



25c

ARGOSY

SEPTEMBER



**POWDER FOR
SANTA ANNA**

Book-Length Novel

by T. T. Flynn

C. P. Donnel, Jr. • Allan R. Bosworth • Larry MacPhail • Leland Stowe



*B*ottled in Bond under U.S. Government supervision... your assurance of age, proof and quantity. The signature of the maker is your assurance of the finest quality.

FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION
JAMES E. PEPPER
★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Bottled-in-Bond
KENTUCKY STRAIGHT BOURBON WHISKEY

THIS WHISKEY IS 6 YEARS OLD, 100 PROOF. JAMES E. PEPPER & CO., LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY



The Monroe Doctrine in Monroe's handwriting from his message to Congress . . . Document from Bettmann Archive

most unlightened policy, and under which
have enjoyed unexampled felicity, the whole
mainstay is devoted. We own it therefore to con-
sist to the amicable relations existing between
the United States and those powers, to declare that
we should consider any attempt on their part to
extend their system to any portion of this Hemisphere,
as dangerous to our peace and safety.
But with the Government who have
their independence, we have, on great
principles, acknowledged
any interference for the purpose
of extending in any other
direction, than as the manifestation of
their power towards those new Governments
we declare our neutrality at the
recognition, and to do so we have

Invitation . . . TO KEEP OUT!

Then as now aggression threatened the new world . . . but a bulwark was erected by bold James Monroe. On a December day in 1823, he set his hand to an immortal document declaring that any attempt by European powers to extend their system to America was dangerous to our peace and safety.

The author of the Monroe doctrine wrote with quills . . . now patriots have a better pen, the Inkograph—smooth flowing, with a 14 kt solid gold ball like point . . . fits all hands and writing styles . . . writes with the ease of a soft lead pencil. It will do everything an ordinary fountain pen does—and much more; is inexpensive, yet has the workmanship and good looks usually associated only with higher priced pens.

Thousands of men and women in the services prefer Inkographs. Their needs come first—so shelves are often shy. If your dealer is out of stock, please keep trying . . . and be patient, later there will be Inkographs for all.

*The name Inkograph on the barrel guarantees the genuine.
Sorry, no mail orders . . . only dealers can supply you.*

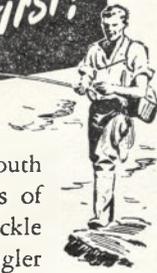
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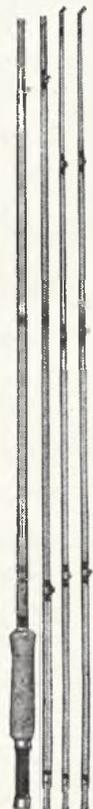
Inkograph Co., Inc., 200 Hudson St., New York 13, N.Y.



The Fly Rod Tackle We
Plan To Make *First!*

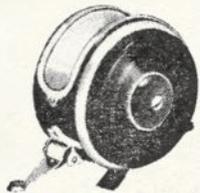


There will again be South Bend tackle for *all* types of fishing, but here's the tackle to make the fly rod angler cheer! Mind you, we're not *yet* in production and can't quote prices, but we *can* tell you about our plans!



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Superb Silk Line**

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The most popular automatic ever made—the war years saw it become a prized "collector's item." No. 1130 and No. 1140, in beautiful anodized aluminum, will be available first.

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Buy and Keep More War Bonds

SOUTH BEND
A Name Famous in Fishing



INTERNATIONAL NEWS PHOTO

TRAPEZE ACT: It happened high over the Himalayas, when two pilots of the Air Transport Command were forced to abandon their ice-coated C-47 cargo plane. As the first pilot jumped through the cabin door, the plane hit a sharp downdraft, throwing the pilot against the tail of the ship and knocking him unconscious—before he could open his parachute. Quickly judging the situation, the second pilot dived through the door, caught the unconscious body just as it slid off the tail and held it as he fell through the air. Twisting, he managed to pull the ripcord and open the injured pilot's chute, then pushed away and opened his own. The first pilot was still unconscious when both landed safely in the jungle several miles below, and it took them six weeks to make their way to the nearest ATC base. Although the pilot who made this amazing mid-air rescue must remain anonymous for the time being, it's on the records of the ATC in Washington—another example of the caliber of the men who fly the world's largest airline.

TINFOIL ARMOR PLATE: When the Eighth Air Force in England began to lose more bombers to anti-aircraft fire than to enemy fighter planes, AAF technicians went looking for the solution. They knew that enemy ground guns were accurate even at high altitudes and through miles of thick clouds, due to electronic detecting and range-finding devices similar to our radar. Such systems, which automatically "track" an unseen bomber across the sky and keep the guns constantly on the target, are activated by radio waves sent up from the ground and reflected back by the metal of the plane. The AAF found the answer in "chaff"—tiny pieces of tinfoil-covered cardboard which were dropped by tens-of-thousands from the leading bomber squadron in the formation. As a result, German anti-aircraft gunners found their batteries aimed at a blank instead of a pin-pointed target—because their locator beams were reflected from the tinfoil squares instead of our bombers, making accurate fire impossible. However, the leading squadron was still exposed, so fast Mosquito bombers were finally used, dropping the chaff ahead of every formation. That is one of the answers to the record low in ships

lost for the Eighth during the last months of the European air war.

POST-WAR WARNING: Many plans are being made to build automobiles with smaller engines and higher horsepower, which will use the war-developed 100-plus octane airplane fuels now in service with our military aircraft. In view of this, petroleum engineers advise that the public receive an educational campaign as to their proper use. The new superfuels are highly volatile, much more so than ordinary gasoline. A drop on a bare arm will cause a severe burn unless wiped off immediately, so dry-cleaning clothes with the new fuels is out. Fumes are highly toxic when the gas evaporates—they have been known to kill even in the open. Consequently, the common rule has been, "If you can smell it, watch out." In one instance recently, a broken pipeline of 100-octane gas in the open air suffocated nine workers and burned many would-be rescuers before the break was finally sealed.

CONTRAILS: The AAF has emergency runways near regular bomber bases which are twice as long as normal flight-strips, with a half-mile of grass field at each end—to be used only when planes are in trouble and need plenty of room to land. . . . When gunners in bomber formations test-fire their guns, pilots, bombardiers, and navigators duck behind their armor plate—more than one pilot has seen .50 caliber slugs rip through his wings when the gunner in the next bomber didn't look where he was shooting. . . . The Eightieth Fighter Group, giving air support for the British and Chinese in Burma, lost only three pilots in air combat with the Japs during the past two years, in spite of their record as one of the most active units in the AAF. . . . The new P-47N version of the Thunderbolt is a vicious-looking airplane, with its eight .50-caliber guns and five rockets and a bomb hung under each wing. . . . Contrails, in case you didn't know, are smoke-like white plumes left by planes flying at extremely high altitudes—they're caused by exhaust condensation, therefore the name.

by Robert Monroe

YOUR WORLD —and mine!



by Lawrence N. Galton

Here are new and interesting facts and colors out of an odd world. Many might be expanded to full article length. ARGOSY crowds them here into nugget form—to give you more in less space in less time

A special radar unit, with which experiments have already been carried out successfully by Sir Ian Fraser in London, is expected to enable the blind to "see." Consisting of two pieces of electrical sound and light apparatus connected to earphones, the unit enables the sightless to tell not only whether an object is in the way, but how far away it is.

For millions of years Nature has anticipated many of man's proudest inventions. Bombardier beetles, for example, squirt a fluid which dissolves into a blue smoke-cloud to cover their retreat. Some plants, like the "squirting cucumber," shoot out their seeds like a shell from a cannon, others launch them on the catapult principle. Birds like the peregrine falcon get their prey by dives as steep as any dive bomber. Termites have been building skyscrapers for eons; their homes reach twenty feet in height. And one spider, the hairy imperial found in Australia, may have been the original fly fisherman. It drops a line about an inch and a half long with which it angles for and hooks moths.

The full significance of the discovery of penicillin and a host of other new drugs isn't yet generally realized. For centuries, all people buried diseased corpses without knowing how the soil protected the living from the germs of the dead. Scientists now know that certain friendly bacteria in the soil attack and destroy parasitic germs. They do so by their secretions, which are called anti-biotics. Penicillin, gramacidin and streptomycin are the secretions of but a few of millions of bacteria present in every cubic foot of soil. Yet these three anti-biotics combat septic wounds, pneumonia, dysentery, typhoid, influenza, whooping cough. Isolation of secretions of other friendly bacteria in the soil is expected to provide a specific cure for almost every known disease of man.

ONCE UPON A TIME IN
ENGLAND



THIS WAS THE
PIPE THEY SMOKED

TODAY, HERE'S THE PIPE YOU SEE

LHS
STERNCREST
STERLING

IN ENGLAND, AND WHEREVER OUR BOYS HAVE GONE

Next time your dealer hasn't just the LHS you want, remember the thousands upon thousands of LHS's which have gone to every fighting front. That's the reason for the shortage—and a mighty good reason it is.

Civilian demand has been enormous, too, because pipe-smokers know LHS. They know that famous trade mark stands today for a true pipe-smoking tradition, for craftsmanship and the finest of materials, just as before the war. Whether you pay \$10 for an LHS Ultrafine or \$1.50 for an LHS Purex Superfine, each is the finest pipe in its price class.

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Smooth finish—also other handsome models, antique or smooth.

**LHS STERNCREST 14K
\$7.50**

Solid gold band—selected briar

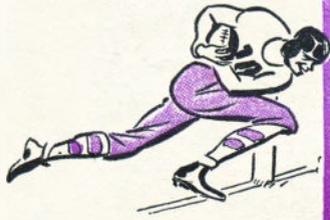
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FREE and
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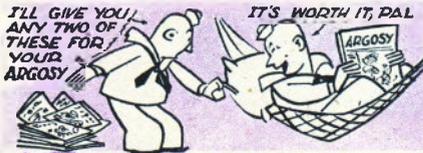
Sirs:

Argosy is standard equipment in the bosun's locker and the radio shack—if returned under guard. Thanks from all hands for your entertaining reading.

"Round the Horn to Hell" (April Argosy) met very much with our approval, with its salty nautical terms. Ships being our current interest, more like it will be warmly welcomed.

We would like to add some negative criticism, but have yet to find anything in your magazine to warrant such.

Argosy can be considered legal tender for



other magazines, with a trade-in value of two-to-one when bartering with other ships. . . .

OWIE MILLER, BM 2/c
BILL COLEMAN, BM 2/c

South Pacific

THEY CALLED IT TOWNBALL

Sirs:

Lt. (jg) Frederic A. Birmingham in the July Argosy—"Starts and Fits in Sports"—discusses the origin of baseball and finds that origin to be cricket and the American "one old cat or two old cat." Now I'm not an authority on the descent of baseball, though I played it when a kid and like a good game now, but it is my humble opinion that the direct forerunner of baseball was a game called townball, which was played throughout the South and, I think, pretty much over the entire country. It was still being played in the Nineties, though baseball was in full swing.

In many respects, townball was similar to baseball. That is, it had bases, a pitcher and catcher and fielders. The ball used was usually made of yarn wound hard around a small stone or other hard object. The bat used was one with a flat surface, making it easy to hit the ball, but the runner didn't have as easy a time as in baseball, for he could be put out by a throw of the ball, and it was up to him to be an expert dodger (maybe that's where the Dodgers got their name). I played a few games of townball when I was a boy.

SAM T. LARKIN

Los Angeles

FROM THE FATHER OF RADIO

Sirs:

I wish to express my appreciation for the interesting manner in which you handled the subject of my career, and particularly the highlights of the industrial and social revolutions which have been brought about by my invention of the three electrode, or radio tube.

I feel that your brief review is instructive and inspirational to the very large number of young people who are reading it . . . in Argosy and the *Reader's Digest*.

LEE DE FOREST

Los Angeles

!!!!

Sirs:

I have read most of July Argosy. It surely is a swell copy. I found the stories by Philip Wylie and by Walter Brooks as good and entertaining as the best ones in the *Post*. As for G. T. Flem-

ing-Roberts' novelette. I believe I won't forget the characters for a long while. . . . All my congratulations!

*ATTILIO GATTI

Derby Line, Vt.

THE SERIAL QUESTION

Sirs:

It is a well known fact that we buy more reading matter than any young family in town (small town) and Argosy is really tops. Years ago, when it was about the size to fit in a geography book, we boys would pool our very meager resources and get every copy and follow (??) I think it was Tarzan, as two or three of us damn near broke our necks in our cottonwood. As we grew older we quit Argosy, as we don't like serials.

. . . I note your notice of a two-part serial by Blackburn for August. Well, I can always wait one month, read the synopsis and get it all, but I think a complete novelette would be better. We'll see.

T. W. BOLIN

Slayton, Minn.

HOW ABOUT THE INDIANS?

Sirs:

In "Back Talk" for July you wonder where a lot of us would be if immigration had been stopped seventy-five or a hundred years ago.

Well, a lot of us would be living in the United States, and it would be an almost one-hundred-percent pure Anglo-Saxon nation.

Frankly, the only ones whose descendants call themselves Americans are the ones who descended from the people here at the time of the Revolutionary War, and the ones who immigrated here after that from England, Scotland, Wales and the Scotch-Irish from Northern Ireland. The others, even to the third and



fourth generation, call themselves Irish, Germans, Swedes, Polish, Italian, etc.

For that reason, I would like to see immigration restricted to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

J. L. ALEXANDER

Erie, Pa.

• Our mail department is ready for a flood of letters a day or two after this issue, carrying Reader Alexander's letter, hits the newsstands.

AN OLD FRIEND

Sirs:

I don't usually go into ecstasy over a magazine but would like to tell you about your current issue. I think the little feature articles are worth the price of the book, let alone the fine stories.

Argosy and I are old friends. My dad let me read it when I was growing up, but if I brought in any other magazines, out they went. "Trash!" he said. "Argosy, yes. Trash, no." That is saying a lot for the magazine, as dad was a very straight-laced Christian. He's gone to his reward, but I shall always remember that it was he (he read it himself) who started me on it.

MRS. C. E. PETERSON

Minneapolis, Minn.

SNIPER SNIPED

Sirs:

We are enclosing a letter clipped from April Argosy, entitled "Fun for Snipers" and written by Mr. C. B. Lister, secretary treasurer of the National Rifle Association. With all due respect to Mr. Lister's position, we would like to give you our point of view on the subject. . . .

Censorship regulations would not permit, else we would state the statistics concerning the carbine, caliber .30, M-1. We concede that it does not equal the old faithful rifle, caliber .30, Model 1903 Springfield, but it stands to reason that the United States Army would not send



their men to war with insufficient firearms, especially one that is not deadly at 200 yards.

Also for Mr. Lister's information, the Army has been teaching their men a new and more effective way of firing which improves their marksmanship. Many men who have never held a rifle in their hands before learn to outshoot men who have, so to speak, cut their teeth on a rifle, and in far less time than ninety days.

We are looking forward to this being published to quell the worries of parents, wives or sweethearts who may have loved ones on the fighting front and have read Mr. Lister's article.

Thanking you for your time, we remain in defense of our country with carbines.

T/Sgt. DAN W. BENNETT

Sgt. DON L. SMITH

Sgt. ANTHONY C. GROHN

c/o Postmaster, San Francisco

SHAKESPEARE ON ARGOSY

Sirs:

I have seen Argosy on the newsstands for years and sometimes have wondered what "argosy" means. Last week I was attracted by your July issue's cover page. . . . I bought the book, and was very well pleased after reading a few stories and finding a wide variety of fields. Has Argosy always been this type of magazine? If so I've been missing something. What does "argosy" mean outside of Webster's definition: a well-laden merchant vessel?

Boyman, N. Dak.

GILBERT STEIG

• The Encyclopedia Britannica defines "Argosy" as "any vessel carrying rich merchandise." In our case, it is one loaded with the month's best reading matter. Shakespeare may have anticipated the new ARGOSY when he wrote:

Where your argosies with portly sail . . .

Do overpeer the petty traffickers.

HOME, TO A GUY

Sirs:

. . . I don't know if anyone has ever told you how much of home is sent to a guy when he gets your magazine, but there is a hell of a lot in it. . . . When my subscription runs out please let me know in time to send you a check for another year, as I don't want any skips if I can possibly help it.

R. MARKHAM, SKT 2/c

c/o FPO, San Francisco

ROUGHING IT SMOOTHLY



A page of advice to the sportsman

NOW is the ideal time to go camping. In most areas the black flies are gone and the mosquitoes aren't half so numerous as they were earlier in the season. In the West the trout fishing is approaching its peak, while in the East and North the bass and pickerel will soon be on the feed again after their hot-weather layoff. There should be few rainy days during the next month.

Not only is this the best season for it, but 1945 is a good year to spend a simple, restful and inexpensive vacation camping out. Some resorts are closed and others are crowded. Transportation facilities are overburdened. We still must put all the money we can spare into war bonds.

But at the same time, all of us who have been working hard—and who hasn't?—need a chance to relax and gather our forces so that we can do our part toward finishing the war. Camping is a good way to do it.

My father took me camping for the first time when I was six years old. By the time I was an old gent of twenty-five or so, I thought I knew practically everything about fishing, hunting, camping and the outdoors in general. Then, one summer, I made a long trip down the Middle Fork of the Salmon River in central Idaho with a real woodsman and discovered that I knew very little indeed about the fine art of camping. We were fifty miles from a road and seventy miles from a town. Our only connecting links with civilization were the horses we rode and the others which carried our duffel.

Roy Parker, my companion, lived on the edge of that rugged wilderness. During the summer he ran a few head of cattle; in the winter he tended a trap line 125 miles long for fox, marten, mink and otter. Summer or winter, he was as much at home in the woods as a flea on an airedale. He taught me a lot of things which make camping easier, safer and more enjoyable.

Roy started right off by changing my basic concept of camping. I had previously believed in "roughing it." Each outing had been a sort of endurance contest to prove to myself just how tough I

was. Roy believed in being as comfortable as possible at all times.

Before we started he looked disapprovingly at my single blanket and tarp in which I would roll up to sleep on the bare ground. Without a word he brought an extra sleeping bag and air mattress from his cabin. When I asked him why, he said:

"A comfortable bed is the outdoor man's best friend. He can endure 'most anything during the day if he sleeps well at night. A good sleeping bag with air mattress is the best year-around bed, considering all factors, including portability. A camp cot with good wool blankets is second best. Cotton bedding should never be used outdoors because it is heavy, cold and draws moisture in wet weather. Bough beds are always a makeshift, but can be comfortable if only the tips of the branches from spruce or fir are used and they are piled thick enough."

During the entire trip, Roy was very particular in his choice of camp sites, pitching the tent on a knoll or the point of a ridge whenever it was possible. I soon discovered that we nearly always had a breeze, there were fewer insects and when it happened to rain the water drained away from the tent, rather than into it.

"It's better to walk a hundred yards for a pail of water than to wake up in a pool of it," Roy said. "Only frogs, muskrats and tenderfeet camp on low ground."

Roy's feats of camp cookery won my immediate respect. He knew a lot of things which made cooking over an open fire quicker and easier. For instance, he always built his fire between two green logs, each of which was approximately a yard long and six inches in diameter. They were flattened on top and placed in the shape of a narrow V so that utensils of various widths could be supported over the flames or coals. He never wasted time holding a skillet over the fire. Instead, he set it on the logs where they were the right distance apart and went on with something else.

Another little trick he taught me was that of scoring freshly caught trout so that they would not curl in the pan and

would cook more quickly. After the fish had been dressed and the heads and tails removed, he made a series of cross-wise cuts through the skin about half an inch apart along each side. Then he salted and peppered them and popped them into smoking-hot fat. If there was much variation in the size of our trout, he scored the larger ones but not the little fish. Due to this they all got done at the same time.

Because we were so far from civilization, we had to do our own baking. Roy's bannocks, or frying-pan bread, were delicious. Here are his directions for making them:

Mix dry, one pint of flour, one heaping teaspoonful of baking powder, one-half teaspoon salt, one heaping tablespoonful of sugar. Then work in a rounding tablespoonful of cold grease until the mixture is uniformly crumbly. Stir in enough water to make a stiff dough. Place dough in a well-floured skillet, rake a few coals from the fire and set the skillet on them until the dough rises. Then hold the skillet over medium heat until the bottom of the loaf is brown. The skillet should then be propped up near the fire until the top of the loaf browns.

The entire baking process should take from twenty to twenty-five minutes. When the dough does not adhere to a sliver thrust into the center of the loaf the bannock is done.

Dried beans are a staple item of diet on such a trip, but the length of time required to cook them in camp virtually rules them out unless one has nothing to do but sit around and put wood on the fire. Roy had solved this problem. Before starting out, he had cooked several pounds of beans in a pressure cooker, without adding the customary pork or seasoning. Then he spread them out on a clean cloth and dried them thoroughly.

In camp, he added a couple of chopped-up slices of bacon to a pot containing a cupful of the pre-cooked beans, water and seasoning, and set them over the fire. They were ready to eat by the time the remainder of the meal had cooked.

A little lesson he gave me in chopping has, I'm sure, saved me from a possible serious injury more than once. I had propped a stick against a log and was holding it with one foot, preparatory to splitting it, when he stopped me.

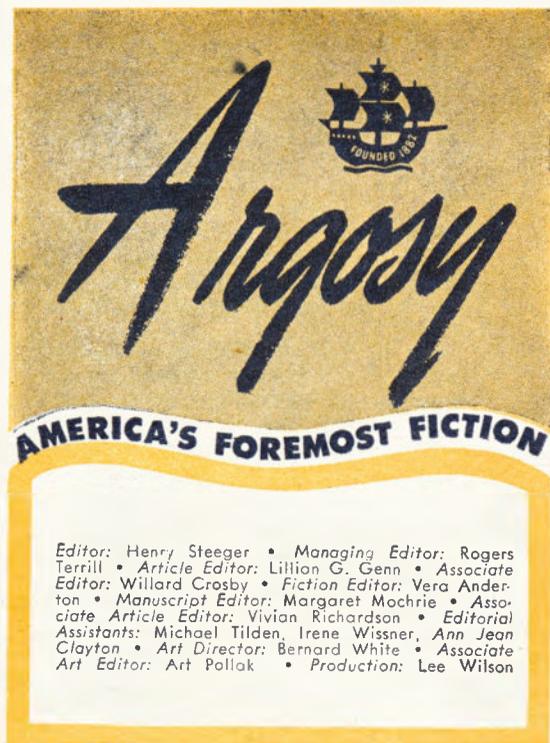
"What would you do," he asked, "if you sank the axe into your foot, down here three days from the nearest doctor? The safe way to split wood is to lean the stick against the *opposite* side of the log. The axe often drives through more easily than you expect, and if it glances or you miss your mark, the log will always stop it and you can't cut yourself."

I realized that I didn't understand all there was to know about camping.

That's why I'm passing these ideas along.

THE END

by Ted Trueblood



WAR brings us many things which are ugly and brutal, but it also brings us, on rare occasions, something singularly worthwhile.

IT STARTED IN WORLD WAR I

The sergeant entered the barracks with a tight, tensed smile on his face. He told the two squads of infantrymen, "The 'Old Man' has called an inspection for first thing tomorrow—field equipment, rifles, bayonets, the works. Better get to work on it, men, if you want a weekend pass."

A chorus of groans went up from the men stretched restfully on their bunks. It was seven o'clock. That meant spending the rest of the evening scouring mess kits, polishing shoes and buttons, cleaning rifles, rolling a full field pack—it meant a lot of work. The men went to it. It was ten o'clock when they finished.

Then one doughboy said, "Hey, Paul's wife is in town, and he took off to see her. He doesn't know about the inspection."

"Yeah—that'll shoot his weekend pass full of holes."

There was a moment of silence. Then one soldier said, "I'll clean his rifle." Another, "I'll roll his pack." The next, "I'll take care of his bayonet and mess gear." And so it went, each man contributing something toward getting Paul ready for the next morning's inspection. As time passed and it became apparent that Paul might be late returning to barracks, thus missing the midnight bedcheck, which would restrict him for the weekend, his friends "fixed" his bed—they stuffed pillows under the covers to simulate a sleeping soldier. When the officer came through he never knew the difference.

Next morning Paul fell out for inspection and passed without a gig—thanks to a way of living the Army has developed among its fighting men. It's known as the "buddy system" and has its premise in the theme that men living together must work together in a teamwork unequalled anywhere. Not only in combat, but in the daily scheme of everyday living the spirit and meaning of the word "buddy" is the secret of a new life's philosophy for millions of Americans in uniform.

The term "buddy system" originated from the way the Infantry used to introduce green troops to combat. A replacement fresh from the States and basic training is paired up with a combat veteran who looks out for the new man when the fighting starts. The term, from a strictly military view, is restricted to just that. But the men picked it up, gave it added significance and carried the phrase much further.

On the field of battle, one man goes trigger-happy and expends his supply of ammunition; a buddy shares half of his precious .30-caliber bullets. A last cigarette may be smoked by six men, and a coveted candy bar may be enjoyed by a squad of twelve. In the States, a soldier is summoned home on an emergency furlough; his friends learn he is broke and contribute the necessary finances. Another, who has a date in town, suddenly finds himself with extra duty; a barracks-mate offers to pull his friend's duty.

That's the way they live, working together for their common welfare—buddies. They have learned that to get along in the Army you must share your riches. It may be borrowing socks or shaving cream, date money or the automobile of a more fortunate soldier, but the lender does it freely and willingly because he knows that, when the time comes that he needs a friend, there will always be some buddies around to help him.

On the battlefronts every hour great stories of the buddy system are being written. A doughboy creeping and crawling in an infiltration maneuver toward Jap lines is hit, wounded and left exposed to more enemy fire. No officer in command of troops will order a man to go after him. He wouldn't have to, anyway. Because probably long before he even sees or is told about it, some buddy is already crawling toward the wounded man to pull him to cover and safety.

Wherever you look in the Army today, you'll see the buddy system in action. It's the most universally accepted doctrine of the war. And here's its ultimate end: The men are going to carry this new way of living with them, back from the foxholes to the living rooms and front porches at home. G. I. Joe has learned something new about his fellow man, learned to get along with people, to work for a common good.

G. I. Joe has been taught a lesson of life that will have a profound influence on his entire life long after the transition from military to civilian takes place at the separation center. He'll be going home a better neighbor, a better man, a better citizen, a buddy to his community.

—Corporal Edwin Diehl

SOMAR BARKER, who wrote "Trail Fever" (page 27), is an irrepressible versifier. He sends us the following about himself:

Born, raised and still live in New Mexico's Rockies Where hoot owls and coyotes supply us our talkies. I write for a living and live for my writing— But sometimes go fishing when brook trout are biting.

I once was a teacher of Spanish and Latin— My wife's a good cook, but I somehow don't fatten (much).

I've fictioned and versed in a few magazines, With two books of poems about western scenes. In brief, that's the tale of my few puny glories— I must get to work and write some more stories!

Mr. Barker's work, despite his own modest summation, has appeared in *Country Gentleman*, *Field and Stream*, *Sports Afield*, *Outdoor Life*, *Liberty*, *MacLean's* and many other magazines.

Frank Laskier says that the loss of a leg when his ship was sunk by the German raider *Von Sheer* is the cheapest lesson a man ever had to learn. We'll let him tell you about it in his own words: "Before I was wounded, I was just another shellback doing a job, and did not appreciate the men with whom I had worked and lived so long. Now that I have had time to sit down and remember, all the heroism, the unselfishness and the humor of these very great men comes back to me in memory. They don't wear uniforms, and few of them will survive long enough to get medals. It has taken the loss of a leg to bring this home to me, and believe me, it's the cheapest lesson a man ever had in his life."

Mr. Laskier was one of five survivors. He first went to sea when he was fifteen and has served ever since in the Merchant Marine.

Authors seem drawn to the sea. Richard Sale, who has written so many sea-war stories, tried to get into the Navy at the start of things, but was turned down for poor eyesight. He is the sort of person who gets more done in a week than the average man does in a year's time. His hobbies include photography, medicine, model railroading, gardening, music, and pistols.

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CONTENTS FOR SEPTEMBER

Vol. 322, No. 1

NEXT MONTH

LEE MAURY had been living on borrowed time for months. He didn't suspect it, of course, for no one, except perhaps a gangster, expects to be murdered. Lee Maury was no gangster. He was a stock broker, a yachtsman and, almost, a gentleman. He was surly, rude and grasping—and he was very confident of his own ability to take care of himself. He must have been surprised in those last terrible moments before the breath went out of him.

Lee Maury's murder wasn't any ordinary one, you see. If he'd died on some dark street corner with a knife in his back or a bullet in his stomach, no one at Miami's swank Buccaneer Yacht Club would have been too shocked. It was the way he went and the one he took with him—and the others who became all too swiftly involved in the dangerous, deadly situation he left behind him—that brought chaos to his club and terror to almost all who had known him.

For as rousing, spine-tingling and intriguing a tale of mystery and murder as you'll find in any one year's reading, we recommend "Murder Sails At Midnight," by Eustace L. Adams, the book-length novel in the next issue of ARGOSY.

Walter Duranty and Mary Loos, writers who need no introduction to any American reader, make their first appearance in ARGOSY with a long novelette of northern Norway. It's the story of a man's single-handed, doggedly determined effort to win a better way of life from his barren land of birth. Its stark drama, its vivid realism, its warmth of human understanding and its primitive love story will lift you for an hour or so out of this war-weary world.

Bill Fay is represented with one of his inimitable stories of the prize ring. William Chamberlain takes us to a new theater of war for behind-the-front drama in India's backlands jungle. Albert Richard Wetjen, master sea writer, brings us a vivid story of the tropic ocean lanes, and C. P. Donnel, Jr., contributes the opening installment of a two-part serial that is, we believe, the most dramatic, colorful and human story he's ever done.

You'll find, too, your old friend Mike McDonough and his redoubtable Navy tugboat, the *Blue Jay*, in another rousing adventure in the fogbound North Pacific. Jim Kjellaard contributes a hunting story you'll remember always. Other stories in the usual vigorous ARGOSY tradition, timely, personally informative articles and the standard assortment of spritely, entertaining features and cartoons round out an issue which marks, we feel, a new high in reading value.



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Mr. McHugh

AND THE MAHARAJAH



by C. P. Donnel, Jr.

Illustrated by Don Pierce

**When a restless reporter meets up with
an Indian potentate on the loose, and a girl who reminds
him of his first kiss, life suddenly turns dizzy, daffy—and dangerous**



HIS mother's letter was the lone piece of mail in his box when Tom McHugh returned to the office from the Ordrupp conference. He did not read it at once; partly because Ordrupp's deliberate manner of saying nothing had spun the conference out to some length; chiefly because it was the first letter from home since he had written his parents about his engagement to Liz Wynyard.

Connelly, the day city editor, crooked a finger at McHugh. "What'd he say?" he demanded.

"That he was veddy glahd to be in Ameddica."

"Nothing about those British-American trade contracts?"

"He is quaitte positive matters can be arranged satisfac-trilly."

"Gimme about four hundred. Fill in with background."

McHugh batted out the Ordrupp interview, from his own ample knowledge of Sir John Ordrupp's mission, then chucked the sheets into Connelly's basket. With a feeling of apprehension, he opened his mother's letter, postmarked Gray's Falls, Idaho.

People and events had come between him and that post-mark, pushing his home ever further into a half-forgotten

distance. Liz and her father, for example—what image did it evoke in their minds when he mentioned Gray's Falls; what images did his occasional references to his parents call up? The Wynyards were always carefully polite.

His mother's handwriting was as frail as she was: ". . . and I need hardly tell you that we are very, very happy. Elizabeth sounds so well bred, so interesting. She looks lovely in the snapshot. . . ."

He skimmed lightly over the rest. The words registered only briefly: her relief over his return from the European assignment, her delight that the school board had renewed his father's contract for five years, her certainty that he had acted wisely in the choice of Elizabeth Wynyard.

His attention focussed sharply, and he reread: ". . . and your father will be busy until August on some rebuilding at the school which Mr. Longnecker (you remember him, and his little plump daughter, one of your early sweet-hearts?) is doing. But then—this is a little surprise—we hope to come to New York. Just long enough to see you and meet Elizabeth, since

To Tom's astonishment, she sprang to her feet. Kimball, staring bel-ligerently, tried to pull her back.



we can hardly expect Elizabeth and her father to make the journey out here. . . ."

Tom put the letter down. The sensation was a curious one. He had written guardedly of the Wynyards, giving merely the impression that they were well-to-do. Well-to-do in Gray's Falls meant like the Torbys or the Jennisons; a good-sized house, an income from a store or farm of perhaps four thousand a year.

False pride? Was he turning into a snob?

Liz and her father, of course, would be courteous, even solicitous. But it would be manners only. The gap between his people and the Wynyards was unbridgeable. Not that this reflected, he decided, on either his parents or the Wynyards. But the Wynyards were old New York, while his own people—he could see his father, gray, gentle, unworldly; his mother, thread-thin, sweet, dressed drably—

It was not snobbery, he argued; it was just that they would have difficulty comprehending the Wynyards and his own position, even if he explained that Liz had agreed to draw from her income only the exact amount of his salary, the rest to go into a trust fund for their children.

Suppose he were to stall them off, promise that he and Liz would arrange their wedding trip to include Gray's Falls? Really, it would be in the best interests of all.

Suddenly, angrily, because he did not entirely trust the sincerity of his own explanation, he seized copy paper and dashed off a note to his mother in which he lied bravely about the joy Liz had displayed on learning that she was to meet the parents of her fiancé.

Tim Bodenwine, the sports editor, drifted up, a small, narrow envelope in his hand. He said, "Howdja like to see the main bout at St. Nick's tonight?"

Tom raised his eyebrows. "What's the catch?"

Bodenwine said helplessly, "Man short-age. Sid George on vacation; Perkins, the idiot, has busted his leg, Charlie Gore's with the Giants; new cub can't read and write yet, and I'm making a speech at a brewers' banquet."

Tom liked Bodenwine; he'd worked for him a couple of months in his early days on the paper, before they discovered that he had majored in political science.

There was Liz, though. He said, "I've got a date, but maybe I can drag her along." He left Bodenwine looking grateful and hopeful, and went and called Liz.

LIZ said, "Tom, dear! I was just getting ready to call you."

The expedition had caught his fancy now. He said, "How about a little good crude fun tonight—drop downtown for dinner at Billy's and take in the main event at St. Nick's?"

"St. Nick's?"

"Fights. Good ones. Bodenwine's asked me to cover the wind-up. Gee, I haven't covered a fight since—"

"Oh, Tom, I'm terribly sorry. I'm afraid I've signed us up for the Andersons' tonight."

"The Andersons?" He was deflated.

"Deborah Anderson. A reception. Fa-

ther's going. I'm afraid we can't get out of it. It's for some visiting Spaniard. I thought you'd be interested in meeting him. He's here on some very important government business, and I knew how interested you are in that sort of thing. Besides, there'll be lots of nice people I want you to meet."

"Sure you wouldn't rather meet a couple of fight managers?"

"Oh, Tom! Now listen, I went on your party last time, when that Grumet man was there. Don't be selfish."

"Just kidding." After all, Grumet had got drunk. He was just in from Germany. But Liz was right. It was her turn. "What time?"

"That's a nice boy. About nine. Black tie. Drop in about eight-thirty for a drink and we'll go in the car with father."

"But about dinner at Billy's, Liz . . ."

"I wish I could but I can't. Aunt Maggie's dining here. I'd have asked you, but I know you don't care much for her."

At least, Liz put it delicately. Aunt Maggie was a small, rigid woman who looked down on you from a great height. Her congratulations upon his engagement to her great-niece had left something to be desired.

Tom returned to Bodenwine and shook his head. "I find I'm signed for something a little more social. Sorry."

"Ain't it hell?" said Bodenwine, and drifted off to seek another victim.

THE night was heavy and damp for June, and the Andersons' reception was, from the viewpoint of Tom McHugh, something less than a success.

The evening started badly at the Wynyards' when Tom discovered that the guest of honor was to be Diego Utrera. He had definite opinions about Señor Utrera, about whom he had heard much in London and Paris. He expressed himself, perhaps a shade pointedly. Señor Utrera, Tom informed Mr. Wynyard, had played the game both ways; trading on his family name, a great one, to stay in with the Royalists; making overtures to the democrats, but always keeping close to Franco.

Mr. Wynyard was not pleased. Señor Utrera, it developed, was in New York on business, large business, with Mr. Wynyard's firm. Too, Señor Utrera had been unjustly maligned by Russia; Mr. Wynyard said so.

On this strained note they left for the Andersons'. Tom salved his conscience by being noticeably frigid to Señor Utrera when they were presented. Again, Mr. Wynyard was not pleased.

The party, however, was not without points. The punch was good, and Mr. Penfold, publisher of Tom's paper, was there. He and Mr. Wynyard chatted at some length. Once Mr. Penfold glanced in Tom's direction.

Then there was Alison. Alison seemed to be a sort of Anderson cousin. At least, she had apparently assumed proprietary rights over the punchbowl. She was a round-faced girl whose body, wonderfully ill-concealed by an evening gown of flame silk, had a number of roundnesses which caught and held the eye. But the most remarkable part of her was

her elementary and devastating frankness. It had been a long while since a young woman of Alison's attractions had made up to Tom.

Duty drove Tom from Alison's side early in the game, but he had barely made contact with Liz when a thin young man with a high forehead and a curved nose had up and monopolized Liz's attention, in a high Boston voice, with an account of a polo game. So Tom returned to Alison and another glass of punch. He wished he and Liz were somewhere else.

Alison cocked a warm eye at him. "I don't think I'd care for you as a steady diet. But you'd be fun for a little while. Do you like me?"

"You're a brazen little hussy."

"Of course." She laughed delightedly. "That's why you keep watching me and looking guilty." She took his arm. "Let's go out on the terrace."

He glanced around. Mr. Wynyard was now talking with Señor Utrera, and had drawn Liz and the high-domed lad into his orbit.

Tom said, "Sure, let's go."

LATER, when he and Alison returned, Liz and Mr. Wynyard were getting ready to go. Liz met him with an inscrutable face.

"Did you have a good time?"

There was a hint of cross-examination in her voice.

"Passable," he said. "Are you mad?" He grinned, amazed at his own brazenness.

"Really, Tom!" She was almost lofty. "But I do think it would have looked better if you had asked me and Launce-lot to join you. People know Alison, you know. I know Alison. She probably asked you to drop by her apartment later for a drink." Tom flushed; Liz either did not notice, or chose not to. "But I'm not worried about your going there. And now let's be getting on home."

In the hurry of leaving, in the strained atmosphere of the car, he had no time to analyze this speech, or his own reactions. It was only when he was at his hotel, with his collar off and one shoe on the floor, that he realized just how near the truth can come to being a lie.

Liz was right. But not altogether right. Alison had roped him in. But he had been willing.

Alison's mouth, so freely given, had been very exciting. And Alison's body, reinforcing her kisses, had lighted bright fires in him.

Yes, Alison had invited him by for a drink. He reached for the phone, let his hand fall. Damn! Well, face it; he wanted Alison. Just tonight. It was not exactly Alison that he wanted. He was not sure just what it was.

Before he knew it, he had put the call through. He waited.

No answer. He hung up, trembling. An answer would have meant more drinks, complications, a musty conscience, inability to meet Liz's eye. He'd have work to do in the morning.

Climbing into bed, he told himself that he was quite tired; that by the time he would have arrived at Alison's he would have lost all desire for her provocative

company. Better this way. A good sleep, then back to work.

But an hour later, with sleep still absent from his bed, he was not too sure.

CHAPTER TWO

CONNELLY said, "League for Advanced Foreign Affairs, East Sixty-fourth, two-part seminar, Boleslavski speaks 's'morning at nine."

"Not Boleslavski, that early. I know. He was in Paris. Sometimes he doesn't even get home that early." Tom lifted a glossy print from a pile of leg art on Connelly's desk.

"Sir John Ordrupp speaks s'afternoon," went on Connelly doggedly. "Full coverage . . ."

"Not this girl." The girl had a figure; finer, less plump, than Alison's. He had almost forgotten Alison, who had disturbed his night. But this girl in the picture was different. She wore an irreducible minimum of bathing suit. Her back was to the camera; it was that kind of a back.

Connelly snatched the print, slapped it face down. "Full coverage, both sessions," he said loudly.

"Shush." Tom McHugh's eyes automatically absorbed the legend on the back of the print: "Carla Allyn, late of London Pictures, now under contract to Superb Productions, Hollywood, who is being sought by Brendan Shea for his much-discussed Broadway production of 'Letitia Hanbury,' a dramatization of the best-seller of that name. Miss Allyn is now at the Waldorf."

"But not in this costume," said Tom sadly. He turned the print over, noted for the first time that a fraction of Carla Allyn's face showed in profile. Nice nose; not pretty-pretty, like Alison's. He said wistfully, "I kissed a girl in high school once who looked a little bit like this. Her name was Theodosia Ravenscroft Longnecker. How about dumping the League on somebody else and letting me interview Miss Allyn?"

Connelly draped a hairy hand dramatically over his eyes and nose. "You! My Rock of Gibraltar! Gone leg-crazy, by God!" He roused himself suddenly. "Good morning, O.P."

O. P. Penfold, publisher of the *New York Day*, said, "Morning, Andy. McHugh, didn't you tell me when you first got back from Europe that you'd like a shot at editorial writing?"

"Yes," Tom was puzzled. Penfold's tone was that of a man doing a disagreeable duty.

"Drop in my office this afternoon," said Penfold curtly, and passed on.

McHugh eyed Connelly. Connelly shrugged. It had been a curious performance. Normally Penfold was bland as a May morning.

Connelly picked up the thread of his emotion: "Listen, get the moonbeams out of your hair and get the hell over to the League. You may not be the best foreign affairs expert in town, but you're all I've got. We've got news to print, not tripe about some Hollywood bimbo."

McHugh, leaving the building, decided to walk. He wanted to think. It looked



Carla led him to the bathroom and worked over him with a wet towel.

as though the editorial-writing job had arrived at last. He wondered why his pulses were not leaping at the prospect. Something in Penfold's manner, perhaps.

There had been rain during the night, spiked with lightning and touched by soft thunder. Now there was glory in the air, and restlessness; from Battery to Bronx, the city vibrated to sunshine of a high brilliance. The streets, still damp from the attentions of heaven and the Department of Street Cleaning, were fragrant, like a country road.

June was upon New York. McHugh, squinting sunwards into a vivid blue sky, sneezed pleasurably. Then he set out across Times Square.

On Forty-fourth Street a bleary bum blocked Tom with a dime-for-coffee routine. The man looked like a frayed

mop, and spoke his piece as though it bored him.

Ordinarily, Tom would have pushed on. Now, on an impulse, he cocked an eyebrow at the specimen. "Coffee's hard on the nerves," he said thoughtfully.

The bum, knocked off stride, stammered unintelligibly.

"On the other hand"—Tom took out his wallet—"if I give you a dollar, you'll probably get stinko."

"Mister, I swear to God I . . ." It was here that the undertone in McHugh's voice penetrated his fuzzy mind. The drear eyes narrowed shrewdly. "Not on a buck, I won't."

"Think you could do it on two bucks, friend?" McHugh thumbed the edges of green money provocatively.

"For three," said the punk, "I could tie one on I (Continued on page 98)

Gagan came over the side and smashed a full bottle of beer on the Jap's head.

Gagan

COLLECTS AN ISLAND

WHEN Spike Gagan speaks fondly of the Old Navy, he refers not to the days of sail, or to those vaunted ones of wooden ships and iron men, but to the outfit within his own memory. He means the Navy of some fifteen years ago.

In those days the Fleet was based at Pedro. There was always port and starboard liberty, and a shoreboat at the gangway, and a little cupcake waiting at the docks or the P.E. station. You went to Panama, perhaps, for the annual fleet problem, and the beer in Jimmy Dean's place tasted like no beer has tasted since repeal; and you were away just long enough to make homecoming sweet.

There are others like Gagan—tall, brown-faced men with the sea in their eyes, an air of devil-may-care and something of the prankish small boy about them until they attain the dignity of chief petty officers' buttons. Gagan did not make chief. He used to say that he didn't want to be mistaken for a streetcar conductor.

He came from a South Pacific island

not long ago, admittedly a little "rock-happy," and reported aboard a newly commissioned ship at Pearl Harbor. He was a bosun's mate first class, with a few tattoos, a plain gold earring in the lobe of his left ear, and four hash-marks on his sleeve. In the first week ashore he lit off all four cans for a long-overdue speed run in the joints of lower Berengaria Street, engaged joyously in a brawl with the combined shore patrol and military police, and found himself busted to second class.

A thing like that seldom worries a thirty-year man. Gagan remarked proudly that he was now undoubtedly the senior second class petty officer in the Navy. From that day on he conducted himself with a new and clownish dignity—particularly toward a reservist bosun's mate first named Frankie Mason, who had not been to sea before.

In this, Gagan was supported by a seaman second named Mogelberg, who had been along on the speed run. For a long time after Gagan jubilantly announced his seniority, Mogelberg ad-

dressed him as "sir," clicked his heels in Gagan's presence, and otherwise kidded Mason, who had become known as the Eager Beaver.

The ship steamed to a base in the Marshalls and embarked a platoon of tough-looking marines with full combat gear. She took aboard a supply of Momsen escape lungs for delivery to a submarine, and stowed a hundred cases of beer below-deck—under lock, much to Gagan's dismay. She was well into the Southwest Pacific, under sealed orders, before Gagan thought of consulting the dictionary about the one thing that bothered him—the ship's name.

HE WAS sitting on the fantail when the idea came to him, and he acted at once. No bosun's mate ever puts off until tomorrow what he can have a non-rated man do today.

"Mogelberg!"

The Eager Beaver was going into the after deck house. For his benefit, Mogelberg sprang to attention and clicked his heels.

"Yes, sir!"

"Lay forward to the desk of the cap'n's yeoman, and look up the name of this ship in the dictionary!"

"Aye, aye, sir!"

The seaman second was a good man to have on your side. He was built like a truck, with a bull neck and huge hands, and the patient, dumb look in his eyes had fooled many people. He came back soon to report that the tradition of naval nomenclature was still inviolate. The ship, like all other submarine salvage and rescue vessels, had been named for a bird.

"It says, sir," Mogelberg recited solemnly, "that there are two types of bustard. The Great Bustard is found in Spain, and is related to the—" he looked at his notes—"to the cranes and plovers. It says there is a Little Bustard in Australia, where it is called a turkey."

"A turkey what?"

"A turkey, sir."

Gagan gauged the wind, and spat tobacco juice over the lee rail. He leaned back and roared with laughter.

They had a few more to ward off pneumonia, the common cold and elephantiasis.





by *Allan R. Bosworth*

Illustrated by *Charles Dye*

"Well, whaddya know!" he exclaimed. "The *Little Bustard*, eh? I was worried. I thought maybe they'd named her for a man, like they do destroyers."

"Who?" asked Mogelberg.

Gagan pointed to the *Eager Beaver*, who was engaged in telling a group of marines they couldn't stand there. Mason was a small man with close-set, prying eyes behind horn-rimmed glasses.

"I thought," Gagan went on, "that maybe somebody had made a typo—a typ—one of them printers' mistakes."

Mogelberg laughed raucously. Mason turned suspiciously, but he couldn't prove anything. And Gagan told Mogelberg to wipe off that smile.

"That guy," Gagan said sternly, "has this ship on his shoulders. You follow in his footsteps, Mogelberg. He'll make chief this war. I think he's striking for the Legion of Merit."

MOGELBERG spat. "Gettin' on to a better subject, I been askin' around about that beer. It ain't the cap'n's fault we don't get a ration. There's a new directive. It says ships can carry beer for us enlisted guys, only we got to take it ashore to drink it."

"Yeah? Ashore where?"

"Some island, I guess."

"That's it," said Gagan. "That gets right back to them gyrenes we got sailing with us. They look like raiders, to me."

Mogelberg blinked. "What's that got to do with the beer?"

"Plenty. When we come to an island, it won't be the kind where we could go ashore and drink beer. It'll have Japs on it."

"Ain't it hell," sighed Mogelberg.

A case of beer turned confusion into complete chaos on the Jap island — when it tricked Petty Officer Gagan into substituting for a platoon of Marine raiders

"Well,"—Gagan grinned—"I took steps. I figured we rate about a case of beer apiece, and in the Old Navy, if you rated anything, you got it. So I went to the shipfitter's shop and made me a key."

At that instant the general alarm sounded. A voice in the loud speakers rasped, "All hands, battle stations! All hands, battle stations!"

That time it was only a drill. Lieutenant Deems, the captain, was about to open his sealed orders, and he was worried. The *U.S.S. Bustard* was hardly gunned or armored to take on a Jap warship, and Mr. Deems had drawn the same conclusions as Gagan had from the presence of the marines on board.

He opened the orders after the drill. "Not as bad as I expected," he said cheerfully to the exec. "We rendezvous with a submarine day after tomorrow. We transfer the marines to the sub. They're to raid Balumgiri Island, and take prisoners for questioning. Balumgiri, I gather, is due to be knocked over before long."

The exec checked the chart. "It's not far away," he said. "We'll be there with bells on, skipper."

THE *Little B*—Gagan and Mogelberg had passed the word of Mr. Webster—saw her first action next day, when an unidentified plane was picked up on the screen. Gagan leaped to his sky gun with enthusiasm, which gave way to grumbled disappointment when the plane came into view.

"Hell!" he said. "A damn little float plane. Down in SoPac, they used to give you a cigar for knocking down one of them babies!"

The forward guns roared, and Gagan's followed suit. But the float plane was high, and went higher. It let go one bomb that missed by a quarter of a mile, then diminished in the direction of Balumgiri.

Gagan turned on Mogelberg. "What the hell were you yelling about?" he demanded.

"We run her off, didn't we?"

"Yeah?" Gagan fingered his earring, and spat. "But she knows where we are. Don't forget that, son."

He had his sleeves rolled high. It was the first time Mogelberg had seen the list of islands tattooed on Gagan's right arm. They began with Guadalcanal, and took in Tulagi, Bougainville, the Russells, the Green Islands, and Hollandia. Gagan grinned.

"I collect islands," he said. "Like in the Old Navy, guys used to collect ports. If I'd stayed in the amphibs, I could have been adding to this list."

Mr. Deems kept the crew at the guns. The marines broke out in jungle camouflage; they oiled their carbines, whetted their knives, and strutted permissibly. Mogelberg remarked on the rugged nature of their assignment, and wondered if they were all volunteers.

Gagan said not if they were smart. He lay beside the sky gun and tried to explain how he looked at that sort of thing—how a professional fighting man looks at it. The raid on Balumgiri was a specialists' job, and the greens were

specialists, like everybody in the Navy. They'd do the job, all right. Just like in the Old Navy you always did what you were told, and did it cheerfully and well. But you did nothing more, because although independent action sometimes led to commendation or promotion, it was more likely to get you hauled up before the stick.

"And," Gagan concluded, "don't ever volunteer. Let 'em pick you if you're the man for the job. That's what officers get paid for."

While this philosophy was being expounded, the Old Man's worst fears were realized. A top secret radio dispatch informed him that the submarine had suffered operational damage and could not keep the rendezvous. Another dispatch ordered the *Little B* to go in and land the marines herself . . .

SHE lay moored by breast and spring lines to huge banyan trees, scarcely fifty feet from the steeply shelving beach of the cove where the marines had been put ashore a little earlier in oar-pulled whaleboats. Steam sang restlessly in her boilers, and the nerves of Mr. Deems and the exec were like fiddle strings as they sweated out the rest of the hot bright day. They had to keep radio silence; Mr. Deems could not ask for instructions or advice. It was up to him to decide whether to remain tied up until the marines returned, or whether to prawl the open sea.

For the present, he chose to stay in the partial concealment of the cove. The sun dropped behind Balumgiri's green-tangled hills. Mosquitoes and copra bugs swarmed out to plague the ship, and darkness woke the jungle to strange, hysterical sounds. The moon rose, and was too bright for comfort, surf murmured softly against an outer reef and there was not a breath of air to cool the sweat on your face.

Gagan and Mogelberg sat on the fantail, slapping at the bugs. Gagan said, "I collect islands. I got to get ashore."

"Try and do it," said Mogelberg.

Birds chattered and screamed beyond the banyan trees, and a limb crashed somewhere, and there was menace in the jungle night. The sweat ran down Gagan's face.

"I been thinking about that beer," he said.

Mogelberg had been thinking about it, too. It was, both agreed, fine beer-drinking weather.

"In the long run," said Gagan, "what's the difference in drawing our ration now, instead of waiting till we can sit on some other island with a bunch of guys who are rock-happy? Besides, I got to add Balumgiri to my list."

"Ha!" Mogelberg said. "So you'll just walk up to the gangway and borrow a whaleboat! The Eager Beaver is watching like a hawk. With this moon, he'd see you even if you tried to swim."

"Mogelberg," said Gagan, "you forget that I am the senior second class petty officer in the Navy, with knowledge and resourcefulness based on sixteen years service. I have figured everything out. I won't urge you to come along, but as I have told you before, I like company

with my beer—I'm not a coal-bin drinker. If you want to go, we'll walk ashore."

"Walk ashore?" Mogelberg exclaimed.

"We will walk ashore," said Gagan firmly. "On the bottom!"

THE Navy's Momsen submarine escape lung is no bigger than a gas mask, with a clamp that holds your nose and forces you to breathe through a rubber tube that fits tightly in your mouth. Soda lime in a waterproof canister removes carbon dioxide from the air you exhale, so that you can breathe it again. In addition, the lung can be charged with oxygen from an oxygen flask, in much the same way as you inflate a tire.

Gagan had thought of everything. They would need weight to keep them on the bottom. He produced two mattress covers, stowed some thirty bottles of beer in each, and added a few empty shell cases for good measure. He tied hammock lashing around the mouths of the mattress covers, grouped the weight in equal parts, top and bottom, and tied more lashing around the middle. Then he showed Mogelberg how the arrangement could be draped over the back of his neck, with evenly distributed weight hanging in packsaddle style.

They slipped out on the fantail. Some sort of activity was going on up forward; they heard the Eager Beaver calling out the names of men. Whatever this was, it cleared the way for them. Gagan said, "Just breathe naturally through your mouth. I've had instruction in the use of these lungs. We won't get the bends—it's not deep, and we won't be under long."

"Gagan," said Mogelberg happily, "you're screwy!"

They clamped the lungs to their shirts, fastened the backstraps, and went cautiously down a cargo net that had been put over the side for the marines. Gagan motioned for Mogelberg to put the clothespin device on his nose, and eased his lanky body into the water.

