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ARGOSY

MAY 1 WEEKLY

JUDSON P. PHILIPS'
New Racing Novel

GRAND NATIONAL

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BY JANE JONES

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St. Louis, Mo.

LISTERINE

checks halitosis

ARGOSY

Action Stories of Every Variety

Volume 272 CONTENTS FOR MAY 1, 1937 Number 5

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29x5.00-19	2.45	1.07
28x5.25-18	2.50	1.11
29x5.25-19	2.60	1.11
31x5.25-21	2.80	1.11
30x5.50-20	2.80	1.12
28x5.50-18	2.80	1.12
29x5.50-19	2.85	1.13
30x5.50-20	2.85	1.15
6.00-18	2.50	1.18
6.00-17	[illegible]	1.18
32x6.00-20	3.00	1.18
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30x6.50-18	[illegible]	1.32
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[illegible]	3.75	[illegible]	[illegible]	12.75	6.15
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A NEW NOVEL OF
THE SPORT OF KINGS

Grand National

By JUDSON P. PHILIPS
Author of "Madison Square," "Tough Guy," etc.

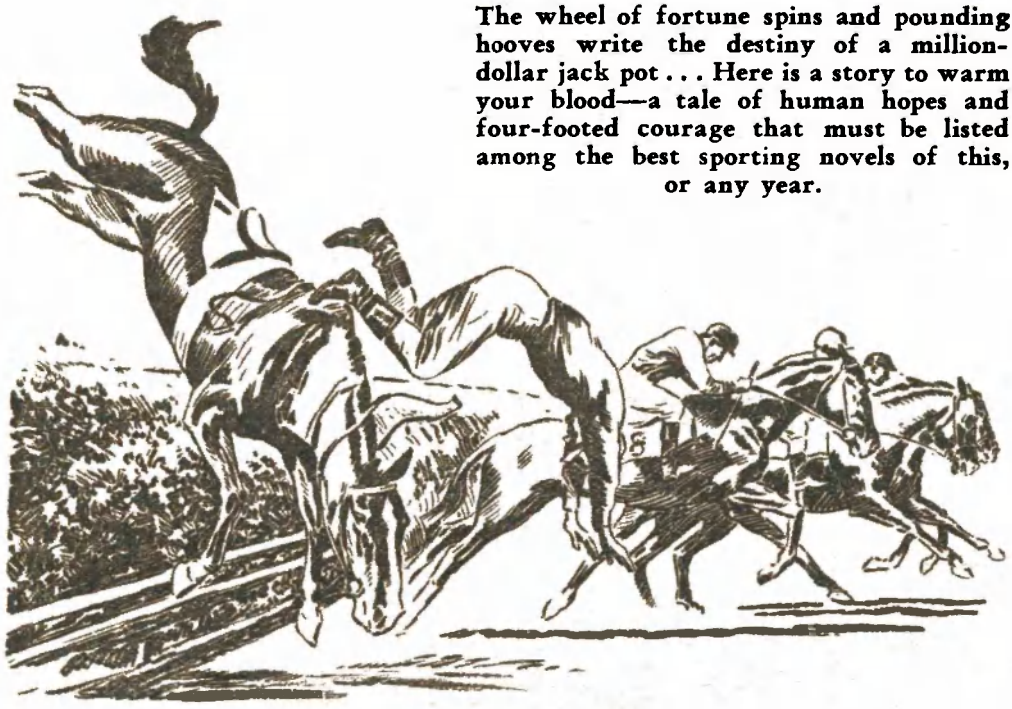
CHAPTER I

LUCKY JADWIN'S BOY

PHILIP Jadwin crouched in the warm straw and listened to old Danny Shane talking to Bowstrom, the jockey. Afterward Philip remembered every detail of those few minutes . . . remembered the smell of the spotless stall; remembered the feel of the chestnut mare's soft warm muzzle as she fumbled at his shoulder, at his neck, at his brightly colored scarf; remembered the way the water dripped from the brim of Bowstrom's hat, for he had just come in from out doors; remembered Danny Shane's voice as he repeated his instructions over and over to Bowstrom; and remembered the anxious look in Danny's kindly gray eyes.

"The first two jumps are nothin'," Danny was saying, "but many a rider's come to grief because he didn't take 'em serious enough. You'll be crowded there, son. If you get away in front, all right. But if you're pushed around at the start hold back, so you'll have some room. Remember, you've got plenty of time to make up lost ground.

The wheel of fortune spins and pounding hooves write the destiny of a million-dollar jack pot . . . Here is a story to warm your blood—a tale of human hopes and four-footed courage that must be listed among the best sporting novels of this, or any year.



It's four miles. Four miles, eight hundred and fifty-six yards, to be exact."

Bowstrom nodded. He was looking at the mare. "She seems quiet enough."

"You'll not have to worry about her, son," said Danny "She'll do her part. But you've got to watch the others. Don't let 'em crowd you. Take her straight into the jumps—particularly at the Canal Turn. They have a way of runnin' out there." There was a straw between Danny's lips, and it bobbed up and down as he spoke. "Becher's is where you've gotta keep your nerve. When you get in the middle of that one it looks twenty feet down the other side. Of course it isn't. It's that deep to the bottom of the ditch, but you *clear* the ditch and land on the uphill slope."

"I know," said Bowstrom. "She took it fine in the workout yesterday."

"It's different in the race," said Danny." "I've knowed riders to tighten up there—plenty of good riders, son. It's the sight of the men with the ropes —and the coppers standin' there with stretchers lyin' beside 'em on the grass. But you just give her head and you'll have nothin' to worry about."

Philip Jadwin's mouth felt dry. "Men with ropes?" he faltered. "What are they for?"

"They're to pull the horses out of the ditch when they can't get up themself," said Danny. "If you fall there it's a broken leg or neck."

The mare's breath was warm on Philip's neck, but he himself was cold —cold and stiff with a dark, unhappy foreboding.

Philip Jadwin was not far past fifteen that day he crouched in the stall of the chestnut mare. It was a day in March of the year 1927. The rain was coming down in torrents outside. It seemed as if the heavens had conspired to blot out the city of Liverpool, England, and all the surrounding countryside. It was

a day that meant a thousand different things to a thousand different people. It was Grand National Day . . . the day when the greatest steeplechase in the world is run.

ALREADY thousands and thousands of spectators were crowded around the course and packed into the stands, watching the preliminary races. They were all soaked to the skin, yet they didn't seem to notice it. Elsewhere millions of people crowded around radios, waiting anxiously for the results. A few lucky persons with tickets on horses drawn in the great world wide lottery were tense with excitement, a fortune dangling tantalizingly in front of them if their horse came out on top at the end of this grueling grind.

Owners and bettors at the track stood to win or lose great sums of money. Jockeys, tense, nerves rubbed down to the raw, waited for time to go to the post, for the moment when the tape would fly up and they would be off on the race that was certain to bring broken limbs, cracked skulls, and perhaps death itself to both man and horse, and glory to some mud-splashed victor who finally crossed the finish line in front.

This was the day of days to all these people. It was a day that would be long remembered for its thrills, its triumphs, its might-have-beens. But for Philip Jadwin it was to be a day that brought stark, unrelenting tragedy; a day that ten years later, was to turn his life upside down.

Danny was still going painstakingly over his instructions with Bowstrom when Philip heard his father's voice . . . the booming hearty, basso profundo of Lucky Jadwin. Everybody knew Lucky Jadwin, even here in England. Lucky's fame had started thirty years before when he had struck oil on a stretch of Texas land where experts assured him there was no oil. He had run a thin dime into more millions than anyone could comfortably contemplate. Lucky was a born gambler, would bet on anything on God's green earth, and seemed to have a special set of gods watching over him, assuring him of success.

Lucky Jadwin, deep-chested, red-faced, jovial, came into the little stable followed by three other people. Philip knew them all. The tall, tight-lipped man with the little gray toothbrush mustache was Sir Humphrey Tarrant, the famous English sportsman. He looked very elegant in his cutaway and his gray topper. The other two were Guy Tarrant, a boy about Philip's age, dark, good looking in a supercilious way, and Jessica Tarrant, a ravishingly pretty little girl of fourteen. Philip liked Jessica almost as heartily as he disliked Guy and their father, Sir Humphrey. Philip stood up, his hand still resting on the chestnut mare's neck. She was fumbling at his pocket now for sugar.

"There she is, Sir Humphrey!" Lucky Jadwin boomed. "Bright Princess! In an hour she'll be the new Grand National winner."

Sir Humphrey's lips twitched in a faintly sardonic smile. "*If* your luck holds out, Jadwin. I must say she's a splendid looking animal."

"And she can jump over the moon!" said Lucky. "How about it, Philip?"

Philip's mouth was dry. He moistened his lips before he could speak. "I wish you wouldn't run Betsy, father," he said, very gravely. Betsy was the chestnut mare's stable name.

"Not run her!" Lucky Jadwin threw back his head in a rafter-shaking laugh. He turned to Sir Humphrey. "The boy

thinks something's going to happen to her. He's kind of goofy about this mare. I tell him if he's going to fool around horses he can't go fallin' in love with 'em. There's always another one just as good or better to be had."

PHILIP hated Sir Humphrey Tarrant for that tight-lipped smile. He knew Sir Humphrey was amused by Lucky Jadwin's crudities. He knew the others, Guy and Jessica, thought of him and his father as some sort of barbarians.

"Your father's right, Philip," said Sir Humphrey, in his precise, clipped manner. "Horses are just horses."

"Not Betsy," said Philip grimly, his fingers clutching the mare's red mane. "She's a—a personality. A—a friend. She's. . . ."

"What awful rot, Jadwin!" drawled young Guy Tarrant.

Philip's lips closed tight. There was no use talking to them. No use trying to make them see.

"Don't worry, son," said Lucky, and gave him what was meant to be a kindly slap on the shoulder—a slap that staggered Philip. "You'll get the greatest kick of your life when the mare wins. She's a prime favorite in the books. Come along. It'll take us a while to get through this jam to our box." Lucky turned to Bowstrom. "Good luck, son. Give her the best ride you can."

Lucky didn't have a word for the horse—the horse he expected was going to bring him fame. Philip hung back, his fingers still clutching the mare's mane.

"I—I don't think I want to watch the race, father," he said. "I—I'd rather stay with Betsy till she's ready to go to the post."

"What?" Lucky was incredulous—almost angry.

"The lad's daft about her, Mr. Jadwin," said Danny Shane, in his kindly voice.

"Then he should be up there to see her run!" snapped Lucky. "Come, Philip. At once. We haven't much time."

Unashamedly Philip pressed his face against the mare's soft cheek for an instant. "Good luck, Betsy," he whispered. And then, with a lump in his throat that seemed to hurt and stretch the muscles, he turned away and followed his father.

Philip sat in front of the box, his fingers clutching the iron rail so hard they were blue. In a few moments now the horses would be coming to the post for the start of the greatest steeplechase in the world. Philip watched the preparations with his heart pounding against his ribs painfully. There were policemen stationed at each jump now, standing there stolidly in the rain. And as Danny had said, beside each one of them was a stretcher with a blanket folded in it, lying on the sodden turf. Each of the officers had a red and a yellow flag with which to signal his mates.

He saw the black motor ambulance moving out toward Becher's, a white-coated doctor sitting in back smoking a cigarette. He saw the horse ambulance, drawn by two great dray horses hitched tandem. He saw the men with ropes, somber figures waiting at Becher's for the inevitable spills.

Then Lucky's voice boomed at his side. "Here they come to the starting post. Boy, this is something, eh, Philip?"

Philip nodded dully.

"Some day you'll be owning horses yourself," said Lucky. "Then you'll know the real thrill of this, kid. I've waited ten years to own the winner

in this race. And by God, there she comes!"

Philip had long since singled out the blue and gold of Bowstrom's shirt. Betsy was walking calmly, without excitement. Bowstrom sat easily in the saddle, reins slack. Betsy never wasted her energy with antics at the start. They were spreading out across the track now, Betsy fifth from the rail. Other horses were champing, rearing, plunging with excitement. Betsy was still, her ears pricked back, waiting for word from Bowstrom. Philip felt little beads of clammy sweat on his forehead. It would all be over in about ten minutes.

"Oh God, please, *please* . . .!" Philip whispered. There was no use giving words to his prayer. If there was a God He would know.

And then the tape was up!

PHILIP sat congealed in his seat, hands gripping the rail. He heard Lucky's bull-throated shout over the thunderous roar of the crowd as the horses raced for the first jump. Betsy had broken fast from the tape, was a good half length in front of the field as they came tearing along in front of the stands. Bowstrom was following Danny's instructions to a T. He must either break in front or hang back so as not to be crowded. She sailed over the first obstacle with the rest of the pack thundering at her heels—so easy, so graceful. There was no tugging, no wild-eyed excitement on Betsy's part. She knew her job; was probably much cooler than Bowstrom. One horse did fall at that first jump and another unseated his rider, but Philip saw none of this. All he saw was Betsy, her usually bright flanks turned dark from the soaking rain.

On they went to the second jump with Betsy still leading, running easily. Again she sailed over, going well within herself, just enough in front of the field to be unmolested. And now Becher's . . . Becher's, where those somber men stood in the rain with ropes, waiting! Philip's teeth were biting into his lower lip. He could see those men—could see the horse ambulance with its crane glistening in the wet.

"Easy! Easy!" Philip breathed.

And then he saw something else. It was that riderless horse, running along the outside of the course, stirrups flapping, neck flecked with foam, eyes white rimmed—running like something possessed. Betsy was leading the way into Becher's, smooth as silk, ears pricked forward. Then Lucky Jadwin's voice boomed out—it seemed as if Bowstrom must hear it even out there.

"Look out!" Lucky shouted.

Betsy was just rising to the jump when the riderless horse, frenzied with excitement, crashed into her. A deep-throated roar went up from the crowd. Philip sat transfixed. He saw the purple and gold of Bowstrom's shirt hurtling through space. And he saw Betsy, curiously suspended over the middle of the jump.

It was a bad mess. Several horses ran out, refusing the jump. Several others crashed. But Betsy was still in sight—still grotesquely on top of the jump. Philip, horror coursing through his veins in icy waves, heard the voice of a man behind them.

"It's Bright Princess! She's caught on top of the fence! The rail's snapped and run clean up into her belly. Done for, of course."

"Betsy!" Choking, Philip was on his feet. Blindly, tears streaking his chalk white face, he started to climb the iron rail of the box. A hand with fingers of steel closed over his shoulder.

"Steady, kid." Lucky's voice was hard, emotionless.

Philip struggled despairingly to free himself from his father's grip. He heard the same voice of the spectator from behind.

"They'll have a job to get her out of there before the field comes round again."

Philip saw them—the men with ropes. He saw Betsy kicking feebly, impaled on the top of the jump. He saw a rope go round her neck—saw that long soft neck he had stroked so often stretched horribly. And then she crashed out of sight on the other side of the jump. The horse ambulance was already in place, the crane ready to drag her aboard.

"Betsy!" Unashamedly Philip was sobbing now—sobbing as if his heart would break. They were dragging her off the course. He wouldn't be able to hear the sound of the veterinarian's gun because of the noise the crowd was making. There was only one thing in the world Philip wanted, and that was to get to her. But Lucky's grip on his shoulder was unbreakable.

"It's lousy luck, kid," Lucky said. "But we'll have better luck next time. We'll win this damn thing yet!"

Next time! There was going to be no next time for Betsy!

A horse named Sprig was the winner of the Grand National in 1927. Philip didn't know it till nearly ten years later when he studied the records.

CHAPTER II

HALF A MILLION

PHILIP never saw the chestnut mare again. Somehow, blindly, he followed Lucky out of the stands after the race was over. They made their way to the stable where they found old Danny Shane sitting on a bale of hay, his gray eyes red-rimmed, his lips drawn hard and tight together. Philip had half hoped, half dreaded that they would bring Betsy back here, but they hadn't. Old Danny slid down off the bale and touched his fingers to his cap as they came up.

"That was terrible bad luck, sir," he said, studiously avoiding Philip's drawn, tragic young face. "That damned runaway. . ."

"Never mind, Shane," said Lucky cheerfully. "We'll find a horse that will cop this race for us yet. We'll win it if it costs us a million bucks. I've got my heart set on it."

"Yes, sir," said Shane quietly. His voice cracked a little, for Philip's fingers were clutching at his sleeve. With an effort he turned his eyes to look down at the boy.

"Danny—will they . . do they s-shoot them qui-quickly? Do they. . ."

Danny Shane's gnarled hand went around the boy's shoulders and held him firmly for an instant. "She won't have suffered much, lad," he said gently. "When they get hurt bad that way the shock of it . . . sort of numbs 'em. And the vet wasted no time with her, lad."

Lucky Jadwin had planned a celebration for that evening. It was not in him to change those plans, even though his horse had met with defeat. Lucky was going to show these English sportsmen that he could take a licking with the best of 'em. That had always been Lucky's creed: Show the same face when you lose as when you win. But Lucky had taken this beating harder than he usually did.

In the first place his heart had been set on a victory. But down underneath Lucky, who had gambled for millions

at unbelievably long odds, was a very superstitious man. If his horse had been outrun in the race he would have tossed it off lightly. But it wasn't that way this time. His luck had turned on him. It could be put down as nothing else but terrible luck when that riderless horse crashed into Betsy at Becher's. That had been a direct scowl from the gods of chance, and it disturbed Lucky.

Lucky had ordered gallons of champagne for his guests, but he did not like the stuff himself. Whisky and water was his dish—and he fortified himself with an alarming quantity of it before he went down to the hotel grill room to receive his party. Lucky knew he was in for a ride from these fellows. He had talked at length about the merits of his horse before the race, and nothing of Betsy's brief performance could detract from her glory. But he had talked a great deal more about his luck—the luck that had brought him from the position of a poverty stricken cow puncher to a position of great wealth and given him a reputation for being the luckiest gambler in the world of sport. Lucky was proud of that reputation and he didn't look forward to the kidding that he knew was coming his way.

The kidding came his way all right, but most of it was tempered with real sympathy for the unfortunate accident which had thrown Bright Princess out of the running. But there was nothing of sympathy in the attitude of Sir Humphrey Tarrant who sat at Lucky's right that evening. The tall, thin, ascetic-looking Englishman, immaculate in dinner coat, sipping his wine with the air of a connoisseur, smoking his scented Egyptian cigarettes in a long ivory holder, was far quicker than Lucky at delicately poisonous repartee. All night Lucky kept up the jovial manner for which he was famous, but underneath he was seething with cold anger.

"I don't suppose there is much in the way of *schools* in the American West," Tarrant had said, smiling that thin, twisted little smile of contempt. "You're a sort of legendary figure, you know, Jadwin. One wonders how much of what one hears of you is true, and how much a sort of national folk lore!" And later: "It takes more than a fat bank account to win the Grand National. It takes a keen knowledge of horses. Mind you, Jadwin, I don't say you wouldn't know a *sound* horse when you saw it. A fellow who's been a cowhand ought to know horses. But you have to be able to *feel* a good jumper when you see him. They can't be made . . . they're born. It takes luck. It takes a skillful rider."

"Don't worry," Lucky had said, still smiling, with his fists tightly clenched under the white linen of the table cloth. "I'll find the horse and the rider, Tarrant. And I'll be back in a year or two with the winner."

Tarrant smiled condescendingly. "You had the best chance you'll ever have today, I'm afraid. I'll wager you can try for another ten years and not come close."

Lucky's eyes were bloodshot, but they glittered now with the light of battle. "Wager?" he said softly. "Does that mean you'd like to place a bet, Tarrant?"

Tarrant's slanting eyes narrowed, and his lips curled upward in a faintly derisive expression. "I admire your confidence in yourself, Jadwin, but confidence won't win the Grand National."

Lucky leaned forward, his voice lowered. "I'll tell you what I'll do with you, Tarrant," he said. "Just before I

came over here I cleaned up a half a million bucks—dollars to you!—in a property deal. I hadn't decided how I'd reinvest it, see? Well, I'll invest it in myself, if you say the word. A half a million bucks I win the Grand National within the next ten years. Is *that* big enough to interest you, Sir Humphrey?" he concluded dryly.

SOMETHING of the color faded from Sir Humphrey Tarrant's face, leaving two little hectic spots on either cheekbone. He reached up and tugged at his mustache for an instant, and his pale eyes saw the challenging light in Lucky's eyes. They had been sparring all night, with Tarrant having all the best of it. Now Lucky had him. It was an absurd amount to bet on a horse race. A mad, ridiculous amount. Yet the Englishman's lips tightened. The chances of Lucky's producing a Grand National winner within ten years was slight. Millionaire horsemen had tried for years and failed. It was a crazy bet—yet it was one that Tarrant had an amazingly good chance to win. Tarrant's fingers shook slightly as he lit a fresh cigarette. "Done!" he said, very quietly.

"Now you're talking!" cried Lucky. He banged on the table for silence. "Gents, you are witnesses to perhaps the biggest bet ever made on a horse race. Sir Humphrey has just bet me a half million dollars I don't win this Grand National within the next ten years!"

A murmur went round the table. Somebody said: "Tarrant's gone off his trolley! Half a million!"

Tarrant sat at his place, still as a figure carved from stone. Lucky turned to him again. "I'll deposit my dough in any London bank you choose tomorrow. You do the same. The bank to pay over the money to the winner of the bet."

Tarrant moistened his thin blue lips. "It would be extremely awkward for me to tie up that much cash at the moment," he said. "I—"

"No ante, no bet!" said Lucky grimly.

"I was about to say," Tarrant cut in coolly, "that I will put up my Huntingdonshire estate as security."

"Mortgage the old homestead, eh?" This was Lucky's moment of triumph.

"I think you will find, upon investigation, that it is sufficient security," said Tarrant icily.

"Oh, it suits me," said Lucky. "We'll get a lawyer to draw up the terms of the bet tomorrow. This was almost worth losin' the race for!" he added.

"One point," said Tarrant. His eyes were chips of steel as he studied Lucky's flushed face. "Suppose something happens to you, Jadwin, before the term of the bet expires. What then? Do I automatically win?"

Lucky looked straight at the Englishman. "Not a chance," he said. "My kid'll stand back of this bet, and your family will have to do the same." Lucky laughed. "If we were betting a half million that I'd outlive you, that'd be different. And if you were putting up the cash, that'd be different. But your son'll have to fork over the security if you die and I win within the ten years. And if I die—and don't count on it, Tarrant—my kid's to have the right to carry out the terms of the bet. Agreed?"

Tarrant drew a deep breath. "Agreed!" he said, in his short, clipped fashion. Then he stood up and walked out of the grill room.

Lucky watched him go, silent for the moment. Then his booming laughter filled the room. "Kind of big time stuff for the old boy!" he said "First time

I made a big time bet like that I was sick as a dog for the next twelve hours. Waiter! More champagne—and another bottle of whisky for me!"

CHAPTER III

HUMAN INTEREST STORY

IT was early in an evening in the month of January of the year 1935. The place was the town of Fairleigh in Connecticut. Johnny Addison, bartender of the Bar-B-Q Tavern and filling station was idly cleaning glasses behind the bar. It was a dull evening for him. Weekday nights were always dull. On this particular evening he had had only one customer, the young man who sat in the corner having a brandy with his after dinner coffee. This young man was about twenty-four, not very tall, slim, wiry, bronzed, with a pair of very keen blue eyes. He had strong muscular hands—hands with long, sensitive fingers.

Johnny didn't know his name, though he was a sort of regular customer. From what Johnny had been able to gather in conversation this young man was just out of college about a year, and had a job tutoring the Bergstein kids up on the hill. A couple of brats those kids were, in Johnny's estimation. This young man, in his well cut tweeds, had the air of a gentleman—or whatever went to make up class in Johnny's imagination. Even if the tweeds were a little worn—even if it was clear that this young man didn't have much dough to throw around. He must be hard up, Johnny thought, if he'd take a job tutoring the Bergstein kids.

Johnny had tried once or twice to strike up a conversation with the young man, but it didn't take. Always very pleasant, the young man had a way of preserving his privacy without making a fellow sore. He always sat over there at the same table, smoking a pipe with his coffee and brandy.

Johnny had the radio going behind the bar that night. Some crooner was doing his stuff. Suddenly the singing ended. After a pause a voice came over the air, a voice charged with dynamite.

"You! And *you! And you!!* Have you tried Yellow Streak gasoline? Do you know that it is the quickest starting, most economical gas on the market? Do you know that in secret tests hundreds of drivers selected it over many higher priced gasolines. Have *you* tried Yellow Streak? You owe it to yourself—you owe it to your car. And now—we bring you Melvin Spratt with his human interest story of the day." There was a pause, and then a calmer and more cultivated voice came over the air.

"Good evening ladies and gentlemen. This is Melvin Spratt, your human interest reporter. Well, 1935 has started off with a bang. Prosperity seems no longer to be just around the corner—it is here! New York ushered in the new year with the biggest celebration since the pre-depression days of 1928. Everywhere people are looking brighter, business is improving, hopes are higher But tonight I find myself caught in a mesh of sadness, ladies and gentlemen, because a few hours ago I lost a friend.

"This friend had the biggest heart I ever knew, was the freest with money when he had it. He never turned down anyone in trouble. The bigness and warmth of his personality was something one seldom encounters in this world of ours. He had color, this friend of mine, a flare for the spectacular. Everything he did was news, and yet he never sought the spotlight. He knew everyone of any consequence in this

country and abroad, and numbered them as his friends. Headwaiters and bus boys and racetrack touts and jockeys and bookmakers and bartenders and bootblacks and bellhops knew him, and loved him, not only because he was always generous but because he was a man! It is with a heavy heart that I have to tell of his passing. The world will be a duller and colder place to live in, ladies and gentemen, without him.

"Lucky Jadwin is dead! That's the word that is being passed along Broadway tonight and over the length and breadth of the country. Lucky Jadwin is dead! Almost everybody has heard some story about Lucky Jadwin. Almost everybody has heard how he started in as a cowpuncher, grubstaked himself a piece of land in Texas, struck oil. Almost everybody has heard of his fantastic ventures in the business world. Almost everybody knew that he had a Midas touch that turned everything he handled into gold. But very few people know that for six or seven years Lucky has been on the ropes, caught in the maelstrom of the stock market crash of '29, wiped out. And therein lies the strangest story of all—for Lucky Jadwin has, deposited in a great bank in the City of London, a half million dollars in cash—a half million dollars which he cannot touch.

"IT was a nine days' wonder when it happened. Lucky Jadwin had his heart set on winning the Grand National, England's famous steeplechase. For ten years he had tried, and for ten years he had failed. And then he developed a horse called Bright Princess—a horse that went into the race a favorite. But Bright Princess didn't win. A runaway horse ran into her as she was leading the field and she crashed to destruction. Bright Princess had to be destroyed and Lucky Jadwin had lost his best chance to win the race. That same night Lucky made a bet. He bet a cool half million dollars that he would win the Grand National before another ten years rolled around. He deposited the money to cover his end of the bet in a London bank. There was no way he could ever touch that money again without winning the race—or in the event of his death, his son could retrieve this great fortune by winning within the allotted time.

"That was just a little less than nine years ago, and Lucky never came close. His great fortune was wiped out in the crash and it did something to Lucky. Lucky had endless faith in the gods of chance who had watched over him. That faith took a bad beating in 1929. Lucky has never seemed quite himself since. But he has had one overwhelming passion. To win the fabulous bet! I don't believe the money was the important thing to Lucky, although he sorely needed it. I think he wanted chiefly to restore his right to use the name his friends had always called him by—Lucky!

"Well, Lucky is dead. He died this afternoon on his Long Island farm. He died as he stood in the cold and slush in the paddock behind his barn, watching his groom try out a horse he had just bought—a jumper! He must have been keen when he went out there. His heart must have beaten a little faster. Had he come to the end of the trail? Had he at last found the horse that might successfully carry his colors to victory in the famous steeplechase and bring a million dollars back into his bank account?

"Lucky never saw that horse jump. The groom had just turned the horse to head him for the jump when he saw

Lucky down—down in the cold muddy sleet. It was his heart. And so Lucky came to the end of the . . . ."

Johnny the bartender in the little inn at Fairleigh didn't hear any more because the young gentleman had come across to the bar—the young gentleman in the shabby tweeds.

"Have you a timetable for New York?" the young man asked. "I've got to leave here at once."

"Sure," said the bartender. Then he looked at the young man. "Hey, are you sick, mister?" he asked with concern. The young man's face was the color of ashes His teeth were clenched on the stem of the pipe which had long since gone out. His voice had a dull, metallic sound to it.

"You better have another brandy," the bartender said. "What's wrong?"

The young man was gripping the front of the bar. "I've got to get to town at once," he said, "Because, you see, Lucky Jadwin. . . ." His voice trailed off as the bartender handed him a timetable.

"What about Lucky Jadwin?" the bartender persisted.

The young man looked up from the timetable. "He was my father," he said simply.

MARK CRAVEN had been Lucky Jadwin's lawyer for thirty years, and it had been an exciting job. As he looked across his desk at Philip Jadwin, Craven felt acutely conscious of his own age. Unconsciously he pressed a finger into his rather paunchy stomach. Once it had been flat and hard like Philip's. Once his face had been unlined, bronzed. Not that his face didn't have character, Craven thought. He had been through plenty—had lived. He never thought of himself as old. But Philip, so clean-limbed, so clear-cut, made him conscious of the passage of time—for he had been present on the occasion of Philip's birth—had been soothing Lucky Jadwin who seemed quite certain that he, Lucky, was going to die!

Craven leaned back in his swivel chair. His cigar was going evenly. He heaved a long sigh. "Well, Philip?" he said.

"Well, sir." Lucky had been buried a week ago. The time had come for Philip to find out just where he stood.

"It's bad," said Craven. "Very bad, Philip. You know, everybody loved Lucky He had endless credit with everyone, but now that he's gone I'm afraid sentiment is dead. The vultures will want to divide the remains."

Philip smiled very faintly. "Are there any remains, sir?"

"Not much. There's the Long Island place. He managed to hang onto that—paid taxes by renting it every summer. But it won't take care of a third of his debts. There are his horses, I understand he has about fifteen jumpers up at the farm where he's been living. You'll know more about the worth of 'em than I do."

"I had a talk with old Danny Shane this morning," said Philip. "He thinks we'll be lucky to get ten thousand for the lot of them. They're worth more, but this isn't the best season of the year to sell."

"That's about all," said Craven. "There's his car—worth a few hundred. He never went in for jewelry. I should say Lucky owed roughly in the neighborhood of a hundred and fifty thousand. We'll do well to realize half that on all his possessions. And that, Philip, leaves you with nothing!"

"Rather staggeringly less than nothing," said Philip grimly. "I have about five hundred dollars in the bank, and

that's that. Of course I shall have to find a way to pay off the balance of Lucky's indebtedness . . . sometime . . . somehow!"

Craven studied the end of his cigar. "Of course you will. But it's your immediate future that concerns me, Philip. What are you going to do?"

Philip Shrugged. "I haven't had much chance to think, sir. Jobs don't grow on bushes these days. There are a million young men with college educations looking for work. This job in Connecticut has just been a stop-gap. I shall quit it because I'll never pay off seventy-five grand earning twenty-five dollars a week and board!"

Craven's eyes narrowed. "Of course, Philip," he said evenly, "there *is* that bet. If you could win it—and you have two more chances. . . ."

Philip's blue eyes hardened. "That's out, sir. Definitely out. I—I have been dodging that bet for the last nine years of my life. Everywhere I go people ask me about it. Poor Lucky—it had him off his head at the end. Well, Grand National winners don't grow on bushes. And if they did, I couldn't finance such a business."

"You might get someone to back you, with a million dollars in the kitty," said Craven.

Philip shook his head decisively. "That's out, sir. I guess I'm a bit shell shocked about the whole notion of the Grand National. Lucky and old Danny Shane have spent nine years trying to pick a winner and failed. It drove Lucky to his grave. Well, I'm going to write it off the books.

"It's a damned shame," said Craven. "That money ought to be yours. It was a crazy bet."

Philip tamped the tobacco down in his pipe. "If Lucky hadn't made that bet, sir, he'd have lost the money in the stock crash. It's six of one and a half dozen of the other. But let's forget about Grand Nationals."

Craven sighed and leaned forward. "All right, son. And now I must confess I've been holding something out on you. But I had to make certain about your stand on the bet."

"Holding out?"

Craven nodded, and pressed a button on his desk. "The day Lucky died young Guy Tarrant took a boat from England. He came directly to see me. He's in the outer office now. He has a proposition to make you."

PHILIP stood up abruptly. He felt a faint cold chill of anger run along his spine. Guy Tarrant. He remembered him as a supercilious youngster who had been mockingly amused at Philip on the day that Bright Princess died. The thought of seeing him was distasteful to Philip. But it was too late to do anything about it. Already Craven's secretary was ushering Guy Tarrant into the office.

"Hello, Jadwin!" said the Englishman.

Philip nodded curtly. Guy Tarrant, tall, dark, undeniably handsome, had that same, thin-lipped sardonic expression that Philip remembered about Sir Humphrey. Guy Tarrant was remarkably like his father . . . arrogant, cool as ice.

"I haven't told Philip about your proposition, Mr. Tarrant," Craven said. "However, he assures me that he had no intention of competing for the bet. I suggest you tell him what you have in mind."

Tarrant sat down with calm insolence on the edge of Craven's desk. "It's quite simple," he drawled. "I'll put my cards on the table with you; we're dashed hard up for money. My father

needs cash to put into his business . . . needs it badly. Ordinarily we could raise money against our property holdings, but our property is up as security on this confounded bet. Of course we knew your father would never give up as long as he lived. But we'd heard"—and somehow Guy Tarrant managed to make this sound exceptionally nasty—"that you weren't interested in carrying on. That you hadn't much stomach for trying the Grand National."

"Well?" Philip's voice was frigid.

"Well, we need that money, Jadwin. Under the terms of the agreement we'll have to wait about a year and a half to get it. However, if you're not going to compete, it occurred to us you might dissolve the bet . . . for a consideration, of course."

"What sort of a consideration?" Philip asked.

"Why, a slice of cash, of course!" said Tarrant. "We've heard that Lucky wasn't so—er—lucky of late, eh? You'll be anxious to clear his name, I suppose. How much would it take?"

Craven broke in. "Here it is in a nutshell, Philip. If you'll dissolve the bet I think Mr. Tarrant will hand over enough money to pay off all Lucky's debts and give you a bit of a background to start on. If you're sure about the bet—"

"Oh, I'm sure about the bet," said Philip. He was struggling with himself. Of course this was a heaven-sent opportunity, yet somewhere, deep down in him, was a curious stubbornness. He hated to do anything that would be a favor to Guy Tarrant. Yet, what was he thinking of? It would take him years to earn the money to settle up Lucky's estate. But he wanted nothing for himself from Tarrant—not one thin dime.

"I'll agree," he said slowly. "Lucky's property is to be auctioned tomorrow. After that we'll know just what it will take to clear Lucky. I'll settle for that amount."

"And something for yourself," said Craven quickly.

"Nothing for myself," Philip said stiffly.

Tarrant smiled, that little twisted smile that was so like his father's. "Of course you're getting a frightfully good break, Jadwin. If we weren't in such a devilish hole we'd—"

"Settle things with Mr. Craven," said Philip. "I suppose there'll be papers to sign?"

"In a day or two," said Craven.

"Then good morning."

Philip wanted to get out of there. He didn't want to be in the same room with Guy Tarrant. He understood now something of the stinging fury that must have lured Lucky into his fantastic bet with Sir Humphrey. Something about the Tarrants—something that made you want to turn the screws. . . .

CHAPTER IV

SEVENTY GRAND PUNCH

PHILIP, the brim of his hat pulled down over his face, his coat collar turned up high, leaned against the rail of the paddock—the paddock where Lucky Jadwin had died. It was a cold, raw day, but it hadn't kept away the crowd. Horsemen of every type and description were there, from members of the social register down to fifth-rate dealers. There were fifteen horses to be auctioned—all of them horses of quality that Lucky had purchased in the hope of finding a Grand National competitor. Lucky's hopes—going under the auctioneer's hammer.

A gnarled old man with a weather-beaten face stood beside Philip, a straw

between his lips, a look of tragedy in his gray eyes. It was Danny Shane, who had always been in charge of Lucky's stable.

"The finest string of jumpers I ever saw," said old Danny. "All of 'em first rate of a kind. But that's a terrible race, lad, the Grand National. Four miles. Four miles and five hundred and eighty-six yards, to be exact. There ain't many horses has the guts for that."

"Guaranteed sound of wind and limb, gentlemen!" the auctioneer was shouting. "From Virginia, this one. He can jump anything in sight. Kid broke! Anyone can handle him! You can take him out and hunt him tomorrow. That goes for all these horses! They're in condition—ready to go. Well, what am I offered?"

Philip's teeth were clenched tight over the stem of his pipe. "I'm glad I steered clear of all this, Danny," he said. "You know what a sucker I am about horses. Once I've been around 'em—well, they're like human beings to me. I can't bear to have 'em go."

Old Danny's eyes were fixed straight ahead of him.

"Me, too," he said.

Philip looked at him sharply. Old Danny was a horseman. You didn't expect to find an old-timer feeling that way. That's why Danny had understood so well how he felt that rain-swept day in Liverpool, nine years ago.

"I have eleven hundred and fifty, gentlemen!" the auctioneer's sharp voice was shouting. "Who'll make it sixty? Who'll make it eleven sixty? Sound, true, wind guaranteed! Do I hear eleven sixty?"

"I've coddled all of 'em," old Danny said, "like they was kids. I know all their tricks and habits, I know their dispositions inside out. And hell, they've all give their best, even if they wasn't what Mr. Jadwin was lookin' for. I sure hate to see 'em go."

"Sold—for eleven fifty! Bring in the next one, Pete!" The auctioneer wiped the sweat from his forehead and took a drink of water.

"They're bringing a little better than I expected," said Philip.

DANNY didn't answer. Danny was looking at the horse which was being led into the circle. He was a big gray, a little over sixteen hands high. Philip saw the powerful chest and sloping shoulders, the perfectly sloped pasterns, the rangy, well knit body. But there perfection ended. The horse had a serious blemish on his nose. A huge raw bump that stuck up just above his nostrils.

"Gentlemen, listen!" The auctioneer's voice was confidential. "This is the one horse we're putting up today that we don't unqualifiedly guarantee. He was badly kicked in the nose when he was being trucked here from Virginia about six months ago. It started some sort of growth. Lucky Jadwin had the best veterinary in the country operate on him, but it wasn't successful. You can see for yourselves that in every other respect he's perfect. He's just seven years old—at his prime for jumping. But we don't guarantee him."

"I should think not!" said a man standing near Philip. "That growth probably goes in as well as out. Nasal passages are probably obstructed."

Old Danny Shane looked grim. "The sweetest dispositioned horse I ever saw," he said. "It's a crime about that bump—but it don't grow down. That I'll swear to."

"Can he jump?" Philip asked idly.

"Don't know much about him—except what I *feel!*" said Danny. "We weren't able to put a bridle on him for

a long time and Lucky—er, your father kind of lost interest in him. By God, I'd give my eyeteeth to own him. He'll go cheap, too, but more than I could stand."

"A hundred dollars!" somebody called in the crowd.

Danny gritted his teeth. "A hundred dollars! God! The sweetest horse you ever stepped in a stall with. He'll go to one of them damned livery stable boys and be hacked to death. What I wouldn't give for a little cash. I got a hunch I could smooth that bump off. He'd be worth money then. I'd find a decent home for him."

"A hundred and ten!" said another voice.

Philip fumbled in his pocket for a match and lit his pipe. His fingers weren't quite steady. A crazy, quixotic notion had occurred to him. This day had brought back poignant memories—memories of Liverpool in the rain. Memories of Bright Princess, her warm muzzle thrust against his neck. Memories of her tragic end and his own heartbreak. Memories of Danny's sympathy and understanding—Danny, the only one who understood how he felt that day. Betsy had been his friend. Now Danny was seeing a horse about which he felt as Philip had felt, going down the river.

The bidding had gone up to a hundred and sixty-five. Slow going at that. None of the real horse-owners were bidding. The cheap dealers were wrangling over the only horse that would come within their range.

"Where would you keep him if you had him, Danny?" Philip asked casually.

"My sister's farm in Connecticut. That's where I'm going when things is cleaned up here. But," and he sighed, "there's the little matter of money."

"I have a hundred and sixty-five," droned the auctioneer. "Do I hear seventy-five? It's dirt cheap for this horse. Do I hear seventy-five?"

Philip drew a deep breath. "Here!" he said.

Danny jumped as if he'd been shot. "Mr. Philip! You—you ain't? . . ."

Philip's smile was a little tight at the corners. "Lucky would have wanted it that way, Danny. If you like that horse we're going to get him for you!"

"But Mr. Philip—the money! I—I know how you're fixed!"

"Nonsense, Danny. I'm fixed all right. And it'll just be a loan. When you've got the horse straightened out and can sell him, why, then you'll pay me back."

Old Danny began to shake. "That I will, Mr. Philip!"

"Eighty-five!" someone said in a bored voice.

"Do I hear ninety-five? Do I hear ninety-five?"

Philip laughed. Five hundred dollars—a little less than that—was his entire capital. This was madness—and yet as he saw the almost fanatically eager light in old Danny's eyes—saw the hope there—he knew the die was cast. He raised his hand again. "Here!"

It went on, up and up by fives and tens. Philip had an insane desire to burst into laughter.

"Two hundred sixty-five!" he heard himself say.

And finally the horse was his. Two hundred and eighty-five dollars! Old Danny went shoving his way through the crowd as if he'd lost his mind. "I'll take him!" he was shouting.

One of the auctioneer's men was approaching Philip. "Your name, sir?"

"Jadwin. Philip Jadwin."

The man looked up sharply. "Gee, Mr. Jadwin, do you think that horse—

are you planning to enter him in the—are you? . . ." Breathless!

Philip laughed. "You've probably read I'm not competing for the famous bet. It's true. I was simply bidding for a friend."

OUTSIDE the hotel where Philip Jadwin had taken a room on lower Fifth Avenue, a low-hung canary-yellow Packard roadster was parked the next morning about noon. Behind the wheel sat a girl—a girl in a bright green coat, bright green hat, and a silver fox fur at her throat. A wisp of red hair peeped out from the brim of the rakish hat. She had a little turned-up nose and very merry hazel eyes. Nobody could have described her as a beauty—yet no one would have failed to look at her twice.

Shortly after twelve Philip Jadwin came out of the hotel's revolving door and headed uptown. The girl leaned forward.

"Hey!" she said.

Philip, evidently engrossed in his own thoughts, hadn't noticed her till she spoke. He came over to the curb. "What are you doing here?" he said, frowning.

"Sleuthing!" said the girl. "Been on your trail for two days, Philip. Now I've got you. Get in." She opened the door of the Packard.

"Look, Connie," he said. "I've got to—"

"Get in!" It was an imperious command.

Very slowly Philip's lips parted in a smile—the first natural smile he had contrived since Lucky's death. His blue eyes softened.

"You're such an ass, Connie," he said. But he got in the car.

"I like that!" she protested. "I wear myself to a frazzle trying to find you because I have the key to your destiny in my pocket. And you call me names."

Philip leaned back in the seat and fumbled for his pipe. He suddenly realized that he had been at the breaking point for days. He felt relaxed now and very content.

"What does the key to my destiny fit?" he asked.

"You're going to be a writer," she said airily.

She started the motor and pulled the car away from the curb.

"They laughed when I sat down at the typewriter," Philip said. "What's the gag?"

"You'll find out soon enough," said Connie Heath. "We're lunching at Tony's with Tony."

"You mean I'm to type his menus for him?" Philip asked.

"Idiot. We're not lunching with Tony who owns the joint. We're lunching with Tony Brent, the book publisher."

"Who loves you," said Philip.

"Precisely," she said calmly. "So he'll do anything I say."

"Fascinating." Philip cupped his hands around the match he held to the bowl of his pipe. "And what has that to do with my destiny?"

"Tony is going to publish a biography of Lucky Jadwin," said the girl, looking straight ahead. "You're going to write it. It'll probably make millions."

PHILIP looked at her sharply. She was evidently quite serious. "Look, darling," he said, "I've spent three days turning down every newspaper syndicate in the country. They all want the story of Lucky's life. Lucky wouldn't like that kind of publicity."

"But this will be a dignified biography," said the girl. "Lucky was a figure—a part of a great age. Thousands of

people will want to know about him. It's a natural."

"I'm not a writer," Philip pointed out.

"But you know Lucky better than anyone in the world. That's what counts. Tony will give you an advance to write the book, so we can get married, and that will be that!" It was said quite flippantly, but her eyes were fixed with a peculiar intensity on the street ahead of her.

Philip looked at her and the hard light had come back into his eyes. "Listen, Connie, there's no use pretending. It's simply out. I have about two hundred dollars in the world and no prospects. God knows when I will have anything. I can't marry Jasper Heath's daughter, no matter how much I love her. The whole town would be screaming 'fortune hunter'—saying I couldn't take it."

"Has it ever occurred to you," she asked, a sudden edge to her voice, "that my happiness might have something to do with this? You won't marry me because of your pride, no matter how much it may hurt me."

"That's it," he said, rather grimly.

"Then I'll just have to wait," she said, with a little sigh.

"You'd be a fool, Connie," he said sharply. "Everything's muddled up in my life. I've never learned any profession or any business. All I know is horses."

"You could be a groom somewhere and I'd be a lady's maid," she said. "It would be fun, Phil."

"Don't kid about it, Connie," he said.

"You'd rather have me kid than disgrace you by bawling in the middle of Fifth Avenue, wouldn't you?" she said, rather sharply. "You're such a pig-headed idiot, my darling."

"You should marry a chap like Brent. Somebody who's set—knows where he's going."

"I shall always cherish your advice, Mr. Jadwin—my poor fool!"

The car turned into a side street and pulled up in front of Tony's. "I think I'll skip this luncheon," said Philip.

"You skip nothing, my lad. Tony's paying for this party."

"I suppose you arranged that beforehand," he said, almost bitterly.

"I did," she said calmly, "when I promised I'd get you to write your book for him instead of someone else. And if you don't come into this restaurant at once, my angel, I shall throw a fit right in the middle of the sidewalk!"

RELUCTANTLY Philip went into the restaurant with her. Tony's was a popular hangout for many people he knew. Philip wanted to avoid people. They all asked him the same question. "Are you going to try and win the bet your father made?" He was weary with explaining that he wasn't, and why.

Brent, the young publisher, was already there and took them directly to a corner table before anyone else could waylay Philip. Cocktails were ordered. "I've already arranged about lunch," said Brent. "I hope you'll like it."

"Stop being polite and get down to business," said Connie. "Tell my fat-headed friend here what you have in store for him."

Brent smiled. "It's simple enough, Jadwin. We want a biography of your father. You're the only person who can do an authentic job."

"But I'm not a writer," Philip protested.

"I don't think that will matter too much. A simple story of his life with the anecdotes you remember about him. I don't see how it can miss. Connie

tells me you're—ah, well, broke—to be blunt! We're not a rich firm, Jadwin, but we'll advance you a hundred a month to live on—say for six months—while you're writing it. We'd like to have it ready for our fall list."

"Listen," said Philip ominously, "if you're just giving me a break on Connie's account—"

"Don't be a damned fool," said Brent sharply. "Any publisher in town will tell you it's a natural. Frankly, I asked Connie to approach you."

Philip leaned back in his chair, frowning. There was no reason why he couldn't do this. It wasn't the sensational sort of thing the papers wanted. Lucky *had* been a colorful figure, and there was no reason why he, Philip, couldn't write a simple account of his life. He leaned forward and was about to speak when he heard a voice—a voice that grated harshly on his nerves.

"So the bet's off!" said the voice, short, clipped, sardonic. "After all, when Jadwin came to me—begged me to dissolve the bet and let him have enough money to pay his father's debts—well, what could I do?"

Guy Tarrant! He was sitting directly behind Philip.

"Of course it was a sporting proposition to us—purely and simply. The old man would never have come crawling—but I guess the son is cut out of a different bolt of cloth."

Philip's chair clattered loudly as it fell. He had stood up so quickly that it went over backwards. He turned to confront Guy Tarrant who was talking to a man—a man whom Philip had never seen before. Philip's face was dead white.

"So I came crawling to you and asked to be let out of the bet?" he said, in a low, menacing voice.

