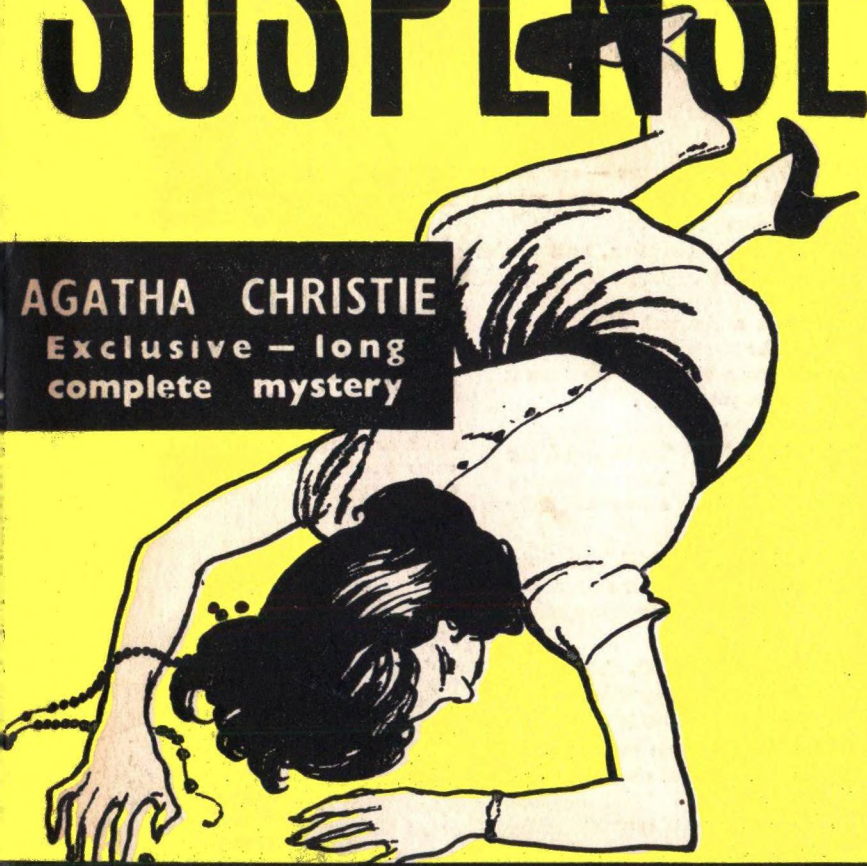


SEPTEMBER 1960 • 2/6

SUSPENSE

AGATHA CHRISTIE

Exclusive — long
complete mystery



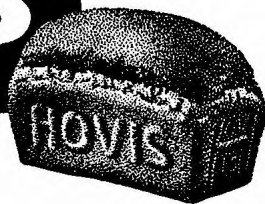
ERROL FLYNN'S 'lost' novel—SHOWDOWN

CHRISTIANN BRAND • COL. 'SPYCATCHER' PINTO

JACK SCHAEFER • JULIAN SYMONS • JOHN WYNDHAM

 **A FLEETWAY MAGAZINE**

WHY?



Don't just say brown — say Hovis. That's what we've been saying month after month — and we've been rather expecting you to ask 'Why should I?'

It's a fair question, and you're entitled to know the facts — so here they are. Judge for yourself.

When a miller makes wheat into flour, he doesn't just crush the grain into powder—he separates it into three parts.

These are:—

- 1. THE WHITE 'KERNEL'** of the wheat grain. This is mainly starch, and the experts call it the endosperm.
- 2. THE HUSK OR BRAN.** This is the tough, fibrous outer skin of the grain, which our digestive systems cannot absorb.
- 3. THE WHEATGERM.** This contains a high proportion of the wheat's nourishing properties.

Now what happens to these three parts of the wheat once they have been separated? That depends upon what kind of flour the miller intends to make. For instance . . .

WHITE FLOUR is made from the white endosperm alone. The bran is taken out and used to make animal foods. The wheatgerm goes too—and to make up for its loss, synthetic vitamins and other nutrients are added.

BROWN FLOUR varies, but usually contains endosperm, part of the wheatgerm, and a fair proportion of bran. Wholemeal flour is made from the whole grain, with nothing added and nothing taken away.

HOVIS FLOUR. This is natural, creamy-white flour, from which all the indigestible bran has been taken away. The wheatgerm has gone, too—but only temporarily. It is lightly toasted to improve its flavour and then put back into the flour. *Then extra wheatgerm is added, so that the bread contains about eight times the normal amount.*

Well, now you know the facts, what do you think? Have we been fair to say 'Don't just say brown — say Hovis'? Or should we go even further and say . . .

Don't just

say bread — say

Hovis

SEPTEMBER
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SUSPENSE

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Cover drawing by Robb

***OH, how
I hate these
detectives!***

by **CHRISTIANN BRAND**

PLEASE read to the end of the sentence after this and then close your eyes and think for a minute.

If you were offered a Personality Platform—seven hundred words or so, to say just what you liked about anything you chose—what would your immediate reaction be?

Yes, I know—me too. Isn't it a sad, sad reflection upon human nature that the first thing both of us thought of was: Good! Now I can tell about all the things I *hate*.

Well, some of them: after all, we've only got seven hundred words.

The first and foremost thing I hate is the whole school of sloshy detectives. I hate them with Stately Home backgrounds and I hate them without. I hate hearts of gold beating beneath the sophisticated gloss of a nice taste in claret and a nasty line in wit at the expense of "inferiors"; I hate them beating beneath the outwardly tough approach, with an equally nasty line in wit at the expense of corpses. I hate the inferiors anyway, silly clots, with *their* hearts of gold and all those hammy remarks about, "Champagne, my lord?—something in the nature of cider wouldn't that be?" and their great, rough, calloused hands that can be very gentle; just as much as I hate the wise-cracking

PLATFORM

One of the most successful thriller writers of the day lets off steam about a few of her pet aversions

ones with snazzy pet names all round, lots more wit at the expense of the dames and the stiffs (if the stiffs are dames, that makes it perfect) and underneath it all, deep, deep down, just a little-boy hero-worship of The Boss . . .

And I hate the whimsy wives with their twisty smiles and their nutmeg voices grating out an aching line or two to show that beneath the determined façade of unsentimentality lies a deeply tender understanding of the difficult male; I'm afraid I hate them just as much when they're simply ripping and ordinary, taking the kiddies to the seaside just like you and me. I hate the kiddies themselves with their great, dark eyes in haunting little, wistful frog faces and the wise, old-fashioned things they say and do. I hate the brassy girl-friends almost worst of all, so loyal and true and ready to put up with the sickening infidelities of their own private Private Eyes—for whom Roving Eye would seem to be a better name.

The fact is, I don't think detectives—our detectives—should have personal relationships at all, not lasting ones. I don't think they should have chummy sergeants in regular attendance, or clean-limbed young neophytes drinking in their every word. I don't think they should fall in love, not permanently, and I certainly don't think they ought to get married. Unlike other authors, we crime writers are most of us stuck with one figure who comes into all our books; perhaps we get to know him too well, this curiously static, ageless creature who is so constantly with us, and there is a tendency in us, when creating a private life for him, to create it in fact for ourselves—wishfulfilment wives and kiddies and girl-friends for the men; wishfulfilment portrayals of our own personalities in the case of the women.

Personally, lest I should be similarly tempted, I modelled my own detective on my father-in-law, so I simply couldn't fall in

love with him without committing some sort of second-hand incest. He is elderly and irascible anyway (my detective, I mean) and as to any heart of gold, he is popularly believed to have one somewhere, but the consensus of opinion among his fellow characters is that it is so infinitesimal and you have to dig so deep down to get at it that it's hardly worth the trouble. If he has a fine taste in anything, it is in beer; but he hasn't, he just likes a glass in a nice country pub. I daresay that, as many of us secretly do, he dearly loves a lord, but he would certainly prefer to make a joke at the expense of aristocratic feelings than risk wounding those of "an inferior"; though I doubt that he recognises anyone as inferior.

And if I hate the heart-of-gold school, I equally hate the no-heart-at-all kind: and this I really do mean. I hate cheap callousness disguised as wit; I hate and loathe descriptions of cruelty and pain, of brutality and protracted violence. I can't stand books in which children or animals suffer; I don't consider that these are fit subjects for "entertainment literature". I think that as writers we should be able to cook up the thrills, the vicarious terrors that you, as our readers, require of us, without recourse to real-life, credible suffering. The crime story has broadened out now to include the serious study of murder and all it entails; but for the ordinary mystery story in all its manifestations I think that an essential unreality is very important. I think we should use all our craft to create an illusion of reality, but that this should be only, and deliberately, a sort of stage effect, just one remove from the real reality of the only-too-real suffering and cruelty that goes on in the world . . .

But, oh, dear! Looking back over that last paragraph, it begins to look a little as though *I* had a heart of gold.

I'd hate that.

THE PERSONALITY

Christianna Brand, creator of Inspector "Cockie" Cockrill, lives in a Regency house in London with her surgeon husband and a red-headed daughter of nearly twelve. The household also includes two Siamese cats, one dachshund puppy, currently one fledgling blackbird in indifferent health, six highly neurotic hens and two tortoises.

Miss Brand has been writing crime fiction since just before the war and has never won an award of any kind. This, she claims, makes her virtually unique.

Her latest book is called "Heaven Knows Who" and is a study of the real-life case of Jessie M'Lachlan, tried for murder in Glasgow 100 years ago. It will be published in early September.



‘At
three-twenty-eight
I shall
kill myself’

THE DREAM

*Exclusive long complete
story*

by **AGATHA CHRISTIE**

NOW TURN OVER

AGATHA CHRISTIE, queen of crime writers, presents you with another baffling mystery. This story appears exclusively in *Suspense* before its publication in book form later this year.

HERCULE POIROT gave the house a steady, appraising glance. His eyes wandered a moment to its surroundings, the shops, the big factory building on the right, the blocks of cheap mansion flats opposite.

Then once more his eyes returned to Northway House, relic of an earlier age—an age of space and leisure, when green fields had surrounded its well-bred arrogance. Now it was an anachronism, submerged and forgotten in the hectic sea of modern London, and not one man in fifty could have told you where it stood.

Furthermore, very few people could have told you to whom it belonged, though its owner's name would have been recognized as that of one of the world's richest men. But money can quench publicity as well as flaunt it. Benedict Farley, that eccentric millionaire, chose not to advertise his choice of residence. He himself was rarely seen, seldom making a public appearance. From time to time he appeared at board meetings, his lean figure, beaked nose, and rasping voice easily dominating the assembled directors. Apart from that, he was just a well-known figure of legend. There were his strange meannesses, his incredible generousities, as well as more personal details—his famous patchwork dressing gown, now reputed to be twenty-eight years old, his invariable diet of cabbage soup and caviare, his hatred of cats. All these things the public knew.

Hercule Poirot knew them also. It was all he did know of the

man he was about to visit. The letter which was in his coat pocket told him little more.

After surveying this melancholy landmark of a past age for a minute or two in silence, he walked up the steps to the front door and pressed the bell, glancing as he did so at his neat wrist-watch, which had at last replaced an earlier favourite—the large turnip-faced watch of earlier days. Yes, it was exactly nine-thirty. As ever, Hercule Poirot was exact to the minute.

The door opened after just the right interval. A perfect specimen of the genus butler stood outlined against the lighted hall.

“Mr. Benedict Farley?” asked Hercule Poirot.

The impersonal glance surveyed him from head to foot, inoffensively but effectively.

“You have an appointment, sir?” asked the suave voice.

“Yes.”

“Your name, sir?”

“Monsieur Hercule Poirot.”

The butler bowed and drew back. Hercule Poirot entered the house. The butler closed the door behind him.

But there was yet one more formality before the deft hands took hat and stick from the visitor.

“You will excuse me, sir. I was to ask for a letter.”

With deliberation Poirot took from his pocket the folded letter and handed it to the butler. The latter gave it a mere glance, then returned it with a bow. Hercule Poirot returned it to his pocket. Its contents were simple.

Northway House, W.8.

M. HERCULE POIROT.

Dear Sir,

Mr. Benedict Farley would like to have the benefit of your advice. If convenient to yourself, he would be glad if you would call upon him at the above address at 9.30 tomorrow (Thursday) evening.

Yours truly,

HUGO CORNWORTHY

(Secretary)

P.S. Please bring this letter with you.

Deftly the butler relieved Poirot of hat, stick and overcoat. He said, “Will you please come up to Mr. Cornworthy’s room?”

He led the way up the broad staircase. Poirot followed him, looking with appreciation at such *objets d’art* as were of an opulent and florid nature. His taste in art was always somewhat bourgeois.

On the first floor the butler knocked on a door.

Hercule Poirot’s eyebrows rose very slightly. It was the first

jarring note. For the best butlers do not knock at doors—and yet indubitably this was a first-class butler!

It was, so to speak, the first intimation of contact with the eccentricity of a millionaire.

A voice from within called out something. The butler threw open the door. He announced (and again Poirot sensed the deliberate departure from orthodoxy), "The gentleman you are expecting, sir."

Poirot passed into the room. It was a fair-sized room, very plainly furnished in a workmanlike fashion, with filing cabinets, books of reference, a couple of easy chairs, and a large and imposing desk covered with neatly docketed papers.

The corners of the room were dim, for the only light came from a big, green-shaded reading lamp which stood on a small table by the arm of one of the easy chairs. It was placed so as to cast its full light on anyone approaching from the door. Hercule Poirot blinked a little, realising that the lamp bulb was at least 150 watts.

In the armchair sat a thin figure in a patchwork dressing gown—Benedict Farley. His head was stuck forward, his beaked nose projecting like that of a bird. A crest of white hair like that of a cockatoo rose above his forehead. His eyes glittered behind thick lenses as he peered suspiciously at his visitor.

"Hey," he said at last. His voice was shrill and harsh, with a rasping note in it. "So you're Hercule Poirot, hey?"

"At your service," said Poirot politely and bowed, one hand on the back of the chair.

"Sit down—sit down," said the old man testily.

Hercule Poirot sat down—in the full glare of the lamp. From behind it, the old man seemed to be studying him attentively.

"How do I know you're Hercule Poirot—hey?" he demanded fretfully. "Tell me that—hey."

Once more Poirot drew the letter from his pocket and handed it to Farley.

"Yes," admitted the millionaire grudgingly. "That's it. That's what I got Cornworthy to write." He folded it up and tossed it back. "So you're the fellow, are you?"

Poirot said, "I assure you there is no deception!"

Benedict Farley chuckled suddenly. "That's what the conjuror says before he takes the goldfish out of the hat! Saying that is part of the trick, you know."

Poirot did not reply. Farley said suddenly, "Think I'm a suspicious old man, hey? So I am. Don't trust anybody! That's my motto. Can't trust anybody when you're rich. No, no, it doesn't do."

"You wished," Poirot hinted gently, "to consult me?"

The old man nodded. "That's right. Always buy the best. That's my motto. Go to the expert and don't count the cost. You'll notice, Monsieur Poirot, I haven't asked you your fee. I'm not going to! Send me in the bill later—I shan't cut up rough over it. Damned fools at the dairy thought they could charge me two and nine for eggs when two and seven's the market price—lot of swindlers! I won't be swindled. But the man at the top's different. He's worth the money. I'm at the top myself—I know."

Hercule Poirot made no reply. He listened attentively, his head poised a little on one side. Behind his impassive exterior he was conscious of a feeling of disappointment. He could not exactly put his finger on it. So far Benedict Farley had run true to type—that is, he had conformed to the popular idea of himself; and yet—Poirot was disappointed.

"The man," he said disgustedly to himself, "is a mountebank—nothing but a mountebank!"

He had known other millionaires, eccentric men too, but in nearly every case he had been conscious of a certain force, an inner energy that had commanded his respect. If they had worn a patchwork dressing gown, it would have been because they liked wearing such a dressing gown. But Benedict Farley's dressing gown, or so it seemed to Poirot, was essentially a stage property. And the man himself was essentially stagey. Every word he spoke was uttered, so Poirot felt assured, sheerly for effect.

He repeated again unemotionally, "You wished to consult me, Mr. Farley?"

Abruptly the millionaire's manner changed. He leaned forward. His voice dropped to a croak. "Yes. Yes . . . I want to hear what you've got to say—what you think . . . Go to the top! That's my way! The best doctor—the best detective—it's between the two of them."

"As yet, monsieur, I do not understand."

"Naturally," snapped Farley. "I haven't begun to tell you." He leaned forward once more and shot out an abrupt question. "What do you know, Monsieur Poirot, about dreams?"

The detective's eyebrows rose. Whatever he had expected, it was not this. He said, "For that, Monsieur Farley, I should recommend Napoleon's *Book of Dreams*—or the latest practising psychologist from Harley Street."

Benedict Farley said soberly, "I've tried both . . ." There was a pause, then the millionaire spoke, at first almost in a whisper, then with a voice growing higher and higher. "It's the same dream—night after night. And I'm afraid, I tell you—I'm

afraid . . . It's always the same. I'm sitting in my room next door to this. Sitting at my desk, writing, There's a clock there and I glance at it and see the time—exactly twenty-eight minutes past three. Always the same time, you understand.

"And when I see the time, Monsieur Poirot, I know I've got to do it. I don't want to do it—I loathe doing it—but I've got to . . ."

His voice has risen shrilly.

Unperturbed, Hercule Poirot said, "And what is it that you have to do?"

"At twenty-eight minutes past three," Benedict Farley said hoarsely, "I open the second drawer down on the right of my desk, take out the revolver that I keep there, load it, and walk over to the window. And then—and then—"

"Yes?"

Benedict Farley said in a whisper: "Then I shoot myself . . ."

There was silence.

Poirot said, "That is your dream?"

"Yes."

"The same every night?"

"Yes."

"What happens after you shoot yourself?"

"I wake up."

Poirot nodded his head slowly and thoughtfully. "As a matter of interest, do you keep a revolver in that particular drawer?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"I have always done so. It is as well to be prepared."

"Prepared for what?"

Farley said irritably, "A man in my position has to be on his guard. All rich men have enemies."

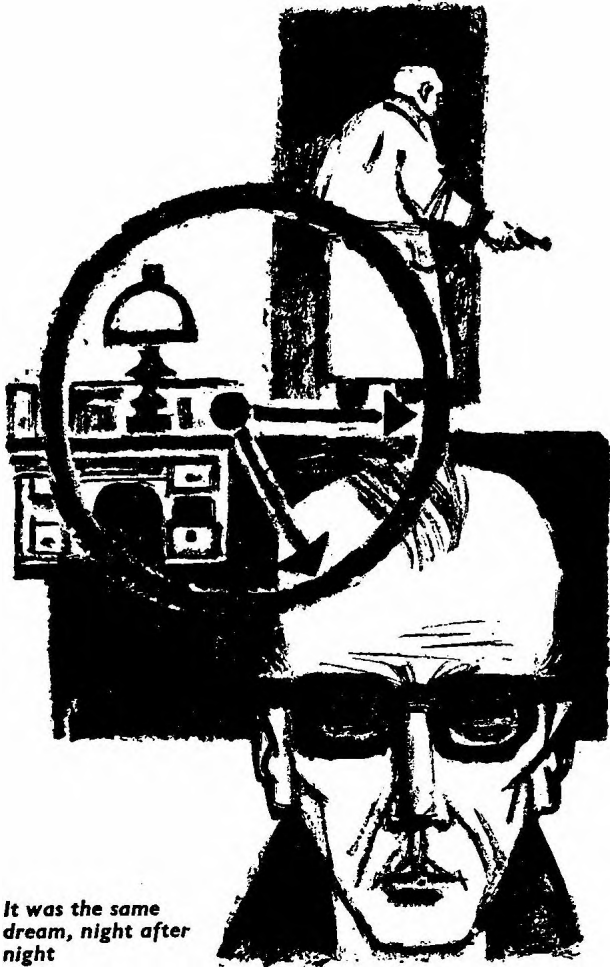
Poirot did not pursue the subject. He remained silent for a moment or two, then he said, "Why exactly did you send for me?"

"I will tell you. First of all I consulted a doctor—three doctors, to be exact."

"Yes?"

"The first told me it was all a question of diet. He was an elderly man. The second was a young man of the modern school. He assured me that it all hinged on a certain event that took place in infancy at that particular time of day—three twenty-eight. I am so determined, he says, not to remember the event, that I symbolize it by destroying myself. That is his ludicrous explanation."

"And the third doctor?" asked Poirot.



*It was the same
dream, night after
night*

Benedict Farley's voice rose in shrill anger. "He's a young man too. He has a preposterous theory! He asserts that I, myself, am tired of life, that my life is so unbearable to me that I deliberately want to end it! But since to acknowledge that fact would be to acknowledge that essentially I am a failure, I refuse in my waking moments to face the truth. But when I am asleep, all inhibitions are removed, and I proceed to do that which I really wish to do. I put an end to myself."

"His view is that you really wish, unknown to yourself, to commit suicide?" said Poirot.

Benedict Farley cried shrilly, "And that's impossible—impossible! I'm perfectly happy! I've got everything I want—everything money can buy! It's fantastic—unbelievable even to suggest a thing like that!"

Poirot looked at him with interest. Perhaps something in the shaking hands, the trembling shrillness of the voice, warned him that the denial was too vehement, that its very insistence was in itself suspect.

He contented himself with saying, "And where do I come in, monsieur?"

Benedict Farley calmed down suddenly. He tapped with an emphatic finger on the table beside him. "There's another possibility," he said. "And if it's right, you're the man to know about it! You're famous, you've had hundreds of cases—fantastic, improbable cases! You'll be sure to know, if anyone does."

"Know what?"

Farley's voice dropped to a whisper. "Supposing someone wants to kill me . . . Could they do it this way? Could they make me dream that dream night after night?"

"Hypnotism, you mean?"

"Yes."

Hercule Poirot considered the question. "It would be possible, I suppose," he said at last. "It is more a question for a doctor."

"You don't know of such a case in your long and varied experience?"

"Not precisely on those lines, no."

"You see what I'm driving at? I'm made to dream the same dream, night after night, night after night—and then one day the suggestion is too much for me, and I act upon it. I do what I've dreamed of so often—kill myself!"

Slowly Hercule Poirot shook his head.

"You don't think that is possible?" asked Farley.

"Possible?" Poirot shook his head. "That is not a word I care to meddle with."

There was a silence, then Farley spoke.

"But you think it improbable?"

"Most improbable."

Benedict Farley murmured, "The doctor said so too . . ." Then, his voice rising shrilly again, he cried out, "But why do I have this dream? Why? Why?"

Hercule Poirot shook his head. Benedict Farley said abruptly,

"You're sure you've never come across anything like this in your experience?"

"Never."

"That's what I wanted to know."

There was another silence.

Delicately, Poirot cleared his throat. "You permit," he said, "a question?"

"What is it? What is it? Say what you like."

"Who is it you suspect of wanting to kill you?"

Farley snapped out, "Nobody. Nobody at all."

"But the idea presented itself to your mind?" Poirot persisted.

"I wanted to know—if it was a possibility."

"Speaking from my own experience, I should say not. Have you ever been hypnotised, by the way?"

"Of course not. D'you think I'd lend myself to such tomfoolery?"

"Then I think one can say that your theory is definitely improbable."

"But the dream, you fool, the dream."

"The dream is certainly remarkable," said Poirot thoughtfully. He paused and then went on, "I should like to see the scene of this drama—the table, the clock and the revolver."

"Of course, I'll take you next door." Wrapping the folds of his dressing gown round him, the old man half rose from his chair. Then, suddenly, as though a thought had struck him, he resumed his seat. "No," he said. "There's nothing to see there. I've told you all there is to tell."

"But I should like to see for myself—"

"There's no need," Farley snapped. "You've given me your opinion. That's the end."

Poirot shrugged his shoulders. "As you please." He rose to his feet. "I am sorry, Mr. Farley, that I have not been able to be of assistance to you."

Benedict Farley was staring straight ahead of him. "Don't want a lot of hanky-pankying around," he growled out. "I've told you the facts—you can't make anything of them. That closes the matter. You can send me a bill for the consultation fee."

"I shall not fail to do so," said the detective drily. He walked towards the door.

"Stop a minute." The millionaire called him back. "That letter—I want it."

"The letter from your secretary?"

"Yes."

Poirot's eyebrows rose. He put his hand into his pocket, drew out a folded sheet, and handed it to the old man. The latter scrutinised it, then put it down on the table beside him with a nod.

Once more Hercule Poirot walked to the door. He was puzzled. His busy mind was going over and over the story he had been told. Yet in the midst of his mental preoccupation, a nagging sense of something wrong obtruded itself. And that something had to do with himself, not with Benedict Farley.

With his hand on the door knob, his mind cleared. He, Hercule Poirot, had been guilty of an error! He turned back into the room once more. "A thousand pardons!" he exclaimed. "In the interest of your problem I have committed a folly! That letter I handed to you—by mischance I put my hand into my right-hand pocket instead of the left—"

"What's all this? What's all this?"

"The letter that I handed you just now—an apology from my laundress concerning the treatment of my collars." Poirot was smiling, apologetic. He dipped into his left-hand pocket. "This is *your* letter."

Benedict Farley snatched at it—grunted: "Why the devil can't you mind what you're doing?"

Poirot retrieved his laundress's communication, apologised gracefully once more, and left the room.

He paused for a moment outside on the landing. It was a spacious one. Directly facing him was a big old oak settle with a refectory table in front of it. On the table were magazines. There were also two armchairs and a table with flowers.

The butler was in the hall below, waiting to let him out.

"Can I get you a taxi, sir?"

"No, I thank you. The night is fine. I will walk."

Hercule Poirot paused a moment on the pavement waiting for a lull in the traffic before crossing the busy street. A frown creased his forehead. "No," he said to himself. "I do not understand at all. Nothing makes sense. Regrettable to have to admit it, but I, Hercule Poirot, am completely baffled."

THAT was what might be termed the first act of the drama. The second act followed a week later. It opened with a telephone call from one John Stillingfleet, M.D. He said, with a remarkable lack of medical decorum, "That you, Poirot, old horse? Stillingfleet here."

"Yes, my friend. What is it?"

"I'm speaking from Northway House—Benedict Farley's."

"Ah, yes?" Poirot's voice quickened with interest. "What of—Mr. Farley?"

"Farley's dead. Shot himself this afternoon."

There was a pause, then Poirot said, "Yes . . ."

"I notice you're not overcome with surprise. Know something about it, old horse?"

"Why should you think that?"

"Well, it isn't brilliant deduction or telepathy or anything like that. We found a note from Farley to you making an appointment about a week ago."

"I see."

"We've got a tame police inspector here—got to be careful, you know, when one of these millionaire blokes bumps himself off. Wondered whether you could throw any light on the case. If so, perhaps you'd come round?"

"I will come immediately."

"Good for you, old boy. Some dirty work at the crossroads—eh?"

Poirot merely repeated that he would set forth immediately.

"Don't want to spill the beans over the telephone? Quite right. So long."

A quarter of an hour later Poirot was sitting in the library, a low, long room at the back of Northway House on the ground floor. There were five other persons in the room: Inspector Barnett; Dr. Stillingfleet; Mrs. Farley, the widow of the millionaire; Joanna Farley, his only daughter; and Hugo Cornworthy, his private secretary.

Of these, Inspector Barnett was a discreet, soldierly-looking man. Dr. Stillingfleet, whose professional manner was entirely different from his telephonic style, was a tall, long-faced young man of thirty. Mrs. Farley was obviously very much younger than her husband. She was a handsome, dark-haired woman. Her mouth was hard and her black eyes gave absolutely no clue to her emotions. She appeared perfectly self-possessed. Joanna Farley had fair hair and a freckled face. Her prominent nose and chin were clearly inherited from her father. Her eyes were intelligent and shrewd. Hugo Cornworthy was a somewhat colourless young man, very correctly dressed. He seemed intelligent and efficient.

After greetings and introductions, Poirot narrated simply and clearly the circumstances of his visit and the story told him by Benedict Farley. He could not complain of any lack of interest.

"Most extraordinary story I've ever heard!" said the inspector. "A dream, eh? Did you know anything about this, Mrs. Farley?"

She bowed her head. "My husband mentioned it to me. It upset him very much. I . . . I told him it was indigestion—his

diet, you know, was very peculiar—and suggested his calling in Dr. Stillingfleet."

The young man shook his head. "He didn't consult me. From Monsieur Poirot's story, I gather he went to Harley Street."

"I would like your advice on that point, doctor," said Poirot. "Mr. Farley told me that he consulted three specialists. What do you think of the theories they advanced?"

Stillingfleet frowned. "It's difficult to say. You've got to take into account that what he passed on to you wasn't exactly what had been said to him. It was a layman's interpretation."

"You mean he had got the phraseology wrong?"

"Not exactly. I mean they would put a thing to him in professional terms, he'd get the meaning a little distorted, and then recast it in his own language."

"So that what he told me was not really what the doctors said."

"That's what it amounts to. He just got it all a little wrong, if you know what I mean."

Poirot nodded thoughtfully. "Is it known whom he consulted?" he asked.

Mrs. Farley shook her head, and Joanna Farley remarked, "None of us had any idea he had consulted anyone."

"Did he speak to you about his dream?" asked Poirot.

The girl shook her head.

"And you, Mr. Cornworthy?"

"No, he said nothing at all. I took down a letter to you at his dictation, but I had no idea why he wished to consult you. I thought it might possibly have something to do with some business irregularity."

Poirot asked, "And now as to the actual facts of Mr. Farley's death?"

Inspector Barnett looked interrogatively at Mrs. Farley and at Dr. Stillingfleet, and then took upon himself the rôle of spokesman. "Mr. Farley was in the habit of working in his own room on the first floor every afternoon," he said. "I understand that there was a big amalgamation of business in prospect—"

He looked at Hugo Cornworthy who said, "Consolidated Coachlines."

"In connection with that," continued Inspector Barnett, "Mr. Farley had agreed to give an interview to two members of the Press. He very seldom did anything of the kind—only about once in five years, I understand. Accordingly, two reporters, one from Associated Newsgroups, and one from Amalgamated Press-sheets, arrived at a quarter-past three by appointment. They waited on the first floor outside Mr. Farley's door—which was

the customary place for people to wait who had an appointment with Mr. Farley.

"At twenty-past three a messenger arrived from the office of Consolidated Coachlines with some urgent papers. He was shown into Mr. Farley's room where he handed over the documents. Mr. Farley accompanied him to the door, and from there spoke to the two members of the Press. He said, 'I'm sorry, gentlemen, to have to keep you waiting, but I have some urgent business to attend to. I will be as quick as I can.'

"The two gentlemen, Mr. Adams and Mr. Stoddart, assured Mr. Farley that they would await his convenience. He went back into his room, shut the door—and was never seen alive again!"

"Continue," said Poirot.

"At a little after four o'clock," went on the inspector, "Mr. Cornworthy here came out of his room, which is next door to Mr. Farley's, and was surprised to see the two reporters still there. He wanted Mr. Farley's signature to some letters and thought he had also better remind him that these two gentlemen were waiting. He accordingly went into Mr. Farley's room. To his surprise he could not at first see Mr. Farley and thought the room was empty. Then he caught sight of a foot sticking out behind the desk (which is placed in front of the window). He went quickly across and discovered Mr. Farley lying there dead, with a revolver beside him.

"Mr. Cornworthy hurried out of the room and directed the butler to ring up Dr. Stillingfleet. By the latter's advice, Mr. Cornworthy also informed the police."

"Was the shot heard?" asked Poirot.

"No. The traffic is very noisy here and the landing window was open. What with lorries and motor horns, it would be most unlikely if a shot had been noticed."

Poirot nodded thoughtfully. "What time is it supposed he died?" he asked.

Stillingfleet said, "I examined the body as soon as I got here—that is, at thirty-two minutes past four. Mr. Farley had been dead at least an hour."

Poirot's face was very grave. "So then," he said, "it seems possible that his death could have occurred at the time he mentioned to me—that is, at twenty-eight minutes past three."

"Exactly," said Stillingfleet.

"Any fingermarks on the revolver?"

"Yes, his own."

"And the revolver itself?"

The inspector took up the tale. "It was one which he kept in

the second right-hand drawer of his desk just as he told you. Mrs. Farley has identified it positively. Moreover, you understand, there is only one entrance to the room, the door giving on to the landing. The two reporters were sitting exactly opposite that door and they swear that no one entered the room from the time Mr. Farley spoke to them until Mr. Cornworthy entered it at a little after four o'clock."