It closed, cool and refreshing; over his head. The weight was just enough; his feet touched coral formation several fathoms down. If the Eager Beaver had been watching closely, he might have seen twin columns of bubbles rising from the flutter valves of the lungs, looking like the broken necklaces of mermaids as they caught the moon's iridescence before breaking surface.

But the Eager Beaver was occupied. Gagan and Mogelberg moved slowly into the shadows at the shoreline. Gagan's head came out of the water. He shut off the exhaust valve of his lung, and looked around.

Oars splashed musically, and he saw two whaleboats leaving the ship. What was more, they headed for the spot where he stood.

At that instant Mogelberg came out of the sea like a squat Neptune, with a collar of kelp decorating his bull neck.

"Jeeze!" he began, but Gagan clapped a hand over his mouth.

"Pipe down!" Gagan whispered. "They've missed us. They got a search party out already! Quick—get into the brush!"

They scrambled inland only a few yards ahead of the first boat, and lay low, listening to the hammering of their own hearts. And then the Eager Beaver's voice said, "All right, men—turn to! Cut mostly palm branches, but anything with a lot of leaves will help. And shake it up!"

Gagan nudged Mogelberg. "The skipper's decided to camouflage the ship," he said. "This is a working party. Okay, so we'll cache the beer here and help 'em cut greenery. Then we got a right to be ashore—see? We can always get lost, and miss the boats. Break out your knife and bear a hand!"

A little later, they trudged down to the water carrying armfuls of green branches. The Eager Beaver was super-

It so happens the skipper is looking for a couple of volunteers with jungle experience."

Gagan stiffened. "Not me! I never volunteer."

"I can fix that," Mason told him. "I can get you detailed to this little job. You're going to be a two-man task force!"

MR. DEEMS, who wished he had more alert, on-their-toes petty officers like Mason, accepted his recommendation without hesitating. He handed Gagan an envelope.

"Take this to the lieutenant in command of the marines," he ordered. "You'll find them here—" he indicated a little indentation in the farther coast-

trail, and came to fairly open country on the top.

Both were panting from the climb. Gagan put down his heavy sack. "Balumgiri," he proclaimed, "I hereby collect you! Let's have a drink."

They had one. The beer was warm, but so is most beer in that part of the world, and you learn to like it that way. It was, Gagan said, the best beer he had tasted since that in Jimmy Dean's place, in the Old Navy. They had another, and then took the trail down the western side of the ridge, and came out on the shore of a peaceful lagoon. This seemed a logical place to stop for another beer. A wind sprang up while they were there, and chilled them through their wet clothes, and they drank several more beers to ward off pneumonia, the common cold, and elephantiasis.

Some time before dawn, Gagan stopped roaring South Pacific songs in a tuneless voice, and discovered that Mogelberg was sound asleep with his head on the still unopened section of his mattress cover.

"Good ol' Moge!" Gagan said tenderly. "Who shaid all shipmates went down onna Maine? I can whip th' guy who shaid that!"

Nobody accepted his challenge. Gagan muttered, "Yellow, that'sh what!" and sat down in the lush grass.

He woke with the tropical sun full in his face, and a working party of little men wielding chipping hammers inside his skull. Mogelberg echoed his groan. They sat up and looked at each other painfully for a moment. Gagan opened two beers.

"We should of gone on," Mogelberg said. "The gyrenes will be somewhere else by now."

"Things slipped up on me," Gagan confessed. "Must be out of training. Well, we can push on over there and look. . ."

If the marines had camped overnight on the western side of the narrow island, it was in some other indentation in the rugged coastline. The two sailors searched until midafternoon without even finding a trail, and then turned back and climbed the ridge again. Gagan kept a sharp lookout for Japs. Mogelberg announced that he was afraid to open his eyes very wide, lest he bleed to death. A few more beers under the blazing sun didn't remedy that condition.

"I don't believe there are any Japs on this part of the island," said Gagan. "Maybe they've pulled out. But they usually leave litter everywhere, just like rats, and you can smell 'em. Down in SoPac—"

HE CHECKED himself abruptly, caught Mogelberg's arm. The cove was below them. It was empty, and the sea beyond the cove was empty. The *Little B*, camouflage and all, was gone.

They sat down where they were. There was no use looking for the marines any more, Gagan said. Let the marines come to them. The patrol would have to come (*Concluded on page 81*)



Mogelberg came out of the sea like a squat Neptune, trailing strands of kelp. "Pibe down!" Gagan whispered. "There's a search party out!"

vising loading of this material. Gagan peered at him through the foliage.

"Dr. Livingstone, I presume?" he said gaily.

"Hey!" exclaimed Mason. "I didn't detail you guys to this working party! What are you trying to pull off?"

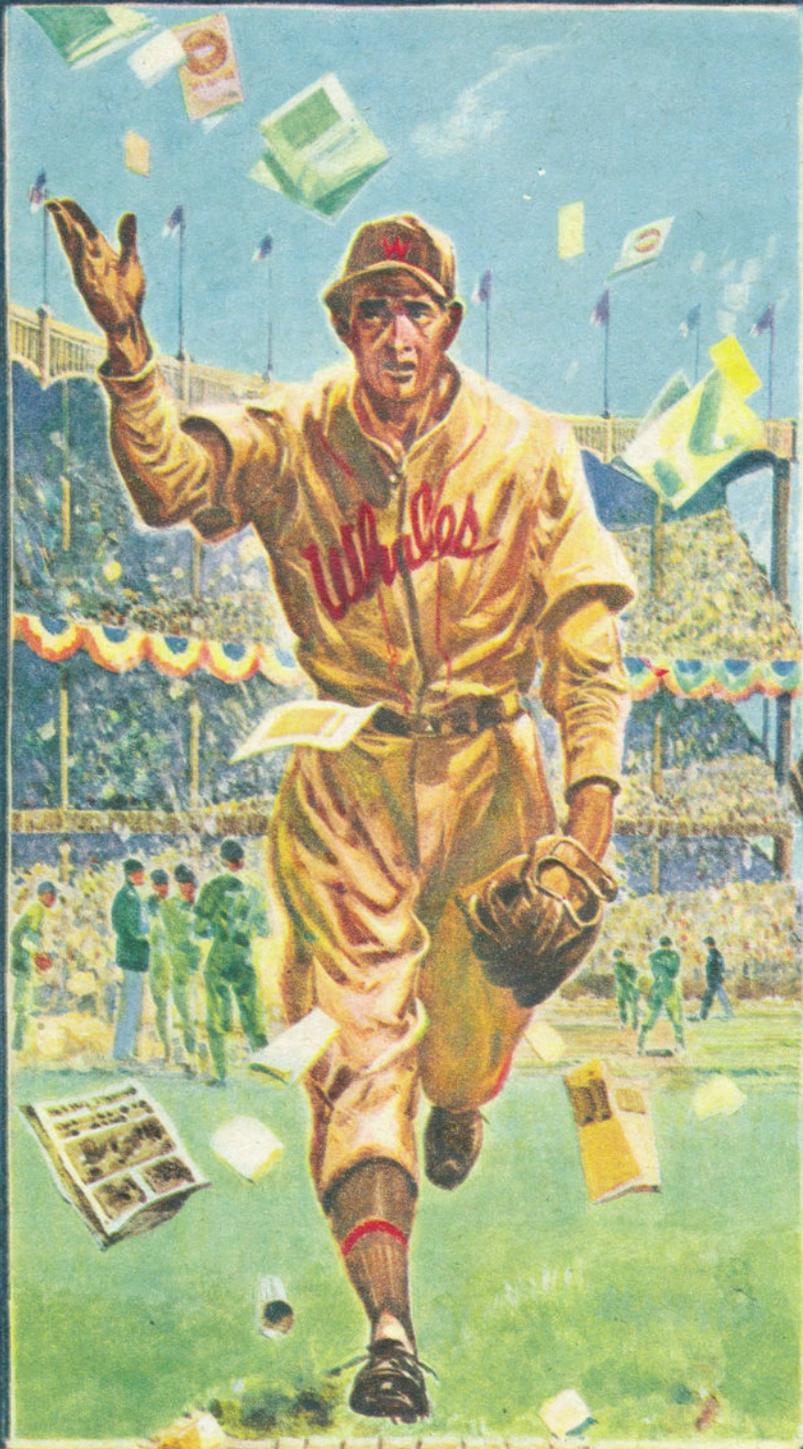
"We just came along to bear a hand," said Gagan. Seeing Mason eyeing their wet clothes, he added, "Swam over, Mason. After all, I've had a lot of jungle experience."

Mason smiled an evil smile. "You can both go back with me in the first boat.

line on the Balumgiri chart—"and if you travel all night, you can contact them before they break camp. Get yourselves a couple of canteens of water, and carry sidearms. If you run into Japs, don't start anything. Your mission is to find the marines."

"Aye, aye, sir!" Gagan said.

The Eager Beaver put them ashore. They vanished into the undergrowth, and immediately resurrected the beer, and stowed the Momsen lungs in the mattress covers with it. They sweated up the ridge, along a semblance of a



The crowd roared as he ran blindly for the tunnel. Mary was waiting. . . .

FLIP REGAN entered the office of the owner of the Whales and sat down quietly on a straight chair. The man behind the desk paid him no attention. Flip reached inside his coat and pulled out a pair of puzzle keys, the kind that come apart only if skillfully attacked. He bent to the task, scowling a little. He had black brows, quite heavy, a tanned face and a slim, nervous body which never seemed quite still.

The keys clinked. Homer Etherly looked up and scowled. He was a dapper, careful man, with a mustache trimmed close to a long upper lip. He said with deliberation, "Regan, you won't pitch tomorrow."

Flip held the keys motionless. "Etherly, you own the Whales, but you're not running them. Bobble Forman runs the Whales."

Etherly said without passion, "Regan, you are not a pitcher—you're only half a pitcher. You've never finished a game. You've made your record only because Al Jordan has always been there to pull you through—you know it as well as I do!"

Pennant Punchy!

by Joel Reeve

Flip said calmly, "Twenty-two games. It got you a pennant. It got you evens in this Series, that record."

Etherly made a steeple of thin, long hands. "You are insolent, Regan. You are slightly lunatic. You cause friction in the club. You are arrogant and quarrelsome. I don't like you and I intend to get rid of you. Meanwhile, tomorrow is the seventh game of the World Series, the crucial game. You are going to inform Bobble that you cannot pitch. Jordan will start—and finish. He can win the game."

Flip twirled the keys. "You are something of a jerk, Etherly. You

lucked into buying this club when it was strictly second division. Bobble Forman took the halt and the lame on your roster and hauled them into a pennant. Now you're trying to go over Bobble's head in the pay-off game . . . You, Etherly, have the abysmal qualities of a first-class jerk."

Flip arose and walked without haste from the office. He paused in the anteroom and looked down at a long, lovely redhead sitting behind a secretarial desk.

"Mary O'Hara," he said, "I have just told your boss that he is a jerk."

"That will cost you," said the girl. She had long legs, very well made. She was slim, but she could fill a man's arms; she was cool and calm, but she contained, Flip knew, fire enough for three alarms. "You'll have to win tomorrow, now that you've torn it. You'll have to win or crawl."

Flip said, "If we win tomorrow, it'll be a miracle. Even with Al behind me. The Bakers are overdue. We fell into our three wins, darling. They plowed through us for theirs. When Flee-son and his lads tee off on me tomorrow . . ." He paused, and then grinned. "You know, Jerk Etherly had one thing right. I'm not a pitcher. I have worked very hard to make the Whales believe I'm somewhat silly and highly superior, and I fear I have done awful things to old Gib Warren, but truthfully, darling, I am strictly a college hurler."

The buzzer connected with Etherly's office whirred. The girl arose and said softly, "You will win tomorrow." She nodded brightly and went to answer the summons. Flip tossed the keys into the air, caught them and went down into the October sunshine. He took a cab and journeyed to the Stadium, where there was a meeting of the Whales. He went in, and of course he was late.

Bobble Forman chewed on a hunk of gum that would have choked a stallion and wrinkled his mahogany-hued face into sardonic lines.

"Nice of you to come, Regan. You're goin' to pitch tomorrow and you come late!"

Flip said, "So I'm going to pitch! Who else you got?"

He winked at Al Jordan. Al was

The battered, punch-happy, crippled Whales had fought to within one game of the pennant when the bubble burst—for their only remaining pitcher was Flip Regan, who had never finished a game

Illustrated by Neil O'Keeffe

from Tennessee, and he was deaf in one ear and ugly all over. He was stringy and stooped and not very bright. He worshipped Flip Regan. No one else even liked Flip, but Al followed him everywhere, like an old hound dog.

THE other Whales glowered. They were a sorry crew, on paper. Tiny Raymond, shortstop, had yet to shave for the first time. Gib Warren, the backstop, was forty. Heck Fyer, at second, limped slightly from a wound received on a Normandy beach. Bill Duke, first base, was a mere five-ten and an ex-outfielder. Pug Zazalli, third-sacker, had sustained an injury on Iwo Jima that still acted up once in a while. The utility men were babies from the bushes.

The three outfielders were all right. Johnson, Heenan and Decker were solid, experienced big leaguers. They batted third, fourth and fifth, and what power the Whales had lay in their bats. They had pulled many a game out of the fire for the Regan-Jordan combination. Regan, who could not buy a hit, never rode them as he did the others.

The other pitchers were *kaput*, like the Third Reich. They had made their stands. It was now left to the screw-ball combination of Regan and Jordan to come through. And they all knew, as Flip knew, that the Bakers were too tremendous for Flip. They had proved it, scoring eight runs on him in his only appearance in the Series before Bobble could get him out of there.

Gib Warren growled, "If we had anybody, we'd use him, busher!"

Flip played with his key puzzle. "I never saw the bushes, Pop. I don't believe I ever shall. I shouldn't think it improves one to bat around in the sticks, observing you, Pop."

"Don't call me Pop!" howled Warren. "I kin lick you right now . . ."

"Okay, old man," said Flip innocently. "Now how do we pitch to Flee-son?"

"You just chuck and duck, you dead-arm!" Warren said.

Bobble said sharply, "Stop that damn foolishness!"

Everyone relaxed. Warren mumbled, but sat quiescent. They all adored Bobble. He was the boss, but he was

kind. He understood them, up and down, in and out. He had carried them on his shoulders to the top of the baseball heap with his knowledge of them and of the game.

Bobble said, "Tomorrow is it. How we got up here I maybe don't know myself. We had whatever it took. We're evens with the Bakers, and tomorrow we do or we don't. Man spends his life tryin' to snag a World Championship—he maybe gets one chance."

They knew he was right. The war was ending and soon the good ball players would return. Not many of the current Whales would remain in fast company. This was their chance, the epitome of their baseball careers.

Flip played with his keys, hiding his emotions. It was not always easy to play screwball to cover his deficiencies. He wondered why Bobble put up with him.

HE WAS a college hurler, no more, no less. He had never pitched in organized ball before a desperate Whales scout had sent him to Bobble. He was just out of the Marines and he needed money to go through another year of Harvard Law School, so he had joined up. Thanks to Al Jordan, he had stuck.

They had not liked his dry, precise speech, his sharp manner, his quiet clothing, and so in self defense he had gone back at them. Through the season he had kept them in turmoil.

Once he had even hurled a bag of water on Etherly, and that had been wonderful. And the Whales, detesting the front office, had laid off him, then. But he had kept roiling them, because he had started and could not stop. They didn't like him, nor trust him in a game.

Well, he had Al. The gangling hill-billy could not start a game because he was psychologically whipped before entering the box. He was a fireman, a finisher. He was not very smart, but he was Flip's roomie and pal and he was tough enough to make the others leave Flip alone when necessary.

Flip realized that Bobble was talking, telling them about playing Fleeson too deep so that his liners went for doubles, and to shift over for Green on outside low pitches and a hundred things like that, which they all knew by heart but which they liked to hear from their manager. Bobble was worried in his great soul, but he talked calmly and confidently.

Bobble finished and Flip arose and said brightly, "The Bakers hammered me before and they will probably do it again. I expect miracles of fielding and backstopping like mad and maybe we can pull it out—maybe! Meantime, I have a date."

They all stared resentfully at him, but Bobble said, "It's time to break up. I wanta see you, Regan."

In the manager's office, Bobble put his gnarled hands on a desk top. He said, "I've been putting up with one hell of a lot from you."

Flip said, "I'm sorry if I—"

"Never mind!" Bobble grinned. "You're sorry, but you're all I've got. Hell, it's a short life! Show up at the park tomorrow, that's all I ask."

Flip said, "You're a hell of a man, Bobble."

"I got a funny feeling about you," said the manager. "We'll find out if I'm right tomorrow."

"Okay," said Flip. He felt pretty low.

He went out and got a cab. In a small delicatessen downtown he slid into a booth where Mary O'Hara was waiting.

She drummed her fingers. "I've been waiting half an hour."

"You're pretty lovely," said Flip. "You're my ideal—did I tell you today, darling?"

She said, "I am also Homer Etherly's ideal. He asked me again today. To marry his millions."

"A man without a soul," said Flip. "A man who is, in simple language, a jerk."

She said, "I don't know. There's only one thing really jerky about him—he wants his own way."

Flip said, "Who doesn't?" He ordered lox with bagel and tea with lemon for two. He said, "Well, darling, tomorrow they slaughter me. Thank the stars for Al Jordan!"

"You've got to win," she said. "I think I told you before."

Flip leaned across the table, putting his face near hers. "Darling, I would give my right arm in the cause. For Bobble, anything. Al would give his. But, darling, Fleeson and his merry men are due. The law of averages says they did not hit yesterday, they will hit today."

Mary said, "For Bobble you'd do anything, wouldn't you?"

"If I had a father, he would be Bobble!"

"Flip, Etherly went berserk after you left." She touched his hand and her fingers were cold. "Before he talked to you, he'd ordered Bobble not to pitch you. Bobble wouldn't listen to him. And now, if you start tomorrow and we lose—Bobble is out as manager!"

Flip stiffened. "That dirty jerk can't do it!"

"He isn't dirty. He's just spoiled and positive in his opinions," said Mary. "He's a lawyer, you know. He has the legal mind. He believes in the law of averages, too."

Flip said, "Now wait, darling. What is this reasoning?"

"The legal mind," said Mary, her lip curling. "Etherly has it. You have it. You agree the Bakers will win tomorrow. Bobble will go back to the minors and you will go to law school. . . . As for me, maybe I don't know one jerk from the other. I'm going home!"

She was out and away before he could drop his bagel. He sat there, staring after her.

IT was an hour before time to report to the dressing room, and across the street in a cafe, Flip and Al Jordan each clutched a cold glass of seltzer, while Flip talked. He enjoyed talking to Al, because even though his relief pitcher could not understand three-quarters of what he said, the long, mulish head always nodded assent to his erudite roommate.

"The Bakers are due," Flip was saying. "They'll get to me, all right. Then it's up to you. Now, Al, you are a very great pitcher, see? In some ways, the best on the club. You come in behind my soft stuff and my curves and you lay in the swift ones like you are chunking rocks back home. See?"

"Anything fer you, pal," said Al.

"You tear the letters right off their chests," Flip said eloquently. "We got to win for Bobble. He is our friend."

"Good old Bobble," said Al. "I would not tell him about my arm, even."

Flip's heart stood still. "Your what? What about your arm?"

"It kinda hurts," said Al. "But I would not worry Bobble with a thing like that. Not me!"

Flip said, "Oh, my God!" He grabbed Al and scattered traffic right and left getting across the street and into the Whales' dressing room. Beany, the trainer, was fussing with liniments and the baking (Continued on page 110)



Al let out a howl. Bobble said, "It's a cinch he can't pitch!"

DANGER WITHOUT GLORY

By Albert Richard Wetjen



OFFICIAL U. S. NAVY PHOTO

IN THE South Pacific the troops go ashore under the grim mouths of naval guns and an umbrella of planes. And when the beachhead has been cleared, the convoys of merchant ships move with the vital supplies—ammunition, gas, medicine and giant stacks of food. It is not quite that simple, of course. There are Jap suicide planes zooming around, and sometimes hit-and-run subs, and it is so bad at times the men of the cargo ships are themselves ordered ashore and into foxholes.

Then, when things have quieted somewhat, a small freighter steams in and anchors near the convoy. She carries no guns for defense. She is not painted white like a hospital ship. She is drab as can be, but she is very important indeed. She is the *S.S. Klang*, the United Seamen's Service's floating recreation center, and to all the merchant seamen at that beachhead she means ice cream and cokes, beer, games and movies. In the early days she crossed the Coral Sea to Milne Bay in New Guinea. She went past New Britain and into the Bismarck Sea to Finhaven. She went up to Hollandia and poked her stubby bow into most of the steaming jungle coves between.

So the *Klang* anchors, and soon after dark the sailors begin arriving from their ships, transported by all sorts of odd craft—lifeboats, work boats, launches, sometimes canoes or rafts. Anything to get to the *Klang*.

The *Klang* is serving a group which has had little real appreciation, and even less publicity. You have heard occasionally of torpedoed crews of merchant ships swimming through flaming oil; dying in the icy waters on the suicide run to Murmansk; bombed off New Guinea; rammied by U-boats while crowded on rafts in the shark-infested South Seas. Sometimes you may have heard how highly paid merchant seamen are for facing all this danger, and how pitifully small the armed serviceman's pay is by comparison.

This sounds very impressive until you break it down. The serviceman is clothed and fed by the government, whether ashore or afloat. He gets medical attention, hospitalization when necessary, a pension if he is disabled; and his family is taken care of if he is killed. The merchant seaman gets very few of these free things—in the early days none at all. Between ships he feeds and clothes himself. He has to

take care of his family out of his own pay. When wrecked, even if badly hurt, outside of emergency treatments and aid, he formerly had to look after himself—until the United Seamen's Service came into being and began to function. And even the USS is limited as to the care it can give.

All in all, the matter of value received just about evens up, with, if anything, a slight edge for the regular serviceman. The unfortunate habit the services have of comparing the highest-paid merchant seaman with the lowest-paid soldier or sailor, is hardly fair. Many regular servicemen get high pay, too, and also draw bonuses for work in war zones, which is one of their complaints about merchant seamen.

Not to carry on such a matter too far, it might also be mentioned that merchant seamen do not get free legal advice nor special furlough rates on trains. Their pay stops as soon as their ship is destroyed and starts only when they have again shipped out. Most ignominious of all, and even somewhat puzzling, is that a merchant seaman killed in action is not entitled to the military courtesy of a flag on his casket. For a service whose mortality rate is, proportionately, the highest of all outfits engaged in this war, this is surely the height of something or other.

While the United Seamen's Service can do nothing about this last, it has in many ways come to the merchant seaman's aid. The floating recreation ship *Klang* is just one example. She is a small coal-burning vessel, about fifteen hundred tons, and ancient as steamers go, having been built in Scotland back in 1908, but she has carried on and made a few thousand lonely sailors under-

stand they have not been forgotten.

Operating today in six continents and in all major ports, the total of USS units numbers one hundred and thirty and its services run the gamut from advancing funds to distressed seamen, to maintaining rest homes for the sick and injured. A seaman, say, in New Orleans, has lost his discharges. The USS obtains duplicates for him. A seaman in New York wants to leave money in safekeeping, and will someone talk to his wife, who is mad at him? The USS helps as best it can. Recreation clubs are run for the sailor to relax in when ashore—the *S.S. Klang*, so to speak, transferred to a street in Naples or New York or San Francisco.

Washington came to with a start a few years back, realized there were possibly heroes in the merchant service, and issued a Distinguished Service Medal for supreme valor. It was about time. As General Douglas MacArthur has stated, speaking of the men of the American merchant service:

"They have brought us our lifeblood and they have paid for it with some of their own. I saw them bombed off Corregidor and more recently I have seen the same thing happen to them in ports in this area [South Pacific]. When their ships were not blown out from under them by bombs and torpedoes, they have delivered their cargoes to us who needed them so badly."

These are the men the United Seamen's Service is taking care of. It is their USO and Red Cross rolled into one. It is the one outfit ashore that makes them feel they are, in some measure at least, appreciated for their work and their hardships, and for carrying on the great traditions of the sea!

A PRIZE STORY CONTEST FOR MERCHANT SEAMEN

ARGOSY invites men in the maritime service to submit short stories of the sea in a contest sponsored by the United Seamen's Service. The first prize will be \$150 in War Bonds and the winning story will be published in ARGOSY, and paid for at our usual short-story rate; second prize will be a \$100 War Bond and third prize will be \$75 in War Bonds. Judges will be Albert Richard Wetjen, C. S. Forester, Joseph Henry Jackson, Captain Claude B. Mayo, USN (Ret.), and Jacland Marmor. Entries must be mailed by November 30 to the Golden Gate Club Short Story Contest, USS, 439 Market St., San Francisco 5, Calif. Entry blanks and further details concerning the contest may be obtained at any United Seamen's Service Club in the United States.



Carrots followed the engineer into the inferno of the stokehole.

WHEREVER the oil tankers sailed, from the refineries of Basra to the jetties of Bayonne, Captain Rankin's name was a byword. He was a hard-case skipper, a driver of ships and men, and I sailed with him once—without ever intending to.

It was one fine Friday that I was sitting with my two shipmates in the Pleasant Landfall, a dockside pub, where we were taking on a few beers before going aboard. I was signed on the tanker *Advocate*, Captain Stuart in command, due to sail a few hours later that afternoon.

It was pleasant and cool in the tap-room, and the barmaid was pretty, and Carrots Drake, a stocky, excitable Irishman, was making great progress with her. Lofty Lythgoe, his six-foot-three frame sprawled out in the chair, was talking with me, when the ship's cook, a lean, taciturn individual, walked in, looking troubled.

"What's the good word, Cookie?" we asked, as he drew up a chair.

He stared coldly at Carrots first. "You keep your eyes off that barmaid," he said. "You've got enough trouble on your hands, without mixing up with a woman."

"And what kind of trouble would that be, Cookie?" asked Carrots.

The cook ordered a round and stared at us glumly. "A telegram came today for Captain Stuart," he said, "from the head office. As soon as he reads it the captain packs his bags and goes ashore, telling the steward he's been granted leave for this trip. So, being a bit curious about who the new skipper's going to be, I waited around. And half an hour ago, I'm going down the gangway when who d'ya think steps out of a taxi, with all his luggage?"

"Who?" we asked. We were really interested now.

The *Advocate*, bound for Persia with a slave-driving captain and an overworked crew, seemed headed for disaster—even before the woman passenger came aboard

Illustrated by L. R. Gustavson

Kevin

COMES ABOARD

by Frank Laskier

"Bully Rankin," said the cook, and sat back.

Carrots jumped to his feet. "It's a lie!" he roared. "Rankin's own ship is alongside the next pier!"

"Was," said the cook. "She was towed into dry dock this morning."

Carrots said nothing for a minute, then called the barmaid over. "Make it a round, miss, and wrap me up a bottle of whiskey." He turned to the cook. "I'll give you a drink the morning Bully Rankin kicks you out of your galley because the soup's too hot," he said. "And I'll drink the rest myself when he has me disgraced because I can't steer."

"That's nothing," said Lofty. "Remember when he threatened to put me in irons for not wearing a uniform cap when I didn't have one aboard?"

The cook chipped in: "Rankin's not a bad skipper: just a bit hasty. I remember when he got mad and threw a half-caste pilot over the side in Abadan. Well—" and he gave a long sigh.

Lofty leaned over to Carrots and nudged him. "Hey," he said. "Just remember Captain Rankin's mother was a woman—it'll help take your mind off the barmaid!"

Carrots groaned. "He was spawned by no woman . . . But"—draining his beer—"I wouldn't put it past the Loch Ness Monster!"

We all laughed, and because we were young and happy, and we felt no skipper was really bad, we all got drunk and the barmaid kissed us all goodbye—but she kissed Carrots twice.

Next morning, aboard the *Advocate*, the bosun stood in the fo'c'sle door at a quarter of six, calling us to work.

"Wakey! Wakey! Rise 'n shine! Turn out and turn to, boys!"

We were just fastening our shoes, when the steward appeared outside the fo'c'sle door, spotless in blue creased trousers and a stiff linen jacket. That was a shock—usually he never even washed until meal-time.

He stepped over the tall fire step. "Hey, Carrots, if you've still got those pants with the backside out, you'd better put 'em back in your sea bag." Carrots began to look dangerous, and the steward looked placatingly around. "Listen, m'lads. Captain Rankin just sent me down to let you know. All neat and shipshape, everyone, he says—or else!"

There was a moment's stunned silence, then Lofty flung himself forward with an indignant yell.

"Does that old son of a sea cook expect us to buy new clothes just because he's joined this greasy old hooker? What does he think this is, a passenger ship?"

A shrill whistle blast from the bridge cut short the steward's answer. We piled out on deck and split into work gangs to take the ship out.

After we had pulled out into mid-stream, we dragged anchor and waited for the pilot. Soon we saw a launch bucking and leaping as it swept from a pier bound out for us. Making a wide circle, it swept under our stern and drew up at the rope ladder we had down for the pilot. A fat man, his face purple with the weather, yelled up. "Here's your passengers, Captain Rankin!" And then, as he saw the flimsy ladder: "Lower your gangway, mister—there's a woman here!"

Over the bridge's canvas screen I could see the captain's peaked brass-bound cap, but not his face. His voice, though, must have scared the seagulls ashore two miles away—a great hoarse roaring bellow that rattled the doors on their hinges.

"Who put that damned ladder over the side?"

The voice seemed to crack under its own sudden fury. "Get that gangway over—call all hands out! Lively there!"

We fell over ourselves in the rush to the afterdeck, and lowered the gangway in record time. Down below, the launch eased along our ship's side. The red-faced man, who was to pilot our ship, ascended first. Then came the first passenger, a tall, thin young man, his long sandy hair blowing over his eyes. He seemed a quiet, dreamy sort of person, a little bewildered. But for the moment all our attention was centered on the woman standing on the sloping, moving deck of the launch.

She had a nice face, plenty of character, with dark, widely spaced eyes and a strong, square chin—and she

laughed as she came up the gangway to the deck, shaking a little spray from her raincoat. It was that laugh that took the heart of every one of us, for she seemed happy to be aboard. We got up the luggage, marked with the name of Sullivan, and the launch kicked off.

We dropped the pilot at the mouth of the river, set the course south for Gibraltar, and settled down to have a look at our ship, our skipper, and our passengers.

THE *Advocate* was an old ship: she had just come out from six weeks dry dock and was as filthy as a dock-side drab. The decks were inches deep in the thick grease tramped out of the engine room, the rails were rusted, the paintwork marked and chipped. There seemed to be enough work aboard to keep us busy for the next six months.

I left the boys cleaning up and went to the bridge for my turn at the wheel. I hadn't been there long when a voice came from behind me: "What's your name?"

I glanced back. Bully Rankin was looking me up and down.

I don't think he stood more than five foot four. He was so clean and well shaven and polished that he glittered. His eyes were cold, clear and utterly inhuman.

I gave him my name.

Rankin grunted, took a short turn on the bridge and came back to stand at my side. "Well, you'll steer a straight wake aboard my ship!" he bellowed. "And tell that crowd fo'ard that I stand no hanky-panky. You'll have *my* ship as clean as a new pin before this trip's over!"

"Aye, aye, sir." I said noncommittally. After all, I hoped to come home alive, so why antagonize him?

And thereafter, from early morning until late at night, he maintained a ceaseless vigilance that kept us all up to the mark. We cleaned that ship until Lofty swore she sparkled in the early

morning sun. We even used steel wool on the deck, and Bully had landed on each man's neck at least three times before much more than a week had passed.

Then Rankin turned his attention to Cookie. Bully didn't like the soup. He said so to the steward, then he came to the galley to tell the cook. The galley was spotless, not a speck anywhere, and the cook was standing in its gleaming center cutting meat.

"I didn't like the soup you sent up," said Bully. "My officers are complaining."

The cook gave him back look for look. "If they don't like it, why don't they tell me?" he asked.

"Well, I'm telling you!" shouted Rankin. "And I don't like the way you let the crew come in here and gab all day. It's bad for my ship's discipline!"

"I'm cook aboard this ship," said Cookie, "and bossing my own galley;

and when I don't want a man of the crew in here, I do—this!" And he twirled the heavy knife in his fingers and hurled it straight at Rankin. It whistled past his ear and struck the heavy wooden carving board that hung from the bulkhead with a deep, vibrant quiver like a bowstring. The cook walked across the galley, reached over the skipper's head, and pulled out the knife. "It serves to scare them," he said simply, as he continued to carve the meat. Then Rankin, who had not budged, did a peculiar thing—he smiled. The cook let a swift, wintry quirk tug at his mouth as he saw it, recognizing it as a flag of truce from a man who rarely gave truce to man or devil.

"Tell the officers not to put salt and pepper in the soup," said the cook. "I do that here."

Rankin walked out of the galley and spoke over his shoulder. "I'll tell them," he said, almost quietly. And he went straight to his cabin and sent the cook a bottle of beer.

So we continued the voyage, with one stop at Gibraltar. I remember that because it was then we first saw the passengers on deck. Up to then they had been seasick and had stayed below in the cabin. They were a nice couple to have aboard, easy and pleasant in their manners to us all, and they made friends and were welcome from one end of the ship to the other.

He was a scientist, a top man in the oil company we were sailing for, on his way out to Persia to make a survey of the methods used there. He told us about it one evening in the fo'c'sle when he dropped in for a game of cribbage.

"The job will take about a year," he said. "I brought my wife with me because she's going to have a baby soon, and I want to be with her." He smiled at us. "We're both praying for a son."

"What'll you call him?" asked Carrots, curiously.

"Kevin Sullivan—an Irishman born in Teheran Hospital!" he answered, with a laugh.

After he left, we sat around for a few moments before turning in to sleep. It was very still in the fo'c'sle. We could hear the rustle, like the silken gown of a woman, as the dark sea caressed the ship's side, and the dull plop of the porpoises as they chased each other back and forth across the bows.

Carrots sighed. "Must be nice to have a life like him—" and he nodded toward the open door through which Sullivan had just passed. "Good job, nice wife, a house ashore, away from ships and docks, and a baby on the way."

We felt the ship sway as the course was changed, and an old boot rolled from under a bunk into

the circle of light, then clattered back. "Y'know," he continued. "a long time ago I had a holiday. I got away from sailor town and went into the country. It was a little bit of a village set down in the hills, and I stayed at the pub."

Lofty gave a cackle of laughter. "I knew you wouldn't be far from a pub. What was the beer like?"

Carrots seemed not to notice. "Every morning I used to get up nice and late—about nine o'clock—have me a big breakfast and go out for a walk. The main street had about four shops, and as I walked down it, the shopkeepers would be standing in the doorways and they used to say good morning to me. And the sunlight was shinin', and I could smell the flowers in the window boxes."

There was a painful silence as each man fought to keep from his tongue his own precious memories.

"That's what I mean when I say it must be nice to be like that passenger. I don't envy him his money, nor his job, but just the fact that he'll leave this ship, and he'll go back to England, and he'll be able to see his wife and baby every night—and he'll be seeing the spring every year."

"Pipe down, there!" came a tight voice from the dark, and we turned over to snatch a little sleep; but there must have been quite a few of us who lay awake for a long time thinking of home.

The weather grew warmer as we traveled the length of the Mediterranean. We never saw another ship, and we had all finally settled down under the not-too-difficult yoke of Bully Rankin, now that he had the ship running his way.

When we reached the Suez Canal, like the opening of a furnace door, the stifling heat of the Red Sea struck us. The temperature rocketed to 110, and the sea was as glassy and stagnant as a mill pond. Poor Mrs. Sullivan took it rather hard. Bully Rankin had us rig a hammock for her in the one spot under the bridge where there was a chance of a stray breeze. We told her about salt tablets—two to a glass of water—and did all we could to help her.

ONE evening Lofty came into the fo'c'sle with some news. "There's all hell poppin' up on the bridge. Sparks comes to tell Bully that the radio's out of commission—something bust in the transmitter. The Old Man's bawling him out something awful."

"That's nothing," said Carrots. "He can put in to Aden for repairs if any's wanted."

Lofty chuckled at that. "You're sailing with Rankin, my lad—Bully Rankin. Ever heard of him delaying a ship or losing a day? He'll just take us straight on to Persia and he'll stop for no one!"

Sure enough, we passed Aden, the last port, at seven the next morning, and we did not stop. We reached Hell's Gates, and the heat increased. The iron decks sent out shimmering waves that danced in front of our tortured, sweat-blinded eyes. Rubber-soled shoes twisted and melted, shirts were soaking wet with sour sweat as we toiled all day to prepare the ship for its cargo of high-test



gasoline. We were used to the heat, and knew what to expect, but our hearts went out to Mrs. Sullivan. She looked really ill as she sat all day in her hammock waiting for the wandering breeze that never came, except in the first hour of dawn.

WE OF the crew ate all our meals and did our sleeping outside under the awning of the fo'c'sle head.

At five o'clock one blazing evening we were there eating our supper. Carrots, sitting on his rolled-up mattress, waved a piece of gravy-soaked bread as he described a trip he had once made to the nice, cool Antarctic in search of whales. Up on the bridge, the third mate leaned over the rail and communed with himself.

Suddenly we felt a rattling shudder go through the length of the ship; then a sudden, deep, muffled explosion, and a great gust of black smoke belched from the funnel. We sat transfixed as we heard the clanging, heart-stopping clamor of the alarm bell.

The bosun dropped his plate with a crash as he leaped to his feet and flung himself down the ladder just behind Carrots.

We followed as we heard a yell from the bridge: "Fire party! Fire party!" Then Rankin's voice: "Boat crews stand by to lower!"

I raced with Carrots, Lofty and the bosun to where our fire-fighting gear was stowed. As I passed the bridge, I noticed Mrs. Sullivan being helped along the deck, supported by her husband and the steward. Her face was gray with shock.

The black smoke was pouring from the stokehold door, and on the deck lay a shriveled, blackened, naked man whose body writhed in the impotence of its searing agony. The second engineer was wrapping burlap sacks around himself, yelling for the gas helmet.

"Boiler's blown up!" he yelled. "I'm going in to turn off the pumps!"

We rigged him up with the helmet and I turned the deck hose on him, soaking the sacks, while Carrots put on wooden clogs to follow him into the inferno of the stokehold. They went down together while I played the hose on them to keep them from being baked alive. Lofty held the life-lines.

In about three minutes the trembling of the ship stilled as the pumps stopped. Lofty's lines went dead, and he tore down to drag out the unconscious men. He brought them up and we gave them artificial respiration just clear of the billowing smoke.

The second engineer revived first and gasped, "That feller damn near blew up the ship!" He pointed to the badly burned man still lying on the deck. "He must have let one of the burners go out and tried to light the boiler with a fire-box full of hot oil. The whole front of the boiler is out!"

I felt Carrots revive under my hands. His blackened eyelashes quivered and he came to. We took him straight back to the fo'c'sle. The fire was under control in ten minutes.

Up on the bridge, the boats were

Captain Rankin got mad in Abadan, and threw a half-caste pilot over the side.



shuddering breath as we sat in silence, waiting for what we sensed would be grave news.

"Well," he continued, "Mr. Sullivan and I got the lady and rushed her to the boat deck. We were all scared, and when that last big explosion came, she slipped on the ladder and fell to the deck. When we picked her up she went into a dead faint. We've just got her to the cabin now."

"What's so strange about that?" asked the bosun. "She'll soon come out of a faint."

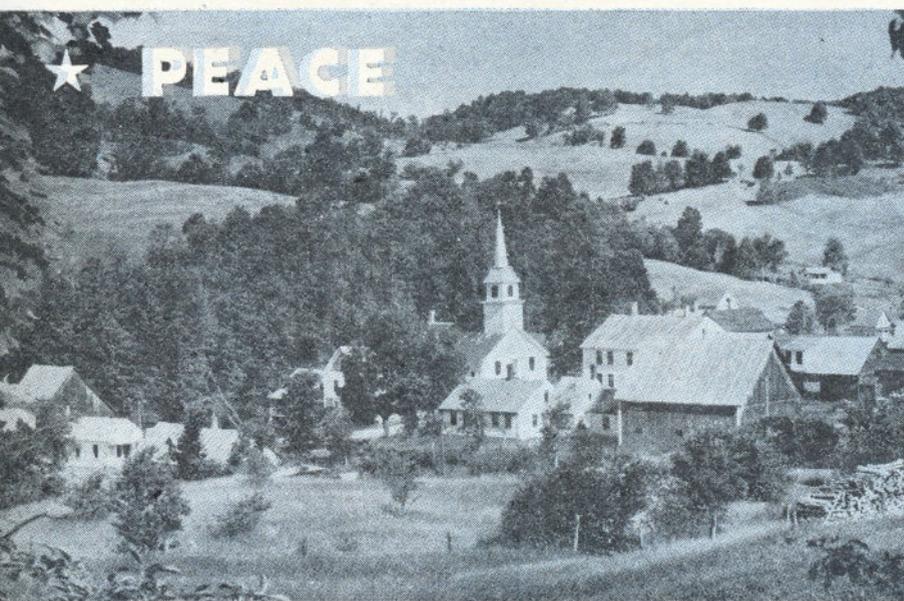
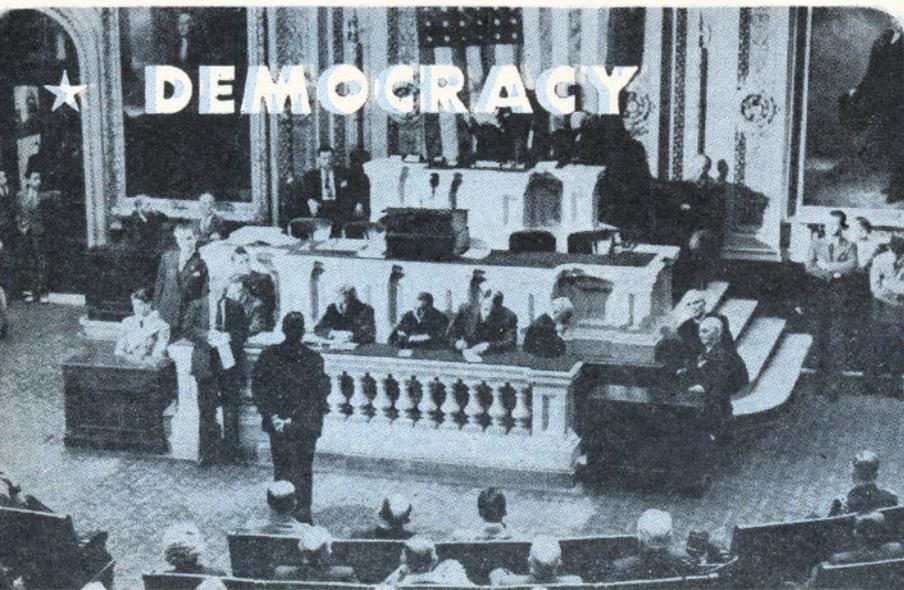
The steward shook his head. "It's not all that simple," he answered. "I saw a woman in her condition fall once, and Mrs. Sullivan (Continued on page 90)

hoisted back on board and the steward came down to us with some ointment and a bottle of rum.

We cleaned up Carrots' burns and the steward poured us all a drink. His hands were shaking, so Lofty gently took the bottle from him and put it on the mess table. "What's eating you?" Lofty asked him. "The fire's out, and you're safe."

The steward sat down as though his legs had been cut from under him.

"You know that when that alarm rings I'm supposed to get the passengers up on deck at 'abandon ship' stations—that's always Rankin's orders." He drew a deep,



AMONG newspapermen, W. O. McGeehan is still remembered as America's greatest sports writer. And it was Bill McGeehan, reporting a golf title match between Bobby Jones and Gene Sarazen, who taught me a tremendous truth about life. Sarazen lost because he slipped in the pinches. McGeehan wrote: "Sarazen was playing Bobby Jones, but Bobby Jones was playing golf."

For many months now Americans have been saying, "What are the Russians going to do? . . . What about the British? . . . What about de Gaulle—or the Chinese?"

Why should a world champion like Uncle Sam be thinking that way? It doesn't make sense for Americans to be "playing Bobby Jones." In terms of our national pastime, *let's play ball*. If we keep our eyes on the ball all these post-war problems of ours aren't so

WHAT

frightening. We can do that by asking a simple question:

What does America want?

With just a little pause for thought, I'll bet you can name what we all want most. We want:

1. Peace—with no more Pearl Harbors.
2. Jobs for all who need jobs.
3. Preservation of our own democratic system.

But where we get our headaches and confusion is on the matter of method. Just *how* can we get these three big things which almost all Americans want so badly? Uncle Sam ought to be Babe Ruth on any ball team. Even so, a few times lately, he's acted kind of jittery when he came to bat. So let's examine America's three main objectives in terms of how America has been acting—and how she *might* act.

1. How can we get a lasting peace?

San Francisco marked the United States' debut as a peace leader among more than fifty nations. In 1919 the world's delegates went to Paris. In 1945 the world came to America. Our delegation, headed by Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., then Secretary of State, shouldered a bigger job of international leadership than Americans had ever tackled be-

fore. Of course our team made errors as well as hits. When a fellow is new in the major leagues he has to learn as he goes along. But the conference wound up as a real success. It set up the machinery for a United Nations league—a new instrument to prevent future wars.

At San Francisco, Uncle Sam made important contributions. Besides that, he gained invaluable experience in world diplomacy and international co-operation. Every day we Americans got reminders that all co-operation between nations means give-and-take. We also saw how easy it is, while playing for peace, to get caught off base. Right at the start we were caught flat-footed over Argentina. The United States delegation helped push a pro-fascist Argentine government into the United Nations, over the disapproval of almost every European delegation. That provoked a series of deadlocks with the

international questions. Second, the only way to make democracy strong is to have policies which *build democracy*.

So we've made a start on how to get peace. We've seen that America's physical power isn't enough. America must develop international policies and diplomatic skills to match the size of her muscles. As a leader in a vast world parliament, we've got to develop those qualities. Because Americans have plenty of natural intelligence, we know it can be done. No nation can win peace all alone. Nobody wins peace through a single conference. Peace is something you earn, year by year. Because Americans have learned these things we are one up.

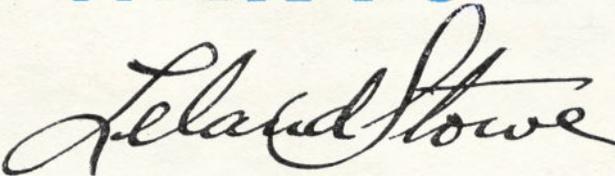
2. *How can America get sixty million peace-time jobs?*

In modern times, the U.S.A. has never enjoyed real prosperity except when we sold large amounts of our goods abroad. In 1929, our boom year,

Truman had told them: "We must learn to trade more with other nations so that there may be, for our mutual advantage, increased production, increased employment and better standards of living throughout the world." Congress was reminded of the big foreign-trade records of all our best years, and of the severe slump in our exports in those years when we had millions of jobless. So Congress renewed the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act—which empowers the President to lower tariffs to get more trade—for another three years.

There's a home run for the second thing all Americans want. That vote in Congress shows that our government knows how to get the fullest possible employment in the post-war years. Approval of the Bretton Woods plan was down the same alley, because Bretton Woods will provide huge amounts of credits for reconstruction and world

AMERICA WANTS

by 

We know what kind of postwar world we'd like, yet, advertising nation though we are—for cigarettes, refrigerators, chewing gum—we're falling down on selling democracy to Europe. Why?

Russians. In addition, it sent America's international leadership into a bad tailspin for a time. Temporarily, we threw away our moral case.

Over Argentina, Secretary Stettinius rolled up a big bloc of Latin-American votes. But he alienated a lot of Europeans as well as the Russians. They saw democratic Uncle Sam supporting an avowed pro-Nazi regime, a government that had been our enemy throughout the war. Europeans asked: "Why is America backing a fascist dictatorship like Argentina's? Is this the way to build peace? Don't the Americans know what they want?" That was a costly error. Uncle Sam's prestige recovered only through weeks of hard work.

At San Francisco the Americans got into hot water when they took sides too quickly. When they worked for compromises, they speeded up many solutions. When Uncle Sam acted as a middle man—a mediator between the Russians and the British, or somebody else—he made his most decisive contributions. He did that in the arguments over the veto question and colonial trusteeship. If Americans learned anything from this great conference they should have learned two things. First, the United States is in a unique position to serve as a referee in disputed

according to United States Department of Commerce trade statistics, we exported one billion dollars *more* of goods than we bought from foreign countries. The last good year of peace was 1938. In that year America exported \$1,134,000,000 *more* goods than she imported. In 1929, for example, our exports to Britain totalled \$841,000,000. This kind of foreign trade spelled employment for millions of Americans. Slash those figures by even fifteen percent and a great many Americans would have had no jobs. Slash them by thirty or forty percent and they'd mean a serious depression.

In June, Congressmen and Senators showed they understand *how* to get more jobs for Americans. President

trade. It won't be easy to reconvert thousands of our plants to peace-time production. Nevertheless Uncle Sam has his eye on creating more jobs than ever before—and he's already showing that he knows what he's driving at. When you've got your objective mapped out, you begin to feel better—and do better—right away.

3. *How can we preserve our American democracy?*

As much as Americans want to keep our democratic system, I think this is where we are most confused. Not many of us see just *how* to do this. Maybe we've been worrying too much about what the other fellows were doing. Take the Russians, for instance. The Russkies always seem to know exactly what they

want. They've been pretty tough about Poland. They've had us worried about the new governments they've set up in Rumania, Bulgaria and Hungary. They've made it plain that eastern Europe is *their* zone of influence.

But what about western Europe? Both western and southern Europe should be zones of influence for Britain and the United States. If we believe in democracy, we ought to support democracy everywhere in our zone. Did Washington energetically promote the establishment of democratic governments in Italy? In Greece or Spain? On the contrary, Washington adopted a negative policy. While Russia was positive, America was negative. While Uncle Sam hugged the bench, the Russians were playing ball.

In Belgium, Italy and Greece, Churchill's government has not supported the democratic parties. Britain has backed the monarchists *against* the majority of popular parties. Meanwhile, the United States usually sat on the fence, instead of pushing for the early restoration of democratic government—the peoples' choice through free elections. The six Italian parties range from communist to conservative, with their majority somewhat left of center. That same kind of mixture exists in most liberated coun-

tries. All these European peoples expected democratic America to help them recover self-government. Instead, Washington has kept its hands in its lap, or has fallen in line with British pro-monarchy policies.

Greece today is a sad example of this. No foreigners admire America so profoundly as the Greeks. The majority of Greeks don't want a king. The majority of the Greeks belonged to the resistance coalition called E.A.M. Last December British troops fought and suppressed the E.A.M., although most of its members were not communists. I got my facts on the spot. Even Greeks who are conservative republicans were indignant because, they said, the British were trying to impose an unwanted king on their country. The Greeks looked to Washington as their only hope for free elections. Washington did nothing. So the Greek masses have been pushed closer to Russia. We may have lost our last chance to have a real democracy in Greece.

But what does the form of government in Italy, Greece, Spain or Belgium have to do with our chances of preserving democracy in the United States? This much. . . . In our present world, the democracies, both in populations and in reserves of raw materials, are very decidedly *in the minority*. Even our mighty U.S.A. will need friends in the peace even more than in this war. Like every other political idea, democracy either will grow and spread, or it will shrivel and eventually die out. America and Britain could run no greater risk than to become—perhaps in 1965 or 1970—the only free democratic nations left in the world. To let western Europe go totalitarian—to encourage the government of 400,000,000 Chinese to *remain* totalitarian—that's the surest way to hasten the end of all democracy. *The only way to preserve American democracy is to defend and encourage democracy everywhere.*

We say we have a wonderful system

of government. Then why do we not work to spread its principles? If we have something which has proved itself of great good to human beings, why do we not urge others to share it? The only way the Yankees keep winning world series pennants is by constantly recruiting young players. Right now, our Anglo-American democracies have a championship team. But no team is stronger than the new members it trains.

This is what many of us Americans don't yet see—including many of our Congressmen. In June, Congress voted to slash all our OWI activities in Europe. In effect, that was saying that America has nothing to sell to Europe. But if American democracy has nothing to sell to the dissatisfied masses of Europe and Asia, then we might as well throw in our chips right now. Hundreds of millions of foreign peoples are potential customers for our form of government. Yet Congress urged Uncle Sam to turn his back on them—to save a mere twenty-five million dollars. In the Kremlin they don't turn their backs on potential customers. We can be friendly to Soviet Russia, and still insist that our own democratic product is best.

IN THIS upset world, the best salesmen are bound to win in the long run—those who clearly understand how to preserve the system they want, how to win friends to their team. It's not enough for the United States to be powerful. Power is a useless, wasted thing unless it's hitched to an engine with a purpose. As Marshal Foch said, "The best defensive is a good offensive." This is why it's time for American democracy to get *positive*. If we Americans are tops at selling radios and refrigerators, why should we not become experts at selling democracy? If the Russians know how to sell their system and if we Americans don't half try to sell *our* system—well, the world is soon going to be an awfully lonely place for us.

The secret of success is not only in knowing *what* you want. It's equally in knowing *how* to get what you want. Of all the world's nations, America today has the greatest opportunity to get what she wants, *provided* we Americans see our objectives and go after them with intelligent plans. Surely no other people has such splendid material, so much technical equipment, nor such tremendous advantages. But the strongest man needs friends, and the toughest jobs are only conquered by teamwork.

Probably General Eisenhower is the most successful builder of a winning team this generation has produced. Speaking of the job of winning the peace, Eisenhower said, "I feel that if the brains and the intelligence, the genius of America, are placed on this problem—if we can forget self, if we can forget politics, if we can forget personal ambitions, we can solve this problem. We must solve it, or we will all be lost."

He also said, "I believe we should be strong, but we should be tolerant."

That's another way of saying, "Come on, Americans. Let's play ball."