For once the famous Tarrant contempt was slightly ruffled. Tarrant stood up. "I say, Jadwin!" Something in Philip's eyes must have frightened him. He looked around like a cornered animal.

"*I* came to *you!*" Philip's voice swelled louder. "Why, you squirming little heel!" Philip's right fist shot out and caught Tarrant flush on the mouth. Tarrant went down in a heap, blood trickling from his lips. Philip leaned over and jerked him to his feet. His voice trembled with anger when he spoke. "Now you can wait for your money, Tarrant! And get out of here if you don't want me to flatten you again."

Tarrant staggered off unsteadily toward the coat room.

"Nice going," said Connie Heath at Philip's elbow.

Philip turned, looked at her a little dazedly. Then he sat down. "That's torn it!" he said. "That wallop cost me just seventy thousand dollars."

"It looked as though it might have been worth it!" said Brent calmly.

CHAPTER V

BAD BILL

DANNY SHANE had the big gray horse cross-tied on the barn floor at his sister's farm in Connecticut. Danny was working on him—grooming him, as he worked he kept talking in a low crooning voice.

"Stand still, ye black-hearted devil," said Danny, with love in his voice. "How'll I clean the dirt out of your filthy carcass less'n you stand still? I'm asking you that, Bill!"

The horse's ears were cocked forward, listening. Danny had curried him, Danny had brushed him, and now he was going over him with a cloth. "So your nasal passages is blocked off.

eh? Well, ye'll breathe if I have to ram red-hot pokers into ye!" Danny's hands were as gentle as if he had been caressing a small child. The horse's coat shone like silk. A sponge cleaned out the corners of his eyes. And now Danny had an old coffee can filled with a mixture of pine tar and sperm oil which he painted on the gray's hoofs with a small brush.

Danny finished his job. Then he went to a shelf and got himself a jar of vaseline and went to the gray's head. The nasty raw gash on his nose looked slightly better than it had two weeks ago at the sale.

"Maybe we'll not take this bump off'n you, William, but we'll grow hair on it, or my name's Aloysius Prendergast!"

The first days the horse had tossed his head and attempted to pull away when Danny worked on his injury. Now he held it still—submitted to the gentle rubbing without protest. He even fumbled at one of the buttons on Danny's sweater with his lips.

"Stay away from that, ye son of evil!" Danny grumbled. But he made no quick gesture, and his fingers were gentle as he pushed the big gelding's nose away. "There ye are—shinin' like a mirror and ready to go places. And soon we'll be knowin' just how you can go, m'lad."

"Nice looking horse." A strange voice.

Danny turned to face a square chunk of a man, dressed in a dark blue overcoat and wearing a derby hat. Eyes too close together, a hard mouth, Danny thought.

"He is that," said Danny.

"My car seems to have boiled over," said the stranger. "I was wondering if I could borrow some water."

Danny pointed to a full pail in the corner. "Help yourself," he invited. But the man ignored the water.

"What's his name?" he asked.

Danny's hand was stroking the horse's neck. "Well, his right name's Gray Dawn, but I calls him Bill—Bad Bill!"

The stranger's eyes widened. "Gray Dawn! Wasn't that one of Lucky Jadwin's string that went at auction?"

Danny Shane was always talking about *feel*. "When I look at a horse I can *feel* whether he's sound or not," he used to say. "If I *feel* there's somethin' wrong with him, then I set out with my brains to find out what it is." Danny looked at the stranger, and suddenly all his senses warned him that there was something wrong here. The stranger didn't *feel* right to Danny.

"Yes," he said slowly, "this was one of Lucky Jadwin's string."

"You buy him?" asked the stranger.

Caution and honesty were struggling in Danny. "Well, yes and no," he said.

The stranger offered Danny a cigar, and when Danny refused he lit one himself. Then he struck his hand against his thigh. "By God, I've got it!" he said. "This is the horse young Jadwin bought himself. I read about it in the papers. They said he claimed he was just buying the horse for his father's old groom. Say, are you Danny Shane?"

"That's right," said Danny grimly. The stranger *felt* very bad to him now. He knew too much—remembered things too easily. His eyes were alight now with interest—yet Danny mistrusted him.

"Is it true Jadwin is really figuring on entering this horse in the Grand National next year? They say around town his rich friends lay off the bidding on this horse so he could buy him in cheap. Anything to it?"

Danny's lips tightened. "The only one as knows anythin' about Mr. Jadwin's plans is Mr. Jadwin," he said pointedly.

"Oh, no offense meant," said the man. "But I was wondering if Jadwin meant to run him, or if he might be for sale. I've been interested in buying a jumper for my wife. I thought maybe—"

"Bill ain't for sale," said Danny sharply. "And now, if you'll excuse me, I'll be puttin' him back in his stall."

"Well, maybe I'll see you again," said the stranger. And he walked off.

Danny's fingers rubbed the gray horse's cheek. "It's funny, Bill, but he forgot the water he was so anxious for," he said.

"I DON'T like it," said Danny, shaking his grizzled head. "I don't like it." He was sitting by the stove in his sister's kitchen, smoking a stubby clay pipe.

"And what is it ye don't like, Daniel?" asked Mrs. Weston, his widowed sister. She was ironing one of his shirts.

"His car boiled over, he said," Danny muttered. "And then he's that glib with questions. 'Isn't this Mr. Jadwin's horse,' he asks. 'Ain't you Danny Shane?' he asks. And then he forgets his water."

"Maybe he's like you," said Mrs. Weston dryly. "Maybe he gets moonstruck at the sight of a fancy piece of horseflesh."

"Not him," said Danny. "There was nothin' moonstruck about him. He knew what he was tryin' to do—which was to pump information out of me. But that ain't the worst of it!"

"It don't none of it sound very terrible yet, Daniel," said Mrs. Weston placidly.

"I ride Bill down the lane this afternoon and head him over a fence or two! Lord, he's a grand horse, Lucy. A little schoolin'—a little competition—and—"

"So what happened down the lane?" said Mrs. Weston, knowing that when Danny got off on a rhapsody about the gray horse he'd never get back to the point.

"Well, I head Bill over a fence or two—and just as I'm startin' back who do I see sittin' on the hillside but this stranger. He's been watchin' the workout!"

"I see nothin' so dreadful in that, Daniel. He talked of buyin' the horse for his wife, didn't he?"

"Yes, he *talked* of it!" said Danny, shaking his head.

PHILIP JADWIN read the post card and chuckled.

DEAR MISTER PHILIP:

Hoping this fines you well as it leeves me. I was wondering if you couldn't come up to the farm for a day. There is some things I'd like to talk to you about importantly. And mostly I would like you to see the gray horse.

Very sincerely your old friend,

DANIEL SHANE.

As he slipped the post card in his pocket the doorbell rang. Philip had found himself a little one room apartment in Greenwich Village, four flights up. This was the street doorbell. He pressed the buzzer that would unlock it. A few minutes later there was a knock at the apartment door.

"Don't tell me this isn't maidenly of me," said Connie Heath, when Philip discovered her standing in the hallway. "You won't put in a telephone! And you won't call me from outside."

"I can't afford a phone," he said, "and I haven't called you because I've been trying to earn the money your friend Brent is giving me to live on."

"How goes the great work?" Connie asked.

"Wonderful!" said Philip dryly. "I write; *Lucky Jadwin, a biography by Philip Jadwin.* No good. I try again. *Lucky Jadwin, His Life and Times, by Philip Jadwin.* No good. Then I try *The Life of Lucky Jadwin, by Philip Jadwin.* Then I write *nuts* a great many times and go soak my head in the wash basin."

"It sounds perfect," said Connie. "Since you've been working so hard you clearly need an outing. I've brought the car. We're going places."

"No can do. I have to work."

"You're going places with me," said Connie severely, "or I'll tell your publisher you haven't written a line."

"That's blackmail!" said Philip.

"Sue me!" said Connie.

Philip sighed. "Okay, Boss. But if you really want to take me places in the car, how about driving me up to Danny Shane's farm in Connecticut? The old boy has something on his mind. I'd like to find out exactly what."

"Done!"

IT was a clear day, warm for that time of year. It took them about two hours to reach the farm, and as they drove into the yard Danny came running from the barn, a grin splitting his face from ear to ear.

"I had a feelin' you'd be comin' soon," he said. "And it's a pleasure to see you, too, Miss Heath. I was just goin' over the horse, Mr. Philip. You'll be wantin' to have a look at him."

They went down to the barn and the big gray was tied out on the floor as he had been on the day of the stranger's visit. Philip Jadwin had an eye for horses—he had been brought up with them. He walked around the horse in silence for a moment. His eyes had a bright look to them as he turned to Danny.

"He's fine, Danny—all but that nose of his."

"It don't improve his looks none," said Danny, "but it don't harm him a mite. You must ride him, Mr. Philip. You never sat a horse like him over a jump. He's a rockin' chair on legs. And he'll go forever without drawin' a deep breath."

"If you can clear up that bump, Danny, he should bring a fat price," said Philip.

Danny frowned. "It's about sellin' him, in a manner of speakin', I wanted to see you," he said. And then he launched into the story of the interested stranger, and his scouting expedition. "But that's not the end of it. The next day he comes, offers me four hundred for the horse. Says he knows we paid two eighty-five for him, that it cost somethin' to truck him up here and keep and that we have a right to a profit. I took the liberty of turnin' him down, Mr. Philip."

"He's your horse, Danny. It was no liberty."

"He's your horse till I buy him," said Danny grimly. "Well, this fellow keeps boostin' the price till he gets it up to seven fifty. Then he goes away—but he's out in the field watchin' me when I rode him that afternoon. I tell you, I don't like it, Mr. Philip."

"He's just interested in the horse," said Philip. "I don't blame him."

"There's more to it than that, Mr. Philip. I *feel* it!"

Philip laughed. Danny had been *feeling* things ever since he could remember.

"But I want you to ride him," Danny said eagerly. "I want you to see what a horse he is."

Philip looked a little wistfully at the

big gray. He had ridden all his life. He'd like to try him.

"I've laid out a little course down the lane and around the meadow," said Danny. "Six jumps. It's just about a mile and you can take him over it hard and he won't turn a hair."

Philip reached out his hand to the horse. "Want to go places, Bill?"

Bill reached out and nibbled gently at Philip's fingers.

"Put a saddle on him, Danny," said Philip. He turned to Connie. "Mind? I won't be a minute."

"I'm crazy to see him go, Philip," she said.

A FEW moments later Danny led the gray out and Philip swung up into the saddle.

"He's got a mouth like a baby," crooned Danny. "You can ride him right up in your fingers—but I don't have to tell you that! And you don't have to rush him at the jumps. He takes his own time, and he won't let you down. Just keep him at the middle of the fences!"

Philip rode off slowly down the lane. The instant he was in the saddle he knew that the gray was all horse under him. He was quiet, easy, but gave the sense of being tremendously powerful. Philip eased him into a slow trot. From the top of a rise he could see Danny's jumping layout. A couple of rail fences, three stone walls, and a ditch with some evergreens growing in front of it.

And then, as they moved slowly toward the first jump Philip saw a man, squatting on the hillside that bordered the little course. A man in derby hat who had a pair of field glasses focussed on the horse and rider. Philip's jaw muscles tightened. Suddenly this man *felt* wrong to *him*. Just as wrong as he'd felt to Danny Shane.

"Bill," he said softly, "maybe we'll have some fun. Let's go, boy."

As he picked up the reins the big gray broke into a long ground-eating canter. It wasn't a gallop, but he was moving very fast. Philip felt his heart start to beat a little more rapidly. If this fellow really opened up! . . .

They were coming to the first jump, with Philip well forward in the saddle, his hands down. He was going to let the horse do his own jumping, and for an instant he thought he had made a mistake, for Bill took off way back from the jump.

But only for an instant was Philip in doubt.

The gray sailed—literally sailed through space. Philip had never felt anything like it under him. And when Bill landed there was no jar. He seemed to be already under way when his feet touched the ground. He didn't acclerate his pace, didn't start racing—just bore down on the next jump. Philip felt a sudden wave of unadulterated joy sweep over him. This was tops! He had ridden hundreds of jumpers, but this gray! . . . Over the second jump—a rail fence—Bill surged in a sort of power dive. Philip reached out and stroked his neck, pulling him down gently.

"Now we'll see if you can really jump, old fella, or if you've just learned this course by heart!" he said.

Separating the hillside where the stranger squatted from Danny's little course was a stiff, five-foot fence. As Philip swerved the gray off the course the big horse didn't fight, as horses will who are used to a routine. He headed straight for the five-foot barrier without faltering. It seemed as if he conveyed to Philip his own pleasure at the novelty of this new jump. Once again he took off from far back and seemed

to soar straight up like a rocket—only to drop gently on the other side. A perfect jump.

But Philip was concentrating on the stranger now—for the man acted strangely. He had turned and was running toward the highway at the other end of the field. Surely an innocent watcher wouldn't turn tail and run.

"Let's get him, Bill!"

A frown etched itself deeply across Philip's brow, and his eyes were glinting pinpoints of anger. He dug his heels lightly into the big gray's flanks and gave a little flick to the reins.

Gently Philip touched the gray with his heels. They had been moving fast. Suddenly they were flying. The stranger looked grotesque—as if he were running in place. It was a matter of seconds before Philip pulled up beside him and swung out of the saddle.

"Stand!" he said sharply to the horse. He didn't really expect anything but to see the gray horse head for the barn. But he stood like a statue. Philip's fingers had caught the stranger by the back of the collar and now he spun him around.

"Well, I'll be damned!" said Philip slowly.

The stranger was the man who had been lunching with Tarrant that day at Tony's.

"All right, my fine friend," said Philip grimly. "What's the game? Why did Tarrant send you here?"

"I don't know what you're talking about," said the man. He was breathing hard.

Philip sighed. "Perhaps you'll recall that I don't play when I sock somebody. I'll give you just five seconds to start talking—or I start punching."

The man shrugged. "Okay, okay, pal!" he said. "I was sent here to find out if you owned this horse, and if you did, to find out if he was any good. If possible I was to buy him."

"Why?" snapped Philip.

The man laughed, a short, mirthless laugh. "It would be an awful headache for the Tarrants if you were to enter a horse with a real chance in one of the next two Grand Nationals," he said.

At that instant Philip felt the big gray horse's nose pressed against his arm. Instinctively he reached out and stroked the long, arched neck. His eyes had a curious, excited glint in them.

"So it would!" he said softly. "So it would!"

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

Fist to fist and toe to toe they fought

Burnout

By JAMES STEVENS

Author of "When Twins Meet Twins," "Double David and Goliath," etc.

FOR the third time in as many minutes Matt Paddigan went down under Steve Armory's fists. Again, it was not a blow that crashed him, but his own cunning. Paddigan was yet unhurt by the half hour of slugging, but his bad leg was caving under him. The old shrapnel scars were as molten wires twisting through the flesh and bone of his right thigh. Torture and strain took him down.

As before, young Steve Armory stood back, waiting for Paddigan to come up again or quit.

"The damn' fool," thought Paddigan. "Now I'll take him."

Deliberately wobbling and lurching on hands and knees, as though near a knockout, Matt Paddigan took a quick sizeup of the circle of men about young Armory and himself. Some forty loggers in winter rigging packed the ring, dark shapes in the rain-smeared rays from the single dock light. Eyes gleamed unwinkingly from blurred faces. Not a sound, not a movement came from the circle now, in this prime moment of suspense. The roar of wind from bay water and shore timber seemed thunderously loud. Through it Steve Armory's spasmodic breathing slashed. He had fought crazily since that first knockdown.

Paddigan considered it all with steel-cold mind, without a spark of fighting fire. He knew what gripped the watching loggers. Not the brute excitement of battle between two tough men, not even the drama of a fight about a woman, but this: Matt Paddigan was at last

taking a beating; Matt Paddigan had come to a burnout; this was a story to be told along the timber coast for years to come, and they were the witnesses of it.

"Too bad to spoil it," Matt Paddigan thought on. "And—maybe I won't!"

He had his second wind. There was plenty of power in his body, from the bad leg up. And that was rested. If he could finish Armory, put him down once, inside the next five minutes. . . .

So thinking, Paddigan shoved up into a swaying crouch and seemed to stagger helplessly from young Armory's flaming charge. He met it as a machine in which each minute nerve was tried and adjusted to the work of taking and giving punishment. Old stuff to Matt Paddigan, too old. As Steve Armory gambled everything now in an attack that was an explosion of physical fury, Paddigan was dead sure of winning.

The tense and silent watchers saw Paddigan reel and rock from the swing-swing-swing of young Steve's arms and bleeding fists. Paddigan's rested legs took him surely backward from the blasting drive. Crouched, head set between hunched shoulders, belly drawn in, elbows sideswiping four out of every five of Armory's swings—so he rode the blows until he felt their steam go down. He staggered into the center of the circle, as though out on his feet.

Steve Armory lurched after him, hauled up, measured him for a finishing smash. For a split-second Armory stood wide-open, breathing like a locomotive exhaust, while he cocked a fist for a haymaker.

In that instant Paddigan came alive, sledging a low-slung uppercut at Armory's middle. The big lad's body buckled over the blow.

A woman's cry struck from the outer shadows. Armory, going to his knees, came back up like a released spring. The fight surged on. But now it was Matt Paddigan who took the lead.

Yet without fire. The fighting machine had a job lined out, and settled down to doing it. Paddigan walked slowly, steadily, after Armory, punching from his shoulders, saving his legs. The loggers saw the end. "Matt's set to chop the kid down," Lafe Burns growled, and agreement sounded around the packed circle of men. Paddigan worked deliberately on. Old stuff, just another fight to him, as Kit Burns was just another woman.

The rain-drenched light fell full on young Steve's face. Smeared, swollen, contorted in a mask of exhaustion and strain, it was yet illumined by the soul of youth at test under fire. Steve Armory had only begun to live. Nothing like this battle with Matt Paddigan had happened to him before. It was glory and destiny for him.

Paddigan saw that, and envied him. A mood came upon him as a winter night wind blows open a door and freezes into a room. A sense of the times past, of life lost in the living of it. Matt Paddigan was through. A withering shell of flesh, a sinking flame within. He was at the gray years. The burnout. . . .

The fighting instinct that Steve Armory had failed to arouse came alive in Paddigan now. That was the way of it these times. In the woods he caught no spark of exultation from beating a tough job. He was emptied of the pride of being a king-jack among the bullies of the tidewater towns. And so he was with women, a shell of a man.

It was worse than hell, life coming to nothing at all. In his struggle to hold up from that Matt Paddigan resorted to

his memories, strove to revive the white heats of his experience. So now. That desperation of soul evoked flashing images from the smolder of old fires, to sustain and inspire him. . . .

HE had grown up in a lumber and fishing port on the lower Columbia River. The sawmills, the log rafts, the river sternwheelers, salmon boats and deep-water ships, the timbered mountains that lifted from the valley, the logging camps and railroads—these filled the boy's dreams. He came of age with flesh and spirit alike unsoiled. It was enough for him to be a logger, with a man's part in the life of the woods.

A good life to young Matt Paddigan. Good to awaken like the spring sun from a soft cloud of sleep. Good to breathe the clean dawn wind and the hunger-stirring odors of the cedars and firs. Good to sit at table with the appetite of a bear, good to laugh and talk with other men on the trail to the day's work. All was glorious to the big young axman. Always the sunrise mountain rims, tree-fringed, feasted his eyes. He responded lustily to the smells of rain-sweetened earth as he trod it, to the sounds and movements of timber beasts and birds, and, most of all, to his work in the woods. The hours that unloosed his strength, that let his body play in powerful harmony with the ringing strokes of an ax blade in big timber, seemed the best of all to young Matt Paddigan.

A man at his work, yet a boy in his reactions to the common world, most of all with woman. He shied from the restless fever the nearness of a girl would stir in him, from the desires that struck through. The high flush of youth, the bid of manhood—that was the golden season of memory.

It ended violently, in his first man-sized battle, the climax of his timber-fight with Bad Ax Larsen.

Larsen was in his prime, the king-jack of the lower river loggers. A timber-faller, he gyppoed in the woods, taking his pay according to the log scale of his daily cut instead of in wages. It was big money, while it lasted, for any faller who teamed up with Bad Ax. Commonly he worked a partner off the springboards in a month or less.

Then chance brought Larsen and young Matt Paddigan together. Day after day the king-jack stepped up his pace with the double-bitted and crosscut saw, and still the big lad held up and on. With Matt it was a game. When he saw enmity growing in Bad Ax Larsen, he was only puzzled by it The man seemed possessed by a devil.

He stepped their work into a murderous pace. Despite Matt's own feeling about it, he was caught in a timber-fight. So the loggers of the camp began to talk it up, and so Bad Ax Larsen lined it out. Matt had to make it a fight on the springboards, or quit. He made it a fight. Now he not only matched Larsen, swing for swing, as they axed out undercuts, and pull for pull on the crosscut, but took the lead and set the pace. A new temper was alive in young Paddigan, a smoky red flame across the golden days.

The Fourth of July shutdown saved Bad Ax Larsen from being worked out of the woods. By then the meat was so sweated from him that his logging clothes hung in folds from his big-boned frame, his face was drained into a mask like worn and weathered leather his eyes were sunken, red-rimmed fevered.

With the shutdown, the loggers stormed for the river town. There Bad Ax cornered Matt Padigan for a fist-

and-boot fight to a finish, in the cellar of the Red Bell Saloon. Men who had witnessed the two-hour fray still talked about it, twenty-five years later.

"The last fight of Bad Ax Larsen," said the old-timers. "He died of it. And of it a hellion was born in Matt Paddigan. . . ."

Memory flashes. No more. For seconds Paddigan held the illusion in the rainy light and the grim circle of men on the Palouse Bay dock. For a moment he knew a rush of white heat. Again he was the young tree of a man, tireless, unbeatable, who hammered Bad Ax Larsen down for the last time, on the blood-smeared sawdust of the Red Bell's floor. Bruised and slashed, a two-hour strain of violence on him, yet blazing with triumph, a king-jack in his world. . . .

STEVE ARMORY was down. Paddigan saw him now in cold reality, as a sudden wrenching pain knifed up from the bad leg. It buckled and he lurched to the left and held up, swaying. The fighting burst was blown out, with pain sense smothering the impulse to finish Armory with the boots. It was a knockout. What else mattered? A done job.

But it was not a knockout. A slim figure strained over the big arm of Lafe Burns, a face smaller and whiter than any other in the circle, peered down at the twisting huddle on the soggy dock planks.

Paddigan watched Kit Burns, heard her cry Steve Armory's name. He was no way surprised to see the kid respond, stiffen up to his knees, jerk to his feet as though in a dream. He was out, blind, witless, but one deep fighting flame in him burned on. Life, young life, that must win or die. Matt Paddigan, not venturing to move, to shift from the one good leg that was not so good and the other that was but a prop, remembered. . . .

LIFE at its worst, and he had taken it and liked it—and beaten it! Not with force that second time, but with cunning. Not with his fists as man against man, but with his wits, as a trapped wolf against his keepers. For the law had tallied the finish of Bad Ax Larsen as manslaughter. Matt Paddigan was sent up for seven years.

In that stone-walled world of crime and punishment, he lived for his liberty. made it the secret purpose of his every action and word. So from the first he put down remorse, regret, self-pity, any mood of wreckage and disaster. A hellion lived in Matt Paddigan now, but it could be cunning as well as violent. could plot a course of action far ahead and follow it in strict caution as well as blast out in a murderous fury.

There were five lifers in his cell block and at his bench in the prison shoe shop. Train-robbers, killers, outlaws born. Seemingly tractable, Paddigan was sure that they were nevertheless waiting and playing for a break. And he, in turn, began to play the five for his own freedom.

He avoided both their confidences and their suspicions. His part was that of an overgrown greenhorn kid who was in the Big House through simple bad luck. A big ox, dumb, good-natured, who took whatever was handed him without thinking about it. What Matt picked up and pieced together from the five, he kept to himself. There was never a thought in him of turning stool-pigeon or being made a trusty. He was making a big gamble for a full pardon. Freedom or nothing. Win or die. He was yet so young.

He had done a year of his sentence

when the five lifers tried a crushout. Somebody on the outside smuggled in a six-shooter and ammunition, in a small keg of hobnails. For months Paddigan had been as keenly on watch for that as the lifers themselves, had figured with them the how, when and where of making a break, once they had a gun. Through his dumb mask he had studied their looks, the movements of their lips, until he was nigh one of them.

The break was at twilight, just before quitting time in the shoe shop. As the five rushed for the doors, the leader jerking up the revolver from the nail keg, Paddigan went with them. He drove in behind the killer with the gun, knowing that the plan was to shoot down the two main-door guards, take their arms, and blast on over the rear wall. At the first shot, outside confederates would come into action. What their part was to be Paddigan had not learned. Nor was he interested. His gamble was against any first shot.

His left fist chopped the leader behind the ear as the gun came up, and his right hand hooked for the gun as the man went down. The other four piled down on the two of them. Matt Paddigan tore the massed bodies apart, kicking them off with legs like flailing fir boughs, clubbing them with the revolver—and then he was up, gunning the gang into quiet as the guards charged in.

In two weeks Matt Paddigan was the free man he had fiercely dreamed and cunningly schemed to be. But the way of return to the good life of the golden season was barred. Matt Paddigan was now a timber-coast name that imaged a killer and a jailbird in the eyes of others. Wherever he worked, soon or late his reputation would catch up with him. Then the loggers stood him apart. Somebody to shoot at or run from. A troublemaker to the bosses. A desperate character to the law in the tidewater towns.

And there was a changed character in Paddigan himself. It was no good to tell himself that it was not his crime but his bad luck to kill a man in a fair fight, no good to know that he had kept clear of the degradations of the condemned. If he had not let himself live life at its worst, he had yet faced its realities for a year. He had seen men hanged. He had lived with dead souls in animate bodies, the old lifers. Unspeakable brutalities and perversions were known to him.

Yet his lusty youth but saw his triumph as the greater for all that.

"I beat it all," Matt Paddigan boasted. "I won out with a full pardon, and I came out clean, by God! Nothing can take me down after that, no evil can harm me now! Man, I can whip the world! . . ."

PADDIGAN remembered that boast now, as he held his legs up under him in iron strain, and watched Steve Armory lurch up and at him. It rang in his memory like the echo of a far-away bell, and was silent. An echo, a mockery. Here was the one real thing to think about. He must hold up, let young Steve come to him, strike to cut him down, strike once. One shot left. If it failed, he'd fall from his own weight.

Armory's blindness did him a lucky turn. In his instinctive charge he lurched away from Paddigan and bumped into the men who held the ring there. They shoved him up and toward the waiting old-timer. Paddigan cautiously shifted to the left. If he could pivot on that good leg at the exactly right instant, swinging his outside fist at Armory—

But his timing was slow. Paddigan glimpsed his own right fist grazing Armory's bobbing head at the end of its swing, felt its force tugging him on, off balance. Automatically he brought the bad leg on in the pivot to prop him from a crash. As his weight drove on it a shock of pain tore up through him, struck in his head like an explosive blow. In that blast Paddigan did not feel the collison with Armory, had no sense of the other holding him up, or of the fists beating his body.

At the moment both fighters were nigh out on their feet. Once more that silent tension gripped the circle of men. Time slowed in a climax of action. For seconds that the watchers would vividly remember where months of their lives were forgotten, they saw Matt Paddigan sagging on Steve Armory's hunched shoulders, while with blind instinct the big lad beat in at the old-timer's body.

"The damn' fool, he's holdin' Matt up," Lafe Burns muttered. "Givin' Matt the use of his own legs. Them punches don't hurt."

Kit Burns screamed, "Steve! Get away from him! Shake him off you!"

Both men heard. Paddigan felt consciousness come back in him, flowing like a black tide of snow water. Steve Armory was stiffening under his weight, straightening up, straining away. It was a play into the other's hands. Paddigan lurched with him, thrust his hands around Armory, locked them at his back. In his arms there was yet a giant's strength. So he held on, as he had always held, more times than he could remember in the very teeth of death.

Holding on to win through, always until now. Again Matt Paddigan strove for the spirit, the fire, of his past to sustain him. . . .

THE night he had held himself on a runaway string of thirty loaded log cars, driving over the swaying pyramids of big timber, from brake to brake, with one chance in a hundred of stopping the string before it cannoned into the trestle curve over the ninety-foot gash of Sleeper Canyon. That was holding on and up, with death in your face in every click of time and inch of motion! That was living to remember!

And it was no foolhardy impulse that brought Matt Paddigan to such a test. Mostly it was the wolf-like instinct that prison had fostered in him.

One night in a mountain logging camp Paddigan kept watch on a log-loader, a little black knot of a man who called himself Joe Jones. The loader had quit his job, after an argument and a one-sided fight with the push. Paddigan saw an insane purpose in the eyes that burned from a battered face, read murderous threats in moving lips as Joe Jones muttered to himself. The little man was of a kind common enough in the woods, an avowed rebel. But Paddigan had sensed a fanaticism that was neighbor to mania from his first acquaintance with this self-called Jones, and had tallied jail signs from him. Paddigan's interest had been curious until now. But tonight he saw a devil in the beaten little logger.

Paddigan kept awake, after lights-out. An hour later Joe Jones catfooted out into the camp yard. Paddigan trailed him. It was a moonless and cloudy night, and he lost the man. He groped quietly through the thick shadows for the bosses' quarters, but caught no sign or sound of disturbance about the building. All was likewise quiet at the commissary. Paddigan was turning back, with the notion of routing out the camp push, when he heard

a dull iron bang from up the railroad tracks. There the log cars were set for the morning haul-out. Paddigan instantly guessed Jones' revenge.

He yelled a warning, then ran through the darkness for the tracks. Twice he pitched to his hands and knees, and at each fall that ominous iron banging from the darkness lifted him on. Then, the grind of steel wheels on steel rails. Enough brakes had been knocked off to start the string rolling down the steep mountain grade.

The grade pitched sharply below camp, toward a trestle over a small draw. Paddigan, swinging up on the first moving car, was sure that he could brake it and the second one before many of the thirty were driving down the pitch. But as he swayed up on the top log of the car, the camp yard lights flared on, and gunfire crackled.

Paddigan was made a lighted target for a madman at the upper end of the moving cars. And the devil could shoot. One of three slugs ripped through Paddigan's mackinaw collar. He dropped to cover alongside the logs, but he did not go on to the ground. He was in a fight of a kind new to him, and he only burned to beat it.

There were two more shots, widely spaced, as Paddigan was drifted from the sweep of the yard lights. Then, shoving up, he saw Joe Jones drop from the bulk of a car into the yard, pitch from his feet and roll over and over, while men ran from the bunkhouses. The shoulder of a rock cut out the scene. The logs underfoot swayed and shook as the momentum of the runaway string sharply increased down the pitch. Matt Paddigan went for the first brake-wheel.

One man against all hell loose and the law of gravity. A race through black darkness, with a plunge down the sheer rock walls of a ninety-foot canyon at the end. The fact that it lasted but a quarter of an hour was something that Paddigan could never afterward realize. A white-heat of living. The smallest detail of action and fraction of time seared in his mind like a log-brand. He drove recklessly over each binder log at the peak of every carload, yet he seemed to crawl. Wrenching a brake-wheel in its ratchet until the binding shoes beneath screamed and showered sparks was a matter of seconds, yet Paddigan felt each as a leaden drag. He couldn't see a chance, but he kept on.

On, while the set brake-shoes burned free behind him, or broke from the strain. On, while the speeding cars rocketed into faster and faster speed. By the force of the wind and the beat of the wheels over rail joints Paddigan tallied the runaway at sixty miles an hour when it reached the last half-mile to Sleeper Canyon.

Ahead the tracks leveled, then took a gentle lift over a saddleback in the high ridge above Sleeper. After that, a plunging coast into a sharp curve and the big trestle.

As the careening cars hit the level stretch their speed began to slacken. Paddigan took little hope from that. The white heat in him sank as the fury of the runaway ebbed. A fool, he thought, to have risked his neck so far. The one thing now was to save it. The slowdown on the lift to the saddleback might be enough for a safe jump. The slope of the cut was mainly soft dirt. If he missed the boulders—

But even as he cooled to a point of reason Matt Paddigan was driving on over another pyramid of logs, swinging down, setting a brake-wheel, scrambling up and charging along another car. He could not quit, even on the last ragged edge of hope.

Luck was waiting for him there. Swinging to another brake-wheel, he stumbled over a giant splinter that jutted from a butt log. As it gave under him Paddigan saw his final fighting chance. Throwing his arms about the jagged chunk of timber, he wrestled as though he was on the horns of the devil. Wrench by wrench, strain by strain, he worked the huge splinter free of the butt log. All the while his ears were alive to the beat of the wheels below him —slower . . . slower—then in ominously increasing rhythm that told him the leading cars were over the hump. Now he was being borne past the slope of the cut. Rocks ahead—and the gorge—but who gave a damn! White-hot again! A man to beat hell, Matt Paddigan!

And he beat it. The big splinter broke free. He turned it into the gap between the car bunks, and let it go. He heard a monstrous grinding from that bottom blackness, then a giant jolt hurled him against the butt log, a jerk as heavy flung him away. He struck against the brake-wheel, and instinctively threw arms and legs about the shaft. And there he rode, praying for binding chains to hold on the log loads, while he took an earthquake shaking from the bucking of the derailed car.

The luck that Matt Paddigan had fought to find stayed with him. The cars had not picked enough speed to buckle on the one he had derailed, and the haul from the running cars ahead kept it rolling on the ties. So the string was halted, with Matt Paddigan aboard

It was the high heat of his memory that time. Never again was he to blaze with such exultation of power and triumph as in the moments when he stood atop the stalled cars of logs, with the realization that he had fought them to a standstill. They had been alive to him, like some fabulous monster on a rampage. That was his feeling, as he looked over the silent black bulk that loomed either way from his feet in the darkness. And he, Matt Paddigan, had beaten it, by God!

He was made a woods boss for that. Five years from thirty, and the push, the works, over two hundred men. . . .

SO much Matt Paddigan remembered, while he held an iron grip on Steve Armory. Images of times past, a flare-out of youth, fading sparks, and again reality. Worse, he now felt a deadening reaction, a sense of his comedown these last years. Down to running a haywire logging show on a backwoods reach of tidewater. Down to a dogfight with a fuzz-faced young hunk of a greaseball, a tractor-puncher. A brawl about a woman. Matt Paddigan had come to that.

And to a beating, as the setup looked. Anyhow he was in a bad way. That leg was wrecked for weeks to come. One more blast of pain from it like that other, and he'd buckle. A mood of defeat clouded through Paddigan. Why not go down and call it enough? What the hell! He was a through man, a done fighter, now or soon.

His grip slackened. Armory broke loose, staggered away, fell, then labored back to his feet. He stood wobbling, his bruised, dazed eyes peering through the rain and bleared glow, in an effort to focus on Paddigan.

The old-timer held up for seconds, stiff and straight as a tree, on his good leg. But it was like a tree cut and wedged for a fall. Great shudders shook his giant frame, he toppled to and fro on the one leg, the other sagging like a broken bough. Then he crashed. And then Steve Armory lunged for him.

Armory was now past holding to his fighting code. In the old style of the

woods he came on for the kill, to put the boots to Paddigan. Twice he kicked in. Protests roared from the circle. Three of the older loggers broke out, going for Armory. Lafe Burns swung for them, drove them back.

"Paddigan ain't out," Burns growled. "He'll say when he's quit. This fight ain't over yet."

For the third time young Armory swung in with a spiked boot. Paddigan, goaded by the two smashes at his ribs, rolled desperately from this one. The spikes of Armory's boot raked his shirt, caught, and as he stumbled an iron arm hooked his ankle. And now the big lad was down. The two fighters tangled and rolled in the muck of the dock planking.

Paddigan ironed it out. With Armory pounding and tearing wildly at him, he held his grip on the booted ankle, inched stronger leverage on it, and buckled the straining leg back from the knee as though he were closing a toggle. Armory strained backward, clawed futilely at the clamping arm and hands, then lurched forward again. Hands propping him from the dock, his head jerked up and down, his face muscles writhing from the punishment he was taking.

Again Kit Burns cried out, and struggled against her father's arm. And again young Steve took fire from the girl's cry. He heaved and lunged, and drove his hands from under him. The left caught the breeches on Paddigan's bad leg. No resistance there, he inched it to his right, caught a solid hold, and bore down.

"Stop it!" shrilled a horrified voice from the circle. "We gotta stop it—they're tearin' each other apart!"

"Let 'em," rumbled Lafe Burns, "if they want to. Their tongues ain't hurt any. They can say when they want to quit. And you, Kit, you shet up, or I'll bat you one. Your doin's, and you got to like it. Back up that ring, you men yonder. Hear me?"

Lafe Burns was the bull-buck, the second boss of the outfit. The loggers heeded him. The girl was still.

This was the finish. The watching men were once more motionless, but every eye was fevered with an image of the end. The younger loggers burned for Steve Armory, and for Kit Burns. To them Paddigan was a man-driving hellion without a redeeming quality. They put no blame on him for playing loose with Kit. She'd run wild with other men before he came to Palouse Bay. But why the devil hadn't he let her go, when she and Steve fell so hard for each other? Handing her a line about her being trapped in a shack-town forever, if she married Steve, tied there by a husband and kids. What of it? Why not? She was no better than the forty-odd other women who were like that on the bay shore, but Paddigan had made her believe she was.

Paddigan had talked her into whip-sawing Steve and making a runout tonight on the Seattle ferry. Steve was putting up a fight to hold and keep Kit Burns. By the Lord, they were for him! They leaned toward the straining men on the dock planking; their arms and hands working with Steve's haul on the bad leg of the giant woods boss, they looked hate at Matt Paddigan.

But there were older men among the loggers who sickened at the sight of Matt Paddigan taking a beating. Some had followed his lead in their own best years—in the log-jam battles of spring floods, in hell beating fights against summer forest fires, in logging through winter hurricanes—always to a winning finish. That lifted logging above work for wages, themselves above laborers. For Paddigan was more than a job

boss. Things happened in his outfits, big things to remember. Paddigan made them happen. He was a woods bull to call on when big timber was to be cold-decked and sky-lined from impossible ridges and gorges, when log shortages demanded logging through the mud, blowdowns and rainy hell of January storms, when crown fires were cyclon-ing treetop brands for five miles in sweeps through mountain wilderness. In those days a certified Paddigan logger was a king-jack in any company on the timber coast.

And this was Paddigan's finish, at the hands of a fuzz-faced greaseball, a greenhorn timber mechanic. A dogfight over a shack-town girl! Paddigan, down to that, taking a beating in the mud!

THERE was one in the circle who could not believe it, this reality under his eyes. Lafe Burns was more nearly one with Paddigan than any other, had followed him at war as well as in the woods. No other here, not even Kit, knew that in Paddigan's gear were the bars and insignia of a machine-gun captain, and three medals of valor. And Lafe Burns knew how he had gotten them.

The bull-buck remembered another time of cold rain and wind, another woods country, the Argonne. Paddigan's company dug in, at the nub of a ridge salient in the brigade sector. Three days and nights of that, shot up by counter attacks and box barrages, but unshaken. Matt Paddigan bossing his outfit in war as he had bossed his outfits in the woods. The king-jack of the timber coast a fighter in France to write to Headquarters about and to pin badges and rank on. Bulldogging on that hogback of hell for seventy-two hours and more, with a spray of shrapnel in his leg from the first bouquet the krauts had tossed them.

Then that G-I can, a quarter-ton of corrugated shell and high explosive, squealing through the twilight murk like Paul Bunyan's timber-hog—who was powered with ninety-gallon lungs. It bull's-eyed the center of the ridge, blew and splashed. The lights went out for Lafe Burns.

It was three months before he saw Matt Paddigan again. A base hospital. The dead-horse ward. Paddigan and white worms were fighting a gangrened leg.

"The docs specify they'll have to amputate." Paddigan said. "But we'll beat 'em, me and the maggots. Another year, old-timer, and I'll be getting out the logs again. Want to bet on it, Lafe?"

Lafe Burns could only shake his head at that. He was seeing green, and things inside him were turning over Matt Paddigan lay there grinning, in the gnawing torture of the maggots at the exposed flesh of his leg wound. Lafe Burns had no heart, or stomach either, for a bet on that battle. But he could see only one end to it, with the nurses and the docs. Matt Paddigan would lose that leg or die in bed.

But Paddigan won. He was three years beating back to his old life in the woods on both legs, but in the end he made it. After that Lafe Burns saw Matt Paddigan as unbeatable.

So he saw Paddigan now. To Lafe Burns his old captain was the image of what the soldiers meant when they used to say, "A man is the toughest to beat and hardest to kill of all things alive." He had no more words for his faith. Matt Paddigan was just all man to Lafe Burns.

He felt it now to his bones, with a power apart from his own and Kit's concern in the outcome of the fight. Something from the deeps of his breed

and blood rose to take hold of him. It was his kinship with Paddigan, stronger than his kinship with his own get. It was the primal force of Lafe Burns' being. Now, amid the wind thunder of the shore trees, the surges from black water, the blowing rain in the dim cast of light, he was as a tribal follower of old Ug, at battle with young Ag, under torches, in a circle of skin-clad men. Ug, the unconquerable, braver than the lion, cunning beyond the wolf.

Man the fighter. This was Matt Paddigan in his last ditch, at his burnout. A spirit stronger than reason, will, pain, disillusion. The white heats were ashes, his flesh surrendered, but the primal force in him would not yield. . . .

HIS iron grip unshaken, Paddigan saw Steve Armory bear down on the bad leg and twist it toward a shattering break. All conscious thought and instinct were fixed on the fighting chance that moment would give him. He set himself to withstand the bomb of pain that would burst in his head, and the numbing chill of reaction.

Then it happened. Armory lurched backward, Paddigan's broken leg bending with him, its unnatural twist from the thigh a sudden sickening horror in his eyes. Steve Armory was young. He was green in battle. He was yet to see the reality of death and pass the ordeals of agony and terror. For one moment he was limp in a weakness of revulsion at what he had done.

Then Paddigan took him. . .

The ferry whistle boomed through the wind and rain. With the sound of it, reality returned to the Palouse Bay dock. Matt Paddigan shoved up on his one good leg and stood, tree-straight, over the man who lay knocked out at his feet. He watched the circle break, saw Kit Burns drop, crying, to her knees beside the big lad. Then he looked up and reached a hand to the support of Lafe Burns' shoulder.

"I'll not be back, Lafe." Paddigan spoke in a flat, wooden tone, as though they were on a job in the woods. "They can have the leg this trip if they want it, and they will. I'll see to it that you are put in my place. Let Steve keep his job. That's all, only you can give me a hand to hobble on the ferry."

He said no more as he stood there, waiting for the ferry to churn in. The younger loggers crowded around Steve, yarded him up and started with him and Kit for the waterfront street. The others stared in a queer quiet at Matt Paddigan, the wind and darkness about them all, the rainy glow upon himself.

His eyes were like windows at night, as a lamp goes out beyond them.

THE END

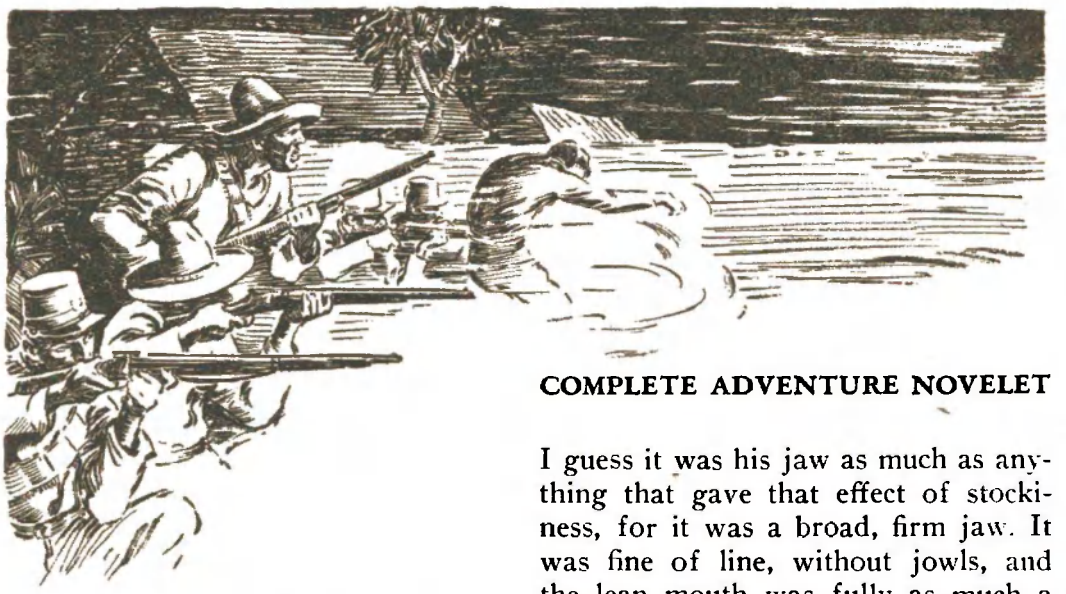
This is a story of war and revolution, of men who walk in the footsteps of death—for of such is Red O'Shaughnessy. But it is also the story of a love that was greater than all of these—for it was O'Shaughnessy himself who said that miserable is the man who has nothing to die for

The Faith Unfaithful

By WILLIAM CORCORAN

Author of "The Dark Waters" etc.

IT would please me no end to keep myself out of this story entirely, but I find I can't tell it that way. It's not my story; it is Red O'Shaughnessy's own story—*el Colonel* O'Shaughnessy to the tough volunteer infantry column of half a dozen nationalities he commanded in that miserable and merciless campaign in the wild snarl of the Guadarramas mountain country north of Madrid. Red (I never learned any other first name for him) is an American—unless the State Department has long since decided otherwise. All his life he has been a professional soldier. The last



COMPLETE ADVENTURE NOVELET

I heard, he was still alive and still fighting, and since he may, and most likely will, miraculously survive the carnage of the Spanish Civil War, win or lose, I shan't say which side he fought for. As a roving war correspondent, early on the scene, I had the luck to visit both sides, so this won't give him away. I'd hate like the devil to do that. I like and admire Red.

I don't think anyone could help liking O'Shaughnessy. Oh, you might fear him at the same time, especially if you were one of his well disciplined and efficient troopers, but then you would probably adore him. He looked more like a soldier than any be-medaled veteran I've ever seen. And he was such a man as any woman might look at not only twice, I'd say, but for as long as he was around. He was six feet three, yet looked blunt and stocky because of his build, wide and powerful. Even at fifty or thereabouts he was a powerful man, clean of limb, erect as a fine thoroughbred is erect, with quickness and speed and challenge in the very look of him. He had small feet and lean, quick hands. I guess it was his jaw as much as anything that gave that effect of stockiness, for it was a broad, firm jaw. It was fine of line, without jowls, and the lean mouth was fully as much a sign of strength, with the addition of that indescribable mark of quick wit and humor in the corners. But it was the eyes that were the man; they were a kind of blue that made me think of the blue in the stars and stripes (foolishly enough, I'll admit) and they were clear and keen and healthy as a baby's. And they were just *so* damned eloquent! I'll swear they could wilt the whole General Staff of any army with one icy glance. They could certainly make you laugh, for no reason whatever, just by the way he could cock them at you, brimful of good humor and mischief, when he felt in the mood and felt like making you laugh.

I hope that gives some glimmer of acquaintance with O'Shaughnessy. I'd already known him for some days and had come to a considerable admiration for his wild courage, his experienced military mind, his blending of Hibernian wit with martinet bluntness, when he finally opened up one chill night as we hunched alone together over a glowing charcoal brazier in a tiny hut and really got

acquainted. I was a privileged character, and knew it. But the fact that I'd covered a couple of wars he'd been engaged in himself was a factor of no small bearing on the matter. I *knew* war, he discovered—so he talked. Maybe he found relief in talking. Personally I wouldn't have a colonel's job for any money, anywhere, any time, in war or peace. Too damned lonesome.

Let me remark here that I have observed that men of all professions invariably wonder what in time induces men of other professions to put up with it all, to take the punishment and carry on and come back for more. Here was I, for instance, on the story of a lifetime, with a background to understand it and bosses to appreciate it—and yet Red O'Shaughnessy only wondered, I know, why in thunder I deliberately chose to invite misery and exposure and even quite possible loss of life for sake of nothing better than so much space in a daily newspaper that would be thrown away next morning.