"So that there is every reason to suppose that Mr. Farley committed suicide."

Inspector Barnett smiled a little. "There would have been no doubt at all but for one point."

"And that?"

"The letter written to you."

Poirot smiled too. "I see! Where Hercule Poirot is concerned—immediately the suspicion of murder arises!"

"Precisely," said the inspector drily. "However, after your clearing up of the situation—"

Poirot interrupted him. "One little minute." He turned to Mrs. Farley. "Had your husband ever been hypnotised?"

"Never."

"Had he studied the question of hypnotism?"

She shook her head. "I don't think so." Suddenly her self-control seemed to break down. "That horrible dream! It's uncanny! That he should have dreamed it night after night, and then—it's as though he were hounded to death!"

Poirot remembered Benedict Farley saying, "I proceed to do that which I really wish to do. I put an end to myself."

He said, "Had it ever occurred to you that your husband might be tempted to do away with himself?"

"No." Mrs. Farley hesitated. "At least—sometimes he was very strange . . ."

Joanna Farley's voice broke in clear and scornful. "Father would never have killed himself. He was far too careful of himself."

Dr. Stillingfleet said, "It isn't the people who threaten to commit suicide who usually do it, you know, Miss Farley. That's why suicides sometimes seem unaccountable."

Poirot rose to his feet. "Is it permitted," he asked, "that I see the room where the tragedy occurred?"

"Certainly. Dr. Stillingfleet—" Mrs. Farley said.

The doctor accompanied Poirot upstairs.

Benedict Farley's room was a much larger one than the secretary's next door. It was luxuriously furnished with deep leather-covered armchairs, a thick pile carpet, and a superb outsize writing desk.

Poirot passed behind the latter to where a dark stain on the carpet showed just before the window. He remembered the millionaire saying, "At twenty-eight minutes past three I open the second drawer down on the right of my desk, take out the revolver that I keep there, load it, and walk over to the window. And then—and then I shoot myself."

He nodded slowly. He said, "The window was open like this?"

"Yes. But nobody could have got in that way."

Poirot put his head out. There was no sill or parapet and no pipes near. Not even a cat could have gained access that way. Opposite rose the blank wall of the factory, a dead wall with no windows in it.

Stillingfleet said, "Funny room for a rich man to choose as his own sanctum with that outlook. It's like looking out on to a prison wall."

"Yes," said Poirot. He drew his head in and stared at the expanse of solid brick. "I think," he said, "that that wall is important."

Stillingfleet looked at him curiously. "You mean—psychologically?"

Poirot had moved to the desk. Idly, or so it seemed, he picked up a pair of what are usually called lazy-tongs. He pressed the handles; the tongs shot out to their full length. Delicately, Poirot picked up a burnt match with them from beside a chair some feet away and conveyed it to the wastepaper basket.

"When you've finished playing with those things . . ." said Stillingfleet irritably.

Hercule Poirot murmured, "An ingenious invention," and replaced the tongs neatly on the writing table. Then he asked, "Where were Mrs. Farley and Miss Farley at the time of the—death?"

"Mrs. Farley was resting in her room on the floor above this," Stillingfleet said. "Miss Farley was painting in her studio at the top of the house."

Hercule Poirot drummed idly with his fingers on the table for a minute or two. Then he said, "I should like to see Miss Farley. Do you think you could ask her to come here for a minute or two?"

"If you like."

Stillingfleet glanced at Poirot curiously, then left the room. In another minute or two the door opened and Joanna Farley came in.

Poirot said, "You do not mind, mademoiselle, if I ask you a few questions?"

She returned his glance coolly. "Please ask anything you choose."

"Did you know that your father kept a revolver in his desk?"

"No."

"Where were you and your mother—that is to say, your stepmother—that is right?"

"Yes, Louise is my father's second wife. She is only eight years older than I am. You were about to say—?"

"Where were you and she on Thursday of last week? That is to say, on Thursday night."

She reflected for a minute or two. "Thursday? Let me see. Oh, yes, we had gone to the theatre. To see *Little Dog Laughed*."

"Your father did not suggest accompanying you?"

"He never went out to theatres."

"What did he usually do in the evenings?"

"He sat in here and read."

"He was not a very sociable man?"

The girl looked at him directly. "My father," she said, "had a singularly unpleasant personality. No one who lived in close association with him could possibly be fond of him."

"That, mademoiselle, is a very candid statement."

"I am saving you time, Monsieur Poirot. I realise what you are getting at. My stepmother married my father for his money. I live here because I have no money to live elsewhere. There is a man I wish to marry—a poor man; my father saw to it that he lost his job. He wanted me, you see, to marry well—an easy matter since I was to be his heiress!"

"Your father's fortune passes to you?"

"Yes. That is, he left Louise, my stepmother, a quarter of a million free of tax, and there are other legacies, but the residue goes to me." She smiled suddenly. "So you see, Monsieur Poirot, I had every reason to desire my father's death!"

"I see, mademoiselle, that you have inherited your father's intelligence."

She said thoughtfully, "Father was clever. One felt with him that he had force, driving power, but it had all turned sour, bitter. There was no humanity left . . ."

Hercule Poirot said softly, "*Grand Dieu*, but what an imbecile I am . . ."

Joanna Farley turned towards the door. "Is there anything more?"

"Two little questions. These tongs here." Poirot picked up the lazy-tongs. "Were they always on the table?"

"Yes. Father used them for picking up things. He didn't like stooping."

"One other question. Was your father's eyesight good?"

Joanna Farley stared at him. "Oh, no—he couldn't see at all. I mean he couldn't see without his glasses. His sight had always been bad, from a boy."

"But with his glasses?"

"Oh, he could see all right then, of course."

"He could read newspapers and fine print?"

"Oh, yes."

"That is all, mademoiselle."

She went out of the room. Poirot murmured, "I was stupid. It was there, all the time, under my nose. And, because it was so near, I could not see it."

He leaned out of the window once more. Down below, in the narrow way between the house and the factory, he saw a small dark object. He nodded, satisfied, and went downstairs again.

The others were still in the library. Poirot addressed himself to the secretary. He said, "I want you, Mr. Cornworthy, to recount to me in detail the exact circumstances of Mr. Farley's summons to me. When did Mr. Farley dictate that letter?"

Cornworthy said, "On Wednesday afternoon—at five-thirty, as far as I can remember."

"Were there any special directions about posting it?"

"He told me to post it myself."

"And you did so?"

"Yes."

"Did he give any special instructions to the butler about admitting me?"

"Yes. He told me to tell Holmes that a gentleman would be calling at 9.30. He was to ask the gentleman's name. He was also to ask to see the letter."

"Rather peculiar precautions to take, don't you think?"

Cornworthy shrugged his shoulders. "Mr. Farley," he said carefully, "was rather a peculiar man."

"Any other instructions?"

"Yes. He told me to take the evening off."

"Did you do so?"

"Yes. Immediately after dinner I went to the cinema."

"When did you return?"

"I let myself in about a quarter-past eleven."

"Did you see Mr. Farley again that evening?"

"No."

"And he did not mention the matter the next morning?"

"No."

Poirot paused a moment, then resumed, "When I arrived, I was not shown into Mr. Farley's own room."

“No. He told me that I was to tell Holmes to show you into my room.”

“Why was that? Do you know?”

Cornworthy shook his head. “I never questioned any of Mr. Farley’s orders,” he said drily. “He would have resented it if I had.”

“Did he usually receive visitors in his own room?”

“Usually, but not always. Sometimes he saw them in my room.”

“Was there any reason for that?”

Hugo Cornworthy considered. “No—I hardly think so—I’ve never really thought about it.”

Turning to Mrs. Farley, Poirot asked, “You permit that I ring for your butler?”

“Certainly, Monsieur Poirot.”

Very correct, very urbane, Holmes answered the bell. “You rang, madam?” Mrs. Farley indicated Poirot with a gesture. Holmes turned politely. “Yes, sir?”

“What were your instructions, Holmes, on the Thursday night when I came here?”

Holmes cleared his throat. Then he said, “After dinner, Mr. Cornworthy told me that Mr. Farley expected a Mr. Hercule Poirot at 9.30. I was to ascertain the gentleman’s name, and I was to verify the information by glancing at a letter. Then I was to show him up to Mr. Cornworthy’s room.”

“Were you also told to knock on the door?”

An expression of distaste crossed the butler’s countenance. “That was one of Mr. Farley’s orders. I was always to knock when introducing visitors—business visitors, that is,” he added.

“Ah, that puzzled me! Were you given any other instructions concerning me?”

“No, sir. When Mr. Cornworthy had told me what I have just repeated to you, he went out.”

“What time was that?”

“Ten minutes to nine, sir.”

“Did you see Mr. Farley after that?”

“Yes, sir. I took him up a glass of hot water as usual at nine o’clock.”

“Was he then in his own room or in Mr. Cornworthy’s?”

“He was in his own room, sir.”

“You noticed nothing unusual about that room?”

“Unusual? No, sir.”

“Where were Mrs. Farley and Miss Farley?”

“They had gone to the theatre, sir.”

“Thank you, Holmes, that will do.”

Holmes bowed and left the room. Poirot turned to the millionaire's widow. "One more question, Mrs. Farley. Had your husband good sight?"

"No. Not without his glasses."

"He was very short-sighted?"

"Oh, yes, he was quite helpless without his spectacles."

"He had several pairs of glasses?"

"Yes."

"Ah," said Poirot. He leaned back. "I think that that concludes the case . . ."

THERE was silence in the room. They were all looking at the little man who sat there complacently stroking his moustache. On the inspector's face was perplexity; Dr. Stillingfleet was frowning; Cornworthy merely stared uncomprehendingly; Mrs. Farley gazed in blank astonishment; Joanna Farley looked eager.

Mrs. Farley broke the silence. "I don't understand, Monsieur Poirot." Her voice was fretful. "The dream—"

"Yes," said Poirot. "That dream was very important."

Mrs. Farley shivered. She said, "I've never believed in anything supernatural before. But now—to dream it night after night beforehand—"

"It's extraordinary," said Stillingfleet. "Extraordinary! If we hadn't got your word for it, Poirot, and if you hadn't had it straight from the horse's mouth—" He coughed in embarrassment and readopted his professional manner. "I beg your pardon, Mrs. Farley. If Mr. Farley himself had not told that story—"

"Exactly," said Poirot. His eyes, which had been half-closed, opened suddenly. They were very green. "If Benedict Farley hadn't told me—"

He paused a minute, looking round at a circle of blank faces. "There are certain things, you comprehend, that happened that evening which I was quite at a loss to explain. First, why make such a point of my bringing that letter with me?"

"Identification?" suggested Cornworthy.

"No, no, my dear young man. Really, that idea is too ridiculous. There must be some much more valid reason. For not only did Mr. Farley require to see that letter produced, but he definitely demanded that I should leave it behind me. And moreover, even then he did not destroy it! It was found among his papers this afternoon. Why did he keep it?"

Joanna Farley's voice broke in. "He wanted, in case anything happened to him, that the facts of his strange dream should be made known."

Poirot nodded approvingly. "You are astute, mademoiselle. That must be—that can only be—the point of the keeping of the letter. When Mr. Farley was dead, the story of that strange dream was to be told! That dream was very important. That dream, mademoiselle, was vital!

"I will come now," he went on, "to the second point. After hearing his story, I ask Mr. Farley to show me the desk and the revolver. He seems about to get up to do so, then suddenly refuses. Why did he refuse?"

This time no one advanced an answer.

"I will put that question differently. What was there in that next room that Mr. Farley did not want me to see?"

There was still silence.

"Yes," said Poirot, "it is difficult, that. And yet there was some reason—some urgent reason why Mr. Farley received me in his secretary's room and refused point blank to take me into his own room. There was something in that room he could not afford to have me see.

"And now I come to the third inexplicable thing that happened that evening. Mr. Farley, just as I was leaving, requested me to hand him the letter I had received. By inadvertence I handed him a communication from my laundress. He glanced at it and laid it down beside him. Just before I left the room I discovered my error—and rectified it! After that I left the house and—I admit it—I was completely at sea! The whole affair and especially that last incident seemed to me quite inexplicable." He looked round from one to the other. "You do not see?"

Stillingfleet said, "I don't really see how your laundress comes into it, Poirot."

"My laundress," said Poirot, "was very important. That miserable woman who ruins my collars, was, for the first time in her life, useful to somebody. Surely you see—it is so obvious. Mr. Farley glanced at that communication—one glance would have told him that it was the wrong letter. And yet he knew nothing. Why? Because he could not see it properly!"

Inspector Barnett said, "Didn't he have his glasses on?"

Hercule Poirot smiled. "Yes," he said. "He had his glasses on. That is what makes it so very interesting."

He leaned forward. "Mr. Farley's dream was very important. He dreamed, you see, that he committed suicide. And a little later on, he did commit suicide. That is to say he was alone in a room and was found there with a revolver by him, and no one entered or left the room at the time that he was shot. What does that mean? It means, does it not, that it must be suicide!"

"Yes," said Stillingfleet.

Hercule Poirot shook his head. "On the contrary," he said. "It was murder; an unusual and very cleverly planned murder."

Again he leaned forward, tapping the table, his eyes green and shining. "Why did Mr. Farley not allow me to go into his own room that evening? What was there in there that I must not be allowed to see? I think, my friends, that there was—Benedict Farley himself!"

He smiled at the blank faces. "Yes, yes, it is not nonsense what I say. Why could the Mr. Farley to whom I had been talking not realise the difference between two totally dissimilar letters? Because, *mes amis*, he was a man of normal sight, wearing a pair of very powerful glasses. Those glasses would render a man of normal eyesight practically blind. Isn't that so, doctor?"

Stillingfleet murmured, "That's so—of course."

"Why did I feel that in talking to Mr. Farley I was talking to a mountebank, to an actor playing a part? Because he was playing a part! Consider the setting. The dim room, the green shaded light turned blindingly away from the figure in the chair. What did I see—the famous patchwork dressing gown; the beaked nose (faked with that useful substance, nose putty); the white crest of hair; the powerful lenses concealing the eyes.

"What evidence is there that Mr. Farley ever had a dream? Only the story I was told and the evidence of Mrs. Farley. What evidence is there that Benedict Farley kept a revolver in his desk? Again, only the story told me and the word of Mrs. Farley.

"Two people carried this fraud through—Mrs. Farley and Hugo Cornworthy. Cornworthy wrote the letter to me, gave instructions to the butler, went out ostensibly to the cinema, but let himself in again immediately with a key, went to his room, made himself up, and played the part of Benedict Farley.

"And so we come to this afternoon. The opportunity for which Mr. Cornworthy has been waiting arrives. There are two witnesses—the two reporters—on the landing to swear that no one goes in or out of Benedict Farley's room.

"Cornworthy waits until a particularly heavy batch of traffic is about to pass. Then he leans out of his window and, with the lazy-tongs which he has purloined from the desk next door, he holds an object against the window of that room. Benedict Farley comes to the window. Cornworthy snatches back the tongs and, as Farley leans out and the lorries are passing outside, Cornworthy shoots him with the revolver that he has ready. There is a blank wall opposite, remember. There can be no witness of the crime.

"Cornworthy waits for over half an hour, then gathers up some papers, conceals the lazy-tongs and the revolver between them and goes out on to the landing and into the next room. He replaces the tongs on the desk, lays down the revolver after pressing the dead man's fingers on it, and hurries out with the news of Mr. Farley's 'suicide'.

"He arranges that the letter to me shall be found and that I shall arrive with my story—the story I heard from 'Mr. Farley's' own lips—of his extraordinary 'dream' . . . the strange compulsion he felt to kill himself! A few credulous people will discuss the hypnotism theory—but the main result will be to confirm without a doubt that the actual hand that held the revolver was Benedict Farley's own."

Hercule Poirot's eyes went to the widow's face—the dismay—the ashy pallor—the blind fear.

"And in due course," he finished gently, "the happy ending would have been achieved. A quarter of a million and two hearts that beat as one . . ."

JOHN STILLINGFLEET, M.D., and Hercule Poirot walked along the side of Northway House. On their right was the towering wall of the factory. Above them, on their left, were the windows of Benedict Farley's and Hugo Cornworthy's rooms.

Hercule Poirot stopped and picked up a small object—a black stuffed cat.

"*Voilà*," he said. "That is what Cornworthy held in the lazy-tongs against Farley's window. You remember, he hated cats? Naturally he rushed to the window."

"Why on earth didn't Cornworthy come out and pick it up after he'd dropped it?"

"How could he? To do so would have been definitely suspicious. After all, if this object were found, what would anyone think? Only that some child had dropped it."

"Yes," said Stillingfleet with a sigh. "That's probably what the ordinary person *would* have thought. But not good old Hercule! D'you know, old horse, up to the very last minute I thought you were leading up to some subtle theory of high-falutin psychological 'suggested' murder? I bet those two thought so too! Nasty bit of goods, Mrs. Farley. Goodness, how she cracked! Cornworthy might have got away with it if she hadn't had hysterics and tried to spoil your beauty by going for you with her nails. I only got her off you just in time."

He paused a minute and then said, "I rather like the girl. Grit, you know, and brains. I suppose I'd be thought to be a fortune hunter if I had a shot at her . . .?"

"You are too late, my friend," Poirot said. "There is already someone *sur le tapis*. Her father's death has opened the way to happiness."

"Take it all round, *she* had a pretty good motive for bumping off the unpleasant parent."

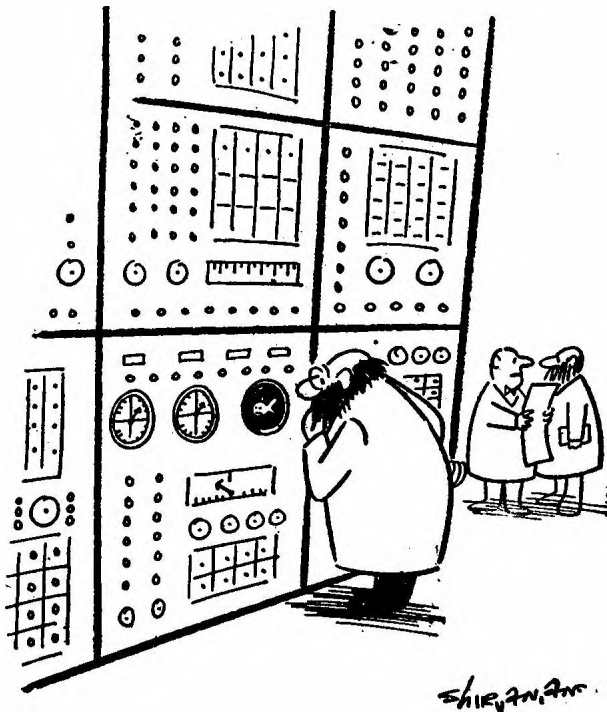
"Motive and opportunity are not enough," said Poirot. "There must also be the criminal temperament!"

"I wonder if you'll ever commit a crime, Poirot?" said Stillingfleet. "I bet you could get away with it all right. As a matter of fact, it would be too easy for you. I mean, the thing would be off as definitely too unsporting."

"That," said Hercule Poirot, "is a typically English idea."

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From "The Adventures of the Christmas Pudding and a selection of Entrées", to be published by Collins on October 24th.



COUNSEL FOR THE DEFENCE

Imagine you are defending counsel in the case outlined below. Would you advance a plea of guilty or try to get an acquittal?

JOHNNY PARKER is a crook with a record as long as the Forth Bridge. Here are the hard facts of his latest bit of crookery, as he told them to his defending lawyer:—

He walked straight out of the Scrubbs into the Army. Of course, they put him in charge of the stores! He was too clever to steal the stuff he was responsible for, but he got friendly with Charlie who had a similar job in the next town. Johnny planned carefully. He got Charlie to agree to hand over the stuff and split the proceeds. But Charlie became worried and told the C.O. The C.O. cooked up a brilliant plan with the police to catch Johnny redhanded.

All went smoothly. Charlie handed over the goods. He even made out a receipt showing that they were released for transport to Johnny's depôt. Johnny drove away in a fast car borrowed for the occasion. The police followed in a faster one. Johnny was caught and arrested and charged with stealing the stuff.

If you were defending him, what would you do? Advise a plea of guilty or try to get him off?

THE DEFENCE says: We tried a tricky defence on a point of law. We had one chance: the law books say that an essential part of the crime of stealing is the "taking away of the goods against the will of the owner." And in this case we argued that the police had been too smart, because the goods were handed over freely by Charlie on behalf of the Army and the receipt, though a fraud, was evidence of that. Perhaps Johnny was guilty of conspiracy or "inciting to commit a felony" . . . but he was not charged with this.

THE VERDICT: Not guilty.

THE BIG DINGO

by PHILIP M. JONES

FANNING cut a hole in the tropical scrub on the side of Black Mountain and built his home beside the enormous granite rock that defied all his efforts to break it out of the mountainside. He slashed down the straggling guava and the prickly lantana, axed the crowsfoot elms and the milkwoods and the cedars, and burned and ploughed and finally produced the crops that were enough to support himself and his new wife and the baby.

In taking this site on Black Mountain, he harmed no living man, and had in fact proved himself a hardy pioneer in the best tradition. However, in casting his home astride the Rock, he had disturbed the age-old peace of the Big Dingo. In his first days he had actually shot the dingo bitch and one of her pups—the other had escaped in a furious charge up through the thick scrub on the hillside. But he had thought nothing of this at the time, for there were many dingoes on Black Mountain, and if their howling as they circled the Rock disturbed his new wife and the baby, they never bothered Fanning, who was a man without fear and of easy conscience.

The Big Dingo scented man on the side of Black Mountain, and saw that the Rock, which had been part of his life always, and of all his forbears, was no longer safe ground. It stank of man and fire, and, in time, of domestic dogs.

Fanning came by the blue cattle bitch in the town ten miles away, and brought her home, and in time she whelped two pups, both dogs, and both as pure in breed as herself.

More settlers took up land on the slopes of Black Mountain, and the dingo pack retreated slowly, until only the Big Dingo and his son came back, remembering, to the Rock. Together they ranged on Black Mountain, killing calves, savaging cattle, slaughtering domestic dogs mercilessly when chance gave them the opportunity.

Fanning's bitch and her two pups had the freedom of the farm by day, hunting wallabies and bush-turkeys and barking at sleeping Koala bears in the trees. But at night they returned to sleep within the safety of the house fence, for no domestic dog will roam at night when the dingoes howl. Fear stills the heart and the spirit of a domestic dog at the wild cry of the dingo, for in heart and spirit they have become alien in breed, and only an exceptional domestic dog, extraordinary in courage or madness, will seek out the dingo to fight.

FANNING'S wife told him one day that she had seen the Big Dingo at the edge of the clearing above them on the side of Black Mountain, and Fanning laughed. He said that the dingoes would not come out by day. Then his wife said she feared for the pups, if they ever got out of the yard at night, but Fanning laughed again and said that they would never go up the mountainside at night, whether they were free of the house yard or not.

Laura Fanning kept her fears to herself, and had nightmares about the wild dogs, for she had been a city girl, and the cry of the dingo echoed in her brain, so that she awoke sweating and shaking in her bed, and heard the howl of the distant pack on the side of Black Mountain.

The blue bitch taught the pups what she had learned—how to hunt silently for the kill; how to avoid the taipan, which will attack rather than retreat; how to lie quietly at evening under the master's hand as he searched for the shell-backed ticks which, once into the flesh of a dog and left for two days, brought convulsive death. And the pups learned, slowly, that obedience in the bush is life; disobedience is pain.

Now high on the mountainside, now close at hand, the Big Dingo circled with his son, eaten up by hatred and a consuming desire for revenge. Long ago he had left the pack he had hunted with, and at night he howled to the moon, placing his strong forelegs wide on the earth, lifting his mighty throat to the pale stars, challenging and hating back through all the untold generations of his kind.

Now there was a place in the fence which Fanning had torn with his plough, and while he left it, meaning to mend it next day, the pups got out. Excited by new night scents, they started up the mountain, disobeying their mother, who followed, whining and trying to force them back.

Fanning's wife said, "The dogs are out."

Fanning turned in a half-sleep, mumbling and out of temper, until he heard the sudden scream up on the mountain. Diving, he picked up his rifle. He ran out of the house and climbed over the fence.

Stumbling, he followed his ears in the darkness, for what he now heard made the night monstrous.

Death had already taken one pup, murderously in the bright starlight. Death was at the throat of the bitch, where the Big Dingo had her, and the fact that he was killing the female of the domestic race of dogs was a measure of his hatred.

Fanning rammed a shell into the rifle as he reached the edge of the further clearing. He aimed and fired, and the great yellow body of the Big Dingo arched and reared and fell thunderously, stretching towards Fanning in the throes of dying, as if to take the man with him.

Fanning buried all three, the Big Dingo and the bitch and one of her pups. And as he comforted the whimpering pup that was left, he wondered if the son of the Big Dingo, who had also killed that night, would ever return.

HE called the remaining pup "Blue", because the colour of his short, thick hair was more blue than anything else, and because most Queensland Heelers are called "Blue" anyway. He was a smallish dog, as Heelers are, lithe and tough and stringy, a silent dog who developed into a vicious hunter on the mountain; a lean dog who followed at his master's heels like a shadow, missing no scent, avoiding no opportunity to kill; a dog whom only Fanning could feed, water, touch.

When the Big Dingo died on Black Mountain, the newspaper wrote it up, and would have published a photograph of Fanning collecting the Government bounty on the scalp, had Fanning not demurred. As he returned home, he wondered that no-one had mentioned the son of the Big Dingo—the yellow dingo-dog who was haunted in the same way that his sire had been, who still scented the blood of his father under the scrabbling vines and lantana on the hill, and who would, some day, come back to the Rock.

Some day surely come back . . .

A year passed, and another. Then one night Laura Fanning

woke up out of a dream and said, "There's a dingo out there."

Fanning tried to wake. His wife had neighbours now, and there was a school within riding distance for the children; she had no call to be waking him out of a deep, exhausted sleep to talk of her old fear of the dingo on Black Mountain. Nevertheless, he clambered out of bed and walked to the back door and through to the veranda.

Blue was standing, half-crouched, quivering, pointed like a taut arrow towards the Rock. Fanning put his hand down and touched his dog, and instantly, faster than light, the dog turned and snapped, and Fanning's hand was in the dog's mouth. As quickly the crunching grip was released to become no more than a salutation—and a warning.

Fanning spoke quietly and returned to bed. He knew now that his wife was right and that there was a dingo loose on their side of the mountain, a dingo which neither howled nor attacked the stock—an animal haunted as few humans are haunted. He knew, too, that his own dog was tainted with the same strange atavistic blood spilled from the Big Dingo, whom he had killed.

The Wet came early that year, thankfully, after a summer drier than men could remember. Low and black crenellated castles of cloud moved in from the west, heavy with rain, silent and moving fast to veil the burnished blue of the sky.

High up, the son of the Big Dingo moved in his appointed grounds. As the dark clouds peaked above Black Mountain, he began a fretful journey down towards the Rock. The aura of his hatred moved before him, and it reached Fanning's dog Blue as the last of the red sun was swallowed up in blackness, and night came down over the crepitant scrub.

In the short twilight then, the domestic dog picked up the challenge of the dingo and went out to meet it. Fanning saw him go, and after a time left the house with a vague excuse and toiled after Blue up the mountain. It was clear to him that what he had begun with the shooting of the dingo bitch in her den under the Rock would now be finished, one way or another, although it had taken seven full years for this to come—the final showdown.

A DOMESTIC dog bent on killing goes for the throat, where the vein of life throbs thickly; the dingo uses its fangs, sharpened by hunger and violence on many long night matches, to disembowel its victim. That is why men fear the depredations of the dingo among their flocks; for death is one thing, and slow torture is another, and often the dingo kills merely for a deadly sport.

The son of the Big Dingo came down towards the Rock as

the first heavy drops of rain fell on the parched scrub, and he came against the lean longing of the Heeler. The dogs met in a withering clash of bodies that was like naked nerves sprung to the trigger of a hair.

The dingo struck first, raking with razor fangs; the domestic dog fell, crouched, gathered and sprang. And when they went down again, the teeth of Blue were as deep as death in the throat of the dingo.

When Fanning walked up to the dogs, the dingo was dead a moment gone; his dog, disembowelled, quivered in an awful ecstasy of fulfilment.

Rain churned the earth as Fanning walked down the side of Black Mountain, carrying his dog. He called to his wife, who brought needle and common thread, and he sewed together the awful wounds which had stripped Blue's flank.

All night long Fanning sat by the dog, and in the morning harnessed the gig and set out through the flooding rains to the town. In the evening he returned, and next morning, in a break between the mighty rains, he augered holes in the Rock, and set charges in them, and fused the charges and blew the Rock. Then he took a crow-bar and levered it in the cracks until he had broken the rock into large pieces, and the large pieces into small pieces.

The Rock was gone, as the dingoes were gone, and from where I sit writing this I can see the mango tree that my father planted thirty years ago on the spot where once stood the Rock, the lair of the Big Dingo. My children love the fruit of the mango, and if they have ever seen a dingo, then they have seen it in a zoo. Certainly not on the slopes of Black Mountain.

CASES IN CODE

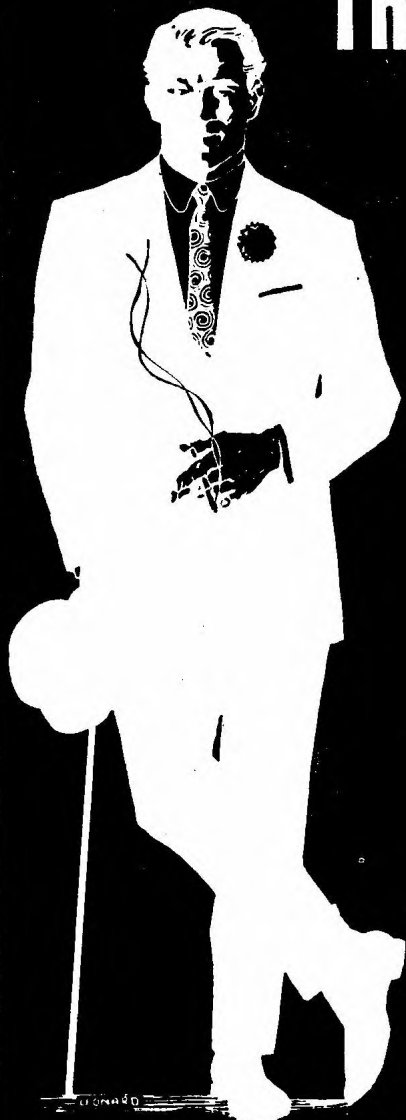
The Case of the Traitor.

When Petrovitch the spy was arrested, he refused to divulge the name of the traitor who was to pass him the micro-photographs of the secret documents. But when Petrovitch was searched, a scrap of paper was found in his hatband. It read:—
Q APITT ABIVL JG ILUQJITBG IZKP IB NWCZ
WKTWKS NZQLIG PWTLQVO KWVG WN XIXMZ—
PCOW

Detective Inspector Bassett deciphered the code, kept the appointment, and arrested the traitor. "I don't think his IQ was really very high," Bassett said.

Solution on page 89

The DAYS



A NEW
'CRIME
CALENDAR'
MYSTERY
FEATURING
FRANCIS
QUARLES

of SEPTEMBER

by JULIAN SYMONS

Tuesday, 27th September

LIKE most of Francis Quarles' cases, this one began with him sitting behind the desk in his Trafalgar Square office, listening to somebody talking. Quarles was a big man, the desk was a big desk, the room was small. The effect was one of overcrowding. Politicians had sat in the chair on the other side of that desk and told Quarles Cabinet secrets; a woman film star had gone on her knees beside the desk to beg that he should find and destroy compromising photographs. The man who sat opposite the desk now was telling Quarles that his baby son, John, had been kidnapped.

He was a small, tough, dark man; his name was Roger Gaye, and he was an insurance broker. He talked to Quarles in a flat, even voice.

The only sign of emotion that he showed was the tight interlocking and separation of his fingers.

"We live in a house at Wimbledon, my wife and I and John, he's just seven months old; a detached house in Elder Grove, which leads straight off Wimbledon Common. There's a woman who comes in every day, and a girl who lives in and looks after John—"

"How long have they been with you?"