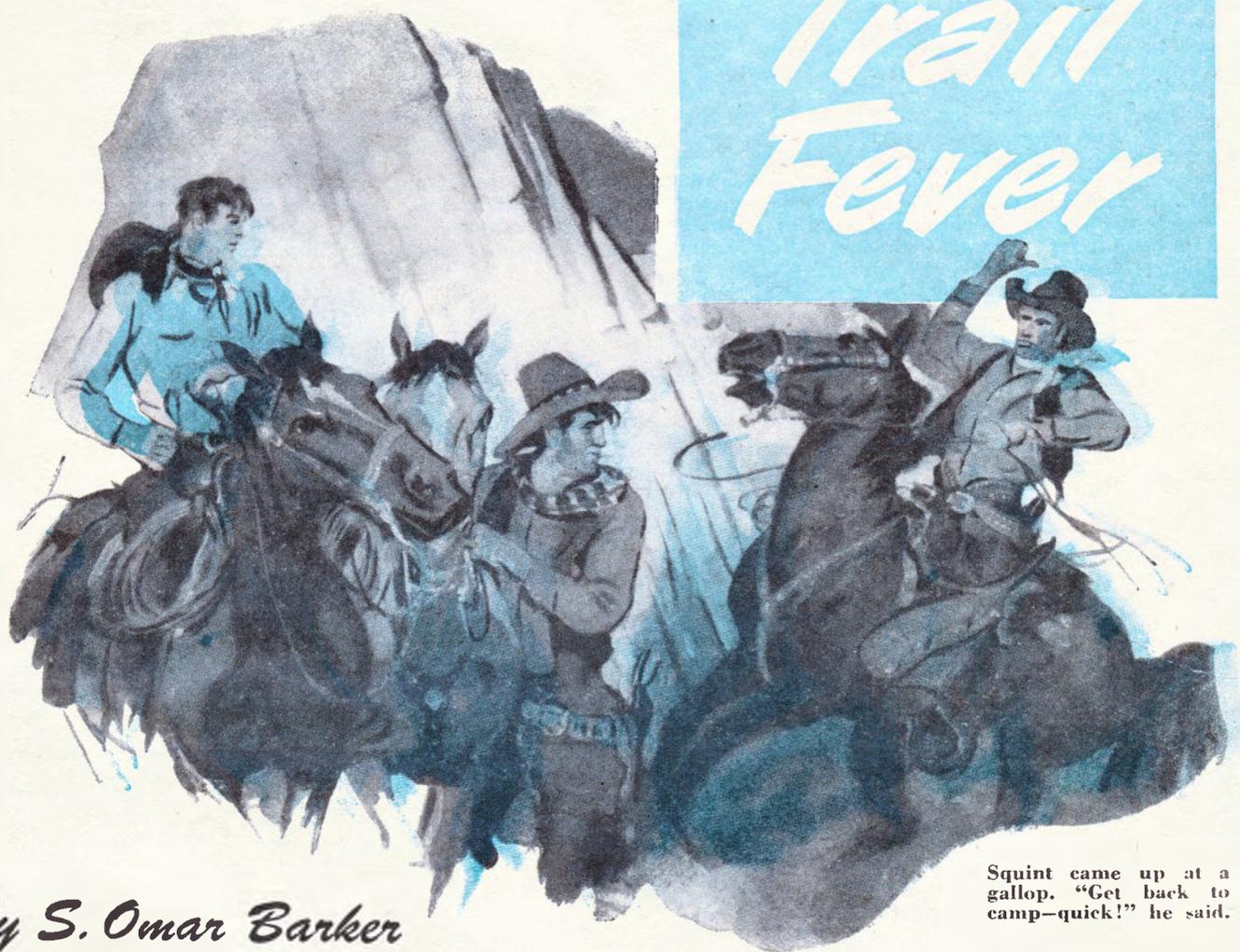
THE END



Other countries sell themselves to us, but a slash in OWI appropriations prevents our selling America.

Nehemiah reckoned he was old enough and ornery enough to make a trail-hand—even though his dad, being a farmer and set in his ways, figured otherwise

Trail Fever



by *S. Omar Barker*
Illustrated by H. Winfield Scott

Squint came up at a gallop. "Get back to camp—quick!" he said.

WHEN Nehemiah first rode in sight, the herd was still strung out in long, dusty procession across a brush-mottled stretch of rolling Texas prairie. But by the time Old Luther's slow gait brought him to the wagon, the longhorns had been allowed to fan out to graze a while before being bunched on the bedground, and part of the leathery-looking trail crew had ridden in for supper.

The first thing the trail boss asked Nehemiah when he spoke for a job was whether he had run away. The boy pushed a sweaty forelock of straw-hued hair back under his hat and looked up at the tall cowman a long half minute before he answered. If this was to be the beginning of his manhood, it was a poor time to lie.

"I told pa I was aimin' to, the first chance I got," he said. "I'm too big to whip, even for swearin'."

He saw the trail boss looking at Old Luther, noting the shabby, narrow forked saddle with its warped leathers and thin rag of a blanket, the collar-worn mane that betrayed the bony bay as a work horse, and finally the brand.

"Where'd you get your mount, son?" the trail boss finally said, in a level, impersonal tone. "What's the brand on it—if it ain't been blotted?"

"It's pa's." Nehemiah tried to hide his earnest anxiety in a tone as casually brief as that of his inquisitor. "But the saddle's mine. Ol' Luther will go straight home when I turn him loose. I wasn't aimin' to steal him, Mr. Gregg."

The trail boss twisted one end of his red mustache thoughtfully. "I notice you know my name," he said.

Nehemiah sensed that he was being ragged a little, but he resolved not to let on that it galled him, nor to reveal the anxiety he felt at not getting a direct answer to his request for a job with the herd for the long, adventurous trip up the trail to Kansas. He wanted to say that everybody had heard of Tom Gregg, the trail driver, just like they had heard of Sam Houston, or of Davy Crockett and old Ben Milam at the Alamo; that any settler's son on the San Saba would give his right hind leg to go up the trail with him. Instead he shrugged noncommittally.

"I heard you was the man to see. I'm goin' on fifteen, Mr. Gregg, an' I know which end of a horse the tail is on, an' I see good at night, an' I got my own saddle, an' I—"

"Well, git you a plate and have some supper." Tom Gregg fished out a couple of tin plates and turned to hand one to Nehemiah. But already the boy was on his way to

his horse, a few steps off from the chuckwagon circle, his slight, adolescent figure moving as quick and light as a cricket.

"Looks like the sod-buster's button has got gumption enough to 'tend to his hoss before he eats, anyhow," observed Frosty Winters, the trail crew's cook, grinning his approval. "I could use a roustabout mighty handy, Tom."

Nehemiah gave no sign that his sharp ears heard the remark. He had taken the invitation to supper to mean that they were going to let him stay, and he was in a hurry to get Old Luther unsaddled and turned loose before the trail boss changed his mind. Once he no longer had a horse on which to ride back to the San Saba, surely Tom Gregg would let him join the drive. He didn't care whether they paid him wages or not. What he wanted, and wanted so bad that the hope of it ached through every inch of him, was to go up the trail with a horse between his legs and get to be a man.

He had told himself that the reason he had run off was because his pa had thrashed him for swearing. The whipping, his first since he was twelve, had been humiliating, of course. But in his heart he knew that, lacking Jeff Belding's consent, sooner or later he would have run off anyway.

Nehemiah had the chicken-catcher saddle off and was just reaching up to unbuckle the throat latch of Old Luther's bridle, when Tom Gregg called to him, "Never mind turnin' him loose, Cricket. Better stake him to that bush yonder where he'll be handy in the mornin'. You can water him out after you eat."

Using the crude horsehair rope that he himself had braided, Nehemiah obeyed, but his high hopes wilted. If the trail boss didn't want the horse turned loose, there could be only one reason—he meant to send Nehemiah home on him in the morning.

Coming back to the wagon with his saddle on his arm, Nehemiah tried to imitate the clumpy stride of the booted cowboys.

A LANK puncher with chapped lips and a toothpick growing out of the corner of his mouth had already filled a plate for him.

"Here's your tapeworm medicine, Cricket," he said with a friendly grin. "Spit out what you can't swaller—but don't let the coosie ketch you!"

"Yeah—ol' Frosty shot a man up on the Cimarron last year for leavin' a chunk of sonuvagun on his plate," said a squint-eyed cowboy solemnly. "Turned out to be a harness buckle that hadn't cook up very tender, but that didn't matter to Frosty. What he cooks you're supposed to eat."

"Don't you pay no attention to Slim an' Squint," advised the grizzly cook. "Their tongues ride on a swivet an' wobble at both ends. Here, git you some coffee, Cricket."

Nehemiah was chagrined that he couldn't think of anything more noteworthy to say than "much obliged." But he grinned widely when he said it, and he felt good inside.

Three of them, now, had called him

"Cricket." He had never had a nickname before in his life, and he liked it. While he filled his stomach ravenously with beef and gravy-sopped biscuits, washed down, cowboy style, with blistering black coffee, he listened, enthralled, to the dry, drawling talk of the trail crew; talk mainly of horses, of saddles, of "rough strings" they had ridden, of lead steers, and of the prospects of flooded crossings.

Nehemiah didn't mind that none of it was addressed to him. It was enough that he was there to listen. He had the warm feeling that his presence was thus casually ignored only because it was accepted. And he almost forgot the dread that, come morning, Tom Gregg would send him back where he came from.

Never wholly submerged, however, was the panicky fear that Jeff Belding might get back from his trip to Lampasas in time to come riding in a rage and hustle

"Where'd you get your mount, son? What's the brand on it—if it ain't been blotted . . ."



his runaway son back to the dull chores of hoeing corn and slopping hogs. It was true that Nehemiah had taken advantage of his father's absence to run away. But further than that he had not been sneaky about it. He had told Ma Belding exactly what he aimed to do, and all she had said to try to stop him was, "You know your pa won't like it, son."

"I don't care no more what he likes," he had told her stubbornly, giggling himself with thoughts of his recent whipping. "I'm gittin' to be a man, now, an' I can look after myself."

"I wish you wouldn't talk thataway.

Nehemiah." He could remember how white-lipped and pale she had looked when she said it. "We always aim to do what's best—me and your pa both."

"Then it's all right if I do git me a job on the trail? You'll fix it with pa so he won't git mad an'—an'—"

"If you've got your heart set on it, you'll go anyway. But goin' thisaway while your pa's not here is runnin' away, and you just as well make up your mind to take your punishment if pa comes after you. I won't try to fix it for you with him or nobody else!"

He had felt like maybe she ought to kiss him goodbye, but she hadn't. She was a thin little woman, stooped from hard work, but she had looked tall and straight then, standing in the doorway, watching him check his cinch and climb into the saddle.

"I expect you'll be back in a day or

two," his mother had said as he rode away, "but if you ain't, God keep you!"

He'd had half a mind to turn and unsaddle Old Luther then and there, but he hadn't done it. And now, here he was, sharing supper with a dozen sure-enough cowboys at the tail of Tom Gregg's own chuckwagon, watching the stars slowly freckle the darkening sky with their beckoning brilliance.

As soon as he finished eating he made himself spry, helping the old coosie "red up" his outdoor kitchen.

The chuckwagon chores proved to be a short horse and soon curried. A slight

jerk of Tom Gregg's head beckoned Nehemiah to him.

"Want to go out with the night-hawk, Cricket?" Gregg asked without taking the pipe from his lips.

"Why, sure!" Nehemiah wasn't quite certain what the night-hawk was, but he aimed to please Tom Gregg.

"Fetch him a horse, Slim," Gregg said. "You wait here."

Nehemiah waited. Presently, without looking up at him, the trail boss spoke again. "What was it you were swearin' about, Cricket?" he inquired.

"I'd left my horsehair rope on the fence an' she got it down an' wallered it in the filth."

Tom Gregg made a noise something like a chuckle. "So you figured you was too big to stay home an' risk another whippin', huh?"

"It wasn't just the whippin', Mr. Gregg." Nehemiah set his chin hard to keep it from quivering. "I reckon I've been aimin' to go up the trail sometime ever since I can remember. When I heard you was passin' through, it seemed like I just couldn't wait no longer."

help remembering that most of his own bronc-riding experience had been on milk-pen calves.

"The *remuda* drifted north up the draw," said Slim. "Lead out, Cricket."

"Whichaway's north?"

"Same direction as the North Star," said Slim. "Only lower."

It took Nehemiah some time to locate what he took to be the North Star. He was grateful now that Pa Belding had made him learn how to find it, though the matter had not interested him much at the time. Setting his course as best he could, he kicked the pony into a lope off through the darkness. Almost instantly Slim spoke sharply from alongside.

"This ain't no hoss race, Cricket," he said. "You want to spook the cattle an' throw a stampede?"

At Nehemiah's sudden tug on the reins, his pony stopped so abruptly that the chicken-catcher saddle pooped up high in the back and he nearly went off over the horn. But presently he got going at a proper quiet pace.

FROM off in the starlit darkness came the strange, muffled noises of two thousand longhorn steers bedding down—a little uneasily, since this was only their fifth night on the trail. Mingled with their snuffy breathings and thumpings came the quiet, chant-like singing of the two cowboys on early guard as they rode slowly around the herd.

"Slim," asked Nehemiah timidly after a while, "do you think ol' Tom aims to hire me on?"

"I hope to hell he does," grunted Slim. "I been up the trail once as a wrangler, an' that's enough. I hired on this time as a cowhand. But we lost our wrangler day before yestiddy, an' ol' Tom throwed it to me."

"Lost him?"

"Yeah, he was a runaway. His pa sent the sheriff after him. What you goin' to do if they come after you, Cricket?"

"Who, me?" Nehemiah tried to sound tougher than he felt. "I'm goin' up the trail, Slim—an' to hell with 'em!"

They had overtaken the *remuda*, bunched it a little and were taking their ease, when suddenly they heard clearly the hoofbeats of another rider approaching. The unseen rider halloosed softly Slim answered and he came up at a gallop. It was Squint.

"Cricket, Tom says get back to camp quick!" he said. "Your ol' man's come after you, I reckon."

Nehemiah sat silent a full minute, then spoke in a low, rebellious tone. "I won't go. I'm goin' up the trail."

"Not with Tom Gregg, you ain't," advised Squint. "Not if you don't obey orders."

Silently Nehemiah turned his horse. "So long, Slim," he said, and followed Squint off toward camp.

"So long, Cricket," Slim called after him. "I'll be seein' you in Abilene—next year, maybe."

Nehemiah wanted to squall. Until a few hours ago he had never seen Slim Bledsoe in his life. Yet now it was like saying goodbye to a lifelong friend.

A quarter or (Concluded on page 94)



"You mean when pa whipped me?" Gregg nodded.

"I don't know as it matters, Mr. Gregg. He had a right to whip me, I reckon."

"He likely did," agreed the trail boss dryly. "What did you say that riled him?"

"It didn't exactly rile him," protested the boy. "He just come down to the pig-pen an' told me he had to whip me for blasphemin'—an' done so."

"Sometimes swearin' a little saves a man from doin' worse, Cricket. Like shootin' somebody, for instance."

"Or knockin' an ol' sow on the head with an ax," agreed Cricket solemnly.

"Here comes Slim with a pony for you. You want to sample a little night-hawk-in, or would you rather go to bed?"

"You—you mean you're aimin' to hire me on?"

"You ask too many questions, Cricket," said Tom Gregg.

Silently Nehemiah got his saddle and went out to Slim in the darkness. The cow pony didn't stand gentle to be saddled like Old Luther, but Slim didn't offer to help him. Once in the saddle, Nehemiah was afraid for a moment that the horse aimed to buck, the way he snuffed and sidled around. He couldn't

Hap C'Day was fighting for more than just gate receipts—more than glory—in what some had said would be his last ring battle



Illustrated by Karl Godwin

CANVAS - BACK Champ

by William Heuman

HE HAD the baby sprawled on the kitchen table with the chairs backed up against it to prevent him from falling off. The kid had one end of the blanket in his mouth and he was kicking the top of the table with his heels, making it bang, liking the noise.

"That's the stuff." Hap O'Day grinned. "Bang away, feller." He paused with the can of maltose in his hand and a tablespoon poised. "How's it, Gang?" he asked. Then he told himself he'd never get the damned formula made if he didn't hurry, and he'd never get down to the Paramount Club by eight o'clock, which would drive manager Johnny Ames into a beautiful imitation of the St. Vitus dance.

The big washpan was on the kitchen range, and he had a small pot of water boiling to sterilize the nipples. There were five bottles in the washpan and the water was bubbling merrily.

"Now that formula," Hap said aloud. "Five bottles—seven ounces in each bottle makes thirty-five ounces." He didn't remember whether it was twenty ounces of boiled water and fifteen ounces of milk, or vice versa. He shook his head, worried.

It wasn't anything, he told himself. Figures never had stuck to him. They never had cut into his mind sharp and clear—like, say, the minimum curve of a left hook homing to rest on the point of a jaw.

But the worry persisted, a small, chill thing in the back of his mind. It came to him that he was forgetful about other things. His relatives on Marie's side would make plenty out of that, if they knew. They were already saying that he was a little balmy—not fit to take care of the kid. They knew

he had taken too many hard ones on the head.

Now, all at once, the idea insinuated itself into his mind. Was it just out of their own cold meanness that they had thought that up, or did they see something in him that . . . ?

His hand shook a little as he put down one of the bottles. He turned toward the closet where he had written the formula down. But after one step he checked himself, his jaw suddenly tight. To hell with them. He knew what he was doing.

He turned back and put in the twenty ounces of milk. A kid needed plenty of milk, didn't he?

With the decision, his normal confidence flooded back.

"Hey, Gang." He grinned at the kid. "Howsabout a good shot of milk, huh?" The kid cooed at him.

Maybe if Marie's family had a guy like Sammy Klein on their minds they'd get forgetful, too.

Hap thought about Klein now, very young, very tough, very smooth. In approximately two and a half hours he was to go on with Klein for ten rounds or less. The sports writers figured "less" because Sammy Klein was coming, and Hap O'Day, middleweight, had never been!

"Now Hap should give our boy a good workout," Bucky George, Klein's manager, had said when they signed the papers. "Play nice with him, Hap."

Hap smiled. "I'll knock his head off." He shook hands with Sammy, a good-looking boy with dark hair and black eyes. Klein had a very strong neck, attached to a chunky pair of shoulders. He looked like a hitter.

"Good luck, Hap," Klein said.

Hap O'Day knew it was luck even getting this match. It would be the biggest gate he'd had in over a year. Klein had hung up an enviable record in the Midwest, and he would draw. Sammy was billed as the next champ.

Looking at him, Hap O'Day saw himself a dozen years ago. He was the crowd-pleaser then, and he was the crowd-pleaser now. He went in swinging with both fists, and they liked it; they wanted to see more of him because he never stopped going. He was the Brownsville Buzz Saw, the guy who would take four to get in one—but the one never seemed to do much damage!

"Every middleweight in the East is ducking Klein," Johnny Ames had said, "Bucky George needs somebody to stand up against him and show him off. You want it?"

"I got a trade," Hap had said, smiling. "I work at it." He was the 'work horse' and he fought them all. Now he needed the cash, and badly.

Hap stirred the maltose into warm water, grinning again at the kid.

"It don't take so many brains to raise a baby, feller," he said, repeating what he had said the other day to Johnny Ames. "We got doctors and I listen to them."

"Don't tell me," Ames had replied dryly. "Save it for the judge, Hap, if they go to court."

But the kid gurgled now, by way of answer, beating an approving tattoo with his heels.

"Whose kid are you, anyway?" Hap demanded.

Hap thought of Klein and knew he would have to hurry. So they thought he couldn't support the kid, heh? Wait until the night was over. He'd get a good cut from the Klein fight, and he'd take Klein plenty! Then he'd be in line for something big.

It sounded nice. The old confidence was there again; he could hear the crowd yelling when he bounced out of his corner. That was good, too.

Carefully, he poured the evaporated milk into the measuring cup and ladled it into the bowl containing the warm water and maltose. The five bottles were sterilized by now and he took them out of the wash basin, at the same time sliding the nipples off the flame.

"Everything you got to sterilize," Hap had told Johnny Ames. "There's no bugs gettin' into that kid, Johnny."

"You keep talkin' about him," Johnny growled, "and you'll have bugs in your own head."

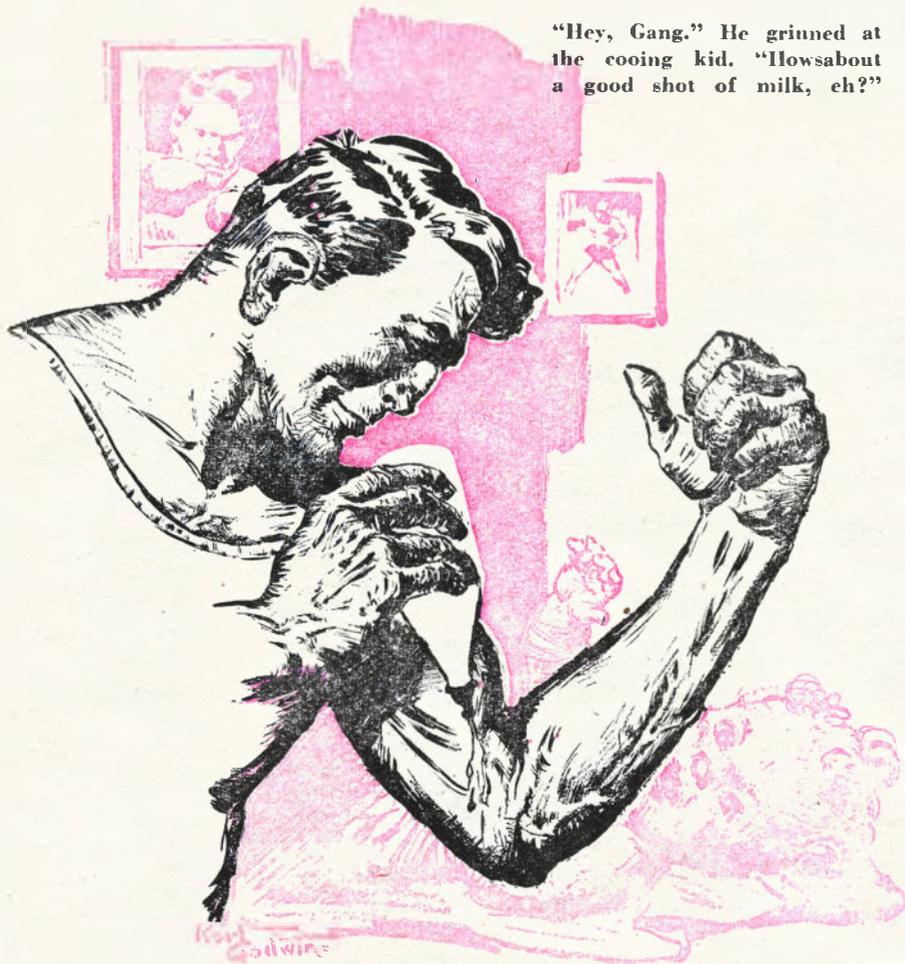
Hap rubbed his fingers through his mop of thin reddish hair and came back to look at the kid again. He never got enough of looking, just standing, grinning, making noises sometimes, laying a big paw on the kid's stomach.

The kid had blue eyes like his own, but there were no scar tissues over them, and the kid's ears were perfect, like little shells. Hap's were getting kind of thick, and there was a break in the bridge of his nose.

At seven-thirty he shoved the five bottles into the refrigerator and then

Grimly, he waited, while Hennessey looked on, a dazed expression on his face, mouth open, eyes popping.

"Hey, Gang." He grinned at the cooing kid. "Howabout a good shot of milk, eh?"



picked the kid up. "Bedtime, pal," Hap said. "Nice long sleep till morning, while papa brings home the bacon."

Hap put the baby on his stomach and he went right off to sleep without a sound. Hap stood at the foot of the crib, watching him. It was at moments like this that he felt the worst. Sooner or later, unless something happened, they were going to try to take the kid away, and another hope would be shattered.

He remembered that he'd had a lot of fond hopes since he was sixteen, and only one of them had come true. He wasn't sure yet why Marie had married him. He was a pug and he was not a good one; he didn't have looks and he'd never made too much money.

"Take care of the baby," Marie had told him. "I want him to be honest, Hap. I want him to be like you."

Half of the light in Hap's heart had gone out after Marie's death; the kid was all that kept the other half alive.

He moved around quietly, cleaning up the kitchen, and then he took another last look in the kid's room before going out. The boy had rolled a little now, and one arm was hanging through the bars of the crib. Hap went over and touched the fingers. He remembered the song they used to sing when he was a kid back in the jazz age.

Ten baby fingers, and ten baby toes.

He locked the door and went out into the hall. Stepping across to the next

door, he knocked softly. A woman opened it. She was a fat woman, smiling, perspiring from doing dishes.

"I'm going," Hap said. "You have your key, Mrs. Goldberg?"

The fat woman mopped her face with a towel. "I'll stop in every once in a while, Mr. O'Day," she said. "Don't worry about him."

Hap nodded. "I'll get back as soon as I can," he muttered. "One of these days, Mrs. Goldberg, I'll have a nurse to look after him, but you can't find one now." He said that confidently, but he didn't know where the money would be coming from. Already, Johnny Ames had hinted broadly that after the Klein fight he was not sure of getting any matches. It was no recommendation for a fighter to whip Hap O'Day. Bucky George had taken the match simply to show Sammy Klein to the public.

ONE of Klein's handlers came in to watch the bandaging of Hap's hands, and then Hap started to move around the room, working up a little sweat. They still had over an hour before going on.

At nine o'clock Hap slipped into his robe again and stepped out into the hall. Johnny Ames watched him in disgust.

"I thought you said he sleeps all the way through, Hap," the manager snapped.

"What's a little phone call?" Hap grinned. "What's a nickel, Johnny?"

He got Mrs. Goldberg on the phone from the pay booth in the hall. The kid was sound asleep, and she'd just come from his room. Hap grinned to himself. "Milk," he told himself. "That's what a little guy needs, milk—not water."

When Hap got back, Ames said caustically, "What happens if he wakes up? You walkin' out on this fight?"

"I could tell her what to do," Hap explained. "Maybe a little warm water. They get dry, Johnny."

"Nuts," Ames said. "You'll be gettin' punchy, Hap, thinkin' about that kid."

"All right," Hap murmured. He didn't like the sound of that word; it had been intimated too many times by Marie's relatives. He was not old, as fighters go, but he'd been in the ring a long time, and he'd taken punches. Every fighter took punches.

Johnny Ames had flatly suggested that he retire after Marie's death.

"A guy twenty-nine doesn't usually get any better, Hap," Ames had said. "Maybe you can do something else."

Hap didn't know anything else. He'd been in the ring since he was seventeen, and now he needed the money more than ever. Getting the money meant taking punches. He'd take them.

At nine-thirty Ames stepped out to watch the semi-final, and for a moment Hap was left alone. He lay on the rubbing table, looking up at the ceiling, trying to convince himself that everything would work out all right.

"Keep on with these guys," Ames had said, "and they'll beat your head to mush."

"Not me," Hap always grinned. "I'm too clever, kid." He always felt that way before going out; he would imagine that he was very clever, and that he could dance rings around the man in front of him. He thought of himself as a young man with a fast left hand and a paralyzing right. Deep down, he realized he was a willing guy, smart enough to keep his head hidden for a few rounds, forcing the fight, but with no power in his gloves.

There was a light knock on the door, and Bucky George stuck his head in. George was built like the capital letter "A," ordinary shoulders, spreading out to a capacious waist.

"Walk in," Hap said. "This is open house, Bucky."

George came in and closed the door behind him. He had a fat face, puffy around the cheeks, and his eyes were small and piggish, a washed-out light blue in color.

"Now, Hap," Bucky smiled, "you've always been a very smart boy."

Hap came up on his elbows. "Nobody calls me a dope," he said quietly. He knew George didn't have much time and that he was coming to the proposition right away.

"Maybe you get fifteen hundred," Bucky said, "and maybe sixteen hundred for tonight's lacing. So what?"

"So I can use it," Hap said.

"You could use another grand. Ain't it so, Hap?"

"Who couldn't use a grand? What's in that fat head of yours, Bucky?"

George sat down on the chair near

the wall, filling it, making it creak. He sighed and waved a fat hand.

"Here's how I look at it. Sammy can take you, Hap, but I think you're smart enough to stick around maybe eight rounds, and maybe even the limit . . . the kid'll win, though."

"He will?" Hap asked.

George ignored the remark. "I bring Sammy to New York," he said, "and I like him to make good with a bang."

"Like a quick knockout over me?"

"Like a quick knockout over you," George said. "Say in the first or second round. Just leave your chin open, kid, and Sammy will do the rest."

HAP sat up and his legs dangled from the table. It wasn't the first time he'd been approached, and he knew that the older he got the worse it would get. Every manager with a young and promising kid would want Hap O'Day; they'd like him to take a dive quick so their boy would look good.

"I get a grand for it?" Hap asked.

"Not only that," George said. "I got friends in this town. You play ball with me and I can swing a few decent bouts your way." He stood up. "Not later than the second, Hap."

"In the second round," Hap told him, "I'll knock your boy up into the balcony."

George was putting the cigarette to his mouth, but he stopped with the butt inches away.

"Take a walk, Bucky," Hap said.

George laughed. "They told me, Hap," he said slowly, "that you were getting balmy. Now I know it." He went out.

Johnny Ames came in a minute later, smoking a cigarette, his thin face showing displeasure.

"You send Bucky in here?" Hap asked.

Ames scowled. "Look," he said, "I never asked you to take a dive for me, Hap, and I never will. I know you need any piece of change you can get because you won't be getting much after tonight, and an extra grand will keep you on your feet—"

Hap O'Day was shaking his head. "You're not a father, Johnny," he said. "When you got a baby you look at things different."

"You want to take care of the boy," Ames reminded him. "You want to keep him, Hap."

"Not that way. I'll dig ditches, Johnny."

"You will," Ames growled. "Don't kid yourself."

They had Mike Hennessey as the third man in the ring, and Mike had worked with Hap many times in the past. Hennessey was an ex-heavyweight, semi-bald now, red of face, with a nose pushed distinctly toward the left.

"Now," Hennessey said, "I would like this very clean, gentlemen."

Hap glanced at the kid curiously. Klein was set up very nicely with the green bathrobe draping his shoulders. His stomach was flat, and he had a good pair of legs, which meant that he'd be getting tougher as the fight progressed. The forearms just above the heel of the wine-colored gloves were well developed, indicating hitting power, and there

were nice ridges running down his ribs from the armpits, a further sign that the boy had a knockout wallop.

"Keep the punches up," Hennessey said. "Break when I tell you and we'll have no trouble."

They went back to their corners and the lights went out. Bracing himself on the ropes for a fraction of a second, Hap stared out beyond the near faces at ring-side, lit up by the overhead globe. Tiny pin points of light flickered here and there in the darkness as nervous fans scratched matches and lit cigarettes.

Gripping the ropes with both gloves, Hap O'Day watched these little lights; he listened to the rising crescendo of sound and he felt the old thrill sweep through him. He would go out now, very fast, with dynamite in that right glove; his gloves would dazzle the hapless Klein.

The bell clanged, jarring in on these thoughts. Hap O'Day sighed and turned around. He bounded out of his corner with that left, whipping it toward Klein's face, and then he threw the right. Both punches missed and they fell in close.

Klein broke away and shot a straight left to Hap's chin. He went under Hap's left hook and smacked a right to the body. Hap O'Day smiled wryly. Nothing was as disheartening as missing a punch; it chased all the illusions away, and it made him just O'Day, the middleweight, a willing guy who could take a punch.

He took plenty in the first round because Klein was even better than he'd suspected. The Midwest boy moved very fast and he could hit with either hand. Time and again Hap lunged at his man, boring in all the time, forcing the fight. That had been his style in the beginning and he'd never changed it. He didn't hit very hard because he was never still long enough.

Coming back to the corner, Johnny Ames said, "How do you like him?"

"What's one round?" Hap asked. "I wasn't warmed up, Johnny."

"Okay," Ames muttered.

KLEIN began to put on pressure in the second. A short right to the chin sat Hap on his haunches for a count of three. He got up, a little disappointed in himself, and let Hennessey brush the resin from the gloves.

He saw from the look in Hennessey's blue eyes what the referee was thinking. As this fight went along it would get worse and worse. There would be more of those jolts to the head, each blow making him more vulnerable to the next—and Mike Hennessey didn't want to see him walking on Queer Street either.

Hap tried to pick up speed. He doubled his attack, piling in faster than before, throwing punches at random. Sammy Klein picked off some and slipped away from the others, countering with short shots to head and body.

Hap's lower lip was bleeding when he came in at the end of the second. He had a mouse over the left eye which would be getting bigger all the time.

"You just threw away one grand," Johnny Ames said. "And for what?"

Hap didn't say anything. He leaned back against the ropes while Ames

washed his face with a sponge, applied adrenalin to the lip and a piece of ice to the lump over the eye.

Bucky George was in the ring with his fighter, talking to him, glancing over in Hap's direction once in a while. George was grinning, and Hap realized the fat man figured it would be over very quickly.

"What if I flatten this guy?" Hap asked suddenly.

Ames nearly dropped the little stick holding the adrenalin-soaked cotton.

"Hell," Ames said. "You are getting punchy, Hap."

Hap O'Day let that thought run through him. Sammy Klein was fast becoming the leading challenger for the middleweight title, and stopping him would put the man who did it on top of the heap—almost in line for a title bout!

"Let's see that mother-in-law of mine say something," Hap growled, "if I was to flatten Klein." He began to fidget now, anxious to get going, feeling very fresh again.

TAKE it easy," Ames said. "You'll get it fast enough."

"Not me," Hap told him. He began to hum: *Ten baby fingers, and ten baby toes.* He felt the way he had felt going out for his first professional fight, a little nervous, but confident. He had everything on his side. One good clout on young Klein's chin, putting him out, would make Hap O'Day a top middleweight. It would silence his in-laws' claim that he couldn't support the baby—they couldn't say he was punch-drunk when he was the leading contender for the crown. "I'll murder this kid," Hap said.

Ames stuffed the red-rubber mouth-piece between his lips and he could talk no more. The warning horn sounded, and then the bell. Hap bounced out of the corner, moved over very fast, right hand cocked, and threw the left in hook fashion.

He felt that he was very fast on his feet because he was fighting for the kid; he felt as light as a feather, but the left missed Klein's head, and he took Klein's right full in the ribs, a jolting blow.

He tried to grin that one off, even though it had hurt, and he told himself it was an accident. This was his fight from now on; he would take the play away from Klein; he would box rings—

Klein's left shot out and caught him on the bridge of the nose. He took another left to the mouth, and then a hard right to the side of the face which shook him up.

Still confident, he went after his man, boring in, hoping for a clean shot with that now lethal right. He hit Klein once with it on the chin before a clinch, but the kid's face didn't change expression.

Very gradually this newborn confidence oozed out of Hap. He hadn't changed: there was no dynamite in his gloves, and he was no faster than he had been before.

Sammy leaped in very fast, feinting with the left, and driving a hard right to the jaw. (Continued on page 95)

MacPhail says he never interferes with his managers. He admits firing Durocher once, but it didn't take.



Joe McCarthy, Yankee manager, and Larry MacPhail, his boss, watch their team in practice.



by Larry MacPhail

Baseball

THE phone bell tinkled. "Can you come down to the dressing room, boss?"

"What's up?" I asked.

"The gang wants to say goodbye," said Leo Durocher.

Dusk was settling over Ebbets Field that Sunday afternoon in October. The season of 1942 was ending—and with it my five years as president of the Brooklyn Dodgers.

The Dodgers had failed to win the pennant. But they were still my team—the year before they had battered their way to Brooklyn's first championship in twenty-one years. Now I faced them—Dolph Camilli, the herculean home-run hitter; Whit Wyatt of the fireball delivery; Billy Herman, Petie Reiser and Mickey Owen, who had missed the never-to-be-forgotten third strike.

They had given me my greatest thrill—and my greatest disappointment. Mickey's error had cost me a world's championship in that fourth game of the '41 World Series. My Dodgers had knocked Atley Donald out of the box. Victory was near—three men should have been out in the ninth, the game should have been Brooklyn's. Then the ball got away from peppery Mike.

The whole world knows what happened. how Henrich raced to first, Keller doubled. DiMaggio singled, Gordon doubled. The Yankees crushed my

Dodgers in a mighty upsurge of power.

Now I could barely restrain a sentimental tear as Herman said, "We'll never forget you, Mr. MacPhail. And we don't want you to forget us."

On behalf of the players, he presented me with a watch. For the first time in my life, I was at a loss for words.

For over a decade I had labored in the grand old national game. I had lifted Cincinnati's Reds from rags to riches; I had boosted the Dodgers from despair to delight. Now I was going back into the United States Army, in which I had been a captain of artillery in the first World War.

I knew what some people were saying—I was too sensational, too Barnumesque. My so-called "stunts," night ball, radio broadcasts, running races, beauty parades, free automobiles, experiments with yellow balls, were circus ballyhoo, not baseball. And I was too rambunctious, they argued; hadn't I battled for Brooklyn with press, umpires, even with league authorities?

Well, there I was, feeling mighty blue as I quit Ebbets Field that day.

Yet I was inwardly contented. I knew I had accomplished all I had planned. Brooklyn had been a pennant contender for four years; the club, once insolvent, now had money in the bank, stars on the roster, a thoroughly renovated park and, in minor leagues, farm

clubs well stocked with potential big leaguers. I had used sound business methods, the only methods possible to lift the Dodgers from shame to fame. With such thoughts running through my head I took the train for Washington.

One morning, a raw-boned Westerner visited my office in the Pentagon building. "I'm Del E. Webb, of Phoenix," he said. "Undersecretary Patterson sent me to you, sir. I met you at a baseball dinner on the Coast last winter."

I remembered Del Webb. He'd told me how he'd pitched a no-hit game for an outlaw team back in the 1920's. He'd been a hard hitter, too, who boasted how he had blasted two doubles and two triples, knocking in six runs in a single game.

We discussed official business. At lunch I asked Webb why he had turned his back on baseball. "Well, sir," he replied, "I used to lie awake dreaming of the day when I'd be a big leaguer. I played on semi-pro teams beside Joe Cronin and Dutch Leonard and other



Some call him sensational, a stunt man, but he pulled the Reds out of the red and made the Dodgers pennant-winners. Now he reveals his plans for his recently acquired Yankees

Yankee owners Webb and MacPhail shake hands on the deal, while Ed Barrow, board chairman, looks on.

guys who made the grade. But nobody ever gave me a tumble . . ."

Later I met Webb on an inspection tour. I learned that he was a fabulous figure in Arizona, where he had arrived from northern California in 1926 in a model-T jalopy, his last fifty dollars in a money-belt. His lone Phoenix friend was a sports editor to whom he said, "I'm not looking to play ball. I'm still a good journeyman carpenter. Where can I find work?"

He found work, all right. In seven busy seasons, Del Webb's rise had been

It was January, 1945, before the deal was consummated. At the last moment, a minor hitch developed. Webb and I were in New York, conferring with lawyers representing Colonel Jacob Rupert's estate. The bank, it seemed, demanded \$250,000 as evidence of good faith, prior to the drawing up of final papers.

"Haven't got that much dough on me," Del apologized. He phoned Phoenix. Funds were transferred by wire, a total of three million!

A few days later, New York's sports writers learned that Captain Topping, Webb and I had purchased the Yankees, conquerors in fourteen stirring pennant races, ten-time champions of the world, a team with a long tradition

is my business

steady. He had constructed hundreds of public and private buildings in Arizona and California. Now he was in charge of the Army's vast airfield and cantonment program in the Southwest.

One day in '44, he was competing in the Phoenix amateur golf tournament when he met Captain Dan Topping, owner of the Brooklyn professional football team. "I'm on my way to the South Pacific with the Marines," Dan told Del. "Saw Larry MacPhail in Washington the other day. He tells me a syndicate is being formed to buy the New York Yankees."

"The Yankees?" Del's heart popped into his mouth. The Yankees were the symbol of baseball immortality. Yankee Stadium was no ordinary baseball diamond—it was an Olympian Field on which superhuman heroes—Ruth, Gehrig and DiMaggio—had performed.

Topping said "I'm in on this Yankee deal, Del. How about you?" Del wasted four putts, holed out in nine. "You're off your game," said the captain.

"I'm in on the Yanks," said Del.

of sportsmanship, clean baseball and conservative business methods.

They learned, too, that I would retire from the Army. For ten years, I would be president of the Yankees, master of the House that Ruth Built.

The following morning, I read accounts of that historic press conference. Hammers were already out; gossip was rife. I learned that I would turn the Yankees inside out, right to left and topsy-turvy. I would desecrate the Stadium's sacred soil with "typically MacPhailian publicity stunts"—beauty parades, brass bands and whatnot. The conservative Yankee organization would fall apart. I would row with the men who had created it; fire, hire, fire again. And rhubarb would grow in the Bronx—"rhubarb" of the Flatbush type, which is not a plant but a good old-fashioned derry-do.

So they said.

Well, now . . . I think the record speaks for itself. A sound businessman adapts himself to changing conditions. In Cincinnati and Brooklyn, my job

was to rebuild tottering baseball teams and finances from scratch. My problem was to revive local interest in baseball by creating winning teams. This, I believe, I did. Two years after I quit Cincinnati, the Reds won their first pennant in two decades, with many players whom I had obtained or developed in the line-up. In three seasons, the Dodgers rose from seventh place to the championship.

Now, let's look at the Yankees. In a quarter of a century, they have never finished lower than third, with one exception. Yankee fans are proud, loyal, seasoned to victory. Today, the Yankee treasury is in as favorable a condition as ever in the club's long and honorable history.

The theory that Yankee fans are less interested in the success of their team than Dodger partisans is fallacious. Brooklyn fans fought desperately for their Dodgers because they were starved for victory. When victory came, they nearly tore the town apart.

But Dodger fans differ in no respect from fans elsewhere. My policies were based, not upon false notions that perfectly sane Brooklynites go loony when they enter Ebbets Field, but on the need for restoring confidence in a baseball organization which had been unable to deliver winning games.

Yankee fans have always had confidence in their favorites, so the Yankee problem is not one of rebuilding. It is one of maintaining the highest standards in the history of professional sports.

Those who forecast that I would rip the Yankee organization apart are poor prophets. Joe McCarthy is baseball's most successful manager. George Weiss, chief of the Yankee farm system, is without a peer in his field. Paul Krichell, head scout, has discovered more scintillating stars than any other ivory-hunter in the game.

These men will remain at their posts.

Those who hinted that I would interfere with McCarthy's management are warming up an old, tough canard—that I always interfered with my managers. I never advised Durocher, Burleigh Grimes, Ray Blades, Bob O'Farrell or my other team leaders how to juggle line-ups or whom to pitch. I never talked with a Dodger unless he protested against a fine Leo Levin against him. When he did, I doubled the fine—because he had gone over his manager's head.

Do I love to hire and fire for the plain heck of it? It's a fact that no member of the Dodger staff was fired during my tenure of office—with one exception. In the spring of 1939, during his early days as manager, Leo had not yet learned how to curb his high spirits. He gained unfavorable publicity by engaging in a row with a caddie on the Hot Springs links. He violated his own curfew regulations. And he resisted sending Pete Reiser, then a first-year rookie, to Elmira for seasoning.

One day in Macon, Georgia, I fired Leo. He succeeded in talking me out of my decision—and you know how Leo can talk. We were fast friends when that interview ended. At no time, during the years that followed, was he dismissed.

My first job as president of the Yankees has been to examine the club's assets. Our wartime team has been in the thick of the pennant fight. Outstanding among today's stars are Hank Borowy, Ernie Bonham, Nick Etten, Frank Crosetti, Russ Derry and many others. On our national defense list are famous players—Spud Chandler, Bill Dickey, Joe DiMaggio, Tom Henrich, Charlie Keller, Marius Russo, and more than one other champion of the recent past. On our minor league reserve list at Newark, Kansas City, Binghamton, Norfolk and Wellsville are scores of likely youngsters.

These men in themselves guarantee continued Yankee success. But postwar baseball must go far beyond the pre-war game in quality. The Yankees, as well as all other major league clubs, must march in step with the times.

For baseball will live only as long as American boys play the game. Before the war, in many parts of the country, baseball was losing ground. During the

war, no professional baseball is being played in many sections of America—in Texas, for example, even in such metropolises as Dallas and Fort Worth.

The Yankees are preparing to help rebuild suspended leagues. We shall do our share to teach millions of 'teen-age kids how to play the game. We shall aid sandlot, industrial, high school and college teams with equipment and instruction. Where businessmen are unwilling to support a local team, we shall, in association with other major leaguers and with Commissioner A. B. Chandler, aid them.

It is my hope that soon organized amateur, semi-professional or professional baseball will again be played in every crossroads hamlet in America.

This means more and better baseball, more future Yankees and better future Yankee teams.

In 1935, at Cincinnati, I introduced night baseball to the major leagues. In 1945, I am operating Yankee Stadium, one of the few major league parks without a lighting system. Of course, I shall install lights at the Stadium, as soon as priorities on men and materials are lifted.

But I am flatly opposed to more than seven night games each season. Baseball was born and grew under the afternoon sun. At night it is a spectacle which attracts those who cannot attend daytime games.

Baseball belongs primarily to kids, who cannot stay up until midnight and then attend school in the morning. Unlimited night ball in St. Louis and Washington has taken the game away from boys who should become the fans of the future in those cities. Even the fourteen after-dark games scheduled by my neighbors, the Giants and Dodgers, are too many.

I recall a Sunday double-header in St. Louis between the Dodgers and Cardinals when we received applications for 250,000 tickets. Only 35,000 could be accommodated; we returned money to 215,000 disappointed fans.

I see no reason why, in the near future, 100,000 persons will not be comfortably seated at Yankee Stadium to witness a crucial ball game. And if 100,000, why not 250,000?

This is the goal for which I am striving—to make Yankee Stadium the home of America's finest sport.

On a chilly day in April, I arrived at Yankee Stadium for the opening of the championship season. An elevator bore me to the mezzanine. I found a seat in a box.

Out on the field, Atley Donald was warming up—the same Yankee hurler who had been battered from the box by my Dodgers in that fourth, thrill-paced battle of the '41 Series.

EBBETS FIELD had been my baseball home for five turbulent seasons. There, like the dizziest fan, I had gloated as Leo the Lip wrangled with umpires, rowed with rival players, firing his boys with the spirit of victory. There I had exulted as Whitlow Wyatt flung his fireball steaming across the plate, as Dolph Camilli hammered homers over the clock, the wall, the street beyond.

And on that April day last spring, the Dodgers were beginning their 1945 campaign. What was I doing in Yankee Stadium? Why was I rooting for the Yanks? Hadn't they deprived me of my greatest triumph—a world's championship for my Dodgers?

Down on the field, Mayor LaGuardia tossed a new, white ball. The game began.

Boston's Red Sox were at bat. A single, another, a third—one run scored. Now, with two on base, old Joe Cronin laced a liner to left. Two more runs clattered over the pan.

So these were the Yankees. Glumly I watched the innings slip by. The Yankees batted like blind mice with their heads in a sack. Where was their pep? Where was their vaunted superiority—compared with the old Dodgers?

And then, in the sixth, Nick Etten began it—a double boomed off the right-field wall. A single followed, another, then a base on balls. Now Russ Derry leaned over the plate, bludgeon in hand. He flailed, bat met ball, which soared like a rocket over the field and into the stand. A home run with the bases full! Shades of the old Bronx Bombers—of Ruth, Gehrig, DiMaggio, Keller, Henrich, Selkirk.

I cheered. Why, these were the Yankees, the peerless Yankees, the greatest team in the world!

And now they were my Yankees. In that moment I realized what it means to be a Yankee. And I promised myself then that I would make the Yankee future as bright as their oldest fan would wish it to be.

I even prayed that the Dodgers would win the National League pennant this year—so that my Yankees might send them crashing down into the dust.

THE END

Dan Topping congratulates MacPhail on pennant-winning Dodgers. Now Topping, with MacPhail and Webb, owns Yankees.





Uncle Heggy bought the vanilla extract and he downed it in one gulp.

Uncle Heggy Goes to Glory

by John Sinclair

UNCLE HEGGY HOBBS died of the suffering chills.

That's what the folks reckoned—Arthur, Pomona and their six kids. But the doctor said it wasn't no such thing. He said Uncle Heggy was old and feeble and his stomach couldn't digest vittles any more. The preacher reckoned there hadn't been a chill in Uncle Heggy, either. Said the Lord just figgered the old man's time had come and He called for him to go.

But whatever killed Uncle Heggy—chills, indigestion or the Lord—the folks of the community all agreed that he was stiff enough to bury; and when they had him all laid out in his box, the neighbors and kinfolks all came to see him, weep over him and gas about him—and they done a lot of speculating,

too, about where he'd hid the nine kegs of good corn likker that was missing.

All the people in Cherry Valley knew that Arthur—that was Uncle Heggy's favorite nephew—took the old man in to die eight years before; gave him a home on his government claim in New Mexico, along with Pomona and the six kids, and aimed to let him have a few easy months before burying. Uncle Heggy's stomach was considerable upset from drinking vanilla extract so many years. The old man used to allow as how store-bought whiskey wasn't strong enough to twitch a mouse's toe, and he had to have a drop of something with a little life to it in betwixt batches of his own white mule.

But the months dragged on to eight years and Uncle Heggy showed no

symptoms of passing away. All that while he chopped stovewood for Pomona, gave Arthur a hand with the chores, amused the kids with his big windies, and complained mightily of the ache in his stomach. He nursed a he-man's appetite come dinner time, too, ailing innards or no. Uncle Heggy was a powerful man that way.

When Uncle Heggy took up living with Arthur's folks on the homestead, he claimed he needed exercise to keep his stomach from paining so. He asked Arthur for a patch of land for corn, so's he could raise a crop and keep moving about by wrangling a hoe-handle.

"How much land you need?" Arthur asked him.

"Enough to grow ten gallons," said Uncle Heggy.

There never was such a funeral as we gave my Uncle Heggy—for he was a departed soul fit to be wept over good

"Gallons? Guess you mean bushels," Arthur told the old man, thinking Uncle Heggy was old and feeble and a mite forgetful.

"I don't measure corn whiskey in bushels," said Uncle Heggy. "They leak."

So Arthur gave him a corner piece of land to plow up and raise a crop of corn on, figuring he was cutting himself in on a good thing, seeing as how Uncle Heggy had a name for getting the good out of an ear of corn and into a barrel.

UNCLE HEGGY made a dugout close by his field, so's to have a private place for sleeping and sitting around. He put a wood-burning heater into it, and a chair and a cot and a copper whiskey still, which he kept hid away in case the revenue men showed up. And he had an old orange crate that he'd use for a table when he was eating his sardines.

Uncle Heggy had a right smart hankering for sardines ever since he came down from the hills. He came from the Cumberland Mountains, where he'd lived healthy for forty-eight years, helping his daddy make good corn likker. Then the Lord took the old man to his bosom, and Uncle Heggy bought himself a pair of shoes and came down from the hills.

The first town he landed in was Knoxville, and the first thought that came to his head was for a drink of hard likker. He found his way to a corner saloon, where he downed a shot of whiskey. Then he saw the free lunch counter.

"What's them?" he asked the barkeep.

"Sardines," the man said.

And that's how Uncle Heggy found him a vittle he loved until the day he took sick on Arthur's homestead and couldn't digest no more. Every day of his life after that time in Knoxville he carried a spoon and can opener in his pocket, and all the grocers Uncle Heggy met on his ramblings around the country did a land-office business selling him sardines.

From Knoxville he headed east to the Great Smoky Mountains. There he put away his shoes and found him a deep, dark gulch among the pines, and that's

where he first came to be known as the best hard-likker-maker in all civilization.

Uncle Heggy had heard tell back home that he had a brother named Reece living in the Great Smokies, and he aimed to hunt him down. When he went over to say howdy to his kinfolks thereabouts, the neighbors told him Reece had got killed off in the war, and his son Arthur had headed west before he got killed, too. It was the Hobbs-Robinson War, they said, and the Hobbses was petering out fast. When they found out Uncle Heggy was kin to Reece, they advised him to get his feet moving fast before he got himself killed too.

So Uncle Heggy came west.

When he crossed the plains of Kansas and saw those big fields of growing corn, thousands of acres of them, he got to figuring on how many barrels he could squeeze out of all those little golden kernels if they was his.

But Kansas was too much in the open for Uncle Heggy, and he kept his feet moving along until he came to the Rocky Mountains of Colorado, with their hide-away canyons where he could set peaceful for a spell.

Uncle Heggy wanted to be let be, that was all; treat his neighbors right and not devil them. All he wanted was nobody coming snooping around in his business. He kept a long-barreled Winchester handy for anybody who didn't see it his way, and who came around without holer-ing first, like real neighbors should.

Uncle Heggy had a right powerful itching in his feet. He couldn't stay put less'n he had himself high mountains and a deep canyon—and only for a short spell then. His customers was always mighty sorry to see him go, but I reckon he just couldn't help himself. The Colorado Rockies, the Sawtooths, the Tetons, the Santa Ritas—all had their canyons perfumed at one time or another with the potent steam from Uncle Heggy's still.

Sometimes a revenue man would come long-nosing around, and then there might be a little quiet trouble that no one heard much about—just a little personal



Illustrated by John Fulton

business between Uncle Heggy and the revenue man.

Uncle Heggy was a lucky cuss, though, and he claimed it was on account of his whittling. When he had nothing else much to do, he'd get out his old jack-knife and whet it up and get to whittling on a piece of stick. He seemed mighty proud of one piece of carving: up to his dying day he kept it tied around his neck on a string—a little wooden whiskey bottle with two notches cut in it. On each side of the charm was tied an empty Winchester shell. But when anyone asked him what the notches meant and how the shells were used, Uncle Heggy just shut his face tight until the conversation changed onto something else.

I RECKON he had a good time those years he was moseying around, gambling in the cities, moonshining in the mountains, always with a little change in his pocket. He didn't stay put for long anywhere—even his spells in the jail-house were short—and always did all right.

One day when he was in a grocery store laying in a stock of sardines, he pointed to a purty little bottle on the shelf, and said, "What's that stuff?"

"Vanilla extract," said the grocer, handing it to Uncle Heggy.

When Uncle Heggy saw it had alcohol in it, he bought it and downed it in one gulp. The grocer said, "God Almighty!" and looked for him to curl up his toes and turn blue. But Uncle Heggy just hitched up his pants and said, "Better gimme about a dozen of them bottles. They got a right pleasant flavor to 'em."

That's the story of how he got himself into the habit of drinking vanilla extract, just like he had eating sardines, and when his stomach went wrong on him, he rambled onto Arthur's homestead in New Mexico, aiming to end his time in peace. Uncle Heggy always had an eye on the future.

"I'm a feeble old man," he told Arthur.

That was in 1932, eight years before the Lord called him, when Uncle Heggy was seventy-four years old.

He rambled onto Arthur's homestead carrying a bedroll with his long-barreled Winchester in it, a bundle of clothes—such as they was—and a ten-gallon keg. The keg was heavy, but Arthur reckoned Uncle Heggy made heavy stuff. When Arthur asked the old man for a sample, Uncle Heggy said, "Reckon not, son. Figure to let it age a mite—till I pass on, likely. Leave it to you then." And he



"How much land you need?" Arthur asked him . . .
"Enough to grow ten gallons," said Uncle Heggy.