Well, I in turn wondered what on earth had ever moved Red O'Shaughnessy to come to this unhappy and benighted country and put up with infinitely more than I, to kill and perhaps be killed—for what? Money? That's a laugh. Did you ever hear of a soldier getting rich? Fame? Ditto—with native *politicos* grabbing any glory handy, naturally. What then? I asked him.

"Well—" he said, and stopped. He had to think that one over. His cynical wit was still now; he was really thinking. He said, finally, "That's a tough one to answer, if it's the truth you want. I know a dozen easy answers, but you wouldn't have them. It might be what the psychologists call compensation. I went to the Point, you know."

I *was* astonished. "West Point?"

"West Point. They threw me out."

"Why?"

"I doubt they could remember if they tried. It's no matter. But that's one thing. I was pretty hard hit and fighting mad about it. Well, I've certainly compensated for *that* blow to my pride and ambition."

MY SILENCE evidently conveyed to him the idea that I was not exactly impressed. He laughed a deep-throated, chuckling laugh, and there was, so help me, what I can only call a twinkle in those keen and somewhat ribald old blue eyes.

"Ah, but I got back at them! By the Lord, I got back at them! I put my son through instead."

I looked at him. The man laughed, yet he simply couldn't keep the pride out of those words. I said, "Son?"

He went on, "The boy came through with honors. He's a first lieutenant today. Engineers. U. S. Army. Career. He's a soldier. By the living Judas, he's a soldier!"

"And aren't you?"

"By Heaven, no!"

The denial was vehement, even violent. The man meant it.

He said, "The boy's a regular. And always will be. You know what I mean by that—a regular. I'm an irregular, and always have been. I've been fighting a lifetime, but always in some other man's battles. I'll lay claim to drawing the line here and there, maybe; and I've quit my command once or twice when the true nature of the cause I was fighting for became too unpleasantly clear. But I'm still an irregular, a hired mercenary, even here."

I demurred, asking him if he felt

no sympathy whatever for his side in this shambles.

"Oh, I do, in a way. A hell of a ways, I guess. But the fact remains." He picked up a fistful of powdery earth from the hut floor. "This miserable soil—this soil isn't mine, and never will be. I'm fighting for it for pay."

"And would you switch sides for higher pay?"

That stopped him a second. "No. By the Lord, I've never done that! I don't know why altogether; it's not logical, but it sticks in my craw."

"Well, suppose you ran into, let's say some information, something that pretty clearly convinced you the other side was right and you were serving an unjust cause. What then? Would you go over?"

"No, I guess I'd quit." He fixed me with those gimlet eyes. "Look here. The other side still wouldn't be *my* side. This soil still wouldn't be mine. In order to switch sides and be—well, let's call it 'honest'—a man's got to be somehow touched in the heart of him. To turn against your own, even though they were such for ever so little a while, should be something that money can't buy. There's nothing illogical about a man's willingness to fight and maybe die for hire. A deep-sea diver, a bridgeworker, they take their chances, for hire. What I mean is something other than hire. For instance, to go out deliberately with the feeling in you that you may die, in fact probably will, without a single dollar involved in the thought of it—well, now there you've got something."

"Such as patriotism? *Semper fidelis* and all that?"

"Yes, I suppose so. And I don't mean flagwaving. I mean facing the music." He paused an instant while his brain wrestled with unfamiliar abstractions. "You've got me all wound up. But I'll try to tell you what I mean. I think that every man alive is born with the need in him of something—something so grand and driving a thing that it'd be worth dying for. Some have a lot of such things. It's a miserable man who has none. The average man has the need of it because if he's called on to die any time, and men always will be, he can at least feel with his last breath that it wasn't all wasted and vain."

And I thought, and still think, that Red O'Shaughnessy did a good job of telling me what he meant.

The effort spend his zeal, even left him a little embarrassed. He turned matter of fact. But the warmth was still in him. And because of it, he was still full of talk. And his mind was focused on certain things, and because of that he had to talk about them. And he did, and out of all the talk came the story, the number one story, the very key to the man who is Colonel O'Shaughnessy, a great and obscure soldier and a gallant and generous and pitiless fighting man.

So bear with me while I tell that story in my own way, as I've got to. I must tell it, even though it's not the usual kind of story at all, but a very real story with the poignance and sadness of life itself in it. It goes back a full quarter century, and crosses far to another hemisphere, and brings into misty yet breathtaking focus the lovely Alexandra, whom O'Shaughnessy loved, and whose beauty and witchery will never pass from the earth.

I

FIRST, there was the day, in the Mexican town of Azulita, when Red O'Shaughnessy met Alexandra. There had been a skirmish out in the

valley, out Loresco way, a kind of haggling with death, a brutal, running clash with the Morelistos. O'Shaughnessy was tired, disgusted and thirsty when he led his patrol into Azulita, with two men missing. At the outskirts of the town he turned the little command over to young Lieutenant Escandrillo, and walked his fine bay briskly through the streets toward the center of town, toward the indolent green plaza and the shade of the Mariposa Hotel verandah. The reflected fury of a Mexican sun beat back from the softly tinted plaster walls lining the street. O'Shaughnessy was sweaty, dirty, unshaved, and did not care. He wanted a drink, and immediately.

The O'Shaugnessy was mad.

It was a time of war then, too, you see, that terrible time in Mexico when the Revolution, uncertain of itself, suddenly lost all its bearings. Madero, the liberator, lay murdered. Huerta, his murderer and successor, sat in the president's chair and offered the torn land, by all the signs, no more than another tyrant's reign. Villa ravaged Chihuahua in the north. The Revolutionary Army, now the official Federal Army, did a despot's unspeakable work, and tried to puzzle out what advance had been made beyond a greater dispatch in the shedding of Mexican blood.

And one ardent young volunteer *Americano* in that army, *el Capitán* O'Shaughnessy, was increasingly fed up on the dubious slaughter, the arrogance of stupid generals, and the indifference of the capital to the fate of isolated and beleaguered garrisons.

As Captain O'Shaughnessy tied his horse to the rail before the Mariposa, he stared at an astonishing sight on the hotel verandah. It was a girl. A number of forlorn women still lingered in the half evacuated town, to be sure, but not of this kind. She was a little queen, and the world was hers. She sat there in riding habit, chatting and laughing and fascinating the officers assembled on the verandah. She was unbelievably young, hardly more than twenty, and very lovely. She had dark hair and vivid blue eyes, incredibly vivid blue eyes, and a precisely mobile, mockingly warm mouth; and the body beneath the riding habit might readily be assumed, right then and there, to be something sublimely healthy and beautiful. Those officers, so long on campaign, were knocked off their feet, and she knew it.

O'Shaughnessy met her inquisitive gaze, and it shot through him and rocked him a little—a blue, violet-tinted sensation. O'Shaughnessy, no saint by any means, had been long on campaign himself. But he walked on, heading for the bar in the *cantina* for that drink right now in a hurry.

It was Major Gomez who halted him, his sleek voice purring, "Captain O'Shaughnessy—you would hardly be so rude?" It was a question, but also a command.

Under his breath O'Shaughnessy swore. Apart from wanting that drink, he was a sight and a spectacle alongside these immaculate, off-duty men, and he had enough vanity in him to feel that. Besides, he knew all too well the glint of dislike and malice in the major's eye. It was an unreasoning dislike, animal and instinctive, fanned into lasting hatred by divers small matters between them—a girl, just for one, who on a night in Mexico City had laughed in the major's face as she walked off on the arm of the triumphant O'Shaughnessy; and a coveted horse, for another, which had changed ownership over a card table when the

O'Shaughnessy played with the devil's own luck. Such things were uncannily frequent. There was no love lost between these two whatever, but he obeyed, and he bowed sardonically when he was presented to the girl.

SHE calmly took in the dust, the dishevelment, the set of the angry shoulders. And the brownish red hair, the bold jaw and look of him, the casual erectness, handsome and hard and maybe a bit insolent. Eyes glowing, she missed nothing.

"Ah, you have been fighting, *mi capitán,* no? You have been out in the valley?"

"I've been fighting, *señorita.* I lost two men. I got about seven. All ten were named Lopez. It was one of the decisive battles of the war."

She laughed. She was interested. "But you are *un Americano, no es?*" Then she switched smoothly to fluent English with a bare trace of an accent he could not name, except that it was not Latin. "You risk your life so recklessly to fight Mexico's battles? Why is this?"

"Well, I was once kicked by a mule, *señorita.* In the head."

"Dear, how sad! And such a hero!"

"Oh, the mule broke a leg and we had to shoot him. Anyway, it convinced me I belonged in the army."

"But—this army?"

"This happens to be the only army working at it right now."

The girl was laughing at him, but he did not mind. That was part of the game He could read the signs clearly when a woman was interested, for this was by no means the first one, and he studied her, his frosty-blue, gimlet eyes piercing, a little daunting. He went on, "*Señorita*—if the major will forgive the rudeness—what on this benighted earth is a girl like yourself doing out here in the war zone?"

Now the girl smiled, a little vainly. She glanced at the others, who were already glowering at this intrusion of a foreign tongue. She switched back to Spanish. "I am writing about all of you. About the Revolution. For the foreign magazines, chiefly the French. It is thrilling—and important, no? I have a pass from the president himself; he is my friend. I came on the military train this morning, and, oh—I am so excited to be here! I want to see everything—everything that goes on."

"Ah, and you will," O'Shaughnessy told her. "The boys will attend to that."

"And you?" she said. "You will attend to that somewhat also?"

He eyed her oddly for an instant, and smiled, the eyes cocked at her beguilingly. "It looks as if you've already made up your mind about that, *señorita,* no?"

The shot scored. Her soft laughter pealed, all gay and silvery, telling him so. It told him more, and he was to remember it like the echo of distant bells for hours afterward. That—and the hot glint in the eye of the staff major, Gomez, who was already acquainted with the uncertainties of rank and precedence in dealing with the unpredictable O'Shaughnessy.

AND so that was the beginning of it. It was certainly not the end. Life is a headlong thing in wartime, and so too is love—and this is a story both of love and of war. It will be told as speedily as the events lend themselves to the telling.

O'Shaughnessy saw her again. He saw her daily. She was everywhere, seeing everything. Officers swarmed wherever she appeared. She was something never seen before in Mexico, a

young girl unaccompanied. But *el Presidente's* signature on her pass was a talisman that halted loose tongues and ambitions, even if it could not quite still every ardent male thought.

O'Shaughnessy watched, amused. She sought him out and she teased him—and so they went riding. They talked, sparring deftly. She bade him be her guest, and they dined alone together in the lovely little patio of the Mariposa beneath the ancient *cireula* trees. They talked, long and murmurously. They became acquainted, well acquainted. Not of course, without some hindrance, for Major Gomez, who was the girl's escort as often as he could arrange, and who fumed and sulked when he could not be, saw to it, using his rank, that O'Shaughnessy was assigned to some sort of disagreeable duty as often as possible. But since Alexandra wished it, and O'Shaughnessy willed it, stubbornly, the major had no way of preventing their being together rather often, for all that. And they were, increasingly, in spite of Gomez, in spite of the officers swarming.

Days passed. They walked together in the dusk along the walls guarding the deserted homes of the old *hidalgos,* brushed by the billowing riot of purple bougainvillea. They strolled by moonlight in the pretty little park which in better days had been Azulita's pride, along formal paths between luxuriant growths of the night-blooming *huele de noche.* They became acquainted indeed—and something more. The forces of life, as if in self-preservation, do not countenance halfway feelings when death is riding, galloping. That you must understand, in order to understand all that came to happen.

She talked of herself freely, teasingly. "You find it a little hard to comprehend me, my Red? That is not strange. I am not like the *señoritas* of Mexico, sheltered and chaperoned, am I? I go where I will, and alone. I go among men if I wish. I come to war as freely as the faithful *soldaderas* who follow your *Juanes,* your common soldiers, into battle."

"You've knocked the breath out of this army a little," he told her. "Women are not exactly a novelty, God knows! But a, now—well, let's say a lady—a lady on the firing line is certainly something new to be seen."

That word as he used it conveyed something. She said, "Yes, that may be." Then disturbed, "Yet I am a woman too, Red."

He abruptly lit a cigarette. "I know it," he said curtly.

She laughed, and it was a young laugh. "You do not think all this is wrong and disapprove, my Red? You do not think—oh, badly of me?"

He glanced at her. "Does it matter?"

He thought for a moment she would not answer. Then she laughed again, and it was now an older, shorter laugh. "Matter? I care what no one thinks. I live my life as I wish."

And he caught her wrist. "Don't talk like that!"

"Why not?"

He had no answer. And he had to answer that. He stared at her, so close. And so it came about that he was kissing her, in that way that a man kisses when it is done without any forethought at all.

She kissed him in return like one who has been waiting. And she had been waiting, and he knew that, and he was shaken. In the far, secret places of his heart he cursed to himself that this should happen. He was not the one to be shaken by a woman's kisses in the night, and yet incomprehensibly he was. He wished, out of some troubled

instinct, to be wary, and he was not at all. He did not like mystery—and she was mystery. Not the mystery of intrigue and counterplot surely; she was as open as the day. The mystery of Woman. Not *women*. There is a difference.

THE mere facts of her life he soon learned. Dramatic, they were . . . Her Russian birth. Her father's impractical meddling in republican thought, in the revolutionary movement. He had been a professor of Romance languages in the University at St. Petersburg. Warned just in time, he got out of Russia less than half a day ahead of the Czar's secret police. His family joined him in Paris, impoverished. In Paris he barely managed to keep a roof over their heads by translating foreign dispatches and articles, ill paid petty journalism. Alexandra, though equipped with good birth and education and background, learned very early all the lessons of hardship and the making of one's own way in a treacherous world. No bourgeois security guarded her young girlhood.

Through her father's connections, she began writing and selling fugitive pieces of her own. She inherited his knack for languages. Then she had suddenly taken fire with the notion of going to Mexico to cover the Revolution there. Nothing could stop her, and she came. She carried introductions that got her quickly into high places, and she had soon met and charmed the president—and here she was.

"Already I have been to the North," she told Red proudly. "Pancho Villa himself received me. He was gallantry personified. He talked and told me, oh, so much. I came away with more copy than I could take care of. I made much money."

"Money?" snorted O'Shaughnessy. "*Much* money—for taking your life in your hands?"

"I did not take my life in my hands. He was very nice to me."

"Well, you must have got clear away before he had time to think twice, and wonder why the devil he wasted time talking politics to a pretty girl!"

She smiled a little, confidently. "No, my Red. It is not quite that way in life. I'll speak frankly. I have what is called breeding, and I am forthright, and I have all the courage of any man I'll ever face. I need no more. Danger is not new to me. Men are not new to me. I have what is stronger than all the *dueñas* and guardians on earth."

He looked at her. "My God, you are young!"

And she laughed and all she said was, "Am I? I wonder . . ."

Now while these two were walking and riding and hastening toward a climax that was like a destiny they could not escape, that vicious little war went on steadily outside their private little world without let-up. When they were together they did not talk about it much, because they were never alone enough to suit them as it was, and the war filled every other moment of their days. Yes, and the nights. In their proper turns, men might sleep—but Azulita itself never. The little town, centuries old, sleepy with history, dozed yet never relaxed, watchful of the dusk, watchful of the dawn.

You see, Azulita, the entire valley, were very humble and small beneath the lowering grandeur of the vast desolate mountains all around. Those grim mountains were the lair and the eyrie of the terror of that entire great state—Francisco Morel and his horde. Morel, rebuffed as a savage when he was all ready to embrace the Revolu-

tion, had flown to the hills with his men to fight for liberty in his own way. And his incredible war was succeeding. He kept an invisible cordon tightly drawn about Azulita, harrying its defenders, raiding like lightning and vanishing like smoke. The capital paid no attention to the garrison's plight. And it was a bad plight. The railroad alone kept the town in touch with the outside world. It ran fitfully, every train swarming with guards—but it ran. It was the last slender lifeline. The garrison at Azulita hung on, neglected, heroic, fighting a war of depletion without passion or hate.

The alarms and excursions were many. Sometimes it was mere nerves, sometimes the discovery of a small enemy party prowling the night for stray horses. One midnight brought an attack that rocked the town with the force of the blow. The outposts were slaughtered, and a raiding party was loose in the outlying streets before the garrison could turn out in force. There followed a retreat and then a blind rifle duel in the darkness just outside town. It had been a narrow escape, and that pointless, crazy battle was ferocious with fear of the unknown in the night.

O'Shaughnessy was in the thick of it. Lieutenant Escandrillo was with him. Escandrillo was a tall, handsome, high-strung and utterly fearless young officer, and O'Shaughnessy daily dreaded to lose him, for his zeal often outran discretion. Tonight he was all in a fever.

"Captain O'Shaughnessy—let me mount the men and charge. They are dismounted out there." Escandrillo indicated the long thin streak of rifle flashes in darkness that marked the enemy's line. "I can cut them down like rabbits."

"When did you ever cut down a rabbit, little one?" O'Shaughnessy asked dryly. "Don't you know that's just what they want us to do? Ten to one there's a party on the other side of town only waiting for us to be drawn out there and disorganized."

He was a soldier, this O'Shaughnessy.

But even the O'Shaughnessy could be unmanned by the utterly unexpected. He was aware just then of someone near, coming close. He made out a little V of white that was the frilly front of a shirtwaist. His heart froze. It was Alexandra.

II

IN HIS passion O'Shaughnessy yelled at her, "What in hell are you doing here? Get back under cover!"

"Please, Red—don't send me back. I am—oh, Red, I am truly thrilled!"

She crouched beside him, and he could make out the luminosity of her eyes, gazing in some pagan soaring of spirit at the long string of unearthly blue flashes winking out there in the thunder and the darkness.

"My God, go back, Alexandra, or I'll have one of my men run you back!"

Then a voice spoke sharply. "That will do, Captain." It was Gomez. "I have escorted the Señorita Alexandra out here at her express desire, and I will be responsible for her."

O'Shaughnessy's tongue was stilled, but not the fury in his heart. He reached for the lapels of the tailored jacket and jerked them over the telltale V.

"Fasten that," he ordered.

"Thank you," she said meekly, and obeyed. "Please don't be angry with me, Red. This is what I came for. It is my job and my life as well as yours."

He could not answer. He could only endure the coldness tight about his heart and a dread of battle that he had often seen in men and himself never before known.

The dawn broke over an empty, peaceful valley. The whole thing ended as so many of such battles did: it petered out, and first light found the enemy nonexistent, vanished over the *pedregal.* Some horses were gone and others slain, a dozen men were killed and many more wounded, and a night's sleep was lost, and that was all.

O'Shaughnessy's orderly awakened him after two hours' rest. Miguel was a stocky, stolid Indian with the massive jaw and sloping forehead of the Toltec. He brought weak hot coffee for *el capitán*—a minor miracle in a town where even basic supplies were very low. The sun streamed in the doorway of the adobe hut, and Miguel squatted while O'Shaughnessy sipped the steaming coffee, and they talked, as was their custom.

Miguel's talk today was ominous, even if ambiguous. O'Shaughnessy said at last, "So there are treachery and evil men in town, Mike? Who, for instance?"

Miguel shrugged. He was never voluble, and never one to go off half cocked. But evil was in the air, he said. "I know. I feel."

O'Shaughnessy knew then that something was coming, and he said, "Keep on talking."

Miguel was, in a way of speaking, O'Shaughnessy's left hand and his third eye. He was no mere servant—the knack of servility wasn't in him. His quiet wanderings, his ferret-like watch over all that went on, the gleanings he gathered of gossip by the campfires—all these had before this proved valuable indeed to O'Shaughnessy.

He talked, and O'Shaughnessy listened and said, "I'll grant you that Gomez will bear watching, Mike. I know him too well, and he's plain bad by instinct. He's been after my hide since we first looked each other in the eye, and for no good reason on earth. But tell me—why do you not trust the young foreign girl?"

Miguel gave him a basilisk look. "Some people I do not trust. I do not ask why. That is enough. The time is yet to come when I am mistaken."

O'Shaughnessy swallowed that, shrugged slightly, and did not press him. He was not invited to. Miguel was well aware of his attachment to the young foreign girl. He spoke his mind in spite of that, perhaps because of that. And it was a mind of other insights and other wisdoms than O'Shaughnessy's.

Red O'Shaughnessy's thoughts that day were long thoughts, very long.

AS SOON as he was free in the late afternoon, O'Shaughnessy went to the Mariposa. He was in time to see Alexandra and Major Gomez mount their horses for a ride. The officer wore a glorious new uniform that had never seen light of day in Azulita before. Alexandra, of course, looked lovely. They made a dashing pair as they trotted from the plaza. Alexandra waved to O'Shaughnessy, with a look in her eyes that was at once mocking and pleading. He watched them go, and there was a kind of fever rising in him. He walked into the bar and resumed his thinking over a *copita* of brandy.

Late that night a ragged *pelado* brought O'Shaughnessy a note from Alexandra. He glanced at it, grabbed up his hat, and hurried out. She was waiting for him in the shadows of the

Mariposa patio. She was gay and talkative and intimate, her voice caressing, her hand touching his sleeve placatingly, her pleasure at seeing him entreating to be shared. But she could not carry it off in the face of his silence. She wilted a little.

"Red . . . you are angry with me. Why?"

O'Shaughnessy's reply, quiet as it was, seemed to come rushing out of a far cold remoteness. "I'm not mad. But I want to know something."

"Yes?"

"Exactly what is Major Gomez to you?"

She gripped his arm. "Is it Gomez? Is it really?"

"No. Only partly. I damned well want to know, too, just exactly what it is you're doing here in Azulita?"

"*Do*-ing?" She sat still, looking at him.

"Yes. How about those articles of yours? I haven't seen you doing any writing to speak of."

"Red . . . !"

"Well?"

She was on her feet. She was in a storm of urgency. "Come! Come with me and I will show you."

"Come where?"

"I have the papers and magazines in my room. With my own name printed. I demand that you come and look at them."

He decided to look at them. They mounted by an outside stairway of old masonry to the upper floor, and in her room Alexandra tore into a small trunk in a corner. She brought out half a dozen publications. At that time O'Shaughnessy understood no French, but the name signed to the articles was undeniably hers. They were war pieces, travel pieces.

"Now!" she said. "You have seen. Now tell me what is wrong. Is it still Gomez?"

He could not answer. He could not tell her about Miguel, about the doubt and suspicion that his Mike had sown. You see, there was the conviction in the very heart of him that his Mike had damned well called the turn. He always had. O'Shaughnessy could tell her nothing, not even the resentment in his own soul, not a hint of the bitterness born of battles fought without heart for leader or cause. Yet they were strangers both in an alien land, the two of them. He could not answer, but he could say, must say, holding her before him by the firm small shoulders, "Don't mind me, Alexandra. I'm a soldier, I guess, with a soldier's way. But talk to me. Tell me what you know about Gomez. I'd like to hear."

"But I only know what you know. That is all. Or . . . but, Red, is there something I should know that I do not?"

"How can I say? Keep on talking."

"Why, I know he is the son of good family. I know he was cashiered out of the army before Madero's time. He was cast off by his own people in disgrace."

"Yes?"

"I understand it was because he agitated for the Revolution even then."

"Right . . . even though I've heard tell that the agitation involved regimental funds. And?"

"And that is all. Everything."

"Everything?"

"Oh, well . . . there are maybe details, all of no importance, from acquaintance here in Azulita."

"I see. You mean you never met him before you came here?"

She took a deep breath. "Red, is that what you are trying to find out? Why do you not ask me first? Of course I met him here."

HE NODDED. He looked at her, and she studied him, but O'Shaughnessy's thoughts were not to be read on his face. He was thinking that he was no good at this, at baiting her, even if she was lying, and that not even the torment of doubt in him could drive him on. And he was thinking of other things also. Of the fragrance that came from her, so close. Of the soft warmth of her in the grip of his two hands. Of those things that can rob a man of all sense and cool judgment. And on top of all, of still another thing like a horror that he tried to keep blurred in his mind so he could not see the image of it, of the dawn and a line of rifles leveled . . .

He said. "Alexandra, Alexandra—" and he stopped. And then he said, "Oh, hell, let's forget about it. I was only wondering."

He released her, but she would not go. She held him, and was even closer now, holding him. "Red, what is on your mind? What are you thinking? What is this Gomez to me?"

"That's what I got to wondering."

"He is nothing. He is what you call 'copy'. You know that, Red . . . !"

"What?"

"Tell me the truth. Is it that you are—made jealous by this Gomez?"

And so O'Shaughnessy lied. He said, "Yes, I am." And yet, and a curious, tormenting thing to consider—it was not really a lie at all.

He could feel her tremble. Her voice was a little husky as she said, "My Red . . . do you know what love is?"

"I guess I do."

She whispered, "Red . . . I love you. I tell you so because I know in my heart that you love me. Isn't that so?"

And it was so. By all the saints in heaven, it was so—and he could no more deny it than he could deny the sun or the moon or the stars in their courses. It was her hour and her triumph, whatever the cost.

And so the trap that life had set for these two was sprung at last, although neither felt the pain of the grip of it then, nor even thought of its existence. They thought only of that hour that was theirs, so wholly theirs, and of nothing else and of no moment of time beyond it. They had found each other, who had never dreamed of each other, and they were together, and that was all that mattered. They loved, and they were lovers, and the world was suspended for a time in favor of a universe they occupied alone.

III

THE night passed, and tomorrow came, and life went on, unpredictable and indifferent to this miracle they had discovered. The war did not pause for them. It flamed on, ever more terrible. A few days later O'Shaughnessy was assigned the job of leading a column out into the valley for a reconnaissance patrol in force. It was a dangerous business, but he set about it with grim zest. It meant something. It was work to do. It was a chance to clear out of Azulita just for a little while, perhaps to get clear of a stormy sea of thoughts and feelings, perhaps to find something in the way of calmer new ones to replace them.

A bit of a surprise came with the last moment of preparation, when Major Gomez announced that he was going along with the patrol. Not to take over command. These were not his men. It was O'Shaughnessy's job, by specific order. He was a soldier, and headquarters was well aware of that. Gomez, it seemed, was going along for the ride.

The patrol, as O'Shaughnessy expected, found nothing. They never did. The outposts were vigilant. The blue haze of dusk over the great valley was peaceful and empty. The small rise just south of town, used for artillery emplacement and observation, reported all quiet. The column rode on, swinging a wide circle in the twilight, the stealthy, swift twilight.

Then something happened. O'Shaughnessy was riding in the van with Gomez when the major made a peculiar sound in his throat, spasmodic and half choked. Then he found voice and screamed, *"Aqui empieza!* Morelistos! The barranca, the barranca!"

It was sheer madness. Frantic, it paralyzed the column. But not O'Shaughnessy. He saw it clearly in a flash. The enemy. Morel's *patriotas.* The brushgrown bank of the dry watercourse just ahead was alive with them. They were in effective ambush, creeping into firing position, their mounts out of sight in the cut.

O'Shaughnessy's first act, amazingly, was to jam his pistol hard in the major's ribs. "Gomez—not a sound out of you!"

It did the trick. Whatever the major next intended, if anything, he now looked at O'Shaughnessy, glared at the gun, but he did not speak. There was a veritable madness in the man's eyes. Whether of terror or reckless hysteria or fanatic courage, O'Shaughnessy did not know. Nor care. It was *not* the moment for madness of any kind.

All this was in a single explosive instant. O'Shaughnessy's next act was to flash his saber and give the long electrifying yell of a cavalry combat command. The troop moved promptly to a man. And a long crackle of rifle fire opened from the line of the Morelistos.

Now what followed was routine. Dirty, bloody routine, to be sure, but too familiar a business in that war to chronicle in detail. You see, they all knew they were hopelessly outnumbered, else the ragged *patriotas* would never have remained to give open battle. The military objective of that column was to get away from there as fast as God would let them. The enemy's objective was to whittle them off as fast as possible while that was being done. It will be enough to say that O'Shaughnessy got his little force, trained and tough of morale, speedily into full retreat with a minimum loss of time and men and military honor.

There was pursuit, of course, immediate and grim. The valley floor was suddenly flooded with Morelistos. There was a horde of them. They came yelling, racing on frenzied animals. They came without formation or order, and overtaking an unfortunate Federal, wounded or straggling, they left a dead man behind.

And it was at that stage of affairs that Major Gomez' handsome mount either stumbled or stopped a bullet, and flinching, threw his rider headlong to earth.

It was a strange thing O'Shaughnessy did then. An insane thing, by any reckoning. It was a rigid convention of that war that any man fallen behind must be abandoned—and the enemy took no prisoners. Now, the instant he realized what had happened, O'Shaughnessy wheeled his mount like a whip snapping. His sergeant tried to stop him, but O'Shaughnessy was off to the rear where Gomez had fallen. The sergeant shouted in frantic indecision, and then joined him. A little private, for no reason within the understanding of man, suddenly left the ranks and went along, yelling what

might well have been an ancient Aztec battle cry.

The major, evidently, was half stunned. He was on hands and knees, shaking his head. O'Shaughnessy pulled up.

"Up, Gomez! Up behind!"

"No puedo. I cannot."

"Dios, si puedes! Vite, vite!"

Then the enemy thundered upon them.

O'SHAUGHNESSY was too desperately busy with his man to take clear note of all that went on. There was a clashing of sabers on machetes. There was a cursing and yelling and scream of horses. There was no shooting—that was the queer thing. His two men seemed to be on all sides of him as he hauled the major from the ground by catching one wrist.

Miracles occur at such moments. One occurred here—O'Shaughnessy, by his own sole strength, you might say, had the major mounted behind and was off. And they made it. Their own rearguard, rallying and charging, made a demonstration that scared off the cluster of Morelistos. It came just in time.

In time, that is, for O'Shaughnessy and the major. The sergeant and one now long forgotten little private lay slain in the bloody dust.

And so that minor engagement too went sputtering out. The entire column was halted and thrown into action by Lieutenant Escandrillo. The Morelistos hesitated, milled about, and decided to call it a day. Both sides could make out by now, you see, the relief column already burning up the road from town.

O'Shaughnessy rode with Gomez on the return journey. He kept, so to say, half an eye steadily on the man as they rode, and it was an icy, inquisitive sort of eye. The major was quite fit again. He was grim, unreadable, silent, but he was plainly containing something that would soon out. It was when they were safe home that he spoke, stiffly, malignantly.

"For a gallant deed, I shall commend you to our general, Captain O'Shaughnessy," he said. His gaze did not waver. "But I am your superior officer. It is unfortunate. Because for insubordination under fire, and for cowardice in ordering a retreat without engaging the enemy, I am compelled to make charges."

O'Shaughnessy smiled. It was not a very pleasant smile though. He said almost gently, "Of course you know there is usually only one outcome to charges of that kind, Major Gomez."

"That, Captain O'Shaughnessy, is for the general to decide. You may consider yourself under arrest in your own custody until further orders."

O'Shaughnessy did not move as the major stalked away. He only stared, and beneath his soldier's tan his face turned slowly white. There are men, you know, who turn red with rage, and there are some who turn quite pale. The first may react reasonably to tact or to warning, but in the case of the latter, unless you are terribly sure of yourself, there is only one thing to do —get out of the neighborhood, quickly.

O'Shaughnessy went directly to his quarters. He looked for Miguel, but Mike was not around. He asked a sentry if the man had seen him, but the sentry had not. Grimly O'Shaughnessy marched to the adobe hut Escandrillo shared with another officer and went through his effects. He found what he was after. It was a bottle of brandy. O'Shaughnessy took it home with him, poured half a tumbler, and sat down with it, to think and to consider.

Now there are times when the thoughts of a man may not be put on paper, for they are not wholly thoughts, with words ready-made that will name them, but partly emotions and partly the stirrings of dark and unknowable instincts that go back to the beginnings of time. Such are the thoughts of a man before murder, of a soldier before desertion—and of a lover, say, contemplating the uncertainty and limitless doubtfulness of that one who holds his life in her hands.

There was Gomez, who was one thing. And a man may handle one thing at a time, who is any man at all. But then there was Alexandra, who was another—who was any number, adding up to infinity.

O'Shaughnessy sat there, still as death itself, set of face, staring into nothingness over the empty glass.

It was a voice calling querulously into the darkness of the hut that aroused him. It was a messenger, a boy from the hotel, and he had been looking everywhere. A note for *el capitan*. From *la señorita*. And, *Dios*, of a most tremendous urgency!

Alexandra was more than urgent. She was even a little hysterical. She had heard evil news. He must come, he must come without fail, and he must see her and they must talk. Let nothing, nothing delay him. She was frantic, and he could not know how important it was. She would expect him in exactly one hour of the writing.

O'Shaughnessy glanced at his watch, paused only to freshen up a little bit, and hurried out.

THERE was even more than the usual gathering of officers on the Mariposa verandah. Lanterns swung gently in the soft evening breeze, and the mocking birds scolded sleepily in the deep shadows of the trees on the plaza. It was a scene of leisure and tranquillity, as false as the eternal brooding peace on the face of the mountains that walled in that doomed valley.

Alexandra was there, languid, softly laughing, bantering with the attentive group of men. She was not seated with them. She stood in the doorway, waiting, the light from within making a halo of her dark, glinting hair, her body a silhouette of slender, firmly rounded perfection. Tonight she wore a gown, white with a dull shimmer, that fell to the very toes of her startling red slippers. Over her shoulders she wore a black silken shawl with an enormous fringe that swung and rippled as she laughed. O'Shaughnessy's heart felt something like a fist suddenly, painfully clenched as he saw her.

Without parley O'Shaughnessy carried her away—to the chill, disconcerted silence of the men on the verandah. Together they crossed the plaza, unhurried but explicit in their strolling pace. They walked past the massive government house first built by Cortez. They passed along a narrow sidewalk, lost in the shadows of the bougainvillea billowing over a plaster wall. They talked lightly of trivia, unimportantly.

Then all at once Alexandra went to pieces. It was without least warning, with a sudden, muffled, gasping sob. She halted O'Shaughnessy and clung to him in a frenzy of desperation. He drew her quickly into the angle of a darkened iron gateway, and held her there firmly, talking to her quietly as he might talk to an hysterical recruit.

"Oh, Red—my Red—what are they going to do to you?" she sobbed. "I have heard. The charges. . . ."

He told her they were nothing, no worry at all.

She said, "Oh, but that Gomez! He is a devil, a fiend!"

"I'll take care of Gomez, honey. Don't you worry."

"But he will have you shot."

"He will not! The general gives the orders around here."

"Yes, I know," she moaned. "But oh, that Gomez! You do not know him. I should have warned you."

He paused. "Warned me of what?"

"The kind of man he is. I know him. I lied to you."

He laughed and told her gently, "I know you did. But that matters so little."

"I was afraid. You were jealous. I lied so you would not be jealous. I met him just once in Mexico City."

"Sure, sure, honey. Let's forget Gomez."

A new fear assailed her. "But, Red—I did not lie when I said he was nothing to me. I swear to it. You are the only man, there was never another."

"I've never asked you if there was, have I?"

"And you believe me when I say that, Red. You do believe me?"

He closed his eyes for an instant, but he said quietly, "I believe you."

She moaned, "Oh, Red, my Red—I love you so much!"

THEY stood in the gateway angle a long time. She quieted as that storm spent itself, even though she was still tense, and still insisted on talking about Gomez, about the charges, about means of countering them. He thought: she is both revealing and deceiving; she is torn between the two and does not know her own mind. And he thought—we can neither of us speak our minds, for we dare not.

But something was working in her, even though it was slow and fearful in coming to a head. "Red," she said, "you tell me you love me."

"Yes."

"Would you do something for me?"

"Maybe."

"I am afraid you will say no."

"Then I likely will say no. Tell me what it is."

She paused, and her hand sought his face and stroked his cheek, pleading. "Red—would you come away with me?"

"Come away? With you? You mean to desert?"

"How can you say that—to desert. What is there to desert? I am young, but I am wise, Red. This army is finished. There is only a little time left."

"How do you know?"

"Don't *you* know? Can't you see?"

He did not answer. She went on, "Already the government has deserted you. You are abandoned here. Your men know it, and I do not have to tell you about the great number that have already slipped away by night with their rifles and ammunition to go to join Morel. Can you call them deserters?"

"I can," he said harshly. "I've shot two of them."

She made a sound of pity. "Oh, Red—but why?"

"Why? Because in war, with an enemy trying his damnedest to kill you, you rely on the man next to you. You need him. You know that without him, all alone, you're a goner. You can't keep watching him, you count on him, and if you find him doublecrossing you or quitting you, you kill him as quick as you can, because that's the only way you can stay alive. There's no other way in war."

"No other way?"

"None that I know of."

"But there is! Ah, my Red," she

groaned, "you give reasons, but you do not talk common sense now. You are facing charges that are lies, and you may even face a firing squad. Your cause has abandoned you, your own comrades are abandoning you—and you talk of relying on others."

"I do because I've got to." He swore. "Listen, Alexandra. I may be a damned fool in your eyes, but there are rules a man simply has got to stick to. I couldn't go through life splitting hairs every decision I came to. Regardless of my cause or my comrades—and I count on a little common sense tomorrow—but regardless of everything, I have a little mob of unbeatable innocents in my command who look to me for everything from hell to breakfast. Their lives, even. Don't you think that's of consequence? They trust me—they trust me because they know I've spared their lives on occasion at the cost of my own little glory, and because of that they'd storm the very citadel of Francisco Morel if I could lead them to it. I can't quit them cold."

"No? And who will look after them when you have been placed against a wall and shot, my brave hero?"

He took her arms and began to push her from him in the cold deliberation of anger. But she would not go.

"No, do not, Red—do not put me away. Hold me, hold me. Oh, I *do* understand! It is only that I am racked by a thousand fears for you. I know what they are capable of doing. And I won't let them. I want you for myself, I want you."

He suffered her in silence. She went on, "I must go soon. In five days. My pass expires. I go to Mexico City. I shall stay there. You can come and join me. No one will dare harm you—you are an American. If you want, I will even go with you out of this desperate country. I will go anywhere. Don't you see? Oh, I want you so, my Red. Don't you want me?"

He was silent. She whispered incredulously, "Red . . . don't you want me?"

"I do," he said. "You damned well know. But I'm not going with you. And apart from all scruples of conscience, there's a quite insurmountable reason I think you should readily guess."

"What? Gomez?"

"Gomez? Gomez be damned! You know what I mean!"

"What just do you mean?"

He said in an odd tone, "Nothing."

She was shaking as if with cold. "Red . . . what are you—planning to do?"

"Nothing." And he added, "Hadn't we better end this conversation right at this point, and save later regrets?"

"Oh," she moaned. "All right. If you wish." And she stood there for a time as if helpless, wilted and unstrung and shivering, and then she said, "Take me back now, please, Red."

HE STARTED walking toward the Mariposa. She walked alongside. They did not talk. On the way she began to cry, and she cried very quietly until they drew near the plaza, and then stopped and dried her eyes and put on some powder and covered all signs.

They strolled up to the verandah of the hotel as they had departed, unhurried and talking of trivia, unimportantly.

O'Shaughnessy went home after that and turned in without seeing anyone.

He did not sleep. As he lay there alone the sounds of the night crept into the room to occupy it with him, each one like a presence. There was the tiny rustle of the myriad living

things in the great wide world, so oblivious of the meaningless concerns of man. The sound of leaves and insects and the night breeze sighing. The horses in the corral—a soft blowing of nostrils, then a whinny, shrill, querulous. Two soldiers in muffled argument somewhere, Latin, unappeasable. The creak of a native cart on some endless midnight journey. A baby crying, in Azulita an awesome, incredible sound. And far across the town, a guitar and a voice singing numberless verses, each one beginning, *"Mi corazón—"*

Mi corazón . . . my heart, my dearest heart . . .

For an hour O'Shaughnessy stuck it out doggedly, and then gave up. He got up with an oath and went out and he walked. He walked like one possessed. Once or twice a sentry challenged him, and let him pass. He strode the dark, deserted streets of the old town as though hastening to a rendezvous he could not keep soon enough, and his only aim was to be alone, to keep going, to wear down the persistent, violent beating of his heart, that would not quiet, but beat on as if oppressed by suffocation.

And O'Shaughnessy came at length, in the stillness of the night, to the one place he knew where the violence might be stilled and the oppression ended. He stood in the shadows of the *ciruelas* in the patio of the Mariposa, and he looked up and there was a light in Alexandra's room. He climbed the old outside stairs and made no sound, and he scratched a nail softly on the panel of her door.

She froze, standing there, when she opened the door and saw who it was. A single question was tremendous in her wide eyes, a single, dread question. She was in a white silken negligée, and the room behind her was strewn with clothes and feminine gear and two traveling bags were open on chairs.

"Red?" she said. "Red . . .?" And she could not name her dread question.

He slid inside the door and closed it. "I'm all alone. This isn't official. Don't worry."

She reached out and touched him, tentatively. She could not be sure, sure. He looked at her, motionless. She searched his face and was baffled, and she closed her eyes slowly and leaned against him, limp and fear-worn and wordless. And then suddenly her arms enclosed his neck and her lips sought his; and he was holding her tightly, tenderly and fiercely; and that vicious little war and all the world vanished in a flash into limitless space and time and they were together alone, without thought or doubt or question.

Afar, the guitar played late in the night and the voice sang, plaintive and poignant, the song of *"Mi corazón . . ."*

My heart, my dearest heart . . . my beloved one . . .

IV

THE following morning Miguel entered O'Shaughnessy's hut when the sun was an hour high, and though he spoke urgently, he was forced to shake *el capitán* by the shoulder before O'Shaughnessy roused. One look, and O'Shaughnessy was out of bed and awake. Those obsidian eyes were afire in their secret depths with purpose and savage satisfaction.

"The general sees you today, *mi capitán*, no?"

"First thing this morning, I hope."

"Bueno! Have no fear. You may talk. You may crucify this Gomez."

"How?"

Miguel placed in O'Shaughnessy's

hand three soiled and crumpled pieces of paper. On each was much writing in ink, two of them violet and one black. Before reading a word, O'Shaughnessy reflected, as if in the back of his mind, that the ink supplied at the Mariposa was violet and that headquarters always used black.

"Where did you get these?"

Miguel was again ambiguous. Enough that he got them. A miserable *pelado,* a woodcutter and peddler, had carried them. He was on his way out of town with them—on his way to the hills and Francisco Morel. Miguel had been watching him, coming and going. He had ferreted out the spy and caught his game at first pounce. O'Shaughnessy did not inquire into the fate of the woodcutter. He knew that the man would not be heard from again.

Miguel said: "These things Gomez says are lies. I have heard this from the men who rode with you, even if I did not already know. If the general would listen—"

"Generals don't listen to the men who do the fighting, Mike."

"That I know," Mike said grimly. "That is why my heart is made glad by this, and my spirit now is content."

O'Shaughnessy smiled a little. "You quite enjoy seeing people killed, Mike, don't you?"

"The right people, the people who have earned death, yes! And, *por Dios,* did I not name—the right people?"

O'Shaughnessy had no retort. He could not meet that challenge. He studied the grimy documents. Then he stared into space a moment, granite-faced. And he said, "You will say nothing of these to anyone, Mike."

Mike said, watching him, "The *señorita* takes the military train this afternoon for Mexico City. So I have learned."

O'Shaughnessy faced that black, opaque gaze squarely, and said, "I learned that myself last night. You have my orders."

Miguel stared an instant, then dropped his eyes and murmured acknowledgement. He had his orders.

COURTS martial in that army and at that time were never affairs of much ceremony. The accused was lucky to get any kind of a hearing at all. The commanding general, an educated savage, was shrewd and ruthless, and he was both court and advocate. So O'Shaughnessy, well aware of his value to the forces, counted on at least an interview with the general. He got even more, for when the summons came, he was allowed to call on witnesses in his defense. He invited only Lieutenant Escandrillo to vouch for him. The lieutenant was badly upset, and could not understand O'Shaughnessy's refusal to be alarmed.

Major Gomez, baleful and silent, was with the general when O'Shaughnessy faced him. The major had already told his story, and doubtless eloquently. O'Shaughnessy told what was the same story, fact for fact, dryly, impersonally, advancing no argument. He said nothing at all about Miguel's three documents. The facts, he said in effect, could speak for themselves.

It was Lieutenant Escandrillo, fairly incandescent with passion, who brought drama into the hearing. He interrupted O'Shaughnessy and would listen to nothing until he had told his own story. It was more than a heated defense, it was eulogy. The captain had been forced to throttle the major's hysteria at the very outset of the encounter with the enemy. He had saved the morale of the troops, and without a second's loss of time had extricated

them from a death trap. The enemy, three to their one, were securely entrenched; only a suicidal maniac would think for an instant of engaging them. The captain's retreat was brilliant tactics. And to cap it all, when the major was down and doomed to certain death, the captain had abandoned all caution and effected a rescue. If this, the lieutenant concluded, was to be adjudged insubordination and cowardice, he, Emilio Juan Escandrillo y Cadonzes, demanded the right to take his place alongside his captain when the sentence of the court was executed!

O'Shaughnessy wore a sardonic smile as he looked on. Good kid, Escandrillo—with a rare gift of friendship and loyalty. The general was another matter. He was a great powder barrel of a man, in bulk and temper; he wore sweeping black mustachios and a poker face. He was a great soldier—but then, O'Shaughnessy reflected grimly, Huerta had also been a great soldier, worshiped in the early days by his men for the victories he gave them. The later days were again another matter. Nothing was fixed and fast and reliable in this queer, unhappy country.

The general, no fool by any means, heard the lieutenant out, cutting him short within no more than a word or two of his conclusion. Then he abruptly roared for silence, thereby gaining an effect without loss of anything he wanted to hear. Gomez stood stiffly by, red with fury. In the silence, the general's ominous gaze swung to O'Shaughnessy and pinned him fast.

"You are an *Americano,* Captain O'Shaughnessy," he told him. "In less polite language, a gringo. It is unfortunate, but the people of your country are the least beloved of any nation by the people of my country. You have served well, but you have not walked softly, I may say, and you would do well to walk softly, my captain. There are spies and traitors, and sometimes we find them underfoot, very conveniently."

"I've found that often to be the case, General," O'Shaughnessy said dryly.

"I will dismiss the charges, though they may still be debatable. We will ascribe this affair to misunderstanding under stress of action with the enemy. But I do not wish to see you here again on any kind of charge. Do you understand that?"

"Perfectly. But may I ask why I am to be made an exception?"

"Because you are of yourself an exception. You are not one of us. Your loyalty to the Revolution—where is it? What man knows?"

O'Shaughnessy glanced at the chagrined Gomez. The man suffered, stewing in his own juice. O'Shaughnessy respectfully shrugged. "In this army, my own command is all the country I own to. My loyalty is theirs as long as it is welcome. I belong to no man or party other than that, I guess. But I hope that's satisfactory."

The general rumbled in vague irritation. "We will see. I think we have no more to say now. Dismiss!"

AND that was that, leaving O'Shaughnessy somewhere between heaven and earth surely. He had a drink on it in a most sardonic mood. There was quiet of a kind in the soul of the O'Shaughnessy, a strange and peculiar peace such as Caesar is presumed to have known after he had crossed the Rubicon. It was not the peace of end of strife, it was only the beginning. But it was the end of indecision.

What pain and regret lay ahead,

O'Shaughnessy could not possibly measure, and he forebore to try. What was coming, would come—and by Heaven, he told himself, it would likely enough be plenty before all this was over!

O'Shaughnessy sent a note to the hotel, telling Alexandra that he would come to escort her to the military train—alone. The company of Gomez or anyone else would be unwelcome. He left to her the management of that, sure she would obey. He had not opposed her sudden flight. He had not, last night, even let her discuss it. He had not let her discuss anything that touched on the future or the past, even though, baffled and frightened and heartsick, a half wild creature in the very hour of that ecstacy, she had wanted to talk, was sick with wanting to talk, to know. She loved him.

Alexandra was waiting, with her bags already stowed in a mule-driven hack when O'Shaughnessy came for her. She got in, and they started, with O'Shaughnessy riding alongside. The distance was short, and they did not try to talk, but her eyes never left him. No one could have told from the calm look of him all that was going on inside the man.

Presently they stood together in the bustle of the depot, alone and isolated on the tiny island of their own concerns. A rapid firing gun was being mounted on a flatcar with a great confusion of orders. A small horde of regulars assigned to guard duty lounged in patches of shade, awaiting the order to board the rooftops of the cars. War was at once a near thing and a very, very far thing.