"Mrs. Dunnett for two years, that's as long as we've been in Wimbledon, and Lilian for five months. Nice girl, Lilian, takes John out for a walk every morning in the pram when she goes shopping. She took him out this morning, and left him in the pram at the pram park by McClure's, you know, the big store."

Gaye leaned forward and spoke emphatically for the first time. "She was gone three minutes, Mr. Quarles, no more than that, she says, and I believe her. The pram was empty when she came back. John had gone."

Quarles had been making notes. Now he asked, "What about his covers—shawl, blanket, toys? Had they been taken?"

"His blanket was still there, but a toy—a rattle, rather a big one—had been taken."

"What time did this happen?"

"At half past eleven this morning. I was in the office. There was a phone call to my wife at home before midday. A man's voice. He said John was safe, and that we shouldn't tell the police."

"Have you told them?"

"No. Do you think we should have?"

"Of course. Anything I can do, the police can do better."

Gaye said slowly, "My wife—Crystal—is terribly upset. She insisted that we shouldn't tell the police. She thinks they, the kidnappers, will get to know about it, and that they'll kill John. We've been arguing about it ever since I got home."

"And?"

Gaye's eyes stared into Quarles', direct and uncompromising. "She's convinced me. We can't risk John's life."

"You intend to pay the ransom money?"

"If you can't help us—yes."

"I doubt if anybody can help you," Quarles said. "But I can try."

They left the office at a quarter to four.

ELDER GROVE was a cul-de-sac, and the Gayes' house, The Elders, stood at the end of it. There was a separate driveway that curved round and concealed the long, low, modern, white-painted house from the road. The door opened as Gaye's car drove up, and a woman ran out of the house. She was in her late twenties, thin, dark, nervously pretty. She turned away when she saw Quarles. "You've been a long time."

"You knew where I was going," Gaye said patiently. "To see Mr. Quarles. He's come back with me."

"Yes. It's just that I thought there might be news. Of John, I mean."

Gaye patted her shoulder and said to Quarles, "Come in."

The house was furnished without taste, but comfortably. Quarles went up into the baby's bedroom and looked at its empty cot. He talked to Lilian Wilson, a fresh-faced girl of twenty-one.

"You see, sir, I did just what I often do. There's this pram park at McClure's and I often leave John there if it's only for a minute or two. This time all I did was to go in and buy a shampoo, and when I came back he was gone."

"You didn't notice anybody hanging around the pram park."

"Nobody at all. There's a commissionaire on duty, and he saw nothing."

The telephone rang. It was, Quarles realised, a sound for which they had all subconsciously been waiting. Crystal Gaye shivered, and started towards the hall at a run. Her husband said, "There's an extension up here, if you want to listen in."

Quarles nodded. He picked up the extension and heard a man's voice, blurred and unmemorable.

"Is that Mrs. Gaye?"

"Yes." She spoke in a whisper.

"Your baby is very well. Have you told the police?"

"No."

"Good. You want him back, don't you?"

"Oh, yes, yes."

"Then put your husband on the line."

"This is Roger Gaye." Gaye's voice was sharp and clear.

"Listen, Mr. Gaye. If you want John back, it's going to cost you twenty thousand pounds."

"I can't raise that much money until next week."

"I'm afraid you'll have to, if you want your son back, Mr. Gaye." The voice was still blurred, but now faintly—what was it?—amused. "Thirty days hath September."

"What do you mean?"

"Today's Tuesday. I'll give you until Friday, that's the thirtieth. I want the money then."

"I don't know if I can manage it."

"You'll just have to, won't you?" Now the amusement, the pleasure, was unmistakable. Over the telephone came what might have been a child's contented gurgle. "He's worth it, isn't he?" the voice said. Then the connection was broken.

Quarles went downstairs. Crystal Gaye sat in a chair crying. Her husband stood staring at the telephone as if it was alive.

"I still say you should tell the police," Quarles told them. "Now."

Gaye turned a furious face towards him. "We want our son back alive, Mr. Quarles, don't you understand? Can the police guarantee that?"

"Nobody can guarantee it. Certainly I can't. If you're going to pay the money, you don't want me." With deliberate brutality he said, "You're fools. But just pay it and hope."

Crystal Gaye stopped crying, and looked up at him imploringly. "We daren't tell the police, but it will ruin Roger if he has to raise the money. Please help us, Mr. Quarles."

Quarles hesitated. "You'll follow my instructions?"

"Yes."

"All right. I'll do what I can."

QUARLES and Lilian Wilson walked out into Elder Grove. The houses on either side were solidly Victorian, detached, set well back from the road. At the end of Elder Grove, where it turned into Frant Street, were two Edwardian houses, red brick and mock Tudor. From Frant Street they walked into the High Street. Lilian Wilson, her first nervousness gone, talked all the time. Yes, the Gayes were very nice people to work for, though it was really Mrs. Gaye, of course, because he was never home before seven in the evening or later. And they were nice people round about, too. She took John out every day on to the Common before going shopping; it was a regular routine.

"And if I know anything about it, you got to know other girls who were pushing prams on the Common?" Quarles suggested.

"That's right. You have to be careful who you talk to, mind. But there's Mrs. Thompson who lives just along Frant Street here—her Rosalind is just twelve months old, and perfectly sweet. And a girl named Alice—I don't know what her other name is—she's nursemaid to the Pykes, who live in Elder Grove. And then there's Mrs. Bennett, but her Billy hasn't been well, and she's kept him indoors lately."

"What about boy friends?"

Lilian Wilson coloured. "I haven't got any."

"I'm not trying to pry into your personal life, Lilian. Do you see what I'm trying to get at? This was a perfectly-timed job. Whoever took John knew your routine very well. It may have been somebody you talked to."

McClure's was a big chain store which sold everything from shaving cream to nylon stockings, from garden shears to lighting fittings. The pram park, labelled as such in big letters, was in a courtyard at one side of the store, with stalls for perhaps three dozen prams. There was a brick wall at the far end of the courtyard, and a commissioner strolled up and down between the entrance to the store and the pram park.

"The pram park was pretty full," Lilian Wilson said, "but there were half a dozen spaces. I wheeled John into one of them, gave him his rattle to play with, then went into the store and bought a shampoo. I was served at once, so I don't think I could have been more than three minutes."

Quarles took out his watch. "Let's try it. Repeat exactly what you did then. Buy another shampoo. I'll pay for it."

She nodded, and walked off towards the store. She was back in just over three minutes.

"You found John had gone. What happened then?"

She passed a hand over her forehead. "I blame myself, Mr. Quarles, but I don't know what else I could have done. At first I couldn't believe it—you know, I thought in some way I must have made a mistake about the pram. Then I got frightened and asked Jenkins, that's the commissioner, but he couldn't help."

The commissioner, large, blue-uniformed, moustachioed, heavily bemedalled, was eyeing them speculatively. Quarles went up to him. "I believe this young lady spoke to you today."

"That's right . . . something about a missing baby. I hope the little fellow has turned up."

"It's a bit of a puzzle," Quarles said, with intentional vagueness. "You keep an eye on the pram park when you're on duty, I suppose?"

"Certainly do. Sometimes they get left as long as an hour or two at a time, then if there's a spot of bother we put out a message in the store saying 'Will the mother who has left her baby in a blue and cream baby carriage please come out and attend to the little dear', you know the kind of thing."

"Did you put out any such message this morning?"

"Why no, sir, all quiet this morning. Except for this young lady, that is."

"And you only let people using prams into this space?"

"Why, yes. Who else would want to come in?"

"Could you swear that in the ten minutes before this young lady spoke to you, nobody came out carrying a baby?"

"Just carrying it—without a pram, you mean?"

"That's exactly what I mean. A baby with a big rattle."

"Why, yes." The commissioner spoke tolerantly, as if Quarles was slightly out of his mind. "You see, sir, this is a pram park. People don't come in and out carrying babies. They leave 'em here."

"You'd notice if they did?"

"I certainly would."

QUARLES' secretary, Molly Player, shared a flat in Maida Vale with a girl named Beaty Barnes, who not only called herself a model, but really was one. Molly showed no surprise at seeing Quarles when he rang the doorbell at half past nine.

"Beaty's on the town and I'm all alone," she said. "I was just making coffee. Come in and have some?"

"Yes. I've got some work for you tomorrow."

"What's a telephone for? You mean you want to talk."

"All right, I want to talk."

"Irish coffee? I warn you, I shall charge it to expenses."

Quarles sipped the whiskey-laced coffee and told her about it. Talking helped to clear his mind. "Now, do you see what I see?" He ticked off the points on his fingers. "Point one, when the man rang up he didn't ask whether Gaye was at home, he simply said 'Put your husband on the line'. He knew Gaye would be at home, and this was only just after four-thirty. Lilian Wilson told me he was never home in the usual way until seven. So it was somebody who'd been keeping a close enough watch to know that Gaye had come home.

"Point two. The commissionaire, Jenkins, is ready to swear that nobody walked out of the pram park carrying a baby. So John came out in a pram. The kidnapper picked him out of one pram, put him in another, and walked out. This means it was almost certainly a woman—a man pushing a pram is much more noticeable. And it's not easy to get rid of a pram without attracting notice. The odds are—I wouldn't put it higher than this—that the kidnapper is somebody who's living in Wimbledon, near enough to the Gayes to keep an eye on them. Somebody who has one child, hence the pram. Probably someone who's talked to Lilian Wilson. Agreed?"

Quarles spread out a map on the floor. "Here's a map of Wimbledon. I want you to cover the streets round and about Elder Grove, using the old sales promotion routine. But it's got to be something with special application to babies."

"A new nappy service?"

"Perfect. I want to know who's got babies, how many they've got, all about their husbands. Look out particularly for recent arrivals, and for husbands who work at home. Here's a picture of baby John, though all babies look alike to me. He's got fair hair and brown eyes. All right?"

"I suppose so. It has occurred to you that the nursemaid or the commissionaire or even your honourable client may be lying?"

"That's exactly why I came to see you." Quarles smiled at her sweetly. "Tomorrow will see a reversal of the proper order of life in a detective agency. I shall be sitting in the office making and taking telephone calls. You will be on the road doing the leg work. Take my advice and wear flat-heeled shoes."

Wednesday, 28th September

Quarles sat in the office for most of the day. He received two enquiries for his services; one from a woman who wanted to

obtain divorce case evidence against her husband, and the other from a store manager who wanted him to investigate a series of petty thefts from the jewellery department. Quarles politely declined the first, and advised the store manager to check on his house detective. "Either he's corrupt or he's inefficient. If you put a tail on to him you can find out which."

He spent the rest of his time on the Gaye kidnapping case. He had a friend who was a director of one of the bigger insurance companies, and the friend told him that Roger Gaye had a high reputation as an up-and-coming partner in a lively firm.

"No bad habits? Women, drink, gambling?"

"Nothing like that been round the grape-vine. As far as I know he's an extremely good chap. Of course, if you know anything to the contrary—"

"No, no," Quarles said hastily. "Suppose Gaye wanted to put his hands quickly on a lot of money—say, twenty thousand pounds—for his personal use. How easy do you think it would be?"

"That I can only make a guess at. I don't know anything about his private affairs. I shouldn't think he'd have that much money lying around, if that's what you mean."

"There are no rumours of his being hard up?"

"No. But there will be soon, if you make many more phone calls like this one. What's it all about, Quarles?"

"Just routine," Quarles said, and hung up. He felt he could dismiss the remote possibility that Gaye had faked the kidnapping himself.

The agency through which the Gayes had hired Lilian Wilson were emphatic that she was a perfectly nice, respectable girl. She was the daughter of an army officer, had been on their books for three years, and had had four jobs in that time, in each of which she had given satisfaction. Her previous employers had parted with her only because they were going out to South Africa, and Lilian wanted to stay in England.

The personnel manager of McClure's said that Robert Jenkins was personally very well known to him. He had been with the firm for ten years and his record was excellent.

This was all negative information, but it was satisfactory in a way. Quarles got out his car and drove to Wimbledon. . .

When Molly Player left her flat that morning she went to a large store and bought four dozen nappies. She then called on a friend in the printing business, who printed some cards for her, and also stencilled an armband which read: *Chafeless Nappies Limited, Sales Demonstrator*. Thus equipped, and wearing a pair of flat-heeled shoes, she set off for Wimbledon.

Her technique did not vary. When the door was opened, she said, accompanying the words with a smile of saccharine sweetness, "Good morning. I am your Chafeless Nappies demonstrator. Are you lucky enough to have a baby in the family?" When the answer was "No", she asked what other families in the street had babies. When it was "Yes", she said that her firm was offering free samples, and suggested that she should see the baby and put on its special, free-gift Chafeless Nappy herself.

The idea worked almost too well. By the time she had fitted fresh nappies on to a dozen squalling babies, Molly felt that she had taken on a job that involved devotion far beyond the line of duty. There seemed to be altogether too many mothers with young babies living in this part of Wimbledon, and they took altogether too kindly to the idea of the Chafeless Nappy service.

It was after three o'clock in the afternoon when she rang the bell of one of the red brick Edwardian houses on the corner of Elder Grove and Frant Street. The sour-faced woman who opened the door said "No babies here", and then perfunctorily added, "Try the Bennetts, first floor." The woman who came down when Molly pressed the bell with "Bennett" written on it was blue-eyed, slightly Nordic, and a little flustered. She did not look like a kidnapper—but then, what does a kidnapper look like? Molly went into her speech. The woman looked at her doubtfully.

"It's nice of you, but I think Billy's all right really."

"Just feel these, Mrs. Bennett."

The woman felt one of the nappies, and made the accurate observation that they felt like any other nappies to her. There was a sudden squawk from above. "There," Molly said brightly. "Baby's uncomfortable. Won't you let me—"

It was at this point that the man came down the stairs, saying pleasantly enough, "What is it, Elsa?" He said it pleasantly enough, and he was smiling, but Molly disliked him on sight. He was again, she supposed, a Nordic type, but his blue eyes were cased in layers of flesh, and his straw-coloured hair looked like a wig.

"Let the young lady come up, let her come up by all means," he said in that pleasant but impersonal voice. "Billy's a bit naughty today, perhaps these special nappies will stop his crying." Again the words were innocuous enough, the words any father might have used, but something about the way they were spoken made Molly want to shiver.

The baby lay in a new-looking carry-cot in a disorderly and dirty room, its face red with crying. Did it look like the Gaye

baby? Molly simply couldn't tell. She picked it up and put on one of the nappies, painfully conscious of the man's unwinking regard. Miraculously the crying stopped. The baby stared up at her solemnly. Looking down, Molly saw and realized something, something she should have noticed at once.

"You're a wonder," the man said. Was there a mocking note in his voice? "Really knows how to look after a baby, doesn't she, Elsa?"

"Billy hasn't been much trouble," the woman said. "Been ever so quiet."

"Until the last day or so, my dear," the man said, savouring his private joke.

Molly wanted nothing more than to get out of the flat. Instead she said, "Have you been here long?"

"Three months," the man said. "Why?"

"No special reason. There seem to be a lot of new arrivals in this part of Wimbledon, that's all. And if you wanted a regular supply of nappies we'd need a permanent address."

"We'll let you know," the man said. "Won't we, Elsa?"

"Yes. Yes, we'll do that." The woman spoke in a strangled voice. She was looking at the baby.

Molly had reached the door when the man said, "We don't know where to contact you. You'll be in the telephone book?"

"Not yet." She handed him one of the cards which bore the name Chafeless Nappies Limited, with Quarles' Trafalgar Square telephone number and address. "This is our temporary address."

She almost ran down the stairs. In the hall there was a pram, and in the pram was what she took at first for a baby, well covered up. Then she saw that it was a large and extremely lifelike doll. Beside the doll was a large rattle.

A BADLY shaken Molly told her story to Quarles and the Gayes. "So Mrs. Bennett simply walked round to McClure's with the doll in the pram, hidden under blankets and with the pram hood up, picked up John, put him in the pram with the doll and walked away," Quarles said. "It's very possible."

Roger Gaye was incredulous. "You mean to tell me that John is here in Wimbledon, just at the end of this road? I can't believe it."

"But it's not their child," Molly said. She repeated again what she had seen.

"Perhaps they adopted him."

"I know—I tell you I *know* they're the kidnappers. The woman's not so bad, but the man is horrible."

"I have faith in Molly," Quarles said. "Assume that her story's true. What can we do about it?"

"Go in and get John," Roger Gaye said. "With a gun."

"And if we're mistaken you'll end up in prison . . . Even if we're right, you'll be risking John's life."

"Wait till they take the baby out, then?"

"If they've got any sense, they won't." Quarles snapped his fingers. "One of the women who talked to Lilian Wilson was named Bennett. Let's talk to Lilian."

Yes, a pale-faced Lilian Wilson said, the Mrs. Bennett who spoke to her had been a blue-eyed blonde. No, she hadn't seen the Bennett baby. Billy had not been well, so Mrs. Bennett kept him indoors.

"It fits together," Quarles said.

Gaye had been listening with unconcealed impatience. "I want to know what we're going to do. This famous discovery of yours seems to have got us nowhere."

Quarles put his finger-tips together. "I suggest we wait."

Thursday, 29th September

THE third telephone call came at ten o'clock in the morning.

"Mr. Gaye," the blurred voice said. "Have you got the money?"

"I shall have it by tomorrow morning."

"Good. In one pound notes, please. Not new ones."

"All right."

The voice became brisk. "You will receive final instructions later."

"What about John?"

"He will be returned when our transaction is completed."

"But—" Gaye said, and then stopped. The line was dead.

Thursday was a waiting day. It was important to watch the Bennett's flat, yet vital also that the couple should have no suspicions. From a summerhouse in the Gayes' garden it was possible to see the gate of the red brick Edwardian house at the top of Elder Grove, and Roger Gaye and Molly Player took turns keeping watch on it.

A waiting day—but there were still things to be done. Quarles found out that the flat had been let to the Bennetts by a local estate agent named Robinson. He went to see Robinson. The Bennetts had come along just over three months ago, the agent said, and had looked at the properties on his books. They had finally settled on the house at the corner of Elder Grove.

Quarles said, "Did you see if they had a baby?"

"No. Look here, you'd better tell me what's wrong."

"I suspect the Bennetts of blackmailing a client of mine. I

don't believe there is a baby. I can't tell you more than that. Did you get references?"

"No. They paid six months' rent in advance."

Quarles hesitated, then decided to ask no more questions. Nor did he dare to make any enquiries about the Bennetts from local traders, in case they should hear of them. He returned to the Gayes' house, which he entered by a gate in the back garden. There, in the summerhouse, he and the Gayes and Molly Player watched and waited. Nothing happened.

Friday, 30th September

JUST after midnight Roger Gaye said, "I don't see any use in staying out in this summerhouse for the rest of the night."

"You go to bed. Molly and I will watch," Quarles said.

Gaye exploded, "You don't think I mind sitting up and watching, do you? It's just that this seems—well, futile."

"Suppose it is?" Quarles spoke without any of his usual urbanity. "I advised you to call in the police—you remember? You wouldn't do it, you wanted me. That means we do things my way. It's too late to back out now."

In the end, Gaye, Quarles and Molly took two-hour turns to watch during the night, and it was Gaye who saw a man with fair hair leave the red brick house at six-thirty in the morning, and briskly turn the corner into Frant Street. He went to Quarles, and shook his shoulder. The big man was dozing.

"Now what do we do?" Gaye asked.

"We wait."

The last telephone message came from a call-box just after eight-thirty in the morning. Five minutes after receiving it, Roger Gaye set out in his car for Chobham Common, between Chertsey and Bagshot. He took with him a large brown paper parcel, stuffed not with pound notes but with pieces of torn-up paper. He left this parcel, as he had been told to do on the telephone, at a point just beyond a certain cross-roads on the Common. He drove straight back to Wimbledon.

At nine o'clock Molly Player, wearing the armband of a Chafeless Nappies demonstrator, rang the bell of the Bennetts' flat. Quarles stood concealed in the embrasure of the door. Mrs. Bennett put her head out of a window.

"Oh, it's you. We don't want anything."

"This is important," Molly said. "I'm afraid I left the wrong type of nappy, Mrs. Bennett."

The window slammed shut. Feet descended the stairs, and the door opened a few inches. Quarles pushed it wide, and caught hold of the woman. "Mrs. Bennett, I'm a private detective. I

believe that you have here the child of Mr. and Mrs. Roger Gaye—”

The woman screamed and dropped to the floor in a faint . . .

They found John Gaye upstairs in his carry-cot, dirty but unharmed. Molly took him back to his mother, while Quarles telephoned the police. Bennett was caught at Waterloo Station as he was boarding a train for Wimbledon. He was identified as a man named “Fingers” Lyne, who had served four sentences for extortion and blackmail. His “wife” was a woman named Paddy Donner, who acted as the come-on girl in his blackmail racket.

“He’s a nasty customer,” Quarles’ friend Inspector Leeds said to him afterwards. “I wouldn’t have given much for that kid’s life if you hadn’t got ‘Fingers’ out of the way. But I don’t see how this young lady spotted that the ‘Bennetts’ weren’t what they seemed to be.”

“I just knew that the baby couldn’t be their own, that’s all,” Molly said. “The baby had brown eyes, and both ‘Bennett’ and the girl had blue eyes. It’s a simple fact of genetics that blue-eyed parents don’t have brown-eyed babies.”

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“I can’t find him!”



BURGLAR

by *PIERRE BOILEAU*

GUGUENHEIM was just starting dinner in his back room when the bell rang. His visitor looked about thirty-five or forty; his brick-red face testified to a life spent in the open air under tropical suns. (On his last visit he had confided that he had spent seven years in Cayenne before he escaped from the prison colony.) He carried a large valise which seemed to weigh him down.

Guguenheim's sour expression gave way to a smile which disclosed black and improbably located teeth. This was the fourth time that the convict had visited the little second-hand shop, and Guguenheim was more than satisfied with their relationship. Not that their dealings had been on a large scale; so far Monsieur Lucien, as he called himself, had turned in only trifling jewels, not worth more than ten or twelve thousand francs all told. But these contacts, Guguenheim felt sure, were mere preliminaries to a more serious operation. The man had already made vague allusions to something of the sort.

While he was greeting the convict, Guguenheim's eyes lit on the valise. "Come to say goodbye?" he asked.

"I'm going away, all right, but this isn't part of my baggage," Monsieur Lucien said. "I have to talk to you—seriously."

"Be with you as soon as I close up," Guguenheim said. He turned the crank, and the steel-mesh curtain came down.

Meanwhile, the visitor had established himself in a dusty and faded Empire armchair. The fence sat on a piano stool opposite him. "I'm listening."

"Look," Monsieur Lucien said, "the climate in Paris—well, in all France—is getting a little hot for me. I've decided to travel in foreign parts. I don't know yet just where I'll settle down; it isn't entirely a matter of my choice anyway. The one thing I know for sure is that by dawn tomorrow I'll have the border between me and my good friends at Headquarters."

"You have a passport?"

Monsieur Lucien smiled as he drew it from his pocket. "All in order. I defy even you to spot anything wrong with it. I've got my ticket for Switzerland and I'm leaving on the Berne Express at 22.37, as the railways put it—10.37 tonight, to you."

Guguenheim was desolated. "Just my luck! For once I find somebody worth working with; and you did lead me to hope—"

Monsieur Lucien looked at his watch. "Well, I've just told you I'm not leaving until 10.37. I've got my reservation and I've checked my suitcase. Say I get to the station half an hour before train time; that still leaves me two hours now."

The fence gave a whistle of admiration. "Ah! I wish some of your colleagues could hear you! So you're planning to leave in a blaze of glory. Could you tell me just how...?"

Monsieur Lucien answered carelessly, "You've heard of the Countess de Felbach's brooch?"

Guguenheim's start all but upset the piano stool.

"I see you're familiar with it," Monsieur Lucien said. "Do you think that the thirteen diamonds, taken out of the setting, could be disposed of without too much risk?"

"You're talking as if the brooch was already in your hands!"

"Oh, in two hours..."

Guguenheim laughed heartily. "I've known some characters who were pretty sure of themselves; but compared with you... So you're expecting to break in, just like that, into the vaults of the Lyonnais?"

"Excuse me," Monsieur Lucien said politely, "the brooch is at this moment in the Count's own safe, in his private home in the Rue Barbet de Jouy."

"He told you, I suppose?"

"Not quite; but I was at the Credit Lyonnais yesterday afternoon when Felbach took his precious deposit out of the bank."

Guguenheim had stopped laughing. "Why did he take it out of the bank?" he asked. "I don't imagine it was so that his wife could wear it. Those two aren't courting the public gaze."

"I see you know the situation," Monsieur Lucien said. "The Count has decided to sell the brooch."

"So he's at the end of his rope?"

"Precisely. Starting tomorrow, the greatest jewellers of Paris will begin their pilgrimages to the Rue Barbet de Jouy; or, to be more exact, they will stay quietly in their shops."

Guguenheim nodded. "Does it look dangerous?"

"Not at all. The Felbachs are spending the evening with the d'Ouvres. The house will be empty."

"The servants?"

"They parted company with the last one a week ago."

"It's not possible! They're down to that?"

"They must be, if they've reached the point of having to sell the brooch, the symbol of their glory. Three-quarters of their furniture is already sold. And that, no doubt, is why Felbach sees nothing wrong with leaving the brooch in his home; it's the last place a burglar would be interested in." Again Monsieur Lucien took out his watch. "But I'm talking too much and time is slipping away. We'll be in the Rue Barbet by nine-thirty. I figure it will take me a good twenty minutes to get into the safe."

"We?" Guguenheim said. "What do you mean?"

"I mean that we will take on this job as a team. The most elementary caution demands a look-out."

"So you thought of me," Guguenheim observed ironically.

"Yes. You know my theories. I distrust chance companions; with you I'll feel safe."

"But look. The only trouble is: *I don't pull jobs*. I buy the stuff—and that's all."

"Very well. Tonight you'll pull your first job."

"No."

"Yes." Monsieur Lucien rose and thumped his fist on a gaming table. "Enough of this childishness, Guguenheim. I'm making you a unique proposition."

"But the risks!"

"There are no risks with two of us. You know my position: if I'm caught, with my record, I'm done for. Do you think I'd be betting my life on anything less than a sure thing?"

Guguenheim said nervously, "But . . . well . . . what would I be supposed to do?"

Monsieur Lucien smiled. "Ah, you're getting reasonable. Well, here's the only complication in this job—the one factor that forces me reluctantly to take on an assistant." He pointed to the valise. "In there I have an acetylene torch which will pierce the thickest metal. My only fear is that somebody will hear the noise

or see the light from outside. If you're on the look-out, I can go about my work in peace."

"But the neighbours across the street . . ."

"The house faces on to a high-walled garden. Listen to me, Gugenheim. If you won't budge, I'll work alone. But I'm warning you; don't count on getting the brooch in that case. If I have to, I'll take all the risks, and I'll pry the diamonds out and peddle them myself."

Gugenheim twisted his moustache with a shaky hand. "And if I go along?"

"I'll let you have the article in question for five hundred thousand francs."

The fence caught his breath; the brooch was worth at least two million.

For the third time Monsieur Lucien consulted his watch. "Come on! Or I'll never catch my train."

After one last, brief hesitation, Gugenheim took his bowler hat from its hook. "Of course we're coming back here?"

"Will there be time? Better bring the money with you; then I can head straight for the station."

The old fence made no objection. Who could tell, if they came back to the shop, whether the convict might change his mind and try to force up the price?

"Go on," he said. "I'll be with you in a minute."

MONSIEUR LUCIEN opened the door, shoved his valise out on the pavement, and crouched down to get under the steel-mesh curtain. Gugenheim's first thought was to take a revolver from the drawer of the gaming table. Then he slipped into the dark room where an army of flies was besieging his bowl of noodles. A moment later he rejoined his companion, his pockets bulging with banknotes.

They took a taxi as far as the Boulevard des Invalides, in front of the Musée Rodin. The street was deserted. Monsieur Lucien strode along, valise in hand, seeming perfectly at ease; but the same could hardly be said of Gugenheim.

In the Rue Barbet de Jouy, Monsieur Lucien took two shiny new keys out of an inner pocket.

"You've taken every precaution, I see," Gugenheim observed, in a shaky voice.

They reached the house without meeting a soul. Monsieur Lucien looked about cautiously, then resolutely marched up to the door. The key turned in the lock without a sound.

Monsieur Lucien drew back to let his companion pass, but Gugenheim recoiled.

The convict shrugged his shoulders and went in. Gugenheim waited a moment. Then he drew a deep breath and crossed the threshold as if he were plunging into a bottomless pool.

Monsieur Lucien closed and bolted the door and lit his flashlight. A short flight of marble stairs rose in front of them. They went up, Gugenheim trembling badly.

"You're absolutely sure . . ." he started to whisper.

To reassure him, Monsieur Lucien cried out with all his might, "Anybody home?" His voice seemed to fill the house, but there was no answer. Gugenheim was satisfied; this was conclusive.

"There's only one danger, as I told you," Monsieur Lucien repeated as he opened a glass-panelled door. "And that is of somebody noticing something from outside. Otherwise, I guarantee everything."

They crossed three pitiful rooms almost completely emptied of furnishings, their carpets rolled up in the corners.

The safe was in the study, a room obviously designed for luxury, but now displaying little save empty bookshelves. Gugenheim, his spirits much brighter now, slipped behind the curtains and pressed against the window, from which he could watch the street for about a hundred yards.

Monsieur Lucien opened his valise and took out two steel cylinders shaped like large bottles. He set them on the floor and attached two rubber tubes which met in a nozzle. He turned off his flash, struck a flame with his lighter, and turned a valve. A blue flame shot out, and a prolonged hiss arose.

The operation went off smoothly. Once in a great while a passerby would come along, and Gugenheim would whisper, "Look out!" Monsieur Lucien would break off until the intruder had gone his way.

Finally Monsieur Lucien turned off the torch, relit his flashlight, and took a crowbar from the valise.

A hole indicated where the lock had been. The door was still smoking. A slight pressure with the crowbar was enough to open it wide. The safe compartments were all empty but one. In this there was a red leather jewel-case.

"May I . . .?" Gugenheim greedily thrust out his hand.

"Please do . . . though I'm afraid it may still be a trifle hot."

Gugenheim was beyond caring. He snatched up the case as swiftly as a cat filching food from a plate. The sharp pain of his burned skin was not enough to make him drop it. He trembled as he opened it. The diamond brooch glittered in the light of the flash. "You told me you wanted to do business on the spot," he said hastily.

"Yes. I can't have much time left."

The fence closed the case and slipped it inside his coat, then emptied his pockets of the bundles they contained. Monsieur Lucien did not even bother to count the notes . . .

On the Esplanade des Invalides, Monsieur Lucien hailed a taxi and offered the fence a lift home. Gugenheim shook his head. "Too risky. The driver might talk."

"Well, goodbye, then," Monsieur Lucien said. "Good luck."

"Good luck to you, too."

The taxi drew up. "East Station," said Monsieur Lucien.

FOR several minutes Monsieur Lucien lolled back motionless on the seat. But as the cab reached the Boulevards, he suddenly sat up and rapped on the glass.

"I've forgotten something. Take me back to the Invalides."

He got out, as before, in front of the Musée Rodin, and retraced his steps to the house in the Rue Barbet de Jouy. Once more he opened the door and called out, "Anybody home?"

And this time a voice answered, "At last! Darling . . ."

He turned on the light switch and the blonde Countess de Felbach appeared at the head of the marble stairs; the brooch of thirteen diamonds glittered on her bosom. "Quick! Tell me everything! Did it go off all right?"

Her husband displayed the bundles of banknotes.

"Wonderful! He didn't make any fuss about coming?"

"He came, though God knows my excuses were thin enough."

"And he agreed to bring the money with him?"

"Yes." With the back of his hand he began to wipe the brick-red colour from his face.

"Wonderful!" the countess repeated. "And that horrid little man didn't have the slightest suspicion of the brooch?"

"Remember, it was an admirably successful imitation," the Count de Felbach said. "You could have been fooled yourself. And then he saw it only by the light of the flash . . . which I was careful not to hold too close."

Still talking, they wandered into the study.

"Didn't I promise you I'd save our symbol from disaster?" he said. "Five hundred thousand francs!" He broke off with a wild laugh. "I'd give ten per cent of my winnings to see Gugenheim's face when he examines his purchase . . ."

Gugenheim grinned a black-toothed grin as he screwed the glass in his eye. His other hand still caressed the red leather case, postponing the delicious moment of opening it again.