They promised they'd have the grave dug by the time dinner was over.

took the keg out on the prairie and buried it somewhere, private. Folks thought that was downright meanness.

"It'll be yours some day, son," said Uncle Heggy to Arthur. "It's the cream of the best hard-likker making in the Cumberland, Great Smoky, Rocky, Sawtooth, Teton and Santa Rita mountains, and I sorta think I'll hang onto it while I'm here."

When Arthur thought of all that good stuff hid away, not doing nobody one mite of good, he got a little riled—but he kept his feelings to himself because Uncle Heggy was old and maybe a little tetchèd, it seemed like.

Every spring the old man sowed his corn. During the summer he hoed out the weeds and babied and nursed the crop like a broody hen. In the fall he shucked and shelled until he had enough for ten gallons, and then he sent to town for a sack of sugar and got the old still to percolating. When he had all that good corn whiskey plugged up in a keg, he took it out, unbeknownst to all the folks, and buried it.

Every fall, after he plowed up his corn patch, he took Arthur out and showed him four wooden spikes pegged out to make a plot six foot by three, right in the middle of the patch.

"Here, son," Uncle Heggy would say to Arthur, "is where you plant me when I git the Glory Call. You're my favorite nephew, for a fact, and I'll be proud if you'll grant me this last request."

Then Arthur would get a heap of sadness for Uncle Heggy and he'd say, "You bet." Arthur respected his favorite uncle.

But this went on for eight years—eight seasons of corn-shelling and the rank smell of moonshine in the making! And not a solitary snifter for a favorite nephew!

Then came the fall when Uncle Heggy, eighty-two years old, upped and died.

The news spread from house to house in the valley like flames taking clumps

of dry grass in a prairie fire. Some folks said it was sad; some said it was a blessing because he was old and feeble and had stomach trouble; others said Uncle Heggy had been no-account anyway and the world was well rid of him. Arthur and Pomona and the kids fussed because there was a corpse in the house that needed burying, and a funeral dinner had to be laid out.

Old Man Bassett packed his woman and kids in the car and headed straight for Arthur when the news hit his house.

"We've come to offer consolation for your recent sad bereavement," he said, dipping snuff with Arthur on the woodpile, while his woman gassed with Pomona in the house and the kids played undertaker in the yard. Then Arthur and Old Man Bassett planned the burying.

"He always hankered to spend eternity in his corn patch," Arthur said. "He's got a place staked off and let me know that there's his grave and nowheres else." Arthur took a big pinch. "I've a heap of respect for dead folks, but I can't help thinkin' it warn't right for the old coot to go off like that without a 'Thank you' for what me and Pomona done for him. He's got all that good stuff buried where we can't find it, and all he left us is his dugout and his long-barreled Winchester! Honest to God, Bassett, I can't git to grievin' at his goin' too much."

EVEN if Uncle Heggy didn't show gratitude, he was sure dead, and something had to be done with him pretty quick. So Arthur got Old Man Bassett to help him make a long pine box, and when they had it done they put Uncle Heggy in it and set it up for all the mourners to see and weep over.

All through the morning the mourners came to pay respects. Some were kin to Arthur and Uncle Heggy—come out from Tennessee on account of the Hobbs-Robinson War—and others were just

neighbors. And while all this grieving was going on, Pomona fixed a big dinner of beans, hog meat, raw sauerkraut, corn bread, cake and big pots of coffee.

When the menfolks gathered around the box and looked down at the remains, probably some of them thought of the soul that had gone, but mostly they thought of all that good stuff that had gone, too. One and all, they had a mighty thirsty look. Because Arthur had bragged up Uncle Heggy to have such a reputation as a first-class hard-likker maker.

Then Arthur nailed up the box, and he and Old Man Bassett got a spade and promised they'd have the grave dug by the time dinner was over. The rest of the folks sat down to eat.

The womenfolks were sad because of Uncle Heggy passing away, and the men grieved too, because there wasn't a snifter of good corn likker in the house—and them come to the funeral of a real old-time moonshiner!

Then, all of a sudden, Arthur and Old Man Bassett came stomping in, out of breath from hurrying, and each was carrying a ten-gallon keg. The kegs were coated with dirt and plenty heavy. They thumped them down and the neighbors and kinfolks gathered around. Old Man Bassett pried the stopper from the bung-hole in his keg, and the smell of eight-year-old moonshine made everybody feel sort of warm and good all over.

"Look at the bead on it!" said Bassett, pouring some out in a cup.

Everybody sampled it and bragged over Uncle Heggy's manufacture, except Arthur, because he'd pulled the stopper from his keg and not a drop came out.

"It ain't liquid," said Arthur, "but it's heavy."

He got an ax and smashed the keg to splinters.

THE first thing anybody knew, there on the floor among the splinters was the biggest pile of greenbacks and silver dollars anyone there had ever seen. And there was a note written in pencil:

To my favorite nephew, Arthur Hobbs, I leave all this cash. It should be two thousand one hundred and one dollars and sixty-three cents. Better count it, son.

Signed, Heggy Hobbs.

"We found them in the grave," yelled Arthur, all het up. "Eight kegs of likker and one with cash. . . . Right where Uncle Heggy wanted to be buried."

All the folks crowded around and thumped him on the back, and allowed as how his uncle was a fine old man who rightly ought to have a ripsnorting funeral party. So a couple of the menfolks went out and brought in another keg, and there never was such goings-on as there was that night in old Uncle Heggy's memory.

And that's how all the mourners came to look on Uncle Heggy as a departed soul fit to be wept over good: a man who'd had a good life, made good stuff, did no one no harm—except a couple of revenue men, maybe—and didn't forget his kinfolks after he'd gone to Glory.

THE END



AT ALGODONES

HE WAS bony-framed, this Foley, with a shock of graying hair and skin like old parchment. He had been hard-used by the years, and dissipation had left its mark on him, but he was brassy and tough and of an age difficult to determine.

McCuen, the super, had come into the chief dispatcher's office in time to hear Foley spieling off his line.

Where had he worked? Hell, he'd pounded brass in all the Western Union mains in his time. He'd been an AP operator; he'd worked brokerage offices and in the telegraph rooms of the big dailies in N'Yawk an' Beantown.

The best in the business in his day—the great Foley.

The chief slid a glance at McCuen. The printing telegraph had knocked off Morse telegraphers in the big time a lot of years ago. Since the big rush began, these old-timers had started

crawling out of their holes, gaunt in the belly and hungry to get at a telegraph key again.

McCuen sized Foley up without enthusiasm. Those watery eyes said he had a ball under his belt right now.

"That's all right, Foley," the super said. "You may have been a good brass-pounder in your day—perhaps you still are—but a railroad job is no place for a boozier."

Foley's lip curled. "All right, I lift one now an' then. So what?"

"So we're going to give you a tryout," the chief said.

"I certainly appreciate that," Foley sneered.

"I hope you're man enough to realize your responsibility," the chief said, "and live up to it." He wrote out a pass. "You will leave here on No. 8, and take over the third trick at Algodones tonight."

So Foley had a job—the first steady job in years, unless you counted the WPA a steady job—but it had taken a world war to land it.

The only reason he had applied for a job, here at Del Rosa, was because he'd heard they used Morse for train dispatching on the Second District of the Canyon Division. Most roads had switched to the telephone long ago, with Morse merely as a stand-by. Foley had wanted one more fling at lightning slinging.

Well, now he was going to have it—and that deserved a drink. He went across the street and hoisted a couple before No. 8 pulled in.

Foley hated Algodones from the moment he climbed off No. 8. A tank town in the middle of nowhere.

Foley was a city man. Skid Row, Los Angeles. He was a charter member of Sun Bums, Madison Square.



The great cylinder and crashing side rods seemed almost to brush Mary Callan's skirt.

by Charles W. Tyler

He stood on the platform at Algodones and drank in the scene, wry-faced, like a man taking a dose of bit-
ters. Foley had seen dumps like this in the horse operas. A few false-fronted buildings lining a dusty street, a few weathered houses, a two-story hotel with a gallery across the front.

A steel semaphore mast was thrust up against the sky, its two outflung arms commanding the single-track main line.

The ragged rims of the Sangre del Salvador del east, with the Llano Pintado—the Painted Plains—spread like a patterned carpet before their blue ramparts. Heat devils performed their Salome dances on the sagebrush flats, reaching away to the end of the world.

The only thing that gave Foley any cheer at all was a faded saloon sign—that and the murmur of telegraph instruments coming from the station.

There was a girl in the telegraph office, copying a train order, and having a time of it. Foley stood in the doorway watching her, his veined face contemptuous. Plainly, this dame was a ham—a beginner. She kept breaking—opening the key and asking the dispatcher to repeat, a sort of telegraphic “beg pardon.”

The cracking sounder said clearly enough that the man at the other end was fast losing patience.

“What’s the matter, sister?” Foley’s tone was caustic.

Two startled brown eyes flashed his way. “What do you want?”

Foley deliberately lighted a cigarette, knowing that the dispatcher would be fairly frothing. “I’m the third-trick lightnin’ slinger for this dump.” He waved his hand. “Go right ahead. Don’t mind me.”

“I’ll never make a telegrapher!” There were tears in her eyes. “They send so fast.”

“Let me sit in there a minute,” Foley growled.

She surrendered the chair, eyeing the newcomer doubtfully. Foley sat down and reached for the key. He glanced at the half-completed train

order, as he rapped a curt “GA”—go ahead.

The dispatcher picked up where he had left off. Foley copied the remainder of the train order with the easy lassitude of the veteran telegrapher. He repeated the order back in blazing-fast dots and dashes.

“There you are, kid,” he said to the girl. His words had a swagger.

She smiled. “Thank you.” She went on, “I’ve only been out of telegraph school a little while.”

“Them ham factories are the bunk,” Foley said. “But you’ll learn.”

“I’m Mary Callan.” She held out her hand.

The grip of her fingers was firm, sincere, and some small spark was touched off in Foley’s whiskey-thinned blood. “The name’s Foley.” Old Rumdum Foley. “Rumdum” had been a telegrapher’s term for a boozier.

Mary Callan’s eyes twinkled. “Us Irish have to stick together.”

“Yeah.” Then: “How come you’re hangin’ around out in this cockeyed desert, workin’ for peanuts? Them dames in the war plants on the Coast are makin’ real dough.”

“I thought I could do more to help here,” Mary said. “The P.C.&T. is desperate for operators. And—well, I guess railroading is in my blood. You see, dad is an engineer, and Johnny, my husband, worked in the shops in Del Rosa. But Johnny’s in the Navy now—somewhere in the Pacific.”

Foley looked at her, the hard, cynical Foley who had long ago soured on the world, noticing how her face all lighted up when she spoke of this Johnny.

“That’s him.” The girl indicated the picture of a nice-looking kid in a Navy uniform on the wall.

There had never been room for romance in Foley’s life; he didn’t know anything about love. As he had always said with wry humor, whiskey gave you a hangover in the morning, but when a man got married he had a hangover for life.

A time freight came roaring out of the west. The two big engines at the head of the long drag of yellow “reefers,” or refrigerator cars, stormed down on Algodones. The whistle of the lead engine blasted a peremptory demand for the challenging signal above the depot.

Algodones held a 19 order for the freight—the one Mary had had trouble copying. A 19 order was delivered on the fly. Mary Callan fastened the train-order tissues and the clearance slips to the hoops, and went out to the platform.

Foley watched her. She looked like a mouse, standing beside the path of a

There wasn't much Rumdum Foley didn't know about railroad telegraphy — except the one lesson he'd never learn — that whiskey drinking and railroading form a dynamite combination



Illustrated by Ray Johnson

A sounder was banging in his ear. Foley forced his eyes open.

couple of Martian monsters. The green fruit job came on, all nice and bluster. The girl at the edge of the platform held one of the two hoops over her head.

It was a helluva note, Foley told himself, havin' to hoop up orders like that. Most roads had erected train-order racks to hold the hoops—one high for the fireman to snag, and one lower for the rear brakeman.

The great cylinder and crashing side rods seemed almost to brush the girl's skirt. The hoop was flipped away, to be discarded down the track when the train-order flimsy had been removed. The fireman's hail came back, a small sound against the tumult of the train.

Mary was making a running inspection now, watching for possible smoking journals and equipment dragging. A rowdy cavalcade of wheels flowed past, and the girl held the second hoop for the figure on the caboose steps, then signaled that everything was all right.

Foley knew a moment's grudging admiration. The kid was all right. It took nerve for a girl to tackle a job like this.

Foley signed for a room at the hotel up the street. It was better than the flophouse he'd called home, there on

Fifth Street in Los, but it was pretty lousy, at that. Small-town stuff, any way you looked at it.

The room retained some of the day's heat, and there were flies. Foley's jaundiced eye took in the meager furnishings, the old-time commode, with its chipped pitcher and bowl, while the flowered chamber in its cupboard below brought a snort.

He looked out of the window—looked out on a land that might have been the palette on which the gods had mixed the pigments of the world at the beginning of creation. Great artists had tried to catch and record the glory of the Llano Pintado, but to Foley there was only hateful emptiness. He guessed he wouldn't be stayin' in Algodones long. There must be better jobs than holdin' down a trick in the stinkin' desert.

AFTER supper, he gravitated into the saloon next door. He killed time until around eleven, then headed for the station. He took a pint along, slyly tucking the bottle under the platform planking.

Mary Callan looked fagged out. Traffic, she told Foley, had been heavy. A lot of troop trains were on the move. Some of the hot shots were running in up to five sections. There had been endless train orders to copy and deliver, hurry-

ing trains to OS, or report, running inspections to be made.

Foley felt some small sense of guilt. He could have come back earlier and helped her out, just as well as not. Still, he was gettin' paid for eight hours, and that was what he was puttin' in.

Mary explained the routine, and prepared the transfer, which indicated outstanding train orders, undelivered messages and the numbers of all overdue trains. Several times Foley was aware that the girl was watching him. He guessed mebbe she had smelled liquor on his breath.

He thought once she was going to make a crack about drinking, as McCuen had. But she didn't; she said, instead, "You know, railroading is like football. If every member of the team does his job they advance the ball, but if even one fails to do what he's supposed to do, it can spoil everything."

Foley was going to say, "So what?" but Mary's genuinely friendly smile parried that. "You remember Knute Rocke's last great team, and their perfect timing?"

Foley said, "That was the year Bucky O'Conner ran wild, an' the Irish upset Southern California in the Coliseum."

"You understand what I mean then, don't you, Foley?"

"Yeah, I get it."

"This war is the biggest game ever," she went on, "and the railroads are giving everything they've got. The steel rail is the first line of supply. American fighting men all over the world are depending on the railroads to bring up the ammunition."

Foley felt he was being lectured. If anyone else had done it, he would have blown up, but a guy couldn't get sore at Mary Callan. Mary was a nice kid.

Foley took over at midnight. Mary stayed on for a time, helping him to get the feel of things. She said Mike Gonzales, the agent-operator on the day trick, had been around to learn if the new man had arrived, and might be back.

"A spick, eh?" Foley said contemptuously.

"A Mexican," Mary corrected. "Mike is an old-timer on the road." She added, "Mike lost a son at Bataan, and another boy is a prisoner in Osaka, Japan."

THE war had not come close to Foley. Living in the backwash of Skid Row, he hadn't come in contact with the homes where war had left its scar. He knew in a remote sort of way that folks received announcements from the War Department of sons, brothers and husbands killed or missing in action, but that was a far cry from Foley's world.

The dusty relays on the shelf over the telegraph table kept up a constant mutter. The banging sounder in the resonator cried incessantly of train movement in a jargon that at times baffled Foley.

Train reports were forever snapping from stations along the line. Extra 5380 west was by Paraje; Main 103, a troop train, was out of McCarty's; First No. 4 was running thirty minutes late; Third No. 7 was showing at Amargosa:

Del Rosa called Algodones, and the dispatcher flashed, "19 copy 3." Three copies of a 19 order.

There was a typewriter on the table. He adjusted the carbon sheets and inserted the metal backing.

The sounder was already firing the order at him—the number, the date, to "C.&E. Second No. 7 . . ."

He had hardly finished repeating it back when the headlight of the passenger train to which the order was addressed showed in the darkness to the east. The man before the train sheet at Del Rosa was shaving them fine tonight, as he was forced to make quick decisions, take advantage of every possible opportunity to keep the rush of traffic moving.

The sound of the train swept down on Algodones, and the whistle shouted imperiously for the "board"—the stern red eye of the signal at the masthead above the depot.

Mary said, "You'll have to hurry."

Foley wasn't used to hurrying for anybody; he didn't like to be crowded. He went out to the platform with his hoops and his lantern. There was a solid wall of sound now, and a headlight boring down on him. The exhaust of the big passenger hauler eased a little, but the man at the throttle was plainly reluctant to check the roll as the train came out of the sag east of the station.

Foley wasn't too sure of himself, and none too steady. He set himself reluctantly, back a little from the platform's edge.

The varnish job came on like an iron-ringed thunderbolt, and a tornado and earthquake enveloped him.

There was a violent concussion, and Foley was caught in a swirling torrent of warm air, smelling of hot oil and steam.

Great eighty-inch drivers whirled past and the flare of the firebox danced before his eyes; jostling trucks racketed in the tempest. Crashing tumult filled Foley's brain. He seemed to wilt and shrivel.

He cringed away, having not the slightest notion of what had happened to the hoop, but dimly aware that it was gone.

A blur of rocking cars streamed past. Somewhere down the rank of Pullmans a lantern winked from a vestibule. Foley set himself, as he brought the other hoop into position. Almost instantly it was snatched from his grip.

There was a cloud of stinging dust, an ebbing tide of sound. Foley shook his fist after the taunting red eyes on the last car, cursing through his teeth.

In the door of the telegraph office, Mary Callan was saying, "Those hoggers (engineers) are supposed to slow to around thirty miles an hour when we hoop up orders, but mostly they don't."

"Some of them guys will be walkin' back for their orders," Foley said thickly. "I ain't crazy about gettin' my britches fanned like that every day."

"You'll get used to it," Mary said. "You're doing swell."

Yeah, he was doin' swell. Well, they could take their bloody job an' go jump in the lake.

When Mary Callan had gone, Foley brought forth the bottle from under the platform. He needed a bracer.

SLUMPED in his chair in the telegraph office, Foley gave himself over to morose reflections. The day of the old Morse code was about done. It was bowing out forever. Years ago, the Western Union had started replacing brass-pounders with machines—the Barclay Printer, the Multiplex, the Morkrum and finally the teletype. The railroads had turned, for the most part, to the telephone for dispatching. And now over long stretches the telephone was giving way to CTC—Centralized Traffic Control—a machine that opened and closed switches a hundred miles away, that signaled trains in and out of passing tracks with lights.

The war had just given the Morse operator a shot in the arm, but when the shooting was over the telegraph would be as dead as the dodo.

Foley closed his eyes, and his mind spanned the misty gulf of yesterday. He was working one side of a hot Western Union circuit, banging out messages, one every minute. . . . He was copying sizzling AP stuff, typing six and seven words behind the sender, as he translated the tricky word abbreviations of the Phillips' Code. . . . Now he was in the telegraph room of the *Boston Post*, the *New York Sun*. . . .

The dispatcher was calling Algodones: "AN, AN, AN—DS." But Foley just sat, his chin sunk against his chest, listening to voices of the past—the clamor of telegraph sounders, the high drone of a big Western Union office.

Then the pleasant chant faded, merged into a persistent hammering. A sounder was banging in his ear. He forced his eyes open, scowling at the raucous in-

strument. That guy was sore as a boil.

Foley lighted a cigarette. "Just keep your shirt on, old hoss." He opened the key. "I—I—AN."

The sounder almost smoked. It wanted to know where the operator had been: it wanted to know if Extra 3780 was in sight; it wanted Algodones to take a 19 order. On the books Extra 3780 west was Main 103. "Main" meant that the General Staff had originated a troop movement, aimed at the Pacific Coast. It could mean grief, and a lot of it.

The dispatcher wanted to run Main 103 around a fast freight at Escalante instead of Soledad.

Foley copied the order. A headlight pin-pointed the night on the eastern desert rim. A big 4-8-4 northern-type passenger engine was walking the troop train down the railroad.

There was time for Foley to repeat the order, time for him to make out the clearance forms, fasten the tissues to the hoops and get out to the platform—if he hurried. But he didn't. Foley took his own sweet time, with the result that Main 103 had to stop.

A Main train, racing to the Coast to keep a date with a convoy, lost precious minutes. Fighting men, going to join the battles of the Pacific, waited there in the high desert for Foley.

Other trains up and down the Second District were thrown off stride; the dispatcher's hair-drawn calculations were knocked into a cocked hat. Stopping the 3780 at Algodones meant added work for operators, for train crews; it meant the delay of vital war trains, the first line of supply.

But that didn't bother Foley. It wasn't his war. He was just an old has-been, thumpin' a trick out in, the sagebrush. When the emergency was over he'd be bounced on his ear, discarded like a busted platter.

MIKE GONZALES was a swarthy little man, with gray-streaked hair and a seamed face. His eyes were bright, but back of that brightness there was a cloud. Mike had never quite reconciled himself to the fact that Pedro wasn't coming home, ever. Big, happy-go-lucky Pedro.

And there was Joe, a prisoner of the Japs. Mike had been hearing a lot about the way the Japs treated prisoners.

Mike showed up at the telegraph office a little after six, almost two hours before it was time to take over the first trick. But it was busy around seven, and he thought he might help the new man out.

Foley, however, resented the agent's desire to be helpful. He thought Mike was just being noseey, and he didn't like Mexicans, anyway. Too, he'd had a curtain-raiser along about daybreak. He was in the mood to tell this guy off if he peeped about smelling whiskey on his breath. But if Mike noticed it he made no comment.

Just before Foley left the office, a wire came through from McCuen. The super wanted to know why the troop train had been delayed at Algodones.

Mike frowned. "What was the matter, Foley?"

"Listen, pal," (Continued on page 96)

The super-patriotic General has been badgering his Allies for years. Now he looms as Europe's No. 1 trouble-maker and America's next big headache overseas



General Charles de Gaulle—idol of French millions

The truth about De Gaulle

by Joachim Joesten

AMERICA'S next big headache in Europe is going to be General Charles de Gaulle. He is without question the leading chauvinist in Europe today. He is also an expert thrower of monkey wrenches. And he commands the fanatical allegiance of millions of Frenchmen to whom he is Joan of Arc, Cardinal Richelieu and Napoleon all wrapped in one.

The lanky, angular general, who wields the prerogatives of President of the French Republic as well as the functions of Premier, did not await Hitler's exit to make his bow as Europe's number one trouble-maker. He has been consistently badgering his allies for years. But it is since the defeat of Germany that General de Gaulle has been going after mischief in a really big way.

In February, 1944, de Gaulle gave high hopes of an enlightened colonial post-war policy. He promised a complete reversal of French administrative policy: Instead of the highly centralized and oppressive government methods in use before the war, and under the Vichy regime, the Free French leader pledged recognition of tribal groups, better education for the natives, a large measure of self-government and generally a more humane treatment of Africa's downtrodden millions.

It looked like the beginning of a new era, but it was only a mirage. The handsome promises were broken, literally, on V-E Day. On that joyful date,

food riots broke out among the famished natives of the Algerian hinterland. A number of French officials were killed in the disturbances.

Instead of merely halting the disorders and punishing the guilty, the French on orders from de Gaulle resorted to indiscriminate mass reprisals. Punitive expeditions were sent out with instructions to kill and burn. They leveled entire Arab communities and mowed down the inhabitants. The French Air Force joined in with more than three hundred sorties against the practically defenseless "rebels." When it all was over, the French government admitted that the Arabs had suffered 905 casualties, but an American correspondent, Jack Foisie of *Stars and Stripes*, reported on May 28 that 10,000 had been killed or wounded.

A few weeks later de Gaulle's troops gave a repeat performance in Syria. Following the breakdown of negotiations between France and the governments of her former mandates of Syria and Lebanon—to which she had granted full independence in 1944, except for retaining a few privileges—de Gaulle decided to underline his arguments with a display of military power.

On May 17 French reinforcements began to arrive in the two countries. Armored cars rumbled through crowd-

ed Arab quarters. Machine guns were posted at street intersections and bazaars. The Moslem population was outraged by low-flying aircraft circling the mosques at the hour of prayer.

For three days, May 29 to 31, the French bombed and shelled Syria's crowded capital, Damascus, with everything they had; the center of the city was almost completely demolished and hundreds were killed. Palmyra, Deir ez-Zor, and other places were given a similar treatment. Final figures on Syrian casualties alone ran to 800 killed and 2,500 wounded.

The slaughter was halted only through the quick and vigorous intervention of Great Britain, fully supported by the United States. Thus the action undertaken in the name of French prestige ended in an unprecedented fiasco. For the first time France really lost face with the Arab world.

Instead of the special privileges which peaceful dealings might have secured, France got the boot in the Near East. French troops were evacuated under British supervision. De Gaulle swallowed hard but he had to take his medicine, for France, only recently liberated from four years of Nazi domination, evidently is not yet in a position to wage war against Great Britain. All the French could do under

the circumstances was to fall back on the set policy of sullenness toward the British and Americans which de Gaulle initiated as early as 1941.

Whenever somebody opposes the general's plans and ambitions, he pouts, sulks and withdraws into his shell. Neither Prime Minister Churchill nor President Roosevelt could get along with him. The latter once described de Gaulle as the "prima donna" of international relations, and the State Department has a standing joke about his being a reincarnation of Joan of Arc.

The parallel really is quite apt. De Gaulle is inspired by the same ardent patriotism and the same mystic belief in his mission that won eternal glory for Joan. He is as pious and as courageous a warrior, and he leads a life as austere as did the saintly Fifteenth Century maiden. But above all, he hates the British as fervently as did Joan.

This antagonism to the British, like de Gaulle's on-again-off-again flirtation with Russia, must be viewed simply as a function of the general's paramount ambition: that France shall be great again, that she shall be treated as an equal of the Big Three, and that the balance of power on the continent shall firmly lie in her hands. This attitude, in turn, faithfully reflects French military tradition as cultivated at St. Cyr (the West Point of France), of which de Gaulle is a graduate.

For years, the compelling psychological motive behind General de Gaulle's actions has been wounded national pride. First he was deeply hurt by the ignominious collapse of France in 1940. Next, he received the impression that he and his country were being deliberately slighted by the major

Allies, and in particular by President Roosevelt. Even after common victory, he felt let down by the Big Three, who refused to admit his claim that France without delay should be given equal rank with them in Europe and the world.

Thus, General de Gaulle, with characteristic obstinacy, closes his eyes to the self-evident historical truth that a country which has suffered such grievous wounds as France, whose entire army has spent years in prison camps, and two-thirds of whose navy has been destroyed, cannot be reconverted overnight into a first-rate power. Even if she had never been defeated and occupied, France, because of her comparatively limited population and resources, would barely be able to hold her own alongside Russia, Great Britain and the United States. In her present state of incipient convalescence she cannot possibly hope to compete on equal terms with these giants. All her allies are agreed that France must be given an opportunity and every possible assistance to recuperate and to resume her rightful place in Europe, but such a process takes time, and de Gaulle's escapades instead of hastening it actually tend to retard it.

Foreign policy dominates his every thought. Long before the liberation of France he had it all figured out: France must take the lead in forming a West-European combination of states which, in conjunction with the sprawling French domain overseas, is to become a real counterweight to the British Empire.

France today is hungry, disorganized, short of all the things that make life livable. Yet, in the eyes of the patriotically supercharged mystic that is de

Gaulle, only one thing really matters: the grandeur of France.

Hence, at a time when the chaotic economy of France cries out for manpower and materials badly needed for the most urgent tasks of reconstruction, de Gaulle keeps 1,500,000 men under arms and gives armaments priority over rehabilitation.

French miners clamor for higher wages and better living conditions: de Gaulle sends troops to occupy a frontier valley in Italy. Paris housewives demonstrate at empty food markets: de Gaulle promises to annex the Rhineland.

In France, opposition is growing against the cavalier and sterile policies of de Gaulle. Not only the Communists, who roundly denounce de Gaulle's preoccupation with prestige while France goes hungry and cold, but also more moderate resistance groups have turned against him lately. In the recent Levantine crisis de Gaulle's own foreign minister, Georges Bidault, threatened to resign in protest against the reckless use of military force in Syria. And France's venerable elder statesman, Edouard Herriot, has openly condemned the policy of deliberate ingratitude and ill humor toward Great Britain which de Gaulle personifies.

General de Gaulle, because of his gallantry, stout-heartedness and real leadership while France was in bondage, unquestionably is entitled to a high and decorative post such as that of President of the Republic. But he should step down, or should be forced out, as head of the executive, before it is too late. For one of these days one of the Big Three is going to lose patience with him and slap him down hard.

THE END

Ambitious to restore France's grandeur, de Gaulle's every thought is of foreign policy. Below, the General receives the Sultan of Morocco.

With Churchill in Paris, The General has no love for the British.

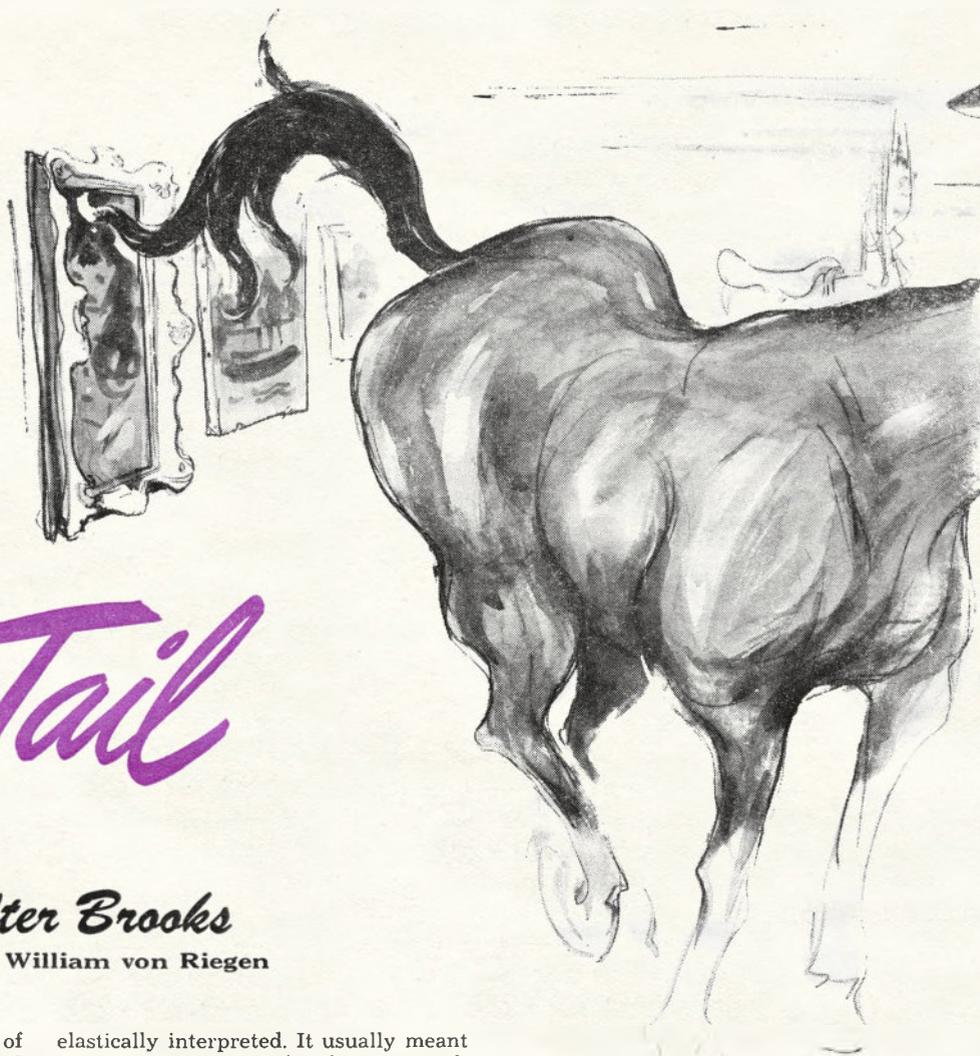


With Teeth

and Tail

by *Walter Brooks*

Illustrated by *William von Riegen*



"It's a different technique than the one I used before," Ed said.

"I'll say they do!" said Mr. Pope. "A couple of nice coats of white paint would be the most satisfactory alteration." He looked gloomily at Mrs. Pope. "And so?"

"Well, darling, you know you can't get a hall bedroom in New York nowadays, much less a studio. And you see, too, Mr. Copley lives only about five miles from here; he could easily drive over. It did seem such a pity when she feels it's her big chance. And after all, it won't be for long, and she can work out in the barn so she won't be messing the house up with her paints. Those double doors face north, and if you throw them open it will make a perfect studio."

"Maybe we could bed her down in the box stall," said Mr. Pope, "and then she wouldn't have to come into the house at all. Lord, it's going to be tough on Ed."

Mrs. Pope sniffed. "I think consid-

THIS Wilbur Pope had a lot of things to be thankful for. He had a nice house in Mt. Kisco, and he had a good job as account executive with the advertising firm of Lamson, Camphire, Leatherbee & Wallet, and he had a beautiful wife. And he had his horse, Ed, on whom he used to ride around the country, weekends.

Of course, like everybody else he had his tribulations. Many of his friends thought that Ed was one of these, and indeed Ed did look a good deal like a tribulation. Particularly when he looked at you down his long bony nose with that sardonic eye. You certainly would never have taken him for a saddle horse. He had thick ankles, an ewe neck, and a general appearance of having been put together by an inferior workman from odds and ends left over from the manufacture of various other animals. But Mr. Pope was very fond of him.

Among Mr. Pope's tribulations Mrs. Pope's relatives had a very high rating. There were rafts of them, and one or another was always coming to New York for a week or two of shopping and mild debauchery, and of course they couldn't leave without seeing dear Carlotta—which was Mrs. Pope's name. "Seeing Carlotta," however, was pretty

elastically interpreted. It usually meant coming out to visit for from a week to—in extreme cases—six months. It was Cousin Edith Manley who had once stayed six months.

Now Mr. Pope didn't dislike Cousin Edith, but six months is too much of anybody's cousin, and when Mrs. Pope informed him one evening on his return from the city that she had invited Cousin Edith to come out for a week or two, he blew up.

Mrs. Pope listened to him fizzle and pop until he ran down, and then she said quietly, "Yes, darling. I know it's a nuisance, but we can't help it. It would be just too mean not to ask her this time. You see, this last winter she met Harmon Copley somewhere—"

"Harmon Copley, the art dealer?"

"Yes. And he said that if she'd bring some of her things to New York he'd come look at them, and if he liked them he'd give her a show at his gallery."

"He must be crazy," said Mr. Pope.

"He was probably just being polite. Anyway, she's come, and she's been trying to find a studio in the city where she can do a little work on some of her paintings before she shows them to him. She said some of them needed fixing up a little."



Ed was bawdy, Rabelaisian—even for a horse—and Cousin Edith was an inhibited old maid. So, when he set out to portray her subconscious mind, it's no wonder he nearly shocked her out of her wits!

eration for Cousin Edith comes before you: moldy old horse." She was always a little acid where Ed was concerned. "After all, she's my own first cousin."

"Well, I wouldn't brag about it," said Mr. Pope. "Oh well, there's one consolation. When Copley gets a look at the things, the party will be over—and quick!"

After dinner Mr. Pope went out to talk it all over with Ed. I don't mean he was going to talk it over the way lots of men talk things over with their horses or dogs, just a sort of monologue that they pretend the animal understands. There isn't much satisfaction in that. But Ed wasn't one of these yes-animals. Ed could talk. He could answer back—and frequently did in no uncertain terms.

"Who is she?" he asked, when Mr. Pope told him that Cousin Edith was coming.

"An artist," Mr. Pope said. "She was before your time here. She'll probably be after your time, too, for she never leaves until she's put out." He went over to the harness closet and got out

the bottle of Scotch, and he and Ed had a drink, and then he said, "I won't put it back yet. You may need another shot." And he told Ed that Cousin Edith was going to paint in the stable.

Ed was indignant. "It's an invasion of my private rights under the Constitution! You can't do this to me, Wilb. . . . Here, give me my smellin' salts."

Mr. Pope passed him the bottle. "It can't be helped. Ed," he said. "You see—"

"Can't be helped—can't be helped!" Ed interrupted furiously. "There ain't nothin' but can be helped if it ain't happened yet. Write her you got small-pox. Tell her there's mice in the stable. There is, you know."

Mr. Pope shook his head. "There's one thing I'll say for Cousin Edith. She would allow neither mice nor germs, neither rats, lions nor centipedes, to stand between her and the practice of what she calls Art. No, Ed, you'll just have to put up with it."

"Yeah? Well, I ain't goin' to. How would your wife like it if I was to invite one of my cousins here and

stable him in *her* livin' room? It's just the same thing." His voice dropped to a pleading note. "Ain't you got any respect for the sanctity of the home? This ain't any marble palace, God wot, but it's the best you've seen fit to give me, and after I got reconciled to livin' in such a dump—well, I'm fond of the place, Wilb. It's my little home—humble, dirty, full of mice—but still, such as it is, my lowly cot, my refuge from the busy world. I'm happy here, Wilb, with all my little possessions about me. With the bin full of oats and the bottle in the harness closet. It's all I've got, Wilb. And you'd bring a female artist into it!"

Mr. Pope grinned unsympathetically. "I expect it'll brighten up the old place quite a lot. You ought to thank me—bringing Art into the Home! Your drab walls hung with rich paintings—it'll do wonders for your cultural development. You'll probably become a connoisseur."

"I'll probably become a squeakin' lunatic," said Ed. "Some guys never learn. Didn't you have enough grief with that little Delisier chick next

door, that you want to have another female artist around?"

"Oh, Cousin Edith isn't a professional artist like Delisier," Mr. Pope said. "I mean, she's never sold anything, except maybe to relatives."

"I've seen 'em," Ed said. "Up north of Boston, miles of easels along the shore, and a Cousin Edith behind every one, peckin' away at a six-by-six canvas board. And when it rains—settin' up an old bottle and a couple wilted cabbages in front of a Chinese screen."

"Well, what of it if they enjoy it?" said Mr. Pope. "Anyway, she's coming, and I expect you to behave yourself. I promise I'll get rid of her as soon as I can."

But this was mere whistling in the dark on Mr. Pope's part. Cousin Edith may have been short on talent, but she was long on enthusiasm, and was enthusiastic about the stable. She spent the first day uncrating pictures and hanging them, and when Mr. Pope came home that evening and had greeted her, she insisted on taking him right out to see what she had done. She was a short woman in her late forties, inclining to double chins and coyness, and she took him by the hand and dragged him out to the stable. "There! Would you have believed that this old place could have been made so charming?"

Mr. Pope gasped. The paintings he had expected, but not the lengths of tattered brocade and silk that draped and hid all familiar objects, even the lawn mower in the corner. Odds and ends of discarded furniture had been hauled down from the hayloft and adapted. "That old chair," said Cousin Edith; "it was an awful old wreck, but throw a bit of stuff over it and it becomes a royal throne!" She bugged her eyes at him triumphantly.

"Yes," said Mr. Pope. "Er—yes." He pulled himself together. "Quite regal. You've done wonders with this old place, Cousin Edith."

His eye slid around cautiously toward Ed's stall, and again he gasped. For the horse's hindquarters were dimly visible between the folds of long flowered cretonne curtains which had been tacked up on each side of the stall.

Cousin Edith laughed delightedly. "Isn't that cute?"

"No one but you, Cousin Edith," he

said, "could have thought up such a refinement. And how are you and Ed getting along?"

"Oh, beautifully! He's such a dear, Wilbur! He stamped and snorted a good deal when I was putting them up, but I went right in and explained to him, and he quieted right down."

"I don't keep him tied, you know," Mr. Pope said. "He has the run of the place and he's in and out a lot. I hope," he said, raising his voice, "that he won't knock over any of your things. I'd have to beat him if he did."

Later, when Cousin Edith was in the house, Mr. Pope came back.

Ed came out of his stall. "Hell and fury, Wilb," he said, "look at them damn curtains! I don't feel respectable going in and out of this place. First thing you know she'll be sprayin' me with one of them little perfumery atomizers."

"Not a bad idea," Mr. Pope said. "But I'm afraid the cost would be prohibitive. She'd have to use a whale*of a lot to get any results."

"Very funny," said Ed. "Ver-ee funny! All right, if you won't do anything, I'm goin' to take measures myself."

"No rough stuff," Mr. Pope warned him.

"No, no," said Ed. "You know me, Wilb. The subtle touch, the iron hoof in the velvet shoe, eh? Leave it to me."

"No!" said Mr. Pope firmly. "I'm with you on this, Ed, but if there's any monkey business Carlotta will side with Cousin Edith, and we'll be a lot worse off then, let me tell you."

"Okay," said Ed resignedly. "Kindly step aside. I wish to return to my boudoir." He clumped off and disappeared between the cretonne curtains.

During the next few days Mr. Pope was gratified to find that Ed was behaving with unusual discretion. Cousin Edith spent most of the daylight hours in the stable, touching up and repainting parts of her pictures in preparation for Mr. Copley's inspection. She reported that Ed was a much more satisfactory companion than many humans with whom she had shared studios. "He's as quiet as a mouse," she said. "And you know, he seems as if he were really interested in what I'm doing. He often comes up and looks over my shoulder—sometimes for an hour at a time."

Ed explained, when Mr. Pope asked

him about this, that he was making a virtue of necessity. "You won't let me kick her through the roof, so I got to do something, don't I? I might as well learn how these artists work. I might want to take it up myself some time. And you know, Wilb, it's kind of fascinatin' tryin' to figure out what she's doing. Like these here puzzles. Take that picture she's got of a herd of elephants standin' on the seashore lookin' off into the sunset—"

"She hasn't got any picture of elephants," said Mr. Pope.

"She sure has. That one that hung over your old work bench, remember?"

"That's a group of fish houses that she painted down around Gloucester one year," Mr. Pope said.

"Fish houses! Well, they sure look like elephants to me. They're that same putty color. That just shows you how art can fool you, don't it?"

Mr. Pope said, "All Cousin Edith's houses are that putty color, kind of gray and mushy. I think it's because she's so undecided about everything. She probably can't ever make up her mind what color it looks like."

"When's the guy comin' to look at the stuff?" Ed said.

"She says she'll be ready for him next week. And then, thank heaven, we'll be rid of her! He'll tell her they're no good and she'll pack up and go."

"AIN'T so sure," said Ed. "There's more to this art business than just paintin' something that looks like something. Of course I ain't a dealer, but dealers want to handle stuff that other folks like to look at, and I kind of like some of these things, Wilb. Take that one of the three zombies sittin' around the stone table in the graveyard at midnight—"

"Zombies!" Mr. Pope exclaimed.

"Well, maybe they're ghouls dissectin' a corpse. I ain't up on the supernatural."

"You ass, that's a tea party! Three women sitting around a tea table on a lawn"

"Yeah?" said Ed. "Well, that just shows you. I bet this griper'll take the whole lot. And she'll have to stay here all summer to paint him some more."

"Well, that would suit you, wouldn't it? You're such pals."

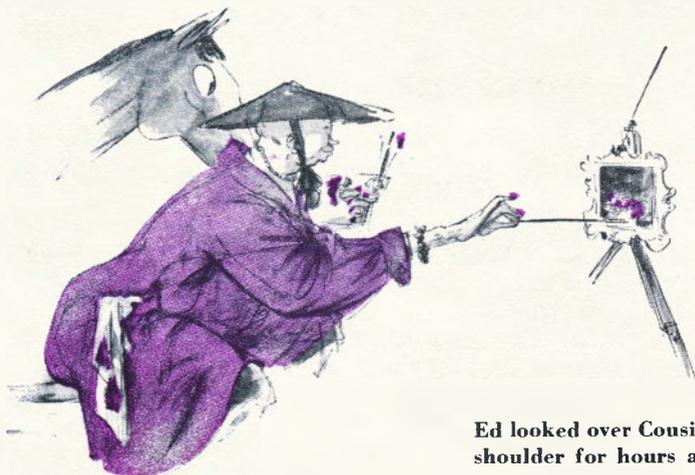
They were sitting under a tree by the roadside and between them was a paper bag containing six empty beer bottles Ed got up. "Come on," he said coldly "Let's take the empties back."

"What's the matter with you?" Mr. Pope demanded.

"Look, Wilb," said the horse slowly "I'm layin' off this dame because you want me to. I got to get a little fun out of it. But if I had my way—"

"All right, all right," said Mr. Pope "But you just let nature take its course Nature can lick art any day. I assure you that in a week Cousin Edith will be only an unhappy memory."

Well, of course she wasn't—not in a week, or two weeks. She repainted nearly every canvas she had brought with her, some of them several times. In an effort to hasten things, the Popes dragged out to look at them for the



Ed looked over Cousin Edith's shoulder for hours at a time.



Ed looked out and smirked. "Pretty vulgar display, eh, Wilb?" he said.

fiftieth time, tried to discourage further alterations. They were lovely, they said, just as they were.

But Cousin Edith only smiled. "Nothing short of perfection, you know—that is the artist's motto. I couldn't think of letting Mr. Copley see them until I'm quite satisfied." She sighed. "Art is long, my dears!"

It was awfully long-winded, Mr. Pope thought.

"But you don't really think Copley will come over here, do you?" he said to Mrs. Pope one evening.

"He will, Wilbur. Whenever she's ready. She got him to promise. I suppose those people don't ever want to miss a bet. She might be good—he doesn't know."

"Well, that will settle it," Mr. Pope said.

"Yes, I suppose so. But, oh, Wilbur! You don't suppose he might—he might like them?"

Mr. Pope laughed. "And she'd want to stay the rest of the summer to paint more? Not a chance. I know you see some queer things in the galleries nowadays, but they're not just fiddling, just completely gutless—like these. You know what I mean."

"Yes, of course, Oh, darling, won't it be nice not to have everything smell of turpentine again?"

"That's one way of putting it," said Mr. Pope.

But at last the great day came. Cousin Edith had phoned Mr. Copley and he had promised to drive over Sunday morning. She spent Saturday morning flying from one painting to another, brush in hand, putting a dab here and a dab there. "They'll still be pretty wet," she said, "but that doesn't matter."

On Saturday afternoon Mr. Pope and Ed went for a ride, and when they got

back Cousin Edith had gone into the house. When Ed's saddle and bridle had been taken off and hung up, he clumped over and stood in front of a large picture on the easel. Mr. Pope started to close the big doors for the night, but Ed said, "Wait a minute. You know, Wilb, this picture's real pretty."

Mr. Pope came and stood beside him. The painting showed wharves, and a cove with fishing boats. There was too much of everything in it—too many wharf timbers, too many stiff little sailboats sitting on too many stiff little waves, too many cotton-wool clouds surrounding a jaundiced sun. In spite of its stiffness, Cousin Edith's indecision was apparent in every brush stroke.

Mr. Pope sighed. "It's too bad, in a way. She tries so hard, and it's so damned awful!"

"I don't agree with you," said Ed. "You're just sayin' that because it's what some of your high-toned artist friends would say. These here are nice simple pictures, the kind that ordinary folks like. And that's what worries me." He looked around. "This guy, Wilb, when he sees these pictures—maybe he won't like 'em himself, but bein' a salesman, it's more important to him what other folks like. And it ain't artists that buys pictures. He's going to realize that this is just the stuff for some of these *nouveau riches* like it might be myself if I made a lot of money and wanted to fix up a house. This is the Century of the Common Man, ain't it? Well, it's the common man that's gettin' the dough, and he's going to buy things with it."

"Maybe. But how are you so sure you know what the common man wants?"

"Because I know him," said Ed. "I've known some of the commonest men you ever saw. Oh, I don't mean you, Wilb.

You're the kind of superior, useless type that's headed for the ash heap. My guess is, this guy buys the whole lot of these pictures. And you know what that means."

Mr. Pope said yes, he did. "Cousin Edith would stay on here painting until cold weather. But you're needlessly alarmed, Ed. I know the kind of stuff these fellows handle, and I assure you it isn't this."

"All right, all right," said Ed crossly. "That's you all over, Wilb—papa knows best. Well, you just wait. Let's see what papa will do when he finds he's got Cousin Edith on his hands permanently. Don't say I didn't warn you."

Cousin Edith was always a-stir much too early on Sundays, but on this one she outdid herself. At eight-thirty she rapped on the Popes' door. "Come on, children," she called. "Get up, you sleepy-heads. Time to stump the experts."

Mr. Pope moaned, then he sat up. "This is outrageous!" he said.

Mrs. Pope smiled wryly. "Never mind, darling. It's the last day."

At breakfast and during the hour or two before Mr. Copley appeared, Cousin Edith's nervousness took the form of an exaggerated fluttery coyness. Probably only the Popes' certainty of an early release saved her from being quietly lynched. But Mr. Copley came at last.

He was a large man, got up for the part of country gentleman in tweeds and a pipe. He was polite but bored, and obviously anxious to get it over with. It was plain after his first glance at Cousin Edith that he expected nothing, and this reassured the Popes. They went at once to the stable.

The stable was dark. While the others waited, Mr. Pope (Continued on page 92)



of jury picking

by Henry Morton Robinson

WHEN a lawyer enters a courtroom his bloodstream is—ought to be—a ferment of bias in favor of his client. His duty is to secure, if he can, a winning verdict. Only the jury's gracious nod can gain him such a verdict; ergo, the lawyer's first care is to select jurors who look, sound—yes, and sometimes *smell*—favorable to his case.

"When I'm picking a jury," a Tennessee barrister once remarked, "I like to see a fellow in the box who's been coon-hunting with me." That just about expresses a lawyer's idea of the perfect set-up. One solid friend in the jury-room may mean more than a week of forensic pleading.

Generally, however, a jury is composed of total strangers possessing all the quirks, prejudices and variabilities of human nature. Because these prejudices may be hurtful to his client, the attorney is permitted to "challenge" a certain number of jurors—that is, to question their fitness to pass judgment

on the case. In trials involving the death penalty in New York State, a lawyer has thirty such challenges; in civil cases he has six. (In addition to these "peremptory" challenges, which the lawyer need not explain to the court, he also has an unlimited number of challenges "for cause"—that is, kinship or business association, etc., with the plaintiff or defendant.) Armed with these challenges, he skilfully weeds out jurors who for one reason or another may be unsympathetic to his client.

"Sympathy" is the key-word in the jury-picker's lexicon. "I know of no justice," said Clarence Darrow, "that is not entwined with sympathy." Darrow's genius (no client of his ever suffered the death penalty) lay in selecting jurors who could see eye-to-eye with him in his presentation of the case. Artful as a lapidary examining gems for a precious necklace, Darrow scrutinized the faces, clothing, social position, racial background and religious beliefs of his jurors. He was always glad when he saw an Irishman enter the jury-box; Darrow knew that the Irishman would be emotional, kindly, forgiving. As Darrow put it, "His imagination will place him in the dock, where he will simultaneously be trying himself and thinking up reasons for letting himself off." Darrow was wary of pharmacists and accountants. Pharmacists, he maintained, "were always counting little pills," accountants were too "ledger-minded," and their veins "contained a mixture of sour milk and pale blue ink." In Darrow's book such men were dangerous, and he tactfully dismissed them before they could "contaminate" other members of the jury.

Darrow once drew a juror with the rum-blossom nose of a hard drinker. Remembering that his client had been

under the influence of liquor when the crime was committed, Darrow smiled benignly at the toper. Then to assure himself that the red nose was really alcoholic, Darrow walked slowly past the jury-box, sniffing imperceptibly. The aroma of the morning eye-opener greeted his nostrils—and the juror was accepted. Darrow knew that shared frailties dispose men to pity each other.

Every district attorney comes to the task of jury selection with a special "dope-sheet" on all members of the panel. His investigators have combed the record of every potential juror. What political party does he belong to? Has he ever been sued or mixed up in any questionable deals? Has any member of his family ever been convicted? All this information rests in the D.A.'s dossier, and is not available to the defense lawyer. He must depend on his intuition, plus a printed jury list, for whatever hints and hunches they can provide.

This jury list, prepared by the court, gives not only names and addresses, but occupations, and it is eagerly scanned. Suppose a department store is being sued by a housewife who has been injured in an elevator accident. She (the plaintiff) is asking for damages. Her lawyer, checking down the list, finds that Juror Number Five is a banker, presumably a man of wealth and likely to be skeptical, rather than emotional, about cash claims. The plaintiff's lawyer quietly asks that Juror Number Five be excused. His place is taken by another juror—a plasterer or gas-station attendant whose social and economic status is similar to the plaintiff's. This strategy sometimes backfires; small wage-earners are apt to think in petty hundreds, whereas the rich man—once convinced that damages are due—lets his mind run in more accustomed thousands.



An acute lawyer finds sympathetic jurors in odd ways—even by smell.

Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes once observed: "No lawyer, no matter what his experience, can possibly conceive how little the jury understands of the case." Therefore, in suits involving complex legal or scientific technicalities, a lawyer attempts to obtain jurors of marked intelligence. A Phi Beta Kappa key dangling from a juror's watch-chain is a welcome signal in a mal-practice or disputed paternity case where the evidence is scientific, hard to follow. Ordinarily, however, lawyers steer away from the too-brainy juror. Max Steuer, defending an unwed mother who had indulged in fatal gun-play, declared his preference for the man or woman juror of sub-medium intelligence, "who could be led down irrelevant lanes of reasoning, and brought to tears by the liberal use of emotional onions."

Just how dumb a jury can be, is evidenced by the following anecdote: Bill Scharton, the famous New England trial lawyer, had just concluded an eloquent opening in a personal-injury case, when a juror popped up in the box and asked to be excused. Scharton inquired afterwards why he hadn't wanted to serve. "Well," said the juror, "you asked us to give ten thousand dollars to your client, and I ain't got enough money to pay my share."

How does a trial lawyer regard women jurors, now eligible for service in about half the states? Our romantic tradition ascribes excessive sentimentality to women, but this is not borne out by the record. "Women's tendency to weep when they are greatly moved," says Judge W. B. Harley of New Jersey, "has earned them the reputation of being soft-hearted. But as a rule, their regard for law is greater than their pity."

Lawyers agree that while women may not be more emotional than men, they certainly have a *different set of emotions*. Even a veteran pleader cannot fathom the whims and fantasies that lurk in the depths of a woman's mind. Most criminal lawyers willingly accept two or three women on their juries, unless—and here's the big qualification—unless the defendant herself is a woman! The girls seem to be

Decorations by John Meola



Women jurors—with a different set of emotions—tax lawyers' ingenuity.

