REDBOOK

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A ROMANCE BY
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A NOVELETTE BY
BEN HECHT

RUFUS KING

COMPLETE BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL BY
GEORGE F. WORTS

House Warming, 1943

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"Getting the stove was Grandpa's idea. Serving my guests with America's Best — Schenley Royal Reserve — is my idea. Resourcefulness and hospitality are America's ideas."

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"You're a Budding Bernhardt, my dear... but remember, talent isn't everything!"

"YOU HAVE talent to burn, child! But remember, talent isn't everything. A bright and appealing smile wins hearts and that's a great star's first duty. I may be old-fashioned, but I do know something about the modern care of teeth and gums. And if you ignore "pink tooth brush"—you're not playing fair with your career."

"Take a tip from the shining stars of the theatre. Their smiles helped light the way to fame. But don't take an old man's word for this! Play your next rehearsal at your dentist's. Let him give you the real facts."

"Firm gums *are* important to sparkling teeth! And the soft foods you eat rob gums of needed work. Massage your gums daily." (Note: *A recent survey shows dentists prefer Ipana for personal use 2 to 1 over any other dentifrice.*)

"My coach did me a great favor! I'm using Ipana and massage twice a day and the improvement in my smile is thrilling. And that tingle as I massage my gums seems to say, 'You're helping us—we'll help you!'"

(Soliloquy of a Broadway Starlet) "My first appearance on the Great White Way—and the future as bright as my Ipana smile! I pinched myself and it's really true. And I'm going to be everlastingly grateful to my coach, to my dentist and to that all-star feature of my beauty kit—Ipana Tooth Paste and massage."

Never take chances with "pink tooth brush" —heed its warning!

WHEN YOU SEE "pink" on your tooth brush—*see your dentist!* He may simply tell you that eating soft, creamy foods has denied your gums the exercise they need for health. And, like many dentists, he may suggest "the helpful stimulation of Ipana and massage."

For Ipana is designed not only to clean teeth thoroughly but, with massage, to help make your gums firmer. So each time you brush your teeth, massage a little extra Ipana onto your gums.

Let Ipana and massage help you to firmer gums, brighter teeth, a lovelier smile!

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VOL. 80 MARCH • 1943 No. 5

METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER'S
LION'S ROAR
Published in this space every month
The greatest star of the screen!

When "Cabin In The Sky" was playing Broadway a couple of years ago, we went to the Martin Beck three or four times to hear the cello-voiced Ethel Waters singing "Taking a Chance on Love" and all the other melodies by Vernon Duke.

★ ★ ★ ★

Here was a musical play with a real plot, a touch of poetry, too. What a film it will make, we said to ourselves, lion to lion.

★ ★ ★ ★

And now Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer is getting set to release "Cabin", happy in the knowledge that preview reports have branded it "a honey", "a dream" and just plain "excellent."

★ ★ ★ ★

M-G-M rules the raves.

The trio of star entertainers heading the cast are Ethel Waters, Eddie "Rochester" Anderson and Lena Horne.

★ ★ ★ ★

Lena is a find. She is destined to become another Florence Mills.

★ ★ ★ ★

Nor must we fail to tell about Louis Armstrong, Rex Ingram, Duke Ellington and his orchestra, The Hall Johnson choir. They're all there in "Cabin In The Sky".

★ ★ ★ ★

It's another excellent musical production by Arthur Freed. The screenplay is by Joseph Schrank. It is the first film that has been directed by the talented artist Vincente Minnelli and he is to be congratulated.

★ ★ ★ ★

A few additional numbers appear in the film by Harold Arlen and E. Y. Harburg. One in particular is entitled "Happiness is a Thing Called Joe."

★ ★ ★ ★

No more paragraphs on "Cabin" for the moment. Turning to other films, we recommend emphatically the current Spencer Tracy-Katharine Hepburn "Keeper of The Flame".

★ ★ ★ ★

If you liked "Mrs. Miniver" and "Random Harvest", you will recognize the same M-G-M touch in this adaptation of the novel by I. A. R. Wylie.

★ ★ ★

How are the New Year's resolutions coming?

★ ★ ★

Well, they were too tough at that.

—Leo

HERE IS YOUR MARCH REDBOOK MAGAZINE

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

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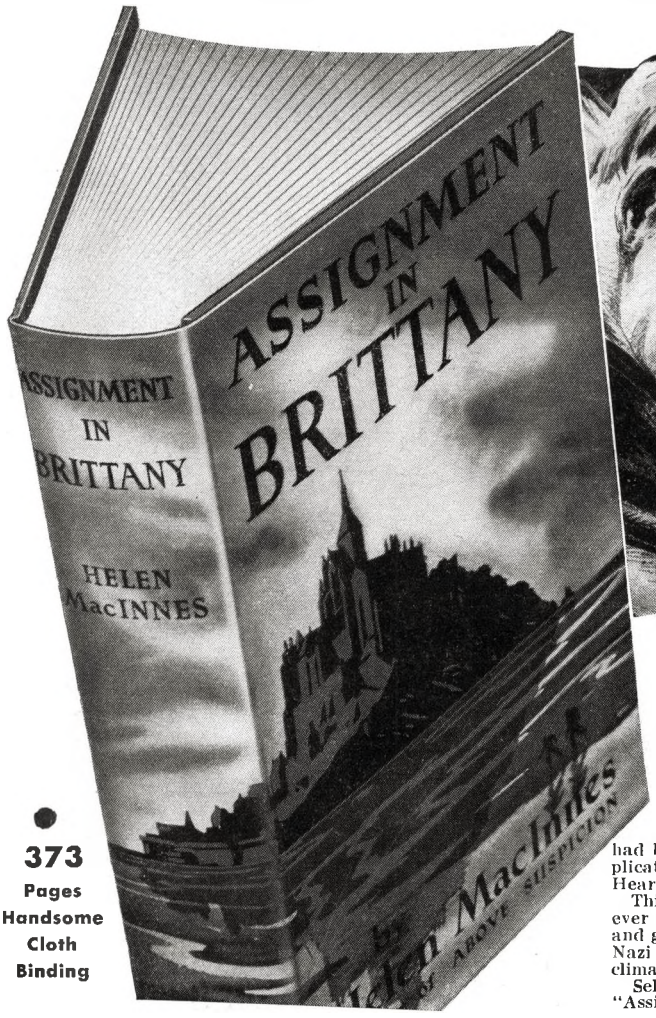
by Helen MacInnes, author of ABOVE SUSPICION



373 Pages Handsome Cloth Binding

What Would YOU Do—

IF because of your perfect resemblance to another man, you were sent on a dangerous spy mission into Nazi-land—
AND there you fell heir to the other man's two passionate love affairs?

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At St. Deodat, he found that Anne Pinot, the Frenchman's fiancee, "accepted" him—in a manner he had not expected. And then there was beautiful, exciting Elise, the Frenchman's clandestine sweetheart—about which Hearne had been told nothing. Moreover, there were many other dangerous, startling complications for which Hearne had not been prepared. Hemmed in by suspicious Nazis, Hearne's mission, his very life was in mortal peril.

This is the setting for as tense, and as fast-moving, an adventure story as you have ever read. You'll race through it with mounting suspense, through scenes of violence and gun play, love and intrigue. You'll meet Fifth Columnists, underground patriots, Nazi big-wigs, women loyal and treacherous, until you come to the smashing, thrilling climax.

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Joseph Cotten and Teresa Wright portray the sinister Uncle Charley *and his niece,* Young Charlie, *in Alfred Hitchcock's latest murder mystery. (Produced by Jack Skirball for Universal.)*

"Shadow of A Doubt" *REDBOOK'S PICTURE OF THE MONTH SELECTED BY THORNTON DELEHANTY*

Macdonald Carey in the part of Jack Graham *displays a romantic interest in* Young Charlie *(Teresa Wright).*

ALFRED HITCHCOCK is one of the few non-actors in the picture business whose name means something when it is attached to a picture.

Most producers or directors—ninety-five per cent of them, let's say—might just as well wallow in oblivion in so far as their identities serve to characterize a picture in the public mind. The Hitchcock label, however, has come to stand for well-defined qualities, and the lexicographers of the future would do well to bear this in mind when they are compiling their synonyms for such already hackneyed expressions as *sinister, baleful,* and the like. Yes, the English language will be enriched, and all the connotations of goose pimples instantly conjured up simply by tagging any horror-subtlety a *hitchcock.*

In his latest picture, "Shadow of a Doubt," which Jack H. Skirball has produced for Universal release, Hitchcock has once again demonstrated his mastery over the ominous, the minatory and—here we go again with those old *clichés*—the sinister. When dealing with one so consummate in his field, it is something of a satisfaction to pounce on a weakness, if it happens to be evident. "Shadow of a Doubt" has a weakness, but it is only for those who insist that every picture have a dominant love-story.

"Her lovely, shining hair
It did my heart ensnare!"

No other shampoo leaves hair so lustrous ... and yet so easy to manage!*

HER GLEAMING LOCKS (shampooed with Special Drene) rival the glitter of her sequin gloves and dress! The smart simplicity of her lovely hair-do is accentuated by the tricky ornaments—satin bows with tassels of silken balls cut from ball fringe.

For glamorous hair, use Special Drene with Hair Conditioner added . . . the only shampoo that reveals up to 33% more lustre than soap, yet leaves hair so easy to arrange!

Nothing makes a girl so alluring to men as shining, lustrous hair! So, if *you* want this thrilling beauty advantage, don't let soaps or soap shampoos rob your hair of lustre!

Instead, use Special Drene! See the dramatic difference after your first shampoo . . . how gloriously it reveals all the lovely sparkling highlights, all the natural color brilliance of your hair!

And now that Special Drene contains a wonderful hair conditioner, it leaves hair far more glamorous . . . silkier, smoother and easier to arrange, right after shampooing! Easier to comb into smooth, shining neatness! If you haven't tried Drene lately, you'll be amazed!

You'll be thrilled, too, by Special Drene's super-cleansing action. For it even removes all embarrassing, flaky dandruff the first time you use it . . . and the film left by previous soapings!

So, before you wash your hair again, get a bottle of Special Drene with Hair Conditioner added! Or ask your beauty shop to use it. Let this amazing improved shampoo glorify your hair!

*PROCTER & GAMBLE, after careful tests of all types of shampoos, found no other which leaves hair so lustrous and yet so easy to manage as Special Drene.

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Soap film dulls lustre—robs hair of glamour!

Avoid this beauty handicap! Switch to Special Drene! It never leaves any dulling film, as soaps and soap shampoos always do.

That's why Special Drene Shampoo reveals up to 33% more lustre!

Special Drene with Hair Conditioner

Victim of an attempted murder (she was locked in the garage with the auto motor running), **Young Charlie** *(Teresa Wright) was saved by the arrival of her family.*

"I hate to be photographed—give me that roll of film!" says **Uncle Charley** *(Joseph Cotten) to* **Graham** *(Macdonald Carey)* **and Saunders** *(Wallace Ford).*

Hitchcock does not strive for romantic fervor; the boy-meets-girl formula leaves him cold. When he attempts it, as he did in "Saboteur" and, to a lesser degree, in "Jamaica Inn," the results are not his best. His real preoccupation is in communicating the creeps to his audiences, not by the hammer-and-tongs method, but through the far more effective insinuations of mental suggestion.

"Shadow of a Doubt," then, is one of the most successful of the Hitchcock adventures with the macabre, and it will delight his admirers (among whom you can count me twice) for the skill with which it manages to keep the plot teetering between mystification and exposure. This is one of Alfred Hitchcock's best tricks; he lets you partly in on the secret, but never far enough to weaken the suspense.

As should be the case with every good murder-mystery, "Shadow of a Doubt" arouses our curiosity at the very beginning, even before we know whether or not there was a crime, and if so who committed it. If this sounds pretty negative, it does not come out that way on the screen. The provocative quality of the opening sequence derives from a juxtaposition of character and setting which is instantly arresting. We see a neatly dressed man stretched out wearily on his bed in full daylight, so weary that he scarcely moves when his landlady comes in to tell him that two men had called to see him awhile before and had gone away.

Why is this man lying down in the daytime, fully clothed? Why does the camera, in moving about to pick up various objects in the room, hold on the carafe of water by the bedside table, and then move on to the bundle of crumpled bills lying on the floor? And again, why is this man so weary that he does not even protest when the landlady, aghast at the sight of the money, picks it up and puts it on the table?

There is something strange going on here, you say to yourself; and the oddity of the whole situation is enhanced by the obvious fact that the man is out of kilter with his surroundings. He is, you note at once, a man of breeding and probably of education. This is implicit in his manner and dress. What is he doing with all that money in this cheaply furnished room in what we soon discover to be a shabby tenement district?

These, I submit, are provocative questions, and they assail you in rapid succession. The man, of course, is hiding out. This is evident awhile later when, through an artful arrangement of the camera, we get a bird's-eye view of him sneaking across a vacant lot and into an alleyway to give the slip to the two "visitors" who have followed him from his house.

His urgency to elude pursuit is made quite plain when we next see him sending a telegram to relatives in California, informing them that their *Uncle Charley* is about to pay them a long-deferred visit. And now, with the introduction of this scene, Hitchcock has set a transcontinental stage for his drama of pursuit and evasion. It is a typical Hitchcock situation, except that instead of using physical objects in which to secrete the fugitive, he employs the more subtle means of a masked identity. No one, outside the family, is certain who *Uncle Charley* is; and even among his new-found relatives his background is unfamiliar.

All we know is that *Uncle Charley* is a dashing figure, easy-going, self-assured, perhaps a little brash at times, and laden with ready cash. No wonder the family with whom he has come to visit finds him enticing; no wonder his niece and namesake, *Charlie Newton,* regards him with rapture. There *(Please turn to page 99)*

"Ever made a house out of newspapers?" **Uncle Charley** *asks his little niece* **Ann** *while trying to conceal a news-story he didn't want her to see.*

In the absence of **Uncle Charley, Young Charlie** *ransacks his room, searching for evidence which may prove him to be the murderer.*

. . . and YOU TALK OF "SACRIFICES"!

Maybe you've heard some of them . . .

The people who complain because they can't always get their brand of coffee—or because the right cut of meat is scarce . . .

The man who "sacrifices" an extra week's vacation to buy a War Bond or two, and the woman who "gives up" a new hat to put the money into a War Bond.

Next time you hear such talk, answer like this . . .

"*Sacrifice?* Is there *anything* you can do to match the bravery of our fighting men? Is there any 'sacrifice' you can make to equal that of a man who gives his *life?*

"You don't 'sacrifice' anything when you buy a War Bond. You get back $4 for every $3 you invest. You get absolute *safety*—with the pledge of the world's strongest nation behind you. You get *security* for the future. You *can't* lose!"

To win this war we Americans MUST buy War Bonds. We MUST give our boys the ships, tanks, guns and planes they need to win. Not just with our "spare" money, but with every dime and dollar we can scrape together.

Let's *forget* the interest, the safety, and the security. LET'S WIN THIS WAR!

Every dollar you put into War Bonds is *life insurance* for our boys. THAT'S what counts! In the lives of these boys is the salvation of our country.

So don't let anybody talk to you about "sacrifices"!

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1. War Bonds cost $18.75 for which you receive $25 in 10 years—or $4 for every $3.
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THE PEPSODENT COMPANY, CHICAGO

What's on YOUR mind?

★ *Write to a Soldier—and Write Often*

I JUST received another letter from that special soldier friend, and have been pondering over something he wrote. It's something that we on the civilian front should know and not forget. He says:

"Everyone down here is simply swell, but as you know, it isn't like home. The boys are all the best of fellows, and we have a grand time—that is, when we aren't drilling or doing K.P. There is only one fault with the whole set-up; something that could be easily remedied. The folks at home just don't seem to realize that the only things that visibly tie us to those we know and love are letters. You have no idea how much pleasure we get out of receiving mail.... After a long day's work, when we're tired and down in the dumps, we read our letters over and over again. And when the mails come in, we crowd around, and clamor for ours. You can always tell those who don't get any by their disappointed faces, and jealous looks toward those that do."

I can't help pitying those boys who are deprived of their only communication from home, by people who don't realize how much their letters mean. For they do mean a lot. Even the unimportant incidents that happen every day, the little anecdotes that are told at the dinner-table, silly little jingles, and our momentary thoughts, bring him closer to home—and to us. The boys enjoy getting a little a lot, rather than a lot a little. A few little notes, scribbled in odd moments, prove to them that we're thinking of them often, mean more than a long letter once in a while. This is beginning to sound like a lecture. I don't mean it to be. It's just what's on my mind. I know that I'm going to write more often from now on. I'm not even going to wait for answers before I write again. The time of the boys in the service is not their own—and the time belonging to all of us will never be ours unless this war is won. Let's all write letters, and let the boys who're winning the war know that they're never forgotten for a moment.

New York.

★ *"From My Kitchen Window"*

IT seems to me that I spend most of my time at the kitchen sink washing dishes, preparing meals for my husband, or squeezing orange-juice for our little boy. And yet these kitchen chores have one compensating advantage over all other household jobs—a large kitchen window just over the sink, overlooking the busy highway.

As I look out this wonderful window, I can feel the pulse of the nation. No newspaper correspondent need tell me that the speed-limit has been cut to thirty-five miles. I can see the traffic slow down. I see the truckloads of scrap, the defense workers' cars decorated with ten-per-cent stickers and *V-for-Victory* slogans, motor-bikes and scooters putt-putting away, the schoolchildren walking along with war-stamp books peeking out of their weather-beaten textbooks, the out-of-State jalopies loaded down with tired men and with old tires tied on here and there, sorrowful-looking travelers jerking their cars to the side of the road and gazing hopelessly at a rear tire just gone flat. My kitchen window gives me, more eloquently than my kitchen radio, my daily report on the state of the nation.

My kitchen window brings me the sight of jeeps, Army trucks and Army ambulances rolling by with that distinctive swish-swish of Army equipment, and I've just begun to realize how many of them are piloted by colored soldiers. America at war—Jew and Gentile, Catholic and Protestant, Negro and White, American-born and foreign-born, all giving the same effort and shedding the same red blood for the right to be free.

We've been promised that out of this war will come greater machines, greater science, greater medicine. Would it be asking too much, to expect that out of this war will come a greater understanding of the religious, racial and social problems of the men who are giving their lives to make such a thing possible? That is on my mind.

Indiana.

★ *Waiting*

"U.S.S. ——— lost in Solomons," my newspaper said yesterday morning. My younger brother, in the Navy since July, was a fireman, third class, on that destroyer.

Until those words brought it home to me, I had not yet realized just what this war means to us. I thought I was doing my part in it. But I was wrong. Until I realize that nothing is too small or large, no hours too long for me to keep, if they contribute to victory, then I, personally, am not in it.

When tears choke me, as they do, I know my attitude is selfish. Why, I've just realized that millions of families all over the world have been suffering this and far worse for long months. Still, I can't help my tears. He is my little brother; he's the serious little first-grader whom I comforted when he was knocked down the first day of school; he's the quick, shy kid who "carried the ball" on his high-school football team, two years ago; he's the farm-boy sailor, not ashamed to pray, who wrote me not a month ago, saying: "Sugarfoot, you know about me and the U. S. I got a feeling that before much longer, it's going to be 'is or ain't' with me, and I'm going to do my best."

So now we wait, my mother at home on an Oklahoma farm, saving grease and saying little words of hope to my dad, while they prepare to give their nineteen-year-old son; *(Please turn to page 62)*

• On this page we publish short contributions from our readers, dealing with personal problems affecting many of us in these perplexing days—simple statements of what's on your mind. We pay one hundred dollars for each contribution which is accepted. All contributions become the property of the McCall Corporation, and none can be returned. Address: What's on Your Mind, Redbook Magazine, 230 Park Avenue, New York City.

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GORDON
means "a fine man"

HERBERT
means
"glory of the army"

EVAN
means
"young warrior"

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Ethyl stands for antiknock fluid made only by the Ethyl Corporation. Oil companies put Ethyl fluid into gasoline to prevent knocking.

The Ethyl trade mark emblem on a gasoline pump means that Ethyl fluid has been put into high quality gasoline and the gasoline sold from that pump can be called "Ethyl."

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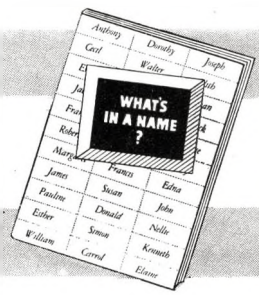

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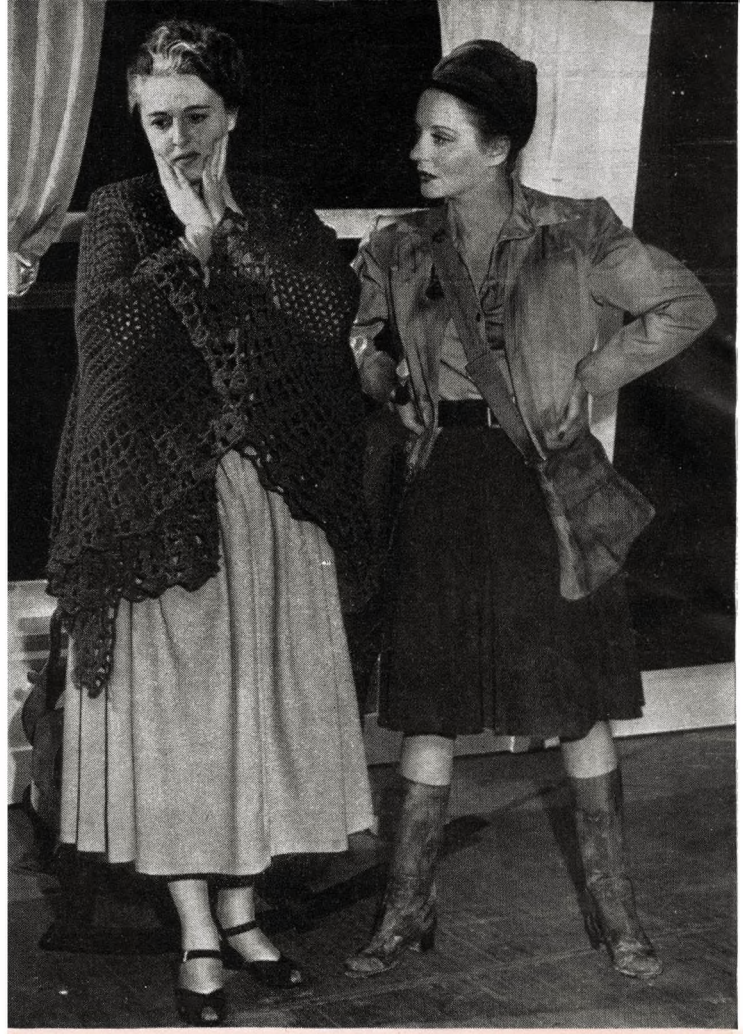
Tallulah Bankhead, the chief protagonist of "The Skin of Our Teeth," is holding a conference with her household pets. You and I may prefer the company of a cocker spaniel, but apparently not Tallulah.



Florence Eldridge, who is co-starred with Tallulah in "The Skin of Our Teeth," is shocked by the return of the Ice Age. Tallulah, however, does her best to explain the amazing phenomenon.

A Wilder Play from Thornton Wilder

For the third time in fourteen years Mr. Thornton Wilder has brought out a piece of work which has set the public by its ears. In 1928 it was the Pulitzer-Prize-winning novel, "The Bridge of San Luis Rey," which fascinated hundreds of thousands of readers. In 1938 it was the Pulitzer-Prize-winning play "Our Town," which convinced even the Broadway cynics that emotion is a box-office commodity, and that a great story can get across the footlights without the benefit of scenery. We have no way of knowing whether "The Skin of Our Teeth" will win another Pulitzer Prize for Mr. Wilder. We do know, however, that after having been turned down by a baker's dozen of producers, "The Skin of Our Teeth" is packing them in, and is on its way toward becoming one of the most profitable theatrical ventures of the decade.

A great many people leave the theater puzzled. They feel exactly as the play's star, Tallulah Bankhead, does when, following the instructions of Mr. Wilder, she steps out of character and says: "Don't expect me to explain to you what this is all about. I have no idea."

It is not easy to outline as whimsical an opus as "The Skin of Our Teeth." To the best of our knowledge, Mr. Wilder selected a middle-class New Jersey family for the sole purpose of showing what has happened to humanity in the last five thousand years. *(Please turn to page 85)*

Florence Eldridge, Frances Heflin and Fredric March, befuddled but not downhearted in another scene in Thornton Wilder's smash hit.

What did *you* do today ... for Freedom?

Today, at the front, he died ... Today, what did *you* do?
Next time you see a list of dead and wounded, ask yourself:
"What have *I* done today for freedom?
What can I do tomorrow that will *save* the lives of
men like this and help them win the war?"

To help you to do your share, the Government has organized the Citizens Service Corps as a part of local Defense Councils, with some war task or responsibility for every man, woman and child. Probably such a Corps is already at work in your community. If not, help to start one. A free booklet available through this magazine will tell you what to do and how to do it. Go into action today, and get the satisfaction of doing a needed war job well!

EVERY CIVILIAN A FIGHTER

CONTRIBUTED BY THE MAGAZINE PUBLISHERS OF AMERICA

Our Readers Speak

Photograph by Paul D'Ome

EACH month we will publish no fewer than ten letters from our readers, and will pay ten dollars for each one published. Address all letters to Editor of Letters, Redbook Magazine, 230 Park Avenue, New York, N. Y. Keep letters within one hundred words. No letters will be returned, and all of them will become the property of McCall Corporation.

★ *That's the Way They Go—*

I'm feeling very smug and self-satisfied at this point—because I completed the Crossword Puzzle in the December issue—and without a peep at the solution. They've irritated me for months, but now that I've solved one all by myself, I think they're swell.

Catherine E. Kirk,
Pittsburgh, Pa.

★ *One Compensation*

After I have had a "difficult" day at school, I just read a *Violet* story and decide I have been teaching angels after all.

Illinois Teacher.

★ *"The Last Best Hope"*

"The fight has begun, and it will spread and spread like a fire in a field"—and it did! As death has spread from my beloved cousins to my school pals and on to others loved dearly. These—like *Mark*—believed in fighting for his, theirs and our freedom with democratic life.

How this novel travels parallel with many lives of today!

From a soldier's wife,
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

★ *And Even At Forty, Too*

Thanks, Gladys Hasty Carroll and REDBOOK, for "Lady, You're Home." It was a distinct pleasure to read this story, wherein the lovers were middle-aged, plump, comfortable sort of individuals, instead of the usual tall-dark-and-handsome and the slim restless tawny-haired heroine.

I'd begun to think that authors didn't understand that people over thirty-five still have the ability to respond normally to any of life's honest emotions.

Lewis C. Sanderson,
Detroit, Michigan.

★ *The Russians*

As a usual thing I don't "go" for Erskine Caldwell's works, but "All Night Long" is one of the most exciting stories I've ever read. All during the raid on the radio station, I was right there, dodging bullets, feeling the heat of the fire on my face, and holding my breath for fear *Sergei's* band wouldn't escape. Oh, I was tired when it was over!

I'd also like to add a word in favor of the three-column page. It makes reading in bed much easier.

Mrs. P. R. Y.,
Greenville, Texas.

★ *But What Does Webster Say?*

How about making another grammatical correction in the paragraph you publish under "Our Readers Speak?" "Each month we *shall* publish, etc." would be more correct than "Each month we *will* publish, etc." The way you now state it, the editors express their determination to publish at least ten letters, rather than their intention of doing this each month.

Harvey Rossen,
Dorchester, Mass.

★ *From an Airman*

After having read "The Last Best Hope" by Helen Deutsch in your December output, I feel more privileged than ever to wear the uniform of our Army.

Private I. B.,
Army Air Forces,
Chanute Field, Illinois.

★ *Sometimes After Only Nine Years*

I never have written to "Our Readers Speak" before, but I've "heared tell" that after the first ten years is over, letters are always printed.

Mrs. H. Thrower,
Sebastian, Florida.

★ *Yes, Possibly*

Possibly your attention has already been called to the error on the front cover of the December REDBOOK.

Cosette M. Palmer,
San Diego, Calif.

(Editors' Note: For details regarding the inadvertence referred to above, see page 4 of this issue.)

★ *But Not Because No One Has Tried*

On "REDBOOK Day" the postman's met.
What novel? And what novelette?
Is *Claudia* still a farmerette?
Comes romance à la Mars Vinaigrette
To *Romeo* and *Juliette?*
Ah, me! Each month's the best one yet!
Except for one supreme regret
No one has poisoned *Violet!*

M. Allison Smith,
San Francisco, Calif.

★ *They're Like Olives, You See*

When your new cockeyed crossword puzzle came out in the November issue of your magazine, you really had me baffled. I worked and worked for hour after hour, but I just couldn't start clicking.

Then came the December issue. And what do you think! I finally began to catch the drift.

Nancy Doughty,
Greeneville, Tennessee.

★ *You See, Our Readers Miss Nothing*

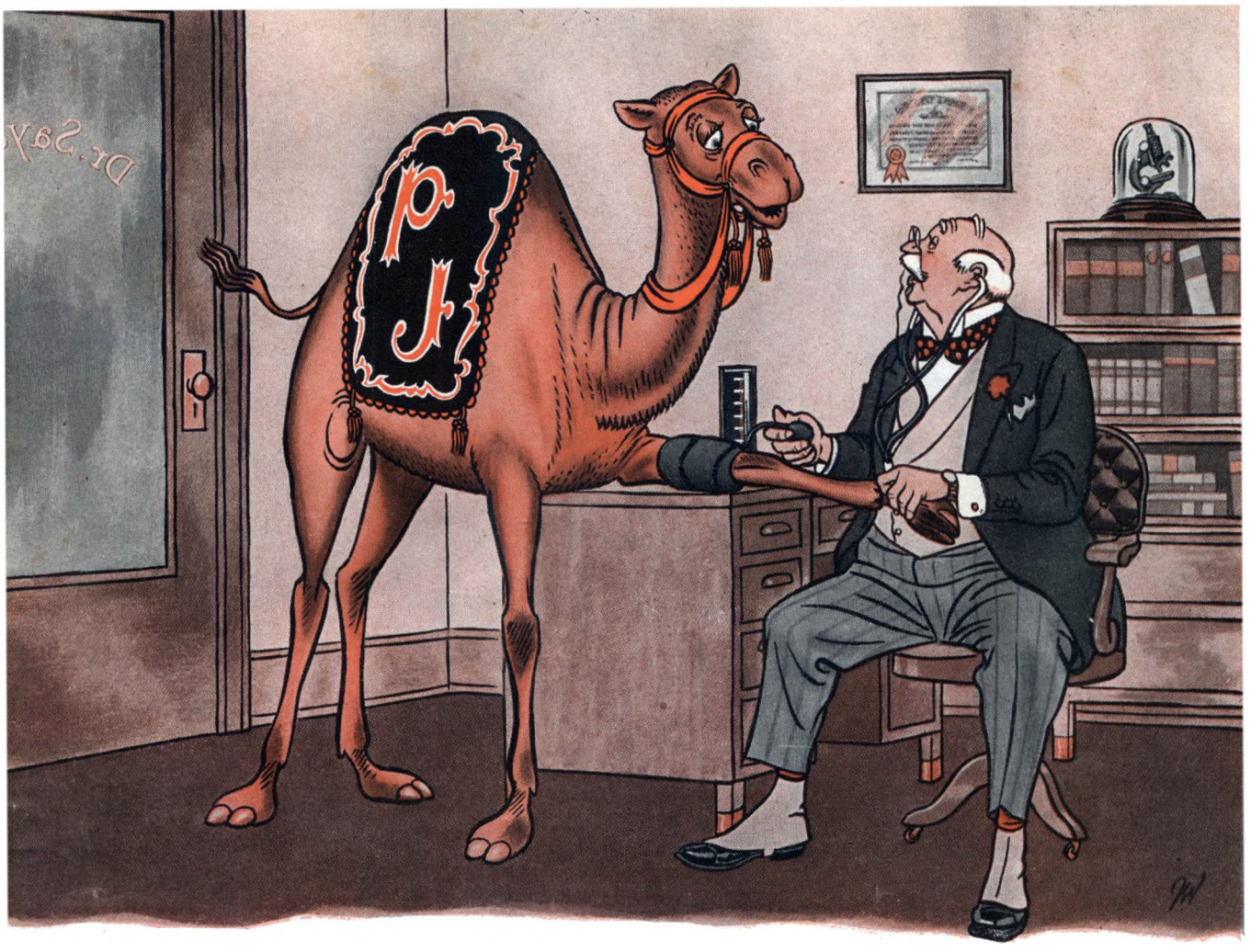
In your "Duel in the Desert" (November issue, page 12) Stefan J. Rundt states that on the chapel at Wiener Neustadt there are inscribed the Gothic letters A. E. I. O. U. *(Austria Erit in Orbe Ultima)*, meaning "Austria Shall Be Forever."

However:

In the Sunday papers of October 18, the John Hix Scrap Book speaks of the vowel slogan "A. E. I. O. U." as the motto of Emperor Frederick III of Austria, which stands for *Austriæ est Imperare Orbi Universi*, meaning "Austria Is to Rule All the World."

Not that it matters a bit to me whether Austria shall survive or not, but you experts ought to get together.

C. G.,
Little Rock, Ark.



"Blood pressure 105... about normal for a camel"

DOCTOR: You look in pretty good shape to me, Camel. Lungs . . . heart . . . reflexes good. Been working hard, lately?

CAMEL: No, O Master of the Stethoscope. Just the usual thing, telling people about the magnificent flavor of Paul Jones Whiskey. Really, Doctor, I feel fine!

DOCTOR: You feel fine, do you! Then what are you doing here, my fuzzy-faced time-waster?

CAMEL: I came about that party you're giving tonight, Noble Taker of Pulses. Your secretary told me about it.

DOCTOR: Party? Yes, I'm giving a party. I asked her to find out about whiskies. But what's that got to do with your state of health?

CAMEL: You misunderstand, Sahib. I came not as a patient, but as a specialist, myself. I came to prescribe Paul Jones, the superlative whiskey so prized for its *dryness*. This dryness, which laymen call lack of sweetness, is what brings out the peerless flavor to the full.

DOCTOR: Say, Camel, that Paul Jones sounds like a great whiskey, one I'd be really proud to serve. Only . . . well, I charge small fees, you know. I couldn't afford such luxury.

CAMEL: But, Gracious Doctor, Paul Jones puts no strain on your wallet. It is yours for a truly modest price.

DOCTOR: That settles it! Get your blanket pressed and comb out your whiskers, Camel —*you're* going to be guest of honor at my party tonight!

The very best buy
is the whiskey that's dry

Paul Jones

A blend of straight whiskies—90 proof. Frankfort Distilleries, Inc., Louisville & Baltimore

She laughed and leaned her head against the shoulder of his uniform. "Drive with one hand, John." He turned; a smile flashed in his tanned face.

PART 1

The Last Time

On a local train that seemed to move more slowly than ever he remembered it, John Redford was going home for a short furlough in June of 1942.

Twenty-one years old, very hard and fit, wearing the uniform of an ensign and the gold wings of a Navy pilot, his hair was bright as the gilded pieces not coined since his childhood. He was very tall; and like many of his contemporaries, he was at least superficially the oldest twenty-one ever known to the world.

His philosophy was composite of his first flight instructor's phrase, "Get tough, if you want to be a pilot," the belief that life had grown very much shorter since the war and therefore one must not waste a minute of it, and a naturally affectionate nature that he suppressed as completely as he could, with reservations.

Against most of what he considered his principles, he was going to waste the first part of his leave at his family's place, High Meadows, near the little town of Burlcourt, in Virginia, instead of presenting himself with the night-clubs and dance orchestras of New York, due him certainly after the just completed grind of his advanced training.

In a way he was fond of the family High Meadows; he used to be more than fond of the place. But now the air of permanence about the great brick house with its white pillars, its decorative old trees, and even shrubbery planted by

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"Are you going to pursue me from room to room at High Meadows, demanding an arm around you or a kiss every twenty seconds?"

We Meet

BY URSULA PARROTT
ILLUSTRATED BY EDWIN GEORGI

General Somebody-or-other to commemorate a visit sometime in the Civil War, irritated him. All that was for people who knew where they were going the next fifty years. *He* didn't know where he was going the next six months, and didn't care. An hour of life in the third dimension of the air was worth a thousand on the ground.

He was only resigned to putting up with it because he often made exceptions as to suppressing affection where his mother was concerned, and to a less degree as to his father's half-sister, Sara Lea Reford, who had been living at High Meadows with his mother since his father's death in 1940. Before that Sara Lea had devoted herself for a decade to her invalid mother—about whom old-fashioned people said things like "blessed relief" when she died.

Aunt Sara Lea was thirty, and a nice-enough woman. His mother was of course forty this year, but not forty like anyone else, with her slenderness, her pretty looks, her fair hair as guiltless of gray

The romantic novel of two young people who were determined not to repeat the mistakes made by the elder generation. Time — today. Place—anywhere in the United States.

as his own. She and Aunt Sara Lea gardened when they weren't going by bus because of the gasoline shortage to Burlcourt to work at Red Cross headquarters. Or sometimes they went riding on the two old hunters, not even thoroughbreds, which were all that were left of the stable.

John Reford sighed, staring out the train window at the familiar countryside, which was pretty in June. Where he was going he wouldn't need money, but it was a bore all the same that though they had all been quite rich in his childhood, they seemed to grow poorer year by year. No one had bothered him with the details, but phrases like "rising taxes" and "unfortunate investments" had floated in the air over his head even before his father died.

Chadwick Cassalane stood watching her ride away and wondering why he was sure it was not the end for her and for him.

One day months ago he had come home unexpectedly to find Aunt Sara Lea mowing the lawn! He had been shocked. And his mother had on a last year's frock, pretty enough; but still, she used to have dozens of lovely new frocks, and a maid just to keep them in order.

He had protested: "You send me a big allowance, and I don't need it, and I won't take it any more. You buy yourself something nice." His mother only put her hand up to his cheek and said: "Nonsense, John dear. I'm a widow, and I'm nearly forty. I don't go to the places where I need elaborate clothes any more."

And Aunt Sara Lea said: "Enjoy yourself while you can, John dear." Her face looked—strange; and his mother's face—stranger!

He knew they were thinking: "Let him have everything, in case he isn't around long to enjoy it." And he wanted badly to tell them it didn't matter whether he was or not! He and all his fellow-pilots were living at the crest of the wave, week after week, month after month. They all knew—those more articulate than he could state it—that they didn't need year after year. They sandwiched more intensity of living into a week than some people into ten years.

He couldn't say things like that, and make his mother and aunt unhappy. Instead he talked on about the wonderful training he was getting, and the emphasis on safety. After a while they were smiling.

Oddly he could say anything that came into his head to Catherine Lansley, whom he loved. She understood, because she was his own generation. But for feeling it would hurt those two people of whom he was fondest (not counting Catherine because love was something else), he would have married her the day he finished training in Florida.

But his mother and aunt hadn't even heard her name! They would hear it tonight at dinner. He meant to ask his mother to wire Catherine, inviting her for the duration of his leave. He and Catherine had it all planned.

Suddenly he could hear Catherine's voice saying: "It's so out of the pattern to be as considerate as you are of older people. But I like it. Maybe you'll be considerate of me when I'm older, on the off chance we're both still around then."

But he couldn't see himself and Catherine old, even if he went through the war all right and they had a life afterward! She was newest of the new, and somehow always would be, he was sure.

He wasn't so sure his family would understand her, in particular her uninhibited vocabulary. He had never heard either his mother or his aunt say even "Damn."

At last! The train was slowing for the station, and he was conscious of the unreasonable excitement that he used to have, coming home from boarding-school ever so long ago.

There was his mother in a blue linen frock, looking practically like a girl, with a glow on her face and her gray eyes shining, just because she was going to meet him.

John felt sorry, for what he didn't know, and kissed her tenderly. There also was the old station-wagon, and he didn't doubt they had done without gasoline for weeks so he could have plenty when he came home. He wished they hadn't. He could walk better than they.

Aunt Sara Lea would be at the house, of course, no doubt icing the Lady Baltimore cake he had been fonder of at twelve than nowadays—though he still looked forward to eating it for dessert tonight. She always arranged that his mother have first meetings with him alone.

His mother said: "You'll drive me, dear?"

Afraid of nothing in the world on horseback, she had always been vaguely timid of cars, and had preferred to be driven than to drive.

He said, "Yes darling," and patted her arm.

The next day on the same train Catherine Lansley, as rarely in her nineteen years, was suffering from self-consciousness—so acutely she didn't mind the crawling pace of the local, the dusty coaches,—not air-conditioned,—nor even the heat, though it would cause her to arrive crumpled, and she hated being crumpled.

Hatless and stockingless, wearing a white frock printed in scarlet and green, green shoes, carrying a green purse (and gloves as a gesture of propriety—hers were scarlet), she was not more than five foot two, but kept her weight at ninety-five pounds and her waist line at twenty-one inches by conscientious abstinence from practically everything she enjoyed eating.

Like a complete wack, as she phrased it, she kept taking Mrs. Reford's telegram from her purse and rereading it.

> DO COME TO VISIT US AS SOON AS YOU CAN. TOMORROW IF YOU CAN MANAGE IT. WE ARE SO EAGER TO WELCOME YOU.
>
> SINCERELY
>
> ALISON REFORD.

Well, if they were eager to welcome her ("they" she assumed included John's aunt besides his mother), they would be exceptions to most family connections. And she ought to know.

Child of her mother's third marriage but her father's first and only, which was quaint, her relatives included in a vague way a half-brother sixteen years older, a married half-sister nine years older, the children of these people's fathers by other marriages, her present stepfather and a few odds and ends. Her father had walked out of the show sixteen or seventeen years since, and had gone exploring in South and Central America, looking for Maya ruins or some such.

Catherine never could remember whether Maya or Inca came first, not that it mattered. She had only seen her father four times in a decade after all, and she usually talked about her progress at school. Otherwise he wrote her a couple of letters a year with checks inclosed, and sent her something strange and South American on Christmases and birthdays.

Catherine was supposed to resemble him, except that he was tall. Her mother

was wont to say in her version of sentimental moods induced by sufficient champagne: "When I got rid of Parker Lansley, I didn't know I would have his hair and eyes around all my life. You hadn't grown any hair at the time, and your eyes were just funny-looking like all infants. Well, I must say he had beautiful hair and eyes. You've got the eyelashes too. They tell me Parker's gone gray. However you can thank me for your complexion."

Catherine's mother's conversation was notable principally for inconsecutiveness. Her complexion, however, had been famous on two continents for more than thirty years. People used to say: "No one else since Lily Langtry has had that skin." But Princess Doumade (her present name) now at fifty-seven was beginning to be more reminiscent of Lillian Russell in *embonpoint* than Lily Langtry.

Catherine disliked her and was ashamed of the fact. The only one of her family whom she "adored" was her thirty-five-year-old half-brother Richard McAllipher. Since he lived in California, where he built engines for airplanes, was unmarried—some reaction from his mother's excessiveness concerning marriage—he wasn't much use to Catherine. But he "made sense!"

So for that matter did her half-sister Muriel, now Mrs. Muriel Van Ruhl, but it was hard to be fond of Muriel. She took her husband's social position with solemnity, and went in for causes that got her photographed with the proper people in the right newspapers. It was she who had arranged Catherine's début, and the years of the correct schools, dancing classes and holiday dances preceding it, all very successfully.

CATHERINE would have been a glamour girl, a few years previously, but they had gone out, rather. Yet she had engagements four deep every day of her first season, knew hundreds of young men by their first names and sometimes even remembered their last names. Next season she was bored, and took Red Cross courses which bored her too, but seemed to have some slight contact with reality.

Even her mother's fortune was showing the strain of the times, plus an expensive young husband, plus three or four previous decades of extravagance. Catherine most violently hated competing with Prince Doumade for part of a dividend check.

Her brother, Dick McAllipher, would send her money if she asked for it, but she understood that he was putting more and more into his share of the California factory, and she chose not to bother him.

She had vague ideas of getting a job, but since she had been "finished," in a good old impractical fashion, she didn't know what at. She was too short for a model, and wasn't sure she danced well enough to be a chorus girl.

Also John Reford's face and voice and smile had already sorted themselves out from the hundreds of other faces and voices and smiles. They had met during his junior year at Harvard. When he left to join the Navy and to fly, they corresponded. She would write pages and pages in her enormous scrawl to the general effect that she missed him.

She once had written:

All the drips are left in town and all the men out of this world are gone off somewhere. You are *out of this world, you know. It's nonsense for us to be serious, of course, with a war and what not. I always vowed I wouldn't marry anyone I couldn't stand the thought of wandering around with, for fifty years. These just-before-the-battle-mother weddings are too too risky.*

I wrote my brother about you. You'd like him. Only one of the menagerie of my connections above the ape stage. I told him you were everything I didn't want, lamb pie. No money, off for the war, no guarantee you'll be around as of 1950. How can you set me up in the country in a house with a swimming-pool, I ask you, sweet?

By now your handsome face will be five miles long conservatively. I told him you were blond, had bright blue eyes, were six feet tall and—lest you develop conceit—bored me talking about what plane could cruise at what altitude with what horsepower and fuel-consumption. That'll impress him. He lives and dies by the machinery they put in heavier-than-air machines.

You and he will build a lifelong friendship on air-cooling versus water-cooling.

Oh, yes, I forgot to mention I told him I was going to marry you anyway, that I'd rather have whatever you and I can snatch from the doom of our generation (joke) than fifty years with some clown.

Shall I go down to Florida and marry you quick and tell people afterward? Mother will have apoplexy, and it will all be very boring. But whatever you say. I suppose I'll be a blow to your people too.

But she had been rather pleased that he wanted to manage the whole show formally. She hoped she got on with his mother and aunt, and meant not to swear. That always put off people so. As a matter of fact, she only swore to exasperate her mother, and that was pretty childish. The point if any was that Princess Doumade used the prissiest language possible and behaved outrageously most of the time. Catherine liked to exaggerate the contrast; to behave as well as possible and speak abominably.

She counted down the list of stations in the timetable: Three more; they seemed to be five minutes apart. She would just go over her face again to pass the time. She hoped there would be a telegram from Dick at High Meadows. She had wired him as she left New York:

DARLING, I'M GOING TO MAKE AN HONEST MAN OF THE ENSIGN PROVIDED HIS MOTHER AND AUNT PASS ME. MAYBE EVEN IF THEY DON'T. THIS WEEK-END PROBABLY. COULD YOU LEAVE THE BOILER WORKS LONG ENOUGH TO COME AND LEND TOUCH OF RESPECTABILITY? DON'T MEAN TO INFORM THE FAMILY UNLESS JOHN'S PEOPLE MAKE A ROW ABOUT IT. HERE'S THE ADDRESS. SEND ME CONDOLENCES OR MAKE PERSONAL APPEARANCE. PREFER APPEARANCE. LOVE AND KISSES AS THEY SAY

CATHERINE.

She sent that full rate and marked "Rush." Though she didn't recognize the fact, the only way in which Catherine obviously resembled her mother was that they shared a passion for long telegrams always sent full rate.

One more station went by. A glance at her face reassured her mildly. She really wasn't looking too impossible. Catherine actually had very little vanity for a girl so lovely. People who grow up in the shade of a famous beauty usually lack vanity. Yet every man in the crowded coach had said to himself an equivalent of: "What a pretty girl!"

Her black hair, that rare completely black hair with neither blue nor red shadows, had a sheen like satin. The eyes were almost as dark as the hair, had a glint of hazel rather than brown, and were adorned with thick long black lashes, and brows with a tilt to them.

She had gardenia-white skin with faint pink tint under the cheekbones, a straight nose, a well-cut sensitive medium-sized mouth, and a surprisingly firm little chin. *(Please turn to page 78)*

Beach Head

BY W. R. BURNETT
ILLUS. BY H. MORSE MEYERS

I HEAR the boys didn't have no trouble on them other islands—but we did. They were laying for us—and I mean laying! The little brown brothers had machine-gun nests all over the place, and when we hit the beach, they cut loose with everything they had. Course the barrage from the boats had slowed them down a little—but not enough.

Them machine-gun bullets have got a nasty sour whine. I heard plenty of 'em whizzing by—passing me up. I just figured I'd get the next one in my guts, fall on my moosh in the water, and that would be that. It's no picnic getting out of a barge loaded down with the junk we got to carry—even during maneuvers (brother, did we have maneuvers—the works!); but when you got them little slant-eyed Japs shooting at you on top of it—you got something. But nothing hit me. First thing I know I'm on the beach, and my feet are sinking into the sand.

Out of the corner of my eye I see a couple guys fall, off to the left, and another guy up ahead of me—just as he was running in among the first fringe of palm trees; but most of the guys was making it, running low. I heard a loud noise and smelled something hot, and I turned too quick, caught my foot on a root, and did a fall. The noise was coming from a Marine Engineer's tank, and it damn' near run over me. Boy, them tractor-treads looked big as they slid past, practically giving me a shave. Before I got up, I caught a glimpse of what was going on behind me. More barges was gliding in, and guys was piling out of them, and the sun was shining on the water, making it dance and sparkle; and away out, a couple of boats was blasting away at the hills beyond, where a lot of the nests was located.

The grove of palms was pretty dense, and there was a green, funny light; it was like coming into a dark room out of the sun. I kept running forward, looking for something to shoot at but not seeing nothing at all except the backs of a bunch of Marines. I'm still hearing these bullets tearing along humming out of key, and every once in a while I see a strip torn off a palm trunk—like in a high wind.

Pretty soon I run onto a guy I know. He's with my outfit. His name is Bill Poleslawski (spelling not guaranteed), and I don't like him. He's a professional football-player—a great big hunk of a guy; and on top of that, he's good-looking with curly black hair and all; he thinks he ought to be in the movies. He's sitting on the ground with a silly look on his pan. His gun's just laying there. And guess what he's doing? He's got his helmet off and he's sitting there staring at the top of it like one of them what-you-may-call-its—you know—looking at a crystal ball.

"What's wrong with you, beautiful?" I says to him, stopping.

He raises his head and gives me the wooziest look I ever seen coming out of human eyes—I've saw some awful drunken guys in my time but I never seen one look that drunk. I don't get it—how could he be drunk? Then I see he's got a dent in his helmet. A machine-gun bullet has just kissed the steel in passing.

"Red—I don't know," says Poleslawski in a funny voice, shaking his curly head. "Something fell on me—I think."

His eyes begin to look better, so I pointed out the dent in the helmet to him and he catches on. In spite of the fact I don't like him, I'll say one thing—he's a pretty tough baby; so in a second he puts his helmet back on and I get him to his feet, and we start off through the palm-grove. By this time there's plenty noise—and I mean plenty! Machine-guns, tank-guns, automatic rifles—the works! Bang! Zowie! Rattle! Crash! My eardrums begin to feel mighty funny, and Poleslawski keeps shaking his head.

It's sort of like a nightmare by now. I'm moving forward and so is the big Polack, but there don't seem to be no sense to it. Wisps of funny-looking smoke is hanging in among the trees, and bullets are still ripping pieces off the palm trunks. My feet are heavy as if I was tramping through a swamp, and it's got so everything is blurred. We see a couple Japs laying in the sand. We pass them. They are very dead. The Polack takes a gander at them and grins. I don't feel like grinning; I feel all tight inside, like when I used to box amateur and was afraid I wouldn't make a good showing and all the guys would laugh at me.

All of a sudden we come out into a kind of clearing. A grass house is burning, and right beside it is a Jap automobile, and it's on fire too. Lead is just pouring out of the brush up ahead; I hear officers yelling, and whistles blowing; and looking off to my left, I see some of our guys hit and rolling on the ground. The rest of them are prone, letting the machine-gun bullets pass over them.

Just as I'm going to say something to the Polack, he falls like he'd been hit with a sledgehammer, and somebody grabs me and slams me to the ground. When I get my bearings I'm laying beside Captain Deniker, and he's swearing at me because I didn't hear the orders and had stayed on my feet.

Now—I aint got no use for Captain Deniker. He's a university guy and got a wonderful education, and his folks are ritzy and he's social and all that stuff; I never could understand why he didn't wangle himself one of them soft office jobs like so many guys with pull got.

"What's the matter with that man?" Captain Deniker says to me, jerking a thumb at the Polack, who is laying beside me—cold but not bleeding.

I'm feeling kind of upset so I says: "I guess he missed a tackle, sir." And I'm damned if the Captain didn't almost smile.

I take a quick gander at Poleslawski, and believe it or not, he's got another dent in his helmet. He's starting to roll his head by now, and pretty soon he gives a kind of groan and tries to sit up. I make a grab for him, but before I can make him lay down, the guy on the other side of him gets to him.

"What happened?" says Poleslawski in a drunken voice.

And I say: "You got conked again. Getting kinda monotonous, aint it?"

THE guy on his other side pipes up: "As long as they hit the Polack in the head, it's all right. They'll never stop him that way."

I grin. The guy on the other side is my pal, Baldy McGovert. He's only about thirty years old, but he's bald as an egg, and sort of sensitive about it—hates to take his cap off. Before he joined the Marines, he was a tailor, and he can really sew things; makes mighty good-looking shirts in his spare time. There's one bad thing about Baldy—he plays the mouth-organ and he thinks he plays it good. As a musician, he stinks.

"Some day I'll break your neck, Baldy," says the Polack, sore. "A guy gets shot and you make jokes."

All of a sudden I feel funny, sort of scared. I didn't know what it was for a minute—then I caught on: the noise had stopped. There was plenty firing way off to the left along the beach and way off to the right—but in the clearing there wasn't a sound hardly.

The author of "Little Caesar" is at his hard-hitting best in this grim story of a squad of Marines who were ordered to establish a beach head somewhere in the South-western Pacific.

"Nice shot, Corporal," says the Captain—just as if Baldy had hit a rabbit on the run. And Baldy says: "He showed metal, sir. I thought them guys was good at camouflage."

I turned to look at Captain Deniker. Ordinarily his face is a brown color like a life-guard's; he was a pretty good-looking guy in his way—his hair gray on the sides and his face long and lean; but now his skin looked kind of greenish, and he was swearing like a truck-driver.

"Stymied," he says, sort of under his breath.

Just then a machine-gun cut loose, chattered for a minute, and quit.

"This aint no good," says the Polack. "We may be here all day. Let's go get 'em."

"You go get 'em," says Baldy. "We can spare you. Go throw a block on that Jap machine-gun. We'll give you a nice funeral."

"You're yellow," says the Polack. "A yellow Irishman—and that's bad."

"Grow up, men," the Captain says.

The machine-gun chatters again and stops, then again; nobody's getting hit, because just ahead of us is a sort of rise—a big long sand dune and the guns are beyond that; but it's mighty uncomfortable to lay there doing nothing and hearing them bullets going over you like a swarm of bees.

Just as the gun stops for the second time, an orderly crawls over to the Captain and says something to him. The Captain nods, and the orderly crawls away, taking it mighty easy. The Captain's face looks more greenish now, and I wonder is he scared—I know I am.

The Captain turns to us—we're all laying close together: the Captain, me, the Polack and Baldy: he turns and says:

"Men, it's like this. A machine-gun nest is holding up the advance. It has to be wiped out or nothing will go on schedule—you understand?"

"Sure," says the Polack, grinning.

Baldy looked dubious. He wasn't going to get shot if he could help it.

"It's like this," says the Captain—he was always saying, "It's like this," and it always griped me. "We're at the northern end of the clearing. We've got the best chance to wipe out the nest—the four of us. We'll crawl around the far end of the dune. Follow me."

The Captain began to crawl. Baldy looked at me and shrugged. Baldy wasn't scared—as far as I could discover, Baldy wasn't scared of nothing except taking his cap off and showing his naked head when there was girls present—but he was careful. He didn't like the idea of rushing a machine-gun nest a little bit. I didn't either, but I was just plain scared. The Polack grinned—he liked it. He crawled after the Captain.

"Block that kick, All American," said Baldy as Poleslawski went past. "All American—that's a laugh! With a name like that!"

"I'm just as good American as you," says Poleslawski. "The Poles put up a fight. What did the Irish do?"

"Never mind, men," says the Captain.

Baldy crawled after the Polack, and I crawled after Baldy. Nobody needed to tell me to keep down—I could feel eyes looking at me, and I expected to get a hunk of lead in the back every second.

We had to crawl about fifty feet. Funny thing—fifty feet is about fifteen-sixteen paces; no distance at all. At an ordinary time—even in maneuvers, even crawling—you'd cover it and never give it a thought. By the time we'd crawled twenty-five feet I felt like I'd gone from Detroit to Chicago on my belly. It was so damn' quiet—except every once in a while a gun went off some place—just one shot at a time: I couldn't understand it. No, I didn't get it at all till all of a sudden I see the Captain throw himself sideways and give a groan. He was hit.

"Snipers, damn it," says the Captain, grabbing hold of his side and making a face. "Up in a tree, most likely—considering the trajectory."

What is he talking about, I thought. Then I remembered the word, but it didn't help because I'd forgot what it meant.

"I hope you aint hurt bad, sir," says the Pole—a red-appler if I ever seen one.

"No," says the Captain, "but we're all dead if we don't locate that sniper."

Just then there was two shots that went off almost at the same time. One so loud I damn' near jumped out of my skin—and raising my head a little, I find out that Baldy has taken a shot at something. Then I seen a sight I'll never forget. Up the slope to the north of us there was a great big tall palm tree that sort of stood out from the rest. All of a sudden a Jap starts to fall out of it. He's hit but he aint dead, and he don't want to fall. He slips down the trunk, makes a grab, loses his hold; then he falls head first, holding his arms out like he was trying to fly. It give me a start.

"Nice shot, Corporal." says the Captain—just as if Baldy had hit a rabbit on the run.

And Baldy says: "He showed metal, sir. I thought them guys was good at camouflage."

Baldy was the best shot in the outfit. I felt like giving him the watch my girl-friend had give me when I shipped out of San Diego.

WASHINGTON—"By all rules of the game we're beaten, and should surrender. But the spirit of earth moves over earth like flame and finds new home when the old's burned out. It stands over this my country in this dark year, stands like a pillar of fire to show us an uncouth clan, unread, harsh-spoken, but followers of dream, a dream that men shall bear no burdens save of their own choosing, shall walk upright, masterless, doff their hats to none, and choose their gods! It's destined to win, this dream, weak though we are. Even if we should fail, it's destined to win! . . . This liberty will look easy by and by when nobody dies to get it."

from Valley Forge by Maxwell Anderson (Act III)
Copyright, 1934, by Maxwell Anderson, published by Anderson House

"Lie quiet, men," says the Captain, "till we see if that shot gave us away."

It had. . . . Brother! All hell broke loose over our heads; lead shrieked and screamed and tore at the palm trunks behind us and kicked up the dirt and thudded and bounced all over the place.

"Captain, sir," says Poleslawski, "maybe, sir, I could toss me a forward pass and get some results."

"Not while that fire's so heavy," says the Captain. "Wait for a lull."

"Yes sir," says the Polack, grinning.

So he gets out a couple of grenades and waits. This boy can really toss them grenades. And all of a sudden I begin to figure what a lucky guy I am. I'm not much good at anything—just average; but here I am with the best shot and the best grenade-pitcher in the outfit; and I'm beginning to think the Captain aint no dunce either, even if he does broad "A" you and look at you down the side of his nose.

The bullets keep ripping and tearing and banging for quite a while and then they stop; and for a second far away we can hear an outlandish-sounding high-pitched voice raising hell about something —in double-talk—a little brown brother!

"I think a gun jammed," says the Captain; then he turns and looks at the Polack. "Now," he says.

Poleslawski gets up and lets two go, and gets down so quick you couldn't believe it. A gun begins to chatter loudly; then the ground rocks, my eardrums feel like they're busting, and things begin to go up in the air and come down. I see a palm tree fall.

And then—well, things went too fast for me, like in one of them speeded-up films. I'm running through the sand, falling down, getting up again; and a machine-gun is going off in my face, it seems like, and a nasty-looking little yellow guy is jabbing at me with a bayonet, and I jab back and it's bingo, and I can't believe it he falls so easy.

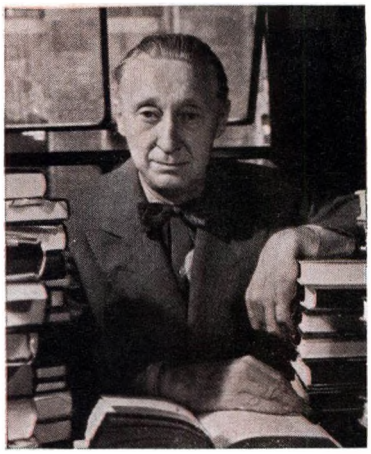
And I see the Polack yelling and waving his arms like he's crazy, and grinning like a cat who's still got nine lives; and some way Baldy's lost his helmet and his varnished-looking round head is shining in the sun, and he's swinging the butt of his gun up like we was taught at the base, and I see a Jap go down from a hardwood uppercut—and there's the Captain firing his automatic and wading in like he's done it all his life, and the next thing I know, the Japanese nest is wiped out and the rest of the boys are charging off through the grove—cheering; and then all of a sudden it's quiet around us, and I can even hear some insects chirping.

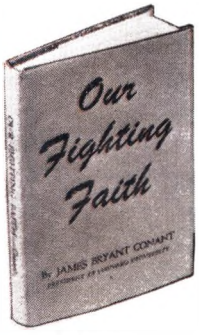
The Polack comes over and puts his arm around me, and grins and hugs me; and Baldy, throwing a cagey eye along the brush around us—just out of habit, because he's one wary guy—wipes the sweat out of his eyes and smiles like a kid on Christmas morning. And the Captain stands there holding his side and smiling.

"Nice work, boys," he says. "Fine work."

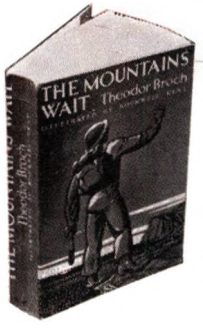
And suddenly I love everybody—even big handsome swell-headed Poleslawski—even the Captain with all his dough and education. *I love everybody.*

BOOK SUGGESTIONS for MARCH by HARRY HANSEN

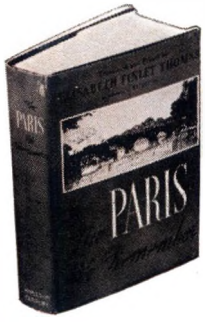




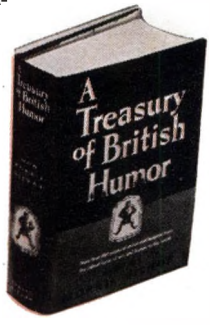
"Our Fighting Faith" is a little book of five addresses in which James Bryant Conant, president of Harvard University, calls on the young men to seek out and defend the positive virtues in American life. To protect our freedom, equality of opportunity must be cherished.



Theodor Broch, the calm and resourceful Norwegian mayor of Narvik, has written an eloquent and inspiring book about the struggles of his people against the Nazi invader, in "The Mountains Wait," one of the truly fine books about the war. The illustrations are by Rockwell Kent.



Paris as it appeared through the centuries to its poets and novelists, described by Balzac, Flaubert, Victor Hugo, André Maurois and dozens of others; the Paris in which Thackeray ate bouillabaisse, Mark Twain saw the Emperor Louis Napoleon, and Dorothy Thompson watched the men leaving for war, lives again in "The Paris We Remember." Elisabeth Finley Thomas has presented extracts from their writings in a new translation, and Elliot Paul gives it his approval in an introduction. A book to refresh our memories and make us confident that France will rise again.



"A Treasury of British Humor," prepared by Morris Bishop, gives enough extracts from favorite writers, old and new, to make it a welcome guest. No book can give a complete cross-section of British humor, but eight hundred pages provide an excellent sample-case.

"Our Fighting Faith," by James Bryant Conant. Harvard University Press, $1.25.

"The Mountains Wait," by Theodor Broch. Webb Book Publishing Co., $3.

"The Paris We Remember," edited by Elisabeth Finley Thomas. D. Appleton-Century Co., $3.

"A Treasury of British Humor," edited by Morris Bishop. Coward-McCann, $3.

This noted critic will briefly review in each issue the recently published books he deems the most interesting.

My Man,

BY JOSEPH HARRINGTON
ILLUS. BY HANK BERGER

"Hamburger," I said firmly, heading for the door. Sing got there first. As he bowed me out, "Make duck very good," he urged placidly. "Hamburger!" I ordered, and shot away before he could get in another word.

I DIDN'T really hire Sing. I didn't expect to hire any Chinese servant, for that matter. I didn't need one, didn't want one, couldn't afford one. Sing was a complete surprise to me.

I was pressing my ivory satin evening gown (two years old, my only one, and marked "*Shopworn—$19.98*" when I got it, but really sweet), when the telephone rang.

"June, dear!" It was Millie Heaston, gushing as usual, dramatic as usual. "I've solved your servant problem!"

That was Millie Heaston for you. Me, June Lacrey, secretary, thirty-two-dollars and fifty cents a week salary, eighteen more weeks before that new divan was all mine—me, with a servant problem! That's what came of mentioning to Millie that the colored girl who put in five hours a week, tidying up my apartment at fifty cents an hour, had up and married.

You'd never dream it to see her now, but Millie used to punch the typewriter beside mine in Kleinhoffer's Department Store. She decorated it handsomely, too. She had long, beautiful legs, the poise of a duchess, dreamy eyes and a mile-long string of beaux. She leaned slightly away from the brainy side. Her typing was a crime, and her notes—well, I had to transcribe them, because Millie by some quirk never could read her own pothooks. I didn't mind a bit doing her work, since as everyone knows, the earnest, hard worker is always rewarded at the end, while the business girl who depends on beautiful legs loses her job. Millie lost hers by marrying young Ferdinand Heaston, who owns plenty of real estate, and shortly thereafter I got a two-dollar-and-a-half raise. See, children, how industry pays?

Sing

The story of a working-girl who could afford but the bare necessities of life and a superbly wise Chinese butler who was adamant in his belief that a "charge account" is just another way of saying, "You don't have to pay for it."

Anyway, Millie didn't forget me after she became "that drenchingly beautiful and clever young hostess" in somebody's society column. She often had me to the Heaston house for tea, and talked about horses, yachts, swimming-pools, Mrs. Van Whatsername—and of course the critical servant problem. This day she was talking on the phone. She said she always wanted to see me because, June dear, she'd never, never forget the time I loaned her my two-dollar pair of silk stockings, that being the very day Ferd spoke to her for the first time. She was quite sentimental, she said, about those stockings.

"So kind of you, Millie!" I jeered.

"I'm sending him right over. You'll adore him!"

I said: "Whoa, Sis! Whoa! Who's 'him'? And what am I going to pay him off with—cigarette coupons?"

"Sing," she said. "A positive jewel, June dear! He's perfect. He'll do everything for you. He—"

That last, about doing everything for me, should have tipped me off. But it didn't. Not that I didn't grasp that Sing had some slight defect—perhaps a touch of leprosy—if Millie, with her servant woes, was trying to shove him off on me.

"Also," I said, "has it occurred to you, Millie, that we'd be slightly cramped in this two-and-one-eighth-room apartment? Not to mention it being slightly unconventional to have him share it with me?"

Millie said: "Oh, don't worry about that, June. He's seventy, at least. Why, I believe he was in the San Francisco earthquake. He's as old as the hills—I mean, dear, he's quite, quite old, and there'd be no question as to conventionality. As to the room, he'll sleep anywhere. The sofa in your living-room, say. And can he cook—"

There was no stopping Millie. She burbled on. To hear her tell it, Sing was the original for Aladdin's genie. Escoffier would have been honored to be his kitchen-boy; he was as faithful as Crusoe's *Friday,* as neat as a pin.

As for his salary, it was this way: She insisted—oh, but absolutely—that she would pay most of his salary the first month, the difference between what I paid my ex-maid and Sing's salary.

"But—" I said.

Millie galloped verbally onward, riding over me.

There was nothing I could do but hang on and listen. I had to listen to the glories of Sing sung and resung, until it was perfectly clear that a whole crowd of colored gentlemen were in the woodpile.

"Why don't you fire him?" I got in bluntly, during a brief pause for breath (Millie's). Oh, Millie wouldn't think of letting a jewel like him go. It also seems Sing was fireproof. Old Mrs. Heaston, whose personal jewel he had been for forty years, until her recent death, had made that clear—Sing was always to be taken care of. Also, Sing had led a peculiarly sheltered life.

"In many ways," said Millie, "he's like a child. Doesn't understand money, and for all the years he's been here, he hardly knows more than fifty words of English. But June dear, he's simply—"

I hung on. She would have to run out of breath sometime, I knew. And that would be my chance. I would say "No!" flatly, finally, and irrevocably and hang up. Of all the impossible, silly notions that ever crept into Millie's head, this one took the prize. "No!" I'd shout firmly. "Absolutely not! Good-by!"

Finally I had to break in. "Millie . . . Millie! Wait a minute! The doorbell's ringing, and I'm not decent."

"Oh—that's probably him now. Well, good-by, June, I'll be back from Sun Valley in two weeks. On the sixth. My! I'm late now for the train. 'By, dear."

"Wait! What's that you said?"

But Millie's receiver clicked firmly.

The doorbell rang again, while I was getting into a robe, while I was thinking: "Pulling a fast one, eh, my dear? Well, you'll have to be faster than that. I'll send your heirloom packing back so fast. . . . I'm coming!"

I wrenched open the door, thinking that I'd say my piece, shortly, brutally, and send him on his way.

"I—" I started and stopped. Sing rather took my breath away. I was looking for a wizened, forlorn little Chinese of seventy, in a coolie coat. Sing didn't look seventy. Or sixty. Or even fifty-five. He looked peculiarly ageless; if I had to guess his age, I'd have said forty to fifty. He was small, almost tiny. When he took off his hat—a very good hat—I saw he had hair as glossily black as polished teak. Later I was to discover that his greatest extravagance were pomades, hair-dyes, shampoos, rinses and whatnots; his collection of hair-rejuvenating junk would have swamped my dressing-table. No signs of leprosy were visible.

He wore a dark suit that might have been made to his order by a custom tailor. It was. His shoes were as sleek as his hair.

His eyes, behind a pair of horn-rimmed glasses, were the most placid black pools I'd ever seen. Placid was the word, too, for that ageless yellow face.

"Miss June?" he asked. "Me Sing."

I found myself saying, "How do you do?" and before I was through, he had picked up his yellow pigskin traveling-bag, and marched in.

I pulled myself together. This was just too, too impossible. I said: "I'm afraid there's a mistake, Sing. You'd better go back."

He said placidly: "No mistake. You Miss June. Me Sing. No mistake."

He had found a closet and was stowing his bag.

I said, firmly: "There has been a mistake. You go back to Mrs. Heaston."

"Mrs. Heaston gone away." Then he sniffed. "Iron," he said, and marched out to the kitchen, with me at his heels.

He saw my half-ironed dress. "Sing finish."

And, if you please, he shut the door in my face. My own kitchen door.

I retired to my bedroom to think this over. I couldn't think too clearly. I picked

up the telephone and called Millie's number. No answer. That's what I expected. I got grim. I decided I'd march back to the kitchen and say, very, very firmly this time: "Sing, you've got to go. I'm sorry." And if he didn't go, I'd— Well, just what would I do? Call the cops and say I didn't want a Chinese servant? Sounded sort of silly. I could push him out the door. But did Sing push easily?

There was a gentle rap on the door. "Come in," I said, and Sing came in with my finished dress. He'd found time to slip on a white jacket, and looked very—well, like a jewel of a servant. Some day, if I became rich, I'd have a servant like Sing, I decided. But not now—not in a two-room-and-cubbyhole apartment.

"You go out?" he inquired, beaming at me.

"I go out," I said. "You see, Sing, there's no place here for you to sleep. That's why I can't have you. So—"

"Sofa okay," he said placidly, and withdrew.

So I got dressed. All right, I'll confess I hung my robe over the keyhole, and I feel pretty silly about it now. But remember, I'm June Lacrey, thirty-two-fifty a week, secretary. All I knew about Oriental houseboys was what I saw in the movies. And there they were always in the pay of a low villain, usually occupied in setting a table, complete with silver champagne bucket and chafing dish, accouterments which the villain hoped to employ in perpetrating his wicked designs on the heroine. Having set this seductive stage, they—Oriental houseboys in movies—withdrew with knowing leers.

I finished dressing in a spurt of speed, after suddenly discovering that it was a quarter of eight and my date with Earl Gayford was eight o'clock.