"The idiot!" he muttered to himself. "I'd give a pretty penny to see his face tomorrow—when he tries to buy Swiss francs with counterfeit French banknotes!"

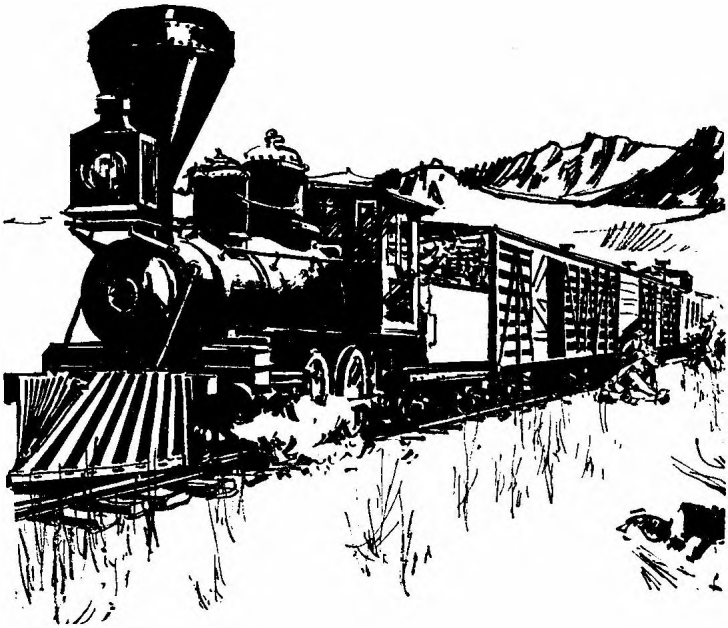
IN NEXT MONTH'S SUSPENSE

**THE
KINGDOM
OF
DEATH**

An electrifying novel of New York's waterfront and of the ruthless men who turn it into a battleground in their murderous struggle for power...

by Hugh Pentecost

**DON'T MISS THE OCTOBER SUSPENSE,
ON SALE SEPTEMBER 23**



RAID on the RAILROAD

SUNLIGHT and silence lay over the range headquarters of the Consolidated Cattle Company. In the big, square corral a dozen or more cow ponies drooped in drowsy dejection. Over by the straggling adobe ranchhouse, at one end of the shallow front veranda, a light buckboard rested on motionless wheels.

Inside the ranchhouse, in the dim interior of the main room opening off the veranda, two men occupied two chairs. One, near the door, relaxed in the mouse-chewed remnants of what had once been a leather-covered armchair. He was long and lean within old, worn range clothes set off by a wide belt with a huge

(continued on page 56)



by **JACK SCHAEFER**

*The most famous Western author of
them all—he wrote “Shane”—
contributes a brilliant new story*

silver buckle and absurdly high, curved-heel boots. He was ageless, any age at all past the half-century mark. A bottle half-filled with an amber liquid was on the floor within reach of his left hand. A small glass was in his right hand.

The other man, farther into the room, sat on a chair behind what had been a rolltop desk, but was now a flat-top with the upper structure removed. He was medium in every way, in size, in shape, in apparent age. A tinge of plumpness bulged the cloth of his neat pin-striped suit. He wore, beneath the coat and vest, a white shirt surmounted by a high collar, from which protruded a small bow tie. On the desk lay a derby hat.

The armchair man said, "Sure you won't join me?"

The desk man frowned slightly. "You know I don't drink. It interferes with my figuring. I'm not being intentionally rude. It's business, that's all." He sighed and ran a finger inside the high collar. "An aggravating business, too, I must say. The directors send me out here every year thinking they're giving me a kind of vacation. Nonsense. I have a sensitive nose. There's nothing out here but heat and dust and flies and smells and—"

The body of the armchair man remained still, but his right hand raised to tilt the contents of the little glass into his mouth. "An' rattlesnakes," he said gently. "An' hosses that don't handle easy. An' men that ain't always full civilized."

The desk man tried a small smile. "Well, yes. You're used to it. Maybe you even like it. But me, I'm a city man. I figure if I get right at this annual accounting I can clean it up this afternoon. Maybe in time to be back in town for the night train. That way I get in a day or two at Kansas City before I have to be back East. Now—where are the books?"

"Where they always are. In the second drawer on the left."

The desk man pulled open the second drawer on the left and took out several dog-eared notebooks and laid them on the desk. He opened the first notebook and settled to his work.

The desk man looked up, "I make it an eighty per cent calf crop," he said. "Isn't that low? It was eighty-seven last year."

The armchair man regarded the liquid in his glass with affection. "A rough winter," he said gently. "A mighty mean spring. I'd say eighty's a right encouragin' figure."

The desk man looked at the derby and reached to flick dust from it. He sighed and returned to his work. Then he held a finger in place on the page in front of him and looked up. "What's this? Eighty dollars for wolf poison! Eighty dollars!"

The armchair man raised his head from contemplation of his little glass. "Just between you an' me," he said, "that wasn't wolf poison. That was for liquid refreshment."

The desk man sat up straighter on his chair. "A bit thick, I must say. Do you realize it takes four steers at the going price to make eighty dollars?"

"Certain I realize it," the armchair man said gently. "A rough winter. The boys were doggin' it hard. Pullin' plenty more'n four cows through."

The desk man chewed on his pencil. Small brown furrows marked his forehead. He sighed and returned to his work.

The sun was lower in the west, opposite the open door, sending a patch of clean golden light into the room. Outside in the corral a horse neighed and the sound of hoofs floated in the stillness from somewhere beyond the buildings. Faintly the complaining creak of the corral gate could be heard. Faintly a voice followed. "Hey, look at the town rig. Bet you Plug-hat Platt's here."

The desk man heard nothing; he was intent on his work. He closed the last notebook and consulted his pad. He leaned back and looked up. "That's done. Everything seems to be in order. And it looks moderately good. Not up to last year. No. As you say, it was a hard winter. But I will be able to assure the directors they can expect another fair return on their investment."

He reached into an inside coat pocket and took out a small sheaf of folded papers. "I've been so busy I almost forgot these. They were shoved into my hand when I stepped off the train. Obviously a joke. I thought the man acted sheepish. It was smart of him, though, to get some Santa Fe Railroad paper."

Amber liquid slid down the armchair man's throat. "I was wonderin'," he said, "when you'd mention those."

"So you know about them?"

"Certain I know about 'em. They're real enough."

The desk man leaned forward, staring. "Obviously you're in on the joke too. But it won't work. Why, if there was anything to these things, they'd have had to be entered in your books here."

"Shucks," the armchair man said gently. "That Santy Fee man knew better'n to try an' present 'em to me."

The desk man sat still, very still. Slowly he laid the papers down and unfolded them. His voice came, hushed. "Good heavens. Claims against the company. More than eighteen hundred dollars. Doctor's bills. Salaries for trainmen laid up with injuries. Repairs to a locomotive."

"Shucks," said the armchair man. "It wasn't too bad. Some of the boys had a little run-in with a Santy Fee freight train."

"A little run-in! What happened?"

"Shucks," said the armchair man. "I missed the fun, but my foreman was in on it. You wait a minute." He raised his voice,

a sudden resonant roar. "Hey! You! Hat! Come here!"

Footsteps resounded on the veranda. The doorway darkened, almost filled by the bulk of Hat Henderson.

The armchair man bobbed his head towards the desk man. "Platt here," he said, "has been combin' through my pen scratches again. You must have met him last year."

"Sure," said Hat. "Sure. I remember him." He looked down at the armchair man. "Now you lookahere, Cal. You plain got to do something about that windmill over on the west flats. We been having to shove cows all the way over by the river because the damn thing ain't pumping hardly at all—"

"Shut up, Hat," said the armchair man affectionately. "You make a mighty poor liar. I checked that mill myself last week. An' I ain't needin' any help on ways of gettin' money out of the company."

The desk man stiffened more on his chair. "I know all right," he said. "Maybe I'm beginning to know too much how things are handled out here. Eighteen hundred dollars! As soon as I'm back East I'll have the company lawyers on to this. Those responsible will have to pay. And I demand an explanation."

"What he means," said the armchair man, "is he wants to know what happened. You tell him, Hat."

"What for?" said Hat Henderson. "The little dude has made up his mind already."

"Maybe he has," said the other man. "But don't you go makin' the same mistake. I'm manager of this spread. I ain't ever let you an' the boys down yet. Now you just tell him. From the beginning."

"Well now," said Hat. He sank down, knees bending, until he was hunkered on his heels. "I'd say it began with that damn order some company jackass sent through last month. Clean out all hosses not being used or likely to be used. That fool order meant rounding up that bunch of half-wild stuff, mostly batty old mares and maverick geldings that'd been roaming the canyon country south of here. And Cal here had to be so damned honest and put them on that hoss tally you called for last year. So that gives somebody a notion. Clean 'em out. Sell 'em off. Squeeze out a shade more profit for—"

"Certainly," said the desk man, asserting himself by interrupting. "That makes sense. Get rid of poor stock to make way for better. That's good business."

"Well now," said Hat. "You can call it good business. I call it a hell of a tough job. Rough country over that way. And those hosses was worse'n wild ones. Knew too blamed much about men and ropes and such. Well, when a job's got to be done,

it's got to be done. I took four of the boys, all I could spare at the time, and went after the things. We really had a time! They was crosses between antelopes and mountain goats. And mean. Spooky as she-bears with cubs. Took us all one day and half the next combing 'em out of the thickets.

"We wore out two good saddle hosses apiece gathering them things. Took us all the rest of that second day to get 'em to that little old broken down corral out on the flats. Only about five mile, but they didn't have no herd sense. When they broke, and they broke often, it'd be in all directions at once. But we got 'em there, every one of the fool things. Forty-three there were. Patched up the corral where it it was broke and just flopped on the ground for some shut-eye.

"Well, come morning, we fixed to shove 'em along some more. We started 'em moving right. We was heading for them corral and shipping pens over on that spur line of the Santy Fee. We get 'em there and we'd have 'em. And they was getting some better. They'd run like rabbits for a stretch and we'd be scuttering to hold 'em together. Then they'd balk and we'd have to shove 'em even into a walk, and then they'd be running again and the same stunt over and over. And then . . ."

THEY came over the last rise, sloping down a half mile to the thin tracery of tracks, sharp against the clean, cloudless blue of the big sky of a big land, forty-three wild-eyed, batty dry mares and maverick geldings and five tired, hungry men on five tough little worn, weary cow ponies. Almost directly below them was the splotch of posts and rails that were corral and shipping pens. To the right the tracks led into distances merging into distances, fading at last into far horizon. To the left the tracks led back into and were lost in a range of low, humped hills. Well back into the hills a fraying streamer of grey smoke floated upwards.

The horses, trotting over the rise, slowed on the downslope and stopped, staring ahead at the pens. The dust of their movement, drifting forwards, caught up with them, swirling slowly and rising to blot out some of the blue of the sky. The voice of Hat Henderson lifted out of the dust. "Easy now, boys. Sunfish, you slip on ahead and open the gate."

A shape emerged from the left of the dust cloud, the thick barrel body of Sunfish Perkins, sweat-sodden on a ratty, flop-eared grey, moving out and forward, loping down towards the corral. From out of the cloud where he had been came three riderless horses, heads high, sniffing at open distance. From thirty feet away, lost in the cloud, came the grunt of a horse hit hard with spurs. Into the clear streaked another shape, the slender com-

pactness of Dobe Chavez, erect in saddle on a scrubby roan already in full gallop, swooping to intercept the three.

From the right of the herd, drifting through the dust, came the cheerful voice of Monte Walsh. "We ain't lost one and the corral's right ahead. Makes a man feel good, almost like when a woman says yes."

"They ain't in there yet," came the voice of Chet Rollins from somewhere near.

"Quit yapping," came the voice of Hat Henderson. "And move 'em along."

Slowly the herd began to move down the slope, the horses stepping gingerly, reluctant, knowing. Sunfish Perkins was back in position on the left. The herd began to pick up speed, the leaders trotting, pushing out ahead of the dust cloud. Faster, and the mass of moving animals was plunging into a gallop, fanning out, seeking to split to right and left of the cluster of pens and corral. Five men on five cow ponies raced with the herd, sweeping, swerving without a break in rushing, headlong stride, closing it in, aiming for the angled pocket made by the pens along the tracks and the much bigger corral jutting out. The herd thudded into the pocket, a milling mass of squealing, kicking horses, hemmed in by five men in an arc around them.

"Jeeehoshaphat!" rose the voice of Hat Henderson as he slid his chunky bay to a stop. Two scrawny geldings had made it past the outer corner of the corral and were hightailing for faraway places. "We better let them two go!"

"Let 'em go, hell!" yelled Monte Walsh. He was already jumps away, spinning around the corral corner. The dun soared over a wide clump of cactus, disdaining to swerve aside. It drove in, angling across the course of the two geldings, and they braked on sliding hoofs.

"Yowee!" yelled Monte Walsh, slapping across the nose of the nearest with a coiled rope. "That won't get you nowhere!" The two swung, slowing, disgusted, and trotted back towards the others, with Monte and the dun behind.

The herd, hemmed in the wide angle, was beginning to accept the inevitable. The gate along the near side of the corral stood wide open, but none of the horses showed any interest.

"All right," said Hat Henderson. "Close in, boys. They ain't got a chance and they know it."

Careful, alert, the men began to crowd the herd closer into the pocket, closer to the open gateway. Two old mares looked in. They took a few steps and were inside and the others were shifting to follow.

Off to the left where the tracks snaked out of the low range

of hills, the streamer of grey smoke drifted upwards over the last little hill. Into view along the tracks, chugging steadily into the strain, came a small locomotive followed by the wood-piled tender, several freight cars and a guard's van.

In the cab the engineer sat relaxed on his stool, elbow on right window ledge, head out the window. A slow smile spread on his ruddy, rough-featured face. "Hey," he said for the benefit of the fireman standing behind him. "Let's have a little fun." He reached up and took hold of the whistle cord.

SCRE-E-E-E!!!

Ahead, at the cluster of pens and corral, forty-three batty dry mares and maverick geldings exploded into sudden action.

"Wow!" said the engineer, staring ahead in fascination. The fireman crowded down by him to look out the window.

Ahead, five men, two still rocking in saddles on pitching cow ponies, three stretched at odd angles on the ground with heads lifted, watched forty-three batty dry mares and maverick geldings heading for the horizon in forty-three different directions.

"We better move along," said the fireman. "Get past there quick as we can."

Ahead, moving in instant, silent, unanimous decision away from the pens and corral, five men advanced towards the approaching train; Monte Walsh in the lead, Chet Rollins a few jumps back on the thick-necked black, Sunfish Perkins labouring behind on his own short, thick legs, Hat Henderson limping, stumbling, hopping, Dobe Chavez crawling on hands and knees.

Monte Walsh reached the oncoming train, and the dun reared, pivoting on hind legs, and raced beside it. Monte took hold of the saddle horn and hopped up, crouching with feet on the saddle, and dived through the side door of the locomotive cab. Monte reappeared almost at once, heaved out on the rebound by the fireman, but one hand was clenched on the fireman's belt, and the fireman came with him.

Chet Rollins was racing beside the locomotive. His coiled rope was in his left hand, a loop forming in his right. His arm flashed and the loop dropped over the locomotive's smokestack. The thick-necked black lowered its head and swung away, shoulders slugging into the sudden strain. The rope tightened with a jerk, and the locomotive shuddered and rocked on the tracks and the black flew off its feet. Chet pushed out and away and the black hit the ground, squirming and kicking and dragged, and the smokestack ripped loose and fell clattering. A shower of sparks rose and descended over the cab. Inside the cab the engineer instinctively, unthinking, threw back the throttle and jammed on the brakes. The train slid steaming to a stop.

Back at the rear end, five trainmen hopped down the steps of the guard's van and stood in a group, staring forward. Up at the locomotive, the engineer peered out the side door and jumped to the ground. He waved at the five and started to shout. His voice was cut short. Chet Rollins had hurtled into him from behind . . .

By the van, one of the trainmen leaned in over the steps, reaching for something. The four others started forward. Monte Walsh, bruised and scratched and cinder-stained, rose from the trackside, leaving the fireman limp and finished, and moved to meet them. They converged on him in a rush.

"I'm coming, Monte," bellowed Sunfish Perkins, pounding in. He lowered his head and plunged forward and turned sideways at the waist, so that one thick shoulder jutted out and the full weight of his barrel body crashed into the melee. One of the trainmen, three ribs cracked, staggered away.

"Save some for me," boomed Hat Henderson.

The fifth trainman arrived, a monkey wrench in his hand. He skipped about, looking for a chance. He saw one and swung. Sunfish Perkins sagged and collapsed.

A gun roared, and the man with the monkey wrench dropped it and clutched with his left hand at his right shoulder.

"He's a nasty man," said Dobe Chavez from forty feet away on the ground, slipping his gun back into its holster. He started crawling forward again. He was close to the whirling melee. His arms swept out and around a pair of legs.

Cinders fell and the dust floated gently over the remnants of fast, furious action along the side of the crippled train. Silence settled over the scene. By the trackside, near the engine, five trainmen reclined on the ground showing no dispositions to rise. Farther up, the fireman sat up, showing no disposition to rise.

Close by the five trainmen, Dobe Chavez sat on the ground investigating his right ankle. A few feet away Sunfish Perkins also sat on the ground, exploring with cautious fingers one side of his head. Monte Walsh leaned against a freight car, chest slowly heaving, combing cinders out of his hair with blunt, curved fingers. Hat Henderson stood on the slight embankment looking down at the bloody knuckles of one hand.

Down the trackside, along the train, came the engineer, face splotched, one leg dragging, sullen, disgusted, coming in little spurts as he was shoved from behind by Chet Rollins.

"You didn't keep it fair," he said. "I heard shooting."

Monte Walsh stepped forward and kicked at the monkey wrench on the ground. "One of your boys had that thing."

The engineer stared down at the monkey wrench. "I see," he said. He sighed.

"How was I to know?" said one of the trainmen, left hand tight on right shoulder. "I thought maybe it was a hold-up."

"They'd have had their guns out, stupid," said the engineer. He sighed again. "An' what am I goin' to do now? Can't get any decent draft with no stack. Leaking steam, too. I couldn't budge the thing."

"Unhook," said Chet Rollins. "Leave the cars here."

"Yeah," said the engineer. "Maybe I could creep along. Why can't one of you ride to the operator at the main line so he can wire for a repair crew?"

Hat Henderson stiffened. "There ain't one of my boys doing any riding for any railroad," he said.

Five dirty, dusty, battered cowboys watched six equally dirty, dusty, even more battered trainmen move away, two of them leaning on others, stopping briefly to collect the fireman. They saw them stop by the tender and fuss with the coupling and climb into the cab. The wisps of smoke floating above the locomotive began to increase, and they could hear the rising hiss of steam. Slowly the locomotive and tender crept away.

Hat Henderson raised his head higher to look around. "Sunfish," he said, "how's that head?"

"I sure know I got one," said Sunfish.

"Dobe," said Hat. "What's with that leg?"

"This ankle," said Dobe Chavez, "he won't work."

"Chet," Hat said, "and you, Monte. Bring the hosses over here. We got forty-three fool critters to find."

THE sun was low in the western sky, ready to drop behind the ragged edging of mountains in the far distance, sending its soft golden light through the doorway.

"Well, now," said Hat Henderson. He rose slowly to full height, blotting out some of the sunlight. "It wasn't too bad. Dobe stayed there and handled the gate while the rest of us brought 'em in in little bunches. But they was tired. Hadn't broke more'n four or five mile around. We brought 'em in, all but one mare that must have caught a foot crossing the tracks and broke a leg."

Hat Henderson turned slightly to look down at the armchair man, who simply shook his head a little. Quietly Hat Henderson went out the open door.

The desk man peered at the doorway. There was no one in sight outside. "Good heavens, man!" he said. "Why were no warrants sworn out? Wrecking a train! Shooting a man!"

"Shucks," said the armchair man. "This is still hoss-an'-cow country. Not a judge around that'd issue a warrant on that."

"Well," said the desk man. "Maybe that's a good thing. As things are, I'd say the company is clear enough."

"No," said the armchair man. "The company's payin'."

The desk man jerked on his chair. "Nonsense," he snapped. "I can see they had provocation. I can sympathize with them, I must say. But being provoked doesn't give them the right to start taking things apart and committing assault. When they cut loose like that, it was their own doing. They're personally responsible. They'll have to pay."

"On forty a month?" said the armchair man.

"That is their problem," said the desk man. "I'll tell you what I will do. I'll get the company lawyers to help them. You know, whittle it down. Counterclaims for that horse that broke a leg, for time lost, for injuries to our men. Things like that."

"No," said the armchair man. "You don't understand this thing at all. The boys had the best of it. They tromped that train crew right thorough. There's got to be no quibblin'."

The desk man stared at the other. "They can be fools about it," he said. "But I won't. That's what the company pays me for. Well, those men had to have their—fun. Now they'll have to pay for it."

"Oh, they'll pay, all right," said the armchair man. "They'll hock all they've got if they have to, except their saddles. An' they'll pay. But that'll be mighty expensive for the company."

"Expensive?"

"Why, sure," said the armchair man. "Come the next day, there won't be a rider anywhere on this whole damned spread."

The desk man jerked on his chair. "Well, then, you'd just have to get busy and hire more men."

"Maybe I could," said the armchair man, "if I scratched around hard enough. An' anyway, I wouldn't be doin' it. I'd be gone too."

"Blackmail," said the desk man slowly.

"Call it anythin' you've a mind to. But you're thinkin' of this in terms of laws an' business rules. I'm tellin' you, those things don't come into it at all." He leaned forward. "The boys've been talkin' about this. They don't go by reasonin'. They go by feelin'. They been proud of the company, of this outfit. They've made the Slash-Y brand, an' the boys that carry that iron mean plenty everywhere cowmen still ride hosses an' swing a loop. They ain't pretty, but there ain't a job I tell 'em to do they don't do an' do right. Like that damn-fool order. They penned those hosses in spite of all the Santy Fee could do."

"They been proud of this outfit. They feel they done right well by it over at the pens. There was five of them. There

was seven of those trainmen, not mentionin' a train. They feel if the company's what they been thinking it is, it ought to help them once in a long while when they're in a jam."

The desk man stared thoughtfully at the other man. "And you," he said slowly. "You feel the same way?"

"Yes," said the armchair man. "I got the same feelin'." He rose out of the armchair. "Reckon I'll go tell the boys to start gatherin' their gear."

"Wait a minute," said the desk man. He saw the other stop and stand quiet, waiting. "You put me in a difficult position. I might as well tell you that some of the directors think highly of you as manager of this ranch. If the men leave, I know what they'd say. What I did: hire some more. But you leave, and they'd be on to me hard. What the devil do you expect me to do? Can't we figure this out some way?"

"It's all figured," said the armchair man. "I don't give a hoot how you put it down. That's your problem. To me an' the boys, you're the company. You're the one who comes out here. What you do is what we'll go by."

"But I don't see how I'll do it."

"But you'll do it," said the armchair man, affectionately. "Come along, Platt, an' we'll tell the boys."

Slowly, reluctantly, the desk man rose to his medium plumpish height and came around the desk and up alongside the armchair man. A lean arm reached out and urged him on ahead, out the doorway, the short distance to the edge of the veranda.

In the soft, luminous dusk sat ten silent men. About fifteen feet away another lounged in the saddle on a drooping dun.

"Platt here," said the armchair man cheerfully, "is going to take care of that little Santy Fee affair."

The desk man was painfully aware of twelve men regarding him gravely. "I'll—I'll do my best for you, boys," he said.

The soft, luminous dusk was alive and vociferous with leaping shapes and back-slappings and high, shrill yells. A voice emerged: "You savvy those Eastern dudes! You can do it!"

He tried to recoil again. A leggy dun seemed to be leaping straight at him. It reared, almost pawing the veranda roof, and dropped down sideways in front of him. He looked up into a lean, youngish face. "Put out a hand," said Monte Walsh. "I've a hankering to shake it." Solemnly Monte leaned down and took the limp hand and shook it. "Move along, Monte," came the voice of Chet Rollins. "It's my turn."

One by one ten cowboys with the dust of the day's work on them and a ranch cook, redolent of grease and smoke, stepped forward to reach for the desk man's right hand.

He winced. His fingers were being crushed in a big hand. "You're all right, Plug-hat," said Hat Henderson.

Between the shafts of the buckboard the flea-bitten bay jogged forward. The desk man held the reins in his left hand. He had no illusion that he was doing much driving.

He wriggled the fingers of his right hand. They seemed to be all there and intact. He reached with them to fix the derby more firmly on his head. "Plug-hat," he said softly. "Plug-hat Platt." He settled into what seemed to be the least uncomfortable position possible on the jouncing seat of the buckboard. "Good heavens," he said, even more softly, "what a way to do business."



"Come out from behind that badge!"

*The thief will shake with fright,
said the old chief in the jungle*

THE JUSTICE OF SUMA

by **EUGENE PAWLEY**

THREE armed warriors menacingly escorted us to Suma Marit's grass hut and forced us to sit on the ground. The chief regarded us intently.

"I regret this has happened," he said slowly. "A valuable stone has been stolen from one of my warriors. You two white men are accused of the crime."

Stanton took the initiative and spoke up. "I suppose we have nothing to say! We're guilty because you say so, and that's all there is to it!" His face was turning red under his sandy hair.

"There is justice in my village," Suma Marit said. "A stone has been stolen. The thief must be caught and punished."

"Where is your proof that we are the thieves?" Stanton demanded. "You can search us if you like. You have no justice here. Law is your word, whether you are right or wrong. Your people are angry because two white men have frightened game out of the jungle, but I explained that we were lost and thought that firing our weapons might bring help."

I was feeling very uncomfortable, and regretted that Stanton—my lawyer colleague back in Liverpool—had talked me into this disastrous safari.

Doubt spread across the old chief's wrinkled face after Stanton's outburst. "How is justice in your village?" he asked.

Stanton rose, as though he were back in an English court. He said, "In my village a man is believed innocent until there is proof—definite proof—that he is guilty."

"Ka," the chief muttered. "Mean nothing. How you find guilty man in your village?"

"We find out as many things as we can about the crime," Stanton told him. "It is talked about at a big meeting. Then several men talk together in secret and decide whether the man is guilty or not."

A smile parted Suma Marit's bulbous lips. "Ha. Take long time for justice. Warrior no have time to waste."

Stanton's face was red as raw meat. "But that isn't justice!" he protested. "How do you know you pick the right man?"

"Many ways."

Suma Marit rose and spoke to one of the guards. Then the old chief turned to us. I got up and stood beside Stanton. "Maybe white man would like to show how he find thief."

"Fine," Stanton answered without hesitation.

"We're not detectives; we're only lawyers," I whispered to him.

"Come," the chief said. "All men of village are here now, for it is night. My men are many, but you will find guilty one."

"And if we don't?" I asked.

"Then maybe you guilty—if you cannot find thief."

OUTSIDE, the village was alive with burning fires and moving figures coming to the open space in front of the chief's hut. There must have been over fifty warriors gathered in the compound.

Stanton seldom became flustered. But now, in the firelight, I saw beads of perspiration along his forehead.

The chief was still smiling. He told the village of the crime. Then he turned to Stanton. "Find thief!"

Stanton seemed to slump. "It—it'll take time," he said.

"Ka. No time. Do now!"

"I can't, damn it!" Stanton swore.

"I can," Suma Marit said simply. "Man will be thief, too. If I prove this, you will agree Suma Marit has good justice?"

Stanton thought for a moment. "If you can do it, I will."

We followed the chief to a small hut that served as a smoke house, and smelled like it. In front of the hut Suma Marit gave orders to a guard, who disappeared into the night.

Presently the man returned with a large parrot. Suma Marit took the bird and went inside the hut. After a while he came out again and spoke to his men. Then he translated for us. "An innocent man has nothing to fear; only the thief will shake with fright when he enters the hut."

"Why?" Stanton asked suspiciously.

"Because I have told my men to stroke the bird. When guilty man touch feathers, bird will talk."

At a signal, all the men lined up. One by one they entered the hut and emerged again. As each man left the hut, Suma Marit shook his hand because the bird had not screamed.

"Now you," Suma Marit said.

Reluctantly Stanton and I filed in after the rest. I was next to last man in. Stanton was behind me. Inside the grass hut, I saw the bird on a perch with one leg tied to a stand. I went to the bird and stroked its feathers as instructed. It didn't make a sound. It was a filthy bird and my hand was dirty. Outside, Suma Marit greeted me and shook hands. In a few minutes Stanton shook hands with the chief and the test was over.

Stanton began, "Well, mighty chief, the bird didn't speak once—doesn't he know your language?"

Suma Marit ignored Stanton. He spoke to the guards. They left and returned shortly with a frightened man. "You, thief!" Suma Marit accused.

The man fell on his knees. In his native tongue he began a long wail begging for mercy. The blade of one of the warrior's spears helped the accused to produce the valuable stone. Stanton was as startled as I. Suma Marit glanced in our direction and smiled; the unfortunate man was led away and we were free.

We were intrigued. Out of fifty men, and without asking one question, Suma Marit had found the guilty man. How?

Suma Marit would not tell us his secret, but Stanton was determined to learn the answer. He was awake most of the night trying to worry it out.

In the morning I asked him, "Well, did you figure it out?"

"The bird's the key," he told me. "You see, Suma Marit is a master when it comes to psychology. Remember that speech he gave about the innocent man having nothing to fear?"

I nodded.

"Well," Stanton said, "each innocent man caressed the bird, because he knew he was innocent and the bird would not cry out. The guilty one never touched the bird.

"Remember the chief shaking hands with every one after they had touched the bird? He had a reason for that. You see, he had previously coated the bird's feathers with some sort of gritty filth—didn't you feel it on your hand? When a man touched the bird's feathers, his hand was soiled and Suma Marit would feel the grit in the handshake. Inconspicuously he would wipe his hand and wait for the next man. The man with the clean hand gave himself away without knowing it . . . What guilty man would have touched that bird? Would you?"

A



*Dilys stared at
him, amazed*

long spoon

by JOHN WYNDHAM

A story that's different
by a master of fantasy

"I SAY," Stephen announced, with an air of satisfaction, "do you know that if I lace up the tape this way round I can hear myself talking backwards!"

Dilys laid down her book and regarded her husband. Before him, on the table, stood the tape-recorder, an amplifier, and small sundries. A wandering network of leads connected them to one another, to the mains, to a big loudspeaker in the corner, and to the pair of earphones on his head. Lengths and snippets of recording tape littered half the floor.

"Another triumph of science," she said, coolly. "As I understood it, you were just going to do a bit of editing so that we could send a record of the party to Myra. I'm quite sure she'd prefer it the right way round."

"Yes, but this idea just came to me—"

"And what a mess! It looks as if we've been giving someone a ticker-tape reception. What is it all?"

Stephen glanced down at the strips and coils of tape. "Oh, those are just the parts where everybody was talking at once, and bits of that very unfunny story Charles would keep trying to tell everyone—and a few indiscretions, and so on."

Dilys eyed the litter as she stood up. "It must have been a much more indiscreet party than it seemed at the time," she said. "Well, you clear it up while I go and put on the kettle."

"But you must hear this," he protested.

She paused at the door. "Give me," she suggested, "give me one good reason—just one—why I ought to hear you talk backwards . . ."

Left alone, Stephen made no attempt to gather up the *débris*; instead, he pressed the playback key and listened with interest to the curious gabbeldigook that was his backwards voice. Then he stopped the machine, took off the headphones and switched over to the loudspeaker.

He was interested to find that, though the voice still had a European quality, it seemed to rattle through its incomprehensible sounds at great speed.

Experimentally, he halved the speed and turned up the volume. The voice, now an octave lower, drawled out deep, ponderous, impossible-sounding syllables in a very impressive way indeed.

He nodded to himself and leant his head back, listening to it rolling sonorously around the room.

Suddenly there was a rushing sound, not unlike a reduced facsimile of a locomotive blowing off steam; also a gust of warm air reminiscent of a stoke-hole . . .

It so took Stephen by surprise that he jumped, and almost overturned his chair. Recovering, he reached forward, hastily pressing keys and turning knobs. The voice from the loudspeaker cut off abruptly. He peered anxiously into the items of his apparatus, looking for sparks or smoke. There was neither, but it was while he was in the act of sighing his relief that he became, in some way, aware that he was no longer alone in the room.