Likes and dislikes, little traits of character, and even tastes in food, dress and blondes guide the clever lawyer in picking those who must pass verdict on his clients

stonier-hearted than men in judging their wayward sisters. But if a presentable young man is on trial, women jurors are inclined to identify him with a son or brother—which is perfectly agreeable to the lawyer defending him.

A veteran defense lawyer is almost clairvoyant in searching out the foibles and secret places of the juror's soul. If he misinterprets an external sign, his case may founder. The tightly rolled umbrella that Juror Number Twelve carries into the box clearly reveals a Milquetoast character—but will timidity turn to self-righteousness in judging guilt? The juror beside him wears a Masonic emblem in his lapel. Will he deal impartially with the defendant who is a Catholic? That prim spinster in the front row—will she be hostile or friendly toward the swarthy handsome defendant who has highjacked a truckload of nylon stockings? These and a thousand other queries must be answered in spot decisions by the lawyer as he proceeds to pick his jury.

The lawyer must ask himself also, "Does this juror like me? Is my personality, dress or mode of speech incompatible with him? A brilliant young Boston lawyer specializing in medico-legal cases, pays the utmost attention to seemingly superficial details. He once drew a juror who wore an expensive hand-painted necktie. After court was dismissed for the day, the lawyer purchased for himself a similar piece of neckwear. Next day he wore his peacock cravat and focused his arguments on the sartorially splendid juror. He won the case, and who shall say that his choice of neckties didn't help him?

Flattering a prospective juror is standard practice with lawyers. Henry W. Taft tells of a county murder trial in which one of the talesmen, accepted by the prosecution, said in a loud voice: "Davis (the defense lawyer) won't have me. He knows I'll hang this man." Everyone expected Davis to challenge him, but the shrewd defense lawyer arose to remark: "We want you on this jury. We want candid, broad-minded men, with big brains and clear powers of analysis." All through the trial he addressed that juror, dwelling on his powerful intellect. Result: a verdict of "not guilty."

Tact of a high order must be exercised in "excusing" a juror, else antagonism may be aroused in the remaining members. If, for example, a defendant's name is Rocco, it would be risky for a prosecutor to challenge every juror with an Italian name. Racial sympathy ranks high, of course, in the emotional scale; a jury composed of Browns, Smiths and Cabots might be



External signs—like a tightly rolled umbrella—may mislead an attorney.

more to the prosecutor's liking. But he dare not challenge every Mucci or Salvatore on the jury list. Sometimes lawyers outdo each other in expressing contentment with the jury as it stands. This disarms the jurors, makes them feel that they are dealing with discerning counsel—clever fellows who know a good jury when they see one.

To many laymen all this psychological jockeying is vaguely disturbing; it seems somehow unethical. But lawyers point out that not all human beings possess the ideal impartiality desirable in juries; many are influenced not only by the facts of the case but by the personalities involved in it. The lawyer for each side is dealing not only with legal precedent but with human nature. Hence the lawyers' sweating and fuming over jurors is likely to remain an integral part of our judicial system; and the assumption is that it all adds up to the greater protection of the client.

THE END



A flashy necktie has nothing to do with Law—but it may win a case.

Wagon Wheel City



by Tom Blackburn

CONCLUSION

The story thus far:

AT FORT BRIDGER, Clark Denton joined the California-bound wagon train captained by Hank Ginselling, a grasping, ruthless opportunist. There was widespread discontent among the company. Ginselling had already charged them double rates for passage to the gold fields, and when he demanded more, as they reached Fortunova, the stage was set for open revolt.

Denton refused to pay the two hundred dollars additional charge. He had to club the wagon-train captain over the head with his gun before he could make his refusal stick, and that touched off the company's rebellion. They overpowered and disarmed the drivers of Ginselling's wagons.

Denton, who now found himself the leader of the company, agreed to return the wagons to Ginselling when they reached Sutter's Fort. Others in the company, though—notably Big Ben Barney, a professional gambler—

figured differently. Tempted by the fact that Ginselling's wagons and their loads would bring a tidy sum in the San Francisco market, Barney and his associates could see no reason for returning the wagons.

A showdown was coming, Denton knew. Even Janice Barney, Big Ben's daughter, warned him to be on guard. And two of the men Denton had trusted to line up on his side—Potter Wainwright, a newspaperman, and Ed Payton, a farmer who had become Denton's second-in-command—were seeing more and more of Barney.

Where Jan Barney stood in all this, she alone knew. Clark Denton felt a strong attraction for the girl, and on the trail a strong vein of honesty had seemed to show through her slightly overbold manner. But as they neared the end of the trail he could not help wondering if she hadn't been trying, with her feminine allure, to win him over to joining her father.

When the train topped the summit of Emigrant Gap, the break came. Barney, with stronger support than Denton had anticipated, made short shrift of the Ginselling crew that put up a fight. Denton was caught in the middle. Between Barney's piratical scheme and the high-handed methods of Ginselling, there was little to choose, and he had hoped to keep out of the showdown fight. But Barney didn't want it that way, and in the flurry of battle he found a chance to shoot Denton.

One wagon carried the wounded Denton and Ginselling and Ginselling's drivers to Sutter's Fort while the others went on to San Francisco. In three months Denton and Ginselling recuperated sufficiently to take a boat downriver, Denton hoping to establish himself somehow, without capital, as a builder, Ginselling determined to avenge the theft of his wagon train.

By a shrewd bit of trading, Denton picked up twelve hundred dollars' profit his first day in town. The deal

netted him not only a sizable stake but the friendship of John Crabtree, who owned a general store. The rest of the day he spent looking over the building possibilities of the booming gold-camp center, and he found them most discouraging. The only lumber in town had been bought up by a carpenter who was gouging his customers for all they were worth. No more lumber could be expected until ships brought mill machinery around the Horn.

Darkness came and Denton returned to Crabtree's store with nothing accomplished. Crabtree had gone out to some sort of meeting. Mrs. Crabtree had a supper set in the kitchen and told him she had a bed made up fresh for him in the loft above the store.

Denton, thawed by this kindly hospitality, told her of his discouragement. Mrs. Crabtree listened but did not seem disturbed.

"When John and I first got here," she said, "we couldn't get a bearing, either. We couldn't make head nor tail of anything. The first days are like that for everybody. On the street you are too close to the town. You can't see it. You can't think. Maybe you should get off a ways in the morning. San Francisco looks different when you get its mud out of your eyes."

Denton thanked her and went up the ladder to the loft. Outside, he could hear distant laughter and faint music. San Francisco, this strange, wild capital of the Land of Opportunity, was a town that never slept. Its challenging tempo already beat strong in Denton's pulse, and sleep was slow in coming.

Now go on with the story:

CHAPTER SIX

SAN FRANCISCO'S street traffic roused Denton before dawn. When he came down the ladder he discovered that Crabtree and his wife apparently still slept. He found his way out a back door without disturbing them and breakfasted uptown. The night mists were rising from the vast bay edging the town when he came out of the tented restaurant. He followed a street out toward salt marshes footing the hills to the west, thinking of Mrs. Crabtree's gentle advice.

Tents and shacks thinned and in half a mile of walking he came out on coarse grass which ran down to the shore of the bay. Off-shore, hundreds of ships stood in disorder. Denton found

The undercover fight for control of roistering,
lawless 'Frisco boils over into mob hysteria,
as Clark Denton watches his erstwhile wagon-mates
choose strange sides for the showdown battle

a hummock and sat down, studying the forested rigging. San Francisco, the focal point for the gold creeks, was not yet a city. It was raw, wholly without roots. Yet here was an armada of shipping which would have crowded the busiest port in the world.

Oddly, there was no activity about the ships. They lay on the water like dead things. Curiosity tugged at Denton. A skiff, rowed by an old man, pulled away from one of the craft. It beached not far from Denton and the old man came up over the muddy shingle. He wore a faded uniform.

"That's a lot of shipping," Denton suggested pleasantly.

"Seven hundred and eighteen hull," the old man said.

"How long will they be tied up here?"

The old man looked surprised. "Till

Doomsday, I reckon. Unless the rascally crews get tired of scrabbling for gold and come back to sign on again, which ain't likely. If a ship could root in this blasted mud and grow leaves, there'd be a forest where this bay is, come another year or two."

"What's the answer—for the owners, I mean?" Denton wanted to know.

The old man dropped wearily on the hummock beside him. "There ain't none," he said matter-of-factly. "No answer a-tall. Take me. There's *Jenny III* lying out there, two over. Sun's working on her; so's the salt. Planks loosening up all over. Sound timber but going to hell fast, and I've only been here five months. She'll do to live on till she founders or rolls over, but I don't mind telling you I'd trade her clean today for a horse that'd carry me

to the diggings. My bosun was down last week with three thousand in dust. I seen it. And what that barnacled bum can do, I sure as thunder can, too!"

Denton's interest focused. He knew nothing of ships or their construction, but the old man had spoken of loosened planks and sound timbers. These terms translated into lumber in his mind. And lumber was what he wanted.

"I don't have a horse," he said. "But I do have a little money. And I'm interested."

"In the *Jenny*? Just how interested, mister?"

"About a thousand dollars' worth."

"You're crazy!" the old man said. "But you've bought yourself a ship!"

Illustrated by Rafael De Soto

The building parted at the seams
and came down with a slow cre-
scendo of sound and flame. . . .



Come aboard and you can look the *Jenny* over and I'll sign the papers. Got your cash with you?"

"Where would I leave it in this town and know I could get it back?" Denton answered wryly. "There's just one thing. You keep this quiet. That's part of the deal."

The old man nodded. "Mum it is," he agreed. "And I won't be hard to find if you want me. It's the best grog shop in town for me, and I'll be a week even getting started"

BY NIGHTFALL Denton had found two men on the beach who would work for ten dollars a day and who thought they could salvage the lumber from a ship, given certain tools. Taking their names and a place where they could be found, Clark returned to Crabtree's store. Crabtree was home. Mrs. Crabtree had dished up supper, but Denton could not eat until he had detailed his day on the waterfront to Crabtree. The store man listened intently and with growing admiration. He interrupted only once.

"You shouldn't be telling me all this, Denton," he said. "A man's ideas are worth money. Instead of telling me—or anyone else—about getting lumber from those abandoned ships, you should just quietly buy them up. After that you should find a hundred other people like me who want additions or new buildings. You could contract to put them up at a wide profit!"

"Maybe I'm not as generous as you think, Crabtree," Denton said. "Fact is, the profit I made on those stoves I sold you represents my stake, and I sank a thousand of it into the *Jenny III* today. I've come up short on my halter."

Crabtree looked thoughtful. "About what you said yesterday, Denton—being in the business of civic improvement. That was quick talk. I know that. But was there anything behind it?"

Denton shrugged. "I see opportunity here and I think I'll stay. A man is always interested in the place where he roots down. If he can help make it a bigger and better place it means bigger opportunities for him. Going that far, what I said is true enough. I am interested in civic improvement."

Crabtree grinned warmly. "We come a long ways to find what we want, don't we, Denton? Ma, bring Mr. Denton another piece of pie. Then we'll go in the other room. This is all going to fit together, Denton. Some of us here have already started looking ahead. We've had to. A mighty bad element has filtered in the last few months. Weeds grow before any crops can sprout. It's time we started cutting at them.

"I've asked the Hatfields to drop by tonight. They're people you'll want to know; important people, Denton. The biggest family in San Francisco, all odds down. Harry was a real estate man in the East, a sackful of family money. He sold out when the strike was made and brought his family and his furniture around the Horn. He's got the biggest house in town and he's the only honest trader in lots and property to set up yet.

"I want you to talk about your ideas with Harry. If they sound as good to

him as I think they will, you won't have to worry about the size of your stake and I'll have to sign a contract to get you to put up my addition, after all."

CRABTREE'S guests arrived in middle evening. Denton noticed that their shoes were dry, a clear indication of their standing. They had come by carriage, and carriages were scarce in San Francisco. Rising to meet the man and the two women, Denton was agreeably impressed. Harrison Hatfield was a tailored, keen-faced man in middle life. His eyes were sharp and he had an aggressively bristling manner which did not detract from his easy, habitual courtesy. When Crabtree had finished the introduction, Hatfield eyed Denton keenly, then offered his hand in a friendly manner.

"Denton—ah, yes. My daughter, Mr. Denton—and Mrs. Hatfield."

Denton bowed to the ladies. They returned the courtesy with a measure of restraint. People who had been able to secure a carriage in this transportationless town would also have established a social scale. Particularly if they were idle women, kept apart from the engrossing vigor of the streets.

Hatfield's wife was a large, strong-backed woman with an erect head, too prominent eyes, and an unbecomingly fussy manner. The daughter was a well-bosomed, cameo-featured girl with a hungry-look in her eyes. It crossed Denton's mind that those who craved society, as such, must find San Francisco a lonely place.

Hatfield was brisk. He rubbed his hands together. "John, here, talked to me about you at the meeting last night. He says you belong with us."

Denton glanced at him inquiringly but said nothing, on a signal from Crabtree.

"I mean this," Hatfield went on. "A few of us have been gathering. Little more than talk, so far. But the idea is at work. We want law and order here. We want women to pass through the streets untroubled. We want surveys and honest lot lines. We want an end to murder, disorder, violence. Naturally, we have opponents—gamblers, black-leg gangs, swindlers. This is their kind of town, now. They are organized, shrewdly directed. But the end is coming, even though it means a bitter fight. If you intend to settle here, we'd like you with us."

Crabtree signaled again, earnestly.

"I intend to stay," Denton said quietly.

"Good!" Hatfield's pleasure was patently sincere. "Tomorrow I will put you in touch with our organization. But enough of that, now. John also tells me you have an idea in which I might be interested. If you'd care to discuss it . . ."

Hatfield leaned back. Denton spoke carefully at first, measuring the man as he talked. When he saw that Hatfield was keenly interested he spoke more earnestly, building his plans as he talked until he had sketched the skeleton of a huge business which was rooted in twelve hundred dollars' profit on a stove deal and the ownership of one weathered little ship.

Recognizing shrewd business judgment

in Hatfield, he expected the man to withhold a decision until he had had time to think it over. However, San Francisco's swift pace was evident even here.

Hatfield leaned forward, his voice losing all patronizing flavor. "This comes at a most fortunate time, Mr. Denton," he said. "I have just completed resale of a tract and have considerable operating cash available at the moment. We will draw rough papers tonight. Tomorrow we will find an attorney for a final draft."

He paused and turned to his daughter. "Lois, my dear," he said, "we have met a very able and intelligent young man this evening—one destined, I believe, to cast his shadow largely over this city."

As though a string had been pulled, the stiffness ran out of Lois Hatfield. Her smile made much of her lips, reminding a man that they were full and soft.

"We have waited a long time for you, Mr. Denton," the girl said, setting the barb with very smooth skill.

A moment later Denton was aware that Hatfield had spoken to him again and was waiting for his attention. He dragged his mind back to the man.

For the next two hours the three men bent over John Crabtree's table, covering lengths of wrapping paper with figures from which developed structures transcending mud and canvas and shacking to embrace graded streets and gray stone buildings and wharves of orderly shipping. The session ended. Denton thought he had been silent through most of it, but he discovered he was hoarse.

It must have been a dull time for the women. Mrs. Crabtree, who helped in the store, was frankly sleepy. Hatfield's women, however, backed by their rigid self-training, still sat stiffly and correctly upright. Hatfield found his hat and motioned to Denton.

"We've kept Molly and John up a scandalous time, now," he said. "Come on. We'll see the women off in the trap waiting out front. Then I'll show you our city."

Taking his wife's arm, he moved out into the darkened store and on toward the street door. Denton had no choice but to escort the daughter. She gave him her arm, rather much of it. And when she saw Crabtree was not following immediately, she paused for a moment.

"Molly Crabtree tells me you are putting up here. It's crowded, I imagine, and—well, hardly a place for the headquarters of father's new partner, do you think? I have a friend at the Empire. It's possible we might find you bachelor quarters there if you cared to look."

"Tomorrow?"

"At eleven?"

Clark nodded agreement. Lois Hatfield's arm, carrying his fingers with it, tightened against her body for a moment. Then they moved on.

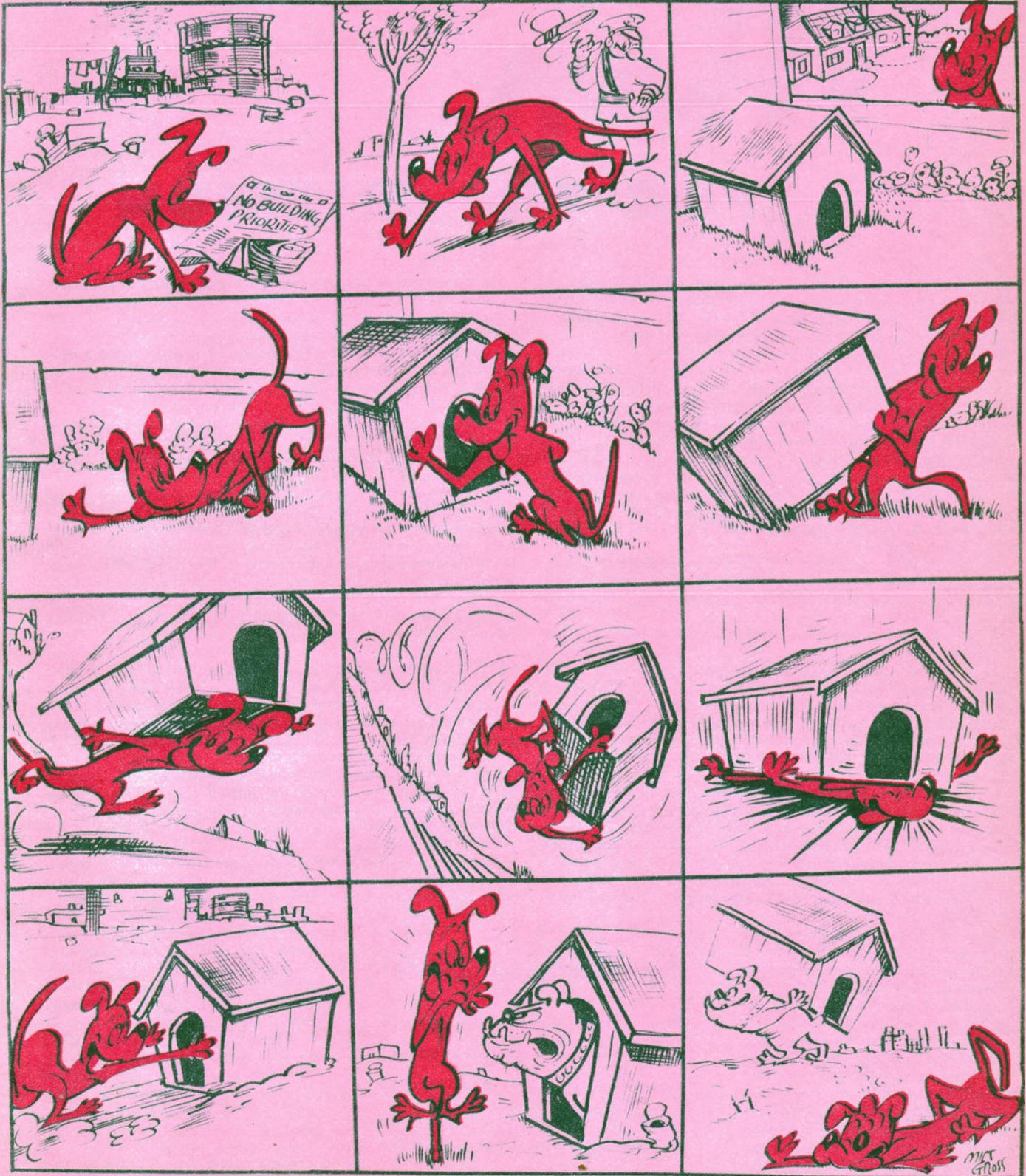
CHAPTER SEVEN

HARRISON HATFIELD moved from the Empire to the Union Queen to the Monarch Club. The parade was, in a way, a demonstration of Hatfield's affluence. Denton met many men. He drank many (Continued on page 82)

Pete the Pooch

by Milt Gross

...Victim of the Housing Shortage



Man

FOR THE MISSION

IT WAS not a great ship, when you reckoned tonnage, but to Sam Jones, who was her radioman, the sixty-three-foot ARB boat was a thing of beauty and an instrument of greatness. To the men who flew from flat-tops, she was Welcome Home on a friendly door mat, the only possible escape from an enforced stay in a Japanese prison camp. She was an Aircraft Rescue Boat, her only armament four fifty-caliber machine guns and a high turn of speed.

Radioman 2/c Samuel Quintard Jones sat beneath her flying bridge in the narrow confines of the radio room, tending the frequencies of reception, and minding the nervous meters of his radio gear. He had headphones on as he listened. Sometimes he peered across the soft and starlit night through a port, minding the steady lilt of the sea as the boat pitched rhythmically fore and aft against the shallow waves.

Now and then he heard a word from the skipper above. The skipper was young Ensign Burney, who kept calling down to the radio room. "Jones," he would say, "how does the signal bear?"

"The bearing is still fifteen degrees, sir," Sam Jones would reply from below.

Sam Jones would check the compass course and settle down to monitoring once more, while the dark wind whistled off the Pacific Ocean. He could feel the speed of their way in the vibration of the ship. The faint and stingy light, which gave the radio-compass card intelligence, did not flash as brightly on his black-dark face as did the starlight off the sea outside.

This was the first official mission for Sam Jones. It was not a great mission, when you reckoned a world at war, and yet to one Lieutenant (jg) Reid Townsend, U.S.N., it was a singularly important mission. It meant the difference between such simple things as foul water or hot jamoke, between dysentery or health, between death or life. Five hours before, Lieutenant (jg) Townsend, a fighter pilot of VF-19, the Aircraft Carrier *Tecumseh*, had been shot up and gone down into the sea south of the Japanese-held island of Baguio during a nasty raid on the Nip installations there. Somewhere out in the dark sea ahead, Lieutenant Townsend was still a free man. Whether or not he would remain one depended upon Sam Jones and Ensign Burney and the sleek boat which thundered on a course to the northward, her twin Kermaths putting out all of their thousand horsepower, her screws egg-beating the soft sea milky.

Sam knew that Lieutenant Townsend was still free because a radio signal said so. Down in the radio room, he was tuned to an SOS. The SOS came from an emergency transmitter, a Gibson Girl, whose radio frequency power is generated by a hand crank. The SOS had a code letter which indicated that it was off the Carrier *Tecumseh*. They had taken a bearing on the signal and were now homing on it, following it to its source.

"How does it go, Jones?" Ensign Burney called down to the radio room.

"Getting much stronger, sir," Sam Jones replied. "Very much stronger."

Not bad, thought Sam, *not bad at all*. Only three hours since the *Tecumseh* had reported to the Air-Sea Rescue Base that Lieutenant Townsend was down. Less than three, really, since they had first picked up Lieutenant Townsend's SOS from the emergency transmitter. And they were piling in on the signal now. Any moment, and they might spy the floating life raft with Lieutenant Townsend kneeling on it, grinding away at his Gibson Girl. Any moment, and the mission might be accomplished.

THE mission was much more important than it looked. It meant more to Sam Jones, in a way, than it did to Ensign Burney, who was out on his first command. More perhaps, than it did to Lieutenant Townsend. Not as many people were staring at the skipper or the downed pilot.

But everybody was staring at Sam.

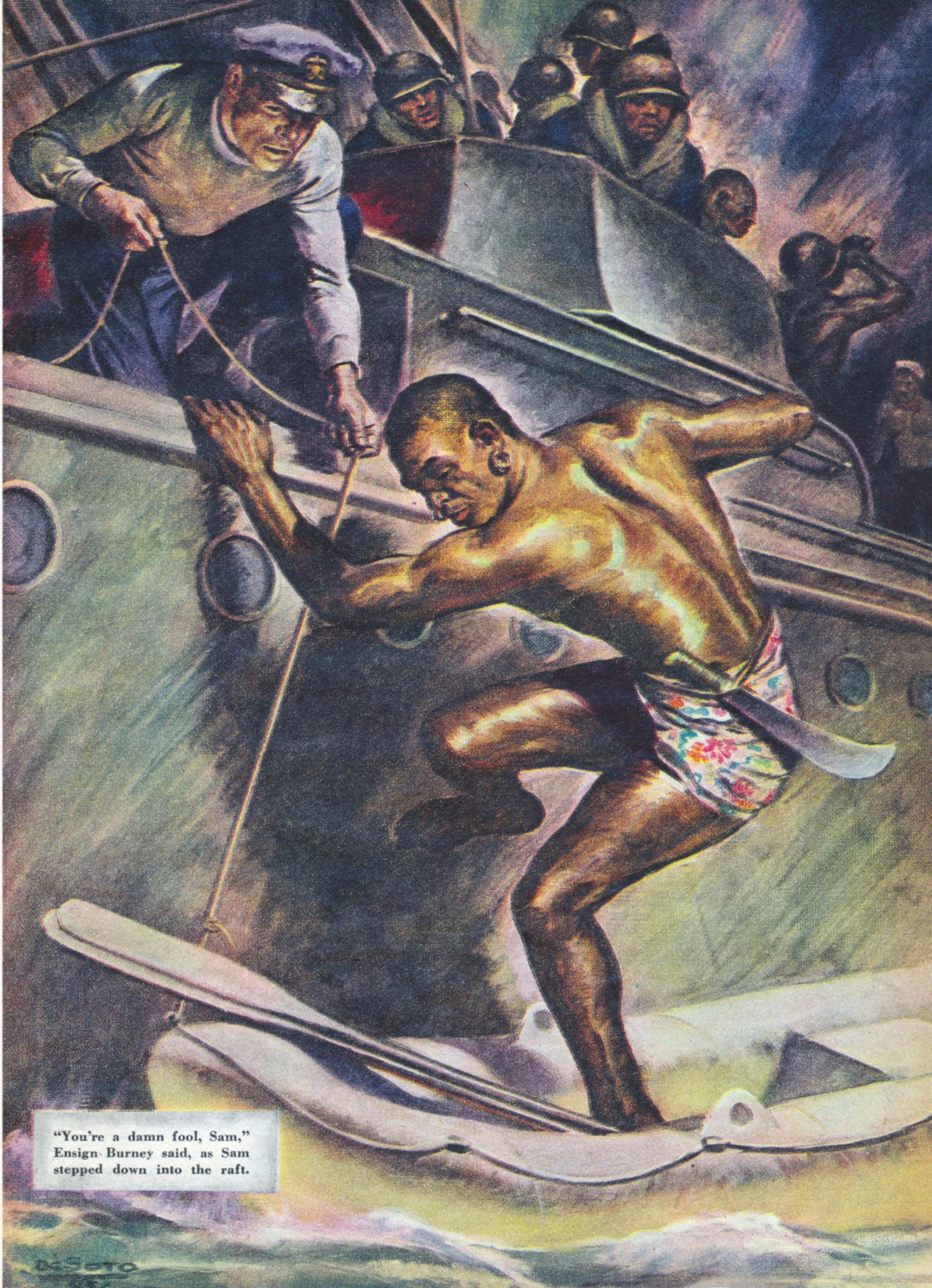
They were staring at him across three hundred years of time, watching him out of the humid heat of an African jungle. And maybe they were all hoping, those dark and glistening ghosts, that he would turn the trick and prove what a war could be all about.

But not only his remote ancestors watched him. There were the less remote. His father watched him from the mists of the Argonne where a bursting shell had carried death. His grandfather watched him from the bloody grass of San Juan Hill. His great-grandfather watched him through the whining grape and stench of Antietam. And his great-great-great-grandfather—ah, there was a ghost with a gimlet eye, who hawked him; there was a ghost who, even in the chains of slavery, had helped to win another war for freedom, had cooked well enough to keep General Washington healthy that bitter winter at Valley Forge.

But it came closer to home than that. They were watching him

by Richard Sale

Sam Jones, U.S.A., volunteered to play the role of jungle savage —so that another Yankee, lost in Jap-held territory, might have a fighting man's chance to live



"You're a damn fool, Sam,"
Ensign Burney said, as Sam
stepped down into the raft.

aboard the boat tonight as she sped northward toward her rendezvous with Lieutenant Townsend and his transmitter. The crew were all watching, each of them wondering how it would go. They watched Ensign Burney and his first command, too, but you sensed that they weren't worried about him. Tradition supported him. But there was no tradition behind Sam Jones.

So, if you are Sam Jones, the mission has to be good. In fact, it has to be extraordinary to show that you are not extraordinary, but indeed, a very ordinary man like any other man.

Suddenly the lookout called, his voice subdued and steeped in dread, "Land ho! Dead ahead!"

"Dead slow," said Ensign Burney instantly. The ARB lost her stride like a horse gone lame. Below, Sam Jones peered through the porthole and examined the horizon with his dark eyes.

The land lay black and sinister on the fringe of the shining sea. It soaked up the friendly stars and did not reflect them back as did the gentle combers, moving northward into ground swell.

"Hold her head at fifteen degrees," said Ensign Burney. "Don't let her swing off." Then he called down to the radio room. "Sam?"

"Yes, sir."

"How does the distress signal bear?"

"Still fifteen degrees, sir, and very

strong. Five db over nine on the signal-strength meter."

"Okay," said Ensign Burney. "You can come topside."

There was trouble, Sam Jones saw, when he joined the men, on the bridge. The ARB had hauled up very close to Watje Island. Sam Jones watched the humped-back whale of land to the northward and thought thoughts grimly.

"You see what has happened," Ensign Burney remarked at large, wanting to air his mind so that his decision would be readily understood. "Watje Island is south of Baguio where the carrier raided earlier today. Lieutenant Townsend probably drifted with the wind after he was shot down. He made a landing on Watje."

"He is sending his SOS from the island, sir," Sam Jones said.

"Yes," said Ensign Burney wearily. "And that's just too bad. . . . He should have stayed at sea. It would have been easier."

Sam Jones said, "I guess green land looks good to you when you've only got a spread of rubber under your heels on a big ocean."

There was a silence. They all watched the dark island. Then Ensign Burney sighed. "That's all we can do," he murmured. "I'm sorry. I'm damned sorry." He sounded as if he were talking to the missing pilot somewhere up on Watje.

"We might be able to do more, sir," Sam Jones said suddenly. "If I could volunteer—"

"To what?"

"To rescue Lieutenant Townsend, sir," Sam Jones said. "I'd like to go ashore and find him, sir."

Ensign Burney looked unimpressed. "Listen, Sam—the guy is down on Watje, and Watje happens to be loaded with Japs. Townsend's had that transmitter going for quite a while, and it's a sure thing that they've taken a bearing on him by now. They'll smoke him out sooner or later."

"Let's get him before they do, then, sir," Sam Jones said.

Ensign Burney took a slow breath because he was thinking to himself that here was a guy, out for the first time like himself, who wanted to make good so bad that he was going to get pretty reckless about the whole thing. Ensign Burney wasn't so particular about short odds or even a sound long shot. But it was strictly sucker stuff to play the field with an out-and-out winner at the post. In a setup like this, Ensign Burney was thinking, Tojo couldn't lose.

He said carefully, "Getting the guy is not as easy as it looks. Different when we bear down on a raft at sea. But he's on land, in that jungle, probably. Where? How's he going to get out to us? How are we going to find him?"

Illustrated by Rafael De Soto



Suddenly Sam went down, raising his leg to trip the left Jap. At the same time, there was a crash from the jungle as Townsend fired the Colt.

Sam said, "I'm not sure. But I've had a thought or two, and one of them is sound."

"They'll range us with radar any time now," Ensign Burney said. "They'll start lobbing big stuff at us any time. You can't just motor-boat in to Watje like a tourist." His voice was getting sharper.

"They haven't picked us up with radar yet," said Sam Jones, "or I would have found their signal on my receiver. They may have had their radio knocked out in the raid this afternoon. . . . Don't you understand, sir—"

Ensign Burney just stared silently at the growing bulk of land and bit his lip. "No. I don't understand."

"He's counting on us," Sam Jones said earnestly. "He wants to be free, and we're all he's got left. That's our service."

"Our service isn't to pass miracles, Sam," said Ensign Burney. "I couldn't order any man onto that island for a search."

"I'll volunteer, sir. There's an accident of birth involved, you see, and a snifter."

"A snifter," said Ensign Burney thoughtfully. A snifter was a small battery-powered field-strength meter. It was used to locate sources of radio signals when you were close upon the source.

"If you could put me over in a raft, sir, and lie off here, I think I could find him and his Gibson Girl with my snifter."

"And the Japs?"

"That's where the accident of birth comes in. I'll show you what I mean, if you'll give me a chance."

Burney put his hand on Sam's shoulder. "Don't be a fool, Sam," he said hoarsely. "Of course I can't turn down your request. But it's your neck. I know you mean it. And I know your courage. You don't have to prove anything. Don't be so goddam brave."

"Brave, sir?" Sam Jones said. He showed his white teeth in the dark. It was almost all of him that Ensign Burney could see. "I'm scared stiff, sir. It's a wonder the Japs don't range us by the knocking of my knees."

"Okay, Sam," Ensign Burney said. "Get to it."

WHEN the ARB had approached as close to the ugly darkness of the island as Ensign Burney dared to go, he cut the engines and had the light anchor let go. He told the helmsman to stand by for any emergency, and told the forward lookout to stand by to haul that anchor, just in case. He had the machine gunners inflate a two-man raft and put it over the side, its painter hitched to the starboard rail. He had just started to chew his nails, when up from below came a black savage, and Ensign Burney could feel fright rise from his heels along his back to the roots of his hair.

"It's all right, sir," Sam Jones said.

The savage was big and black and powerful, wearing only a piece of gay cloth wrapped around his midriff, with a machete slipped through the tong of the wrap-around. Otherwise he was naked. His frizzy hair stood up on end

and he had a ring of silver hanging from his nose and a pair of silver rings hanging from his ear lobes.

"Good Lord!" Ensign Burney whispered.

"How do I look?" Sam Jones said.

"You look—you look—" Ensign Burney faltered, and then stopped.

"A trifle primitive," Sam Jones said. "You see, sir, Watje Island belongs to a Melanesian group. There are all sorts of colors among men in the southwest Pacific. The Polynesians are tan. The Micronesians are rather brown. And the Melanesians are very dark. As black as some Americans. Myself, for instance." He grinned at his joke. "The hair was easy—I needed a cut badly. But these ornaments are no fun, and the sooner I get rid of them the better."

"Where did you get them?" Burney asked.

"They're washers," said Sam Jones. "I cut a part of the ring out and squeezed them on."

"The raft is ready, Sam. If you're not back within five hours, we'll have to pull out of here and get back to base."

"Yes, sir."

"How'll you tell time?"

"Got my wrist watch hooked inside this sarong with a safety pin."

"Also," said Burney, "if you are detected out there, or fired upon, we'll have to leave at once. No other rescue parties are to be put ashore. In other words, if anything occurs, we scam. Understood?"

"Yes, sir," Sam Jones said. "If you should leave, and Townsend and I get away, we'll attempt to contact you for a new rendezvous, using his transmitter."

"Okay, Sam," Ensign Burney said. "You're a damn fool. Take it easy, and good luck."

"Thanks, sir," Sam Jones said. He stepped down into the raft with his snifter and a pencil flashlight, and squatted in the bottom of the raft. They threw his painter clear, and he spread his duraluminum oars and started rowing for the shore. They could see him for quite a while, for there was a strange faint luminescence behind him. But his oars were silent in the sea and soon he vanished into the fluid blackness which hugged the periphery of the dark island.

Burney heard one machine gunner say, "Bet Smoky Joe makes it." And the other replied, "I wouldn't bet against it."

That was good enough for him. He crossed his fingers.

IT WAS only luck, certainly not skill, that brought the raft to sand without capsizing, for there was a line of warm, white surf along the sand that was breath-taking. Luck took the raft and used it as a surf board. Samuel Quintard Jones rode up to the beach at the speed of a lazing shark and struck the shallows with such impetus that he was nearly precipitated from his perch.

He stepped out into the shallows and hauled on the raft. He pulled it free of the water and high onto the sand. He examined the sand furtively, noted it was not etched heavily with footprints, which indicated that this was not a

heavily populated locale. But there was a track across the sand with a narrowness and regularity which indicated a patrol, and it made his breath come faster.

Sam Jones noted, too, that he was wet—and not from the sea, which had touched only his feet. It was his sweat which dampened him, and it was fragrant with fear. He left the raft and ran for cover, and only when he had plunged into the palms and sword-stemmed bushes beyond the sand, did he pause to recapture quiet breathing and still the thunder of his heart.

When he had rested, and listened for the crunch of feet crossing down the sand, he put aside the disturbing thought that there were dangerous fauna and reptiles in the moist jungle which began at his buttocks and stretched eastward. It was a time for practicality. It was a time imagination could destroy you.

HE flipped the switch which put his snifter in operation. Then, guardedly, he turned the tip of light from the flashlight on the meter and held up the instrument, turning it to and fro until the needle on the meter suddenly deflected, almost full-scale. Noting the direction in which the snifter was pointing, he turned out his light, rose and began to stride into the jungle. The direction of bearing was at a thirty-degree angle, approximately, to the line of the beach. He tried to be noiseless, as noiseless as those African ancients would have been, but he was noisy enough.

Aware that a man walks in circles when he can see, and that he probably would do worse in the dark, he halted every thirty steps to take a new bearing.

The needle on the meter went full-scale, which meant he was very close to Lieutenant Townsend, and the sense of direction began to broaden. He had to watch it closely.

When he halted for the fourth time to take a reading, his flashlight disclosed the needle of the meter at rest, not deflecting at all. In other words, the snifter received no signal. Lieutenant Townsend was no longer using the transmitter.

Resting, Sam Jones thought. *His arm must be broken from hauling the handle on that old coffee grinder.*

He rose to his feet and started forward again, on the same line as the previous bearing had showed. Without warning, an eerie red glow came up out of the jungle to meet him. It missed his head by a meager foot and thwacked into a tree beside him where it sizzled and burned brightly. It was followed by a sharp detonation.

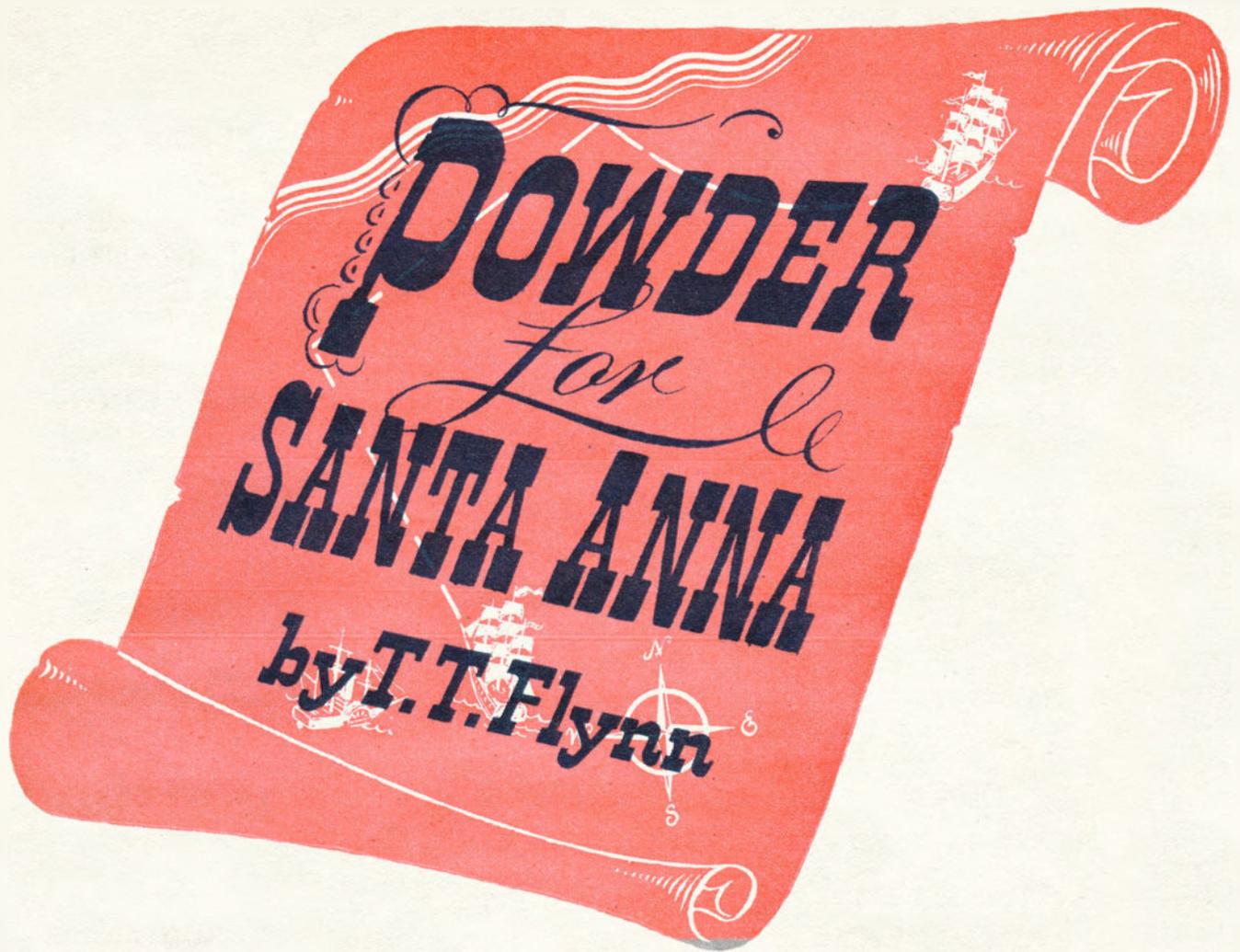
Sam Jones realized that the speeding red firefly had been a tracer bullet, and that the detonation had been the voice of a .45-caliber Colt pistol. But all this was thought in micro-seconds, for by the time the bullet had struck, and the pistol had spoken, he was flat on the ground, hugging it as if it were a woman, his stomach hard and cold.

He called, "Don't shoot, don't shoot. don't shoot," and only the third supplication became (*Continued on page 79*)

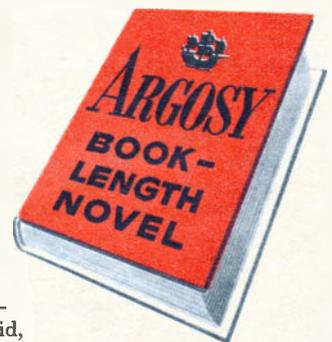
The surf-boat armada
took off. . . . Ashore, the
fort's guns opened up.



Frederick
Blakestee



It was war with Mexico, and a Caribbean free-booter had to choose the side he would serve, for the navy that had cashiered him now needed a man of his wild and unruly talents. . . . A novel of romance and high adventure in America's turbulent youth



THAT small thin old man must have known my answer before we sat in the dim back room of Papa Pio's cafe in Havana. He must have known my bitterness. Seven years of memories smoldered no less in this July of 1846 than in the first year.

"I'm not your man," I said, and I added, "sir."

He might have been a Boston trader planning Yankee traps for the fat Chinese merchants of the Canton Hong syndicate. He was Commodore Dexter, U. S. Navy. His blue eyes were hard as boarding steel. I was Cass Morgan, in business from the Guinea Coast of Africa to the Caribbean and the Mexican Gulf.

"Why should I risk my neck as a civilian in this war with Mexico?" I asked him. "I own the *Blue Turk* schooner and the brig *Sampson*. I work with Irish O'Malley of New Orleans and the Isle of Pines. He gave me my start after the Navy threw me out. I'm doing well. And the men you want me to cross would throw me to the sharks."

The commodore tasted his brandy with the delicacy of a connoisseur, and nodded. "They're rascals," he said, eyeing me stonily. "Scum, slave traders, gun runners. Aye, and pirates, too, no doubt."

"The court-martial put me on my own," I reminded him. "Let the Army and your Navy have their fight in this war. I'll take care of Cass Morgan."

"Our Navy," he said. Then: "You were a midshipman on the *Constitution*. I was junior lieutenant on her, under Hull, in 1812." He looked at me. "You heard her beat to quarters, as I heard her beat when Hull cleared for action with the *Guerrière*. Now we're at war again."

"I'm sorry," I said.

"My granddaughter, Treva, thought you'd refuse to help the Navy," the commodore said quietly.

I was indifferent. "Treva's married. I suppose? To

Illustrated by Fred Blakeslee and Neil O'Keeffe

that Army fellow I had the trouble with—Lieutenant David Key.”

“Treva’s twenty-three now,” the commodore said. “Old enough to know her own mind. Perhaps she and David will do something about it this fall. They’re both in New Orleans. David is on duty, and Treva is visiting her aunt, Madame Olivares.”

I was silent.

“You put a sword scar on young Key’s face that he’ll carry to the grave,” the commodore went on. “Got yourself court-martialed. Came close to involving Treva in talk. Damned foolishness in headstrong young roosters. You might have made first lieutenant in this war, if you’d kept your head seven years ago.”

His thin old face was seamed and weathered. Men high in Navy and government trusted him. To me he was the tall masts and the ranked gun batteries, blood and bone of the fleet.

But I was young and hard with seven years of reckless living. “It doesn’t matter,” I said. “I’m doing well.”

“General Taylor has won at Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma,” he said. “Taylor is at Matamoras, at the mouth of the Rio Grande, calling for supplies and men. Navy must move them. Navy must also stop blockade-running of war supplies to Mexico. We must know who tries to run the blockade, and where to catch them. Some will probably be Americans.”

“Perhaps,” I said, “men like O’Malley or myself?”

“Perhaps.” The commodore stood up and laid a thin oiled-silk packet on the table between us. “If you should change your mind, and be boarded by one of our ships, while working for us, you might need this paper. You’ll have no standing, of course, under the Laws of War.”

“I’m a rascal, and I stay a rascal, even if I help the Navy.” I smiled bitterly. “How do you know I won’t use these papers while I’m running the blockade myself, with arms for Mexico?”

“I don’t,” he said. “Good day, sir.”

THE *volantes* were thick on the Paseo Tacon that night. High in front, the Havana carriages carried Negro postillions in big boots and gaudy uniforms, and ladies in white, with roses at their ears and languorous fans in their graceful hands. A man could be overwhelmed by that passing stream of beauty.

I hardly looked as my own *volante* rolled to Granville Crosby’s house. I was thinking of Treva Dexter. I wondered if Treva’s eyes could still flash as scornfully at anyone who had disgraced Navy epaulettes and Articles. I wondered if she was still as lovely.

In Granville Crosby’s large square courtyard, I wondered why I had been invited tonight. Crosby was a tall Englishman, smooth as Jamaica treacle. The better Britons ignored him. His business affairs were vague and profitable.

Thirty-odd guests were in the drawing room, dancing, talking, drinking wine served by scarlet-clad Negroes. Crosby gave me a warm handshake.

“You’ll have champagne?” he suggested, and he beckoned to a servant.

An hour later I was wishing Commodore Dexter were with me. As choice

rascals as ever wore fine broadcloth and frilled linen were in the group about me. At my right was MacIntosh, a pious Scotsman whose friendship was pure poison, as I’d known trusting fools to discover. Spreck, the thick-necked Dutchman, had shot a man for truthfully calling him a Guinea Coast slaver. Varillat, the white-haired Creole banker from New Orleans, stood with all the wiry ease of a fencing master in Exchange Alley. The two Mexican gentlemen I did not know. Nor did I know Scofield, the beefy merchant from New York. Ramon Rodriguez was an elegant and shady Havana politician and lawyer, with a sly twinkle at life. I had always rather liked Rodriguez.

It was the champagne and the music, I suppose. “Gentlemen,” I said, lifting my glass, “to the Lion of Mexico, to Santa Anna, the exiled president, who, I hear, is being returned to Vera Cruz, through the American blockade, to more honors and fame in Mexico.”

Spreck’s heavy chuckle assented. “To dot I drink.”

“And,” I finished the toast, “to all the men who will die in this unhappy war.”

Spreck’s wine suddenly seemed to gag him. The others looked glum. I laughed at them, knowing more about them. “To glory, then,” I changed the toast. “And to profit.”

I left them, smiling wryly as I went

onto an outside balcony. I stared into the moonlight on the harbor, suddenly tired of Havana’s narrow streets and lush nights. I thought again of Treva Dexter and of David Key, together in New Orleans. Treva hadn’t forgotten me, and all that she remembered of me was bad.

The girl who joined me on the balcony seemed startled at finding me there.

“From the back, Don Cass, you looked like Señor Crosby.”

Susanne Valverde, singer and dancer in many countries, was considered beautiful by most men. She was, I suppose, with the humor that seemed to linger around her generous mouth and glow in

The dead man was wearing my clothes, and he had been stabbed in the back.



the olive delicacy of her features. But I like better the fire of living which always seemed so much a part of her. She had a dancer's graceful slenderness, soft blue-black hair, small and expressive hands. A French mother and a Spanish father had given her a zest for life like fine champagne, dry, tangy, with restless bubbles.

"Did you really think I was Crosby?" I asked.

"No," said Susanne. "But you might have pretended I did. Why don't you like me, Cass Morgan?"

Her nearness was heady. In the moonlight she looked young, innocent, desirable, in her high-waisted gown of cream-colored silk.

"I do like you, so I'm cautious."

Susanne turned her head. She was smiling a little. "We're so much alike, Cass. Always your kind and my kind must have what we want. Even if we're afraid of it. Even if we know better."

"Do you want Crosby as much as he seems to want you?" I tried to change the subject.

"Does it matter?" Susanne shivered slightly and she looked at me again. "That Spreck is a bad man to do business with, Cass."

"I have no business with Spreck."

"And you will not have?" She put her hand on my arm, and the heady nearness of her was over me again.

"What are you trying to tell me, Susanne?"

Behind us in the balcony doorway, Granville Crosby's amused voice said, "Tell me also, Susanne. It should be interesting."

SUSANNE'S fingers tightened on my arm, but she was laughing as she turned. "I'm trying to tell Mr. Morgan that I want to waltz. He'd rather talk." "In that case," said Crosby lightly, "let me offer myself. Morgan, I think one of the guests wishes to talk to you. Jan Spreck."

"Later?" I said to Susanne.

"Perhaps," she said airily. "But you must always listen to me, Señor Morgan. Closely. Or I promise you regrets."

So she warned me again as she left, and I wondered why. Jan Spreck joined me a moment later. He was patting a handkerchief on his broad face and his thick neck, inside the points of his high collar. He was a massive man, with blond hair curling thickly over large ears. He always seemed to be perspiring and smelling of gin.

"For one year I will pay high for all the shipping space dot you and your partner, Irish O'Malley, have," he said. "Cash in advance. My own captains and crews. In three years, Mr. Morgan, you will nod make so profitable a trade."

I laughed at him. "When your captains and crews come aboard our boats, we'll have small-shot and cutlasses waiting for them, *mynheer*."

The big man sighed. He looked reproachful, hurt. "You haf heard lies, young man. All lies. I represent a contract with your government. . . . You do not believe? Wait here."

He returned with Scofield, the red-faced New York merchant. Scofield gave

me the same assurance. Mississippi river boats were bringing vast quantities of supplies to New Orleans, and would bring increasing quantities. Shipping was badly needed for cargo to General Taylor, on the Rio Grande.

"Sir," said Scofield earnestly, "it will be a patriotic service. The profit, of course, will be handsome."

Jan Spreck beamed like an honest Amsterdam burgher. I thought of MacIntosh, and Varillat, the slippery Creole banker, and of Granville Crosby. Something was wrong. Susanne had been trying to tell me of this.

"Irish O'Malley and I have other plans," I said.

Scofield was vastly disappointed. Spreck reddened and held his tongue. He was a cold-blooded and ruthless man, and never more so than when brooding like this behind his phlegmatic stare.

One of the scarlet-clad Negroes came to the balcony doorway and addressed me in Spanish. "*Señor*, a gentleman wishes to see you in the courtyard."

I took my leave, and went out wondering who would be seeking me tonight.

IT WAS Sam Caffrey, captain of my brig *Sampson*, due from Barbados. Irish O'Malley had told me I was a fool to hire him. "I don't like the look in his eye," O'Malley had said.

Tonight Sam Caffrey, who usually dressed the dandy, wore a shabby pea jacket, too small, and patched trousers that a foremast hand would have scorned.

"I've lost the brig," he said in a nervous, hang-dog manner. He swallowed "On a reef near the Cayo Cantiles. We were being chased by a Spanish sloop of war, and were on the reef before 'twas seen."

My graceful, fast-sailing brig, bought with profits of risk and careful planning! And I had intended to sail for New Orleans on her!

"What were you doing in there near the Isle of Pines?" I demanded coldly. "You should have been standing out to clear the Pines and Cape San Antonio, before you made for Havana."

"A bit of private business," Caffrey said, still with the hang-dog look. "A little private venture of my own."

"Niggers," I said. "Don't lie to me, Caffrey. You took slaves aboard, against my orders."

"Only eleven," he admitted miserably. "Got 'em dirt cheap from a schooner that'd lost a mast an' couldn't sail."

"I was warned against you!" I said, and knocked him down.

Caffrey got to his feet without spirit, one arm raised defensively. "Wait," he begged hoarsely. "The Spaniard got the slaves and some of the crew. They were searching the Isle of Pines for the rest of us. I got across the island and escaped in a fishing boat. If they catch me now, I'll go to La Cabaña dungeons for slaving. I've known men who stayed in that hell pit for years, Mr. Morgan. I've got to get out of Havana." A look of cunning came into his eyes. "If they make me swear the venture belonged to you, they'll have you for slaving," he added.

I wanted to knock him down again, but I held myself in check. The rascal

might make trouble. Spanish law took strange twists.

"Go to my lodgings at Pio's place," I told him. "and wait for me. Put on some of my clothes, or the watch will pick you up, the way you look. Here's money for a carriage, and for Pio's silence."

I went back up to the broad gallery overlooking the courtyard. Jan Spreck was standing there, big, immobile, blank-faced.

"Dot mind of yours iss not changed, young man?"

"No," I said shortly, and went inside, wondering if Spreck had heard any of my words with Caffrey. Spreck would not be above sending a man to La Cabaña dungeons for the same things he had done himself.

I waited for a dance with Susanne Valverde, and as we swung into a waltz, she asked, "You have not done business tonight?"

"Why shouldn't I?"