I dashed out of the bedroom and headed for the door. For all my speed, Sing got there first and opened it for me, and bowed me out as though I was Lady Whatsername. How he did it, with his old bones, I don't know, but he did.

"Miss June back late?"

"Very late," I flung over my shoulder.

DOWNSTAIRS, I got a taxi. It would set me back at least fifty cents, but Earl had been known to walk out on a late date. Very independent, Earl.

In the taxi, I got a shock. It suddenly occurred to me that, coming home late, I would have to walk through the living-room to get to my bedroom. And the living-room was Sing's bedroom. And while I wasn't exactly convent-bred or delicately shielded from the facts of life throughout my twenty-three years, the idea of walking through a gentleman's bedroom, at midnight, while the gentleman is abed—well, it was the sort of thing I'd consider a prize-winner in a Most Embarrassing Moment contest, $2 for all accepted Moments.

It weighed on my mind and made me absent-minded through dinner with Earl. Earl didn't notice at first. With Earl, it isn't necessary to be on your mental toes. He provides all the necessary conversation. All you have to do is to say, "Really!" and "Wonderful!" and "No!" occasionally.

If, from the above, you jump to the hasty conclusion that I'm not in love with Earl, you have jumped with unerring precision. There's nothing wrong with Earl, really. He's good-looking in a tall, shouldery, slim-hipped way, and thoroughly aware of it. He drives a cream convertible that simply floats.

He has one artistic accomplishment—the ordering of dinner. He does a magnificently thorough job of it. Each morsel is closely examined as to its origin and pedigree. I've heard him cross-examine a head-waiter until the steak he was contemplating—and later rejected—was traced back to the Chicago stockyards. The result is a dinner that carries me easily through three days of ham sandwiches and malteds.

The only trouble with Earl is that he's like the man who sits next to you in the subway. He's not interested in you or *vice versa*. When it comes your stop, or his, you separate without a backward glance.

That's why I was a little surprised when he leaned across the table and said: "What's wrong, dear?"

I blinked away the thoughts of Sing—and how I'd get past his couch in ladylike fashion—and said: "What?"

He said: "You're worried. I've never seen you so thoughtful. Anything I can do to help?"

I gave what was meant to be a light laugh. "Oh—just the—servant problem."

He looked startled. "Servant problem?" He frowned as though trying to place me. Maybe he was, since he rotates a wide circle of girls. "I didn't think you business girls had servant problems."

When I tried to explain, Earl obviously misunderstood my mumblings about an "old family retainer" and "don't need him any more."

Because he said, brightly: "Oh, that's very simple. We've had the same problem, Dad and I. We simply pension 'em off. Give 'em, say, a hundred a month and let them live as they please."

I choked a bit over my pheasant. Imagine me retiring anybody on a hundred a month! I murmured that wasn't exactly the problem. My man, I said, just wouldn't go.

Earl nodded sympathetically. "I know. It's defense mechanism—they hate to admit they're no good any more." I needed sympathy, but not for the reason he thought. For once I ate one of Earl Gayford's wonderful dinners without savoring a mouthful, thinking only of that Embarrassing Moment to come.

It occurred to me that if I got home early enough, the Moment might be avoided. But there was no hurrying Earl. He dawdled over dinner, danced and talked—oh, but endlessly talked—about the Gayford servants, from his baby nurse and his English governess, down to the current valet and the butler. He gave me the Gayford recipe for Getting Along with Servants.

"The trick," he said, "is never to invade their personal lives and never let them step into yours." He said it while I was looking over his shoulder at the clock—eleven-twenty already—and hoping Sing was a late sitter-up.

Me, I murmured occasionally, "That's a wonderful thought!" and didn't even think it funny—the suggestion that Sing and I, in the two-and-one-eighth-room apartment, stay strictly out of each other's lives. And every ten minutes, I murmured it was getting late, wasn't it?

For all my constant agitation for an early parting, it was well after midnight before the cream convertible floated up to the door of my apartment-house and discharged me, with another batch of free advice on the servant problem.

Upstairs, I got out my latchkey, debating whether to close my eyes and tiptoe past Sing's couch or carry the thing off with open-eyed *sang-froid*. A waste of debate, that. For as soon as my key touched the latch, the door flew open and Sing bowed me in. Sing, completely dressed to his white jacket, horn-rimmed glasses and placidity.

I said: "Oh!" Sing said: "Evening, Miss June." As I marched by, I saw his couch all spread, averted my eyes and dashed into my bedroom, saying: "'Night."

"Breakfast what time, Miss June?" Sing called.

"Don't bother," I called back through the door. "I always stop at the drug-store."

"What time Miss June get up?" he persisted.

"Seven A. M.," I said. "Good night."

I WOKE with the fragrance of coffee tickling my nose. When I walked out, the table was spread, the little electric percolator was bubbling away, and Sing was doing things in the kitchenette. There was a glass of orange juice in a cereal bowl filled with cracked ice. I was just reaching for the coffee when Sing came out with a platter of bacon and eggs.

I said: "Oh, no, Sing. Orange juice and coffee has been my breakfast for years. It's plenty."

He said. "Bacon, eggs," placidly.

I ate them. Sing's placidity had a peculiar firmness underneath.

"Dinner?" asked Sing, as I was leaving. "Tonight?"

"Might as well," I said. I took a dollar out of my purse and said: "Here, get a pound of chopped round steak and some frozen peas."

Sing took it. "Make duck very good," he said.

I decided the time had come to assert myself. After all, he'd decided what I'd have for breakfast.

"Hamburger," I said firmly, heading for the door.

Sing got there first. As he bowed me out, "Make duck very good," he urged placidly.

"Hamburger!" I ordered, and shot away before he could get in another word.

Riding downtown, it occurred to me that Sing must have bought those eggs and the bacon out of his own pocket the night before. My refrigerator sported no such provender. Nice of him, I thought, but I made a mental note to tell him to stop doing that sort of thing. After all, I had something to say about my own house—or so I thought at the time.

In the afternoon Earl Gayford called me up. That was a shock in itself. Ordinarily, Earl waits a careful ten days or two weeks between calls, so as not to give any girl the foolish notion that he's got a crush on her.

"Found myself thinking all day about you and your problem," he stated. "Are you going to take my advice?"

"No go?" I asked. And Earl snapped, "You know darn' well no go! You probably had it all fixed up to have him turn me down. Well, now you have had your laugh!" He snatched up his hat and stamped out.

I said, "I'm thinking it over," groping frantically in my memory. Oh, yes! Toss the unwanted servant a hundred a month and let him go his own way!

"Suppose we get together over dinner tonight and give it some more thought," he said.

I couldn't have been more surprised if he'd proposed. Dinner—on two successive nights? Breath-taking!

"Well," I said. "Well—" and had an inspiration which I didn't stop to think out clearly. "Why don't you have dinner at my place?" Then I remembered the hamburger. "If," I added hastily, "you don't mind hamburger."

He said: "Fine!"

"You'll see how the other half lives," I promised.

"Oh, sure," he said scoffingly.

After he had hung up, I called my apartment. Sing's voice: "Miss Lacre' residence." Very ritzy, it sounded.

"Sing," I said, "this is Miss Lacrey."

"Yes, Miss June."

"We're having a guest for dinner. So get a pound and a half of hamburger instead. Dinner at seven. Understand?"

"Okay, Miss June. Make duck very good."

"Hamburger!" I shouted. "Understand?"

Placidly: "Make duck very good."

EARL picked me up at six-thirty at Kleinhoffers' and drove me home. Floating along in that cream convertible, he said: "I must warn you, you're not going to surprise me a bit tonight. I know all that stuff about promising hamburger, and delivering lobster. Tell me, why do you girls have to put on the modest act that way?"

"You'll get hamburger tonight," I promised grimly. On that dollar I left behind, Sing couldn't possibly conjure up a duck. I was very sure of that—and very wrong.

When Sing opened the door for us, black hair shining with its pomade, eyes glowing with placid welcome, "That," said Earl, sniffing, "smells like no hamburger that I know." He took the words right out of my head. The gentle fragrance in my living-room was exceedingly ducky.

I gritted my teeth and glared at Sing. He beamed. *(Please turn to page 88)*

REDBOOK'S NOVELETTE OF THE MONTH

Serenade to

THIS story that I am going to write about Hollywood is half true. I could easily make it all true; but then you wouldn't believe it.

The Hollywood I write of is not exactly a city. It is a corrosive mood shared by some ten thousand people who are not exactly people. They are a sort of cross between elves and caliphs. Some of them are quite mad, and if they ever left Hollywood and went some place else to live, they would be clapped into a bughouse immediately. Some of them are brilliant and have magic minds. And some of them are so stupid that you wonder how they can keep alive from day to day.

These are often the most powerful figures in Hollywood.

But I don't want to be unfair, entirely. There are many powerful figures who are men of charm and vast talent. Yet somehow when I think of power in Hollywood, these worthy and pleasing Pharaohs escape me, and I see instead such bubble-headed, majestic ciphers as Jerome B. Cobley. Mr. Cobley is the villain or hero of my story—you will have to figure out which for yourself. I am too full of prejudice on the subject to be trusted.

The mood that the ten thousand people of Hollywood share (I will come to Mr. Cobley soon), is a devastating one. It is a twenty-four-hour-a-day desire to become known—and to remain known. The first half of this desire is easier to achieve than the second. There are a number of reasons for this, but I will touch on only a few: If there were no turnover of Fame, Hollywood would eventually become so full of famous people that nobody could get a seat in a restaurant. In Hollywood the restaurateurs always give celebrities first claim on all the seats. As it is, you will see uncelebrated people eating standing up at the bars or in the vestibules. And too, if not for the turnover of Fame, there would not be any room in the soldier canteens for any soldiers.

Another contributing factor to the constant uncrowning of kings and delaurelizing of geniuses is that the one thing famous people do not like is other famous people. This is, of course, true everywhere. But in Hollywood it becomes a sort of Civil War.

Civil War does not quite describe it. It suggests courageous hostilities. The situation is more like a bandwagon plunging through Siberian snows. On this bandwagon, Celebrity and Genius cuddle and coo and, at intervals, throw each other to the wolves.

Fame, in short, is the god of Hollywood. All the other gods come in a bad second.

To the god Fame, all men of power, brilliant or inane, bend their knee—not forever, but for as long as it lasts.

As my friend Vladimir Fantikoff observed, the bended knee is in excellent kicking position.

I once asked Fantikoff: "What would you call yourself—a writer, director, idea man, producer or what?"

"None of these things," Fantikoff answered. "They would neither describe nor please me. I prefer to be known simply as an enemy of Hollywood. That is enough fame for me."

Hollywood has two kinds of enemies within its gates—a raging tribe of geniuses who can't get into the movies, and another raging tribe of geniuses who can't get out of them. My friend Fantikoff belonged to the first of these embittered groups. This group consists mainly of foreigners who have brought to our country an unsalable but superior understanding of literature, drama and acting, which they refuse bitterly to relinquish. As Fantikoff put it: "We are not content for the movies to remain as they are—a Stradivarius in the hands of a gorilla."

This is one reason why there are so many oafish and stupid people running the movie studios. Because if there were not, all these lovers of finer things would get jobs and soon bankrupt the industry. For as everyone knows who has had any experience marketing films, the great Masses who go to the movies do not care so very much for the finer things. Indeed, there is a sort of mystic pact between Hollywood and the Masses that if they want to get a headache looking at or listening to art, they will go to a museum or a concert. Whenever Hollywood betrays this pact, there is great rejoicing by the critics. The Masses, however, do not get excited at all. They stay at home and sulk.

MY friend Fantikoff's superior ideas were not the only matter that kept him unemployed. He was under a double blackball from the studios. He was not only a genius but also a Russian. And not one of the "nice" Russians who had escaped from their ruined country hand in hand with the Grand Dukes. He belonged, alas, to that ominous group of Russian *émigrés* who had never owned stables of horses or swooned in the stalls of those who did. And if the Hollywood of 1936 could be said to have any religion other than Fame, it was despising Russian Communists. I don't know why this is—or maybe I do; but in any case, I won't go into it.

My first meeting with Fantikoff took place in a drug-store where he was having

a Nickel

BY BEN HECHT
ILLUSTRATED BY GEOFFREY BIGGS

Bramel and Fantikoff spent days in debate over a single line of dialogue. And when each scene was finally done, Eleanora acted out each sigh and syllable for the unit.

his dinner at the counter. I saw a lanky man of forty-five with twinkling eyes and a mop of blondish hair that grew in a circle on his head and made him seem to be wearing a small hooked rug.

He recognized me and introduced himself. He was, he said, a close follower of my writings and would consider it an honor were I to give him a few minutes of my extremely valuable time.

"I am the cinema correspondent of the Moscow *Art and Labor Gazette,* published weekly in Moscow, you understand; and I have written about you some very interesting things. Not just superficial, but something under the surface. Would you care to hear them?"

Lured by the prospect of an admiring critic, I followed Fantikoff to the flimsy hotel in which he lived. We entered a littered room, and with the eagerness of true authorship, he pulled a huge scrapbook from under his unmade bed. For the next hour I sat listening to my host translate his dispatches to the Moscow *Art and Labor Gazette.*

I HAVE always found adverse criticism fascinating. One toils like a beaver and with the single aim of charming and diverting an audience. After which, as often as not, one finds himself suddenly the butt of such wholesale insult and malice as are seldom inspired by even kidnaping or black magic. No crime is received with such whoops of rage as that of the eager writer who has failed to please.

I said nothing of this to Fantikoff, for I have long ago learned there is no profit in debating with critics. Their criticism is like an itch. The more you scratch it, the more inflamed it becomes.

I will skip over my host's references to me. I was, happily, one of Fantikoff's minor irritations. In fact, in one outburst my critic even credited me with writing badly out of a contempt for Hollywood.

"You see," said Fantikoff, beaming at me, "I understand you. I do not stay on the surface."

"Go on reading," I said.

"Thank you," said Fantikoff, and continued his opinions of my co-workers and their produce.

It was pure savagery. I was not entirely displeased. It is sometimes refreshing to hear idols smashed and fame ravaged. One gets to feeling a little crippled by all the greatness in one's own field. Fantikoff had made plenty of *Lebensraum* for his ego.

Week after week, in communiqués running to ten thousand words apiece, Fantikoff had wiped out battalions of geniuses (the employed ones). His scorn, his fury, did not stop with actors who could not act, directors who knew less than jellyfish about directing, and writers who were too busy licking the hand of Mammon to concern themselves with even the pretence of art. He went beyond these to the Pharaohs.

There was one passage that particularly appealed to me.

"'The great crimes of Hollywood,'" Fantikoff read, "'are not committed by

the terrified and overpaid slaves of the industry. They are the work of such men as Jerome B. Cobley, head of the powerful Empyrean Studios. Jerome B. Cobley is the man who says "There shall be no light." He is the great and glittering *golem* who orders throughout his empire daily the assassination of ideas and the massacre of beauty.'"

But there is no idol-smasher who does not finally come upon an altar to worship. In the second hour of listening, I discovered that Fantikoff had come upon two of them.

Lubitsch, Sullavan, Garbo, Gable, Fleming, Colbert, Oberon, Grable, Zanuck, Boyer, Goldwyn, Selznick, McCarey, Capra, Crawford, Shearer, Wanger, Cooper, Davis, Dunne, Dietrich—these were to him all tinseled nobodies. Eleanora Yerry and Wilson Bramel alone, in all the wasteland of Hollywood, were worthy of praise. And Fantikoff's praise was truly that of a parched desert wanderer come upon a life-giving spring. I interrupted his second communiqué on the genius of Yerry and Bramel.

"Do you mind a question?" I asked.

"Not in the least," he answered.

I asked him if there were really two people called Yerry and Bramel.

"What do you mean?" he stared. "I have just read you how glorious is Miss Yerry and how brilliant Mr. Bramel is. I am sorry you were not listening."

"I was listening," I said. "I'm asking you, because I've never heard of these two people before. I can understand living in Hollywood and not hearing of a poet or a philosopher. But to live here and not know of the existence of the greatest movie actress and the most brilliant cinema dramatist of my time is something else. What's more, I've never heard of a movie called 'Basement Souls.'" (This was the opus in which Yerry and Bramel had distinguished themselves.)

Fantikoff smiled patiently.

"Your not knowing of these matters," he said, "is part of the powerful Hollywood conspiracy against art. Let me assure you, however, that all Russia knows them."

"Possibly," I said; "but you haven't really answered me. Do they exist, was what I asked."

"My dear sir," said Fantikoff, "I can well understand your refusal to believe that true talent exists in Hollywood. But I assure you, it does! And how!"

"Damn it, Fantikoff," I said, "even if I didn't see 'Basement Souls,' I would have heard of it if it were a tenth as remarkable as you say."

"No," said Fantikoff. "You would not. Because it was never released. I am one of four people who saw it."

"Shelved?" I asked.

"By the censors," said Fantikoff. "The sole thing of beauty ever made in this capital, crushed by the bourgeois censors. Sit still, please. I will be back in a minute."

My host left the room and I sat alone, pondering on the aberrations of critics. The door opened again, and Fantikoff was back with two guests. I saw a girl of twenty with a thin, pale face and a childlike body, and I wondered at my first look whether she was beautiful or merely aglow with the pangs of malnutrition. The other guest was an unshaven young man with a glower. I was introduced to Eleanora Yerry and Wilson Bramel.

Two such waifs I had never before encountered, even in Hollywood. Fantikoff's new Duse—"the greatest actress ever to come to the American screen"—sat like a bump on a log, a sad little bump, and tried not to die of embarrassment as our host analyzed her genius. And Bramel, the Gorky of the screen, seemed similarly occupied. Only, Gorky frowned and glowered and kept his eyes averted. Whereas Duse managed now and then to open her large dark eyes and smile. Her face became at such moments as appealing as a hungry child's.

"For one year and a half," said Fantikoff, "not a single job of any nature has been offered this *artiste*. Nothing. A boycott. As for Wilson, it is even more so with him. But less important. You see, for the true writer, oblivion does not matter. In oblivion he may still write. The actress, however, what can she do in oblivion? Consider that."

"Nothing," I said.

"Exactly," said Fantikoff. "Nothing. Unless you choose to call suffering a career."

I left the flimsy hotel wondering what I could do to further the fortunes of Yerry and Bramel. The frayed little sweater and the carefully darned stockings of "Hollywood's greatest actress" stayed in my mind. And the bitterness behind the shy young eyes of dramatist Bramel haunted me.

But I knew in advance the defeat that would attend any efforts in their favor. I had had experience with Yerrys and Bramels before. Nitwits and clapperskulls can be hoisted into the inner temple of the industry through back windows and trapdoors. There is, in fact, only one type of human for whom success in Hollywood is a lost cause. This is the poet with his eyes fastened darkly on the secrets of life. How good or bad his talents are makes no difference. They are not for filling movie theaters.

As for Eleanora Yerry—I ran through my mind looking for a single casting director, producer or studio official who would not be instantly repelled by her hungering little child's face. I could locate none. . . .

I was right. Two years of submitting dramatist Bramel's screen plays to everybody I knew who might buy them ended nowhere. Poor Wilson! The movie censorship code said that in a screen play right must always triumph, evil always be punished, valor always win, crime never pay, purity know no defeat and the good in heart inherit the earth as well as the heavens. Author Bramel saw life differently.

Fantikoff would not allow me to "corrupt" our protégé.

"He must not give in to the conspiracy of Hollywood," said Fantikoff. "Look—here I have written; it appears April 30 in the Moscow *Art and Labor Gazette*. Please."

And Fantikoff translated:

"'With all the world overrun by *Frankensteins*, Hollywood still lives by the code of the bourgeois *Cinderella*—all but one literary hero, Wilson Bramel. In a world engaged in blowing itself to pieces, Hollywood remains an oasis where Santa Claus sits making toys for children—or for childish minds. Wilson Bramel does not sit in this oasis.'"

And Fantikoff continued to read ecstatic criticisms of "The Cinder Patch" and "Beggars in Silks," two of author Bramel's scenarios that had been hurled back at me (and him) by every studio in town.

Eleanora's case was even more hopeless. For while I might get an occasional studio official, out of respect for my salary, to listen to the plot of an unemployed writer, my championing of Yerry but added another hazard to her course. The studios do not like to give jobs to anybody's sweetie. Eleanora was no sweetie of mine, but wondrously in love with the glowering Mr. Bramel. But you can't fool a studio official, from doorman to Pharaoh. As one Pharaoh, a nice one, explained to me: "If we took on this girl of yours, it would only mean we would have to take on everybody else's girls, including mine. And before you know it, the whole damn' studio would be nothing but a great big love-nest."

"Miss Yerry is no girl of mine," I said.

To this the Pharaoh replied coldly: "Well, if you're going to try pulling my leg, you're wasting your time and mine."

Why, then, with no such classic relation to Eleanora and no great wonder over the genius of Wilson, did I pursue jobs for them? Fantikoff is more than half the answer. Eleanora and Wilson were Youth beleaguered, and Art (of a sort) lying in the dust. I had known them before. In fact, I had been them. But Fantikoff was a new and refreshing friendship. I hunted him down as often as I could, and coaxed him into wider social circles. I dragged him into the homes of the stars and geniuses (employed ones), and on occasions he sat at the board of the Pharaohs.

"His wife Eleanora is working as a waitress. She has a baby and is not very well."

This increase of journalistic scope was immediately reflected in the Moscow *Art and Labor Gazette.* The Fantikoff communiqués, full of more intimate and exuberant calumnies, grew longer. Everything was dynamite that came to the Fantikoff mill.

A YEAR later, at the end of 1940, my Yerry-Bramel-Fantikoff campaign suddenly bore fruit. I was playing gin rummy with Jerome B. Cobley on a Sunday afternoon beside his swimming-pool.

"Who is that friend of yours?" Mr. Cobley asked me as I was dealing. "The one with the crazy haircut?"

"His name is Vovo Fantikoff," I said.

"What kind of a name is that?" Mr. Cobley inquired darkly. "Russian?"

"No," I said. "Czech. Czecho-Slovak."

"I like the Czechs," said Mr. Cobley. "They are fine people. So are the Greeks. I regard the Greeks and the Czechs as very worthy. They have fought very courageously and made the supreme sacrifice—and yet have not tried to drag us into their purely personal wars, as some other countries are trying to do. When I think of the traitors in our midst—men in high places, who are doing their best to get us into a war that don't concern us, my blood boils. If we're going to fight, we have only one enemy—Russia. Nobody else. Russia will have to be destroyed before civilization can flourish."

I am quoting Jerome B. Cobley, because I do not want to discuss him.

"You were asking about my friend Fantikoff," I said.

"You say he is not a Russian," Mr. Cobley frowned.

"A Czech," I repeated.

"That name—Fantikoff." Mr. Cobley pursed his lips in thought.

"An old Czech name," I said. "Goes back to the old Slavonian legends. There is even a street in Prague called Fantikoffsky Prospect."

"Is that so!" said the head of the Empyrean Studios, and returned to our game. He studied his cards a moment and then added in a low, amused voice: "I got rummy."

He laid down his hand, and I looked at it casually. One of his diamond sequences had a heart in it.

"I never saw anybody with your luck," I said. "You must have been born with a full set of silver spoons in your mouth."

"It's a little more than luck," said Mr. Cobley. "Send this fellow over to see me tomorrow. What is he, a writer?"

"He writes," I said, "but he's the finest producing brain I've met in town."

"That's much better," Mr. Cobley agreed. "I like a producer with a brain. I like only people with genius around me, as you know. They are easier for me to understand and get along with."

Fantikoff agreed to become a Czech —for a single interview. He was more nervous about another matter.

"What do I say when he asks me what sort of ideas I have?" he inquired with amazing sanity.

"He won't ask you," I said. "Just sit still and listen to him. And don't interrupt him, and you'll be hired."

"May I ask, as what?"

"As a producing genius," I said. "And then you can hire Wilson Bramel to write a movie for you, and Eleanora will star in it."

"My God!" said Fantikoff, and he looked at me as if I were the *Wizard of Oz*. . . .

Fantikoff listened for forty-five minutes to Jerome B. Cobley. He grew red in the face and his eyes snapped, but he kept his mouth shut. And Monday morning the Empyrean Studios rejoiced in the acquisition of a new producer.

Fantikoff's first action was to order the story department to engage Wilson Bramel. After a reasonable delay, our Gorky was finally landed on the pay-roll at $150 per week.

The next evening Fantikoff read me his communiqué to the Moscow *Art and Labor Gazette* before putting it in the mail. It was a solemn and chiseled piece of writing such as befits the reporting of a first magnitude event.

" 'Hollywood,' " wrote Fantikoff, " 'has taken its first step toward honor, decency and art. Jerome B. Cobley, head of the Empyrean Studios, and himself responsible, as I have often written, for the worst movies to come out of the Hollywood sausage-mill, is the man who has taken this step. Is this a paradox? No, it is evolution.

" 'The Empyrean Studios are finally going to produce a work of art from the gifted pen of America's leading dramatist, Wilson Bramel. In this epochal cinema there will be seen also the beauty and genius of America's greatest actress, Eleanora Yerry. Did I say evolution? Perhaps it is more. Revolution.' "

There was no mention of producer Fantikoff in the dispatch.

"It is psychology," he explained. "The first function of a journalist is to present the truth so that it will be believed, not doubted. That Jerome B. Cobley, the greatest Fascist in the cinema world, has engaged a Russian Communist to produce a picture under his banner—who is going to believe this?"

"You could explain about being a Czech," I said.

"The whole thing is too complicated," said Fantikoff, "for journalistic treatment. In a book, yes. I will write it in my definitive history of Hollywood."

"You write books?" I asked.

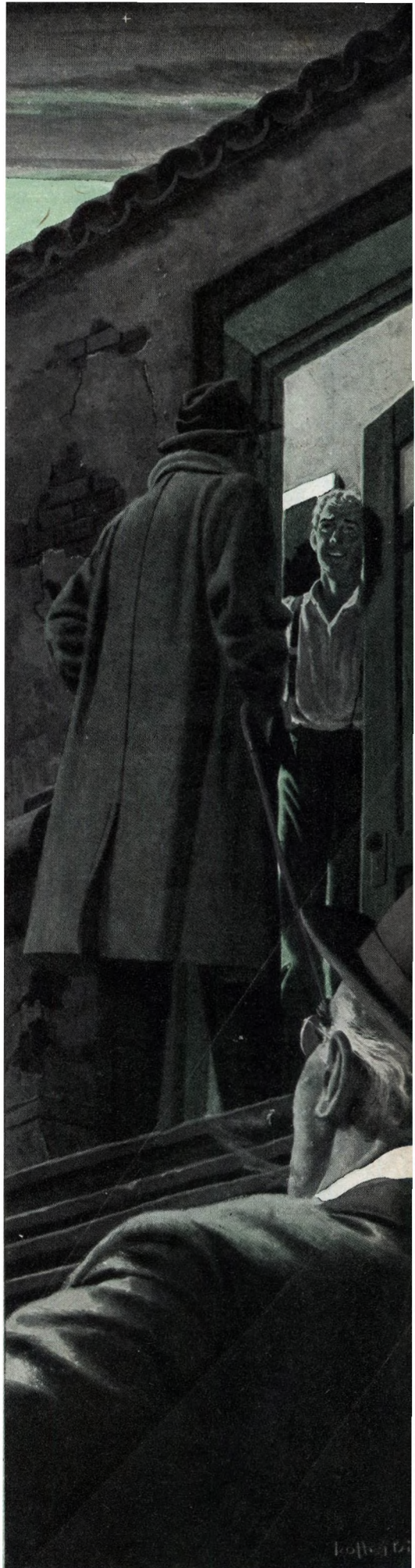
"I have written twenty-two books to date," said Fantikoff. "You look surprised I have not mentioned such a fact. My good friend, it is only natural of me not to speak of past achievement. The true Russian, the real Russian, lives in the future of his country."

"And what is the future of Russia?" I asked.

"To save the world," said Fantikoff.

IN my considerable spare time I acted as chaperon of the Fantikoff unit. After sitting in on several conferences between Fantikoff and Wilson Bramel on the nature of the screen play they were going to prepare for production, I sought out Mr. Cobley at one of the Friday Wizard Fests.

On Friday, all the guiding brains of Empyrean assemble under the scepter of Mr. Cobley. There are to be found on these occasions ten or twenty geniuses

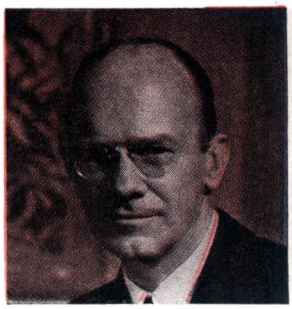


Fantikoff opened the door for us. . . . I left the others in our cars, and sat down with him.

REDBOOK'S RECORDS OF THE MONTH

Deems Taylor

suggests:



SERIOUS

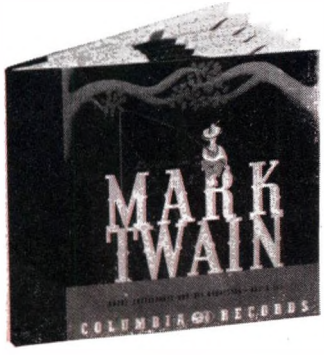
Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto, in G major, played by Artur Schnabel and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under Frederick Stock. *Victor Album M-930.*

A magnificent performance by all concerned. It's one of the last recordings made by Stock before his death last fall.

Samuel Barber: Adagio for Strings, played by the N.B.C. Symphony Orchestra under Arturo Toscanini. *Victor 11-8287.*

Typical Barber music: lucid, deeply felt without being maudlin, contemporary without being ultra-modern. Superbly played, of course.

POPULAR



Jerome Kern: "Mark Twain," a "musical portrait," played by André Kostelanetz' orchestra. *Columbia Album X-227.*

In this the composer of "Show Boat" shows that he can handle more ambitious forms than songs.

Bing Crosby sings "Moonlight Becomes You" and "Constantly" from the picture, "The Road to Morocco." *Decca 18513.*

The Old Master "gives out"—and I don't mean gives out.

Deems Taylor, one of America's leading composers and music critics, will select each month two or more records he believes our readers will enjoy playing.

who Have Done Wrong. Mr. Cobley is on hand to straighten them out.

Fantikoff had been summoned to make his début at this Friday auto-da-fé. I had intercepted the summons and destroyed it. I gained entrance as emissary of the Fantikoff unit—all writers are barred from these conclaves as being too low in the creative scale for any business contact with Mr. Cobley—and offered Fantikoff's apologies.

"He's a hermit type," I explained, "and can neither think nor talk when surrounded by people."

"I understand perfectly," Mr. Cobley nodded. "He's shy and all excited with ideas. A man like me is liable to frighten him and paralyze his creativeness."

"It wouldn't do any harm to have him up here once," said Kenneth Emmereth. Mr. Emmereth, in the days of the Great Foreign Grosses, was Mr. Cobley's ambassador to Europe.

"It might make him feel at home to speak Czech to somebody," he continued.

"I doubt it," I answered.

Mr. Cobley was on my side.

"I don't think it would be good policy," he said. "Leave it to me. I think I know how to get the maximum out of genius."

He beamed down the table.

"I want the word passed around," he continued, "that there is to be no interference with the Fanny unit—from anybody."

"Fanny" was the measure of Mr. Cobley's easy-going intimacy with genius. It is possible, too, that he was still a little skittish about the Russianness of his new producer's name.

"Tell Fanny to go ahead," he said to me, "and not to show me anything of any sort till he's given it all he's got. That's the time I can be most useful."

The sachems nodded.

"What story is he working on?" Mr. Emmereth asked.

"I said 'no interference,'" Mr. Cobley frowned.

"That's perfectly all right," I said, smiling at Mr. Emmereth. "The name of the story is 'Serenade to a Nickel.'"

Mr. Cobley's voice grew gentle as he repeated: "'Serenade to a Nickel.' Well, boys, there's a title that's full of imagination. It says things to me."

It should have. For "Serenade to a Nickel" was the story, thinly disguised, of none other than Jerome B. Cobley.

I tried during the first month to divert our Gorky's talents into other channels. But Fantikoff saw through me.

"You are afraid it will not be produced," he said. "My answer to you is simple. Better that a great work of Art is *not* produced, than that another piece of cinema garbage *is* produced."

I gave up literary debate and concerned myself with realities. At least my protégés were eating and thriving in the practice of their arts. I worked to prolong this period of charm and solvency by confusing the Fantikoff unit with suggestions and criticism that might delay the completion of "Serenade." I also supplied some Jerome B. Cobley anecdotes as raw material.

"I am *(Please turn to page 100)*

In the Minute Before It Would Strike

BY JOSEPH PRETTYMAN
ILLUS. BY JOHN HOLMGREN

"TWENTY minutes to midnight, sir."

"All right," said Davis. "I'm awake." And he slid out of his bunk. As a matter of fact, he hadn't been asleep at all; he'd been lying thinking about Stella Lopez. "I must be nuts," he told himself: here it was five days since they had left San Neria, and he still was mooning about that girl. Half-guiltily he glanced toward the framed photograph of Mary and the kids that was nailed up on the bulkhead. Then he started for the bridge to take the midnight watch.

When Davis came on to the bridge, Boyle, the third mate, began to josh him in his customary way. "Well," he said, "it's a nice clear night for tinfish, and hot as blazes too. I wish I was back at San Neria, don't you?"

Davis didn't answer but stared out of the bridge window to accustom his eyes to the darkness. It was a nice clear night as Boyle had said, too clear for comfort in these waters where German subs were thick as fleas. He could see the blacked-out shape of the tanker nearest the *Norlina* in the convoy, and beyond, the lower sleeker outline of one of the escorting Navy craft.

Either Boyle was squelched by Davis' not answering, or he was merely in a hurry to get off the bridge. In any case, he went through the routine of turning the watch over to him in a quiet and efficient way. "Well, O. K.," Davis said. "I'll take her." He heard Boyle's footsteps going down the ladder and along the deck, then settled down for the long four hours of his watch. But try as he might to keep alert, his thoughts kept straying back to Stella and San Neria.

They'd been in there about a week. On the way across the Gulf they'd run into a squall, and the *Norlina* had sprung some of her plates. The Captain had fumed and fretted at the delay, but there was no help for it. At first Davis had fretted too, but then he had met Stella . . .

He'd had supper at a little place with Boyle, then walked along with him to some bowling alleys. All four of the good new alleys had been taken up by sailors, but Davis was content to sit and wait awhile. A sudden impulse had made him turn his head to look out toward the street, and there he had seen Stella, standing in a group of native boys and girls. The bowling-alley lights had glowed like fire on her orange slack-suit and the single white hibiscus in her jet-black hair.

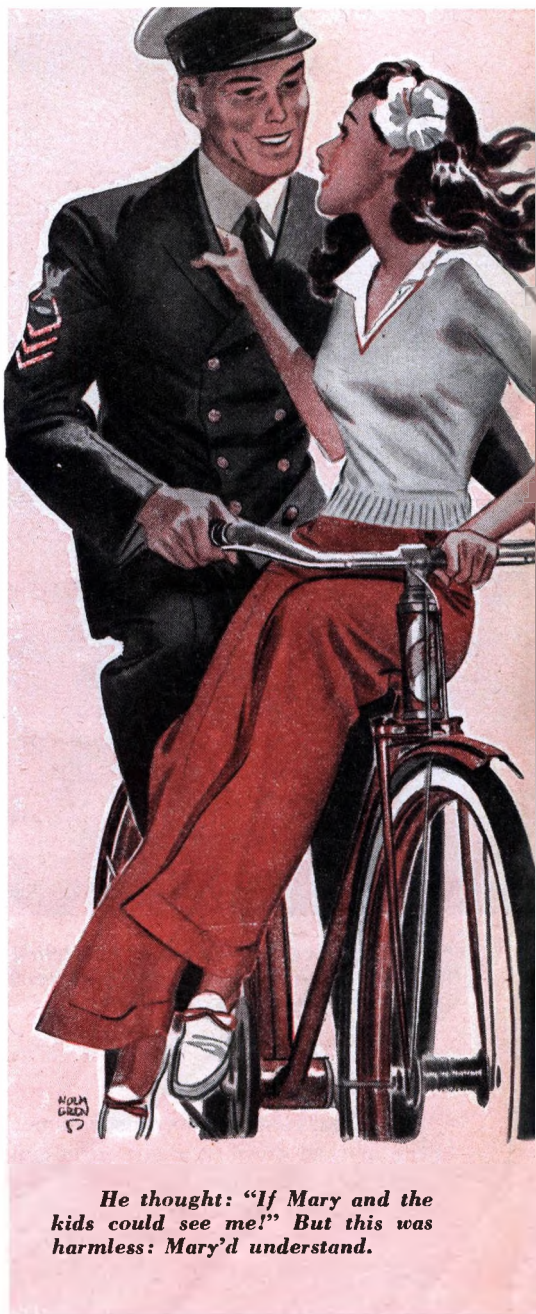
Boyle walked over to the group. "Hello," he said. "Remember me? I met you all last evening." He'd laughed and talked with them awhile, then beckoned to his shipmate. "Come on, Davis," he had said. "We're going to find a place to dance." And so it was that Davis somehow found himself upon a rented bicycle, with Stella Lopez riding sidewise on the bar before him, close inside the circle of his outstretched arms.

Along the blacked-out road he had pedaled, a little way behind the rest. They seemed fairly to fly along, with no sound but the singing of the tires on the road and the rattling of the palm-trees in the breeze. Sometimes he could smell the scent of Stella's white hibiscus; sometimes, when he leaned forward to pedal up a little grade, his chest would brush against her shoulders and his cheek be close to hers. Once he thought half-guiltily: "What if Mary and the kids could see me now!" But this was really harmless: Mary'd understand; she was always writing him to try to get some recreation when he got ashore.

By the time they arrived at the dance hall, he was feeling swell, and he kept feeling more and more so as the night progressed. Maybe it was the cocktails that they ordered, or the music and the crowd. The place was packed with Navy ensigns who kept asking Stella for a dance, but she always gravitated back to Davis when the music stopped. Pretty soon he himself was dancing with her, and with Lola, the girl who had come along with Boyle—he even joined a Conga chain; he totally forgot the old *Norlina* and the voyage to come.

FINALLY, when it was almost dawn, he'd pedaled Stella home. She slipped off from the bicycle. "Good night," she'd said. "I had a lovely time." Suddenly she bent and kissed him; then, giggling, she ran into the house.

After that, he went around a lot with her and Boyle and Lola. He couldn't tell her when they were going to sail, but she must have guessed it somehow. The last night, when he'd stopped beneath the sapodilla tree before her house, she suddenly had flung herself into his arms. Then he'd forgotten to be fatherly, and kissed her until he was breathing hard. And



He thought: "If Mary and the kids could see me!" But this was harmless: Mary'd understand.

—well, that was all there had been to it; but the fact remained that he'd been thinking of her ever since.

The zigzag clock rang: it was time to change the course—already the ship ahead of them *(Please turn to page 60)*

This is the fourteenth of a series of articles about those rare individuals who do the things that most of us can only dream of doing. Cornelia Otis Skinner, a woman of great charm and many talents, tells us what she thinks of Cornelia Otis Skinner.

Dream

Cornelia Otis Skinner says: "Acting is stimulating and exciting; it can be joyful, and it can be heart-breaking. But under no circumstances is it easy."

Otis Skinner and daughter during filming of "Information Please," when Miss Skinner was guest star.

Cornelia Otis Skinner as Anne of Cleves *in her solo drama "The Wives of Henry VIII."*

One blistering day last summer I was trying on an evening gown that had been marked down at a sale in one of those small bargain shops which wedge themselves in between the swanker establishments on Madison Avenue. I didn't need the dress particularly, but my morale was low; and whenever my morale sags, I find that the quickest if not the most admirable way of reviving it is to indulge in some form of personal and highly unnecessary extravagance.

The heat in the place was intense, and the fitting-rooms, which were about the size of telephone booths, were sweltering. What modesty I have—and it's negligible—I had thrown to the winds, which were also negligible; and clad in my slip I had stepped from my private bake-oven out into the main part of the shop.

The gown, a skin-tight affair, had to go on over the head, and after a contortionist-like struggle, I emerged to face in the mirror not quite the vision I had counted on to raise my morale. My lipstick had smeared; my hair was pulled down over my forehead in dank wisps; and all vestige of powder had been polished from my nose, which was sunburned and peeling. The fact that I was wearing an ancient pair of low-heeled black suède walking-shoes didn't do much to enhance the ensemble.

A woman customer waiting for her parcel stood watching me while I, trying to picture myself under more favorable conditions, postured and half pirouetted before my own reflection. Her steady gaze made me uneasy. Hers was the look of an F.B.I. agent about to make a kill. My uneasiness increased when, still studying me with apparent suspicion, she approached me and said:

"I beg your pardon."

Jobs

BY CORNELIA OTIS SKINNER

Miss Skinner as Catherine of Braganza *in her new solo drama "The Loves of Charles II."*

Cornelia Otis Skinner's father and her son Otis Skinner Blodget (Taken three years ago).

Cornelia Otis Skinner as she appeared in Scene II of "The Empress Eugenie" which she presented recently at the Lyceum Theater in New York.

Looking guilty, a thing I always do if anybody regards me with suspicion, I said, "Certainly." It seemed as apt a rejoinder as any.

"You must have wondered why I was staring at you," the woman went on, and I smiled feebly and lied: "Not at all."

"Has anyone ever told you, my dear," —and she had the look of someone announcing a surprise party,—"that you bear a most striking resemblance to Cornelia Otis Skinner?"

For a moment I thought she was pulling some sort of joke; then I realized she must have seen me only in the theater under the benign protection of soft lights and false eyelashes. The forlorn reflection from the mirror convinced me I was in complete disguise.

"Why, no," I said. Who was I to disillusion her and lose a cash customer?

"You've seen her, of course?" she asked.

"Only once," I replied. Then for some curious reason added: "In Toledo."

THE woman's next remark was even more surprising. "I'd rather be her than anyone I know."

"For heaven's sake, *why?*" I couldn't help gasping. It was clear by now the creature must be unbalanced.

"Think of all the happy, happy jobs she has!" Not wanting to, particularly, I didn't; but she went on: "She acts; she writes; she travels all over the country; she talks on the radio; she has a family. And it's all so easy for her! She leads a charmed life." And before I had time to say, "Oh, yeah!" she trotted away.

I shed the evening dress in the manner of a snake shedding its skin, paid for it, gathered in the bundle and boarded a bus bound for the Pennsylvania Station. On the way I mused about my happy, happy jobs and my charmed life. It was quite true, I thought, that I did all the things this un- *(Please turn to page 93)*

The Case of

BY RUFUS KING
ILLUS. BY W. BAUMHOFER

The Story Thus Far:

"MISS LEDRICK," said her employer, the famous photographer Fanny Mistral, (Inc.), "you are leaving for Haslow's Black Tor at three this afternoon from the airport. A Haslow plane will take you. They have their own landing-field on the grounds—which are, incidentally, four thousand acres in the heart of the Adirondacks. You will take a lot of pretty pictures of Estelle Haslow's beloved ocelots. There are three of the brutes, and she obviously adores them, because she evacuated them with her from Paris about a year ago. Miss Haslow specified, when she telephoned, that you be sent. Her cousin remembered your shot of the Manx in the prize exhibit."

Ann Ledrick dealt with a phone-call from Bill Redfort, who had just been accepted for the Marines and who insisted they were going to be married when he returned on furlough next Friday. Then she set out for this mysterious Adirondack estate, and found it even more strange and magnificent than she had expected, with a staff of servants and a huge hothouse complete with small trees of their native Paraguay, for the three ocelots.

Mr. Haslow—kind and elderly—was evidently ill. He introduced Ann to the mistress of the ocelots—"My cousin Estelle. You'll find that her bombazine exterior really shelters the soul of a *femme fatale.*"

At dinner there was another house guest, one Ludwig Cadbry, a middle-aged man who questioned Ann curiously as if to test her acquaintance with Boston people. Later Estelle accompanied Ann to her room, and in the course of a long talk asked her:

"Tell me, have your twenty-two years been happy ones?"

"Very happy," Ann answered. "Naturally there has been some lonesomeness since Father died last year. Mother died quite a while ago."

It was after Estelle had gone that Bill Redfort telephoned and protested:

"I don't like your being up there. Haslow is dangerous. He's been off his nut ever since his son knifed his wife twenty years ago. I don't mean Haslow's wife—*she* was dead. The son killed his own wife, and was electrocuted for it. Haslow always believed in his son's innocence. He, and nobody else. It knocked him for a loop, and he's still spinning. This pretty domestic tragedy took place right where you are, my dear—in the music-room. I want you to know these things, because I want you to snap the damned ocelots tomorrow, and pack up and beat it. It's a charnel house. Not only did Haslow believe in his son's innocence, but he is still trying to prove it. The son's wife was a Charing from Boston, and had a corner on the family's supply of good looks. She knocked men flat. The prosecuting attorney showed that Fred Haslow went berserk in a jealous rage. The whole thing was foul, Ann. Alice was going to have a child, and they did a Cæsarean and saved it. The mother was already dead."

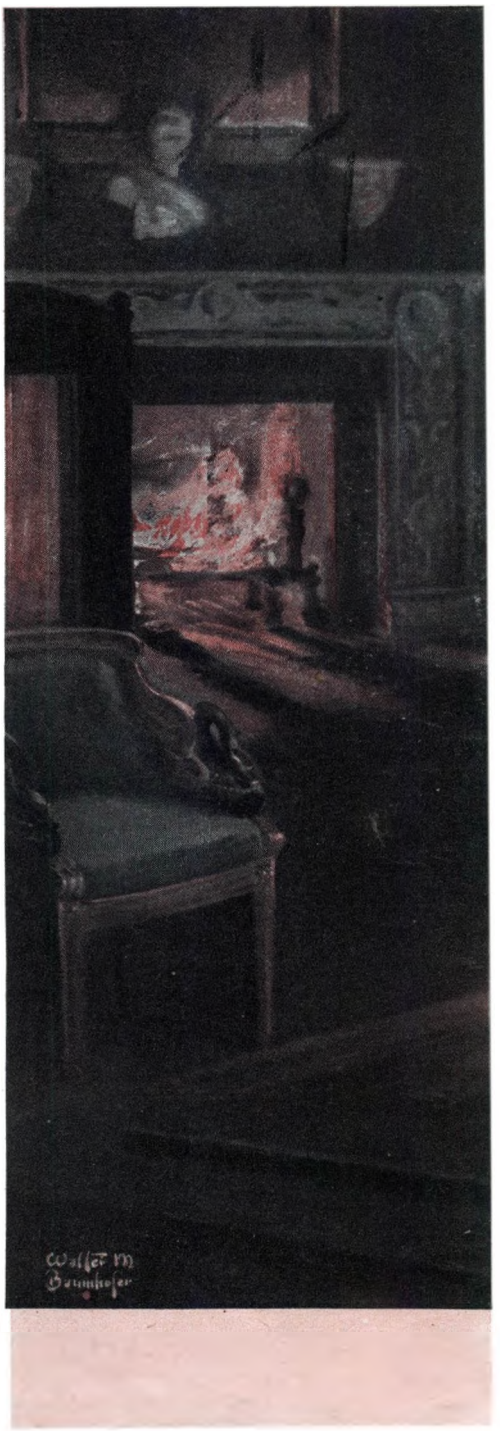
"That's terrible, Bill. Terrible."

"I know it is. Haslow fought like a tiger to clear his son, right up to the execution. Then, off and on, things happened. A boyhood flame of Alice's, a Jerry Abyard, who the State claimed drove Fred Haslow into the deed, was staying at Black Tor at the time of the murder. Abyard came back to the house as a guest of Haslow several months after Fred Haslow was electrocuted. Abyard left the house up there in a coffin. A hunting accident, my dear. And a Boston man by the name of Frank Lawlith, who had also been a flame of Alice Haslow's, died there—of ptomaine, it was said."

ANN decided she would indeed leave as soon as she could; but as it happened, after she had used a pack of film on the ocelots next morning, a storm prevented. She was only mildly puzzled later, when Mr. Haslow held the film-pack in his hand for several minutes; but the aftermath of that was shocking: for Beridge, the young man-of-all-work who developed the films, showed her that across each picture of the spotted ocelots, a shadow like the bones of a hand was superimposed. . . .

Mr. Haslow was taken ill. Dr. Johnstreet was called. The strange pictures were shown to him.

Doctor Johnstreet shrugged helplessly. Slowly the color left his face.



Mystery and romance are closely interwoven in this fast-moving novel of a young girl photographer and a man whose wealth enabled him to indulge his eccentricities.

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the Rich Recluse *PART 2*

A rush of sympathy for this murdered stranger swamped Ann and suddenly brought her to tears. A love welled up no less strong because it was so late—a grief that strengthened the tears and blinded her.

"I couldn't have known," he said. "No man could. I am faced with this, Miss Ledrick. I've been treating Mr. Haslow for neuritis and pernicious anemia. But it's not that. What we have seen is the sign of death. There is nothing on earth that can now be done to save him." A look of childlike amazement came over his face. "It's murder," he said. *(The story continues in detail:)*

THUNDER rolled, jarring with repercussive tremors all objects in the room and filtrating through animate nerves already vibrant and on edge. Doctor Johnstreet put the prints back on the table.

Ann watched him, drugged by being face to face with murder, with the thought being still unreal, so divorced was it from all of the things through the years of her life which she had known.

Harley Beridge watched him, caught in a similar inanimation while Doctor Johnstreet placed the prints side by side face up. Doctor Johnstreet seemed to have not the slightest knowledge whatever that he was doing so. His jowly face which held suggestions of at some time —years ago—having been handsome, appeared stunned and frozen, while his voice, when he spoke, held the measured cadence of groping thought rather than of speech.

"This thing must have been going on for months—a year. There is no way of telling for how long. No earthly way of knowing when the stuff was given to him. One ingestion would have been enough. It would never have to be repeated. One little speck, so small it could have been a sugar seed upon a cake."

Doctor Johnstreet looked at them helplessly, as if beseeching them to join in his wonder at this enormity for which he was so unprepared, and against which all of his knowledge of science, which was reputed to rank amongst the highest in the country, offered him no weapons for combat.

"Are you going to tell Mr. Haslow?" Beridge asked.

"I don't know. I do not know what to do. What we are faced with is a man who is murdered, and yet who is not dead. . . . There is this about life: I must prolong it. I must keep it fanned until it dies of itself. His heart is bad. To tell him, would be for me to kill him, to snuff out that flame I have been nourishing with such trouble, with every resource that I know. You see that, don't you? Both of you see it?"

"Yes," Ann said. She threw away her irritation at dupery, and thought again of Haslow as a kind old man. She was suffused once more with pity for him in view of this horrendous act which had been done against him, with its recognized fate for which there was no known reprieve. Such time as was left him, with its peculiar burdens of physical and mental pain—why weight it down further and add the gall of murder to his already bitter cup? She said: "What does it matter?"

"You catch my point, Miss Ledrick. The thought of retribution. Possibly Mr. Haslow alone could let us know toward whom to look, could give us some definitive indication as to his murderer."

His murderer, Ann thought, was one of two people: his cousin Estelle, who presumably would inherit Haslow's great fortune; or Ludwig Cadbry, whose motive would be enmeshed in the decades-old murder of Alice and the electrocution of the son.

Who else?

Doctor Johnstreet was regarding her curiously, and he said: "No, do not jump at the obvious, Miss Ledrick. I can sense that you are thinking of motive. I suggest that both you and Mr. Beridge disabuse your minds of restricting Black Tor as a haven for the murderer. The very nature of the crime makes the possibilities most broad."

"In what way?" Ann asked.

"Because we do not, and may never, know just when the radioactive substance was given. Months ago, perhaps. Perhaps years. I am thinking of the dark days following the death of Mr. Haslow's son. You know about those things?"

"Yes, Doctor—the common reports."

"Then you know nothing, really. I lived through them. I think I may say without boasting that I made it possible for Mr. Haslow to live through them. Night and day it was a problem of keeping his mind from going to pieces. I shall never forget. And this thing could have been done even as far back as then. I

Sergeant Hurlstone said: "The murderer has developed a sharp finesse." He stood up—moved to the door. He said before leaving: "These crimes were not conceived by a ninny." The door closed.

remember many people came, people whom Mr. Haslow wished to question. There were members of Alice's family, her mother Elizabeth and her father Morton Charing. Even though mourning had started to be an anachronism, Elizabeth Charing seemed shrouded in black, a white dot of a face lost in crape. That was before Mr. Haslow's great seclusion. Before we became this shut little world."

Doctor Johnstreet thought for a while and then said: "There is the law—man's law, and that of my profession. I think a compromise can be reached. I will telephone the State police and make a report. I will tell them exactly how things are. So much we must do." The decision seemed to please him, for he shook off his lethargy and said: "Mr. Beridge, have you spoken of these prints to anyone other than Miss Ledrick or to me?"

"No, I brought them straight up here."

"Was anyone helping you in the laboratory?"

"No, Doctor."

"I would not care for people to know about them. It would not be wise. In spite of what I have just said to you, Miss Ledrick, we cannot blind ourselves to any possibility."

"What will I do when Mr. Haslow wants to see them?" Beridge asked.

"Couldn't you say that the films did not turn out?"

"He wouldn't believe me."

"Blame me," Ann said. "Say that I saw them and wasn't satisfied. Say I destroyed them during a fit of my alleged artistic temperament."

"Good," Doctor Johnstreet approved. "Will you take care of them, Mr. Beridge?"

"I will, Doctor. And the films."

Beridge picked up the prints and went toward the door. Doctor Johnstreet followed, saying: "This is not pleasant for you, Miss Ledrick. It cannot be helped."

"I know that, Doctor."

They left her, and Ann sat down and smoked a cigarette. It failed to soothe her, and her nerves grew increasingly jumpy. The sullen weight of storm-light had not abated, and the room's lamps tempered but did not dispel the general gloom. She thought of calling up Fanny Mistral again, and then thought not. To tell Fanny, would be to tell the world, via the press. Tomorrow's papers, if the storm permitted them to come, would reek murder and revel in a celebrated corpse which still was living and had breath.

Estelle or Ludwig Cadbry would read the report, and would not let Haslow speak. One or the other of them would see to it: "Dear Justin," (this would be Estelle) "let me cool your fevered brow." And dimpled fingers would press, slipping tenderly downward over cheekbones to the windpipe. "Hello, Justin." (This would be Ludwig.) "Feeling better?" Then a solicitous approach, and with hairy thickset fingers the same result. Ann felt sick.

There was a knock, and Estelle came in, and Ann felt sicker. Estelle's face was still rosy and apple-like, and all of her soft plumpness radiated its aura of kind good will toward all men. So strong was this aura that Ann repudiated Estelle from the scene and settled on Ludwig Cadbry. Surely Estelle must be rich enough not to want more money, with her chateaux and Paris flat, and emeralds now so cannily home with her, thanks to the ocelots. Whereas Ludwig presented a murderer cut in the grand style. The man was cast to type.

"Ann dear," Estelle said, tentatively reaching out dimpled fingers and then withdrawing them, "do come down with me to lunch. I feel so stupid about this business of your having been brought up here for another reason than your photography. Really, dear, it's not a revised version of 'East Lynne.' Justin will be able to see you this afternoon, and then you will understand perfectly. Accept the situation for a little while, no matter how melodramatically stupid it may seem to you." Estelle glanced toward windows. "In any case, you'll have to. And we're having squabs *crapaudine* and babas with kirsch for dessert. Have you ever had squab that way?"

"No; in fact, rarely any way."

"I wish you could see Henri fix them. He cuts the breasts and turns the two ends so as to look like a frog, and then flattens the result with a blow of the cleaver. It makes him very happy, and I have to send down a little note of appreciation."

She did not know. Estelle could not (Ann thought) know and still be pleasured with such warmly gustatorial anticipations. Ann was swamped with sympathy for this agreeable woman who was trying to be so friendly, and over whose head, impregnant in the very atmosphere which surrounded her, hung death in its most brutal form. . . .

They went down to lunch.

Ludwig Cadbry put himself out to be pleasant. He indulged in no thoughtful glances or in any of the complex innuendoes with which he had bespattered Ann last night and during the morning. Estelle seemed grateful for this change of Ludwig's, and the babas arrived during a

welter of chit-chat of the most innocuously social nature.

Doctor Johnstreet came in while they were having coffee. His face was pouted with worry, and his skin had the quality of damp suède. He apologized briefly for intruding. He refused Estelle's immediate invitation to join them.

He said to Ann: "Mr. Haslow wishes to see you. Will you come with me, please? Now?"

He said to Ann as they walked toward the elevator: "He recovered consciousness and started talking about you. Inadvertently I mentioned your decision to leave here today. I would not have done so if I could possibly have foreseen the effect on him. He became frantic. He insisted upon my giving him something which would bring him sustained strength, enough strength so that he could talk with you."

Chapter Nine

The nurse and Doctor Johnstreet left, walking softly on the carpet's deep pile: two stolid rears, the one in dark tweed and the other planed in starched white. Ann sat in a chair drawn close to the Empire bed, its smooth veneers deep pools of dark shadow.

Haslow's skin was waxen, and his eyes were abnormally alive from the stimulant Doctor Johnstreet had given him.

"My life has been like this storm," he said. "Thunder and lightning crashing close and then receding to a murmur. But never going, always coming back again. . . . Do smoke if you want to."

Wasted fingers gestured toward a marquetry box on the bed-table. Ann took a cigarette and lighted it.

"I know very little of your life, Mr. Haslow. I've been told the general rumors, that's all."

"Do you believe them?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because I've met you."

This pleased Haslow enormously, and he said nothing for a while but lay quietly regarding her, and then he said: "I had nothing to do with the deaths of Jerry Abyard and Frank Lawlith. I am reputed to have killed them both. You have heard about them?"

"Yes."

"Also there was that business of the two men whom I managed to drown. So it was said, and *(Please turn to page 66)*

The Nicest Man

It was a hot Saturday morning, the brilliant sun shining down from a cloudless sky. A heavy-set man in overalls was clipping the hedges beside an empty lot. Hardly a breath of air stirred the leaves in the thick maples, and every now and then the man paused to wipe his face with a colored handkerchief. In the still, oppressive heat, the whirr of a bird's wings moving from branch to branch sounded noisily. . . . With a cunning acquired from years of Indian-hunting, three figures crept stealthily across the lot, worming their way on their stomachs through the high grass.

The man with the shears, whose name was Pete, was in reality a dangerous saboteur. William and Geepy, with Imogene between them, had decided to take the criminal alive and force a confession from him, for secret information had come to them that Pete intended to blow up the Hazelford post office.

Suddenly they jumped up and almost scared the man to death. Imogene got herself tangled in the cuffs of the saboteur's denim overalls.

Pete thrust Imogene gently aside with his boot, and the cat arched her back and sniffed disdainfully. "What you try to do, you kids?" the handy man demanded.

"We're heroes," said William. He looked to see if his wooden rifle was loaded and cocked.

"Yes sir," said Geepy severely. "We're heroes, and we finally got up with you."

"You haff to give us your confession," William said.

"Yes sir," said Geepy. "We got you surrounded."

The handy man smiled. "Better you sit under a nice tree. Too hot to play in the sun."

"You're a desperate criminal," said William patiently. "You got to give us your confession about blowing up the post office."

"What post office?"

William shook his head at the handy man's denseness. "The post office." There was only one post office. "We also need to have all the names of your gang."

Pete took a file from his back pocket, honed his shears briefly, then went on with his clipping. "Too hot to play games," he decided.

Imogene had already lost interest in the saboteur. A little brown bird on a twig of maple had caught her eye. She didn't really ever expect to catch a little brown bird like that. It was too quick and clever. Still, you never knew.

William and Geepy turned away from their unwilling victim.

"Come on, Imogene," said William.

"He don't know how to play," Geepy sighed.

"No," said William. He felt sorry for adults. As Geepy said, they didn't know how to play. They were unable to act out the simplest drama. They had no imaginations. Any eight- or nine-year-old would have instantly understood how to be a captured saboteur, but a big grown man like Pete merely shrugged and thought it was too hot to play games. Games! Why, even Imogene was capable of becoming a lion at a moment's notice. Grown-ups must lead very prosaic lives, he concluded.

"I think I tore something in my pants," said Geepy as they made their way back to their headquarters. This headquarters was a piece of an ancient army blanket attached to a tree and stretched out on two tall pegs to form a kind of tent. It was makeshift; but then, this was merely their field headquarters. "Crawling through those weeds to capture that desperate criminal, I tore something." Geepy examined the damage to his trousers, a jagged rent in the knee. "Oh, well, it's lucky I tore them, because they're just my old pants anyway."

William, who was methodical in everything he did, carefully removed the make-believe cartridges from his trusty rifle and placed it on the two nails fixed in the tree for that purpose. "You got to always unload this rifle," he said to Geepy; "otherwise it might go off by accident and kill some innocent bystander like Imogene or somebody." Then he sat down inside the headquarters on an upturned tomato crate. The hero business was somewhat slow this morning.

"Nobody wants to be a desperate criminal today, because it's too hot," said Geepy. This seemed very unreasonable. Bright insects danced gayly in the thick sunshine. A hot sweet perfume came up from the burning grasses. A dreamlike quality pervaded the morning stillness. People were most unreasonable, he thought.

"Then maybe I guess we will haff to be desperate criminals ourselves," declared the practical William.

"Yes," said Geepy, nodding agreement. "The best thing we kin probably do is to go ahead and blow up the post office ourselves. I know where there is ten sticks of dynamite." Geepy recovered a bunch of clothespins from a tin can he had buried in the ground. "I guess this is enough dynamite to blow it up. Come on."

William shook his head. "I don't think we better blow up the post office," he said. "because my father's friend, Mr. Atwater, works there. Let's be nice criminals that ride on horses and rob rich millionaires, and then all the gold and jewels we get we'll give away to poor people."

Geepy put back his dynamite regretfully. "All right," he said.

"Only the one trouble with being robbers is we haff to have a secret hide-out."

"Isn't this a secret hide-out?"

William frowned at Geepy's abysmal ignorance. "Robbers is got to have a cave to hide in, so that after a big robbery they can disappear into it. They haff to swear a secrecy never to reveal this hide-out."

"When do we start in robbing rich millionaires?"

"Whenever we finally get this secret hide-out finished," said William. Geepy tended toward precipitate action. He didn't realize that much preparation and hard work were essential to the success of large and dangerous enterprises. "The first thing we haff to do is to find some shovels and start in to dig a round hole."

"My father has two shovels in the cellar," said Geepy.

On their way to Geepy's house to get the shovels, Geepy said: "I hope my mother don't notice us taking my father's shovels, because then she'll want to know what we need those shovels for." Unfortunately, Geepy's fears immediately materialized. As they emerged from the cellar, Mrs. Grosset accosted them.

"What in the world do you intend to do with those shovels?" she demanded.

Geepy shook his head. "It has to be a secret which we aint allowed to tell anyone, not even our mother."

"How many times have I said not to say *aint?* Well, make sure you bring them back. I can't imagine why you want to dig on such a hot day."

William *and* Geepy, REDBOOK'S *newest characters, make their second, and we hope not their last, appearance in your magazine. Eight, and uninhibited, they are happy possessors of a flamboyant imagination and a keen sense of drama.*

in the World

BY LOUIS PAUL
ILLUS. BY TRAN MAWICKE

"We're real robbers now, aint we?" said Geepy ecstatically. "Now we kin kill some rich millionaire and take away his di'mon's and jewels."

"Yes ma'am," said Geepy.

It did seem a little hot after a while, but with great persistence and by taking turns, they succeeded in excavating a surprisingly deep hole. Their faces were caked with dirt, and their clothes plastered with dust and perspiration. Geepy could hardly see over the rim of the level ground. The sun rose high in the sky, but all sense of temperature or time was lost in the excitement of creation.

Imogene complacently watched this activity with understanding approval. She adored dirt, being a pure-blooded ailey cat.

WHEN the dugout was finally completed, Geepy, still out of breath, asked: "Now kin we rob somebody?"

William shook his head firmly.

"First we got to build a top on it so that it is dark and secret inside it. I know where there is a nice trash-pile where there's a lot of stuff that is just what we want for this hide-out."

They tossed their shovels aside, and Geepy followed William, with Imogene skittering along ahead of them. Though

she didn't know where they were going, she was determined to get there first. The fine trash-pile was in the alley back of the grocery. They found some wonderful things: an electric lamp without a cord, some excelsior, some torn tar-paper, a piece of moth-eaten carpet, a last year's calendar, two left shoes, the wire frame from a lampshade. Their eyes shone as they pounced on each new discovery. These were positively wonderful things. "Look at this that I found!" exclaimed Geepy. It was a Mason jar containing spoiled peaches full of blue mold.

"They aren't no good," said William.

"The jar is good," Geepy insisted. "We could also save this stuff and poison our enemies with it."

"But we're good criminals," William explained. "We're almost practically heroes, because whatever we rob, it is only to give to the poor. Good criminals don't poison even their most worst enemies."

"Oh," said Geepy, crestfallen. It seemed like such a splendid jar of spoiled fruit. "Well, is this good to take?" Geepy held up a tattered pocketbook.

"That's all right," William decided. "That's fine, that pocketbook. We can keep our gold and rubies in it."

Arms loaded down with precious rubbish, they returned to their half-finished hut. With infinite patience they constructed the roof from bits of blanket and canvas and wood. William remembered a bundle of nice new cedar shingles that lay in back of the coal bin in his cellar. No one noticed them as they wheeled these away in Geepy's small red rubber-tired wagon. People sat in the shade of their porches sipping lemonade or iced tea, and fanning themselves with palm fans or brushing their brows with handkerchiefs. Mr. Camden, the postman, worked his way slowly from door to door, dark streaks of dampness showing through his powder-blue shirt.

"Well, you've got the drop on me," said Uncle Fred, shrugging. "But you'll never get away with this. There'll be a posse out after you bandits before nightfall."

It would take them many days of patient effort to complete their hut, but the hardest work was done. They had still to build a long secret passageway instead of the makeshift entrance they were temporarily using. Still, the roof was on. Their cave was dark inside except for little slits of sunshine that penetrated through crevices here and there, cool and mysterious and dark. They would have to stock it with reserves of groceries, in case the police got on their trail and they had to hide out for long periods.

"Is it time now that we're allowed to go and hold up some rich millionaire and take all his money and di'mon's?" asked Geepy hopefully.

William, in the earth-smelling gloom of the dim cave, explained the necessity of first swearing the awful Robber's Oath. "We both haff to swear the Robber's Oath, and then make an X on each other's chest with blood."

"Blood?" said Geepy. "Where kin we go to find any blood?"

"The way you got to do, you got to cut yourself or something," said William. "Then you dip your finger in and make an X."

Geepy shivered eerily. "I don't want to cut myself."

"All right," said William. He was not unwilling to waive the blood part of the oath himself. "Maybe if we get some red ink, it is prob'ly just as good. And if anybody ever tells the secret of this robbers' cave, they are supposed to be killed and never let come into it again."

"I'll never tell," said Geepy.

"The main thing that we need now," said William, "before we're able to swear the terrible Robber's Oath, is a bottle of red ink; and we also got to find a candle somewhere, so that we can see to write down secretly the names of our victims, and things like that."

"I don't think there's any red ink in my house," said Geepy, "but I know where there's a candle."

"I'll see if we have any red ink," said William. "—You stay here until we get back." This to Imogene.

When they arrived at Geepy's house, Mrs. Grosset was sitting under the willow with a fan in her hand. They opened the screen door at the side of the house that led to the cellar.

"Is that you?" asked Geepy's mother. "Why don't you come out of that sun? It's too hot to play outdoors."

"I don't feel hot," said Geepy. "We just want a drink of water."

They got the candle and then went over to William's house, but this time they weren't so lucky. Mrs. Winyud was in the kitchen fixing a salad for early Saturday evening supper. She stared, horrified, at the two dirt-caked and grimy figures, unable to believe her eyes. "What have you children been doing to get yourselves completely covered with dirt from head to foot?"

"We're doing something secret," William explained. "We haff to go upstairs and find something."

"Well, you're not going out of this house again until you wash yourself. And that applies to you, young man," she added, nodding at Geepy.

"Yes ma'am," said William.

"Do you realize you haven't had a thing to eat since breakfast?"

"We aint—we aren't hungry. We'll wash up in the bathroom," William said.

"All right," said Mrs. Winyud. "But I want you back home by four o'clock. Don't forget, come right home when the four-o'clock whistle blows at the plant."

"Yes ma'am," said William. They went to the bathroom, patted some water on their cheeks and hurriedly rubbed off some of the grime on the bath towel. Then they looked high and low, but they couldn't find any red ink. William got out his tobacco tin from the bureau drawer. "I think we might haff to buy some," he said. "Anyway, we can ask the man in the stationery store how much it costs." Then he added: "The best thing we better do is go out by the front door, I guess."

The man in the stationery store had bottles of red ink that cost ten cents. Decisively William said: "We'll take one." He had twenty-one cents saved up in his tobacco tin bank, beside a few other things. The money was at the bottom, and he took out the other things methodically and laid them on the counter. The stationery man gazed uncomfortably at several customers waiting to be served. Carefully William laid out his fishhooks, a dead cricket, two Canadian stamps, a wilted four-leaf clover, a ball of string, a penknife, a box top from a package of cereal, a trunk key, two "reely shooters," eight rubber bands, a piece of rock with mica in it, and a good many additional things not so easily identifiable. Finally he got down to the money, handed the man ten cents, then carefully replaced his possessions in the can one by one.

The stationery man sighed and wrapped up the ink. He looked at the dime and said: "And a penny tax."

"Oh!" said William. He took out his can and began delving into it once more.

"No," said the stationery man, hurriedly handing him the ink. "Not that all over again! You just forget about the penny tax." He hastened to his waiting customers, mopping his wet brow.

"That's a nice man," said William. "He didn't even make us pay the tax."

They returned to their secret hut. Overhead the sky was a dazzling pale blue. It had become too hot even for the birds, who hid in the shade of the still maples chirping softly in a low chorus. Pete had long ago gone home. It hardly seemed as if the world were alive, so close and still was the atmosphere; it was as though a moment in time had come and forgotten to go. William and Geepy climbed down into the enchanted darkness of their cave.

"Soon," said Geepy excitedly, "soon we kin go and rob somebody now, can't we?"

William opened the bottle of red ink. He made Geepy stand up and cross his arms over his heart. "Are you all ready to swear to the terrible Robber's Oath?" he demanded in a solemn whisper.

Geepy blinked and swallowed hard. "Y-yes."

Then William made up a terrible Robber's Oath and they both swore to it.

"Now we got to make an X with this bottle of blood," said William. They dipped their forefingers in the bottle and made crosses on each other's chest. "Now we're real robbers," he said.

"We're real robbers now, aint we?" said Geepy ecstatically. They climbed out of the hut, blinking their eyes in the brilliant sunshine. "Now we kin kill some rich millionaire and take away his di'mon's and jewels."

"No," said William. He couldn't seem to make Geepy understand that they were Robin Hoods. "No, we ride up on our horses and surround him and then we say: 'Your money or your life!' "

"Let's rob my Uncle Fred," said Geepy. "I guess he'll give us his money or his life. He's a pretty rich millionaire."

"All right," said William. Uncle Fred would make a good first victim. They checked their weapons carefully, then mounted their steeds. "Whoa!" cried William as his horse reared and pranced. "Whoa, boy!" Having at last brought their high-spirited animals under control, they galloped off in the direction of Cedar and Elm, where Geepy's uncle operated a small garage and service station. They reined in their mounts in front of the lubricating rack. Uncle Fred, perspiration running down his lean cheeks in rivulets, looked up from the old tire he was repairing.

"Your money or your life!" Geepy aimed his six-shooter at their victim's midriff. "Either you got to give us a lot of di'mon's and jewels, or we'll haff to kidnap you for ransom."

"We mean business," said William. "We're desprit characters."

Fearfully Uncle Fred looked from one to the other of the highwaymen. They were unquestionably desperate characters. "I just want to wipe my face with a handkerchief," he explained as he reached into his back pocket.

"I think he's tryin' to lose a lot of time until a policeman comes along," said William shrewdly.

"Hurry up and give us your money and jewels, because we don't have all day to waste," commanded Geepy.

"Well, you've got the drop on me," said Uncle Fred, shrugging. "But you'll never get away with this. There'll be a posse out after you bandits before nightfall." Hunting about the garage, he found some valuable things to hand over to the robbers. He gave them some old steel ball bearings, a defective bicycle pump, four broken spark-plugs, several discarded car lamps, a little electric switch, and a dime apiece. "You men will swing for this," declared Uncle Fred gravely.