"My Red, my Red," she said, taking between two fingers just a little of the cloth of his sleeve. "You will not come with me."

"No, I'm afraid not."

"And am I never to see you again?"

"Who knows? Maybe. Some day there'll be peace."

"Peace? But you know what kind of peace will come here to Azulita before then!"

He smiled slowly. "You mean annihilation? Well, maybe. I'll have something to say about that. My men also."

She jerked the cloth of the sleeve this way and that, exasperated and desperate. "But Red, don't you *know?* Don't you understand?"

He took a deep breath and brought from a pocket two crumpled pieces of paper, two pieces closely overwritten in violet ink. "I guess I understand well enough, my dear. But it's not as bad as you think. I stopped these from doing any damage for the present. You can have them back, but I'd advise you to destroy them."

HER eyes went wide with stark fear. She was transfixed. He had to take her limp hand and hold it over the crumpled papers.

"You—" she said, and could not speak. She swallowed, and went on, "You know everything? I thought you only suspected, Red."

"I began by suspecting. I wound up with these. They are devilishly clever! I think you're quite right in your conclusion that an attack in force might easily swamp us. As a professional report on the garrison and the town's defenses, these would do credit to any soldier. And my dear, are they—everything?"

"They're everything." Her eyes were bleak and her face was bleak. "Everything except my first notes to Francisco Morel, establishing contact with him."

"Who sent you?"

She looked at him, despairing, doubting. "Pancho Villa sent me. He is joining forces with Morel."

"And where does Gomez fit in?"

She shrugged. "It has been known a long time that Gomez was not too loyal. But he was cautious. He demanded money and much reassurance. It was part of my mission to persuade him. It was not difficult—but he is trusted by no one. He is no patriot. He is only a traitor."

"What ever induced you to get mixed up in this sort of thing?"

A spark of fire flashed briefly in her gaze. "You don't think I have reason? Hounded out of my native country as a child? My father barely escaping with his life? You ask me that? The cause of the Revolution is my cause, anywhere there exists tyranny and oppression."

"Well . . . that's as good a reason as any other, I guess."

And then suddenly she was crying. "Oh, but I don't care any more. Red, Red, why did this have to happen to us? I want you so, and my heart is breaking."

He stood there looking at her, and he was turning white for all his burnished tan and his eyes looked very young and almost frightened. "Don't, honey. Don't, for God's sake! This isn't any too easy for me. I've done all I can do."

"You haven't."

"I've signed my death warrant—if they ever find out that I let you go like this. Isn't that enough?"

"You know it isn't!" She ignored the indifferent soldiery, the milling and confusion, and beat at his rigid breast with small clenched fists. "If you loved me, you'd believe me and you'd come with me."

"And join Morel?"

"No. Abandon them all. I only want you to save yourself. Even if my mission has failed, others will not. Nothing can save this town. No one here will escape. The end is already near."

"It is?"

"Oh, but it *is*, Red! I'll tell you this much more. The news has already gone that I am leaving today. That required no writing, no notes. This town is full of friends of Morel. And this will be the last train ever to leave here. The track will be totally destroyed. I know the plans."

He said nothing.

She went on, pleading, "I can't convince you?"

Through set teeth he said, "Yes, you can convince me, Alexandra. But, by God, you can't persuade me! Judas alive, I've doublecrossed my people, the men I've fought with. I've betrayed men who have died for me by letting you go. I should have you shot, by my oath, though God help me, I can't. I'll square that with my conscience, but beyond that I'm licked. I couldn't face it out. And I wouldn't want to face it with you . . . hating you."

"You would hate *me?*"

"What do you think?"

She took a deep breath and dropped her eyes, and she plucked, all unseeing, at the edges of her crumpled handkerchief. She had no answer.

He said, "You'd better get aboard. They'll be off any minute."

SHE began walking toward the coach steps. He walked along with her. She did not say anything. The *cochero* had already placed her things aboard. She stopped at the steps, not looking at O'Shaughnessy. He stood there, and there were no words in him.

And then in a flash she had her arms around his neck and she was clinging, sobbing as if her heart would break.

"Oh, how can I leave you, Red? Don't send me away. Keep me. I'll stay here with you. I don't care what happens to me."

"Don't, honey, don't."

"Keep me here, keep me, Red!"

"No. That would be suicide. For both of us."

"I don't care!"

"Then I'll do the caring for two. We were licked from the start. I can't go and you can't stay. You'd better get aboard."

She went limp and still, and he thought for a swift instant that she had fainted. But she only leaned against him for a moment, and then pulled herself together.

There was a bawling of orders, and the idle guards rose and moved upon the train. They began to clamber all over it. A great hiss of steam came from the ancient locomotive.

Alexandra gave O'Shaughnessy one look as if to fix the image of him forever in her sight. She said, "Good-by, my Red." And she ran up the steps into the car.

The last O'Shaughnessy saw of her was a white hand fluttering from a window as the train pulled out of the depot. The hand released a slip of paper that floated and sailed aloft in the disturbed air. He walked along the tracks and picked up the paper. It bore an address in Mexico City and the single sentence, "If ever you want me, ask here where I am and they will tell you."

O'Shaughnessy read it over many times, and then struck a match and touched the flame to the paper. He got his horse and rode back to the Mariposa. He called a boy from the plaza and gave him a coin to take the animal to its corral. Then he went into the *cantina.* He ordered a glass and a bottle of brandy. And so provided, he proceeded to find out how thoroughly and painstakingly drunk it was possible for a man to get.

He found out. In fact his success made minor history in Azulita that night before Miguel, hastily summoned, firmly escorted him home to bed to sleep it off.

V

O'SHAUGHNESSY awakened well past sun-up next morning. It was like awakening in a minor hell of his own making. But when he saw the time he quickly sprang from bed. Miguel had been waiting patiently outside the hut, and he entered when he heard *el capitán* stirring. He was as much the basilisk as ever and had nothing to say, but O'Shaughnessy felt his scrutiny. O'Shaughnessy laughed, a bit grimly. Mike was clearly wondering how his master fared this morning, but he might have saved himself the concern. O'Shaughnessy's vast physical energy could take plenty of punishment. He sent Miguel off to bring Lieutenant Escandrillo while he shaved and dressed.

There was concern also in the lieutenant's attitude when he arrived, but O'Shaughnessy quickly allayed it. He talked as he finished dressing, crisply, vehemently.

"Young one, you'll remember, I'm thinking, that free-for-all that went on yesterday out in the valley while I was getting Major Gomez up and mounted behind me?"

"I do."

"Was there any shooting that you recall?"

"Shooting? *Dios,* yes! Plenty of shooting."

"I mean right on the spot—right

there where I picked up the major?"

Escandrillo thought, then shook his head. "No, when I stop to think. I remember none. It was all sabers and machetes."

"And how would you account for the fact that no shots were fired?"

The lieutenant shrugged. "The sheer excitement of close quarters, maybe. Men forget good sense at times."

"Some men. But not every man in an army. Those fellows did not fire because they had orders."

"Orders? But why?"

"So they wouldn't harm the major. He was to be their guest."

The lieutenant's stare was blank.

O'Shaughnessy laughed. "It takes a little believing, doesn't it? Luckily I have the proof. By Heaven, I have the proof! Gomez has been in touch with Morel."

"With Morel? Gomez?"

"Yes. I imagine most of the exchanges were verbal, coming cautiously to terms. But it seems that Gomez finally notified Morel that he was ready to come and have a talk with him. His value to Morel would be small if he simply deserted. It would be much smarter to let himself be captured. Then later, after a good visit with Morel and an understanding arrived at, he could conveniently escape, and turn up here again—a hero!"

"But why should he run all this risk?"

"Because he's yellow, primarily. That's not as contradictory as it sounds. He feels we're licked, and he's been ready to switch over for some time. God knows, I've seen the thing in his face myself, not knowing just what it was! I distrusted the man yesterday, I distrusted that fall he took, and in distrust and stubbornness I rescued him."

"But why, if this is true, did you not shoot him?"

"Because I didn't know his game. I was only guessing. It happens I guessed right. You see, young one, his chances of commanding a regiment under Morel would be greatly increased if he could but contrive to doublecross this garrison in some manner before showing his colors. There are a thousand ways a staff officer could do that. I think he even had one of them in mind when he seemed to be going off his head out in the valley yesterday."

Escandrillo looked at O'Shaughnessy and there was fury in his eyes, and he began to curse in a picturesque litany of Latin imprecation. But there was uncertainty in him too. O'Shaughnessy, after a glance at him, went to his jacket and got the third piece of paper, the crumpled piece with the writing in the black ink. He handed it to the young man.

"That's the message Gomez sent off to Morel last night after we got safely home. Take note of the handwriting. You'll find the whole story there. He regrets that their plan fell through, damn his black soul, because of the interference of a miserable *Americano*, and he promises better luck next time, and that a bit anxiously. Read it—see what you make of it."

Escandrillo read the message. He swore, slapped a hip, and started for the door. O'Shaughnessy spoke sharply, halting him.

Escandrillo begged, "Let me take care of this. They cannot then say it was revenge, as they may do with you."

"Revenge or not, you'll take my orders. This will be according to regulation. Get a couple of files and bring them here with fixed bayonets. And keep your mouth shut and that temper cool."

"You mean—to arrest him?"

"What else?"

Escandrillo did not say what else, but his very silence was eloquent.

O'Shaughnessy growled, "You have your orders."

Escandrillo shrugged uncomprehendingly and vanished.

THE grim little party found Major Gomez in his quarters. Gomez occupied an apartment in a handsome residence surrounding a patio cool with flowers and a singing fountain. O'Shaughnessy halted the detail in the patio, and without ceremony opened the door to the major's sitting room. Escandrillo was close at his heels.

Gomez, writing at a paper strewn table, looked up in surprise, then indignation. "What means this, Captain? What permission have you to enter this way?"

"I don't need permission, Major Gomez," O'Shaughnessy told him gently. "You're under arrest. Treason, I guess they'll call it."

"What are you talking about? Are you out of your head?"

Escandrillo snapped, "We are not. I have read the message myself."

"What message?"

O'Shaughnessy shook his head. "Bad luck, Gomez. The fortunes of war. I intercepted your letter to Morel."

For a long moment the major sat without motion, without expression, looking at them. Then he relaxed. He picked up a cigarette and lighted it. "That is bad, isn't it?" he drawled. "I don't know what there is for me to do—except to deny everything."

"You'll have all the opportunity in the world. But right this minute you're in process of coming into custody." O'Shaughnessy's tone changed, and it was like a whip lashing. "Stop fumbling and get out of there or I'll have my men haul you out."

Gomez arched his eyebrows delicately and got up. He walked from behind the table submissively. And like a cat springing, he was abruptly tearing at the revolver in a holster hanging on the wall.

Escandrillo flew into a lashing, scrambling motion, pulling his own gun, but O'Shaughnessy struck down his arm. O'Shaughnessy's revolver was already out, and he fired.

He fired twice, a third time, and a fourth time, deliberately, as the wincing, collapsing figure of the major slid slowly down the wall against which he leaned. There was at first an expression of the most intense hatred on the officer's face, but then, like warm butter running, it melted, and the face turned slack and vacant. The body rolled on the floor, twitched once or twice, and that was all.

O'Shaughnessy stood there, looking. He swore slowly, dispassionately. Then he turned to Escandrillo and handed him the revolver.

"I'll surrender this to you. You will kindly place me under arrest."

"I'll do nothing of the sort!"

"You'll damned well do as you're told!"

The lieutenant glared at him.

O'Shaughnessy said, "Young one, wouldn't you, in my place, rather be in custody of a friend?"

It dawned on Escandrillo. There was a bit of a flush on his face, but he accepted the weapon and stepped aside for O'Shaughnessy to proceed him out of the room.

THE killing, of course, was a sensation, for all the familiarity of death in that town. It had all the overtones of personal drama, of feud and

vengeance and murder. The captured message to Morel made it plain, however, that O'Shaughnessy's motive was thoroughly military, and Escandrillo's testimony made it plainer. O'Shaughnessy had a brief and stormy interview with the general, in which he permitted himself to give as good as he took, explaining how he came by the message and justifying his choice of action upon it. Thereafter he was detained in a comfortable room in the palatial summer residence where the general made headquarters. He had accounted for everything. He asked, experimentally, for a brandy and water, and it was speedily provided. With the glass and a cigarette he sat down and waited.

It was a long wait, longer than he expected, and it gave him all too much opportunity to think, which was unwelcome. He did not think of Gomez especially. He had seen men die before. There was another kind of death, however, that he could think of only as purely fortuitious and horrible, and the thought of it haunted him. He was thinking of Alexandra.

And when he thought of Alexandra, he was only satisfied that Gomez was dead. A mouth was stilled. A secret was safe. A life, a life so damned incredibly precious was secure!

O'Shaughnessy strove hard to appraise and come to an understanding of himself in the trying hour of that wait. He had violated a trust, and yet he did not care. He had let Alexandra go, when every duty bound him to deliver her to the authority he served, the very authority which now sat in judgment on his own life. And he did not care, although he could cheerfully die rather than endure the self-contempt of any other smallest relaxation of his soldier's trust.

The truth, of course, was this. He was masterless in chaos. He had already been cast off by his own. He had found no faith and trust in those he had come to serve. Quite by chance, he had come across a guiding star, a conviction and a passion, and he let it lead him, and he regretted nothing.

He regretted nothing. He counted the hours, and knew that Alexandra had arrived in Mexico City in ample time to catch another train for the north or for wherever she would find refuge. The secret was safe with him—although he knew that no secret is ever safe. He thought of her and remembered her. He could see her suddenly, fleetingly, in the shadows of the corners of the room, and he could feel the warmth and softness of her still lingering in his hands, and was glad with a soaring of spirit that this perfect recollection was secure, safe, somewhere alive and living.

A young staff aide, crisp and impersonal, at length came for O'Shaughnessy. He led him to the late drawing-room of the house. There O'Shaughnessy was mystified to discover most of the officers of the garrison assembled. The room was blue with smoke, as if after prolonged conference. The officers, silent and expressionless, lounging all over the big room, looked at O'Shaughnessy without a sign of recognition. He felt the cold breath of enmity striking him, as if these men, all of one blood, had already set him apart, an alien.

The general, seated at the head of the long table in the middle of the room, gave him ample recognition, however. O'Shaughnessy tried, but could read not a thing in that poker face nor find any comfort in that dark and opaque gaze.

"O'Shaughnessy," said the general—

significantly omitting the *capitán*—"I have investigated the killing of Major Gomez. I called in my officers to witness this proceeding, because I thought it would be most edifying. I was not wrong."

O'Shaughnessy could only say, "Yes, sir."

THE general went on, "I find the circumstances of this killing as you related them to me to be entirely correct. I give my approval to the course you chose. I commend you for saving, quite possibly, this command from unexpected and unjustified disaster through the treachery of a scoundrel who was a traitor to the Revolution."

O'Shaughnessy took a deep breath and waited what was coming. Something was coming. The general got up and walked around the table.

"And having disposed of all that," said the general, "I now call upon you for explanation of certain other circumstances not yet accounted for—and for the surrender of the two other documents you captured."

"Two other documents?" said O'Shaughnessy.

"Can it be possible you have forgotten them? I refer to the two military reports addressed to Francisco Morel by the fascinating Russian you escorted to the train yesterday afternoon."

O'Shaughnessy looked steadily at the general, and that gaze between them was like two forces locked in combat. "I have no such documents."

"Then what disposal did you make of them?"

"They were destroyed."

"By whom?"

O'Shaughnessy had no answer. There was no possible answer. The general waited, and then smiled, with a narrowing of his eyes and total absence of humor. He returned to the chair at the head of the table.

"Señor O'Shaughnessy—your orderly, Miguel, is devoted to you. But you failed to take him into your confidence. From him we obtained a story somewhat more complete than the one you told me. You were aware, not only that Gomez was a traitor, but that the seductive Alexandra was a Morelisto spy. I'll concede without questioning that you did not permit her messages to reach their destination?"

"I did not."

"That is good. It saves you from a painful death on an ant-hill, *mi amigo*. It is unpleasant, and grieves me always, but I have been compelled by the folly of men to order such a sentence executed on more than one occasion."

"It will not be necessary now."

"So I had hoped. And with further regard to these messages, I will presume that you either destroyed them yourself, or perhaps gallantly returned them to the writer as she was leaving. This will allow me the privilege of presuming also, in view of her hasty departure, that she left on your own urgent advice."

"She left entirely of her own accord."

"I see. But nevertheless, may we not believe that her departure was hastened by the fact that she knew you were acquainted with her mission?"

O'Shaughnessy merely shrugged, for words had passed all usefulness. The general was baiting him as pitilessly as a cat might a mouse. That ruthless mind was already made up.

The general went on inexorably, "You are a good soldier, O'Shaughnessy. But you are a very bad soldier of the Revolution. You have caused trouble before. You have conspired

with a spy and assisted in her escape. You have implicated yourself in treason. I am not surprised at this outcome. And it is only with a philosophic regret that I now come to an unavoidable decision. This army is at war. The verdict is mandatory. It is my order that the sentence of death be executed upon you at dawn tomorrow." The ironic tone abruptly changed. "Lieutenant Mercado! Remove the prisoner!"

And that was that. All within a matter of seconds, without even the chance of an attempt at rebuttal, O'Shaughnessy, sardonic and outwardly serene, was marched out of that room in dead silence, and the eyes of every man that watched him were as cold and expressionless as death itself.

THERE is no need now to relate the tortuous travels of O'Shaughnessy's thoughts during the hours of that night in the tiny, verminous cell into which he was thrust. They were no different from those of any man in like position, except that in facing the issue of imminent death the O'Shaughnessy had a strength and a consolation beyond that which is granted to most condemned. His life was a payment that was due, and what it had purchased was well worth the while.

Life was sweet, to be sure. He had only learned how sweet it could be to a man. He would have liked living on, would have liked fighting and working, loving and building, and liked growing old in his time. And Alexandra! He would have liked, if only once, to be with Alexandra again before embracing death. Those were the things! Death itself was nothing, a negative thing, so easily dismissed and done with in a flash, as no one knows better than a soldier whose business is death.

The new day was stealthily gathering somewhere in the eastern darkness when a key clicked softly in the lock of O'Shaughnessy's cell door. He was lying on the cot, sleepless, and he glanced toward the door. He heard it creak ever so faintly as it was opened with care, and he sensed the presence of someone in the cell.

"Mi capitán," the unknown whispered. "Captain O'Shaughnessy."

It was Miguel, of all men! O'Shaughnessy was out of the cot in one movement, groping and finding the Indian in the darkness.

"Mike—what in hell are you doing here?"

"You will go now," said Mike. "I have made all ready."

"What?"

"There is a horse, with blanket and food, in the little alley behind the jail. You will find also a rifle and revolver. I have made the guard very drunk, and no one will stop you. But go quickly."

"Mike!" O'Shaughnessy pounded the hard chest of the Indian with his fist for lack of adequate words. "Why on earth did you do this? Don't you know they will find you out? What will you do?"

"What will I do?" A pause. "I go now to Francisco Morel. There I will be among friends. I do not like this Revolution, this government and this army. It will be well, and it is time."

"Mike, my life is yours. If there is anything I can do, tell me."

"I took away your life, I give you back your life. Yesterday I betrayed you, without knowing. I told of the *señorita's* messages and did not know you had not spoken. I did not know you had not given them to the general."

"We're square, Mike. Never think of it again."

"I will think often. I will hope and

wonder if you came safely through this ride tonight."

"I will, Mike."

"And I will wonder, too, if you have found the *señorita*. I think that is what you will do, is it not—go in search?"

"I guess so. I have nowhere else to go now, Mike."

"Then I hope you find her. I think she is all right. She was my enemy for a little while. That is all. Now it is over. I wish you good fortune, *mi capitán.*"

"*Mi amigo,*" O'Shaughnessy corrected. "And all the good luck in the world to you. *Adios,* Mike!"

And he moved silently, swiftly, down the jail corridor, and in a moment the dark night received him, and embraced him, and assured him with its myriad small voices that he was free. There was no alarm or challenge. He was free!

And that night all the stars in the heavens were incredibly bright as O'Shaughnessy rode through the hours —and the North Star as it wheeled in its course was the brightest by far in all the firmament. And that is something I think you will understand without any more elaboration.

* * *

I HAVE skipped and foreshortened much detail in telling the story O'Shaughnessy told me that night in the mountains. And I must skip and foreshorten again, for the tale of his escape, of his arrest in Mexico City and his second escape, is a story in its own right apart from all this. Enough that he got away, clear away, and that he found Alexandra at last.

It took him six months to find Alexandra. They were six difficult and dangerous months, and he could easily have gone farther north and crossed the border safely and forgotten all about it, except that it was impossible for him to do that. He persisted, and he found her. And when he found her, he did what you'd expect him to do, of course —he took possession of her and married her. She was in rather bad need of him then.

"It was a shock, finally to find her," he said. "For more reasons than one. Too much of success, too much of what we call happiness, can be as much of a shock as disappointment or defeat. Worse, maybe, because you can be philosophic in adversity, but in tremendous good fortune you can't count on keeping your head. I tried. I had to. I had damned little money and no job. And the little bit she had was urgently needed. Ah, it was needed!"

"How so?"

"You'll understand in a minute. I kept my head pretty well, though it was hard. I took her north. We stopped in El Paso. The town at that time was full of Mexican exiles and intrigue and plotting. I found I could make myself useful to certain parties because of my experience. I made money. There were matters of gun-running and such, and delicate dickerings with people in Washington that I knew how to handle best."

"And was Alexandra satisfied and happy?"

"Satisfied and happy?" He rocked a little, brooding, just barely smiling and just barely aware of my presence. "She was. I have that—by Heaven, I have that! I have it to remember till the day I die. Maybe it was the first flush of marriage, maybe it was because we had just by a hair escaped tragedy together. Anyway, I've never seen what you'd call happiness to compare. Myself, I was worried, I was a bit dazed by the crazy way life ran on, but I was certainly in a heaven all of my own. And she was there too, with no worry, no doubt, no

thought of the wars or the world or the Revolution, or a thing but us. *Us*—do you understand?"

I didn't. He laughed, and went on.

"Never mind then. You will quickly. I could talk till next Thursday noon about that time. I used to stop and think and wonder—how little I'd planned it out, how little I'd even known about wanting it, and how content I was. I was a fool for luck, and I never gave a thought to my old command or the general or anyone."

"What ever happened to Azulita?"

"It was practically wiped out. The railroad was wrecked as Alexandra promised me—far too ruined for repair. The army evacuated the town and left it to its certain fate and retired on Mexico City. It was a running battle all the way, and they were badly cut up. After that Francisco Morel had his way in that valley—until an assassin's bullet ended his career a year or two later. It's a long time ago now, and they're all dead and gone: Huerta, Zapata, Villa, Carranza. There are mighty few left who can tell any tale of the high places of that time. Dead and gone and almost forgotten—themselves and their causes and the loyalties they received from a million or more men."

"Including your own," I said. "Red O'Shaughnessy, have you ever felt a least twinge of regret over anything you did in those days?"

"Never. To this day it's still muddled, in a way, and yet it's always right."

I REMEMBERED something. A quotation that sprang into memory like an electric sign flashing. I wasn't too sure of myself, but I quoted it. "It's Tennyson," I told him. "Maybe it fits." And these were the lines:

His honor rooted in dishonor stood,
And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true.

O'Shaughnessy had me repeat them, and he recited them after me. He chuckled.

"Tennyson called the turn, I guess. I'll remember that. And now look here." He delved into an inside pocket and brought out a wallet, and from the wallet he took a snapshot in a transparent cover. He handed it to me.

It was a picture of a young American officer, a photo taken in the field, showing the young man looking up from a table spread with maps. He was a very handsome and soldierly looking young officer, and he had the O'Shaughnessy jaw and the insolent, likeable look of the old man. He had that look of importance that is only bred in the very bones of a man, and that marks a young man for prestige and position years ahead of his time. I no longer marveled at the pride in the voice of Red O'Shaughnessy.

"That's the boy," he said. "What do you think of him?"

I admitted my real admiration.

O'Shaughnessy said, "He's everything I could ask for. He's a devil and stubborn, and he fairly disowns me for roaming the world like an unregenerate old pirate, as he puts it, but I think, at the bottom of it all, he's a little bit proud of his old man at that. He thinks I'm a soldier. I like to think he may be right. He was born in El Paso, by the way."

"And Alexandra? Where is she?"

He paused. "She's in El Paso. I had to leave her there."

"Leave her?"

"She's buried there. It was as sudden and unexpected a thing as I'll ever meet again, and a blow, you needn't doubt. I was a wild man for a little. I'd never even dreamed. But something went wrong, and she didn't pull through when the boy came."

I couldn't say anything. He went on, "She said to me, 'Don't be sad, my Red. We've cheated life. We were both marked for death, and we cheated life and beat it. We're still ahead, we're still winners, aren't we, Red?' . . . I told her, yes, we certainly were. And I guess we were."

He took the snapshot from me and looked at it. He said, "Regret? You ask if I have anything to regret, no less! Do you realize this is what we needed that little money for? That this is the reason she lost track of wars and revolutions and the world itself? This is why I had a little heaven all to myself for that while. Can you feel a little the shock that I felt when I found her, with a son of mine in the world and coming to being?"

He waited for no answer, but added, "Honor? Loyalty? Duty? I've lived the most of a lifetime by those things, and yet I'm a fool to give the breath to utter them. No words can define or limit such things. I should have, on my oath, turned Alexandra in at Azulita, and she's so long gone now it almost seems it wouldn't have mattered in the end. A man can get over things. But do you know what I'd have done if I did that?"

"What?"

He stared, a little transfixed, at the snapshot, and the kind of feeling of miracles that very likely visited his dreams on certain nights seemed to hover over him right then.

"I'd not only have had her shot," he said. "Don't you see? I'd have shot *him!* As surely as if I took a pistol to him as he stands there. I didn't know it, didn't know what was happening in my life, and I'd have killed him!"

A little of that awe crept into my own consciousness. Imagine—carrying that macabre thought for a quarter of a century!

O'Shaughnessy put the photograph away. "He has his own mother's eyes, even if he has his own father's jaw. He's a soldier." He added, with finality, "Ah, but if you only had seen her! There will never be anyone like her again." He was quite composed, but with that he was finished and his story was done.

And so that's Red O'Shaughnessy's story. It's a sad story, maybe, and yet he himself is not sad. I had to tell it. And I know now, and I think you will know, what he meant when he said that miserable is the man who has nothing to die for. He knew what he was talking about, the O'Shaughnessy.

THE END

War For Sale

By

MAX BRAND

Author of "Pretty Boy," "Big Game," etc.

THE father of Lady Cecil Margaret Agnes Kathryn De Waters was so very British that he seldom left England, even to visit Lady Cecil, in her flat in Paris. Lady Cecil was so very much more British that she used her Paris residence merely as a jumping-off place for the occasional secret service work she had undertaken to do for the Empire.

On this particular evening, Lady Cecil's plans included nothing more spectacular than a quiet dinner with a young Belgian admirer. That is, they did until Fate knocked at her door, like the postman—twice.

First in the person of an American ne'er-do-well, William Gloster, called "Willie" by his friends, because he wasn't at all the "Willie" type. All Gloster wanted from Lady Cecil was dinner and her promise to marry him.

But Fate's second rap was more urgent, coming in the form of a phone call from Mr. R.—the head of the British secret

This story began in the Argosy for April 24

service—in London. "Maggie's picture," came the voice over the wire, "is gone and Papa Jacques knows nothing about it." Lady Cecil translated quickly. Maggie's picture—the plan of the Maginot fortifications along the eastern frontier of France; Papa Jacques—the French nation. "Mr. Hendriksen has the picture," Mr. R. goes on. "He is now in Germany, and you will please go after him and recover it."

LADY CECIL can think of only one person who can help her—the mysterious, miraculous Monsieur Jacquelin, free-lance secret agent. But no one knows who M. Jacquelin really is—no one except a Parisian journalist, Jules Cailland, who is running a sensational series of articles about him. If Cailland divulges M. Jacquelin's true identity, Lady Cecil knows, at least twelve governments will send agents to kill M. Jacquelin. He knows too much about all of them—they could not let him live.

In something like desperation, Lady Cecil turns to Willie Gloster, who is big and strong, and rich and courageous and pleasantly gay, and who—most important of all—owns a fast monoplane.

Lady Cecil and Willie fly to Germany and manage, without too great difficulty, to corner Hendriksen and persuade him to part with the vital map. After a brief but hectic skirmish with von Emsdorf—the biggest cog in the German counter-espionage mechanism—and his men, Lady Cecil and Willie skim out of danger.

Meanwhile, in Paris, the journalist Cailland has received warning that Hendriksen has talked, and has exposed Cailland's part in the theft of the plans. Pretending to fear the wrath of M. Jacquelin, presumably aroused by Cailland's disclosures, Cailland runs from his office, and quietly disappears. . . .

LONDON. Hither come Lady Cecil and Willie anxious to return the Maginot plans to Mr. R.—otherwise Winton Jones. . . . Hither comes Jules Cailland, hiding, frightened. . . .

But before Lady Cecil can hand over the plans, they are neatly grabbed by one of von Emsdorf's agents. The young peeress is bitterly dismayed. Her failure, she feels, has made a blot on her honor that only she can wipe out. Again her thoughts turn to M. Jacquelin, who, she has decided by this time, is none other than Cailland himself.

Willie Gloster, who knows Cailland, scoffs at the idea but offers to introduce her to the French journalist. Gloster gloomily advises Cailland not to bother to deny that he is M. Jacquelin.

"She's made up her mind that you are," he says.

"No, no." Cailland's protests are almost hysterical. But when Lady Cecil looks at him in obvious disappointment, he bows. "But Jules Cailland is at your service, *mademoiselle*. Make use of him."

Willie tactfully leaves Lady Cecil and Cailland alone for a few moments. Returning, he finds nothing but a brief note from Lady Cecil telling him that she and Cailland have gone off to recover the plans. Willie swears helplessly and scowls at the walls that are all that is left for him to scowl at. . . .

CHAPTER VI

CABALA UND LIEBE

WINTON HOLLING JONES walked home every day to stretch his scrawny legs and fill his cramped lungs with air. At every corner he paused, regarded the traffic, and then crossed the street with caution, just as that mind of his crossed with caution all the traffic of international problems, for it was hard to separate the Winton Jones of ordinary affairs from the Jones who controlled the secret service of his country. He looked upon his dinner plate with the same misty far-sightedness with which he viewed an imbroglio in the Far East.

He had just made one of these corner hesitations and started across the street when a big-stepping man drew up beside him and a voice round and resonant said:

"You can control your own agents, Jones, can't you? They don't go off helter-skelter without your sending them, do they? Then call back Lady Cecil, will you?"

"Gone where?" asked Jones, vainly lengthening his step to match the stride of the other. "Lady Cecil gone where, Mr.—er, Gloster?"

"To hell, I suppose, with Jules Cailland. She thinks that he's Monsieur Jacquelin."

At this Winton Jones halted and put his hand on Gloster's arm and looked up into his face. He glanced up and down the street as thought to make sure of their privacy, but though the street was quite empty he merely shook his head and walked on again, more slowly. One might have thought that he suspected the crawling London mist of being a sentient thing, capable of overhearing unguarded remarks.

They entered the park. The trees drifted slowly past them. In the distance the trees stood still, gathering dim mantles of evening. The street lights left wavering yellow water marks along the pavements.

"Gone with Jules Cailland!" said Jones. "Well?"

"Call her back," said Gloster.

"How can I?" asked Jones. "If she has taken to the air with Cailland, how can I call her back? I can't whistle down that bird yonder, you know. Really, I'm not God!"

"Then why do you play His part?" asked Gloster.

"Ah?" said Winton Jones.

"Please don't be so damned English," said Gloster.

They walked on for a time in silence. Afterward, Jones said, "I think I should beg your pardon, Mr. Gloster."

"Granted," said Gloster. "Now about the girl."

"When did she leave?"

"An hour ago."

"She's a headlong creature. I'm afraid they may be in the air already."

"I know that. Call her back! Will you call her back?"

"If I called her, would she come?" asked Winton Holling Jones. "I'm afraid not. If she sees her goal, will she turn from it? If the plans of the Maginot Line which she lost—"

"You were there. It was your fault, not hers," said Gloster.

"Ah, but certainly that's true," admitted Jones. "On the other hand when I see an intelligent, high-spirited, rich girl ready to break her heart to be of service to her country, what a singular man I should be if I opened her eyes."

He gestured elegantly.

"Will you look at it another way?" said Gloster. "She's a clean-bred girl but she's been raised in a rotten century where the women no longer give their hands with their hearts but with their brains. She thinks that Cailland is Monsieur Jacquelin. The thought may sweep her off her feet. Do you follow me?"

"I follow you. Unwillingly, I follow you."

"You have long arms. Will you call her back?"

"How shall I find her?"

"If I find her, will you make sure that she has to return?"

Winton Jones took six long steps while he measured this request. Then he said, "Yes—I shall."

Gloster held out his hand. "That's a gentleman's agreement."

WINTON JONES regarded the hand. He looked up into Gloster's grim, half-ugly face and then took the hand with a sudden gesture.

"Yes, my dear fellow. Yes, yes!" he said. "But will you go after her? Are you going to jump into the fire again?"

"I am," said Gloster. "Which way shall I jump to find it? Von Emsdorf is the thief. He has the stuff. Will he take it straight to Wilhelmstrasse? Is that where I have to go?"

"No," said Jones. "Not there."

"Where, then?"

"I don't know."

"You have something in mind," insisted Gloster. "What is it?"

He had to wait again while the nervous feet of Winton Holling Jones put another stretch of the black pavement behind him.

"Why should you go at all except with your eyes open?" asked Jones.

Gloster said nothing.

"There is a cabal," said Jones. "And von Emsdorf is part of it. He may be the guiding brain of it. Perhaps he is. I *think* he is and I think he stole the Maginot Plans twice to serve an end that was as much personal as national —as much *inter*national as national. Let me sketch everything briefly from the beginning. A good deal of it you know already. But let me think aloud."

"Please do," said Gloster.

"Germany is desperate," said Winton Jones. "A few facts prove that. She has less than two million unemployed, within a half million of the best figure since the war. But she's employed her people making war munitions. She's paying them with her blood. I'll give you some figures. Exports in 1929, thirteen billion marks. This year, four billion. The gold Reichsmark costs too much. Foreign trade is dying. But she has to buy raw products—tin, copper, silk, rubber, manganese, chromium, tungsten, textiles, iron ore, and so forth. She has to have nickel for war material. She's trebled her purchases of it. She works like a madman, day and night. She makes substitutes—sugar from wood, flour from potatoes, gasoline from coal, margerine from coal. It turns the stomach to think of what German patriots will have to eat during the next war! But how, with a failing foreign trade, can she afford to pay for her enormous imports? How can she carry on an arms program that costs her four thousand millions of dollars a year?

"The cleverest financial juggler in the world controls the purse strings—Dr. Schacht. What does he do? Well, he draws 'voluntary' contributions. The bank clerk gets two hundred and ninety Reichsmarks a month, but fifty he pays back as 'contributions.' That helps, but poor Schacht is still in the fire. He gets internal loans that are forced loans. Last summer, the banks gave him five hundred million Marks. The insurance companies gave him three hundred million Marks. But he can't get that from them again, and he knows it. They are bled white. In return they have IOU's from the government which, in case of a crash, will mean exactly nothing.

"And while he struggles like a devil to find more money, the air ministry's budget under Goering goes up by two hundred million Reichsmarks for the year! That's the financial background. You see what it means? Germany is arming herself, but she is paying with her blood. Presently there will be no more money left in the national veins. You follow?"

"I follow," said Gloster. "And she feels that she must fight or die."

"Exactly," said Jones. "She feels that she is being strangled to death by lack of room. Her birth rate is actually decreasing. It's estimated that her population in fifty years will be under fifty million as against sixty-five million today. Are Germans going to sit still while fifteen or twenty millions of them vanish from the face of the earth? I don't think so. So Germany rushes on her preparations. She feels a religious eagerness. Hitler says:

" 'In the annihilation of France, Germany sees merely the means of our nation to obtain full development in another direction. Our foreign policy will only have been correct when there are two hundred and fifty million Germans, not crowded like coolies in a factory, but free peasants and workers. Almighty God bless our weapons! Judge if we have merited freedom! Lord, bless our combat!' "

"I've read that," nodded Gloster.

"NOW we come to the crux," said Jones. "Germany has been arming as fast as she can but she's still far behind in guns of big caliber and in heavy tanks, and such things. Furthermore, it will be a long time before she is up-to-date in those directions. These big guns cost like the devil—like the very devil, you know. So do the heavy tanks. Like inland battleships, you might say.

"So Germany's preparation lags. There are two opinions among the war-minded in Germany — and the entire nation is really war-minded. A majority of the conservatives want to wait until the preparation is complete. *Der Führer* leads this opinion on. Remember that he is only a great orator. In the war he did nothing as a soldier. He was a corporal at the end of it. His mind runs to words rather than to actions. Therefore he favors delay before the great crisis. But the minority disagrees.

"They see that their preparation is incomplete but they count on the fervor of the people and the war-weariness of the rest of the world. The shame of defeat still makes the blood of every German boil. And with reason, poor devils, for God knows they fought like heroes! But let that go. There are in Germany certain men made of steel who desire to strike now. As their own preparation goes on, they see that other countries around them, richer in gold, will be making still greater preparations. They feel that their chance is as equal now as it ever will be. Leonhardt von Emsdorf is one of these. Steel, all steel. There's not even iron in von Emsdorf. He wants to strike now. And he has enormous influence. With *der Führer,* with Goering, with Colonel-general Blomberg, with von Fritsch. Von Emsdorf has the ear of all of them. Still, he's working to a certain extent with a lone hand. His cabal has to do not so much with other Germans as it has with other countries, for when Germany strikes she wants to involve other nations all around her so that her flanks will be secure as she faces west. Well, does it still make sense?"

"It still makes sense," said Gloster.

"We've known about this cabal for only a short time, but we have the names of his correspondents in certain countries. There is Jacques Louvain in Belgium, Johann Gleich in Austria, the Conte di Parva in Italy, and that queer monstrosity, that great orator and beast, Gregor Raskoi in Russia itself. More than this, we know that on this very day all four of these men have left their own countries and started for Germany. But we don't

know their itineraries. Only at one point—Raskoi changes from plane to train at Landsberg, in Prussia, and is passing on through or to Berlin. That seems to indicate Berlin as the meeting point for all of them, but we're not at all sure. But does the picture grow on you?"

"Von Emsdorf opens the meeting," Gloster said. "He tells them that the time to strike will never be better. Italy to strike for more colonies in Morocco or Algiers, Russia to clean up the Baltic nations, the Austrian Nazis to make a great *putsch* to unite their country with Germany, and Germany itself to pour west on a France that trusts to the Maginot Line—which will be almost non-existent now that the master plans are in German hands. The cabal agrees; von Emsdorf brings to *der Führer* a practically completed fact. If *der Führer* is not convinced, then perhaps von Emsdorf intends to reach above his head and appeal to the sword of Germany, the disciplined troops of the *Reichswehr*. And so—a leap at the throat of Europe."

Winton Jones paused. He turned and looked up steadily into Gloster's face. "You seem to know your Europe," he said.

"You can't wander around the world as I do without hearing bits of news, now and then," said Gloster.

"True," agreed Jones, walking on, but with a thoughtful air. "But now that the picture is clear in your mind, what could you do about it?"

"Find out the meeting place of the cabal," said Gloster. He hummed a little senseless tune. *"Cabala und Liebe.* Schiller, you know. Cabal and Love."

"And how will you find out where the cabal is to meet?" Jones asked, ignoring the interpolation.

"Get to Landsberg before Raskoi takes his train and then tail him to the finish of the trip. I can speak Russian."

"And at the finish of the trip?"

"I'll find Lady Cecil and take her back to England by the scruff of the neck," said Gloster. "With your assistance in case of a pinch."

"Is that all you'll do?" asked Winton Holling Jones, in a weary voice.

"Suppose that I get to the spot, what would you *have* me do?" asked Gloster.

"What would I like to do if I were there in person?" said Jones, dreamily

"Yes, put it that way."

"I'd try for some means," said Jones, "of killing them off. Not a quick death, you know. Something slow. So that they would have a chance to look around them. And then I'd want them to see me, laughing, not too far away. Laughing, Gloster, and rubbing my hands. And watching them go up in a fine stench of smoke. That's what I'd like, Gloster, so that another ten million men wouldn't have to die, and leave the world poisoned with hate for fifty years."

CHAPTER VII

AND NOW BERLIN

GREGOR RASKOI threw a bomb when he was fourteen years old, and was sent to Siberia for it. Siberia had only a year to toughen him before the Bolshevik revolution brought him back to Moscow as a boy hero. He lived violently all the time. He served with the Trotsky forces when they were hunting down the White Russians When he came back as a colonel, he betrayed Trotsky to gain the favor of Lenin, because there was only one great quality in his mind, and that was an ability to know, in advance, who would win the argument. Then he

went out as a red-handed headsman for Lenin, being a good deal more savage about it than Lenin ever imagined. He never talked about his deeds of violence. He only laughed about them. Stalin took him over when Lenin died, too busy to know exactly how savage a monster he'd inherited.

He was a whip in the hands of his masters. He grew to be such a great whip that only one person could handle him, and that was Stalin. And even Stalin was dumbfounded by some of his performances. After a while he gave up actual bloodshed except on rare, holiday occasions. He preferred the more delicate work of extracting confessions from those among the accused whom he felt it particularly important to convict. This labor appealed to his more mature talents, as they ripened. The confessions which prisoners make in Russia sometimes amaze the world, but that is because the world does not know that there are such experts as Gregor Raskoi. Gregor Raskoi, in short, was a law unto himself.

He worked chiefly with electricity. He knew how to step up a harmless current that could not cause death but which traveled along the nerves like saw-toothed probes and wound up by jabbing into the brain. You can't resist electric torture. You can't resist it because it destroys your will power at the same time that it puts the body on the rack.

Big men—big, passive, hard-headed Slavs with no more imagination than lumps of wood could not resist the devices of Raskoi. Presently their heads twisted back and they began to scream, monotonously, terribly, with grating shrillness. Raskoi liked that. It was the only sort of music that appealed to him. What he preferred was to take as many as half a dozen and work on them at the same time with the currents stepped up to varying intensities. He could turn a bass into a shrieking tenor just by varying the intensity of the electric shock, and when half a dozen strong men who would have laughed at cannon were all screaming together and making the only sort of harmony that fed the soul of Raskoi, then Gregor would throw back his own head and show his white teeth and the red of his throat as he laughed.

He came to know just how much to give his—patients. He would dose a man so well that half an hour later, when the fellow had to appear in court, he still had no more will power than a baby and confessed with tears and sobbings that seemed to be of the uttermost contrition. Gregor Raskoi could have made an angel confess that it had stolen its wings.

He had specialties. To make a young girl, a pretty thing, accuse her mother of various dreadfulnesses was one of Gregor's principal joys. He could cause a newly married couple, still sick and trembling with the joy of love, to denounce one another in screeching voices before an astonished court.

In short, Gregor made himself invaluable to the Revolution.

After a while he discovered that vodka, though heavenly, was not the only drink in the world. With vodka he got himself drunk in an hour or two, and that was too soon; with red French Burgundy he could keep his throat awash a dozen hours at a time before he was done in. He kept himself well drunk more than half the time, and the cost of the Burgundy was often tremendous. His taste improved. Once he drank nothing but *Romanée Conti* for an entire month

and even kings hardly revel so magnificently as that.

Lenin, it is said, once sent for him and remarked: "Gregor, you are a beast."

"True," said Raskoi. "I'm *your* beast!"

"Your beastliness costs too much," said Lenin.

Raskoi began to travel around in a high-priced limousine with the Burgundy packed in special side pockets. He learned how to knock the neck off a bottle and pour a whole quart down his throat while he was traveling at full speed, but when there was snow on the ground he always squirted out the last mouthful so as to leave a visible peace offering to Mother Earth.

Raskoi had three wives, one after another, but he sent them all away and their children with them.

"Red Burgundy is my wife and my child," he said. "It is also my father and mother. Lenin was only my grand uncle and Stalin is my uncle. There . . . you know all about Gregor Raskoi!"

But people did not hate him as much as you might suppose. He had a way of doing big things. Money made no difference to him. Clothes made no difference. He liked the automobile because it went fast. All he wanted was plenty of wine. And when that soured his belly, he freshened his stomach with a pint of vodka and began on the Burgundy again.

HE had a bottle of *Clos de Vougeot* in his hand when Gloster first saw him walking up and down in the station at Landsberg, waiting for the train. There were no guards about him. That was one of the things that the Russian people liked; Raskoi never had bodyguards. He used his own strength instead of hired guns. Once when three of the men he'd tortured set on him in the street, he knocked the heads of two of them together, and let them escape while he strangled the third man with his hands.

He lay down on the dying man and as the swollen tongue thrust out between the teeth, Raskoi kept shouting, "Farther! Farther!" In fact, he feared nothing in the world except Stalin, and him, only a little. He used to say, "I will be a dog to only one man."

That was why he was walking up and down the station with his bottle of Burgundy, unguarded and unafraid. He was about the height of Gloster, and like him he was big with strength. He gave a sign of it while Gloster was watching. He was munching a sausage of fat bacon, and a big street cur came up and begged for a share. Raskoi swung his thick leg and kicked the mongrel away. The dog went off hobbling as though its ribs had been broken. Raskoi laughed and continued his promenade. From time to time he burst into song.

Gloster got out the little pocket accordion and accompanied him. He sang an under part for Raskoi's song—in fact the Russian had a very good voice. It was a little rough and there was too much of it, that was all. Raskoi went up to Gloster at the end of the song and said:

"If you can speak Russian, why do you sing like a damned Frenchman, through your nose?"

Gloster laughed. "I'm still too close to Russia to answer you," he replied.

"Ah," said Raskoi, "you are an *émigré*, perhaps. You are one of the ones who ran away with your pockets full of rubies and roubles? Is that it?"

"No, but I saw Raskoi and went away. I knew there wouldn't be room for the two of us in one little Russia."

Raskoi was too drunk to understand at once. But when his eyes had swallowed the sense of these words he laughed with his whole heart, like thunder.

"In Berlin," said Gloster, "I could see you."

"Yes, by God, in Berlin!" said Raskoi. "I will make you drunk and it won't cost you a penny. Not a penny. Oh, Saint Catherine, how drunk I shall make you!"

He was still laughing at the thought when the train arrived and they separated and got into it.

THE train reached Berlin in the evening, about twenty-four hours after Gloster had said goodbye to Winton Holling Jones. In Berlin people move quickly, like Americans; some of them have big stomachs from beer but most of them are rather pale and their faces are set a little with the strain of labor. But a German, like an American, will pour out his whole life-strength rather than decrease his standard of living. The junkers are that way more than the lower classes; they keep their jaws set almost all the way through life and their eyes are sharply focused on the best chance.

When he got off the train, Gloster found Raskoi no drunker than when he got on it. "Remember," he said, "you are to get me drunk tonight."

"Did I say tonight?" said Raskoi. "Well, you come and see me. I'll be at this hotel. You come and I'll get you good and drunk. I'll make wine run into your eyes! If it doesn't run out your ears, I'll keep on pouring it down your throat until it does. You come and get drunk with Raskoi!"

It seemed an immense joke to him. He laughed so that his hand shook as he held out a card to Gloster with the name of the hotel written on it in German script. It was a place on Unter den Linden.

"Come at ten," said Raskoi. "I don't begin to drink well till ten. I only have little drinks before ten, but then I have it by the bottle."

Gloster went off through the long, sraight streets of Berlin and looked sadly at the rococo buildings of an earlier period, with harsh, faceless slices of modernity crammed in, here and there, like fists among dumplings.

Night was coming, and Lady Cecil was somewhere; and Jules Cailland was not far from her.

He went into a restaurant but he could not eat because he kept thinking about Cecil. The blue evening which was rubbed across the window of the restaurant made him dream of the dusk in London through which he had driven with her. Remembering that moment, he could repeat all her words, one by one. He could take them into his own mouth and re-say them. They left a sweetness in his brain, like wine; and they left a sorrow that sank to his heart and made it cold.

He told himself that she was only a woman, like any other woman. She would get middle-aged, like all of them. She belonged to Cailland. Cailland had her. Cailland had made her his woman.