"A woman's whim." She laughed. I was never quite sure when she was mocking me. The perfume of her nearness, her hair, the warm firm clasp of her fingers, her red lips and her slender grace, pushed sober thinking aside, made me breathe faster and draw her closer.

"Susanne!"

"Yes, Cass?"

"You are beautiful."

"You've never said so before."

"I've thought so. Some day I'll tell you all the things I've thought."

"Some day?" Susanne said, looking up at me. I don't know what she saw in my look. Her eyes dropped. I would not have thought Susanne could blush so delicately, or that she could draw away so naturally, like an innocent girl caught by confusion.

Then I remembered she was an actress who had danced in the great cities of the world. She was no stranger to compliments. O'Malley had warned me about her. "Look out, my boy," he'd said. "Susanne has broken better hearts than yours." This was folly and I wanted none of it.

So I said, "I'm leaving for New Orleans in the morning," and the moment passed from us, and we were merely Crosby's guests, waltzing on his marble floor.

"I'm glad you're going, Cass," Susanne told me, and she would not say more when I tried to draw her out. Her last words were, "I think Irish O'Malley needs you, Cass."

I laughed at the idea of O'Malley ever needing anyone. O'Malley was fifteen years my senior, and never unsure of himself.

MANY kinds of men stopped at Papa Pio's place. This night, when a *volante* brought me from Crosby's house, the driver looked ahead in the night, and exclaimed, "*Señor*, there is trouble!"

Men stood ahead of us in the warm, thick shadows, and as I left the *volante*, Papa Pio's waddling figure met me.

"Señor Morgan, how could I know of this? What could I do?"

"What happened, Pio?"

Pio elbowed ahead of me through the small crowd and threw one fat arm out dramatically. A ragged Negro was hold-

ing a smoky lantern over a huddled body. The dead man was Sam Caffrey, wearing my clothes, and he had been stabbed in the back.

It was late that night before I slept. Murder was not uncommon in these dark streets near Havana's waterfront. But why had Sam Caffrey been killed so soon after talking to me? I was not satisfied that robbery was the reason.

In the morning Pio entered my room, panting from the steep stairs. His heavy mustache was jerking with excitement.

"This stranger," he said breathlessly, "asked for one small rum, and when he paid he said it was bad that the Señor Morgan was killed last night."

I forgot the shirt I was drawing on. "A stranger down there thinks I was stabbed last night?"

"Si, si."

"What sort of man is he?"

"A *Havañero*, señor. A small man I have not seen before. Not an honest man, I tell you. He was surprised to hear that you were alive."

"Damnation! You told him I was alive? You're a fool, Pio. Is the fellow down there now?"

"No. He left quickly." Pio made the sign of the cross. "Señor, I am not the fool. Last night the man wearing your clothes was mistaken for you." Pio drew a fat forefinger across his throat. "No?"

"Breakfast, Pio," I said.

When Pio went out, I stood with the shirt half on, thinking of Jan Spreck on that shadowy upper gallery while I talked with Sam Caffrey. The threads of a web seemed to be closing about me. I wondered how much Susanne Valverde knew about it.

CHAPTER TWO

THAT afternoon the three-masted paddle steamer *India Star* moved slowly out past Morro Castle. I was on her deck as the pale blue and red Havana houses dropped astern, and the white bastions and rose-colored walls of La Cabaña fortress followed.

My fellow passengers were Cubans, Spaniards, a Dutchman from Curaçao, Englishmen, Americans, and Louisiana planters and Creoles from New Orleans, and among all the polyglot company I could find no one who showed interest in me.

Dead calm held from the Morro battery to the mud flats at the mouth of the Mississippi. The weather was hot, sultry. In the Mississippi current it became worse.

Early one afternoon two full-rigged ships came down the river in tow of steam tugs. They were army transports carrying troops to General Taylor. I watched gloomily. I was against this war with Mexico. Dispatches out of the North had painted a picture of mounting excitement in the States. Regiments of one-year volunteers were hurriedly being raised. The Caribbean countries were seething with excitement. Good men were dying, because politicians chose not to agree.

The oppressive heat grew worse under a greasy sky. Heavy scents of wild blos-

soms drifted from the river banks. Alligators slid smoothly off mud banks. Night fell solidly and blackly, and livid lighting began to flicker in the distance.

The storm approached. Wind began to sing through the high rigging. Officers shouted orders. Passengers had retreated below, but I was still on deck as the first hard sheets of rain drove through the black night.

I stood at the rail, facing the storm, and its very fury gave me an elation I needed. Lightning flashed blue-white and brilliant, and I turned instinctively from the bolt. That movement saved my head from the full crushing blow that struck at me from behind, and drove me reeling against the rail. Only by instinct did I duck away from a second blow. My head came hard into a man's chest, and we staggered against the rail.

Lightning glared again; and I sighted another man close on my left, his knife ready. I wrenched away to meet the threat of that knife, and I was clubbed again, and hurled over the rail. The next instant I went deep into the river and the deep-threshing paddle wheel overwhelmed me. One blade struck me, and the blow, tremendous and paralyzing, drove me down toward oblivion.

SOME vague will to survive kept me from trying to breathe there under the water, made me struggle in the wild currents; and when it seemed I would have to breathe or die, I was hurled to the surface.

In dazzling lightning, the high stern of the *India Star* moved away like a vast black wall. A clap of thunder beat back my cry. I was strangling, half-dead. But even then I was furious at having dropped my guard in the last few hours. Sam Caffrey's death, while wearing my clothes, had been warning enough of danger ahead.

Susanne Valverde had tried to warn me, and I knew now that the mystery I had shrugged off was as deadly as death itself. What it was, I didn't know. But I would live to find out. I made that promise deep inside. I'd live and discover the meaning of all this.

A long time later I floundered weakly through soft mud and shallows, and fell exhausted among wet reeds and grass. The storm had moved on. My head, my side and right leg hurt, but I was alive. The knife had slit through my shirt and gashed across the ribs. Fever chills shook me for the first time in months.

But slowly I drew strength from the fact that I was alive. I thought of Irish O'Malley in New Orleans, all unsuspecting of what was happening. The men who had tried to kill me were on the *India Star*. By morning they would be in New Orleans with O'Malley. We were partners. If death reached for me, it was also reaching for O'Malley. He must be warned.

Frogs chorused in the storm-washed night. Clouds of mosquitoes shrilled above me. Harsh birds echoed across the river. Then I heard dogs barking, and I struggled up and hobbled over the levee bank.

In returning moonlight, cane fields and woodland stretched away. The dogs were on a narrow road at the foot of the levee.

A creaking ox cart was following them. The fever had me light-headed as I hobbled to the road just as the ponderous yoked beasts brought the great cart slowly to the spot.

"I must get to New Orleans," I told the Negro in the cart. "I'll pay to be carried there. I've had an accident."

The moonlight gleamed on his white teeth. "We goin' N'Awieans, suh. Slow-like, but we gets dere. Sack o' straw behin' de seat, jes' right fo' sleepin'. I he'p you on, suh."

It was a strange journey through a giddy, pain-filled night. At times I must have been out of my head with the fever. Once I caught myself singing. But before dawn I slept soundly.

The bright sun woke me up. We were in New Orleans, creaking into the clutter, the hustle and bustle of the French Market. Here all New Orleans came to shop, look, gossip.

The world was swimming when the Negro helped me down from the high cart. I gave him money, and lurched off through the market crowd in search of a carriage.

Fish, fruits of all kinds, were piled about. The loud bargaining, the people, the talk and gestures, were unreal as I went by. I had the feeling I was alone in the sick haze, and that I must keep going to O'Malley. I had to find Irish O'Malley, and warn him that death might be waiting at any turn of the narrow streets.

Faces, faces without end, swam before my eyes—and then one face took form like a vision striking through the fever. All the world held only one girl like her. one girl with chestnut hair above the cool, clear triangle of her face.

"Treva!" I exclaimed. "Treva Dexter!" And then, as she looked at me with startled recognition, I laughed. "It's been a long time, Treva. Seven years."

A white-haired Negro with a basket moved watchfully to Treva's side. People were looking at us. Treva's voice trembled. "Cass, you're in trouble or drunk." Her voice became husky. "You've been bleeding!"

I looked down at my muddy trousers and my slashed and blood-stiffened shirt.

"A drunken, bleeding desperado is what you expected, isn't it?" I asked, and I laughed again. This was a dream, a nightmare, with strange faces watching curiously.

A little old woman, erect and purposeful in a black dress, joined Treva. Her brisk question had the faint music of French and Creole accent. "What is this, Treva?"

"Madame Oliveras?" I guessed. "Treva's aunt? Allow me, madame. Cass Morgan, once and always the devoted admirer of your niece." I bowed to her, and then fell flat on my face there in the French Market.

THE next thing I saw was sunshine on the coverlet of a large canopied bed, where I lay. Madame Oliveras was standing at the foot of the bed, looking at me.

"So! Now we will live," she said. Her smile had the shrewd understanding of age. "Eleven days, *m'sieur*, we have tried to keep you alive. I think only a very

wicked young man could have cheated the devil as you have. Treva was horrified at the things you said while in the fevers."

Alarmed, I asked, "What did I say?" Her eyes danced. "How delightfully wicked you have been, M'sieur Cass Morgan. Like M'sieur Lafitte, that handsome pirate who lived on Bourbon Street when I was younger."

"Madame, I am not a pirate."

"Oui, m'sieur."

Then I thought of O'Malley. Eleven days had been lost. O'Malley had not been warned. He might be dead.

"You have been too kind, madame. I must leave at once. There is a man I must see."

"If the man is in New Orleans, we will send for him," she said firmly. "You have not recovered. M'sieur le docteur will say when you may leave."

"My friend is named Irish O'Malley. Word can be had of him at the Bank of New France." And then I asked, "Is Treva here?"

"Treva, m'sieur, has gone to the plantation."

She must have seen my face fall, because she added, "She waited until you were out of danger." And she went out, smiling faintly to herself.

WITHIN the hour I heard O'Malley's gusty laugh in the rooms below, and his deep voice cried, "Strangle me, ma'am, but I thought he was dead! Best news I've had for years."

Then he was in the doorway, towering behind Madame Oliveras. Tough as mast cable, with a sun-blackened face, a square jaw and a wide mouth, O'Malley was so near to being ugly that he was almost handsome. He came in like a gust of fresh life, a fine Panama hat crushed under one arm, and his other big hand reaching for my hand.

Madame Oliveras retired. O'Malley grinned down at me. "I talked with men who'd seen you on the *India Star*."

"I had a bit of trouble down river. Went overboard."

"Gambling, or a woman?"

"I'm not sure what's back of it. I made shore with my head cracked and the fever loose again. Didn't know much until today."

O'Malley looked about the room. "Nice nest, but I need you. Our boats are on the government run to Mexico."

"By any chance, have you met a man named Scofield?" I asked.

O'Malley's laugh boomed out in the quiet room. "Scofield's pockets hold the easiest money we'll make in many a year." He spun a satin-covered chair to the bed and sat down, explaining.

Scofield had arrived in New Orleans four days ago and gone at once to O'Malley. The general commanding at New Orleans Barracks had vouched for Scofield. And now our boats were in the war, subject to official orders.

"Jan Spreck was with Scofield in Havana," I said. "Spreck spoke to me for Scofield, and I turned them down."

"So Scofield said," O'Malley admitted, grinning broadly. "I thought better of the matter than you did, Cass. Now get out of that fancy bed and pull rope."

But Irish O'Malley was holding something back. After he left, I had the tight and troubled feeling that we were both deep in that web I'd suspected at Granville Crosby's house in Havana. But now it was worse. O'Malley was not fully at my side. That, I think, troubled me more than anything else.

CHAPTER THREE

OMALLEY had rooms for us on Bourbon Street, and two days later I moved in with him.

Over a bottle of fine old Portuguese port, O'Malley said, "General Santa

Anna has left Havana on the British steamer *Arab*, sailing to Vera Cruz. It's a fool thing to let happen. Santa Anna will rally Mexico. Taylor will need more supplies. We'll have work ahead." He stood up, chuckling. "I'll leave you now, Cass. I'm calling on your pretty friend, Susanne Valverde."



It was the wild, passionate outpouring of the voodoo jungle. Only Susanne could have made it seem so real.

Anna has left Havana on the British steamer *Arab*, sailing to Vera Cruz. It's a fool thing to let happen. Santa Anna will rally Mexico. Taylor will need more supplies. We'll have work ahead." He stood up, chuckling. "I'll leave you now, Cass. I'm calling on your pretty friend, Susanne Valverde."

"The devil! Is she here?"

"Her dancing makes the soldiers and officers bug-eyed every night at the theater." He winked broadly. "I haven't told Susanne you've been living off the fat of the land, with an old flame to soothe your fever."

"Blast your insinuations. Tell Susanne I expect to see her."

O'Malley had first introduced me to Susanne. His humor now had warning. "Our pretty Susanne will make you dance before she's through, and you won't like the tune, my hearty. Mind your step."

I laughed.

That night I sat in the theater and watched Susanne dance. She was a lithe, slender girl, in a full, flaring skirt with a yellow and white *tignon* on

her head. Behind her an old black crone hunkered beside an iron pot and fondled a snake. Three black men knelt in reeds beside the crone, and their low chant and the soft rhythm of the small drums they thumped went on and on.

Susanne glided across the stage and saw the snake. She retreated in alarm and poised uncertainly. The drums began to thump faster, faster. . . . Then she began to dance, and as the drums and the chanting came louder and faster, the packed theater filled with savage undercurrents straight out of the African jungle. I had heard it like this in the slave barracoons on the Guinea Coast. It was old Africa, the wild and passionate

outpouring of the deepest voodoo jungle. Only Susanne Valverde, I think, could have made it seem so real. When the curtain was lowered, proud Creoles and gold-braided officers clapped madly.

Later, in a swaying barouche which carried us to a famous restaurant, Susanne sat beside me, slender and smiling. "You have the jungle behind that pretty face," I said.

She was pleased. "You like it, Cass?"

"I'm not afraid of it," I said, and she laughed.

Jacques had my order beforehand. The champagne was iced and ready. Candles lighted our table in an intimate corner. And when we were seated, I said, "Did you know that the captain of my brig was stabbed to death that last night in Havana? He was mistaken for me. And I was followed from Havana, and almost killed as the boat came upriver?"

Susanne's hand was unsteady as she put the fragile wine glass down. "No, Cass."

"Why did it happen?" I demanded, leaning forward.

"I don't know, Cass."

I laughed at her. It was the wrong thing to have done. Her quick, flashing anger was like the barbaric fire in her dance.

"Don't laugh at me, Cass Morgan! I warned you in Havana. And here you are in New Orleans doing business with Jan Spreck."

"With the government, and that man Scofield. What do you know about Spreck's business, Susanne?"

"Go ask the voodoo women back of Congo Square!" she threw at me. "If you won't listen to me, find a black witch you'll believe!"

Her cheeks were flushed and her eyes were bright. She was beautiful as she raged in the candlelight, and I saw I would get nothing from her. "Irish O'Malley made the deal with Scofield," I said sulkily.

"I know," she said. "Now please be nice."

WHEN a carriage brought us to the house on the Rue Royale, where Susanne was staying, we were laughing lightheartedly as I handed her out on the banquette.

She unlocked the massive patio door. We stepped inside, and the heavy door swung shut, and we were alone and close in the dark shadows. A fountain tinkled softly. Perfume from flowers and Susanne's nearness crept about us. It was very quiet, and I felt the slow, hard thumping of my heart, the warmth of wine and Susanne running through me.

Her low voice said, "You'll try to keep from danger, Cass?"

"Why should you care, Susanne?"

The delicate oval of her face was close, looking up at me. "I don't want you to be hurt, Cass."

"Why not?" My heart was thumping faster.

"I like you, Cass." It was almost a whisper. "I shouldn't, should I? I don't know why I do."

I reached for her hand. Her small fingers were stiff, and then soft and submissive, clinging.

"You're more beautiful than ever," I said unsteadily.

She tried to draw away. Once more her reaction was like convent innocence, alarmed, confused, as though she didn't understand herself. I held her and captured her other hand.

"Susanne!"

"This evening has been so nice, Cass. I will see you again, won't I?" she said unsteadily.

"I'm here now," I said. "Look up, Susanne."

I brought her to me as she looked up. She was tense in the imprisonment of my arm. One small hand went to my chest in protest. She looked away as I bent to her face. I kissed her ear and the fragrance of her hair was giddy. The curve of her cheek was soft as I kissed her again.

Her whisper was barely audible. "Please, Cass. Please! We're too much alike."

I brought her close, hard. She began to tremble; she looked up and I found her mouth and there was madness in the soft, feverish hunger that met my lips.



A low and drawing voice spoke: "Sit easy, mister." . . . I sat motionless, and a blanket was dropped over my head.

Her arms went around me. Her slender body was suddenly all sweet and yielding in the fierce embrace in which I caught her.

"Cass! Oh, Cass!" she gasped, as we clung tighter, tighter.

She had warned me we were too much alike. There was no city, no patio, no night, in those long furious moments that we clung together. No thought, no reason. Only the wild and elemental feeling that ran like fire and fever through us. Only the feel of Susanne's mouth, the hot touch of her cheek against my burning cheek, the utter yielding of her lithe and slender body against my hunger.

Too much alike, too wild and reckless to mean the things we felt. Suddenly I could almost hear Irish O'Malley's voice jeering: "You'll not like the tune you dance to! Watch out!"

I released Susanne.

"I'm ashamed, Cass!" she gasped. "Terribly ashamed."

O'Malley's warning faded. No woman, however gifted, could pretend such pas-

sion. None, however worldly, could fake such sweet confusion.

I brought her close again, gently, and kissed her tenderly.

But she disengaged herself, stepped forward and pushed open the patio door.

"Good night, Cass."

She closed the door quietly, and as I walked through the soft dark night I remembered Treva Dexter standing in the French Market in startled uncertainty. I could almost hear Treva's shaking voice saying, "You're in trouble or drunk, Cass."

"Both, evidently," I muttered aloud. "And a fool besides!"

I DID not find the two men who had tried to kill me on the *India Star*. On an afternoon when I knocked on the door of the dignified Oliveras house, on Toulouse Street, the tall black servant faced me politely and informed me that Madame Oliveras and the young mistress had gone visiting to Natchez.

I thought, as I walked away, that Treva Dexter might be escaping from New Orleans, where it was possible that we might meet again. How much, I wondered, was she running from the past between us?

In September, British sources brought word that General Santa Anna had made triumphant entry into the City of Mexico. The politicians in Washington had guessed wrong. They had let Santa Anna return, hoping he would rend Mexico into factions, after his exile. He was bringing the country together in fiery purpose. The war with Mexico promised to grow stubborn and long.

O'Malley and I had become forwarders of freight, boxes, crates, dismantled supply wagons, harness, and all the assorted supplies of a fighting army. We obeyed orders, brushed elbows with the Navy and were prodded by the Army. New Orleans grew more busy and prosperous. Uniforms were everywhere.

Madame Oliveras and Treva were still visiting upriver. Between Susanne and myself lay a truce. We were, I think, on guard against each other.

One afternoon, while O'Malley and I walked to Government Wharf, through the levee smells of molasses, tarred cordage, hides and spices, O'Malley said, "There's a Captain David Key been put working close with us. Ain't he the one you marked on the cheek?"

"Yes. So he's a captain now?"

"And not liking you any better, I'm thinking," said O'Malley. "Watch him. He's naming cargo that we carry."

"I'll not bother to think of him," I said, and I went with O'Malley aboard O'Malley's two-masted schooner, *Voodoo Belle*, just in from the Rio Grande.

Mongo Jack Walker, the bearded captain of the *Voodoo Belle*, had been a slaver. He was a man after O'Malley's heart, with big scarred fists used on many a wild crew. In the small cabin. Mongo Jack opened a bottle.

"Drink an' be damned, gents, as the preacher promised. What'll I take next to old Taylor?"

"Powder," I told him. "You were duc ten days ago, Captain Walker. What de-layed you?"

O'Malley chuckled. "No doubt a bad norther, Mongo, eh?"

"Bad weather she was," Mongo agreed, showing strong white teeth. "East to s'east wind in our faces all the way home, gents."

I left them a few minutes later and walked forward, where some of the hands were working under the squinting gaze of Holly, the mate.

A gray-haired seaman was coiling rope near Holly. I went over to him. "Nice trip?" I asked.

"Midlin', sir," he mumbled.

"Bad weather, I hear."

Mongo Jack spoke harshly behind me: "Show one of the owners politeness, damn you! Tell Mr. Morgan about that dirty norther that caught us, an' the head winds we bucked."

"Never mind," I said. "Thank you, Captain, for your interest."

"Always thinkin' of me owners, sir," Mongo said, grinning.

O'Malley was in the background. "Friend of yours coming aboard, Cass," he warned.

IT was David Key. Seven years had only stamped deeper on David's aristocratic face all the frigid self-assurance of his distinguished New England background. The last time I had seen that face, blood from my sword cut had been streaming past the thin mouth. The white scar from temple to jaw began to turn red now as we met face to face on the *Voodoo Belle's* deck.

"Mr. Morgan," David said coldly.

"So it's Captain Key now?" I said.

He nodded. "I've had the feeling, Mr. Morgan, we'd meet again. I've heard of you from time to time." His voice held a faint, icy contempt. "A colorful life you've been leading."

Somehow I'd thought the bitterness had stayed only with me. David had remained an officer and a gentleman. His welcome had remained with Treva Dexter, over whom we had fought. He had kept everything, and I had lost everything. But he was bitter, too. Seven years later, here in New Orleans, he hated me.

"At least," I said, "I've had my share of fighting, David. Not checking supply lists and fighting a war with blobs of ink."

David froze. He had to swallow twice before he said in a stifled voice, "I've applied for a place in the battle regiments. A quartermaster's assignment was not my seeking, sir. I'll be out of it, if possible. Meanwhile, I'll do my duty. . . . Gentlemen, this schooner was expected some time ago. General Taylor is advancing on Monterrey and needs his powder."

"Captain Walker will explain his slow voyage, no doubt," I said. "You'll excuse me."

David ignored me.

I walked to the French Market for coffee and a chance to think. There I saw Madame Oliveras and Treva again.

I bought roses from a flower seller and took them to Treva. She was boy-slim in a high-waisted dress, and wearing a gay bonnet.

"Why, Cass!" she exclaimed, and she

took the roses before she thought, and color came into her face.

"So, M'sieur Pirate!" Madame Oliveras greeted me.

"With your permission, *madame*," I said, bowing, "I will call to thank you for your hospitality."

"M'sieur, in three days from now you must dine with us. Is it not so, Treva?"

"Whatever you say, Aunt Cecilia," said Treva coolly.

After that, in spite of Treva's coolness, I would not have believed trouble possible. Powder was being rushed into the *Voodoo Belle*. O'Malley was busy, and I was not much good to him. Treva was on my mind most of the time. I was thinking of her as I walked on Chartres Street the third afternoon, and met Seymour Ashford, merchant and plantation owner.

"Here's luck," Ashford greeted me. Then he drew me under an overhanging balcony and looked around before he spoke. "Would you be knowin' of slaves that might be comin' in, cheap?"

"No," I said shortly. "We're busy with supplies to Taylor's army."

He smirked. "Word comes up the bayous that boats still slip in at Passe de Terre and Isle Grosse. Smoke still makes signals on that coast."

"Damn the smoke signals, Ashford! I told you O'Malley and I were running cargo to the Rio Grande."

He wagged his head, grinning slyly. "I've heard of a man who might be doubtin' that. He's talked with my overseer at Crooked Bayou. A Yankee stranger with a fine scar across his cheek, and he's traveled almost to Passe de Terre."

"The coast is full of Yankee strangers," I said, and I was sure Ashford looked disappointed as we parted. He had thought I'd be concerned, and I was.

A SHABBY *fiacre* hurried me to the levee, where the Navy sloop *Vandoria* was just back from the Mexican watch. I went aboard.

"I'll speak to the lieutenant," I told the marine guard, nodding at the officer near the mainmast.

The lieutenant turned. It was Jock Peters, once a midshipman with me. "What a sight for blotty eyes!" he cried, rushing to shake my hand.

In seven years I had not stood on a man-o'-war's deck. I looked at the rubbed and polished guns inside their ports, the well-stoned deck, the rope ends, Navy-style, in Flemish coils. The glazed brim of Jock's cap, the rotten-stone brilliance of his buttons, the bright gold of his epaulettes, brought a tightening to my throat.

"I've only time to look at your pea-ball batteries and ask how the weather's been toward the Rio Grande," I said.

"We'll lob broadsides with any three-decker," Jock swore, his round face shining. "As for the weather, I've never had a finer run. We're carrying dispatches to Mexico these days."

"No northers?"

"Nary one."

Mongo Jack Walker had lied about his weather, and O'Malley had all but suggested the lie to Mongo. David Key had known what he was about in the swamps

to the south. Smoke signals must still be rising from Isle Grosse and boats putting in by Passe de Terre.

I sent regrets to Madame Oliveras for not being able to dine. The sun was still shining that afternoon when I rode south from New Orleans into the swamp country.

Big Jules, the overseer at Seymour Ashford's Crooked Bayou plantation, lived alone, loutish and brutal. Slaves and trade goods were smuggled through the swamps from the coast, and taken from Crooked Bayou to Ashford, in New Orleans.

That night, in the crude plantation house, Big Jules leaned his arms on a table and grinned through lantern light.

"The same two niggers who fetched you in last year will take you to the coast," he said, and winked. "Cargo comin'?"

"There'll be no cargo back," I said.

JIMBO and Sambo were my swamp guides. A pirogue hollowed from a cypress log carried us into the swamps, where channels were choked with masses of lush water hyacinths, and runaway slaves and half-wild men of the coastal wilderness lurked and hid.

Near sunset we camped on higher ground beside a cypress swamp, and we ate dried shrimp gumbo and corn cakes from the fire ashes. While the black boys slept like weary animals, I smoked a Cuban cigar by the smudge fire.

A bull alligator bellowed not far away, and then a low and drawing voice spoke behind me. "Sit easy, mister."

I knew the casual way a knife or a bullet could kill. I sat motionless while a blanket dropped over my head. "Damn these skeeters," the soft voice said. "Keg Head, you got him fanged. Bulltuck, git them other two in the boat."

They lashed my wrists behind and helped me into what seemed my own pirogue. After what seemed like hours we were hailed. The boat touched land. I was guided ashore and the blanket stripped off. Smudge fires glowed. My soft-voiced man was an army sergeant, with sandy stubble. And the next thing I saw was David Key, immaculate, even here in the swamp night.

"A smuggler and a slaver," David said contemptuously. "A man who'd help the enemy in time of war for dirty gold to spend on some cheap dancer."

"You're a filthy liar, David," I said.

"You'll hang," David said. "After I investigate Isle Grosse, you'll hang, Cass Morgan. Sergeant, I hold you responsible for him."

That night I slept little. At dawn we went on in three large rowboats of shallow draught, with small masts unshipped and lashed out of the way.

All that long day we traveled south, and the next day also, and late afternoon we followed a narrow channel into a long salt-water lagoon. Masts were stepped: we sailed on into a mile-wide bay, and landed on a long point of land which thrust out from the west. The spot was some twelve miles east of Passe de Terre and Isle Grosse.

Here by the Gulf I sensed again the full depth of David's cold determination. There had been about time for the

Voodoo Belle to clear the Mississippi Passes with her powder cargo, and to put in at Isle Grosse. When he had proved she was smuggling, he meant to see me hang.

I still had hidden on my person the oiled-silk packet which Commodore Dexter had given me. I could have shown the paper to David. I could have sworn anything we found at Isle Grosse was part of my plan to help the Navy. But the commodore had put me on my honor. He still believed in my honor.

We marched at dark along the ocean beach, west. *Passe de Terre* was a mile-long, sickle-shaped bank of sand which connected Isle Grosse to the mainland. At low tide the *Passe* lay under water that could be waded.

The channel into Grosse Bay was at the west point of Isle Grosse. Inside that western point of the island, a schooner could be tied almost against the steep shore. Palmetto brush and trees made a screen against boats passing off-shore.

When we came over the beach sand to the *Passe de Terre*, David's order was curt: "Muskets ready. We may be sighted before we reach the island. Any man who falters or turns back will be shot."

CHAPTER FOUR

MY ARMS were lashed behind, as were the arms of the two Negroes, Sambo and Jimbo. The sergeant kept watchfully at our heels. We waded out across *Passe de Terre*, and the dark mass of Isle Grosse grew clearer.

Sambo's ape-like head cocked. I wondered what his swamp-trained ears had heard. And then from the undergrowth at the island's edge, came a shout:

"What do ye want?"

David called the order to charge. A shot rang out from the bushes; a few army muskets answered. But that was all. The yelling soldiers made the island sand and crashed into the undergrowth.

I could have told them that two guards had usually been posted at this end of the island. One had run to give warning when we first appeared on the *Passe*; the other had fired on us.

"To the other end of the island!" David cried.

"Mister," my sergeant warned me, "I'm watchin' you!"

Branches slapped at my face as the skirmish line advanced. In the scrub growth, moonlight was cut off. There was no warning that reinforcements had reached the lone guard until several guns suddenly fired at us.

The army muskets replied. A soldier cried out in pain, and the troops plunged ahead. The guns of the island men retreated.

I stumbled heavily to the ground. "Git up!" the sergeant ordered fiercely. "Git up or I'll shoot!"

I leaped up and drove my head into his face. His musket seared flame past my shoulder, but I knew he'd have bayonet steel in my back as I ran.

I barely saw the black shadow that dove past me. It struck, head first, in the sergeant's middle. He doubled with a stifled groan and went to the ground.

"Kill 'im, sah?" Sambo panted, rolling up on short, ungainly legs.

"Leave him. This way!" I ordered.

The two Negroes and I plunged into the brush. Minutes later we burst out on the beach. "Get a shell and cut these ropes," I told them.

Sambo backed to me with a wave-washed shell in his strong fingers, and the sharp edge chewed at my wrist ropes and freed me. I used the shell on Sambo, and let him free the other black.

The night shivered with a deep report as I led them at a run along the beach. The *Voodoo Belle* was firing ball or cannister into the island undergrowth from a deck cannon. An American boat, firing on American soldiers, in time of war! O'Malley's boat, and so, in a way, my boat. How Commodore Dexter's thin old lip would have curled with contempt!

We had kept a small boat hidden in the brush. With the two black men rowing, the small craft leaped forward toward the western tip of the island.

My first sight of the *Voodoo Belle* was her high gaff sails glowing in the fire glare. Mongo Jack, as I had guessed, was taking the schooner out into Grosse Bay, and crowding on all sail as he swung for open water.

The oars bent as the Negroes pulled furiously. We cleared the island point, and saw the schooner heeling and bearing toward us like a white-winged bird rushing through the moonlight. Gouts of red flame burst from her gun ports. The roar of six-pounders rolled across the water.

Cannister was bursting on the island. I could hear the fainter reports of muskets from the undergrowth. Flames leaped on the shore, among palmetto storage sheds.

A warning shout came from the schooner's bow, as our small boat angled across her course.

"Passengers!" I shouted through cupped hands. "Captain Walker! I'm coming aboard!"

Our boat drove recklessly to the *Voodoo Belle's* side. As I caught at the schooner's rail an unrolling rope ladder almost knocked me down. I swarmed up the ladder, followed by Sambo.

"Sah, Jimbo go swamp!" he said.

When I looked back over the rail the small boat was dropping astern. I knew Jimbo was swamp rat enough to go back to Crooked Bayou.

CASES of freight were stacked on the *Voodoo Belle's* deck, and men, strange men, crowded around me. Mongo Jack pushed his way through.

"Mr. Morgan! Blast me if I know what'll happen next!"

"I'll talk in your cabin, Captain. Is Irish O'Malley aboard?"

"Not he. I've been wishin' he was."

The small cabin looked luxurious after the swamp country. "A glass of Madeira?" Mongo Jack asked, grinning. "Ye look a little pale."

"Damn your Madeira!" I said. "Those were army troops from New Orleans. They almost caught you taking aboard contraband for Mexico, didn't they?"

"We was loaded. All they found was fire in them old sheds." Mongo chortled.

"For all they know, we stopped to pick up passengers or take on water. We'll strut the levee in New Orleans safe as any general, when we get back." He fingered his curly beard. "Unless," he added, "the lady hangs us. I ain't sure about the lady."

"What lady?"

"Found her stowed away when we cleared the river," said Mongo Jack. "I'll fetch her."

Mongo Jack's grinning deference was mocking as he bowed Treva Dexter into my presence.

Treva was pale and her voice was cold. "He locked me in my cabin. At your order, I suppose, Cass."

"I gave no orders," I said. "Treva, why did you do this?"

"To see if things I'd heard were true. I wanted to know if I'd nursed back to life a man who would turn against his country as soon as he was well."

"You've been listening to David Key."

"Yes," said Treva. "David said you would hang, and now I believe him."

I turned to Mongo. "Throw that contraband overboard," I ordered. "We're putting back."

Mongo Jack sneered. "O'Malley gave me orders, and they stands."

I HIT him in the curly beard, and he staggered. But a blow or two never stopped a man like Mongo Jack. He bel-lowed, "I'm captain on me own deck!" and rushed at me, swinging his fists.

I forgot Treva, everything but my fury, as I knocked him back on his heels. He knew every trick of foul fighting, but so did I. His big fists sledged at my chest and smashed my nose. I caught his beard and almost tore it out as I twisted his head, yanked him off balance, and hit him a thundering blow on the ear that sent him reeling.

Then, just as I was going to finish him, a pistol shot roared and my left arm went numb.

I just had time to see Jan Spreck lurching across the cabin, a pistol in each hand, when Mongo knocked me down.

The cabin blurred. I heard Treva cry, "You can't kill him!"

"Git in your cabin!" Mongo's furious, panting voice told her. "And you put the pistols up, Spreck. Let O'Malley kill his partner, if need be."

"Foolishness," Spreck told him. "He brought those soldiers to Isle Grosse."

Mongo searched me carefully, and found the oiled-silk packet. He opened it under the hanging brass lantern, looked at it, then gave the paper to Spreck, who read it aloud:

"Mr. Morgan is proceeding on matters of interest to the undersigned. You will oblige, Dexter, U.S.N."

Spreck laughed and put the paper carefully inside his coat. "Now," he said, "we haf the Navy protecting us. Nice, no?"

I was put in irons by two seamen Mongo Jack summoned, and was shut in the storeroom. I sat in blackness, with slave shackles on ankles and wrist, and thought things out.

This, then, was what O'Malley had been holding from me. He'd known I'd not agree. The plan was perfect. Boats belonging to O'Malley and me could load

contraband at Isle Grosse on their way to the Rio Grande, and land the extra cargo on the Mexican coast before going on with Taylor's supplies.

No wonder Spreck and MacIntosh and Granville Crosby had wanted my friendship in Havana! The profit must be enormous. They were all in on it, working out of Cuba, getting rich by sending death to American volunteers. And I was a part of it—I, Cass Morgan, who had been a midshipman in the battle line.

Mongo Jack sent me food and water, and attended to my comfort in a way. But days passed, and he left me with the rats and the dark, and the sound of sea against the *Voodoo Belle*.

I was sleeping when the schooner made her landfall and let go the anchor. Alert, I heard the sounds of small boats alongside, and cargo going over. It was easy to visualize the boats rushing contraband to some isolated spot on the Mexican coast. Hours later we sailed again.



Jan Spreck came lurching across the cabin, a pistol in each hand. . . . Treva cried, "You can't kill him!"

Near noon the next day Mongo Jack had me brought to his cabin. "You'll take the Dutchman's bunk," he said. "I'll leave them shackles on your wrists, but you an' me an' Holly will be all cozy an' comfortable, eh?"

"Where's Miss Dexter?" I asked.

"She went ashore with the Dutchman."

"You let that fat killer take her into Mexico?"

"Ain't every man has a commodore's kin to sweeten the game he's playing," Mongo assured me, grinning. "That Spreck is a deep one, if you ask me."

His backward jump was too late. I was on him, shackled wrists uplifted, and I struck down with a fury I had never known before.

The rough iron shackle bolt and the heavy lock caught Mongo under the eye and tore open his face. He dropped like a dead man. I had his keys in a moment and was at the arms chest. Pistols were always loaded and ready under the lid.

"Holly!" I roared.

The mate came down out of the sunlight, blinking. "Cap'n?"

"Come here!"

Holly saw the pistol and Mongo flat and bleeding. He snatched off his cap. "At your service, Mr. Morgan, sir. You'll mind I'm only mate. I takes me orders."

"Put your middle against the pistol and unlock these shackles. Then put them on Mongo. Where's the black man who came aboard with me?"

"Ironed fo'ard."

"Get him. If there's any trouble with the crew, you'll suffer. And get a boat over, with water and a few biscuits."

"Aye, aye, sir."

MONGO JACK stirred, groaning. I hauled him up and shook him.

"Where did you unload last night?"

"Mutiny!" he shouted thickly. "Holly! All hands . . ." He broke off as I cocked the pistol.

"I'd as soon shoot as not," I said. "And now, can we put back and find Miss Dexter?"

He licked his bloody mouth. "There's only an empty beach there. And like as not a Yankee gunboat looking around."

An empty beach on the wild and lonely coast of Mexico. And Jan Spreck. I thought of Treva, and every feeling I had cried out to follow her, find her, protect her. But this was war with Mexico. I'd probably fail, and I knew Treva's spirit, her fierce loyalty to country, well enough to be sure of what she would want me to do. I could hear her now, reminding me that this was war and we were Navy, that our duty was not to ourselves, to our own safety, but was where the tall masts sailed and the quarterdeck orders directed. And she was right.

I turned on Mongo Jack. "Damn you! On deck, you dirty scoundrel!"

"You'll not shoot me?" His voice showed fear.

"I'll give you an open boat, or choice of being handed over to the Navy at Brazos de Santiago anchorage, off the Rio Grande."

"The Navy'll hang me!"

"Too good for you. Take the open boat. And if you find Jan Spreck, warn

him that if Miss Dexter is harmed I'll kill him if I have to follow him all over the earth!"

"An open boat is murder!" Mongo protested, and began to curse. He was still cursing as he drifted astern in the boat. Actually, he'd not have too much trouble making the coast if the wind held fair.

I had Holly lay the crew aft, and I looked them over. They were sweepings of the Caribbean, including the eight men taken aboard at Isle Grosse.

"You'll hang for that little business at Isle Grosse," I told them, a pistol in each hand. "By now every Navy hull west of the Mississippi will be looking for this schooner. I'm going to try and make Cuba. If there's any among you with other ideas, Sambo, here, will be watching beside me while I sleep. I warn you. . . . Now get forward and work smartly. We'll change our paint and name. Pirates or traitors, we'll all hang no higher."

CHAPTER FIVE

MY PRIDE had gone. Shame and anger were with me in those days we ran toward Cuba. I had slight feeling about David Key. He had faded into the shifting fortunes of war. But the thought of Treva stayed with me like the ache of a hurt beyond healing.

"What are you, Cass Morgan?" the commodore had asked me in Havana.

He had his answer. Scum. Smuggler. Gun runner. Traitor. The very letter he had given me was being used against the fleet. As the tall mainmast swept against the stars on the run east, the commodore stayed in my thoughts.

I drove the crew, ate little and slept less. I had changed the *Voodoo Belle's* name to the *Amanda*, and painted the hull white with black trimmings. Mongo Jack had carried extra papers. All of our boats did. We had traded and run cargo in vague and devious ways, and we were always prepared.

It hurt to have that powder cargo for General Taylor broken out and heaved over, but it had to go. The schooner was a death trap in a fight, with powder stowed below.

I wanted Granville Crosby, and Mac-Intosh, and Irish O'Malley, if he'd escaped from New Orleans. So I went to Havana, knowing the cowed crew would not run the risk of hang ropes, by talking.

We sailed in past the Morro boldly. My false papers passed the port officials, and I made sure of it with a discreet passage of money.

I was wondering how to get ashore, whether I could trust Holly and the crew with the schooner, when a boat came alongside, and a man, a little older than I, with a great flaming red beard, swung aboard. It was Captain Johnny Frink. He punched me in the ribs and winked.

"I seen you pass the Morro," he said. "*Amanda*, eh? Ain't this the *Voodoo Belle*? What slippery business are you and O'Malley up to now?"

"Have you seen O'Malley?" I asked as we went below. "Is he in Havana?"

"I've not seen him," said Johnny Frink. "I've been too busy celebrating



"Even a rascal has a country," I told him. "I was a midshipman once. I've surrendered now, sir, to pay the fiddler."

good fortune." His deep laugh filled the cabin. "Nigh three hundred pieces of good fortune. Over the beach and inland without a hitch."

"Slaves again? You'll sweat for it some day, Johnny," I warned.

"Fine talk," said Johnny. "At least I'll never carry powder an' shot to anyone who'll fire them back at American boys."

"There's a meaning behind that remark," I suggested, not smiling.

Johnny Frink nodded. "Cap'n Juniper Woods is in the harbor now. The brig *Balmoye*. Off Yucatan Strait, Cap'n Woods spoke a schooner on a southbound course. He got no reply. Through the glass, he was sure he saw O'Malley by the mainmast. O'Malley knew well enough who was master of the *Balmoye*."

Johnny uncorked a wine bottle with his teeth, drank deeply and looked at me. "And I," he said, "know bloody well what's going on. O'Malley was nigh caught in New Orleans. It's a dirty business, bucko."

"So O'Malley went south, through the Yucatan Strait?" I said, and drank too. "Maybe you'd like to help stop it, Johnny?"

"Maybe I would."

"Will you?" I asked. "It's a dirtier business to me than it is to you. I've broken with O'Malley, whether he knows it or not."

I knew by his narrowed eyes that Johnny was weighing me and each word.

"I've made money and not been proud of some of it," he said. "A little glory in stopping blockade-running against our troops wouldn't be amiss. It might make me hold my head a little higher when I walk across Boston Common to see my old mother."

I knew he would do it, and I told him all that had happened.

"You see how it is, Johnny? The dirty lot of them have to be brought in. O'Malley, Crosby and the rest. I've got to do it. I know their tricks. I was blind and let it happen, and now I've got to stop it."

"By God, Cass, I'm with you!"

"This schooner will do."

"Back your sails," warned Johnny. "There's a pile of planning. More guns. The right crew. O'Malley ain't a man to trifle with. Nor the others."

Johnny sent for some of his crew to come aboard and watch the schooner, and before dark I went ashore, to Papa Pio's place.

GRANVILLE CROSBY, I found, was not in Havana. A carriage bore me to the house of Ramon Rodriguez, the elegant and shady Havana lawyer. It was the social hour, but Rodriguez welcomed me into his study. He had my health in his fine brandy, and he held a candle to my cigar.

"I have heard from New Orleans," he informed me. "There has been trouble, *señor*? . . . Ah, yes. I place myself at your service."

I wondered how much at my service, and tested him with a question. "Where can I find Granville Crosby?"

Rodriguez lifted thin black eyebrows. "I have heard that *Señor Crosby* has been in Jamaica. If not—" He shrugged.

"Then you can't help me at all?"

He spread slender hands regretfully, and changed the subject.

"Have you seen, *señor*, our gifted and beautiful friend, *Señorita Valverde*?"

"Yes. In New Orleans, and very much the toast of Royal Street."

Rodriguez smiled. "In Havana now, *señor*," he corrected. "She will sail tomorrow on an English boat for Vera

Cruz and Mexico City. Art," he observed, "is above war."

As soon as possible, I left. It was strange how desperately I felt about seeing Susanne before she vanished into Mexico.

SUSANNE showed no great surprise when I arrived at her door. Her welcome was calm, casual. Only in me, it seemed, was the explosive past between us as I took her hand.

I rebelled against this new Susanne, this indifference she could not really feel. She could not have forgotten those moments in the quiet patio.

"Sit down, Cass," Susanne smiled. "And don't look so stern, so fierce."

She sat beside me, slender, graceful as always. "I know why you did not return to New Orleans," she said slowly. "No, please listen, Cass."

She reached for my hand. My pulse began to race, and then subsided. Her touch was as calm as her manner. Something had gone from between us.

"We're so much alike," Susanne said. "All the world is ours for the taking, and we reach for it. I think I loved you, Cass. I think I still love you. . . . No, don't! Listen to me." She moved away.

"You're acting very strangely, Susanne."

"I know you. I know you so well, Cass, because I know myself. So I must tell you. Between us I will not have thoughts that are not spoken. You see what love means to me?"

"I'd never have thought it meant acting like a sister."

She looked at me. Her mouth was tender, but her eyes looked sad.

"I have danced in many countries," she said slowly. "But I have only one country, Cass." Her hand tightened on mine. "I'd not do anything to hurt my country or my people."

She made me think of Treva Dexter. The same fierce pride in flag and country. I had thought them different. A world apart. Treva lovely, proud. Susanne all fire and passion and recklessness. To each some part of me had reached out. Now, suddenly, I was uncertain.

"So we're not alike, after all?" I said.

"I begged you to be careful," Susanne reminded me.

"Did you know that Granville Crosby, Jan Spreck and the others were dealing with Mexico?"

"Yes."

"I was a fool. I didn't suspect, until it was too late. Not even when they tried to kill me, so I'd not influence O'Malley. He didn't tell me our boats were smuggling contraband through the blockade." I stood up. "I tried to stop it, and I was too late."

"Oh, Cass! I should have known! I'm a fool." Susanne came to me blindly, eyes filling. She put her cheek against my chest and held me a moment. And then she stepped back, smiling, blinking. "Tell me, Cass."

So while we stood at the tall windows, arms about each other, Susanne's head against my shoulder, I told her all that had happened.

"Spreck took Treva Dexter into Mexico," I said. "He'll see Treva is made use-

ful to their plans." I took a deep breath. "Susanne, you'll have the run of Mexico. Will you find Treva and keep her safe?"

I felt her stiffen against me.

"I hate her," she said abruptly. "In New Orleans I met this Captain Key. Yes, after I heard what had happened at Isle Grosse, I had to see him. He told me about this girl. He told me how you had turned her head years ago, and then again in New Orleans. You could not stay away from her in New Orleans. He thinks you have taken her away for yourself."

"Ridiculous! I was helpless."

"But you still want her. And I hate her!" Susanne burst out with passion. "You're frantic with worry about her."

"It's my fault she's where she is."

Susanne laughed scornfully. "Your fault? Who asked her aboard your schooner? Oh, Cass! I'm not quarreling. I'm not even jealous. Don't look at me like that. I just hate her."

Then she turned to me, inside the circle of my arm. "But if you want her, Cass, I'll find her. Hold me just once, and don't say anything, before I go into Mexico and find her for you."

I said huskily, "Never another like you, Susanne." I kissed the sweetness of her hair, and held her closer, and put a hand under her chin and brought her face up. Her eyes were closed.

"Don't, Cass. Not when she's between us. Not when I must find her for you to hold—"

I kissed the words away, and felt fire run wild through me again, and through Susanne. I caught her up lightly and swung to the couch where we had sat, and paused a moment, kissing her eyelids, her cheeks, and then the softness of her mouth, fiercely. Then I knelt and put her gently down, and held her close.

She protested, and then clung and held me. She knew; I knew. So much alike. Wildness in each of us that met wildness until we were exhausted. And when she lay gasping against me, her hand touched my cheek. Eyes closed, she murmured that sweetest, tenderest word of all Spanish. "*Querido*—beloved. *Querido mio, te amo*—I love you."

THE next morning I saw Susanne off in a harbor boat to the British steamer *Falcon*. Then I forced myself to stop thinking about her, and went to see Johnny Frink.

Johnny's schooner, the *Scudder*, carried carronades and a long-gun. We took those for the *Amanda* and purchased four more brass carronades of six-pounder size.

"If we have trouble, we'll close in," I said. "Leave long-guns and solid shot for Navy gunners. We'll do better with langrage and cannister and chain-shot."

Johnny culled men from the *Scudder*. We combed the waterfront for more good hands. Then, at the last minute, I sent Holly and most of the old crew ashore for a drunk, with their full pay, and we brought the new crew aboard and sailed.

Salty old Navy gunners had taught me gunnery. I formed gun crews and drilled them hard in the way of running out, firing, reloading, before they dashed across deck to serve the other guns. I drilled them with boarding nets, cutlass

work, and fast and steady musket fire. Navy style.

We sailed south into the Caribbean. "They must have a base this way, if O'Malley was sighted on his course," I told Johnny Frink. "And it can't be far south of Yucatan Strait."

We made landfall at Espiritu Santo Bay, and found nothing. We sailed northward again for Cozumel Island, some ten miles off the mainland.

From the masthead I trained a long-glass on sandy beaches and rocky points, and over the low tree-studded island. There was no sign that boats had used the place for a base.

We took the *Amanda* off-shore for the night. Restlessness sent me to the masthead again, where stars and moon drenched light over an empty world.

There, later in the night, I sighted a distant sail bearing across our course.

"Sail ho-o-o!" I called down.

Johnny Frink was waiting when I reached the deck. "Running in toward Cozumel, or the mainland, north of the island!" I said. "Running in under cover of the night! She sighted us and started about. Lay alongside her! She's ours!"

"Piracy, if we fire on her and are wrong," Johnny reminded me.

"Worse, if we're right and lose her," I said sharply.

Johnny shouted for all hands, and all sail. I went to my guns.

CHAPTER SIX

WE HAD the wind and the shorter leg of that run out to sea through the moonlight. "She's guilty, or she'd not be running," I told Johnny.

By this time sand and water, powder and chain-shot, langrage, swabs and rammers, all the gear of gunnery were out and ready. I had served out muskets, cutlasses and pistols. Netting was up, against any try to board us. All the tedious drilling of the crew was bearing fruit.

I ordered chain and langrage into starboard and larboard carronades, and chain-shot in the swivel gun. If that fleeing schooner expected ball to be lobbed wildly around her, she was due for a surprise.

The cook set out hot food and strong coffee, and as the night hours wore away, we came up slowly on the strange schooner. I was sighting the long-gun myself, when the screeching howl of a ball came at us out of the night. The shot struck short, came off the water, and crashed against the *Amanda's* hull.

"Steady!" I called. "We've an answer for that!"

The *Amanda* shook as the long-gun went off, double-shotted with chain. When the flash cleared out of our eyes, the other craft's foresail was split and her gaff was hanging down.

"Close in!" I shouted to Frink.

Side carronades fired at us. A hail of iron langrage struck us. A man screamed with pain. Some of the light rigging was severed, and then the *Amanda* heeled and shook as starboard carronades fired in battery.

Johnny Frink wore ship at once. Sails slatted. The booms swept over. In a din

of shouted orders, the men jumped to their duties. The larboard guns came to bear, and I called the order to fire.

It was a full strike the length of the stranger's deck, taffrail forward. She was a tangle of ruined gear and shredded canvas as Johnny came about again and ran up under her stern. His voice boomed out through the speaking trumpet:

"What boat? Where bound?"

"*Dolphin!* Mobile to Kingston! Cap'n Sanford! What the devil kind of piracy is this?"

I ran to Johnny and the trumpet. On all the oceans there could be only one outraged bellow like that.

"O'Malley!" I roared through the trumpet. "I'm boarding you! Cass Morgan!"

No one but O'Malley would have answered in such a jeering humor, with blood and treason and death between us. "Come aboard and I'll open a bottle, Cass! I've been expecting you!"

"Just like O'Malley to try and talk himself out of it," said Johnny.

"He's tricky," I warned. "Dangerous when he talks most. Watch him."

JOHNNY brought us in close, recklessly, through the first cool dawn, and the *Dolphin's* guns caught us full, without warning. The *Amanda* shuddered mortally from the hell of metal that struck her water line. A flying wood splinter laid open my cheek.

"Aim at her deck!" I shouted. "Then all hands for boarding!"

I doubt if O'Malley expected the fearful mass of langrage, nails, old bolts and chunks of scrap iron that our carronades blasted across his deck. There were wild shouts and cries of pain on the *Dolphin* as Johnny Frink brought us hull to hull with a grinding shock.

Our men raised a shout as they followed me over with cutlasses and pistols. Wilson, the long-necked State of Maine man, was a leader, despite a bloody and almost useless leg. Aldie, our slow-speaking bosun, had become a demon, with a cutlass in each hand and a dirk hanging behind his neck.

While the two crews mixed in a mad melee, I found O'Malley waiting for me.

"I knew ye'd come!" he shouted. He hurled a cutlass, point down, into the deck and beckoned with a huge paw. "Will you fight fair?"

I covered him with a cocked pistol. "You've had your fight and fun, Irish! Get to the cabin!"

"What!" he bawled in astonishment. "You'll not fight?"

"I'll blow your head off, you tricky, black-hearted Irishman! But you'll not have the fun of fighting for it. Get to the cabin!"

He was almost sheepish as he stalked below. I caught a last blurred glimpse of the *Amanda* drifting away, her mainmast canted drunkenly, one rail under. Then I faced O'Malley in the cabin, with the uproar of fighting still above us.

His dark-burned face was a study in angry uncertainty. "What do you mean to do, Cass? Hang me?"

"You fool," I said. "You should be hung. After all our years together. After all we had ahead of us, you smash everything like a greedy, treacherous idiot!"

O'Malley winced. "I didn't mean it that way, Cass. It didn't seem so bad at first. A little trick, like, to make a mountain of money, while still helping out with the war. More of a joke."

"War," I said angrily, "is no joke. A sniveling midshipman would have known better. You've made a traitor out of me. We're both going to pay. Now what do you know about Treva Dexter?"

"Nothing," said O'Malley, cast down. "I never was one of them. Their plans were no concern of mine."

"You stayed with them."

"Nothing else to do. That Captain Key came back from Isle Grosse and almost had me by the heels before I slipped out of New Orleans. The Navy gobbled all our boats quick. I thought best to keep away from Havana."

Johnny Frink came bursting into the cabin, waving a pistol. "We've got a gent named Crosby, and one called MacIntosh! Bring 'em in, boys."

Crosby and MacIntosh were herded in at pistol's point. Crosby's fine linen was rumpled, his thin face haggard. The square and pious face of MacIntosh looked as if it had finally met the devil and a fearful reckoning.

"Gentlemen," I said, "it's going to be a pleasure to put you in irons. Where is Jan Spreck?"

MacIntosh muttered that Spreck was in Mexico. Crosby tried to be suave and argue of profits if I would listen. I ordered them into slave shackles below deck, and had O'Malley shackled too. But I let him stay in the cabin.

The *Amanda* had gone down. Johnny Frink was cheerful. "We've still got a boat to sail, Cass. What now?"

"This is Navy business," I said. "They'll have to know."

"They want you, too, Cass."

"I'm finished with running away."

"As you will. It's you who will suffer when the Navy lays hands on you."