"No sir," said William. "Nobody can ever find us in one billion years, because we got a secret hide-out. —Well, come on!" He motioned toward his partner. Hastily they swung themselves into their saddles. "Don't drop none of the swag," he cautioned Geepy. As they galloped furiously away toward their secret hide-out, Uncle Fred at last permitted himself to smile.

Imogene was waiting for them. She brightened perceptibly when she saw the booty they carried.

"These are certainly some pretty fine solid gold nuggles we robbed from my Uncle Fred," said Geepy as they reentered their hide-out.

"And this dime," said William. Just then the four-o'clock whistle at the plant blew. "Now I think I haff to go home, because my mother said to come home when the whistle blew." He sighed.

"Gee, I wish we could stay in this secret hide-out and even sleep here all the time," said Geepy. "I guess Imogene kin live in it when we aint here. I don't think Imogene will ever tell anybody about our secret hide-out."

"No," said William. "But next week, just to make sure, we'll give her the terrible Robber's Oath and make a cross on her with blood, and then she can be a real member of our gang."

Geepy's eyes lit up with the prospect. "Gee, I sure wish it was next week already," he murmured wistfully. He gazed rapturously at the pitted bearings that shone brightly even in the darkness of the cave. "Gosh, these nuggles alone are prob'ly worth a million hundred dollars. My Uncle Fred was a pretty nice victim all right, wasn't he?"

William nodded. "I think maybe your Uncle Fred is prob'ly the nicest man in the whole world."

Infamous Prelude to

REDBOOK'S ENCORE OF THE MONTH

BY ARTHUR KROCK, REPRINTED BY SPECIAL PERMISSION OF THE AUTHOR AND THE NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE

A YEAR ago last November Saburo Kurusu, special envoy of the Government of Japan, left Asia for the United States to assume his part in the "peace conversations" that continued until more than an hour after Japanese forces attacked Pearl Harbor.

Why did Kurusu come, since he came with hands empty of a peace formula the United States could accept? Was he playing for time during which the Japanese could sneak up on Pearl Harbor? But the United States was playing for time, too, and Kurusu knew that.

Were the Japanese intelligence services sufficiently informed and deductive to have advance confidence that assaults from the air would find our commanders in the Pacific as non-coöperating and completely unready for this tactic as they proved to be?

History ultimately will disclose the answers to these questions. The fact remains that Kurusu came on what, in both the United States and Japan, was forecast as a sleeveless errand; that under cover of his activities here the Pearl Harbor expedition was launched; that alertness and Army-Navy coöperation were absent, and the assault was heavily successful.

Did Kurusu know before he left Japan that, conscious of the improbability that the United States would accept the Japanese formula, Premier Tojo had assented to the expedition against Pearl Harbor? It was already in preparation on Japan's mandated islands, where international pledges had long been violated and from which aliens had long been barred. Ships, men and war supplies were undoubtedly on their way to the bases when Kurusu departed.

No one in the United States Government is in a position to express more than an opinion as to whether Kurusu knew or not. Most officials believe he did, and they are certain he had been informed of the actual attack before he and the Japanese Ambassador, Admiral Nomura, made their final call on Secretary Hull.

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How much did Nomura know? The preferred belief is that the Ambassador was kept in ignorance of the plan and its maturing. For he seemed to Washington to have lived always by the code of an officer and gentleman, according to our own view of what that code is.

But Tojo knew—Tojo the Premier who came to power because the Konoye Ministry was too conciliatory to suit the militarists of Japan. And on Tojo must rest both knowledge and responsibility for an act of war by a nation whose representatives were even then asserting that with the nation attacked there could and must be a basis for peace.

It should be recalled that earlier in the year 1941 the President was invited to sail into the Pacific for a peace meeting with Premier Konoye, an invitation he declined. And before and after this Mr. Hull had been meeting steadily with Admiral Nomura to talk of peace and finding no foundation for it. In both countries, among the really informed, before Kurusu came, war was held to be inevitable whenever the Japanese thought the moment was most advantageous.

KURUSU cannot be credited with the feat of acquiring this vital segment of time while the Government of the United States remained in blissful ignorance of what he was doing. For weeks Mr. Hull knew what was afoot; the President was fully aware of it; and the Army and the Navy were put on notice by the Secretary, many days before Pearl Harbor, that the Japanese were ready and likely to strike, "by surprise, and simultaneously throughout the Pacific area."

But, in consequence of the six-year neglect of the democracies to prepare for the event some of their elected leaders

Saburo Kurusu and Nomura leaving Secretary Hull's office on December 7. As they discussed "peace" plans, Japanese bombers without warning attacked Pearl Harbor.

Nomura, Hull and Kurusu arriving at the White House on November 17. The President told Japan's trouble-shooter that he hoped a major conflict could be avoided.

Pearl Harbor

THE INSIDE STORY OF THE KURUSU "PEACE MISSION"

DRAWN ESPECIALLY FOR REDBOOK BY ROLLIN KIRBY

foresaw, the armed forces of the United States and of the United Nations were not ready for the war that projected its shadow upon the "peace conversations" at Washington. In response to their pleas, Mr. Hull was playing for time, too, though he met the Japanese envoys in good faith and peace was his sincere desire. Had there been at Pearl Harbor and Manila the military alertness the President and he had every reason to expect, and which Mr. Hull had specifically urged on the War Council, the stakes of war at the outset would have remained in the hands of our government as completely as did the stakes of diplomacy and honor.

No conferences in American history were more dramatic in their implications or led to a drama as bodeful and as bloody.

Three conferees more different in mold could hardly be conceived. The Admiral is very tall for a Japanese—over six feet—portly, less inclined to use the property smile which is one of the fixed manners of his countrymen. His English is thick and halting, his vocabulary limited. It is easy to see that the quarter-deck and not the conference-room is his natural habitat.

Kurusu is short, even for a Japanese, slight and silky. His English is clear and certain. His smile is thin, but frequent.

As equipment for his errand he brought some carefully acquired American slang and a good imitation of the airs of what Anglo-Saxons call "a good fellow." With all this, he was never able to remove the distrust of his personal sincerity, as well as of his errand, which arrived in Washington with him.

The Secretary is as different from the one as from the other. His voice can be silky and his words ambiguous, or his voice can be hard and his words like dagger-thrusts. As the conversations went on Mr. Hull put more and more of the silk and ambiguity on the shelf and talked straight Tennessee. But he never forgot his dexterity, or his need for time, too, which explains why Kurusu is supposed to have said after the meeting of Nov. 26,

Saburo Kurusu, Japan's special Ambassador, at La Guardia Field, on his air trip from Tokyo to Washington.

when Mr. Hull had obviously come to the American *sine qua non:* "We have got the old gray cat in the bag."

The conversations began in a national and international atmosphere unfriendly to the imposition of the fundamental sanctions (embargoes), an atmosphere that had prevailed as far back as the Brussels conference of 1937. At that time sanctions by European signatories to the Nine-Power Treaty other than Japan were considered by those nations. But to Dec. 7, 1941, no occasion was found when diplomatic and military affairs could be made effectively to march together, and with public opinion. Yet this coherence was necessary because the declaration of sanctions, especially on petroleum, it was obvious, would bring the world to the threshold of war.

Yet test polls showed a majority sentiment for peace through 1940 and well into 1941. The party platforms of 1940 reflected the national attitude. All branches of the governments of what is now the United Nations recognized this public opinion. The military commanders, on the argument that they were unprepared, steadily besought the diplomatic spokesmen to avoid war and play for time. No President could have dispatched a fleet to Japan in those circumstances, and nothing less would have supported an embargo policy on oil.

Kurusu reached Washington Nov. 16, 1941. The Clipper had been held in Hong Kong to facilitate his arrival, and every preparation had been made to hear him out. He first saw the President and Mr. Hull next day. In a later meeting that afternoon with Mr. Hull alone the Japanese envoys pressed so vigorously for acceptance of the Tokyo formula for a Pacific settlement that the Secretary of State was moved to his first trenchant comment. He said he didn't feel that the United States Government should be receiving remarks suggesting an ultimatum from a government whose contemporary acts were like those of Japan.

(The Tokyo formula for a Pacific settlement was, generally, that Japan must be left free to crush China and practice war and aggression there, but that she would pursue the ways of peace in the remainder of the Orient. It was this untenable attitude that induced Mr. Hull frequently to say to the envoys during the conversations: "You are trying to face both ways. You can't face both ways and effect real peace.")

Kurusu then handed the Secretary a document which asserted that the Japanese Government did not object to confirming the peaceful statement that had been made by the former Premier, Konoye. It declared that the Premier's qualifying phrases were only those necessary to maintain the rights of a sovereign state and were made with the recently concluded non-aggression treaty of Russia and Japan in mind.

The President, when earlier that day he had received Kurusu and Ambassador Nomura, said the intentions of the United States were peaceful. Mr. Hull then remarked that, so long as Japan clung to the Tripartite Pact (the treaty of "mutual defense and common aims" with Germany and Italy), no settlement of the Pacific question purporting to be peaceful would be taken seriously by anyone. He said Hitler had put the United States in danger and the American people believed that such Japanese phrases as "a new order in Greater East Asia" were just other names for a program intending to dominate the whole Pacific area economically, socially, politically and by military power.

Kurusu minimized this view. He said Premier Tojo wanted peace; he had refused a Cabinet post under Tojo until assured of that, he said, and there was no reason for a serious difference between the two countries. A solution must be found, he asserted, and often he reiterated it.

The next day, Nov. 18, there was another meeting, and Mr. Hull repeated his statement of doubt that the American people would have confidence in any agreement with Japan while Japan kept its alliance with Hitler. He reminded the Japanese envoys that "after every atrocity" Japanese leaders sent telegrams of congratulation to Hitler. Then, with great emphasis, he said that the United States had "nothing to offer Japan for bargaining except our friendship." He expressed doubt that a satisfactory agreement could be made in the circumstances.

"Rather than to go beyond a certain point," said the Secretary, "it is better for the United States to stand and take the consequences."

Kurusu promised a much more liberal Japanese policy after the war. But when the Secretary asked him if his government could agree in principle "now" on a commercial policy, there was no reply.

Kurusu then took another tack. The American and British regulations freezing Japanese-American fiscal and commercial relations had caused impatience, he said, in Japan; had evoked the feeling that it was best to fight while one still could. Japan had entered the tripartite pact because she felt isolated, but she would never be a cat's-paw for Hitler.

At this point the colloquy went something like this, though of course, the actual words are not recorded:

Hull—How many soldiers do you intend to keep in China?

Kurusu—We may withdraw 90 per cent. Suppose we did.

Hull—How long will you keep the other 10 per cent there? (To this there was no direct reply.)

Hull—Japan is now in a fine situation to produce peaceful goods, if you can get war and invasion out of your minds.

Kurusu—We must move gradually. The United States is responsible for the delay.

Hull—There has been no delay. I have always seen Ambassador Nomura promptly. [They had been conferring for months.] Our views have been made clear from the outset. Your invasion of Indo-China interrupted the conversations.

Kurusu—Do you want to return to the *status quo, ante* Indo-China?

Hull—If you can't withdraw the troops, adopt a liberal commercial policy and solve the question of the tripartite pact, then won't you see what you can do? Would releasing the freezing regulations help the peace party of Japan?

Nomura—Japan's unyielding policy toward Chiang Kai-shek stiffened China. Your unyielding policy toward Japan has stiffened us. Let's go back to the pre-Indo-China status.

Hull—But would you then divert the Indo-China troops to some equally objectionable locality? After you invaded Indo-China I could no longer defend our shipments of petroleum to you.

Nomura—We are tired of fighting in China, and we will go as far as we can.

The conversation ended with the Secretary's statement that he would consult the other governments especially interested in the Pacific.

There was another meeting on Nov. 20, and for the purpose of brevity and clarity I shall again attempt to reconstruct the words used by the conferees.

Hull—Before we can have a peaceful settlement there must be an end to Japanese aggression. We need a manifestation of a clear purpose to pursue peaceful courses.

Nomura—But we have this day presented a proposal to that end. [A detailed summary of this follows shortly.]

Hull—I will discuss what you have said with the other governments which have interests in the Pacific.

Kurusu—But, remember, we are unable to abrogate the tripartite pact.

Hull—You didn't talk that way about the Nine-Power Treaty.

Kurusu—That was twenty years old and outmoded. I urge you to adopt this proposal and *(Please turn to page 86)*

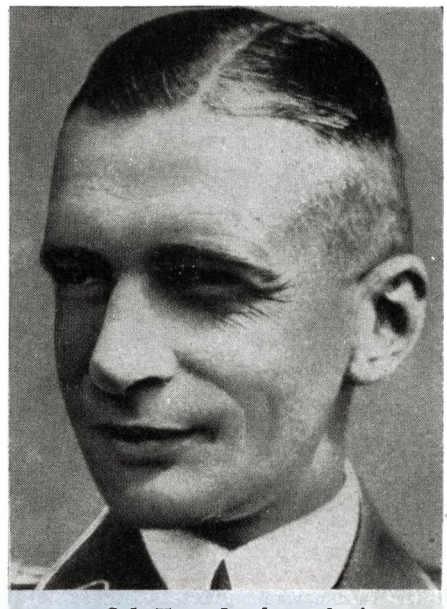
THE GERMAN ARMY IS NOW IN THE HANDS OF Desperadoes

WHERE ARE WE GOING AND WHY?

Why did Hitler decide to replace his experienced Field Marshals with Gestapo-trained street-fighters and desperadoes? Will that decision make the war shorter or longer? For answers to these very important questions read this revealing article — *by MAX WERNER*

Heinrich Himmler, Chief of the Gestapo. His favorites and henchmen are now in charge of the German army.

Gen. Kurt Zeitzler, forty-seven and Gestapo-bred. He replaced Halder as Chief of General Staff.



Col. Hans Jeschonnek, forty-four and Himmler's favorite, is now Chief of the General Staff of the Luftwaffe.

WHILE the Battle of Stalingrad raged along the Don in fall of 1942, in Berlin a completely unknown young German general was raised from his subordinate post and appointed to the highest post in the German Army. General Kurt Zeitzler, forty-seven years old, was made Chief of the German General Staff. The appointment was kept secret for a long time. Reports of it seeped abroad in the form of rumors weeks before the German people were told about it in December.

General Zeitzler's appointment will determine the future course of the German conduct of war. The liquidation of the old leadership of the German Army has been virtually completed. Of the eight great German military leaders who in July, 1941, were named field marshals, the highest rank in the German Army, five have already been broken. Von Brauchitsch, von Witzleben, von Bock, von Leeb and List have been relieved of their commands. Of the three remaining, Keitel is Chief of the High Command, which is more of a political post than a military one; von Rundstedt is in a secondary post in the West; and only Kluge retains a command on the active Russian front.

The old corps of generals is now completely excluded from participation in the making of major strategic decisions. With the replacement of General Halder by the young Zeitzler, the two top posts of the entire German armed might is without the benefit of the Reich's best experts. These top posts are those of Commander in Chief, and Chief of the General Staff. At the end of 1941 this team was still von Brauchitsch and Halder. Today Hitler and Zeitzler are the "Duumvirate" in whose hands lies the fate of the German army. Those seasoned generals who still command fronts in Russia (Kuechler, Kluge and Hoth) are merely executive military clerks.

By his acts of 1942 Hitler has eliminated the last traces of strategic opposition to him from within. His opponents of the old school, most persistent among them having been von Brauchitsch, von Leeb and Halder, are not only completely without influence now, but need not even be audible any more.

The young generals set, devoted personally to Hitler, closely tied in with the National Socialist Party, is composed of military dare-devils and desperadoes. Anonymity has characterized the operations of the German army since the winter of 1941-'42. Names of leading generals are not mentioned in dispatches or communiqués—names of the commanders of major units have been kept close secrets. No leader of an army in the German forces has been given public praise, with the exception of Rommel. After the armies of von Bock, Kluge, von Weichs, von Strauss, Guderian and Hoth were defeated before Moscow, no longer did the German propaganda machine exhibit any army leaders.

HITLER did not want any competition after he took over the supreme command in December, 1941. He did not want any popular generals for the future. Perhaps most important in the Fuehrer's consideration was the fact that such anonymity enabled him during the year 1942 to execute transfers, dismissals and new appointments in the German corps of generals without any impediment. He could act suddenly; he did not have to prepare any minds. *(Please turn to page 106)*

U.S. Today

"If Babs has fallen for this professor fellow," Ed said, "she must tell George." His gray-blue eyes were dark, as they are when he is angry. "Double-crossing somebody in love is the meanest thing in the world. and no child of mine is going to do it."

"It's easy for an older man to fascinate a girl of seventeen." I put some toilet articles into my overnight bag.

"But I thought she was all fixed up with George," Ed protested. "George is a grand guy. He has brains, and looks too. Once he gets to be a doctor, it's my bet he'll go a long way. And he plays a sweet game of golf." He sighed; golf didn't mean much now. "What's the matter with that girl, anyhow?"

"Youth," I smiled. "Remember it?"

But Ed was not to be diverted. "Well, it's time she grew up." He started to rise, as if he might go right down and begin aging her.

"Wait," I said. "Let's see how it goes over the week-end."

"I don't like it." But he sank back. "She isn't—she isn't true."

"She's true underneath, I think. . . . Here, my bag is ready." I set it on the floor. "Give her time."

A couple of hours earlier the boys, Ed and I had been eating our Friday night dinner. Eileen, with the new baby, has her supper in bed. Dick, the baby's father, is somewhere overseas, and Babs was at college. Presumably, that is. For it was then I heard her voice:

"Where's everybody?" The door opened, and Babs came loping in, wearing a white sheepskin coat trimmed with scarlet bands. Her dark hair glistened with rain. Her feet were tucked in red socks and once-white moccasins.

"Oh, hello, Toots. What are you doing here?" Ed's voice was warm.

"Sweetie!" I kissed her. Then: "You didn't come down on the train like that—no hat—no stockings—"

"I like the motherly welcome." Babs went around and took a seat by her Daddy. "Hello, my pet. I got a ride."

"George, I suppose. Where is he, out in the rain?" Ed asked.

"No." Babs avoided his eyes. "Matter of fact, I came down with Professor Crelford. I'm in his Social Science class. *You* know; I *wrote* you about him." Her voice said we were supposed to have registered this but not made too much of it.

"How come a professor gets all that gas?" Ed's tone was just a little edgy.

"He saved it up ever since college opened, for some emergency like this. Arthur isn't a prosperous business man like you, Daddy."

"Thanks." Ed's tone was grim.

"When *he* goes somewhere, he has to take himself in his car. He was asked to speak at a forum dinner here in town, on Manpower and the War. So he drove down and brought *me*," she finished with a pleased smile.

"Well," I said, comfortably, "now you've come, you can stay over Sunday."

"I'd like to. —Hi!" Babs grinned up at Norah She looked at the plate of fish before her. "Gee, that sauce looks good. They make ours out of some sort of glue. But I have late permission, and I've got to go back with Arthur tonight."

I made no comment. Babs finished and ran up to see Eileen and the baby. Norah brought the coffee into the living-room. Ed sat back in his big chair, and Babs and I settled ourselves on the sofa. The Professor, I knew, might come at any moment It was now or never.

"This Professor Crelford," I began, "he must be twice as old as you are."

Babs grinned at Ed. "It's the age I attract."

"I don't doubt it I don't want you driving back with him tonight, however."

Babs turned and stared at me. As the import of my words sank in, ripples of anger ran across her brown eyes.

"But Mother, Arthur is a *wonderful* man. *Everybody* at Blake College is simply ga-ga about him. Why, he could be a friend of Daddy's—"

"You must think of his side of it too." I tried appeasement.

"But he likes having me along. He brought me with only just a *little* shoving."

"Suppose you have an accident, or broke down. If Professor Crelford were towed into town at two A.M. with a girl from one of his classes—well, it might cost him his job."

Ed put down his pipe. "Your mother is right."

"Now, Moms," Babs' voice rose in despair, "you don't know how *hard* it is to get to see a professor alone. I—I lie awake nights thinking how I can do it. And he'd never understand your not letting me go. He'd be terribly hurt."

"And does that matter—terribly?" I asked.

Babs turned away a little. Then she said in an unwilling tone: "Yes, it does."

I thought fast. "How about taking me back with you for the week-end?"

Babs sighed. She looked at her father for a moment, hoping for help "Well, okay," she said when none came. "I suppose it's better than nothing."

While I was packing my bag, getting out galoshes—a college campus in winter is all wet, and not in the slang sense either—and so on, my mind went back to George. After the great decision at the end of last summer, to get educated instead of married, George had thrown himself into the hard grind of preparing for medical school. Having settled the marriage question for the time being, he apparently felt no need of a formal engagement Yet having seen him so much with Babs, I was sure he thought of her as his very own girl. Babs was pretty bitter about the way he took her for granted.

"He's just throwing me to the wolves." And now here was a wolf in professor's clothing. In spite of trying to reassure Ed, I was troubled. I put on my hat so firmly it felt like a blow.

I should have known that if Babs fell for him, the Professor would be neither nearsighted nor bald nor undersized. The man who came to our door an hour later stood six-feet-one or -two His blue eyes had in them a half-tender, half-mocking expression, which was not without considerable appeal. He was a bit gaunt, and the excellent brown tweed coat he wore swung from his shoulders as from a frame.

As we walked out to the car, Babs gave my arm a delighted squeeze. "Wait till you hear him talk," she said.

I didn't have to wait long. He was still basking in the afterglow from an appreciative audience, and he launched at once into telling us what he had said From time to time Babs commented in slow, measured tones that were absolutely new to me. Each of her words was thoughtfully considered. I sat in some amazement. *Babs?* I felt left out, yet amused and proud. Once I started to break in on the subject of the small factory. Ed owns a small munitions plant

"My husband says—" I began.

"Now, Mother," Babs cut me off. "you're not going to quote Daddy. Much as we all love him, he's *only* a business man. You see,"—she turned a serious face toward me in the semi-dark—"Arthur *knows*."

I relapsed into thoughtful silence. It was almost twelve when we turned in under the maple trees that in summer shaded the campus. Because it was so late, I was to sleep in the little room that Babs and Patty, her roommate, used as a study.

AN INTIMATE GLIMPSE INTO AN AMERICAN HOME

BY HENRIETTA RIPPERGER • PHOTOGRAPH BY LEO AARONS

"Good night, everybody," he said, then turned and walked out. George watched the receding back. "Nice old geezer, isn't he? And now,"—he tucked his arm under Babs' arm,—"how about dancing this one?"

I WOKE next morning to find Babs already gone. Patty was bringing me some coffee. The room was desperately untidy; yet it was gay too, with a litter of bright pillows and magazines and books and colored articles of clothing. The sunshine poured in. Somehow, suddenly, the disorder didn't matter.

"It's so wonderful to have you here," Patty said delightedly. She is small and yellow-haired, with enormous gray eyes. "Babs has an *(Please turn to page 96)*

For the Lack of a

BY ALEC WAUGH • ILLUSTRATED BY GEORGE HUGHES

The author of this story of a lonely heartbroken Tommy who dreams of his sweetheart, is at present on the General Staff of the B.E.F. in the Middle East. He knows what he is writing about.

A HIGH stack of letter-cards and airgraphs awaited censoring. "Again," he thought.

There had been a time, when he was still soldiering in England, when he had fancied that the censoring of his men's mail would be a fascinating occupation. Now after ten months in the Middle East, it had become a chore like any other. The letters were all the same. What else could he expect them to be? The men could not say what they were doing or where they were doing it.

Everything really personal went into the green envelopes that were censored not regimentally, but at the base. The letters that came to him were in the main replies to letters that had been received from home: *("Well, darling, I bet you enjoyed yourselves that day Bert took you to the picnic!")*, bulletins about their health *("I seem to have got over my attack of 'gippie' tummy")*, comments on the war news: *("Well, mum, I don't think it'll be long now. We'll soon be giving Jerry a taste of his own medicine. Six months, I give it")*.

Six months. It was always that. Six months. Occasionally a year. At first he had been puzzled, at times almost irritated by this insistent, unflagging, unreasoned optimism. How on earth could they imagine that the war could be over within six months—for it was always a question of "Jerry being socked," never of the war just "finishing." Gradually, however, he had come to realize that six months represented a human being's capacity for expectation. One had to be able to mark a date upon a calendar. In their heart of hearts they knew each one of them that they were set upon a long, long journey. But being human, they had to be able to think, "This time next year—"

He had little doubt of the kind of thing that he would find in this present stack. He knew the men's styles and friends. He knew which men he had to watch for indiscretions—there were only three he had. He only bothered to read the majority of the letters because they gave him "sidelines" on the men themselves. He found it easier to deal with them, to get good work out of them, if he knew what was on their minds.

Quickly he read the letters over. Another adjuration from Bombardier Gregory to his mother "to keep her chin up." Sergeant Evans was still worried about the furnishing of the flat his wife had taken. There was Willis writing to that girl of his again—no, it was to his mother this time: *"Well, dear Mom, I don't think it'll be much longer now. I don't think Jerry can take much more of it. Early next spring, I say."* The usual stuff. No need to bother about this.

He turned the page: *"Well, Mum, I expect you've heard about Anne getting fixed up with a chap from the munition factory. I don't suppose I can blame her, me having been so long away, but it was a blow."*

A blow! He checked, staring at the bald announcement. A blow. He should

Word from Him

A LOVE STORY

think it was! How many letters hadn't he censored to that girl, how many parcels hadn't he watched Willis pack for her. Willis must have spent every spare penny on stamps and presents—and then for this to happen! To be jilted by one's girl! It was bad enough when that happened to one in England, when one was surrounded by friends and by familiar things. But when it happened to one out here—

He pushed back his chair and stepped to the opening of his tent. He was in charge of a section of six-pounders detailed for coast defence. Below him in all its splendor stretched the blue meadow of the Mediterranean. Behind him rose the snow-peaked mountains of the Lebanon. It was a beauty-spot all right. But it was a prison too. A hundred yards away, a group of gunners were on the camouflage netting that concealed the guns. Between him and the guns were the scattered tents in which the gun-teams lived. For six months now they had been stationed here, watching for an attack that might never come, but for which at every hour of the day and night they had to be prepared.

It was a monotonous life, all right. One did one's best to make things varied for the men, to keep them fit and interested in their work. One got leave for them when one could: sent them into the nearest town whenever possible. But the guns came first; their job was to serve the guns. For six months now they had been waiting, watching. For all that *he* could do for them, for all the brave showing that *they* made, their hearts must be often heavy.

They were not professional soldiers after all; their real lives, their careers, the things they cared for, were in England. They lived for their mail, their links with home, their "after-the-war" dreams; and if their homes let them down—

He had heard stories enough of men whose girls had flung them over, of wives who had asked *(Please turn to page 63)*

"If I hadn't had to come out here, I might have been able—well, to steady her. . . . I suppose I've always known it was bound to happen. I only hope—she's a headstrong girl, sir—she's found a decent fellow."

After Ten

GINNY stood at a window staring out, as she so often did when he was away, out of town. It was noon, and outside a flock of pigeons swooped and sailed on sun-polished wings. She did not see them, for today her deep blue eyes were too full of tears. Her orange dress was new, smart, becoming. All Ginny's dresses were becoming—had been even in those distant days when there had been little enough to spend on them. They seemed to love to snuggle close to the warm slenderness of her sweetly curving figure.

She had worn an orange dress the first time she saw Jim. Fresh from college and a business course, she had come to him as a secretary. He had given her letters the morning long, thirty of them, until she thought he would never stop, and a burning resentment had grown in her breast. She had gathered up her notes to do her typing and their eyes had caught and held, and he had smiled. It was as simple as that. . . .

It was as simple as that—meet men all your life with a laugh on your lips, and never the faintest touch of heart trouble; and then one man completely snows you under with work and smiles at you, and you're in love. Foolish Ginny.

Later, on a day of furious dictation, he had stopped suddenly in the middle of a sentence, caught her up in his big arms and kissed her breathless. And that done, he held her close with his head against hers, his deep voice sounding through her being. "Hello," he had said softly. "I love you." And she had whispered back, "Hello. . . . I love you too."

Could it have been two years—those madly swirling days that followed? Take out remembrance, Ginny, like an old love-letter, and read it again. Ten years ago. You are ten years older than twenty-two now, Ginny, and you're still in love with him. Still in love with him—madly in love with him. He's even handsomer now than he was then, Ginny, still the handsomest man you ever saw, with that smile that would make any woman's heart turn over. Heigh-ho, Ginny.

Ginny studied at night after working through the strenuous days. She rented a typewriter and practiced in her room. She got all the company literature and dug into it until at last she was no longer trying to see through a frosted pane of glass, and the picture began to clear. With a gay astonished little laugh she realized that she felt the pulse of the big company, had some inkling of purpose and method. And then she became efficient indeed. She saw the business, and she saw Jim, the company's youngest executive, as an exposed film, and love grew and spread like a spreading fire.

"I want you to know all of me, Ginny, if you will. All my hopes, dreams, thoughts, feelings. I don't want you ever to wonder; I want you to know, and I want to know you. We'll keep our understanding as fresh as a daily newspaper, and we'll love forever, Ginny. Not just love—we'll be in love . . . always, darling."

AND so they had their world, and laughed at and rather pitied the other worlds around them. And each day she felt the power and the thrill of him holding her close; heard his voice whispering the words that were always the same. Sometimes the arms crushed her, and she felt him shaken to his depth. Sometimes he seemed to her like a tired little boy, but always he was there, needing her.

Jim was a marked man. She could detach him from her love and see that clearly. He would go up and up from the minor position he held. But Jim dreamed of an experiment in a business of his own. He had denied himself, saved money toward that end. The mortality rate in established business was high, heaven knew. To try to start a new business, unproved, facing fierce competition, sales-resistance, lack of confidence, on one man's personality, an idea and very little capital, was wild to say the least. But Jim believed in his idea, and she believed in Jim; and above all, she wanted him to do what he wanted to do, so she encouraged it. She went with him, demanding that her salary be cut. He had looked at her long then and smiled. "You would do that for me, Ginny. Just you out of all the world."

The work they had done before was play to what they did now. Ginny lived, breathed, gave her last shred of soul to the struggle. She was on the inside; she shared in triumph and disaster. She was part of it, never on the outside, out of touch, not quite knowing what it was all about. In six months Jim sold a contract to a great company, a contract which would take a year's output.

"We're across, Ginny. This is the steppingstone. The banks will loosen up now, and the rest of the trade will fall in line. Forty thousand in this deal!"

He took a small package from his pocket, and his tired face broke into the smile that was always a little shy and a little wistful. She took the package and opened it. There were two rings. He had carried them with him since the first day he kissed her.

You took a lot for granted, Mister.

"The business doesn't matter so much, except that now I can provide for you as I want to. Ginny, you're all that matters. I need you, I want you. Will you marry me, Ginny?"

SO they were married that afternoon. They went on a week-end honeymoon, and together selected a lovely apartment with windows looking out on the green oasis of a little park.

They had waited so long, and now he wanted her to make a home. A home with Ginny in it, Ginny his wife, waiting for him.

Eight years, and the business had grown beyond all dreams, had been one of the first to turn everything over to war production, with Jim giving all of his energy to the war effort. He had been at a conference in Washington for six weeks.

Ginny stood at the window looking out. This was the tenth anniversary of the day they'd met.

Get out another memory, Ginny: Take it like an old file from a cabinet and read the pages. Go back eight years. You had just married. Did you know then that love burns and sometimes burns out; and when it's gone, it's gone, Ginny, past any recalling? Love is where you find it, and you found it working with a man on the firing-line. Marriage makes a difference—or does it? Didn't something tell you then that if a man must work, you'd better work with him? Didn't you have a feeling in your heart that you might lose touch, come to hear from him only polite generalities? Be on the outside—not the eager pulsing inside, Ginny?

The pigeons swooped and circled again. Ginny watched them alight on the eaves of the building which housed their big assembly plant across the street. She

A story of a girl who discovered that love is where you find it—and marriage is what you make it.

Years

BY HENRY EXALL

ILLUSTRATED BY AL SCHMIDT

turned from the window back to Jim's dearly familiar spacious office, with his great flat-topped desk and her smaller one.

Can you be a wife and make a home and give all of a mother's passionate devotion to a small seven-year-old Jim, and be a secretary too, and keep happiness and love?

Ginny smiled. She took from her desk an opened telegram. "HELLO. I LOVE YOU. ARRIVE 12:10. JIM."

No one else would have heard them so far down the corridor, but Ginny would have felt them at the ends of the earth—footsteps. Her heart beat with them, and her breath bunched up tight in her throat. And then a big man with a touch of white at his temples was through the door. His eyes leaped at sight of her, and an eagerly wistful smile gave to his rugged features a kind of radiance. He caught her up and kissed her breathless, and after a time with his head on her shoulder, he repeated the old refrain.

Later still, with an effort, Ginny murmured dreamily: "I couldn't meet you at the airport. There's an important call due, and I had to stay on the job."

He sat down in a great leather chair and took her with him. He lifted her face. "You're crying, Ginny! What's sad, darling? What's troubling you?"

Ginny's slender fingers straightened his tie, and moved up slowly to rumple his hair.

"I'm crying because I'm happy, Mister." Suddenly her head drooped close against him, her arms clinging fiercely. "Because—because you still love me."

"You're crying, Ginny. What's sad, darling? What's troubling you?" Ginny's slender fingers straightened his tie, moved up slowly to rumple his hair. "I'm crying because I'm happy, Mister."

WHERE ARE WE GOING—AND WHY?

"The Brass

BY CHARLES HURD

General Marshall commands all our armies. He is a tall and quiet-spoken man about whom there never will be a legend. He is not picturesque, but quietly efficient. He has no taste for the limelight and would rather be misunderstood by his own country than understood too well by the enemy.

It takes almost a mile of walking to follow the outermost corridor of the Pentagon Building, the five-sided four-storied structure across the Potomac River from Washington which houses the directing heads of the United States Army. More than fifty other buildings in and around Washington house war activities. This war activity is the most confusing thing that ever has happened to the United States, and yet its objective is the most simple one that ever has faced the country.

We hear charges that it is wasteful and duplicating, that it is inefficient, that it has torn apart the whole normal structure of the United States. Its activities are the subject of violent criticism, acrimonious debate and unending investigations.

We hear that there is no unified command and that there is no primary economic policy. Some of the most violent critics say there is not even a war policy. That is the side of the picture most often read in the newspapers, alongside the stories of our victories abroad, because news from Washington is principally made up of controversial things said by prominent men.

The criticism is healthy, and it is necessary. But there is likewise another

Hats"

The military reporter of the Washington bureau of the New York* Times *presents the so-called "brass hats" not as the typewriter strategists see them, but as they really are—hard-working, highly intelligent and efficient men.

side to the war picture. It is a side that does not obtain enough prominence, and yet it comprises the things that families of soldiers should know, that taxpayers should know, and for which, it seems to me, all of us should be grateful.

This is the story of the "Brass Hats," the professionals, the most criticized of all groups in wartime, but the only men who in the final analysis can win the war for us.

"Brass Hats," and not politicians or military critics, won the Battles of Coral Sea and Midway Island. "Brass Hats" have started rolling back the Japanese in the Southern Pacific. "Brass Hats" conducted the almost bloodless occupation of French North Africa. And most important of all, "Brass Hats," or professional soldiers, are plotting, in a few sequestered offices in the national Capital, the victory that must precede the peace.

Some humorist invented a joke in the last war that officers wore spurs to keep their feet from slipping off the smooth tops of desks at General Headquarters. In this war there isn't a spur in Washington, and in two years of informal calls on the highest ranking "Brass Hats," I have yet to see a foot leisurely propped on a desk.

Speaking generally, there is a lot of red tape in the Army and the Navy that seems pointless to outsiders, including the writer. In my own work I have occasionally raised the roof at censorship rulings and delays. But I also know that the standard work-week for Army officers is six and one-half days a week, and none of the responsible ones can keep up with his work.

You have read hundreds of stories about the civilians who direct the war work, but the men who carry the load of directing military and naval operations—except for occasional feature stories—tend to become lost in the maze of the operations in which they are involved. Most of them have picturesque backgrounds, but their work is prosaic and seldom mentioned except in debate over its merits.

The Army is far more confusing than the Navy, because its growth has been so fantastic—from some 130,000 men three years ago, to a projected 7,500,000 soldiers next year. The Navy will be only doubled or trebled.

The fountain-head of the Army is the office of General George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff. General Marshall was pruning apple trees on his farm the day the Japanese struck Pearl Harbor. He is a tall and quiet-spoken man about whom there never will be a legend. He is not picturesque, but quietly efficient. General Marshall commands all of our armies,

Lt. Gen. Brehon B. Somervell is head of the Services of Supply. It is up to him to provide the army with everything.

Admiral Leahy, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is a man who produced results as the Ambassador to Vichy.

Lt. Gen. Henry H. Arnold, head of the Air Forces, spends most of his time studying the planes to be made next year.

Lt. Gen. Lesley McNair, of the Ground Forces, granted one interview when he assumed his job, then went to work in silence.

but the four stars of his rank on his shoulder-straps are miniature rather than the regulation size. General officers have permission to design their own uniforms, but his are strictly regulation in cloth and cut. His unpleated trousers, tunic lapels, and pocket flaps are precisely to the standard of those prescribed for junior officers.

If General Marshall could inject some of his very warm personality into public speeches, he could avoid a great deal of criticism, but he prefers and necessarily must follow a silent course. He is not an orator. Furthermore, he detests soldiers who have mingled their military duties with a taste for the limelight. He remembers McClellan's failure in the dual rôle of politician and general in the Civil War.

By one rule, General Marshall is ruthless in organizing the Army, but by another test he is most delicate. If you follow the war news you have noted that almost all the outstanding generals are

new men. Lieutenant General Dwight D. Eisenhower was a colonel only a couple of years ago. Marshall personally has selected his new crop of generals, and he personally has broken the formerly well-known men who have disappeared. Yet not one has been publicly degraded.

"We have had to retire hundreds of high officers in the last year," he once told a group of friends. "But why should we do it publicly? These men have given their best, and simply because they could not keep up, or were too old, is no reason for breaking their lives."

THERE will be controversy until the day that peace is signed, over the need for a large army running into the millions. General Marshall set the goal for 7,500,000, but he never has explained the thoughts behind the goal, because he would rather be misunderstood by his own country than understood too well by the enemy. But a few scraps of information which filtered out of the debate over the question of drafting eighteen- and nineteen-year-old boys in November explained something of the things he never discusses publicly.

With about four million men in the Army at that time, it was revealed in November that the few hundreds of thousands of men on foreign duty represented all of the fully trained units then in the Army. The men who landed in Africa and who are pressing the war in the Pacific are well trained because they are the pick of units from among a vast army, one large enough to provide training and maneuvers on a grand scale.

A handful of men in Washington know the blueprint of the war. Many others think they do. General Marshall is one of the men who helped make the blueprint. He is working toward a goal that represents the maximum need to win complete victory. The makers of the blueprint may be wrong, but the first steps indicate otherwise.

Since the Chief of Staff of any Army such as ours has too many responsibilities to worry about details, General Marshall broke the top responsibility three ways, picked a man to head each branch, and at the same time pulled a master political stroke. He divided the Army into the Ground Forces, the Air Forces and the Services of Supply, and put a lieutenant general at the head of each.

Lesley McNair heads the Ground Forces. He held one press conference the first week he was in his new job, explained something about the needs of modern mechanized warfare, and then went to work in silence.

More picturesque and more publicized is Henry H. Arnold, the laughing "Hap" Arnold, who heads the Air Forces. He is the senior pilot in the Army. In the course of the war he had been twice to Britain and once to Australia. When foreign types of planes were getting showers of favorable publicity earlier in the war, he had the hottest seat in the Army, because our types of planes were his personal responsibility.

"Hap" Arnold sat tight and silent, and waited while our planes, when finally in action in mass, piled up scores that for months have averaged six to one, and while our bombers in Europe have demonstrated they can operate in relative safety without fighter protection.

Arnold spends most of his time studying planes that will be made next year, but about every two weeks he hops out to see how his boys are doing. As a little extra fillip for the Air Forces, he flew to Washington from Brisbane, Australia, in seventy-seven hours and eleven minutes, setting a new world's record in a standard Army plane.

HEAD of the Services of Supply is Lieutenant General Brehon B. Somervell, whose responsibility is to supply the Army with everything it needs to eat, fight with, and wear, as well as to produce all the manufactured goods required for Lend-Lease.

Somervell has got quite a little unwelcome publicity over his alleged dispute with the various civilian agencies set up to control or assist war production. It has been difficult to determine whether this really was a fight. It rather was a divergence in methods. When Somervell is told that he has a certain amount of time in which to produce five thousand tanks or to procure three million pairs of shoes, it is his nature to get them. In our system of democratic operation, no one—including Somervell—wants to see military control clamped on the country's economy; but Somervell is going to get his tanks and his shoes.

Somervell is a man with all the social graces, plus something else. As an engineer officer in the last war he wrought construction miracles in France. Do you remember the Army colonel who was placed in charge of W.P.A. in New York State when it got into a mess, and who came out of it a national figure? That was Somervell.

Now for that master political stroke by General Marshall. It concerns the position of General Arnold. As you see, the Army is divided into three principal commands, with General Arnold heading one of them. But General Marshall also has been well aware of the demands for an autonomous Air Force. With the cooperation of President Roosevelt, as Commander in Chief, he gave Arnold what amounts to autonomy while keeping the Air Force as an integral part of the Army.

This semi-autonomy results in Arnold sharing equally with Marshall the honors of the national group and the international group in which the basic operations of the war are designed.

The only man who, under our Constitutional form of government, can order an invasion or put in action a military plan, is the President of the United States. Mr. Roosevelt did not invent that formula, as so many people seem to think. He is the boss, just as every other war-time President has carried full responsibility.

The President invented the organization known as the Joint Chiefs of Staff, while circumstances which made Washington the directing center of the war evolved the Combined Chiefs of Staff.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff are General Marshall, Admiral Ernest J. King, Commander-in-Chief of the Navy, and General Arnold, who, in the White House conferences, sits equally with his superior, General Marshall. In order to avoid appearance that one or another of the three men is superior to the other two, Mr. Roosevelt designated Admiral William H. Leahy, retired, as chairman of the group.

Admiral Leahy is a quiet-spoken man who climbed without fanfare up the Navy ladder to retirement, and then won fame as the Ambassador to Vichy who mollified the Axis-controlled government there until we were strong enough to back our position in Europe.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff may not be the perfect substitute for a single military directing head for the war, but the organization does avert jealousy such as certainly would arise if a general were put over the Navy, or an admiral over the Army, or an air man over both.

How these men work is one of the great military secrets of Washington. But the results of their work have met many severe tests, including a lot of early bluffing in the war.

Among results we can see are numerous examples in the Pacific. In the North, in the Aleutians, there is a formidable Army Air Force command operating under naval control and operating mighty effectively. The Hawaiian Islands are under an Air Force general.

IT might be better to have one commander in the South Pacific, but up to now the results could hardly have been improved. General Douglas MacArthur commands in Australia and to the northward, including New Guinea. Admiral William F. Halsey, Jr., has command of everything to the eastward, including New Caledonia, the Hebrides, the Fiji Islands and the Solomons. But don't think for a minute that MacArthur and Halsey are fighting separate wars with the Japanese.

MacArthur has a little navy of his own, lent by Admiral Halsey. Ever since the Solomons campaign began, the marines and soldiers there—yes, the soldiers also are under the Navy—have been supported by daily raids by MacArthur's bombers on the Japanese bases in the northern Solomons. Down in New Caledonia, or thereabouts, there is a full force of Army bombers commanded by Major General Millard F. Harmon, who take their orders from Admiral Halsey.

Next Month:

"YES IS A LITTLE WORD"

A Romantic Novel by

HARLOW ESTES

who won the $10,000 Prize offered by REDBOOK MAGAZINE and DODD MEAD, Publishers, in 1940

COMPLETE IN ONE ISSUE

These are only a few of many examples. They do illustrate the manner in which the Joint Chiefs of Staff, by their quiet conferences here, solve the problem of unified operations.

When James V. Forrestal, Under Secretary of the Navy, returned from a 25,000-mile tour of the Pacific war area, he said: "The closer you get to the shooting, the more you see how unified the command is."

ALMOST every morning, Marshall, King and Arnold keep another date together, when they meet with the Combined Chiefs of Staff. All the United Nations are represented on the Combined Chiefs of Staff, but the actual work and the big decisions fall on the American and British members.

The ranking member of the British group is Field Marshal Sir John Dill. Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham represented the Royal Navy, until he departed to command the force of hundreds of warships which supported the invasion and occupation of French North Africa.

The Combined Chiefs of Staff represent a compromise with the demand for an over-all commander of all the armies of the United Nations. Maybe there should be such a commander, but the test is whether the war goes as it should.

Thus far, the Combined Chiefs of Staff plan has not done too badly in placing armies in the field under commanders of unquestioned authority. Australia was the first test. By approval of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, MacArthur was given supreme command over Australian and the later-arriving American forces, with the blessing of the Australian Government.

The occupation of French North Africa offered a stiffer problem but an equally friendly solution. Most of the initial landing forces there were American, and so an American officer, General Eisenhower, was given supreme command of the North African Army. The naval forces were British by a large majority, so Admiral Cunningham was given control of the British and American warships and transports.

It was not possible, however, to have a fleet and an army working on the same job under separate command. Therefore, Eisenhower was placed over Cunningham. It should be noted, also, that when the British First Army was landed in North Africa, after our occupation, to carry the brunt of the march on Tunisia, its commander, who was Lieutenant General Kenneth A. N. Anderson, served also under Eisenhower.

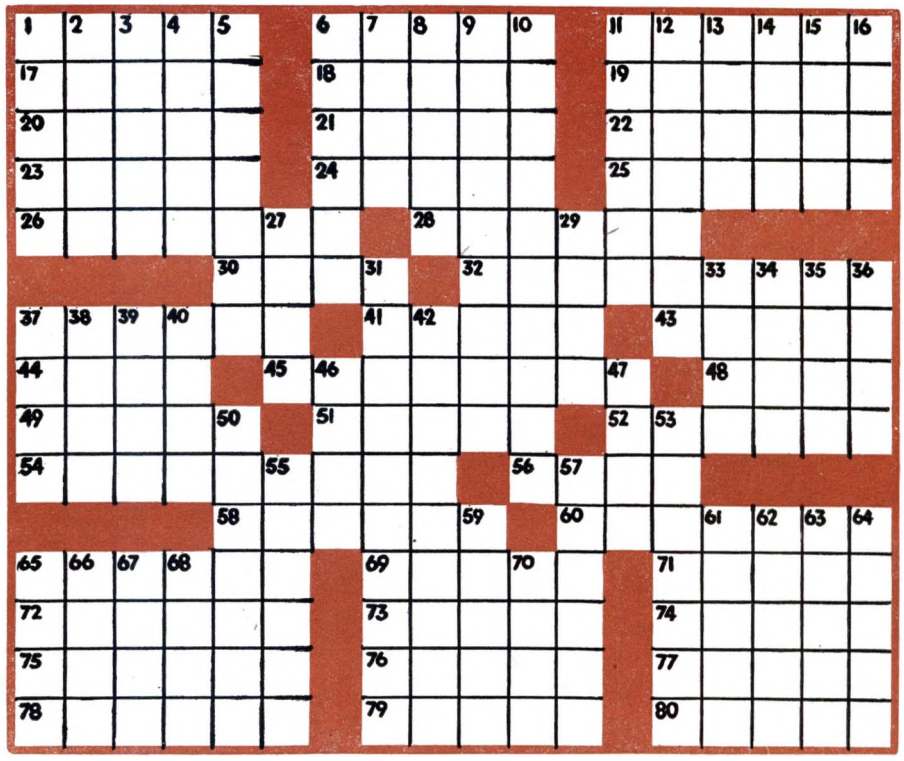
If the test of machinery is how it works, the first major steps seem to indicate that the ponderous and overlapping plan of joint and combined chiefs of staffs seems to fill the bill.

Nothing in this piece is intended to argue that improvements cannot and will not be made in the conduct of war operations, particularly on the front of organization for the great struggles yet to come. But as a questioning reporter, I do feel strongly that we are too prone to overlook the quiet and orderly manner in which the dreadful responsibility of fighting the war is being carried out. Certainly the results are encouraging.

Redbook's Crossword Puzzle of the Month

EDITED BY ALBERT H. MOREHEAD

The definitions below are tricky—look out for puns, anagrams, "hidden words," phonetic spellings, and other word-games. But a straight dictionary definition is usually included, if you can find it. The solution appears on page 94.



ACROSS

1 This passion for fame comes around fifty
6 Fast car starts off in reverse
11 So slim and lithe
17 Oppressed, I make a denial
18 Run off to get married, like five-sixths of people
19 A rogue begins to be wicked
20 A terminal on the electric line
21 Tsarist didn't use to tease about these garments
22 Sped around in a proof of having backbone
23 Marcus may return if you get out
24 A heroine in the toils
25 A ten-gal. snarl
26 Search in Hegel for this listing
28 Writers err in hiding their briefer works
30 These are times when one's confused
32 Pasting in assorted pictures
37 Reluctant and disorderly as ever
41 Art is moving around
43 I leave a mixture of poison for a spy
44 Judge from this concoction of acid
45 Ten lines for a soldier to guard
48 Rushed from the midst of the stores
49 A word chosen for campaign posters
51 This Parisian finishes the pie, but you get a slice
52 Made up, but could arrange no date
54 Portuguese miss, anagrammatically, is another
56 The Rain Came to the Hindu queen
58 Amble around the sea when the winds die away
60 Err, but with tact apologize
65 Are red again
69 Make arise
71 Buster Brown's dog starts for a cat
72 This is manifest in Venice
73 Henrik is with Ben
74 Escape from the eaved structure
75 Cop caught in a lie
76 Extreme view of art on the way back
77 Try to get a rest from the present prices
78 Rarely is the arrangement of a melodist without it
79 Plateaux in a mess
80 These give good rides (but there's no ad for saddles here)

DOWN

1 Brilliant halfback gets another letter
2 Clean but complicated cut
3 Love may begin with a fuss
4 Lamed in a mêlée, gets a decoration
5 See me in a mix-up with my foes
6 Reigns, but under new arrangement must abdicate
7 , poor Yorick
8 Landscapist
9 Pertaining to a functional disease
10 Arresting agent brings one nearer stir
11 Be unusually silent
12 Trims pa and tells
13 Turn around and get those Zero pilots
14 So ordered, the guns hummed
15 The altered rôle of the city in Russia
16 Persian homonym for a reward
27 As times change, expect denials
29 If I were you, father would be positive
31 Arm Tunisia and get a more healthful place
33 Who gets inside? Not I!
34 Rises at 12, descends without a moment lost
35 Ogre casts about for blood
36 Spurted, avoiding the rut in the center
37 In case they fly
38 Farewell servant who forgot tea
39 Paradise was generated with great loss
40 A missing chair is worth a lot
42 Can be lifted
46 Long poem sponsored by Upton Sinclair
47 A lean mixture for the road
50 Cabot & Co. discover an American leaf
53 Tritest way to get laughs
55 Start in the red, pay in full
57 As near, in a way, as the stands
59 Obscures issue by saying anti-communism is tsarism
61 Enemy returns to the lair around five
62 Stone taw
63 Declined, gave up nothing
64 I can arrange hair for my sister
65 Air makes repairs in fabrics
66 There's nothing in Eve to suggest this cry
67 Stream starts in Rhode Island but ends 50-50
68 Come up and have dinner, Mrs. Geraint
70 Antitoxins come from the ears

Parental

BY SIDONIE GRUENBERG (DIRECTOR, CHILD STUDY ASSOCIATION) AND HILDA SIDNEY
DRAWINGS BY LUCILLE CORCOS

WHERE ARE WE GOING AND WHY?

"First things first" is a phrase that has become familiar to all of us in recent months, and it represents a concept that we have accepted completely. We recognize that we must let certain things wait for future consideration, while we concentrate on the essentials.

In the delicate matter of bringing up our children, however, it is not always easy to know just what the essentials are. We are willing, here as everywhere else, to do without certain things and to wait for others, so long as we can see, fairly clearly, our objectives. All of us want to do everything that is humanly possible for our children. But so often it is hard to know which values are the real ones, and so it is hard to know what things should come first.

This set of questions with the accompanying answers, cannot solve all your problems. It can merely suggest what kinds of attitudes we believe will yield the most satisfactory results in the long run. It may also help you to understand some of the basic needs and motives underlying your child's behavior, and enable you more easily to help him become adjusted to this very complex world.

There are twenty statements to be marked *"Yes"* or *"No,"* each one counting five points. Therefore the perfect parent will make a score of one hundred; but so far, the perfect parent has not been found on land or sea. Of course, we do not believe a questionnaire of this sort can give an absolutely accurate numerical scoring. What it can offer is a method by which parents may discover whether or not they are on the right road and headed in the right direction.

Those of you who score above seventy may heave a huge sigh of relief. And whatever your score, we sincerely hope that in the process of pondering about the questions and reflecting on the reasons for the answers, you will get some orientation with respect to relative values and objectives in the training of your children.

1 *A mother who spends many hours away from home, at her job or as a volunteer in civilian defense, can be just as good a mother as the one who devotes all her time to her children.* YES ☐ NO ☐

2 *Regular mealtime and bedtime should take priority over everything else. Making exceptions for occasional outings, or for seeing relatives and friends of the family, prevents the establishment of good habits.* YES ☐ NO ☐

3 *There should be fixed, in the child's mind, a Head of the House.* YES ☐ NO ☐

4 *Radio listening should be confined to the hours when children are not present, and every effort should be made to keep war news and reports of disaster away from them.* YES ☐ NO ☐

5 *Even if he doesn't put away all his tools (hammers and nails, clay and paint, stamps or scissors or paste), it is important for a child to have active and absorbing interests.* YES ☐ NO ☐

6 *The father of a three-year-old and a five-year-old is overseas with the U. S. Army. The mother should make a point of bringing his name into conversations. She should have the children dictate their daily doings in letters to him.* YES ☐ NO ☐

Priorities

This timely article will help you to understand some of the basic needs and motives underlying your child's behavior, so that you, in turn, can help your child become adjusted to this complex war world.

7 *A child who has been careless with money should have his allowance taken away from him.* YES ☐ NO ☐

8 *Children should be allowed to hear their parents discussing questions and issues about which they disagree.* YES ☐ NO ☐

9 *Grown-ups should not interfere with children who are playing at dive-bombing, guerrilla warfare, etc.* YES ☐ NO ☐

10 *A child is stimulated to greater effort by having the achievements of a brother, sister, cousin or playmate held up before him.* YES ☐ NO ☐

11 *A boy has stolen a number of things from his parents at home, and from the desks of playmates at school, but when questioned, confessed freely to the thefts. Therefore the whole matter should be forgotten.* YES ☐ NO ☐

12 *Boys and girls do not outgrow their childish jealousies and fears along with their childish shoes and clothing. Unless properly handled, they may become the basis for a lifelong maladjustment.* YES ☐ NO ☐

13 *When both the parents work, young children should know about their comparative earnings?* YES ☐ NO ☐

14 *You should insist that your child finish everything on his plate.* YES ☐ NO ☐

15 *When a six-year-old tells you with a perfectly solemn face that he beat up two big boys from the third grade, he should be punished so that he doesn't get in the habit of lying.* YES ☐ NO ☐

16 ***A four-year-old girl with a new little brother has recently gone back to thumb-sucking and baby-talk. Although she adores the baby, is it still possible that jealousy may be the cause of her slipping back to her infantile ways?*** YES ☐ NO ☐

17 ***If there is a good children's movie in the neighborhood, should you take your two children of nine and six—even though the older one didn't go to the movies till he was seven?*** YES ☐ NO ☐

18 ***A child who is always "good," quiet and submissive, may be just as unadjusted as the child who is aggressive and always getting into trouble.*** YES ☐ NO ☐

19 ***A twelve-year-old girl spends nearly all of her allowance buying treats for her friends. This shows an unusually generous disposition and should be encouraged.*** YES ☐ NO ☐

20 ***If you have always been very understanding of your children and have brought them up "according to Hoyle," they will go sailing through the difficult teen-age without any trouble.*** YES ☐ NO ☐

ANSWERS

1 YES. It is the "quality" of the time she spends with her children that counts —not the "quantity."

2 NO. "Good times" are an essential part of "good management." And friendly visits sometimes takes priority over routine—especially in these days, when visits are less frequent.

3 NO. Father and Mother should share equally as symbols of authority and security.

4 NO. Overprotection makes children feel "excluded," and adds to their anxiety. Discretion must, of course, be used as to how much radio listening and when.

5 YES. Neatness is important, but the ardent pursuit of a hobby (even a messy one) takes priority.

6 YES. It is very important to keep the soldier-father a vital part of the family picture.

7 NO. That is like keeping him away from the water until he has learned to swim.

8 YES. Only when parents use their differences of opinion to belittle each other is it destructive. Children can learn very early that fine and intelligent people often disagree. This is one of the fundamental lessons in democracy.

9 YES. Children must be allowed to get their feelings of aggression out of their systems. All children's games are imitative, and peace on earth will not come through snatching war-toys away from boys and girls.

10 NO. He is more likely to grow discouraged and to hate the "shining example."

11 NO. This child is in trouble. Admitting his guilt will not make his inner difficulties disappear.

12 YES. They need help, understanding and sympathy.

13 NO. The spirit should be that it's "our" money—there should be no "mine" and "thine" in the relationship.

14 NO. Feeding problems often start with forcing. Servings should be small, but enjoyment of food takes priority over the consumption of an arbitrary number of calories and vitamins.

15 NO. Most young children, in the process of becoming truthful, tell lies for one reason or another. This type of lie is merely a kind of showing off. Let *him* know that *you* know it's not true—but treat it lightly.

16 YES. She doesn't know she's jealous, but such behavior shows she feels deposed from her throne. She wants the same kind of adoration as the newcomer is getting—and as much of it!

17 YES. Leaving the little one home would spoil the family party, and the older child must learn that "justice" should not be interpreted so narrowly. He should, however, enjoy certain privileges by virtue of being the oldest.

18 YES. He may not be *accepting* authority—merely *submitting* to it. Such a child often escapes into fantasy for satisfaction instead of facing the real situation.

19 NO. Such a strong desire to "buy" popularity is more likely to indicate the child's feeling of inadequacy. She should be helped to develop qualities that will make her friends like her for her own sake.

20 NO. Rebelling against one's parents, questioning and doubting, is part of growing up. The reward for your early efforts will come later, when you face each other as two adults. During the storm-and-stress period try to maintain your patience, faith and sense of humor.

In The Minute Before It Would Strike

(This story is continued from page 33)

was swinging off to starboard. He gave the order to the helmsman, then stared out of the bridge window once again.

But Mary, what about her? Wasn't she the one he really loved? They'd got along so swell together always; he knew that she still loved him passionately, and yet she sort of mothered him besides. Lately he'd tried staring at the photograph of her and little Jack and Jane, forcing himself to think of what they would be doing. In the morning, Mary would walk downtown with the kids to do the marketing; she wouldn't drive the car if she could help it—she said every drop of gas she used meant just more time at sea for him. The clerks would all engage her in long friendly conversations; she was the kind whom people always told their troubles to.

Then, in the afternoon, she'd work around the house, his house and hers that they had bought together. Maybe she was painting the game-room in the cellar; he suspected she was going to do it as a surprise for him. In the evening she'd be writing him her daily letter, full of all the cheerful little things she'd thought up to amuse him since she'd written last. And then she'd go to bed in their enormous old four-poster. She'd lie there missing him and worrying about him; then finally she'd take his pillow in her arms and go to sleep. He knew all this, but now he had to make a conscious effort to remember it. It was Stella's face that kept coming most vividly into his mind. . . .

"Torpedo on the starboard bow!" Davis saw it the same instant that the lookout yelled: a long white phosphorescent wake, streaking toward them through the water. He leaped to the engine-room telegraph and rocked back the arm for full astern. "Hard aport," he shouted to the helmsman, and sounded the alarm for general quarters. He could feel the old *Norlina* tremble as the engine-room obeyed the signal. Already the crew was pouring up on deck, and the Captain had rushed up from his stateroom to the bridge. But the *Norlina* couldn't turn or back down fast enough: the torpedo's deadly wake was just a few yards now from the bow. In a minute it would strike; it would probably ignite the oil in the forward tanks, and the entire bow and bridge would go up in a sheet of flame.

Then suddenly the torpedo began to act in a peculiar manner. Right beneath the bow it broached out of the water, turned and twisted playfully, then dived and came up on the other side. *"Porpoise!"* everybody shouted it at once, and Davis turned apologetically to the Captain. "I'm sorry, sir," he said. But the Captain slapped him on the back. "That's all right, Mister, you can never tell. Better to mistake a porpoise for a torpedo than to have it be the other way around."

No sooner had the Captain left the bridge than Boyle stuck his head inside the door. "How about it, Davis? Didn't you wish that you were back at San Neria when you saw that torpedo coming off the bow?" But Davis only grinned. Boyle couldn't get his goat that way—not any longer: everything was O. K. now. In that split second just when the torpedo would have struck, he'd seen Mary more vividly than he had ever done before, lying tragically alone in their four-poster, with his pillow in her arms.

Sorry, the Postman says "No!"

WE WISH we could mail you a Four Roses Hot Toddy—just to let you know what a downright marvelous cold-weather drink it is.

We can't. So we suggest the next best thing:

If you haven't a bottle of Four Roses on hand, get one at the nearest liquor store and follow our recipe for the world's finest hot toddy.

Then settle back in your favorite chair before the fire and slowly sip the warm and fragrant masterpiece that you and Four Roses have created!

Recipe for
the world's finest Hot Toddy

Put a piece of sugar in the bottom of a glass and dissolve it with a little hot water. Add a twist of lemon peel (bruise it firmly) . . . four cloves and, if you desire, a stick of cinnamon. Pour in a generous jigger of that matchless whiskey, Four Roses . . . and fill the glass with steaming hot water.

Frankfort Distilleries, Inc., Louisville & Baltimore.

FOUR ROSES

A blend of straight whiskies—90 proof

For you...New loveliness, New happiness!

go on the CAMAY MILD-SOAP DIET!

MRS. GEORGE A. HORVATH, of New York City, says: *"I'm just thrilled with the new loveliness the Camay Mild-Soap diet has brought to my skin!"*

THE JOY of a lovelier skin can be yours—sooner than you think! Try the beauty secret of so many brides—the Camay Mild-Soap Diet. It can help you so much.

For you may not be cleansing your skin properly...you may even be using a soap that's not mild enough! Skin specialists say that many women make these mistakes.

That's why we say, "Go on the Camay Mild-Soap Diet." Camay is proved milder than dozens of other popular beauty soaps. Notice from the very start, the Camay Mild-Soap Diet makes your skin feel fresh and alive! Then continue faithfully—see how soon thrilling new loveliness will be yours.

Tonight—go on the CAMAY MILD-SOAP DIET

Work Camay's rich lather over your skin. *Feel its mildness!* Give special attention to nose, nostrils, chin—Camay's thorough care counts there! Rinse warm . . . and if skin's oily, splash cold for 30 seconds!

In the morning—a quick "freshen up" with Camay. Follow this beauty routine faithfully—twice each day. Remember it's this regularity—with Camay's wonderful mildness—that means new loveliness for you.

America's Most Beautiful Brides Are On The Mild-Soap Diet!

T. M. Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.

What's on *Your* Mind?

(This feature is continued from page 10)

my husband deciding we don't need that week we had planned to take off between war-plant construction jobs; and I, realizing finally that until destruction is destroyed, there can be no rest, no peace, anywhere—and praying that he's alive to fight and then to build.

Louisiana.

★ *A Mother's Faith*

THERE is much on my mind—much that is serious, for today my little nine-year-old son came into the house after collecting a big pile of scrap, with a broad, satisfied grin on his little brown face. "Betcha this'll help lick those old Japs," he said, and there was a proud, eager look in his eyes as he told me how his class had collected more scrap than any other class in school. This is my problem—keeping alive in him that pride and eagerness to help his country win this war. I have read much about the tasks and duties of mothers in wartime. Mine is a big job—much bigger than that of some mothers, for I am a Negro mother; and first, in order to keep that pride and love of his country alive in the heart of my little boy, I've got to fight against the resentment and discouragement that wells up sometimes in my own heart.

The fanatics in my own race almost cause me to waver at times. They say: "What are we fighting for? If we help win the war, we will continue to be kicked around, discriminated against, denied the right to make a decent living." But I don't waver long, for I begin to think about the conquered countries under Hitler's beastly rule, and the atrocities the minority races in these countries have had to suffer.

I have faith in the goodness of America, because I am an American. When my little boy comes to me with a look of bewilderment in his eyes, and says, "I want to do this, or I want to be that, when I grow up, but Joe says I can't because I'm colored. Can't I, Mamma?" I point out to him the achievements of the colored artists, musicians, scientists, and champions in the world of sports, and I say: "Where would they be if they had said—'I can't because I'm colored'?"

Yes, I have faith in America, and I love it. I believe in it in spite of the fanatics. I believe that America will eventually wipe out this challenge to her democracy, and that the time will come when no person need fear that he cannot become a truly great American because of race, color or creed. I believe that after we win this war, we will emerge as an even greater nation. I will keep this faith alive in my own heart, and in the heart of my little boy.

Georgia.

For Lack of a Word from Him

(This story is continued from page 51)
to be divorced. Such stories were the commonplace of the Middle East. But it was the first personal example he had had: the first time that it had happened to anyone he knew.

And for it to have happened to Willis too! Willis was such a decent, quiet, self-respecting fellow, so punctilious about his work—work for which he had no real aptitude but at which he had made himself proficient, out of a sense of duty: Willis, whose whole world had been centered on this girl; who wasn't one of those resilient, happy-go-lucky people who can shrug off such things with "There are as good fish in the sea." Willis wasn't capable of that, poor devil. . . .

Pity seized him, and anger and frustration; a sense, too, unexpectedly, of relief: of personal relief in his own safety, in the knowledge that to himself nothing like this could ever happen. How wise he had been to form that pact, that self-denying ordinance with Judy:

"Darling," he had told her, "it's been heaven—more than heaven. I can't believe that the time will ever come when it'll be any less heaven. We can't tell, though, how long the war'll last. We can't tell how we'll be feeling about each other, about anything, in a year's, in two years', in maybe three years' time. Let's make no vows. Let's make no attempt to keep in touch. No telegrams, no letters. Let's just remember, and then as soon as I'm back, let's get in touch; and darling, if we feel the same way, *then*—"

That was the pact that they had made. In all conscience, it had been hard enough to keep—during the long nine weeks' journey around the Cape, when her memory had been a ghost beside him; during the excitement of his first weeks in the Middle East, when everything had been new to him; during the monotony of these recent months when turning the pages of an old diary he had thought: "A year ago today." How he had longed for the sight of her handwriting on an envelope! How he had longed to "talk" to her on paper! How often while censoring the men's mail had he not felt envious! Yes, how he had been wise, hadn't he? He could never receive a letter such as Willis had. No matter how long the war lasted, he could go on believing that at the end he would find her waiting.

THROUGH the flap of his tent he could see Willis alone beside the gun-pits. He walked across to him. One should not, he knew, refer to anything that he had read in a man's letter. The censorship was like the confessional. There were times, though, when it was wise because it was human to ignore regulations, when a man was grateful for the opportunity of getting a thing off his chest.

"I'm sorry," he said, "about your trouble."

Willis shrugged. "It's what I half-expected, sir," he said. "Anne's a lively person, always on the lookout for fun. I was really a bit old for her. If we could have married right away, if I hadn't had to come out here I might have been able—well, to steady her. But with me away, and her not knowing how long the thing will last—well, sir, one's only young once, with no one to rely upon, not seeing her future clear, if you get me, sir. I thought that if I wrote a lot, if I sent her things, showed her that she was mattering as much as ever, it might make her feel that—well, things would be all right in the end. It was too long, though, sir, too far away, and not being able to see an end to it. I suppose I've always known it was bound to happen. I only hope—she's a headstrong girl, sir—I only hope she's found a decent fellow."

It was said simply, undramatically, on a level tone without inflections. Its simplicity both touched and humbled the officer who stood beside him. How selflessly, how unselfishly, he reflected, this man had loved!

Willis had thought of one thing only, of how he could make things easier for his girl. It was of her only that he had thought. Whereas he himself, had he at any time, at any point, thought of anything except himself, of how he might protect himself, insure his own peace of mind?

Had he once thought of Judy, of how *she* would be affected by this self-denying ordinance?

SLOWLY, pensively, he walked from the gun-position to his tent. On the canvas camp table lay the pile of letters, Willis' at the top of it. Ten minutes back, it was with a sense of relief, of personal satisfaction, that he had stuck down that letter.

But he felt ashamed now of that feeling. What had he to be proud of after all? He had forged himself an armor, yes, but only by taking away Judy's. For all he knew, Judy might have remembered him no longer than Willis had been remembered by his girl. Yes, but on the other hand there was an equal chance that back in England, lonely and abandoned, she was on the verge in her loneliness, of taking a step that she would regret all her life.

With a sudden resolve he pulled forward a sheet of paper. His whole life might be ruined for the lack of a word, a sign from him, a proof, a reassurance that he was still dreaming of, still planning, that shared life between them. What was the use of armor to him, what right had he to armor, if his wearing of it left her vulnerable?

"Beloved," he wrote, "that self-denying ordinance was nonsense. Am missing you more than ever, Judy. Please, please write."

Within a week that telegram would have reached her. Within six weeks he would have started to fret anxiously, longing for, yet dreading that first letter. From now on he would know no certainty, no peace of mind. He had flung away his armor. Yet it was with pride and happiness that he faced his own complete defenselessness.

"Just 30 extra seconds and I'm *Fragrantly Dainty* for hours"

"HOW MANY GIRLS realize, I wonder, how their popularity can be wrecked by body staleness? It took me months and months—lonely months—to learn my lesson. Now it takes me just 30 extra seconds to stay fragrantly dainty for hours. Watch:

"FIRST, I dry my body gently after my bath—just patting the places that might chafe."

"NEXT, I powder my whole body with Cashmere Bouquet Talcum. Thirty extra seconds . . . yet it clings to me silky-soft as face powder and dries up any moisture I missed. There I stand, delicately perfumed all over . . . Now I know why you call it—*the fragrance men love!*"

"NOW my girdle—lingerie—stockings and frock. No chafing later; Cashmere Bouquet's silky feel stays on all evening. *And so does the fragrance men love*—to keep me fragrantly dainty for hours!"

Cashmere Bouquet is a body talcum of face powder quality—the largest selling talcum powder in America. You'll love its haunting fragrance and clinging softness. Make it your daintiness secret. 10¢ and larger sizes, at drug and toilet goods counters.

Cashmere Bouquet Talcum

WITH THE FRAGRANCE MEN LO

The Hit of the Month Club

recommends

PARAMOUNT'S

ALAN LADD

as

"Lucky Jordan"

He's on the loose again — this time with Helen Walker — whose blonde beauty hides the kind of fire Alan fans to full blaze. Everybody's after "Lucky Jordan"—but he's too hot for a girl to fool with — too tough for a mob to break!

And don't miss Alan's first starring hit—"Lucky Jordan"!

How would you like a photograph of your Alan Ladd completely free? Merely write to Paramount Pictures, Inc., Room 1210, 1501 Broadway, N. Y. C. — and one will be mailed you immediately.

ALSO ON YOUR CHECK LIST AS A "MUST-SEE": Paramount's

"STAR SPANGLED RHYTHM"

With almost as many stars as the flag! 43—count 'em—43! 7 great songs! A million laughs! No matter who your favorite stars are—you'll see 'em and cheer 'em in this picture! It's a once-in-a-lifetime hit—so be sure to see it!

ASK YOUR THEATRE MANAGER WHEN THESE PARAMOUNT HITS ARE COMING

Redbook's Film Suggestions for All the Family

Betty Hutton and Victor Moore in Paramount's musical revue.

Rosalind Russell and Herbert Marshall in RKO's war picture.

★ *STAR SPANGLED RHYTHM*

THIS is a lavish all-star musical revue and spectacle, the first in a series of pictures pointing a new trend in Hollywood film entertainment. By a simple plot device whereby a group of sailors on a sight-seeing trip is spirited into the Paramount studio, the opportunity is offered to bring together in a song-and-dance show virtually all the top star talent on the lot.