The thought made him so sick that he put his knuckles against his forehead and ground bone against bone. But even when his eyes were closed, the memory of the girl got inside his eyelids. She shone upon his mind and he knew that that special light never would leave her. Or him. Age would not dim it. She would be beautiful forever.

He sat in the restaurant for a long time, sipping Rhine wine and eating green olives. The wine was iced so that

it made his palate ache but the delicate perfumes of it went up into his brain and joined the thought of Cecil, which was lodged there. He was taking the advice he had given to her and was adding sorrow to sorrow, resolvedly, but he could not break down the cold iron that bound his soul. He could not dissolve it by wallowing in regrets.

It came to be ten o'clock and he went to the address of Raskoi but all the way he felt that it was a losing game—that it was too late—that the ruin already had been accomplished. His feet, not his mind, took him to the hotel.

When he tried to telephone to Raskoi's room, the operator said, "You will just have to go up. He has broken the telephone!"

Gloster remembered the weight of the gun which he carried under his armpit. The fact that the telephone was broken seemed to give him an opportunity, in some way. He could not have said exactly how.

When he got up to the door of Raskoi's room, the Russian's thick, rich voice bellowed inside, and he walked in.

RASKOI lay on a couch in the living room. There were some very modern, garish colored prints on the wall of the room. Some of the figures were mere ideas, not images, but Gloster could recognize a blue stallion galloping over the top of a green hill and the sky was a gray background, stippled in. The furniture was comfortable, overstuffed, upholstered in gray, and there was a thick gray rug. It was a good hotel, new in every way. It lacked the *Schmack* and smoky old beer-flavor of Berlin's more seasoned hostelries.

Raskoi lay on the couch, stripped to the waist with his feet bare, also, though the evening was quite raw.

"*Hai,* brother!" called Raskoi. "Are you my brother, pig?"

"I am not from the same sty, though," said Gloster.

"You're not from what?" demanded Raskoi, heaving himself half off the couch. He looked like an animal ready to spring from all fours.

"Not from the same sty," said Gloster. "And don't look at me like that."

"How *should* I look at you?" shouted Raskoi. "I'll break your back!" he yelled and jumped at his guest.

Gloster hit him with all his might on the corner of the chin, so hard that the bone bit into his knuckles painfully. It should have knocked Raskoi right across the room. Gloster had never in his life struck a man with such force. But the blow merely stopped Raskoi's rush and made him take one step back.

"Ah?" he said, and lifted his hand to his chin. His fingers came away with blood on them. "*Hai,* Elise!" shouted Raskoi.

A girl came into the bedroom door. She was blond as a Prussian and had a pretty, rather delicate face.

"Elise, look!" said Raskoi, and held up his hand with the blood on it. "*He* did it!" said Raskoi. "He did it. That little man. *He* did it to Raskoi."

He began to laugh in a great uproar. "That little man did it to me," said Raskoi. "Shall I kill him?"

"No, don't kill him," said Elise, looking at Gloster, smiling on him.

"All right, I won't kill him," said Raskoi. "He hit me on the chin and I can see my own blood."

He laughed again and hardly could stop his merriment. "Brother," he said to Gloster, "do not get too drunk, because I might strangle you if you fall asleep. Sit down and drink!"

There were two cases of Burgundy

straw-packed in boxes on the floor. He picked up two of the bottles and knocked their necks off against the radiator. Other bottle necks lay already on the floor.

"Now!" said Raskoi, giving Gloster one of the pair. "Now, deep! Make the last pint splash on top of the first pint."

Gloster drank off the whole bottle. His head rang.

"Give it to me!" said Raskoi. He took Gloster's bottle and held it upside down. No liquid ran out.

"By God," he said, "you must be a Russian, and a noble! Elise! He is a Russian and a noble. Get down on your knees and kiss his feet—down on your knees—"

HE lifted his big hand and the girl dropped. Gloster caught her under the armpits and lifted her to her feet.

"He doesn't want you to," said Raskoi, dazed. "He doesn't want you to, by God . . . I don't want you, either. Go get to bed! Be off with you."

The girl disappeared into the bedroom; her dark, slant eyes looked back over her shoulder towards Gloster as she went.

"Now we'll drink," said Raskoi.

He knocked open two more bottles and placed them on the table as he sat down. He was a little fat, but not very. The loose of his belly overhung the top of his belt somewhat and there were some clots of fat under the skin of his neck, but his strength had not yet rotted away.

He sang, and Gloster accompanied him on the accordion. He drank, and Gloster kept pace with him, sweating. He felt that he had to keep pace or else what he meant to do would be more foul and dishonorable. He had to set his teeth and say to himself every time he took a swallow, "I won't get drunk!" So his will power kept his brain on ice and kept it from getting hot with alcohol.

"I'll tell you a story," said Raskoi, after an hour. "Elise, come in and hear my story."

"I haven't anything to put on," said Elise.

"Come in, damn you," called Raskoi. "If you had anything on I'd tear it off."

She came in wearing a nightgown of thin, pink silk.

"Look at a woman," said Raskoi. "They're all loaded in the hips and gone in the shoulders. If a horse looked like a woman, we'd shoot it to put it out of pain. Look at her! Are you fat inside the knees? No, she's not fat inside the knees. If she was, I would have knocked her over the head. . . . Come here!"

He pulled her into his lap. "Take some of this," said Raskoi.

"Don't cut my mouth," said Elise, holding up her hand for protection from the sharp edges of the broken bottle neck.

He slapped the hand out of the way. "I won't cut your mouth. That would only give you red kisses, you fool," said Raskoi. "I'm going to tell you something. Listen to me."

She lay back in the arms of Raskoi and looked up into his face like a baby, inert, watchful of strange things. Under her blond hair and her blond eyebrows, her eyes were exceedingly dark. The eyelashes were sooty shadows.

"The first time I saw a battle, it was like this," said Raskoi. "I was off with the cavalry on the left wing. I looked across the battlefield. It was nice to see the infantry go on in lines. It was pretty to see the artillery gallop out in front

and unlimber. Little puffs of white blooming like white roses. Lovely! Whiter than your throat, sweetheart, and the sky was bluer than this vein—this one that I pick up between my thumb and finger. You see, brother? And we sat up there on our horses, watching. . . . Give me another bottle . . . to war—to fight—there's the sport. I think of men who play tennis and my belly turns over. They could play war, just as well. . . ."

HE poured down his bottle of wine. Gloster finished his at the same time and locked his teeth. He was getting drunk. The sudden great floods of the wine half nauseated him. He looked at the girl and her eyes found him at the same time.

"Look at *me,* you slut," said Raskoi. "I won't have you looking at anything else. If you look at him, I'll kill you both and hang you out the window for the birds to pick at. . . . But I was talking about the first battle. . . Battle . . . I heard a shell whistle in the air, going faster than a bird, and traveling south. . . . I wanted to go south, too— Then a messenger rode up and saluted the squadron commander. He kept his hand at the visor of his cap while he talked. But every now and then he would turn his head a little and spit. I wanted to see the commander stick a sword through him but he only looked and listened. He looked as though he were reading a book. Then I saw that the grass was red. The messenger was spitting blood."

The girl sat up.

"Be still!" said Raskoi, and struck her back into his lap. She lay still. The red marks of four fingers grew out on her cheek. Her eyes turned to Gloster and would not leave him.

"Give me wine! Why the hell is there no wine? D'you think you can steal it?"

Gloster opened two bottles, Raskoi poured down one of them at once. Gloster fought his own bottle down by degrees. He knew that he could not take another.

Raskoi stood up. He was shouting. And he had thrown the body of the girl across his shoulder.

"I said to the messenger: 'Where are you shot?'

" 'Through the lungs,' he said.

" 'You're going to die,' said I. 'You know that? You're going to die.'

"And then something made me laugh at him.

"He spat in my face. He spat all over my face and when I wiped it away, I saw that it was all red. It was blood. And I laughed. It's only the second time, tonight, that I've had blood in my face—and both times—I laughed—I laughed. . . ."

He began to stagger. "I laughed . . ." shouted Raskoi, roaring with mirth. He reeled and fell by the couch. The girl got up from him. Raskoi lay still with his arms and legs spread wide.

"Now!" said the girl. "You can get away!"

Gloster went to the door and stepped out. There was a numbness through his brain out of which a thick voice kept saying to him that he could not harm a drunken man.

He went downstairs through the lobby to the open street. The sweet coldness of the air blew through his lungs. He walked for half an hour, with his knees strengthening and the fumes blowing out of his brain. Then he turned and came back to the hotel.

He was sober enough to know that he must not go back through the lobby into the hotel. He had been seen going out and he must not be seen returning.

The room of Raskoi opened on a fire escape, so he went around through the alley behind the building and jumped to catch the lower end of the fire escape. There was enough strength in his arms to pull his body up but when he got to the first steps above, he had to crouch for a moment. His heart was racing so from the effort that he lost his breath and it would not come back.

The alcohol sickness was on him, too, making lights spin before his eyes. He forced himself to breathe regularly, looking down, trying to regulate his pulse by force of will. Then his natural strength rose up in his body and cleared his brain and his heart began to pound steadily. He commenced the upward climb.

CHAPTER VIII

A ROOM AT THE ADLON

THE straight-edged backs of three buildings rose beside the alley. All the nonsense of decoration and false front was stripped from them. Seen from the rear, they showed the builder's mind as it really was. Down below, as Gloster climbed, the light in the alley shrunk smaller and smaller and commenced to throw out separate rays, unwearingly. Three other fire escapes jagged up the backs of the neighboring buildings, dodged the windows, climbed and climbed to the roofs. Behind one window whose shade was pulled down, a light burned and made a blind, yellow eye which had some sort of spiritual significance to Gloster. He could not tell what it meant but he knew that it filled him with fear.

Then he got to the window of Raskoi's room. He recognized it by the rank, sour breath of wine that issued. He climbed in over the sill. It was not wine alone that fogged the air. He felt that he had come into the lair of something less than beast and more than man.

He sat down on the arm of an overstuffed chair and waited for his heart to quiet again after the climb. He could hear Raskoi breathing in heavy sleep.

Gradually the light came into the room, not the light of moon or stars but the glow of the city reflected from the miserably low clouds. By degrees his eyes felt their way around the chairs, the table, the lump of darkness on the floor that was Raskoi.

The coat would be in a bedroom closet. He got back into the next room, softly. The bed was a square of pale gray. He leaned close to it and heard the girl breathing. She had not taken her chance to leave the big drunken beast. She would wait for the morning, and money. If Raskoi gave her enough money no doubt she would stay on and hate him and serve him. Perhaps he would beat her into some sort of an affection, if he cared to take the time.

She began to whisper in her sleep: *"Je ne sais pas. Je ne sais pas. . . ."*

Gloster stepped back from the bed. He tried the wall to his right, running his hand up and down for doorknobs. When he found one, it was cold glass, cut to crisp edges. He opened the door. On the inside wall his hand touched the icy tiles of a bathroom.

He went on exploring. The next door opened on a closet filled with shelves. Another door gave him access, at last, to a coat closet. He touched the rough flimsy of a woman's coat, then a man's jacket. That must be Raskoi's.

He stepped inside the closet, closed the door until it was only an inch ajar, and used the little flat pocket torch which he carried. The shaft of light made a spot of burning white on the

wall, with yellowed circles around the central core. He could see everything very well.

He went through the pockets of the jacket. He found an old-fashioned turnip watch with a heavy case of soft gold, dented in several places. It ticked too loudly to suit Gloster but it was telling the correct time. A gold chain connected with the watch, and at the end of the chain there was a big green, rough stone, an uncut emerald. A flat round of steel projected under the left armpit of the coat. He pulled at it and a straight-bladed dagger came out. He fitted the thing into his hand and the double-edged blade projected between his second and third fingers. He pushed the knife back into the leather scabbard which was sewn inside the lining of the coat. He found a cigarette lighter of English make, a cheap comb with some of the fine teeth broken out and hair twisted in among them, speckled with dandruff. There was a note book, one side of it stiffened with cardboard to make it firm for writing upon.

HE opened the book and commenced to run through the pages. The Russian was hard for him to read but he made it out. The opening insert was:

> Merciful God, lead by the hand, guide with your voice your pitiful servant, Gregor Raskoi, who lies here weeping at your feet.

On another page:

> Under the fingernails! What a fool I was to forget to connect the current *under* the fingernails. It must be like driving splinters into the quick. How much time I waste, being a fool!

Again:

> Up, Raskoi! Up, up, Raskoi! Up, up! . . .
> Well, he makes me his dog, but I will bite all the other dogs. I will drive them mad. I will make them foam at the mouth. Mad dog! Mad dog! . . .
> Oh woman, when shall I find a mate? Why do you crumble under my hands? Why do you melt away in my arms? Why are you softer than butter! Beasts, you are not worth buying, you are not worth having as a gift. On a black day, God threw you down on earth. He swept you out of heaven. He saw you fall. Afterward, he began to ache all over but he was free of you.

Several pages followed filled with figures very neatly written in and totaled. Perhaps these were expense accounts.

Then:

> She was fat all over, like a swine, and she squealed like a swine. She never had to draw breath after the current struck her under the fingernails. She never stopped screeching. Wonderful, wonderful lungs! . . .
> Miserable Gregor, lowest of beasts. God, behold him! . . .

Almost on the last written page he found, written in German, not in Russian:

> Tuesday. 9 A.M., Adlon, Winterberg.

This was Monday. On Tuesday at nine in the morning a person named Winterberg was to be met, it seemed. Or was Raskoi to go from the Adlon to a place called Winterberg?

Here the door of the closet blew softly open. The lights of the bedroom snapped on and he saw Raskoi naked to the waist with his lips grinned back so that the stiff rolls of flesh bulged up under his eyes.

He did not speak, but reached a hand out for Gloster's throat, and Gloster smashed a fist into the middle of that grin.

The blow jerked back Raskoi's head. Gloster came out of the closet behind a shower of blows. Blood spurted on the face of Raskoi but his head was India rubber. It was knocked back and forth and yet his body

swayed back only a small step with each shock. The girl sat up in her bed with a screaming face but it seemed to Gloster that she made no sound. He was cutting his hands against the teeth of Raskoi and against the hard, bony ridges of his brows and jaw.

The Russian ducked in under a driving punch. He caught Gloster around the body and buried his teeth in the coat and shoulder. The pain was fire, as though Raskoi were biting out a lump of flesh; and all the while he kept kicking up with one knee. There was no end to the strength of his arms. They tightened and tightened like rope cable. They crushed the wind out of Gloster's lungs so that he commenced to bite at the air like a dog which is held by the throat. He had his right hand free and with the second knuckles he began to beat behind the ear of Raskoi. The flesh turned white. It split. The blood ran down.

Suddenly Raskoi winced and jumped back into the living room doorway. Gloster could not follow. His heart, thundering in his throat, choked him. Then, behind Raskoi, he saw a dim ghost with a maniac's face. A bottle swayed up in two hands and came down on the head of Raskoi. The glass did not break but the bone crunched. Raskoi dropped on his face.

He had not made a sound. Neither had the woman as she struck. There was only the fat, plopping noise as the loose flesh of Raskoi struck the floor. Blood was running into the matted hair at the back of his head.

"LOOK at him," said the girl through her teeth. "Is he dead?"

Gloster looked at the smashed head. "He's dead," he answered.

"He's dead—the beast!" nodded the girl.

"There's blood on your face," said Gloster. "Go wash it off. And then dress."

She got as far as the bed and fell on it, her arms twined around her head. Gloster went into the next room and lighted a cigarette in the darkness. The burning coal drew out to a long, crooked, red triangle; the heat of the smoke scalded his tongue.

He turned on the lights and opened a bottle of Burgundy. At the first swallow, his heart stopped racing and his stomach was warmly comforted. It was good Burgundy. There was nothing green in its taste. It was a little sweet but all Burgundy is a little sweet. It was full of marrow and fruit, as the Frenchmen say. He found himself thinking about the wine and nothing else in spite of the other things that needed thought. The night voice of the city groaned in the streets and the memory of Lady Cecil came up to him, embodied in the sound.

Gradually a door opened in his mind. He kept slamming the door shut, turning away from the grim opportunity which lay ahead, but still with a quiet logic the thought persisted.

Russia was far away and Russian leaders are not publicized in the western world; we do not know their faces. People know how Stalin looks, and that's about all.

He went back into the bedroom. "Get up and dress," he said to the girl.

She did not move.

He turned the body of Raskoi on its back and looked at the face for a long moment. Then he studied himself in the mirror. There were disheartening differences. Fear began to come up in him as when a man drives an automobile too fast and frightens himself and still keeps on driving faster and faster. He knew that he would follow

out the idea which had entered his brain. At last he surrendered to it entirely and began to act upon it.

He pulled the trousers off Raskoi. There was a spot of blood on the knee of one trouser leg. He undressed. Raskoi's trousers were a little too big around the waist and hips but they were not a very bad fit. In the closet he found Raskoi's gray flannel shirt. There was a black necktie to go with it. In a suitcase were more shirts, underwear, socks of soft wool, some Russian cigarettes, a flask of vodka, a volume of Pushkin, a pack of goosequill toothpicks, two packs of cards, a big automatic, loaded, and an automobile map of Germany.

He took a swallow of the vodka; it seemed to send smoke out through his nostrils but it was good vodka.

Yes, there was heart in it.

He took off the trousers again and dressed himself from underwear out, completely, in the clothes of Raskoi. In the shoulders the coat pinched him a trifle; in the waist everything was still a bit too large, but on the whole he was comfortably dressed. There were stains on the front of the coat, which was a good, tough tweed, of dark gray. One of the stains was grease; another was sticky, perhaps from a sweet of some sort, and the dark red Burgundy had left its traces, naturally. Gloster seemed to see it hanging in drops from the chin of the Russian.

He had hard work, then, dragging his own clothes onto the body of Raskoi. When that was done, he picked up the hulk under the arms and dragged it to the coat closet. He took out the girl's coat and Raskoi's old raincoat, which was black with grease around the inside of the collar. Then he shoveled the body of Raskoi into the closet, locked the door, and dropped the key into his pocket.

AFTER that, he washed in the bathroom. His hands had stopped bleeding. He pulled off some bits of loose skin from his knuckles and then noticed that the hands were swelling a little. Back in the bedroom he leaned over the girl.

"Get up!" he commanded.

She lay as though senseless. He turned her on her back and made her sit up. Her eyes were dead, her face twisted into set lines of nausea.

"You've got to dress," said Gloster. "Try this. It will buck you up."

Her head went back helplessly against his shoulder and he poured a long swallow of the vodka down her throat. That got her off the bed and made her stand up, shuddering.

"Listen to me," said Gloster. "He's dead. Raskoi! Raskoi is dead!"

"I killed him," she whispered. She looked up at him with the smile of a contented child. "I killed him!" she said, and closed her eyes again.

He wrapped her in a blanket, and laid her on the bed, because the coldness of her body alarmed him.

"Who sent you to pick up Raskoi?" he asked. She lay with her eyes closed and made no answer. "Raskoi! Why did you kill him?" asked Gloster. "Raskoi—you hear me?"

"Winton Jones," she whispered. "Am I going to die?"

"You've had a shock, but you're not going to die," said Gloster. "You're getting better fast. In ten minutes you'll be all right."

"I want to sleep! I'm sleepy, Monsieur Gloster. . . ."

The name had hit him hard. He wanted to have Winton Jones there and curse him. The color was coming

back in her face. now. "Did Winton Jones tell you to kill Raskoi?" he asked.

She opened her sleeping eyes suddenly and said: "God told me to! I saw my brother screaming and dying and Raskoi laughing. I saw . . ."

She sat up in bed. Her voice went into a screech. Gloster put his hand over her mouth. The softness of the lips kept struggling against the palm of his hand. After a moment she fell back into the pillows and lay there, panting.

A hand tapped on the living room door.

"Will you be quiet?" asked Gloster. She looked up at him with frightened eyes and nodded, so he went into the living room, singing loudly the old Volga song which goes something like this:

> My sweetheart wears but wooden shoes
> Wooden shoes, wooden shoes;
> And a sack around her middle,
> A sack around her middle,
> And a skewer through her hair!

He roughed up his hair, took a bottle in his hand, and opened the door. A big man with a hard, square, Prussian face stood in the hall.

"The noise, Herr Raskoi!" he said. "The trampling and dancing and the singing. How can your neighbors sleep?"

"Pour this down their throats," said Gloster. "That will choke off their complaints. And what's left pour down your own throat and choke yourself, and be damned!"

He thrust the bottle of Burgundy into the hands of the clerk and shut the door in his face. The hand did not tap on his door again. He waited, feeling a greater and a greater strength. A voice inside him seemed to be speaking.

HE lighted a cigarette and went into the bedroom. He was amazed to see the girl already dressed, sitting in front of the mirror to do her hair. She smiled over her shoulder at Gloster, lifting her eyebrows in a question.

"All right," said Gloster.

He watched her face and throat in the mirror. It was a street dress but it had a collar of fluffy lace that framed the picture softly. She was no longer beneath desire. She seemed to know the difference when she stood up and met his eye. She straightened the dress with her hands and put on a pale blue hat that slouched to one side and had a red feather in it.

"Now that I'm all ready, do you really want me to go?" she asked.

"Do you know what's in there?" asked Gloster.

She looked toward the coat closet without the slightest shock or disgust.

"I wonder what part of hell he's in?" she asked.

"Come along," said Gloster. "You're getting out of here."

"Yes, Monsieur Gloster."

"Raskoi," said Gloster.

She looked at his clothes and nodded, as she started for the door. "But *that* won't do," she said, pointing to the floor.

On the painted wood the blood of Raskoi lay in streaks and globules, like red oil. She went into the bathroom, brought out a wet washrag and cleaned the floor. Afterward, she rinsed the rag clean, scrupulously clean, in the washbowl, and dropped it over the edge of the bathtub. When she came out she said:

"He didn't tie his necktie like that. Have you forgotten? This way."

She undid the tie and unbuttoned the neck of the shirt.

"It was open, like this," she said,

"and he made two wrappings—so—Monsieur Raskoi. *Comme ça.*"

She smiled at him as she worked.

"Are you all right?" asked Gloster. "You *look* all right."

She nodded. "I'm happy. I could sing," she said. "I could sing—and dance on his dead face! Are you sure you want me to go?"

"Yes," said Gloster. "How much money have you?"

"Plenty. I don't need money," she told him.

He took her purse and counted eight hundred Reichmarks in it. "That's not enough," he said, and gave her two thousand more.

She merely said, "It's not right. *I* ought to do the paying! I've had the pleasure."

"Now come along," said Gloster, and took her from the rooms into the hall.

He was rumbling deep in his throat, as they took the elevator down, the same old Volga boat song:

> My sweetheart has but wooden shoes,
> Wooden shoes, wooden shoes . . . .

They walked out onto the main floor, where rugs were rolled up and the cleaners scrubbed busily. They scrubbed on their hands and knees, working thoroughly. No one was visible behind the semicircle of the desk and he was glad of that. They walked out into Unter den Linden and saw the dreary gray of the morning beginning on the horizon, making the sweep of windy clouds blacker and heavier. A taxi driver saluted like a soldier. Gloster waved him away and they walked on through the great Brandenburger Tor with its silly horses galloping endlessly into the sky above them.

"Where do you go?" he asked.

"Zum Westen," she said.

"Get out of Berlin," said Gloster. "I'm going to leave you now. Get out of Berlin. Get out of Germany. You'd better take a plane and fly out. Go fast. The German police are the devil."

She dropped a hand on her hip and surveyed him with a smiling deliberation.

"Do you think I'm afraid to die?" she asked. Her head jerked back with a full, free burst of laughter. "Do you think I'm afraid to *die?*" she repeated.

CHAPTER IX

MEN OF DESTINY

HE went back to the hotel, and took an elevator with two couples who had been out doing the town. When he got out at his floor he heard the elevator boy saying throught the closing doors, "Raskoi. . . ."

And one of the women almost screamed, "What? Raskoi? . . ."

The closing of the metal doors shut out the voices; only the whirring of the elevator was audible as he went down the hall, wondering if he had played the part well enough. But after all even Raskoi must have his down moments and could not be continually exploding. He put his hand on the knob of the door and waited there for a long moment before he pushed it open. But nothing lived in the room except the blue stallion galloping over the green hill into the sky.

He looked into the bedroom. A blanket had fallen to the floor; the top sheet was twisted into strings and wrinkles. On the floor he examined the bare paint and then the rug but found no recent stains. He had had a sense that blood was flowing and spattering from the beginning of the fight and yet the only blood had been on the spot where Raskoi fell.

The living room looked like a stable, with the broken bottle necks and the littered straw jackets in which the Burgundy was packed. He lay down on the couch, folded his hands on his stomach, and closed his eyes. Weariness set an ache behind them; alcohol weighted the base of his brain. And then sleep in great numb waves seemed to move upwards from his feet. It broke in showers of darkness across his mind.

At eight o'clock a tap on the door half roused him; a mechanic stole in with a kit of tools. Gloster cursed him in Russian, then in German. The blond Prussian reddened with savage anger and set his teeth and went on working at the broken telephone. Gloster closed his eyes and snored, with a deep, rattling intake and a whistle with each outward breath.

"Swine!" said the mechanic under his breath. *"Schwein!"* he whispered again, as he left the room.

Gloster sat up and used the telephone. "Breakfast!" he shouted. "No damned German *Frühstück, hören Sie?* This is Raskoi! You hear me? Caviar, and half a dozen boiled eggs, and some fat pork. *Fat,* you hear? And a quart of black coffee; and some stale bread. *Stale* bread, I tell you, sheep's head, wooden block!"

BREAKFAST came and two frightened waiters with it. Gloster snored on the couch till they were gone. Then he ate what he could and threw the rest away.

At nine o'clock, precisely, came the rap on his door.

"Herein!" shouted Gloster.

The door opened on a tall man with a long, thin face and hair dead white above the ears, dead black over the rest of the head.

"Winterberg?" asked Gloster, without rising.

"Winterberg?" exclaimed the German. "No, Herr Raskoi. Hans Graustein, only—to serve you, Herr Raskoi, if you will come with me?"

"Where?" said Gloster, rubbing his eyes and yawning.

"Where they agreed to wait, Herr Raskoi," said Graustein, looking puzzled.

"My face itches," said Gloster. "I'll shave first."

"But, Herr Raskoi, they all are waiting! They are ready!" said Graustein.

"Let them wait and be damned for it," said Gloster. "I told you my face itches."

He went into the bathroom and shaved, deliberately, and as he shaved he sang, over and over, the chorus of a Moscow street ballad, full of Oriental whine and with very little tune at all.

Graustein was a very nervous man when Gloster went down with him to the street to a closed automobile that whipped them out through Friedrichstrasse and stopped in front of an old stone house with a brown front and a coat of arms over the door, a unicorn and a bear rampant on either side of a disk covered with indistinguishable figures.

The door opened into a big hall with a double staircase rising from the farther end of it, and a huge, crystal chandelier descended from the middle of the ceiling. It was more of a palace than a home.

GRAUSTEIN took Gloster through two or three rooms with gilded consoles in the corners and many great mirrors and rugs that flamed hotter than fire underfoot. Finally, opening a door, Graustein bowed him into a

library done in time-darkened oak, with racks of books rising eight feet all around the room, and hunting trophies affixed to the walls above.

"Herr Raskoi!" announced Graustein, and four men rose in the room to greet him.

One of them came forward. He had a face like a wolf, heavy in the jaws, meager in the muzzle, with wise wrinkles of thought cleaving the middle of the forehead. His manner was distinguished, calm, and easy. He took Gloster by the hand.

"Von Emsdorf," he said. "A great pleasure, Gregor Raskoi."

He brought Gloster on toward the fireplace where five-foot logs were hissing and burning without throwing up a clear flame.

"Conte di Parva — Herr Johann Gleich—Monsieur Jacques Louvain," said von Emsdorf.

Gloster noted them one by one. The Belgian, Louvain, was a fat man who was so short of wind that he panted as he smoked his cigar, holding it exactly in the middle of his mouth and making almost inaudible smacking noises with his lips. He was sixty, at least.

The Austrian, Johann Gleich, was only a lad of twenty-eight. He looked like an athlete and a desperado and sneered every moment as though he found what each moment contained really beneath any serious interest.

Conte di Parva represented the hearty *contadino* type of Italian, with plenty of neck girth and not much back to his head; and yet there was something about his big face, the very crook and size of his huge nose, that assured Gloster that the man was of a very old family, indeed.

They greeted Raskoi one after the other, and Johann Gleich said: "We've been waiting almost an hour for you, Herr Raskoi."

"I would have made you wait two, but I felt good-natured this morning," said Raskoi.

The four looked at him silently. Young Johann Gleich ran the red tip of his tongue over his lips.

"You little Westerners," said Gloster, "have to get used to waiting for the real people." He turned his back on them and spat into the fire. "Give me some Burgundy," said Gloster. "I'll be on time to drink that, anyway!" And he put back his head and roared with laughter.

They kept on looking at him, silently. Then von Emsdorf walked to the wall and pressed a bell.

"Little Westerners!" said Gloster, waving his hand. "Little people with no backyards. You have to plant your crops in your cellars. Get away from me! I laugh! Raskoi, he laughs! . . . I kept you waiting? You thank God that I came at all and don't start talk about waiting."

"I'm going to tell you," said the hard, ringing voice of Johann Gleich, "that your Russian . . ."

"Johann!" said von Emsdorf.

Gleich looked down at his hand. made it into a fist, and then slowly relaxed the fingers one by one. When he looked up, he had himself under control again.

GOOD-NATURED Jacques Louvain said, "You know, Gregor Raskoi, it seems to me that you've grown a new face since I last saw you in Russia."

Von Emsdorf was prodding at the fire with a long poker. He turned his wolf's head, slowly, and looked Gloster in the eye.

"Yes, I have a new face," said Glos-

ter. "And it cost me money to get it. You know how I got it?" He laughed and went on without waiting for the question. "Burgundy! You water your wheat with red wine and it will be red wheat! I *used* to be thin. When you saw me, little man, I used to be light. But now when I come they hear my step on the stairs. Yes, they hear me on the stairs and it makes their flesh crawl. They hear my footstep and they hear my voice, too. Because I come singing. In Russia there's no room for filthy aristocrats; there's no room for counts or viscounts, either, and there's no room for fat bankers, but there's room for a man and his song, too. You hear that, all of you?"

No one answered him. A servant came to the door.

"Herr Raskoi will have some Burgundy. Red Burgundy," said von Emsdorf. "What sort will you like, Herr Raskoi?"

"What sort will I like? What is the best? The best may be good enough for me. Bring me a bottle of *Romanée Conti.*"

The cold, even voice of von Emsdorf said, "A bottle of *Romanée Conti.* I think there is a little left."

But the German had flushed, and the big muscles at the base of his jaw were bulging.

"You know," said Louvain, "it still is rather strange to me. I wouldn't have recognized Gregor Raskoi. And yet I sat at the same table with him. The table was rather long, to be sure. I thought it was quite a different face."

"Ah, did you?" asked von Emsdorf.

"I did," said Louvain, with increased surety.

Von Emsdorf drew some papers from his pocket and selected an envelope from among them.

"Have you any specimens of your handwriting, Herr Raskoi?" he asked.

"Specimens? Why should I show you specimens? I show specimens to doctors, not to von Emsdorfs. But if you want to see if Gregor Raskoi can write, he can! Look for yourself!"

He snatched out the notebook of Raskoi and flung it at von Emsdorf. The German caught it in his hand, stared a cold moment at Gloster, and then opened the little book.

He read aloud:

> For roasted pig's head, plenty of mustard, roast apples, soft bread for the gravy, served by a maiden if you can find one in Russia.

Gloster shouted with laughter. He took hold of the back of a chair and laughed some more.

Von Emsdorf closed the notebook flicked the pages with the edge of his thumb, and returned it to Gloster with a bow.

"You write very well, Gregor Raskoi," he said. "You write—with a great deal of feeling."

"I write what's in me," said Gloster, "and by God, some of it would take the skin off your noses. Some of it is hot enough to burn."

"Do you bring me any word from our friend of the Central Executive Committee?" asked von Emsdorf.

"Ah, ha," said Gloster. "I know what you mean. Our Beloved and Bold, our Wise Inspirer, our Genius, our Shock-worker, our Best of the Best, our Guiding Star, our Comrade, our Friend, our Stalin! That's the one you mean, is it?"

"That *is* the one I mean," said von Emsdorf.

"I carry my master's words in my brain, not in my pocket," said Gloster. "I'm the dog that barks when he bids me but I put my teeth in other men."

"Yes," said Louvain, suddenly.

"That's Gregor Raskoi. That sounds like him."

"But if you want to know what authority sends me here," said Gloster, "I'll tell you. It's the authority of Gregor Raskoi. Is that good enough for you? You, Gleich, or whatever your damned name is, is that good enough for you? Do you want something more? Don't rouse me, you little Westerners. Look at my hands! I barked the skin off them on a woman's head but there's plenty of tough wood under the bark, and I can use it on weak-hearted, puling, soft-faced, white-bellied aristocrats! You—I mean you, Gleich!"

"Johann!" barked von Emsdorf.

Johann Gleich turned his back and walked to a window with his head bowed.

VON EMSDORF said, "If you keep on talking like this, Johann Gleich will murder you, Gregor Raskoi."

"Ah, will he?" answered Gloster. "Will he do that? Perhaps I was wrong. Perhaps he *is* my brother. Gleich, come and give me your hand."

Gleich turned slowly, with a white face.

"Johann, give him your hand," said von Emsdorf.

Johann Gleich crossed the room and touched the hand of Gloster silently. Behind him, von Emsdorf's German shepherd dog slunk suddenly out of a corner where it had lain as obscure as the shadows, and as though it recognized with a devilish surety the passion that was in the young Austrian. It now slipped along at his heels, and shrank away again as he turned and left Gloster.

Gleich merely said as he took the hand of Gloster, "I won't save your words like money!"

Then von Emsdorf took control of the group and pushed forward their business.

"We have not much time," he said. "The fewer moments we spend together the better, as you all will agree. And there is nothing in our work that cannot be done suddenly. Raskoi, here is your wine. Take this chair. Parva, let's hear from you, first."

"I cannot tell you exactly how Italy will move. If anybody could read the mind of *il Duce,*" said Parva, "he would be the leader himself and Mussolini would be something else. But I think he will act if he has the chance; that is to say, if there is some opportunity which opens the door. Our last normal year was 1934. The deficit that year was half a billion dollars.

"Do any of you realize what half a billion dollars a year means in a poor country like Italy? *Il Duce* can't afford to let the country stand still and discover what's happening to it. Forty percent of the total income of the country goes into the national revenue. Can any of you imagine *that?* And in addition, there's the five percent capital levy, collected! More than a year's income at a stroke.

"If *il Duce* allows the country to pause, it may be overwhelmed with despair. It *has* to go forward. Where? It's hard to tell. Take a slice out of Jugoslavia? Those Jugoslavs are hard fighters, and they offer us nothing but barren mountains and highlands. Rumania, Turkey, and Greece are solidly behind them. That's why we turn north and look at France because of her colonies. Show us a gate that can be opened and we'll move. Not because we hate France but because we can't stand and starve outside the only door that can be opened."

"This is more than mere thinking?

You've made wide inquiries, Count?" asked von Emsdorf.

"Among the people of whom I told you. No, it is not mere thinking."

"Now you, Louvain?" asked von Emsdorf.

The fat man's cigar waved.

"There is a party in my country, as you know," said Louvain, with his pleasant smile, "which never wanted to be tied to France and the gold bloc. It has seen the gold bloc fall and it is ready for change. The party is quiet, but it is very strong. If a powerful movement were made toward France *south* of Belgium, I can guarantee that there would be no flank attack delivered by the Belgian army on the invaders. It would remain on the frontier to observe. It would stay there observing."

"In spite of the treaties?" said von Emsdorf.

Louvain laughed a little. "Treaties? Today?" he murmured. "My dear von Emsdorf! After Ethiopia? After the occupation of the Rhineland?"

Everyone in the room smiled, except Johann Gleich.

"We would see to it—we peace-lovers—that there would be no Belgian flank attack," said Louvain.

"AND you, Gleich?" asked von Emsdorf.

Gleich said in his clear, rapid voice, "It is better to starve in company than to starve alone. Austria would join Germany for a strong blow; and Austria would be linked to Germany forever. Blood tells. We are the same blood."

"And Russia?" said von Emsdorf.

Gloster lifted the bottle and poured a long draft down his throat. He lowered the bottle. A few drops ran down on his chin and collected there.

"Latvia — Esthonia — Lithuania—" he said, and felt the drop fall from his chin and gave no heed.

He saw the face of Gleich twist with disgust and straighten gradually again.

"Go on, please," urged von Emsdorf.

"Go on!" said Gloster, waving his right hand. "Go on West, you little peoples. We will take the East. And if Poland jumps on your back when you turn West—Russia will take a slice of Polish cheese. We have good stomachs. We digest bad meat easily!" He laughed as he said it.

"Stalin?" asked von Emsdorf.

"Yes, Stalin," said Gloster, nodding, and half closing his eyes.

"He understands what we must have. We need Germany, because Germany is full of machines which we must have. Germany can make them. We will buy them, little machinists. Yes, yes, we will buy many of them. You will be able to drink your beer and get fat again and smoke your crooked pipes and beat your wives—"

He laughed, leaning back in his chair, thrusting his legs straight out. In this moment, von Emsdorf looked steadily at him and observed the big shepherd dog, black as night and yellow-eyed, come stealthily up to the hand of Gloster; and the hand of Gloster, absently, as though of its own volition, found the head of the dog and stroked it, found the shoulder of the big beast, drew it close to his chair, and went on caressing, with an instinctive, wandering gentleness of touch. The eyes of von Emsdorf narrowed as he watched.

"So—" he said. "It is enough! We meet again this evening, here. Then I will show you what gate is to be opened."

"Do you mean that we stop now,

when we've hardly commenced?" snapped Gleich.

Von Emsdorf let his glance rest upon each of the faces around. His eye was bright, his voice a silken rustle:

"We've more than commenced. We've seen the faces of one another. We've heard one another speak. This evening I'm going to start opening the Western door for you. I shall show you the way."

VON EMSDORF sat at the table alone when the others had gone from the room. Heavy doors hushed away all sounds from this inner place, yet the echoes of Gloster's great laughter still remained with him. There was black earth in that laughter, the German thought, and it was unclean.

His long finger felt along the sagging line of his jowl. . . . Louvain—yes, that fat one could be counted on. Slow, perhaps—a coward surely—yet Louvain was an old hand who knew the traitor's penalty too well. . . . Di Parva—a parrot only. A puppet who spoke the words he had been taught. . . . Johann Gleich, a patriot, a firebrand. Yes, that was the surest kind. . . .

But Raskoi—? What of Gregor Raskoi?

Von Emsdorf's lean lips compressed. His narrowed eyes pondered infinitely. They had warned him, of course, that the Russian was half-devil, half-cur. Trouble walked in the footsteps of Raskoi. Why had they sent such a filthy pig with so much weighed in the balance?

He leaned back his head and his fingertips touched. Little mechanics, eh? The *Romanée Conti* only he would drink? He would treat them like the unwashed dogs—?

"Ah," said von Emsdorf softly. "*Dogs. . . .*"

Yes, it might be that they had sent this Raskoi to defile and insult them all. To make a furor of this meeting and dynamite all plans. Yet Stalin was too wise for that. There was too much to be gained.

"Dogs—" he said again, and his thin lips pursed.

He turned in his chair and his gaze was bright upon the black shepherd that was stretched out near the fireplace.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

Arctic Justice

By HAROLD WILLARD GLEASON

I. The Crime

Five snowbound moons of shuddering loneliness
The Arctic trapper fought with ruthless foes:
With winter, swift to strike at man's distress;
With gnawing hunger haunting all repose;
With prowling wolf and keen-fanged carcajou
That stalked him, slavering, savage, on the trail;
With fear—the howl of phantom loup-garou
Shrill in the shadows round his wangan frail.
Then, with the crash and roar of shattering ice,
The slithering hush of snow from bush and tree,
Came March—reprieve! To him no common vice
Beckoned . . . . But God! *five months of fish and tea!*
He robbed a cache—the mark H. B* it bore—
And wolfed till, glutted, he could gorge no more . . .

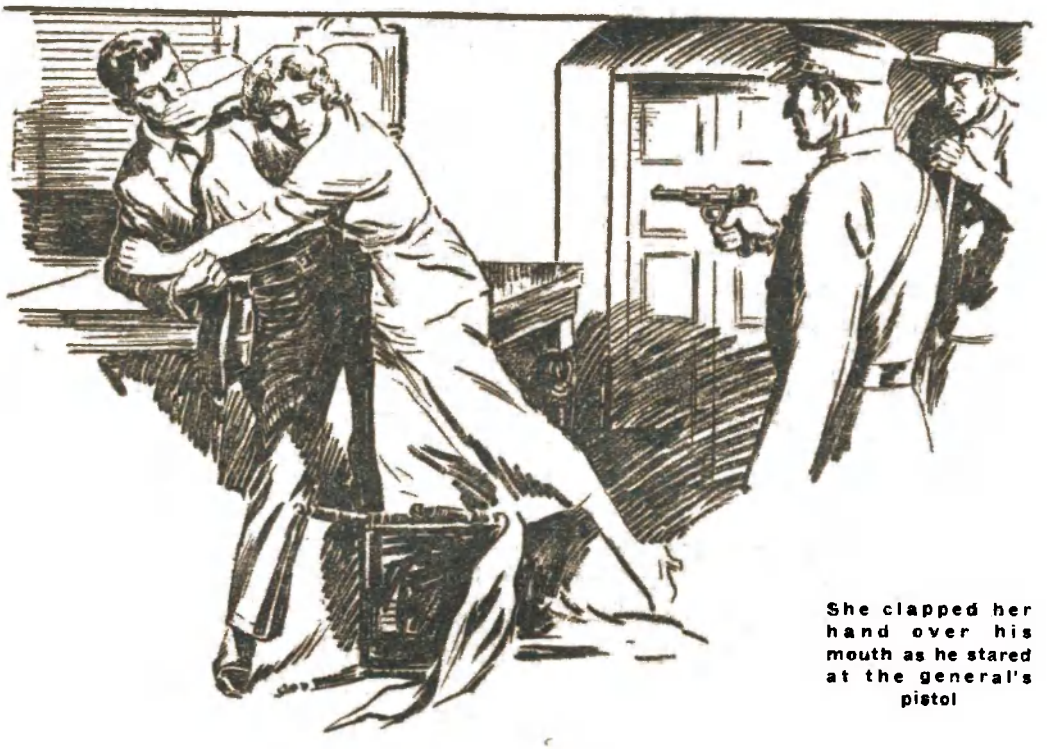
II. The Punishment

Back at the Post he scanned each face . . . No eye
Of those grim fur-clad factors gathered there
Showed pity . . . Downward pressed the leaden sky;
Chill stinging sleet with menace filled the air.
No mercy . . . Woe betide the waster rash,
The selfish fool who, unassailed by need,
Dare violate a cairn-protected cache,
Stern sacred symbol of the Arctic creed!
Dogs snapped and snarled . . . He slung upon his back
The futile thong-bound pouch of food allowed
(Ironic touch!) to stay his lonely track
Into the dread white void; then, shoulders bowed,
Lurched outward, racquettes creaking, with a curse,
To face a spoiler's doom—*la longue traverse* . . .

III. Retribution

"Come soon! Come soon!" Through crusted lips the prayer
Wailed eerily across the frozen waste . . .
With broken back the outcast huddled there . . . .
(Already miles away, with clumsy haste
Shuffling, taxed racquettes groaning, toward the Post
A chance-met *courrier* braved bleak wilderness
For help . . .) Before the exile like a ghost
Black gathering storm-clouds mocked his sore distress.
Each move sheer sweating agony, he fed
The blaze beside him from a scanty store
Of jack-pine branches . . . Faint, afar, the dread
Howl of a wolf rose shrill . . . He knew no more . . .
Ere gale-torn scud revealed a baleful moon,
His piteous plea was answered—*death* came soon . . .

*Hudson's Bay



She clapped her hand over his mouth as he stared at the general's pistol

Revolution—With Pictures

By EUSTACE L. ADAMS

Author of "Red Chaos by Night," "Skyway to Peril," etc.

WALLY SHANNON and Joe Gray, of the Apex News Weekly, earned their living by following trouble around the globe and taking its picture whenever they were able. In Viscaya, they found admirable scope for their activities. They also found their old rival, Two-time Mueller of the Globe Movienews, ready to make things as difficult and dangerous and troublesome for them as he could.

After President Vallejo, the Benevolent, died, General Garcia had seized the government. Garcia's methods were high-handed, his discipline cruel, and his nature suspicious. Trembling natives named him the Eye—and shrank to call their souls their own.

MIGUEL VALLEJO, son of the former president, is ambitious to change all this and to restore his country to the peace and prosperity it enjoyed under his father. But Garcia learns of Miguel's proposed return from America, and sends soldiers to take him off the boat. Vallejo, warned in time, has slipped off the steamer. Sally Lane, a young American partisan of Miguel's, tells Wally and Joe Gray that Miguel is in hiding in a small coastal village.

Wally and Joe have known and liked Miguel some years before in Panama, and partly because of that and partly because they cannot keep out of whatever trouble seems to be handiest, they agree to help him. Just to keep the balance, Mueller is on Garcia's payroll.

The trio of Americans charter a schooner to take them to Santa Ysabel—and find Two-time Mueller stowed away on board. Sally and Wally manage to land at Santa Ysabel, leaving Joe Gray holding the ship at gunpoint.

They rescue Miguel, precipitate a running gun fight, capture a government launch and start to return to the schooner. But Joe Gray has had more than he could do to hold the *Tupelpo's* crew in submission indefinitely. Wounded, he jumps overboard and swims to the launch.

This story began in the Argosy for April 10

AND the schooner puts out to sea. The only way for Miguel and his friends to reach the capital now is by the jungle trail. Disheveled, weary, but grimly confident they plow on through unbroken wilderness until Joe Gray drops with fever.

Wally takes Sally ahead in an attempt to reach Miguel's friends and to send a doctor and a guard back for Joe and young Vallejo.

General Lobo, Miguel's chief supporter, receives them a little dubiously, but they manage at length to convince him of their sincerity.

"We shall have to wait until nightfall before we can get to Miguel and your friend," the general informs them.

It is only just dawn. Wally is desperate.

"If Joe isn't taken care of in a few hours, he'll die!"

"Nothing can be done until nightfall," the general repeats, unmoved.

Wally, exhausted, furious, and tormented with worry, explodes. "Unless I lead you to Miguel, you'll never find him," he storms. "Either get a doctor and stretcher-bearers now, or I'll get help myself. You and your damned revolution can go plumb to hell!"

There is a brief, crushing silence, and then, at long last, the general murmurs gently. "I wish, young man, that I had three friends in all the world as fierce and loyal as you."

CHAPTER XVI

FLIGHT INTO DARKNESS

SOME of the strain went out of Wally's haggard face. "We start immediately, then?"

"Wally!" Sally blurted. "You—you can't go all the way back there now."

Wally stared at her in astonishment. "Do you think I'm going to leave him out there one second longer than I have to?" he demanded.

"You've got to rest!" Sally wailed.

"Listen, sister," Wally said, patiently. "There are three things I'm going to do before I worry about resting. I'm going to bring Joe in. I'm going to get my camera so I'll be ready to shoot pictures if trouble comes. And—" he grinned wolfishly—"and I'm going to kill Two-time Mueller!"

It was odd, Sally thought dimly, that she was not shocked. At least the events of the past two days and nights had done this for her: They had taught her to know reality—and death was the last, the final, fact of reality. She could endure, now, the knowledge that men—men she *knew*, men whose hands had touched her, men whose arms had carried her—could go in search of enemies and slay them.

What had happened to her, she acknowledged in this moment of self-revelation, was even worse than that. She, whose girlhood had been spent in the ordered, frigid calm of Boston, who had thought the Ice Carnival at Wellesley College the most exciting thing in the world, who had embarked on this tropic adventure merely to watch Miguel Vallejo march, with bands playing and flags flying, into the Presidential Palace—she could calmly consider the killing of a man—and approve it!