"At least," I said, "I'll have my self-respect. I've done what had to be done."

WE sailed the *Dolphin* north through Yucatan Strait, repairing battle damage, bending fresh canvas, doctoring the wounded. Irish O'Malley, with only wrist shackles, had the run of the deck.

When the day came to face the Navy, there was irony in it for me. We were on course for the Mississippi when we sighted a Navy sloop, just out of the river. I put her in the glass. "She looks like the *Vandoria!*" I exclaimed.

She was the *Vandoria*. In an hour she became aware we were closing for a purpose, and shortened sail, and let us come up.

I hailed her. "Is Lieutenant Peters aboard?"

"Lieutenant Peters commanding! Is that Mr. Morgan?"

"Coming aboard!"

Johnny Frink shook my hand as I went over the rail. "Luck, Cass."

"I'll need it."

Jock Peters met me as I stepped on his deck. His round face was sober.

"Orders are out to take you on sight, Cass," he informed me formally. "Consider yourself a prisoner, sir. Is that your schooner?"

"Whatever you care to make her, Jock. And remember, I had to chase you, to surrender."

Jock coughed and masked a smile. In his cramped cabin, he exploded, "Damme, Cass! I'd rather do anything than this! Here I've my own command at last, and one of my first duties is this sorry business with an old shipmate."

"I'll explain," I said, and Jock listened, clearing his throat now and then. He opened a bottle, and put a glass in my hand, and sipped his own wine, while he watched my face.

"I want word sent quickly to Commodore Dexter about all this," I said when I'd finished my story.

Jock smiled. "Might be done. I'm carrying urgent dispatches and some are for Commodore Dexter, at Isle Lobos. I'll put my junior lieutenant in charge of your schooner, and we'll all go there and let the commodore ponder what next. Meanwhile, mister, act like a proper prisoner, or your bottles will be empty."

"Jock," I said, and had to try again. "Why, damn you, Jock . . ."

So I came back to the Navy, even if a prisoner. I was not eager to face that thin old man we would find at Isle Lobos. But it had to be done.

CHAPTER SEVEN

IT was late in February when we raised the island. The *Dolphin*, sailing close, followed our lead toward anchorage behind a bold reef that extended southeasterly from the island.

Jock was as much astonished as I at what we saw. "God's favor, Cass! All the ships in the Gulf must be here. Look at them! Frigates, steamers, transports, brigs, schooners. There's nigh a hundred, if there's one. Something big is brewing!"

Anchorage behind the south reef offered good shelter. Once I had put in here with my *Blue Turk* schooner. Isle Lobos then had been covered with wild trees and shrubs. Now the whole small island was a teeming army camp. The banyan trees, the wild lemon and lime trees, the palms and tangled vines, had been thinned out. Tents stood in orderly rows. Soldiers moved everywhere.

We were hailed by a steam tug. A pilot came aboard and took us inside the reef. Jock had donned his best uniform. He put off in his gig with the dispatches.

My midshipman years were very close as I stood on Jock's spotless deck and watched the armada of shipping gathered about. Navy discipline and smartness were everywhere. Navy might, Navy pride, towered there in the great frigates.

I was not a part of it. I was Cass Morgan, prisoner. But I was proud. My heart stirred faster. My throat tightened.

Jock returned. He was hurried. "The commodore will see you. My gig will take you, without irons, to the frigate *Peloneon*, where he is in quarters."

"What did he say, Jock?"

"Little enough. He's a cold one. I risked speaking my best for you, Cass. He made no comment. Are you ready?"

As the gig approached the *Peloneon*, the frigate's great masts and yards gleamed in the sunlight. The black snouts

of her cannon bristled through her open gun ports. The crew was busy as Jock was piped aboard.

Once I, too, could have been a part of the stiff saluting that followed. The deck officer was rigidly correct to Jock.

"Prisoner to the quarterdeck," he ordered.

Jock, to his relief, I was sure, was turned loose aboard, to await the commodore's pleasure. Two ramrod-like marines hustled me aft. The awful majesty of a commodore, on a frigate's sacred quarterdeck, received me. Here, the dry little man I had talked to in Papa Pio's dim back room became God Almighty. He was majesty supreme, life, destiny, to all the gold braid and all the seamen under him. You forgot his size; you saw the gold braid on his uniform; you felt the frosty stab of his look.

That look was on me now, as he turned from the rail. "I'll see you in my cabin," he said coldly.

At least he plucked me from the haughty marines. He walked stiffly ahead of me to that most sacred holy of holies, where not even the frigate's commander stepped without invitation.

THE massive deck beams were low overhead, the space was cramped, but this was awesome territory. There was an awesome note in the brief and icy question Commodore Dexter asked me when the door was closed.

"Where is my granddaughter?"

"You've had no word of her, sir?"

"Yes," he said. "One letter, sent out of Mexico in the British mails. It warned me that Treva's life depended on my honoring the pass I gave you."

My heart sank. "Did you do anything about the pass, sir?"

"I had already taken measures," said Commodore Dexter coldly. "My orders were given to bring in anyone found with that pass. There have been reports that it was used twice before my order got

around to all commanders. I have been reprimanded for being so careless as to issue such a paper." His eyes flashed fire. "At my age, with the record I've made, I was reprimanded. Thanks to you."

He turned to his cabin window and looked out. A trace of huskiness was in his voice when next he spoke.

"I loved my granddaughter. She resembled my wife, who died when Treva's mother was born."

I'd rather he had ordered me to the gratings to be flogged. "Would you care to hear what happened, sir?"

"Mr. Peters gave me your version. Eloquenty." He turned, indifferent again.

"I would have followed Treva into Mexico," I said, "but Spreck had her a full day or two ahead of me. A Yankee, like myself, could not have gotten far into Mexico in these times. And then, there was more than Treva, too."

"What?"

"Your pass, sir. Spreck had it. I knew the Navy would take steps to void it. It seemed more important to go about the business of stopping the blockade-running."

"Indeed?" he said. "You were getting rich, I believe. Matters of your own to worry about."

"Even a rascal has a country," I told him. "I was a midshipman once. I found I couldn't forget it. I've done all I could. I've surrendered, to pay the fiddler."

"Ah," said the frosty old man, "there's always a payment to the fiddler. You're sorry, eh? You'd like a little mercy? After all, you did bring in a prize, and some of the precious rascals who were breaking our blockade."

"Sir," I said, stung at last, "confound your mercy! If my neck were worrying me, I'd have gone in another direction with the *Dolphin*."

"I don't believe I understand your reasoning," he remarked dryly.

"I think you do, sir. Else why did you trust me with that pass?" And while he

watched me without expression, I said, "Treva had no business leaving New Orleans. Men are dying in this war. Even loving Treva, I had to go on to stop the dirty business I'd been tricked into. And let her safety wait a bit." I looked him in the eye. "If I hadn't, she would have less use for me than she has now."

"I see you know Treva," he said gravely. "What have you to suggest about her, and this man Spreck?"

"Treva may be safe," I said slowly. I told him of Susanne Valverde's promise, in Havana, before Susanne sailed for Mexico. "On the other hand," I said, "Treva may be in danger. Granville Crosby warned me that if harm came to him or MacIntosh, Treva would suffer. Jan Spreck will stop at nothing."

"Ah," he said. "Of course. We must expect that. Now, sir, would you care to give me your parole?"

My smile was bitter. "Hadn't you better ask that of an officer and a gentleman, sir? Aren't you forgetting who I am?"

"Why, no," he said evenly, "I know quite well who you are. Might I suggest you be good enough to give your parole, for all circumstances which may be suggested?"

I HAD to swallow hard. "I give you my parole, sir, in whatever form you choose to say."

"Very good." He studied me thoughtfully. "We are sailing to take Vera Cruz by bombardment and storm," he said. "General Scott is in command of the troops. Approaching battle is always friendly to lawless men, Mr. Morgan. Men like this Jan Spreck are at their worst." He pulled his lip. "I can put you ashore at Vera Cruz. The rest would be up to you."

He opened a locker drawer and took out a newspaper, the worse for wear.

"This was brought aboard by a visiting Englishman, straight from Mexico City. Your speaking of the dancer reminded me that she was mentioned in this paper. She was dancing in Mexico City then, but the account says, I believe, that she intended going to Vera Cruz for an engagement. If you go ashore . . ."

"I'll report back, sir, if alive," I said eagerly.

"Good."

"May I speak for Irish O'Malley, sir?"

"He will have his chance to speak for himself." The commodore returned to brusqueness. "Report to the officer at the gangway. I'll request the captain to provide you space until we're off Vera Cruz."

He barely nodded when I thanked him.



I struck inland, asking questions as I went. Everywhere was furious activity.

But I left his cabin a new man. My parole had been considered worth taking by a flag officer of the fleet. Only a man parted from pride, lost in deep and bitter shame, could have known what that meant.

CHAPTER EIGHT

I WAS told twelve thousand soldiers were aboard the transports that sailed from Isle Lobos. The tall white sails, the flags, pennants, the trailing smoke

Before noon the steamer *Princeton* led off anchorage, towing the *Raritan*. The steamer *Massachusetts* moved next, carrying General Scott and his staff. Everywhere one looked the brilliant sunlight was flashing off sharp, fixed bayonets.

Under easy sail the rest of the ships moved, towing big surf boats which would carry the troops ashore. In the rear of the American armada were warships of European nations, their decks, masts, rigging crowded with spectators.

In the middle of the afternoon the warships and transports anchored opposite

when the wind blew sand so thick men on shore were all but blinded.

I wondered if Susanne Valverde and Treva Dexter could be behind those grim walls of Vera Cruz, where already shells were bursting, and toward which all hell would shortly be loosed from our shore batteries. Curiously, at a time when I should have been thinking solely of Treva's safety, the thought of Susanne's danger tortured my imagination just as much. I wondered if I would live to get inside the city and search for them.

A young midshipman finally sought me out the next morning, with word that the commodore wished to see me.

In his quarters, Commodore Dexter spoke briskly. "I've been waiting for word from inside the city. General Scott has ways of hearing things. Now I can tell you that your dancer was in Vera Cruz three days ago, entertaining for the garrison and population in a small makeshift theater, just off the main plaza. There is still time for you to enter the city before investment is complete, if your wits are sharp enough. Have you any plans?"

"I'll make my plans, sir, to suit the cut of the moment."

He nodded. "The best I can do for you is another pass, good inside our army lines. You run the risk of being shot as a spy, of course, if caught in Vera Cruz."

"Yes, sir."

He gave me the pass. "We're sending shells ashore in an hour. Go in the first boat. What kind of arms will you want?"

"I have a knife, sir. It'll do for the present."

He said, "Good luck," and drew a long breath. "Tell Treva the same, from me, young man."

"Yes, sir, when and where I find her, Vera Cruz or inland."

He nodded again, and I left him with that understanding; wherever Treva was, I'd find her, no matter how long it took. And Susanne. And then I'd be back to pay the fiddler for O'Malley's recklessness and my blindness.

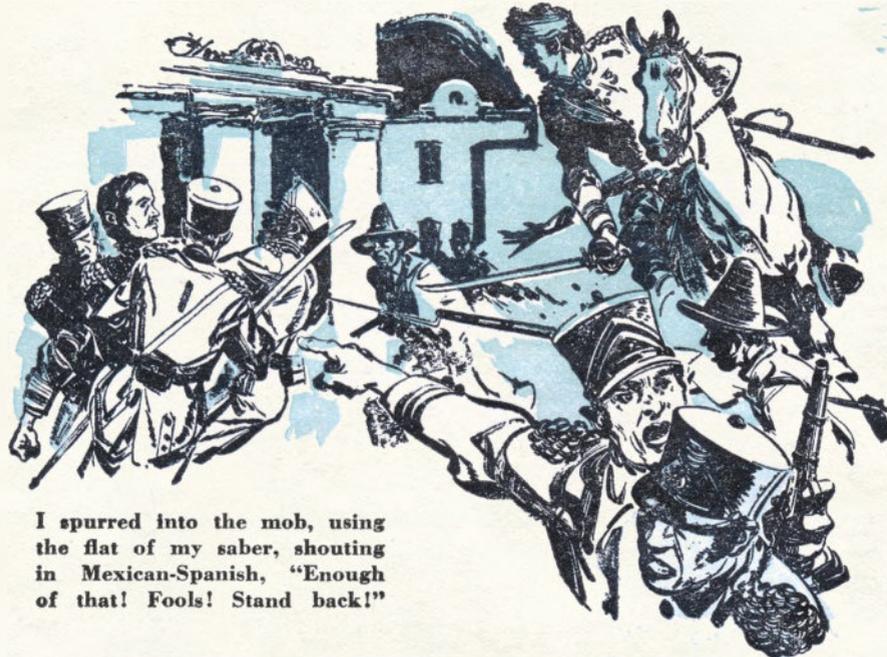
A DEEPLY loaded surf boat put me on the beach. I struck inland, asking questions as I went.

General Worth's men were on the right of the line, nearest the city. Pillow, with Tennessee and Pennsylvania regiments, had advanced to an old building at the head of the Laguna Malibran, and was pressing forward toward the road connecting Vera Cruz with the small village of Medellin, south down the coast a few miles. Scattered Mexican forces were retreating to the shelter of the city guns.

It took many questions and much footwork before I advanced far enough to know all that. There was furious activity everywhere. Heavy guns, ammunition, supplies were being laboriously advanced through the high hills of loose sand.

The landscape was broken, rugged. Roads had to be cut through the dense chaparral. And always, in the background, were the deep reports of fleet and fortress guns and exploding shells.

Every man who moved was burdened with his provisions and arms. The enemy was striking repeatedly at various parts of the front line. Now here, now there,



I spurred into the mob, using the flat of my saber, shouting in Mexican-Spanish, "Enough of that! Fools! Stand back!"

plumes from the fast steamers seemed to blanket the sea.

A cold norther struck, and was still blowing when the fleet sighted the blockade squadron at Vera Cruz, and sailed into Anton Lizardo anchorage, south of the city.

The next day we saw the snow peak of Orizabo, inland. The following day word passed from ship to ship that General Scott was on the steamer *Petrita*, with Commodore Conner, reconnoitering the Vera Cruz approaches. Tension mounted.

Hills of loose sand, dense chaparral surrounded the massive walls of Vera Cruz. Unhealthy swamps lay behind the city.

The defenses were formidable. The Vera Cruz guns were backed by the great batteries of San Juan d'Ulloa, the almost impregnable fortress on a rocky island just off shore. I was still aboard the *Peloneon* when the landing started, and could watch the tremendous spectacle.

This was history. A hundred years from this March day of 1847, when all the world, God pray, would be peaceful, prosperous, knowing little of war, men would read about this mightiest force any country had ever put ashore against an enemy.

The cold norther had blown out. The sea was calm, its depths clear. The sun poured dazzling light.

Sacrificios Island, each ship in its assigned position. The huge surf boats, each holding a hundred men, took position at the ships' gangways.

By four o'clock, four thousand five hundred men were in the surf boats, which extended abreast in a solid, mile-long line. A midshipman excitedly told me the boats held General Worth's division, given the honor of landing first.

The deep, somber report of a signal gun came from the *Massachusetts*. Cheers went up from all the fleet. Bands burst into martial music on all sides. The surf boats started toward the shore.

The great guns of San Juan d'Ulloa, to the north, opened up. We could see shells bursting and round shot skipping on water and shore. But, strangely, the gray, threatening walls of Vera Cruz were silent. Not a gun was fired from the city as the soldiers leaped waist-deep into beach water and dashed ashore.

The flag went up as the sun was setting. The flag—on enemy territory. It was rippling in the breeze as darkness fell and the surf boats returned to load again.

By ten o'clock that night twelve thousand men were ashore. The sun came up in a blaze next morning, and the batteries of Vera Cruz and San Juan d'Ulloa opened with full fury. The fleet guns began to answer. From then on during the siege, the din of gunfire and crash of exploding shells was continuous, save

with storms of musket fire, quick retreats, sharp advances at another spot.

Men were fighting and dying and laboring mightily, as the siege ring was slowly, stubbornly stretched about the defiant walled city. Wounded men with bloody bandages were straggling back through the chaparral.

"What's ahead?" I asked one unshaven man from a Tennessee regiment.

He spat tobacco juice and grinned wearily at me. "Hit ain't no turkey shoot, mister. Them Mexes is full of vinegar an' spit. He looked at me curiously. "You sight-seein' er what, without no gun er uniform?"

"I'm looking around," I said. "Have you seen a dead Mexican about my size?"

He looked at me and grinned thinly as he thumbed back the way he had come. "Go git you one, mister. They's all sizes fer the takin'."

Pillow's men were in the sand hills and chaparral when I found them. They were driving a Mexican force from the Medelin road toward the city. Well toward dark, shells came from the city batteries to protect the retreating enemy. Orders were passed to halt, close up and form for the night.

It was there in light chaparral between two sand hills, just before dark, that an officer headed me off on the double with a squad of riflemen.

"Hold still, Morgan!" the officer shouted. "Don't run or you'll be shot!"

And I would be shot. When David Key talked of killing me, he could be believed.

WELL, David," I said when he confronted me, "I see you reached the fighting. But do you need all the army to back you up each time we meet?"

"Take this man!" David ordered the soldiers. "Shoot instantly if he tries to get away. He's a traitor, wanted for hanging, back in the States. Doubtless he'll get a drumhead court and be shot here on the field."

"You needn't have me pawed over. I've no weapon but a knife," I told David when a corporal started to search me.

The corporal stepped back with my knife. David moved in, and spoke low, for my ear alone.

"Where's Treva? What did you do to her?"

"Is this your drumhead court?"

"You know it isn't," David said between his teeth. "If I weren't an officer and a gentleman, I'd have shot you on sight."

"I doubt it, David. Then you couldn't have asked me about Treva." And because I was annoyed, I asked, "Do you want me dead worse than you want Treva alive?"

It was dangerous baiting. The man was almost out of his mind with hatred of me and worry about Treva.

"Where is she?" he demanded.

"She's probably in Mexico. That's all I know. Now what are you going to do?"

David drew one of the rare Colt repeating revolvers from his holster. He was so pale that the sword mark I'd put on his cheek years ago was like a band of gay color.

"Good enough, Corporal," he said in a choked voice. "Go about your business. I'll continue with the prisoner." And to

me: "Start walking to your right. I'll shoot if you even look like running."

"You're making a mistake, David."

"I'm Captain Key, sir! Walk!"

I walked, since David's way was my way. But I was dubious. He was in a state where control might slip. My back was a tempting target.

We walked beyond General Pillow's men, and passed more dead horses and dead men, Mexican and American. I noticed a Mexican officer of dragoons who seemed to be about my size.

The sun had plunged behind the western mountains, when we were challenged by a sentry. We had reached Colonel Campbell's First Tennessee regiment, which was holding the stone powder magazine behind the city. A guard took us to the colonel's post beside the stone building.

DAVID saluted stiffly, produced orders which he had been carrying, and said, "On the way here I captured a known traitor, and probably a spy, sir. He was moving about inside our lines without a uniform." He glared at me. "If I had the authority, I'd order him shot out of hand."

Colonel Campbell was dusty, even to his mustache. He looked tired, but he smiled as he folded David's orders.

"Well, now, Captain, perhaps it's a good thing you don't have the authority. Has your prisoner admitted he was spying inside our lines?"

"No, sir. He's clever, I warn you."

The colonel walked to me. "What have you got to say for yourself, my man?" He looked me up and down. "Spying is a serious business."

"Naturally, Colonel. I was trying to find this powder magazine when Captain Key took command." I smiled. "He made a good guide. Brought me straight here." I gave him Commodore Dexter's paper.

Colonel Campbell began to chuckle as he looked at it, then handed it to David.

"It can't be!" David gulped, as he read.

"Why, the Navy *wants* him! He was running arms through the blockade! He's a known slaver and smuggler. A—damned desperado, if there ever was one!"

"He's well backed by authority," Colonel Campbell said good-naturedly. "You see, Captain, why it's a good idea not to get hot-headed about shooting? Or do you question Commodore Dexter's right to use this man on Navy business?"

"My God, no, sir!" David gulped. His face was red. "But I can't understand it. Commodore Dexter! I'd think he'd be the last man—" He broke off, glowering at me.

"Well, now that we're all agreed, what's your purpose, Mr. Morgan?"

"Tonight," I said, "I'll move beyond your lines and get to the city walls."

"Hmmm. You speak Spanish?"

"Fluently," I said. "With a passable Mexican idiom. We passed a dead Mexican dragoon officer back there, Colonel. I'd like to take over his uniform and rank and see if I can't get into the city tonight. I'd like to be passed beyond your sentries."

The colonel laughed. "A Mexican uniform would be just the reason for my men to shoot. Oh, Lieutenant Cherry.

Escort Mr. Morgan to his new uniform, then bring him back here. I want to see how he looks."

It was dark before we located my dead officer. The lieutenant helped me change clothes, and we returned to the stone magazine, carrying my own clothes and shoes. David Key was not about, but the colonel joined us.

He looked at me and whistled softly. "Not bad! In fact, perfect, all but that dried blood on the shoulder."

"I'll give myself a bandage for a head wound," I decided. "He was killed by a musket ball through the head."

"Anything else? What arms do you need?"

"I have this saber. Someone got his pistol. But I don't mean to fight, Colonel. A one-man battle with the Vera Cruz garrison won't get me far."

"I wish you luck," Colonel Campbell told me dubiously as he shook my hand. Lieutenant Cherry escorted me beyond the Tennessee regiment's line, gripped my hand, and stood there while I vanished in the night.

From that moment on I forgot Cass Morgan. I was Dragoon Lieutenant Jose Fernandez y Montoya. The name was my own invention. My life depended on not slipping out of character for an instant.

CHAPTER NINE

THE night trembled with the bombardment of great guns from the fleet, from the city, and from the fortress of San Juan d'Ulloa. Exploding shells were like heat lightning flicking across the sky. One, falling near, rattled grapeshot like hail through the dry chaparral.

A horse nickered sharply to my left. I heard a wounded man groaning, calling weakly in Spanish for water. He was on the ground, out of his head, clutching the reins of the horse with an unconscious death grip.

Mercy aside, here was luck. I rode from there with the dying man across the saddle. When the first challenge came, it was an *escopeta* shot, followed by an alarmed shout to halt.

"Mother of God!" I cried furiously in Spanish. "Are the wounded left to be killed by the cursed *Yanquis*, and then fired on when we seek safety? Lieutenant Fernandez y Montoya orders you to advance and assist!"

"A thousand pardons, my Lieutenant! How were we to know?"

It was an advance squad from *el Onze*, the Eleventh Regiment, posted well out from the city walls to observe American intentions through the night. The leader was a non-commissioned man, not sure where his officer could be found.

"Enough!" I cut short his ramblings. "We die while you stumble around like blind burros! I will take two men to assist us to the city gate! Your two best men!"

I proceeded on the crowbait horse with an escort afoot, while the wounded man groaned without pause.

We were challenged again and again, and I was a better Mexican than any that we met.

I came out on a road. The city guns were close ahead. The great wall loomed high. The vast gates were open. Men, horses, carts were passing in and out, many more coming out than in. The civilians of the city were escaping before the siege lines were closed. In a day or so Vera Cruz would be a rat trap waiting bombardment by heavy mortars and cannon.

"Viva Santa Anna!" I shouted.

My escort shouted *vivas*. The escaping mob joined in. Cheering let out their excitement, gave them hope, bolstered their defiance. And I, Lieutenant Fernandez y Montoya, rode through the clamor with my head bandaged, my wounded man and my escort. Not even a second lieutenant questioned my right to pass inside the gate.

It was done. I was in. Confusion to those rascally *Americanos*.

"Take this man to help," I ordered my escort. I gave them *clacos* from the money in my uniform. "Drink to Santa Anna before returning to battle."

CONFUSION was on all sides. Now and then a shell from the fleet burst among the buildings with a muffled roar. Screams and cries, snatches of prayer, furious oaths greeted each explosion.

I rode through the bedlam, without trouble, head bandaged, more warlike than Santa Anna himself in my scarlet uniform. I wanted to find out if Susanne Valverde had been dancing in the city, and where she might now be.

The place for all that and other gossip was the *fonda*, the inn, of Monsieur Forbat, a Frenchman, just off the great plaza. I was just turning the corner to go there when the cry of "*Muerte al Americano!*" reached me.

For an instant I thought the shout was for me. But bobbing lanterns to the right, the massing of an excited crowd, the rising shouts, told where the trouble was.

Death to the American. Some other poor devil had been unmasked.

For a moment I thought of Susanne and Treva and that old man on the quarterdeck who had allowed me ashore. It was folly to take notice. I had my own business to think of. I was not even an American tonight. I was Lieutenant Fernandez y Montoya. The thing to do was to ride on.

The cries had a wild, hysterical threat. "*Muerte! Muerte . . .*"

I spurred into the mob, using the flat of my saber, shouting in Mexican-Spanish, "Enough of that! Fools! An officer commands you! Stand back!"

But in that moment, near by, flame blossomed in a fountain of death at the edge of a rooftop, a shell exploded, scattering bits of the building through the night, and the mob scattered for safety.

A swaying man lurched from the front of the building where he had been cornered. I leaned from the saddle and caught his shoulder.

"Get up here, fellow! Quick!"

I doubt if he understood much. He was bleeding, groggy. It took both my hands, all my strength, to drag him up.

Then, before I could escape with him, a dozen or so horsemen wheeled into the

street, questions were shouted, and answered by members of the mob, and we were surrounded.

"What is this? Where is the American?" an angry officer demanded in Spanish.

"I, Lieutenant Fernandez y Montoya, have him, my Captain."

"Alive?"

"Yes, my Captain."

"Good!" he said, riding across and peering. "Bring him. There will be questions. You will explain what has happened." He swore. "A cursed American inside the city, dressed as a soldier of Mexico. A spy!"

HORSEMEN surrounded us. There was not a chance of breaking away.

"Who the devil are you?" I muttered in his ear as we moved with the armed escort. And then, looking more closely at the cheek turned toward me, at the dark line of a scar, I knew.

"David Key!"

The blasted idiot! I dared not even try to question him with Mexican ears so near.

David began to recover. "Cass?"

"Keep quiet, you fool!" I whispered.

We rode across the great plaza, past the cathedral and the town hall. From pillar to pillar, doorway to doorway, mouth to mouth, flew word that an American spy had been captured.

I marshaled my wits. This might be bluffed through. There might be a chance, if David would keep his mouth shut. But he hated me so, that he might grasp the chance to denounce me, even at the risk of his own neck.

We went directly to garrison headquarters. David was marched ahead into the gloomy stone building.

The mustachioed captain strutted beside me. "A brave deed for Mexico, Lieutenant. You are wounded. How did it happen?"

"In the fighting near the Medellin road, my Captain."

"Viva Mexico!"

"Viva!"

The big stone room we entered was bright with candlelight and oil lamps. Officers were everywhere. Two of the troopers gripped David's arms. There was much saluting, in which I joined. Captain Gonzalez, who had brought us in, began to report to a colonel.

David, too, was dressed in a lieutenant's uniform. His left sleeve was bloody. He limped, and he was bruised from the mob's beating. But now, when all was lost, he stood stiffly, coldly defiant.

Suddenly it did not matter what David did. Ice seemed to press along my spine. I turned my back to the broad-chested, thick-necked man who strolled past the door guard as if well known here at garrison headquarters. But every nerve in my body was straining for Jan Spreck's first comment.

"Well, Colonel, I hear you have an American spy," Spreck said jovially. "Dot iss good, eh?"

He strolled in front of us, and I turned away.

Then his heavy voice said, "I've seen dot scar before." He repeated it in Span-

ish, to David. "New Orleans, eh, Captain? You remember?"

"I have nothing to say to you, sir," David answered coldly in English.

Spreck chuckled. "Colonel," he said in Spanish, "who is the lieutenant with the bandaged head? Have I seen him before? Ah, Lieutenant—"

There was nothing to do but turn. All eyes were on me. Spreck's smile had such greasy satisfaction that I knew he'd recognized me the moment he entered the room.

"The stage station at Jalapa?" he pretended to recall. "Was it not there, Lieutenant? Your name is—"

The colonel, with a wave of his hand, said, "Lieutenant Fernandez y Montoya is reported to have captured the spy, *señor*."

"Good." Spreck chuckled. "You will allow me to speak with him, Colonel, while you are busy."

The colonel's hand waved assent. Jan Spreck evidently was a man of some importance among the military in Mexico.

He took my arm and walked me to the corner of the big stone-walled room. "Well, *señor*," he said in his clumsy Spanish, "a pleasure, no?"

"Out with it. What's on your mind?"

SPRECK was perspiring as he looked at me with his ponderous, fatherly air. "You know what iss waiting, my boy," he said under his breath in English. "A wall and a firing squad. Dot iss bad. But I am your friend, no?"

"Are you?"

"You will see." Spreck paused, smiling. "After you have proved we are friends. . . . You are in the city to find Miss Dexter, eh? Where is she? Speak up, my young friend. Remember what happens to a spy."

"So she got away from you," I said softly. "You're looking for her." Now I was smiling.

"Tell me where to find her, where you were to meet her, and I giff you the word of Jan Spreck you will go free and safe. Miss Dexter will not be harmed." He waited, watching my face. "Tell me."

"Then what will you do?"

"I will wait here with you." Spreck laughed softly. "Und when soldiers have brought Miss Dexter here, you will go. Fair enough, no?"

He had me fair, like a cat with a doomed mouse. Until he had Treva, he had me and meant to keep me.

"I don't know where Miss Dexter is," I told him truthfully.

Spreck shrugged. "Lies will not help. You would not be in Vera Cruz unless you knew where to look."

"If I'm put in front of a firing squad, I still won't be able to tell you where she is."

I measured the distance to the door and figured the chance of making a run for it. Spreck guessed my thought. "I haf pistols," he said. "You will be killed in trying to escape."

He was right, of course. The mob that had trailed us here to garrison quarters was still outside, beyond the guards. An escaping American spy would be torn apart.

"Have you Commodore Dexter's pass?" I asked.



As we approached the guards at the great city gate, Father Gomez began to intone a litany. We moved through the night, praising God.

Spreck nodded. "It now iss not much use. But one never knows. It has helped."

"You'll trade it for Miss Dexter?"

"Only for your life will you find her," Spreck told me. His smile broadened. "Why be foolish? Life iss good, eh?" He glanced at a thick, repeating watch. "Thirty seconds I will give you. Quick. Will you live for the years ahead?"

"You'll have to go with me to find her," I said. "Just you and me alone. That's final."

Spreck put the watch back. Red flowed into his perspiring face. "Young man, I stopped being a fool before you were born. We waste words, eh?" He drew a pistol from under his coat, crying, "Colonel Pedraza—"

I smashed the rest of it back in his mouth with my fist, and caught at his pistol as he reeled back. The weapon roared harmlessly against the edge of my hip. I tore it from his hand.

He was gabbling incoherently through a crushed mouth and broken teeth as I smashed him between the eyes with the pistol barrel.

In Spanish I shouted, "Liar! Thief! Spy! Traitor!" I drew my saber as Spreck's big body crumpled on the stone floor. "A Fernandez y Montoya has been insulted by bribery!" I cried through the confusion. "Arrest this traitor!"

Shouting, waving the saber so wildly men ducked away, I rushed at Colonel Pedraza. "My Colonel! You have been betrayed! Arrest the man! Shoot him!"

By now the room was in an uproar. No one knew what to do or where to turn.

"Quiet!" Colonel Pedraza snapped at me. He started toward Spreck's sprawled figure, where other officers were already gathering.

I caught one of the troopers who held David's arm. "Quick! Assist the colonel!"

A shove and the flat of my sword sent him stumbling toward the end of the room. I did the same with the other trooper. Neither dared to dispute the command of an officer.

"Outside, if you want to try for it!" I told David under my breath. I dashed for the doorway, waving saber and pistol, shouting to the guard to assist the colonel.

The door guard stumbled inside with

the push I gave him. David had followed me. His face had a cold desperation.

I ran, shouting and flourishing the sword, calling help for the colonel. The rest of Captain Gonzalez' troopers rushed inside, carrying the outer guard with them. The mob pressed after them, knowing no more than the troopers.

"This way!" I told David.

We slipped behind the stone pillars of the portico entrance, came out into the open and ran through the night. Jan Spreck alone could have straightened out the confusion, and Spreck was unconscious. The Mexican uniforms David and I wore were our safety for the time being.

I thrust my head bandage inside the uniform and doubled around a corner into the great plaza. A note of order seemed to be entering the uproar we had left.

"They'll be after us," I said. "Across the plaza. Keep close to me. It'll be a firing squad next time, in short order."

CHAPTER TEN

THE bombardment was rising in intensity. The city guns and San Juan d'Ulloa fortress off the harbor mole were replying in a frenzy. The night shook. The very pavement stones of the plaza seemed to tremble. The glare of explosions flickered and danced across the sky.

"When the siege mortars are in battery, they'll gut the city," David observed darkly. "Scott came prepared to blast it into rubble if necessary."

"He's doing well enough now," I said. "What the devil brought you in here tonight?"

"Treva brought me," David replied sulkily. "I won't have you doing more for her than I do."

"You left your duty for that?"

"No. I was sent to the front lines to observe. If I chose to enter the city, I could."

"You made a pretty stew of my plans. If it weren't for you, I'd be roaming Vera Cruz at my pleasure. And finding Treva and helping her. You had seven years to do for Treva, and didn't marry her. Why not keep out of the way now?"

"She loves me. I love her. If it weren't for you, we'd have been married long ago." He went on angrily, "Treva was too young and romantic. You turned her head. She couldn't forget something that never existed. She'll know better now."

"Will she?" I said. "We'll see." And in that moment when David confirmed all I'd suspected about Treva's feeling for me, I thought of Susanne with a little wrench. Susanne, who had promised to bring Treva to me. Of course Susanne could not understand; Susanne had not known Treva, or how memories could grow more tender with passing years.

"Since I'm in your way, I'll leave you!" David said stiffly.

"Don't be a fool again!" I caught his arm as he turned away. "We'll have to stand or fall together. Our necks will be safer. Besides, Treva might need help from you. You have that much feeling for her, haven't you, no matter what she decides? Stop hating me."

"How can I hate you after you saved my life twice?" David retorted irritably. "I just don't like you."

"Fair enough. I believe they're after us now. . . . Into the cathedral. They may not think to look for American spies in the shadow of the altar."

We joined men and women and children entering the cavernous depths of the cathedral. Inside, war was muted and far away. It was quiet, save for the low drone of whispering prayers from kneeling scores. Candles burned before the great, impressive altar. Priests in gorgeous vestments were kneeling, reciting prayers. The odor of incense was sweet and heavy over the bowed heads.

"Prayer would not be amiss, even for us," I whispered to David as we went silently into the shadows at one side and knelt awkwardly.

I had not said many prayers since I had left my mother to be a midshipman. When I bowed my head now, my mother seemed very near and war seemed very far away, and the help I needed for Treva very certain there on the altar. I did not forget Susanne. . . .

A long time later, when I lifted my head, a strange new peace was with me. I felt amazingly calm even when soldiers passed near, scanning the worshipers,

although I knew they were looking for us. Presently they went away.

The peace stayed with me as I stood up. David moved with me, gloomily silent. I think he felt that this night he was losing Treva forever. He paused in tense silence when a small, wrinkled old priest in sandals and belted robe stepped up and greeted us: "God be with you, my sons."

"As God wills it, Father," I replied.

"You are fighting for your country?"

"Yes, Father."

"God suffers with all this killing," he said sadly.

"Yes, Father." A thought struck me.

"Father," I said, "I look for a young lady. She must have prayed here. She is a dancer. Señorita Valverde."

"A friend of yours, my son?"

"Yes."

"You have prayed to find her?"

"Yes," I said truthfully.

He sighed and crossed himself. His knees bent to the altar. His wrinkled hand went to the cross hanging from his neck. "Come with me."

We followed his sandaled steps out into the night, into the tumult and the red flicker of war. I became aware that people in the plaza were being stopped and questioned. The city evidently was being searched for us. We were turning out of the plaza when a squad of soldiers came by.

"The blessings of God this night," our little old priest called to them.

Several answered respectfully as he made the sign of the cross toward them. David brushed against me. He was stiff with tension. And I, each moment, expected the outcry of discovery.

But we passed in safety with our robed guide. We followed him through darker streets and confusion. He did not look aside when a shell burst near us. He was placid as he stopped at the doorway of a house without lights, and knocked.

HE knocked several times before an answer came through the porter's little wicket. "Yes?" a voice said—Susanne's voice.

"It is Father Gomez, from the cathedral, daughter. I have friends who seek you."

"What friends?"

"You will remember me from that last night in Havana," I said, and I heard her catch her breath inside the gate. She unbarred it. I stepped inside, and she caught my hand tightly.

Father Gomez said placidly, "I will stand here in the street and say my beads before returning. A priest might be needed by some who pass."

Susanne guided us into a candle-lit room. Her face was shining. "You did come, Cass! Nothing has happened to you!" Her eyes widened. "Captain Key!"

David bowed. "Fortune of war, ma'am."

"And love," I reminded him. David flushed as I said to Susanne, "We've had a brush with Jan Spreck tonight. He's looking for Treva Dexter. You have her?"

"That pig Spreck!" Susanne said with a curl of her lip. "He has questioned me about her." She was pale as she looked at me. I knew she was thinking of that last night in Havana, and of the moment when she would see Treva and me to-

gether. I pressed her hand, overcome by such emotion as I had never before known. Things I had never till that moment dreamed of saying rose unbidden to my lips. But Susanne, oblivious, cut me short. "I kept my promise, Cass," she said, and walked across the room and opened a door. "Treva! He is here!"

Treva was pale, too, as she came into the room. The clear candlelight struck gold glints from her chestnut hair.

"Cass!" she cried, and started to me with her hands out in welcome, as she had often met me of old.

Then she saw David Key, and stopped. "David!" she said chokingly, and went to him blindly. I doubt if they knew Susanne and I were there, as they clung together.

I had a queer, detached feeling, and—Heaven help me—a sensation of relief. All my fine memories of Treva through the years seemed to be dissolving in a desire to show these two how a lover should greet a loved one—how a girl such as Susanne would respond to such a meeting. David was holding Treva so damned properly, and she, God help her, seemed to think it the height of happiness.

They were both pink and glowing when they turned to us, and, I did no more than to take Susanne's hand again in mine.

"Thank God," David said huskily. He gave me a tolerant and triumphant look.

WE'LL still have to help a little," I said dryly. "We're still in Vera Cruz. If we're not rooted out and shot as spies, we'll have the town shelled down about us." I turned to Susanne. Sadness and pity were in the look she gave me. "Will you leave tonight also?" I asked her. "When the siege lines are drawn and the full bombardment starts, it will be too late."

"Whatever you think, Cass."

"Then get cloaks. Shawls, too, if you have them. Are you agreed, Captain?"

"Naturally," David assented.

"I'll ask the priest if he can guide Treva and Susanne ahead of us. If you and I are caught, Father Gomez can bring them back here."

In the darkness outside the gate Father Gomez listened attentively.

"All women should leave Vera Cruz," he agreed. "I will walk with the *señoritas* to the city gate."

Before we started, there was time for a hurried explanation as to how Susanne had located Treva.

In Mexico City, Susanne had found Spreck and had his movements watched. He often went to a rented villa outside the city, and servants had revealed that a young American lady was held prisoner there. The rest was careful planning, liberal bribes, and, finally, a dangerous coach ride to Vera Cruz.

Susanne had not believed that Spreck would come so quickly to Vera Cruz, looking for Treva. But he had, and his powerful links with the military, and the uses to which Treva might be put as a prisoner, had made dangerous any attempt to get her out of the city, even to escape the American bombardment.

"I think you did not come too soon,

Cass," Susanne told me. She was not happy that I had lost Treva. The sadness was still in each look she gave me. I knew she was thinking of how I must be hurt. She could think that way because she was Susanne. Her faint smile could not hide the stiffness of her lips. "I shall be glad to go, Cass. I think to Spain, next. They like me in Madrid."

"At the moment," I said, "you're going to the city gate. That's far enough ahead to plan."

The girls were ready to leave. They wore thin dark cloaks and long fringed shawls over their heads. In the Vera Cruz night they would be old crones, for all a stranger could tell.

FATHER GOMEZ was inside the gate. He was troubled. "I have been asked if strangers have entered this house," he told us. He crossed himself. "I gave God's blessing and said I was not the watchman in the night."

"Who asked, Father?"

"A big man who did not speak the language of the country well."

"Jan Spreck!" I muttered. "Where is this man, Father?"

"He went toward the plaza."

"Take the young ladies the other way," I decided. "First, I'll step outside. He may be waiting with help."

"He'll kill you, Cass!"

"Do as I say, Susanne."

She looked at me long, then drew the black shawl across her face.

I stepped out into the dark street, saber drawn. I saw no one there, and motioned to Father Gomez that it was safe to lead Treva and Susanne away.

The city was shaking under exploding shells. The deep thunder of heavy cannon was like a restless storm, which wheeled above one spot, never moving on. People ran past us in the street.

"I think we can follow now," I said to David, and we hurried until we were behind Father Gomez and the two girls.

The old priest led us through the city by dark and roundabout streets, walking calmly through shell fire and growing desolation.

The great gate by which I had entered the city was the last test. It might be closed. Guards might be posted there, watching for David and me.

We did find guards at the gate, and confusion, and very little light. As we neared it, Father Gomez began to intone a litany. A woman carrying a heavy bundle fell in with Treva and Susanne, and called the responses, in a shrill and quavering voice. Others joined in, both men and women.

"Close up with them," I said to David, and we became part of a growing procession that moved through the night, praising God.

The guards at the gate did not stop or search that procession of prayer and faith. We passed safely outside, and there David and I joined Treva and Susanne. Father Gomez ended his litany and gave blessing to those who went on to safety. Then he turned to us.

"My children, go in peace," he said. "You will reach the Americans now in safety, I think."

"You knew?" I asked, startled.

He said, quietly, "There could be only two men, one with a scar on his face, whom the soldiers were seeking in the cathedral."

"Knowing that, you helped us? You, a Mexican, with our guns firing on you?"

I heard him sigh. I saw his hand go to the big cross hanging at his belt.

"Prayer shall be answered," he said quietly. "You prayed to God, and could God do less than answer? Go now with God. Pray for those who stay."

He left us, a meek and gentle old man, trudging back into the city, which shortly would be sealed against escape.

Susanne took my hand, and looked after him. "With God," I heard her repeat. And then the four of us went on, hurrying against the coming of dawn.

The skirmishing parties and the outposts of the Mexican forces were not watching for Americans to appear from the direction of the city walls. We were stopped again and again, but David's and my uniforms kept us safe.

Dawn was bringing the palest of gray over the eastern sky when we climbed a sand hill and rested on the top.

"The stone magazine should be near here," I said. "We'd best wait for more light. American sentries might shoot."

DAVID moved to Treva. They sat down, decently apart, and talked in low tones. Susanne and I stood there, watching dawn creep from the Mexican Gulf, behind the tall masts of the fleet.

I put my arm around Susanne. There was just enough light to see how tired and sad she looked.

"I'm sorry, Cass," she said.

"Sorry?"

"Of course. That it was not you. I—I didn't even know, myself, until she saw him. I would not have you hurt, Cass."

There was much to say, and suddenly I was awkward about how to say it. The light was growing brighter. The thunder of the guns had slacked off.

"I must go back to the fleet," I said. "I don't know what will happen to me. But if you are somewhere, thinking about me, Susanne, it will be easier."

Her fingers tightened on my hand. "I shall pray for you, Cass."

"Prayer shall be answered," I quoted Father Gomez. I had to fumble for words, because of what I felt. "Susanne, in the cathedral, on my knees, I prayed for you. That you would be happy and safe. That you would have love and faith without ending."

"Then I shall, Cass, if you asked it," she said tightly. "Wherever I am."

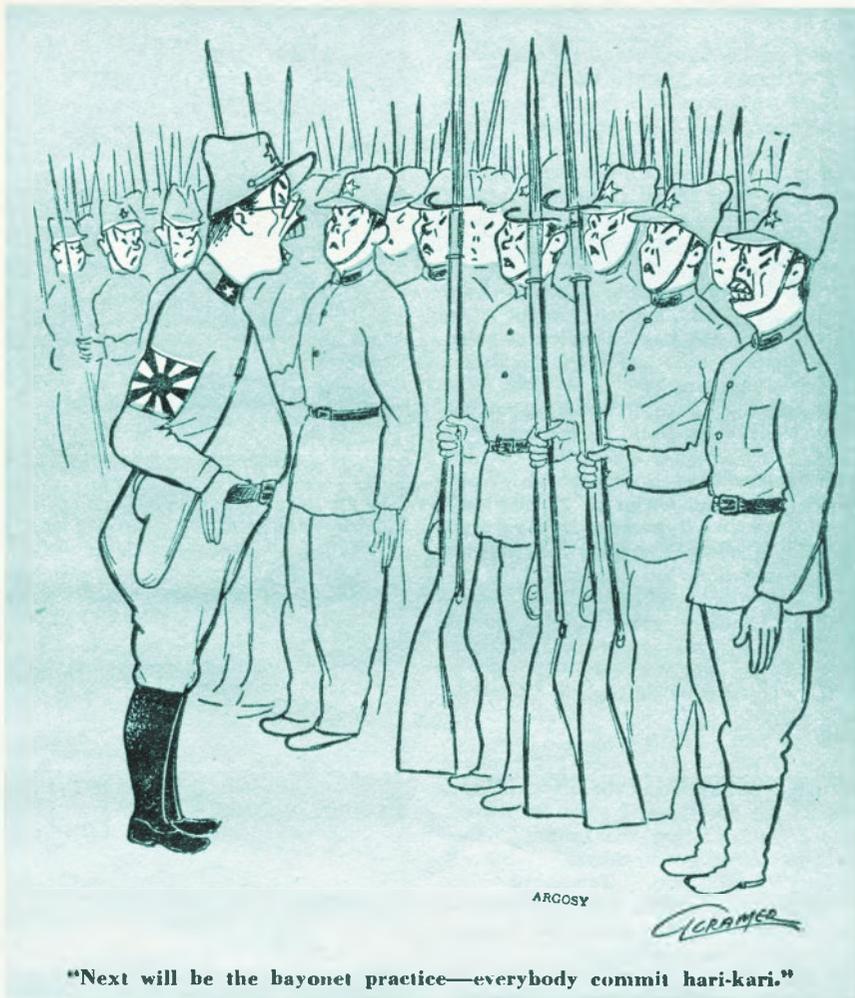
"Where you are, I'll be too, if you'll have it," I said. "There never could have been anyone but you, Susanne. Do you believe me?"

The dawn was on Susanne's face as she looked up at me, and an inner glow through her weariness had more beauty than any dawn could ever bring.

"I am afraid to believe you, Cass." She turned, and her arms went around me. "But Cass, my dear, hold me close, Cass."

So I held her close, the sweetness of her against me and all about me, and I whispered, "*Querida mia*—my beloved, *te amo*—I love you. . . ."

THE END



Man for the Mission

(Continued from page 59)

audible, for he had to cry out with his mouth pressed against the forest floor. "Don't shoot, sir!" he said, raising his head. "Lord God, Lieutenant, don't shoot again. I've come to take you out!"

There was a silence, then the invisible flyer said faintly, "Who are you?"

"Radioman second class, Samuel Quintard Jones, sir," Sam replied. "ARB 137. We're lying offshore. Followed your signal here. You're Lieutenant Reid Townsend of Fighting 19, Aircraft Carrier *Tecumseh*. You were shot down—"

"That's enough," Lieutenant Townsend said. "Sounds too good to be true. Get up and come forward on your present bearing and come slowly so's I can get a good look at you."

"I have a flashlight," Sam said. "I can shine it on myself as I come. But, Lieutenant—"

"Yeah?"

"I'm masquerading. Don't be alarmed."

"Turn on your light and walk toward me."

Sam got up. He turned the tiny flashlight on his face and walked forward until Lieutenant Townsend told him to stop. He heard the lieutenant suck in a sharp breath. "That's not grease paint," Townsend said with acerbity.

"I'm colored, sir," Sam said, "but I'm

an American, and I've come to get you out of here."

He could see the flyer now, holding the .45 and wondering hard, for much was involved here, and the Nips were full of nasty tricks. He could see Lieutenant Townsend was having a great struggle, for he wanted badly to be free, and he disliked greatly being killed by some subtle treachery. A man had to know, a man had to be sure. . . .

"I don't know—" Townsend whispered.

"Look, sir," Sam said. "A snifter used for radio-location. Made for the Bureau of Ships, the name plate is right on it. My boat is lying offshore no more than a mile. I've got a Mark II raft lying on the beach. I was born in Baltimore—"

"That does it," Townsend said. He walked over and slipped the gun in his holster, then extended his hand. "I'm sorry, Sam, but a guy has to be sure. This is a rough war."

Sam grinned. "I know, sir. I was worried how I'd make myself known to you." They shook hands firmly. "Are you ready?"

"Sure," Townsend said. "I've been ready ever since I toured in here. I was worried stiff they'd bear on my Gibson Girl. Had to hang an antenna up in a tree and I didn't know how I was get-

ting out . . . God, I didn't think I'd be free again! It was like being buried alive."

"May not be as easy getting out," Sam said. "There's a patrol on the beach, and my raft was left there. If anyone heard your shot—" He shrugged. "We'll do our best."

"Why the Melanesian get-up?" Townsend said. "But that's a stupid question. You figured it would be safer."

"Yes. Let's go. No more talk, and stay close. Be very quiet."

It was difficult to be quiet in the jungle. They broke branches in the dark, and the trees and bushes pulled at them. There were leeches and bugs, thousands of mosquitoes, and the dark was filled with minor but multitudinous pains. They did not go back at the angle at which Sam had approached, but cut due southwest straight to the beach. When they reached the fringe of it, they followed it northwest, keeping in the greens and off the sand. Presently, they sighted the raft and drew up abruptly.

TWO Japanese soldiers, the patrol, obviously, had found the raft, and were discussing it excitedly.

"That tears it wide open," Townsend said sadly.

"No," Sam whispered. "There's a chance. A long-odds chance. I'll go down there as a native, bring them back. You'll have to get one when I start them back toward you. I'll get the other. There's no time. We've got to move."

"They'll kill you," Townsend said.

"Maybe not," Sam said. "There's a chance. Have a care now, sir, have a care, when you fire."

Townsend tried to say something, but only "Good luck" came out. He squeezed Sam's arm.

Sam rose from the jungle and ran out on the sand, not too fast, crying, "One fella Jopon officer! Come plenty much quick! One mahster Jopon soldier, you plenty make fast come quick!"

The Japs whirled and raised their rifles shoulder high but did not sight. The night was bright on the sand and they saw him plainly.

"No make much shoot, sah," Sam called as he came. "You come plenty fast. My name all same Guaro and me find big much 'Melican. Great fella Jopon soldier come catch sick 'Melican sky-bird man." He gestured madly at the jungle's edge.

Would they understand him? That was a tight moment. They finally lowered the rifles and approached him. They prodded him roughly with bayonets, opening sharp little wounds, and talked to him in Japanese. He pretended not to listen, pretended ecstasy with his own discovery and kept gesticulating and crying, "One 'Melican who fly, him lie there most dead, most sick. Guaro show you, one fella mahster Jopon soldier. You come plenty much quick."

They treated him roughly with cold steel, those two little men, but they knew what he was saying. One spoke very decent English. "Where iss Am'ican?" he asked savagely.

"Plenty much there," Sam said, pointing. "Byemby right 'long there, very close."



A prod. "You show Japanese soljahs where Am'ican iss hiding?"

Sam trotted up the beach directly toward the spot where Lieutenant Townsend was hiding. The Japs kept behind him, one to the right, and the spokesman behind to the left, but close, bayonets ready for more prods.

Ten feet from the edge of the jungle, Sam tripped himself beautifully and fell headlong, raising his left leg to trip the left Jap as beautifully. The Jap fell, and the bayonet on the end of the rifle missed Sam's back by six inches as it plunged into the sand, ripping the rifle from the Jap's hands.

There was a crash from the jungle as Townsend fired the Colt, and then two more crashes, as he made sure.

Sam could not afford time to see the

other soldier's death. He had released the machete from his belt almost as he struck the ground, and as he and his adversary wriggled on the sand like snakes, the Jap attempting to rise and retrieve his rifle, which stuck in the sand like a milepost, Sam squirmed enough to turn and give his right arm leverage, and sank the machete into the Jap's skull and left it there.

He rose shakily, sickened, trembling, weak. Townsend had come out of the brush. The other Jap lay crumpled with the .45-caliber bees buried deep in him.

Townsend pushed Sam toward the sea. They ran, stumbling across the grasping sands. They launched the raft hurriedly and clambered in.

"I'll row," Sam said hoarsely.

They overturned at the first line of surf, wisely swam out past the breaking seas, towing the raft, then righted it and climbed aboard wearily. Sam rowed dead out, bearing on the two dark bodies across the sand, using them as a guide point until he could no longer see them.

Then Townsend murmured, "There's the ARB, dead ahead. Keep straight on. I'll guide you. Want me to row?"

"No," Sam said. "I'm doing fine."

They were silent the rest of the way.

When they reached the ARB, Ensign Burney hauled up Lieutenant Townsend and said, "Welcome aboard!" He was grinning from ear to ear. He held down a hairy hand to Sam and yanked. "God, Sam, you're hurt!"

"Just scratches," said Sam. "I'll clean them up. Nothing serious."

"Up anchor!" Burney snapped then. "Get under way. There are liable to be fireworks now."

They pulled out fast.

TOWNSEND sat below, on a berth in a stateroom. Aboard an ARB, stateroom was hardly the word. Sea chest would have been better. Townsend had taken off his filthy clothes and sat in his shorts. Fatigue had hit him. He just sat there.

Sam felt the same way. His hair was combed, he'd gotten rid of the glamorous washers in his nose and ears, and he'd donned a pair of shorts. But he felt all gone, too.

There was blood on his chest and his back. There was blood on Townsend's body where the jungle had treated him badly.

They stared at each other.

"I've been trying to say something," Townsend remarked slowly. "But it doesn't come. It's—well, back there on the raft, I was going to say that your color sure came in handy tonight. But that act could've been done in burnt cork by a redheaded Irishman. Color really had nothing to do with it. It needed your guts and—what I mean is—hell, Sam, I'm trying to thank you, and—"

"You don't have to thank me, sir," Sam said. "We're all squared away." He laughed and rose. "Let's wash up and start looking human. There's hot jamoke waiting, and fresh clothes. What do you say?"