One of the sailor lads is played by Eddie Bracken, who has been told that his father, played by Victor Moore, is the top man at the studio. Actually the old gentleman occupies a humble position as gateman, but one of the girls at the studio persuades him to pose as the big shot so that his son and companions won't be let down. The upshot is a series of hilarious episodes which throws the organization into utter confusion when the real executive shows up and tries to get into his office.

Cecil B. DeMille is only one of a number of Paramount dignitaries who appear in the plot. The picture winds up with a show which takes place in the canteen where the ship is in port. Participating in this are Bob Hope, Fred MacMurray, Paulette Goddard, Betty Hutton, Bing Crosby, Dorothy Lamour and many other top names. (Paramount)

★ *FLIGHT FOR FREEDOM*

AN unusual and striking war picture, in that documentary evidence is used to back up the theory, held by many authorities, that one of America's foremost woman flyers perished in the South Pacific a number of years ago while performing a special and dangerous mission for the U. S. Navy.

According to the story as developed in the picture, this renowned aviatrix was to start out on a round-the-world flight and then pretend to be forced down near the Japanese mandated islands, thus furnishing our Navy with an excuse to search for her and find out if there was any truth in reports that the Japanese were secretly fortifying these islands in defiance of international agreements.

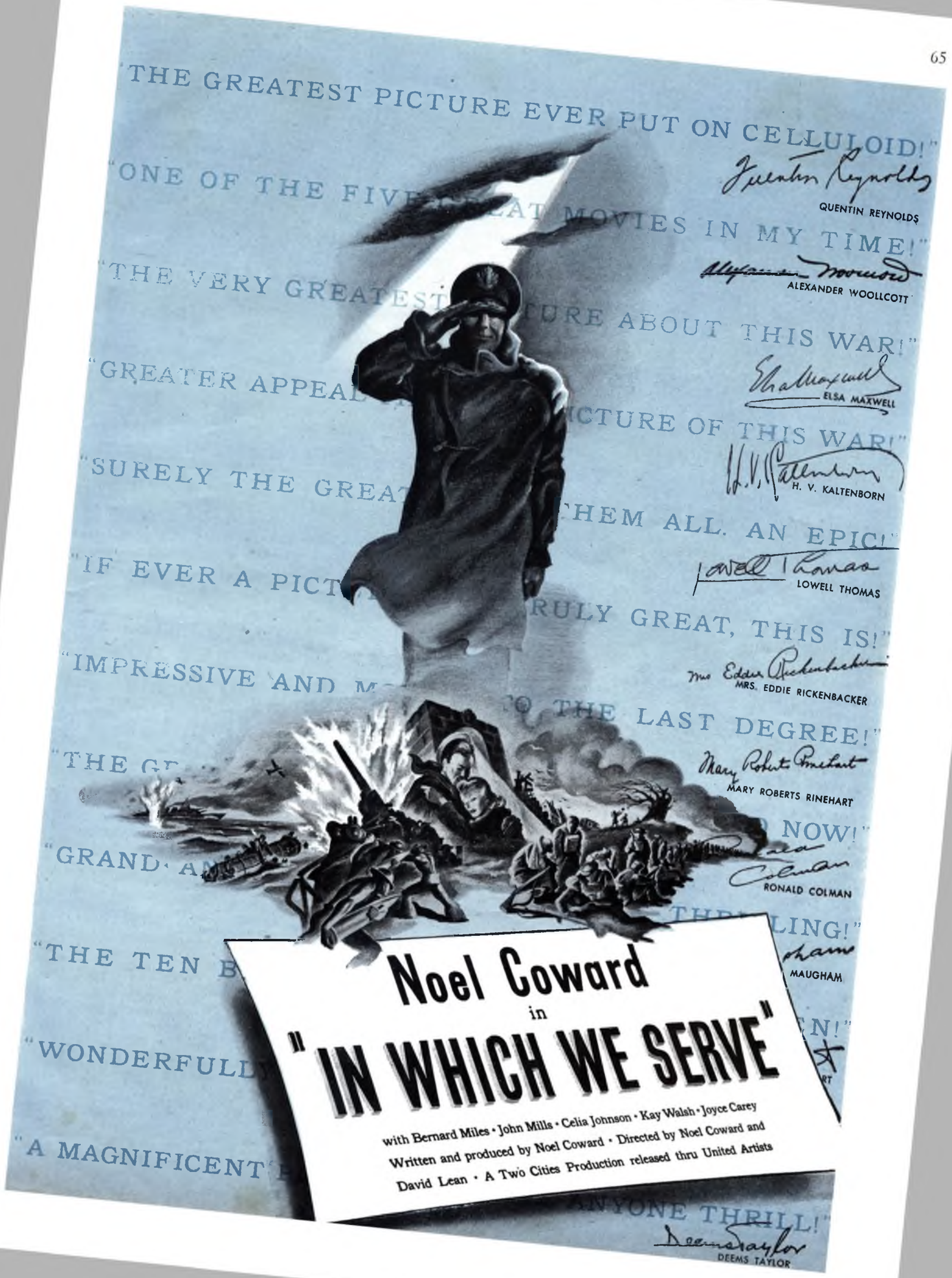
As recounted in the picture, the heroic work of this woman and her navigator resulted in the acquisition of invaluable information by our Navy.

This picture is most timely, as it is placed in an area once remote, but now close to the concern of many Americans, whose boys are battling about the perimeter of the Japanese "mandate."

The story is told as a biography, with Rosalind Russell portraying the flyer. Fred MacMurray is the navigator, and others in the cast include Herbert Marshall and Eduardo Ciannelli. (RKO)

Eddie Bracken and Paulette Goddard in "Star Spangled Rhythm."

Eduardo Ciannelli and Rosalind Russell in "Flight for Freedom."


"THE GREATEST PICTURE EVER PUT ON CELLULOID!"
QUENTIN REYNOLDS
"ONE OF THE FIVE GREAT MOVIES IN MY TIME!"
ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT
"THE VERY GREATEST PICTURE ABOUT THIS WAR!"
ELSA MAXWELL
"GREATER APPEAL THAN ANY PICTURE OF THIS WAR!"
H. V. KALTENBORN
"SURELY THE GREATEST OF THEM ALL. AN EPIC!"
LOWELL THOMAS
"IF EVER A PICTURE WAS TRULY GREAT, THIS IS!"
MRS. EDDIE RICKENBACKER
"IMPRESSIVE AND MAGNIFICENT TO THE LAST DEGREE!"
MARY ROBERTS RINEHART
"GRAND AND GLORIOUS NOW!"
RONALD COLMAN
"THE TEN BEST THRILLING!"
MAUGHAM
"WONDERFULLY
"A MAGNIFICENT
ANYONE THRILL!"
DEEMS TAYLOR
Noel Coward
in
"IN WHICH WE SERVE"
with Bernard Miles • John Mills • Celia Johnson • Kay Walsh • Joyce Carey
Written and produced by Noel Coward • Directed by Noel Coward and
David Lean • A Two Cities Production released thru United Artists

The Case of the Rich Recluse

(This story is continued from page 39)

so it still is said. Such rumors never die. They have the longevity of burdocks. I grew tired of people tightening up when they came near me."

"I'm sure the deaths were accidental, Mr. Haslow."

"You say that because you have decided to like me. As for myself, I am sure that they were not. They were murder. A common thread united them, one which bound each of them in some fashion to Alice, and I am incredulous at so great a stretching of coincidence. What do you know about Alice?"

"She was your son's wife."

"I shall say it for you: and Fred was executed on the charge of having murdered her. I shall tell you about Alice."

"I have been told she was beautiful."

"Very beautiful. Can you understand that her beauty was not a thing of the day? So many handsome young women receive the cachet through a resemblance to some reigning fad. Because they looked like the Gibson Girl, or some timely belle of the hourglass age, or the statuesque. We find their pictures in old albums, and realize that their beauty died with their short moment, leaving tolerant laughter. Alice was not like that. She had a timeless beauty, both of face and of character. It killed her. Much as the ownership of some celebrated jewel is potentially linked with death."

"I would like to have known her."

"You would have loved her, as Fred loved her, and I. She was a simple woman, natural and sweet, and utterly incapable of governing this devastating power which her beauty gave her. It constantly bewildered her, and I think there were moments when it frightened her too. I want you to understand this, because I want you to understand Fred."

"I think I do. *Covet* is such a bad word, but I can see how she would be coveted, as men would covet a stone like the Kohinoor."

HASLOW nodded slowly.

"Yes, that is it. Covet, kill and cheat, and die as men have always done for such a thing. It has never been the stone's fault any more than the fault was Alice's. She was as inanimate in her helplessness as that. The prosecutor for the State claimed that Fred killed her during a fit of homicidal jealousy."

"I know."

"Clarence Hartnor was our lawyer. He still is. I told him then, as I still tell him today, that Fred's only chance of proving his innocence lay in our turning up the man who killed Alice. My intention to do this has never died." Haslow raised himself on one elbow while scarlet silk of the spread rippled in dull valleys of fire. He forced himself to speak, in the manner of a man who has reached the brink of an abyss and is, at last, compelled to jump. "*Your* intention to do this must never die. There was a child. You are that child."

Shreds came back of her Red Cross work, and Ann thought: "I'm getting shock." Clammy skin, feeble pulse, lassitude, all were evident because her admirably cultured power of intuition assured her that Haslow would never have made such a confounding claim unless it were the truth.

"I have shocked you," Haslow was saying, "but I am a believer in clean strokes rather than in a niggling approach. Clarence Hartnor is one of the best lawyers in the country. He has all of the documentary evidence of this, Ann. You were not given over into adoption. So far as you and the world were to know, you were simply brought up by Florence and Walter Ledrick as their own child."

"I loved them, and they loved me. They were everything to me."

"If I had not been sure of that, you never would have been left in their care. You are no longer a child, but a woman. You now have the moral stamina to accept this situation which would have shattered you during your formative years, warped you, driven you deeply into some neurosis from which you never could have recovered. Instead of being the healthy girl you are now, you would have been an embittered, furtive creature wincing before every finger that pointed you out as the daughter of a murderer, of a husband who had killed his wife who was with child. Could you have stood that, Ann?"

"I think no child could have."

"There was also the brutal misfortune that you were heiress to a great fortune. You were news. You would have continued to be news at every break you might have attempted from any seclusion. School, social contacts, a normal girl's existence, would have been plain hell for you."

Haslow waited until his breathing had calmed down and then continued: "You were three months old when I arranged with the Ledricks that they take you. They and Clarence Hartnor guarded the secret. No one else has known it until, recently, I told Estelle. Naturally, the press made great efforts to discover what had happened to the Haslow Murder Baby." Haslow smiled bitterly. "They gave up the search in time as a bad job."

"And now, of course."

"Yes, you will go through your moments of anger and torture at their hands, but you will have the courage and strength to face them." Haslow leaned toward her and said with dreadful earnestness: "And you will have the courage to carry on my fight after I am gone. *Your* fight, Ann! You shall prove your father's innocence, never pausing, never letting up until the job is done. No—do not interrupt—I am growing weak."

Haslow fought for breath a moment.

He said: "I have sent for Clarence Hartnor. Everything that I know he knows. . . . Give me your hand, Ann."

Her own fingers were as chill as Haslow's. He pressed them gently.

He said: "You will need your courage. All of it. Not only from the publicity you will be forced to face, but from physical dangers. When you leave this room, it will be known that I have told you every guiding point I have been able to discover leading toward the murderer of your mother. There are not enough, but you and Hartnor will complete them. I have guarded myself well." *("You have not,"* Ann thought. *"Your guard has failed. You have been murdered.")* "I am arranging plans whereby you shall be guarded too. Trust no one. Trust no one but Clarence Hartnor."

A spasm of such strength gripped Haslow that he twisted sidewise across the bed. He fought desperately for breath, but the power to breathe eluded him, and his eyes grew weary of the strain. Briefly the struggle ceased.

He died.

BECAUSE of the short moment for which Ann had known Haslow, she felt no sense of grief over his death. Certainly there was none of the wrenching sorrow which had shaken her after the deaths of Florence and Walter Ledrick, whom she continued in her heart to consider as her true mother and father. She was sorry for Haslow, enormously and thoroughly shocked. She waited in the living-room after Doctor Johnstreet and the nurse had gone in to him.

Doctor Johnstreet returned alone.

He said: "He is dead, Miss Ledrick. A fearful experience for you. You are bearing it well. Mercifully, his passing was quick. And at last we can come out in the open."

"About the radium, Doctor?"

"About everything. I shall get in touch again with the State Police and let them know. I see no reason for locking these rooms until they reach here. There is no 'scene of the crime.' Simply a bed, in which a murdered old man died." He smiled oddly. "Of course, it's more than that. There's an end-of-a-dynasty touch about it. He was a great figure in his way. One of the last of those men who were so rich that their lives touched the feudal. But Miss Haslow must be told. Would you care to come with me?"

"Yes."

Doctor Johnstreet hesitated.

"Do you mind my being curious? I am puzzled over what he wanted to see you about. In a sense that whatever he said to you would fall under the heading of being last words."

"He told me, Doctor, that I am Ann Haslow."

Doctor Johnstreet's once-handsome face became deathly pale, and small mottle marks grew prominent on his skin.

He said: "I brought you into the world. I did that operation which made it possible for you to live." He studied her for a moment with eyes that were newly critical. "How wise he was! How right! Tell me—Alice and Fred Haslow are nothing more than names to you?"

"Nothing more, Doctor."

"So completely wise." He contemplated her for a further moment as a visual justification of Haslow's apt foresight. He seemed to regiment some disturbing train of thought. He said: "Does Estelle Haslow know this?"

"Mr. Haslow told her a short while ago."

"And Ludwig Cadbry?"

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"No, Doctor."

"I don't suppose it matters. Not now. The country will read of it in tomorrow's newspapers."

They took the lift to the ground floor. An utterly irrelevant and untimely realization came to Ann as they were going down. She thought: "This is my elevator." It symbolized with a deadly accuracy the fabulous change in her fortunes. Her work had taken her into many great houses, and more than anything else their private lifts had stood out as the hallmark of large wealth. She had been touched with a normal envy.

She felt badly about thinking of such things, with Haslow so newly, so brutally dead; but the notion had come and had burst like a small star of white fire in her brain. She admitted the truth that subconsciously she would have liked unlimited wealth—that any woman would have. The *Cinderella* dream so deathless in each of them. Aladdin's lamp. Her father (she would always, she thought, continue to think of Walter Ledrick as such) had once, when she was a child, tried to shield her against future disillusionment. He had said to her: "The gods to avenge themselves grant us our desires," and had explained what the quotation meant. It recurred to Ann now.

ESTELLE and Ludwig were playing backgammon near the fireplace in the lounge. The rattle of dice seemed impudently futile on the heels of a crash of thunder. Both of them, when they observed the look on Doctor Johnstreet's face, stood up.

"Justin," Estelle said, "is dead."

"Yes."

Tears brimmed her eyes.

"Justin! I think of him as sleeping. A good sleep at last, with no horror in his dreams." She held out her dimpled hands to Ann. Ann took them. A delicate scent of Parma violets sifted from Estelle. She said: "He told you, Ann?"

"Yes."

Ludwig's bold dark eyes were flat disks of knowledge.

"You are Alice's child," he said. "I knew it last night when I met you. I thought of her at once on seeing you. You have her look."

"Who is with Justin, Doctor?" Estelle asked.

"Miss Ashton."

"I must go to him. Death is so unbelievable when it comes, no matter how much one has been prepared for it. This is hard on you, Ann. I'll carry on until you get adjusted. There are people to be notified, and things to be done."

"I have already," Doctor Johnstreet said flatly, "notified the State Police."

Ann could see Estelle shrink. Literally she seemed to get smaller, and her face looked as if someone had struck her. She regarded Doctor Johnstreet as though he had suddenly gone stark mad.

She said: "Why?"

"Mr. Haslow was murdered."

Ludwig gripped the edge of the backgammon table so abruptly that green-and-white counters rolled skimming on the floor.

"How was it done?" he said.

"I shall make my report to the police."

"I see. It's going to be that way."

"Ludwig!" Estelle broke in sharply. "Poor Justin. Even to the end." She sat down, as tears once more clouded her eyes. She said to Doctor Johnstreet: "What do we do?"

"We wait." Thunder growled endlessly. "Possibly they will get through on horseback. I'll telephone now."

"Is there—"

"Nothing, I'm afraid. The coroner must get through, too."

Doctor Johnstreet left the room. They sat with their several thoughts. A log shot sparks up the chimney. Death seeped down upon them through wood and steel and plaster from Haslow's room. It came unchecked by any physical barrier and joined them.

"Would you mind leaving me with Ann, Ludwig?" Estelle said.

Ludwig was not pleased. His handsome face clouded sullenly, and for a moment he seemed on the point of refusing.

"Very well," he said. "I'll be in the library if you want me."

"Thank you, Ludwig."

Estelle waited until he had gone. Then she said to Ann: "Do you know the fable about the man who protested too much? It isn't a fable, of course. It's one of those things out of Shakespeare. Anyhow, it's Ludwig. He was here when Alice was killed. He has always claimed that he knew something which might prove Fred's innocence, something that lay just on the fringe of memory, but which Ludwig was unable to recall. For years Justin has been giving him sums of money at different times to jog the peculiar quirk in his memory. Ludwig is not a pleasant man."

"No, he is not a pleasant man."

"Of course, Justin never believed in him for a minute, and neither have I. Justin paid to tempt him into coming here. He hoped that at some moment during their talks Ludwig would make a slip." Estelle glanced briefly toward the distant doorway. "Justin and I have always thought it was Ludwig who murdered Alice."

Chapter Ten

WASHBURN apologized for the interruption. He spoke briefly of Haslow, a formal expression of sincere regret at his death, offered both to Estelle and to Ann. His manner toward her, Ann thought, had subtly altered. She was, it implied, of the family.

The press associations, he said, and a great many specific newspapers were putting through telephone calls with requests for interviews and information.

Washburn looked at a point impartially spaced between Estelle and Ann.

"What would you advise, Estelle?" Ann said.

Estelle reached over and gave Ann's hand a warm, friendly pressure.

"Let us leave them to Washburn, dear. Perhaps it would be best to say, Washburn, that a statement will be given out after the proper authorities reach here. I know you won't antagonize the reporters, Washburn."

"No, Miss Haslow."

"For your sake, Ann. They'll make a Hollywood première of you as it is, without this ghastly horror of Justin's murder being tacked on. You had better say, Washburn, that Miss Ann Haslow will be very glad to give interviews when she recovers from the shock of her grandfather's death. She is at present resting under the care of Doctor Johnstreet. Is that all right, Ann?"

"Thank you, Estelle."

"There is a personal call," Washburn said to Ann. "Miss Fanny Mistral, from New York. Will you take it, Miss Haslow?"

"Yes, of course."

Ann followed Washburn to a small room just off the lounge. He indicated the telephone. He closed the door.

"Darling!" Fanny's voice screamed. "The papers had it on the streets two minutes ago. I simply can't believe it. I feel as if I've been using the Hope diamond for a paperweight. Are you all right, darling?"

"Perfectly all right. I'm glad you called. It's like something solid, hearing you—or doesn't that make sense?"

"It's the most insulting thing that's ever been said to me, and I love it. That man who sent the story in from that unheard-of village in the Adirondacks told simply nothing. Just that you were that child, and that Justin Haslow had been murdered. I sha'n't ask a thing, because

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I know the A.P. and U.P. will have to get the story out of you, and I do appreciate the fact that you can't talk. Especially to me, darling. I know me. Clarence Hartnor is the Haslow lawyer, isn't he?"

"Yes, Miss Mistral."

"Oh, for heaven's sakes," Fanny screamed, "call me Fanny. You're rich enough to, now! Well, every word you say from now on will have to be infra-rayed by Hartnor. My dear, you'll love him. I met him last fall at one of those dog-fights that people call luncheons, and he's the nicest old lamb that ever housed a wolf and ate a grandmother. He'll probably dash in on horseback ahead of the troopers—and don't think he can't. Is there *anything* I can do?"

"Thank you, Fanny; nothing. But it was ever so good just hearing you."

"Darling, I couldn't be sorrier. Miss Stone just dashed in and said that eight vultures from the press have wrecked the place and gone off with every shot we have of you."

"It doesn't matter, Fanny."

"You'll find out whether it matters or not when you get the morning editions. Good-by, darling, and call me any minute of the day or night you feel you need a solid."

"Thank you, Fanny, and good-by."

Sergeant Hurlstone of the State Police reached Haslow's Black Tor shortly after four o'clock. With him were Clarence Hartnor and a medical examiner. The electrical pyrotechnics of the storm had stopped by then, but the rain continued to torrent down in gray sheets; and the three men, in spite of their ponchos, were soaked.

Ann had gone up to her living-room after Fanny had telephoned. She had found out from Washburn that Estelle was in Haslow's private office, which formed part of his suite of rooms, with his estate manager and secretary.

At a quarter of five the house phone rang, and Ann answered it.

"Ann Haslow?" a strange voice said. "I'm Clarence Hartnor. I'm coming in to see you, if I may."

"Certainly, Mr. Hartnor."

"I've bailed myself out, but I'm still waterlogged, so don't expect much more than a sodden hulk. How about asking Washburn to send up my usual depth-charge of rum, will you? I need it."

"Certainly."

"Thank you. My rooms are just a quarter of a mile down the hall. I'll be right over."

Ann phoned Washburn and asked for the rum, and also a drink for herself. The few hours had been fretfully nervous ones, the sort where you felt at sea, and Hartnor's voice had been a relief.

Nothing as yet had sunk in. She still felt like Ann Ledrick with a job at Fanny Mistral's and a room on 37th Street. She didn't feel rich. Not even partially rich, much less Haslow-rich. Nor had she felt in any sense nervous about physical dangers. Haslow's tragic moment of death and his burning warnings were very remote. The edge had dulled greatly from their reality.

But he had been murdered.

There was always that. Murdered for having circled ever nearer and nearer to the murderer of Alice! Murdered, of course, by the murderer of Alice. And Haslow had handed her the torch. Whether Ann wanted it or not, she held it. She could protest herself blue that Haslow had died before having told her of the spadework already done. His (and Alice's) murderer would never believe it, and in any case would know that Hartnor would shortly give her all the facts. She was beginning, now, to get nervous. She was glad she had ordered a drink.

Hartnor knocked and came in.

Ann liked him instantly. She doubted whether she had ever seen a man so completely ugly or with such a warming smile. He was not especially tall or large, and yet he lumbered. Comfortably. His clothes were so much expensive sacking. They were also (which Ann did not know) so much expensive tailoring by one of the best men in New York, to give him precisely that wholesome look.

No male juror had ever sat watching him without feeling pleasantly satisfied with his own little blue serge number, and no woman juror had ever failed to want to give his coat a motherly twitch. Hartnor had also discovered that this worked out admirably in private life, so he had never bothered to be *svelte*.

He shook hands and said he was going to call her Ann.

"And you," he said, "will call me Clarence. I don't mind the name a bit. It saved me the bother of looking for chips when I was a kid. Where's the rum?"

"It hasn't come yet."

"Rotten service. Ought to change your hotel. I won't offer sympathies to you about Justin, because I know he could have meant so little to you. Just the death of a stranger. Same way when we get to that business about Alice and Fred. Your whole mentality and heart are still Ledrick, and that's how it should be. Both of them were fine."

"You knew them?"

"Intimately, only you never knew it. Part of the arrangement. Even to wish me a good morning is supposed to cost the wisher a mint. Stupid, the way a legend will grow up about a public figure. You'll find out. You're one yourself now. Has Bill called you up since the story broke?"

"Bill? You know Bill Redfort?"

"Ann, there isn't a thing about you that I haven't known since you were three months old. You lived as the Ledricks' daughter, but you were still the Haslow heiress—and thank God here's the rum."

Ann answered the knock and said: "Come in."

Washburn ushered in a manservant with a tray on which among innumerable other things was a spirit lamp heating a silver pot of boiling water. The man placed the tray on the coffee-table by the fireplace and left. Ann thanked Washburn, who told her that Miss Estelle Haslow had suggested they would have cocktails in the lounge at seven. Miss Haslow had felt that the usual household routine should be adhered to.

Hartnor mixed Ann a highball after Washburn had gone, and then concocted, elaborately, his own hot spiced rum.

"Bill hasn't telephoned at all today," Ann said. "Fanny Mistral has."

"I like Fanny. I admire her. She's like a smart trick. You know it's legerdemain, but it's slick. I guess Bill's busy being a Marine. He is not, incidentally, a bad bet."

"For me?"

"Certainly. If you love him. And if you can get him."

"Get him! He's a direct descendant of Og the Cave-man."

"True, but he is also a descendant of a sterling line of self-sufficient Redforts. Most of them had the major characteristic of Army mules. And the scene has changed. He isn't clubbing simple Miss Ledrick on the head. He's clubbing the Haslow heiress on the head."

"As if that would make the slightest difference to Bill."

"Possibly it won't. It's all according to how you handle him. You'll be seeing Sergeant Hurlstone shortly, Ann. He's all right. He has brains, brawn, and believes in the decencies. A good character. I have given him a complete synopsis of your life, including the how and why of your being here now. Don't worry about him. Just help him. And now tell me everything you know about Justin's death."

Hartnor sat quietly sipping the hot rum while Ann did so. He made no comments. He did not interrupt. He seemed to weigh and separate and file her words as she spoke. She ended with the short talk after Haslow's death which she had had with Estelle, and with Estelle's flat statement that both she and Haslow thought that Ludwig Cadbry had himself killed Alice.

Hartnor permitted himself a grunt.

"If Justin did think that, he never said so to me. In fact, he considered Ludwig the one person with a perfect alibi. Ludwig's clothes were wet."

Chapter Eleven

Hartnor mixed another hot rum. He suggested a highball, which Ann refused. He returned to his chair, and for a while regarded the dark and rain-drenched windows.

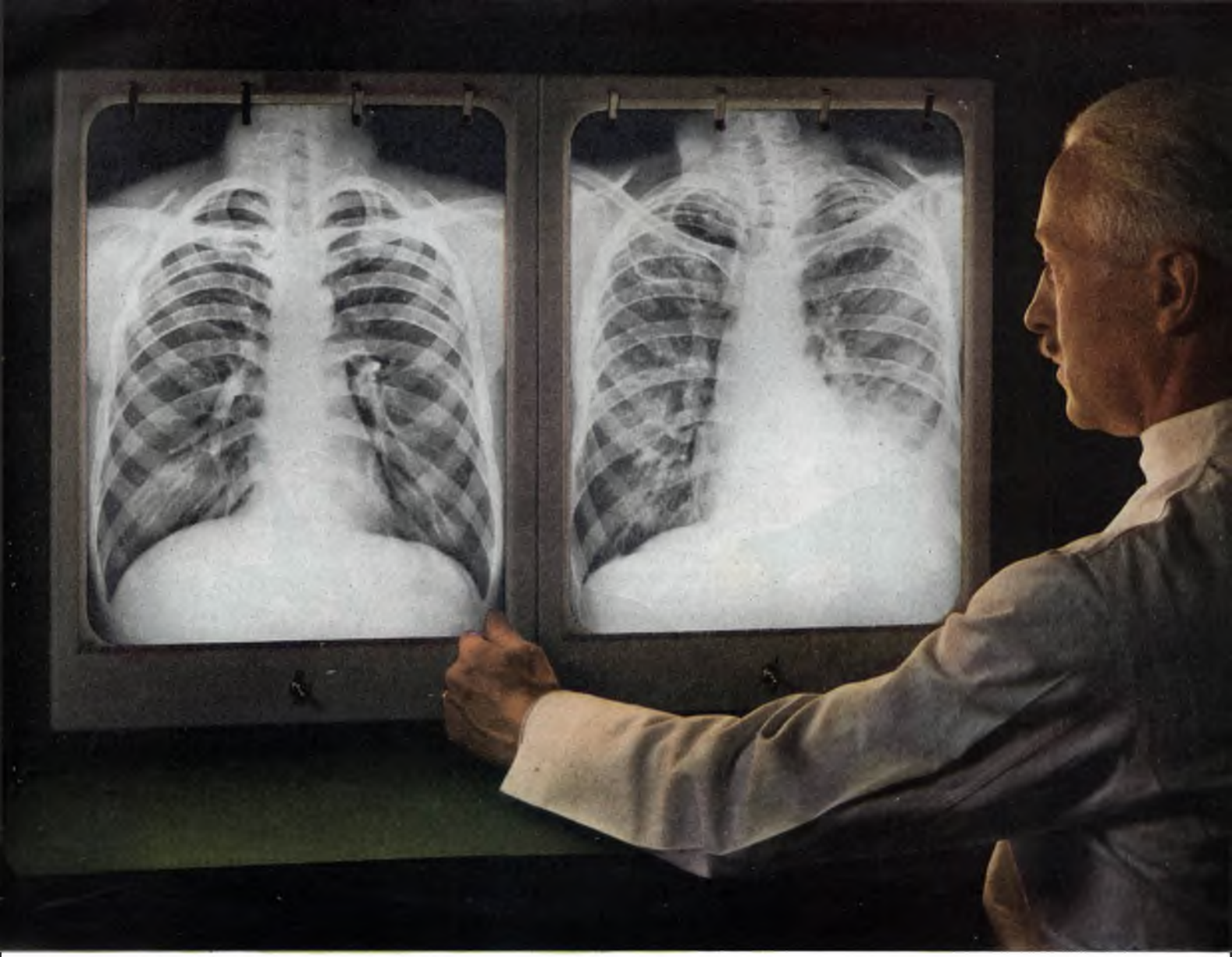
He said: "There is the falsest sort of security in being cozy. As we are now: A lazy fire, soft lights, good drinks, the intimate charm of this friendly room. Ships are like that, right up to the moment of some swift and unpredictable disaster. I am frightening you."

"Not really."

"I think a little. I want to. Justin was right, Ann. Hold a constant alert against the unexpected in danger. Let me show you the murderer's mind—the murderer of Alice and of Justin. To him, you are an unknown quantity. He has no yardstick as yet with which to gauge you."

"In what way?"

"Your tenacity. The extent and strength of your purpose to carry on where Justin left off. I am interested in the results of the autopsy. The Examiner is a good man, a careful one. I expect that the murderer's long-range plan involving the radioactive substance lingered too long. We shall see. There is nothing in all you have told me to indicate that Justin had come upon some decisive clue—but the murderer could have harbored that illusion. He will continue to harbor it, and will believe that Justin



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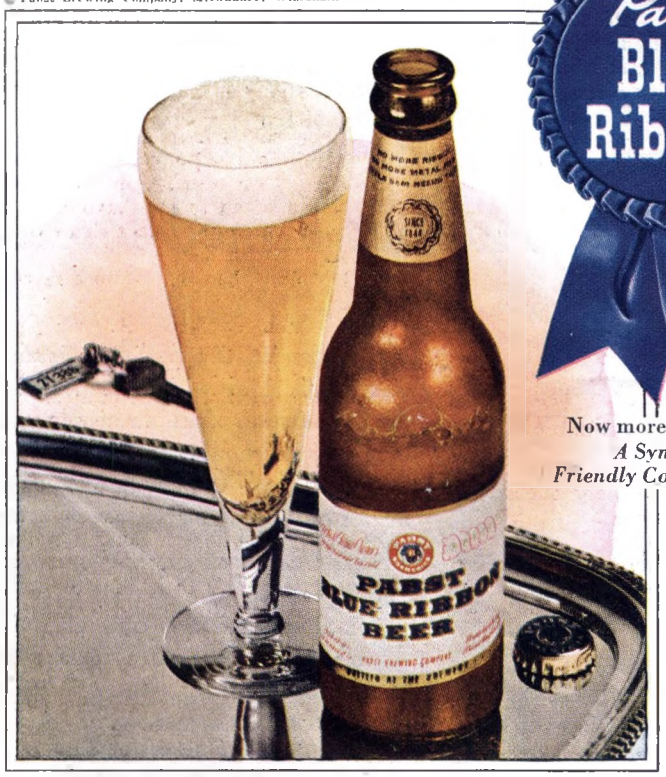

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passed it on to you. I shall get you out of here."

"I wish you would. I ride. You made it on horseback—why couldn't I?"

"We found the difficulties almost insurmountable even in daylight. We are centered in a circumference of chasms, peaks and streams. The streams were already swollen to torrents. There is no chance by night. We will see what weather the morning brings. I am hoping that the storm will be sufficiently over for a plane to take off. You will be safer in New York. . . . Now I will tell you about Ludwig."

"His wet clothes?"

"Yes. It was a day like this one. Buckets of water since morning, and about the same time of year as now. . . . You have met Justin and Estelle. You know Ludwig, Doctor Johnstreet, and me. We were all here. Have you run into Fleury?"

"No."

"He was here too. He is Justin's secretary. Hermits are outmoded, I believe. We dub them misanthropes or solitaries. Anyhow, Fleury is one. He has his own apartment on the floor above, and would scuttle out of it only when Justin had some business for him to take care of. You will think it odd that a man like Justin would have such a secretary."

"I do."

"It was a sense of obligation, I suppose. Justin clipped him one evening while driving in—permanently crippled him. It's depressing to look at him, and Fleury knows it. I suppose that is really why he keeps so much to himself, poor devil. He's the one who found Fred in the music-room. Fred had the knife in his hand, and Alice was dead. Jerry Abyard and Frank Lawlith, of course, you didn't know."

"They were the hunting accident and the ptomaine?"

"I agree with Justin that they were not accidents. Both were here, and that completes the list. You must think of all of us then as being twenty years younger, with emotions that were far more fiery and with far less balance than today. Estelle was twenty-five, very rosy-cheeked and plump, very much like any Christmas calendar version of a country lass, only give her a thumping income. And the only corn-fed thing about her was her figure. Doctor Johnstreet, of course, was a far better-looking man at thirty than he is today."

"Wasn't thirty rather young for him to have been Mr. Haslow's physician?"

HARTNOR sipped his drink.

"He was Alice's doctor, not Justin's. His father had been the Charing family doctor in Boston. The old gentleman had died of a stroke, and Dick had taken over his practice. Dick Johnstreet had graduated with about every honor in the book and was a boy marvel of Back Bay. . . . To get back to Ludwig: You can see what a bull he is."

"Indeed one can."

"Twenty years ago he was a younger one—still very bull, and he-man from the word *go*. Everybody else stayed indoors that afternoon because of the storm. But not Ludwig. Oh, no!. Ludwig had to pop outside and breast it. Just himself and the rain and the thunder."

"I bet he batted the bolts right back."

"No doubt of it. Well, he did look up at the music-room windows just around the moment when it was settled that Alice was stabbed. That's when he saw it."

"Saw what?"

"The thing that Justin paid him money for years to remember. It was a white back."

"A what?"

"Either somebody in a shirt, or a white coat, or a white dress. Rain blurred the window to an extent, but Ludwig claimed there was something identifiable about that white back if he could only put his finger on it. He's still claiming it, and he still hasn't put his finger on it."

"Didn't he testify at the trial?"

"Yes, but it got us no place. We showed that Fred had been wearing a dark suit at the time when Alice was killed, and that it was improbable he would have taken off his coat in order to stab her, especially while blinded in his alleged moment of homicidal rage. We claimed Fred's story was true, that he had come in and found Alice stabbed, and had taken the knife from the wound. We offered the white back as that of the murderer. The district attorney simply sliced Ludwig's vague impression into ribbons."

"Do you believe Ludwig? Estelle told me that she and Mr. Haslow didn't."

"I believe nothing. We looked into this business of the white back thoroughly. Both Alice and Estelle were in dark dresses, which takes care of the women. The men were in tweeds, so there you are; and there was Ludwig with his lucrative claim. He grew more definite bit by bit as the years passed. It wasn't a shirt or a coat or a dress. There was something unique about it. I think it will remain unique as long as he can get a cent out of it."

"How *could* he charge for trying to help?"

"Oh, my dear Ann! Nothing so crass as that for Ludwig. He would ask for loans to tide him over momentary straits. Every time he got a loan from Justin, he would go into his concentrating act."

"Estelle was definite about Mr. Haslow's paying him simply because he hoped that Ludwig would make some incriminating slip."

"Possibly she is right. She may herself have turned Justin to that point of view since her return from Paris. I haven't been up here in over a year. But I maintain that Ludwig's alibi was perfect."

"Doesn't that in itself—"

"No; I know the current mode and it's nonsense. I stick to simplicities, especially so in the case of Alice. There was nothing premeditated about the crime, whatever. A flash of terrific passion, a weapon at hand, and she was dead. Have you been in the music-room?"

"No."

"It has a museum touch. Cases of rare coins, some excellent folios, some weapons. That was true to form, if you wish."

"The weapon?"

"Yes, a Cellini dagger out of one of the cases. Ludwig's alibi was this: Fleury raised perfect hell the moment he spotted Fred holding the dagger and Alice slumped on the spinet keyboard. I mean really hell. You wouldn't think Fleury had it in him. The lung-power! Well, Ludwig had just come in by the front door. He was drenched clear through and left a clear trail of wet footprints right to the coat-room."

"Did anyone see him come in?"

"Not actually, but Washburn ran into the entrance hall because of Fleury howling murder, and he saw Ludwig just taking off his sodden overcoat."

"It was a matter of water."

"You are thinking about shower-baths, some sort of trickery. Forget it, Ann. Nothing was planned about Alice's killing."

"This is something I didn't tell you: When Ludwig came here last night, Mr. Haslow didn't act like a man who was glad that someone whom he was trying to trap had arrived. He looked murderous. You know how you can't mistake certain facial expressions? Mr. Haslow's was one of hate. Bitter, intense hate."

Hartnor thought this over.

"Interesting," he said.

Chapter Twelve

DANNING, the maid, came in after Hartnor left. A pale Danning, and a thoughtful one.

She said: "I'm glad it's you. We always felt the child would come back one day, and I'm glad it's you who are Ann Haslow."

"You've been here since that time?"

"I was one of the upstairs maids. I'd take care of Mrs. Haslow when her own maid was on vacation. Do you know that these rooms were Mrs. Haslow's?"

"No, I didn't."

"Mr. Haslow expressly said you were to have them. It made us think, those of us who were here then—Mr. Washburn, and Henri, and me."

Danning continued, Ann realized, to think. She drew a bath and laid out Ann's dark voile dinner-dress.

Danning said: "She was lovely. She was a poet as well as a fine musician. I'd see her sitting at that desk over there writing, and she'd look at me and smile. But she wasn't seeing me. I suppose you'll think this is funny, but there are times when I can feel her in this room."

"No, that isn't funny. Anyone you've liked, when you're in a place that's closely associated with them—"

"It's more than that. I'm a seventh daughter."

This stumped Ann. All she could say was: "*Are* you!" Which satisfied Danning perfectly. Danning went on a bit with her extrasensory prowesses. She had seen a niece's illness, the niece having been in Newburg at the time, hundreds of miles away. Influenza.

Danning left on this note of triumph.

"Well," Ann thought, "there is something to it. You do feel things. Not always with a seventh-daughter virtuosity, but still in a manner highly snorted at by science." She tried to shake off this train of thought before it became a mood.

Definitely it was not a moment for moods which encompassed the astral. Tangible murder was wretched enough. And where was Bill's brash voice? Washington papers would be carrying the story by now. Joining the Marines didn't in-

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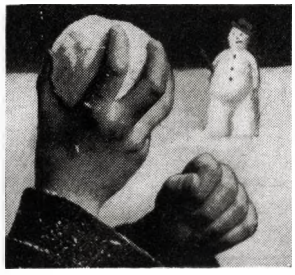

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volve a retreat into solitary confinement. Anything but! They were famous for their aptitude with telephones. And telephone numbers.

Well?

The mood took root while Ann did a final job on her lips and hair. As she sat before the dressing-table, it occurred to her that Alice had sat there too. Her mother. Still, Ann could not emotionalize her as such.

She went through the living-room, and her eyes rested briefly on the desk where Alice had sat with her verses and loveliness and inward thoughts. How easy (she thought) to *think* a ghost. And how insultingly nonessential all mediumistic paraphernalia of floating cheesecloths and iced rubber hands!

This nervous reflection went with her along the hallway and into the lift which once more impressed her with its cachet of luxury as Ann went down. It was somewhat before seven, and the lounge was empty except for the brawny figure of Sergeant Hurlstone toasting his rear before the log fire.

Ann found him everything that Ludwig Cadbry hoped he—Cadbry—was and wasn't. Features of calm granite, muscles of flexible granite, and eyes of hard dark slate. Practically a park monument of the better and more martial sort. He came forward to greet her, extending a solid hand which pressed her fingers with the courtesy of a restrained stone-crusher.

"I regret the incident of your grandfather's death, Miss Haslow. You are Miss Haslow?"

"I am, Sergeant."

"I like to have things confirmed."

"A very sound idea, I should say, in your profession."

"It is. Mr. Hartnor has told me about you. After dinner I would like you to tell me yourself."

"I'll be glad to."

"I will want you to tell me also every word you can remember which has been said to you since you arrived here. Everything, too, which you have observed."

"I will do the best I can."

"That will be satisfactory. There is no such thing as perfection. Thank you."

THAT scene was over. Sergeant Hurlstone withdrew into his granite fastness and once more offered his rear to the coöperating fire. Ann sat on a lounge. Socially the moment presented no routine avenues for advance, and she regretted not having Estelle's salon touch—an ability to breach all walls.

She wanted to ask about the autopsy, and saw no reason why she shouldn't. She was about to, when Estelle's appearance prevented her. Estelle was loosely hung with nervous dark chiffons, which were relieved about the throat by a magnificent circlet of what surely were the ocelot-born emeralds.

There were two men with Estelle. One, Ann identified as Haslow's secretary Fleury: a gaunt man with a wasted and distorted left arm as the badge of Haslow's having struck him with the car. His eyes were a clear pale blue, and seemed shutters rather than windows to his thoughts.

Estelle introduced him, and the other man as Martin Thurlan, the manager of the estate. Thurlan offered with his neat rimless glasses and thinning sandy-toned hair a portrait of efficient precision. His movements were all accurately timed and nice, and his smile was as thinly clear-cut as the pressure of his hand.

Washburn supervised the service of canapés and cocktails, and Clarence Hartnor came in with Ludwig and joined them. Ann noticed that the Medical Examiner did not appear; nor did Doctor Johnstreet. She found herself with Fleury.

"I suppose all this will go," Fleury said.

"Black Tor?"

"Yes. The time has gone by when such gestures are any longer tenable. When lands and houses and machinery, when the lifetimes and ingenuity and labor of many women and men should all be expended toward the maintenance of privacy for a single man! I do not think you will find the thought revolutionary. What will you do with all this, Miss Haslow—these possessions both living and inanimate which now are yours?"

"I have still to appreciate that they are mine, Mr. Fleury."

"You are offended. You feel it an impertinence on my part. Do not. I have discussed this quite openly with your grandfather. I did not find him sympathetic."

"Sympathetic to what, Mr. Fleury?"

"To my notions, if you care to call them that. He did."

Fleury's shallow and pale blue eyes took on some warmth of life—a glow. His notions were, he told Ann, frankly socialistic. There was nothing new about them. The administration in Washington for a good many years had been attempting to apply them, at least a good many of them; but such an attempt was due to be a long struggle and an ultimate possible failure.

You couldn't do it that way, from the top down. Using either a schoolmarm's admonitory finger or a big stick, to say nothing of making people pay through the nose for the experiment whether they liked it or not. No! That bred outright antagonism or a cumulative irritation, which was worse. You had to start at the bottom with a willing guinea pig who would offer himself as an example, say a man like Mr. Haslow, and with an outfit like Black Tor. Fleury clearly was becoming feverish about his obsession (it amounted to one) when Washburn announced dinner.

Ann thought of Fleury as she walked into the dining-room: "Are you the one? Did you kill him for that? Did you hate him for what he did to your arm, and did you brood yourself toward homicide because he would not underwrite your Utopia?" It could be. But where was Alice in all of that?

"Yes," she said to Sergeant Hurlstone, whom she found seated at her left, "I have seen 'Arsenic and Old Lace,' and I liked it very much."

There was this about Sergeant Hurlstone, Ann realized: he kept things in their niches. They were at dinner, and the talk would therefore be the talk which he understood was suitable for talk at dinner when served as the meal was at a place like Black Tor.

She began to like him very much. He believed in a balanced mental ration

as firmly as in a diet properly apportioned among the vitamins.

It was different after dinner was over and he was alone with Ann, at his request, in her living-room.

"Now," he said, "we can get down to work."

Chapter Thirteen

Sergeant Hurlstone listened with his granite calm until Ann was through. She began to feel towards the close like a *Scheherazade* on the thousand-and-second night.

"What," he asked when Ann had run down, "have you left out?"

"Heavens!"

His slate eyes widened in faint reproach.

"You have been here since yesterday afternoon."

"And I have talked for over an hour."

"You have told me what you discussed with Mr. Haslow, with Miss Estelle Haslow, with Mr. Cadbry and Doctor Johnstreet. There were others. Who?"

Ann took a fresh grip and rounded out the view with the pilot, the coachman, Washburn, Danning, the young man from the photography lab' Harley Beridge, and the recent fervid cocktail with Fleury, during which he had expounded his socialistic notions with such zest.

Sergeant Hurlstone stood up. He walked over to the desk at which Alice, according to Danning, frequently had sat.

"Fine Adam," he said.

"You know furniture, Sergeant?"

"I try to know something about everything. Robert Adam is simple. The wreaths and *paterœ*, the honeysuckle and that fan ornament—you can't mistake him. What interests me, Miss Haslow, is that this desk must have been built before 1792."

"Why? I mean the interest? Do you think that age gives a thing some psychic value? That Danning 'feels' Alice Haslow more than if the desk were modern?"

Ann had the odd impression that her question relieved him—not the question itself, so much as her interpretation of his interest in the desk.

He said: "Why not? The psychic is a state of mind, and the mind is lulled by old things. The new excites it. You are more receptive when your mind is at rest. Take India or China: There's where you find your mystics. Not here with our chromium and plastics and glass."

Sergeant Hurlstone gave a parting touch to the desk's velvet patina. He returned to the fire.

He said: "We must go back to the origin of this matter—the murder of Alice Haslow. I agree with Mr. Hartnor that it was a crime of impulse, instantly conceived and committed. Then do you find a paradox?"

"I can't say I do."

"Murderers are supposed to conform to a set pattern. Once a sash-weight always a sash-weight; once poison always poison. That sort of thing. Largely it's true, but here we are faced with the exception to the rule. We find increasing premeditation and more care in preparation. The hunting accident to Jerry Abyard—it had to be plotted and the

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MUCH FOR WHISKEY. BUT
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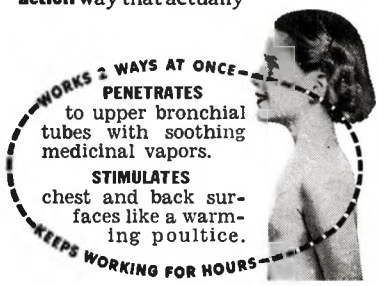

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"Then you also accept the fact that Fred Haslow was innocent?"

"It would be stupid not to. The thread runs backward through twenty years. It would be equally stupid to concentrate on an original motive such as jealousy, the one accepted at the trial. Perhaps it was a crime of passion. Perhaps not."

"What else?"

"Much else. Its obviousness at the time confused the issue. Jealousy, rage, murder; so simple, and all the ingredients were at hand. Also the protagonists. Jerry Abyard, still in love with her. The jealous husband. All too neat. . . . Look here, Miss Haslow."

"Yes, Sergeant?"

"Your grandfather warned you to trust no one."

"With the exception of Mr. Hartnor."

"So you said. I suggest you remove the exception."

"But you can't say a thing like that without giving me a reason?"

"Mr. Hartnor was here at the time of Alice Haslow's murder. He was here when Jerry Abyard suffered his hunting accident. He has been here frequently during the years, and was in Mr. Haslow's confidence. Such reasons are enough. I do not isolate him. I simply include him and advise you to do likewise. This will be all for tonight, Miss Haslow. Thank you very much."

Sergeant Hurlstone stood up. He moved to the door. He said, before leaving: "These crimes were not conceived by a ninny."

The door closed.

Nonsense—Ann thought—about Clarence Hartnor. On the other hand, family lawyers had had their popular run: And so, my dears, the old counselor did it because he had a poisonous appetite for the stock-market and had helped himself to fifty gilt-edged bonds from your late grandpapa's estate!

Rubbish and nonsense.

ANN looked at the time and decided she would go to bed. It was after eleven. She went through the bedroom and into the dressing-room. Danning had laid her things out for the night. She took her dress off and put on a wrapper. She sat at the dressing-table and began to take her face apart for the night. A quiet night, now, except for the continual pelt of raindrops against the windows. A dreary sound, and a furtive one.

Bill had called up last night around this time.

What was the matter with the dope? A sterling line of Redfort forbears—no, that was absurd. "The Haslow Murder Baby." That's what Haslow had said the press had called her. Heaven knew what they were planning to call her now. Change *baby* to *heiress* and leave the rest? That wouldn't matter to Bill.

Her money? That might, yes. She knew examples, and they weren't pleasant, of a man with a very rich wife.

There was no earthly reason why such a set-up shouldn't work out, but it so rarely if ever did. Never, that Ann knew of. With gigolos, of course, and the handsome frameworks that you bought and paid for. But not with men like Bill. When she looked at it that way, it was depressing as hell.

The dressing-room door was slightly open, and clearly in the hush and muted pelting of the rain Ann heard a small sound of something tapping once on metal. It focused her nerves into a knot of fright. She called out sharply: "Who's there?"

Estelle's voice said, "I am, dear."

ESTELLE pushed the door wide open and came in. Her face was tired nd pale, and her plump, pleasing body seemed to have lost its stiffening.

"I knocked," Estelle said, "but you didn't answer, so I came in. I thought you must be getting ready for bed."

("I did not hear you knock," Ann thought. "You came in and clicked something against metal in the bedroom or the living-room. You did not call to me as soon as you came in. You were in there doing something.")

"Is there anything I can do, Estelle?"

"No, dear. I just wanted to say good night."

(Ann thought: "What were you doing? Trust no one, Haslow said. Only Hartnor. Don't even trust Hartnor, Sergeant Hurlstone said.")

"It has been a nervous day," Estelle went on. "It seems trifling to call such a tragic day nervous, but that's what it is. It's fretful on the nerves. You look worn out."

"Just a cold-cream pallor."

"No, I watched you during dinner, dear. You'll need a really good sleep in order to face tomorrow. Would you like a sedative? I've some tablets I used to use in Paris. They're amazing."

"I think not, but thank you, Estelle. I never have."

(*"Amazing,"* Ann thought, "would probably be right. A delicious coating of sugar to cover that arsenical taste. I'm being brutally unjust. She came here in the kindness of her heart. It's she who needs comfort and rest. . . . Trust no one, not even Hartnor, Sergeant Hurlstone said.")

Was it thought-transference? Because Estelle went on: "How did Sergeant Hurlstone strike you?"

"As a devastatingly intelligent and immovable force."

"He alarmed me, too, until he admitted he'd taken his M.A. at Harvard. We're both of us dead, Ann, so we won't talk of anything until tomorrow. Good night, dear."

"Good night, Estelle."

Ann stood in the doorway until Estelle had gone through the bedroom and into the living-room. She heard, because she was listening for it, the sound of the living-room door as it closed. Then she went in and turned the small knob which bolted it.

She was, she admitted, in a state. What was the click against metal she had heard? What was it that Estelle had done? The living-room was calm and serene, a haven of beautiful peace. The bedroom, too, offered no metal-clicked note. Silver was a soft sheen on the bed-

table, the silver tray, the carafe of iced water, the glass.

Ann lifted the stopper from the carafe and cautiously sniffed. There was no odor to the water. No scent of almonds. She replaced the stopper.

There was something about the glass. It was wet on the inside. Estelle had used it and taken a drink. It had clinked against the carafe or the tray when she put it down. That would be all right.

It could also not be all right. The carafe would have been full, and Estelle might have needed to get rid of some of the water in order to make room for a dose of narcotic or of poison. The simplest way of making room would be to pour out some of the water and drink it.

Ann went to the house phone and got Washburn.

"Do you know where Sergeant Hurlstone is?" she asked.

"I believe he is in the lounge, Miss Haslow."

"Thank you; I'll ring it and see."

She pressed the button marked *Lounge*. She recognized Sergeant Hurlstone's answering voice.

"Would you mind coming up?" she asked.

"Certainly, Miss Haslow."

Ann said when he got there: "This is either very stupid or it's not. Estelle Haslow has just been in here to say goodnight. I was in the dressing-room and didn't hear her come in. I did hear a sound like something clicking against metal. I called out, and she came in and joined me. The drinking-glass beside the carafe in the bedroom is wet on the inside. I think she took a drink of water."

Sergeant Hurlstone continued to listen in stony silence.

"My nerves are none too good right now," Ann said. "It occurred to me that the best way to get rid of some of the water would be to drink it, if you wanted to put something else in its place—either poison or a narcotic. This is a damnable attitude to take, but you and Mr. Haslow and Mr. Hartnor have got me to a point where I don't know where I stand. I'm sick and I'm frightened about everything."

"You are not being stupid. Neither, if the water has been poisoned, was Miss Estelle Haslow. Unless you had noticed that the glass had just been used, you could have taken a drink of the water and no one would have known she had been in here."

Sergeant Hurlstone went into the bedroom. He came back carrying the silver tray with the carafe and drinking-glass.

"Doctor Johnstreet and the Medical Examiner are in the laboratory doing the autopsy," he said.

He went to the door. He said: "I'll let you know."

HALF an hour passed. Ann took off her wrapper and put on her dress. She put back her face. She went into the hall and took the lift down to the ground floor. She went into the lounge.

Sergeant Hurlstone was sitting near the fire in a straight-backed chair. On his lap was a large black cat.

"I couldn't stay up there alone," Ann said. She sat on the sofa and watched him stroke the cat.

"The Examiner has just completed the test, Miss Haslow. He phoned me

1. The Dormouse at the Hatter's party could fall asleep at the drop of a hint, a talent many of *us* would like to acquire. Worldly cares didn't bother him a bit.

2. He didn't worry or get jittery—as we do—and didn't lose precious sleep because of it. Apparently his nerves are not jangled by the caffein in coffee or tea.

3. But caffein, even in small doses, *does* affect some humans. If you're jumpy and can't sleep, caffein can be largely to blame. So maybe you'd better give up caffein!

4. Mind you, we said give up *caffein*—not *coffee!* For you can continue to drink that delightful, satisfying brew without getting any caffein effect. You can—

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that he found the water poisoned. About one swallow would have been enough, he said."

Ann said after a while: "Will you arrest her?"

"Miss Estelle Haslow? No. Nothing is certain. I think by tomorrow we can tell."

His fingers found the cat's neck. The cat purred contentedly with tight-shut eyes.

"This cat belongs to the cook," Sergeant Hurlstone said.

"Danning," said Hurlstone to Ann, "filled the poisoned carafe and left it on your bed-table. So we start with her." (From this point Mr. King's fascinating mystery moves, in our forthcoming April issue, to even more dramatic scenes.)

The Last Time We Meet

(This story is continued from page 19)

Now no station intervened between her and her destination. The train crawled slowly and more slowly; Catherine's heart raced faster and faster! A wonderful rose-color deepened in her cheeks. Her hands picking up the green purse, the scarlet gloves, trembled suddenly.

And she thought: "For forever or as little time as we get. I love him so. He's real, and I at last through him am real."

The train was drawing into the station. There he was! She smiled, walking down the train aisle, and in a minute was in his arms.

THEN in not more than another minute, but it seemed a long time, she was seated beside him in an old station-wagon, driving through a pretty, lazy-looking town.

"John, are your family going to hate me?"

"They will bear with you on account of me."

She laughed and leaned her head against the shoulder of his white uniform. "Drive with one hand, John."

He turned to her. A smile flashed in his tanned face. "Are you going to pursue me from room to room at High Meadows, demanding an arm around you or a kiss every twenty seconds?"

"You bet. You love it."

"How right you are, Catherine!"

"Would you marry me, John, if I tried to please you?"

"I might next Wednesday, just because I'll get some extra leave if I do. You know that's the only reason."

"Yes, I know. . . . What time Wednesday?"

Again he smiled down at her, and her heart turned right over. "Any time

you say, Caty. I have no other engagements that I remember."

"As early in the morning as possible, so I sha'n't have to worry all day about you changing your mind, John." Then she stopped being gay. "Was your mother startled?"

He was serious too. "In a way. I suppose most mothers continue to think of their sons as something like a decade younger than their actual ages. My Aunt Sara Lea doubted that I was old enough to be sure of my own mind. . . . How would you like to be married at High Meadows, if you don't—if you dislike—"

"Why all the delicate reticence? I don't want to be married at my mother's triplex apartment with Serge Doumade giving me away, all of Mother's Pekingese yapping under everyone's feet, and Mother weeping champagne tears. If it won't cause your mother trouble, I'd like to be married at your place, and aside from my brother, I don't want anyone there except your friends."

"Not even your father?"

As it happened, he had met her father for half an hour in Florida. Parker Lansley was on his way north from Mexico. As his daughter phrased it, "The war and taxes put the backers of exploration for ruins in the doghouse." John had rather liked the thin vague handsome man who was Catherine's father.

She said: "I suppose we could have him. He'll give us some kind of Mayan decorated piano shawl or whatever makes little sense for a wedding present. The poor dear was a pretty good young scientist when he met Mother, I've heard. But he hadn't learned anything in the jungle to show him how to manage *her*. So after a year or so he fled back to the extinct Indians. Don't blame him. But he's always liked me in a mild way, though I think sometimes he would like to measure my skull. They're always measuring skulls, you know—archeologists, I mean. The measurements prove a lot of things. I forget what, though. Well, I suppose the old sweet would like to come and stand around. I'll wire him. He's stopping at some place in Chicago where they have an archeology department."

She dropped the subject. She said: "Oh, John, I can't believe we'll be married Wednesday. That's only four days. John dearest, you take care of me so I don't ever turn out badly, won't you?"

"I'll beat you at the first sign, Caty."

But he stopped the car to kiss her, under a tree by a nice-smelling field in which amiable cows stared at them.

John didn't start the car again for a minute. "Suppose I weren't around, my dear, to see that you didn't turn out badly?"

Her wonderful soft dark eyes were grave. "Then, remembering you will be enough to keep me steady always, John."

"Thank you, Catherine." There wasn't any flippancy in his voice at all.

Suddenly in the warm sweet-smelling air, she shivered. She actually couldn't believe her luck; she couldn't believe that John loved her, that they would be married in four days, be happy until he went away, and even that he might come back so they would be happy always.

The bright day darkened; her white lids dropped.

John asked: "What *is* it, Catherine?"

She opened her eyes. The sun was bright again. She shrugged in the circle of his arm. "Nothing, John. Someone walked across my grave, as my old Irish nurse used to say whenever she shivered. More likely the heat of the train and my general excitement, I'd guess."

"Are you sure you're all right?"

He looked so worried that Catherine laughed. "Darling, I'm going to invent slight ailments so you'll look at me like that—like a child having forcibly removed from him the last piece of cake in the world. Funny, it isn't the fashion to say, 'My dear John, your presence is sunlight in my heart,' or 'John my love, the romantic feelings you stir in my bosom are something or other.' All that's moronic. And if you went on about my hands and my eyes and so on, at length, I'd go out of my mind—but utterly!

"I love it for you to say, 'Not a bad frock!' or 'You'll pass,' when I'm all dressed in my best. If you went on about my 'slender graceful hands,' for instance, I'd hate it. But underneath the words, the emotions are—well, marvelous, terrific, out of this world, aren't they?"

He only nodded. But she wouldn't have wanted him to wander on. In fact, she was pleased when he grew severe and said: "Try to restrain yourself from saying things like 'going nuts' around the house, my angel."

"Why, John Reford, I've been censoring my vocabulary ever since yesterday, just to get in practice."

"I noticed the absence of brimstone. Make a lady of you yet, that's my ambition."

"I wish you luck."

He drove on through the sunshine.

Chapter Two

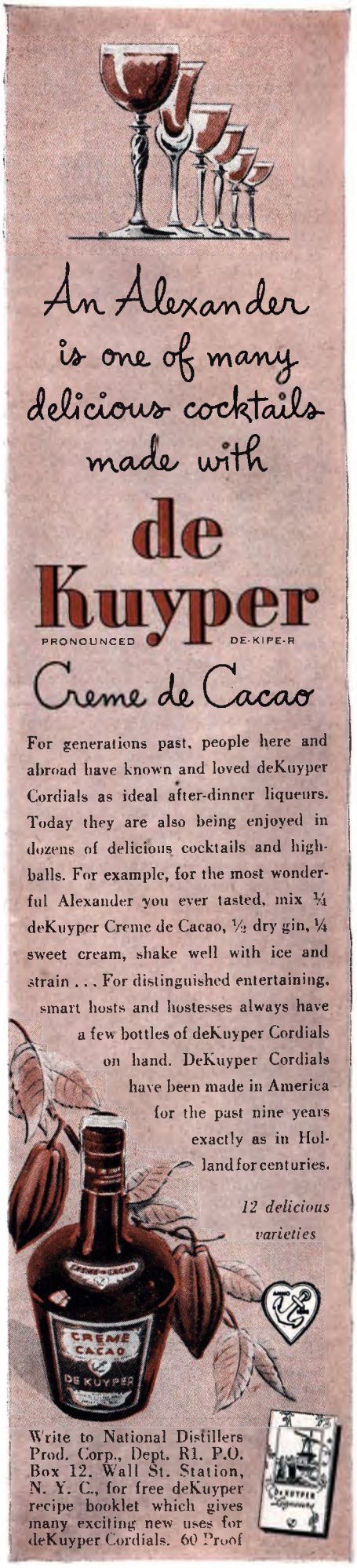
In her dressing-room, where the summer wind stirred the faded blue taffeta curtains, Alison Reford was changing her frock to get ready to meet her prospective daughter-in-law.

John's news that he wanted to marry had startled her; but she wanted him to marry if he chose, just as she had consented to his flying because he chose. People said she was "too wrapped up" in her only child; and it was true that in all her waking hours, thought of him was present in the foreground or the background of her thoughts.

But now, sitting at her dressing-table, she had forgotten him and the girl he wished to marry, the girl with whom he said he was completely in love. She had thought "Young love!" felt the scented air of June on her cheeks, and as very rarely, had let her mind wander off to her own life, to a June, a summer so far away that another person seemed to have lived in it.

That other person was a girl named Alison James, who never thought of becoming Alison Reford, who had indeed not met John's father. She was sixteen years old, an orphan, heir to a lovely neglected house and garden and acres in Virginia, but not too much money. She was chaperoned and supervised by three aunts, in turn, or often simultaneously.

There was a young man named Chadwick Cassalane who was twenty years old,



handsome like all the Cassalanes in a dark eyed dark-haired fashion, and alleged to be a "trifle wild" like all the Cassalanes too. He thought Alison James was the loveliest person in the whole world. He was firm in that belief for a whole summer, or perhaps even for all of his life.

And even at sixteen, Alison was beautiful, though her aunts did stress the fact that she was too thin. She had thick straight gold-colored hair growing in a widow's peak from her broad forehead, long gray eyes, a beautifully shaped scarlet mouth, a fine even profile. Her aunts were confident among themselves that in a few years when she acquired some curves, Alison should marry well, meaning marry money, as all the aunts had done in varying degrees.

Chadwick Cassalane didn't have any money. The Cassalane estate was if possible in worse condition than High Meadows the James house. But anyway, both he and Alison were too young to be serious, so it didn't matter that he spent all the leaves he could snatch from that mad Army camp—where they taught him to fly—on the wisteria-covered veranda of High Meadows. (Why didn't he go into the cavalry like a gentleman, the aunts wondered? All the Cassalanes were beautiful horsemen.)

It was not literally true that he spent all his leaves on the veranda. In the lazy summer afternoons he and Alison rode side by side on bridle-paths so narrow their shoulders touched from time to time, as the horses crowded each other. And Chadwick and Alison even went for all-day picnics on horseback occasionally, when the weather was not too hot. They would ride to a favorite hilltop, whence one had a view of many rolling valleys, and the Potomac a silver cord across the valleys.

They were to remember forever that view, the fragrance of the summer woods, the moon rising before High Meadows, shining through the lacy pattern of the wisteria, the stillness, and fireflies dancing over the dark lawns, fireflies more golden than the summer moon. But they did not know then that these things were almost all they would have to remember of each other through all the busy sensible years afterward.

THEIR single summer was the summer of 1918. They were members of that other war generation obliged to grow up before its time.

Now, before Chadwick Cassalane met Alison, he had drunk his way through a university in a gentlemanly fashion, and had a silly boy's infatuation for a young married woman of Burlcourt. But from the first evening he sat in a creaking rocking-chair, listening to Alison's soft voice, his old habits, his old careless acquaintances, knew him no more. It is possible that the touch of Alison's slim fingers might have steadied him always, as they steadied him for about a hundred days, because his "wildness" was largely the overexuberance of youth.

He made—they both made—all sorts of plans for after the war. He was to take a job in the near-by city, study law evenings, make money to refurbish his house (and he always added to himself, "to buy Alison clothes and jewels and everything she ever wants in the world").

Alison was confident Chadwick would be a famous lawyer, a Congressman, a Senator, or perhaps Governor, because he was wonderful and remarkable and there was no one like him. They were both to live happily, never to grow old like other people, never to quarrel or change at all.

Meanwhile at least they lived happily planning all these things, from May until September. Chadwick's training school was near, he could drive to Burlcourt most evenings, and all week-ends they could go riding. The aunts were preoccupied with war work and didn't bother those two whom they called "the children."

But on September first, Chadwick was ordered overseas. Then all their plans for their marvelous life after the war seemed dreadfully far off and the intervening separation unbearable. So they decided to elope.

Neither of them liked to remember that painful evening when every minister of their acquaintance refused to marry them because they were so young. The first minister whom they approached telephoned Alison's Aunt Maizie, then in residence at High Meadows. Aunt Maizie caught up with them at the house of the third minister.

WITH the best of intentions, Aunt Maizie, the most forceful of the three sisters, stage-managed the rest of the story. At first she had anger and alarm to excuse her for forgetting reticence due a girl as young as Alison. Before they had got home to High Meadows, she had blurted out a most sordid—as well as exaggerated—account of Chadwick's devotion to a married woman at least ten years his senior. She drew on rage and imagination to some extent for her account of various escapades of Chadwick's at the university.

To Alison, who had been living in the innocent enchantment of a very young girl's love, the awakening was shocking. Yet—for underneath her gentleness and apparent docility she had character—she made a fight for her love, a rather pathetic futile fight. She said she would believe nothing against Chadwick unless he himself admitted it. She demanded to see him.

So the aunts summoned him, on the last day of his last leave, to see Alison and themselves. They were assembled in the shabby drawing-room of High Meadows with its assortment of portraits adding their stiff glances to those of the aunts.

Aunt Maizie managed the interview. She was by many standards a difficult old woman, and when she died of apoplexy in the early 1920's, her niece couldn't find any tears for her; but this time she was impressive, as are all people convinced they are "doing the right thing."

Chadwick stood against the fine paneled doorway. Afterward one of the aunts remembered with slight regret that no one had asked him to be seated.

Maizie began like a lawyer cross-questioning: "It is true you were twice suspended from the university?"

Chadwick's dark eyes were furious. But he was helpless, too. It was that day that Alison realized for the first time that he was not completely grown up, either.

He said: "Yes, that's true." Alison, separated from him by half the length of the room and the ample persons of her aunts, twisted her fingers in the lap of a frock not much whiter than her own face.

"You were suspended for drunkenness?" Aunt Maizie's voice went on, and Chadwick answered coolly, admitting everything, qualifying nothing—until they came to Mrs. Caroline Wrett.

"You had a flirtation with Mrs. Wrett?"

Then Chadwick said: "I refuse to discuss that."

But Aunt Maizie wasn't disconcerted. She tried a shot in the dark. "Will you admit that you have seen that woman, even that you have been at her house, this summer since you have been attentive to my niece?"

Chadwick said stiffly: "I have been at her house twice this summer." By the code he had inherited with his dark eyes, his fondness for horses, the color of his hair, he could not say: "She called me incessantly. She begged me to see her. I only talked to her twice."

Well, Aunt Maizie relaxed. She had accomplished all she wanted.

The boy in the doorway looked past her to the white-faced girl. He asked of the girl or the room in general: "Is this all? Have you anything else you want to say to me?"

"This is sufficient," Aunt Maizie told him. He turned and went out of the room. But amazingly, there was a flutter of white, and Alison ran past her aunts as if they weren't there.

On the veranda she said: "Chadwick, wait a minute." He turned. She said, "I can't let you go to the war without saying, without saying—" and couldn't go on for a minute. Then she did a surprising thing. She put her slim young arms round his neck. She said: "Chadwick darling, take care of yourself at the war, and—well—don't be unhappy."

He kissed the top of her golden head, but she lifted her face, so then he kissed her lips. He knew in that moment that she was a child, with a child's loyalty, and a child's love. He knew that everything possible would be done to make her forget that love, that there was no use in saying anything more than, "Thank you, Alison sweet," and "Good-by."

CHADWICK got into action before the fighting ended, and was wounded in one of the last air actions of the war. For some months he stayed in a French hospital until his knee was healed. Then—he had inherited a small sum of money from an uncle—he and a great friend made a long tour of Europe.

He was oddly reluctant to return to America. But sometimes, in his rare moments of self-analysis, he understood the reason. He wanted Alison to be completely grown up before they met again. He wanted her to comprehend the truth about his not specially gaudy past, and to be sure of herself. Sometimes he hoped she would love him. He hoped most intensely. Then at other times their love seemed a childish finished thing, and he forgot her a little, and his own aching for her. . . .

In the early autumn of 1919, Chadwick Cassalane was twenty-one, and knew it was time to go home, find a job at some-

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·hing, and organize his life. He reached Virginia at the end of a blazing October. And as soon as he drove through the familiar roads toward home, every ride he had taken with Alison, the sound of her voice, her slow grave smile, and the sun on her fair hair, were as near as yesterday.

The first news he heard was that she was to be married within a week to Stewart Reford, who was rich and at least fifteen years older than Alison. Chadwick told himself bitterly: "The aunts made safe."

He was precisely right.

From the moment Stewart Reford paid the least attention to seventeen-year-old Alison, who looked somewhat more mature than seventeen that year, probably because she was unhappy, the aunts had been agreed. Of course dear Alison was very young; but Stewart Reford was such a distinguished lawyer, and so on and so on.

As for Alison, she had been hurt and unhappy. She was flattered by the attention of one so much older yet so attractive, with his red hair, his bright blue eyes, his tall wide-shouldered sturdiness. And every time she thought of Chadwick, she remembered "that woman." How could he have liked *her?* If not quite ten years older than Chadwick, she was certainly more than twenty-five years old. Well, she would forget him, as her nicest aunt, Aunt Maxine, said gently sometimes that she would forget.

So her marriage was set for the last week in October.

Two days before the marriage, a Negro maid brought to her a note.

Will you ride this afternoon to the hill-top where we used to go? I want very much to see you.

Always
Chadwick Cassalane.

She rode up the hillside as the sun was setting over the ranges to the west. He was already waiting for her there. She saw him with a sort of aching in her heart, but no clearer emotion. He helped her off her horse; and when their hands touched, she wasn't happy.

In these months of her engagement she had been content, if not happy. Everyone—meaning her aunts—said she was making a worthy marriage. Everyone approved of all she said or did or wore. And everyone knew more than she, so they were right. She had never been confident that she knew very much, since all that business of Chadwick and Caroline Wrett.

But now her unreasonable heart said: "I'm so glad to see you."

He said, "Thank you," and she remembered that almost the last thing he'd said when he went away had been, "Thank you."

But now he said a great deal else. He said that if she loved Stewart Reford, he only wanted to wish her happiness, but if she was being forced into this marriage, he wanted to know it.

She knew that she was not being "forced," though she had been encouraged. On the hilltop it was hard to remember exactly what Stewart looked like; she could only remember that she was fond of him in a way, and that he was much more adult than either she or Chadwick.

It was more than a year since she and Chadwick said good-by. She didn't know how to get back to intimacy with him in this hurried hour she had snatched from a crowded day. All sorts of relatives were coming to dinner; her aunts would grow anxious if she was late. And she had suffered over Chadwick long months: she didn't want to suffer any more.

She couldn't say any of those things to him. She couldn't even say: "Why didn't you come home sooner?"