He jerked his head round. His jaw dropped fully an inch, and he sat staring at the figure standing quietly some four feet to his rear right.

The man stood perfectly straight, with his arms pressed closely to his sides. He was tall, quite six feet, and made to look taller still by his hat—a narrow-brimmed, entirely cylindrical object of quite remarkable height.

For the rest, he wore a high starched collar with spread points, a grey silk cravat, a long, dark frock coat with silk facings, and lavender-grey trousers, with the points of black, shiny boots jutting out beneath them.

Stephen had to tilt back his head to get a foreshortened view of the face. It was good-looking—bronzed, as if by Mediterranean sun. The eyes were large and dark. A luxuriant moustache swept out to join with well-tended whiskers at the points of the jaw. The chin, and lower parts of the cheeks, were closely shaved.

The features themselves stirred vague memories of Assyrian sculptures.

Even in the first astonished moment it was born in upon

Stephen that, inappropriate as the ensemble might be to the circumstances, there could be no doubt of its quality, nor, in the proper time and place, of its elegance. He continued to stare at his unusual visitor.

The man's mouth moved. "I have come," he announced, with a pontifical air.

"Er—yes," said Stephen. "I—er—I see that, but, well, I don't quite . . ."

"You called upon me. I have come," the man repeated, with an air of explaining everything.

Stephen added a frown to his bewilderment.

"But I didn't say a thing," he protested. "I was just sitting here, and—"

"There is no need for alarm. I am sure you will not regret it," said the man.

"I am not alarmed. I'm baffled," said Stephen. "I don't see—"

The pontifical quality was reduced by a touch of impatience as the man inquired: "Did you not construct the Iron Pentacle?" Without moving his arms, he contracted three fingers of his right hand so that the lavender-gloved forefinger remained pointing downwards. "Did you not also utter the Word of Power?" he added.

Stephen looked where the finger pointed. He saw that the discarded scraps of tape did make some crude geometrical figure on the floor, just permissibly a kind of pentacle form. But *iron* pentacle, the man had said . . . Oh, the iron-oxide coating, of course . . . H'm, pretty near the border of permissibility, too, one would think.

"Word of Power", though . . . Well, it was conceivable that a voice talking backwards might stumble upon a Word of practically anything.

"It rather looks," he said, "as if there has been a slight mistake—a coincidence . . ."

"A strange coincidence," remarked the man, sceptically, looking at Stephen hard.

"But isn't that really the thing about coincidences? That they are, I mean," Stephen pointed out.

"I have never heard of it happening before—never," said the man. "Whenever I, or any of my friends, have been summoned in this way, it has been to do business; and business has invariably been done."

"Business . . .?" Stephen inquired.

"Business," the man repeated. "You have certain needs we can supply. You have a certain object we should like to add to

our collection. All that is necessary is that we should come to terms. Then you sign the pact, with your blood, of course, and there it is."

It was the word "pact" that touched the spot. Stephen recalled the slight smell of hot clinkers that had pervaded the room.

"Ah, I begin to see," he said. "This is a visitation—a raising. You mean that you are Old—"

The man cut in, with a quick frown: "My name is Batruel. I am one of the fully accredited representatives of my Master; his plenipotentiary holding his authority to arrange pacts. Now, if you would be so good as to release me from this pentacle, which I find an extremely tight fit, we could discuss the terms of the pact much more comfortably."

Stephen regarded the man for some moments, and then shook his head. "Ha-ha!" he laughed. "Ha-ha! Ha-ha!"

The man's eyes widened. He looked huffed. "I beg your pardon?"

"Look," Stephen said. "I apologise for the accident that brought you here. But let us have it clearly understood that you have come to the wrong place to do any business—the wrong place entirely."

Batruel studied him thoughtfully. He lifted his head, and his nostrils twitched slightly. "Very curious," he remarked. "I detect no odour of sanctity."

"Oh, it isn't that," Stephen assured him. "It simply is that quite a number of your deals have been pretty well documented by now—and one of the really consistent things about them is that the party of the second part has never failed to regret the deal, in due course."

"Oh, come! Think what I can offer you—"

Stephen cut him short by shaking his head again. "Save yourself the trouble," he advised. "I have to deal with up-to-date high-pressure salesmen every day."

Batruel regarded him with a saddened eye. "I am more used to dealing with the high-pressure customer," he admitted. "Well, if you are quite sure that there has been no more than a genuine mistake, I suppose there is nothing to be done but for me to go back and explain. This has not, to my knowledge, ever happened before—though, of course, by the laws of chance it had to happen some time. Just my bad luck. Very well, then. Goodbye—oh, dear, what have I said? I mean *vale*, my friend. I am ready!"

His stance was already rigid; now, as he closed his eyes, his face became wooden, too.

Nothing happened.

Batrue's jaw relaxed. "Well, say it!" he exclaimed, testily.

"Say what?" Stephen inquired.

"The other Word of Power, of course. The Dismissal."

"But I don't know it. I don't know anything about Words of Power," Stephen protested.

Batrue's brows came lower, and approached one another.

"Are you telling me you cannot send me back?" he inquired.

"If it needs a Word of Power, I certainly can't," Stephen told him.

An expression of dismay came over Batrue's face. "But this is unheard of . . . What am I to do? I *must* have either a completed pact *or* the Word of Dismissal."

"All right, you tell me the Word, and I'll say it," Stephen offered.

"But I don't know it," said Batrue. "I have never heard it. Everyone who has summoned me until now has been anxious to do business and sign the pact . . ." He paused. "It really would simplify matters greatly if you could see your way to—No? Oh dear, this is most awkward. I really don't see what we are going to do."

THERE was a sound at the door followed by a couple of taps on it from Dilys' toe, to indicate that she was carrying a tray. Stephen crossed to the door and opened it a preliminary chink.

"We have a visitor," he warned her. He did not want to see the tray dropped out of sheer surprise.

"But how—?" she began, and then, as he held the door open more widely, she almost did drop the tray. Stephen took it from her while she stood staring, and set it down safely on a table.

"Darling, this is Mr. Batrue—my wife," he said.

Batrue, still standing rigidly straight, now looked embarrassed as well as constrained. He turned his head in her direction, and nodded it slightly. "Charmed, Ma'am," he said. "I would have you excuse my style, but my movements are unhappily restricted. If your husband would do me the courtesy of breaking this pentacle . . ."

Dilys went on staring at him, and running an appraising eye over his clothes. "I—I'm afraid I don't understand," she complained.

Stephen did his best to explain the situation, and at the end she said:

"Well, I really don't know . . . We shall have to see what can be done, won't we? It's so difficult—not as if he were just

an ordinary D.P., I mean." She went on regarding Batruel thoughtfully, and then added, "Stephen, if you have really made it quite clear to him that we're not signing anything, don't you think you might let him out of it? He does look uncomfortable there."

"I thank you, Ma'am. I am indeed uncomfortable," Batruel said.

Stephen considered. "Well, since he is here anyway, and we know where we stand, perhaps it won't do any harm," he conceded. He bent down and brushed aside some of the tape on the floor.

Batruel stepped out of the disrupted pentacle. With his right hand he removed his hat; with his left, he gave a touch to his cravat.

He turned to sweep Dilys a bow, doing it beautifully too; toe pointed, left hand on a non-existent hilt, hat held gallantly over his heart.

"Your servant, Ma'am."

He repeated the exercise in Stephen's direction. "Your servant, Sir."

Stephen's response was well-intentioned, but he was aware that it showed inadequately against his visitor's style. There followed an awkward pause. Dilys broke it by saying: "I'd better fetch the tea things."

She went out, returned, and presided. "You—er—you've not visited England lately, Mr. Batruel?" she suggested, socially.

Batruel looked mildly astonished. "What makes you think that, Mrs. Tramon?" he asked.

"Oh, I—I just thought . . ." Dilys said, vaguely.

"My wife is thinking of your clothes," Stephen told him. "If you will excuse my mentioning it, you have got your periods somewhat mixed. The style of your bow, for instance, precedes that of your clothes by, well, at least two generations, I should say."

Batruel looked a little taken aback. He glanced down at himself. "I paid particular note to the fashion last time I was here," he said, with disappointment.

Dilys broke in. "Don't let him upset you, Mr. Batruel. They are beautiful clothes—and such quality of material."

"But not quite in the current *tone*?" said Batruel.

"Well, not quite," Dilys admitted. "I expect you get a bit out of touch in—er—where you live."

"Perhaps we do," Batruel confessed. "We used to do quite a deal of business in these parts up to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but during the nineteenth it fell off badly."

There's always a little, of course, but it is a matter of chance who is on call for different districts, and it so happens that I myself visited here only once during the nineteenth century, and not at all during the present century, until now. So you can imagine what a pleasure it was for me to receive your husband's summons; with what high hopes of a mutually beneficial transaction I presented myself—"

"That's enough of that . . ." Stephen broke in.

"Oh, yes, of course. My apologies. The old war-horse scenting battle, you understand."

There was a pause. Dilys regarded the visitor pensively. To one who knew her as well as her husband did, it was clear that there was a half-hearted struggle going on, and that curiosity was being allowed to pile up the points. At last she said: "I hope your British assignments have not always been a disappointment to you, Mr. Batruel?"

"Oh, by no means, Ma'am. I have the happiest recollections of visits to your country. I remember calling upon an Adept who lived near Winchester—it would be somewhere in the middle of the sixteenth century, I think—he wanted a prosperous estate, a title, and a beautiful, well-born wife. We were able to fix him up with a very nice place not far from Dorchester—his descendants hold it to this day, I believe." Batruel sighed and thought back over the years.

"Then there was another, quite a young man, early in the eighteenth century, who was set upon a nice income, and the opportunity to marry into court circles. We gave satisfaction there, and his blood now runs in some very surprising places. And just a few years later there was another young man, a rather dull fellow who simply wanted to become a famous playwright and wit. That was more difficult, but we managed it. I shouldn't be surprised to find his name remembered still."

"That's all very well," Stephen broke in. "Nice enough for the descendants, but what happened to the protagonists?"

Batruel lifted his shoulders slightly. "Well, a bargain is a bargain. A contract freely entered into . . ." he said. "Although I have not been here myself lately," he went on, "I understand from my fellow representatives that requirements, though they differ in details, are much the same in principle. Titles are still popular, particularly with the wives of clients. So, too, the *entrée* to society—such as it has become. So is a fine country house, and nowadays, of course, we supply it with all mod. con., also a *pied-à-terre* in Mayfair. Where we used to provide a full stable, we now offer a Bent-Rollsley saloon, a private aircraft perhaps . . ."

Stephen felt it time to interrupt. "Bent-Rollsley, indeed! You'd better read your Consumer Research handbook more carefully next time. And now I'll be obliged if you will leave off tempting my wife. She's not the one who would have to pay for it."

"No," Batruel agreed. "That's a feature of a woman's life. She always has to pay something, but the more she gets the less it costs her. Now your wife would have a much easier life, no work to do, servants to—"

"Will you please stop it!" Stephen said. "It should be clear to you by now that your system is old-fashioned. We've got wise to it. It's lost its appeal."

Batruel looked doubtful. "According to our bulletins the world is still a very wicked place," he objected.

"I daresay, but the wickeder part of it hasn't any use for your old-fashioned terms. It greatly prefers to get a lot for a little if it can't get something for nothing."

"Scarcely ethical," murmured Batruel. "One should have standards."

"That may be, but there it is. Besides, we are much more closely knit now. How do you think I'd be able to square a sudden title with Debrett, or sudden affluence with the Income Tax inspectors, or even a sudden mansion with the Planning Authority? One must face facts."

"Oh, I expect all that could be managed all right," Batruel said.

"Well, it isn't going to be. There is only one way nowadays that a man can safely become suddenly rich. It's—by Jove . . .!" He broke off abruptly, and plunged into thought.

BATRUEL said to Dilys: "It is such a pity your husband is not doing himself justice. He has great potentialities. Now, with some capital behind him there would be such opportunities, such scope . . . And the world still has so much to offer to a rich man—and to his wife, of course—respect, authority, ocean-going yachts . . . One can't help feeling he is being wasted at present."

Dilys glanced at her abstracted husband. "You feel that about him too? I've often thought that they don't appreciate him properly in the business."

"Office politics, very likely," said Batruel. "Many a young man's gifts are stunted by them. But with independence and a helpful wife—if I may say so, a clever and beautiful young wife—to help him, I see no reason why he should not—"

Stephen's attention had returned. "Straight out of the Tempter's Manual; Chapter One, I should think," he remarked

scornfully. "Now just lay off it, will you, and try to look facts in the face. Once you have grasped them, I am prepared to consider doing business with you."

Batrue's expression brightened a little. "Ah," he said, "I thought that when you had had a little time to consider the advantages of our offer—"

Stephen interrupted, "Look," he said. "The first fact you have to face is that I have no use whatever for your usual terms—so you might as well stop trying to form a pressure-group with my wife. The second fact is this: *you're* the one who is in a jam, not me. How do you propose ever to get back to—er—well, wherever you came from, if I don't help you?"

"All I'm suggesting is that you help yourself at the same time that you help me," Batrue pointed out.

"Got only one angle about this, haven't you? Now, listen to me. I can see three possible courses before us. One: we find someone who can give us this Word of Power for your dismissal. Do you know how we set about that? No? Well, nor do I.

"Then, two: I could ask the Vicar round here to have a shot at exorcising you. I expect he'd be quite glad to oblige. It might even lead to his being canonized later on for resisting temptation . . ."

Batrue shuddered. "Certainly not," he objected. "A friend of mine was once exorcised back in the fifteenth century. He found it excruciatingly painful at the time, and he hasn't fully regained confidence in himself yet."

"Very well then, there's still a third possibility. In consideration of a nice round sum of money, with no strings attached, I will undertake to find someone willing to make a pact with you. Then, when you have it safely signed, you will be able to report back with your mission honourably completed. How does that strike you?"

"No good at all," Batrue replied promptly. "You are simply trying to get two concessions out of us for the price of one. Our accountants would never sanction it."

Stephen shook his head sadly. "It's no wonder to me that your practice is slipping. In all the thousands of years you've been in business, you don't seem to have got a step beyond the idea of a first mortgage. And you're even prepared to employ your own capital when you should be using somebody else's. That's no way to get ahead. Now, under my scheme, I get some money, you get your pact, and the only capital laid out is a few shillings from me."

"I don't see how that can be," Batrue said doubtfully.

"I assure you it can. It may mean you having to stay for a few weeks, but we can put you up in the spare room. Now, do you play football?"

"Football?" Batruel repeated vaguely. "I don't think so. How does it go?"

"Well, you'll have to mug up on the principles and tactics of the game. But the important point is this; a player must kick with precision. Now, if the ball is not exactly where he calculated it will be, this precision is lost, so is the opportunity, and so, eventually, the game. Have you got that?"

"I think so."

"Then you will appreciate that just a nudge of an inch or so to the ball at a critical moment could do a lot—there wouldn't need to be any unsporting rough-stuff or mayhem. The outcome of a game could be arranged quite unsuspectingly. All it would need would be a nicely timed nudge by one of those imps you use for the practical jobs. That shouldn't be very difficult for you to arrange."

"No," Batruel agreed. "It should be quite simple. But I don't quite see—"

"Your trouble, old man, is that you are hopelessly out of touch with modern life, in spite of your bulletins," Stephen told him. "Dilys, where is that Pools entry-form?"

HALF an hour later Batruel was showing an appreciative grasp of the possibilities. "Yes, I see," he said. "With a little study of the technicalities it should not be difficult to produce a loss, or a draw, perhaps even a win, as required."

"Exactly," approved Stephen. "Well, there you are. I fill in the coupon—laying out several shillings on it to make it look better. You fix the matches. And I collect handsomely—without any awkward tax questions."

"That's all very well for you," Batruel pointed out, "but I don't see how it is going to get me my pact successfully, unless you—"

"Here we come to the next stage," Stephen told him. "In return, I undertake to find you a pact-signer in six weeks, in exchange for my winnings. Will that do? Good. Then let's have an agreement about it. Dilys, bring me a sheet of writing paper, will you, and some blood—oh, no, stupid of me, we've got blood . . ."

Five weeks later, Stephen slid his new car to a stop in front of the Northpark Hotel, and a moment later Batruel came down the steps. The idea of putting him up at home had had to be abandoned after a couple of days. His impulse to tempt was in

the nature of an uncontrollable reflex and proved to be incompatible with domestic tranquillity, so he had removed to the hotel, where he found the opportunities more varied.

He emerged from the revolving door cutting a very different figure from that of his first appearance in Stephen's sitting-room. The side-whiskers had gone, though the luxuriant moustache remained. The frock coat had been replaced by a meticulously-cut grey suit; the remarkable top-hat by a grey felt; the cravat by a tie with stripes that were discreetly not quite Guards. Indeed, he now presented the appearance of a comfortably-placed, good-looking, twentieth-century man of about forty.

"Hop in," Stephen said. "You've got the pact-form?"

BatrueI patted his pocket. "I always carry it. You never know . . ." he said, as they set off.

The first time Stephen had picked up the treble-chance win there had been, in spite of his hope of remaining anonymous, considerable publicity. It is less easy than it might seem to hide a windfall of £220,000. He and Dilys had taken the precaution of going into hiding before the next win was due—this time for £210,000.

There had been some hesitation when it came to paying him the third cheque—£225,000. Not exactly a quibbling, for there was nothing to quibble about; the forecasts were down in ink. But there was a thoughtfulness on the part of the promoters which caused them to send representatives to see him. One of these, an earnest young man in glasses, talked with some intensity about the laws of chance, and then produced a figure with a staggering number of noughts which he claimed to represent the odds against anyone bringing off a treble-chance three times.

Stephen was interested. His system, he said, must be even better than he had thought.

The young man wanted to know about his system. Stephen, however, had declined to talk about it—but he had indicated that he might not be unwilling to discuss some aspects of it with the head of Gripshaw's Pools.

So here they were now, on their way to an interview.

The Pools head office stood beside one of the new outer roads. Stephen was saluted by a braided porter as he slid his car into its park.

A few moments later they were being shown into a spacious private office where Sam Gripshaw was on his feet to greet them. Stephen shook hands and introduced his companion. "This is Mr. BatrueI, my adviser," he explained.

Sam Gripshaw's glance at BatrueI suddenly turned into a careful, searching look. He appeared to become thoughtful

for a moment. Then he turned back to Stephen. "Well, first, I should congratulate you, young man. You're by a very long way the biggest winner in the whole history of the Pools. Six hundred and fifty-five thousand pounds, they tell me—very tidy, very tidy indeed. But," he shook his head, "it can't go on, you know. It can't go on."

"I wouldn't say that," Stephen replied, as they sat down.

Again Sam Gripshaw shook his head. "Once is good luck; twice could be extraordinarily good luck; three times gives off a pretty funny smell; four times would rock the industry; five times would just about bust it. Stands to reason. Now you've got a system, you say?"

"We've got a system," Stephen corrected.

"Ah, yes—Mr. Batruel," said Sam Gripshaw. "I suppose you wouldn't like to tell me about your system?"

"You can scarcely expect us to do that," Stephen protested.

"No, I suppose not," Sam Gripshaw admitted. "All the same, you might as well. You can't go on with it."

"Because if we were to, we'd bust your industry? Well, we don't want to do that, of course. In fact that is why we are here. Mr. Batruel has a proposition to put to you."

"Let's hear it," said Mr. Gripshaw.

Batruel rose to his feet. "You have a very fine business here, Mr. Gripshaw. It would be most unfortunate if it were to lose the confidence of the public—both for them, and for yourself. I don't need to stress that, for I perceive you have refrained from giving any publicity to my friend, Mr. Tramon's, third win. Very wise of you, sir, if I may say so.

"Now, I am in the fortunate position of being able to propose a means by which the risk of such a situation occurring again can be positively eliminated. It will not cost you a penny, and yet . . ." He launched himself into his temptation with the air of an artist taking up his beloved brush. Sam Gripshaw heard him through patiently to his conclusion. "And, in return for this—this mere formality, I am willing to undertake that neither our friend, Mr. Stephen Tramon, nor anyone else, will receive any further assistance in—er—prognostication from me. The emergency will then be over, and you will be able to pursue your business with the confidence that I am sure it so well merits."

He produced his pact-form and laid it on the desk.

Sam Gripshaw reached for it and glanced through it. Rather to Stephen's surprise, he nodded, almost without hesitation. "Seems straight enough," he said. "All right. I'll sign."

Batruel smiled happily. He stepped forward, with a small, convenient penknife in his hand.

When the signing was done, Sam Gripshaw wrapped a clean handkerchief round his forearm. Batruel picked up the pact and took a step backwards. Then he inspected it with simple pleasure, folded it with care, and placed it in his pocket.

He beamed upon them both. He made his elegant, eighteenth-century bow. "Your servant, gentlemen."

And, abruptly, he was gone, leaving nothing but the faintest trace of sulphur on the air.

It was Sam Gripshaw who broke the following silence. "Well, that's got rid of *him*—and he can't get back until somebody raises him," he added. He turned to contemplate Stephen. "You've not done so badly, young man, have you? You pocket more than half a million for selling him *my* soul."

"Well, you, at any rate, don't seem to be very perturbed about it," Stephen said, with a note of relief in his voice.

"No. Doesn't worry me," Mr. Gripshaw told him. "*He's* the one who's going to be worried. Makes you think, doesn't it. Thousands of years him and his lot have been in business—and *still* got no system into it. What you need today is organization—the whole business at your finger-tips so you know where you are, and what's what. Too old-fashioned by half, that lot."

"Well, not very subtle perhaps," agreed Stephen. "But his need is rather specialized, and he's got what he was after."

"Huh! You wait till he's had time to look in the files—if they know what files are down there. How do you think I ever managed to raise enough capital to start this place . . . ?"

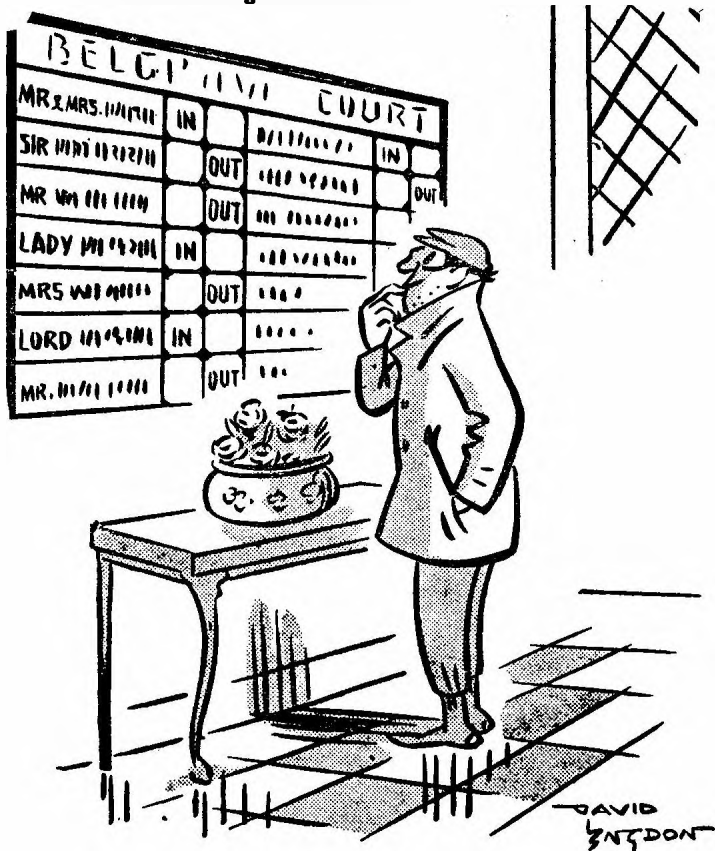


Meet David Langdon

HE's a London-born cartoonist with an international reputation. He is a regular contributor to the Sunday Pictorial, Punch, and a member of the famous Punch table. He also contributes to the New Yorker, Paris-Match, and other leading magazines.

HE first came to fame with his "Billy Brown of London Town" drawings, and then with his many cartoons about the Royal Air Force, in which he served as a Squadron Leader.

HE has an eighth floor studio flat near Baker Street and a cottage in the country. He loves cats, dogs, and golf; loathes tea, children over five—and people who ask him how he gets his ideas.



ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S choice

A master of suspense chooses
our story-of-the-month for you!



**WITH THE
CHEF'S
COMPLIMENTS**

by Henry Slesar

SITTING alone in his grimy hotel room in a Paris back-street, Jules Roband contemplated a long past and a short future. He sat on the springless bed, the small brown envelope of white powder in his hand, and saw in the streaked mirror a Jules Roband that had never existed before. Gone was the magnificent paunch. Gone were the full, apple-coloured cheeks. Gone was the grand manner, befitting a great chef.

He opened the flap of the envelope and peered inside. How harmless the deadly chemical appeared! Like a few inches of powdered sugar, no more. It had taken weeks, and the last paltry francs of his resources, to find the poison. It would do its work swiftly; the work of dispatching Jules Roband from misery to paradise.

He thought about that paradise. It would be a vast, gleaming white kitchen, with glistening pots and pans, and a larder which never emptied. He would be Master of the Kitchen once more, and he would create, for angelic patrons, the superb dishes which had won him celebrity on earth. It would be a true chef's paradise; and most important, it would exclude for eternity the man responsible for his untimely end—Anton Verimée.

Verimée! Verimée! How could so much selfish cruelty be

contained in one name, in one small, smiling man . . . Verimée!

Jules had been the head chef of the Mirabelle Restaurant, and Anton was only an assistant, a fawning, flattering assistant. M. Roband had been amused by the flattery. He had been complimented by far greater judges of culinary skill; by lifelong members of the Escoffier Society, by the gourmet patrons of the *Tour d'Argent* and three other notable French restaurants. Why should he be moved by the praises of an obscure assistant chef?

Yet still Anton Verimée persisted in his compliments; and, after six months, his obvious devotion, his adoration of M. Roband's speciality, *Salmis de Bécasse*, began to have an effect. M. Roband softened towards Verimée, and began, sparingly, to endow him with some of his most cherished culinary secrets.

Jules Roband had been a big man, in every sense. His height was impressive, his girth was impressive, his appetite was impressive, and the dishes to which he was most susceptible were naturally his own.

Anton Verimée was of a different stamp. He was a lightly-built, sharp-featured man, with a look more of a hairdresser than a chef. But there was talent in the man. One day, M. Roband said, he would make a satisfactory head chef in a large, chrome-plated restaurant, where the manufacture of meals was more important than the creation of masterpieces.

Six months went by, and then the trouble began. It began with a *Poitrine de Veau Farcie*. Its reappearance in the kitchen five minutes after serving came as a shock to M. Roband.

"Customer says it's terrible," the waiter said. "Something about pepper."

"Pepper?" M. Roband repeated, prodding the stuffed veal with a fork. He lifted a mouthful and rolled it about his tongue. Then he groaned. "*Ptui*," he said. "The gentleman is right. Throw out this garbage, and I will make amends."

The incident was disturbing, but it was only the beginning. An *Omelette Bretonne* made its reappearance during the noon hour, and M. Roband was too stunned to stutter out his anger.

"Customer says it's too salty," the waiter said.

"Salty? Salty?" Jules slipped a forkful on to his tongue and then spat it out. "Impossible! I have made ten thousand *Omelettes Bretonnes*! Why should this be salty?"

Two days later the *Sole à la Marguery* came back; and then, like a nightmarish parade, all of M. Roband's creations were rejected—even his famous speciality, *Salmis de Bécasse*.

Again and again the complaints came, until they were submitted by the *mâitre d'hôtel* himself. "Now I don't know how this could have happened," M. Plis said, bland-faced. "But lately,

M. Roband—well, I think perhaps you're tired. Perhaps you need a rest."

"Perhaps," M. Roband agreed, sadly.

"There is, of course, the question of a replacement—"

"That is no problem," M. Roband sighed. "Anton is well-qualified. He has learned a great deal during the past year."

M. ROBAND was away for two weeks, but they were merely 300 lonely hours. He was glad when his "rest" was over.

"Welcome back," M. Plis smiled. "You'll be glad to know that Anton did very well while you were away."

"I am glad," M. Roband said simply.

But on his first day in charge again, three important customers of the *Mirabelle* returned three entrées, and M. Plis broke a long-standing rule and entered M. Roband's domain.

"I know, I know," the chef said. "I do not understand. I taste each dish. Anton, too, tastes each dish; I do not rely on my judgment alone. Isn't that so, Anton?"

"Yes," Anton said, "I taste each dish, M. Plis."

"And you, too, detect nothing wrong?"

Anton shrugged. "I would rather not say."

M. Roband stared at him. "You would rather not say what?"

Anton Verimée turned to the *mâitre d'hotel*, his face set.

"The dishes are not good," he said painfully. "I am ashamed to tell M. Roband. He was once, after all, a genius. But now—"

"Anton!" M. Roband's eyes widened in horror.

"It pains me to say it, Jules, but you have lost the touch."

"It's a lie!" the head chef bellowed. "I have made no errors—"

"Somebody has," M. Plis said gently. "But we'll talk about it another time."

"No!" M. Roband picked up a saucepan and banged it on the stove's edge. "We will talk now! If you wish to fire me, fire me now! A hundred restaurants will pay me *double*."

"Some other time, M. Roband—"

"I insist! Do you wish me to leave?"

"If that is your desire, M. Roband—"

"Very well!" He snatched off his cap and apron and flung them to the floor. "I resign! I give you Anton Verimée, that lying *cochon*! May your customers writhe with indigestion!"

M. Roband stomped to the cloakroom. Anton followed behind him, a curious smile on his small, sharp face.

"Too much salt," he said lightly, wagging his finger. "Too much pepper. Too much this, too much that . . ."

M. Roband whirled, with the realization of his betrayal.

"You!" he said hoarsely. "You added the pepper, salt—"

Anton folded his arms and laughed. "You treated me like a child, like a buffoon. But now we see who has really been clever in this kitchen, eh, M. Roband?"

It was then that the chef began throwing things. And it was then that M. Plis called the police.

It didn't take long for M. Roband to reap the bitter fruits of that day. The story of his failure at the Mirabelle and the lurid details of his arrest spread quickly. One by one, interview after interview, he found the finer kitchens of the city closed to him. Even after realization came, it took months of unemployment before he allowed himself to enter the premises of a second-class restaurant in Montmartre. The manager was less particular, and M. Roband's experience impressed him.

But the job wasn't to last. There was a mountain of pride in that mountainous body, and it caused M. Roband's fall. He scoffed at the managerial complaints about his extravagant purchasing, and in another month he had received his notice.

And so it went on, from job to job, with ever-dwindling prestige, shrinking income, and vanishing faith. Failure begot failure, and when an ugly kitchen brawl in a third-class restaurant cost him his latest job, he knew the end had come.

HE had found the name of the poison in the public library, after weeks of search. It was tasteless, and that was its most important qualification for what M. Roband had in mind. For the chef had decided upon the ideal suicide, the gourmet's way of ending his life. He would leave this unkind world with a flourish, and with the taste of a really superb dinner in his mouth . . .

He rose now from the bed, and dressed as carefully as his worn clothes would allow. He took a taxi to the Mirabelle.

The tables were crowded. The waiting patrons in the cocktail bar were many. He caught the eye of the head waiter, and was saddened when that gentleman failed to recognize him.

"I'm sorry, sir," the head waiter began, but M. Roband pressed a note hurriedly into the man's gesticulating hand. The head waiter smiled, and showed him to a small table near the service door.

"Yes, sir?" the waiter said, condescendingly.

"*Potage aux Bouquets*," M. Roband said, "*Homard à la Morlaise, Salmis de Bécasse, Salade*, no sweet."

When the soup arrived, he dipped a spoon into its aromatic depths and sighed ecstatically over its flavour. The lobster was equally delightful. But when it was finished, he waited

eagerly for the main event, for his own *Salmis de Bécasse*.

It arrived, surrounded by a ring of steaming potatoes, exuding a delicious fragrance of bay leaf and thyme. He studied it for a moment. Then he reached into his pocket for the small brown envelope . . .

He didn't know what interruption prevented him from completing his task, whether it was a burst of laughter at a nearby table, the swift movement of a waiter, or simply the instinctive revolt of his unconscious at the thought of suicide. But he stopped and stared at the plate.

It had seemed simple before, but now, faced with the pleasures of the table again, life seemed more worthwhile.