". . . and it will take perhaps three-quarters of an hour to summon Dr. Guerra and Lieutenant Lopez, whom you will lead into the jungle," the general was saying quietly. "You will consult with Lieutenant Lopez as to the best means of getting in and out unobserved. Meanwhile, I suggest you bathe and rest. And will you do me the honor of taking coffee with me?"

An immense relief swept over Sally. So the general had accepted Wally Shannon and herself, two tatterdemalions from the jungle, as allies. It seemed to her that Joe Gray was already in a clean white bed, Miguel Vallejo already president and she . . .

But it was at that moment, when everything seemed so fine, that the thing happened which was to cause, later, so much trouble, heartbreak and tragedy. Sally, slumped on the couch and glancing tiredly down the room, saw it begin.

The spy, standing against the wall before the nightgowned figure of Ramos the servant, suddenly bent down and lanced his body at the guard in a quick, stiff dive. His careening shoulder struck Ramos' gun arm, knocked it up. The gun spat fire at the ceiling. Ramos' body plummeted backward; his head struck the floor with a thump that echoed the full length of the *sala*.

The spy was up like a cat. Five flying steps he took toward the nearest French

window. The general, after one incredulous look, brought his gun up. The spy made no effort to pull open the jalousies whose slats, by day, kept the sunlight out. He ducked his head and went through them like a swimmer plunging into the water. But even as his head sloped down, the general's great pistol roared. The spy's voice lifted in an agonized cry of protest, trailing behind him as he pitched out of the window. There was a splintering crash and the man was gone, leaving the slats of the jalousies split and awry behind him.

The general raced toward that window, running with the speed of a man half his age. And Wally was right behind him. The old man wrenched the jalousies open, and stuck his gun out; but there was no explosion because the spy had gone, leaving the patio door open behind him.

"Give me that gun!" Wally shouted and grabbed the big pistol out of the general's hand.

HE LEAPED for the ground, and was running even as his feet hit it. He skidded through the patio door and found himself on the wide, lighted expanse of the Avenida. There was a car parked three or four houses down and the spy had almost reached it. A dark figure popped out to help him as he staggered. With one hand the man from the car jerked the fugitive toward the open door. With the other he lifted something that was dark and bulky.

There was a puff of fire and a *splat* of sound, and a bullet ripped by Wally's face. Another, and Wally's coat jerked violently. Wally fell flat on his face on the sidewalk. Holding his breath to stifle his panting, he fired one bullet at the gunman. He stretched his arm out along the pavement, resting his fist on the concrete. Something hit the concrete directly before him, spitting powdered dust into his face and ricocheting away with a whining scream. Wally blinked the dust out of his eyes, cursing like a madman. The gunman was now wrestling with the spy, pushing his head down and jamming him into the tonneau of the car. Wally squeezed the trigger carefully and fired two shots more. He knew they went true because, with a convulsive jerk, the gunman straightened. Wally put another bullet into him.

Hands came out of the rear of the car, grabbed the spy's arms and jerked him inside. The motor roared. The gunman fell to the sidewalk and lay there flapping his arms and squalling at the car which was already underway. His screams bit through the night air, probing deep into Wally's ears. He fired once again and the ugly commotion stopped. Wally started toward that now-quiet body. He heard running footsteps at the next corner. He saw lights flash on in the windows nearby. He changed his mind and hurried back to General Lobo's patio.

The old man and Sally had opened the front door.

"He got away," Wally said, simply.

"Who—who was screaming?" Sally asked, faintly.

"One of his friends," Wally said.

Sally looked at him searchingly, her eyes big and round and very dark. "I—I could—use a drink of water," she whispered.

But she could not wait for the drink of water. She sighed quietly, closed her eyes and went forward. Wally caught her just before she hit the floor.

TENDERLY Wally Shannon put Sally on the couch. Ramos, his night-gown flapping absurdly around his ankles, brought a glass of water.

"No," Wally said. "Don't try to bring her out of it. Let her stay that way. It may turn into sleep. Anyway, it's rest of a kind." He turned to the general. "That spy got away," he repeated, significantly.

The glass in Ramos' hand shook until water slopped over the edge. The servant's face was stricken with shame. "Your Excellency," he said, hardly daring to look at the general, "it was my fault, and—"

The general cut him off with an absent-minded gesture. "I knew I was suspected," he said, "when they relieved me of my

command. I had the Second Regiment, you know." A look of pride came into his eyes and he squared his shoulders. "Perhaps Miguel did not tell you. I was in command of the Presidential Guards when his father, Vallejo the Benevolent, was in the palace." He strode to the window and looked out. Already the sky in the direction of the harbor was growing pink with approaching dawn. "In half an hour," he murmured in a troubled voice, "it will be broad daylight. And that spy. . . . Ramos, dress instantly. Young man, you will have to postpone your bath and breakfast. We must leave this house."

"About getting the doctor," Wally reminded him. "Or do I have to go back to that jungle alone?"

"You can't go back if you're in the fortress, can you?" the general snapped, hurrying toward the doorway.

"I won't be in the fortress," Wally retorted. "I'll be on my way to hunt up a doctor and some stretcher-bearers."

The general spun around. He tramped back toward Wally, a tall and commanding old figure, majestic in anger wrath. "Before I let you do that," he said, tightly. "I'll shoot you myself. Do you think that after all these years of waiting and planning and praying we'd let you spoil everything at this last minute? Don't you know that an entire nation is waiting for Miguel to enter the city? Do you think we're any less anxious to rescue him than you are to help your friend?"

"Well, why don't you get started then?" Wally demanded, coldly. "I don't know a damn thing about your plans, but mine is simple—I'm going to get Joe Gray out of that jungle!"

The general's angry stare swept him, took in the fatigue-chiseled lines on Wally's face, the redness of his haggard eyes, the tired droop of his broad shoulders and the stubbornness of his reckless mouth. And suddenly the anger went out of the older man's face. He put his hand on Wally's arm.

"I shall be fast, my son," he said with unexpected softness, "and I promise you no time shall be lost. Please believe that and be patient." He turned and hurried out the room.

Wally stood where he was. Weariness made him sway, and he recovered his balance only by taking a quick step forward. He realized he was practically out on his feet. But he knew that if he were to sit down, even for a moment, sleep would club him with unconsciousness. He tried to remember when he had slept last. This was, he thought, Thursday. Last night they had been marching through the jungle. The night before they had been sailing on the Tupelpo and he had had to remain awake to watch Mueller and Rosario. And the night before he had slept but three hours because he and Joe had been playing poker with the Pathé and Gaumont cameramen, whom they had not seen since Addis Ababa.

THINKING of Joe made Wally's heart contract. He could hardly imagine going on if Joe were dead. They had been together too long, shared too many dangers and hardships. Joe had been with him on every assignment since the newsreels had first begun to use sound. Together they made a perfect unit, working in utter harmony, knowing and understanding each other's likes and dislikes and—well, a future without Joe was unthinkable.

What was it, Wally wondered dully, Joe had said about Sally? He could see the girl now, stretched like a sleeping child on that couch, a tiny bit of color coming back into her cheeks, her red lips slightly parted as she slept. Good kid. He'd had to be tough with her, but she had taken it on the chin. He didn't like to think how she must hate him; but there was nothing he could do about it. He had had to get her through the jungle, had to drive her, no matter what it had cost him. If he hadn't she'd have been out there now, just a few miles this side of where they had landed in the shot-riddled boat.

All his life Joe had been looking for a girl like Sally and now Sally was going to be Madam President. Wally winced and

closed his eyes. Instantly he tottered and had to grab the nearest chair to keep himself upright. So Joe loved her, too? Well, that was the price a camera mug had to pay for the fun he got out of wandering to far countries. You didn't have time to meet girls—nice girls—so you never found one you wanted to marry. That was, you never found one in time. When you found a Sally, someone else was going to marry her, someone who hadn't been shooting pictures of white Indians up the Orinoco, nor of assassins of kings in Marseilles, nor yet of conquering Italians in villages so hot that—

"Ready, *señor?*" came a voice that seemed to come out of his dreams.

Wally shook the sleep haze out of his brain. The general was entering the room, clad in the gold and blue uniform of the Second Regiment. Behind him was Ramos in the blue denim of a common soldier. Both were wearing gun belts. They began to cross the room toward the spot where Wally was still holding on to the back of a chair. But suddenly, halfway across the room, they came to a full stop. Both, as if impelled by the same impulse, looked toward the window through which the spy had made his escape.

A sound penetrated into Wally's tired brain. He bent his full attention to that sound and identified it as the purring of a high-powered motor.

Ramos darted to the window, peered out through the broken slats of the jalousies. He turned back, his face chalky. "General!" he whispered. "The secret police! A whole car full!"

That cut into Wally's consciousness like the edge of a razor. His hand fell first to his holster, where the general's enormous weapon had somehow found a place. But that gesture was entirely automatic; his heart and his brain drove him toward Sally's quiet form on the couch.

"Quick!" the general said sharply. "Out the back way. Into the rear patio!"

The imperious drumming of a fist on the sturdy front door reverberated through the hallway and into the *sala*. Wally's big arms scooped Sally up. She stirred faintly and opened sleepy blue eyes. She was soft and warm and fragrant in Wally's arms. In spite of the weariness that dragged at every muscle in him, he felt that he could carry her anywhere, forever.

"I—I passed out!" she said, apologetically. "Let—let me down."

"In a minute," he said. "There's trouble."

And, carrying her, he galloped down the rear hall after Ramos, and ahead of the general who, gun in hand, brought up the rear. The servant panted, "This way, Excellency," and turned hard left at the edge of the patio.

"I can walk," Sally murmured.

"You'd have to run," Wally said, and continued to carry her. In a little while she would be Madam President but now she was just a tired girl to be carried out of trouble, out of danger. "In a minute I'll put you down."

There was a great flowering bush. Ramos circled it, disappearing instantly. Wally could hear the general's feet pounding behind him. On the other side of a bush there was a low, inconspicuous gate. Ducking his head, Wally scooted through. Ramos had disappeared.

"The garage, *señor!*" the general called.

WALLY heard the high whine of a starter, the churning of a motor being turned over. Then he saw the open door of the garage and raced inside. A car was there, a great open Daimler. Ramos was behind the wheel on the right side and already jerking at the gears.

"On the floor in the rear," the general commanded. "Both of you."

There was just time to wrench the door open, just time to throw Sally in and climb after her. The car was already moving out of the garage when the general leaped for the running board. To a great iron-hinged double gate the car moved and the general hopped off to swing the doors wide.

The bark of a heavy pistol slammed out of a window in the general's house and a bullet *pinged* against the metal body of

the car. The general, calmly seating himself beside the driver, lifted his pistol and sent four bullets crashing up at that window. The rear wheels kicked up pebbles and dust. The car leaped ahead, skidding wildly as it roared down the alley which, but an hour ago, Wally and Sally had entered on their way to the general's house.

Wally was crouched on the floor, his head well below the tonneau's edge. Sally was beside him, her sleep-drenched eyes wide and unafraid. Wally grinned at her, approvingly, and she stared at him, wondering at the quality of that smile. He had not smiled often like that; mostly, in the time she had known him, he had not smiled at all.

The car heeled like a sailboat as it slewed around the corner of the alley and debouched into a side street. The general's calm voice struck back through the drumming of the motor:

"For seven months, *señor*, this car has been ready for this moment. Are you all right, my friend?"

Wally glanced at the girl. "I'm fine."

Swift tropic sunrise was laying its pink paint upon the stucco fronts of all the houses. The feathered tops of the palms were stirring lazily in the first breaths of the morning trade winds from the Caribbean. The car yawed twice, turning corners, then straightened out for a long, straight run for somewhere.

"What—what about Miguel and Joe?" Sally asked in a small voice.

Wally's face turned hard. "We have to get out of this before we can help them."

"That," said the general's voice over Wally's head, "is bad." He was glancing back and what he saw did not please him.

"I told you, Your Excellency," Ramos said in a dissatisfied tone, "that we needed a faster car. A *Yanqui* car, or a Bugatti."

Wally shot a quick glance above. The general's fine-chiseled face, still turned to the rear, looked set and a little stern. A moment later his gun arm reached out, straight and level above Wally's head. Flame lanced from the heavy barrel of the pistol.

CHAPTER XVII

HELL ON WHEELS

UNSMILING, his nerves keyed to high tension, Wally shoved Sally's slimness hard against the back of the front seat. Facing rearward, he put his own body between hers and whatever it might be that the general was shooting at. The pounding of the motor was a steady roar now and the motion of the car uneven. The driver was running her wide open, and they still needed more speed.

Swaying carefully to the right to avoid knocking his head against the general's extended arm, Wally brought his eyes up to the level of the back cushions. Squinting over the lowered top, he saw a sedan of American make close behind them. Instantly he knew that the other car would overtake them easily; he remembered having shot pictures of just such a car in Chicago when a gangster chief was through with it—forever. Twelve cylinders, and the power of some one hundred and fifty horses.

He turned his face down at Sally, who was looking up at him, her blue eyes carefully reading his expression.

"I might better have left you in the jungle," he said.

"I'm all right here," she said.

Ramos swung sharply at the next corner. The big sedan, racing at higher speed, careened up on the curb and nearly skidded into the wall of a house before its driver wrenched the wheel straight and came on after the Daimler.

They were running down a narrow street, now, and Wally thought they were heading toward the center of town. But he knew, definitely, that they would never get to wherever it was they were bound for. Twelve cylinders could beat six, especially these six—and he could hear Ramos frantically shifting from fourth into third and back again every time they turned a corner.

He put his gun up and waited. When the *Yanqui* car pulled up he raked it with an entire cylinder-full of cartridges. But

nothing happened. The thought struck him that the pursuing car had bulletproof glass, like gangsters' cars up in the States. These secret police were gangsters, all right—he had heard the rumor that they took lessons from the cowboys of traditional American fiction and cut notches in their guns—so why shouldn't they use bulletproof glass?

They were on a wide boulevard—he thought it was the Avenida Presidente Garcia—when he saw a tiny round panel of glass slide open in the windshield of the pursuing car. He saw something push its way out as the car suddenly leaped ahead.

He smacked Sally to the floor and put his entire weight on her, covering her with his body. The ugly dark snout of the sub-machine gun flamed and the entire world seemed to be filled with humming wasps which stung the car with vicious probes of steel. Wally ducked while the wasps sang overhead.

The car lurched sickeningly and Wally's heart clogged his throat. But Ramos straightened the wheel and the screaming tires, skidding in a full quarter-circle, took hold. The car roared off at a new angle, heading straight for the lamp post at the corner. Ramos dodged it by thin inches.

Wally, sticking his head up, saw the American car almost miss the corner. The driver whirled it in a crazy skid, followed the Daimler down this new and narrow street, a street so threadlike that Wally thought he could have touched the houses on both sides merely by putting out his hands. But something was wrong.

"Patron!" Ramos screamed in a choked voice.

The rest happened too fast for even Wally's trained senses to follow. The left wheels of the Daimler leaped the narrow curb. The mudguards raked the blank sides of the closely set houses. The car rocked wildly—rocked too far! Wally felt it go over. He flattened his body, shielding Sally as best he could.

The car rolled over on its side and slid a base-runner sliding for second. There was a tinny screech, starting high and ripping down the scale. Wally found himself on the street, holding tight to Sally, and the car going away from him, still on its side, still with its wheels spinning grotesquely. A slick of oil and gasoline marked its path. Oil and loose gadgets were everywhere.

All this Wally saw in a split second. He saw the general push himself up from his hands and knees, peer across the overturned car, wheel and start to run away from it. In the slow ticking of two seconds Wally knew what he was running from. He pulled Sally to her feet, dragged her along the pavement. And over his shoulder he saw the great American car come on, its engine roaring. . . .

THE driver tried to swerve, but there was no room in this narrow street. His brakes squealed, hot smoke puffed up from under dragging tires. Wally saw the driver put his head down as the big sedan plunged head on into the overturned Daimler.

Metallic thunder bounced back and forth from the facades of the houses on that quiet street, followed by a terrific crash as the tremendous motor car turned a complete forward somersault over the wreck and landed on its roof almost at Wally's feet.

For a long, terrible second it lay there, no sound coming from its interior. Then there was a quick flash of yellow flame, rapidly spreading. There was sound, then. A high-pitched scream cut through the dull hiss of the flames. Someone cried out from the interior of the big sedan. It was not to be believed, the way those flames spread.

Wally had no intention of interfering with those who had, but a few long seconds ago, been trying to kill him. Yet somehow his legs took him away from Sally, carried him toward that motor car whose wheels looked grotesque, pushed up that way into the smoking air.

The general limped into Wally's range of vision, a vengeful old man with a face

wickedly angry. He came up to the car, pushing his body effortfully against the heat that struck out at them. Sally was beyond that circle of blistering warmth. She had her hands to her ears, trying to close out those grisly screams, but she could not yank her eyes away from the wreck.

There was a dull boom. Blazing drops of gasoline spewed out of the tank, shot like flaming bullets in a wide radius. The Daimler suddenly caught fire, adding its tankful of gas to the holocaust.

A screaming figure suddenly scrambled out of the midst of that flaming pyre. His clothes were afire. So was his hair. He ran, blindly. Wally tried to catch him, but he ran with the speed of the wind, his cries horrible to hear. Wally could not see the man run like that. He lifted his gun. But the general's big pistol barked first. That did it. The human torch fell, rolled, and lay still. There were no more screams.

Windows opened in adjacent houses. Heads peered out in the pink-tinted morning, gazed down with horror at the two blazing cars. But at the very first shot they popped in again, and shutters clattered, in closing. Within thirty seconds every facade was blank.

Wally, his tattered and jungle-stained coat pulled around his face, was darting at the wreckage, trying to get toward the Daimler. He could smell his own hair frizzling in that gushing heat. When he opened his eyes to squint at the car pain stabbed into his eyeballs. But still he tried to push on.

A hand grabbed his arm, pulled him away. "What are you trying to do?" yelled the general.

"Ramos must be in there," Wally panted. "I don't see him around."

The general pulled him still further away. "He *is* in there," he said with an audible catch in his voice. "That's why we overturned. He—he was dead before we stopped sliding."

For a moment they stood there, helplessly staring at the Daimler which in these few short seconds had become a livid mass of white hot metal, squirming, as if it were a living thing.

"We must go," the general snapped. "There'll be other cars of the secret police. Come!"

Sally was standing a little aside, her face in her hands. Wally took her arm, swung her around, pulled her along after the general. Behind him, flames still ate at whatever there was to feed upon in that funeral pyre.

CHAPTER XVIII

RED SKY AT MORNING

AT FIRST Wally thought the general was going to lead them straight to the presidential palace itself, so close did the silent trio approach the great grim building where Garcia, the Eye, lived, ruled, and cast his bloody spell of fear across the land.

But just before they reached the plaza which faced the palace, the general turned in at an alley. His hand was on his gun holster and he was looking warily at the shuttered windows of the adjacent houses as if ready to shoot anyone who might show himself by swinging wide one of those shutters.

In the fast-growing light, Wally could see that Sally's face was dead white and strained with horror and fatigue. She was staggering a little, but she was trying desperately to keep pace so that her weight would not drag on him.

"If—if I see just one more terrible thing," she said with a break in her low, sweet voice. "Wally—I can't stand any more. I'm sorry—but I just can't. . . ."

Wally knew that this day just dawning would be a bloody one; for the secret police were out, and Miguel would be coming in from the jungle, and it was wholly likely that riots—perhaps the revolution itself—would break out before nightfall. And of all wars, a civil war is the most brutal, the most savage, the most atrocious. He knew. He had seen film "rushes" of the Spanish war too horrible to show on any screen in the world. But he did not

tell Sally this. Time enough for her to know when she saw it with her own eyes. And he wished with all his heart that he could keep her from it.

The general came to a stop before a wall that surrounded a house set in a wide patio. No chance of scaling this wall. The glitter of broken glass set in its top was warning enough. They were apparently at the rear; the front, Wally guessed, would face the plaza—and the palace. It struck him that for a hideaway it was entirely too close to the Eye for any comfort at all.

The general stepped to the massive gate and, ignoring the pull-bell which hung from the pillar, ran his fingers along the old mahogany of the pillar and pressed something. Instantly the gate swung open on well oiled hinges. An unfriendly face appeared at the crack. "Quickly," the general snapped. "We are being hunted."

The *portero's* dark eyes swung to Sally and to Wally. He flung the gate wide open and they entered. Instantly Wally revised his idea of this silent, apparently sleeping, house. Flanking that patio gate were two machine guns, set on tripods. Beside them lay men, sprawled in sleep—perhaps then—lost. The rear door of the house itself, invisible from the alley, was pierced for the ugly snout of a machine gun which stared coldly at them as they entered.

Three or four men leaped to their feet beside the guns and came to rigid attention; then turned as if to kick the slumberers into wakefulness, but the general stopped them.

"Let them sleep," he said, gently. "God knows when they'll sleep again!"

An officer in a uniform Wally did not recognize, met the general in the hall. His face was anxious. "Trouble, general?"

"Much. The secret police raided my house."

"Things commence," the officer said, drily, and stared at Sally with entire approval. His gaze drifted to Wally, marked his unshaven cheeks, his ragged clothes, and swung away with complete disinterest. "Have you heard anything?"

"Miguel," the general said, "is in the jungle, a mile or two beyond the city."

"And someone," Wally cut in, grimly, "is going after him—now."

The officer's glance grew interested.

"This *señor*," said the general, "is Don Wallace Shannon, the motion picture man of whom you have heard."

HE PUSHED on, leaving Wally, astonished, to follow Sally through the hall. He had not told this quiet old man his name. Now he remembered that the general had not asked. How, then, did he know? But he was too tired to try to puzzle it out. His brain felt beyond the power of thought. To one fact and one fact only, he clung savagely: He was going after Joe within the next few minutes—alone if he had to, but going . . . somehow. . . .

The general turned to the right into a vast front room, almost as large as a tennis court. It was no longer a living room, but a combination machine-gun nest and office. Men lay limply asleep on cots beside sandbagged and steel-shuttered windows where machine guns squatted on tripods. An officer with the insignia of a lieutenant-colonel sat at a table which was covered with large scale maps of San Pedro and the surrounding countryside. A junior officer, also in that blue-gray uniform which was strange to Wally, sat drowsily at a smaller desk, on which was a telephone and a scratch pad, nothing else.

As the general, Sally, and Wally entered, the officers stood up, hastily, and saluted. "I heard you say, general," said the colonel, "that your house was searched by the secret police. The Eye is awake then."

"Yes," the general said. "He has struck first. So today is the Day."

Wally's tired eyes saw a dark bottle and a glass on the table before the colonel. He was much too tired for politeness. He strode over to the table, poured one finger of the liquid into the glass and sniffed it. Cognac. Good. He carried it over to Sally, who was leaning against the wall.

"Drink that," he commanded.

She crinkled her nose, but drank it. He went back to the table, filled the glass full.

"My God!" the general gasped. "You can't drink that."

"Watch."

He tossed it off neat. The raw liquor hit his stomach like a projectile, sent heat through every vein, every capillary, in his body. He took a long breath.

"Now, general," he began. "About those two out there in the jungle—"

But from the desk came a small whirring sound, loud in that quiet room. The officer picked up a telephone and whispered into the transmitter. Then he listened. And as words came through the receiver into his ear, his face went white, his eyes tragic. He put the instrument down and looked up at the general.

"Speak, fool!" the general cried. "What's the matter?"

"From one of our agents, *mi General,*" he said in a dull voice. "He reports that the Eye's men have come out of the jungle in the Cerrada quarter. They have captured Don Miguel and an unknown man who is badly wounded."

It seemed to Wally that a thunder clap had sounded in that room. Black bitterness crashed into his brain. And with it burst a great wave of anger. How long since he had first told that uniformed old goat to send a party after Joe and Miguel? Not long, but long enough.

". . . but they are not being taken to the fortress, *mi General,*" the young officer was saying. "The car drove not up Calle Gloria, but down the Avenida—toward the palace!"

For the first time, the general's composure cracked. He strode to the sandbagged window, squinted out through an almost invisible peephole.

"In three hours they will be dead! That is his way! He will question them, and play with them, like a terrier with a rat. And then he, himself, will put his gun to their heads. Remember Pancho Guerra?"

Wally took a long breath. He could not think very clearly. His head spun with weariness, hunger and the rising fumes from that big slug of cognac hitting on an empty stomach. But he did not have to think clearly. He knew well enough what he must do. Grimly, silently, he turned and started for the door.

"Wally," Sally cried, where are you going?"

"I'm going to the palace," he said. "Where else would I be going?"

THE general wheeled, stared at Wally. "Stop him!" he said in a quiet voice.

Four of the soldiers who had been standing by the machine guns started toward Wally, but they took only two or three steps. Wally's gun was in his hand and it pointed straight at General Lobo. On his haggard face was the look of a killer.

"Stop me?" he snarled. "Just how would you do that?" His eyes darted to the young lieutenant at the communications desk. "If you want to find yourself a new general, start something. If you don't—reach high, *amigo,* reach high."

"Son," said the general, his voice still quiet, "don't make a mistake that you'd regret all your life."

"I've made that mistake already," Wally raged. "I stuck my neck out getting into this damned revolution, and I dragged my best friend into it, too. We aren't soldiers! We don't give a damn who wins. All we're paid to do is to take pictures of what happens. And here I am helling around when I knew I should be getting Joe Gray out of the jungle!"

"Wally!" Sally cried, desperately.

"Pipe down!" Wally snapped at her. Then he turned back to the general. "I can get into the palace. I'm a newsreel man. I've got my credentials right in my pocket. I can talk my way in. And if I can't, by God, I'll blast my way in!"

"Son, did you know there was a deportation order against you, and that you've already overstayed it?"

"To hell with that!" Wally snarled. "I left my buddy in the jungle. I asked you for help. You didn't send it. It serves you right to have your precious Miguel cap-

tured and I hope they hang him, but that doesn't help Joe!"

"One minute," the general cut in, quietly. "I saw you for the first time less than an hour ago. Much has happened since then, but in reality very little time has been lost. Now, if you go out of this door and start marching across the plaza like that with a gun belt on, you'll have lost whatever chances we may have of saving Miguel and your friend. Are you so anxious for action you are willing to increase their danger?"

But anger and despair drove Wally recklessly on. "I'm going to get Joe out of this crazy jackpot!"

"*Bueno*. But first will you listen to me?"

"Yes, but not for long," Wally said, harshly. "There's been too damned much talking already."

"Here are my orders then," General Lobo snapped. He turned to the young officer at the desk. "Is our secret line in order?"

"It is, *mi General*. It is over that wire I just got the message about Don Miguel."

"*Bueno*. Telephone to Cuesta. Have him communicate with the colonel of the Second Regiment. Have him tell the colonel to march upon the city, instantly. Send a dispatch carrier from here, in civilian clothes, to confirm the message in person. Telephone Weyler to pass words to his agents. Have them spread news, quickly, that Don Miguel has arrived in the city —don't tell him Don Miguel is a prisoner. Have them hurry from *cantina* to *cantina* the moment they open, to get the news passing quickly among the people. They have already been instructed what to do when the moment comes—and this is the moment! *Dep risa!*"

Dimly, listening to the general's rapid fire orders, Wally realized that he was probably the first newsreel man in the world to be in at the starting gun of a revolution which, if successful, would shake two continents. He would cheerfully have given both legs to have had his equipment here—and Joe by his side to catch the momentous words on raw film's marginal sound track. But he didn't have his equipment, and he didn't have Joe, and it was looking very much as if he would never have Joe again.

THE young officer had picked up a hand-set, had cranked a military type transmitter and was even now rolling sonorous phrases into the instrument. The general was standing alertly by his side, listening, and the lieutenant-colonel, at the big desk, was closely scanning his map. Nobody slept now in that charged room. The machine gunners were all sitting up, or standing, listening with their mouths open. There was a clattering of boots on the stairway which led up into the dim recesses of a second—and perhaps a third floor. The door was suddenly crowded with soldiers who stared at Wally's gun, then looked to the general for instructions. But General Lobo appeared to have forgotten all about Wally's gun. Certainly he was paying no attention to it.

"If we can get the people to make a demonstration in the plaza," the general said, wheeling toward the lieutenant-colonel, "the opportunity that we have waited for would surely come."

"The opportunity, general?" asked the other officer.

"To use the passageway."

"It is my opinion," said the colonel, slowly, "that it would be best to wait the arrival of the Second Regiment. Then, in the confusion, we can try it."

"What passageway?" Wally asked, instantly alert.

The general looked at the the communications officer, who was still mumbling into his transmitter. He met Wally's tired eyes, not even glancing at the pistol. Reluctantly Wally shoved the gun into its holster.

"It will do no harm to tell you, *amigo*," the general said, "now that events have begun to march. Twenty-one years ago, when I was in command of the Presidential Guards under Vallejo the Benevolent, a secret passageway was cut beneath the

plaza to this house, which the president himself had purchased. There were then rumors of a revolution, and the passageway was to permit *el Presidente* to escape if the palace should be besieged. Only the European workmen who constructed it, Vallejo, his secretary, and I knew it. The workmen were pledged to secrecy—it was supposed to be a drainage system—and were sent home to Europe when it was completed. Vallejo died. His secretary proved to be a traitor, and I killed him. That left only one living man in Viscaya to know the secret—myself.

"When the Eye proved himself to be a tyrant, a killer, the leader of a gangster government, I determined that one day Miguel Vallejo should restore the benevolent rule of his father, under whose leadership this country was so happy and prosperous. I bought this house, whose owner had never discovered this end of the secret passageway. I made this our secret headquarters. No man, not even Colonel Ferrand, here, was told of the passageway until a few days ago, after Miguel had sailed from New York. Then we gathered together these loyal men, who pledged themselves never to venture from this house until the Day. And this is the Day!"

"Well," said Wally restlessly, "what are we waiting for? We have enough men here right now to go through there and clean out the whole palace!"

The general shook his white head. "Not now," he said, decisively. "Since word leaked out that Miguel was on his way here from the States, the Eye has the palace swarming with guards. Like all tyrants, he is a coward. If we were wiped out in there, there would be no revolution."

"And if they kill Miguel," Wally said, hotly, "there won't be any use having a revolution. You—"

But the general cut him off with an imperious gesture. All the old man's attention was focused upon the young lieutenant, who seemed to be having difficulty with his telephone line.

Wally glanced at Sally, whose heavy-lidded eyes were glazed with fatigue. She was sitting in a straight-backed chair and she looked so young, so tired, so helpless, that Wally's hardboiled heart went out to her. But she was all right for the moment and other things—more immediate and urgent—clamored for the full attention of his exhausted brain. He dug his fist against his forehead.

"Back in a minute, Sally," he said, starting for the room beyond.

Instantly she was out of her chair and following him. "Where are you going?" she demanded in sudden panic. "Please don't leave me."

"I'll be back in a minute," he repeated.

He knew that the slug of cognac had hit his empty stomach with a heavy jolt. He was having trouble framing his words. Or maybe it was just that he was so tired he couldn't talk straight. Anyway, it didn't matter.

Joe, wounded and sick, was going to die in the palace—if, indeed, he wasn't dead already from his wounds and fever by now. A revolution of tremendous importance to the two Americas—to the entire world—was about to start and he, Wally, had no camera with which to record it. After being sent by his editor to San Pedro, he had fallen down on the job—would probably have no job to fall down on when the editor failed to receive pictures of the fighting.

Nor were these his only troubles; he had Sally to look out for so that if, by any chance, Miguel lived long enough to become president, Sally could become a president's wife. To hell with her. To hell with everybody.

"Get back to your chair!" he snarled at her so viciously that she took a quick step to the rear.

And it was exactly at this moment that from the direction of the front door there came a terrific thunder of gun butts banging on thick wood panels. Before the sinister sound had died away in that suddenly silent house, the noise was duplicated from the rear patio.

"General!" someone cried. "The secret police! Many of them! They are at the front door!"

And from the rear hallway, an anxious hail: "Attention! There are soldiers at the patio gate! The alleyway is filled with them."

A shout filtered down from the second floor. "Your Excellency! The house is surrounded!"

The general took a very long breath. His shoulders sagged with utter weariness. "Betrayed once more," he murmured in a voice washed dry of hope.

CHAPTER XIX

BLOOD IN THE STREET

THE silence which pressed down on that living room was thick and utterly sinister. It was like the stealthy, remembered quiet of the jungle. Every man in that great *sala* stood as if his feet had been glued to the marble floor. Every head was turned toward General Lobo, who stood for a long, long moment saying nothing at all. As his eyes swept slowly around that circle of waiting men he looked completely disillusioned; a bright dream had faded out of his eyes and he would not live long enough to fashion another dream.

From the other side of the heavy front door came a command. "In the name of His Excellency, *el Presidente,* open!"

The general sighed and squared his straight shoulders. "My children," he said in a low voice, "go to your posts."

"General Lobo!" roared the voice from outside, tore a muffled path into the room. "It is known you are here. I have orders to break in if you do not surrender instantly."

There was a clicking of bolts and chargers as the gunners got their weapons ready. Feet shuffled quietly upon that old stone floor. Men swung steel shutters, camouflaged from the outside by the slatted jalousies. Fingers reached for triggers and bodies became taut with the strain of waiting.

"If all goes well," the general said in a low voice, "the Second Regiment will have rebelled by now and will be marching into the city within two or three hours. We must hold out until then."

Wally Shannon turned back into the room. He walked to the table, reached for the black bottle and poured himself another huge slug of cognac, which he drank without pausing for breath. He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and spun around to face General Lobo.

Sally, watching him, took a long, harsh breath. From the look on Wally's face she knew that trouble was coming. His belligerent chin was lifted and his gray eyes were stormy.

"Two or three hours, eh?" he snarled into that crackling silence. "And where will your nice, new president be then? Dead as hell, that's here he'll be, and then what good is your revolution? And where will Joe be? Dead, too—"

Darkening faces came away from the windows and glared at him. The general wheeled as if he had been stabbed in the back.

"Be still!" the old man roared. He glanced at the black bottle. "You're drunk! Drunk!"

"Maybe I am," Wally said, carelessly. "but I'm telling you just the same! If you haven't any more sense than—"

"Wally!" Sally cried.

She leaped out of her chair, took three hasty steps and clapped her hand over his mouth. Roughly he pushed her away. He opened his lips to speak again, found himself staring straight into General Lobo's big pistol. Tableau—silent, deadlocked.

THE stentorian banging upon the door recommenced, blanking out the rest of his angry words. And the voice from outside came to the anxious listeners like the tolling of a death knell.

"One at a time, come out. All those who are arrested will have a fair trial and—"

One of the machine gunners, a private with a long, horsey face, began to laugh hysterically.

"When has the Eye given anyone a

fair trial?" he screamed through the embrasure. "My wife's brother, did he get a fair trial? They put a gun to the back of his head and blew his face off from behind!"

"Antonio!" cracked the voice of the colonel, who had risen from his table and was standing tensely behind the gunners.

But Antonio had worked himself into a frenzy. He slapped the lock bar and swiveled the machine gun down so it covered those at the front door.

"My brother's wife sends her kisses!" he squalled. "And this is from my brother's seven children!"

His gun vibrated and danced upon its squat tripod. That started it. A machine gun upstairs burst into staccato chatter. Another, in the rear of the house, added its sharp voice to the growing chorus. Wally, his dark, unruly head cocked to one side as he listened, could hear the returning bark of service automatics, the distance-quenched slapping of hurried feet.

General Lobo turned his calm face to the communications officer.

"*Teniente,*" he asked, "are you getting any answer?"

The young lieutenant, his face very white, cranked his instrument again, murmured into his transmitter and listened intently. Then he shook his head. "No use," he shouted above the rising clamor. "Our line must have been discovered—and cut."

Bullets were clanging against the closed steel shutters at the windows, were rattling against the outside of the house. A slug darted through one of the holes pierced for the machine guns. It whined obliquely upward, gouged out a V-shaped hole in the ceiling. Dust filtered down, spread through the air in white layers, powdered Sally's hair like snow. Gun smoke lifted and fell in wispy layers. The noise in the house was indescribable. From somewhere in the rear came a high, sustained shrieking whose tone cut into Wally's ears like the thrust of a knife.

Sally, sat perfectly still because there was nothing else to do, sat silent because there was no sense in trying to say anything. She felt herself dragged away on this tidal wave of violence, as helpless, as buffeted as a tiny chip of wood floating on the swelling deep. It was clearly a miracle that she remained alive from moment to moment. And after a little more of this she knew she would no longer care very much whether she lived on or not.

A soldier at the nearest machine gun screamed and clapped his hands to his face. Scrambling to his feet he began to run crazily around the room while blood ran swiftly through his fingers, down his sleeve and dropped from his bended elbows. He bumped against the colonel's table, almost upset it, then caromed away. Someone put out a foot, tripped him and caught him as he fell. He was carried, still screaming, out of the room.

WALLY, brushing past the watchful figure of General Lobo, moved behind one of the machine gun crews, squatted and peered across their shoulders through the peep hole in the shutter.

He could see a curtailed segment of the street and the plaza beyond. The secret police had been caught napping, and most of them had paid for their carelessness with their lives. He could see them lying out in the early morning sun, flat and shapeless bundles in their dark civilian clothes. Some, who were taking longer to die than the others, were trying mechanically to crawl away, dragging invertebrate bodies across the blood-slimed pavement.

Watching them flounder there, Wally wondered what they thought now of government by violence, government by will of a dictator—any dictator—who gained, and maintained, power through bullets, not ballots. Wally had seen secret police in action in Rome, in Berlin, in Moscow. Supermen, they were, as long as they had guns and the other man didn't—but when you shot them, they were always astonished, and they suffered more exquisite agonies in dying because they had thought themselves invulnerable. Gangster government—sooner or later those participating

in it die as they lived—violently; and as far as Wally was concerned, they could all go screaming to hell.

Squinting through the round orifice, he could see others who had not been struck down by that surprise burst of machine-gun fire. A saturnine, dark-faced plug-ugly was directing them, scattering them behind hibiscus bushes in the plaza, getting them settled for a siege.

Antonio, crouching behind his machine gun, pumping short, vicious bursts at the men outside, straightened up, staring at the leader who was directing his men.

"Carlos, look!" he cried above the heavy rattle of fire. "There is the *gallego* who burst into my brother's house! He knocked my brother's wife down and kicked her! Watch!"

He swung the muzzle of his machine gun up, squeezed the trigger. Wally, watching, saw dust-puffs scamper diagonally across the pavement, drawing a dotted line toward the hard-faced leader of the secret police. They ended at his feet, and his body suddenly jerked as if an unseen hand had tied an invisible string to him and were twitching it with cruel glee. The man was dead before his twisting figure struck the dusty grass of the plaza. But even then Antonio was not satisfied. He kept on firing. . . .

A squad of uniformed men came trotting around the corner from the palace. They deployed carefully, taking positions behind bushes, behind shining trunks of royal palms. A motor car was standing near the bandstand; four soldiers crouched behind it and began to shoot at the house.

"They've called out the Presidential Guards!" Antonio snarled through his teeth. "Next will be the artillery!"

Wally, about to turn away from the peephole, saw something that made his heart leap. A white truck, shaped like a delivery wagon, careened into the plaza and stopped abruptly. Two men jumped out. One pulled from the rear compartment a heavy camera, his companion a microphone and coils of sound cable. The cameraman scrambled to his platform atop the truck, set his camera up and swung it to point at the beleaguered house. The sound engineer raced forward with his microphone and dragging cable, coming well within range of the defenders. Wally held his breath, expecting to see him fall at any moment. He recognized the crew immediately; the Pathe unit, Mejat and Dupont—he had played poker with them the night before Sally had landed—how many days, years, ago had that been?

The man set his microphone on its tripod, flew back to his car, and Wally dragged in a deep breath of relief. Where, he wondered, was Two-time Mueller? Two-time Mueller who, by slugging him and reading that note from Miguel, had learned of Miguel's disappearance—and let Garcia know about everything! If it hadn't been for Mueller, Joe would not now be wounded, perhaps already dead; Sally would not be trapped in this house—and he, Wally Shannon, would not be standing there, half drunk and so tired it was a job just to stay standing on his feet, watching his rivals making sequences which he, himself, should be filming.

HE whirled away from that peep hole and his stormy eyes raked the room. The general had disappeared—upstairs, perhaps, looking to the defenses there. At least Lobo was not among the three dead men who lay so flatly on the blood stained marble floor. The colonel was standing behind one of the other machine guns, directing its fire. Unless something happened, they would all die very soon now. There was no way he could see of holding this place more than an hour—two at the outside. Only a very few minutes if they brought up the artillery.

With sudden impulse, Wally strode toward the door which led to what had once been the dining room. Passing Sally, he reached out and grabbed her wrist.

She followed him without question. Through the dining room they walked, and nobody noticed them, so great was the uproar within that big house. There was a door at the left. Wally went through it,

Sally still in tow. It led to the service quarters, as he had hoped. He searched for another door—one leading into the cellar.

A soldier came hurrying through the servants' pantry, almost collided with them. Wally put out his hand and stopped him.

"*Amigo,*" he said, gently, "be so good as to show us the passageway leading to the palace."

The soldier gasped. He was about to step aside and to brush by when he felt something sticking into his stomach. He looked down at Wally's pistol pushing, pushing at his belly. He sucked in his breath, trying to pull his stomach away from that gun.

"I am in a hurry, *compadre,*" Wally said, still in that quiet voice which was somehow more sinister than a shout. "Must I kill you and find another guide?"

Fear drove all the color out of the soldier's swarthy skin. He licked his lips, swallowed hard and nodded.

"*Con su permiso, señor,*" he murmured, "I will show the way."

"And what you will be feeling against your backbone," Wally rejoined, levelly, "will be this gun. Hold that thought."

Shakily the soldier turned and moved down a corridor, with Wally at his heels and Sally following. The whole house was a bedlam, reverberating to the sound of running feet, to the hammering of machine guns, to the rising yowl of men dying. Sally moved along as if she were walking in her sleep.

Wally went down a stairway after his guide; Sally remained close enough to touch him, to hang onto him if need be.

"*Gracias, compañero,*" Wally said, gravely.

Sally, marching on, bumped onto him. He reached out, quickly, with his free hand, and steadied her.

"Tough going," he said. "Some day this'll all be over."

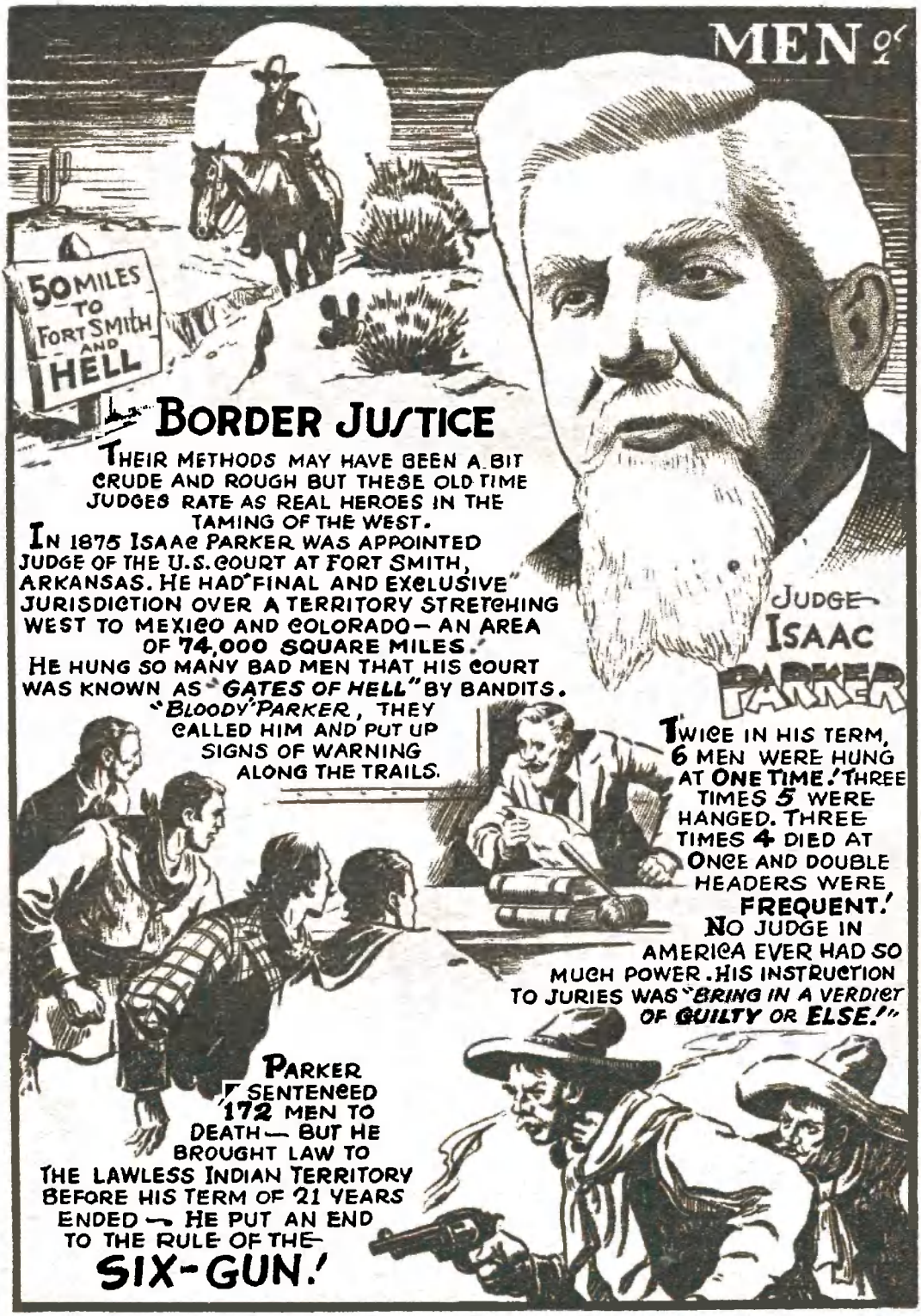
But she knew it wouldn't be. As long as she lived she would stumble on through a fog of hunger, fatigue, fright. It could never be any different than it was now.

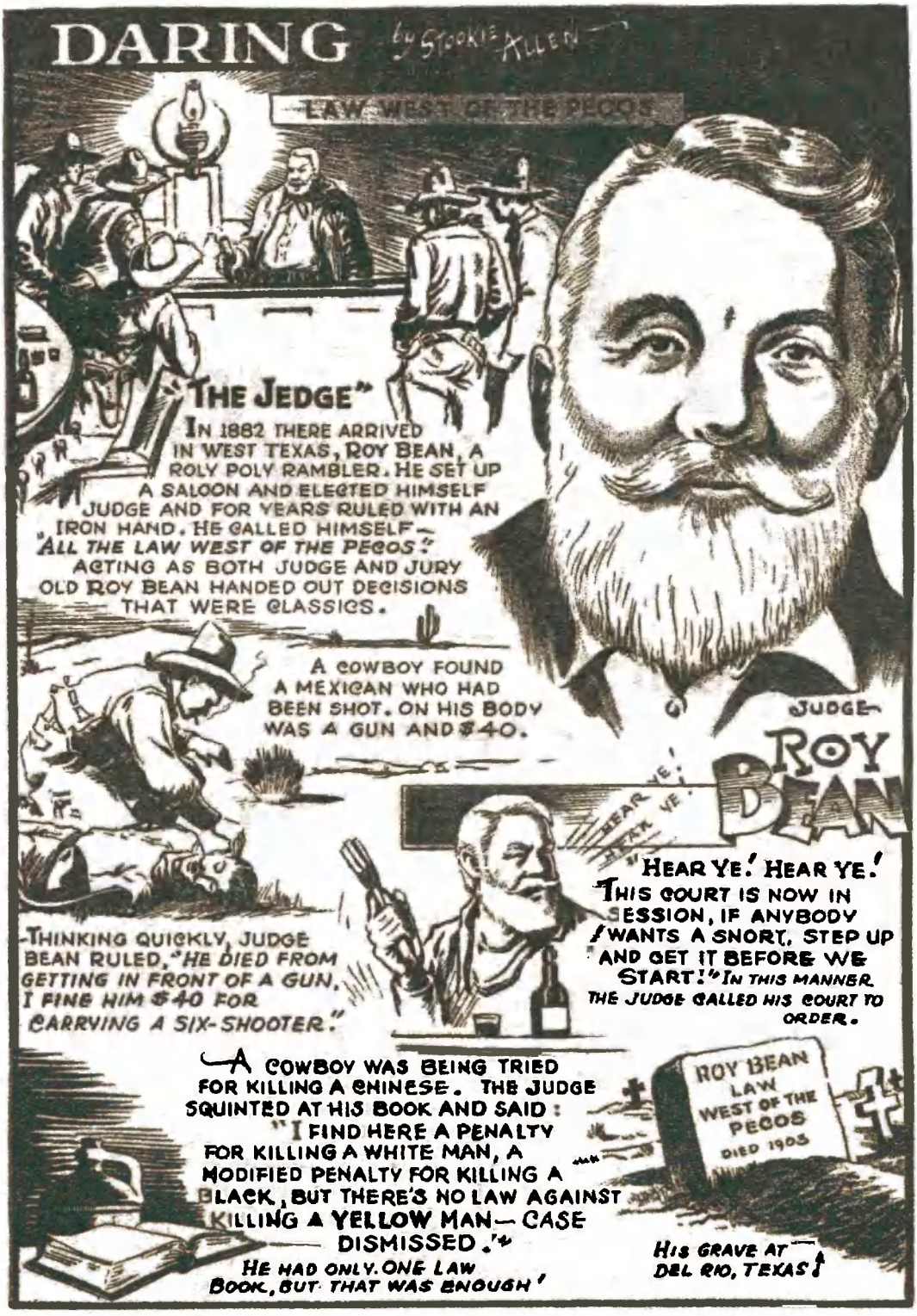
Wally's gun was still leveled at the soldier, who was swinging open a door which seemed built of massive masonry, like the walls of this cellar. But he swung it so easily that Sally realized it was made of something lighter, and just camouflaged to look like that. She didn't care what it looked like. She just waited for Wally to enter, and then she would enter, too.