It was all unhappy. The summer of 1918 was a lost lovely time—but ever so far off.

At the end, she tried to break through the wall of days lived separately. Chadwick had helped her to mount. She put out her hand to him. Oddly, after she had suggested going, he hadn't tried to make her stay longer. Why hadn't he?

She said words, one after the other, like: "We're going to live in Burlcourt, you know, and just use High Meadows for a country place, so I sha'n't be here very often." Then her voice changed, composure left her, and she said in a warm tone he remembered: "Oh, Chadwick, it was good to see you, even if we never meet again."

He held tight to her hand. For the first time that afternoon he smiled as she remembered. He said: "Alison, the last time we meet will be a year a long way from this."

That was their good-by.

Chadwick Cassalane stood watching her ride away and wondering why he was sure it was not the end for her and for him. . . .

Alison Reford's life was happy. Her husband was kind, indulgent and successful, more and more successful as time passed. She had a town house; she had High Meadows rejuvenated.

The shabby Federal mahogany chairs had fine new polish and upholstery. The porch had new pillars. (But the wisteria was trained to grow against them as before.)

Alison's son, John Reford, loved High Meadows better than the town house, so his parents spent John's Christmas and spring holidays there as well as summer. And sometimes at Christmastime Alison would go hunting with her tall fair son, both of them better mounted than she had ever been in her girlhood.

Two or three times over half a dozen years she met Chadwick Cassalane, out with the hunt.

He lived in New York, where he was supposed to have made a fortune in the market; he had married a New York girl, and came to Virginia only for holidays. Alison disliked these encounters, and it seemed to her Chadwick disliked them too, because he avoided her as much as he could.

Memory of a far lost time during the war that no one talked about any more, troubled her when she saw him. That summer, that absurd young love, had so completely nothing to do with the rest of her life. Young love! She supposed she loved her husband; certainly she got along well with him. He was never at a loss for things to talk about, even if lately, since he planned to go to Congress, he did orate. But it was easier for her to say things to her son, who was eight . . . . who was twelve . . . . who was fifteen years old.

And Alison thought: "How old I'm growing! John was born in '21, and now he is sixteen."

Yet John said: "You are an absurdly young mother. I'm sure you adopted me," in his happy warm voice, and she forgot about growing old, except sometimes when John was away at boarding-school and at college. Then once in a while when she was tired, the sense of something missing, something lost long since and forgotten, would trouble her.

More often she wondered whether other people too, didn't really feel older inside. The 1930's had seemed an æon distant from the 1920's, which had not quite begun at the time of her marriage. Now the 1930's were coming to an end. Yet riding through the woods with John, or at Christmases, or sometimes just when she was happy, she felt as young as the girl she had been in High Meadows so very long before. She had a sense of something wonderful around the next corner of the world.

In 1939 Chadwick Cassalane came back to Virginia to live. He was poorer than he had been in the 1920's, but he remembered being poor before that—actually poor, not relatively. He brought back to his family's home his fourteen-year-old daughter, an old car, and two fine hunters. His wife had decided she couldn't stand life in Virginia.

Chapter Three

On Monday afternoon after a long day out of doors, Catherine Lansley sat having tea with her who was to be her mother-in-law. She was thinking that she had never liked any older woman so quickly and so much; not that one should think of Alison Reford as an "older woman," in the sense of someone growing middle-aged and homely, or in the other special New York sense of someone beginning to look well lacquered.

She liked High Meadows, too; it had a slight shabbiness not unfamiliar to her, as a good many of her friends lived in houses which reminded one that the 1920's —when last they were "done over"—began to be a long time ago. High Meadows, however, had a more authentic air of age than most; it had been so well founded with its massive English mahogany, its delicate French gilt mirrors, as to be beautiful regardless of the condition of upholsteries and window chintzes.

She said, into a comfortable silence: "Your house suits you, Mrs. Reford, or you suit your house. I can't tell which."

Under the smooth golden hair, the quiet face lightened, and Catherine thought: "When she smiles, she looks divine."

"The house ought to suit me, my dear; I've lived in it almost all my life."

There was a sound of bicycle wheels on the drive outside the window. Both women looked up; John had gone to the village on his old bicycle to do some errands. He had already wired for extra leave for his wedding, so that when the maid announced, "Boy with telegrams," Alison and Catherine both thought he had received a prompt reply.

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But there were three telegrams, all addressed to Miss Catherine Lansley.

The first was from her brother:

ARRIVE IN MORNING TO SEE YOU THROUGH. VERY PLEASED. LOVE.

RICHARD.

She was delighted, and then had an afterthought. High Meadows was so obviously a large house run on the barest skeleton staff. "Mrs. Reford, my brother's coming. But won't it be a great deal of trouble for you to put him up? I mean, he could stay in Burlcourt or somewhere."

"But High Meadows can put up endless people, Catherine. We'll be very glad to have him." She went on: "The place is going into one of its shabby cycles, of course. The last one was in my girlhood, but with five less baths in the house. The next time the place is renovated will be by you and John in the good years after the war."

Catherine hesitated and then decided to be frank. "Can you really believe in the good years after the war?"

"Completely, my dear. The world has ups and downs, as people's lives do."

Sara Lea Reford came into the room. Small, slight, as if a strong wind would blow her away, she had dark auburn hair, bright blue eyes like her nephew's—and, they'd told Catherine, like those of her dead brother, John's father.

There was something charming about her face and figure, something eager and much younger than her thirty-one years, that Catherine liked. All the same, every time she saw Sara Lea, she wanted to make up her face and rearrange her hair. The face, with a good white skin and firm neat features, was unadorned except with a touch of not very red lipstick. The hair, guiltless of a wave, was combed back smoothly.

As Catherine had said privately to John: "Your aunt looks as if she just washed her face and forgot it; yet she could have enormous style."

John had answered: "But sweet, she probably just does wash her face and forgets it. I don't suppose in ten or eleven years of looking after an invalid mother she had much time to do more. And there is one of those vague Southern stories. . . . She had a beau; she couldn't leave her mother; the beau married someone else. All centuries ago!"

CATHERINE sat thinking, while Alison told Sara Lea that Catherine's brother was arriving in the morning. Sara Lea seemed as pleased with the news as Alison did. Strange, they were *really* hospitable. Her own mother spasmodically filled the Florida house or the New York triplex or an assortment of rented places with guests she hoped might amuse her. There were always three times as many men as women. When they were gone, her mother said malicious things about them.

Her thoughts drifted off. Would Alison think she was a dreadful bore if she stayed at High Meadows a great deal after John went overseas? It would somehow be nearer to him, here where he had spent his boyhood. Also in Alison's company—or Sara Lea's for that matter, it would be easy to be "good." Somehow she could not imagine either of them going on about being bored, though certainly their lives were quieter than the lives of anyone else she knew.

The big moment of the days seemed to be the calls of Major Chadwick Cassalane, who must be past forty, but was attractive in a black-haired dark-eyed fashion. Sara Lea had been confidential with her, as they were spraying roses today. (Imagine spraying roses! She had liked it in spite of the horrid disinfectant smell of the stuff. The garden was so quiet and bees hummed, and she wondered how many wives and sisters and daughters had taken care of the roses in that garden.)

Sara Lea had said: "Chadwick Cassalane was madly in love with Alison, my dear, in the other war when they both were scarcely more than children. But it was thought Chadwick was just a little 'wild.' So Alison married my brother, and Chadwick went to New York and made a fortune and married someone who left him when he lost the fortune. And now Alison and he are just great friends, of course. Chadwick has a pretty little daughter of seventeen. You must meet her."

At the time it seemed to Catherine that was a most inadequate summary of several lives. If Alison had really loved Chadwick—Catherine could see that he must have been pretty gorgeous when he was young; even now he was mildly fascinating with his look of having been through things—why hadn't she married him regardless? How could she have gone on and made a perfect wife to someone else?

All of the various ladies who had called to meet Catherine the last two days said things like: "My dear, if you make John as perfect a wife as Alison made John's father, he will be the most fortunate of young men."

Alison's voice interrupted her gently: "Catherine, you haven't opened your other telegrams."

"Oh!" She was startled. "Actually, I forgot them."

She tore open a yellow envelope:

OF COURSE WILL COME TO YOUR WEDDING, CATHERINE. THANK YOU FOR INVITING ME IN SPITE OF MY INADEQUACIES AS A PARENT.

FATHER.

Catherine said, "Father's coming to the wedding," and didn't notice the surprise on the two faces. Neither Alison nor Sara Lea had had an idea that a father might not turn up at his only child's wedding.

But Catherine, holding the third envelope, was thinking: "I should have told Father, when I wired him, not to tell Mother. Otherwise he'll get one of his annual moods of remembering how things used to be done thirty years ago before he was an archeologist, and decide 'in spite of their differences' they should arrange to go to their daughter's wedding together."

She had left it to John to tell his mother and aunt what he chose of her reasons for wanting to be married at High Meadows, and for not asking her mother. John had not told her what he explained. She did not want to know.

THERE was the sound of bicycle wheels again. This time it was John. He called through the long screened window: "Hello, everyone. Any wires for me yet?"

Catherine ran out to the hall to meet him. He kissed her warmly, and said with his arm still round her: "It's pleasant to have you in the house, Caty. I don't mind looking forward to it as a permanent arrangement."

"My brother is coming to our wedding. So is Father," she told him. "Also I wouldn't mind having *you* around the house permanently. No chance. Why can't you just come home from the office every night at five from now on?"

John's blue eyes were suddenly troubled.

Catherine went on, half joking and half serious: "Your office will be the skies over the world, and instead of living in a town, you'll live in a continent, Asia or Africa, Europe or Australia. Who knows for how long? It's not much of a home life, darling."

The grandfather's clock in the hall struck six.

John said: "But I think perhaps we shall have the years too. A small black-

haired angel just persuaded me, by being unconvinced herself. I'll forget it, I'm sure, a great many times, but for this minute I have no doubt."

Catherine thought: "And now I'm going to remember this minute, I'm quite certain I shall remember this, whatever I forget. The sound of the clock still vibrating in the air, the air itself scented from the rose garden, the curve of the staircase, John's smile, the sense of continuity—"

But John's mood changed abruptly to flippancy.

"That's enough sentiment for you for one day, my favorite pretty little imbecile."

"Why am I an imbecile?"

"For behaving as if you couldn't manage to breathe except for my devotion, of course. What telegram are you clutching? One from your brother or your father's?"

"Oh, this is a third. I was just going to read it when you arrived."

She opened it and read:

CATHERINE, YOUR FATHER TELEPHONED ME TO ANNOUNCE YOU PLAN TO MARRY THAT PENNILESS YOUNG ENSIGN I'VE MET ON WEDNESDAY OF THIS WEEK. IT IS POOR REWARD FOR MY LIFE'S DEVOTION TO THROW YOURSELF AWAY WITHOUT BOTHERING TO CONSULT ME. SERGE AND I ARE ARRIVING TOMORROW TUESDAY TO HAVE A TALK WITH THIS BOY'S FAMILY AND CONVINCE THEM I WILL NOT SUPPORT THEM OR YOU IF YOU PROCEED WITH THIS MADNESS. IF YOU WANT TO BE BURIED IN VIRGINIA FOR THE DURATION ON PART OF HIS PAY, DIGGING POTATOES OR WHATEVER THEY OCCUPY THEMSELVES WITH IN VIRGINIA, I DON'T KNOW YOU, BUT WILL PREVENT THIS CATASTROPHE AT ALL COSTS.

MOTHER

The sudden-swift changes of wartime, changes in hopes and fears, in ideas and ideals, are nowhere more important than in their impact on the course of love. The next installment of this vivid romance mirrors the dramatic pattern of contemporary life.

A Wilder Play from Thornton Wilder

(This article is continued from page 12)

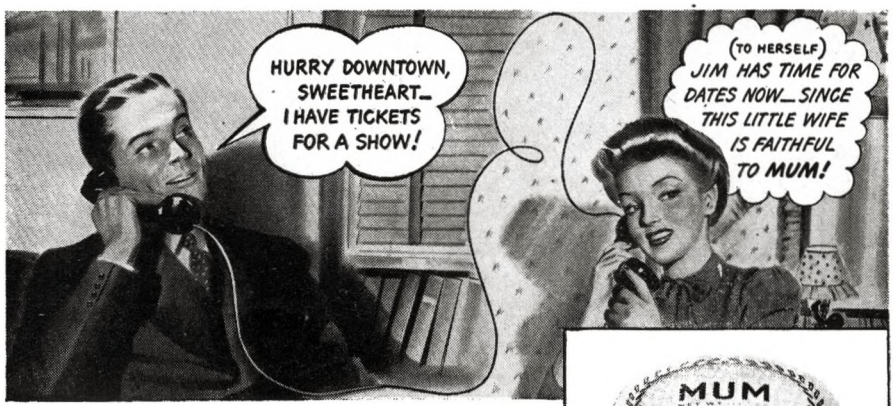
When the curtain goes up on the opening scene, we think we are in 1942; but then, quicker than you can say "Bridge of San Luis Rey," the Ice Age returns and then the fun begins. *Mr.* and *Mrs. Antrobus* (that's the name selected by Mr. Wilder for his New Jersey family), are faced with the task of rescuing and harboring all those who have survived the calamity. In order to accommodate them, they have to kick out a few dinosaurs, but then, if we know our history, that animal always got the dirty end of the deal.

It is our hunch that sooner or later, no matter where you live, you will be able to get better acquainted with "The Skin of Our Teeth," because the movie producers are sure to grab it.

Elsie: "I *am* disappointed! I've planned his favorite dinner! Jim may be busy, but we've been married only three years!"
Auntie: "You can't expect a honeymoon to last forever. Now and then, even the best husband may be thoughtless. Again, maybe it's the *wife*—even a pretty wife like you, who forgets to be a sweetheart!"

Auntie: "Elsie dear—I'll be frank! Underarm odor can shut the door to a man's heart, and a wife *may not know* she's guilty! That's why I'm speaking up!"

(*Later*) "My mistake was easy to make—and hard to forgive. I forgot that a bath only cares for *past* perspiration, but Mum prevents risk of underarm odor *to come.*"



It's easy to stay dainty and appealing with Mum!

It's quick—Only 30 seconds to use Mum! Even when you're busy, you have time for Mum!

It's safe—Mum won't irritate sensitive skin. And Mum won't injure fine fabrics, says the American Institute of Laundering.

It's certain—Mum works instantly because without stopping perspiration it prevents underarm odor, all day or all evening. Get Mum at your druggist's.

• • •

For Sanitary Napkins—*Mum is so safe, so gentle, so dependable! Thousands of women use Mum this way, too.*

MUM

TAKES THE ODOR OUT OF PERSPIRATION

Product of Bristol-Myers

DO MEN TURN AWAY *when your hair comes too near?*

If you enjoy dancing... if you want to be considered dainty, fastidious .... then guard against scalp odor.

Remember—your scalp perspires as well as your skin—and many girls also have oily hair which easily forms an unpleasant odor. Check up on yourself . . . your hat, your hairbrush, your pillow, tomorrow morning.

It's so easy to play safe. Use Packers Pine Tar Shampoo regularly. It works wonders with oily hair and scalp odor because it contains pure, medicinal pine tar.

It leaves your scalp clean and fresh. The delicate pine scent does its work—then disappears. Be sure of yourself . . . with naturally clean, naturally fragrant hair. Start the Packers habit tonight. Get it at any drug, department or ten-cent store.

PACKERS *Pine Tar* SHAMPOO

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Doctor's 4-Way Relief Acts INSTANTLY

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2. Quickly removes corns
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4. Eases tight shoes

Dr. Scholl's Zino-pads instantly stop tormenting shoe friction; lift painful, nerve-rasping pressure—keep you foot-happy! Separate *Medications* supplied for quickly removing corns. Cost but a trifle.

Dr Scholl's Zino-pads

Infamous Prelude to Pearl Harbor

(This article is continued from page 46)

bring about peace. Japan, however, is committed to an expansion policy.

On Nov. 21 Kurusu brought a formula which he said clarified the obligations of Japan under the tripartite pact and should relieve the fears of the United States in that particular. But it was only a statement that Japan reserved the right to interpret freely her obligations under the pact and that this interpretation need not be the same as Germany's or Italy's. Japan, the formula asserted, was not bound to cooperate or collaborate with Germany and Italy in aggression.

Hull—Have you anything more to offer?

Kurusu—No.

Hull—This is not especially helpful.

It becomes increasingly clear that Japan would not budge from the position of its military leaders. She was steadily refusing to abandon preferential positions in all the occupied areas. She was demanding a victor's peace with China and our assent to it, her army to be kept there indefinitely. Her envoys had made no answer to Mr. Hull's proposal on economic policy, but kept asking if there could be a *modus vivendi.*

Though the fact was kept from the Japanese, the President and Mr. Hull had been exploring a path of temporary adjustment, but had found no solution. It was during this exploration that the Chinese feared they would be abandoned by the Great Powers—a fear that proved baseless. The Army and Navy, as well as the Dutch and British Governments, were calling for more time. It was apparent to Mr. Hull that all hope of meeting the crisis by diplomacy had ceased, but he determined to make one more offer.

Next day, Nov. 22, the conversations were resumed. Mr. Hull said we could not furnish oil to the Japanese Navy, permit the Japanese troops to remain in Indo-China or desist from aiding China while Japan continued to assist Germany. If one more move like that in Indo-China were made there could be no hope of peace.

"Won't some Japanese statesman," he asked, "preach peace for a change?"

He expressed the belief that the Dutch, the British and the United States could arrange to end the freezing regulations if some concrete evidence were given of Japan's peaceful intentions. Japan might have all the materials she wanted on demonstration of this.

Kurusu and Nomura replied on a tangent. They stressed that a Japanese troop withdrawal to the north of Indo-China would relieve pressure on Thailand, but they continued to give no indication that their government was considering the basic suggestions made by the Secretary. Kurusu added it was hard to get the Japanese Army to agree to leave South Indo-China, yet he had accomplished this. The situation was approaching an explosive point, he explained, and a quick settlement was needed.

"No progress" would be a fair summary of this meeting.

On Nov. 25, as he did again on the 28th, Mr. Hull, attending the War Council where were gathered the civilian and military chiefs of the American State, emphasized the critical nature of the conversations and said he saw no possibility of an agreement. He warned that Japan might strike at any moment. And he added that, though he did not venture to speak as a military man, he would counsel his hearers to look for surprise attacks simultaneously at many points throughout the Pacific area. He said that even during the final phase of his conversations with the envoys of Japan, our government had learned of the dispatch of new Japanese troops and equipment to Indo-China and the Gulf of Thailand. The obvious objectives were Singapore and the Burma Road.

Secretary Hull brought to the meeting of Nov. 26 for consideration by the Japanese envoys the document now famous in history. In it was outlined a plan for a broad but simple settlement covering the entire Pacific area.

The proposals were instantly depreciated by Mr. Kurusu. His government, he said, "would throw up its hands" when it saw them. He asked again for a *modus vivendi,* and Mr. Hull replied that this had already been explored.

They turned to a discussion of the value of international agreements in general. Japan didn't do well with these, said Kurusu, and reminded the Secretary of The Hague award against Japan in the matter of the Perpetual Leases. The conversation droned on, returned to the Japanese proposals.

Hull—You ask for all the oil you want. I might almost be lynched if I promised that oil would go freely to Japan in these circumstances.

Nomura—Sometimes statesmen fail to get public sympathizers. Only wise men see far ahead, and sometimes they suffer martyrdom. But life is short and a man can only do his duty.

On this melancholy note, the meeting ended.

It was now Nov. 27. The sands were almost in the bottom of the glass and the war cloud was sweeping in from the West. On Nov. 27, the day before Mr. Hull's second warning to the War Council, the President and he received the envoys. The President said he had not given up hope, but the situation was serious. The American Government was disappointed by the attitude of the Japanese leaders toward fundamental principles of peace. This had created difficulties in the atmosphere here and abroad.

The United States had been very patient, and would continue to be if Japan would permit it. But the United States must have manifestations of peaceful intent.

The President, saying this, warned the envoys that the best interest of Japan would not be served by Hitler.

Hull—Every one knows that the Japanese slogans of "a new order," etc., are

war propaganda, are camouflaged terms of the policy of force and conquest and military domination of all the conquered peoples.

The envoys offered very little in response except for reiteration by Kurusu that the differences between the two countries were not in fundamentals but only in their application.

THE conferees resumed again on Dec. 1. Mr. Hull said the United States would definitely not become a partner with the military leaders of Japan from whom came only "bluster and blood-curdling threats."

"We aren't trying to bluff you," he remarked, "and there is no occasion for you to try to bluff us. There is a limit to these things." He went on to summarize:

To ask us to cease aid to China is the same as asking us to cease aid to Great Britain. We would be prepared to consider your proposal that we use our good offices to bring China and Japan together, but in return Japan pursues a policy that immobilizes anti-Axis troops in the Near East, thus assisting Hitler. The envoys must also recall that Premier Tojo on Nov. 20 had said the United States must be purged of influence in East Asia.

The conversation continued:

Hull—We won't be driven out of the Pacific. Why can't we go back to the fundamentals of my proposals of Nov. 26? Japan needs no sword to sit at the head of a table.

Kurusu—The Nov. 26 document has been communicated and we expect a reply soon. But Japan thinks its Nov. 20 proposal is equitable. What is the ultimate aim of the United States? I advise you to make a deep reflection as to that. And why is the President returning earlier to Washington than he had planned? [Mr. Roosevelt had left for a brief trip.]

Hull—Perhaps it was the loud talk of Premier Tojo.

Kurusu—That was only a twenty-minute broadcast. And bad translation resulted in the Premier's being misquoted.

Nomura—What Tojo said is not much different from your Pan-American policy. Our methods are simply more primitive.

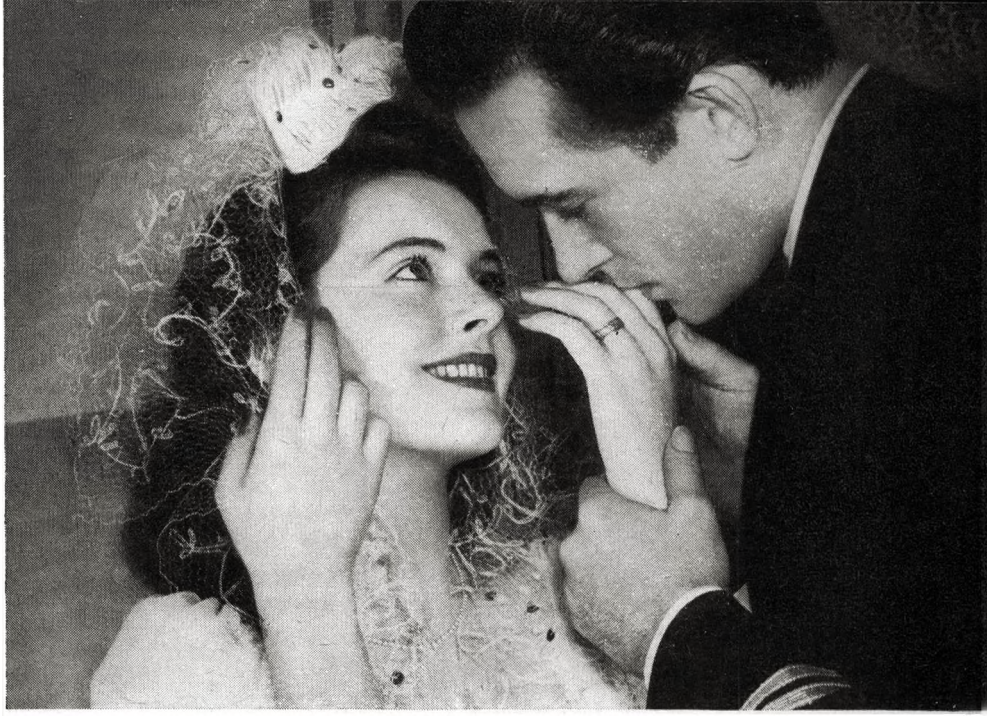
Kurusu—And if you don't look out, China will sell us both down the river.

Nomura—I hope we can come to a peaceful settlement. A war in the Pacific would be a tragedy. Wars don't settle anything.

The President some days before had asked Mr. Hull to inquire why Japan, in the midst of the conversations, had sent reinforcements to Indo-China, this time concentrating them in the north. Long before that, as it later became evident, Japan had prepared its expedition against Pearl Harbor.

Kurusu brought the reply to the question on Dec. 5 at a subsequent meeting. His government, said the envoy, had reinforced Indo-China as a protection against threatened Chinese aggression.

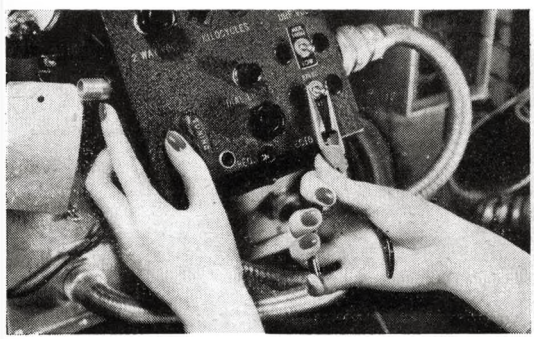
Mr. Hull was surprised. He had just the opposite impression, he said. He had understood that Japan was going north in Indo-China to attack China. It was new to him that this was a move of



WARTIME BRIDES have Hands adorably Soft

NO IDLE HANDS today—but a girl's hands can still be serenely smooth, soft for love and romance.

Disappointing roughness, uncomfortable chapping—you easily help *prevent* by regular use of Jergens Lotion. Close to professional hand care. Jergens includes 2 ingredients, so important for helping to smooth and soften the skin that many doctors depend on them. 10¢ to $1.00 a bottle. Notice how quick to use; Jergens Lotion leaves no troublesome sticky feeling.



1. Nearly 250,000 girls in airplane factories today! And these girls care for their hands with Jergens Lotion, almost *3 to 1*. Jergens helps prevent uncomfortable, unfeminine harsh hands.

2. Home duties must not suffer. But hands can still be smooth, cared-for. Jergens is a protective lotion, if used regularly; furnishes your hand skin with beautifying, softening moisture . . .

3. A service that's badly needed by most hard-working hands. Water, cold weather tend to lessen nature's provision for skin-softness. Jergens smooths on quickly; never feels sticky

★ BUY WAR BONDS AND STAMPS ★

THAT WAS ME, all right! Especially, when it came to taking a laxative. I used to punish myself with the worst-tasting medicine. And how that stuff would weaken and upset me! Aside from its awful taste, it was just *too strong!*

THEN I ADDED INSULT to injury! I went to the other extreme and started taking what turned out to be a "namby-pamby" laxative. I thought it would be easier on me, but it failed to give me relief. It was just *too mild!*

FINALLY, ONE OF THE GIRLS at the plant put me wise to Ex-Lax! Now, *there's* a laxative for you! It's such a cinch to take . . . tastes just like swell chocolate. And it does its job so well — without knocking you out! Ex-Lax is not too strong, not too mild — it's *just right!*

Ex-Lax is effective — but effective in a *gentle* way! It won't upset the children; won't make them feel bad afterwards. No wonder it's called:

THE "HAPPY MEDIUM" LAXATIVE

As a precaution, use only as directed.

IF YOU HAVE A COLD AND NEED A LAXATIVE —

It's particularly important when you're weakened by a cold *not* to take harsh, upsetting purgatives. Take Ex-Lax! It's thoroughly effective, yet not too strong!

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defense. He hadn't known the Japanese were on the defensive in Indo-China.

This irony was met by an observation from Nomura that Indo-China could be a menace to Japan, therefore care must be taken that no other power control it.

Patiently once more, although his hope was dead, the Secretary urged the Japanese Government to renounce force and aggression. He declared that the United States was not looking for trouble, but it wasn't running away either.

Kurusu (reverting again)—How are we aiding Hitler?

Hull—I have told you by keeping British, Dutch and American forces immobilized in the Far East.

Nomura (in Japanese)—This isn't getting us anywhere.

Hull—And can you explain the malignant press campaign which is confusing the situation and which your government is permitting to go on during these conversations? You control the press of Japan, and you could stop it.

Kurusu—Your press here is not free from articles that confuse and irritate. For instance, there was one story that I had been sent here to check Ambassador Nomura. That, indeed, was not helpful.

The envoys departed and on Dec. 6 the President sent the message to the Emperor that was the final plea for peace.

SUNDAY, Dec. 7, was a day of unusual beauty in Washington. The forenoon was quiet, but at noon the Secretary received a request from Ambassador Nomura to see him and Kurusu as soon as possible. The appointment was made for 1 o'clock, then postponed by the Japanese until 1:45.

The three conferees met together for the last time in Secretary Hull's office at the State Department at 2:20. Kurusu explained the delay by saying there had been difficulties in decoding Japan's reply to Mr. Hull's final proposals.

He handed the Secretary the reply.

Tokyo flatly rejected the proposals made by Secretary Hull in his memorandum of Nov. 26 and notified the American Government that "in view of the attitude of the American Government it cannot but consider that it is impossible to reach an agreement through further negotiations." The Japanese reply charged that the American Government intended to "conspire with Great Britain and other countries to obstruct Japan's efforts toward the establishment of peace through the creation of a new order in East Asia, and especially to preserve Anglo-American rights and interests by keeping Japan and China at war."

MR. HULL read the document slowly with a look of unbelief growing on his face.

Then he turned to the Japanese envoys and uttered the denunciation that has become a dramatic part of the recorded history of that fateful time.

"I must say that in all my conversations with you [the Japanese Ambassador] during the last nine months I have never uttered one word of untruth. This is borne out absolutely by the record. In all my fifty years of public service I have never seen a document that was more crowded with infamous falsehoods and distortions on a scale so huge that I never imagined until today that any government on this planet was capable of uttering them."

The envoys left without comment.

One hour before, the Japanese fleet and air force had attacked Pearl Harbor.

My Man, Sing

(This story is continued from page 27)

"Nice diggings you have here," said Earl, dropping into my easiest chair. "Very nice! As I say, I wish you girls wouldn't put on that act about hamburger and potluck—gets boring, y'know. Your boy jiggle up a good Bacardi?"

What could I do? I couldn't well start bawling out a servant before him.

"Make Bacardi very good," Sing assured him, and padded to the kitchen.

"Oh, he makes a wonderful Bacardi," I said bitterly. "Just wait and see."

My cellar stock consisted, I remembered, of one bottle of beer, left by a girl friend who'd had a Dutch-treat dinner with me a week before.

"In fact," I said, "just wait."

And then I heard ice-cubes clashing vigorously in the kitchenette. What they were clashing in I hadn't the slightest idea. I didn't have a cocktail shaker. I sat down quickly. I felt I had to.

Sing came back bearing a tray, with two frosted cocktail glasses and a huge silver cocktail shaker.

The tray, the glasses, the cocktail shaker were complete strangers to me.

"Bacardi," said Sing. "Very good."

It was very good—so Earl said. "As good as I ever tasted," he said with faint surprise. There was even a bit of hurt in his voice. "As good—or very nearly as good, as my own man makes." Personally, I wouldn't know what the stuff tasted like. What I wanted to know was where Sing got it all, how he got it, and sixteen other things.

It gave me something to think about, in a whirling sort of way, while Earl talked about the cocktails he'd had, where, who mixed them and how, while Sing padded about getting the table ready. It was only a minor shock to notice that a slender silver vase was in the center of the table, and from it rose a dozen long-stemmed apricot roses.

Earl was about to pour himself a fourth cocktail when Sing took the shaker, placidly but firmly, and said: "Dinner ready now. Very good." And Earl—accustomed as he was to having head-waiters hang on his every whim—took it. As I have said, there's something about Sing's placidity.

Sing seated me, for all the world as though I was Lady Whatsername in the huge baronial dining-room at Crockerleigh. From the kitchen he produced a soup that

proved that Millie Heaston hadn't lied about his cooking powers. Undoubtedly it had earthly things in it, like mushrooms and cream and sherry, but it tasted as though it was made in heaven. Yes, I could really taste it. For two of those cocktails had taken the numbing shock from my palate, and I felt reckless and a little mad.

The duck came next. It didn't look like a real one. It was too perfect; it looked as though an artist had carved it, and a painter had varnished it that mahogany tan. It came in a covered silver platter, surrounded by orange sections.

There is, I discovered, a point at which the human mind becomes anesthetized against shock.

For when Sing brought the silver champagne bucket, wrapped the golden head of the bottle with a napkin and twirled it expertly, I felt no more surprise. I had passed my own borderline. I could even smile fixedly when Earl said, "Hamburger, indeed! Well, I must confess I didn't expect a dinner like this!"

I could even say, "Neither did I," truthfully.

When Sing was out of the room, he leaned across the table and whispered: "But that isn't the man you want to be rid of, is it?"

"It is, indeed," I said.

"But he's a jewel of a cook. He's superb!"

I mumbled something about not needing a cook, even a superb one.

After dinner it took three hours to get rid of Earl. He sprawled in my easy chair, sipping brandy—of course, Sing produced that—and chatting about Earl Gayford.

When at last he was gone, I wheeled on Sing.

Severely, "I'd like a little information, Sing," I said.

He halted on his way to the kitchen and looked placidly at me. "Yes, Miss June?"

"In the first place—where did you get all that stuff—the duck, the liquor, the silver?"

Sing blinked behind his glasses.

"Store," he said, blandly.

"No! Really? Amazing!" I was trying to be sarcastic. I was still to learn that one of Sing's many blind spots is sarcasm and irony.

He beamed placidly and bobbed his head. "Store. Yes."

"And just how did you pay for them? With that dollar? If so, where's the change?"

Sing put down his tray, fumbled in his pocket and produced my dollar. He handed it to me.

"No pay," he smiled. "Charge."

"Charge!" I hadn't known my credit was that good. In fact, I did know it wasn't good for more than a dollar at Sneeder's delicatessen, and at other places it wasn't that good. But in a flash, I saw it all. No place would refuse credit to an establishment which sported a Chinese servant. They wouldn't even question it.

"Good heavens!" I said, sinking into a chair and holding my aching brow. "Sing, you've ruined me. I'll be the rest of my life paying this off. Have you no idea of money? Have you any idea what all this cost?"

Imagine ME leading a double life!

Ever have days when you wish you could run away from your other self?

For weeks you go along singing, smiling and working like a soldier. There's lots to be done—at school and the Canteen . . . at home, where you've taken over K. P. for Mom. Later at Service Dances where you're a regular, you look all crisp and shining.

Then there's that Double—your other self. Telling you that you *can't* keep going! Your confidence does a dim-out and you call Peg to make excuses for tonight.

"I know everyone's counting on me," you begin. "But what can I do?"

Peg tells you straight! It's *comfort* that makes the difference! You'll never know how big a difference until you try Kotex sanitary napkins. And she adds brightly: "Don't forget—8 o'clock sharp!"

Banish that Double

Is it worth a try? And how! You'll learn that Kotex is more comfortable—made to stay soft in use. None of that snowball sort of softness that packs hard under pressure. And no wrong side to cause accidents!

Now your confidence never misses a beat. Because Kotex has those patented improvements no other pad can offer! Like the 4-ply double-duty safety center. And the flat, pressed ends of Kotex that don't show because they're not stubby.

From now on you can be at your best *every day* of the month! That's why more women choose Kotex than all other brands of pads put together!

"AS ONE GIRL TO ANOTHER" is a swell booklet that explains a girl's private life...gives tips on social contacts, good grooming . . . do's and don't's for "those days." Quick send your name and address on a postcard to P. O. Box 3434, Dept. RB-3, Chicago, for your copy. It's FREE!

Keep going in comfort —with Kotex!

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Sing insisted. "No cost, Miss June. No cost!" Emphatically, *"Charge!"* he concluded, triumphantly.

That was my first hint of what Millie meant when she said he was like a child where money was concerned. A charge account to him was something miraculous, that made it unnecessary to pay for anything.

After a while I undertook to explain: "Look, Sing. I'm not rich. Get me? Me no got money. Savvy? Can't afford. Me working girl. Savvy?"

Sing's brow ruffled just a bit. "Yes, Miss June."

"I work for salary, see? Like you. Money no got. Mustn't spend! Now, for heaven's sake, do you understand?"

"Understand!" Sing beamed. "No spend. *Charge!*"

I gave up. So would you if your head ached as mine did. I looked over my new possessions and tried to figure out what they cost. My head ached worse. The silver came from Kleinhoffer's. With the other things I couldn't make out the source. I asked Sing. Sing said, "Store," brightly. So I took three aspirins and went to bed and had a nightmare. The nightmare was about the first of the month, and in it a mailman tottered up to my door with 2,471 bills, totalling $8,742.

I should have waked up screaming, but I didn't. As with surprise, there are limits to despair. There comes a reaction. I ate apple fritters—never heard of them before for breakfast, but they were wonderful—and drank three cups of coffee, piping hot and fragrant. It was so delightfully different from having a slopping cup of coffee slid across the marble counter at the drugstore—this having Sing fussing around in his white jacket, refilling my cup, building a prop for my morning paper.

I was hardly disturbed at all noticing that there was another silver platter for the apple fritters, that in place of my battered aluminum coffee-pot from the five-and ten there was a graceful slim-spouted silver one. Oh, well, I thought, a mere three or four months' salary should take care of those. Pooh!

Leaving, I handed Sing a dollar—the same one—and made a last try. "We've had a fine time, but let's call it a day, Sing. Tonight we have hamburger. Savvy?"

Sing bobbed his head agreeably. "Make lobster very good," he said, shutting the door after me.

That night I had for dinner—surprise! —lobster.

For ten days I ran a mental fever, up and down, up and down. I had exalted moments as when Sing produced a sweetbread and mushroom concoction straight from the kitchen of the gods. Vengeful moments, thinking of what I'd like to do to Millie Heaston's neck. Fearful moments, as the first of the month—and the bills—drew inexorably closer.

It burst upon me suddenly that maybe my creditors wouldn't be so lenient, and let me off easy, to work the rest of my life paying my bills. Maybe they'd get nasty and have me arrested. In that sudden burst it seemed to me that I'd read somewhere of people, ordinary clerks, stenographers and the like, who turned from their workaday paths and skipped down the one with primroses on the borders, putting up at the swankiest hotels, ordering clothes made to order, a car with a special body job, and pretending to be rolling in money. As I recalled it now, they didn't just make these people work it out. They put 'em in jail.

I tried to find out where Sing got the stuff. Useless. To Sing all stores were "store." Wonderful places that sent fine foods, wines and whatnot simply for the asking. I got a picture of Sing, too, which showed it wasn't all his fault. He'd been with old Mrs. Heaston for what he called a "long time." Sing had only two measurements for space—long and short.

He had, I gathered, practically run the poor old lady's life. He had run the Heaston homestead placidly, ordering just what he wanted. After doing that for forty or fifty years—totally unaware that "store" sent out bills, which were dealt with by secretaries who never intruded in Sing's domain—after a "long time" of unquestioned authority, Sing, the servant, was also a tyrant. A placid, beaming tyrant, who humbly took orders, then did what he pleased.

I had frustrated moments, too. As, for example, the time Earl Gayford decided to hire him. In ten days Earl had been in for dinner three times, and each time he raved about Sing's cooking. It was the cooking—not me—that brought him. I was sure of that. Earl, as a matter of fact, seemed to like me less and less. Jealousy—of my servant, I mean.

He grumbled finally: "If you girls would only be frank enough to say what's on your mind once in a while—"

"Meaning?" I said.

"But no," he went on unheeding. "You tell a chap he's going to rough it on hamburger, then feed him the best food he ever ate. You say you want to be rid of a servant, and if I tried to hire him, you'd probably snap my head off."

"I swear I won't!" I swore with fervor. "In fact, I'd consider it a favor."

So, after a little conspiring, I went into the bedroom to powder my nose, while Earl went to the kitchen and made Sing an offer.

Just what Sing said, I don't know, but when I came back to the living-room, Earl was red-faced and sulky. My heart sank.

"No go?" I asked.

"You know darn' well no go!" Earl snapped. "You probably had it all fixed to have him turn me down. Well, now you have had your laugh!"

He snatched up his hat and stamped out. Don't suppose I didn't feel badly about it. My one and only boy friend! And in these days when the Army is grabbing the good young men, that's nothing to be scoffed at.

When Sing came in, I gave him a murderous glare.

He beamed at me.

The first of the month came, and I dashed home in the evening to look at my bundle of bills. It wasn't until I found the mail-box empty that I realized how silly—or ignorant, since I'd never had a charge account—it was of me. It had slipped my mind that the stores send out bills on the first—they don't arrive until the second.

I dashed home on the night of the second. Again an empty mail-box.

The third, fourth and fifth were the same. Not a bill. No cops waiting for

"Very well, if you say so and the Government says so, it's warm!"

Times like these teach us a new gratitude for the simple things in life. A quiet evening of rest, a friendly game with a next door neighbor, good talk, good refreshment, these make a welcome interlude of sanity in a seething world. For millions of Americans that interlude becomes calmer, happier, more content with a glass of friendly Schlitz.

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me at the door. Only Sing, and a delicious smell.

On the fifth, I breathed easier. Millie would be back tomorrow. In the first place, Sing would go back to her. In the second, she'd have to help me out with a loan to meet those bills. After all, the bills were Sing's doings, not mine. And Sing belonged to her; I would certainly insist on that!

On the sixth I telephoned the Heaston house. I telephoned it early and often. Finally, at three o'clock in the afternoon, Millie's voice floated back with, "Hello."

I said: "Well!"

She said, "June, dear! So nice to hear from you." She didn't sound overjoyed.

"It's lovely hearing you," I said grimly. "I'm packing that wild Chinaman back to you."

She sounded a little faint: "Oh!" After a long pause: "He didn't suit, June dear?"

I said: "In the first place—" And started. I was a little out of breath, but not finished at the forty-second place.

"In the forty-second place," I said, "he'll probably be the cause of my arrest. He's been buying things right and left and charging them to me. He must have spent four hundred dollars for me in two weeks, and I haven't got—"

"He didn't charge them to you," Millie said.

"What?"

"I've just been looking over my mail and wondering about those bills. You see, June dear, he charged everything to me. He's a child about those things."

I said, weakly: "Oh, did he?"

"Probably didn't mean to. But he bought them at places where he was known as my servant, and they charged them to me."

"Well—what do I owe you, then?"

There was a long pause. Then Millie said: "I'll make a deal with you, June dear."

"What sort?"

"I'll take care of these bills. I'll even go on paying his salary. If—you'll keep Sing."

"But—but—"

She suddenly started to wail. Yes, actually cry. "It won't be so bad for you," she sobbed. "After all, you don't have to spend most of your time at home. But I do. And I can't stand it! He won't let me do anything I want to. He decides what I'll eat, what our guests will eat, what I'll wear, and even what guests I have! He's simply—" Muffled sobs. Business of saying I was a strong-minded person, and could ride him down. She couldn't. That, of course, was sheer flattery. Business of saying Sing was really a jewel of a servant, in which there was a germ of truth. Business of pointing out that I was getting a wonderful bargain.

Did I agree? No—well, not exactly. In the end I agreed to keep him for a "few days" and try to find a berth for him. Her tears were really sincere; and me—I could understand them. I went home that night with an idea.

After dinner: "Sing," I said, "we've got to have a heart-to-heart talk."

"Yes, Miss June."

I explained carefully, in words of one syllable or less, why I couldn't keep him. I led gently up to Earl Gayford. At the Gayfords' he would be boss, No. 1 boy; he would have a bedroom of his own; his pay would be much greater; his life there would be much happier. After all, I pointed out, what future did he have with me?

At the end, Sing said placidly: "No like him."

I said, "Oh!"

Sing queried, disapprovingly: "You like him, Miss June?"

"I think he's wonderful," I said emphatically. "He's—"

"Sing knows lots of nice fellas," Sing interrupted.

"Earl—" I started to say, and stopped. I glared at him. What did he mean by that crack about knowing lots of nice fellas?

"Listen, Li-Hung-Chang!" I shouted, "if you have any fool notion about running my love-life, I, s'help me, I'll—" And stopped. The very idea took my breath away.

Sing beamed. "Sing knows lots of nice fellas. Much better than him."

And padded off, placidly.

And that's how I'm marrying Bob tomorrow.

"No, your mother and I haven't quarreled! Can't you see she's reading the comics?"

Dream Jobs

(This article is continued from page 35)

known woman had enumerated. But were they easy? That, and I almost stated it aloud, was as glaring a fallacy as the fact that I had ever run into myself in Toledo.

The first job she had mentioned was acting. I wondered if there still existed people who imagined acting was easy. That notion, I thought, went out with the notion that all actresses wore diamond garter-buckles and American Beauty roses, and loaned their slippers to favored suitors for use as dubious receptacles for champagne. Acting is stimulating and exciting; it can be joyful, and it can be heart-breaking. But under no circumstances is it easy. To study and create a part, is an exacting and even agonizing task. It takes weeks of rehearsing and even playing before a part is really set; and during those weeks one goes through periods of exhaustion, of doubt and of complete loss of confidence which with members of other less optimistic professions (for ours is one which in order for us to endure must be optimistic) might be symptomatic of a nervous breakdown.

I never rehearse a play without reaching a stage, usually three or four days before the opening, when I become convinced it's going to be an abysmal failure, and that I know nothing about acting, and the only thing left in life for me is to run off to some obliterating refuge like a cloistered order or the

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Foreign Legion. The horrors of opening nights are too familiar for me to dwell upon. Suffice it to say, that whatever power enables us to live through them is as mysterious as whatever mad impulse drives us to go through such Gehennas time and again. Nor do years of experience abate the agony; for acting is one profession in which the longer one remains, the less one knows about it.

THE opening night over, there remains the run of the play, or the closing, as the case may be. If it's a flop, that's just another heartbreak to be patched up with the healing cement of an actor's private philosophy. If it runs, the strain is still there, although in a milder degree. One must continue to develop and build a part. Every audience is different and must be played to differently. There is no such thing (or there shouldn't be) as reaching a stage of laxity when one can walk through a performance.

In addition to this constant concern, one must keep fit physically and vocally. And one must set aside a certain amount of time for those extra-curricular things which, according to the management, will help business—interviews, photographs, benefits, patriotic rallies and luncheons at some hotel before the beaming gaze of several thousand women who are hell-bent for culture.

My particular specialty is solo acting. (Monologues, if you like, although I don't. I hate the word *monologue* only one degree less than the word *readings.)* And while it's an interesting job, I could hardly agree with the unknown woman that it's a happy, happy one. I have to write all my own material. Not that I consider my own material in any way superior; it's just that nobody else appears to want to write it for me. Audiences are constantly demanding new numbers, and the necessity for writing and working them up is a perpetual Damocles' sword over my reluctant head. For I secretly hate writing monologues. It's an extremely tricky medium. One must have just the right balance of time, place and character. "And if that woman imagines it's easy," I muttered, much to the astonishment of the individual sharing the bus seat with me, "let her try to write one!" I myself write at least five, to one I eventually use.

Once written, a new sketch has to be produced—an *accouchement* I always find extremely painful. I never believe it's going to be any good, and it takes me days of screwing up sufficient courage to try it out, first on the family, then on some unsuspecting woman's club, and eventually before a genuine theater audience.

The people in the seat behind me were discussing a trip to Boston as if it were to Capetown, and I began thinking about my happy, happy job of traveling all over the country. Here she was nearer the truth. Being a born gypsy, I must admit to a passion for the road. The road, however, is anything but easy. A solo performer can rush in where big productions fear to tread, and this job carries me the length and breadth of the United States and Canada, and into every sort of city and town from New York to Canyon, Texas. And that's no reflection on Canyon, either, because I had a grand time there. A job like mine means traveling between twenty and twenty-five thousand miles a year, which is fine if one likes travel. Fortunately for my health and sanity, I do. It means I must average some sixty nights a year on sleepers, make many jumps by plane, day-coach and a few by bus. It means staying in every type of hotel from the Ritz-Carlton to a certain gem of a hostelry in a small Western town where they sold feed and fertilizer in the lobby, and the only place to wash was in the upper hall at a community basin adorned by a roller towel.

It means playing on stages which range from that of the Philadelphia Academy of Music to a rickety platform hastily knocked together in a school gymnasium. I have performed in churches, in tents and in barns—and once in a skating-rink; this was in Youngstown, Ohio. The dressing-room problem is as trying as that of the stage. I've dressed in high-school laboratories, in organ lofts, in cellars where a sewer pipe had burst and I had to stand on a plank between two chairs. Making up in the ladies' "loo" is an old story to me, and once at a swank Palm Beach club they had placed my dressing-table, for some unknown reason, on a roof.

NOR are all problems confined to travel and auditoria. One must cope, or try to, with the problem of well-meaning but misguided souls who want to do what for lack of a better name they call "entertaining" one. The fluttering committee ladies who, although you've stated piteously that you're too tired to meet anyone, suddenly spring on you that ultimate in excruciating tortures, a "reception." The Chamber of Commerce dignitaries who can't understand why you aren't charmed to utter a few words of welcome at the Shriners Convention luncheon. The members of Little Theater groups who think it would be lovely if you'd just drop in at their rehearsal and give them a few pointers. Avoiding with tact such giddy distractions (and unless you do, you become a gibbering wreck) requires a subtle technique which takes years to acquire. Then there's the menace of schoolchildren reporters who have been sent by teacher to get an interview, and who hound one even into the tub. In a town in northern Michigan two little girls actually did beat their way into my room when I was stark naked, and were quite hurt when I bellowed at them *"No!"* They could *not* watch me take a bath!

The road, of course, has its joyous aspects. I like the sense of liberation in

SOLUTION OF OUR CROSSWORD PUZZLE APPEARING ON PAGE 57

F	L	A	M	E	■	R	A	C	E	R	■	L	I	S	S	O	M
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S	C	R	A	M	■	I	S	O	L	T	■	T	A	N	G	L	E
H	E	E	L	I	N	G	■	T	E	R	S	E	R	■	■	■	■
■	■	■	E	O	N	S	■	P	A	I	N	T	I	N	G	S	■
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being off on my own, keeping whatever hours I like, doing as I pretty much please, getting away from whatever "it all" may be. Much as I adore my son and husband, I seldom get homesick, for I was brought up in a devoted but frequently scattered family, and at an early age I became used to being separated from the people I love. I still get a certain amount of excitement out of travel, and I have a small child's rapture over trains. It's pleasant seeing old friends and meeting new congenial souls along the way. And I hope the day never dawns when I cease to get an emotional "wallop" out of the beauty and majesty of the American countryside.

But is touring easy? No, lady of the dress-shop! As the bus lurched along, I wondered how she'd have relished my last trip from a town in Oklahoma to one in Texas. There was a "norther" on that night, which meant the thermometer had dropped from sixty-five to twenty-eight in a few hours and we ("we" being my maid, my manager and myself) had only spring clothes. The train which was supposed to pull out at midnight, crawled out at four A.M. and into Dallas at six. One had to be up and out on arrival. From Dallas we went halfway across the State of Texas, a nine-hour trip in a day-coach which was guiltless of any air. And then we were driven overland nearly a hundred miles by car to my destination, where I had just time to choke down a sandwich and gulp a cup of coffee before going on the stage.

I wondered, too, how she'd have liked the time the levees were breaking in a Mississippi flood, and our train, crawling along with the wheels under water, finally stuck in an impasse of delta mud in a desolate stretch of inundated country and stayed there a day and a night. How about the time in a Wisconsin blizzard—Oh, well, why spoil the poor woman's fun?

My bus lumbered past the public library, and for some reason it reminded me that writing was one of the happy, happy jobs the woman imagined were easy for me. If pulling out your own teeth, I mused, is easy, then maybe writing is too. For I write with difficulty, reluctance and the same sort of laborious anguish with which my twelve-year-old son executes an English composition. The correct word, the pat phrase may come to some authors on wings of inspiration. To me they come as if on the tail of a giant sloth. I crumple a dozen pages before I can start even the simplest assignment; and once started, I scratch out, I revise, I transpose and I often as not give the whole thing up as hopeless. Moreover, I write long-hand. I've never learned to think on a typewriter—nor to write accurately on one, for that matter.

What writing I do has to be accomplished on the road. For years I have tried to write at home, but it's impossible—which is just an evasive way of saying that I have no strength of character. However sincere my determination to concentrate, let the telephone ring, or my son catapult in from school, or one of the dogs yowl to be let in or out, I shove aside all creative efforts for the situation at hand. The result is, I write when I'm on tour, and preferably when I'm on a train, a place I have found to be the only real

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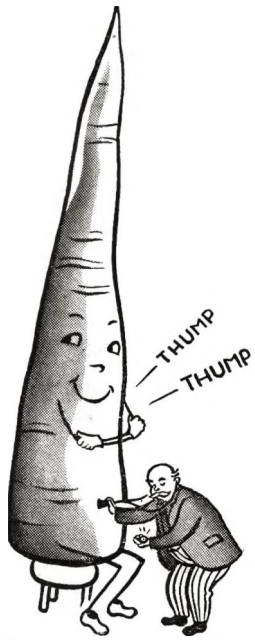

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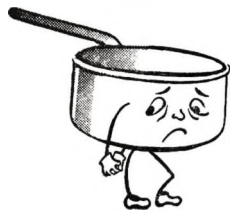

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refuge. The telephone can't ring; people can't get "at" you; you don't have to be tied down to any specific schedule; and there's no incentive to give it all up and dash out to the movies. Writing on a train is all very fine when one is traveling de-luxe in a drawing-room or compartment, and on a comparatively smooth roadbed. But to write, as I sometimes must, in a jiggling, overheated and crowded day-coach amid the noise of crying babies and the smell of bananas is hardly the ideal set-up for courting the Muse.

Radio, I enjoy. But it too is not particularly easy. The persons who very obligingly occasionally employ my services usually make me write my own broadcasts, and the timing and cutting of any broadcast is an exacting task. Also, despite the years I have been in radio, I have never overcome a certain tendency to "mike-fright."

The last job the woman had mentioned with envy was my family. And there I don't blame her. Anyone who hasn't a family—a happy one—is justified in envying the person who has. And without any deliberate desire to nauseate the reader, I am fatuously glad to state that mine is just such a one. The only serious drawback to my home-life is that I have to be away from it so much. But perhaps that's just as well. We never get to taking one another for granted, and however used we are to being separated, we are always gaggingly glad to see each other again. Felicitous as mine is, no family job is an easy one. The problems are all too familiar to everybody for me to enumerate. Sufficient to say they are the common lot of my family too, and they range from my son's education, through converting an oil- into a coal-burner and mending the cesspool, to moths in the coat-closet. The fact that my son is an average little boy of twelve, and my husband a sportsman in his off hours, and both the enthusiastically hospitable type, is hardly conducive to making the house a continual haven of quiet. Nor is the fact that we are the proud owners of nine dogs, a trained parakeet, Javanese sparrows, a flock of homing pigeons and a rapidly increasing colony of rabbits.

THE bus by now had reached the Penn Station; and clutching my package, I scrambled out along with the other Long-Island-bound commuters. The train was jammed, and I had to stand as far as Jamaica. I was hot and exhausted, and I wondered if that woman, had she known the truth, would still have wanted to be me. As a matter of fact, even at that low ebb, I still wanted to be me. For I like my jobs, all of them, and I like my life. But as far as it's being charmed—well, it all depends on what you call charm.

U. S. Today

(This story is continued from page 49)

eight o'clock class—Professor Crelford. I thought of joining the rush and taking it too, only I'm against anything that happens that early in the morning."

I smiled. Patty is the only girl in a family where nothing is really necessary, neither education nor effort, for women. She has a beloved and protected air; but in one thing, at least, I knew her to be fierce, and that was in her devotion to George, her only brother.

"Patty," I said as I sugared my coffee, "I'd like to know what *you* think about this Arthur business. I don't know anything about the man situation with you," I went on tentatively; "but somehow, I think you'll agree with me George ought to be able to leave Babs five minutes without her falling for another man."

Patty looked up at me from where she was sitting on the floor. The white cotton daisies in her hair gave her a childish air; but looking into her eyes, I saw a deep and mature shadow across them.

"My guy's a flyer," she said. "Sometimes I try to work up an outside interest just to get my mind off it—but I can't."

I sipped my coffee. "That's the way she should be about George."

Patty got up on her knees to reach for a cigarette. "I rather thought you were against their getting married."

"Right now—but not in a few years. And it troubles me that she can be dying to marry George one minute, and the very next, so to speak, be—well—off her head about somebody else."

Patty started to speak, but something, perhaps loyalty to her own age, stopped her. I went on to explain why I felt so strongly: "You see, character is one of the things we've got to put into this war. And being dependable and—well, reliable, emotionally, is something women can do for men. I mean, this isn't the moment to insist on attention, like spoiled children." When Patty continued to smoke without comment, I brought it back to George: "He's taking that very hard short course. He ought to be free to do his work—he must have peace of mind."

Patty glanced at me curiously for a moment. Then she got up.

"Well, I'll try to look out for George's interests" she said.

THE day passed. I scored a hit by taking the girls off campus to a dinner of burned lamb chops and hard peas. Then we went back to the hall so that they could dress. It was the night of a sophomore dance to which the girls invited the men. Babs was taking Arthur, and Patty had invited her man's younger brother, a freshman from somewhere named Ronny. We turned on the light. Atop the mound of books and rackets on the desk was a squat florist's box.

"Flowers, for me?" Babs bent over the tag. "No, they're for you, Patsy. I didn't *think* Crelford would go all to pieces like that!" She disappeared into the bedroom. Patty lifted the gardenias from the box. At this moment a face peered in at the door.

"Company? Oh, 'scuse me." The face disappeared, but the voice persisted apologetically: "Long Distance wants Room 202. Anybody here put in a call?"

The tissue and gardenias fell onto the armchair as Patty ran out. "I did."

Presently Babs reappeared with her dress. It was a tight-fitting bodice of green faille with an ample non-priority skirt of green and white stripes. She had made it herself last summer. And with it she wore the ubiquitous white sheepskin. Patty came casually back and slipped expertly into a pastel gown, and threw over it a trench-coat of pale gold leather. She looked delicate and expensive beside Babs' peasantlike gayety. In contrasting ways, each seemed irresistible. I lay down, after they had gone, hoping for the first time that it was not so.

Hours later, I woke to feel Babs' hand on my hair. "Listen, Moms, wake up." Her voice was low and urgent. "We all want to go out to the Brass Bowl. It's not on the approved list, but it's okay if your family takes you." I got sleepily up and went to a mirror.

"Was it a good party?"

"Super. Everybody nearly *died* when I walked in with Arthur."

I touched my hair. "How's his dancing?"

"Gorgeous. Very remote control, but very, very smooth. And I snaked him

Please Note This Change in Redbook Publication Dates

REDBOOK, in common with many other monthly magazines, through a period of many years has been advancing its date of publication to a point where it now is on sale one month ahead of the month appearing on the cover. This practice has led to confusion on the part of our readers, our advertisers and our newsdealers.

REDBOOK'S publication dates are therefore being changed. Our April issue will appear on March 10th, instead of the end of February. Our May issue will appear on April 21st, instead of the end of March. Beginning with our June issue, each number of REDBOOK will appear on the Wednesday or Friday immediately preceding the first of the month shown on the cover.

LOOK FOR YOUR NEXT (APRIL) ISSUE OF REDBOOK ON WEDNESDAY, MARCH 10th.

away quite a lot so we could talk." She put a bobby pin in a rear curl for me. "Mother, he's so interesting." She gave me a quick glance in the mirror. "He certainly makes those Princeton stooges look young and dumb There, your hair's perfect Come on."

The boy named Ronny put me in the front seat of the little roadster next to Patty, while Arthur and Babs climbed into the rumble. There was a slight drizzle, but I knew enough not to mention it I was not going to be the one to worry; and if I did, I was determined not to show it

As we left the town behind us, the real rain began It came with a gust of wind against the car The water sluiced across the windshield as if thrown from a bucket. It was impossible even to see the road "This boy is a good driver," I thought "He'll turn in, or at least draw up at the side of the road." Other than concentrating his gaze ahead, however, Ronny gave no sign of even noticing the weather. The speedometer registered an even forty. I wanted to be casual, but I knew that Babs and the Professor must be deluged. I shifted a little and peered through the back window into the rain.

And suddenly I saw there was no one there. There was no sign of anyone in the back seat Nobody Nothing!

"Ronny!" I could not keep the alarm out of my voice. "Babs and Professor Crelford are gone!"

Ronny smiled without turning his head "I closed the top down over them," he said. "There's no seat in back. So while they were fumbling around on the floor I just shut 'em in. Don't worry. The air gets in around the edges."

I tried to think what to do. They must be battered and frightened if not actually smothered. There might be an exhaust—monoxide gas! At this moment Ronny leaned forward and peered toward a light at the left. We had driven beyond the storm We swung in the driveway and drew up before a cabin-like building. This was the Brass Bowl He got out. I simply ran to the rear and lifted the cover. Babs popped up like a large toy.

"Some rumble seat!" she said.

Professor Crelford clambered out.

"That could have been very serious," he said sternly to Ronny.

"I think so too," I said "It's very dangerous, no air in a car—"

"We could have died, and nobody would have noticed," Babs said cheerfully, "but we didn't. Come on, stop complaining, you two, and let's get a nice, cozy corner"

In the semi darkness of the low-ceilinged room, a juke-box ground out, *"Everything I've Got Belongs to You."* We gathered around a small bare table, Babs on a bench against the wall.

"Isn't there some way of shutting off that scratchy thing?" Arthur glanced toward the music-box.

"Oh, don't stop it!" Babs' voice was alarmed. "That's what we came for!"

Arthur tried almost visibly to pull himself into the mood of the party.

"I suppose that's boogie-woogie." His eyes smiled into Babs' eager face.

"That? No! But there'll be some soon. You like solid-piano?" Ronny was interested in Crelford for the first time.

Even *Blackouts* don't help

THE GIRL: (*peevishly*) What a man! The lights are low, I'm feelin' mighty lovable . . . and *he* spends his time looking out the window!

US: Maybe *he* doesn't think you're so lovable, my dear!

THE GIRL: Well, of all the nerve . . .

US: Now, now . . . relax! We only want to help by telling you The Secret you *should* have known!

THE GIRL: This had better be good.

US: It is—it's the secret of daintiness . . . the secret of bathing body odor away, the *feminine* way . . .

THE GIRL: The *feminine* way? Pardon my girlish laughter! I thought a soap to remove body odor *had* to have that strong, "mannish" smell to be effective!

US: Not *this* one, honey . . . here's a truly gentle, truly feminine soap that leaves you alluringly scented—and *daily use stops all body odor!*

THE GIRL: I'd like to see you *prove* that—

US: Okay...it's easy to prove, 'cause the rich, creamy suds of today's specially-made Cashmere Bouquet Soap bathe away every trace of body odor instantly!

THE GIRL: Well I'll be—it's *true!* And I *adore* that perfume . . . no wonder it's called "the fragrance men love"!

US: (*proudly*) And not even the most "mannish" soaps can remove perspiration better. So, Cashmere Bouquet's really get something, m'dear!

THE GIRL: I've got somep'n too . . . a date to go strollin' in the park with him . . . hope my new glamour works . . .

THE GIRL: Bless me! Will Cashmere Bouquet *always* make him so ardent?

US: It's your loveliness makes him ardent, dear girl . . . Cashmere Bouquet just guards your daintiness for moments like this!

THE GIRL: But—but—he *proposed* to me!

US: Don't blame him . . . lovely girls who are lovable too, are rare prizes!

THE GIRL: Thanks a million . . . *especially* for the secret of Cashmere Bouquet Soap!

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CHANGES OF ADDRESS

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***Write to* REDBOOK MAGAZINE**
McCall Street Dayton, Ohio

"Well, I can wait." Arthur sat back, his long legs sprawling under the table. He exchanged an amused glance with me. Instinctively, I wanted to help; it seemed unfair that he should appear at a disadvantage.

"Professor Crelford spoke on Manpower and the War in our town Friday night," I told Ronny.

"Is that a fact?" Ronny's nice young face lit up politely while remaining a perfect blank.

"Tell them that incident you told me, driving up," I urged.

"Well, you see—" Arthur leaned forward, tapping the metal table with his finger. Babs smiled absent-mindedly. She had brought this human marvel; she did not have to listen. Her eyes roved the room. Suddenly she bounced up.

"George! There's George. Hi! We're over here!"

I TURNED. The inverted shade in the middle of the room threw the light down on George's honey-colored hair and tanned skin set off by a coat of Bermuda tweed.

"Well, this *is* a party." He looked around the circle while holding my hand. "Hi, kid. Hi, Ron." I introduced him to Arthur. He went and stood over Babs. "Hello, you! Patty said I'd better come over and join the doings." He studied Ronny curiously for a moment. It was evident that he thought Ronny, though an old friend, was the new menace. Babs looked up at him, her eyes alight but a little puzzled. "How about moving over?" he asked. He took his place beside her, and laying his arm casually along the back of the seat, he let his hand fall firmly on her shoulder and remain there. Having thus declared himself in, he looked alertly about the table. "Don't let me interrupt you."

Professor Crelford hesitated as if checked by a counter-current. Then he began to talk again.

"It's all a question what counts most," George said when the other paused. "Take my case: I'm going into medical school instead of the Army or defense." He turned his earnest eyes on Professor Crelford's face. "The way I figure it, we're in for a long war, and they're going to need doctors more than anything. Don't you think so, sir?" When Arthur did not answer, George drew Babs toward him. "Well," he said, "that's the way *we* see it."

There was no mistaking the familiarity of habit in the gesture; no mistaking, either, this boy's assurance that they two were a little team against the world.

For a moment Professor Crelford's gaze rested on Babs' face. It was glowing. He pushed back his chair.

"If nobody minds, I think I'll take the next bus to town. I've—I've got some papers to correct. An old chap like me has to get his sleep."

Babs freed her arm and put out her hand.

"I'm sorry you have to go."

"Thanks for including me." Arthur stood for a moment looking at the two of them with desolate eyes. "Good night, everybody," he said, then turned and walked out.

"Good night." George watched the receding back. "I'd like to have talked to him some more. Nice old geezer, isn't he? And now,"—he tucked his arm under Babs' arm,—"how about dancing this one?"

"I guess Arthur got pretty fed," Babs said as we undressed later that night. "Oh, well, it was kind of a strain on me, anyway. Pretty rugged. You know, all the time intellectual!" She sat down and hugged her knees. "Now with George, I can just be my dumb self. He likes me the way I am." Suddenly she looked straight up into my eyes, and I saw that her brown ones were full of shining tears. "I *was* crazy about Professor Crelford, really, but Mother, when George came in tonight and sat down beside me, I could have died of pure, unadulterated happiness. I guess I'm just the loyal kind."

News about Redbook

(This feature is continued from page 4)

novel "City of Women" will be well remembered by our readers, is now a corporal in a medical detachment of the U. S. Army. Henry F. Pringle and Milton Mackaye, whose articles appeared frequently in REDBOOK up to a year ago, are working in the Office of War Information. Incidentally, Elmer Davis, who directs the destinies of that very important agency, used to be one of our contributors. His short stories appeared in our magazine at regular intervals, and a complete book-length novel by him was a feature in REDBOOK for August, 1935. William Reusswig, the illustrator who helped Whitfield Cook, the author, immortalize *Violet,* will be in the Army by the time this issue appears.

ROSE FRANKEN of *Claudia* fame is not satisfied with being represented in the South Pacific theater of war by her son, Lieutenant Franken. It is quite likely that long before you read this issue of REDBOOK she too will be somewhere in the Southwestern Pacific. God and the proper authorities willing, she will fly there right after New Year's, and will become our war correspondent. Needless to say, we don't expect or want Miss Franken to give us descriptions of battles. That is up to the radio and the newspapers. In her inimitable fashion she will write about our boys—how they live, how they fight, what they think about. The millions of men and women who have enjoyed the *Claudia* and *David* stories will miss their favorite reading for a while, but they will be amply reimbursed by Miss Franken's interesting articles from Australia, New Guinea and all the other places which she expects to visit.

REMEMBER "The Time Between," our February complete book-length novel by Gale Wilhelm? Well, very soon you will see it on the screen. Warner Brothers bought it right after we published it. Dennis Morgan will play the part of the hero, that reticent aviator who would rather engage a flock of Zeros in combat than talk about his achievements; Ann Sheridan will impersonate his sweetheart.

IN our next issue: a complete book-length novel by Harlow Estes, who won the $10,000 award offered by Dodd, Mead, publishers, and REDBOOK MAGAZINE two

years ago. Short stories, articles and special features by Philip Wylie, Henrietta Ripperger, Joseph Dineen, Morris Markey, Frederick Van Ryn, Albert H. Morehead, Harry Hansen, Deems Taylor and many others; a new *Violet* story by Whitfield Cook; a novelette by Elizabeth Seifert; and continued novels by Ursula Parrott and Rufus King.

* * * * *

MARCH FASHION CREDITS

The dinner dress shown in the illustration for "The Case of the Rich Recluse" is a Samuel Chapman design.

In "My Man, Sing," the hat in the illustration is from Madame Pauline, and the dinner-dress is a Jeau Don original.

Redbook's Picture of the Month "Shadow of a Doubt"

(This review is continued from page 8)
is an affinity between these two, a telepathic bond that produced of itself a minor miracle of coincidence: for at the moment when *Uncle Charley* was sending his wire to California, the girl was composing one to him, urging him to pay the family a visit. She had never met her uncle, but she had heard enough about him to convince her romantic soul that he would be a tonic for the family.

INDEED, *Uncle Charley* proved to be a tonic, but not in precisely the way the girl had envisioned it. He provided the thrills all right, but in the end they became overburdening. The day of his arrival, when the family, pulsating with excitement, went to the station to meet him, was only the beginning of the adventure. *Charlie* and her younger sister and brother, and the mother and *Mr. Newton*—all of them—felt the excitement, and I would like to say here parenthetically that Hitchcock communicates with extraordinary clarity and detail that immemorial sense of tension and anticipation which attends the arrival of an important train.

Uncle Charley is *Mrs. Newton's* younger brother, and he was always looked on as the baby of the family. His sister adores him; seeing him again after so many years, gives her new life. She insists that he is to make his home with them forever, and *Uncle Charley* feels pretty much that way too. Santa Rosa is a long way from that tenement district in the East, not only geographically, but morally and every other way. It is a clean town, bright and prosperous and, above all, respectable. It is the last place in which you would expect to find a criminal. So *Uncle Charley* thinks.

No sooner has he installed himself (with a magnificent flourish he deposits forty thousand dollars in the local bank), when his peace of mind is abruptly ended. Two strangers have arrived in town. Asserting that they are making a survey of the typical American family, they have called at the *Newton* home to ask questions. That is enough for *Uncle Charley*.

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Either through instinct or a sense of guilt he knows they are after him. His only chance lies in the fact that he is merely suspect, and that he is safe so long as no one talks.

From this point onward, the picture takes on ominous overtones, with the two strangers mooching around the house, *Uncle Charley* skirting in and out, and a sense of the chase closing in on the quarry.

It is here, too, that Hitchcock has his field-day, because the moment of *Uncle Charley's* breakdown is timed to coincide with the rising tide of suspicion directed against him. *Charlie*, his niece, is his idolator; she has invested him from the beginning with the aura of a *Don Quixote*. Now we see this vestment dissembled, and little by little the awful truth dawns on *Charlie* that her uncle is something other than has been represented to her. It is a shocking disillusionment, the harder to bear because *Uncle Charley* himself is powerless to cover up his own weaknesses. He is a trapped maniac, and his efforts to extricate himself only serve to strengthen the case against him.

The real tragedy of *Uncle Charley* is *Charlie's* disillusionment. This is at once the murder-mystery and the romance of the story. Hitchcock has tried to bolster his picture with a love-interest between *Charlie* and one of the pursuing detectives, but this device is patently inferior to the main theme.

SINCE there is a critical code which precludes the exposure of a murder-mystery plot, I will not presume to tell you what's cooking with *Uncle Charley* or how he meets his ultimate fate. I will even forbear from telling you what that fate is. The important thing is that he is symbolic of all misdirected geniuses, and that the picture presents him faithfully as a problem child who has grown up to confute and confuse the good intentions of his devoted family.

He is a plausible character, and one in whom Hitchcock takes an evident relish. His sins, which are multiform, spring from inner complexities; and throughout the picture we are privileged to witness the efforts of a tortured soul to reconcile itself with its environment. It is this struggle that forms the substance of the story, and which so clearly enthralls Hitchcock. The psychological drama of *Uncle Charley* as it reveals itself by slow and horrifying degrees to the hero-worshiping niece is what makes "Shadow of a Doubt" a vivid cinema experience.