He waited a moment, sipping his wine. Then his head began to lift slowly from his chest, as if observing a sudden dawn. He tore off a corner of the envelope, and dusted the dish lightly with the fine white powder. It dissolved into the butter sauce.

"Waiter," he said hoarsely. "This *Salmis de Bécasse*—it's terrible!"

"But sir, the dish is famous. It's the chef's speciality—"

"I don't care. It's uneatable."

The waiter shrugged. "Very well," he said stiffly, and bore the *Salmis de Bécasse* back into the kitchen of the *Mirabelle*.

M. Roband waited five minutes, toying with his salad. When he heard the sudden shriek from the depths of the kitchen, a shriek he knew came from the surprised and mutilated throat of Anton Verimée, he rose from the table and, leaving some money by the salad plate, went striding to the door.

He was still hungry, but he was completely satisfied.

CASES IN CODE

Solution to the Case of the Traitor on page 33

"It was a very simple code," Detective Inspector Bassett wrote in his report, "in which each letter of the alphabet represented another in alphabetical order. Find what any single letter really is and the code is broken because you have found the 'overlap' of the two alphabets.

"Also, in this case, the traitor made the mistake of including one single-letter word in his message—and there are only two such words in our language—I and A. Then, since one of these single-letter words must be either I or A, the overlap of the two alphabets is easily discovered . . ."

I SHALL STAND BY ADMIRALTY ARCH AT FOUR
OCLOCK FRIDAY HOLDING COPY OF PAPER—
HUGO

SUSPENSE

The
TRAITOR
of
ARNHEM

in Real Life

**On the anniversary of a famous battle
COLONEL ORESTE PINTO,
known now to millions of TV-viewers,
tells a fantastic true story of the war**

THE case I am going to relate is perhaps the most important spy-case in the whole history of espionage : a tall claim, but not, I think, an unreasonable one.

There are good grounds for claiming that the parachute landings at Arnhem on September 17th, 1944, so badly planned and daringly executed, might have been the real turning point of World War Two in Europe if they had succeeded. They did not succeed, as the whole world knows, but not for want of military skill and courage. In fact, Arnhem is a shining example of the British ability to fight on to the end against overwhelming odds.

One man—and one man only—made the Arnhem landings a doomed venture from the start. He was a Dutchman named Christian Lindemans.

My job as head of the Netherlands Counter-Intelligence Mission attached to S.H.A.E.F. gave me the responsibility of organising in the area allotted to me the security arrangements behind the armies advancing through Flanders towards Holland.

As the tanks, the self-propelled guns and the infantry rolled forward, inevitably they left a trail of devastation and ruin behind them. Everything was in confusion and many civilians were making the most of their opportunity to pay off old scores and to indulge their wants free from police control.

Law and order had to be established promptly. All the homeless, the refugees, the suspected collaborators and spies were put into camps and then gradually sorted out. As soon as the honest

citizens could establish their innocence they were removed to more congenial quarters. Gradually, through this constant filtering, only the dregs were left and they were interrogated, tried and punished according to their deserts.

After Antwerp had been liberated, I had arranged for one of these large security camps to be erected in the neighbourhood. I happened to be passing near the main gate one day when I heard a commotion and went over to see what was happening. I came upon a surprising sight. Towering over the sentry on duty was a giant of a man. Well over six feet in height, he was disproportionately broad, with a massive chest that strained and threatened to split his khaki shirt. He must have weighed nearly eighteen stone, but he was hard and solid all over, a great monolith of a man.

As if his physical appearance were not enough to make him stand out from the crowd, he was like a miniature mobile arsenal in the weapons he carried. In his leather belt were stuck two dark steel knives. A long-barrelled Luger pistol was strapped to his right hip. A Schmeisser sub-machine gun was slung across his huge chest. His pockets had a sinister bulge that to my eye spelt out the presence of hand-grenades.

This giant apparition had a smiling girl on each arm and was surrounded by a gaggle of admiring Dutch youths. And as I approached the group from behind, I heard the giant rumble in a deep voice: "*Ach*, these two girls are good Dutch patriots. Tell your colonel that the great King Kong has vouched for them. They are to be released at once to drink wine with me."

I had, of course, heard of this "King Kong", the daring leader of the Dutch resistance forces. His was a revered name in Occupied Europe for his brute strength, his fearlessness and the brilliant coups he had engineered against the Germans. But he had no right to come into my camp, or to pick up a couple of girls and remove them before they had been screened by the proper authorities.

I shouted out to him: "Come here—you."

He turned round, blinked and shrugged off the girls.

"Were you talking to me?"

"Yes, you. Come here."

He hesitated and then swaggered over to me. Before he had the chance of speaking, I touched the three gold stars he wore on his sleeve. "By what right do you wear those? Are you a captain, and, if so, in what army?"

He expelled his breath in a growl. "I wear these three stars by authority of the Dutch Interior Forces—the underground!"

"Really? And who are you?" I asked, with mock naïvety.

"Me?" He was astounded that anyone could be so ignorant. He swelled his mighty chest until I expected the buttons to burst off his shirt. "I—I am King Kong!"

"The only King Kong I ever heard of," I replied softly, "was a big stuffed monkey."

There was a titter from behind him. He clenched his teeth and his fists, and my hand slid unobtrusively towards the Walthur automatic pistol I always carried in my shoulder holster. But he merely glowered at me without making a move.

I pressed on. "As you do not hold the rank of captain in the Netherlands Army, you are not entitled to wear the insignia." I reached out and ripped off the cloth band with the three gold stars which he wore on his sleeve.

His jaw sagged and he changed colour. By now my hand was hovering over the pistol butt in case he attacked me in a sudden frenzy of wounded pride. But he stepped backwards. And then, mustering his self-respect, he shouted: "I shall make a formal complaint of your treatment without delay," and strode away.

THAT was my first meeting with King Kong. In the ordinary way I should have been glad to greet him and pay my respects to the great Resistance leader, the "Scarlet Pimpernel" of Holland. But I could not let him ride roughshod over the regulations.

Musing on the encounter afterwards, I wondered why he had submitted so meekly to my brusque treatment. Any man with his outstanding record, even when consciously in the wrong, would surely have stood his ground and defended himself, especially when surrounded by hero-worshippers. Such conduct did not seem typical of the man and his reputation. Perhaps it needed investigating.

On my return to headquarters I sent for my assistant, a remarkable man whose varied career had included serving as a sergeant in the French Foreign Legion and also operating as a spy in Tangier.

"Tell me, Vilhelm," I said, "what do we know about the Resistance leader nicknamed King Kong?"

He paused for a moment. Then he said, "Real name Christian Lindemans. Born in Rotterdam, the son of a garage owner. Ex-boxer and wrestler. Reported to have killed several men in tavern brawls. Dozens of girls listed as his intimate friends. He's the eldest of four brothers—all Resistance men working on the escape line."

"Any been killed?" I asked.

Vilhelm's memory failed him for a moment. He went over to a filing cabinet and selected a file. He turned over the sheets

and then paused. "No, none of them have been killed. One, the youngest brother, was captured by the Abwehr, and so was a cabaret dancer named Veronica, shown here as intimate with Lindemans. They were both working on the escape line." He ran a finger down the typed page. "Both were later released."

"They were *what*?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "That's what it says here—it seems odd for the German Intelligence to release its prisoners."

"Anything else?" I asked. The tension in me was growing.

"Yes, sir. Lindemans himself was captured by the Gestapo in a raid a few weeks later. He was shot through the lung. His own Resistance group rescued him from a prison hospital after a running gunfight."

"Many killed?"

"Yes—one S.S. guard killed, two wounded. The Resistance men came off worse, though. Lindemans got away with three of them, but the other forty-seven were all killed. Ambushed as they withdrew from the hospital."

"Almost as if the Germans had known beforehand," I said slowly. "I'll borrow that dossier for two or three days. With any luck, I may be able to add a page or two to it. I'll leave for Brussels in the morning."

Once in Brussels, I found the problem was not so much locating men and women who had known Lindemans, as getting rid of the dozens who claimed intimate knowledge of him. He was a national hero in his native Holland, but he was also a popular figure in Belgium, and there were many who wished to bask in his reflected glory by posing as his closest friend. I only wanted men who had actually worked in the Resistance with him.

After a while I came on the track of one such man and arranged an appointment with him. Before long I realized from his remarks that he really did know Lindemans and had worked with him.

"Were you one of the lucky ones who got away from that hospital raid?" I asked.

"No, unfortunately I missed that party. I got this little *souvenir de la guerre* about a month afterwards." He proudly pointed to a bullet scar that ploughed a furrow across his scalp.

"A near thing," I remarked. "How did it happen?"

"Well, sir, we were dynamiting a bridge. I was fixing the fuses to the charges under the bridge stanchions when—just like that," he snapped his fingers quickly, "bullets began to crack all over the place. Somehow the Nazis had got wind of our plan and had planted an ambush. The sudden shock knocked me off the bridge into the river and luckily I had the presence of mind to

stay under the water until the current—it was very fast just there—pulled me out of sight of their guns. King Kong, our leader, he was magnificent! He got away right from under their noses. But the others—” He shrugged his shoulders.

“What were they shooting with?” I asked. “Machine guns?”

“Strangely enough, they weren’t; they all had sniper’s rifles. They picked us off one after the other, like knocking tins off a wall. Every man was hit, except King Kong. They couldn’t hit him. What a man! He was born lucky, that one!”

“Strange,” I said quietly. “The biggest target of all and they couldn’t hit him.”

A picture of sorts was beginning to take shape in my mind. I poured out some more red wine for the little Resistance man. “They say that King Kong has an eye for the ladies,” I remarked casually.

“Oh yes, sir, there they speak the truth! I tell you, the pretty heiress who lives in the big château on the hill beyond Laeken—they say she gave all her jewellery for his Resistance group war funds.” He smiled tolerantly. “They also say he gave the sparklers away to girls here in Brussels.”

Shortly afterwards the interview ended. I drove off at once to the château near Laeken and found the lady of the castle at home. After the preliminary courtesies, we began to discuss Lindemans. Yes, she had given him her family jewels. She was careful to stress that she had done so out of patriotic regard for the Resistance movement, but she suspected that Lindemans had embezzled them and not sold them for Resistance funds.

“What makes you think that, Countess?” I asked.

“I do not like saying so, because after all he is such a brave man and has done such fine things for Belgium. But one day I saw a girl in the town wearing one of my emerald pendants. She was not a respectable girl, you understand? I asked the girl if she would sell it to me, but she said King Kong had given it to her and would strangle her if she sold it.”

“Did you find out her name?”

The Countess sighed. “In fact there were two girls. Mia Zeist was one, and the other was Margaretha Delden. They are both notorious tavern girls here.”

Fortunately she did not glance up as she spoke, for she would have seen a strange look on my face. Mia Zeist and Margaretha Delden were both listed on my security files as paid and highly valuable agents of the German Abwehr!

I drove back to Brussels as fast as the car would take me. There I put a telephone call through to Vilhelm at intelligence

headquarters. Had he the addresses of Mia Zeist and Margaretha Delden? After a few minutes he produced them, and I borrowed a couple of security policemen from the Dutch Intelligence in Brussels. Together we rushed to the first address, but we were too late. The flat was empty. Mia Zeist had fled—we learned later, to Vienna.

We drove to Margaretha Delden's apartment, and found the door heavily bolted. We smashed the door in, burst into her room and found her lying on the bed. Normally she must have been a pretty girl, but poison does not improve one's features. She was still just breathing when we found her but she died in hospital that afternoon, without uttering a word.

So two vital witnesses in what I was already calling mentally "The Lindemans Case" were to be written off the list. One had wisely fled in time. The other had obviously killed herself, and in dying had been faithful to the end to Lindemans, although to him she had been only one of many.

I spent a further day and night in Brussels, combing the back streets, the sordid cafés and the smoky cellars for more details of Lindeman's career. Gradually the jigsaw was being pieced together. Several independent witnesses confirmed that, when his younger brother had been captured by the Abwehr, Lindemans was deeply in debt. In spite of his popularity, various tradesmen and private citizens to whom he owed large sums were threatening to foreclose on him.

I also learned that the cabaret dancer, Veronica, who had been captured at the same time as the younger brother, had been King Kong's sweetheart from childhood. In spite of his countless amours and intrigues, he had always come back to her.

Other witnesses confirmed that, coinciding with the release of his sweetheart and his brother, Lindemans became suddenly affluent. Not only did he pay off all his debts, but he lived even more riotously and expensively. He also grew increasingly reckless in his guerilla battles with the Nazis. Each raid was more daring than the last and each suffered heavier casualties. But always the heroic leader escaped by the skin of his teeth, blazing away with his arsenal of weapons and using his giant strength to save himself.

It seemed strange to me that no breath of suspicion tarnished King Kong's own reputation. All the survivors whose stories I listened to were loud in their praises of his daring and resourcefulness. And there was always the inescapable fact that he had himself been wounded, shot through the lung, and then captured by the German security police.

This made me pause. Was I being premature in condemning

him as a spy, in spite of the evidence against him? This one inexplicable fact seemed to disprove his guilt.

And then, accidentally, a possible explanation hit me. I recalled that, to find out Mia Zeist's and Margaretha Delden's addresses, I had had to telephone all the way to Antwerp, although I was actually in Brussels, their home town. The local field security had not known their addresses; nor had Dutch Intelligence headquarters in Brussels. But S.H.A.E.F. Intelligence had known.

We were all on the same side, fighting for the same general cause, but we had not pooled our information. There were always those petty rivalries and jealousies, the urge to keep the "plums" of information to one's own headquarters, which tended to mar the co-operation between different services and different countries.

Human nature being fairly constant the world over, it was reasonable to assume that a similar rivalry might exist between the three different branches of the German Intelligence—Gestapo (the security police of the S.S.), the Abwehr (the Counter-Intelligence service) and the Sicherheitsdienst (the German field security police). If, as I suspected, Lindemans was a traitor in the pay of the Abwehr, the Gestapo and the S.D. police might easily not have known this. Thinking him to be one of the most redoubtable Resistance leaders, they would probably shoot him on sight, only afterwards discovering that he was a valuable ally.

If this reasoning was true, what a blessing in disguise was this bullet-wound to Lindemans! It was the perfect answer to anyone who might suspect that he was a traitor.

I decided that the circumstantial evidence against Lindemans was sufficiently strong to warrant my cross-examining him in person. I sent a message to the headquarters of Dutch Intelligence at Castle Wittouck. I left word that he was to report to me at eleven o'clock next morning at the Palace Hotel, Brussels.

The next morning I was punctual at the rendezvous. Lindemans had not yet arrived. As I waited, my right hand felt the rough comfort of the serrated grip of my pistol, which was loose in its holster. The action was cocked and there was a round in the breech. Lindemans might not yet realize that this was to be a life-or-death meeting for him, but I did.

Ten minutes went by and there was no sign of him. When it was after twelve o'clock and he had still not appeared, I began to wonder whether I had perhaps misjudged his arrogance. Was he so confident of his reputation that he would deliberately disobey a specific order?

I had waited nearly two hours when I found the answer. Two young Dutch captains strode smartly into the lounge of the hotel. They marched over to my table and saluted in unison.

"You are waiting for Lindemans, sir?" one of them asked.

"I am. And have been for nearly two hours."

"We're sorry, sir, that you've been kept waiting. Lindemans cannot keep the appointment. He's had other orders."

"Other orders. Whose orders?"

They drew themselves up even more erect and a tone of reverence crept into the spokesman's voice.

"Lindemans left this morning on a very special mission."

My throat contracted so that I could hardly speak. He had not only eluded me, but was probably this very moment leading brave men of the Resistance into a well-prepared trap.

"With the Interior Forces?" I asked.

The two staff captains hesitated.

"No, sir. He has been attached to the Canadians for special intelligence duties, but we are not permitted to tell you what those are, sir."

LATER I learned what had happened. The Canadians required a really trustworthy local man who could secretly enter Eindhoven, which was still in German hands, and get in touch with the leader of the Resistance there. The messenger was to inform the Resistance leader that large allied parachute landings were to take place north of Eindhoven the following Sunday morning, September 17th, and the Resistance leader was to prepare and concentrate his men to aid the paratroopers and exploit the initial German confusion.

The Canadians applied to Dutch headquarters, who at once thought of Lindemans as just the man for this special mission, little knowing that he might be a traitor and that I was on his track. Sending Lindemans on such an errand could easily be equivalent to broadcasting the news on the B.B.C.

But I did not know then that the landings were about to take place. All I could then do was hope—a vain hope—that the special mission Lindemans was engaged on would not cost us too dear in casualties. All I could do was to carry out that last resort of those who have failed—to make out my official report and send it to S.H.A.E.F.

What happened three days later is too well known to need more than the briefest of descriptions. At dawn on September 17th the largest airborne landing in the history of warfare took place. Nearly ten thousand men of the British 1st Airborne Division were dropped at Arnhem, while twenty thousand

American paratroopers and three thousand Poles were dropped at Grave and Nijmegen. Their task was to secure and hold bridge-heads over the Maas Canal, the Waal River and the Neder Rijn, while armoured spearheads from the main forces plunged down the major road to join up with these outposts and force the water-crossing in bulk.

Everything seemed to be going according to plan. Air reconnaissance on the morning of September 16th showed that there was no abnormal German activity in the Arnhem area. But after dark that night the German Panzers rumbled quietly up to positions behind hedgerows and ditches around the vital dropping area.

At dawn the paratroops dropped out of the grey sky, but not to find the enemy surprised and confused. From the start it was obvious that something had gone wrong, but at the time everyone thought that a lucky coincidence had caused the Germans to consolidate their armour and infantry in the one place where they were neither expected nor wanted.

After nine days of gallant and hopeless fighting against the enemy that surrounded them on all sides, with food and ammunition running out and with their ring of defence drawn so tight that air-dropped supplies were more likely to land among the Germans than themselves, two thousand four hundred survivors of the heroic "Red Devils of Arnhem" struggled to safety back across the Waal River, leaving seven thousand casualties behind them.

The daring coup had failed. The war was to be prolonged for another eight months of killing and devastation. In the "black winter" of wrecked dykes and trampled harvests that was to follow, nearly two hundred thousand Dutch men and women were to die through flood and famine.

MEANWHILE, although I was very busy on other cases, I had not shelved the Lindemans case. The report which I had sent up to S.H.A.E.F. had no doubt been neatly filed somewhere in that enormous headquarters. The Intelligence branch had many different problems to consider and this would only be one of them. In any case, most senior officers, who had to rely for their information on what was reported to them on paper, would be likely to dismiss my suspicions as being utterly fantastic. And such a charge could easily have serious political and diplomatic repercussions.

So for six weeks no results came from my efforts to have Lindemans arrested. Thus far there was no absolute proof of his guilt but only circumstantial evidence supported by deductions.

Then one evening the additional proof arrived dramatically.

The Allied advance had continued, although since the tragic failure of Arnhem the armies had had to fight for every foot of ground they gained. I was in Eindhoven, which had now been taken, and was just concluding an interrogation which had lasted for nearly three hours. I was working alone and had to act as interrogator, judge and gaoler where my suspect was concerned.

He was a young Dutchman named Cornelis Verloop. I had finally trapped him into admitting he was a spy. He was at his wits' end with fear.

I stood up and stretched myself, dusting cigarette ash off my uniform. He watched me closely.

"Am I to be shot?" he whispered. His throat was too dry to allow him to speak normally.

Here, unexpectedly, was the last link that made my chain of evidence against Lindemans complete. "Did King Kong betray Arnhem to the Nazis?" I asked.

Verloop licked his dry lips and then the words came tumbling from him. "Yes. He told Colonel Kiesewetter on September 15th, when he called at Abwehr headquarters, that British and American troops were to be dropped. He said that a British airborne division was waiting to be dropped on Sunday morning beyond Eindhoven."

I could not control my excitement. Once Verloop was safely in his prison cell, I rushed to Dutch Intelligence Headquarters and burst into the officers' mess. One of my acquaintances looked round. "What's up, Pinto?" he asked. "You look as white as a sheet."

That mild inquiry did it. "God damn it!" I roared. "It's high time you lot realized that when I say a man is a suspect, I mean it! Lindemans—King Kong. Two of you will go by car to Castle Wittouck at once and arrest him."

"Arrest Lindemans—you must be crazy! He's always armed to the teeth. It would be sheer suicide. In any case, what are your grounds for arresting him?"

Rapidly I gave my reasons, and something in my manner must have shown them my sincerity. "Two of you—you and you—" I told them, "will go to Castle Wittouck and tell him he is to be decorated for his gallant services. Persuade him to disarm, put on a clean shirt and brush his hair. Meanwhile, I'll ask for ten military policemen to be sent to the castle to arrest him. Understood?"

The two officers I had selected grinned. "I hope ten will be enough," one said. "Tell them to pick the biggest they've got."

That was the plan—and it worked.

The traitor was flown over to England and, when the aircraft touched down, he was rushed to a house outside London. It was staffed by the British Counter-Intelligence, whose interrogators were possibly the most skilled in the world. For two weeks they kept Lindemans under cross-examination.

When he was flown back to Holland I escorted him to his cell. Gone was his swagger and the truculence, but there was not a bruise nor a wound on his massive body. And with him there had come a full and detailed confession covering twenty-four pages of closely-typed foolscap. I took the top-secret document to my office and sat down to study it.

The story of Lindeman's treachery had begun in 1943, when he was at the height of his fame as a Resistance leader of the Dutch Interior Forces. Running short of funds for lavishing presents on his numerous girl friends, he began to persuade rich women to part with their jewels to provide fighting funds. The proceeds never went to the Resistance. They were spent in taverns and night clubs in drunken orgies.

He was still an honest man where his country was concerned, but sooner or later he would have to account for the jewels he had embezzled—Resistance leaders were already growing suspicious of his extravagant way of living.

Then, in February, 1944, his youngest brother and the French cabaret dancer named Veronica were captured by the Gestapo. Frantic with worry and sensing the growing suspicions of other Resistance leaders, Lindemans decided to make a deal with the enemy. He knew two Dutchmen living in Brussels who were in the pay of the Nazis: he arranged to meet them and he offered his services to the Germans. The bargain was sealed and the next day Veronica and the youngest Lindemans were pulled out of their dark, damp cells, and were thrust to freedom in the spring sunlight of the Rotterdam streets.

King Kong spent the first instalment of his traitor's pay in a new burst of revelry, drinking and wenching; but, as I had suspected, the Abwehr—either through a sense of rivalry or because they dared not spread the news too wide—had failed to inform the other security branches that Lindemans was now in their pay. One day the security police raided another Rotterdam Resistance headquarters and Lindemans was among the men captured there.

It was a bad moment for him; he could either give himself away as a traitor, or else risk sudden death. He hesitated for a second, then took the coward's choice: he moved one hand in a certain secret gesture. But before the Nazi commander could give the order for his men to avert their rifles, one of them, already trigger-happy, fired, and the bullet hit King Kong in the chest.

The wound would have proved fatal to many humans, but the jungle strength of King Kong brought him through the crisis. The head of the Abwehr visited him in hospital to make plans for him to "escape", but it was Lindemans himself who suggested that his own Resistance men should attempt the rescue, so that they would walk into an ambush and be killed while he got away. The plan was put into effect and forty-seven of his colleagues died while rescuing their treacherous leader.

The climax of his confession was, of course, the Arnhem betrayal. When he was given the job of alerting the Resistance Movement in the Eindhoven area so that they could aid the forthcoming airborne landings, he realized at once that this was a golden opportunity for bigger and better treachery. He met Colonel Kiesewetter of the Abwehr at Driebergen on September 15th, two days before the landings were to take place, and told him all the secret facts with which he had been entrusted.

He completed his Eindhoven mission not without difficulty, for the local Resistance leader was suspicious of him and had him arrested. In fact, with supreme irony, the Canadians had to send an Intelligence officer to "bail out" Lindemans and vouch for his integrity before the Eindhoven Resistance men would listen to him.

It was one thing to vow that Lindemans must be brought to justice, and another to accomplish it. Certain highly-placed officials in the Netherlands Forces were reluctant to see Lindemans publicly tried—some of them who had innocently shown him friendship did not want their lack of judgment exposed to the public eye, while others felt that it would not be good for the Dutch war effort if so popular a figure were to be shown up as an infamous traitor.

And then, at Christmas, 1944, I fell ill and returned to London.

During this time the British newspapers scented out a story of a secret prisoner. Although Lindemans was still in my private wing at Breda Prison, some news of his flight to England for questioning must have leaked out. Rumour had it that a Dutch officer was being held prisoner secretly in the Tower of London, and this romantic story made many headlines for the news-hungry press.

In June, 1945, after prolonged sick leave, I was able to return to the Lindemans case, and the first thing I did was to order his removal from Breda Prison to a grim block of dungeons which formed part of Scheneningen Prison.

The solitude wrought swift changes in him. His appetite disappeared and the flesh seemed to melt from his bones. Without exercise his huge knots of muscles became slack and stringy,

and the giant frame grew so gaunt that the clothes hung as limply on it as on a scarecrow. But I could feel nothing but contempt for a man who could not stand the treatment he had cheerfully ordered for others, and who had not, like them, felt the agony of torture.

In October, 1945, after I had made a nuisance of myself by continually importuning my seniors to bring on the trial of Lindemans, I was suddenly released from the Security Service and later promoted and transferred to duty in Germany. I had, however, been expecting such a move. There is an old Dutch proverb which says: "He who wants to beat a dog can always find a stick for the job", and I had long realized that after the arrest of King Kong a stick would be found for me.

But I was not sorry for what I had done; only that I had not achieved better results.

Then, almost a year later, when I had long resigned myself to having heard the last of Lindemans, a surprising event occurred. The British Press was, of course, no longer gagged by censorship, and they began to ask what had happened to "the Dutch officer who had betrayed Arnhem"; "the secret prisoner in the Tower of London". The same questions were asked by all: had he been tried, and if so, what had been the result? If he had not yet been tried, what was the reason for the delay?

The Dutch Government had only one course to take. It was announced that a special tribunal would assemble at the end of June, 1946, for the purpose of trying Lindemans on charges of treason.

For months Lindemans had been growing weaker, and he was now so emaciated that the skin seemed to hang in folds on his giant skeleton. In addition he was partially paralysed. The prison doctors, knowing that he had been shot through the lung, suspected tuberculosis had set in and removed him from his bleak stone cell to the prison hospital.

WOMEN nurses are not usually found in Dutch prison hospitals, but as Scheneningen was by this time more of a hospital than a prison, the rule was now waived. And although Lindemans was no longer the superb muscular athlete with a reputation for turning girls' heads, one of those coldly efficient and practical nurses fell in love with him.

Perhaps they had known each other in the lustier days. Perhaps she had been won by his great reputation, and refused to believe that he was guilty of the charges against him. Whatever the cause, she decided to help him escape.

Lindemans was kept in a prison hospital room by himself. There was only one small window, which was heavily barred, and

the room was several storeys up with a sheer drop of many feet to the ground. But the daring plan nearly worked. The nurse managed to smuggle a steel file into Lindemans' room. With this she had to saw through the stout bars of his window in such a way that, although they appeared to be intact, one hard push would remove them.

She had an accomplice who had the romantic name of "The Singing Rat" and who was apparently serving a term of imprisonment for a minor offence, and through her efforts he was given the job of nursing orderly.

The second part of the plan was even more difficult to perform. The three plotters had to devise some means for Lindemans to reach the ground after climbing through the window. There were no convenient footholds or drainpipes, so it was arranged that "The Singing Rat" would leave a rubber hosepipe hanging out of a storeroom window which happened to be conveniently close to the window of Lindemans' cell. All the escaper had to do was perch on the window-sill, swing across until he grasped the hosepipe and then swarm down it.

Although the Lindemans I had last seen only a few months before had been hardly strong enough to tie a knot in a length of rope, he somehow managed to slither down the hosepipe and reach the ground. But unfortunately he made too much noise in the descent, was heard by the guards patrolling the grounds and was captured.

Within a few minutes he was behind bars again. It would not have required much imagination to suspect that the nurse who had devoted so much time to the assiduous care of the prisoner might be implicated in his escape plan, but for some unaccountable reason she was neither arrested for her part in the plot, nor even removed from her post.

The day of justice was now approaching. Soon the whole world would know of Lindemans' guilt and a popular false idol would be smashed for ever. But fate—or human intervention—had one more trick to play.

Two days before the trial, Lindemans was found lying on his bed. He was dead. Across his body lay the nurse, inert but still breathing.

She was rushed to the hospital, where she recovered and confessed that she had administered eighty aspirin tablets to Lindemans and had swallowed an equal number herself. They had agreed on a suicide pact, she said.

Lindemans was now beyond the reach of the law. But what of the person who assisted him in his final escape—the nurse? She was surely liable to face charges, the least of which was grave

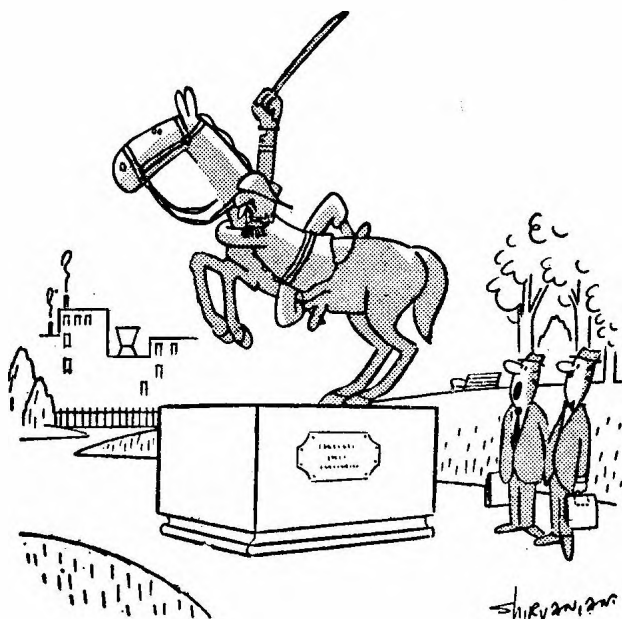
enough, that of being accessory to the attempted escape of a prisoner, and the worst of which, for the survivor of a suicide pact, was murder. Yet this nurse, whom one would consider lucky to get off with a heavy prison sentence, was never tried in public and subsequently has held responsible official positions in Holland.

It is a strange thing, which I for one do not begin to understand.

The special tribunal that was to have assembled to try Lindemans was dissolved before it ever met. There were brief reports of his death in a few Dutch papers, and the case was officially closed.

And so Lindemans, master-traitor, vain, brutal and cowardly, found in the end that his luck with women held, although women had contributed so much to his final arrest. If he had not entered the Antwerp security camp for the purpose of picking up a couple of girls, I might never have suspected him in the first place.

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Macabre secret of a removals van discovered by a 6 year old boy.

MOONLIGHT RED

Dighton Morel

Mysterious epidemic which threatens to destroy mankind!

SECKER & WARBURG



Showdown

by

ERROL FLYNN

FATHER KIRSHNER, stretched out in the stern of the canoe, slapped suddenly at a mosquito. The persistent brute must have been following him for the last ten miles. Mosquitoes, he thought, with mild indignation, had no business this far out from the coast—even the New Guinea coast—at any time, let alone in broad daylight.

Sighing, he reached for his medicine bag, untangled his binoculars from the stethoscope, and trained them on the shore, carefully examining it almost yard by yard.

He wondered how far that monstrous little curiosity, Anitok, would dare to come on his raiding expedition. The friendly Kanaka's report, brought to Father Kirshner at his mission station the day before, said that this time many of Anitok's little men had come as far as the deserted mission station at this point on the coast. The Kanaka also reported stories about a strange white man's schooner, from which the white man and all but one of his crew were missing. The two stories made a combination unpleasant to contemplate and it was to find a clue to the whole

business that Father Kirshner's eyes now swept the shoreline.

Suddenly Vetoma, one of the Kanaka boys, stopped paddling.

"A man," he remarked, in a matter-of-fact voice, "jumps along the beach."

He pointed ahead, and Father Kirshner raised the glasses.

"A fire is also there," Vetoma added softly.

Father Kirshner could see now the figure moving along the beach. "*Himmel!*" he exclaimed involuntarily. He watched the figure make a couple of erratic circles, then suddenly collapse in the sand and lie still.

"*Taubada,*" observed Vetoma, in the same mild tone; which is to say "white man".