"And now," Wally was saying to the soldier, "please go back upstairs. Go right along. If you should turn back, I should regret it, for I would have to kill you."

With a quick, sharp gasp of relief the Latin turned and ran for the stairs, disappearing instantly from Sally's range of vision.

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK


MEN of
50 MILES TO FORT SMITH AND HELL
BORDER JUSTICE
THEIR METHODS MAY HAVE BEEN A BIT CRUDE AND ROUGH BUT THESE OLD TIME JUDGES RATE AS REAL HEROES IN THE TAMING OF THE WEST.
IN 1875 ISAAC PARKER WAS APPOINTED JUDGE OF THE U.S. COURT AT FORT SMITH, ARKANSAS. HE HAD "FINAL AND EXCLUSIVE" JURISDICTION OVER A TERRITORY STRETCHING WEST TO MEXICO AND COLORADO — AN AREA OF 74,000 SQUARE MILES.
HE HUNG SO MANY BAD MEN THAT HIS COURT WAS KNOWN AS "GATES OF HELL" BY BANDITS. "BLOODY" PARKER, THEY CALLED HIM AND PUT UP SIGNS OF WARNING ALONG THE TRAILS.
JUDGE ISAAC PARKER
TWICE IN HIS TERM, 6 MEN WERE HUNG AT ONE TIME! THREE TIMES 5 WERE HANGED. THREE TIMES 4 DIED AT ONCE AND DOUBLE HEADERS WERE FREQUENT!
NO JUDGE IN AMERICA EVER HAD SO MUCH POWER. HIS INSTRUCTION TO JURIES WAS "BRING IN A VERDICT OF GUILTY OR ELSE!"
PARKER SENTENCED 172 MEN TO DEATH — BUT HE BROUGHT LAW TO THE LAWLESS INDIAN TERRITORY BEFORE HIS TERM OF 21 YEARS ENDED — HE PUT AN END TO THE RULE OF THE SIX-GUN!



Next Week: Capt. Ernest Engerer—Animal Trainer

He sprawled on his face as shotgun pellets hailed on the mailbox

Camera Tells a Lie

By DALE CLARK

Author of "A Racket in Blondes," "The Devil in Hollywood," etc.

JOHNNIE SQUIRE said softly, "Oh, boy! Boy, oh boy! Hotcha!" His grin widened, and his feet did a shuffle-off-to-Buffalo on the sidewalk in front of the Riverview First State Bank.

Main Street at high noon stretched, practically deserted, between rows of brick buildings down to the bridge. There was a glitter of blue water, and then abrupt, forested bluffs on the far side of the stream. Nobody noticed Johnnie Squire's jigging feet, except four hillbillies in a parked sedan across the street. The driver's bearded face split in a grin, and a man with a scarred face in the back seat drawled:

"Yeah. Reg'lar coon show, ain't he?"

Johnny Squire flushed, and went hastily up the bank steps into the cool, shaded vestibule. He knew the contempt in which hill folk held "city fellers"—Riverview, population 14,000, classifying as a city. Being employed at the lumber yard, it was up to him to maintain a businessman's dignity; only dignity didn't always sit so easily on twenty-year-old shoulders.

It didn't sit easily now. The flush deepened around Johnnie's blue eyes as he thrust his savings passbook under the cashier's grille.

Tight-lipped, hatchet-faced, white-haired old Thaddeus Revere stood inside the cage. Cashier *and* president of the bank, old Thad knew all his depositors by sight; knew their business, too.

"Drawing out forty dollars? Why, Johnnie, that leaves you a balance of exactly"—silver hooped brows lifted disapprovingly—"sixty dollars and forty-three cents!"

Johnnie Squire said, "Yes, sir," and heartily wished Brownlow, the assistant

cashier, or young Thad Revere were inside the cage. But they were out to lunch. For that matter, Johnnie Squire was on his lunch hour.

He fidgeted while old Thad said:

"That's a pretty hefty withdrawal, my boy! Flying a little high, ain't ye? Living beyond your means, maybe?"

Johnnie Squire repressed a sharp retort. Old Thad owned, besides the bank, a large share of the lumber company. Also, no doubt of it, the old duffer meant well.

"No-o. This is an investment."

"An investment is something you sh'd talk over with your banker." Gray eyes nettled. "Is it insurance, Johnnie?" Old Thad sold insurance. . . .

"No," Johnnie Squire replied hastily. "No, nothing like that."

"Not making a down payment on something?"

Johnnie Squire's glance went to the wall clock. "No. I—I'm buying a camera."

"What? Another?"

The young man grinned. "You wouldn't say a fellow shouldn't buy a book because he already has a book."

"Camera's different." The banker shook his white mane. "Tain't the first cost, it's the upkeep."

"Well, you can't take pictures with a bankbook. Now, can you?" Johnnie Squire laughed—alone. "Honest, Mr. Revere, this is a *buy*. It's an imported job, all kinds of features, cost a hundred dollars new. Somebody just traded it in this morning on a Leica—I'm lucky to get it at all."

"That kind of luck will wind you up in the poorhouse. Camera's a millionaire's plaything. Why," said the banker, "your average deposit has gone down to two dollars weekly since you started this nonsense."

He dealt the money out, hesitantly. And kept one thumb planted on it. "Better think this thing over a day or so first, young man."

"Gosh! And have somebody else buy it while I'm deciding?" Johnnie Squire thrust the money into his pocket.

He sailed out through the vestibule, scooted up Main to West Water Street, and darted into the gloomy little photo shop.

He remained inside less than two minutes.

COMING out, he wore both a broader grin and a slabsided case that dangled on a shoulder strap. The case bounded lightly over a pocket crammed with film packs, for Johnny Squire carried his precious acquisition in lean, excited fingers. Stepping along West Water Street, he lamped passersby through the eye-level finder; turned the camera this way and that; flipped open its back and sighted a barber's pole upside down on the ground glass, flipped the thing around, and read off the numbers around the lens. He said fondly, "My baby! My honey!"

He fiddled with this dingus and that, clicked the shutter, tinkered with the lens' stops, pulled the bellows to double-extension. He acted like a kid with a new toy; or in other words, like any enthusiast with a new camera.

He came to the corner of West Water and Main, turned toward the lumberyard where he worked and was due in five minutes; turned, but stopped. . . .

Johnnie Squire said, "Ooooh, gosh!"

It was the usual street, with the smug white brick First State Bank in mid-block, with a church spire behind the bank. What caught Johnnie Squire's eye was the sky —just an average blue sky, but with two streaks of high white cloud in it.

Johnnie Squire said, "Golly!"

For you do not get cloud formation like that twice in a lifetime. The cloud bars were separate, of course. One of them was possibly three or four thousand feet higher than the other. Different stratospheric air currents formed them. And they bisected each other at right angles. They were cross-shaped. The church spire pointed up to a cross in the sky!

Johnny Squire flashed blue eyes around quickly. He had no tripod with him; but there stood the parcel mailbox on the corner. The mailbox would do fine.

He moved fast—he had many things to do. Clouds, like time and tide, wait for no man. They change form with incredible rapidity.

He planted the camera on the mailbox, looked to the spirit bubble, monkeyed with lens and shutter. What he found on the ground glass was half of the church spire —upside down—the bank, and the hillbilly's sedan.

"My sweetheart," said Johnnie Squire joyously, for at this point he would have been ditched by his other cameras; here he just applied thumb and forefinger to the rising-front thingamajig. The street and all the bank but its roof moved off the ground glass.

Meanwhile, a truck rattled up from the river, shedding gravel and dust from its tailgate. Johnny Squire growled, and whipped out a handkerchief. He wiped the lens; this he did as tenderly as a mother wiping her first-born's eyes. He looked at the sky. The cross still held, but a plume of smoke climbed from the river bottom.

And three men got out of the hillbilly's sedan.

JOHNNIE SQUIRE clicked the shutter on several varying exposures. The smoke bothered him. If it came from a switch engine in the yards, it was not much matter; but if from a river boat, it would certainly climb up to devour all his sky in one black maw.

The three men slouched up the bank steps.

Johnnie Squire changed film packs; he meant to shoot on both pan and chrome. He changed filters, too. He meant to find out just what this camera would do.

The smoke plume fattened and climbed halfway up the sky. A boat, no doubt of it. Its whistle blew. The three men reappeared on the bank steps, one of them gripping a gunnysack. Johnny Squire touched the cable release. The men hurried down the bank steps.

Johnnie Squire bent his head over the problem of changing exposure time. He heard the roar of a motor. Spinning around, he saw the car charging down hill —straight at him, it seemed. He jerked back, and the sedan swerved.

He saw an open window, and a face like a square mask with a white scar seam making a U on one cheek. A splash of mouth, and slotted, blazing eyes piercing the mask. Johnnie Squire did not see the revolver until it belched flame and roar.

Then he sprawled flat on his face; not too soon. A shotgun poked through the open back window as the car swept past. It bellowed, and shotgun pellets hailed on the mailbox, rattled off the wall behind Johnnie.

"Why, the crazy—!" Cheek flat on the sidewalk, he saw the bank's bookkeeper run out into the street, rifle in hand. A crisp, sharp explosion from the sedan beat the rifle's crack. Johnnie Squire saw red liquid spurting over the bookkeeper's hands as the man sat down grasping his thigh.

The bandit machine bounced its four wheels off the pavement, shooting over the hump onto the bridge.

Johnnie Squire sat up, shook his head. The river was black with smoke now. Gates fell at the bridge end, a red-eyed semaphore swung over the street. The bridge tender, being old and deaf, had caught nothing of the rumpus in the street.

The sedan rushed into the woods across the river, was lost in thicker smoke—while the bridge divided, reared up—and twin funnels poked into view at the foot of Main Street. Brakes squealed. Riverview's one police car screamed to a slueing stop.

Officers sprang from the machine. They swore futile oaths, something like the barking of dogs before a fox hole—futile, because the bridge could not be let down now until the steamboat had cleared.

Johnnie Squire said, "Gosh! They sure figured—" and then his stare fell on his camera.

His camera? No. Pieces of it. There was the holder, the film blown right out of it, just a broken frame queerly left hanging on the mailbox. Nothing else on the box, though. Only a rain of glass remained of an imported *f.4.5* anastigmat lens.

Shreds of the bellows looked as if they'd been chewed by angry moths.

Johnnie Squire's face grew very white, his lips very thin. He reached a hand out mechanically, began to pick up pieces here and there. . .

THERE was no sense in doing it, for no power on earth could patch anything together from those pieces. He knew this, but could not immediately realize the fact. When he did, his fingers stopped fumbling; his blue stare fogged. He shivered.

"Why, the dirty—!"

A cop stood over Johnnie Squire. "What goes on here?"

"They blew my camera all to hell!" said Johnnie Squire. "Damn them, they didn't have to do that!"

"You got off lucky! Come on with me."

The officer headed for the bank, and Johnnie followed on dragging feet. What felt like a hot lump burned in his throat. His fingers curled into angry, impotent fists. He looked around dully.

Already the street teemed with action. Cops paced to and fro, waiting for the bridge to lower. Other men carried the wounded bookkeeper toward a doctor's office. White-haired old Thaddeus Revere stood on the bank steps, a useless pistol dangling in his fingers. He was telling his son about the robbery.

Both Reveres followed the officer into the bank, and young Thad closed the doors to keep out the curious crowd.

"Now!" the policeman said. "I want descriptions of those men and their car. We're not going to catch them easily. They evidently planned it out—to escape just before the bridge went up, and it worked perfectly."

Old Thad growled deeply. "They made us lie face down on the floor in here. The ringleader had a kind of little horseshoe scar on his cheek—that's about all I saw."

"And you?" The policeman turned to young Thad.

Young Thad's face was pink under a mop of flaxen hair. "Why, I wasn't here. I was out to lunch."

"Uh. Any idea how much they stole?"

"About twelve thousand," said old Thad.

"Of course the bank's insured on that," his son added.

"Insurance won't help Charley's leg much," snapped old Thad.

"Yeah, and my camera wasn't insured, either!" Johnnie Squire said bitterly.

The banker sniffed. "I told you not to waste money on junk like that. You're money ahead if they did smash it."

The cop turned to Johnnie. "Seems like you had the best chance to identify them. What did they look like?"

Johnnie pondered. "I wasn't looking at them—I was taking a picture. The driver had whiskers. Another one had a scar on his face, like Mr. Revere said. That's about all I noticed."

"What kind of a car was it?"

"A sedan. Blue or black. Dark blue, I guess."

"License tag number?"

"I wasn't paying any attention to them until the shooting started." Johnnie Squire shook his head. "And then it all happened so fast."

"You could have seen a license number after the shooting stopped."

Johnnie said, "Maybe, but I didn't. I looked at my camera, that's what I looked at! Forty bucks—and all I have to show for it are three-four films."

The cop's face changed. "You *got* the pictures! Say, if those birds or their car—"

"No. Not a chance," Johnnie muttered. He rubbed one hand tiredly over his face. "I was taking a cloud picture."

"Are you sure?"

Johnnie Squire flushed, squinted through angered blue eyes. "Yeah, I'm sure! I wish I wasn't! Boy, how I wish I had the goods on those hooyaks!" The resentful scowl etched his tanned features. "Anybody mean enough to bust cameras'd feed rat poison to babies!"

Young Thad grunted, shrugged blue blazer-clad shoulders. "But they thought you were snapping them."

"Nuts! Who'd be dumb enough to stand out in the street taking pictures of a bank robbery?" Johnnie growled. "Besides, I started snapping before they even went into the bank. No, it was plain cussedness; they'd have shot me, too, if I hadn't flopped behind the mailbox."

"Robbery or no robbery," young Thad was provokingly cool, "they could have thought they were on your film."

"Well, they weren't—worse luck!"

JOHNNIE SQUIRE stumped along West Water Street to the lumber yard. He didn't feel any better about losing his camera as the day wore on. It wasn't just the forty dollars; he wouldn't have felt a quarter as bad if the gang had come into the bank a little earlier, had taken the cash out of his pocket. It was the camera—the wanton destruction of it. Sailors can feel that way about ships, other men have a similar feeling for dogs or horses.

Feel any better? No, a blunt anger grew in him—pointless because hunting outlaws in the hills was like seeking needles in haystacks. It had been tried before. Posses had scoured the back country, yet half a score of dangerous gangs had secure hideouts there.

Huh! Those fellows wouldn't be caught.

So thought Johnnie Squire, until he went into the bathroom off his bedroom that evening—slapped black oilcloth over window and door, got out his trays and chemicals.

One stare at the developing negative by safelight—and in the darkness his face flushed redder than the ruby lamp. There was something on the film!

Something, that is, human!

This seemed perfectly preposterous. Johnnie Squire slid the film into the solution, rocked the tray with trembling hands. How could he have caught a person in such a photo? People don't go floating about in the sky.

He rigged the Graflex with its enlarging device. All this took time—and patience; but presently he stooped scowling over a fair-sized image. There was no doubt about it at all. He had a picture of a person.

Moreover, Johnnie recognized the person. It was young Thad Revere.

How could that be? The banker's son did not appear on the film like an angel descending from the skies. Johnnie Squire recalled that he had adjusted the rising front of his camera so as to exclude the street and the bank—but not all of the bank; its roof remained in the focus.

What Johnnie had was a picture of young Thad Revere on the flat roof of the bank. "But how in the heck—?"

He slipped out of the dark room, sat on the edge of the bed, lighted a cigarette—and pondered. First off, no question at all that this *was* Thad Revere; the blazer he wore would have settled that even in a much less satisfactory print. But the banker's son had not been visible on the roof at the time Johnnie Squire had made his ground glass observation. He had popped into sight after that. And he hadn't stayed there long. There was no sign of him in the later negatives—

For Johnnie Squire could arrange these shots in order of taking. Conclusively, he could show a progressive drift in the position of the cloud-cross. It moved slightly leftward of the fixed spire. In the last picture a little smoke appeared to the right.

"Gosh!" said Johnnie Squire.

A CHAIN of logic began to forge itself in his mind. He closed his fist, remembering something. Obviously young Thad had popped up on the roof at a particular moment, then had ducked out of sight. Johnnie Squire had not noticed him at all, for his stare had been focused alternately on his camera adjustments and on the cloud formation. But the camera had been in focus at infinity, registering everything beyond a hundred feet. But what was the particular moment?

Johnnie Squire chucked out his cigarette, popped into the dark room, popped out again. The picture on which young

Thad appeared had been the first taken with the filter; and just after he'd taken that, three men had climbed out of the sedan and headed for the bank.

Johnnie Squire lit another cigarette and thought about this. Could there be more than coincidence to this? Johnnie muttered in a shocked tone, "Golly day!"

It came hard to believe that the banker's son had given a signal to the bank robbers. Hard? Next to impossible!

Still, the camera couldn't lie. Young Thad Revere *had* been on the roof—and for what earthly reason? Another question deepened Johnnie Squire's frown. Why had young Thad told the cop he'd been at lunch during the stickup? And why had he blushed when he said it?

"Huh?" thought Johnnie Squire. "Say! I got to find out something!"

And no sense waiting, either.

He slapped a cap onto his head and hurried out. He walked briskly, ten blocks to the bank. The lower floor was darkened. Upstairs, a light burned behind one window—the upper floor being rented, mostly to dentists. Johnnie Squire poked around to the rear and the fire escape.

He climbed this fire escape. It went only as high as the second floor level. By standing on the railing, Johnnie Squire could reach his hands to the roof's waterspout. He tested this; it held. Johnnie Squire chinned himself, swung one leg over the rain gutter, and pulled himself onto the tar and gravel roof.

He said, "Yes sir-ee," for a trap door inclosed in a roof hatch told of an easier access to the roof. He looked at the building front, with a two-foot cornice that would easily have sheltered a prone man from view of the street. Then he stared around.

Sure! This roof commanded a view of the river! Anyone up here would be able to sight a steamboat approaching the bridge.

Now—the cop had pointed this out—the bandit raid had been timed for an escape just before the bridge rose. The raid might also have been planned at a moment to catch twelve thousand in cash in the bank.

"The cops would laugh at me," thought Johnnie Squire. "Thad'd have a reason for being on the roof—or he'd invent one."

In fact, he would have laughed at the idea himself. Only he remembered his camera, and that was no laughing matter.

He dropped from the roof onto the fire escape. And held his breath; dodged up to the wall. For someone was coming out of the bank's back door, directly under Johnnie Squire. The someone went into the alley, went to a roadster parked there, stood for a moment beside the roadster.

A match flared at the end of a cigarette. Johnnie Squire gasped. It was young Thad Revere who'd come out of the building. What brought him to the bank at night, and why didn't he turn on the lights in there?

Johnnie Squire started down the fire escape with Indian stealth.

Young Thad opened a door of the car, and by the dashlight, Johnnie Squire watched young Thad transfer an object from his blazer pocket to the door's compartment. The object was a revolver.

JOHNNIE SQUIRE made a snap decision. It was like action photography: you take the thing on the spur of the instant, or you do not take it at all. You cannot for example ask a bird to pose in mid-air while you snap it. In this case, Johnnie could not run to a telephone and confide his suspicions to a cop. Young Thad was already in the roadster, and toeing the starter.

The car started forward—Johnnie Squire darted into the alley and hopped the bumper. Young Thad was busy turning the corner into West Water—Johnnie Squire slid to the floor of the open rumble compartment.

He hunched there while the roadster purred down Main and across the bridge, and he didn't have an idea of what he might be getting into. The notion of danger never came into Johnnie Squire's head. Gun or no gun, he wasn't afraid of Thad

Revere. And if it came to that, he could explain his business in the rumble seat as easily as the banker's son could explain being on the roof just before the robbery —or explain the nature of this armed errand.

And if it turned out Thad Revere had any connection with the broken camera, Thad would pay dearly for it.

A ferocious and almost unreasoning hunger for vengeance grew and grew in Johnnie Squire—and growing, pushed him into action.

Overhead, above the open rumble space, the night reeled off in a moving black film. It was spotted by white bulbs strung over the bridge, then by clotted boughs of trees overhanging the river road. Presently, as the car turned, these overhanging branches came very low. They were evidently following one of the side roads up into the hills. Pretty soon the bouncing of the roadster gave proof that the highway had dwindled to a mere rutted trail.

Thad Revere had driven ten or twelve miles when he stopped the car. He grunted, got out, slammed the door.

Johnnie Squire counted ten seconds—"one thousand and one, one thousand and two"—as a photographer counts exposure time. Then lifted his head.

The roadster was parked on a hilltop, in a black tangle of shade under the trees. A stake-and-runner fence marched on skeleton legs over the hill. Thad Revere went through a patch of moonlight beyond the fence, went on under the brow of the hill.

Johnnie Squire followed.

Young Revere led him across pasture land, a close-cropped slope of grass with boulders that shone like dim white skulls. Johnnie Squire hesitated. He could not follow young Thad directly, since one backward glance would betray him. The pasture ran on for a quarter mile, stopped where a second picket fence bordered a thicket. Johnnie saw this. He could not give Thad that quarter mile headstart.

So he swung left, following the sweeping brow of the hill. He kept this hill between him and Thad. In three or four minutes, both of them had reached the second fence, but Johnnie was now a hundred yards leftward of the banker's son.

THE thicket seemed to be mostly wild plum, and gooseberry. Thad Revere plunged into it. Johnnie Squire had his choice of two plans, but little time to make the choice. He could hurry along the picket fence and then plunge into the thicket behind Thad; or he could go into the brambles now, trusting to come out on the other side at the same time the other did.

Johnnie Squire liked this last idea better. He liked it because it kept the hundred yards between him and the banker's son. By this time Johnnie's nerves had tightened considerably. Also he reflected that Thad must be coming out here to meet someone. And he knew he would not get through the thicket without making more or less noise.

He knifed right into the bushes. Spine studded branches belted his hands and face. His clothes kept getting stuck. He had to stop to release them, and when he did, the needles pricked his fingers to bleeding. He was crawling snake-fashion by the time he reached the other side of the tangle.

He stopped, held his breath.

A foot came down within inches of his outthrust hand. Johnnie Squire lay logstill. The foot lifted and went on. Johnnie poked his head out of the bushes, and started.

In front of him stretched what had once been a potato patch; only a weed patch now. To the left, his gaze found a house —on the hillbilly lean-to order—at the upper end of the ex-potato patch; its window gave a chink of yellow light.

If it had not been for the light, this place would have been exactly like any of a hundred other farms in the hills that had reverted for unpaid taxes. If there had been potatoes in the patch, it would have been like any of a hundred farms still inhabited.

The potato patch widened in a wedge

shape beyond Johnnie Squire, to the right; Thad Revere had apparently come through the gooseberry thicket where it was much narrower, and was now tramping through the weeds toward the house. In doing so, he had come within inches of stepping on Johnnie Squire's hand.

Johnnie Squire stayed on his hands and knees, waited for young Thad to go into the house.

Meanwhile a head and shoulders popped up out of the black shadow next to the house—popped up into the yellow chink of window-light, peered into the window.

Johnnie Squire thought, "Huh? Why—" And stared in honest puzzlement.

For this head was bare, and flaxen-haired, and those shoulders wore a blue blazer. Thad Revere! Sure—Thad looking in through the window—

But then, who was it who had almost stepped on Johnnie Squire's hand?

There was still that other man, prowling along the end of the weed-plot now. No doubt of it at all, young Thad had picked up a second pursuer.

And as Johnnie Squire grappled with that fact, the other man sprang into the window light behind young Thad. He gave no warning. There was a pistol in his hand, and the pistol flashed in the yellow light. Its barrel came down, *thunk*, on Thad's skull. And Thad fell. He folded up with a windy grunt, like an accordion.

IT WAS done without any more fuss and bother than that. The assailant knocked the young man cold as matter-of-factly as shaking hands. Now he got hold of the blazer collar, and dragged Thad Revere along the side of the house, threw open a door, and dragged Thad into the building. The house swallowed them both, and presented a blank face to the right.

Someone in the house said loudly, "What in hell—"

The man in the doorway said, not so loudly, "It's the damn' boy scout again," and laughed. He closed the door, turned when he closed it, and Johnnie Squire saw the U-scar on his cheek.

A short, muffled grunt crossed Johnnie's lips. Pads of flesh pushed up and hardened a scowl around his eyes. He said in a whisper:

"Yah! You're the guy!"

Now it would have been an excellent thing for Johnnie Squire to clear out of there; to start Thad's car if it could be started; but at any rate, to clear out. These men were desperadoes, and armed to the teeth— But the excellent idea of leaving never occurred to him at all.

These were the guys who had busted up his camera, and somehow or other he would make them pay for it. *That* was the idea which did occur to him.

Emerging from the bushes, Johnnie Squire came skulking through the abandoned potato patch up to the side of the house. He tiptoed to the window and looked in.

Inside, a gas-lantern burned on the wooden table. It threw its light on three bearded faces, and on the face of the U-scarred man's feet.

The window had been broken and had a piece of tin loosely stuck in the place of one pane, and Johnnie Squire could hear every word that was said inside.

"Sure! He came alone!" the scarred man said. "He's just the kind of blame young fool *would* come prying around alone. Like he done before!"

"Maybe, but I don't like it! It don't make sense to me!" protested another bandit—one with a reddish beard.

"Well, Joe, this here boy scout hasn't got good sense. That's why!" Scarface said. "I was there in the bushes, watching him. He's alone, all right; besides, why would a posse send a sap like him to look the place over? That don't make sense, either."

Joe replied with an oath, he still didn't like it. "I say, let's get out of here before a posse does come!"

Scarface gave a laugh.

Johnny Squire pressed closer to the window. There was something in Scarface's laugh that made his body tense and sent a dryness to his mouth.

"They got the posses watching the bridges, I bet. That's what they figure we would do—try to get further back in the hills. The smart thing is for us to lay low right here. You boys give me a few days to grow whiskers on my face. Then *you* shave. Then we can ride right through Riverview without being suspected. They're looking for three bearded guys and one shaved—not the other way around. We'll change the license tags on the car. We got nothing to worry about."

Johnnie Squire could smell trouble in the room; Scarface talked too long, too confidently. His eyes were not confident, though. They kept shooting oddly worried glances at his three bearded companions.

"Listen!" Scarface said. "This lad here is a break for us. He's a hostage. If a posse does come, all we got to do is push him out in the open and threaten to shoot him if they make a rush—then they won't dare fire at us!"

Young Thad let out a sickly groan from the floor.

Johnny Squire heard that groan and his scalp got queerly tight. It was right about then, too, that he almost forgot to breathe.

"Nuts!" said Red-Beard. "I say let's shave and get out of here *before* any posse comes. This boy scout seen us here before. He might have talked, and I say it's too blame risky to stay any longer."

The other two men did not say anything at all. Scarface looked at them. "That's all right for you," he said. "That's *fine* for you, because it don't take ten minutes to shave. But what about me? I got to grow whiskers and cover up this cheek of mine. You boys wouldn't ditch me, would you?" His voice hardened on the last words.

Red-Beard shrugged. "You can stay here. You're the one that wants to. You're the one that thinks it's safe."

And now the scarred face grew very hard. "We're all staying!" Scarface cried." "I'm a-going back where that car's hid in the bushes. I'm a-going to be watching that car—and the razors in it. If any posse comes snooping around, I'll start shooting. And I could easy make a mistake and think you was a posse in case you come snooping around out there!"

HE TOOK steps backward, opened the door, and went out. When he did that, Johnnie Squire ducked below the window and flattened himself on the ground close to the house. And when he flattened, he found something hard under his chest—an object that had fallen from Thad Revere's hand at the moment of the slugging.

Johnnie Squire closed his fingers around this object. Meanwhile Scarface went tramping away across the old potato patch. And inside the house, Red-Beard spoke.

"Throw some water on that-there boy scout," he said. "We got to bring him around."

One of the others said, "Why?"

Red-Beard glared at him and made a pretty critical noise with his lips. The beard waggled, like a bright and angry flame, and the man's small eyes grew even smaller with his displeasure.

"We'll make him go down there in the bushes," Red-Beard growled. "George will take a shot at him or else jump him; and then we'll know where George's hiding at, and we'll jump him."

"We ain't staying?"

"Why in hell should we stay? There's bound to be a posse scouring this country before George grows enough whiskers to cover that scar on his mug."

Johnnie Squire heard a splash of water, and heard Thad Revere groan. He didn't wait to hear any more.

It was plain that it didn't matter much whether a posse came or not. These men would wind up killing each other off; but they would kill young Thad first of all, would do that before Johnnie Squire could possibly get outside help.

So Johnnie Squire went swiftly and silently along the edge of the old potato patch. He was following Scarface just as he had followed Thad, by swinging to the side of him. Johnnie Squire had never

hunted a man before; it made his heart pound violently in his chest.

And then his heart almost stopped beating at all. Scarface had walked clear to the other end of the potato patch; he kept looking back over his shoulder—was watching the door of the house. Now he stopped beside a tree. Johnnie Squire saw him tuck his pistol into the waistband of his trousers.

Then Scarface put up his hands, and Johnnie knew that he was going up into the tree.

Johnnie also knew that he himself would be helpless once Scarface got up into that tree.

So he took four or five long steps, and said:

"Keep those hands up!"

The scarred man did just that. For Johnnie Squire had shoved something hard, cold, and circular against the fellow's spine.

Leaning hard on his weapon, Johnnie Squire reached one hand around the scarred man's waist and jerked the revolver out of the belt.

The man stood very quiet, tensed and waiting like a panther ready for a spring. Johnnie Squire felt as if he were holding a match over a keg of powder.

"I'll drill you if you let out one yip!" said Johnnie Squire.

The scarred man did not let out even a tiny yip. In a few minutes he could not have yipped had he dared to; he was gagged and tied to the tree. His wrists were bound with his own shoelaces, and his neck was strapped by his own belt around the bole of the tree. A large part of his shirt filled his mouth.

Then Johnnie Squire Indian-sneaked back to the house. A tree grew in the yard not far from the door. Borrowing an idea from Scarface, Johnnie Squire climbed into this tree.

He waited.

Something was going to happen very soon now, and Johnnie Squire felt as ready for it as he would ever be. He even had a sort of strategy worked out in his mind.

PRESENTLY the three bearded men and Thad Revere came out of the house. But they did not come out by the door; they used a window on the other side of the building for their exit.

"Now, you walk ahead of us," Red-Beard was telling young Thad. "Remember we're right behind you, and we'll shoot if you stop."

Thad didn't like the setup. "Say! What's the idea?"

"We want to see if you brought a posse with you," Red-Whiskers grunted. "If you didn't, it's going to be all right. If you got a posse in the bushes, better say so now."

"There's nobody but me—"

"Then get going!"

Red-Beard put a big, wide-fingered paw on Thad's shoulder and set him into forward motion with a hefty shove. Thad tripped, caught himself and started ahead.

Johnnie Squire waited until Thad was nearly to the other end of the potato patch. The three bearded men stood beside the house, guns ready in their hands.

One said, "'Sfunny George don't shoot him!"

Johnnie Squire yelled, "Hands up! You're surrounded!"

Two of the men whirled and threw away their guns. Red-Beard carried the shotgun, and he used it. Pellets hammered the trunk of the tree under Johnnie Squire. Johnnie squeezed the trigger of the scarred man's gun. He was no pistol shot. He missed.

One of the men who had thrown away his gun said in fear-strangled voice:

"Huh! You wanta get us all killed!"

And he hit Red-Beard right on the whiskers.

Johnnie Squire shouted, "Thad! Thad, come and tie these lugs up!"

Thad tied them up. He did a good job, one that took all his attention; when he had finished, he started thinking things over.

"Johnnie Squire! What in heck are you doing out here?"

"Huh, that's the *easy* part. I followed you." Johnnie Squire dropped out of the

tree; came up to Thad. "What were you doing on top of the bank today during the stickup? What was your idea coming out here?"

Thad's flush showed even by moonlight. "On the r-roof? Did you know—I was coming back from lunch, see? And I saw you putting up your camera, and I saw the sky, too. It looked like a swell shot, and I wanted to try out my new Leica. So I beat it up on the roof."

"You were the one who—"

Thad said, "I couldn't admit it. You know how my old man is about wasting money! He'd raise plenty Cain if he knew I spent a couple hundred bucks for a *camera*. He doesn't even know I've got a darkroom rigged up in an empty office upstairs. That camera you spent forty dollars for—well, I traded that in on the Leica, see?"

"Good gosh! I never guessed *you*—"

Johnnie Squire stared at Thad Revere, blue eyes popping with blank surprise.

"It's pretty much a secret on account of my old man," Thad said. "I generally go off somewhere in the country when I want to take pictures. I was bumming out this way last week, and I ran onto this place. I ran into these guys, too—fact is, they booted me off the place. Didn't want their pictures taken, see?"

Johnnie Squire said, "Yeah. I found that out, too, and I wasn't even taking their picture."

He thought angrily of how much they'd hated to have their pictures taken, smashing his camera that way.

"Sure! Well, look," Thad urged. "I heard you and dad describe this fellow with the scarred face. I figured, suppose this was their hideout. You know, that camera of mine can almost take a picture by candlelight. Suppose I got their picture with it, and my dad identified them from it, and we had the sheriff come out here with a posse! Then the old gentleman would have to admit there was something to this photo hobby, and I wouldn't have to behave like a sneak thief. That's part of it, and the rest of it is that the Bankers Association offers a standing reward of five hundred dollars for evidence on bank robbers. My picture would be evidence, because a camera can't lie."

Johnnie Squire laughed softly. "Yours did."

"My—*what?*"

"You dropped that candid camera of yours when the scarred-faced guy slugged you. I picked it up. I used it to *take* him with—the lens felt like a gun against his back!"

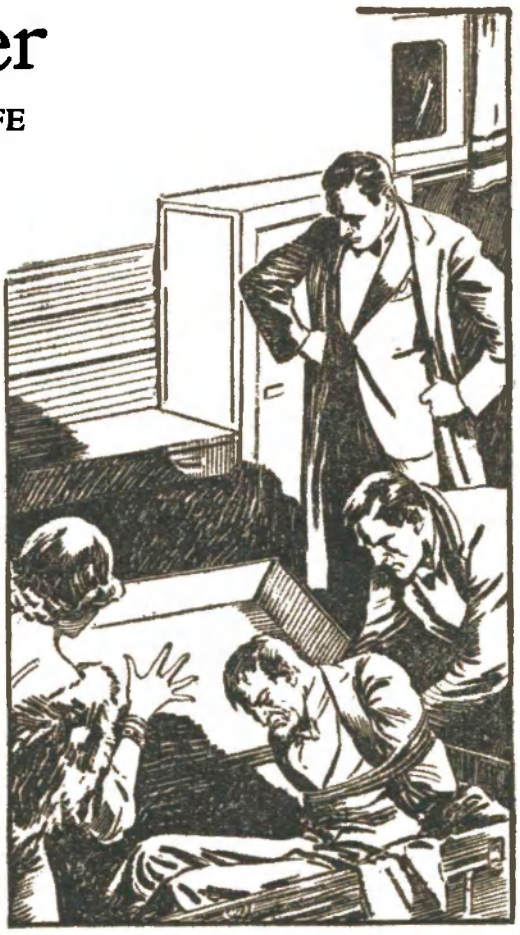
Then young Thad showed he had some of old Thad's blood in him. "That reward—five hundred dollars. Will you split fifty-fifty? Because if it wasn't for me—"

"Huh?" said Johnnie Squire. "Oh, sure! I didn't know there was a reward, but I'd sure like to get the price of a brand-new honey with features like a rising-front and stuff. . . .

THE END

Doomed Liner

By GARNETT RADCLIFFE



CHAPTER XVII

SEARCHING PARTY

MR. PETERS paid no attention to the police officers when they ran towards the house. His unhinged brain had collapsed altogether. When they came nearer they saw that the side of his head was a mass of dried blood, evidently where Inspector Eastman's bullet had struck him the previous night. And his painful movements hinted at the presence of another wound in the body.

That he had not died was a miracle. Eastman snapped a hurried order.

"Look after him, Bates. Come on the rest of you."

With drawn revolvers they ran into the dark hall. As they did so a man appeared through a door on the opposite side. He was a dwarfish, shock-headed creature with eyes like a wild beast's. For an instant he glared at the intruders. Then with a snarl he whipped out a revolver and fired point-blank.

A detective called Upton grasped his shoulder and reeled back. Two guns barked as one. The dwarf made no attempt to run. Crouched like a wildcat at bay he hurled shot after shot until a great blotch of blood suddenly blossomed on his forehead. Limply he toppled.

"Wait—" Eastman advised breathlessly. "There may be more of them."

In their position of vantage whence they could command both hall and stairs they waited for perhaps half a minute. Then they heard a sound of muffled hammering that came from the upper regions of the house.

Dr. Kennet? Leaving his subordinate to attend to Upton who had sustained a flesh wound in the shoulder, the Inspector raced up the stairs. Now he could hear a faint voice calling for help.

The sound came from a room opening off the gallery above the hall. The Inspector pulled back the bolts and was confronted by the pale and bearded ghost of Dr. Richard Kennet. He was handcuffed and his ankles had been secured by a short length of rope so that he could barely hobble.

Allington was lying on a bed at the further side of the room. He seemed to have suffered more from his captivity than Dr. Kennet. One arm was in splints and his flushed face and brilliant eyes proclaimed a high temperature.

The first installment of this six-part novel, concluded herein, appeared in the Argosy for March 20.

Kennet's laugh was almost hysterical.

"Just in time, Inspector. Those devils were planning to finish us off this evening. God, what fiends! That dwarf!"

"He's dead. Dalziell—or Peters—seems completely bughouse so we can't touch him. Were there any others?"

"Yes, three or four others. All foreigners—absolute scum of the earth. I expect they've cleaned out by now."

A search of the house and grounds confirmed that idea. The other men must have taken the alarm in time to make good their escape. A quantity of weapons and a store of food and drink were found in a downstairs room. But look as they would the police officers could find nothing to prove who was behind this affair. . . .

Two hours later Dr. Kennet related his story to Inspector Eastman and Superintendent Nettles in the one little hotel Abingfield boasted. Allington, too ill to be questioned, had been taken to the local hospital in an ambulance. But Kennet could tell them what had befallen the publisher.

". . . . They took him on the night his offices were fired when he was driving back to his home. A pretended breakdown in Figgis Road. When he got out to assist three fellows jumped on him and slugged him. He was laid out and got a broken arm. Next thing he knew he was in that room with me at Chalk House. Poor devil! Even to be suspected of knowing too much about Sotan and his friends is dangerous."

Then he related what had happened to himself. How he had been decoyed to No. 10 Hutton Street and given the "bum's rush" by the man they now knew to be William Dalziel.

"He put them on to me in the first place," he said. "In his capacity as butler at Knockweather House he must have been a useful spy." He looked at Superintendent Nettles. "I suppose you're satisfied now it was Dalziell and not Tom Vachell who killed Montfalcon?"

"Vachell was released days ago," Nettles told him. "And now I'm going to ask you one or two, Dr. Kennet. In the first place can you give us any proof that Mr. Sotan was responsible for your being kidnapped?"

Kennet shook his head.

"I can't. It's all suspicion founded on coincidence. The men who guarded us never mentioned his name. I doubt if they even knew who was employing them."

"And you can't tell us where to find this Miss Vansittart who was engaged to Major Greaves?"

"I can't. When I talked to her she thought Greaves was dead. Perhaps she knows the truth now and is helping him."

Nettles grunted.

"Let's hope it is so. We'll need all the help we can get to down these people. It's their money gives them the pull. They can fix up any crime from sabotage to murder; the lesser fry get caught, but the big ones remain safe. Anyway, I think we've scotched their plans a bit this time. After all that's happened they won't dare take a stab at the *Queen Elizabeth.*"

"No—?" said John Eastman drily. "What's the betting?"

INSPECTOR EASTMAN'S uneasiness had percolated to high quarters. Dr. Kennet and Mr. Allington had been rescued on Wednesday, and the *Queen Elizabeth,* now fully repaired, was scheduled to sail from Souchester for New York on the following Friday. But on the Thursday night there was a police raid in Souchester harbor. Its ostensible reason was to detect infringements of the Hargreave Act forbidding the export of certain munitions, but in reality it was a precaution against the *Queen* being sabotaged at sea.

Permission had come from a very high quarter indeed. So high that Colonel Bruder had to remain standing while Authority spoke.

Authority, represented by a delicate looking old gentleman with the face of a born diplomat, spoke slowly, leaning back in his chair with his eyes half-closed and his finger-tips pressed together.

"I've read your confidential report, Colonel. Your allegations against certain

well known gentlemen who are held in high esteem in the City are ridiculous."

Bruder pursed his chubby lips.

"I can't agree, sir. The disclosures arising out of the Montfalcon murder—"

"I've read your report carefully," the elderly gentleman snapped. "I say again your allegations against this ring of munition-makers are ridiculous. They seem merely to be founded on statements made by a shell-shocked man and a neurotic woman neither of whom can be found. Are you asking me to take action on that?"

"Yes, sir. When those statements made by Major Greaves and Miss Vansittart are considered in conjunction with what has actually happened—"

"I know, I know," Authority spoke testily. "And they can also be considered in conjunction with reports from Intelligence of which you know nothing. You can have your raid. Purely to find out if suffocation-gas is being made at Carding and shipped to Japan. We're doing this to oblige the League of Nations. I leave all details to you: you'll have no orders in writing and if there's any subsequent trouble my name must not be mentioned. In plain English I'm giving you a free hand to take any measures you think necessary to protect the *Queen Elizabeth.*"

"Thank you, sir," Bruder said gratefully.

Authority almost winked.

"I've three grandsons of military age. The idea of them dying for the benefit of an Armenian's bank-roll doesn't appeal to me. Good-morning. . . ."

That most unofficial interview bore fruit about midnight on Thursday. While a convoy of lorries packed with police from Souchester converged on the factory at Carding, four launches owned by the Souchester dockyard police were preparing for a dash across the harbor in the very shadow of the *Queen* herself.

Inspector John Eastman had elected to accompany the water raiding-party, whose destination was the Sotan Company's private wharf. He had arrived in Souchester by the midday train and had spent the afternoon supervising yet another search of the giant liner, carried out by dockyard officials aided by expert searchers from the customs.

The searchers had penetrated every nook and cranny of the enormous ship. Tank-top, illuminated by a specially fitted electric plant, had received their special attention. Nothing had been found, and even John Eastman had been forced to agree with the junior staff-captain that the search had been an entire waste of time and energy.

"To say nothing of the delay in loading," the staff-captain had grumbled. "Let's hope this isn't going to happen every trip we make. If it does the owners will find her an expensive luxury."

While he spoke the process of taking on cargo was going on apace. The *Queen Elizabeth* had been warped by tugs alongside her loading jetty, and gangs of men had been carrying stores through the opened side-hatches. Passengers' heavy luggage was being slung up to the sorting deck, motor cars were being driven into the garage, thousands of crates of food were being passed into the commissariat department, barrels, pianos, pieces of machinery, furniture, crates of china, gas cookers, bales of rugs, and a thousand and one other undefinable odds and ends were swiftly disappearing into the ship's maw.

Now some live-stock were being taken on board. John Eastman replied with his eyes on a pair of sprightly greyhound pups which were being conducted to the Pets' Run.

"It won't be necessary again. If she survives this trip without trouble you'll be all right."

"Thank the Lord," the staff-captain had answered.

THE searching and the taking on of stores had been completed before nine in the evening. Again the *Queen Elizabeth* was nosed back to her mooring station by the tugs. When the passengers had embarked the following morning she would be ready to sail.

Her thousand-odd feet of steel, studded with lighted portholes, loomed like the side of some tremendous cliff above the police officers passing from the tender into the waiting launches. One by one the launches shot away like vengeful sharks. Deadly, efficient and silent they raced across the mist-enveloped harbor.

"My dad was at Zeebrugge," Mr. Quinnell croaked in Eastman's ear. "I guess he'll have nothing on me after tonight."

They were in the leading launch heading for the southern end of the Sotan wharf. Soon they could see the long outline of the warehouse silhouetted against the sky. As on the night John Eastman had paid his single-handed visit in the dinghy there was a tramp moored by the jetty. She belonged to a German line and was flying a warning signal to denote the presence of explosives.

The look-out in the prow raised his hand and whispered hoarsely.

"Look there, sir. . . . Somethin' black—"

They strained their eyes. Yes, there was a low black shape which seemed to have darted from the denser shadow cast by the German tramp. It passed across their bows leaving an arc of creamed water and they heard the faint purr of an engine. And then they heard something else. The beginning of a shout which was instantly silenced.

The look-out spoke in a puzzled voice.

"Must have been a motor-boat. The fastest I've ever seen. Look at her wake! Shall I hail her?"

"Not on your life," Eastman said. "We don't want the fellows on the wharf to know we're coming."

He stared back to where the black motor-boat had been swallowed in the mist. Unless he were vastly mistaken she had contained Major Anthony Greaves, D.S.O. And he had no wish to interfere with the mysterious man he believed to be Sotan's deadliest enemy. Let Greaves play his own game against the munition-makers—and more power to his elbow!

The other two launches were stopped a hundred yards away from the wharf. That in which John Eastman and Mr. Quinnell sat ran straight alongside. A surprise attack was what the Inspector had planned. He had an uncomfortable feeling that if they were detected in time the place might be blown sky-high. Men who were plotting to start a European war would not be likely to stick at trifles.

No voice hailed them. They clambered up an iron ladder and scattered round the wharf. With three men following him John Eastman ran round the end of the warehouse into the weighing yard.

The silence of the place puzzled him. Then he saw a Lagonda car, the same that he had seen on the previous occasion, standing near the rear door of the warehouse. But the chauffeur was not at the wheel and the car was empty.

Nor was the night-watchman anywhere to be seen. Except for the presence of the Lagonda the place seemed utterly deserted. Even the rats were not in evidence.

The warehouse doors were locked. While the Inspector was testing them he heard a sound that brought a host of unpleasant memories. It was the *chug-chug* of the electric pump used for flooding the underground portion of the warehouse.

Eastman turned to Mr. Quinnell.

"Looks as if they'd got wind of the raid. We'll have to force the doors."

It was while they were improvising a battering-ram from a heavy baulk of timber that the watchman was found. He was stretched in a dark recess near the yard gates, and the police officer who first made the discovery fancied he was dead. His jaw sagged horribly and there was a wound on the back of his head. A sergeant bent down and put his ear to his chest.

"It's still beating! Looks as if someone landed him one on the jaw."

"Get ahead and smash that door down," Eastman snapped. "There's something damned queer about this."

He watched while a dozen officers raised the heavy baulk and charged. The shock flung them back, but the massive steel-lined door, running on wheels set in the cement, stood firm.