Nor is the achievement confined to Hitchcock's directorial function. Shrewd and artful as that is, the picture would be something less than distinguished were it not for the superbly conceived and executed performances of the principal players. The acting burden falls on Joseph Cotten, whose characterization in the rôle of *Uncle Charley* is notable for its sensitivity and intelligence. It is an outstanding job of interpretation, and one that will undoubtedly establish Mr. Cotten as one of the most important screen actors of this day.

Equally valid is the playing of Teresa Wright as the niece. Miss Wright's studied artlessness is a joy to watch, and a deep satisfaction. There are excellently modulated portraits by Patricia Collinge as *Mrs. Newton*, Henry Travers as the father, and Hume Cronyn as an amateur crime addict. Macdonald Carey gives a salient performance in the comparatively minor rôle of Miss Wright's love-interest, and Wallace Ford is fine as his accomplice.

A good, progressive book on child psychology for my parents to read. They're trying to get their way again!"

Serenade to a Nickel

(This story is continued from page 32)

glad that you have decided to help and not hinder," said Fantikoff to me. "This movie, I assure you, will stir Russia to her depths."

My sabotaging was hardly necessary. I have never known an author as slow as Wilson Bramel—nor a producer as insanely finicky as Fantikoff. The two of them spent days locked together in debate over a single line of dialogue. And when each scene was finally done, Eleanora Yerry was summoned to bring it to life. Pale, child-faced Eleanora acted out every sigh and syllable for the unit.

The intensity, the exuberance, the blissfulness with which these three Hollywood misfits went about their work of creating a movie that nobody was ever going to read—if I could help it—sent me home night after night with a growing guilt-complex. I found a little comfort in having Eleanora put on as secretary to the Fantikoff unit, a deed that required two weeks of powerful intrigue

And in June, 1941—after seven months of joyous creation—the Fantikoff unit was still flourishing. Not a word of the script had been read by anyone in the studio.

I WAS in Mr Cobley's office one afternoon, receiving the great man's praises following the preview of a picture I had done when he changed the subject to Fanny. He had been showing an unhealthy interest in Fanny of late.

"I understand you've been helping Fanny out on the rewrites," he said. "It ought to be good, with so many geniuses working on it."

"It'll be good," I agreed. "But it takes time."

"Seven months already," said Mr. Cobley.

"Seven months is nothing in the creation of a masterpiece," I said.

"You consider it a masterpiece?" he beamed.

I nodded.

"What did I tell you?" Mr. Cobley turned to Mr. Emmereth, who was always present. In the studios, when two officials become inseparable, it is seldom a sign of friendship. Onlookers begin to lay bets as to when one of them will stab the other and take his place. It was widely felt that Mr. Emmereth was a likely and fitting successor to Mr. Cobley. For one thing, the collapse of the European market had placed him in the important position of having utterly nothing to do. It is the history of such major studios as Empyrean that any official who has achieved complete uselessness automatically becomes its Pharaoh, with the help of a little dagger-work. I was, however, putting my bets on Mr. Cobley. Instinct told me

that the body that would be removed from the foot of the curved staircase would not be his.

"You see," Mr. Cobley continued, "I am always right in my hunches. That's what makes a showman, Kenneth. To know ahead of everybody else what's a masterpiece and what aint. You got to be able to smell those things." He frowned at his crony as if he considered him hot-headedly opposed to these philosophies. "You are wrong and I am right, Kenneth. I think I have proved that every time. Not for here,"—he tapped his frontal skull—"but for here." His finger shifted to his padded diaphragm. "That's where we must aim our entertainment. Give me any day a strong, human story with rich laughter in it. That's what we need to overcome the menace of Russia in our midst."

"The box-office is more important than Russia," said Mr. Emmereth with a sort of English drawing-room smile.

"No." Mr. Cobley wagged his finger. "It doesn't pay to be selfish these days. Mark my words. Russia first. And then, with that disposed of, the world can be happy."

A NUMBER of things occurred to me during this daffy colloquy. But I kept a craven silence in behalf of the Fantikoff-Bramel-Yerry weekly pay-checks.

A buzzer sounded, and Mr. Cobley addressed his desk.

"Who is it?" he said to his desk. "Can't you see I'm busy?"

The desk, a huge one, crackled back timidly in a language Mr. Cobley evidently understood.

"Oh," he said, "that's all right. Why didn't you say so?"

The desk hung its head.

"Send him right in," Mr. Cobley continued. "Right away." He smiled at me. "It's Fanny," he said. "He wants me to read 'Serenade to a Nickel.' "

"Is that so?" I said, and sighed as one does when all good things come to an end. "I didn't know it was quite finished."

Fantikoff, followed by Wilson Bramel, walked into the room. Mr. Cobley rose, and his gray face and puffy body radiated a father's welcome.

"Sit down," he said. "It's time you were calling on me. You fellas! Always eccentric. How are you, Fanny?"

Fantikoff blinked at this change of gender, nodded courteously and sat down. He placed the manuscript on his knees.

"And who is this gentleman?" Mr. Cobley inquired, looking at our Gorky.

I introduced him.

"Wilson Bramel—Wilson Bramel," Mr. Cobley repeated. "The name is very familiar."

I identified the visitor as the author of "Serenade to a Nickel." Mr. Cobley immediately lost interest in him.

"The manuscript—" He held out his hand to Fantikoff. "I will read it tonight. More, I cannot say now."

He stood weighing the script in his palm, his face full of fatherly lights. He was always pleased by people struck dumb in his presence.

Fantikoff, who had not moved for three minutes, came to life.

"Mr. Cobley," he said, "we have a great deal to discuss. Pardon me,"—he

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raised his voice.—"I know what I am talking about. There is the problem of casting. I was advised by certain people not to disturb you about it. But now, I think is the time."

"We will take up the matter of casting when I have read the script," said Mr. Cobley, "and know what I am talking about."

At the promise of this millennium, Mr. Emmereth raised his eyebrows.

"I disagree," said Fantikoff. "Now is the time. Because, please believe me, Mr. Jerome Cobley, everything depends on who plays the part of *Olga.*"

"Olga?" Mr. Cobley's face grew stern.

"I have selected the greatest actress in America for the rôle," Fantikoff went on.

"Is that so?" Mr. Cobley looked blank. "What's her name?"

"Eleanora Yerry," said Fantikoff.

"I have never heard of her," said Mr. Cobley. He sat down and looked at his desk as at a true friend.

"Everything considered," said Fantikoff, "that is possible."

"What studio is she with?" Mr. Cobley was calm.

"She is with this studio," Fantikoff answered eagerly, "working at the present time as my secretary. Such is the injustice of the cinema industry. A beautiful, brilliant talent—working as a secretary!"

"I see," said Mr. Cobley, and frowned.

Mr. Emmereth took the ball. He addressed Fantikoff in a foreign tongue. Fantikoff's face brightened, and he answered quickly and passionately. A brisk dialogue ensued. Mr. Cobley listened with lowered head.

"What language is that?" he asked finally. "Czech?"

"No, Russian," said Mr. Emmereth.

Mr. Cobley looked at me. His eyes lost their fatherly beam.

"I will read Mr. Fantikoff's manuscript tonight," he said. "And you will hear from me tomorrow."

"Come on," I said to my protégés. "Mr. Cobley is a busy man, and we mustn't take up too much of his valuable time."

Bramel took a step toward the desk, and I put a restraining hand on his elbow. You can never tell about unpressed young authors.

"What about Eleanora Yerry?" Bramel asked in a husky voice. "The whole reason I wrote this play is for her."

Mr. Cobley was silent.

"Listen," said Bramel, "a laborer is entitled to the attention of his boss, even in this country."

Mr. Cobley quivered for a moment but said nothing, and our author continued: "I don't want to fight, you understand. I just want to tell you something you ought to know: Eleanora Yerry happens to be my wife. But that cuts no ice with me as an artist. She also happens to be the greatest actress in Hollywood, and it would be criminal folly to give anybody else the star part in 'Serenade.'"

"Don't rush him," I said, as Bramel stopped for breath. "Mr. Cobley will have answers tomorrow."

I spent a bad night. Not until I had decided to skip Mr. Cobley altogether and take the afternoon plane to New York, was I able to fall asleep. In the morning, however, I decided it would be unfair to deprive the Pharaoh of his revenge. The Fantikoff unit was already at the studio when I arrived. It had been waiting since daylight. I persuaded it to remain at its post, and I answered Mr. Cobley's ten o'clock summons alone.

Mr. Cobley allowed me to sit on the other side of his desk for ten minutes, while he looked at a number of letters. Finally he turned to me and said:

"I have put this entire matter into the hands of the F.B.I."

I nodded.

"I read the manuscript carefully and marked certain passages," he went on, "and turned it over to them as evidence. They are reading it now. This much I can tell you: You and your Communist friends will be out of this country inside of three days."

"What is the charge?" I asked. "Writing a good movie?"

Mr. Cobley was silent, but his eyes stuck out.

"Instead of trying to arrest people," I continued, "why don't you give us all a bonus and produce a fine picture for a change? I'm sure that's what Mr. Emmereth would do if he were running the studio."

I felt I owed the Fantikoff unit this much of an argument.

I started for the door. Mr. Cobley called something after me, but I was too

busy thinking of Fantikoff, Bramel and Yerry and their dream's end, to make out his words.

My report to the unit was brief. The three listened calmly. Fantikoff nodded a number of times. Bramel grinned. Eleanora squeezed my hand and said: "I'm really not surprised."

"The future," said Fantikoff, "looks dark. Not ours—but Hollywood's."

I was on the afternoon plane.

WHEN I came back a year later, I found that Hollywood had gone to war, along with the rest of the world. I don't mean the many of its youth who had disappeared into the armed forces. I mean the Pharaohs, the Satraps and the Geniuses. These had enlisted in the great back-of-the-lines Second Front.

If there are critics of the Hollywood war effort, I am not among them. Cock-eyed, vanity-ridden and footling as part of it was, it made its contribution. It retooled its sausage-mill for war-movies. It flooded the training-camps with documentary films, and sent out its famous ladies in kissing-bug platoons to sell war bonds. It danced, sang, joked for the soldiers, plied them with doughnuts, rhumbas and gin rummy. If some of its ardor seemed more of chanticleer than of eagle, and many of its sacrifices were performed on billboards rather than in fox-holes, two things must be remembered: Civilians in war, however inspired, are the kibitzers—with a large bet on the game—and are inclined to make more noise than the players. The other thing to remember is that Hollywood's egomania, out of which comes the entertainment of the world, could not be expected to go to war in a kitchen apron.

But of all the changes I found in Hollywood, the most startling was contained in an invitation to attend a meeting of the Sacrificed Peoples' Relief Committee. The invitation was signed by Jerome B. Cobley.

My first feeling was that of outrage. That this flapdoodling Pharaoh should be a spokesman for the travail of Europe struck me as a tasteless Hollywood joke on the heroic Reds. But on second thought it appealed to me as a measure of their greatness. They had not died in vain. Mr. Cobley was their sponsor.

I went to the meeting and listened to Mr. Cobley plead for the noble troops of Stalin. After the meeting Mr. Cobley took me aside. He was his old fatherly self again, and wanted to know in which studio I was working, and if I was content with my tasks.

"By the way," he changed the subject before I could answer, "what's become of your friend Fanny?"

"Fantikoff?" I said. "I don't know. I thought maybe you'd had him deported."

"That's not the sort of spirit I like here in Hollywood," Mr. Cobley said. "You've got to be bigger than that. Look him up for me. I can use him in this work I'm doing for his country. He ought to be proud to help."

I had inquired at Fantikoff's hotel on arriving, and found him moved. Further inquiries failed to reveal him. He had apparently vanished, as had Wilson Bramel and Eleanora Yerry. There is no limbo as deep as that into which the defeated of Hollywood fall.

I come now to Hollywood's greatest war event, greater even than the false air-raid of February. This was the arrival in San Diego of some Russian freighters.

I NEVER found out, so great was the tumult caused by their advent, what actually had brought one certain humble, battle-and-tempest-scarred vessel into a California port. It had hardly come to its mooring when the news of its presence plunged all of Hollywood's patriotic hostesses into a dither not known since the visit of the Prince of Wales many years ago.

Mr. Cobley at once assembled his many committees, and arrangements were made—enough arrangements, indeed, to entertain the half of Russia. Fêtes, parades, rallies, dinner parties, oratorical contests, radio programs and public barbecues were planned. Three major studios fell to work instantly preparing screenplays on the "life" of the Russian freighters, and rushed cameramen to San Diego to photograph them inside and out. And beyond all these revels prepared for the gallant officers and crews of other ships, Mr. Cobley's organization launched a drive for a Russian mercy cargo. The freighter *Shialiushkinpovitch* would return to Murmansk bulging with chocolates, drugs, canned goods, preserved figs and hand-knit sweaters.

All in all, Hollywood was going to express its adoration of Russia in a burst of largesse and hi-de-ho unparalleled in its history. Under Mr. Cobley's com-

What book is that, Professor?

Why, Bobby, this is one of the most popular books in the country—your telephone directory.

But I thought that was just a list of names — !

It's more than that, Bobby. For instance, the first few pages tell you a lot of helpful things—how to call a policeman, fireman or ambulance—how to reach the business office of the telephone company—among other things.

Sounds interesting.

It is. When Mummy wants to know some one's telephone number, all she has to do is turn the pages and presto—there it is.

Guess I better have a look right now.

Atta boy! Always look up the number in the directory instead of calling Information. That saves time for everybody.

BELL TELEPHONE SYSTEM

mand, the Pharaohs, Satraps, Geniuses and all their butlers stood ready for the happy Russian invasion of Movieland.

And on the second day, with all these matters organized, with the last guest list of celebrities drawn up and rechecked, a great calamity befell Mr. Cobley's Russian Mardi Gras. Word was brought to Hollywood by bowed couriers that all the heroes on this Russian freighter, including two women radio operators, had decided not to leave their ship.

"The Captain and the crew of the *Shialiushkinpovitch* thank you for your kind invitation," read the message to Mr. Cobley, "but they do not desire to see Hollywood or to attend any festivities while in port."

Mr. Cobley summoned Mr. Emmereth, and between them they rounded up a score of important people who loved Russia. They left for San Diego.

THE first interview with Captain Xanop of the *Shialiushkinpovitch* lasted only two hours.

I was present at the second, which lasted a full day. The husky Russian sailors sat by in a moody, childish silence. They stared a little grimly, I thought, at Mr. Cobley and several favorites of the late Czar who had been brought along as interpreters and diplomats. Mr. Emmereth, however, did most of the discussing for our side. At six o'clock Mr. Emmereth gave Mr. Cobley a full report of the situation.

"I've told them everything," he explained hoarsely, "but they have only one answer. These sailors refuse. They want to meet nobody, and they don't care to see anything. They prefer to rest on the boat. All they will say is they are in a hurry to get back to Russia—to kill Nazis. They are interested in nothing else. No radio programs, no parades, no dinners. They don't care for any Hollywood monkeyshines."

"Is that what they call it?" asked Mr. Cobley.

"The equivalent," said Mr. Emmereth.

"Don't they want a mercy cargo?" Mr. Cobley mopped his head.

"Yes," Mr. Emmereth went on saying, "they are willing to accept it if you will be kind enough to give it to them. But they would prefer a Flying Fortress or two."

"By God," said Mr. Cobley, "they're still crazy. I thought the war had changed Russians. I can see it aint. They're crazier than ever. We'll come back after dinner and try again. I think I will speak to them myself."

"There's only one who understands English," said Mr. Emmereth.

"One is enough," said Mr. Cobley.

A half-dozen of us returned to the ship after eating.

It was obvious, however, that we were becoming a strain on the determined Russian politeness. Most of the sailors made no bones about scowling at us.

The English-speaking crew-member was produced, and Captain Xanop stood by as Mr. Cobley opened up on him in powerful yet soothing tones.

"I can understand your devotion to your duty," said Mr. Cobley. "It's the same with me. Nothing could ever distract me from my duty."

"O.K.," said Able Seaman Rapakovitch, a tall youth with a snub nose and unwinking eyes.

"But," continued Mr. Cobley, "I feel that you fellas are overdoing it. I mean, there's a limit to duty. There's such a thing as being human. That's what we Americans would like to see from you Russians."

Able Seaman Rapakovitch spoke in Russian to Captain Xanop, who puffed his pipe and grunted three times.

"O.K." The young sailor turned to Mr. Cobley.

"What's O.K.?" said Mr. Cobley, controlling himself.

"He means, go ahead," said Mr. Emmereth.

"Listen, for God's sake," Mr. Cobley exploded suddenly, "what the hell is this? I'm offering you Hollywood—and you're all behaving like a bunch of dummies."

Mr. Cobley's loud tones brought a change to the scowling crew. They looked up brightly. Captain Xanop took his pipe out of his mouth.

"What I want to know," continued the bellowing Pharaoh, "is if there's anything you want. I'm here to serve you—and Russia. And I'm telling you, this is your last chance. Anybody you want to see or meet? Great writers, great movie stars are all waiting to honor you."

Captain Xanop conferred briefly with the tall sailor.

"What's he say?" Mr. Cobley demanded.

Seaman Rapakovitch translated slowly: "He say this is what. We would like to meet her."

Mr. Cobley beamed.

"Who?" he asked, with a triumphant look at Mr. Emmereth.

"Eleanora Yerry," said Seaman Rapakovitch. "O.K."

"Eleanora Yerry?" Mr. Cobley repeated.

"O.K.," said the sailor.

Mr. Cobley turned to Mr. Emmereth.

"Who the hell is she, ask him," he ordered.

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For five minutes Captain Xanop, joined by several officers, talked eagerly with Mr. Emmereth.

"They say she's the greatest American cinema actress," Mr. Emmereth translated to his employer. "And they would like to meet her and would be pleased to honor American genius."

"What the hell are you talking about?" Mr. Cobley stared. "Eleanora Yerry! They're mad! I never heard of her."

"Yes, you have," I said to the Pharaoh. "You've just forgotten."

"You know her?" he turned on me.

I nodded. Mr. Emmereth and the Russians were talking.

"They say," he translated, "that all Russia loves Eleanora Yerry, and that if they could give a party for her, they would be very happy. It would mean something for them to tell their friends in Murmansk and Stalingrad that they had met Eleanora Yerry and talked to her. Also, if you could induce her to give them autographs, they would consider it top hole of you."

"Tell them tomorrow night," cried Mr. Cobley, "we'll stage a magnificent party in her honor. But they will have to come to Hollywood."

"They will come to Hollywood to see Eleanora Yerry," Mr. Emmereth announced after five heated minutes.

Mr. Cobley argued with me all the way back from San Diego. His premise was that Russia was a country of madmen. I explained about Fantikoff and his weekly communiqués to the *Art and Labor Gazette* hailing the genius of Eleanora Yerry.

"Evidently Fantikoff has made Russia Yerry-conscious," I said. "You know how critics are. They can make or break a star."

"But one critic can't break all the stars and invent somebody called Eleanora Yerry as a genius," Mr. Cobley said. "That's crazy. It's against human sanity."

Crazy or not, I assured the Pharaoh, Fantikoff had obviously blotted out all the stars of Hollywood from the Russian soul—all but one.

WITH the entire publicity and personal-contact departments of the Empyrean Studios, I spent the night looking for Fantikoff. We found him through the alien-registration bureau, and at daybreak arrived at a ramshackle house in one of Hollywood's most thistle-blown cañons.

A lean Fantikoff opened the door for us. He looked wasted and ill. He greeted me with a far-away smile. I left the others in our fleet of cars and sat down alone with him. He had, he explained, retired to write his definitive history of Hollywood. Hunger and a touch of madness were in his eyes as he spoke.

In turn, I explained to him all that had happened, the *Shialiushkinpovitch*, the obstinacy of its crew and their final request. And as I talked, his eyes grew happy.

"I didn't hear about this boat," he said. "You understand, when I am writing, I am alone. Without radio or telephone."

I nodded, and he went on.

"Wilson Bramel," he said, "is in the Army. He is already overseas. His wife

Eleanora is working as a waitress. She has a baby and is not very well. I have done everything I can, but it is not much."

We talked for some time, and dismissing the fleet of automobiles, went to a number of offices, for there was much to do before handing Eleanora Yerry over to Mr. Cobley. It was all done, signed and sealed by the time the doors to the dining-hall were thrown open for this obeisance to Russia.

In they came crowding, the glittering toy-people and toy-makers of Cinemaland. It was something to see, I can tell you, so many Upper Brackets, so many Gilded Temperaments and fame-drunk darlings, craning their necks for a look at the crew of a Russian freighter. But there were no Russians yet. The speakers' table was still empty.

At eight-thirty, when the last of the most accomplished "entrance makers" had been pried into their places, there was a blare of music from the band, and a Soviet march filled the room. Simultaneously a double door at the rear swung open, and some forty Russian sailors came walking into the place. They were a weatherbeaten-looking lot, with faces right out of a Russian movie—bland and contained—and they marched to the speakers' table. At their head was Captain Xanop, without his pipe, and beside him a pale, slender girl in a long white gown with a high gold-braided collar. And Jerome B. Cobley! I forget where he was in this Entrance of the Gladiators, but I remember he found the exact center of the speakers' table and clung to it.

The cheering lasted so long that it seemed certain that all the Geniuses, Sachems, Stars and Pharaohs would holler themselves into a coma. Minute after minute they remained on their feet, cheering. And it would be unfair to call it Hollywood cheering. The noise that came out of the throng was homage from a part of Hollywood that only seldom finds voice. Stars and wizards and geniuses they were, but it was Podunk and Oak Corners and all the Main Streets and village squares of America that roared out of their famous throats.

The forty Russian sailors stared at the frenzied ovation. They were simple men, but wise enough to know that not they but the soul of Russia was being hailed. And the great ovation continued—as if the noise-makers were intent on making themselves heard by the dead of Leningrad, Moscow and Stalingrad, and by the bomb-deafened ears of the living who still stood undaunted before the might of the Nazi.

This was a *Cinderella*-enough finale even for Hollywood, and not until the last yip and roar had ended did I remember that the wild hosannah for Russia and its valiant was only half the show.

Eleanora Yerry, who had spent eight solid hours in the hands of coiffeurs, make-up men and costumers (and a lawyer or two), and who had lost some ten pounds since I had seen her last, and who now had a baby, and a husband at war, and a job carrying sandwiches to people too lazy to leave their automobiles and walk into a restaurant, and who had waked that morning as weary and hopeless a little human as ever rose from a rooming-house bed—Eleanora Yerry sat radiant next to the beaming Captain Xanop—and the eyes of the forty heroes were all for her.

The great of Hollywood marveled and gaped as each of those seagoing celebrities passed her their tobacco pouches, their menus and pieces of laundry for her to autograph. Mr. Cobley, who was not above fancying that part of the ovation which had almost cracked the ceiling was for him, sat beaming on the other side of Eleanora. He was as rattled as any intruder in Wonderland—but he had the business of the evening firmly in charge.

I will not report the speech Mr. Cobley made at the end of the dinner. It was too emotional for print. The forty Russian sailors, who understood not a word, glanced at Mr. Cobley sympathetically now and then, obviously thinking he had lost his mother and was telling the hushed assemblage all about it.

Mr. Cobley touched on a number of topics, and such was the emotional tension of his audience, that he was hardly able to stumble through each paragraph without having to wait for the cheering to subside. When he had done with the glories of Russia, China, England and the U.S.A., Mr. Cobley turned his swimming eyes finally on the pale girl who sat between him and Captain Xanop.

It was his honor, his high honor, said Mr. Cobley, to present to his friends and to the great American public—there were two microphones a little to one side of the Pharaoh's mouth—the mascot of all

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Russia, the woman beloved by the indomitable Russian masses, whose genius and beauty they hailed even as they stood defending their land against the hordes of Nazi invaders.

Fantikoff had written this part of the speech, and Mr. Cobley had refused to let anyone change a word of it.

The idol of the Russian Armies, Mr. Cobley roared on, "and held by the Soviet Republic to be the greatest motion-picture actress of our time. I give you none other than Eleanora Yerry."

Eleanora stood up. The great of Hollywood saluted this new lady of fame, keeping their bepuzzlement out of their clapping hands. For there was no denying the validity of Jerome B. Cobley's remarkable pronouncements.

Forty Russians were on their feet, applauding madly and emitting cowboy-like howls of delight. Captain Xanop silenced his crew with a raised hand. He then reached into his heavy jacket and brought forth a large red flag. It was full of holes and partly in tatters. Holding the flag high and stretched between his hands, he addressed a short speech to Eleanora, and then, with an old-fashioned bow, gave her the banner. And at this point all the forty heroes broke into a roar of song, sounding as practiced and lyrical as any Hollywood Cossack choir before the cameras. Then they sat down.

Eleanora spoke, and only to the forty sailors. Her large eyes moved from one to the other of their happy faces.

"Thank you, my dear Russian friends," she said, "for your gift of this flag. It will always speak to me of noble deeds. And wherever I am, it will always hang beside the flag of my own country."

I had helped Fantikoff on this speech, and Eleanora had memorized it carefully under the hair-dryer. But come to its finish, our Eleanora remained standing. Her large eyes turned for the first time to the throng in front of her. She smiled abstractedly, like a child in a dream, and her liquid, throbbing voice began again—all on its own now.

"I've been thinking all the time that maybe this would all disappear all of a sudden, all you famous people and all these wonderful heroes sitting here—and Mr. Cobley and everybody. That you would all disappear, and I would find myself back serving sandwiches at the Drive-in. But maybe it's real. I don't know yet. Thank you very much—even if you all disappear right away—thank you."

I ask you to imagine how actors, writers, producers and Pharaohs all dedicated to the worship of the *Cinderella* myth greeted this melting announcement from a pale and childlike beauty, and holding a Russian battleflag in her hand.

When the cheering had ended, Mr. Cobley raised a commanding arm.

"What I am going to say now is not for any publicity reasons," he cried. "This is beyond publicity. Believe me, I am speaking only confidentially to these great boys here, these great heroes from Russia. And I want to tell them something I know will make them happy. Mr. Emmereth, will you kindly translate this message I have for the wonderful Russian people? Tell them that Eleanora Yerry is going to be starred in her first picture for Empyrean Studios, which goes before the cameras immediately. And the title of the picture—and a beautiful, imaginative title it is, believe me—will be 'Serenade to a Nickel.'"

Mr. Emmereth translated the message to Russia, and the excitement among the crew and officers of the *Shialiushkinpovitch* communicated itself to the throng. The wildest of cheers resounded. And Mr. Cobley, his eyes going like a pair of faucets, entered Russian history. A score of sailors crowded around him and pumped his hand and waved wine-bottles in the air and shouted congratulations. . . .

I am doing a little rewrite of Wilson Bramel's screen play, not much—but enough to send producer Fantikoff hourly into discourses on the corruption of Hollywood. I point out to him that I am removing chiefly some of the Jerome B. Cobley anecdotes I originally contributed.

Fantikoff will never believe in me, but Eleanora trusts me. She has gained fifteen pounds, bought a small automobile, moved into a hotel with individual bathrooms and a nurse for her ailing child, and has twenty thousand dollars left in the bank out of the twenty-five Mr. Cobley paid for "Serenade to a Nickel." He wouldn't have had to pay anything for it, since it was written on his time. But as Mr. Emmereth agreed, it might confuse the war effort if word ever leaked into the press that Mr. Cobley himself had done his utmost to deport the creators of this screen play on no other grounds than that they had written it.

As for Wilson Bramel, he writes jubilantly from the Solomons: "The Japs are never going to get Hollywood if I can help it. Tell Jerome B. I will gladly lay down my life in defense of the Empyrean Studios. Thank God this all happened, because now I know what I'm fighting for."

The cameras start rolling next Tuesday, and the idol of the Russian masses is up in her part, and has a dressing-room on wheels with an American star over the door and a red flag hanging beside her make-up table. By the time you read this, her photograph will be on three magazine covers, and her name will be part of the daily fame communiqués from Hollywood.

As for the *Shialiushkinpovitch*, she left San Diego last week. Her honest sides bulging with chocolates, canned corn, drugs, preserved figs and hand-knit sweaters, she and her forty Russian *Prince Charmings* are steaming stanchly back to their fabulous land.

The German Army Is Now in the Hands of Desperadoes

(This article is continued from page 47)

In addition, the technique of secrecy covered failures of military leaders and veiled the conflicts that he knew would arise within the highest German military leadership. Thus there has been in process since the winter of 1941-'42 a permanent purge of the leadership of the German armed forces.

Replacements are of a new type of military leader. They are young combat officers, daring and inconsiderate, untrained in the theories of warfare and without traditions. Such men are Generals Jeschonnek, Richthofen, Galland of the Luftwaffe; General Student, commander of the Parachute Corps; Zeitzler and many still unknown divisional commanders of armored forces. These men did not undergo the schooling on the von Seeckt principles; did not have to absorb the lessons of German defeat in World War I. In temperament and ruthlessness they are the young Lud-

endorffs of World War II, but they lack the toughness and experience of the Kaiser's chief of operations, who was not only a tactician but also a great organizer and general staff officer. Hitler's young generals have the fondness of familiarity for modern weapons. They are mostly flyers and tank men. Forceful and ruthless though they are, they are without the great qualities of the Prussian-German military tradition: cold-bloodedness, organizational genius, shrewd far-sightedness. Hitler's "young-'uns" are the motorized hussars of our time.

THERE can be no doubt as to the kind of strategy this new corps of German generals will operate. They will proceed unscrupulously and without consideration of losses. They will force the last ounce of offensive power, of combat strength and physical endurance out of the troops, regardless of the final cost. They will take any risk. It is likely that this new leadership will corral all the German forces for a last great offensive—one like the Ludendorffian offensives of the spring and summer of 1918. These new generals are gamblers and, fired on by Hitler, will be prepared to undertake any strategic adventure.

The least they will do will be to operate on a strategy of aggressive defense which will witness many sudden transitions to counteroffensives. In the young generals Hitler has found military leaders for his "strategy of prestige." They will attempt to hold everything—everywhere. Defense, for the new generals' corps, will never be in the long view: regrouping of forces, shortening of lines of communication. So long as the German Army is forced on the defensive, they will attempt to defend Germany where defense is most senseless: in the Caucasus, on the Don, in Libya and in Tunis.

It is a singular paradox that these blustering desperadoes are called upon to lead at exactly the moment when the Wehrmacht has, to a considerable extent, lost its power to attack. The military instrument which Zeitzler and his cohorts have now been given, is already weakened considerably, and will disintegrate further in their impatient hands. One fact must be specially emphasized: the kernel of the German army is built on a biologically inadequate base.

At the outbreak of war, Germany's young men between the ages of twenty and thirty numbered a total of four and one-half millions. The Soviet Union had fifteen million men in this decisive age class; the United States ten million. The German four and one-half million men between the ages of twenty and thirty constituted the entire reserve of the combat-fit effectives of the German armed forces. The greater part of these are already dead or disabled. Examination of the recent death-notices in the German press discloses that the majority of current casualties are now among men over thirty and under twenty. Thus it is obvious to how great a measure the kernel of effectives of the best age classes in the German army are exhausted.

Actually there are now two German armies, existing side by side. One is composed of the younger age classes—twenty to thirty. This is an army of young, vigorous professional soldiers, excellently and thoroughly trained, physically at the height of their endurance, drilled for the offensive and passionately devoted to the Nazi régime. These are the age classes used for the composition of the German assault divisions, the best infantry divisions, the flyers and the Panzer troops. These were the divisions which conquered continental Europe: the bearers of the offensive power of the Wehrmacht. The other German army consists of the men between thirty and fifty years old. These are the *"bürger"* divisions, civilians in uniform, reserves, soldiers with only superficial training of low military coefficient: without stamina and without enthusiasm.

A scene on the Russian front is typical of this split. A German soldier, a prisoner of war, is being questioned by a Russian officer:

"Which divisions are on your sector?" the Russian officer asks.

"I can give you only their nicknames," is the German prisoner's answer. "There is the 'Bloodhound Division.' Then there are the 'Murder and Arson' fellows, the 'Old Uncles,' and finally we have the 'Tango Division.' "

"Why 'Tango Division'?"—from the Russian interrogator.

"Because it moves in tango step: one step forward and two backward."

NOW then, the number of "Bloodhound" and "Murder and Arson" (those twenty to thirty years old) is constantly decreasing: they have been most strongly used up and annihilated. Greater in number and constantly increasing in the Wehrmacht are the "Old Uncles" and the "Tango" divisions, which draw on twice as many age classes and were organized later.

These thirty-to-fifty-year-olds are today the bulk of the German Army. But with "Old Uncle" and "Tango" divisions no war can be won. Not even the young desperadoes who lead the German forces today can achieve victory with such human material.

But this new German military leadership will bring about an even greater intensification of the war. It will become still bloodier and more convulsed from the German side. The young military desperadoes are Hitler's last card. With these men at the helm, the consuming of the Wehrmacht, the waste of the Wehrmacht, will be accelerated. The German war crisis will be more critical, the mighty decision in the war will be here sooner.

(Continued on page 112)

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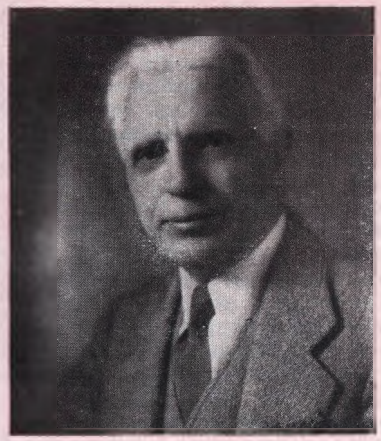
The Honor Rolls

BY ANGELO PATRI



THIS is a time of trial. Our young men are streaming out to the war fronts; our young women are pouring into the Service wherever the call leads. War demands the spirit and zest of youth, and they are steadily responding to their country's need.

Their going leaves empty places and lonely hearts behind them. Those who watch them go, close ranks and bravely shoulder the tasks their loved ones lay down. The old folk, fathers and mothers, young wives and sweethearts, take over new loads and valiantly carry on in the face of restrictions, deprivation and sacrifice.

Everywhere there is increased work and fewer workers, always more to do and less to do with; but the work must be done, and ways must be found. The home tasks are many and complicated. The children, bewildered by changes, distressed by the absence of fathers and mothers, big sisters and brothers, are hard to manage. Familiar ways have disappeared overnight. The little, taken-for-granted things have suddenly become problems.

One cup of coffee must do where no limit was set before. There is a scant supply of sugar, a scramble for milk for the baby, and butter so scarce only the ailing should have it. The car is laid up for the duration, the coal in the bin runs low. Meat is hard come by, and every grain of flour is valuable. Life is stripped to the bare bones of necessity, but nobody cries about that.

Nobody is going to cry, so long as the brimming cargo-boats put out to sea bearing their precious freight for the fighting forces, carrying priceless food for the perishing people under the heel of the oppressor. Nobody cares what happens to himself, so long as the children are preserved and the country saved to freedom.

The Honor Rolls are coming in from the front. Fame is writing the names of our heroes on a page of glorious history. We cheer each citation until the sky echoes our pride and joy. Well done!

No less honor is due the Home Army heroes. Honor is to be paid the mothers who sent their sons and daughters out with a smile, and stayed at home to rear the grandchildren on the stinted rations of wartime.

Someone must speak for the fathers who watched their children, their hearts' blood, march away and made no sign of the grief that shook their souls.

Someone must record the sacrifice of the older men and women who forsook retirement to take up the work the younger ones had to lay down and did double duty to maintain the front lines.

And surely, surely, honor must be paid the young women who married their soldier lovers that they might mother the children of our bravest and best. Theirs is a service beyond price, beyond praise.

To the unconquerable Home Army, then, be all honor. Let their service be marked as acceptable before the Lord; let their honorable deeds be recorded, their names inscribed on the nation's Honor Rolls.

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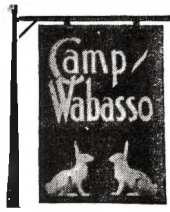

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(This article is continued from page 107)

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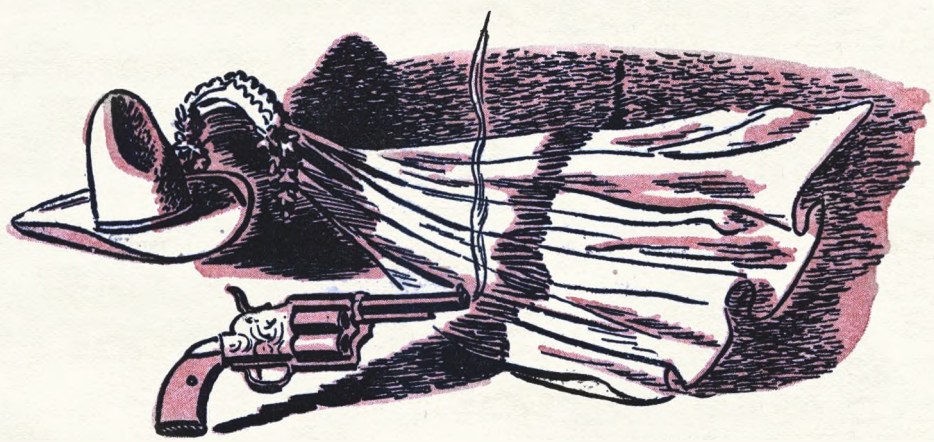


BY GEORGE F. WORTS

Roger Crassingway was a widower, and since the death of his wife, he was a woman hater. He had devoted himself to most abstruse scientific research.

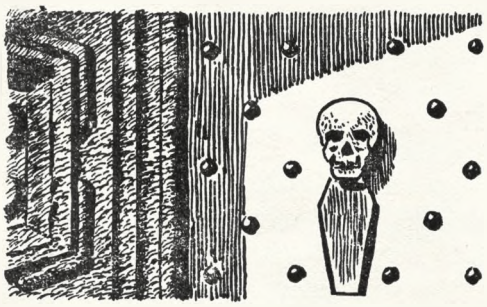
Suddenly, surprisingly, he marries again, and goes on a honeymoon, only to meet with an extraordinary accident. His daughter Kirby arrives, inspects the new household, and—not suspecting the danger to herself—questions the "accident" which all but killed her father.

DANGEROUS HONEYMOON

By GEORGE F. WORTS

DECORATIONS BY EVERETT HENRY

CHAPTER 1



THE sun had dropped behind the black sawtooth mountains, leaving them rimed with dusty orange afterglow, when Kirby Crassingway saw once again that house of lost enchantment. Her heart began to beat faster, and her lips went a little dry with a curious nameless fear.

You climbed a final rise and caught your first glimpse of that house glowing like a jewel through the oasis of Chinese elms and cottonwoods on the pink mesa. Its roof of hand-made green tile, its azure swimming-pool, the wrought-iron grilles at its windows, its patios with their chinaberry trees, rose arbors and marigold beds—all were eloquent of Eastern imagination and money applied to the fabulous architecture of the old, lost Southwest.

The house was a rich scientist's whim and a small girl's dream; and it hugged the earth, as a house in windswept country should.

Kirby Crassingway had been ten when she helped her father design it. That was when she had learned that most dreams, if you make them come true, are disappointments.

Her father had called it "*No Le Hace,*" which is Spanish for "It makes no difference," or "It doesn't matter." The world and its worries and bitterness was far away. That was his idea. Here was peace and contentment, the happiness of sun and sky, of horses and flowers and swims and hikes.

Only the dream was lost. Within those creamy walls nothing of the old spell lingered. In its place was a stale bitterness and certain ominous possibilities.

All the way from Tucson, where her old roadster had been in dead storage for three years, Kirby had driven slowly, giving an occasional wry thought to her doubtful tires, but mostly letting her mind flow like lazy water over familiar scenes and things. She loved the insolence of the desert heat, the piney incense of the sagebrush, the lilting flight of the occasional jackrabbit—freest and fleetest of all desert creatures.

Now and then she speculated about the woman with whom her father was honeymooning.

"I am going to be good," Kirby said out loud. "I am going to be as sweet as bar syrup."

But she couldn't help wondering why her father, with his Olympian aloofness, had made such a spectacle of himself.

His elopement with his private secretary hadn't been necessary, and it had been entirely out of character. And the fatuous grins he had given the photographers had been appalling.

Three years ago Kirby had vowed she would never return to No Le Hace. Curiosity was luring her back. But there were other reasons. One was real concern over her father's accident, which the newspapers had hushed up so quickly. Another was Tracy Delavett, who had told her, none too playfully, that if she tampered any further with his affections, he would wring her neck.

She wanted to get away from Tracy, to think things out.

But the main reason—to be perfectly honest—was Gertrude, and the tantalizing and somewhat ominous mystery behind Gertrude.

"Why," Kirby asked herself, "do I use that word *ominous?*" It was silly. Gertrude was ominous only because she was unknown.

The newspaper accounts of her father's accident had been mystifying. The first report had said only that he had had a nasty fall from a horse. In later reports there had been implications that matters were not so simple as they seemed. He had issued a statement from bed in which, in his sardonic way, he denied all mysteries. He said he had been thrown from his horse and had suffered minor injuries and that any man who falls off a horse deserves injuries.

Responding to Kirby's telegram, he had wired:

AM ALL RIGHT. DON'T COME.

Five curt words. He might have added "*love*" as the sixth, but he hadn't. He seldom used the word "*love*" to Kirby.

What magic, she wondered, had Gertrude used to humanize him? What kind of woman was this Gertrude? She wasn't beautiful in her pictures, so she must be awfully clever.

"Well, I'm awfully clever too. We'll see."

SHE turned in at the main gate and stopped her roadster in the gravel turning-circle, got out and ran up the cobalt-blue steps.

Her hand hovered indecisively over the old cast-iron knocker—a miniature skull whose lower jaw you worked up and down, clacking it against an iron plate shaped like a coffin lid and bolted to the wood. Kirby had fallen in love with it in the Thieves' Market, in Mexico City, when she was ten.

An ethical point to be decided: was this still her house and should she walk in unannounced, or was it now Gertrude's and should she knock?

She lowered her hand to the wrought-iron door handle, opened the door and cheerily cried, "Hi!"

The long low living-room, with its carved dark beams, its enormous white corner fireplace, was so dark, after the brightness of the late afternoon, that Kirby was momentarily blinded. She left the door wide open and walked into the middle of the room and looked it over. The Indian and Mexican wall pieces had not been moved. The pigskin-cov-

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ered furniture, from Puebla, stood approximately where it had always stood.

She bent down and tested a leather chair-bottom with her thumb. After twelve years, it was still in prime condition. The pigskin had originally been pale. She had seen a cowboy dressing a new saddle with neatsfoot-oil and turning it from buff to rich mahogany and protecting it, as he had explained to her, against the desert dryness; so she had given all the leather furniture in the house several neatsfoot-oil dressings.

She glanced at the fireplace. It glowed in the semi-darkness like a huge face, and the opening was a black mouth—an O of perpetual wonder. The fireplace had been one of Kirby's happiest ideas. She had planned that she and her father would spend long evenings lying on their stomachs on thick Indian rugs, watching the logs burn, telling each other their dreams and hopes, founding—at last—a friendship that would endure through life and beyond.

She turned and gazed at the closed door of her father's bedroom with a faintly bitter, faintly cynical smile.

"Phooey!" she said, and became suddenly aware of the stillness. She could hear her heart beating as if in preparation for a major ordeal. She sniffed the dry odorless air as if for clues.

Should she open that door and walk in?

As she hesitated, the door opened and a woman in pale blue came out. She stopped with her hands lifted halfway to her face, as if Kirby's presence had startled her. She gasped. Her hands came slowly down. She closed the door without turning from Kirby, without removing her eyes from Kirby.

"Hello, there!" she said in a cheerful voice. "Are you Kirby?"

"Yes, I'm Kirby," Kirby answered in a voice that sounded husky.

Her eyes weren't yet adjusted to the dimness of the room, but what she saw—her first impression—of the woman in pale blue, startled her. At the instant Gertrude Crassingway come into the room, she had seemed no older than Kirby herself; but as she moved into the light, she became ten or twelve years older.

Her voice and her appearance were astonishing to Kirby. The newspaper photographs and her own imagination had created a portrait of a dashing, gay, blonde woman, and this woman who was smilingly approaching looked neither dashing, gay nor blonde.

Nor was she as slender, as svelte, as Kirby had expected. She was somewhat buxom, and it seemed to Kirby that a friendly warmth emanated from her. It was in her voice, in her coloring, and in her smile. Her hair was between blonde and brunette, of no easily named color.

She came toward Kirby with her hand outstretched, smiling; and then, as she came closer, the light from the open front door fell upon her eyes, and Kirby was startled again.

She had been expecting, since she had first sensed her warmth, warm brown eyes. And Gertrude Crassingway's eyes were neither warm nor brown, but amber—golden amber—and clear and cold. Her smile was warm; her voice came from her lips with a warm and friendly tone—it was a rich contralto; but her eyes remained steady and watchful and cold. They were the eyes of a shrewd, capable personality. Their golden clearness and alertness touched a remote memory, but Kirby could not define it.

"I'm Gertrude," the woman said, and she said it with a charming air of uncertainty and shyness, as if more than anything in the world she wanted Kirby to like her.

Her handclasp was firm and warm and characteristic. It spoke of directness and great capability.

"We got your wire," she said amiably. "It was so nice of you to come." She had recovered from her shyness and uncertainty. She tilted her head a little and took a backward step and looked at Kirby, from head to foot, with candid, smiling appraisal.

"You're lovely," she said promptly. "You're even lovelier than I expected you to be. You're quite a legend, you know."

She was probably referring to the café-society legend that Kirby hated so. Just let yourself be the daughter of a famous man, and let yourself be flash-bulbed in a couple of well-known night-clubs, and you belong to café society!

"How is Dad?"

"He's been doing very well—with slight reservations. I'll tell you all about it. There's nothing to worry about," Gertrude Crassingway said crisply. "And will you call me Gertrude?"

Kirby suddenly felt that this handsome woman, with her warm coloring, her maternal air and her cool golden eyes, was too much for her. Her instincts told her that Gertrude was dangerous.... Or did they?

Whether or not Gertrude was a clever woman remained to be determined. Certainly she was a direct, capable woman. Kirby had never been particularly fond of Gertrude's type, which was the busy career-woman type with loads of self-assurance.

Kirby realized that she knew very little about her brand-new stepmother. The newspapers had said that she had lived in the Middle West most of her life and had served a number of prominent men as a private secretary. She had been married to a man named Wolsby who had died, and she had then taken a secretarial course.

Someone had recommended her to Roger Crassingway, and when he had been called to Washington to confer in connection with the extremely secret electrical discovery on which he had been working in his own laboratory in Volonne, Gertrude Wolsby had gone with him as his private secretary.

Roger Crassingway had said to newspaper men when he married Gertrude two weeks ago: "I'm taking out of circulation the best private secretary in existence."

"I hated to intrude," Kirby murmured, "but I was worried about him."

"My dear girl, you aren't intruding," Gertrude said heartily. "I'm delighted to have you. I've been anxious to know you, and I need you badly. You've known your father much longer than I have, and I need your advice. These men who seem so calm have often the most treacherous nervous systems. Would you like a drink?"

"No, thanks."

"Just where the nervous system leaves off and the mind begins is baffling, anyway," Gertrude said.

"Is anything the matter with his mind?" Kirby asked with alarm.

"No. It's nothing but nerves. What Roger has needed for months has been a rest, and that fall certainly didn't do his nervous system any good. He must have been unconscious for some time. He's had this curious hallucination ever since, that he was being followed—that a horseman came rushing up beside him."

"Where did it happen?"

"In the big sandy wash that you take past the old ranch-house to get on top of the mesa."

"We always run our horses up that wash," Kirby said.

"Yes. He says his horse was galloping, and he insists that a horseman came galloping up behind him. He was so insistent that I sent the stableman up the wash the next morning to check on hoofprints, but there had been a rain during the night, and there were no hoofprints at all. He also insists he was in a room, and that there were three men wearing handkerchiefs over their faces. Next thing he knew, he was lying in the wash beside his horse, coming to."

Kirby was looking intently at Gertrude's face. "What do you think about it?"

Gertrude lifted her shoulders with an air of weariness. "My dear, Roger was a very tired man without the accident. You can't realize what a strain he's been under in his work at Volonne, and during his short stay in Washington his desk has been a clearing-house for crackpot ideas. I think he

was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. . . . Why should a mysterious horseman follow him up that wash? It was night. There isn't a ranch, as you know, within miles of here. The stableman never rides. No other horses were out that night."

"Has he been delirious?"

"Not once," Gertrude answered with firmness. "He was a little feverish for a few days—and dazed. But that was to be expected. It was a very bad fall. What actually happened was that his horse stumbled or shied and threw him. He was knocked unconscious. He must have struck the ground and slid on his face on those sharp stones."

"Was his face badly cut?"

"Rather badly. There is one deep cut under his left eye that had to have four stitches. I'm afraid he'll carry that scar. It won't be disfiguring, but it will show. The doctor thought he might have some plastic surgery done later."

It left Kirby feeling cold and shaken. She had always thought that her father, with his lean, aquiline face, his thick curling gray hair, was an extremely handsome man, although a news-magazine had described him as "plain, lean, austere Roger Crassingway, inventive genius."

"I'm anxious to see him," she said.

"Yes, dear, and he's terribly anxious to see you," Gertrude said heartily. "He was delighted to hear you were coming."

That, Kirby knew—unless her father was a completely changed man—was a lie cut out of whole cloth. But it was a kindly lie.

Gertrude went to the door and opened it. "Roger," she said cheerfully, "Kirby's here."

Muffled mutterings came from the sickroom. Kirby, taking a nervous breath, walked in. She looked quickly about. The room was unchanged except that a pair of twin beds, with a night-table between, had taken the place of the single studio bed.

Roger Crassingway was lying on his back with an arm thrown across his forehead and partly covering his eyes. It seemed to Kirby that his long, lean face was a patchwork of adhesive tape and bandages. She tiptoed to the bed with her heart beating slowly and heavily, with a familiar sense of uneasiness stealing over her.

He turned his head as she bent over to kiss him, so that she could not kiss him on the mouth. Even when she was a small girl, he had always turned his face away so that she must kiss his cheek, and it still made her feel that he preferred to have her not kiss him at all.

"Hullo, Dad," she said huskily.

He said in his flat, sardonic voice: "My pal!"

Kirby suddenly wanted to cry. It was so hopeless. It had always been so hopeless.

"Gertrude," she said dryly, "just told me how delighted you were that I was coming. Fancy my surprise."

"Yes," her father said, "isn't it nice?"

"I think she's a peach," Kirby said.

She saw that the pupils of his eyes were contracted to needle-points. "Yes," he said again. "We three should have a delightful honeymoon. Do you plan to stay long?"

"No." Kirby answered dully. "I don't plan to stay long. Would you like me to go at once?"

"My dear child," he said with an air of surprise, "didn't you say that Gertrude told you I was delighted you were coming?"

The gray eyes were mocking her. And she realized that, at least as far as she was concerned, his marriage hadn't changed him at all. He would doubtless carry his bitterness to the grave.

Gertrude had come in. "Darling, I want Kirby to see that cut," she said briskly.

Roger Crassingway grimaced, then closed his eyes.

Gertrude removed the bandage. The cut was crescent-shaped and deep. It was about an inch and a half long, and it ran from a point about two inches below the inner corner of the left eye to a point under his left cheekbone. Although the cut was clean, with no sign of infection, the glimpse of it left Kirby feeling weak and slightly ill.

"It's doing nicely," Gertrude said briskly. She replaced the gauze.

Roger opened his eyes. There was a strange look in them. Kirby felt that, even under his familiar bitterness and mockery, something was wrong. She had been hoping, for his own sake, that his marriage had humanized him, but she had seen no glow of affection when he looked at his new wife. She wondered if it was an experiment that had failed. Certainly his bleakness was untouched.

"I told Kirby," Gertrude was saying in her brisk, cheery way, "that the three of us would have dinner together in here. Won't that be nice?"

"That." Roger Crassingway said in a dry, flat voice, "will be cozy."

"How," Kirby asked him, "is the noble experiment coming along?"

"I was instructed by a high power in Washington," he answered, "not even to discuss it with myself."

"That," said Kirby lightly, "was right down your alley, wasn't it?"

He had always been secretive. She knew that he had made an amazing discovery in the electrical field in his fabulous laboratory in Volonne, and that it had wide war uses—if it could be perfected. And she knew that her father and his co-worker, Professor Anderson Dendry, had been secretly and furiously working with a small and very expert staff which had been sent to Volonne. The work was so secret that it had never been announced, even that he was working on it, or that he had been supplied the materials and men for his experiment.

"You must," Kirby said, "have the bugs pretty well out of it, or you wouldn't be able to take this vacation."

He was watching her eyes as if she amused him. His smile was wry. "So I thought," he murmured. "I thought I could leave the cleaning up to Dendry. But I was mistaken. The trouble is, the idea came out of my head."

"And Professor Dendry is in trouble," Kirby said.

"Yes, he is; he needs my advice. He'll be here sometime tonight. They're bringing him from Volonne to Tucson in a special plane." He glanced up at Gertrude. There was defiance in his eyes. "And I'm going to talk to Dendry. If necessary, I'm going to talk to him all night."

Gertrude laughed softly. "Yes, dear. If you say you are, you are."

His strange, angry eyes returned to his daughter. "There's been one advantage in getting away from that work," he said, and hesitated.

Kirby wondered if he was hesitating because he intended to say something nice, something complimentary, about Gertrude.

"Even the accident itself had an advantage," he continued. "It made clear to me how to overcome a difficulty we've been combating. I am very anxious to see Dendry." He glared at Gertrude. "And I don't want any tricks."

She laughed again. "Roger, you may talk to Professor Dendry till the cows come home."

He closed his eyes again. Kirby glanced at Gertrude, expecting to see surprise or some displeasure at his tone, but Gertrude was smiling warmly.

The two women walked out of the room. When the door was closed, Kirby said impulsively: "Is he always just like this—with you too?"

Gertrude seemed surprised. She stared at Kirby, as if the question puzzled her, then laughed softly. "You mean, mocking—and a bit bitter?"

"Yes."

"He's never been much different since I've known him," Gertrude said cheerfully. "It's one of the things I like in him. Most men are so gushy."

Kirby had once heard an extremely worldly woman say: "Men would be surprised if they could know the reasons for which women marry them."

"Roger is determined," Gertrude went on, "to get out of bed and get back to Volonne. He's a handful, that man. . . . Shall we plan on dinner at eight?"

Kirby was tempted to tell this understanding, capable woman of her lifelong attempts at breaking down her father's chilling indifference, his sardonic aloofness. But whatever it was that she had sensed in that room stopped her—the indefinable wrongness in this house.

"Your room's ready," Gertrude said.

Kirby started toward her room, and Gertrude accompanied her. Her face was flushed. Kirby wondered if she had been telling the truth. She seemed calm and composed and cheerful. It was possible that she was, under it, a high-strung, unhappy woman.

"Do you know if my palomino mare is still here?"

"The golden one?"

"Yes—Susannah."

"There's a lovely golden mare," Gertrude said, "with a silver mane and tail."

"That's Susannah. I've had her since I was ten. She was a two-year-old colt, and I trained her myself. Do you ride?"

"Yes. I've ridden a great deal in Michigan and in the South, although I haven't been on a horse in two years. I love it, and I need exercise. Your father and I intended to do a lot of riding."

"Try Susannah," Kirby said. "She's pretty lively, but she's awfully intelligent. If you'd like to try her in the morning, I'll take care of Dad."

"Thank you, dear. I'd love it."

They had reached the door of Kirby's bedroom. As she put her hand on the knob, the older woman said: "We're having servant troubles. I tried to get the old ones, but they've scattered, mostly into war jobs. I scraped up a combination cook and houseman named Brent, and a man to look after the horses—Sarka—and I don't think you'll like either of them any better than I do."

"Isn't old Gomez here any more?" Kirby asked. Pedro Gomez, an ageless Mexican who had taught Kirby to rope and to play the Spanish guitar, had been caretaker of No Le Hace since the house was built.

"No. Gomez left when we came," Gertrude answered. "He wanted to live out his days, as he expressed it, in his dear Sonora."

Something in the way she said it made Kirby look at her quickly. Gertrude's cold clear golden eyes were fixed brightly on hers. With an impulsive gesture that was almost maternal, she laid her hand on Kirby's elbow.

"I hope you'll like me, Kirby," she said, in her warm, rich voice. "And I hope you won't think I'm an intruder."

"I like you very much already," Kirby said huskily, and opened the door.

The rosy glow coming in at the western windows enriched the warm color in Gertrude's cheeks; yet her eyes were cold and alert. And Kirby suddenly realized what it was they reminded her of—the steady, vigilant golden eyes of a parrot.

Gertrude, smiling warmly, turned and walked away.

CHAPTER 2

KIRBY went into her room and closed the door. She halted and looked about the cozy, charming room in which, as a child and as a growing girl, she had spent so many unhappy nights. A brown pot of marigolds on her dressing-table filled that end of the room with an illusion of morning sunlight. Gertrude must have placed these flowers here. It was a touching act of thoughtfulness.

Kirby sat down at the dressing-table. She felt confused and uncertain. She tried to hear Gertrude's warm voice, and to see her warm coloring, but all she saw was the eyes of a parrot.

"I'm being silly about this," Kirby reasoned. "The only thing wrong here is myself." It was simply that she was unhappy and lost—and frightened because she was lost—and she was creating an atmosphere to match her mood. She wanted to be fair, to evaluate Gertrude honestly, not give her some sinister quality she didn't possess.

"Is she capable of making Dad happy? That's all that counts. A man can't jeer at things the way he does and be a happy man. Underneath it, and underneath the way he's always treated me, he's probably been a bitter person all his life. Gertrude is a charming, capable woman. If she makes him happy, I'll love her."

But Kirby's mind could not cling to such wholesome reasoning. It went back morbidly over her conversation with Gertrude to those references to her father's nervousness and his curious hallucinations, and the wrongness she had sensed in his room.

"Just where the nervous system leaves off and the mind begins is baffling, anyway," Gertrude had said.

Just what had she meant by that, Kirby wondered? Though her father was a scientist and a dreamer, he had a practical, hard mind, and his nervous system had always been as tough as cast iron. He wasn't a man given to hallucinations.

It seemed to Kirby, recalling her last few seconds with Gertrude in the hallway, that her cold golden eyes had considered her as if she fitted precisely into some ominous pattern.

There was that word again! "Long before I met her, or heard her voice or saw her eyes, I was calling her ominous. There is nothing ominous about her. It's nothing but my muddled, morbid mind."

A KNOCK at the door made Kirby jump. And that, she reflected, indicated the state her nerves were in.

"Come!" she called.

The door opened a few inches, and a man's long, pale face appeared. Small eyes of a brown so dark they looked black, gazed at her.

"I've got the bags out of your car, Miss Crassingway," he said.

He opened the door and came in with one of her white pigskin suitcases in either hand. Under ordinary circumstances, Kirby would hardly have noticed him. He was, in his buff house uniform, typical of a manservant in well-run houses everywhere.

Kirby noticed that his hair, which was black, had been cut so recently that the skin under it, about his ears, looked pale blue; that his hands were pink and that their backs were hairy and that the brown oxfords he wore were of a better cut and had a much more expensive look than his station in life warranted.

She guessed his height at five feet ten and his age at forty.

He placed the suitcases on the pine bench at the foot of the bed, then turned and faced her.

"Is there anything else, Miss Crassingway?"

It seemed to Kirby that he was less a servant wanting to please her than a man acting a part. "No, thank you."

He seemed reluctant to leave. He was deliberately looking her over, and there was shrewdness in his small dark eyes.

"A Scotch-and-soda or a rum collins after that long drive, perhaps?"

"No, thank you." The directness of his gaze was making her uneasy.

"If you ever want me, just press that button by the bed. It rings in the kitchen."

"Yes. I know." Kirby said in a dry voice. "I planned it that way."

His smile, which was little more than a dimpling at the corners of his long, thin mouth, was hardly that of a well-trained servant.

"I hope your stay with us will be very pleasant, Miss Crassingway," he said.

"Thank you, Brent," she murmured.

He had backed to the open door. He went out, with an effect of gliding. He closed the door so slowly that it seemed to the girl that the latch would never click. When it did, she experienced a great relief. She realized that she had been holding her breath.

Her mind was all of a jumble again. The houseman had brought into the room an aura of evil. His eyes were those of a bold and fearless rat.

"I'm being ridiculous," Kirby said aloud. "First, Gertrude's eyes reminded me of a parrot's, and now this man's eyes remind me of a rat's."

Gertrude, she recalled, had warned her about Brent—had said she didn't like the man.

Her unhappiness, Kirby decided, had made her a prey to fantasies. A ride would make her feel better, and she was dying to see Susannah—to find out if, after three years, the golden mare would recognize her.

She found several pairs of riding-pants on hangers in the closet, and several pairs of riding-boots. She selected a pair of boots and tested them for black widow spiders and scorpions by tapping the heels on the floor, then holding the boots upside down and shaking them. They contained no spiders or scorpions, but they were so stiff and dry that she wondered if she could get into them.

Kirby took down a pair of whipcord riding-pants, then locked the hall door and undressed. From a pile of riding-shirts in a bureau drawer she selected a faded blue one and put it on, then put on the riding-pants. They fitted as well as they had three years ago. The shirt was a little snug.

She dusted boot-powder into the boots and pulled them on. They were stiff and tight. From a pile of bandana handkerchiefs in another drawer she took a bright blue one and recalled that she had bought it in Nogales because it matched her eyes. At least, it intensified their blueness. She recalled how happy a cowboy at a dance had made her when, as they danced "Put Your Little Foot Down," he had told her that her eyes reminded him of the evening sky over the Mustang Range. She had been sixteen at the time.

APPROACHING the mirror on the bathroom door, seeing the slim, dark-haired girl it reflected, she was startled. The familiar old riding-clothes magically made her three or four years younger. The differences were in her face. Unhappiness born of her loneliness had left its mark about her mouth and her eyes—had subtly changed the pattern of the face that so many men had told her, with such a meager choice of adjectives, was beautiful.

She was sure that her eyes looked much larger than they had three years ago. Certainly there was much less hope in them. As she turned away, she wondered, with the same indifference with which she might have wondered if tomorrow would be hot and clear, if she would marry Tracy Delavett. And she wished that all the men she knew, the attractive ones, the ardent ones, the amusing ones, didn't leave her so unmoved. And she wished that she didn't treat them so cruelly.

She clipped to her belt a pencil-sized flashlight that she always carried in her purse, and she hoped that tonight the darkness wouldn't frighten her so that she would have to turn it on.

She went out through her patio, through a larger patio which was, just now, a golden blaze of poppies, and into the saddling corral. She was passing the tackroom door when a man's voice said banteringly: "Just look who's here!"

Kirby stopped as he emerged into the bright dusk. He was a big blond man in blue denim work-pants and faded khaki shirt black with sweat under the armpits. The shirt was unbuttoned halfway down, and she saw the mat of curly golden hair on his chest.

He was grinning at her. His hair was a thick tangle of sun-bleached molasses-colored curls. His head was big. His face was square and brown. His eyes, under half-lowered lids, were a murky color—either green or slate. He was handsome in the obvious, physical way that had appealed to her when she was in finishing-school, attending football games and screaming for Yale, Harvard or Princeton, as the case might be, but now left her so unmoved. Such men, with their bold vanity, were, in Kirby's opinion, caricatures.

"You would be Miss Crassingway," he said.

"Yes," said Kirby.

He leaned against the door-jamb. There was a coiled lariat in his hand. He was running his eyes over her with expert appraisal. Half-lidded, their gaze was insolent. But it was more than merely a frank inventory of her attractions. Something, she was sure, was behind their murkiness. It was the same quality she had detected in the eyes of Gertrude and the houseman, a quickening and a sinister evaluation. There was something snaky about this man's eyes.

She was afraid of him, not as a man but as a member of this ominous troupe. Either there was something wrong with this whole household—or with her.

"I take care of this end of things," he drawled. "I'm Sarka Sarkendar."

"Yes," Kirby said huskily. "I know."

SHE was trying to be rational. She wasn't being fair. She supposed her loneliness, her unhappiness were making her neurotic, and people in neurotic states are inclined to see the abnormal in everyone because they are abnormal themselves. She had seen in Gertrude's eyes the eyes of a parrot, in Brent's, the eyes of a rat, and in this man's, the eyes of a snake.

It was silly. Gertrude was nothing but a high-strung woman who had gone through an ordeal that would have tested anyone. Brent was merely overanxious to please. And this man was only an insolent stableman proud of his masculine beauty. Long before she had reached No Le Hace, she had started looking for evil, and you always find what you look for.

She said crisply: "Will you saddle up Susannah for me, please?"

"Who," the blond man drawled, "is Susannah?"

"The palomino mare."

"Oh, you mean Goldie."

"I mean Susannah." Kirby said firmly.

He laughed. "Okay. Do you want to ride alone or do you want me to go along?"

"I want to go riding alone." She hadn't meant to speak so sharply. But his insolence irritated her and his eyes frightened her. She was suddenly sure she had found in him, in the houseman, and in Gertrude a common denominator: that this household was one in which something sinister was afoot. The approach of the desert night accentuated her uneasiness—another nameless threat was on its way to chill her very bones.

Sarka's face had darkened with surliness. He was evidently not used to having his companionship declined. "Okay," he said in a jeering tone. "Just as you say, Miss Crassingway."

A man's voice from the main corral yelled: "Hey! Where the hell's that rope?"

"Coming!" Sarka answered.

Kirby started walking rapidly in the direction of the voice, wondering who its owner was. Gertrude had said that only Brent and Sarka were here.

The man was standing with a yearling palomino colt in a corner of the corral under a cottonwood tree. Kirby had not noticed the tree when she drove in, but she noticed it now. She had planted it herself when she was eleven. It had been a pencil-thick seedling. It was now a full-grown tree forty

feet tall with a trunk bigger around than her waist. It had a lovely spread, and in the dusk its leaves shimmered with a silvery green light. She felt a glow of pleasure and pride.

As she approached the man and the golden colt, she saw that he was holding its left foreleg up and hard against its chest, and that blood was pulsing from a deep cut close to its tiny hoof. There were small clotting puddles of blood on the ground.

The man was a stranger. He was tall and dark-haired. Kirby could not see his face.

Sarka gave him the lariat. The strange young man shook it out with one hand and talked amiably to the colt. It was trying to get away. to free its bleeding leg. Its eyes were rolling with terror.

"Take it easy, young fellow," he said. "This won't be fun, but it isn't going to hurt; and the next time maybe you'll know enough to keep out of barbed wire."

He had a delightful voice. deep and rich and full of overtones and undertones.

He deftly tied the rope about the colt's neck, then rigged an intricate harness about the injured foreleg, so that the hoof was bound securely against its chest.

He stepped back and said, in the same deep, amiable voice: "Go ahead! Try it out! You'll have to get along with three legs for a while."

The colt nickered, took a stumbling step forward, then went hobbling toward the watering-trough. The bleeding, Kirby saw, had almost stopped.

"Was it an artery?" she asked.

He whirled around with a look of startled surprise, and for the first time she saw his face fully. It was dark, and he was dark-eyed. In the dusk, he looked romantic. He wasn't Spanish, but he might have Spanish in him, or French.

The tall young man came slowly toward her. "Well!" he said softly. His expression of surprise accommodated itself to an obvious pleasure in her appearance. His dark eyes were glowing. She saw his chest suddenly swell, as if he were gathering all his muscles together for a spring. They were, to Kirby, very familiar symptoms. He was reacting to her as Sarka had, but with certain notable differences. And he was suddenly smiling, as any man will, when he unexpectedly encounters a pretty girl.

"Yes," he said. "He got tangled up in some wire down by the spring. We tried a tourniquet, but he got it off with his teeth. I once saw this stunt worked in Virginia. The leg may stiffen up for a while after we take that rig off and let it down, but it will choke off the hemorrhage. . . . Aren't you Miss Crassingway?"

Kirby was smiling in a particular way at him. She nodded as if she were preoccupied with what he had said. "Yes," she said huskily.

"I'm Jeff Bixden," he said. He was doubtless someone she was supposed to know. When her face betrayed no knowledge of him, he said: "I'm your dad's new assistant. . . . I heard you were coming." He grinned quickly, and in the dusk she saw the flash of fine white teeth. "It's awfully nice."

She wondered if he was as innocent as he seemed. He was evidently a nice person. She was aware of lifting emotions, and her fears became less urgent. If this young man was as genuine as he seemed, he was an island of normalcy in a sea of suspicions.

Sarka walked away, presumably to saddle Susannah.

"When did you come?" Kirby asked Jeff Bixden.

"I flew out as soon as I got news of the accident."

KIRBY'S confidence in him increased. He might be subject to suspicion, but at the moment it seemed to her that he struck the only true note she had heard. It occurred to Kirby that he had left something hanging in air—an unspoken doubt or question—and this would bear pursuing later.

She saw in him a young man of intriguing possibilities. He was finding her not only attractive but alluring. His smile and the glow in his eyes betrayed him, although that sudden swelling of the chest had been enough—the involuntary response of a man who scents fair game.

He was asking polite questions about her trip, and she was murmuring responses—and feeling only a little guilty at herself for deliberately whipping up his interest in her. It was so easy! The frequent, shy lowering of her long lashes to entice him. The wistful, intimate little smile to arouse his masculinity. A certain way of standing and holding her head to demoralize him.

Nothing of the slightest importance was happening in what they were saying. They were so many banal words. It was the undercurrents which were cutting out a channel for excitement. It was cruel, but she could not resist it. She was creating trouble, and there would be, somewhere along the line, the usual accounting. But his face was more sensitive than most men's, and it was fascinating to see all the familiar symptoms so beautifully arrayed: The quickening of his interest in her. His increasing appreciation of her face, her slim figure. The desire in his eyes that he would try, up to a point, to suppress.

IT was a familiar chain of actions and reactions. The game, as Kirby played it, was to make this man care for her, and to let him think that she liked him. At the crucial moment—and this was where her sense of guilt crossed swords with her cruelty—she would refuse him.

But it was more than cruelty, for back of the cruelty was fear. It was like her fear of the night. Rather, it was the same as her fear of the night. It didn't matter whether his proposal was marriage or something less conventional. Her answer always was the same. No. Then she would attend, with mingled feelings, his reactions: His fury, his scorn, his desperate pleading. He would blow up or he would break down.

One man had almost struck her. One man had wept. What would Jeff Bixden do?

She could hardly see his face now. His shoulders were hunched forward a little, and his head was lowered as he tried to hold in his eyes her face as it slipped into the darkening twilight.

If Kirby had been asked for a reason and had answered with honesty, she would have said that she believed men deserved their fate. She led them along this road because of her inability to fall in love with any of them. She was cruel to them because of the cruelty that her nature inflicted on her. It was confused and painful, but there was logic in it somewhere.

Jeff Bixden was asking her about her father. Had she seen him?

"Yes," Kirby said. "What do you think of these hallucinations?"

She thought his eyes narrowed a little, but she wasn't sure. She saw his big shoulders move up and down in the dusk. He said apologetically: "I don't know your father very well, Miss Crassingway."

"Hasn't he talked to you about his accident?"

"Very little. He's a very reserved man, isn't he?"

"Yes. Very. He's a terribly hard man to get along with."

"Yes, I'd heard that. He's a great man, and he's bound to be aloof. Well, there's no reason why I should be welcome. You see, I came of my own accord. But I had to. I was worried about him. Things were piling up. He could become a pretty big gear in the war machine, you know."

She sensed his reluctance to talk about it. "Did he tell you that you aren't welcome?"

Jeff Bixden smiled. "He said he came here to get away from his job."

"What did Gertrude say?"

"Oh, she has been very pleasant."

That was nice That simplified things a little. Kirby heard a gate creak, then the whinny of a horse.

"Susannah!" Kirby cried. The horse whinnied again, and the girl heard the excited trampling of its hoofs and Sarka's muttered: "Take it easy, you dope!"

The the mare was rubbing her large, beautiful golden head against Kirby's shoulder.

"You darling!" Kirby cried. "You *do* remember me!"

"She hasn't been topped," Sarka said peevishly. "She's apt to be a handful. Do you want me to top her for you?"

"No, thanks, I can handle her. She's just excited at seeing me. Isn't it wonderful? She remembers me!"

Kirby could hardly see Jeff Bixden's face in the dusk. "I'll see you later, won't I?"