Father Kirshner heaved his great body upright so suddenly that the canoe threatened to capsize. "To the shore!" he bellowed, as the medicine bag clattered to the bottom of the boat. Seizing Vetoma's paddle, he began digging into the water . . .

FOR the ashen-coloured, skeleton-thin young man lying on the bed in Father Kirshner's mission, certain brain-fogged shadows began assuming a sort of hazy substance. Between bouts of delirium he became dimly aware first of an enormous black beard, and then that a face was somehow shrouded in it. As the dark shadows took on more reality, impelling black eyes seemed often to dance with an almost mockingly comical light, as if to say, "What a joke that you should have thought you were going to die!"

"You'll be up and around any day now, Mr. O'Thaymus," the priest announced one morning. "By the way," he added, suddenly, "we've often wondered whether that's the way you say your name."

"It's pronounced O'Tems," Shamus smiled. "Like the river in England. But I don't mind."

"Ah, thank you," beamed the priest. "Those English T-h-e's. O'Tems. I'll just call you Shamus."

"Of course." Shamus smiled, then hesitated, as if he wanted to say something more.

"Ah, yes, you're probably troubled about many things." The priest nodded with smiling understanding. "Blackwater fever does that—leaves gaps in the mind."

"I was wondering about my schooner, the *Maski*."

"Oh, quite all right. Your bosun, Tulare, sailed her almost to our door a week ago. She's lying anchored in the lagoon now. Tulare searched all up and down the coast for you and was wild with joy when he heard you were alive. He told me you had gone into the mountains to look for gold."

"I gave him strict orders to wait for me and not move."

"He obeyed until you were three weeks overdue."

"That long?"

"Longer. You've been here on your back another two weeks. Now you must rest." Father Kirshner turned towards the door.

"One more thing," Shamus asked quickly. "What of the rest of my men?"

For the first time, Father Kirshner's face really sobered. "The heathen Anitok must have murdered them," he said. "Vetoma and I went back after we had made you comfortable here, and searched for them. Your bosun tells me there were seven and yourself in all. We buried five and I blessed their graves. The other two? Dead or alive, they are in the hands of God."

"Did one of those whom you buried have the figure of a naked woman tattooed on his chest?" Shamus persisted. He had wondered especially about Dumai, the younger brother of his bosun, Tulare, and next to Tulare his best man.

"Now would a holy father notice such things as you speak of?" the priest asked, in mock rebuke. Then, relaxing, he roared with laughter again. "But I shall not pretend with a sick man. I assure you that Johannes Kirshner would notice—as he noticed, to his shame, the same kind of display on the chest of a man I know named Kanaka Tom. But there was no such display on any of the broken bodies Vetoma and I buried."

"And who is Kanaka Tom?" Shamus asked.

"A strange, puzzling individual," the priest answered. "A tall Kanaka who is somehow in league with Anitok. My men once found him unconscious far up the river, with a spear wound through his shoulder and a broken skull. They brought him back here and he got well and went back to Anitok. He would never tell us how he got hurt like that."

"You keep mentioning Anitok as though I knew about him. I don't. Who is he?"

"He's a little tyrant with a twisted mind, the ruler of a tribe of mountain pygmies who have terrorized the Great River region. He's not one of them. He and Kanaka Tom appeared among them from no one knows where only a few years ago, killed their head man and took over. Anitok now claims a strip of territory along the river clear down to the sea. He keeps sending scouting parties farther and farther."

"Has he ever attacked your mission?" Shamus asked.

Father Kirshner laughed. "Ah, my boy! You are as yet unversed in the ways of God. We are safe from Anitok here. Kanaka Tom—don't you see? Tom thinks of me as a friend because I saved his life. Well! I must be off!"

And with that the big cleric was gone, leaving Shamus with plenty to think about as he turned his face and his gaze wandered through the window to the tall, straight trunks of the coconut and pandanus trees which marked the edge of the forest . . .

Five weeks! Shamus could remember certain episodes, but the between-times, when he had lived in a half-lit world in which reality merged into fantasy, were beyond him.

Something troubled his memory. A face; a face which prodded sweetly, insistently, at his need to remember. Was it a reality? Was it someone whom he had really seen? Shamus was sure that he had seen the face twice at least. It slipped in and out of his befogged memory of a night of horror in which he had seemed to be reliving the attack in the jungle. At first he thought it was his mother—the blue-grey eyes, the smooth, high forehead, the lips even, might have been his mother's. But why would his mother be wearing a starched white hood?

Another time, when he seemed to be coming back from some indescribably dark and empty death-like distance, he had been briefly conscious of the rim of a cooling glass of water at his lips. He swallowed eagerly, without thought and then, looking up, found again the blue-grey eyes looking gravely, tenderly, at him, saw the thin warm lips, and the starched white hood. He felt the soft cool touch of her fingers on his cheek for a blessed living moment, and then the darkness swept over him once more.

Were these things real? Had they happened? Or were they only fever-born fantasies?

ON his first morning out and about again, Shamus wandered about the single street of the mission village, looking around and lingering where he had a clear view of the convent where the mission sisters lived. But after a while he shrugged, smiled a little foolishly to himself and, turning towards the harbour, walked away.

Lying on his sick-bed, Shamus had carried out a personal stock-taking. He had decided that he had had his bellyful of the South Seas. He was going back to London, where he would make out somehow, begin again. And how could a white-hooded nun, under the vows of a Catholic sisterhood (for if the vision he had seen was any more than a vision, she could only be a nun) affect his plan in any way? But he worried about the vision of his convalescence nevertheless. It troubled him.

Shaking his head and calling himself a fool for even thinking about such fantasies, he walked on towards the harbour for his first look at the *Maski* since his illness.

At the dock, Shamus found Tulare, his bosun, hard at work

with a new Kanaka crew found by Father Kirshner. He walked slowly aft, joyfully feeling under his feet his own deck, scrubbed to gleaming whiteness. His own quarters again! Everything was in place—the wheezy old gramophone; the erratic icebox; the low, handmade stool covered with alligator hide; his favourite deck chair.

He went to the gramophone, and was about to put on a record when he stopped short, his glance shifting questioningly from the table to Tulare. In the centre of the table stood a Dresden china vase which he had never seen before, and in it was beautifully arranged a bouquet of scarlet hibiscus flowers, with a few sprigs of lemon bloom to lighten the flame-like blaze with creamy white and glossy green.

Tulare smiled. "The young mission Tauberina," he said. "Every day, three days, she comes with them new. Perhaps she think you come sooner."

Shamus felt a sudden thrust of emotion taking him unawares. He put down the record he had been holding and seized Tulare's arm.

"Tell me, Tulare. Has the Tauberina eyes the colour of daybreak? And does she wear a starched white hood? A big thing like a small tent?"

The bosun nodded vigorously. "Yes, Taubada. Eyes like the clear sky before the Guba blows. And the white tent over the head—with the face like a blossom of the lime tree."

Then it was true. It had been no dream, no fever-born fantasy, but a warm, living reality that had bent over him, brought water and a precious peace to drive away the horrors of his nightmares.

Twice, during the week that followed, the flowers in the Dresden vase were replaced by fresh ones, but Shamus never saw Sister Ganice, the nun who set them there. But he learned her name, and that she was young, an Austrian, and very beautiful.

Finally came the day which Shamus determined was to be his last at the mission. The next morning he would sail with the tide for Rabaul.

Father Kirshner looked at him affectionately when he announced his decision.

"My boy, we're going to miss you," he said gently, "but if you must go—well, anyway, you're not gone quite yet. I've an idea. Oh, quite a lovely idea. We'll give you a farewell dinner. Tonight. You don't mind?"

"I'll love it, of course," Shamus smiled. "You're very kind." Suddenly he was aware of the rapid beating of his heart.

Father Kirshner had said "we". Could it mean that Sister Ganice would be there?

Aboard the *Maski* again, Shamus went quickly to the poop deck, where he stood for a moment looking down at the Dresden china vase with its hibiscus and lemon blooms. Then he went to his old refrigerator that was now a store-cupboard, opened it, looked along the backs of a row of books stacked in it, and finally selected *The Golden Book of Marcus Aurelius*. Coming back to the table, he opened the book at random, started to lay it down thus open, then paused and smiled as his eye lit on one of his favourite sentences—a sentence which he had underlined with pencil long ago: "Fret not thyself at things, for they care naught about it".

He let his fingers run gently over the flowers in the vase, then carefully selected a hibiscus bloom and one from a sprig of lemon with a fragrant leaf attached, spread them out carefully between the pages of the book, closed it gently, pressing it together, and put the book back into the refrigerator. He had come almost within fingertip contact with a rare and elusive beauty. Perhaps he could thus keep a little of it.

He called his bosun. "Tulare," he said slowly. "I want you to throw out those flowers in the vase. Wash the vase very clean and take it back to the Tauberina. I think you'll find her at the convent. Tell her that we sail with the tide at daybreak. Tell her I have said that the vase and the flowers are very beautiful and that I am deeply grateful. Say also that I thank her for taking care of me while I was sick, and that I shall not forget. Can you remember all that?"

Tulare's head bobbed up and down in solemn assurance . . .

The rest of the day crawled slowly for Shamus, and so restless was he that he reached the dining room that evening before his host had arrived. The little palm-thatched room was festooned with flowers as if for a banquet. The long refectory table, roughly hewn from native woods, was similarly bedecked with red hibiscus buds and lilies, a crockery set of coloured Bavarian china, and some blue-green glassware, slender and beautiful.

There were light steps outside the door and Shamus moved quickly to one corner of the room and stood motionless in the shadow as the door opened and a woman came in.

Except for the huge white starched hood which hid her face, she was dressed in a nun's habit of coarse grey material. She failed to see him immediately and moved swiftly to the table, humming softly to herself. Then some sense must have warned her of his presence, for she turned swiftly and looked at him with a startled gasp.

Shamus gasped too, and found no words. The face beneath the hood was that of an extremely beautiful young girl. There were those blue-grey eyes and the thin lips of incredible sensitivity. He could feel again the tenderness of her hands as they had quieted him in his delirium. A warm possessive tumult surged within him.

As though his feelings had been wordlessly communicated to her, the girl's face flushed a deep scarlet. Lowering her eyes, she dropped him a quick, flustered little curtsey, and started for the door. But Shamus was there ahead of her.

"Not yet," he pleaded. "One little moment—please."

She stopped and stood before the door, not looking at him.

"You came to me when I was all but dead and in the terror of delirium, and you gave me peace and strength," Shamus said quickly. "I thought that I must have imagined it; and here you are, real, and the most beautiful thing I have seen in my life. I—I wish I had words to tell of my secret thoughts of you, but what can I say—what can I speak of . . . ?"

He broke off helplessly, looking at her.

"The *Maski* and the tide, Mr. O'Thaymus," she said, in very precise English. "Surely that is what you should speak of."

Her voice was low and warm.

"So you speak English."

"A little I learn in school," she answered, smiling. Then her face became serious and she looked directly into his eyes as she continued. "But there are words I have never learnt to speak or to understand if they are spoken. So—I may go now, please."

Before Shamus could speak again she had opened the door and gone swiftly through it, closing it behind her.

For a moment Shamus stood where she had left him, trying to find some repose within himself, trying to strengthen his resolve. Then swiftly, impulsively, angrily, he reached for the door knob.

The door opened, and there was Father Kirshner. He had a little old lady on his arm. She was dressed in a grey nun's habit and white starched hood identical with that worn by Ganice.

ABOUT THIS STORY

SHOWDOWN is the "lost" novel by the late Errol Flynn. It was written before he became a film star—when he was an unknown adventurer in the South Seas. Recently a New York publisher rediscovered the book, which is being rushed out in the United States. Suspense presents this condensation exclusively in Britain.

Gently the huge man led her to a chair. "Ah, my dear fellow!" he boomed at Shamus. "Allow me to present to you Sister Alicia. She's doing you the honour to dine with us, which is more than she does for most people. And this is Brother Arden . . ."

The sallow, austere face of the man who had followed them in remained expressionless as he bowed stiffly. Shamus, without caring, had the feeling that he was being regarded with suspicion and disapproval.

"Now then, let's be seated," Father Kirshner was saying, "I've some fine wine of the Rhine I've been hanging on to for just such an occasion."

BEFORE dawn next morning, Shamus went aboard the *Maski*. All was ready for departure, and he hurried aft to stow in his own quarters the gear he had brought from the mission.

He started to lay on the table a book which he had carried in his hand, and then he stared in surprise, for in the dim grey light of the early morning he saw the outlines of the Dresden china vase, filled with flowers.

He whirled angrily on Tulare. "I thought I told you to take it back to the Tauberina!"

"That I did," Tulare said. "I wash the vase. I say to the Tauberina that the deep of your heart is thankful for the beauty and the care while you are sick and that you do not forget. The young Tauberina say nothing. Only her eyes say keep. But I come away and leave the vase with her. Last night, while you eat, she come back. The vase is fill with flowers as before. She come on board and put it there. She say 'Tie down, Tulare, so that it does not run away again'. So I do that. See?"

He pointed to the base of the vase, and even in the half-light Shamus could see how skilfully Tulare had lashed it to the slats of the table so that it would stay upright when the ship was under sail.

The *Maski* sailed on the flood tide. As she threaded a cautious way out of the maze of channels leading to the open sea, Shamus scanned the palm-sprinkled shoreline through his telescope for a last glimpse of the mission. Father Kirshner was not to be seen, but outside the little palm-thatched chapel with the white cross on the roof he spotted two slim figures in nuns' habits standing together, watching the ship's departure.

He could almost make out her face. On an impulse he raised his arm and waved. Through the glass he saw her start and peer forward eagerly. Then she waved back.

Ganice.

Rabaul, by those who know this sultry port, is designated by more than one vulgar phrase, not one of which is in the least complimentary.

The harbour, as well as the town, has quite a few skeletons in its closet, or rather, rattling along its reefy bottom; skeletons in the most literal sense, for it was here that the epic devilry of the infamous Black-birder, Bully Hayes, reached its nadir of bestiality.

Finding his schooner, with sixteen black-birded slaves aboard, being overhauled by an Australian government frigate—so the legend goes—this ingenious gentleman, sooner than be caught red, or rather blackhanded, with the goods, tied a slave to each of the sixteen fathoms of his anchor chain, suddenly hove to, and bawled, "Leggo anchor!" And to the bottom of the bay slid the luckless sixteen. Calmly, Captain Hayes waited for the frigate to haul alongside. "What Kanakas?" he inquired, with mild indignation. "Search my ship? Naturally—I insist on it."

Shamus never entered the harbour without thinking of its unsavoury reputation, and on this trip he was more conscious of it than ever, for it was all of a piece with what he had determined to leave behind him, and accented in his mind by contrast with the exquisite nobility and beauty of Ganice—so briefly presented to him only to be snatched away. During every waking moment of his voyage from Father Kirshner's mission to Rabaul, the thought of her had been with him, and strangely the strengthening conviction of her complete desirability had tended to resolve the conflict between his wanting so terribly to stay near her and his resolve to return to England. For, feeling that he could never have her, her gentleness and loveliness, the peace of her being, had created in him an overpowering nostalgia for the gentleness and peace of his childhood home of long ago.

Instinctively he knew that if he stayed in the South Seas he would forever be trying to achieve his desire—against all of Ganice's vows to the church, against his own loyalty to Father Kirshner, against all reason.

But if he could return to England and there re-establish a civilized way of gracious living, he would be able to achieve some of those things for which Ganice stood for him, and thus find a measure of peace.

Here, his very need for her was partly to escape from savagery, much less the savagery of natives like Anitok and his band than that symbolized by the white man Bully Hayes and his kind . . .

At Rabaul, Shamus went straight to Ah Chee's hotel in Chinatown. He would spend the night there, he decided, before going to the office of Burns Philip and Company, his agents, to announce his decision to return to England.

Checking in at Ah Chee's was a simple matter. You merely walked upstairs and along the corridor until you came to an unoccupied cubicle. And it was thus that Shamus came upon an odd and unusual sight—a curtain stretched across one of the cubicle doorways. Smiling at this innovation, he pulled the curtain aside and poked his head inside. Instantly a large body of water doused him from head to foot.

"I thought I'd get you this time, you snooping louse!" said an angry female voice with a strange accent.

"I—I beg your pardon!" gasped Shamus. He was soaking wet and still half blinded by the deluge.

"Okay—scram!"

As he shook the water out of his eyes, Shamus gasped again. Standing before him, trying to cover herself with a bath towel, was a strikingly beautiful young white woman. She was glaring at him out of aquamarine blue eyes.

"Go on!" she repeated with a threatening stamp of her foot. "Scram!"

Shamus came to. Bewildered, flabbergasted, he beat a hurried retreat, leaving a trail of water down the corridor. Still dripping, he had himself rowed out to the *Maski*, diving in and swimming the last fifty yards to avoid comment on his soaking clothes among the crew.

After dinner that night, Shamus sat under the awning on the poop deck and wrote a note of apology:

On board Aux. Schooner MASKI

Madam:

I assure you I had no conception, when I made my unwarranted intrusion upon your privacy today, that your room was even occupied—let alone by a lady. Please accept my most humble apologies.

*Yr. obedient servant,
Shamus O'Thames.*

He sealed the letter with red wax, stamped the *Maski's* seal on it, and sent it off to Ah Chee's by Tulare.

Next morning found Shamus astir early. He gathered up his ship's papers, left the *Maski*, and presented himself at the offices of Burns Philip and Company.

His intention was still to tell Mr. Gibson, the manager, that he was going to sell the *Maski* and return to England. And

this he did, but Gibson had other plans for him. He introduced him to Doc Swartz, a genial, dynamic American who wanted to charter the *Maski* for a trip to the Sepik river country to shoot some scenes for a film he was making.

For a time Shamus held out against temptation, but he was beaten in the end. He liked Swartz; the money was good; and—most important of all—the Sepik river was near Kirshner's mission . . . and Ganice.

At tea-time next day Shamus spotted a long line of carriers approaching the *Maski* from the township. It must be his party. Doc Swartz was bustling along in front, shepherding one of the carts.

Shamus rose and started off down the wharf to meet him. He had only taken a few steps when he got the first jolt. The figure swinging along close behind Swartz was the girl from Ah Chee's, garbed now in a pair of tight-fitting blue jeans.

Shamus' first instinct was to flee. But it was too late. Beaming and mopping his face, Swartz came up. "Morning, Cap!" he said cheerfully. "Well—we're all here and ready to go." He drew the girl forward. "Allow me to present Miss Cleo Charnel."

Shamus bowed stiffly. "A pleasure, madam," he murmured.

"Hello," the girl nodded a casual and friendly acknowledgment. Then she walked to the side of the wharf and looked down at the *Maski*. "Is *that* the tub?" she added wonderingly.

Doc Swartz indicated a tall, razor-faced individual, with a worried expression and lank, white hair. "Like to have you know Whitey O'Donnel," he said.

Shamus bowed.

"And Jimmy Dodds, my second cameraman."

Shamus bowed again to a small, red-haired man with a glass eye and a twisted smile, and Swartz completed the introductions by pointing to a long-necked, pale, and slender youth. "This is Jodo Wilkins," he said.

The boy said, "Hi," in a flat and supercilious tone, plunged his hands in his pockets, and looked bored.

There was a silence, and Shamus became conscious that the girl was examining him curiously. Suddenly, she began to laugh.

"Of course, it's you!" she exclaimed, pointing at him. "I thought I knew you."

Swartz looked mystified. "You two know each other?"

"Do we know each other! I'll say we do! He's seen quite a lot of me."

She laughed again and Shamus tried to retreat behind words. "I beg your pardon—" he mumbled stiffly.

She arched an eyebrow at the others, and waved a languorous hand in his direction. "See what I mean? You'd never think he was a peeker, would you? Your little note was very sweet, though." Suddenly and warmly she melted in his direction. "It was from you, wasn't it? Sweet—I've been caught with my pants down before, but I never got a letter like it was from the British Ambassador about it."

She turned away and peered down at the *Maski's* deck. "Well, let's start moving, boys. And please, please be careful of my trunks. Here—give me that little one, it's my make-up. If anything happens to that—"

"Had no idea you'd met Cleo." Swartz paused with a suitcase under each arm and nodded amiably.

Shamus looked at him blankly. "The young lady?" he said. "Surely—surely, you don't propose to take her, do you?"

"Cleo? Sure."

"To the Sepik?"

Swartz took Shamus' arm. "Look, Cap," he said, in a friendly, apologetic tone. "Cleo's got to come along. So has Jodo, because my picture is all about the two of them. It's my responsibility to photograph both of them against certain backgrounds. You know—tropics, palm trees, lagoons, natives, and so on. That's what I'm here for. I've got to make it fit the story—Cleo plays a society girl, cast adrift in the tropics, and Jodo is her kid brother. Anyhow, I thought that since I'd hired the boat I could more or less—"

"Of course," said Shamus, responding to the little man's honest concern. "You have every right to bring anyone you wish. It's merely that—well—a charter like this is somewhat out of my line. But since you've made your arrangements, please give it no further thought. The young lady shall have my cabin."

THE *Maski* had been a week at sea, ploughing along the coast of New Britain, and for Shamus the voyage had not been easy. His passengers were giving trouble. Whitey O'Donnell and that unpleasant boy Jodo had started a gambling session with the crew; Shamus had had to break that up. And Jimmy Dodds was constantly removing his glass eye and polishing it, a habit which revolted Shamus.

Now, trickier still, there was trouble with Cleo. She had come on deck in a skin-tight bathing costume, and Shamus had noted the effect on the crew.

He spoke to her about it; and she was furiously angry. But walking aft an hour later, he saw her leaning against the rail in

slacks and a V-neck blouse. And the smile she gave him seemed genuinely friendly.

Shamus smiled back. "Thank you very much," he said, and meant it.

She arched her brows, raised her shoulders, and spread her hands in a gesture of helplessness, as if to say, "What can I do against a masterful man like you!"

With a light fair breeze, Shamus couldn't complain of the *Maski's* progress. But because of the extra demands on the water supply, he had to stand in at various points along the coast to refill the tanks.

Sometimes, when he came back to the ship from the shore, he brought back flowers with him—scarlet hibiscus and lemon blossoms, if he could find them. And then, if the sea was calm, he would bring out the Dresden china vase, and for a little while live silently in the emotions which the vase and the flowers provoked in him.

More than once Cleo saw him arranging the flowers, and watched his face as he did it.

One day, while idling on the poop deck, she walked over to the old refrigerator, and, out of sheer curiosity, opened the door. When she saw what was in it, she started in surprise, then laughed.

"My God, look what's here! Any hot stuff in this literary ice box?" she asked.

Shamus came forward just as she extracted *The Golden Book of Marcus Aurelius*. As she held it in her hand, it quite naturally fell open at the place where Shamus had inserted Ganice's hibiscus and lemon flowers.

"Ah," she said, "memories! Were they in that blue and white vase once?"

"Yes," Shamus said. Abruptly taking the book from her hands, he put it into the refrigerator, closed the door firmly, and strode away . . .

But, as the days passed, Shamus spent more and more time with Cleo.

And then came the night of the *kulakaikai*.

The *Maski* had put into an island of the Siassi group for fresh water and, when a stiff breeze from the north sprang up and turned the smooth water into a nasty cross sea, Shamus decided to postpone sailing for a day, and to prepare a *kulakaikai*, a feast, on the beach that evening.

The proposal met with the enthusiasm of all hands. The Kanakas were sent off in the longboat to look for young reef lobsters and shrimps. Jodo built a fire, and Whitey and Jimmy

were detailed to gather ripe coconuts. Cleo's chore was to scrape the white meat of the nuts, press the scrapings, and squeeze out the thick cream. Shamus set to preparing a young sow for roasting.

At last everything was ready. The brief twilight fell glimmering over the lagoon. As darkness fell, the Kanaka boys set fire to the dried brush torches which had been made earlier and which stood now stuck upright in the sand around the table. The table consisted merely of large pandanus leaves laid on the ground, but in such a setting it could have been the festive board of ancient Melanesian kings.

Before the banquet, Shamus gave his guests rum toddy to drink; and, with the meal, burgundy and Moselle from the *Maski*.

When the feast was over, he rose quietly to his feet with a murmured excuse. His head was swimming alarmingly. Only by a supreme effort of will was he able to keep his feet without swaying. He wandered off in the direction of the beach. A few minutes' solitude, he felt, were necessary to pull himself together.

And besides, he was sick of pretence, tired of talking, tired of drinking. He had known, as he looked at Cleo in the firelight, and seen, with mounting excitement, how she looked at him, that—well, what the hell? He hadn't solved anything. Why, he asked himself, had he ever consented to take this trip? Why hadn't he been content to go back to England immediately, carrying with him the pure uncomplicated memory of Ganice? He was tortured by his conflicting reactions to Ganice and Cleo. On the one hand there was Ganice's pure beauty, which filled him with an emotion that was almost reverence. And on the other there was Cleo, just as lovely, but with a warm, human, even provocative liveliness. . .

Shamus kicked angrily at the sand and strode on down the beach. With one glance back to be sure he was unobserved, he pulled his clothes off and took a running dive into the lagoon. He took a deep breath and allowed his body to float face downwards, luxuriating in the limpid water. Then he turned over lazily on to his back and, raising his head slightly, could see the fire, a quarter of a mile down the beach and a little back, with the sprawled figures of Doc, Whitey, Jim and Jodo but dimly distinguishable; and, in the background, three of the Kanakas.

The rest were obviously in the shadows. But where was Cleo? He had left her by the fire with the others.

His question was answered when a figure on the beach, near him, stepped into the line of his vision. For a moment she stood silently looking out at him. Then he could see her, silhouetted

against the glow of the fire, stretching her arms above her head, struggling with her dress. The next instant she was running down the beach. A quick header into the water, a few short strokes, and she was facing him.

"Damn!" she gurgled, treading water and reaching an arm up to her head. "I forgot all about keeping my hair dry. I'll look like a rat." He could see her lovely, excited face in the moonlight. "Do you mind?" she asked. "I found your clothes on the beach, and it seemed a swell idea."

For a time she tread water, smiling at him. Then, with a quick backward kick, she settled down to a long, slow crawl, and Shamus, after a moment's hesitation, caught up with her.

They swam wordlessly, side by side. Then Shamus felt sand under his feet and realized that the tide had taken them on to a sandbank. His feet had only touched it when a gentle swell threw Cleo against it, too. She stumbled a little, clutched his arm to keep her balance, and for a brief moment her body was against his in the water.

"Oh, darling," she whispered; then, suddenly, she broke away from him and pushed her way up the sandbar until the water was just above her waist.

"Come here." His voice was low, almost unrecognizable, and there was nothing very gentle in the way he went to her and lifted her into his arms. And the first kiss was savage, too, and seemed to be revenge for his pain and torment, wanting to hurt. And, as he splashed his way to the beach, he hardly knew where he went, and didn't care, only felt the long liteness of her body, and her breasts crushing against him; saw her eyes, vaguely lit, serious, staring up into his with a calm softness in them, yet eager, her lips parted in a sort of wonder.

The deep shadows of a casuarina tree enclosed them . . .

Shamus sat up in the grey light of the early morning and wearily let his head sink into his hands. A dull pain, which seemed to have its origin in the base of his skull, kept pushing forward to his eyes. But this, of itself, was nothing. The things which really hurt were things which he could not understand.

The night before, after the party on the shore, the greatest and most painful shock he had ever known in his life had come to him. He had heard Cleo's voice drifting out from her cabin—and Cleo's laughter! ". . . and there I was with my pants down, see? Well, when a girl's caught like that, what can she do? So I said to him . . ."

Shamus cringed. Cleo's laughter swept over him, drenching him in the bitter acid of humiliation. To him Cleo's words, and her laughter, meant only one possible thing. She was telling

about it—was even repeating their words of love and desire—was laughing at him!

For the rest of the night he had tossed restlessly. In his bitter pain he accused himself on so many counts that his mutilated self-respect was in tatters. He had become sodden with drunkenness, had allowed himself to be deceived by a woman who was proving her unbelievable shallowness even now by her recounting, and laughing at, the event. But, worst of all by far, he had thrown away something which had been of infinite preciousness—his right to think of Ganice as he had been thinking of her.

Swiftly on the heels of his recrimination came a decision. He had undertaken this trip in the hope of seeing Ganice again; well, he would avoid Father Kirshner's mission like the plague. He would get back to Rabaul quickly, and sail for England as soon as possible.

Three days' sail ahead of them was the mouth of the Ramu River. If Swartz agreed, he would put in there instead of carrying on to the Sepik.

Next morning, Swartz agreed to the suggested change of location, and Shamus went forward to give the necessary orders to the crew.

Meanwhile, Cleo had come up the companionway to the poop deck. She had slept beautifully, during the short time left to her after they had come back to the ship, and as soon as she had been able to get rid of Doc. He had come to her cabin to talk. She hadn't wanted to talk, but you could never get sore at Doc, he was such a good old guy.

She had joked with him about something that happened at a beach party at Santa Monica a year before, and then he had taken himself off.

Her first waking thought had been of Shamus. She had slipped on a pair of slacks and a shirt and gone silently up the companionway. But, instead of Shamus, she found a deserted poop deck, and the Dresden china vase standing on the table—the mystery, the inanimate thing which some time ago she had recognized as, in some strange way, a challenge to her. Why had he brought it out from its careful concealment just then, she wondered.

Slowly, thoughtfully, she walked to the table and picked it up, turning it over in her hands. Then her fingers gripped it hard as a sudden, inexplicable feeling of desolation and helplessness swept over her.

She started and turned swiftly as she heard a step on the floor behind her.



It was Shamus, his face white and drawn. Without speaking, he took the vase from her hands. "I'd be grateful if you would stay out of my quarters," he said then and, without looking at her again, went to the refrigerator, carefully wrapped the vase and put it away. "We're about to sail," he added, impersonally. "Breakfast will be a little late." Then he went forward.

Soon the cry came back clear and sharp: "Anchor straight up and down!"

"Ahead—slow," Shamus bade the helmsman curtly.

"*Oi, Taubada*—ahead slow."

"West by south, a half west. Here—give me that bloody wheel."

If, instead of taking the wheel, Shamus had at that moment gone to his cabin, he would have found Cleo stretched prone on his bed, weeping into the pillow with an uncontrollable abandonment to hopeless, bewildered grief.

THREE days later, the *Maski* crossed the bar and sailed smoothly into the calm waters of the mouth of the Ramu. Shamus chose an anchorage hurriedly. Bad weather was obviously approaching from the north; already black, rolling clouds filled half the sky.

A little crescent-shaped cove looked fairly snug. It was rocky, with not much room to swing, but this was no time to pick and choose.

The anchor splashed into six fathoms of muddy water, and Shamus ordered all awnings and loose gear stripped off, extra gaskets bound on the furled sails, and the spare anchor broken out.

To the passengers, anxious to set foot on shore after three long days at sea, Shamus' preparations seemed overdone. "I'd like to go for a walk," announced Cleo when they sat down on the poop deck for a scratch midday meal. "I've been cooped up here so long I feel like stamping on somebody's instep. Tulare can take us in the longboat and be back in a little while."

"The longboat hasn't been put in the water yet," replied Shamus. "The crew is eating—they haven't had anything since dawn this morning. And besides—"

He broke off abruptly. Even while speaking he had felt a sudden, minute change in wind direction, a cold draught of air. And it had come from the south! It brought him quickly to his feet, searching the horizon.

"What's the matter?" Cleo asked.

Shamus made no reply. A blow out of the south could turn his snug cove into a nasty trap. He would have to get the ship out of there—and quick.

"Stand by anchor!" he ordered curtly. "Start up engine!"

The half-cold engine turned over with a weary rumble, coughing and spitting in protest. Anxiously Shamus listened to its broken cadence.

If it should desert them now . . .

"Heave up!"

The winch had just started to grind when it hit—the prelude;

little sharp gusts at first, spurting unevenly, followed by a fine, chilly spray that bit into the skin. Almost immediately a stiff, cold blast began breezing a high whistle through the topmast shrouds. The ship stiffened hard up against her cable. Now he didn't dare order the anchor up—not in the teeth of a sudden blast of this sort, and with a spitting engine.

“Belay there! Now slack off chain!”

Then the rain came. It came in a blinding sheet that obscured the deck and merged with the driven salt spray, drenching and stinging like gravel. Darkness fell as quickly as if a curtain had been drawn over the heavens. The *Maski* heaved and strained against her chain as the mounting waves clawed at her with a giant grip.