AT THE third assault the ram shivered in their hands. John Eastman was not there to hear their curses. With Quinnell and one other officer he had gone round to the farther side of the warehouse. Something had whispered to him there was urgent need of hurry, and he had decided it might save time to enter by his previous route.

Surprisingly the manhole cover was open, and a lowered match showed two feet of turgid black water cascading through the conduit below. Mr. Quinnell observed "Me no likee," and lowered himself into the flood. Eastman and the third officer followed. Bent low they splashed through the water which seemed to be increasing in depth and force in the wake of Quinnell's torch.

The noise of the pent-up stream was deafening. When Quinnell stopped and yelled something over his shoulder they were unable to catch his words. But his meaning was plain. He was pointing to the water, which was now up to their thighs, and advising a retreat.

"Go on," John Eastman yelled. "Only five yards to the other manhole."

A fresh spate surged up to their waists and almost swept them off their feet. Quinnell lurched forward, and a shout announced he had reached the bars that blocked the conduit. Grasping the bars with one hand he reached up with the other and pressed against the manhole cover. Then his language became sulphurous and they saw by the light of the torch that his rubicund face had gone white.

"It's locked! We'll have to go back the way we came. If we can."

If? They knew the chances of reaching the other manhole were slender in the extreme. The manhole cover seemed the better hope. Balancing himself against the flood the Inspector reached up and joined his strength to Quinnell's. The third officer located the lock with his fingers, put the barrel of his revolver against it and fired.

"That's how they do it in the books," he yelled. "Dunno if it'll work—"

The reports in that confined place were deafening. Something had given. Pushing together they raised the cover to the accompaniment of a shriek of twisting iron. A last heave flung it back.

Brilliant light from an overhead arc lamp dazzled them. With their revolvers ready they clambered out of the trap and faced about, expecting instant attack. But the clean, lighted place was deserted. From behind a cement door on the right of the platform came the steady *chug-chug-chug* of the electric pump, making the building shake with every ponderous stroke.

"Lord!" Quinnell said. "Listen!"

He was not alluding to the sound of the pump. What he heard was a shrill noise infinitely horrible in its suggestion of frantic terror. The squealing of a host of rats mingled with the cries of maddened men. And above all there was the surging roar of pent-up water.

John Eastman lunged past the others. His face was white, for he had guessed the ghastly truth. They saw him leap from the platform down into the well whence the door to the testing-tank chamber opened. There was two feet of water in the well. It was splaying in great sheets of spray through the interstices at the sides of the door, driven by tremendous pressure on the farther side.

The Inspector hurled himself at the door. He tore back the bolts, but a heavy lock still held it firmly. It was set in cement and defied the bullets that he fired.

While he struggled the piercing sounds on the other side rang in his ears. He knew what must be happening. There were men there as well as hordes of frantic rats. The collapsed wall had been repaired and they had been trapped by the water exactly as he had been.

What he heard told him what was happening. The trapped men had lost every vestige of human decency. They were fighting as madly as the rats. Climbing on one another, shrieking, biting, kicking and raving. And the rats were swarming over them as they fought.

He was powerless to open the door.

Quinnell had grasped the situation and had run to stop the pump. But he too had been held up by a locked door. They could do nothing to assist.

The rising water in the well forced John Eastman to return to the platform. By this time the outside party had forced the warehouse door and the place was filled with officers. The ram was fetched and the door of the pump-house beaten down. A second later eager hands switched off the current and the pump came to a sobbing stop.

Too late! The sounds in the testing-tank chamber had ceased minutes before. This time no wall had collapsed. The place was filled to the roof and in the enormous cistern it had become floated the bodies of three of the wealthiest and most influential men in England, jostled by a multitude of drowned rats.

There was an escape cock operated from the pump-house. When it had been opened the water cascaded back into the harbor whence it had been sucked and they were able to force the door. One by one the bodies were recovered and carried up to the platform. Distinguished bodies wearing evening clothes and diamonds. A millionaire munition-maker, a great newspaper proprietor and the most patriotic politician in the British Isles. Mr. Bugley, M.P. had been placed between the bodies of Sir Otho Schultzer and Herr Goldmack. All the bodies bore indications of a struggle that must have been notable for its desperation rather than its dignity. . . .

COLONEL BRUDER, who had been with the party that raided the works at Carding and had been summoned in a hurry, turned from regarding the bodies to look at another object that had been found in the testing-tank chamber and carried up to the platform. It was a ten-foot long model of the *Queen Elizabeth*, marvelously constructed out of wax. But in one detail the model differed from the original. In the lower portion there were circular traps which could be opened by the explosion of a minute charge placed inside. By experimenting with that model an interested person could have formulated an idea as to how the ship herself would behave when she was holed by an explosion in the interior.

The night-watchman had not yet sufficiently recovered to make a statement, but it was not needed. Colonel Bruder had already decided on his verdict.

"It was an accident, Inspector. These three gentlemen had gone into the testing-tank chamber for some purpose and by an extraordinary mistake the flooding-pump was started while they were there. An accident—of course."

"Of course, sir," John Eastman agreed.

"No one," Colonel Bruder pursued, his eyes on the model of the *Queen Elizabeth*, "would have started the pump knowing they were in the testing-tank chamber. Not even if they'd seen what I've just seen in the factory at Carding. Suffocation gas, devices for raining acids on cities, inflammable vapor that could burn London like a wasp's nest. And there were gas-masks for babies that were not gas-proof. . . . Yes, it's very sad about these poor gentlemen . . ."

But his expression as he eyed the bodies of the gentlemen in question seemed to belie his words.

The Inspector coughed.

"It was fortunate Mr. Sotan wasn't with them."

Colonel Bruder started. "I'd forgotten Sotan. Perhaps you'll find his body later."

"I'm afraid not, sir—glad I ought to say," the Inspector corrected himself. "If he'd been inside we'd have found him by now."

Bruder glanced at him.

"I suppose it couldn't have been Sotan who locked the door and started the pump?"

"Hardly, sir. I'd like to know where he is though. I mean the *Queen Elizabeth* sails tomorrow, and if we were sure that Sotan—"

"You needn't worry," Bruder interrupted. "You can sail with a light heart. We found no evidence in the arms-factory

to lead us to suppose they were planning an attempt on the ship. Plenty of other evidence, but not that. My opinion is they abandoned the scheme. And, Inspector—"

"Sir?"

"Make it clear in your report for the press that these gentlemen were drowned accidentally."

He gave the three bodies a last look and turned away with a muttered remark that sounded like, "I wish it had been boiling oil." It is possible he was thinking of what he had seen in the arms-factory. Gas masks for young babies, and fire-squirting bombs that would shrivel women and children alive if dropped into a street.

And was thinking, like John Eastman, that the three men who had exploited war for profit had had far too easy a death.

CHAPTER XVIII

PRISONER OF WAR

AT nine o'clock next morning the early passengers began to come up the gangways of the *Queen Elizabeth* to the reception deck. None of them had any eyes for Inspector John Eastman who had taken Hodson's place as ship's detective for the trip. He had a gift for making himself unnoticeable. Standing near the head of the first-class gangway, he looked as if he himself were a passenger and an unimportant one at that.

Had he been wearing oriental robes and a highly colored turban the men and women coming aboard would not have given him a second glance. It was the *Queen* herself who called for their attention. For each passenger she had one special tit-bit of interest. For one the flower-beds on the promenade deck; for another the squash racquets court; for another the shopping-avenue where you could buy anything from a motor car to a packet of pins. They had read of these marvels in the press, and were almost incredulous that they actually existed. Even in the blasé twentieth century a trip in England's greatest luxury liner counted as a thrill.

John Eastman, to whom the big liner was now as familiar as his own lodgings, watched them coming. Young and old, the blatantly rich, the obviously poor. There was an unusually high proportion of children. It had been blazoned abroad that for the kiddies a trip in the *Queen Elizabeth* was a glimpse of Fairyland.

Presently Dr. Kennet joined him. He had recovered from the effects of his imprisonment in Chalk House, and was in high spirits. When he had returned from New York he and Istra Fenwick were to be married. From Kennet's point of view everything in the world was as it should be.

He spoke chaffingly to the Inspector.

"You're looking grave, old horse! Surely you're not still worrying?"

Eastman laughed. "It's a bad habit I've developed since I came up against Sotan and Co."

"They're smashed, dead as mutton. At least all the principals are except Sotan himself. And you're as certain as it is humanly possible to be that there's nothing on board that shouldn't be."

"That's so," Eastman nodded. "All the same I'll be relieved when we're back in Souchester."

Kennet went away whistling and the Inspector envied him. He himself felt pressed down by a weight of responsibility.

But everything was going to be all right. He ran over in his mind all the precautions that had been taken to insure the ship's safety, adding them to all the defeats the Organization had suffered. William Dalziell, the killer and spy of the gang, was in a criminal asylum; Bugley, Schultzer and Goldmack had perished miserably in the "accident" beneath the warehouse. Grosford had been arrested in the raid on the arms-factory. Only Sotan remained unaccounted for. But Sotan had been the richest and most formidable of them all.

No matter about Sotan. It was a proven fact there was no mine on the *Queen*. Eastman had personally superintended the search of tank-top which he regarded as the danger spot. Barrels and kegs had been

opened; even the tanks for storing water and oil had been examined. It was inconceivable that a quantity of explosive large enough to sink an eighty-five thousand ton liner should have remained undiscovered.

Then the Inspector saw something that gave him renewed confidence. In a tall befurred figure walking languidly up the first-class gangway with a maid and two porters at her heels he had recognized the Countess Rivialli. Mr. Sotan's friend! Proof definite nothing was going to happen to the ship that trip. If there'd been any evil planned Sotan would surely have warned her not to go.

HE watched the woman curiously. Like Mr. Sotan and his friends she had the air of being different from common-or-garden humanity that the possession of vast wealth gives. Even on the *Queen Elizabeth* she was a personage. There were stewards bowing round her. Her luggage, mounds of pigskin and crocodile and glittering silver fittings, luggage that looked sufficient for a dozen ordinary mortals, was being wheeled into the entrance of what he knew to be the most expensive suite of state-rooms on the liner. The Countess disdained to glance at her belongings. Leaving her maid to check the trunks she sauntered to the rail. Bored and beautiful she stood, her chin resting on her gloved hand looking towards the tourist-class gangway.

John Eastman followed the direction of her gaze. Then he started. An uncommonly tall man with a pipe in his mouth was walking up the gangway. He wore a shabby waterproof and a slouch hat pulled down so that his face was almost invisible. But by his height and straight lean figure the Inspector had recognized him as Major Greaves, *alias* "Mr. Brown."

His first impulse was to tell the ship's authorities and have Greaves put ashore as an undesirable passenger. But why? He knew nothing against him save that he had been on the *Queen* on a previous trip and had made a nuisance of himself. All the rest was only suspicion. There was not a single illegal act Eastman could definitely prove unless it were attempted suicide by jumping into the Solent. To prove what he secretly believed—that Major Greaves had been responsible for the deaths of Bugley, Schultzer and Goldmack the previous night—would have been impossible even if he had wished to do so.

When he looked round the Countess Rivialli had disappeared, presumably into her suite. The Inspector remained on the reception deck watching the leave-taking scenes. A bell was ringing to warn the people who were not travelling to return to shore. Then he saw a C.I.D. man running up the gangway.

He came up to the Inspector. "From Colonel Bruder, sir."

Eastman opened the note and read:

Nothing has yet been heard of Mr. Sotan. Grosford states Sotan accompanied the deceased to the wharf last night, driving the car himself. It looks as if he was drowned when the accident happened; possibly this body will be recovered later from the harbour.

Have received information from Lloyds stating unusually heavy policies against loss of life or property on the *Queen Elizabeth* this trip. The bulk of this business was handled by Jarvis and Warrington who are Sotan's brokers. This seems to confirm previous suspicions.

The Inspector wrote a reply on a leaf torn from his notebook:

Message received. Nothing to report except that the Countess Rivialli and Major Greaves are both passengers. Am not interfering with Greaves. Cannot account for disappearance of Sotan. Suggest he may have taken alarm and left country.

"To Colonel Bruder with my compliments," he said, presenting the message. The C.I.D. man hurried off. He was almost the last of those not sailing to return to shore. In another minute the gangways were being pulled clear.

A blast from the mighty siren was answered by the tugs. Glancing upwards the

Inspector saw Commodore Whitlock on the projecting bridge-wing. He was chatting and laughing with another officer and looking quite unperturbed by his enormous responsibility.

With three more titanic blasts the *Queen* said *au revoir* to England. From the promenade deck came the strains of *Auld Lang Syne*. The dock was a field of fluttering handkerchiefs and upturned faces. Then the tug lines splashed down into the water and an almost imperceptible tremor announced that the world's greatest liner was once more moving under her own power.

"I THINK," Dr. Kennet said, "we can congratulate ourselves on everything being all right."

Inspector Eastman, to whom the remark had been passed, grunted a qualified acquiescence. It would have been absurd to have done otherwise. The time was eleven o'clock that night and by the model of the *Queen Elizabeth* that moved across the great illuminated map in the main dining-saloon she was a hundred odd miles west of the Scilly Isles, ploughing through the unfettered Atlantic at thirty-two knots an hour.

Never had voyage been more uneventful. Not even a minor catastrophe such as a hat being blown overboard. They'd reached and left Cherbourg at schedule time to the second, the weather was temperate and passengers were beginning to talk optimistically of another record run.

The Inspector and Dr. Kennet were seated in the observation lounge. The former, who had been in hourly communication by wireless with the Yard in addition to his routine duties as ship's detective, had a feeling of a good day's work done. If the Yard had reported the finding of Mr. Sotan alive or dead he would have been completely care-free but they had done no such thing.

It was a gay scene in which they sat. By feminine decree the custom of not changing for dinner on the first night out had been abolished in the instance of the *Queen Elizabeth* (it would have been sacrilege to have sat down unchanged in that gold and bronze dining-saloon with its lofty pillars) and everyone had appeared in evening dress. Now the observation lounge was like a flower garden, fragrant and colorful with scintillating frocks and flashing jewels.

Music, laughter and white-coated men manipulating shakers. Two people were threading their way between the tables. An immensely tall man and—! Dr. Kennet gave an exclamation.

"I'll be damned! Miss Vansittart—with Major Greaves!"

Before John Eastman could speak the two had come up. He stared at the woman Kennet had called Miss Vansittart. Even though she had got rid of the make-up that had given her a pronounced Italian appearance, he recognized her as the Countess Rivialli.

Mr. Sotan's friend in company of Major Greaves. Then—! But Greaves' voice cut through his confusion of ideas.

"It's all right, Inspector. Miss Vansittart is on the right side. We all owe her a lot. Especially you, Dr. Kennet. If she hadn't wormed out of Sotan where you were imprisoned you wouldn't be here now."

The Inspector stared at her. "Are you *Well-Wisher?*"

Miss Vansittart laughed. There was an ease and poise about her now. She spoke with soft assurance:

"I plead guilty. Do you remember what happened in No. 10 Hutton Street? Someone opened the door behind you when you were questioning the reception clerk. I was that person. I did not dare disclose myself then, but I found out what you wanted to know by other means and sent you the information. I'm glad you got to Chalk House in time."

John Eastman's hand went out.

"Shake!" he said. "You ought to have a medal for helping Scotland Yard."

They had seated themselves again. There was a feeling of expectancy in the air. Then Major Greaves began to speak:

"WELL, gentlemen, we've met at last. As allies who've been fighting on different fronts against a common enemy. About my own part in this affair I'm not going to say much. I daresay you've pretty well pieced together my story. I found out the truth about the war aims of Sotan's Organization when I was employed at his works in Carding, and set out to defeat them. As a soldier I've no objection to war in an honorable cause—there are occasions when it's a regrettable necessity—but I bar fighting for the financial interests of a few aliens. So I set out to defeat Sotan. And I tell you frankly that when I did that I had not the least idea of the power of the men I was trying to oppose. . . .

"I don't think that even now you really appreciate how powerful those munition-makers were. They had an army of spies and cutthroats doing their work in every country. *Agents provocateurs,* criminals, gangsters, and terrorists of every description paid to do their work. The man called William Dalziell was only one of the terrible characters who worked for them. What they controlled amounted to an army of unscrupulous criminals backed by unlimited money.

"When I fell foul of them I had to hide for my life. With all due respect to you, Inspector, the police couldn't have saved me. What did save me was the body of some unknown man I found on the bank of the Carding canal. He'd killed himself by drinking poison. I changed clothes with him, and by that means was able to escape my pursuers for a time.

"But I dared not disclose the fact I was still alive to anyone—not even to Miss Vansittart to whom I was engaged. I dreaded to bring her into danger too. I got abroad and lived the life of a hunted rat. I had the notes for a book I'd intended writing in the hope of rousing public indignation against the Organization, but I had no means of getting it published until by a lucky chance I saved the life of an Englishman in some low resort in Brussels. That man was Theodore Montfalcon, the novelist. He was a nasty little swine, but he did me a good turn. Partly out of gratitude and partly in consideration of what I paid him he published *In the Grip of the Brute* as his own work. As you know the book made some stir—enough anyway to do Sotan and Co. considerable harm. And I bet they wondered how Montfalcon had got his inside information about munition-firms!

"By that time I thought they'd forgotten me—or come to believe me dead—and I returned to England. What I did then I won't describe in detail. I was working against Sotan all the time. I took big risks in spying on them and managed to find out their plot for starting war between England and Russia by sabotaging British shipping and hoodwinking the public into blaming the Reds. I also found out that the *Queen Elizabeth* was one of the ships threatened—that in fact her sinking was to be the crowning outrage that was to start a European war that would make the last seem like a game of skittles.

"I had only the vaguest details, and I believed that the attempt on the *Queen* was to be made her last trip. That's why I sailed as a passenger under the name of Brown. As you know"—he smiled at Dr. Kennet— "I developed a severe attack of malaria and behaved in a rather foolish manner. Naturally I wasn't believed when I tried to convince people there was a mine on board. It didn't matter, however. My suspicions were wrong. The *Queen* returned from New York unharmed.

"There was, however, a minor disaster, at least a disaster from my point of view. William Dalziell, who I knew to be one of the most dangerous of Sotan's henchmen, had seen and recognized me on board. That man was a monster, a freak, half-mad and yet as cunning as a raven. But as it happened I knew something about his past. I knew that he had once been a member of the Carlotti Society in New York, had betrayed them to the American police and that the gang had sworn to have his life in consequence."

Major Greaves gave a slight smile. He

was speaking quietly, punctuating his sentences with frequent glances at his wrist-watch. Then he lit another cigarette and went on:—

"Well, it was a queer business for an Englishman who was an ex-officer of the Coldstream Guards to get mixed up in, but any weapons were good enough if they helped to defeat Sotan. I got word to the Carlotti Society that Dalziell was traveling on the *Queen,* and they contrived that two members of the gang should be smuggled on board for the purpose of executing the gang's revenge. Unluckily he was informed of the plan by some of Sotan's secret agents in New York, and you know what happened. He got down to tank-top, probably by bribing one of the ship's company, and gave the gangsters the 'bum's rush.' I imagine he killed Jefcoate because Jefcoate was unfortunate enough to find him there. Also, he attempted to complete the good work by murdering me, but did not succeed in entering my cabin.

"I knew he would have informed Sotan's people of my presence on the *Queen,* and that if I landed at Souchester in the ordinary way I was a dead man. That's why I took a chance on jumping overboard when we were coming up the Solent. The trick worked. And my first action when I got to London was to try to kill Dalziell."

JOHN EASTMAN nodded. "We were on to you there. You were seen firing that shot."

"Which unluckily missed," Greaves said. "For that you must blame the shakiness after malaria. Anyway, I wouldn't have been in time to save Montfalcon. Dalziell had dealt with him before I got a chance of potting at him. Incidentally, I didn't know that Montfalcon was in danger. The reason they killed him was, I fancy, to prevent *Lives for Gold* being published. I intended it as a sequel, a sort of follow-up blow to *Grip of the Brute,* and Montfalcon had agreed to publish it on the same terms. I'm not certain, but I've an idea that Miss Gilbert, Montfalcon's secretary, played false about that sequel. She told Sotan or some other member of the Organization that the typescript was in Allington's office; hence the raid. They made Miss Gilbert accompany them to identify the typescript, and when she had done that they killed her to shut her mouth. Anything else you'd like to know?"

Dr. Kennet spoke.

"When did you two," he looked from Major Greaves to Miss Vansittart, "join forces?"

Miss Vansittart answered.

"On the day after I'd met you at No. 10 Hutton Street. I wrote you a note, and then got my chauffeur to drive me out into the country. I told him to take me to a spot in Kent that Tony and I used to know in the happy days before Sotan came into our lives. There was a lake and an empty cottage. I—I had an idea I'd find rest in that lake. But for auld lang syne I thought I'd have a peep into the cottage before I did what I intended doing. So I—" She choked and stopped.

"Looked in and saw a disreputable tramp lying asleep—a tramp who on closer inspection proved to be me," Major Greaves took up the tale. "It was rather a dramatic meeting, as you may imagine. When we came to our senses we decided to join forces against Sotan. I hated dragging May into the business, but she overruled me. And she gave me what I badly needed—the sinews of war. Also she took her life in her hands and spied in Sotan's camp as the Countess Rivialli. If it hadn't been for May I wouldn't have known—"

He broke off but John Eastman completed the sentence.

"That Schultzer, Goldmack and Bugley would be in the testing-tank chamber under the warehouse last night."

His eyes met those of Major Greaves. For a minute they looked at one another in silence. Then the Inspector spoke again. His voice was dry:

"We've already decided what happened to those three gentlemen, Major Greaves. They were drowned by an unfortunate accident. But what we should like to know

is what happened to Mr. Sotan. Was he with the others?"

"He was," Major Greaves said with a gleam in his eye.

"Then he was drowned?"

The major shook his head. Again he consulted his wristwatch. He smiled thinly at Miss Vansittart.

"The dope ought to have worked off by now. Will you come and see him, Inspector? He's in Miss Vansittart's stateroom hidden in a cabin trunk."

CHAPTER XIX

THE STROKE OF DOOM

THE Queen Elizabeth must have got a quarter of a knot nearer to New York before anyone spoke. John Eastman's first idea was that Major Greaves had made a rather ill-timed joke. But looking at that extraordinary person he saw he was perfectly serious.

"Do you mean to tell me he's here—on board this ship?"

Greaves's grin deepened.

"Unless he's recovered from the dope and wriggled out of the trunk he is. He was in the trunk all right when we left Cherbourg. I had a peep at him."

"Why did you do it?" John Eastman's voice was sharp.

"As an insurance that the *Queen* would reach New York."

"It was unnecessary. There's no mine hidden anywhere—she's been searched from bow to stern. There'll be trouble about this. Even if we held definite evidence against the man—which we don't—kidnapping is—"

"A very trivial matter compared with the lives of five thousand odd men, women and children," Major Greaves said coldly. "You say you're certain there's no mine on board. Well, I know more about the Organization than you do and I've never known their plans to fail yet. The only thing I regret is that I gave Sotan such a powerful hypodermic when we took him in the motor-boat off the wharf last night. Waiting for him to recover consciousness has wasted a good deal of valuable time. We'd better not waste any more. Sorry to seem such an alarmist, but I suggest we go at once to the stateroom."

They all rose as he did. No one in the crowded lounge gave them a glance as they walked out. Of the extraordinary things they had been discussing not a whisper had reached the passengers.

Although it was close on midnight, gaiety on the *Queen Elizabeth* was still in full swing. She was a-throb with music and merriment like some vast hotel on a gala night. On that calm night, not a cloud in the sky and a full moon throwing a ribbon of silver over the placid sea, it was impossible to imagine that anything could threaten this, the mightiest of civilized man's contrivances. Unless civilized man himself—

No! John Eastman plucked the idea of a lurking death waiting for the liner from his mind almost with scorn.

It was unthinkable, impossible . . .

Still, it could do no harm to see Sotan. They passed on to "A" deck off which the luxury suites opened. Here all was hushed with discreetly shaded lights. Miss Vansittart produced a key and unlocked a door.

They followed her into a spacious room, panelled with varnished maple and decorated in gold and cream. There was a grand piano, a settee, deep armchairs. Off it there was another door which opened into a recess for luggage. Major Greaves went through and in an instant returned dragging a huge wardrobe trunk.

"Better pull the curtains," he advised. "It wouldn't do if anyone saw us."

When the curtains had been drawn he unlocked the trunk and flung back the lid. They saw the munition-maker lying full-length like a corpse, wedged round with blankets. His eyes were closed, his face flushed and he was breathing stertorously. Greaves frowned.

"Still under! We'll have to revive him."

Between them they lifted the limp figure from the trunk and placed it in an armchair. The cords that had secured wrists

and ankles were removed. Then Kennet spoke.

"One moment. I'll fetch something to wake him up. It was morphia you gave him, wasn't it?"

"It was," Greaves said.

They stood silent and anxious watching the unconscious form until Kennet had returned. He had brought with him a syringe. Quickly he bared Sotan's wrist and plunged the needle into the skin. As the plunger under his thumb sank slowly they saw the millionaire's eyelids flutter.

In another minute he was sitting up, yawning and rubbing his eyes. He looked dazedly from one to the other. Then, as realization of his surroundings came, he began to splutter in outraged fury, a grotesque, bearded figure in dishevelled evening clothes.

"WHERE am I? What's the meaning of this? Who's dared—?"

He saw Major Greaves smiling above him and he gave a sort of gasp.

"You again! I thought you were dead—"

"And now you're naturally delighted to find that I'm still alive," Greaves drawled. "I'm going to ask you a few questions before these gentlemen, Mr. Sotan. In the first place were you responsible for all the sabotaging of British ships supposed to have been done by Communists?"

"You're mad! I deny it absolutely."

"He pleads not guilty to the first charge," Greaves said in an impartial voice. "I'll proceed to the next. Did you employ a man called William Dalziell to murder Theodore Montfalcon because he'd written a certain book?"

The millionaire seemed to be recovering his nerve.

"Your accusations are ridiculous. I know nothing about Theodore Montfalcon."

"Prisoner again pleads not guilty," Greaves drawled. "So I'll go on to my third and final question. Did you hatch a plot to have a mine hidden on the liner *Queen Elizabeth?*"

Sotan laughed sneeringly. Ignoring Major Greaves, he addressed Inspector Eastman.

"This man is completely insane. Why should I answer his ludicrous accusations? I demand to be told where I am—to be set at liberty. If this is supposed to be a joke—"

"It isn't," Eastman snapped. "Answer the question. Do you know anything about a mine hidden on the *Queen Elizabeth?*"

"No," Sotan roared.

"Then I'm glad for your sake," Major Greaves said quietly. "You haven't yet grasped where you are, have you? I'll enlighten you. You're in one of the *Queen's* state-rooms and the liner is somewhere in the Atlantic."

For a long pause no one spoke. Sotan's face had gone white. They saw him pluck his collar as if it felt too tight.

"I'm on—the *Queen Elizabeth?*" he gasped.

They could hear a note of terror in his voice. It was plain that the man who was so callous about the sufferings of others was an arrant coward where his own skin was concerned. All his bluster had vanished. His mouth was twitching and his eyes rolling like the eyes of a frightened horse while he strove to collect himself. His voice droned in a meaningless mumble of sounds and choked words.

And then John Eastman knew the truth. There *was* a mine, and Sotan knew it. He seized the millionaire's arm and his eyes were merciless.

"Tell us all you know or I'll break every bone in your body."

He twisted the arm he held and Sotan screamed. A shrill, wavering scream quite out of proportion to the pain.

"Don't, don't. . . . There is a plan. . . . Housman's coming. . . . You can't stop him. . . . Oh, my God! . . . We're doomed —doomed, I tell you. . . ."

He was stammering, inarticulate in his agony of terror. John Eastman looked at Major Greaves.

"What does he mean? Housman's coming! Who's Housman?"

"The German pilot who flew his monoplane. An absolute young fanatic. He's quite insane in his hatred of England."

Sotan was screaming again.

"At midnight on the first night out. He's flying from the Arran Islands. You can't stop him."

All their eyes had gone to the clock above the electric fire. It was only a minute off midnight. And then another sound beat into the cabin. The deep roar of a twin-engined monoplane.

Doom thunder in the sky—

THE officer of the watch had heard the sound before they had. He hurried from the chart room into the wheel house. The look-out at the observation screen turned his head.

"Someone trying an Atlantic flight, sir. He's come out of his way to have a look at us."

As he spoke the monoplane roared over the bridge at a distance of a few feet, turned sharply and began to climb. They could see it with the utmost distinctness in the moonlight. The pilot waved his hand and some passengers standing on the sun deck cheered. The officer of the watch spoke nervously.

"Silly fool! Hope he won't try stunting near us." Then the bell of the telephone from the crow's nest rang and he hurried to answer.

"Aeroplane flying very low, sir. Almost carried away the aerial. He's coming back now."

The man in the crow's-nest was the only person in the ship who could see clearly what was happening. The view from the bridge was blocked by the domed roof of the wheel-house.

But the look-out in the crow's nest had an unobstructed view. Looking aft and upwards he could see the three monstrous funnels belching smoke and the wires of the aerial a hundred feet above them. And he could see the monoplane gliding down towards the forrard funnel.

Then horror came upon him and he yelled aloud. If the crazy fool in the plane didn't take care he would be caught by the down-draught and sucked into the forrard funnel. The fate that had nearly befallen the British bomber that struck the *Queen Elizabeth's* famous French rival.

He yelled again. Didn't the fool realize his peril? Now he seemed to be poised directly above the funnel. Then the monoplane reared slowly up and over, a silvery, moth-like shape in the clouds of smoke. And its pilot was shouting also. . . .

For this was the supreme moment of Carl Housman's life. He had war-madness in his blood, a heritage from a shell-shocked father. He hated the whole English race without rhyme or reason. It was as natural to him as breathing or sleeping. An obsession for which he was not responsible.

And now he was about to glut his hatred. Sotan and Sir Otho Schultzer and other great German patriots (as he believed them to be) had given him the means. Behind him a ton of titrinal nitrid enclosed in three torpedoes placed in the monoplane's cabin; below him the accursed English ship.

That he must die himself mattered nothing. He was avenging the millions of Germany's dead. As long as there are wars, so long will there be fanatics like Carl Housman, fine tools for crafty men to use.

Now he saw the mouth of the funnel gaping below him like the mouth of hell. Black and lurid with red sparks. Duty, the Fatherland and revenge! With a shout of triumph he kicked the rudder over and sent the monoplane with its load of shattering death roaring down into the great smoke-vomiting cylinder below.

A wing hit the edge of the funnel and was cut away as by a knife. Unchecked, the body of the machine hurtled downwards. The engine crashed through the fore funnel uptake as if it were paper and it was in No. 1 boiler room that the charge eventually exploded with a roar like the simultaneous discharge of a thousand guns.

FOR perhaps half a minute after that sound had ceased the *Queen Elizabeth* was completely silent. People were too dazed, too shaken to speak. The dancers in the saloons had been flung down like mown grass. Then women began to scream. There was a rush of hysterical white-faced people on to the decks and for an instant panic threatened.

The shuddering shock of impact laid a pall of terror upon them all. Wiped out in a breath was the gaiety, the music, the laughter, the security these passengers had casually accepted. There was one woman who shrieked and shrieked again until a pale girl struck her in the face. A frightened fat man cursed monotonously. Then stronger voices rose above the hubbub. Sanity and discipline spoke in them, and the animal wave of fright was quelled.

Quickly order was asserted. Calm-voiced officers and stewards were everywhere assuring people there was no danger. The engines had stopped, flung out of gear by the explosion, and the *Queen* was stationary on a calm, moon-lit sea. From the wireless room calls were already flashing forth to every quarter of the globe.

Calling all ships—SOS . . .

In a few minutes all the passengers had been conducted to their boat stations. There was need of haste for no one knew how badly the ship was damaged. That she had been holed was certain. But the fire in No. 1 boiler room rendered a close examination impossible.

All humanly possible had been done. The fire-proof doors had been closed; the sprinklers and other elaborate fire-fighting devices had been brought into action. All that remained was to abandon ship as quickly as possible.

Theoretically twenty minutes were required to fill and lower the twenty-four lifeboats each holding a hundred and forty-five people, but in this emergency the time was not required. One by one the packed boats slid down the gravity davits and were dropped by electric winches. The little Diesel engines started like machine-guns, and the boats moved slowly away like swimming beetles from the mother ship's side.

Concentrated haste, but no flurry or confusion. . . . Only once, when the lights failed and the flames shooting up through the fore funnel cast a ghastly blood-like light upon the scene, did a wail go up from hundreds of women and children. Instantly the emergency plant was switched on. Far below in the smoke-filled generator rooms unknown men were working at peril of their lives.

The disembarking went on. People were talking quietly; some even laughing. Then a hoarse cry rang out and its terror sent a shudder round the packed deck.

"Twenty thousand pounds for a seat in a boat. Fifty thousand. Anybody give me a seat for fifty thousand pounds?"

The voice was that of Mr. Sotan. He was howling for the only god he recognized —his money—to protect him. Somehow he wrenched himself from Greaves' grasp. Dashing forward he thrust a woman aside and tried to fight his way into the boat.

"Fifty thousand. . . . Anything—"

A ship's officer hurled him backwards. Major Greaves seized his arm.

"Don't worry, Sotan. I'm going to save you—for the hangman."

THE boat which John Eastman and Major Greaves entered with Sotan between them was the last to be lowered. It had waited for the fire-fighting squads from the engine-rooms. Two men were left at their posts of honor. One was Commodore Whitlock on his bridge; the other was the senior wireless operator, ceaselessly sending out calls that struck the whole world dumb with horror.

The boat descended, cast clear and began to move away from the side of the doomed liner. Now they could see her in silhouette against the placid sky. They saw her in all her stream-lined beauty, the vast terraces of decks, the sloping funnels, the bridge with its projecting wings, and the graceful sweep of the superstructure. And men who loved her turned their faces away for they could not bear to look.

She was settling very slowly by the bows and all round her there were pools of blazing oil. John Eastman knew what he was about to see. Porthole after porthole was sliding beneath the water. Now, the tip of a propeller was visible. Like the model in the photographs the ship was tilted as if on the edge of an abyss.

It was as poignant as witnessing the painful death of a living creature. John Eastman's thoughts went to all who had toiled to make the *Queen Elizabeth* the finest ship afloat. Famous architects and humble riveters. Electricians, engineers, artists and carpenters. They had lavished their skill upon her without stint, and by the greed of a few their work had been all in vain.

The Chief Engineer sat beside John Eastman. And his face was as if he were watching by the death-bed of a loved one. He raised a clenched hand.

"Good-bye, old girl," the Chief said hoarsely. "I wish I could go down with you. But you did your duty. You held up till your passengers were safe."

Long minutes dragged past. Major Greaves spoke in the Inspector's ear, his voice charged with bitter rage.

"I told you the Organization was cunning, didn't I? Too cunning for you and me. Even kidnapping Sotan didn't save the ship. She—"

He stopped and stared at the Chief Engineer. That person had risen to his feet and was swearing terribly. Strange, jumbled oaths while tears ran down his cheeks. Then he raised his voice in a tremendous shout.

"She's *not* sinking! I tell you she's *not* sinking. Good old *Queen!* It 'ud take more than a pennorth of gunpowder to sink you. Boys, I tell you she's floating. They'll tow her into Queenstown and repair her. Back to your ship, you lily-livered sons of sea-cooks. We'll save her as sure as she saved us."

It was evident now, even to a landsman's eyes, that the liner's list was not increasing. The flames vomiting from the fore funnel were subsiding. And they could now see the smoke of fast ships tearing to the rescue. Yes, the *Queen Elizabeth* could be saved to carry the blue ensign for many a year, and wild cheers rang out as the fact was realized.

John Eastman stared through his binoculars at the foremost of the rescue ships, She was a dinghy tramp with her funnels flaming. Men frantic to save other men's lives crowded her rails in furious impatience.

John Eastman kicked the munition-maker crouching at his feet.

"Look, Sotan! That's a Russian ship," he said.

THE END

Argonotes

The Readers' Viewpoint

IT is a dark week indeed around this office when at least one reader does not object to at least one story in ARGOSY. We feel very strongly about this. When somebody doesn't kick, we begin to wonder if ARGOSY is losing its variety. And that, as we may have said before, but feel impelled to say again, is one of the things for which we strive hardest. We don't want this magazine to get stuffy; we don't want anyone to be able to say this or that story is an "ARGOSY type of story."

So if you find a story that you don't like, it is quite possible that you have hit upon a story that was chosen for just the very thing you objected to—a different manner of writing, a different kind of plot, may have caused us to pick that tale to add the spice to that particular issue of ARGOSY. For that matter, today we might agree heartily with your objections; for we claim to be men of varying moods; and how, for that matter, can a man who is not a Fagan one day and a Falstaff the next edit properly such a magazine as ARGOSY?

We try in various ways to emphasize this variety. A while ago we came to the conclusion that the blurbs, those short bits of explanatory matter on each of the stories, were running too much to sameness. As you may have noticed, since then we have altered the form of the blurbs a bit, attempting to emphasize not so much what the story was about as how it differed from the other stories in the issue.

We are now even thinking very seriously of starting a minor revolution on the front cover of ARGOSY. A good many readers have asked for a change there; we think it's long overdue; and unless the rest of you object we're going ahead.

And so in other ways as well . . . To put it briefly: we intend to keep ARGOSY moving; we intend to keep it young. We don't mean that in order to get variety we are going to publish bad stories; that is farthest from our intent. We simply mean that we don't want to get to the point of sameness where every reader will loudly praise every story.

Our motto, in other words, is "Any good story is an ARGOSY story."

Bearing that in mind, we are certainly not going to leap from our desk in fury, nor on the other hand sink into a self-made cavern of gloom, over such well-intentioned criticisms as those of

JEANNE DuNOYMO

For a long time I have been looking each week, in ARGOSY, for something besides the so-called "blood and thunder" stories. Why so much of the same "murder"—ghoulish—wicked—terrible and disgusting? Why not give us something bright and fine once in a while?

When I first started to read ARGOSY, as you now call it, my attention was called to it by "His Diary" by Edgar Franklin. It was so interesting and full of unique situations, etc. that I kept on and was delighted with many of the other authors. It seemed as if Rozika Story, Semi-Dual, John Solomon, Gillian Hazeltine, etc. were old friends, and it was so interesting to read of them in different experiences. Others have told me of the same feeling about it.

I like most of the stories—but I do get "fed up" when the contents are all of the same pattern, so I was pleased when I saw that "Henry Harrison Conroy" was with us again, for in these days of misery and depression for so many of us, it is a wonderful thing to sit down and forget it all (as I do) by going into a "far country" with characters you have grown to know—like a neighbor.

Lately there has been such a sameness of bloodthirsty, horrible stories and so little that was amusing, I have almost stopped reading

ARGOSY—which has been my "recreation" for 20 years.

Why don't you publish again some of those wonderfully interesting stories of 15 to 20 years back? Franklin's "His Diary"—"The Big Idea" and some of those "Semi-Dual" and "John Solomon" numbers. I would love to read them again, and several people I have told about them would be glad to have them too.

Rochester, N. Y.

AND here we'd been thinking that this bloodthirsty business was all cleared up! But we promise Reader DuNoymo plenty of tales to make her laugh in the future—and meanwhile give space to someone who feels quite differently, who signs himself

SATISFIED READER

Have just read the "Tentative Report to Those Concerned On the Situation as Regards the Good Ship ARGOSY" in the March 20th number, and I hereby register a vociferous vote of thanks to ye Editors for the stories promised for the near future.

I want to say here and now that Burroughs' "Seven Worlds to Conquer" was tops with me. "The Resurrection of Jimber-Jaw" was a swell yarn also. Give us more of the same kind. Adams' "Skyway to Peril" can't be beat. Regarding the complaints about Mr. Adams' stories being bloodthirsty, I want to say they suit me exactly as they are.

I prefer four serials to three, and I am heartily in favor of a quarterly. I would like to see some of the George W. Ogden, A. Merritt. Achmed Abdullah serials of long ago, especially "The Mating of the Blades," by the latter. I read part of it in an old copy of ARGOSY given me by a neighbor years ago, and I have never forgotten it. If Abdullah is still in the writing game I would like to read a new story by him. I can't understand why more of the old-timers aren't calling for more stories about the Far East as only Achmed Abdullah can write them.

Another type of story which I would like to see in our mag is about the ancient, ruined cities of Mexico. Why not have Mr. Adams fix us up a swell yarn about those fascinating ruins? Also a story about the ancient tombs and pyramids of Egypt would not be amiss.

Tupelo, Miss.

AND there you are! Breeders of dissension, that's us. And on the other hand, says

NELVILLE F. ALLAN

It seems that at last I must write for the first time to ARGOSY to say a few words that have been burning on my tongue for many months. Spurred on by the fact that you are just as eager to hear from Canadians as you are from Americans (though what the difference is I cannot tell) I want to get it off my chest while you think well of us as a nation.

My first blast of vituperation is contained in the question: What have you done with that ace of writers, Slater LaMaster? The Editors ought to have a darn good excuse for losing him. "The Phantom in The Rainbow" of a few years past was one of the best stories I ever read. Perhaps a few will be able to recall it. I have read the ARGOSY since 1920 with only the loss of six months in that time as I was out where I could not get a hold of it (in the Timber of B.C. to be exact) so I have kind of earned a few words, haven't I?

Fred MacIsaac used to come next to Slater LaMaster, but I think he's slipping without a doubt. Though woefully behind the time (1933) I quote "The Lost Land of Atzlan" as absolutely hopeless and could hardly believe my senses when I found Fred's name to it. Listen. Author Fred, give us the stuff you gave us years ago like "Soft Money" and "Burning Money," etc. "The Vanishing Professor" was a humdinger, too.

Now that I have definitely thrown a good many brickbats at poor defenseless Fred MacIsaac, let me give a bouquet or two to the others. Otis A. Kline, you are one hundred per-cent in your line, and may you continue to string out your successes. E. R. Burroughs comes in for a shower too, on his "Seven Worlds to Conquer." So far George Challis is fine in his "The American" and it is annoying to have to wait to see what other dirty work at the crossroads is about to happen. How soon do we have Kline in 1937?

Calgary, Alta.

WE have room, at least, to answer one of Reader Allan's questions. We have been haunting that man Kline again and he assures us the serial is on its way to completion. But here is a man who is biting his nails for a crack at Theodore Roscoe, and it looks as if we'd have to let him have it. Says

CLIFFORD BALL

Allow me a word with Mr. Roscoe.

I admire his style of writing very much. I enjoy reading the novel twists of his phrasing and the descriptive adjectives he employs; I have endeavored to emulate his emphatic dialogues in a recent short story which I had the satisfaction of selling to a Chicago publication.

But this, Mr. Roscoe (speaking to you) is too, too much. Let me quote from page 103, issue of Feb. 20th, story entitled "Z is for Zombie." Quote: "A frightened Negro, a frightened blonde and a frightened college professor were parked in a frightened Model T." Now, in the name of sanity, Mr. Roscoe, please! I have driven Model T's and I know how unreliable they can be and how they can without warning develop the characteristics of a jackass. But I have never yet heard of one that was frightened. I assure you, Mr. Roscoe, that they are absolutely without fear, perhaps because they are so ugly in this modern age that possible dents do not alarm them. Perhaps you meant frightful. . . .

Now quoting from the same page: "He heard the Irishman's voice bang, 'Tell your story, big boy, and tell it quick!' the bang lowering to a menacing undertone." I envy you, Mr. Roscoe! I have never heard a man's voice go "bang!" Imagine what some of our political speakers could do with that ability! Imagine radio broadcasters "banging" about, then finally "lowering to a menacing rapidfire undertone." What price machine-guns!

Tch! Tch! Mr. Roscoe! Now I'll read the remainder of your serial. After all, you know, I like it.

Astoria, L. I.

AUTHOR ROSCOE could not be reached at a late hour last night, but we rise to report that we once owned a Model T that was so frightened it trembled all over at sight of a high hill. And as for voices banging—on the radio, for example—well . . .

However, here's a man who really means what he says. He's pretty angry, is

P. WHITEHALL

When are you going to get a proofreader or two for that otherwise swell magazine of yours? I can stand the increasing number of errors in spelling, typographical errors, and the like, so long as the plots and characters of the stories maintain their present high level, but you should really have some unimportant low-brow around to tell you things. Now, for example, whether or not you can silence an automatic—who cares, as long as the story is interesting? Not I. Neither am I overly worried about how bodies buried fourteen years in the steaming soil of tropical Haiti can be brought intact to the surface. This most humble member of your staff should, however, tell you such things as that there are no fraternities at Princeton, and Princeton students usually consider it bad form to wear orange and black ties. After all, the place is only forty or fifty miles from the swivel chair which exudes all these "magnificents" "super-colossals," etc.

Let me chime in with the rest and add my three cheers for "Annapolis Ahoy." Most of your stories are interesting—this one was actually worth reading!

Seriously, I do think your proof-reading is getting pretty careless. I hate to see it too—because errors like these grate on the nerves and partially make your efforts in getting fine stories useless.

Washington, D. C.

AND Reader Whitehall is right. Errors are certainly no part of our intent in bringing variety to ARGOSY. But right back at him thunders

ROBERT H. POLLARD

What the ARGOSY needs is a firing squad. Why? To shoot cranks, of course. The guy that spends all his time looking for mistakes and bad stories should be stood to a wall.

The ARGOSY is a fine magazine, without doubt the finest of its kind on the market. I will admit that once in a while a poor story gets mixed in, but they are few and far between. I dare any one of your so-called critics to name any magazine that does not have an off story once in a while. In Bay St. Louis there is a certain drug store that runs out of ARGOSY the day they arrive. The only way I get mine is by paying my dime in advance.

Since the year 1936 has passed away in peace—at least in the Americas . . . it is time to pick the best stories of the year, and all these so-called old timers had better look to their laurels, as it will be a tough job. May I present my selection of the best five? They are picked because of merit, not favoritism.

1. "Annapolis, Ahoy!" by George Bruce ranks first on my list. It is by far the best story ARGOSY has seen in many a day.

2. Brings us "The Pathfinders" by Allan Vaughan Elston. Major Tom Eagle is America's Sherlock Holmes.

3. "The Howling Wilderness" by Allan Vaughan Elston rightfully deserves this place. In these two stories Mr. Elston shows his knowledge of the northland.

4. Goes to Mr. George Challis for his great novel "The Golden Knight". . . This book is destined to gain high honors as one of the finest stories written of King Richard the Lion-Hearted.

5. Last, but not least, is "The China Clipper" by H. Bedford-Jones. A splendid novel of the present worthy of Mr. Bedford-Jones.

May the good ship ARGOSY have good sailing, with no "cranks" as stowaways, and may you never strike a reef!

Bay St. Louis, Miss.

Looking Ahead!

GALLOPING GOLD

There is gold somewhere in those hills, but the question is, whose is it? And where? The answer must be left to none other than Henry Harrison Conroy, that amazing, big-nosed, be-spatted and cane-carrying sheriff of Tonto town. Beginning a rollicking new novel by

W. C. TUTTLE

A GHOST IN THE HOUSE

What was the grim secret that dark house held? Who walked its corridors, the living or the dead? Six eerie thrills per page are guaranteed for this tale by

DALE CLARK

THE SEA'S WAY

Everything was against the *Lovely Lady*. Fallen upon evil days, plying the drudgery of a coastal tramp, the once splendid yacht was beset by barratry, by fog and flame . . . even by murder. The saga of a ship cursed by the fates, and of the man who fought to redeem her. A complete novelet by

ROBERT H. PINKERTON

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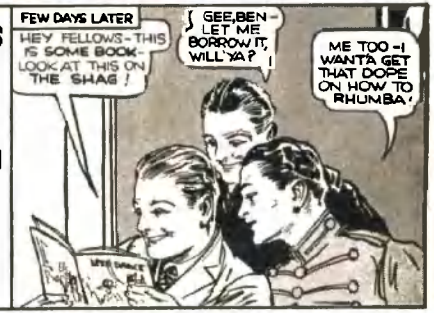

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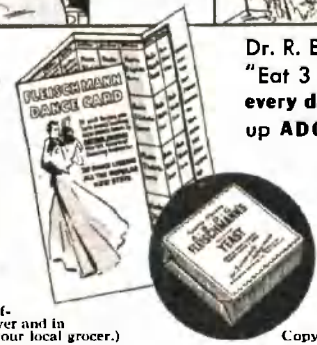

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