I hope so," the young man said fervently in his rich. deep voice. "Would you care for a moonlight ride after dinner? Or will you be too tired? There's a spot I'd love to take you to."

"I'd love to see it," Kirby said, and wondered what spot it was. There wasn't a butte for miles around that she didn't know. Sarka, holding the mare, was gazing at Kirby with solemn insolence.

"Is that colt out of this mare?" she asked him.

He took a long time in answering. "I wouldn't know," he said. "I'm nothing but a little boy, busy learning things."

"You'll find," Kirby said pleasantly, "that experience makes a wonderful teacher. Will you open that gate, please?"

CHAPTER 3

SARKA opened the outer gate. Kirby mounted and rode out into the blue gloom of the evening. Susannah danced about and veered for the wash. Kirby let her have her head, keeping only a light check on the reins. Susannah was prancing. She wanted to run. She was evidently as delighted with this reunion as was her mistress.

Ahead of them, up the long, winding wash which led to the top of the mesa, darkness flowed as ink flows from an upset inkwell. Kirby had timed it badly. She wanted to be far from No Le Hace when night fell, to have it out with herself far from the temptation of lights and human companionship.

But now the house was behind and the darkness was coming to meet her, to engulf her, and there was a thread of cold in the mild breeze. A psychiatrist to whom Kirby had gone had lucidly explained her fear of the night, of all dark places.

Chiefly, it was her fear of love. And back of that were other things, but chiefly her unhappiness and bitterness because of the scorn her father had always shown for her. Having been denied paternal love all her life, she was now in an emotional cul-de-sac with the inevitable consequences.

The psychiatrist had made the mistake of telling her candidly that she should marry the first acceptable man who offered himself. Marriage would melt her, would break down her unhappiness, make her a freed, happy woman.

It was such old stuff! She had the modern generation's scorn of psycho-analysis, and the scorn of youth for any theory which makes of sex too dominant a factor in the shaping of one's life. She wanted freedom from unhappiness and fear, but not at the cost of her self-respect. The psychiatrist had argued it simply and rationally, but she would not agree that she happened to represent a rather simple human problem and that the only cure for her was marriage.

She had stopped going to the psychiatrist. In her heart. under deep layers of cynicism, Kirby was a romantic. She believed that he was a humbug, yet she had come to appreciate the truth of much that he had said so glibly about her problem. However, she still had her own fixed idea of how it should be treated. She believed that a frontal attack on her fear of the night was the only way she would find release.

She could not remember when she hadn't been afraid of the night, or when she hadn't been fighting it. Sometimes she made progress, and sometimes she lost. She would. for example, go for weeks without requiring a light in her bedroom all night; then, unexpectedly, for no logical reason. the terror would descend. and for weeks, night after night. she would have to have a light. As time passed, fighting it all of the time. she would again triumph over the terror—and sleep in an unlighted room. But the victory was never lasting.

Her treatment of men she considered an issue apart. She understood it perfectly. She hated herself for treating men so unfairly, for torturing them so deliberately. There was no decent justification for it. It was simply that life had been cruel and unfair and unjust to her. and she was striking back in every way she could.

She never lost hope that sometime she would meet a man who would brush aside her sadism and see beyond it through her cynicism into her heart. and calm her fears and doubts—and he would be the man to whom she would happily entrust herself for life. But she had never met him. She had never met a man who remotely resembled him. All the men she had met had thought of her only in terms of what they wanted.

She gave more thought to Jeff Bixden. He was an attractive man. His height, his leanness. his rich, deep voice. his romantic dark eyes and the sensitiveness in his face gave him a physical appeal that might, under proper conditions. be hard to resist. He really was unusual. Yet her instincts had warned her that he was lacking in certain vital qualities. She had sensed. in those few minutes, that he was ardent but innocent. She knew that a man who could understand her would have to know a lot about women.

What, she asked herself, would she do about him? It would be decent of her to stop playing her favorite game with him as the victim. He was a nice person, and obviously a simple sort of person, a scientist; and it had been her experience that such men are easy game. If all her guesses about Jeff Bixden were true, it would be downright cruelty to lure him on. Yet she was strongly tempted. He was obviously a young man of strong feelings. It would be interesting to watch them develop. Her better nature rebelled; but her instinct, her cruelty, was already mapping out the campaign.

Susannah was pulling at the bit and tossing her head impatiently because Kirby was holding her in. She wanted to run. Kirby had always let her run up the wash. Susannah remembered that. All her long, beautiful muscles were tensed. awaiting only the signal.

NIGHT rides were entirely different from day rides. In the night, all the familiar objects of daytime took on strange and fantastic shapes.

This ride up the wash had its own especial terrors. It had begun about seven years ago when, riding up the wash one night, she had become convinced that if she reached the end of it, the mesa would not be there.

The mesa was a flat tableland extending for miles in all directions. If you followed a trail leading off to the right. that is, to the south, you came eventually to the Pringal ranch. Jubilo Pringal was their nearest neighbor—sixteen miles, if you took the trail over the mesa. The Pringal ranch was twenty-one miles from No Le Hace by automobile road.

Riding a horse on the mesa at night. all you had to worry about were the gopher holes, and unless you were running your horse, it used some equine sixth sense in avoiding them, as it cannily avoided arroyos, boulders and the sagebrush, the creosote and cholla bushes with which the mesa was studded.

This truth had been established on many a daytime and moonlight ride. But the belief that had taken shape seven

years ago was unshakable. The belief was that the wash ended at the brink of a bottomless black cañon into which she and her horse would plunge. If she rode with someone else, the fear was not there.

On no night ride in seven years had Kirby, alone, reached the top. She always turned back.

She let Susannah out into a prancing, slow canter. It was three miles to the top of the wash. A little more than halfway up was the old ranch-house. Nearing it, Kirby leaned forward a little and relaxed the strain on her reins. Susannah, at the signal, snorted and stretched out into a run. Her hoofs made a soft rolling thunder in the sand and pebbles, clattered on the exposed reaches of bedrock.

KIRBY was afraid of the old ranch-house. In the daytime, it was a rambling old frame house, with windows broken or gone, doors hanging askew. At night, it was a haunted house.

An old rancher years ago had told her the story. In the old days when the pioneers were fighting for a foothold in southern Arizona, a young man, his wife and year-old daughter had homesteaded here. The nearest neighbor was then fifty miles away.

The young man was often absent a week at a time, looking after his cattle. He had come home one night at the end of a week's absence to find his wife and daughter dead. His wife had been bitten by a rattlesnake and she had killed the child because the mother knew that she would die before she could reach help, and that the child would, in her helplessness, die horribly before the father returned.

The young rancher buried them and never came back.

Many years later, the old man who had told Kirby the story, said that he was riding along the wash late one night. He was twenty miles from camp, was tired and his horse was lame. He decided to spend the night in the deserted house. As he came down the wash from the mesa, he saw what appeared to be two gossamer-like objects. But when he neared them, they vanished.

He spent the night on his blanket on the floor of the living-room. Next morning, when he awoke, there were five rattlesnakes in the room. Two were black, or mountain rattlesnakes, which will sometimes pursue a man. Fortunately, his six-shooter was on the floor near his head. He shot them all. It was, he told Kirby, the closest squeak he had had in all his years in the desert. And he was convinced that the two gossamer-like objects were the ghosts of the young mother and her baby daughter, trying to warn him away.

Kirby was eleven when she heard this story, and it had made a deep impression on her. She thought of the pathetic young mother and her baby daughter every time she rode past the old ranch-house. Her father had laughed at the story and had called it "wonderfully typical," but Kirby had seen no humor in it. In spite of the temptation, she had never been inside the house. And she did not question that a nest of rattlesnakes existed under the rotten old floorboards.

She always passed it at night, uphill or down, at a brisk run, as she was doing now.

The old ranch-house was little more than a pale loom in the darkness. As she watched, a vertical portion seemed to detach itself from the tumbledown porch. It might have been a man, or a trick of her tired eyes, or of her imagination.

She felt chills race up and down her spine, and she reined the mare in a little and stared. She was sure she saw a figure moving to the right. She was sure that a man of about her father's height had emerged from the house and was moving through the thickening darkness toward the tall clumps of bear-grass in the back.

She called out "Hi!" in a thin voice, but there was no answer, and if a man had been there, if he had existed anywhere but in her imagination, he was vanishing.

Kirby unclipped the flashlight from her belt and pushed the slide that turned it on. The feeble beam touched the porch posts and penetrated a little of the way to the clumps of bear-grass. She was almost sure she saw a tall, gray figure receding into the bear-grass; yet she wasn't really sure.

She turned off the light and returned it to her belt. Her heart was thumping in her throat. The chill played up and down her back until it lodged between her shoulder blades.

She might, she argued, have seen a ghost! But whatever it was, it was typical of the things that made the terror of the night so real. In a sudden, shivering accumulation of fright, she touched her heels to Susannah's flanks and the mare promptly lunged ahead in a full hard gallop.

Somewhere along here, according to Gertrude, her father had had his accident.

All the associations of this place were suddenly too much for her. She pulled up on the reins. Susannah fought the bit, tossing her head wildly, snorting with indignation. For this was where the real running usually began. But tonight, more clearly than ever before, Kirby saw the brink they would approach, and the yawning cañon where the mesa should be.

It was discouraging. She told herself: "I've got it worse than I ever had it before."

Usually when she turned back, she made some excuse. She would tell herself that she really should turn back; that she had important letters to write, or things to do. Tonight, she made no excuses. She admitted that she hadn't the courage to ride farther. She pulled Susannah around and headed for the ranch at a run.

WHEN Kirby reached No Le Hace, the corrals were brightly lighted and the windows in the house were hospitably aglow. She heard the soft purring of the light plant as she dismounted. She could still marvel at its ingenuity. It did not run unless a light was turned on. When you turned on a light, the plant started automatically, and within a few seconds, the light you had turned on glowed brightly. And when the last light was turned off, the plant automatically stopped.

Kirby hoped that Sarka would not come out to unsaddle for her. She unsaddled quickly, turned the mare into the pasture and carried saddle and bridle into the tackroom. She placed the saddle on a rack and hung the saddle blanket over the pommel to dry, and the bridle on a wooden peg.

Coming down the wash, she had lost her terror of the night when the lights of No Le Hace became visible, and once again, she told herself, what a coward, what a spineless weakling she was; and she informed herself, as usual, that the next time she took a night ride, she would go all the way to the top and prove that the mesa and not a yawning black cañon was there, and that just over the summit was the old trail leading off to Jubilo Pringal's ranch.

She went into the house and heard men's voices in the kitchen. She supposed that Sarka and Brent were at dinner there. She hadn't enough time to shower and change before dinner. As she entered the living-room, she heard her father's voice, cold and sarcastic, and Gertrude's, warmly argumentative. Evidently they were quarreling.

Kirby could not hear what they were saying. She did not want to hear what they were saying. She had already guessed that the marriage, brand-new as it was, was not a success.

Her father's bedroom door was open.

She called out "Hi!" to warn them she was coming, then walked into the room, the hard heels of her cowboy boots clicking sharply on the dark-red tile.

Her father was propped up on pillows, drinking a highball from a long thin glass. Gertrude sat in a chair near the bed, sipping a highball. She had changed from the blue-print dress to flowered dark-blue cocktail pajamas. The light on the table behind her brought out glints of russet in her hair.

Kirby glanced quickly from one face to the other. Each had the stiff, dark look to be seen in the faces of people who have been quarreling and who are still angry, and it was

evident that they were trying to rid their faces of this look for Kirby's benefit.

Gertrude said in her warm voice: "Well, dear, did you have a nice ride?"

"Yes, it was nice," Kirby answered.

"Will you have a highball?"

"Thanks—very light."

She glanced at her father. He was gazing at her over his highball glass with the familiar look of derision.

A bottle of Scotch, a bowl of ice-cubes, a bottle of siphon water and an empty glass stood on a tea-table beside Gertrude. She made Kirby a drink, and Kirby sat down on the edge of the other bed and sipped it.

"Where'd you ride?" her father asked.

"Oh—up the wash. Is anyone using the old ranch-house?"

"No one," he answered, "but the little gossamer girl and her gossamer mother. Were you calling on them?"

That was one of his favorite old questions. "Yes," Kirby said. "We played dolls and drank cambric tea." It was an answer she had made up, rebelliously, many years ago, and it was still an answer.

"I was telling Gertrude that story awhile ago," he said. "She thought it was very funny."

"I didn't!" Gertrude said indignantly. "I thought it was very sad and touching."

"She thought," Roger Crassingway said to his daughter in mocking tones, "it was very sad and touching."

Kirby saw Gertrude's lips go thin; then he said: "You didn't see anything of Dendry, did you?"

"No, Dad. I thought he wasn't coming until later."

He glanced at Gertrude. "When Dendry comes, I don't want him sidetracked. I am perfectly capable of talking to him."

"When he comes," Gertrude said amiably, "I'll bring him here at once."

BRENT came into the room, seeming to glide.

"Shall I serve dinner, madam?" he asked.

"Yes, Brent."

When he had gone, Gertrude said to Kirby: "I must warn you, my dear, that Brent is not much of a cook. We're having a sort of lap supper. If you're awfully hungry, we'll just open more cans."

"She is never hungry," Roger Crassingway stated. "Looking back over the years, the clearest picture in my album of memory is of Kirby pushing a hardly-touched plate away from her."

It seemed to Kirby that his voice was thick and uncertain. The vague look in his eyes kept returning, and she had the impression that he was trying hard to concentrate, but that his thoughts kept slipping away.

What, she wondered, were his real thoughts? It occurred to her that she had known this man for twenty-two years, yet she had never really known him. He had never told her about himself, his work, his plans, his dreams.

To the American public, Roger Crassingway was a mystical figure—a fabulous man who labored in fantastic laboratories. Kirby suspected that he loved the public's attitude, and fostered it. Typical was the statement he had issued to the press from this very bed after his accident. A high priest of esoteric research had emerged just long enough from his Shangri-la to assure the awed and adoring multitude that he was not seriously hurt and would soon return to his labors in the temple.

His eyes had sharpened. "Did you think you saw someone at the old ranch-house?"

Kirby hesitated. She thought that Gertrude was watching her very alertly. She couldn't see her stepmother's eyes, because the light was behind her.

"No," said Kirby.

"Why did you ask if someone was using it?" her father persisted.

"I was thinking about your accident. It happened near there, didn't it?"

"Must we discuss it again?" Gertrude said with a touch of annoyance.

"Well, after all," he answered, "I promised Kirby I would tell her all about it. You see, Kirby, Gertrude says that if I persist in saying that a mysterious horseman overtook me and beat me up—"

"Is that what you claim?" Kirby interrupted.

"I never claim anything I can't prove," he answered. "I have a scientific, analytical mind, so the news-magazines say, and I never make claims that are not based on demonstrable fact. In this case, demonstrable fact is lacking."

He was talking in the sardonic tone that Kirby hated so. Gertrude was still sipping her drink, with her head averted, as if she were angry or bored.

Poor Gertrude! Kirby knew just how she felt. She herself had been exposed to that sardonic tone so many years that she was case-hardened to it. She wondered, as she so often did, if it was her fault, even partly. It was as if he resented her very existence.

Kirby had gone all over this when she was in her early teens. She had decided then that she had been an unwelcome accident. She knew that he had been desperately in love with her mother. She had guessed that she was the unpremeditated result. Perhaps he hadn't even wanted a child.

His scorn could still make her bitter, but the greatest bitterness was past. Kirby knew now that she was by nature affectionate and demonstrative. His aloofness, his indifference had therefore been doubly cruel. The greatest envy she had ever known was aroused by the girls she had known in boarding-school, who had babbled about their fathers—men who were warm and sweet and kind and *interested*.

His indifference and his scorn had dammed up all her lovingness and, she knew, had made her a near-neurotic.

"Is it any wonder," she wearily asked herself, "I'm so cruel to all men?"

"Gertrude," her father explained in that sardonic tone, "has the theory that if a horseman overtook me and beat me up, it was to avenge some ancient wrong."

"Roger!" Gertrude said reproachfully.

He raised his eyebrows with an air of mock surprise. "But, my dear, I'm sure Kirby will be interested. It has the fine, rich odor of scandal. . . . Won't you, Kirby?"

"I wish," Kirby answered in a flat voice, "you'd stop using that tone. I get awfully tired of it."

"Very well! I shall use the tone with which I address boards of directors—my unctuous tone. Gertrude's theory is that I was beaten up by a mysterious horseman for some unpardonable wrong I committed against his innocent young sister many years ago."

"I only said that to stop you from telling that ridiculous story!" Gertrude cried.

"It's my story," Roger Crassingway said gravely, "and I refuse to let you call it ridiculous. Besides, I promised Kirby."

As a small girl, Kirby had wriggled in misery when he had used this bantering tone. Why, she wondered, had she tried so hard all of her life—was still willing to try—to win this man's affection? What did it really matter?

She recalled one of her old dreams—that he would marry again and that she would have brothers and sisters. Later, she had wished that he would adopt several children so that she wouldn't be so lonely. But she had never voiced these wishes.

"I'D gone for a ride alone—as usual—after an early supper," her father was saying. "I was riding the black mare—Negra. We went up the wash. It was just dusk, just turning dark. As I approached the old ranch-house, I suddenly heard the strains of far-off music. It seemed to come from the treetops—a symphony with voices. Then I heard the jingling of bells. And suddenly ahead, in the darkness, I saw the gossamer girl and her gossamer mother. There they were, as clear as clear, standing side by side, and each of them was holding a rattlesnake by the tail and waving it at me."

The corners of Kirby's mouth dipped down. He was in one of his worst jeering moods.

"And then," Kirby said, "a golden angel came sliding down a tight wire on roller skates and banged you on the head with a harp."

He stared at her. "Not at all, Kirby." His eyes lost their sardonic glow. "I distinctly heard hoofbeats in the wash behind me. Next thing I knew, I was in a room with three men, with handkerchiefs over their faces."

"What kind of room?" Kirby interrupted.

"It was very vague. Their faces swam around as if they were in a cloud. Next thing I remembered, I was lying on the ground near my horse. Negra was standing there, as if nothing had happened."

GERTRUDE made an impatient clicking sound with her lips. Roger Crassingway glanced at her drolly, and Kirby did not know whether or not he was telling what he believed was the truth.

"So I got back on Negra," her father went on, "with some very curious impressions. One was that I smelled chloroform. Another was that there was a strange substance wedged in between several of my teeth. I picked it out next day. It was pale pinkish lavender stuff. It looked to me like dental wax."

Gertrude sighed. "It was pebbles," she said, as if she were again nearing the end of her patience. "We've been all over that, Roger. Why do you keep insisting it was dental wax? That wash is covered with pinkish lavender pebbles that have washed down from the mesa. You had a mouthful of them."

"Where are they?" he persisted.

"I don't know. What does it matter?"

Kirby's father was shaking his head. His eyes gleamed with what might or might not have been malice.

The houseman came in with a large tray on which were three dinner plates. Each plate contained a thick slice of baked ham, a baked potato and green salad. There were also plates of bread and butter.

"I will go to my grave believing my teeth were full of dental wax," Roger Crassingway said.

"Did you call in anybody?" Kirby asked.

"Call anybody!" he cried. "For days the place was swarming with sheriffs and reporters!"

"That, as usual," Gertrude put in, "is a gross exaggeration. A deputy sheriff and two bored reporters came all the way out here from Tucson and spent two hours being jeered at."

"Nevertheless," said the man in bed, "they came running. You see, Kirby, the first rumor that got out was that I had been attacked by a band of Japanese commandos."

"He started that one himself," Gertrude murmured.

"I didn't hear that one," Kirby said.

"There were others," her father went on. "Perhaps the most colorful was that international bandits had slipped over the border from Mexico intending to kidnap me and hold me for ransom. How much would you have ransomed me for, Kirby?"

"A thin little dime with maybe a big hole in it." Kirby answered. "What does Sarka say?"

"What," her father answered mockingly, "does Sarka know?"

"I'd like to question him," she said firmly.

"Very well. . . . Brent, tell Sarka to come in here."

Brent was gazing at Kirby. His small brown eyes were bold. She felt suddenly uneasy. Once again she had the feeling that she was being measured, evaluated.

"Yes sir." Brent had placed the tray on the table beside Gertrude. She gave a plate to her husband and one to Kirby. Kirby was hungry. She opened the baked potato and put a lump of butter on it.

When the houseman had left the room, she said: "Where's Jeff Bixden? Doesn't he eat his meals with you?"

"No," her father answered. "You see, this is supposed to be a honeymoon."

"I see," Kirby said dryly. "Would you prefer to have me pitch a tent in the pasture and cook my meals over a bonfire?"

Roger Crassingway smiled. "My dear girl, Gertrude told you you were very welcome."

"Does he eat in the kitchen?"

"I believe Mr. Bixden dines in regal splendor in the bungalow. I don't know. Ask Gertrude. She attends to such things."

"Who is Jeff Bixden?" Kirby asked.

"I know very little about the young man. Certain powers in Washington decided that I was being overworked and needed an assistant."

"Then you really know very little about him," Kirby said.

Her father shrugged. "Oh, I think he worked for Ford, General Motors or the Douglas aircraft people, or something. He is a brilliant young man. He is supposed to do my leg-work and my trouble-shooting. He is the best trouble-shooter I ever had. He has a solid scientific mind. I consider him a genius. Why? Are you falling in love with him?"

"I talked to him for three minutes in the corral," Kirby answered. "I haven't fallen in love at first sight in at least four years."

He smiled thinly. "My! You're growing up, aren't you? It seems to me I read in the papers that you're engaged to Tracey Delavett. Are you going to marry him?"

"I don't know," Kirby said.

He was eating his baked potato with great care. "You probably will. It's curious—how women prefer the playboy type."

"Why is it curious? Women like to be amused. And I'm not engaged to him. I'm only considering the feasibility of it."

He stared at her, and it seemed to Kirby that his eyes were vague again, that he was making a great effort to control his thoughts.

"I suppose," he said, "I'll be dandling a grandchild on my knee almost any day."

"I doubt it very much," Kirby said. "Besides, I wouldn't trust you. You've never had any practice."

He smiled thinly. "You might try me out with a grandson."

Kirby laughed. "That," she said, "is pure applesauce."

"Do you two," Gertrude broke in, "always get along like this?"

"If twenty-two years is 'always'," Kirby answered, "then the answer is 'Always'."

"What a delightful life," Gertrude murmured, "you must have had!"

"What," Roger Crassingway asked, "is Del doing now?"

"I believe he's changed most of his factory over to make howitzer shells," Kirby replied.

The houseman returned with another tray. This one contained a glass pitcher of milk and three glasses. He was followed into the room by the stableman. Sarka grinned at Kirby and said, "Yes, Mr. Crassingway? You wanted me?" insolently.

ROGER CRASSINGWAY waved his fork. "My daughter wants to ask you some questions."

The big blond man had his hands on his hips. His murky eyes, half-lidded, seemed to shimmer as he stared at her.

"On the night when my father had that accident," Kirby said, "did you look Negra over afterward?"

"Yes, Miss Crassingway."

"Did you find anything to indicate that she had fallen?"

"Yes, Miss Crassingway. The hair was scraped off on a spot on the left knee, and the shoulder on that side looked like it had scraped along on the sand."

"Is that spot healed?"

"Not quite, Miss Crassingway."

"Did she limp?"

"Well, she favored that leg for a couple of days, but she's all right now. Mr. Bixden's been riding her. He asked me to saddle her for him this evening—and Goldie for you. I was just gonna saddle 'em."

The stableman, with his eyes still half-lidded, was still grinning at her insolently.

"Very well," she said curtly. "Tell Mr. Bixden I'll be along in a few minutes."

"Yes, Miss Crassingway."

When he and Brent had gone, Kirby said: "Well, Dad, it looks as if you'd better stick to your symphonic music—with voices. When you recovered consciousness, was Negra standing to your right or was she off to your left?"

"I happened to be lying face down, with my head upstream. Negra was off to my right."

"Then you must have gone off over her head when she stumbled—off to the left—and skidded on your face along those stones. It all seems to work out. Negra just picked herself up and stood there like the well-trained cow pony she is. It seems to me it explains everything. Were the reins on the horn—or dangling?"

"Dangling."

"They would naturally have been," Kirby said rather crisply. "I'm afraid your horseman was headless—and horseless."

"Yes," her father said in a dry voice. "You've convinced me that I imagined the whole thing."

That settled it, or should have settled it, and if there was a healing sore on Negra's left knee, that would affirm it. Yet the feeling lingered that nothing was settled, that something was wrong. She had sensed it again in Brent, and again in Sarka, and the very casualness with which Gertrude had been watching her all along had again made her uneasy and suspicious. Gertrude had been sitting all this time with her back to the light, so that Kirby could not see her eyes, but she could not forget their cold golden alertness.

"So you're going riding with Jeff Bixden," her father said.

"Yes."

"He must have worked pretty rapidly in those three minutes. Or were you doing the work?"

"We were both working like mad," Kirby answered.

"Ah," he said, "how worth while everything would be if I thought I'd brought love into your life!"

In spite of his derisive tone, in spite of herself, Kirby's cheeks burned. "Yes," she retorted. "It would be the first time you'd brought it into my life in any form, wouldn't it?"

CHAPTER 4

SARKA was waiting for her in the stable. In the darkness, relieved only by a single yellowish light hanging from a joist, he looked big and menacing. He wasn't grinning, and she sensed his smoldering surliness.

He led the black mare out of her stall and under the light. Kirby, wishing that Jeff Bixden would hurry, bent down to look at Negra's knee. She unclipped the flashlight from her belt and flashed it on. There was a healing scar on the left knee. It was round, the size of a half-dollar, and pink and clean from the ointment which Sarka had evidently used.

She became aware that Sarka had moved, so that he was standing close beside her. As he bent down, his shoulder touched hers, and she could feel the heat of it through her shirt.

"I used liniment and salve," he said in a low, heavy voice. "Miss Crassingway, why don't you like me? I'm a pretty good guy, and we ought to be friends. There's a whole lot of things we could do together. And I'm a lonesome kind of fellow."

He had turned his head, and she could feel his breath hot against her ear. His shoulder, still pressing against hers, gave a lurch and threw her off balance. Before she could recover, he threw his arm about her shoulder. His hand slid down her arm and pinned it against her side.

KIRBY jumped up, twisting herself away. The black mare threw up her head and backed away.

"Miss Crassingway—" Sarka began.

She said with cold fury: "If you can't behave yourself, roll up your pack and go to town." That was an almost forgotten expression which she had once heard a rancher use to dismiss a drunken cowboy.

"Miss Crassingway, I didn't mean anything. I just lost my balance."

His eyes were bloodshot, and his lower lip, protruding and ugly, was wet. His face was red, and veins stood out knottily on his flushed brown forehead.

"You'd better learn to keep your balance," Kirby said.

He was taking quick breaths, and his chest was heaving. He stood between her and the door. His long thick arms were bowed out from his sides, and his thick fingers were bent into hooks. She was sure that he was about to lose control of himself, that in a moment he would leap at her.

"Sarka!" she said warningly.

Then she heard footfalls in the gravel outside the stable, and she called: "Mr. Bixden!"

"Hullo!" he answered.

Sarka said hastily, in a heavy whisper: "Miss Crassingway, I'm sorry I forgot myself. It won't happen again, so help me God!"

She ignored him. She walked past him and said blithely: "I think the horses are ready."

Jeff Bixden met her in the doorway. He wore a fuzzy blue sweater, tan frontier pants and new-looking tan boots.

"Your horses are ready, Miss Crassingway," Sarka said.

"Thank you, Sarka," she said pleasantly. She had had other experiences with the Sarkas of this world. The unbridled impulses of some men no longer horrified her. She detested them for what they were, but their demonstrations didn't upset her for long.

Jeff Bixden was looking at her as if he were taking up where he had left off earlier this evening. He seemed self-conscious, and his smile was bashful. Gazing up at him, smiling, Kirby reaffirmed many of her earlier impressions of this tall, slender, dark young man.

She sensed in him, as she had earlier, a man of simplicity and honesty. The light behind her gave her a better glimpse of his eyes. They were steady and very alert—the kind of brown eyes that change from soft to hard, from gentle to cruel with a thought. There was certainly a trace of cruelty in him, and that intrigued her.

She was hardly aware that Sarka was taking the horses outside. She was wholly lost in Jeff Bixden, gazing up at him, watching the play of his smile.

"The moon will be up soon," he said.

"Yes," said Kirby.

How easily, she reflected, the wrong woman might ruin the career, the life, of this man! What a challenge he constituted! What a challenge, Kirby meant, and what a charge—for the right woman. She saw it in a swift *montage* of bright and dismaying glimpses. She tried to see herself attending to the everyday details of his active life, smoothing the way, as the right woman would, for the unhampered growth of what genius he possessed.

How dull, she decided, it would be to become a handmaiden to genius! She saw herself in the part, and she recoiled from it. The glimpse into a future so distasteful was, she realized, a test for selfishness. She was not cut out to be his handmaiden.

She would probably marry a man like Tracy Delavett. Del adored her. He might adore her indefinitely. Life with Del would be amusing. It mightn't be secure, but Kirby was not particularly interested in security. She wanted to be adored, and she wanted amusement.

They went outside and got on their horses.

"Where are we going?" Kirby asked.

"Up the wash a little way. We take a trail off through a little cañon on the left."

Kirby knew every inch of the trail. She had been over it countless times. She wanted to hear him talk. She wanted to know everything about him. She had almost decided to be merciful with him.

He had never, he said, been in the desert before. She had guessed that from his boots.

"I've touched at Phœnix and Tucson on flights to and from the West Coast," he said, "but I've never really been in the desert. I'm crazy about it. After the war, I'm going to have a ranch out here."

She smiled dimly. Many Easterners, when they first came to southern Arizona, said that. Some of them meant it. Many of the ranches in this region were owned by Easterners who had come for a visit and had stayed. If you loved this country as she did, it wasn't hard to understand.

"It's going to be a nice place to spend the reconstruction period," Jeff Bixden said, in his rich, deep voice. "I'm planning to build a laboratory and do a lot of research work. I have some ideas for plastics, but I'm too busy for them now. Plastics will be the big thing after this war."

"I'm sure they will," Kirby murmured. She saw herself taking care of his house, taking care of him, encouraging him when those wonderful experiments went haywire. It had a romantic flavor, but she was too wise. This passionate young scientist would be too engrossed with his test-tubes to spend much of himself on his handmaiden.

"We turn left here," he said.

She had always loved this little cañon, and the trail running out of it to a butte which commanded a breath-taking view of this beautiful country.

A moon almost full was rising over the chrome-yellow mountains—now black cardboard mountains—behind them. It was as yellow and bright as if it were rising from a gold wash.

They climbed to the top and dismounted, tethering their horses to a mesquite bush. They stood together and looked into and across the great valley. Beyond it were ranges, some pink, some yellow, some black as iron. It was filled with a powdery lavender light, and it was breathless and as empty and dry as the moon. The beauty and the emptiness of this valley always filled Kirby with sadness and longing. She believed that here was the ultimate in the charm of loneliness.

Jeff Bixden's elbow was touching hers. She wondered just how much time he would waste, and what his preliminary move would be. She heard him sigh.

"Kirby," he said, "I want to warn you I am falling in love with you."

She was a little disappointed, but not surprised. She had heard men like him say it before, in just that impulsive, spontaneous way. It was the only line they had. It was certainly the quickest of all approaches to what they wanted, which was to get you in their arms. She had been bowled over by that approach when she was seventeen, but not since.

She didn't look around at him. Forty miles away, at the northern end of the valley, an airway beacon was flashing. She kept on looking at it.

She knew that Jeff Bixden was stirred up, because she had used all her tricks to stir him up. She felt a little guilty.

"Jeff," she said gently, "how old are you?"

"Thirty. And you were twenty-two on the fifteenth of last September. Kirby, you can't realize what your coming here has meant to me. You see, I've known you for quite a long time."

She could almost hear his heart beating in his breath.

"Have you?" she said.

He laughed nervously. "Yes! You'd be surprised how well I know you—how much I know about you. Last night, when I heard you were coming, I could hardly sleep. I want to tell you about it. I suppose I should be more tactful and break it more gently. The trouble is—now that I've got you alone up here—I can't sort it out. I had a nice speech all ready, but I forget how it went. I want to say—"

Kirby was still watching the blinking beacon at the end of the valley.

"Say it," she encouraged him.

"You won't feel this way about it, I suppose," he said. "The way I feel is that fate finally has brought us together. I'm in love with you. There's something special about you, Kirby. There's something about you that almost brings tears into my eyes. I have the feeling that I want to protect you and defend you and do things for you."

Turning, she looked up at him. His face was in the shadow of his hat.

"Do you?" she said softly. She was puzzled.

"Yes," he said. "The first time I saw you, there wasn't the slightest doubt."

"When was that?"

"Winter before last, in a New York theater. You were seeing 'Life with Father.' There were six of you—two other girls and three men. Afterward, I followed you to the Stork. I sat at the bar and watched you dance."

Kirby tried to recall that evening. One of the men, an English aviator, had intrigued her, and they had done a lot of shows and night-clubs. She had heard that he had been killed in Singapore.

"I fell head over heels in love with you," Jeff Bixden said. "You know now how close you came to being accosted by a stranger that night. But I kept it bottled up. I'm not doing so well now, am I?"

He swayed a little toward her. She expected him to grab her. She was prepared for it. She wanted to feel his strength. She knew just how long she would permit that embrace to last.

He reached for her hand and folded it in his. His hand was strong and warm.

"Shall I tell you some more?"

"This is all rather staggering, Jeff." Most men grabbed first, then did their explaining afterward—lucidly, or incoherently, or romantically, or however. When a man like Jeff mentioned love, he meant marriage.

"I know I'm bungling this," Jeff said. "I'm too full of it. Ever since that night, you haven't been out of my mind. I've thought about you and dreamed about you. But I never dreamed I'd have the luck to get you off alone in a place like this."

"I was trying my best to look glamorous that night because of one of the men who was along. I don't suppose that ever occurred to you."

"What difference does it make?"

"All right," she said. "Do you want me to be honest? I don't see this for dust, Jeff. I'm the kind of person who wouldn't do you anything but harm. You're a special person. You need a special kind of person."

Jeff was softly laughing. "You're wonderful," he said. "You're perfect! And—what do you really know about me? Wait a while! Wait till you get to know me!"

"But I do know you."

He laughed again. "How could you? You didn't know until a couple hours ago that I existed!"

"That isn't quite true," Kirby said. "In a way, I've known you a long time. Your face and your attitude tell an awful lot about you, Jeff. You're a very nice person. You're a sweet, thoughtful person. Let me see if I can't tell you your history. You're from some place like Louisiana or Oklahoma."

"Who told you?"

"Your accent. You came from an awfully nice family who loved you very much. That's in your attitude. They

were fairly well to do. I know that, because you have that kind of self-confidence. You've had a very fine scientific education, and that means you went to one of the best technical schools. My guess is M.I.T. or Cal. Tech."

"This," Jeff said, "is very interesting; and almost correct."

"You have the scientific type of mind," Kirby went on, "or you wouldn't have done as well as you have, and you therefore have the scientific type of temperament. Dad says you're a genius. I've spent twenty-two years with the scientific temperament. You're entirely different from Dad. His is the cold scientific type. Yours is the passionate scientific type. But all scientists run pretty true to form."

He chuckled. "Doesn't the passionate neutralize the scientific?"

"No. You're still scientific, and you still need a special type of person."

"Your type, Kirby."

"No. I'm the other type of person. I'm like my mother. Do you know what happened to her?"

"I know what the papers said. I looked it up."

"So did I," said Kirby. "I've looked it up many times. I was two when it happened, and for a good many years I didn't understand. The papers didn't tell the story. The truth was that Dad was spending days, nights and holidays in a laboratory—and Mother was a frivolous person. She loved all the things he didn't have time for. So she left him and married a man who specialized in all those things."

"Did he make her happy?"

"I don't know. I don't remember her at all. All I know is that I'm just like her."

"Are you?" Jeff said. "I wonder. In fact, I've wondered about it a lot."

"You can stop wondering. I am."

"It's my turn now," said Jeff firmly. "You've analyzed me pretty well. Now let me try it: You are unhappy, and you're lonesome. You're bitter and you're gun-shy. You're afraid to fall in love."

Kirby felt a quickening in all her nerves. "Why?" she said sharply.

"Because you're doing all the things that frightened, unhappy girls do. Why did you jump from one school to another so often? Why are you constantly traveling? Why do you waste your time night-club hopping?"

"That," Kirby answered, "is where we do not see eye to eye. I say it's fun to move about. You say it isn't—because you disapprove of it. Half the people in the world would be on the go constantly if they weren't tied down by jobs or obligations."

"Are you saying," Jeff broke in, "that scientists are stick-in-the-muds?"

"Primarily!"

"I know botanists and biologists," said Jeff, "who go scuttling all over the world looking for stuff. I know one ichthyologist who—"

"I'm speaking generally. In your bright lexicon, there is no such word as *aimless*. You have the scientific mind. You relentlessly pursue an idea until you catch up with it—in a lab. I wouldn't give two cents a carload for the scientific attitude. Dad tells me with great pride that you scientists are realists. So I'll just order vanilla. I'll take music and poetry and art, the good and the bad, and fun where I can find it. I'd like to look forward to a postwar world run by artists, musicians and poets—because there isn't any beauty or whimsicality or charm in the world any more. That makes me, so Dad says, a sissy."

"I love beauty," Jeff said. "I love you. After the war, the world will swing away from realism. We've got to be scientific just a little longer. You can't lick Hitler with a Beethoven symphony or an Edna St. Vincent Millay sonnet."

"Scientists!" Kirby said with scorn. "Efficiency experts! Research workers! I've seen men in labs who were so absorbed in their work that they'd forgotten people are human!"

"I," said Jeff, "think that people are more fun than anybody else."

"And I," said Kirby, "have seen these scientists—these gnomes—try to snap out of it. It was pathetic and appalling. Scientists trying to be human! Scientists at play! You flounder pitifully, or you get drunk and have crying jags, or grow more and more and more scientific!"

"That," said Jeff, "is a ghoulish picture, but it isn't a picture of me."

"Wait ten years!"

"Wait fifty," he said cheerfully. "I love to play. I'd rather be silly than right. I am an ideal companion. When I get tight, I play a piano like an angel and become as happy as a termite in a lumber yard. Do you prefer Brahms or Gershwin?"

"Wait," Kirby said, "until you get into those plastics problems!"

"Bixden the playboy and Bixden the scientist are two different men. At research work, I'll grant I'm as single-minded as a mongoose on the prowl for a cobra—but I don't carry my work into the home. I relax and have fun. . . . Anyhow, we were talking about you. We were saying you resemble your mother—but only to a point."

"Did you know her?" Kirby said sharply.

"I looked up enough pictures of her to know her. Maybe she was frivolous. Maybe the fault was your father's. What you aren't granting is that there are scientists and scientists. Whatever is behind it, you're convinced that you are your mother. The truth is—you don't know yourself."

"That's true of anybody," Kirby replied. "It's true of you as well as of me. We kid ourselves."

"That's my point," said Jeff. "You claim that you see me more truly than I see myself. It works the other way, too. I think we would be wonderful for each other. You would stop me from turning into a dry-as-dust scientist—even if I were headed that way, which I'm not. And I'm pretty sure I would make you a happy woman. I think we would have a marvelous, exciting life."

Listening to his deep voice, sensing his strength and his controlled feeling, Kirby suddenly felt a familiar panic. She decided to test it.

She said: "Kiss me, Jeff."

He had been holding her hand. He promptly dropped it, reached out with both hands and pulled her against him so hard that she gasped. He was stronger than she had guessed. He was kissing her on the mouth with a prolonged and stirring fervor. This man at least knew how to kiss a girl. Kirby felt a sudden reckless response. The insistence of his kiss sent a thrill flaming through her.

Then the panic, which she had momentarily lost, began again. It started as a creeping feeling in her breast and it traveled through her in slow, icy waves. His arms holding her so close were like a trap, and his lips against hers were shutting off her breath and smothering her.

Suddenly frantic, she pushed him away with all the strength in her arms. Panting, she looked into his face that was shaded by his wide-brimmed hat. She could not see his eyes but she could see that he was trembling as much as she was.

"Kirby," he whispered, and started toward her.

"Keep away from me!" she panted.

"But why did you ask me to do that?"

"I don't know." The feeling of panic persisted. It was the same feeling that came over her in the dark. It was something that went crawling and twisting along her nerves, turning her cold and weak and sick.

"Does it prove anything?"

"No," Kirby answered. "It doesn't mean a thing."

"You were frightened," he said. "You ought to know better than that."

"It isn't that. Jeff, this isn't fair to you. I wish you would try to understand. I am not the fair kind. To me, this is nothing but a game. Every man who makes love to me I treat this way. I can't help it. I'm cruel."

"You have a right." Jeff said, "to reject men as fast as they come along—until you find the right one."

"You don't even know what I'm talking about," Kirby said. "You're honest. I'm not. I'm not playing fair, because I can't. That's more warning than I usually give men."

"Every minute," said Jeff, "I love you more and more. I thought it wasn't possible. I thought I was so saturated with you that it couldn't be any worse. Seeing you standing there, hearing your voice—"

"I know," Kirby interrupted. "I can't do this to you."

"No," he said. "I wasn't going to say that. You have a right to do anything you want. I asked for it. It's worse than that. Now that I finally know you, I won't be able to bear having you out of my sight. You're really in my blood, Kirby. I'm going to have you if I have to half-kill you. That's my platform."

"Yes," she said, "you don't mince your words. That's the scientific attitude. As Dad said awhile ago, 'I never make claims that are not based on demonstrable fact.' "

JEFF chuckled. "Stop sounding so bitter. You're making what I have to say next pretty difficult."

A curious flatness in his voice made her look sharply at the shadow under the broad brim of his hat. "What is it?"

"You're going to pack up and go back to Volonne tomorrow."

Her mouth was filled with an electrical taste. She started to laugh, but it was purely a nervous reflex. "Really?" she drawled. "I thought you couldn't bear me out of your sight."

"I can't," he said dryly. "That's what makes it so difficult."

"So you're sending me home."

"Yes, Kirby. Tomorrow. I'll take you into Tucson. I'll try to get you a plane reservation."

"Well!" Kirby said breathlessly. "This is terribly interesting. I am in your blood. You are saturated with me. You can't bear me out of your sight. So you're packing me up and sending me home. Why?"

"Isn't it pretty obvious? Your father came out here for a honeymoon."

"What's obvious about it? My father had a serious accident. Did he tell you," she demanded, suddenly suspicious, "that he didn't want me around?"

"No. It wasn't necessary. No man on his honeymoon wants his grown daughter around. And it isn't as simple as it looks."

"No," Kirby said huskily. "It seldom is, is it?"

"Please don't be angry. This is hard to say, but I want you to understand. You know your father much better than I do—and much better than his wife does."

"So Gertrude's in this."

"Naturally, she's in it. I feel terribly sorry for her. I don't think she knew what she was getting into. You said yourself that your father is difficult. Even without that accident, he was difficult."

"Yes," Kirby said.

"Figuring out how to get along with a man of his temperament is a hard enough job for any woman. To be perfectly honest with you, I think your popping up here is bad."

"But your popping up here is all right," Kirby said softly.

"It's entirely different. I'm an outsider. I'm here strictly on war business. You'll notice that I'm not living in the house, and you'll notice that I'm not having any of my meals in the house."

"Yes," Kirby said, "I noticed that. You're just here trouble-shooting."

"Exactly."

"I see. The trouble-shooter is trouble-shooting the trouble-maker. . . . Jeff, you are going against your nature. You are not an artful liar. Why do you really want me out of the way?"

"I told you."

"That," she said shrewdly, "is not the real reason. What's going on here?"

He said, with an air of surprise: "I don't know what you're talking about."

"Oh, dear," Kirby said. "Something is going on here—something sly and wrong. There is something awfully funny about that hallucination Dad had—the horseman galloping up that wash behind him, then those three masked men in a room."

Jeff's wide-brimmed hat was swinging from side to side as he firmly shook his head. "He was thrown from that horse and knocked out. The mysterious horseman and the three masked men was strictly a piece of calculated romancing."

"This," said Kirby, "is terribly interesting. I've had another theory ever since I walked into that house this afternoon. My understanding is that Dad is doing some secret work which may have a vital effect on the war. That makes him pretty important, doesn't it?"

"Yes," he said softly. "So what?"

"I don't quite know," Kirby said thoughtfully. "But lots of strange things must be happening in the country. Up until the minute war was declared, there were lots of people who didn't want us to go in. Isn't that true?"

"Yes. Go on."

"There were lots of friends of the Axis who, weren't *all* arrested. They didn't *all* get caught—or even suspected. Aren't some of them going quietly about whatever they want to do?"

"Undoubtedly. But how does that concern your father?"

"It's probably my morbid imagination," Kirby said dryly, "but Brent the houseman and Sarka the stableman impress me as being just a bit on the sinister side. I'm not at all satisfied that I've heard the truth about Dad's accident. I think something fishy is going on."

Jeff laughed, and it seemed to her that he sounded nervous. "Such as what?"

"I don't know. But Dad's working at something awfully big, which, if he gets it, may give enough advantage to our armed forces to be an important factor toward winning the war. He knows something that the enemy would love to know." She hesitated.

"Lots of people," said Jeff, "know things that the enemy would love to know." He was trying to sound indulgent, as men do when they discuss with women subjects of which women are supposed to be ignorant; but beneath his affected indulgence she heard the throb of excitement—excitement out of proportion to the cause. The same sense, which had warned her so many times this evening, told her that something was wrong, that this man who was trying to be smooth and disarming was merely being glib.

"Did anybody," she asked, "check up on Brent and Sarka?"

"No," he said. "Why should they? They're quite all right. You're accustomed to well-trained servants, and these men are a bit clumsy."

"Yes," Kirby agreed, "a bit clumsy. And did anybody check up on these mysterious rumors?"

"Washington," he answered, "breeds them."

"These," Kirby said softly, "were bred right here."

"I have it on good authority that your father made them up himself."

"Whose?"

"Your father virtually admitted it himself! He has a pretty sly sense of humor. And as much as he claims to hate publicity, he loves it."

KIRBY recalled that Gertrude had accused her father of starting those rumors, and that he hadn't denied it.

"Were you satisfied with the investigation that was made?"

"Yes," he said. "We came to the conclusion that he hadn't even had the hallucination."

"What are you saying?" Kirby said huskily.

He was studying her face in the moonlight. "Kirby, look at it this way: Your father, at the age of fifty-five, after a life devoted to science, turns romantic. At least, he unexpectedly marries an attractive woman who had become obliged to work for a living. He wants to appear romantic in her eyes. Wouldn't he, naturally?"

"Go on," said Kirby.

"So he goes riding, takes a nasty spill, lands on his face and carves himself up pretty badly. He has been seeing himself in a romantic light; so, when he reaches home, does he tell his bride he took an ignominious spill? Not much! He spins a romantic yarn about being attacked by a mysterious horseman."

"The trouble is, Dad wouldn't do such a thing."

"How," Jeff asked, "do you know what a fifty-five-year-old man in love will do?"

"I don't," said Kirby. "I'm going on other evidence."

"What other evidence are you talking about?"

"Let's skip it," Kirby answered. "Let's get back to my being a poisonous influence."

"I'm sorry you're angry," Jeff said sadly. "I was hoping you'd see the advisability of it. Everybody knows you've never got along very well with your father. I'm only saying —give the poor guy a break."

Kirby was watching the moon. The luminous edge of a cloud was skimming close to it. She saw that clouds were rolling up over the mountains in the west. When clouds came from that direction, it usually meant there was bad weather in California. A light cold breeze had sprung up.

"I'll take you into Tucson first thing in the morning, and get you out on the first plane."

"Thank you," Kirby said calmly. "I'm still traveling under my own power and making up my own mind. Shall we go back?"

"I'm sorry you're angry," Jeff said again. "I'm sorry I had to bring this up. More than anything in the world, I want you to stay. It's going to kill me to have you go."

"I know," Kirby said brightly. "I'm in your blood."

She wasn't feeling as bitter as she sounded, but she wanted Jeff to think she was. She was suddenly more suspicious of him than of any of the others. What she had sensed, first in Gertrude, then in Brent and Sarka, she was sharply aware of in this tall dark romantic-eyed young man.

She realized that she had innocently underestimated him. His whole approach had been so guileless, so disarming. For just a moment, when he had first said in that impassioned juvenile way, "Kirby, I am falling in love with you," she had felt a fluttering of doubt, of suspicion. But he had then proceeded capably to put it at rest.

As Kirby swung into her saddle, her mind was backtracking. She could prove nothing; only a small unenlightening part of the complete picture was visible. All of them, she was sure, were taking part in a conspiracy that concerned her father.

As for the handsome young man with the beautiful deep voice riding along the trail behind her, she acknowledged that she had no facts on which to base her suspicions. He was a brilliant young scientist who had been selected to help her father. Who had influenced the selection? Gertrude?

Who, after all, was Gertrude? She was, on the surface, an attractive, capable woman with a warm voice and a maternal attitude—and eyes as cold and calculating as a parrot's. Most people, sincerely trying to be friendly, quickly managed to let you know something about their backgrounds. In their several contacts, Gertrude had dropped not one self-revealing hint.

Gertrude was open at least to the suspicion of having married Roger Crassingway for his power and his wealth. But if she had, why was a conspiracy of any kind necessary now?

Tomorrow, Kirby decided, she would try to make him talk. She would question the doctor who had attended him. She would make inquiries everywhere she could.

The lights of No Le Hace twinkled with diamond-clear sharpness across the icy desert air.

Kirby suddenly felt cold and miserable and lost.

CHAPTER 5

SARKA was waiting in the corral when they rode in. Kirby glanced at Jeff as she dismounted. He had said nothing since they had left the butte. He looked sullen, and his eyes were evasive.

She said, "Good night, Jeff," cheerfully and started toward the house. She did not hear his answer, but before she reached the gate she heard the sudden low murmur of the two men's voices. . . .

Her bedside light had been turned on. Her bed was turned down, and a nightgown and dressing-gown and mules were laid out. She sat down on the bed and pressed her palms to her temples. It hadn't been Brent, she was sure. Gertrude had come in here out of the goodness of her heart, had turned down her bed and laid out her things.

It was, as the bowl of marigolds had been, a small but touching act of thoughtfulness.

She had been willing to believe—had convinced herself a moment ago—that Gertrude and Brent and Sarka and, lastly, the romantically handsome Jeff Bixden, were partners in some sinister machination with Gertrude at the throttle and her father as the intended victim.

Was there, she asked herself, truth in any of it, or was she doing all of these people a great injustice? She went back over the events of the evening. She was willing to believe that she had herself created a mood of fear, that she had made herself the victim of morbid imaginings. Yet she could not shake off her conviction that something in this house was wrong, and she could not dismiss Gertrude's cold, watchful eyes, or the houseman's evaluating stare, or the stableman's murky glances. She had detected the same ominous quality in all three. Jeff Bixden was smoother. He had beguiled her into deciding that he was the only innocent one of the lot. And eventually he had betrayed himself.

She was beginning to realize how deep her disappointment went. She had really begun to believe, on the ride, that she had met, in Jeff Bixden, a man who was quite special. His mixture of shyness and ardor had delighted her. She had wanted to be in his arms, at least experimentally. She had been receptive and hardly at all detached, and that was an achievement!

Kirby carried her speculations further. Provided that events had followed a happier course, would Jeff, with all his ardor, have had the power, tomorrow, or the day after, to overcome the panic which had terminated that kiss? Would it have been possible for her to marry Jeff, not in fear and reluctance, but with confidence and gladness?

Kirby saw her face in the dressing-table mirror. It was wan and big-eyed.

There was a knock at her door. Kirby sat up straight and stared at it. She got up and unlocked and opened her door.

Gertrude stood in the hall with a Mexican enameled tray in her hands. It held a small blue bowl of apples and oranges, a vacuum jug, a cup and saucer and a fruit-knife.

She was in a dressing-gown and mules. She gazed at Kirby with an uncertain smile.

"I heard you come in," she said apologetically. "I thought you might be a little hungry after your ride. Do you like hot chocolate?"

Kirby felt her face turn hot. She realized that in her thoughts she had been doing this woman a great injustice. Gertrude desired nothing but her friendship. She was, under her air of brisk capability, a shy person. The truth, Kirby supposed, was that Gertrude knew how she felt, how lonely and unhappy she was, and was in these little ways trying to comfort her.

Kirby kissed her impulsively on the cheek. She took the tray and said: "Come in and talk to me. You're an angel. I adore hot chocolate!"

She placed the tray under the electric lamp on her bedside table. Gertrude came in and sat down on the edge of the bed. She still had an air of shyness and uncertainty. Her face was flushed, and her lavender dressing gown softened its lines.

The thick conical lampshade cast a shadow over the upper part of her face, so that Kirby could not see her eyes, but she was sure they were not cold and alert and predatory. They couldn't be! Gertrude had brought into this room an atmosphere of normality. Her very warmth was steadying, and Kirby realized how far her imagination had led her astray, how wrong she had been in giving sinister values to Gertrude and Brent and Sarka—and Jeff Bixden.

How nicely all her doubts and anxieties were cleared up! A bowl of fruit and a jug of hot chocolate on an enameled Mexican tray—and Gertrude sitting there with her shy smile! It reminded Kirby of a chemical experiment in school, when a single drop of some chemical in a beaker filled with a cloudy liquid had magically turned the liquid crystal clear.

She decided to talk things over frankly with Gertrude.

"If Gertrude," she thought, "says I'm throwing monkey-wrenches into the honeymoon, I'll go. If she insists on my staying, I'll be very tactful with Dad. I won't make trouble."

"I may be up before you are," Gertrude was saying. "I'd really like to try Susannah, if you don't mind—and if you think she isn't too much for me."

Kirby poured herself a cup of hot chocolate. "She isn't, and I'd adore having you ride her. She likes a light rein. If you take her up the wash, just let her have her head, especially when you go up that little rise this side of the old ranch-house. She loves to tear up that little rise."

She felt so grateful to Gertrude for coming in and sitting there so shyly that she wanted to hug her. Her last doubt was gone. Her mind drifted happily along. There would be other moonlit nights on other hilltops. She was a little surprised that tonight's hilltop left her feeling so excited. Most men's kisses didn't reach so deep. . . .

"How is Dad?" Kirby asked. "Does my being here seem to upset him?"

"If it does, I haven't noticed it. He is now," Gertrude said ruefully, "jeering at Jeff Bixden."

In surprise, Kirby asked: "Is Jeff with him?"

"Yes. It's something about a new experiment he's planning—and Jeff isn't agreeing with him."

Kirby laughed softly. "Jeff is awfully cute for a scientist."

"He is awfully smart," Gertrude said thoughtfully, as if she were measuring her words. "I'm glad your father found him. Roger has no respect for anything but the scientific attitude, and Jeff has it. He can be a big help to Roger if Roger will let him. I think your father has two bad faults in dealing with people, although they both grow on the same bush. He won't delegate anything even to people who are perfectly capable and trustworthy, and he's terribly secretive."

Kirby laughed. "Are you just finding that out? He's so secretive that he won't let one side of his mind know what the other is thinking!" She picked up an orange and began to peel it.

"I found it out when I was working with him," Gertrude answered wryly. "Ordinarily, men of his importance delegate everything they can, and their secretaries know their innermost secrets. All he used me for was to run errands, answer the telephone and take letters of no importance. That's why his work has practically burned him out. At first I thought he didn't trust me."

"I know," Kirby said wisely. "The truth is, he doesn't trust anybody. And Jeff will last about as long as the others."

"I'm afraid so," Gertrude agreed. "Roger treats people as if they were machines. He's a maddening man to work for."

"Does he still," Kirby asked, "get people out of bed at all hours?"

"Yes. Poor Jeff! Twice in the short time he's been here, Roger has waked up at three in the morning and decided he wanted to send a message to someone in Washington. And Jeff had to drive all the way to Tucson, to catch the Senator or the General at breakfast. He loves to catch people at breakfast. The nearest telephone is at Jubilo Pringal's—sixteen miles by horseback or twenty-one by a virtually impassable desert road. But there are eight parties on the line, and Roger wants privacy. I asked him why he hadn't had a private line run in here—it would cost about ten thousand dollars but it would be worth it—and he said he wanted isolation. Isolation!"

Kirby ate a segment of orange and said: "Would you be perfectly honest if I asked you a blunt question? Jeff told me that I'd spoiled your honeymoon by coming out here. He told me that if I had any sense, I'd pack up and go back to Volonne."

Gertrude was staring at her. "How perfectly ridiculous!" she cried. "Did he really say that?"

"He said that Dad and I had never got along, and that I was a bad emotional influence, and that you had a tough enough job getting used to him without having me around. . . . I wish you'd be perfectly candid about it. I like you awfully much, Gertrude. I do know Dad's pretty difficult. And if it would help in the least if—"

"Jeff makes me furious!" Gertrude snapped. "If anyone's intruding on a honeymoon, what's he doing?"

"I reminded him of that," Kirby murmured. "He said he was an outsider—and here strictly on war business, anyway. And that he was not taking any of his meals with you and was sleeping in the bungalow. He pointed out that people on honeymoons like to be alone."

"Did he mention that on the morning after the accident—the fifth day of our honeymoon—a Senator from the East, a General in the Flying Corps and three research engineers dropped in for a conference—at Roger's invitation?"

"No."

"Did he mention that Roger is in a perfect dither over Professor Dendry's arrival tonight?"

"No."

"I think," Gertrude said dryly, "that will give you a fair idea of your father's conception of being alone on a honeymoon."

"But that isn't Jeff's point," Kirby argued. "If you have the slightest feeling that *my* being here is upsetting Dad or making things in any way more difficult for you—"

"My dear girl," Gertrude broke in in a firm voice, "you don't seem to realize how delighted I was to see you. I am being perfectly honest and perfectly selfish about it. I love having you around! I need your help! I need your advice! Roger is a problem child, and I," she finished grimly, "am going to lick the problem."

"There's nothing," Kirby said, "I wouldn't do to help."

Gertrude's golden eyes were misty. "Yes," she said. "I know. You're a grand person, Kirby, and I love you—and I'll never forgive you if you run out on me. Now—does that answer your question bluntly?"

Kirby's dark eyes were shining with affection.

"Yes, Gertrude," she said huskily.

It occurred to Kirby that only a few minutes ago she had decided that this kindly woman was the brains of some sort of conspiracy directed at her father. "I blow hot; then I

blow cold," Kirby thought. "That psychiatrist said I'm the emotionally unstable type—and won't snap out of it until I marry and settle down. It's awful, believing one thing one moment and the exact opposite the next."

"I'd like to talk to Dad about it," she said. "I'd be much more comfortable if I felt he didn't mind having me around."

"Why don't you go in and talk to him now?" Gertrude suggested.

Kirby paused in the doorway of her father's room. He was alone. He was propped up in his bed with a sheaf of papers on his knees, and a cigarette in his mouth. He was scowling with concentration. With his tumbling gray hair, his lean face with its fine dry lines, he looked—even with that patchwork of adhesive tape—the sardonic genius that he was.

Kirby said blithely: "Hi, Pop! Busy?"

He worked on for several seconds before he glanced up. He gazed at her frowningly. His eyes were vague. "No," he said. "I am lying here languidly sniffing a freshly plucked rose and thinking how much like its fragrance life is."

Kirby walked in. "Ah, the pity," she said in a flat voice. "I hoped you were busy, because I love to annoy people. I thought it would be fun to have one of our famous heart-to-heart talks."

Her father put the papers aside as she sat down on the other bed. He looked at her suspiciously.

"About what?"

She shrugged. "Oh—stuff. You and your dewy bride. And me."

She started a cigarette. Her father was watching her alertly, as if he were wary. She was unable to shake off the feeling that something was wrong. She wanted to believe that she was imagining it, but it kept coming back. It was very much like the sensation she had often experienced in a theater or a church, that someone behind her was staring at her. And when she became more and more restless and turned to look, it was always to meet a pair of staring eyes.

However, she would grant that this extra sense was misleading her now. She would gladly call it imagination and concede that when she and her father were alone, he usually seemed self-conscious and ill at ease.

THINKING of her father's womanless past, she said impulsively: "Roger, why did you marry Gertrude?"

"Why," he answered, "do two people ever marry?"

"Because they're in love."

"Well?" he asked.

"You," she said, "don't know the meaning of the word."

"All right," Roger Crassingway said, "I'll explain it."

"This ought to be good," Kirby murmured.

"It is good. It will enlighten you. It will give you a glimpse into a phase of life that you don't suspect exists—as worldly as you are. When a man reaches fifty, if he's successful, he is a monkey who has learned a trick. My trick has to do with research into the mysteries of matter. It led me into a field that might not have been practical for years; but the war suddenly made it practical—if I work out my trick. So I went to Washington. I thought I could get things done quickly, but I couldn't. But I stayed there for a while, hoping to expedite matters. I had a good deal of time on my hands; I felt bored and lost."

"But Gertrude saved you from boredom."

"Gertrude," he said, "was neither inefficient nor confused. She was a rock in a storm-tossed sea. I realized how much I needed companionship."

"Yes," Kirby said huskily. "Of course." It made her feel bleak. She had offered him her companionship for the past twenty years, and he had scorned it.

"It wasn't young love," her father said. "We realized that."

"You mean," Kirby said, "it wasn't love. Does she realize that?"

"You are being cynical," Roger Crassingway said. "And you are not entitled to cynicism until you are past forty."

"I," said Kirby, "was cynical when I was five. How do you account for that?"

The sardonic glow was in his eyes. "Some people," he answered, "have a disinclination to believe in Santa Claus at any age. You and I happen to be in that category."

"It's a bad thing," Kirby said. "It doesn't make for happiness. It doesn't make for happy marriages." She hesitated. "Your marriage isn't happy, because you don't know what love is."

"Love!" he jeered. "Is that all you can talk about?"

"A loveless marriage," Kirby answered, "won't work." She was seeing Gertrude's cold golden eyes, and thinking how all the rest of her contradicted them. She wondered if her marriage to this man might not have put that bleak look in Gertrude's eyes.

His lips were thin. "I was afraid you'd cause trouble if you came here, Kirby." He pushed himself up on one elbow. His eyes were narrow. "Have you been discussing this with Gertrude?"

"No!"

"But you came here looking for trouble!"

KIRBY felt her anger rising. It was the first time in her memory that they had met an issue head-on. Invariably they had avoided issues. Invariably they had maneuvered all around them.

"It's here, without my looking."

"Little Miss Fixit!" he jeered.

"Gertrude," Kirby said firmly, "is delighted to have me here. I asked her point-blank. I asked her if I was unwelcome, and she said I was not."

"She was being polite."

Kirby stared at him. His eyes were still narrowed, and his lips were still thin. She felt the flush of anger burning up from her chin to her ears. "I asked Gertrude to tell me bluntly how she felt about my being here. I said—"

"Oh, yes, yes, yes," he interrupted her. "You said and she said and you said! Look, Kirby: You have been avoiding me for three years. I have been married just two weeks. Be honest! Why did you decide to come catapulting back into my life?"

"I was worried about your accident."

"All right! Your worries are over. What are you doing now?"

She wanted to cry. She had not realized there were such depths of bitterness between them. But she would not give in. "Trying," she answered, "to talk something over rationally with you. Is it possible?"

"I don't believe it is. I don't believe you know how to be rational about anything. At this moment, Kirby, you are being what is known as a scheming female."

Kirby stared at him steadily as she started another cigarette. The match in her hand was shaking. She wondered if it was true—that she had deliberately come out here to start trouble. She was sure it wasn't. She had come here because she was worried about him, and because she had still hoped that they might become friends.

"I'd like to know this," Kirby said, trying to keep her voice low and calm: "You do an awful lot of kidding and an awful lot of jeering. I'm used to it. But sometimes you aren't kidding. I'd like to ask you the same question I asked Gertrude, and I'd like you to answer it as honestly as she did. Do you honestly think my being here is making trouble in any way for your marriage? In other words, do you want me to pack up and go?"

"All right," her father said. "You shall have an honest answer to your honest question: *Yes!*"

She felt the chill of it going over her. She didn't want to believe that he meant it. It focused all of her years with him into the sharp meaning that she had tried, in one way and another, to rationalize or to avoid. He had never said in so many words that he didn't want her, that she was in the way, but he had shown it in a thousand and one ways. She had been miserably unhappy so much of her life because she had sensed it, but she had believed she would never hear him say it.

"You do mean it," she whispered.

His eyes were still narrow, still unrelenting. "You asked me to be honest. I've got a job on my hands. Marriage for a man of my age isn't easy. Gertrude has got to learn my ways, and I don't want anyone around interfering."

Anger was rising in Kirby again, and she was trying to subdue it. The things she wanted to say to him—had wanted for years to say to him—were things that simply must not be said. She did not want a scene with him.

"You mean," she said, "you want a free hand so you can ruin her life as you've done your best to ruin mine—because you hate women so."

The sardonic glow had returned to his eyes. "My dear child, I don't know what you're talking about."

"You've hated me," Kirby said in a thin, dry voice, "from the moment I was born—or at least from the moment Mother walked out on you. All my life I've known you've detested me, and all my life I've tried to make you like me. But you wouldn't have me. I wish you could know what I've been through!"

She did not want to say these things. She wanted to say other things. She had managed to keep it bottled up, and she wanted to say none of it, but it was coming out as water comes out of a dam when it finally finds a place to break through.

"All my life," she heard herself saying, "you've hated me. The way you've jeered at me! 'Well, Miss Flashbulb, so you're finally a member of café society. So the little girl has made the grade!' Anything I ever did! Anything I ever tried to do! 'So you're an Eagle Scout! Maybe some day if you really work at it, you can rub sticks together and light a cigarette for me.' "

"Kirby!" her father said.

"Sarcasm and sourness and jeering," she went on, unheeding. "Twenty lovely years of it!"

"Kirby!"

"I wouldn't have mentioned any of it," she said hysterically, "if I didn't see that you're starting to put Gertrude through the same thing."

He sat up and reached for the dressing-gown at the foot of his bed. He slipped into it, got out of bed and walked barefooted to a chest of drawers.

"Kirby, come here, please," he said. His voice sounded rough and uncertain.

She was suddenly furious at herself for having let herself go. She got up and followed him across the room.

He opened the top drawer and took out of it a large brown envelope.

"Sit down," he said. When she did not move, he took her by the elbows and pushed her down onto a bench before a dressing-table on which were three mirrors.

"Now look at this," he said, in the same rough, uncertain voice. He removed from the envelope a large sepia photograph of her mother. It was one that Kirby had never seen. Her mother could have been no older than twenty-two when it was made. With her head up, her large brown eyes shimmering, she was smiling—almost laughing. It was the loveliest photograph of her mother Kirby had ever seen.

"Now," her father said, "look at yourself."

Kirby looked into the mirror. Her face was gray. Her eyes looked wild. Her outburst had made her a caricature of herself.

"Well?" she said wearily.

"Well," he said, "does that explain anything?"

"What? That I look like her? Roger, this was very dramatic, but don't you suppose I've known for years that I look like her—and that you've resented it?"

"I was trying to talk to you in your own language," he said. He walked across the room and got back into bed. Kirby crossed the room and sat down in the depression she had made in the other bed.

"But that doesn't explain enough," Kirby said.

He sighed heavily. "All right," he said, "I'll try. I'll try to explain why I've treated you as I have—and why I can't help treating Gertrude the same way. Your mother was the one and only woman I've ever loved or ever could love."

"If she meant so much to you, why didn't you try to get her back? Wasn't she worth the fight?"

"She made a mistake when she left me," her father said stiffly. "It was something for her to fight out by herself."

Kirby's gaze was incredulous. "Dad!" she said softly. "You can't believe that—really! Mother got fed up because life was just one long round of scientific discussions and evenings alone while you worked in a lab. The only reason she left you and married a man who was nothing much more than a playboy was that you were neglecting her!"

"How do you know?" His eyes were still closed.

"Because it's so easy for any woman to put herself in her place! You didn't understand. Until that airplane fell and finished her, you were sure she'd realize her mistake and beg to come back. You still think it was a mistake."

Grassingway opened his eyes. "It seems a pity you weren't old enough at the time to fix everything up!"

Kirby laughed. "I'd have done a better job of it than you did! So you put all the blame on her, and you hated me, first because I was hers—then because I resembled her. And what did I have to do with it?"

Her father closed his eyes again. He puffed out his cheeks and blew out his breath slowly. "All right," he said, "let's try to get this straight. It may be impossible. You are an emotional girl. I am not an emotional man. The values we each give to any emotional problem are bound to be entirely different. But we can try."

"All right," Kirby said. "At least, let's try."

"As far back as I can remember," her father said, "you have always seemed a normal, happy girl—whatever 'normal' is. You may be too sensitive and too imaginative to be normal. I don't know. There's no known yardstick for measuring either of those qualities. However, I thought you were self-contained and happy and contented. Evidently, I was blind and deaf to the truth."

"Or disinterested."

He arched his eyebrows. "That may be a point of view. I believe that children should not be dominated by their parents, but should be permitted to grow as their natures incline them."

"To a growing girl," Kirby said, "that might seem to be indifference or even dislike."

"I know I'm not demonstrative. Even with your mother I couldn't be demonstrative. It was all behind a bottleneck that's been there for more than fifty years. In all my life, I've never had an intimate. I never had a chum as a small boy, or a pal as a grown man. It isn't that I want to be aloof. I've tried to be close to people—or to let people come close to me. It's impossible. I succeeded a little with your mother, but I couldn't keep it up. I tried even harder with you. You guessed why I built this place. I thought it would break me down. I was sure that our very aloneness here would bring us close together. But it didn't work. I couldn't do it.

"I've never told you much about my childhood. I still hate and abominate my childhood. My mother was a mousy little creature, and my father was the coldest, hardest man I've ever known. At least he seems so now. He must have had a profound distrust of people. He was suspicious of everybody. If he were alive now and would talk about it, he would probably tell you that someone—his father or mother, or an older brother—shaped him and embittered him too.

"He was a harsh disciplinarian. He used to beat the hell out of me. One time when I ran away, he beat me so badly I had to have a doctor.

"My mother was scared stiff of him, and she devoted her life to doing whatever she could to avoid his displeasure. I thought she had no use for me, but I realize now that he kept her so stirred up and so miserable that I simply didn't count."

He stopped to light a cigarette. His hands were trembling. Kirby realized what an ordeal this was for him. It

was an ordeal for her, too. Thinking of his bleak, bitter childhood, she wanted to cry.

"I think I took up science," he went on, "because it offered the career farthest removed from emotional entanglements. Perhaps you can now understand my jeering and my wisecracks."

"What?"

"You say I've jeered at you all my life."

"You have!"

"But great heavens, Kirby, I've always had the greatest respect and admiration for you, not only as my daughter, but as an individual. Can't you realize that what you call my jeering sarcasm has been nothing but my peculiar way of expressing affection?"

"I'm beginning," Kirby murmured, "to understand it. Perhaps I've always sensed it. I don't know."

"You should have," he said. "You should have noticed that it's a special kind of wisecracking that no one else shares. It makes me sick to be told that I've not only failed you but that I've been blind to it. I don't suppose it will do any good to tell you that you are the only person on earth I have real affection for."

"But I've been blind too," Kirby said quickly, "and maybe a little stupid."

She felt tremulous and happy and tearful. It had been, she reflected, much worse than pulling teeth—but it was worth it. It had given her a glowing feeling of warmth and contentment. She now understood many things. She knew that she would never be closer to her father than she was at this moment, but she also knew that she would never want to be. She understood now why he was aloof and why he was not only undemonstrative but why he shrank from demonstrativeness in others.

Her father was puffing at the stub of his cigarette and blowing spirals toward the ceiling. His face was flushed and wet. It had been, she realized, a shattering ordeal for him.

"Do you still want me to pack up and go?"

He glanced at her. "I think you should," he answered. "I think it would be better."

"Not that I'm in the way," Kirby said. "Not that I'm really a monkey-wrench in the honeymoon."

His eyes had sharpened. "What do you mean?"

It had been in his glance a few seconds ago. She had forgotten all about these people and the wrongness she had sensed since she had come here. Now it was back.

"Isn't it true that something is wrong here—and you're suspicious at least—and you want me out of the way just in case there's trouble?"

"Please explain yourself, Kirby."

"I'm still mystified by your accident—and other things."

"What other things?"

"These people—Brent and Sarka."

He looked at her steadily and said: "What's the matter with them?"

"They seem furtive. They seem sinister."