The situation called for no decision now, for no alternatives offered. To try to run out of the cove would be to court certain disaster, so fierce was the force of the gale. The only course left was to drop the spare anchor, hope that the wind wouldn't increase; and, if it did, trust in God that together both anchors would hold the ship.

Shamus started forward. Ah, Tulare had taken no chances—already he could see the thick manila line of the spare anchor pointing straight down into boiling water, stretched taut.

As he leaned over to inspect the line, the bow suddenly fell away from under him. The ship hit the bottom of the trough and a heavy sea came crashing green over the fo'c'sle, submerging and blotting out everything. As she reared up into the air again, sheets of lashing spray followed.

Tulare was yelling in his ear, “Anchors holding. No drag!”

“Keep two men on watch—all the time!” Shamus shouted back.

Bracing himself against the fo'c'sle hatch coaming, he began a grim calculation. There was no way of foretelling how long the storm would last, but the time for an attempt to get the passengers ashore was past. One look into the roaring darkness astern told him the futility of such a move. In that maelstrom nothing could live.

Then the blow fell. As the *Maski* dipped her nose and then heaved it high in the air again, there came a curious grating sound. And following, almost lost in the screaming tumult, a relatively inaudible crack.

The anchor chain—Shamus knew instantly that it had broken, knew it even before he felt the ship heel over sharply and veer off to port.

He held his breath, waiting, hoping for her to come up against the spare anchor . . .

Amazingly the rope line held. As the *Maski* righted herself, the tough hemp stretched and strained, drawn so taut it seemed a full inch less than its normal thickness.

It was holding. But it couldn't last long.

Only one course remained. Cupping his hands, Shamus shouted into Tulare's ear. "An axe! Stand by and we'll try to make a run for it. Cut the line when I pass the word!"

Tulare nodded and Shamus started aft. He meant to try to get an extra bit of power out of the engine. Hauling himself up on the poop deck, he bumped into Cleo. She was standing huddled against the shrouds, gripping them with both hands.

Before he could utter a word, it came—a sudden sharp report as the anchor rope parted. The wind seized the puny *Maski*. Her head swung off and she began drifting towards the rocks.

Shamus leaped for the girl and tried to drag her as far as possible away from the crash he knew must follow. But terror had given her a death-like grip. She was frozen to the shrouds.

The crash came. A giant sea lifted the vessel high, held her suspended there for a moment, teetering on her beam ends, and hurled her down on to the rocks below; then seized and swept her out to sea again.

"Over the side!" Shamus shouted. "Jump!"

Again he tried to pry Cleo's hands loose from the rigging, but she clung on with a strength that was amazing. A short hard blow took her squarely on the jaw and with a little moan she fell limp in his arms. He struggled to lift her over the rail, then flung himself together with her into the sea.

Striking out in blind desperation, his most vivid recollection was of seeing the ship's stern, with its lettered gold legend, MASKI, RABAU, tower overhead for a brief second. Then she plunged to her end.

The following wash of the same giant wave seized them. Struggling helplessly, he felt himself lifted high on its crest, caught a brief flash of jagged rocks far beneath. Then they too were flung headlong on to the shore.

THE Kanaka boy Alaman found Shamus and Cleo standing by a native hut in a jungle clearing. His black eyes shining with joy, Alaman ran across the clearing and seized Shamus' hand.

"We thought you had died! This is good! Tulare—"

"Tulare is well?" Shamus said quickly.

"Well. Yes."

"And the others?"

"We have not yet found the young Taubada, and the Taubada Swartz lies dead upon the beach. The rest of us live."

Cleo turned quickly away and went inside the hut. Shamus followed; so did Alaman.

Inside it was dark after the bright sunlight and Shamus blinked. Then he saw that another figure lay upon the ground on a crude bed of brushwood. It was Jodo. Jodo's face was grey and haggard with pain, and he lay very still.

Alaman leaned over him briefly. "He will die," he said.

"Perhaps," replied Shamus.

For a moment there was silence. Then Alaman said, "Tulare must know you live. Then all of us will come to this place to camp. I go?"

Shamus nodded. "Go. Tell Tulare to send two for the old one—he must be planted in the ground. Wait—"

Shamus moved out of the hut with the boy.

He said hesitantly, "What did the sea do to *Maski*?"

Alaman paused. "The sea," he said slowly, "ate *Maski* up—every piece. Nothing is left. But the sea was also good—we found the longboat. It has a hole—not big. But only two of us have knives that we saved, and they are not enough for mending. I go?"

"Go," said Shamus.

As he watched the boy disappear swiftly in the jungle, he thought grimly of their plight. This was not far from the spot where he had gone ashore before, and lost most of his crew to that ruthless little savage Anitok.

But Anitok's village, he knew, lay inland, in the mountains. With luck it might be a few days before the pygmy raider learned of their arrival.

They would have to work fast. Father Kirshner's mission could not be more than a hundred miles away. If they could repair the longboat, they might just make it.

Shamus smiled grimly. Was some powerful fate driving him back to Ganice, in spite of every effort of will he could make to keep away from her?

Cleo's voice broke in on his thoughts. "Shamus, you'd better go see Jodo—he wants you."

As Shamus stooped down to enter the shelter, he could hear the heavy respiration. The boy's appearance shocked him. All the colour had drained from the dry lips and his thin little face was gaunt and drawn with pain.

"Goddammit," he said, "I can't see."

Shamus searched for something to say. "Anything you want? A drink of water?"

The boy made a slight negative indication with his head. "What for? I must have . . . played this scene forty times. They

always want to give you water . . . jerks . . .” The faint flutter of a smile trembled on his lips. “That’s only because . . . it says so in the script. I’m not thirsty.”

Jodo’s voice was barely audible, but his breathing seemed to have become easier. Suddenly he opened his eyes wide. Then his head slipped to one side, and he lay very still . . .

When Shamus left the hut, he could see Cleo, through a gap in the jungle, walking slowly on the shore with her head down. Once he saw her stoop, pick up something and wipe the sand off it. After turning it over thoughtfully in her hands, she put it carefully into a pocket of her slacks, and, turning, left the beach and started back to the shack.

BY the time a week had passed, the repairs to the precious longboat were well under way. A sago-leaf shelter had been erected to protect the boat from the sun and, under it, the hole in her side was in process of being slowly and painstakingly squared off, grooved, and patched with no better tools than the two knives. At the same time, the Kanakas had found pandanus trees and were constructing a native sail from their great, tough leaves.

But Shamus knew that a watch was already being kept upon the clearing from the edges of the jungle. Searching for bark suitable for pulping into caulking, he had heard a slight scuffling that might indicate the presence of game. As he carefully parted some brush in front of him, the thick undergrowth exploded into life. He caught a brief glimpse of two diminutive naked rumps and a ferocious, tattooed face. There came a sharp hissing sound, some projectile whizzed by his head, and then the jungle swallowed them up.

Then, on the eighth day, three of the boat’s crew disappeared. Sent out as a separate foraging unit, the boys failed to return in the evening. Shamus wondered if they had deserted. Anyway, he thought grimly, there would now be three less for the overcrowded longboat to carry.

But on the morning of the ninth day there came a terrible sequel. Cleo, coming out of her hut, almost stumbled over something in the doorway. She gave one look and screamed. On the ground, tied together like coconuts, were the severed heads of the three missing boys. The gruesome souvenir lay mud-spattered and horrible, little dark rivulets of blood streaking off into the ground.

Late that same afternoon, Tulare suddenly paused in his work and cocked his head to one side. For a moment he listened intently. Then he rose to his feet and made a short, low hissing sound: “Psst!”

Guana, the boy seated next to him, rose also. Listening a moment, he nodded. "Ay-ye!" he exclaimed fearfully.

Faintly upon the jungle air, so far distant as yet that the sound could only be detected by the most finely attuned hearing, there came a low, ominously rhythmic, muffled rumble.

"Garramuts—the drums! They come!" Guana spoke tensely in the Rabaul language. "It is time to flee!"

Tulare stared off into the jungle with his usual impassive gaze. Then he stood up and walked over to Shamus, who was kneeling on the ground caulking a lower seam. "Headhunters," he announced laconically, nodding towards the jungle. "Killing talk, I think."

Shamus stood up and listened. He could hear nothing.

It was fully fifteen minutes before the deep measured pounding on the crocodile-skin drums became audible to everyone's ear. By that time, Shamus had made the best dispositions possible. With a sinking heart, he thought once again of the utter hopelessness of the situation. Even to assume attitudes of defence was out of the question; bluff was their only chance . . .

There was a little time left to them and, hand in hand, Shamus and Cleo walked silently away from the hut in the direction of the beach. Deep within Shamus lay the thought of Ganice, but now he found no inconsistency, no conflict, between that and his desire, when death seemed close upon him, to take Cleo in his arms. The rôle Cleo had played in their predicament had vastly increased her stature in his eyes. Not once had she referred by word or intimation either to the night they had come together on the beach or to the quarrel of the following morning. No word or gesture of love had passed between them. She had done her share of the work skilfully and cheerfully, had neither asked nor expected any special consideration.

At last, as they walked along the shore, Shamus spoke. "I'd like you to know that I'm sorry," he said, "for my—well, brusqueness on the ship the morning after—our shore dinner. But when I heard you speaking about us—and laughing, I—well, I couldn't stand that. It meant—quite a lot."

"Oh, Shamus, my poor darling!" she cried, and there were tears in the eyes that looked up at him. "So that was it. I remember."

Swiftly she told him what had really happened in the cabin that night, how she had not been telling Doc about the time she had spent with Shamus, but about some other, trivial incident from the past.

They were almost out of sight of the camp now. Shamus, in his happy relief, stopped and took her into his arms, the soft

slenderness of her melting into him. He gripped her so fiercely that what was left of her tattered blouse came loose as his hands slid hungrily around the bare skin of her waist until her breasts crushed soft under them. The slender muscles at first went taut to his touch, and then relaxed, and with a little moan she clung to him, passionately kissing him with a long kiss that closed out fear.

"Cleo, my dear, my dear!" he whispered, and could find no other words.

Hand in hand, in taut silence, they walked back to the longboat.

TO those waiting with grim anticipation in the clearing, Anitok's arrival was staged with a nice sense of the dramatic. There was the terrifying sound of purposeful movement in the undergrowth, and suddenly there appeared, out of the thickest part of the jungle, four fierce, Lilliputian men, naked except for G-strings of vegetable fibre, and cylindrical gourd sheaths for their arrows.

Holding overhead their carefully carved bows, they advanced a few steps. "Anitok! Pe-an!" they called out, repeating the guttural words several times. Then they brandished the weapons and flung them conspicuously on the ground, a stratagem designed by Anitok's lieutenant, Kanaka Tom—the man Father Kirshner had healed—to accustom the strangers to the sight of weapons and, by thus discarding them, but not too far, to indicate peaceful intentions.

There came a sharp, staccato rattle on the drums, and Anitok stepped out, with a tall Kanaka beside him, towering like a giant above his ridiculously short body. From the tattoo on his chest Shamus knew this was Kanaka Tom.

Pausing to allow his followers to gather round him, Anitok raised his left arm stiffly.

"Ahoy," he called.

Shamus strolled over a few paces from the longboat and leaned casually on a tree stump, as if pleased by the prospect of an idle chat. Whitey O'Donnel and Jimmy Dodds shot a quick look at each other and decided to stick close to him. Cleo started to follow, but Shamus motioned her back.

The Kanaka crew, with Tulare and Alaman in the lead, silently took their places beside and a little behind the group of white people.

"Ahoy!" Shamus called back in a cool voice.

Anitok had dropped his arm, but remained motionless.

"You fella savvy talk, eh?" Shamus asked, in as friendly a voice as he could muster.

"Me savvy talk," Kanaka Tom said. "Anitok speak. I tell you. You speak. I tell Anitok. Belong wha' name you come Ramu?"

Shamus hesitated. Should he reveal his friendship for Father Kirshner and his knowledge of Tom's identity, or wait? No, he would bluff for a moment.

"What's matter?" he said sharply. "The Ramu belongs to you?"

Tom translated to Anitok swiftly, and Anitok pounded himself fiercely on the chest, chattering rapidly.

"He say, that's right. Place belong him," Tom said briefly, nodding his head towards Anitok.

Shamus took another tack. "Our friends, two Taubadas, died. We put them in the ground."

"Anitok say for ground, how much you pay?" Tom said, translating.

"For ground?" Shamus' mind worked at high pressure as he stalled his answer. The demand for payment for the graves was based upon the soundest legal premise, for the very foundation of all Kanaka law is the ownership of land.

Never shifting his gaze, Shamus half turned. "I'm going to have to give him a knife," he muttered, but in a mild tone. "Whitey—go and get Tulare's."

Tulare returned with Whitey, bringing the knife, and Shamus tossed it to the ground at Tom's feet.

With careful deliberation, Tom kicked it spinning back towards Shamus.

"Anitok say no good," he grunted.

Shamus thought swiftly. Without turning, he said, "Cleo—your silver bracelet."

She came up behind him swiftly and slipped the bracelet into his hand. Then, ignoring his signs to her to retire, she stood tensely beside him.

Shamus flung the bracelet tinkling through the air. Tom caught it, examined it briefly, and handed it to Anitok.

"More," Tom said, gutturally. "The woman. He pay for her. He give food, water, big canoe."

Shamus' face went white. It was time now to try the name of Father Kirshner for whatever good it might do.

"Kanaka Tom," he said, "I know you. You are friend of the big Taubada with the beard—Father Kirshner. You are good man. Kirshner has told me. I, too, am friend of Kirshner. The woman is friend of Kirshner—like the young Tauberina in the white hat who saved you once from your sickness. Do you want the anger of Kirshner? You know what it will surely be if

harm comes to us—especially this woman whom Anitok says he wants.”

He watched Tom's face closely, but could see no sign to tell him what effect his speech had.

For a long, tense moment there was only silence. But now Cleo had understood what was being discussed.

“He wants me?” she said dazedly. “That thing?” And suddenly her taut nerves snapped and she flooded into a gale of laughter, hysterical, incredulous, derisive.

The sound had an immediate effect on Anitok. These people were helpless, yet they had the temerity to deride him!

Like a minute yet terrible volcano, he exploded. In fury, his deep, guttural voice became harshly strident and high-pitched as he strode up and down in the middle of the clearing, haranguing his people and speaking in violent asides directly to Tom, who remained silent and enigmatic.

At last he came to a stop beside Tom. Tom spoke a few brief words to him, then addressed Shamus.

“Kirshner too far away,” he said stolidly. “No good now. Me Anitok man. This place not belong you. All belong Anitok, all land, all earth, all trees, all water. You steal ground. He come this one time like friend. Because you give him present, he give you little time for think. Now he get up, he go along place. Better you think quick. Next time he come once more. Only once. Take payment. Take woman.”

He turned abruptly away with Anitok. Together they broke through the ranks of the warriors, who stood aside to make way and then followed, the dark jungle swallowing them up.

STRANGELY, though the drums pounded insistently, maddeningly, there was no second visit from Anitok and his men that day. Yet if Shamus, or any of the others in the clearing, were hopeful because of that, their hope would have been shattered had they been able to see what was happening in Anitok's village.

Anitok and Kanaka Tom sat together in the latter's hut. Anitok was plainly angry and disgruntled.

“Why did we not finish it while they stood there helplessly before us?” he asked. He shook the wrist on which Cleo's silver bracelet hung, delighted at the gentle tinkling which it gave forth. “I could even now be having her.”

Tom scowled and shook his head. “You are unaware of the cleverness of the white man,” he said. “When he seems the more harmless and at ease, it is then he has the most strength hidden. Did you not see the leaves stacked about the boat?”

(continued on page 137)



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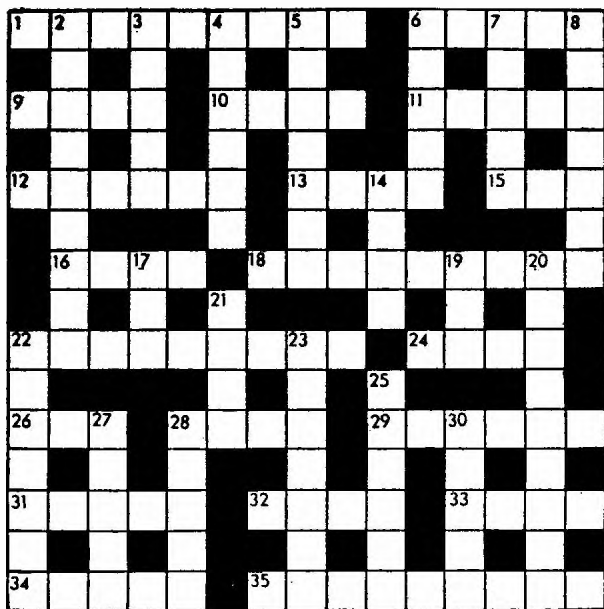
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SUSPENSE CROSSWORD



CLUES ACROSS

1. Look for a card-sharper (5, 4)
6. Tough joint ? (5)
9. Coiner's Mecca (4)
10. Moslem announces he's early (4)
11. Girl with a guinea can hold her liquor (5)
12. M's opposite numbers (6)
13. Dull but lethal when small (4)
15. Behead toff at a distance (3)
16. The Razor's? (4)
18. Long-distance to Saratoga ? (5, 4)
22. "When you want a bite have . . ." (1, 8)
24. Heroic poem (4)
26. A shot at a fingerprint (3)
28. Ale kiln makes a sot (4)

29. He married Agatha Troy (6)

31. Six start the poison we finish (5)
32. Simians in cheap espionage (4)
33. Entrance is a street in the north (4)
34. Shoals are nearly doped smokes (5)
35. Weird liberal mixed up in SS makes for crooks (9)

CLUES DOWN

2. Where they sling the hashish ? (5, 4)
3. You break and do this (5)
4. Turn at fish for beliefs (6)
5. One of six in revolver (7)
6. Tidal wave sounds impatient (5)

7. Cheer on assassin : (5)

8. Sounds like vague yearning for a card game (7)
14. He does who fights another day (4)
17. Just the weapon for a crazy gnu (3)
19. Black, it's ominous headgear (3)
20. Playing in fortunate film ? (5, 4)
22. Highwayman's home in Hants ? (7)
23. Footpad ? No, dupe (4, 3)
25. Kit is the boy after the auto (6)
27. Does it shove along canals ? (5)
28. So as I reform in desert (5)
30. Not criminal, anyway (5)

Undoubtedly there was hidden a chattering monkey gun. Do you think I am a fool to allow us to be struck with such a one? No, my friend. There is a better way than that. Have you forgotten the promise which you made to Kután?"

He was speaking of the ruler of the powerful Arane people, who lived a hundred miles to the south east. Between them and Anitok's people there existed a precarious alliance.

"The matter is very simple," Kanaka Tom went on. "There is no need for us to take chances. I shall send Dumai with a message to Kután telling him to come and join us. We shall then yield the honour of the attack to Kután and allow *his* people to face the monkey gun. When the monkey has spat out all of its teeth, we shall close in in safety. Meanwhile the drums will remind the white men of our presence."

"But the woman is to be mine," Anitok grunted.

"Of course," Kanaka Tom murmured smoothly.

He left the hut, called Dumai—a captive Kanaka from Shamus' old crew, Tulare's brother—and, in words which only the two of them could hear, gave him instructions and sent him off swiftly into the jungle . . .

For four days and four nights Anitok chafed and fretted in his village, pacing from hut to hut in the daytime, tossing restlessly at night. But when he complained to Kanaka Tom, the latter merely said, "It is far to Kután. It is not yet time."

On the fifth day Anitok could stand it no longer.

"That slave!" he grunted to Kanaka Tom. "Perhaps he has run away. Perhaps he has been killed by the Arane people themselves. Why do we wait? The white people are helpless. They have no monkey gun."

Tom looked at him for a long moment in silence. Then he shrugged his shoulders. "So," he said. "We go."

He strode into his hut and, removing his bed, dug beneath it. Anitok stood by and suddenly began to tremble. He knew what Tom had hidden there, and he coveted it.

From the earth Tom took a steel box. Opening it, he took out a revolver. . .

Once again the little warriors filled the clearing in ominous

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silence, and then Anitok and Kanaka Tom pushed their way through them and stood facing the group of white people and waiting Kanakas. Shamus had dropped his work of caulking as soon as he heard their approach. He whispered to Cleo, telling her to stay back, and walked slowly forward to the tree stump where he had taken his place during the former visit. He noticed the revolver in Kanaka Tom's G-string.

Anitok spoke rapidly. Tom looked at Shamus.

"He asks whether you are ready to give the woman?"

Shamus made no answer. He felt his muscles go tense for the rush he hoped would carry him to Anitok.

And then he heard quick steps behind him and, turning, saw Cleo coming forward, her eyes staring straight ahead, her mouth set in a grim, straight line, her face deathly pale.

She was brushing past Shamus, almost without looking at him, when his hand shot out and seized her wrist.

"Are you mad?" he said in a low voice.

Anitok's eyes had widened with eagerness as Cleo had come forward. Now, as he saw Shamus' hand grip her wrist, he began muttering angrily to Kanaka Tom. Tom, watching Anitok closely, kept his right hand near the revolver.

In that moment, when no more than a split second seemed to stand between life and violent death, a most extraordinary thing occurred. First the deathly stillness of the clearing was broken as if a strange electric current had run through it. Almost simultaneously a loud clap of thunder shook the heavens. An excited jabbering suddenly broke out among the crouching warriors. Anitok himself looked as if he had been turned to stone. His eyes bulged, his jaw dropped down on his chest. He stared, immobile. Only Kanaka Tom stood as he had before, silent, impassive.

Suddenly a mass of the little men turned and fled helter-skelter into the jungle. All the others fell back in horror and alarm.

A second, more violent roll of thunder boomed forth. Bewildered, Shamus thought that there must be some strange connection between the thunder and the fright of the pygmies. Then he turned and his eyes followed the direction of Anitok's frozen gaze.

At first he could see no cause for the commotion. Whitey crouched near the longboat. Cleo had collapsed. Close by, Jimmy . . .

In a flash enlightenment came. Jimmy, scared stiff and sweating violently, had removed his glass eye, as he so often did in moments of distress, and was wiping it off on his shirtsleeve!

For a moment Shamus could hardly credit the ludicrous

fantasy of the thing. But he knew the primitive mind.

He strode over to Jimmy. "Your eye!" he whispered. "When I tell you—put it back in again!" Then, seizing Jimmy by the arm, he drew him into the centre of the clearing. Addressing himself directly to the still astounded Anitok, he announced in a loud voice: "This is a Taubada of magic. Look!"

Tom translated calmly, but Anitok shook with fear. At Shamus' nudge, Jimmy plopped his eye back into its socket.

Shamus let a few seconds go by to size up the effect and allow it to gather momentum. Then:

"Give it to me!" he muttered urgently. "Slower this time."

Jimmy obeyed. Forcing a cool smile, Shamus took the eye and held it up for display between thumb and forefinger. Then he placed it conspicuously on the tree stump before him.

"This eye," he intoned, "sees everything. It is magic. All day and all night it tells me all. Nothing is hidden."

Kanaka Tom translated impressively and in a steady voice. A low murmur arose, and then panic gripped the little men. Some threw down their weapons, others fell flat on their faces and began crawling away. Still more fled outright into the jungle. Only Anitok and Tom were left.

Once more the thunder boomed out, sonorous, portentous. The sky exploded; pelting rain began flooding the clearing.

Anitok cast one more glance at the tree stump. The eye, wet, pale blue and savage, the thin artificial red streaks of blood running across the white, gleamed back at him ferociously. Anitok fled.

For a moment Kanaka Tom stood there alone, his face impassive, looking from Shamus to the eye, then back to Shamus. Finally he turned and began to walk slowly in the direction of the retreating pygmies, all of whom had by now disappeared. Then he, too, was swallowed up by the jungle.

A moment later there came from the jungle the sound of a single shot. Then absolute stillness . . .

Solution to SUSPENSE CROSSWORD on page 136

Across: 1. Poker-face; 6. Elbow; 9. Mint; 10. Imam; 11. Glass; 12. Smersh; 13. Bore; 15. Off; 16. Edge; 18. Trunk-call; 22. A sandwich; 24. Epic; 26. Dab; 28. Oast; 29. Alleyn; 31. Virus; 32. Apes; 33. Gate; 34. Reefs; 35. Swindlers.

Down: 2. Opium dens; 3. Enter; 4. Faiths; 5. Chamber; 6. Eagre; 7. Bravo; 8. Wistful; 14. Runs; 17. Gun; 19. Cap; 20. Lucky star; 22. Andover; 23. Cat's-paw; 25. Carson; 27. Barge; 28. Oasis; 30. Legal.

Father Kirshner sprawled in his new canvas deck chair, smoking a pipe and contemplating the low-lying coast of dark New Guinea with a thoughtful eye. He listened with hearty satisfaction to the steady throb of the new eight-cylinder diesel engine.

Father Kirshner had good reason to be ship-proud. He had long wished for a vessel like this. The schooner *Mary Knoll*, built by Catholic subscription in Sydney, was a fine little craft.

"Ramu, ahoy!"

The cry came from aloft and the cleric rose from his chair, the breeze whipping the thin ducks about the bulging muscles of his legs.

The *Mary Knoll* slid into the river. Soon she swung about and was in chains, near the very spot which Shamus had chosen for the last, ill-fated anchorage of the *Maski*.

"Stand by to go ashore!" boomed Father Kirshner happily.

The landing looked silent and deserted. Posting a guard over the boat, Father Kirshner led the way cautiously up the beach. Moving in single file, the party had only penetrated a short distance when suddenly he threw his hand up. The line of Kanakas halted, peering ahead.

In a small open clearing there appeared to be a village.

Stealthily Father Kirshner moved forward until he stood in the open. A quick glance inside one of the huts revealed an empty interior.

"Gone!" he grunted. "But how? Have I come too late?"

He began crossing the clearing, and then suddenly he halted again, his eye caught by a curious object that stood like a small monument in the centre of the clearing.

The ochre-painted native figure was about four feet high, and Father Kirshner remarked with surprise that it was carved with considerable skill from the still rooted and growing stump of a tree.

The arms hung stiffly by its side and the legs ended in feet that merged with the living roots, while the grotesque features, sculptured into a ferocious snarl, had two small wild boar tusks implanted one at each end of the wide mouth.

The idol, or whatever it was, possessed but one eye, in the centre of the forehead: an eye pale blue, cold and savage.

A track led off from the clearing into the jungle. On each side of it Father Kirshner found many small mounds of decayed native food—propitiatory offerings, apparently, to the little one-eyed idol.

Following the winding trail, he soon found himself in another smaller clearing, a sort of little dell. Here he stopped and stared down at the ground. In English lettering, roughly hewn on the

crude wooden cross of one mound, was a brief legend: DOC. And on another smaller one, four more letters: JODO.

Father Kirshner made the sign of the Cross, blessing the two graves, then hurried back to the beach. When he found the trail showing where Shamus' party had dragged the longboat to the water's edge, his eyes glowed with excitement and hope. He turned to his waiting crew.

"Back to the boat!" he shouted. "We're putting to sea at once."

During all the rest of that day he pushed the *Mary Knoll* hard, cruising in a wide zigzag course over a large expanse of sea in the direction of the mission. But he found nothing. It was not until the next morning, when the sun was burning down on them, that he bellowed happily to his crew.

"Look! A sail! A sail—made of pandanus fronds!" With a great bound, he started aft. "About ship!" he roared. "See that my medicine bag is ready. Bring out ice from the galley. They'll be overcome with heat, every one."

In a graceful arc the *Mary Knoll* swept about and headed at full speed towards the boat with the pandanus-frond sail.

Over Father Kirshner's mission rested the quiet peace of a

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Sunday evening. Shamus lay stretched out on the dark beach under his favourite coconut tree, thinking of how much Cleo had come to mean to him during the time at the mouth of the Ramu river and during those hellish days in the overloaded longboat.

But Ganice?

What of his feeling for her . . . ?

It was not until they had all been at the mission for three days, and regained a measure of strength, that the priest had mentioned Sister Ganice.

She was not with them any more. Old Sister Alicia had returned to Europe to spend her few remaining days there, and Ganice had been ordered to go with her, to care for her on the voyage and to receive a new assignment.

It was well, Shamus decided—just as well that they were not to see each other again. For he knew that Ganice had already fulfilled her place in his life, and that now she would remain forever the symbol of a bright perfection, of all the loved intangibles of life compressed into a vision of beauty and purity and loveliness.

He stirred, and was about to get up to go and find Cleo, when he heard voices approaching down the beach. Father Kirshner was talking to his assistant, Brother Arden. Shamus, not feeling in the mood for talking, settled back and waited for them to pass. But instead of passing, the two men seated themselves not twenty feet away, not seeing him in the dark, while Father Kirshner went on talking.

"It's wonderful the way things work together," he boomed. "Even primitive political intrigue can sometimes work out for ultimate good. You remember, Brother Arden, the tall Kanaka named Tom—a henchman of Anitok—who came to us wounded a long time ago? An unscrupulous devil if ever there was one, as it turns out. Yet he saved the lives of all these people—all except the three Kanakas who were killed by Anitok's men in the jungle. He has eliminated Anitok, is now himself the ruler of Anitok's pygmies, and is willing to co-operate with us. I think the truth of the matter is that he is afraid of the Arane people, but why question motives?"

"Anitok out of the way?" Brother Arden interposed. "High time. How did Tom do it?"

"No one save himself knows exactly," Father Kirshner answered. "The story Tom has spread among the natives is that Shamus shot the little tyrant after his men had deserted him on the beach, but Whitey just now told me that no one in the party had any kind of gun."

So that, Shamus was thinking, explained that single shot which they had heard just after the pygmies had left them for the last time.

"All we know certainly," Father Kirshner went on, "is that Tom, when he learned who the white people on the beach were, sent a captured Kanaka slave, Dumai, one of Shamus' old crew, to me to tell of the plight of the white people so that I could rescue them. It was his return for our curing him—or, if you like, a part of his political plan for gaining future co-operation from us."

Shamus waited until the two men had finished their talk and left the beach; then he got up and walked slowly down to the dock where the *Maski* had been tied during his earlier visit. The *Mary Knoll* was there now, riding quietly with the almost imperceptible movement of the gentle swell.

"Hello!" Cleo's voice, low and vibrant, came from so close that it startled him. It was as though the *Mary Knoll* herself had spoken to him.

He looked up and could barely distinguish her on the deck of the boat. She was leaning forward, her elbows on the rail, and even in the dim light from the half moon he could see her gentle smile.

"Sort of came back to the scene of the crime, I guess." She laughed. "Here, give me a hand down."

Slowly they walked to the end of the dock and sat down on the rough stones.

For a time they were silent, watching the movements of the sea. Then Shamus took her into his arms.

"It is true, isn't it?" he whispered. "I can be sure, can't I darling?"

And then he kissed her, at first gently, then greedily, their lips meeting with the strength and firmness which is the gift of tested love.

"All that I want—all that I want forever," she breathed. "Oh, Shamus—Shamus, my darling!"

After a while she withdrew her hand from his and reached into the pocket of her skirt.

"I've got something for you, darling," she said. "Call it an early wedding present if you like. It's something I picked up that day on the beach, after the shipwreck—remember? I've been carrying it about with me ever since we got here, waiting for the proper time to give it to you. This is it. I think you'll want to keep it always. I'm not sure that I'd be able to understand you if you didn't."

She slipped it quietly into his hand, a small, paper-wrapped

package, and Shamus unwrapped it, feeling along the rough edges of what seemed a bit of broken pottery about twice the size of a silver dollar.

Taking a match from his pocket, he struck it and held it above the object in his hand.

It was a piece of the Dresden china vase.

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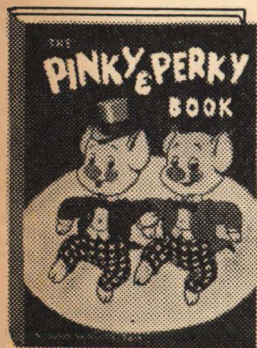
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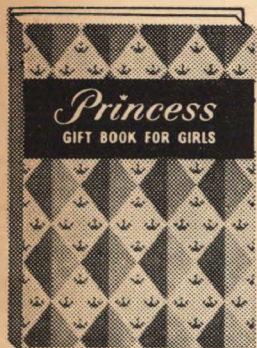
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