Her father smiled thinly. "With your imagination, if you'd only gone into science, you'd be another Thomas A. Edison. . . . What's sinister about them? Be specific."

"I'm afraid I can't. I simply don't trust them."

"It seems to me your intuitions are working overtime. I don't trust intuitions."

"Would you mind terribly," Kirby asked sweetly, "if I waited until morning? It's going to storm."

"I'm not joking," he said.

"I'm not either," said Kirby. She ran her hand with an impulsive gesture through her hair. It was a gesture that she tried to remember not to use when they were together. There was something about that unimportant nervous gesture. It always angered him. He had been smiling sardonically at her a moment ago, but the instant she ran her hand through her hair, he stopped smiling, the corners of his mouth went down and the glow went out of his eyes.

Long ago, Kirby had reasoned it out: it was a gesture she had inherited from her mother, although there was nothing particularly distinctive about it. But it evidently reminded him so poignantly of her that it stirred up, for the moment, all his old bitterness and resentment.

She said brightly: "I'll pack up and go first thing in the morning. Good night, Roger!"

CHAPTER 6

Jeff Bixden arose from a chair at the far end of the living-room. He had a large brown leather notebook in his hand.

"Hi!" said Kirby.

He came slowly toward her. Kirby's heart began beating rapidly, in hard little thumps. It surprised her. There was something about the way he walked and the way he held his dark head. She felt perverse impulses stirring.

Jeff stopped and looked down at her with a slow, lazy smile.

"Still mad?"

Kirby lifted her chin. "Was I mad?"

His smile was tilted up at one corner. "Every time I see you," he said, "you're lovelier. If this keeps on, I'm going to need a straitjacket."

Her doubts of this mysterious, ardent young man were returning. She had been certain that her father had not been telling the truth; that he, too, was suspicious.

"I've decided to take pity on you," Kirby said. "I've decided I'm not going."

He seemed amused. His eyes were glowing and his smile now had a tilt at each corner. "Really?" he said.

"Yes. You see, Gertrude is just as anxious for me to stay as you are for me to go. So I'm staying."

She wanted to hurt him, to make him angry. But it wasn't working. He was watching her face as if her defiance delighted him.

"Gertrude and I," Kirby said, "are going to work everything out."

"I see," Jeff said in his deep voice. His smile hadn't changed, and the glow of amusement was still in his eyes. "Thank God it isn't *my* honeymoon!"

"And Dad," Kirby said, "is delighted. At least, he just said so."

His expression sobered. He eyed her doubtfully. "You mean—you've just been talking to him?"

"Yes."

He frowned. "Well, that's odd. I just came from a walk up the wash—past the old ranch-house. I saw him there. There was a dim light on. He was sitting in there. He seemed to be talking to somebody. I thought it was awfully odd—"

"That house," Kirby broke in, "sometimes affects people strangely. When I rode past it this evening, I was sure I saw a man resembling Dad, then I was just as sure I didn't. How could you have seen Dad? He can hardly move, he's still so weak."

Jeff was staring at her unbelievingly. It was obvious that he wasn't convinced.

"That house," Kirby said, "has a reputation, you know."

"I don't believe in haunted houses!" Jeff Bixden declared.

"Maybe it's time you looked a little further into the subject. Lots of solid, intelligent people have seen ghosts there. You probably saw the ghost of the husband of the woman who was killed by the rattlesnake!"

"Phooey!" said Jeff.

He walked on. Kirby did not move. She heard the heavy thumping of his cowboy boots as he walked into her father's room.

She walked into the kitchen. The lights were on, but Gertrude was not there.

The back door was open. Gertrude, she supposed, had gone out into the service patio to drink her coffee.

Kirby went out. The sky was rapidly clouding over. The moon, now almost overhead, was obscured for seconds at a time. The clouds were racing, and they looked wet.

The service patio looked empty. A door in the servants' wing facing it was open a few inches and a shaft of light came through the crack.

Kirby called, "Gertrude!" When there was no answer, she started to walk to the end of the patio. As she passed the door that was partly open, she saw Brent sitting at a table. Something on his head glittered, and Kirby saw that it was a bright metal headband holding against his ears a pair of headphones such as she had seen being worn by wireless operators on ships.

The houseman's dark head was bent down, and he was rapidly writing.

Kirby came to a stop. She supposed he was listening on a small radio, the kind that is too small to have a loud-speaker, and she supposed that he was taking down news bulletins. But as she walked on it occurred to her that three years ago there had been an expensive cabinet radio in the servants' living-room. If it was still in working order, it was strange he wasn't using that.

When she reached the doorway of the servants' living-room, she went in. She turned on the radio and set the dials for one of the Tucson stations. In a few seconds, a murmur of dance music came from it. Before the volume could increase and warn Brent that she was there, she turned it off and went out.

Why, she wondered, was Brent using those uncomfortable earphones when he could have, by opening his door, listened to any station he wished on the living-room radio?

"I don't intend," Kirby said firmly to herself, "to let my imagination run away with me this time. There is probably a perfectly innocent explanation for it. Perhaps he doesn't want to disturb Sarka."

She returned to her room and locked the door. In spite of her resolutions, the mood into which she had been lured persisted. Why had Brent been using those headphones—and writing down what he heard—when he could have used the radio in the servants' living-room? Where was Gertrude?

KIRBY sat down on the bed, and ate the rest of the orange she had peeled earlier. She poured a cupful of chocolate from the vacuum jug. It was still steaming hot. She sniffed its fragrance and drank a little. It seemed to her it tasted sweeter than it had before, although that might have been explained by the orange. Yet, as she sipped, it persisted in tasting too sweet and, when she put the cup down, a strange flavor lingered in her mouth.

"I'm in the right mood," she reflected, "to suspect that Gertrude or Sarka or Brent or Jeff put sleeping-powder into it—or poison. Maybe I'm the kind of person that people believe should be poisoned. I'm the monkey-wrench in the honeymoon."

She tried to see herself as others saw her—as her father saw her, as Jeff saw her. Was she really a disturbing influence? Was she being an obnoxious Meddlesome Mattie? Was Gertrude merely being polite in insisting that she stay?

"Well, I'm not staying. First thing in the morning, I'll pack up and go. Me and my moods, we'll jog along together."

She nibbled at an apple, to take the strange taste of chocolate out of her mouth, then undressed. She took a hot shower, then a cold one. This would be, she supposed, a bad night, because her thoughts were in such a jumble and her nerves were so tense.

When she was ready for bed, she placed her pencil flashlight on the bedside table and arranged a candle and a container of kitchen matches so that they would be handy. Often, when terror came in the darkness, her worst moments were those in which she groped for a light.

She went to the western window, to open it. The Venetian blind had been let down, but the slats were turned flat so that she could see out into her patio. The patio was dark, but it suddenly was filled with misty light. It made the high tamarisk hedge against the adobe wall look more feathery than usual. The top of the hedge was tossing about in the wind.

The patio suddenly grew dark again. A moment later, it was again filled with misty light. Clouds racing across the moon were causing it, but the effect was that a light was being turned off and on. It recalled to her Jeff's grim certainty that he had seen her father in the old ranch-house. How imaginative was Jeff—how sensitive? Certainly, it was a night for ghosts to walk—or for very sensitive humans to imagine fantastic things.

ABOVE the purring of the light plant, she heard the sound of a car. Headlight glare flickered across the tops of the cottonwood trees beyond the wash. Professor Dendry was, she guessed, arriving.

Over the hedge she saw a blob of moonlight drifting along the flank of a distant hill. Then she was attracted by something that was moving along the hedge toward the corrals. It might have been a shadow. Then she was sure that it was a man. The next moment she was sure that it was a woman in a pale dressing-gown.

Kirby opened her mouth, to call out. She was about to call, "Gertrude!" She closed her mouth. If the figure against the tamarisk hedge was Gertrude—what was she doing there?

The next moment, Kirby was sure she was imagining it. It couldn't be Gertrude! If it were a man, it occurred to her that if he had been standing there, he might have been looking into her room for some time.

She stared. One moment she was sure she saw something moving, and the next moment she was sure nothing was there. It was reminiscent of her experience near the old ranch-house, when she had believed and then was shaken from her belief that she had seen a tall, lean man move away from the tumbledown old porch and disappear into the beargrass in back.

This might be another trick of her unhappy imagination—or it might be Sarka. She slipped between the Venetian blind and the window, opened the window and leaned out. She stared at the spot where she thought she had last seen movement. She was almost sure she saw someone or something moving toward the corral, but she was not quite sure. Then a cloud covered the moon and the patio turned black.

Kirby moved out from behind the blind and adjusted the slats so that no one could look in. She was sorry there was no screen at that window.

She was halfway across the room when the electric lamp on her bedside table went out. She stopped in the sudden darkness, and listened. Her heart began beating with panic. As her eyes adjusted themselves to the darkness, she saw the ghostly glow of moonlight at the edges of the Venetian blinds. Then this light was extinguished. The light plant engine was purring. As she listened, the purring stopped. Perhaps twenty seconds had elapsed since her bedside light had mysteriously gone out. Her heart was beating strangely. She felt a wave of heat go over her face, then it became clammily cold. She felt dizzy and unnaturally sleepy. She had had similar symptoms one time when she had taken a certain kind of sleeping capsule. She thought of the hot chocolate, with its strange taste, and she was suddenly frightened

She was familiar enough with the light plant to realize that it wasn't following its usual procedure of getting into trouble. When it failed, because of lack of fuel, the lights grew dim and fluttery, then went out. Her light had gone out as abruptly as if a switch had been pulled. And it had gone out twenty seconds before the plant stopped running.

Why should anyone have wanted her light to go out?

It hinted at the one thing of which she was afraid—the unknown. She was shivering.

She groped for her bed, found it, pulled the covers down and climbed in. With her lower lip held firmly between her teeth, she tried to relax. Chills ran along her legs. She heard the rapid thumping of her heart, but she could hear nothing else.

SUDDENLY she awoke. Her body was rigid. She was wet with perspiration and her teeth were clattering. A creeping feeling went twisting and crawling along the nerves in her arms and legs.

She would light the candle as soon as her helplessness passed. She would smoke a cigarette and at the end of it she would fall asleep, utterly exhausted. That was the usual procedure.

She became aware of a curious medicinal taste in her mouth. She recognized it as the taste that had lingered after she had sipped the second cupful of hot chocolate.

She became aware that something had been and still was crawling along the instep of her left foot. She held herself perfectly still, to make sure that she wasn't imagining it. She wasn't. Something was crawling on her foot.

In this h dry land where small crawling things may be dangerous, Kirby had learned to be subconsciously alert and prepared. She jerked her feet away from the foot of the bed. Her fear of the darkness was forgotten. She sat up, found the bedside lamp and yanked the chain.

Counting seconds, she listened for the whirring of the light plant. She counted up to ten before she recalled that she had not pulled the socket chain when the light had mysteriously gone out. The plant was out of order and it would not start.

She groped for her flashlight and switched it on. She played the beam on her feet. There was nothing on either of them now. Kneeling in the bed, she cautiously pulled back the covers.

Where her feet had been she saw first one, then a second and then a third round black pellet, about the size of buckshot. Each had thin, shiny black legs.

The kneeling girl tried to hold the beam of the flashlight on them, but her hand was shaking uncontrollably. She was too frightened to move. The three spiders were moving about, and one of them was crawling toward her.

Kirby was, ordinarily, not afraid of black widow spiders. She had killed dozens of them. They usually spun their coarse, unsymmetrical webs in woodsheds and barns, but sometimes they got into houses.

One of the three spiders had been crawling along her foot when she awoke, but it hadn't bitten her. It was miraculous that it hadn't—but it hadn't. The sting of the black widow, she had been told, is as painful as if a white-hot needle were plunged into the flesh.

But she was not, after that first shock, really afraid. She hated rattlesnakes and scorpions and vinegarroons and black widow spiders, but she wasn't afraid of them, and she knew how to deal with them all.

She lighted the candle. She slipped into her mules and walked into the bathroom where, unless it had been removed, a fly-swatter hung on a nail just inside the door. She had found when she was ten that a fly-swatter is the best of all weapons for dealing with black widow spiders and scorpions.

As she took the fly-swatter down, she sent the beam of her flashlight about the ceiling. In one corner, she saw one of the typical coarse, shapeless webs. There was no spider in it.

She returned to the bed. She studied the spiders. They were, she realized, gravid females. Their black round bodies were larger than normal. The bite of a gravid female is much deadlier than that of a black widow at other seasons. The gravid female is not only deadlier but much more belligerent. It will attack on little or no provocation.

Although the spring months constitute the egg-laying season for black widows, it seemed odd to her that all three of these should be gravid.

She quickly and efficiently exterminated the three spiders. Then she pulled the bed from the wall, systematically removed the bedding and examined each piece. She turned the mattress over, inspecting it thoroughly. Then she got down on her knees and looked under the bed with minute care. She f d no webs and no more black widows.

She was thinking, as she remade the bed, that she had had a very narrow escape. The bite of one gravid black widow might have been serious. The bite of two of them would certainly have been dangerous. If the three of them had bitten her, she would have received an amount of poison that easily could be fatal.

One black widow might have found its way between the smooth fresh sheets to the foot of the bed. The presence of the second was something more than a coincidence. But the presence of three could hardly be called accidental.

It was, of course, possible. She had seen as many as three black widows in a single small web, but the more she thought about it, the more unlikely it seemed that three gravid black widows would have found their way between the sheets to the foot of a freshly made bed.

What the presence of the three spiders might imply, stopped her in the act of smoothing out the second blanket. She sat down on the edge of the bed and watched the black smoke stemming from the motionless candle flame.

Her watch said 12:52. She had been in this bed more than an hour while those three deadly spiders had crawled about near her feet!

It would have been a simple and safe way to kill her. It would have been a murder to which no blame could possibly be attached.

"My imagination," Kirby said to herself, "is morbid. I'll grant that. I'll grant that I brought fear into this house, and I'll grant that I may have read into all of these people all sorts of sinister qualities they don't possess. But I won't grant that these black widows were in my bed by accident."

A GUST of wind rattled the slats of the Venetian blind at the open window. With the flashlight in her hand, she walked to the window and pulled the blind back and looked out. The patio was empty.

It hadn't been empty a while ago. At least, she had been sure—or almost sure—that it hadn't been.

If a man had been there, staring in at her window, why had he been there? She would not have put it above Sarka to stand out there and watch her undress. But she was seeing the recent mystifying events of tonight as a pattern, and if there was truth in the pattern, Sarka had not hidden in her patio merely to watch her undress.

If these people had decided, for whatever reason, to kill her, and to make it appear that she had died from black widow bite, they must first have made sure that she would not find the spiders in her bed prematurely.

Her bedside light had gone out only a moment before she would have gone to bed. She was in her nightgown and ready for bed. Someone in the patio might have given the signal to a person stationed near the light plant, and this second person had pulled the switch which had put her light out, and a few seconds later had stopped the engine.

It was plausible, and it made a neat pattern for murder, yet there were flaws in it. First, she wasn't sure she had seen anyone moving beside the hedge. And regardless of her suspicions, it was possible that the three black widows had found their way into her bed. But, above all, none of these people had a valid reason for killing her.

Or had they?

What would they gain if she were dead—murdered in a way that would not implicate them? Her earlier suspicions that they were enemy agents conspiring against her father hardly seemed applicable now. He was worth a great deal of money. Presumably he had drawn a will under the terms of which she would inherit a generous sum at his death. If Gertrude had married him for his money, then Gertrude became the leader of a crew which was planning to acquire his entire fortune.

Considering all this, Kirby decided it was a little too pat. a little too much like the plot of a bad movie. She tried another approach.

While she and her father were talking, what had Gertrude been doing?

"Where was she," thought Kirby, "when I went through the kitchen and into the patio and saw Brent using those headphones and writing? And where was Sarka?"

Kirby clearly saw the pattern now. Assuming that Gertrude, Brent, Sarka and Jeff Bixden were partners in a sinister enterprise, and assuming that they had an adequate reason for killing her, one of them had slipped into this room while she was talking with her father, had put sleeping medicine into the hot chocolate and the three black widows into her bed.

Since the first cup of chocolate hadn't had a strange taste. she could safely assume that it had been doctored while she was talking with her father. What, she wondered, had prompted this attempt at killing her?

If her conversation with her father had been overheard, it might have been something she had said. She had spoken freely of her suspicions. That might be it! She had said that Brent and Sarka ought to be investigated.

It was glib reasoning—a trifle too glib, perhaps; but it seemed to Kirby that it was logical. The next step was, if it was correct, who had eavesdropped? Jeff had been sitting in the living-room—for how long? She and her father had not restrained their voices. With the house so quiet, Jeff might have overheard the entire conversation.

There was another possibility—Brent. Brent with the headphones at his ears!

It all came together, Kirby discovered, very neatly. A dictaphone was concealed in her father's room! Wires from it led to Brent's room!

If her deductions were correct up to this point, then a new light was cast on Jeff Bixden. He had gone into her father's room, and talked to him after she had left. Brent, when she had seen him, must have been copying down her father's and Jeff's conversation. If Jeff was one of the conspirators, Brent would not have written down that talk.

The pattern was now almost complete. To secure possession of her father's entire fortune—if that was their plan—they must kill him and they must kill her, but both murders must have the aspect of accidents.

But if they had wanted to kill him, why hadn't they done so? They had had ample opportunity. Why had they stopped just short of it?

Kirby suddenly glimpsed a deviousness so intricate that it appalled her. Whatever their plan was, she was certain it was as complex as it was sinister. It obviously threatened her life, and in some obscure way it threatened her father—his war secrets, or his wealth.

CHAPTER 7

KIRBY put on the clothes she had taken off earlier—the skimpy faded blue riding-shirt, the riding-pants and the cowboy boots.

She went to the chest of drawers, pulled out the middle one, and placed it on the floor. Four or five years ago she had hidden, in a little recess in back, a .32-caliber revolver which she had bought when she was twelve.

She unwrapped the revolver from the square of once-oily gray flannel. The oil had evaporated and the cloth was dry and dusty. The small revolver was coated with dust.

She blew off the dust, flipped out the cylinder and dropped the cartridges into her hand. They were as shiny as new. She blew the dust out of the barrel and squinted through it at the candle flame. The rifling was clean, rustless and only slightly pitted. She replaced the cartridges, flipped the cylinder into place and put the drawer back.

She dropped the revolver into her right-hand hip pocket. She suddenly saw herself in the tall mirror on the bathroom door. Her face was white and drawn. Her eyes were darkly aglitter with excitement. Her dark hair was disarrayed. She might have been thirteen again, pretending she was about to keep an appointment with a desperado at their secret rendezvous.

Her image in the mirror recalled those imaginative days so vividly that she was suddenly doubtful. All her recent reasoning, all her sinister suspicions, seemed childish. She was about to go into her father's room to tell him that his bride or one of the servants had drugged her hot chocolate and attempted to murder her with black widow spiders!

Kirby wavered. As her suspicions paraded by in her mind, she critically considered them. She had, after twenty years, reached an amicable understanding with her father. If she were imagining all this, she would jeopardize that. Was it worth it?

He had mockingly said: "I never make claims that are not based on demonstrable fact." That was the essence of his philosophy.

Kirby had in her possession only two demonstrable facts: Her bedside light had gone out as she was in the act of going to bed. The other was the presence in the bed of three black widow spiders.

She unlocked her door and let herself out. A candle burned on a table at the far end of the living-room. Her father's door was closed. Jeff was sitting in a chair beside the closed door. His chin was on his chest. He seemed asleep, but when she approached him, he lifted his head.

He made an airy gesture with one of his hands. He lifted it to his mouth and stifled a yawn. "Halt," he said. "No one can even approach that door. Professor Dendry has arrived."

"When?" Kirby gasped.

"Oh—an hour ago. A very obliging lieutenant from the bomber base brought him out. I was given orders to guard this door, to admit no one. They're at it hot and heavy, and it's extremely hush-hush."

Kirby stared at Jeff uncertainly. A moment ago she had had a passionate desire to tell her father about the black widows, about the dictaphone she was sure was hidden in his room, about all her suspicions. Now, hearing his voice, with its sharp edge, she was suddenly unsure of everything. If she burst in the room now and blurted out that an electrical pipeline was carrying his precious secret to Brent's ears, he would be furious. Perhaps there wasn't a hidden dictaphone. Perhaps she had imagined everything.

"How long will it be?"

"God knows. Maybe all night."

"You're almost asleep," Kirby said. "Run along to bed. I'll stand guard."

Jeff stifled another yawn. "For that," he said. "I love and adore you even more. But this is man's work. Run along, dream woman—and dream something encouraging about me."

She saw that he was too sleepy to notice how white she was, how wild her eyes were.

The door opened, and Professor Dendry's long, pale face appeared. Kirby had never been very fond of Professor Dendry, he was so typically a scientist, so inhumanly scientific—a gnome who labored amidst fantastic paraphernalia in a laboratory. He was, she had always thought, ageless. Certainly he had not changed in all the years she had known him. And he still wore a white stubbly beard.

"Ah!" he said. "Kirby! How very, very nice! Jeff, you don't have to wait any longer. We're almost through. Another half-hour or so. Mr. Crassingway says you're to go to bed."

Professor Dendry smiled vaguely at Kirby, then closed the door. Jeff was walking down the room with the air of a sleepwalker.

Biting her lips, Kirby turned and watched him go. She had the feeling that all the things she had been sensing in this house were rushing toward a climax. Or, she asked herself weakly, was she imagining all of it?

She started to return to her room, then changed her course and went through the dining-room and out through the kitchen into the kitchen patio. At the door of Brent's room, she stopped. The door was closed. The room was dark. With a trembling hand, she tested the knob. It turned, but the door did not open. It was locked.

She returned to her room; she closed and locked the door. She stared a moment at the guttering candle, then determinedly picked up her flashlight from the table.

She needed one more demonstrable fact to support the others. If anyone had been hiding in the patio, heel-marks might have been left beside the tamarisk hedge.

With the flashlight in her hand, Kirby climbed out of the open window. She walked to where she believed she had seen someone standing or moving, and played the beam of the light at the base of the hedge. Close-cropped Bermuda grass grew matlike close to the hedge. It was too wiry to hold heelprints.

Above the wind, Kirby heard men's voices in the house. She turned off the light and held her breath. A man's voice was suddenly raised, as if in protest. It stopped.

She turned on the flashlight. The narrow beam fluttered across the feathery tamarisk and picked out a shred of pale gossamer that fluttered in the wind at the end of a twig.

Kirby removed it and held it close to the flashlight lens. It consisted of a few threads undeniably lavender in color. Their crinkly nature identified the material from which they had been snagged.

Kirby had felt a chill go through her. This wisp of evidence confirmed all her suspicions. Gertrude had been hiding here when the light plant stopped!

It was shocking. Kirby realized that she had not expected to have her suspicions confirmed. She had not wanted to have them confirmed—but here was the confirmation!

She heard Gertrude's rich contralto voice. It seemed to come from the front of the house. Kirby was sure she was so upset that she was imagining it. In her imagination, she was seeing Gertrude in her lavender dressing-gown standing against the hedge: and now, as clearly, she was hearing her voice.

Then she heard, above the wind, the sound of a car in low gear. This sound also came from the front of the house. A few seconds later Kirby saw the flash of headlights; then she saw the car silhouetted in the glow of its own lights reflected from the hillside. It was a small pick-up truck. The truck or one closely resembling it had been in the garage when she drove in from Tucson this afternoon.

Why was anyone from No Le Hace going up the wash at this hour? Whoever it was, she was now convinced that she had not heard Gertrude's voice. She was sure she had imagined it.

Kirby climbed back through the window. She clipped the flashlight to her belt, unlocked the door and went out. She felt less grimly determined now, than apprehensive.

A yellow light seemed to sink through the air at the end of the living-room. It was a kerosene lamp. It came to rest on a table near the fireplace. The man who had been carrying it straightened up, turned and started toward her.

The man was Brent. His black hair was disordered, and his pale face looked strange. Then Kirby saw that his jaw on the left side was swollen.

When he saw her, he stopped. He stared at her as if her appearance shocked him. His mouth slowly opened and closed.

To Kirby, his astonishment was quite logical. Whether or not he had taken part in the attempt at murdering her, he must have known the attempt had been made.

"Good morning, Brent," she said cordially.

He made a grimace that was doubtless intended for a smile. Color climbed into his face until his forehead and his ears were a dark red.

"Good morning, Miss Crassingway." His small dark eyes were so bright they seemed to gleam. He seemed angry.

"Are my father and Professor Dendry still talking?"

"No, Miss Crassingway. Professor Dendry went over to the guest-house and went to bed a few minutes ago. Your father is alone."

"Thank you, Brent."

Kirby wondered what had happened to his chin. He had the look of a man who has recently been in a fight. And she wondered why he was angry.

Because she was alive?

The door of her father's room was open, and light was coming from it. She stopped at the writing-desk, picked up a memorandum pad and a pencil and walked into the room.

A candle was burning on the table beside him, and its light fell on his lean gray face with its patchwork of adhesive tape and bandage. He was propped up on his pillows as he had been when she had last seen him.

"Hi, Pop!" she said. "This is—"

She stopped. The candlelight was in his eyes. He was staring at her with astonishment. He seemed no less shocked than Brent had been. He was staring at her with involuntarily widening eyes, as if he too were amazed that she was alive.

Into Kirby's mind floated a suspicion as black as the night. It made her feel faint. Then she told herself she was a fool to entertain such suspicions. He was merely astonished at seeing her at this hour. But she could not argue away the final doubt.

He began to smile.

Looking back later, when the tantalizing mystery of this house was finally explained, she would recall how his eyes and his smile had puzzled her, and how his voice, when he spoke, set up strange dissonances within her.

More than anything else, it was his smile that chilled her. Under these or any other circumstances, it was a wrong smile. It was subtly different from his usual smile. It wasn't sardonic; it was cruel.

She reached the bed across from his and sat down on it weakly.

At the moment she was recalling a remark of Gertrude's that had alarmed her. Gertrude had said: "Just where the nervous system leaves off and the mind begins is baffling, anyway."

"You look pale," her father said. His voice was weak; he was very tired.

"I couldn't sleep."

"That's what comes of heart-to-heart talks."

"Where is Gertrude?"

"She couldn't sleep, either. I told her about some of the things we had said. I'm afraid it upset her. She went to one of the guest-rooms."

Kirby scribbled on the pad: "*Be careful what you say. There's a dictaphone hidden in this room. I am sure every word you and Dendry said was overheard.*"

She gave him the pad. When he had read it, he raised his eyebrows and whispered: "If you're sure it isn't your morbid imagination, search the room."

There were not many places where a dictaphone might be hidden. She looked behind the few pictures, although it was unlikely that a dictaphone would have been hidden behind any of them because of the difficulty of running a wire through the thick adobe walls. She pulled out the two chests of drawers from the wall, then the dressing-table. She went into the bathroom and quickly investigated its possibilities. She then looked under the large Navajo rug and under both beds.

When she had finished her search, she was certain there was no dictaphone in the room. She was disappointed and bewildered.

She closed the door. When she returned to the bed on which she had been sitting, the familiar sardonic glow was in her father's eyes.

"What made you think there was a dictaphone in here?"

She told him about Brent and his headphones.

"We'll have Brent in and question him," her father said. "What else is wrong?"

"Why did the light plant go off?"

"I haven't the faintest idea, Kirby. It probably ran out of fuel. Why? What's so mysterious about that?"

"The lights didn't act as they usually do when the fuel tank goes dry."

"Perhaps Brent can explain it. I've got to send Jeff into town to do some telephoning, anyway."

He pressed the wall button. "What other mysterious things have been happening?"

KIRBY was sure his eyes were mocking her. She hesitated to tell him about the black widows. "A pick-up truck left here and started up the wash a minute ago."

"Yes," he said, "I thought I heard a truck. We'll ask Brent."

"What guest-room," Kirby asked, "is Gertrude using?"

"I don't know," he said indifferently. "What difference does it make?" He lighted a cigarette at the candle.

There was a tapping at the door. It opened, and the houseman appeared. He had neatly brushed his hair.

"Yes, Mr. Crassingway."

"Come in, Brent, come in. Miss Crassingway complains that mysterious things are happening. She wants to ask you some questions."

The houseman came into the room. There was a heavy look in his eyes and a somewhat sullen set to his mouth.

"Yes sir," he murmured. His "sir," Kirby decided, was not that of an insolent servant, but that of an equal who is trying not too hard to conceal a smoldering displeasure.

"She wants to know why the light plant went off. Have you looked into it?"

Brent glanced at Kirby. "I'm sorry, Miss Crassingway, but I was making toast and tea for Professor Dendry, and something went wrong with the toaster and the main fuse blew out. I've been tracing down the short-circuit and I've just located it."

"Where is it?" Kirby asked.

"In the main fuse-box. There are no spares, so I've been making one out of tinfoil. I'll have the plant working again in five minutes."

Kirby was studying his swollen chin. She wasn't satisfied with his explanation, and she was puzzled by the anger she sensed in him. She looked at his hands, which were hanging at his sides. Their hairy backs were toward her, but she knew that the palms and fingers were clean and that they were pink. They were clever, trained hands, and they were not the hands of a servant.

She glanced quickly at her father. He and Brent were gazing at each other, and it seemed to her that the eyes of both men were full of meaning. The houseman's eyes were angry, and her father's eyes were belligerent. The interplay puzzled and disturbed her.

"My daughter," her father said, "has been under the impression that a dictaphone was hidden in this room, with wires leading to your room. She says she saw you awhile ago with earphones on—and writing."

Brent compressed his lips in the involuntary response of a man with fresh reasons for displeasure. He shifted his dark little eyes to Kirby, and his manner changed.

"But, Miss Crassingway," he said reproachfully, "I was listening on my short-wave radio to a broadcast from Australia! I always use my little radio at night, instead of the large one, so I won't disturb anyone."

"What happened to your chin?" Kirby asked.

He sent her father a glance, and it was the glance of a man who is being driven to the limits of his patience. "I was rummaging about in the dark for fuses, and I banged into a shelf."

"You must have given that shelf all you had," Kirby said dryly.

Her father said: "Both of us heard a truck pulling out of here a few minutes ago, Brent. She says it went up the wash. What do you know about it?"

The houseman's eyes became narrower still, and his thin face was red again. "It was Sarka, sir."

"Sarka!" Kirby cried. She looked at her watch. "Sarka going up the wash at half-past one in the morning? What for?"

Brent stared, heavy-lidded, at her father, and said with the air of a man controlling himself: "Have you forgotten, Mr. Crassingway, that you told Sarka to try out the ultra-violet ray apparatus on that large conglomerate outcropping?"

Roger Crassingway chuckled. "Yes, I had. You see, Kirby, I've been wanting to try this new stunt for locating bodies of tungsten ore. If there is any tungsten present in rock, the ultra-violet ray causes it to glow in the dark."

"I see." Kirby murmured. She would reserve judgment. She was sure that Brent was glibly lying, but it would be easy to check up on everything he had said.

"Is that all?" her father asked her.

"Yes," she said. "I guess that's all—for the moment."

"Very well, Brent. Will you tell Mr. Bixden to get dressed and come in here? I want him to go to Tucson."

"Yes sir."

Brent turned and walked rapidly to the door and let himself out. Something in his alacrity made Kirby suspect that the houseman was glad to go.

"Well," her father said, "are you satisfied?"

She considered him. She believed that his eyes were mocking her, that he was secretly pleased about something.

"No," she said. "Something is going on. It's very baffling."

"Kirby, please!" he said in the same exhausted voice. "When you were in here before, you made all sorts of strange accusations. What is this all about?"

Kirby got up. She said in a controlled voice: "You won't like it, Dad. Are you sure you aren't too tired?"

"No," he said indulgently. "I want it cleared up."

Kirby hesitated. In his present frame of mind, he would jeer at anything she said. And she was suddenly doubtful of all the things which had seemed so logical a few minutes ago. She had not been sure that the hot chocolate was drugged. It had tasted strange, but chocolate often tastes strange. As for the black widows, she had been almost willing to concede that they might have found their way into her bed without assistance. But if all of her reasoning was wrong, how was she to account for the shred of lavender chiffon?

She sat down again.

"When my light went out," she said, "the plant kept on running for at least twenty seconds. Only the main fuse blew out. How do you account for my light going out twenty seconds before the plant stopped?"

"It took the current a few seconds to melt the fuse. After all, the amperage of this current isn't high. It's only a small plant."

"But if the fuse on my circuit didn't blow out—and why should it have?—my light should have stayed on until the main fuse melted. It didn't. It went out as if a switch was pulled."

HER father pushed himself up on one elbow. "Kirby, I didn't know you were an authority on light plants and fuses. If it's so important, we can investigate in the morning. What is so mysterious about a blown fuse? Why are you making such a fuss about it?"

"Because I'm suspicious!"

"Stop saying you're suspicious," he said irritably, "and be specific!"

"Very well!" Kirby said huskily. "I'll be very specific! Somebody in this house tried to kill me tonight!"

His head was bent forward, his eyes on a level with hers. It bent lower and lower as he stared at her eyes until

he was looking up at them. He seemed stunned by it, but the suspicion crept over her that he was only pretending to be stunned. She recalled his stare of amazement when she had first come in, as if he were startled at seeing her alive, and she recalled the glances he had exchanged with Brent.

Kirby was suddenly so frightened she could feel the scream forming in her throat. But she didn't utter it. These implications were too horrible to be accepted. She realized that he was so distrustful of all her suspicions that he could not reasonably be expected to accept this one. He would jeer it down as he had all the others, because that was his nature.

"What—are—you—saying?" he whispered.

"Somebody," Kirby said firmly, "put sleeping-medicine into a jug of hot chocolate meant for me. Just as I was about to get into bed, somebody pulled the switch that controls my lights; and about an hour after I got into bed, I found three black widows in it. Gravid females—all three of them! And I found this hanging on the hedge in my patio."

She removed the shred of chiffon from the breast pocket of her shirt and dangled it before her.

He was staring at her eyes. "Kirby, are you telling me the truth? Are you sure you didn't imagine the black widows?"

"I killed them with a fly-swatter! They're on the floor by my bed. If you want to see them—"

"Wait a minute. These threads are from Gertrude's dressing-gown!"

"Yes, Roger. And I'd like very much to know where Gertrude was when I left here and went looking for her!"

Her father sank back on the pillows with his eyes squeezed shut. "Let me think a moment: If Jeff should interrupt us, don't say anything about this. If there's any truth in what you're saying, if you're not imagining it—"

"I didn't imagine any of it. When I was—"

"I know," he said impatiently. "But you do imagine things. We will check up carefully on all you've been saying before we mention it to anyone."

"I'm sorry," Kirby said, "you mentioned that dictaphone to Brent. I'm still suspicious of him."

"Yes," he agreed, "I'm sorry, too. This is beginning to look very serious."

"But you suspected that something was going on!"

"Yes," he said, "but nothing like this. Nothing as dreadful as this. We'll go into it thoroughly when Jeff has gone."

"I want to talk to Gertrude. I want to ask her some very important questions. What room is she using?"

"I don't know."

"Well, there are only four. I'll look."

"I don't want you to disturb her."

Kirby gasped. "Is her rest more important than my life?"

Thin-lipped, he answered: "How do I know that you aren't imagining all of this? You're making an ogre of Gertrude. I can't believe she's involved in anything like this."

Kirby gazed at him helplessly. A flood of new suspicions had chilled her, but they were subsiding.

"Of course you can't, Dad! You married her in good faith. Your pride won't let—"

"If you aren't jumping to conclusions—"

"Dad, you keep saying that you never make claims that aren't based on demonstrable fact. I've collected several demonstrable facts to prove that someone tried to kill me tonight with black widows. I knew you suspected that something horribly wrong was going on here, but—"

"Nothing like this," he said. "But wait till Jeff has gone."

"Do you suspect him?"

He gazed at her steadily. His eyes were dark and strange and unfathomable. "My dear, I do not trust a living soul in this house but you."

She felt grateful, but the glow of it lasted only a moment. It had occurred to her that the whole situation might be much more complex than she had realized. She had assumed that only one sinister force was in motion. She now wondered if she might not be sensing a combination, a cross-play, of forces. She was more and more convinced that her father was withholding the truth, that he was excited and exhilarated over something that had happened.

Certainly, something had happened. In their previous talks, he had sometimes seemed vague and he had frequently seemed to be trying hard to concentrate, to find the right words to express himself. It had puzzled and worried her.

Now his eyes were clear and alert; and his thinking, it seemed to her, was taking place with mercurial ease. He had the air of a man who is agitated and elated, as if he had just accomplished something that was dangerous and important.

She wondered if it concerned Professor Dendry's visit—the talk they had just had. He had told her earlier tonight that Professor Dendry was coming here so that they could discuss the problem on which both had been working. If they had solved it, he would of course be elated. But his elation would have been of another kind.

"Was your talk with Dendry satisfactory?" she asked.

"Not entirely," he answered. "We've ironed out most of the kinks, but I'm still not entirely satisfied. I'm thinking things over now and we'll have another talk later."

The shaded light on the bedside table magically went on. Her father said: "Well, thank God, at least one mystery is solved. Electric current still knows how to flow through copper wire."

There was a knock at the door. Roger Crassingway called, "Come!" The door opened, and Jeff Bixden came in.

CHAPTER 8

He had obviously just been awakened. His eyes were heavy, and his face was flushed. He glanced at Kirby and smiled sleepily at her; then his gaze cleared and steadied, as if he saw something startling in her face.

"Yes, Mr. Crassingway?"

"Jeff, I want you to drive into Tucson at once and phone my friend Allister. You have his unlisted phone-number, I think."

"Yes sir."

"Allowing for the difference in time between Tucson and Washington, if you drive pretty fast you should catch him at breakfast. He always has a very early breakfast. Tell him I can't give him an opinion on any practical application of beryllium-nickel alloy until he sends me that report from the London metallurgical research office. Have you got that?"

"Yes sir. But didn't he promise to send that report by air express?"

"Yes—several days ago. You might drop around at the airport or the express office and check up."

"I will," said Jeff.

Jeff's voice, his very presence, were calming and steadying to Kirby. She recalled her original impression of him—how sensitive she had thought his face was. She recalled his expression, the sympathy in his voice, when he was tying up the colt's leg. She had thought of him then as an island of normality in a sea of suspicions. And it was still true. She remembered the image in her mind when she had awakened

from her dream a short time ago—Jeff, not her mother, stood behind that door which she could never find in the darkness—Jeff, waiting to take her into his arms and comfort her.

"And while you're about it," her father said, "you might as well put through a call to Jim Lindquist, in Volonne."

He was scratching at the bandage over the cut under his eye. He pulled it off and said irritably: "This damned thing itches all the time."

Jeff bent down and looked at the crescent-shaped cut. "It seems to be healing nicely," he said. "Shouldn't he be able to leave that bandage off now, Kirby?"

"I should think so," Kirby said.

"Tell Lindquist," her father went on, "to shoot along more particulars of the work he's doing. Full particulars! That's all. Run along, Jeff. You'd better take the day off, to catch up on sleep."

Jeff smiled at Kirby, but his dark eyes were humorless. He seemed puzzled by something he saw in her face, or concerned. "Sure you don't want to catch that early plane?"

"So many people like me," Kirby answered. "So many people have implored me to stay."

"Such popularity," Jeff said, "must be an awfully interesting sensation. I may see you at lunch."

"We might," Kirby said, "have a horseback picnic. Dainty little boloney sandwiches sliced awfully thin."

Jeff didn't smile. He was gazing at her speculatively, and frowning. He went to the door and opened it. He hesitated and looked at her steadily for several seconds. Then he went out and closed the door.

"What," her father asked, "was that all about?"

"Oh, he wants me to go. Didn't you and he discuss it?"

"No. Why does he want you to go?"

Kirby sighed. "It was he who coined the slogan, 'Kirby is to a honeymoon what emery-dust is to machinery.'"

"Have you discussed these other things with him?"

"I said I was suspicious of these people."

Her father's eyes had become very attentive. "What did he say? How does he feel about it?"

Kirby hesitated. The intentness of his eyes was making her uneasy. "Just as you do—that I'm imagining it."

"I'm very curious to know just what Jeff said."

"He said you hadn't even had those hallucinations—that he was told you'd made up that story to impress Gertrude. You'd taken an ignominious spill, so you spun that yarn to give the accident a romantic twist."

"Do you think Jeff really believed that?"

His persistence and the intentness of his eyes mystified her. Kirby's uneasiness was growing.

"Of course!" she said. "Jeff is a simple, honest person."

"Sometimes these guileless people aren't as innocent as they seem."

"Jeff isn't guileless. He's simply honest and direct. In my travels, I don't encounter much real honesty—the old-fashioned kind. He has it. He admires you tremendously. You are his hero. He's loyal, and I think very patriotic. He considers your brain a great asset to the war effort. He doesn't want you annoyed in the slightest way. Put all that together, and you have a man who will move heaven and earth to prevent any intrusion on your peace of mind."

"This is very interesting," her father interrupted, "if you really believe he wasn't merely being foxy."

"Foxy!" Kirby cried. "Why should he be? I think I understand him very well. He doesn't mince his words—or his ideas. Once I thought he was being gratuitous, but now I know it's nothing but his fierce loyalty to you. Why are you so suspicious of him?"

"Just what did he say?"

"That no man on his honeymoon wants a grown daughter around. He thinks it may be a difficult marriage to work out, and that my being here may spoil everything."

The expression of pleasure, of satisfaction, about her father's mouth surprised and puzzled Kirby.

"That may have been true before you and I had our talk," she said quickly. "But didn't that clear it up?"

"The main thing is," her father answered, "Jeff doesn't share any of your suspicions. That's definite, isn't it?"

"Yes, very definite. Why?"

He was smiling as if he were delighted. "Yes," he said thoughtfully. "It's awfully hard to believe that Jeff isn't loyal—and trustworthy. And he's smart. If there was anything wrong, he'd suspect it. The fact that he doesn't, indicates that all these suspicions must be in your imagination."

Kirby heard the whirring of a starter, the soft bubbling rhythm of an exhaust. Headlights flickered across a window; then she saw the tail-light receding. She felt unaccountably lonely and unhappy. . . .

The car had stopped. She could still hear its exhaust.

And suddenly she wished that Jeff wasn't going. She had not realized she was afraid. It would be comforting to have Jeff around. And it seemed to her that it was much more important to clear up this mystery than to send that message to Washington.

Jeff's car was moving again. The tail-light vanished.

Her father was lighting a fresh cigarette.

"You were going to tell me what your suspicions were," she reminded him.

"They can wait," he said. "They are vague. Yours are specific."

"Yes," Kirby agreed. "I want to show you the remains of those spiders—as three demonstrable facts. And I want you to taste that chocolate. I'll get them."

Before she reached the door, her eyes were filled with tears. All that they had accomplished in their other talk seemed to be lost. The delightful understanding they had reached no longer existed. They were once again embittered strangers. . . .

She went to her room, placed the three dead spiders in an envelope, and with the vacuum jug, returned to his room. At his closed door, she hesitated. Then, on an impulse, she walked to the door that led into the wing where the four guest-rooms were.

She was curious about Gertrude. Everything that had happened in this house tonight had assumed grotesque proportions. Yet her most fantastic suspicions had been confirmed. She was sure she had heard Gertrude's voice just before the truck had started up the wash, and she was sure that something had happened in this house tonight in addition to the attempt at murdering her. She had sensed it repeatedly in her father's attitude, in his glances and gestures, in his strangeness. She suspected that it concerned Gertrude, and she wanted to make sure that Gertrude was in one of the guest-rooms.

She went down the hall, opening the doors. All of the guest-rooms were empty. None of the beds was made up. But in the fourth room was tangible evidence. Thrown across the mattress were a white chiffon nightgown and a lavender chiffon dressing-gown. Near the bed were Gertrude's lavender mules.

It seemed obvious to Kirby that Gertrude had come into this room to dress. She had dressed and departed.

Two cars had left recently—the station-wagon in which Jeff had driven to Tucson, and the pick-up truck which Sarka had taken up the wash.

Gertrude might have gone in either car. Kirby recalled that Jeff had stopped the car on his way out, had waited fully a minute before he drove off. Gertrude might have got in then and gone with him. But Kirby did not believe that she had. It would mean that in some way Jeff was in this conspiracy, and she was convinced that he wasn't. It seemed much more likely that Gertrude had gone with Sarka in the truck. But why had she gone with Sarka?

Brent and her father had explained the truck, but their explanation had not been convincing. She had had the feeling when they were making it that they weren't even bothering to concoct a convincing lie. She believed her father knew that Gertrude had gone with Sarka in the truck, and

that whatever they were doing, it had his sanction. She believed that Gertrude's disappearance was connected with whatever it was that had happened earlier to make him so excited and so elated.

His attitude bewildered her. Since she had gone into his room this time, he had jeered at almost everything she had said, but it was different from his usual jeering. It was almost as if he knew an elaborate and fantastic attempt had been made to murder her. It was, of course, unthinkable.

She returned to his room. She placed the thermos jug on the table beside him and carefully decanted upon a sheet of paper the remnants of the three black widows.

Her father sat up and inspected them. With a match he turned one of the small black pellets until he exposed the red hourglass on its belly. He looked up at her. He seemed subdued.

"There's no question about these ladies. They are beautiful specimens. Just where were they?"

"Between the sheets at the foot of my bed."

"H'm. I wouldn't care very much for them as bedfellows. I want to ask Brent about this." He pressed the wall button.

"Do you think it's wise?" Kirby asked quickly. "My theory is that Brent is in this."

"I want to question him. It was his job to make up that bed. I intend to get to the bottom of this."

She felt relieved. She had been so sure he would jeer at her suspicions.

In a moment Brent opened the door. "Yes, Mr. Crassingway?"

"Come in," Roger said curtly.

The houseman came to the foot of his bed. Kirby's father held out the sheet of paper. "Do you know what these are?"

Brent bent down and looked. His eyes still seemed to be smoldering. He glanced at Kirby. "They're black widows, aren't they?"

"They are, Brent. They are, indeed! My daughter found them just a few minutes ago at the foot of her bed—between the sheets. Miraculously, she wasn't bitten by all of them and killed."

Kirby was watching the houseman's face. It had turned very pale and now it turned very red.

"Did you make up that bed in her room?" her father asked.

"No, Mr. Crassingway."

"Who did?"

"Mrs. Crassingway."

"When?"

"Just this morning, after you received your daughter's wire. I helped her fix up the room, but Mrs. Crassingway made the bed herself."

Kirby was glancing from one face to the other. The mystifying expressions she had seen in them before were appearing again. The houseman was controlling his anger only with an effort, and her father was being belligerently stubborn. It was bewildering.

"My daughter is under the impression that these spiders were placed in her bed by someone who wanted to kill her."

"It seems to me," said the houseman, "that anyone who would try such a stunt must be extremely stupid."

"Really?" Roger Crassingway drawled. "I was under the impression that the bite of more than one black widow spider might cause death."

"To cause death," Brent said stiffly, "black widows must sting their victim. Miss Crassingway was not stung. My opinion, since you've asked for it, is that if any person placed them in her bed for the purpose of killing her, that person was taking a very long chance."

"You mean, you think they got in there under their own power?"

"No, Mr. Crassingway, I do not. I mean that if any person had wanted to kill your daughter, that person was very reckless in placing reliance on black widows."

"Very well, Brent. You may go now."

Brent had the air of a man who can no longer suppress himself. His hands were clenched. His face was red, and his lower lip was jutting.

He relaxed his hands. "Thank you, sir," he muttered, and walked out of the room.

Kirby was watching her father speculatively.

"Just what," she inquired breathlessly, "was the meaning of that?"

"Brent," he answered, "has grown more and more impertinent. As soon as Gertrude can replace him, he's going."

"I don't mean that." Kirby said. "I mean the byplay."

He stared at her. "I don't know what you're talking about."

"It was almost as if you were carrying on an old argument about black widows—whether they could or couldn't be relied on to sting a person."

"I'm afraid, Kirby, you're working your imagination overtime again. What you sensed was a basic mutual antagonism. I have never liked Brent, and he has never liked me."

She shrugged. "All right, Roger." But she was still mystified and uneasy. "Will you taste this chocolate?"

She poured some into a glass. He tasted it. He put the glass down. "It tastes like nothing to me but hot chocolate. If you insist, I'll have Jeff take a sample into town for analysis. Did you notice any symptoms?"

"I thought so, but I wasn't sure."

"My dear girl, is there *anything* you're sure of? You say you saw Gertrude in your patio. Are you sure of that?"

"Doesn't this shred of lavender chiffon prove it?"

"Kirby, you've built, in your own mind, a very elaborate and a very convincing hypothesis, but you have not proved it."

"Don't these spiders prove anything?"

"That's the trouble! You can make them prove anything."

"Doesn't this shred of chiffon prove anything?"

"The shred," he answered, "merely proves that Gertrude was at some time in your patio. She has been very restless since my accident. She often goes out and prowls about the grounds at night."

"In a chiffon dressing-gown?"

"Why not?"

"Do you hear that wind? It would have blown this shred away."

"Kirby, you are forgetting that you're dealing with circumstantial evidence. No court in the land would accept this evidence as proof of your claims. The wind might have blown it away. It might not have. The truth is, your facts are not demonstrable."

"The black widows—" Kirby began.

"Any girl who finds three black widows in her bed is entitled to her suspicions—and a full-grown case of hysteria. I think your hysteria has run its course. I hope so. Your suspicions, I think, we've pretty well answered."

"Have we?" Kirby said wearily. "I don't know what to think."

"Even in the laboratory we come on amazing coincidences, and sometimes they throw us off. That's exactly what Professor Dendry and I have been discussing. A certain series of coincidences was what threw the final experiments off. I definitely suspected that that was the trouble. He has just confirmed it, so that we are now on the right track—the last lap of the right track. However, we must not ignore your intuition. Let's adopt an attitude of unrelaxing vigilance."

He was smiling mysteriously. Something, Kirby realized, was happening, but she could not guess what it was. There was elation in his smile, but it was not elation over the successful outcome of his talk with Professor Dendry. It was sinister and strange and baffling.

"Perhaps," he said, "you'd better go back to bed. You're tired. It's been a hard day. If you wish, we can go into this again tomorrow."

She felt her face growing hot. She supposed she was too tired to think clearly. And she was trembling. Something had happened. and she could not guess what it was. Something had been happening all the time Brent was in this room. Something was still happening. It was in his eyes, which were so steady on hers, and his smile, which was so elated. She nervously ran her fingers through her hair and realized too late that it was the gesture he hated so.

"I'm convinced it's one of two things," she answered. "An elaborate plan to get rid of both of us and to get hold of your money—or something to do with this war-secret of yours."

He was shaking his head and still smiling. "But they haven't tried to kill me." He reached up and pressed the wall button.

He was watching her, still with that patronizing smile.

SOMETHING was wrong. Something was dreadfully wrong.

She ran her fingers through her hair again. This time she did it deliberately. Always, when she made that gesture. it angered him. It had never failed to anger him.

He was gazing at her blandly and smiling.

The door opened. Brent came in.

"Tell Professor Dendry," her father said, "I am very anxious to see him at once. Tell him it's rather urgent."

"Yes sir," Brent said coldly, and withdrew.

"Is it about this?" Kirby asked.

"No, my dear. Your problems must wait until morning. I want you to get a good night's sleep. Here. I think you need these. These will make you sleep."

He opened a small round white box and took from it three capsules filled with yellow powder.

"Take them all."

She accepted them and got up. She felt baffled and bewildered and dreadfully tired. She walked wearily out of the room. Outside the door, a wave of faintness went over her. She staggered to the chair beside the door in which, a short time before. Jeff had been sitting. She placed the capsules in the breast pocket of her shirt, dropped her face into her hands and tried to subdue her faintness and her trembling.

She felt lost and frightened. She heard a scuffling sound and glanced up. Professor Dendry, in a shapeless gray bathrobe, was shuffling toward her. His stubbly white beard was like a halo about his chin. In the dust-colored bathrobe, with his waxen white face, he looked like a ghost.

He smiled sleepily and said: "Aren't you up pretty late. Kirby?"

She did not answer. She watched him go into the room. Her father said: "Well, Dendry! I hated to drag you out of bed, but I've got an idea. I hope you don't mind."

"Of course not, Roger! What is it?"

"My idea is to go over the entire operation so that we can be sure you understand it. I'd like you to repeat it to me from the beginning. Just start in and explain it as if I knew nothing whatever about it. Wait a minute! You'd better close that door."

Kirby heard the door click shut. The murmur of the two men's voices began again, and presently she heard nothing but the thin, monotonous voice of Professor Dendry.

Even in her confusion, she realized how dangerous this was. Perhaps for the first time, a complete exposition of her father's discovery was to be given. She hoped that in her search of the room she had not overlooked the ingenious secret hiding-place of a dictaphone. For if one of her guesses was right, if the sinister people in this house were trying to steal that secret, this would be their golden chance. . . .

The truth struck her with such shocking force that she sprang up. It had really been so obvious all this time.

The door beside her was flung open, and Professor Dendry came running out. His white hair was rumpled. The gray bathrobe had slipped off one shoulder. In his agitation, he looked ludicrous.

"The man in that room is not your father!" he panted.

"I know it!" Kirby cried.

"He is an impostor! He is not your father, Kirby! What have they done with your father?"

"I don't know," she whimpered.

"They've killed your father and substituted this man!"

The man who resembled her father so remarkably came striding out of the bedroom. He struck Professor Dendry with swinging fists. The scientist fell. The back of his head struck the wall beside the chair in which Kirby had been sitting. He slid down and lay still.

Brent came trotting into the room. He glanced at Kirby. then stared at the man who had been substituted for her father.

"Wouldn't he talk?" the houseman said coldly.

"He began," the impostor answered.

"But you didn't get it?"

"No. We've got to go through with it."

Kirby started to run. She heard Brent, and the man who had been substituted for her father, running after her. She reached her room. slammed her door behind her and locked it a second before one of the men struck it.

"Miss Kirby," she heard Brent's voice. "Please unlock this door. Let us explain. You don't understand. There is nothing to be afraid of. I will explain everything."

Kirby snatched up her flashlight; she made sure of her revolver in her pocket and she went out through a window. She ran through the patio and to the tackroom, where she snatched up a bridle and picked up her saddle and its blanket from the rack. She ran out through the main corral and let herself into the pasture, closing the gates behind her.

Back in the house, they had broken down her door and found now that she had escaped; for the man she had known as Brent was calling: "Miss Crassingway! Miss Crassingway, where are you? There is nothing wrong! Where are you?"

Kirby was running through the pasture, calling softly, "Susannah! Susannah!" In the darkness she could not see even the pasture fence. A horse whinnied, and she heard it moving toward her.

Susannah's velvety nose touched her cheek, and Kirby reached out and felt the mare's mane.

She put on the bridle, then the blanket and saddle.

At the house, the shouts for her had ceased; and she gussed that "Brent" and the substitute for her father—whoever he was—were searching for her.

KIRBY was leading the mare to the lower end of the pasture. She found the fence, followed it to the gate, led Susannah out and left the gate open. In the darkness she heard the other horses following.

She swung herself into the saddle and touched Susannah's flanks with her heels. The mare moved down the arroyo, in the direction of the old ranch-house.

Her father. she was sure, was there—if he was alive anywhere.

When had the sinister substitute been brought in, and her father taken away?

She suddenly realized when it had been. When she had last seen Jeff. sitting in front of her father's door, guarding it, Professor Dendry had been in the room talking with her father—and that had really been her father.

Jeff had gone to his quarters, and she had returned to her room and crawled out the window and into her patio, and found the shred of chiffon on the hedge. While she was in the patio, the change had been made. Professor Dendry had gone to his room; her father had been drugged and taken away; the substitute brought in—and Professor Dendry called back to rehearse to the substitute all the details of work in the laboratory at Volonne.

Kirby's mind slipped back over the grotesque occurrences since her arrival; and for the first time she could arrange them in some sort of a pattern; for the first time, everything that had happened began to have a reason. A frightful reason; but a reason.

CHAPTER 9

WHEN Kirby reached the wash a half-mile above No Le Hace, she touched the mare's flanks with her heels and let her run the rest of the way. As she made the last turn into the straightaway that ran past the old ranch-house, she saw a glint of light at a window; but as she watched it, the light went out.

Just below the old ranch-house, she dismounted and tethered Susannah to a mesquite. With her flashlight in her left hand and her pistol in her right, she started toward the house.

She did not switch on her flashlight, but merely held it ready, as she was holding ready her revolver. She did not remember, at that moment, how old were the cartridges in the chambers of the revolver. The feel of the butt in her palm and the trigger at her finger strengthened her. She was armed—armed and also protected by the dark. Her father was in that house; and she was going to save him.

Twice, as she advanced, she jumped to her right; her nerves required that much of her. Twice she spun around. But no one was behind her; nothing threatened her—except the silence and darkness of the ranch-house where there had been, a minute ago, a glint of light.

Kirby came to the door.

"Who are you?" a voice challenged her from inside the door—a woman's voice, Gertrude's voice.

"It's I, Gertrude—it's Kirby," she answered almost steadily.

"Anybody with you?"

"No. . . . Gertrude, is Father here? Is he with you?"

"Your father—" Gertrude's voice repeated, and trailed away.

"Gertrude, let me in!" and Kirby struck the door with her hand with the pistol in it.

The door opened and it was darker inside than without.

Kirby snapped on her flashlight.

The beam caught Gertrude's face, gleaming into Gertrude's eyes—her wide, surprised eyes. Below the beam, while Kirby held it in Gertrude's eyes, Kirby saw that Gertrude was holding a revolver as she herself was holding her revolver. And she knew that Gertrude saw that too.

Kirby swung the light, and it caught a cot with a man lying on it—her father with his bandaged face. His eyes were closed, and he was lying still. His hands were crossed on his stomach, and the wrists were tied together with a cord.

"You've killed him now, Gertrude?" Kirby said.

"I've not killed him," Gertrude's voice denied. "Nobody's killed him. He's not dead. You can go and see."

Kirby went to the cot. She stepped past Gertrude, leaving Gertrude holding the pistol behind her. Kirby kept hold of her pistol, but she did not point it at Gertrude now. Kirby put her weapon down on the cot beside her father, while with her fingers she touched his temple and cheek and his lips. He was warm; he was breathing.

"You see," Gertrude was whispering beside her. "You see, he's not dead. . . . What happened at the house?"

"What happened?" Kirby repeated, still touching her father's face with her right hand, while she continued to hold her flashlight with her left.

She wanted to pick up her pistol; and Gertrude knew she wanted to. Gertrude expected her to move to pick it up; and what Gertrude then would have done, Kirby never knew.

Kirby made no move toward her pistol; instead she jumped back from the cot and caught Gertrude's wrist.

Kirby dropped the flashlight, and her left hand reinforced her right on Gertrude's wrist, holding the revolver pointed up.

She pushed Gertrude, and Gertrude tripped or stumbled. They both fell, with Gertrude underneath and striking on her back, her head hitting the bare hard floor.

Kirby kept hold of Gertrude's wrist; and Gertrude's grasp of her pistol relaxed. Kirby took it from her and got up.

The flashlight had not gone out, but was pointed into a corner. Kirby picked up the flashlight and inspected Gertrude.

"You better stay where you are, Gertrude," Kirby commanded her. "Stay just where you are."

"What happened at the house?" Gertrude asked her again.

"You know what happened! Oh, you know what happened! . . . What did you do to Roger?"

"I put him to sleep," Gertrude replied. "That's all."

"You drugged him, you mean."

"So they wouldn't kill him—so they wouldn't have to kill him. Don't you see?"

"Who wouldn't have to kill him?"

Gertrude did not reply. She was listening, and Kirby saw it, and she listened and looked out.

Headlights were coming up the wash.

Gertrude sat up. "They're coming," she announced.

"I see."

"They want to kill Roger. I don't," Gertrude said. "Do you see that?"

"Don't get up, Gertrude."

The headlights had come close and disappeared.

That meant, of course, that the lights had been switched off; the men—there might be three of them, Kirby well knew—were approaching the house on foot. Very likely they were separating, to come from different sides.

Kirby backed to the cot and laid down her flashlight to pick up her own pistol. She put it in her pocket, keeping Gertrude's revolver in her right hand. She picked up her flashlight again and snapped the light off.

"Kirby," Gertrude appealed to her in the blackness. "Tell me what happened at the house."

"Professor Dendry found he wasn't talking to Roger."

"Did they kill him?"

"Professor Dendry? Not while I was there. They knocked him out."

"Brenzel did it?" Gertrude asked.

"Is that the name of the man like Roger?"

"No. I meant Brent."

"Oh."

"He tried to kill you. I didn't."

"Brent, you mean?"

"With the spiders."

"Yes."

"Kirby, don't you see that all the time I was saving your father?"

Someone at the side of the house whistled, and immediately repeated the same note.

"There's an answer to that?" Kirby whispered to Gertrude.

"Yes. I'm not giving it."

"That's Brent?" Kirby asked.

Gertrude did not answer, and Kirby went to the side window. A pane was out, and through the clear space she could see vaguely a man's figure. She fired above his head, and instantly a revolver flashed and spoke in return. Bullets crashed into the room.

KIRBY crouched and waited until they ceased. She heard Gertrude moving somewhere in the darkness. Kirby crept to the door.

Someone was outside, and she emptied Gertrude's revolver through the panels. Bullets came back; and Kirby, crouching, feared for her father. He was in line with these bullets; but Gertrude was nearer in line.

Kirby heard Gertrude gasp and fall. Kirby pulled her own pistol from her pocket and snapped it. The first cartridge did not fire, nor the second; but the next two were good.

One of these bullets, or one she had fired from Gertrude's revolver, seemed to have hit the man outside; for in the silence now, Kirby heard him scrambling away. Somebody came to help him; and slowly they went off.

Kirby found her flashlight. She turned it first on her father. He was lying just as he was, in a stupor but not dead nor wounded. No bullet had hit him.

One had hit Gertrude; she was lying in the middle of the floor. Kirby knelt beside her.

Outside, at a little distance, a motor started; headlights flared out, and a car drove away.

Two men—two at least—had come; and now they both seemed to have gone. One of them had been hit.

Kirby, listening, snapped out her flashlight. After a few moments, when she heard no sound nor sensed any new alarm, she put on the light again.

Gertrude did not speak or stir. A bullet had gone through her breast. There was the wound, but with little bleeding from it. Little bleeding externally, that was. In such an injury, the great bleeding would be internal—impossible to stop. Gertrude coughed and choked in her unconsciousness; and Kirby knew that a lung was filling up. Gertrude was dying, and nothing could be done for her.

Kirby could do nothing for her father but watch over him and wait until the effects of the drug he had been given could wear away. She examined him again and returned to Gertrude.

Still there was no sound nor sign of any presence outside; but Kirby once more extinguished her light. It was of no use, and it might attract a shot from somewhere. So, in the dark, she sat on the floor beside Gertrude and near to her father.

She remembered that they had been on a honeymoon —a honeymoon following a marriage made, and now about to be ended, by one of the workings of a world at war. A world at total war, in which nothing that can make for victory for one side—and for defeat for the other—nothing could be neglected.

It was obvious that the Nazis had not neglected Roger Crassingway.

German scientists of course had known about him in the years before the war. Kirby could remember, when she was a child, a German physicist who visited her father, and who after his return to Germany corresponded with him. After Hitler took over the Reich and attacked Poland, the international exchange of scientific knowledge largely ceased; but by that time Roger Crassingway must have been marked on the Nazi lists as a man whose genius could be of great value in modern war.

Perhaps someone was assigned to watch him at Volonne; and the Nazis saw the usefulness of his work before he himself appreciated it. For before he went to Washington, Gertrude had appeared.

When Roger first met Gertrude—Kirby recollected—he had not yet succeeded in interesting anybody on any of the war boards. The usefulness of his experiments was hard to see; so if he wanted to employ an interesting and attractive stranger as his secretary, that was his business and his alone.

Later, when the Government experts began to show interest in the work at Volonne, it would not have been possible for Gertrude or anyone else to associate herself with him so easily; but as it was, Gertrude already was his secretary, and more than that, he was emotionally involved with her—if he was not really in love with her—when his closer contacts with the war effort began.

How, Kirby wondered as she sat in the dark beside the dying woman, had Gertrude overcome her father's lifelong distrust of women and lured him into liking her, and on into marriage?

That must, at first at least, have been a trying task. Gertrude must have been repeatedly offended and rebuffed. But Gertrude could not give up. She endured whatever rudeness he offered; she let nothing discourage her; and so she had changed his antagonism to affection—or to some sort of emotional fascination that made him marry her.

And meanwhile, what had been happening, emotionally, within herself? What would Gertrude say for herself, if she could speak again?

Well, she had said something for herself, in almost the last words she had spoken:

"Don't you see, Kirby, that all the time I was saving your father?"

What did that mean? For certainly she must have been from the beginning at the center of the scheme against him. But what, at first, was the scheme against him?

Very likely, in the first place, it involved no more than the expectation that Gertrude, after insinuating herself into a close and confidential position with him, would be able to get from him the details of his work.

But she found she could not do it. Who, then, was responsible for the next move which was made? Gertrude, or somebody else? Brent—or Brenzel, as Gertrude once called him?

No one could get into the laboratory but Roger and Professor Dendry; and if an outsider did get in, he could not by his mere entry uncover the complex secret of the work. Kirby knew that much; and Gertrude undoubtedly also knew that. It was essential that whoever got into the laboratory, have the work minutely and accurately detailed to him.

Kirby clearly could visualize the scheme taking shape. Suppose that "they"—whoever "they" were, besides Gertrude and Brenzel—could put a substitute for Professor Dendry in the laboratory?

Very likely "they" thought of something like that first; but it could not be done, perhaps because they had no near double for Professor Dendry, and perhaps because they considered Roger too astute to be caught by such a trick.

But they had—or at least they found—a near double for Roger Crassingway; and they could make him a more convincing double by a simple process as old as the intrigues of the Middle Ages or of the Romans or of any time that people began plotting against each other.

Injure Roger, and injure his near-double in exactly the same way, and not only would their similarities be actually increased, but any difference in the substitute—when he presented himself as Roger—would be put down to the effects of the injury.

That of course was the cause of the "accident" a week ago. A horseman—doubtless Sarka—had followed Roger up the wash, or more likely, had ambushed him along the way; had struck him over the head and knocked him unconscious. Then her father had been carried into the old ranch-house. It was, Kirby guessed, in one of its rooms that he had seen the three men with handkerchiefs over their faces—Sarka, Brent and the man who resembled her father.

The smell of chloroform, the mystery of the dental wax in his teeth—all of this was explained so easily! It was all part of the carefully worked-out plot to substitute the strange man for him. He had been chloroformed while a wax impression was taken of his teeth. One of these men was obviously a surgeon who had cut his face in numerous places and had then precisely duplicated all the cuts on the substitute's face. In the time that had elapsed since then, the substitute's teeth had been worked on until they matched her father's.

Kirby snapped on her flashlight and gazed again at Gertrude and saw she was still unconscious. Her breathing was shallower and slower but it continued. Kirby went to her father and found no change in him.

Had he known, after his injury on that ride, that he was in danger; and had he secretly suspected Gertrude? Had his bitter pride prevented him from accusing her; or had

his pride been so great that he could not believe that the woman who had won him had married him only to trick him?

Kirby thought back over the incidents following her arrival; and she realized what an obstacle she must have been to "their" plans. No wonder one of them had tried to kill her.

That was Brent—or Brenzel. Or Gertrude had said it was. Anyway, someone had tried to kill her in the most subtle and safest way—with the spiders.

In one way—and Kirby wondered whether perhaps Gertrude had argued this— Kirby's presence was an advantage to "them"; for though she suspected something was wrong, she had no idea of the actual nature of the scheme. When she faced the substitute in her father's place, she did not know it was not her father.

This must have been useful to "them" as it would help to allay any uneasiness that Professor Dendry might have felt when he talked with the substitute for her father.

But in that interview something went very wrong; and Kirby guessed what it was. "They" had provided the substitute with the appearance and trained him in the tricks of speech and in the mannerisms of Roger Crassingway but they could not provide him with Roger Crassingway's brain; and Professor Dendry had discovered it.

Where was Professor Dendry now? At the house, undoubtedly; but was he living or dead?

Gertrude was choking and Kirby returned to her. The effort for breath seemed almost to revive her for an instant. Kirby left the flashlight burning and laid it on the floor so she could watch Gertrude. Unable to do anything more, she clasped Gertrude's hands and Gertrude's fingers gave back a faint pressure.

Gertrude's eyes opened once and closed; the faint pressure of her fingers ceased; her choking ceased; she gave a last gasp—was dead.

Where was Jeff Bixden? The impostor had sent him to Tucson; but was it perhaps to waylay him on the road? Or had "they" been satisfied merely to get Jeff out of the house? Manifestly Jeff had not been one of them.

How carefully, in small details, they had prepared their plan. There was, for example, the item of the sore on Negra's knee. It might have been made by Sarka with sandpaper.

A car was coming. Headlight beams gleamed and swayed and swung as the car bumped over the road.

Kirby picked up Gertrude's pistol and snapped off the flashlight. She remembered, then, that she had emptied Gertrude's pistol. In her own revolver were two untried cartridges which might—and might not—fire. She rose to her feet.

The car came closer—much closer than before.

"Kirby!" she heard her name called. Jeff was calling: "Kirby! Kirby! Where are you?"

It was not the car, and the men, who had been here before. This was Jeff!

Her knees crumpled in her relief but she caught herself up. She switched on her flashlight, turned it on the door, and saw Jeff come in.

"Kirby! You're all right?"

"Yes; I'm all right." Then she turned her light on her father upon the cot; and then on Gertrude on the floor.

THEY were at Jubilo Pringal's—Kirby and her father and Jeff. She and Jeff had succeeded in carrying her father to the car; they had lifted Gertrude's body to the cot on which Roger had lain. They had left Gertrude there and driven to Jubilo Pringal's, where Jeff had done a lot of telephoning.

"More than anything else," he repeated to Kirby, when they were alone and between them they had to go over events again, "it was the expression on your face when I went into your father's room. You looked so scared. When I got the car out of the garage, I almost didn't go. Driving along, I got more worried about you, thinking of things you had said the day before. I didn't turn back nearly as soon as I should—but I did turn back, thank God. . . . Then I got to No Le Hace and found it empty, except for Professor Dendry, bound and gagged. . . . When I cut him loose, he couldn't tell me much of what happened. He didn't know. But I guessed, if you were anywhere—your father and you—you were out there. . . . And what was happening to you! And what you did, Kirby! . . . But it might have been you, and not Gertrude, who got it. . . . I think I need a stiff drink," Jeff finished. "Then we better look at your father. He ought to be waking up soon."

KIRBY and her father were at No Le Hace and were ready to leave it. The inquiries and investigations were over. Professor Dendry was back in Volonne. And Gertrude was buried.

For another of "them," a burial service soon would be read in a little Nevada town where he had been captured. Brenzel—who had gone under the name of Brent—had a turn for the worse with his wound.

The German who had taken employment under the name of Sarka and the man, known as Keldar, who had attempted the impersonation of Roger Crassingway, also had been taken. They were in safe custody in Nevada and Jeff, who had been in Tucson, was returning with the information which had been got from them.

"If you think it would be any satisfaction to your father," Jeff said to Kirby when she met him, "you might tell him that both Brenzel and Sarka complained about Gertrude. She was in the scheme, of course; but she wouldn't always do exactly what the others wanted. From what was gathered from them, she told you the truth when she said she was trying to save your father—at least from being killed. She did really care about him; and she wouldn't go with them all the way. That's one reason Brenzel shot so freely into the old ranch-house. He knew that she was there with your father and you; and he didn't care whether he hit her or not."

"I'll tell Father," Kirby said. "It's little enough; but still it's something—something to salvage from his honeymoon."

She looked up at Jeff and, looking down at her, he asked: "Will this make it impossible for you to think of a honeymoon?"

Kirby shook her head. "Mine will never be like this."

"Nor mine."

"Yours?"

"Ours!" Jeff corrected, hastily. "Say it, Kirby! Ours!"

"Ours!" Kirby said, obediently; and, with Jeff's arms about her, it was minutes before she went to find her father.

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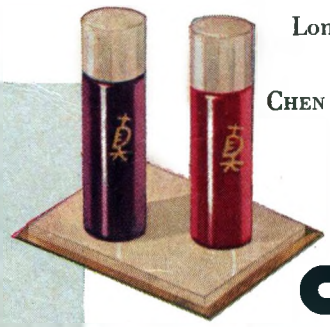

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