Lieutenant Townsend said, "It sounds swell."

THE END

Gagan Collects an Island

(Continued from page 15)

back this way on its return to the ship. "Maybe," said Gagan, "the Old Man got jittery, and put out to sea. But they'll be back. We'll be hauled up to the stick anyway, so we might as well take it easy. We'll go back to the lagoon and see if we can find something to eat."

There was nothing but coconuts and green bananas, a fact that forced them to drink a few more bottles of beer. Just before sunset, the Jap float plane buzzed overhead.

"Still looking for the *Little B!*" Gagan said. "Must be Japs somewhere around, after all."

The time dragged. Mogelberg said his stomach thought his throat was cut. Gagan said there might be shellfish around the shores of the lagoon, and they went out to look.

The short twilight faded as they started back to camp, and they heard the float plane again. Its engine was stuttering.

"Duck!" yelled Gagan, and leaped for the underbrush.

The plane swooped so near they could make out the two helmeted Japs in its cockpits. It landed neatly, lost way, then turned and taxied back down-wind until it was some fifty yards from where they lay. The pilot cut his erratic engine, and got out to stand on a float while he tinkered with it.

"Jeez!" Mogelberg whispered. "We gonna be pinned down here all night?"

Gagan jumped. "Hell, no!" he said. "I been thinking. We couldn't fly that crate, but maybe we could taxi it out past the reef and up around the island. Maybe we could find the ship that way!"

NEITHER of the Japs saw the two strangely burdened figures leave the undergrowth and enter the water. Neither noticed the bubbles rising to the surface of the lagoon. The Jap army officer—a full colonel—was still saying what he thought of the Imperial Navy; the Jap navy pilot was burning his hands trying to free a stuck valve.

He had just succeeded when the plane rocked slightly more than it should have in the calm water. He looked up respectfully. Was honorable colonel, like all landmen, addicted to rocking honorable boat?

The pilot never found out. Mogelberg's big hands closed on his ankle at that instant, and gave a violent jerk. The Jap grabbed wildly at the wing and missed, and had time to give only one startled yell before he struck the water.

Mogelberg went under with him, still remembering to breathe naturally through his mouth. By the time the unhappy colonel had unbuckled his safety strap and raised up for a look, Mogelberg was under the floats and had shifted his grip to the pilot's neck. And then, with nearly perfect timing, Gagan climbed over the cockpit from the farther side and shattered a bottle of beer over the colonel's head. It was, he remembered ruefully, one of the last few unopened bottles.

The water was barely neck-deep here. They left the two mattress covers, which had been weighted with stones for ballast required on this submarine attack, and towed their unconscious prisoners ashore. After the Japs had been tied with hammock lashings, there was nothing to do but wait until morning—any attempt to navigate the float plane by night, Gagan said, might be disastrous.

They finished the last of the beer. The prisoners were conscious, now, but either could not speak English or refused to do so. Gagan examined a briefcase he had taken from the colonel's cockpit. It was well stuffed with important looking papers.

"Listen!" Mogelberg cautioned.



CHOOSE YOUR PARTNERS

Here is a quiz calculated to keep you completely confused until you find the proper partner for each. All you have to do is write in the correct term alongside its corresponding sport—and keep trying till all the pieces fit together perfectly. But there's a time limit in scoring. Ten minutes is average, seven minutes pretty good. Line them all up in five minutes or less, and we'll credit you with a home run. Answers will be found on page 84.

1. Baseball—kick
2. Bowling—tackle
3. Football—gloves
4. Golf—strike
5. Boxing—pin
6. Swimming—mask
7. Tennis—stroke
8. Horseshoes—bag
9. Fencing—net
10. Fishing—pitcher

by BILL WERNICKE

There was movement in the jungle toward the west. A branch snapped; equipment rattled faintly. Gagan and Mogelberg flopped on their bellies.

It was a whole patrol, and it would be out in the moonlight in another minute. And, Gagan told himself, *it could be Japs*. He remembered the dispatch he carried. It had been watersoaked; he would be able to eat it a little easier than if it were dry. He got out the soggy envelope and tore it open.

Just then somebody let go a springy limb, and the man behind him in the trail countered with a good, round American cussword.

Gagan leaped to his feet. "Semper fidelis!" he called. "Hey, you gyrenes! We got a dispatch from the ship!"

The lieutenant halted the patrol and ordered the sailors to advance and be recognized. The beams of pocket torches fell on Gagan and Mogelberg.

"All right," said the lieutenant. "Let's have that dispatch."

He scanned the soaked paper under his flashlight.

"Mr. Deems wants us to go back to the west side—he's moved around there. Dammit, that means another four miles of hiking tonight, and we have to go aboard empty-handed!"

The darkness hid Gagan's grin. "Lieutenant," he said, "come over here. We've got something for you."

AND so, captain," the marine lieutenant was telling Mr. Deems the next morning, "we had covered practically all of this end of Balumgiri and were coming back without anything to show for it. Then we ran into Gagan and Mogelberg, and got your message saying the *Little B*—I mean the *Bustard*, sir—was moving around to the west side. You could have knocked me over with a burp when I saw those prisoners and that float plane!"

Mr. Deems rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "Speaking of burps," he said, "I'd like to ask you something. Did Gagan and Mogelberg appear—er—sober?"

"Sober?" exclaimed the marine, his eyes wide and innocent. "Why, certainly! I hardly think a pair of drunks could have done the job they did. And I still don't know how they did it. They were in pistol range, but neither fired a shot. They got the Japs alive!"

"I don't know how they did it, either," complained Mr. Deems. "My first class bosun's mate—a very reliable man—reports that the beer locker was raided. He's quite certain Gagan and Mogelberg took a couple of cases of beer ashore and went on a speed run."

"How could they?" demanded the lieutenant. "How could anybody smuggle that much beer ashore?"

"That," said Mr. Deems, brightening, "is what I told Mason. And the more I think of it, the more I think you're right. I'll see that Gagan's rating is restored. Yes, by George, and I'll recommend both of them for the Legion of Merit!"

THE END

KEEPING UP WITH SCIENCE



ABOUT FISHING: The *paiche*, which weighs from fifty to one hundred and fifty pounds at maturity, is a cod-like fish of South America. Caught by hand-hurled harpoons, this strange denizen of the Amazon River needs air to survive and rises to the surface once in every ten minutes for a "gulp" . . . The crayfish travels much faster backward than forward; it swims tail first . . . Largest brook trout on record weighed fourteen and a half pounds, was caught in the Nipigon River in Ontario, Canada, in 1916 . . . Biggest whale shark ever caught weighed more than twenty thousand pounds; biggest man-eater shark, more than two thousand pounds.

AVERAGE MAN, living seventy years in the United States, eats 150 head of cattle, 225 lambs, 26 sheep, 310 swine, 2,400 chickens, 26 acres of grain, 50 acres of fruits and vegetables in a lifetime . . . During his allotted years he develops twenty pet peeves, such as a cold, flabby handshake or noise made by a dripping faucet . . . But his wife develops many more.

HOT AND COLD: All-time record for cold was 90.4 degrees below zero in Siberia in 1892; all-time heat record was 136 in the shade in Azizia, Lybia, in September, 1922 . . . Wolverine—unlike any other fur—does not hold frost created by the human breath . . . Flame-thrower used in our war on Japan throws a flame 450 feet . . . Chinese used fire in warfare five hundred years ago; they also used rockets, but for signaling purposes only.

NEW INVENTIONS: Aluminum lifeboat, much lighter than its wooden or steel predecessors, is being installed by United States Coast Guard because it lessens weight on superstructures of ships, thereby increasing their stability . . . Tiny humidifier that fits into your package of cigarettes to keep them just in the right condition . . . A new germ-killer, allicin, obtained from garlic; it asphyxiates the germs . . . Bachelor-aids: (1) a machine for breaking, frying, and placing eggs on plates; (2) a coffee pot that won't boil over . . . For the boys overseas or convalescing in hospitals, a lap-sized piano . . . For industry, a chemical process that converts soft wood into hard wood.

By Dr. James F. Bender

Wagon Wheel City

(Continued from page 54)

drinks. He recalled that at one stage in their rounds Hatfield and he had passed the head of a narrow street feeding down to the water, its walk bright with the lights of establishments busy with trade. He had veered in that direction. Hatfield checked him.

"Every town has two ends," Hatfield said. "That's the wrong one. Some day all of us will go down there. But it won't be a social night when we do. That's where the cribs are, the cribs and the dives. That is King Barney's corral."

Clark remembered feeling no particular astonishment at hearing Barney's name voiced with grudging respect by one of San Francisco's leading citizens. He had felt no doubt that King Barney and Big Ben were the same man, and he was not surprised at this indication that Big Ben was already deeply rooted. However, later in the evening, when he and Hatfield were in a booth in the Monarch Club, curiosity began to plague Clark. He leaned forward, intending to question Hatfield about Big Ben and some of the others who had been in the Ginselling train, but Hatfield's attention was on other matters.

"There's a man I want you to meet, Clark," he said. "We need him on our side. We need him badly. But he sits on the fence and none of us have been able to touch him. If you could make a friend of him and—"

Hatfield broke off and edged out of the booth to snag the arm of a small, round man moving down the aisle back of the crowd at the bar.

"I've been looking for you," the real estate operator said in as close an approach to deference as Denton had heard him employ. "Clark, I'd like you to meet Potter Wainwright, owner and editor of the *San Francisco Liberty*."

WAINWRIGHT looked a little more harassed than he had on the trail. He had lost weight. He seemed on edge. Denton, rising, saw recognition percolate slowly through his preoccupation.

"Mr. Denton," Hatfield said, "has just consented to become my partner. We are launching a new venture which should be of interest to San Francisco and the *Liberty*."

Plainly astonished, Wainwright leaned forward with almost fawning affability.

"Clark, my boy!" he said eagerly. "You're looking fit. How long have you been in town?"

"Since yesterday morning."

Wainwright grinned. "And a Hatfield partner already!" He was impressed. "You'll be busy. I know that. But when you've a minute—anyone can locate the *Liberty*—I want to see you."

He backed off, nodded at Hatfield, and left the room. Hatfield slid back on to his seat and studied Clark carefully.

"Can you draw an ace like that out of the pack every time?" he asked drily.

"No," Clark said. He offered no further information.

The evening died. A little later Hatfield and Denton made their way to the

street together. Hatfield offered Clark a lift to Crabtree's but there was thinking Clark wished to do alone. He refused and Hatfield drove off.

Denton remained in front of the Monarch a few minutes, savoring the damp air, then turned and started slowly toward the lower part of town. At the first corner a voice brought him up short.

"Clark—Clark Denton!"

A battered trap, obviously one of the few public vehicles in the city, was drawn up against the far walk. Its door opened. Denton angled cautiously toward it. There was no light. He could not see its occupant clearly. He did not recognize her until the night air brought him a faint, familiar perfume. He stepped into the trap and pulled the door closed. The driver started his horse without a signal.

"I've followed you since late afternoon," Jan Barney said. "I would have hailed you earlier, but you were traveling in too good company."

"You followed me?" Clark said. "Why?"

"Ginselling's in town, too, isn't he?" Jan asked. "You came down together? Captain Sutter wrote me that you would."

"Sutter wrote to you?"

"Why not? No, Clark, you misunderstand. I had no part in what happened to you at the wagons. I was against that and I tried to warn you. I tried to get you out of the train. Afterward, at the first opportunity, I sent a messenger across to Sutter's, inquiring after you. The captain has kept me posted since."

Denton digested this. He wanted to believe it. It was an explanation that might be true. Or it might be an evidence of Ben Barney's concern in a man he had failed to kill. After all, Jan was Big Ben's daughter.

He answered guardedly. "Yes, Ginselling's in town."

Jan ignored his stiffness. "Then do this for me—take this to him."

She put a pouch on Denton's knee. It was a fat, heavy pouch of San Francisco's coin—creek-dust.

"Back on the trail, Clark," she said. "I had to stay with dad and Ed Payton."

Clark blinked, trying to accept this. He wished his head was a little clearer.

"My mother," Jan went on quietly, "was practically a slave. Some women can put up with that kind of life, Clark. Mother had pride and hope and tenderness, and still she was a slave to Big Ben Barney. When he needed to put on a show of worth and family solidity, he produced her and me. He took us up and down the river with him, always keeping us desperately dependent upon him, even for our meals. I probably should have hated him when pneumonia brought an end to mother's unhappiness a few months ago, but I didn't. I don't hate him now. But when we started to California, I made up my mind that I didn't want any more of the life he had forced on mother and me. I decided to split my trail from his—that California was the place for a new beginning."

"So to celebrate, you helped him make a last take?"

"If holding back and keeping my mouth shut, except when I tried to warn you, was helping him, then yes," Jan agreed levelly. "When we reached Frisco and auctioned off the wagons, Big Ben insisted I take a share. Dad, Ed Payton, Wainwright, Will Stewart and a man named Frank Murray—you remember him—divided the rest. The money they gave me is what I want you to return to Ginselling. It's all there, together with fair interest."

Clark scowled.

"I would have left the string anywhere this side of the Fortunova and taken you with me if you had given one sign," he said slowly.

Jan nodded. "I know that. You would have. But I had to wait until I got to California, until we all got settled here. On the trail we had no way of knowing what changes a place like this could bring about in us. Ben Barney was a boss gambler on the River, taking his percentage without resorting to violence. But he's not contented with percentages and small games here. What good was in him is gone. How can I tell what change will be worked in you? How can you tell what change there will be in me?" She touched his hand. "Already you must see that I was right. How could a gambler's daughter be important to a city builder and a Hatfield partner?"

Denton could not see that. Neither could he see that Jan Barney's trail had forked away from her father's. She had offered no proof beyond this pouch of gold, and in the three months in which Ben Barney had been laying his foundations, many such pouches must have come to his hands. This could be a cheap way of buying whitewash for a portion of his activities.

"See Ginselling for me, Clark," Jan urged quietly. "Give him back this money. Make him understand. I have my fresh start, here. And I want that old trouble off my conscience."

The trap had halted. It was warm inside. A recklessness seized Clark, personal and selfish. "And this—" he tossed the pouch of dust—"was your reason for waiting for me?"

Janice Barney stirred. She answered soberly and very softly, "I should not have to answer that question, Clark."

Leaning forward, she opened the door. Denton looked out and saw the trap had stopped before lodgings over a place of business in a substantial part of town. He handed Jan down from the trap and went up with her, with this woman who had come seeking him. . . .

WHEN he came down again the sun was over the street and he saw the lettering above the windows of the establishment on the ground floor:

THE JANICE SHOP
Mode Millinery

Behind the glass a few display stands supported bizarre head creations at whose feminine appeal he could only guess as he had to guess at the long hours of labor and the skill at salvage which had gone into their making. He glanced at the

drawn shades above, and revulsion shook him—not for the night, but for his own folly.

He had been full of whiskey and stubbornly certain that Jan Barney was the shadow of her father, even here. That certainty, as much as the alcohol, had made him different than he might have been. If there had been protest or hurt in the girl he would not have known it. He had not tried to see beyond the words he heard. He did not need to, now. Somehow the little shop, its contents, and the separate lodging were arguments enough. If they were not, the pouch he was to take to Hank Ginselling was an honest plea and bore no taint of Big Ben. Too late, that conviction was sound in Denton. Jan Barney was no part of the wrong end of town.

Two corners away Denton found a small Mexican boy standing knee-deep in the mud with a dewy basket of deep-colored flowers cut from some old garden. It was an incongruous touch on the squalid street. He gave the boy a coin and directions as to the proper door over the millinery shop.

Clark moved on toward the waterfront. The flowers did not make him feel any better.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DENTON'S recollection of his first day as Hatfield's partner blurred under the accumulation of new experience and the pressure of business, but a few things remained clear. When he left the street in front of the millinery shop, he went directly to the grog-shop the old captain of the *Jenny III* had named. A small crowd was gathered in a tule lot beside it. He thrust through and found the man for whom he was looking lying on the salt-encrusted mud. The old man was dead. His pockets had been rifled.

"He's been dead since last night," a man in a dirty apron said. "Stiff as a board already."

"So you stand around!" Denton barked. "Get an officer down here. Get the law on this. It's plain murder and there ought to be tracks in this stuff."

"Sure there's tracks!" growled the man, his face setting sullenly. "Leading right to the Broken Wheel. But what's this law you're talking about?"

"The Broken Wheel?" Denton said. "What's that?"

"A dive over off of Montgomery Street. A hell-hole with a new boss. Got bought out a couple months ago. A gambler—"

"Named Barney," Denton said softly.

"Named Barney," the man agreed. "You ain't as green as I thought, friend."

"Any proof this was Barney?" Denton asked.

The aproned man grinned crookedly.

There was nothing to be done. Denton moved on. He had wanted the old man for a contact among the other shipowners. He worked alone, now. Some ships were company craft. Owners of others had vanished. By noon, however, he had acquired a round dozen of the hulks and spent fifteen thousand dollars of Harrison Hatfield's money.

It was after one o'clock before Denton remembered his engagement with Lois Hatfield. He hurried up to the Empire, aware that he was dusty and untidy but afraid he had delayed too long. The girl, however, was waiting. Trim and cool, with heightened color the only sign of her impatience, she gave him her hand when he found her in the lobby.

"Cavalier treatment, Mr. Denton," she said. "Ah—no excuses! A businessman's daughter has heard them all. But now that you're here I hope you saved a little time for me—enough, perhaps, for luncheon?"

THEY took a window table. Talk ran lightly, dealt out in Lois Hatfield's engaging manner. Denton, however, heard little of it. He was preoccupied. Potter Wainwright sat three tables away. He smiled pleasantly and nodded as Denton caught his eyes. When Lois Hatfield glanced at him he rose and bowed. In a booth farther down the room, seated in a position where Wainwright could not see him, Ginselling was bent over his meal. Denton wanted to see both men.

Wainwright, however, rose directly and went out. The newspaperman was hardly out of the room before Ginselling stood and motioned sharply at Denton. Clark excused himself and crossed the room.

Denton sat down, pulling Janice Barney's pouch from the pocket of his vest. He dropped it onto the cloth.

"It's yours," Denton told Ginselling. "One share of the profits made on the sale of your wagons and freight. I'll want to take a receipt back with me."

"Wainwright?" Ginselling asked bluntly. Denton shook his head. "Barney's girl, then," the freighter said. "Sure, the girl. Coming from you, it'd have to be!"

He shook with soundless laughter. Denton frowned and he checked himself.

"That's all right, Denton," he went on. "With her it's all right. I see she's got herself all set up with a store. She's got sand. It's all right. Make out your receipt. I'll sign it."

Denton took a card from his pocket and wrote out a simple form. Ginselling signed and pushed it back.

"But it won't do for the rest," he warned. "You know that?"

Denton nodded.

"All right," the freighter said. "Now me and you will do some business. I hear you've bought up a mess of them old ships. Why?"

"That's my affair," Denton said stiffly.

"So it is. What I want to know is what you're going to do with the strong boxes them skippers had aboard. You've got 'em—and the combinations?"

"Yes. I suppose the combinations are among the ships' papers."

"I want ten of them and I'll pay you four hundred apiece where they sit."

"Ten safes? Why?"

The freighter snorted. "I could give you the same answer you gave me. But I won't. I'll tell you straight. There's a thousand miners a day hitting town with the cleanup from the creeks. Ain't a one of 'em safe on the streets after dark with that dust on 'em and no place to leave it. At the same time, there's a thousand speculators and assorted damned fools

trying to haul themselves up by their bootstraps with no money to work with. I'm opening a bank."

Denton was tempted to laugh. This mule-buster behind a banker's desk! He was checked by sudden realization of the soundness of Ginselling's scheme. A thought prodded him. He could not resist passing it on.

"Grudges die quickly here, don't they?"

Ginselling's face darkened. "Not mine, they don't!" he said with sudden savagery. "Do I get them iron boxes?"

"Pick them up when you want." Denton rose and returned to his own table.

"Business makes strange bedfellows, doesn't it?" Lois Hatfield asked with a glance at Ginselling.

"Yes," Denton agreed quietly, thinking of the considerable distance which existed between him and Harrison Hatfield's daughter.

BY MID-AFTERNOON Lois Hatfield had persuaded the wife of the owner of the Empire to install Denton in a second-floor corner room and had found him a tailor. He saw her out to the family rig, waiting in the street, and turned toward the Monarch Club. Hatfield was pacing restlessly there. His anger eased off when he learned that the cause of Denton's delay had been his daughter.

"You two hit it off well, don't you?" he asked. Then he plunged into business.

"I've got us a lot for headquarters. We'll put up an office building on it. Work on it when other jobs are slack. I've located thirty men and enough tools. Fifteen dollars a day too much to pay? No? Good! And contracts—man! I told John Crabtree we'd do his job for him ten percent above cost. Figured we owed him something for bringing us together. Then there's a lot of small stuff and one big one that'll clear our investment in one whack. A club building—saloon and gambling rooms downstairs, card rooms on the second floor. A round hundred thousand for the job and it won't cost us ten!"

Hatfield was right, of course. A big contract, early in the game, was exactly what the project needed.

"Sound party?" Denton asked.

"As a dollar!" Hatfield said enthusiastically. "Gave me a thousand down for a binder when he signed and never even blinked. A lad from down the bay. Placer money, likely. Turning a good strike into something that'll pay when the creeks have dried. Name's Payton."

The Golconda Construction Company started a dozen buildings over town simultaneously. The biggest of these were the headquarters office building, which Hatfield decided he wanted pushed on through to completion, and the Payton gambling hall. Crabtree's store addition was completed, and Crabtree became overnight the biggest retail merchant in San Francisco. A ship arrived with a distressed cargo. Crabtree came to Clark with a complaint beginning to be heard more often on the street—shortage of ready cash. He wanted this cargo but lacked current funds with which to take it on. Denton thought of Hank Ginselling and sent Crabtree to him. Hatfield heard

of this and went to Ginselling, also. Golconda had enormous profits in the offing, once contracts under way were completed, but today's opportunities would not wait for tomorrow. There was a residential area on the hill and more of the mud flats would soon be in demand. Hatfield wanted these. Denton knew little of this. Supervision of the scattered construction jobs kept him always on the move, leaving direction of the business chiefly to his partner.

When there was a little time, there were other demands. Two or three times a week Hatfield took Clark out to his house in the evening on invitation from the women there. In addition, there was the organization, meeting sporadically and steadily recruiting membership. Outsiders began to speak of it as the Law and Order Party, and in time its members accepted this. Denton discovered himself high in the party council and an intimate of the big names of the town, secured in this position by his partnership with Harry Hatfield and the baldly rumored connection between Hatfield's daughter and himself.

Half a dozen times in the first month Denton passed by Janice Barney's shop and would have stopped except that her place always seemed full of trade and a call might have set the gossips to work. Once, late in the evening, he planned to see her but saw Potter Wainwright coming down the stairs from her room over the shop and was barely able to avoid him. Thereafter he thought less frequently of her.

As the reform party grew, so did the forces opposing it. Ben Barney emerged as the undisputed head of the opposing element, and his Broken Wheel, off Montgomery Street, was the admitted headquarters. Hank Ginselling's bank, successful from the beginning, provided ample security for the miners' dust for a while. But more men from the creeks poured into town with passing days, overflowing Ginselling's capacity and his need for their gold. His vaults, therefore, actually did little to decrease the violence invited by this tide of easy money. No night passed without its murders, its broken heads, its raw lawlessness. And Barney's profits were enormous.

CHAPTER NINE

DRIVEN hard by Golconda's constant expansion and the knowledge that Lois Hatfield was steadily driving toward a commitment he was not yet sure he wanted to make, Denton attended

Choose Your Partners

(Answers to quiz on page 81)

- (1) Baseball strike, (2) bowling pin, (3) football kick, (4) golf bag, (5) boxing gloves, (6) swimming stroke, (7) tennis net, (8) horse-shoe pitcher, (9) fencing mask, (10) fishing tackle.

party meetings with no clear conception of the division rapidly splitting the town. It was late midwinter when Harry Hatfield brought it suddenly to his attention. Denton had turned in early, dog tired, in his quarters at the Empire. A knock roused him. He answered the door and found Hatfield in the hall, wet with rain and deeply disturbed.

"Dress," Harry told him. "I'll talk while you do. Clark, we're at the edge. It's time to jump. Tonight a man named Willie Stewart walked into the Union Queen, picked a quarrel with Walter Saunders—Saunders Importing Company, you know—and shot him dead."

"A personal thing?"

"No," Hatfield said flatly. "Saunders was a committee head in the party. This morning he ordered the owner of a dive where a man was killed last night to close up and get out. Now he's dead. That was Barney's answer!"

Something came up into sharp focus in Denton's mind.

"This Stewart—" he said softly—"he's a little man, thin-faced, bald in front?"

Hatfield looked startled. "The devil! You know him?"

"Possibly," Denton said.

Hatfield seized his arm. "We all think this is for you, Clark. Some of us tried to get a street crowd up to deal with Stewart, but Stewart walked out as easily as he came in. This town has got to be jolted to its feet!"

Denton swore. "For me!" he protested. "What do you want me to do—hunt down Stewart and kill him?"

Hatfield shook his head impatiently.

"No. It may come to that. That may be the best answer, to meet fire with fire. But not now. We've got to make the man on the streets see what's coming. And there's only one way to reach him. A newspaper. I told you before we were counting on you for that. The *Liberty's* still on the fence. Wainwright's your friend. See him—tonight!"

CLARK doubted this was the right time to try to stir Wainwright to action. Still, there was need for a beginning, and Hatfield's insistence was compelling. Leaving Hatfield at the Empire, he went up the dark street to the *Liberty's* narrow building.

Wainwright was alone in the office. "You work late hours, Clark," he said. "What's the trouble? You look worried."

"You heard about the shooting tonight?" Denton asked quietly.

"Our friend Stewart, cutting Walt Saunders down? Yes. I was just proofing a news box for tomorrow's issue."

"A news box?" Denton said. He ran scorn into his tone. "On unprovoked murder? Your white horse has been a long time dead, Potter! I told Hatfield, when he asked me to see you, that you—"

"Hatfield!" Wainwright barked excitedly. "Then this isn't a parked call? Hatfield—and the rest of the party, too?"

Clark did not understand the quick enthusiasm. "The party wanted you from the beginning," he said. "You should have known that. But you straddled the fence, instead. This Saunders shooting is a final straw. The party isn't going to wait longer. I was asked to tell you it

was time to take this to the people, to the men on the streets. And only the *Liberty* can do that!"

"Denton," Potter Wainwright said slowly and softly, "I have waited a long time to hear this. You know what few do, that this newspaper was started with money from stolen goods. It's all gone now. So is almost all of a loan I made from Hank Ginselling. And all of the time I've been waiting. You once said to me that rotten money couldn't build a sound sheet. You were wrong, Denton. I knew one day I'd be fighting Payton and Barney or others like them. I had to make myself as strong as they were. That was a beginning, and the end justified the means. San Francisco, sooner or later, was going to need a sound sheet. Whatever I could do to provide it, I would.

"I have straddled the fence, marking time. And why? Because false starts have ruined a lot of good races, Clark. I was waiting for a force to back the *Liberty*, for men to get ready for action. When a newspaper fights as powerful and unprincipled an outfit as Barney's, the fight goes only one round. There's no chance at a second start. It's the big thing, root, hog, or die!"

Wainwright sucked in a long, slow breath. "If the party is ready now, so am I. If you, Hatfield, Crabtree and the others will take your hurts as they come and back me fairly—then, by hell, the *Liberty* will fight! Tomorrow's paper will state the issue. Then we will see. But now, what of you, Clark? You do a great business. Golconda signs on half the lots in town."

"Business is good," Clark admitted.

"You've expanded like a fire. It could only happen here. Not too much, you think?"

Denton shrugged. "We'll know about that when the wheel stops spinning and the little ball drops into the slot," he said carelessly.

"That's the curse of this place. If a man could only copper his bets . . ." Wainwright broke off with a rueful laugh.

Denton rose, crossing to the door. "Potter, do you see Jan Barney?" he asked abruptly.

Wainwright did not seem surprised at the question. "A man can't be killed for hoping," he answered bluntly. "Yes, I see her, if for nothing else than a taste of courage. And so does one of your customers."

"Who?"

"Ed Payton."

FOR the first time in many weeks Denton neglected Golconda's projects. After leaving the *Liberty* office he went to the Monarch Club with Hatfield and the others, and stayed there through the morning. They were a quiet group, some of them grave, and he thought none of them were without certain fears.

At eleven a newsboy brought limp copies of the *Liberty*. Wainwright had kept his word. An epitaph for Walter Saunders covered the front page. It was inspired journalism. The *Liberty* had not fired its full armament in this first salvo, but its editorial indictment would lift hair below Montgomery Street, and San



"Hello, Ma . . . I got the job!"

Francisco would know by nightfall that the party was no mere gentlemen's discussion club. There was blood on the moon. Wainwright had said so plainly.

"Potter Wainwright's life isn't worth a plugged nickel from here on," said Crabtree, a quiet man by nature. "Nor the lives of any of the rest of us—if we've meant what we've said."

"Have we?" Denton asked.

"Yes," Crabtree answered. "I think we have no choice."

Before the group at the Monarch broke up Hatfield proposed a show of solidarity, inviting the party membership to his house in the evening. To insure success for the party, he recklessly hired the Monarch's staff to cater it. Denton would have avoided this but knew he could not. Lois had grown possessive.

He waited for Hatfield, separated him from the others, steered him into the Empire, where the deep booths insured privacy, and asked him a somber question: "Just how is our cash balance in Golconda, Harry?"

"Cash—in this town, and with the opportunities at hand?" Hatfield was astonished. "Why, hell, we haven't had any cash almost from the moment we began! But we've got everything else—land, contracts, business. We're out in front!"

"Are we? A bad turn—"

"We'd see it coming," Harry said. "If we didn't, Ginselling would pull us through. We owe him a hundred thousand. He'll give us more to save that." Denton scowled and rubbed at the cloth with the heel of his table knife.

"I've left that part of it to you. But the office building and Payton's hall ought to be finished next week. You mean you've reinvested the partial payments we've been getting from Payton as his building has come along?"

Hatfield's face paled a little. "You knew about that—I'm sure you did! The Payton contract was a lump-sum deal, full payment on completion of the contract. Payton wanted it that way. There haven't been any partial payments."

Denton dropped his knife. "We've put up a hundred-thousand-dollar building without getting any more in than that thousand-dollar binder Payton gave you when he signed?"

Hatfield looked worried. "Is it so bad, Clark? I couldn't get much on the man, but he seemed sound and has kept out of the way."

"Harry," Denton said grimly, "it is very bad. The fault is mine for not telling you this before, but Ed Payton was associated with Big Ben Barney before either of them hit San Francisco. I've nothing to back it, but I'd stake everything we've done so far that he's a partner in Barney's machine, right now!"

Hatfield shoved back from the table. "Good God!" he murmured. "I'll start calling everything I can get my hands on. We're pretty thin, Clark, pretty damned thin. If we lost that building—"

CHAPTER TEN

HATFIELD'S show of party solidarity became a show of affluence for his women. Denton thought it a very unwise thing. Approaching the brilliantly lighted house on the hill, Denton thought about the chore which had been assigned to the *Liberty*. Wainwright would have to write skillfully to persuade the miners on the streets that good could come from this blazing citadel of the profiteering rich on the hill.

Every coach and trap in town was lined along the curb before the house.

Inside, Denton saw beautifully gowned women, fashionably dressed men; much to drink and much drinking. It did not strike him as the birth of a reform party for a troubled city.

Lois met him, just within the door, and drew him into her mother's deserted sitting room. She wore a stunning dress cut to display her flawless figure at the very bounds of propriety. She smiled up at him and took both of his arms in her hands.

"Father tells me there may be trouble ahead for us—for Golconda, I mean. Wouldn't it be better, Clark, if there should be, to face it together?"

"You have thought this out carefully?"

"The trouble? No. Trouble is a man's business. But about us—yes. We are a match. We could stand high in San Francisco, Clark."

Denton was having difficulty holding his attention to her words. A pulse was throbbing in her throat. There was perfume—the same, he realized, that Jan Barney had worn one distant night. This was a woman before him. And when he added the things a man could desire in a woman, he could find no lack in Lois. If there was desire in her . . .

"You want this?"

"Yes! Oh, yes, Clark!" she breathed.

He drew her toward him in his assent, but she struggled free with a vigor which shattered the moment.

"Some things can wait!" she said sharply. Then, more softly: "I can tell them tonight?"

"You can tell them," Denton agreed.

SHE swept away. Denton followed. The orchestra was tuning up. Couples gathered about the floor. Lois moved from group to group. She was near the door when it opened and Potter Wainwright came in, escorting Janice Barney. A sudden scream could not have worked a swifter silence. The women, most of whom wore Jan's hats, knew her. The men, who did not, were arrested as effectively by her appearance. To say her beauty was earthy did her an injustice, but that quality was about her, a deep and vibrant and living thing. Her gown, more modest than most, did as much for her figure as any in the room.

Wainwright handed Jan past the door. Lois stood a little to one side, a stone image. Wainwright bowed to her and began an introduction. Lois turned mercilessly while Wainwright was still speaking and moved swiftly down the room to the hall door at the far end. Wainwright colored a most painful red. Jan smiled pleasantly, as though nothing had occurred. The orchestra chose this fortunate moment to strike the first bar of a waltz. Angry and shaken, Denton crossed the room with long strides, halted before Jan, and offered his arm.

"My dance, I believe?" he said loudly.

"Yes," Jan said against his shoulder a moment later. "Your dance, Clark. Some day I will save your life. Now—get me out of here!"

Denton grinned. "I'll go with you."

"No!"

"Then you'll stay," he said firmly. When the music stopped he dragged her over to face Hatfield.

"Harry," he said, "may I present Miss Janice Barney, who is a better businessman than either of us, and the first lady of San Francisco, besides?"

Hatfield bowed formally. The music began again. Hatfield's discomfort was in his eyes. It pleased Denton to see the pressure he could bring to bear against his partner. Hatfield murmured and took Jan's arm. They danced away.

Across the room Clark heard a scandalized whisper: "A milliner—here!"

Denton moved purposefully toward the whisper. He contrived to pass by certain other men of the party, standing along the edge of the floor. He said nothing, yet he knew when he had completed a circuit of the room, that Jan would not lack partners.

WAINWRIGHT caught him near the hall door. "You're a sandy devil, Denton," he said with feeling. Clark grinned, letting part of the anger run out of him.

"A friend of ours dropped in just before I left my office," Wainwright went on. "Who?"

"Willie Stewart. He said, 'Wainwright, you had better stay out of this. You had better shut up!'"

"And you said?"

"Nothing." Wainwright laughed. "My sand is pretty finely ground, I guess. Look, I ought to get one dance tonight. I brought her, didn't I?"

The newspaperman cut across the floor toward Jan. Denton stepped into the hall and found Lois Hatfield in the sitting-room doorway, her face without color.

"Lois—" Denton offered.

"Damn you!" she said intensely. Her anger was hard, but Clark saw that she was controlled, that she spoke from the heart. "God damn you, Clark Denton!"

This, then, was the real woman in her. Denton said nothing and she stepped into the sitting room, closing the door sharply. Clark swung back into the salon.

The spark of the evening was dead. Lois did not reappear. Her mother went into the hall and did not come back. There was restlessness in the room. Crabtree made the first gesture. Touching his wife's arm, he spoke gently.

"We have a day ahead at the store, Molly. It's time . . ."

Hatfield saw them to the door. Returning, he was met by other women asking for their wraps. Denton felt himself looming large on the clearing floor and stepped into the cloakroom to help Jan. They were there when the front door swung open. Her face ashen, Molly Crabtree clung to the frame for support.

"The horses!" she said quietly and very distinctly. "They've taken the horses—" and she tilted forward, falling limply into the room.

Denton knocked Harry Hatfield aside and plowed out of the cloak-room. Jan had dropped beside Molly Crabtree in the doorway. Potter Wainwright was already in a full run down the front steps. Denton raced after him. Once in the open, the whole thing was clear to him. Ben Barney, with shrewd generalship, had taken this opportunity to strike at the party while all of its members were gathered together.

Every animal had been cut loose from the rigs and hacks lining the street. Men were driving them down the street. That some of the hack drivers had protested the attack was evidenced by two limp bodies spilled onto the foot of Hatfield's terrace. The balance of the drivers were bunched in a knot at the foot of the steps, herded together by half a dozen rough-looking men. It was toward this knot that Wainwright drove.

Clark saw the wink of steel at the foot of the steps. He saw two of those about the hackmen turn toward Wainwright.

"Potter!" he roared. "Easy, you fool!"

Gunfire punctuated his warning. Wainwright staggered aside. More men poured from the house at Denton's back, shifting the odds, and those holding the hackmen broke, sprinting down the street toward their companions with the horses.

Denton reached Wainwright, who was doubled in agony. Blood dripped onto the stone walk and the polished toes of his boots. Clark offered Wainwright support and was thrust away. John Crabtree lay in the gutter, the upper half of his face crushed by a powerful blow. Clark started toward him.

Wainwright reeled after him and clutched his arm. "The town!" he said.

Denton turned, looking out from the hill for the first time. A red glow lay in the air between the hill and the water of the bay.

Wainwright sank onto the curbing. "Damn!" he said softly.

Doubling, Denton lifted him and carried him into the entrance hall of the house where there was a settee. Jan came from an inner room to help him. Men jammed about.

A woman cried hysterically, "What is it? What is it?"

"Fire!" Denton answered grimly.

"Barney, by hell!" Harry Hatfield breathed. "He's torched the town!"

"You coming?" Denton said, and wedged himself out the door and started at a trot down the steps.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

MUCH of the party at Hatfield's strung out behind him. When he reached the street, he hit a full, ragged run. Within a block someone worked up beside him. He glanced obliquely and saw that it was Jan Barney.

"Get back!" Denton growled at her. "Stay out of this!"

The girl shook her head.

"Potter, then," Denton insisted. "He needs you."

"Yes," Jan panted. "But it's too late for him. It may not be for the town. And this is my town, too!"

Her voice was inflexible. Remembering her store, down below, Denton could not protest further. They ran on together.

Blocks away from the central square the pattern of the fire became apparent. It had plainly originated simultaneously in the nearly completed shells of the Golconda Building and Payton's hall. It had been touched off with attention to the wind, so that the waterfront and the lower end of town would escape.

The flames had already spread to most of the structures around the square.

A huge crowd was bunched in the glow. Denton saw that buildings already aflame could not be saved. There seemed a chance for some of the others. He shoved through the crowd. Faces turned toward him. A stir ran over the press and he forged leadership out of it.

"Get a fire-break torn through that row of shacks over there!" he shouted. "Get a bucket line going to wet down stuff that hasn't caught yet. There's buckets in that hardware store. Break out the window."

A surge followed his instructions, stunned men welcoming the chance to do something. However, there was trouble in the crowd, trouble carefully spaced and working to orders.

A MAN close at hand bellowed, "Save your own skins! That's Denton. Let his damned place go. Save your own. Walls will start going soon. Get out of here. It ain't safe!"

At the same time this man and three or four others moved purposefully toward Denton. As they shoved up, Denton slid his gun out and struck the leader mercilessly across the face with the barrel. The man went down. His companions eased swiftly back into the crowd.

"Get at that fire!" Denton ordered them, brandishing his gun.

These men, plainly from below Montgomery Street, buckled. Much of the crowd was catching Denton's hope that the town's complete destruction could be avoided. They fell into work parties and the dissenters vanished among them.

A man burrowed through to Denton and seized his arm. "Get help over here!" he demanded. "Quick, for the love of God!"

Denton shoved him aside, then recognized Hank Ginselling, singed and stained with smoke.

"Where?" he asked.

Ginselling pointed to the broad one-floor structure which had housed his bank. Its roof was a huge torch. Back of it, butting from the next street, was the *Liberty* building. Embers were already on its roof, smoking ominously.

"To hell with the bank!" Denton snapped. "It's done. Here, some of you! Get up on the *Liberty* building and keep that roof clear!"

A party formed out of the crowd and trotted off. Ginselling disappeared. Denton wondered briefly about Jan. He had lost her in the first moment. He shoved down across the square, thinking that perhaps tools, at least, could be saved from the two pyres which contained Golconda's fortunes. But the flames worked swiftly on the seasoned timbers which he had salvaged from the abandoned ships. Neither building could be approached.

Suddenly shouts arose. The rear wall of the Golconda building buckled and crashed thunderously downward. A great spiral of flame shot high into the smoke pall lying over the burning city. Payton's hall was a furnace. Denton stared at it. Ed Payton had lost a thousand-dollar binder in his hall, but his loss was trivial. Hatfield's trading fortune and

Clark's own tremendous labors were gone. Whatever was saved of the city would not alter this.

A hard bitterness shook Denton. Barney had been very sure of himself. All of this had been planned in a dive below Montgomery Street as long ago as the day Ed Payton had signed his contract with Harry Hatfield.

He backed from the heat, head down. A hand touched his arm. He looked up. Jan Barney was beside him, her eyes on the ruins of the two unfinished buildings. The fire had reddened her skin. There were burns on her hands.

"I'm sorry, Clark . . ." she said.

Sorry, he knew, for much more than his loss. It was there in her voice. Regret that she was kin to the man who had brought it about. Regret that much of the good which both of them might have known in this place of new beginnings had not materialized. Denton felt better for it. A belated thought struck him. He looked over the crowd. Only a heap of embers marked the place where Jan's shop had stood. She saw the direction of his glance.

"I was at the *Liberty*," she said.

Hank Ginselling shoved up, steady now, and much marked by the fire.

"The *Liberty*ll get by now, Denton," he said sourly. "Thank that girl and my own damned foolishness. I put sixty thousand in dust into that newspaper on Wainwright's notes, to get Wainwright where I wanted him. This fire would

have broken him. But you and this girl got the best of me on that. I reckon now I'll have to get him the hard way!"

"He's been got!" Denton said bluntly. "He was shot through the belly an hour ago."

"I didn't know," Ginselling said with sudden quiet. "Damn Barney!"

Harrison Hatfield came dazedly out of the crowd, smoke-blackened and coughing. His face was listless, his eyes dull.

"My God, Clark," he said lifelessly, "this is what we started! We've been fools, all of us. Crabtree is dead. Wainwright won't last till morning. Two cabbies were killed. And Golconda is wiped out. We're beaten!"

Hatfield coughed again. "The fire looks whipped. If you want me, I'll be at the house. The women . . . I'll see you tomorrow."

He turned and stumbled brokenly off through the crowd. Jan started to follow.

"Potter?" Denton asked her.

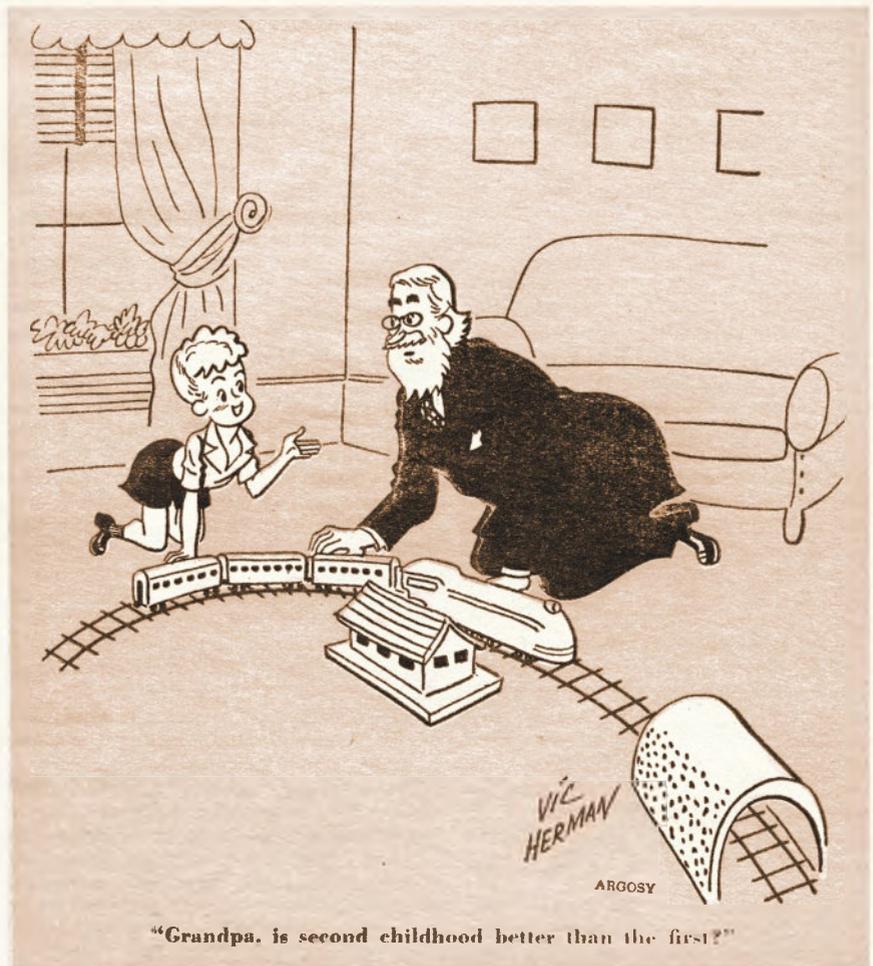
"Yes," she said quietly. "Maybe there is something I can do for him. He should know the *Liberty* is safe, at least."

Ginselling remained beside Denton, who spoke heavily.

"The rest of it won't go, this time," he said. "The town's saved."

Ginselling snorted. "Is it?" he asked.

Denton did not want to answer that question. He wanted to think that he was now beyond any demand. He wanted to think that he had paid a full price. He wanted a privacy from which to view



"Grandpa, is second childhood better than the first?"

the tangled skein of his own affairs. Lois Hatfield was up on the hill, bitter in her condemnation, and his partnership with Harry Hatfield was thus doubly on the rocks.

Janice Barney, who might have lightened his dejection and salvaged something from this night, had left him amid this ruin. She had gone up the hill to Potter Wainwright.

Wainwright was dying, but his death could make no difference. This was grimly plain to Denton. Jan might come back down the hill, but not to him. Not when he was finished talking to Ginselling. Not when the rest of the night had run out. It was not a thing measured in justice. It was simply that Ben Barney was her father. Jan herself had once said that the ties of blood were strong. She might understand this final move of Denton's, but she could not forgive it. These thoughts held Clark silent.

Men from below Montgomery Street were still scattered over the business area. One of them came close to where Denton stood with Ginselling. Ginselling thrust out a foot and tripped him.

He was a shifty, sullen fellow with a badly battered face. Denton recognized him as a man from the train.

"Murray!" Clark said. "Damn you, Frank Murray, I want to talk to you!"

HE CAUGHT the fellow's collar as he scrambled to his feet. Murray looked slantwise at him. A vestige of stubbornness remained in his eyes. Denton drew his gun and lifted it suggestively.

"I said I wanted to talk to you."

Murray cringed. "All right," he said. "Ben hired me. He hired forty of us. We set the fires. We was earning our pay. We got to eat, same as you!"

"Ah!" Denton said in a savage voice, and he flung Murray away.

The man poised on the edge of the crowd. "So you win this hand," he yelled. "But Ben'll have another crack at you when the time's ripe—you and your whole stinking, grabbing kind!" And he disappeared into the crowd.

"This will happen again," Denton said to Ginselling. "That much is sure. Even a man like Murray knows it."

Ginselling swore quietly.

"Waiting will gain nothing," Denton went on.

Ginselling hunched his shoulders. "I've been a fool, Clark," he said. "I should have tracked Barney down—him and Payton and Stewart—the first day I hit town. But now—we're in this together. Could we move the crowd with us?"

"No," Denton said.

"It's their fight! Drive the damned cowards!"

Denton shook his head. "Another year, maybe, and they'd go. When their roots are down. But not tonight. And this is the time we have to strike. Barney has spread himself thin. His boys won't be gathering at the Broken Wheel till the fires are down and the streets quiet."

Ginselling hitched at his belt. "Let's go."

They started across the square, skirting the dying flames. Ginselling turned, walking backward, and his voice roared

out, "Come on, boys! Who wants a spoke out of the Broken Wheel? Who wants to hang the sons who touched off this fire?"

Denton, who believed that the birth of a city was a slow thing and that the men in these muddy streets were not yet ready, was surprised to see that more than a dozen had fallen in behind Ginselling and him when they turned into Montgomery Street—a dozen silent and purposeful men.

CHAPTER TWELVE

AT THE alley heading Barney's domain, guns were drawn. Denton and Ginselling started walking down, side by side, toward the front lights of the Broken Wheel, sixty yards away. The tension was like a rope straining rapidly toward the limit of its resistance.

A knot of men broke through the front door of the Broken Wheel, scattered along the street and opened fire. Clark was aware of the rush of bullets. He heard those behind him answer the challenge. Ginselling, apparently with the same fixation of purpose as his own, did not even raise his gun. The two of them drove steadily on toward Barney's door.

Ten yards short of their goal, a bullet struck Ginselling, who grunted heavily and fell back a little. Denton strode on to the door, kicked it open and drove through. Willie Stewart was midway between two overturned tables. Denton fired at him, broke his knee, and spilled him on the floor. Two guns flashed behind another table. A flat, smarting crease wiped across Denton's upper thigh just under his belt, momentarily disturbing his balance.

Rocking forward on his toes, he angled across the room, flanking the table. Flushed out, Ed Payton stood suddenly upright. Big Ben Barney rolled from behind a battered piano, swearing with soft intensity. Faced with two targets, Denton chose the closest, firing a shot into Payton's chest at close range.

Barney had lumbered to his feet. Denton saw he had dropped his gun. Two shots split through the room. Denton turned and saw Hank Ginselling, his gun still smoking in his unsteady hand. Stewart, on the floor between Denton and Ginselling, fired upward. The bullet struck Ginselling under the hinge of his jaw and flung him across a chair which splintered under his weight. Denton swung clumsily forward. Stewart tried to roll clear but Clark rammed the hard swinging toe of his boot into the center of the little man's face.

Denton looked at Ginselling, saw that he was finished, and moved on down the room. Barney had reached the rear wall. He stood there, two yards to one side of a back door, fumbling against the planking for a latch he could not see. He heard Denton's step and turned with a grinding effort to prop his huge and sagging bulk against the wall in unshaken defiance. One of Ginselling's bullets had struck him in the face and another was in his body. Breathing heavily, he remained upright for a long moment. Then the life ran out of him and he fell.

Moving absently, Denton went out the rear door, wanting no part of the crowd in front. It was a strange experience to walk out of a holocaust with but one small, stinging hurt, when death had been so generous to others. He needed the wind in his face.

Clark found unguarded horses in the Broken Wheel's back lot, mounted one, and rode slowly across tulle lots toward the rising bulk of Hatfield's hill.

Hatfield, looking gray and haggard, opened the door. Denton nodded at the unspoken query in his eyes.

"So it's over," Hatfield said slowly. "And it came to nothing. We're stripped. It was not worth that. Not to us, Clark."

Denton's face wrinkled with distaste and the stinging of the crease on his thigh was a greater irritation than the hurt warranted. He sank onto a chair. "Ginselling is dead," he said.

"Ginselling—and the bank burned tonight!" Hatfield brightened astonishingly. "By thunder, Clark, maybe we can save some of it, yet! Ginselling's books will be gone. That lets us out from under our notes to him. Tomorrow we'll look over what's left and—"

"No," Denton said wearily. "I'm done with that. I'm done with you, Harry. I want something else . . ."

Hatfield started to protest, then stood up with a shrewd look. "Wainwright went soon after I got back from the fire. He died asking to get back to his paper. The Barney girl took him down, but he died in the hack, the driver told me."

Denton had known he would hear this. It struck him that Harry said it only to cover something else.

Harry went out and a moment later Lois Hatfield came in, crossed to him with quick, light steps and dropped to her knees.

"Clark!" she murmured. "You've been hurt! And I worried so—to be separated like that . . ."

Denton sighed his disgust. These swift words, this light concern, the kneeling posture—none of them fitted Lois. They were all too obviously the result of a hurried conversation between father and daughter, designed to revive a dead partnership. Denton felt completely emptied of anything binding him to this house. He rose wearily.

"It's no use," he said.

LOIS shot him a bitter, angry look, then brushed past him and ran up the stairs. Harry did not reappear. Denton let himself out onto the street and remounted his horse. He had not, he realized, come here to bring any news to Hatfield. He had not come here to pass final words with Lois. He had thought Potter Wainwright would still be here. And where Wainwright was, Denton had hoped to find Janice Barney.

He rode loosely down the hill, turned back of the ashes of Ginselling's bank, and swung down beside the *Liberty* building. A black wagon was drawn up before it. He waited until it had rolled away, then pushed into the dimly lighted office. Jan sat at Wainwright's desk, her head in her hands. She looked up.

"It's—it's finished, Clark?" she asked.

"All finished," Denton said, a note of

gentleness in his voice striving to ease the shock of these words which announced the death of her father.

Jan's head lowered to her hands again. He waited patiently. When she raised it again, he saw that her eyes were still colored with the flames of the fire and the hard divisions of this night.

"That's all I want to hear," she said quietly. "It is past, now. I don't want to hear who or how. And when I do hear, it can make no difference. I want you to understand that, Clark. Ben Barney sat in on his last game. He held low cards, that's all."

It took courage, and it shook Denton from his dullness and preoccupation.

"It's all finished, Jan," he said again. "All but us—"

"Us, Clark?" Jan breathed.

"Us. How can we be finished when we never began?"

"There was no beginning. I have thought that so often," Jan murmured. "But is there ever more than one chance for a beginning?"

DENTON did not understand. Some restraint was holding Jan. He did not want to think it out. He was too full of thought already. He was thinking of the mud flats below, of the people on them. Mud. It was on the banks of the creeks, too. But there the miners called it black sand. And out of it they washed gold.

He answered, "San Francisco will have to start again—tomorrow."

Jan lifted an envelope from the desk in front of her and removed a single piece of heavy paper. He took it from her fingers. It was a statement, witnessed by John Crabtree and written over Potter Wainwright's signature:

In the event of my sudden demise, I hereby convey all right and title to the *San Francisco Liberty*, subject to certain notes in the hands of H. Ginselling, in equal and undivided portions, to Clark and Janice Denton on the day of their marriage.

Denton folded it. "He loved you," he said.

"He loved us both, I think. And the *Liberty*. It was mostly the *Liberty*. He wanted it to go on—the way he would have run it. Can we do that, Clark—can we run a newspaper?"

Stunned, feeling a little humble, but with his mind already running ahead, exploring new opportunity with rising faith in the city which had burned to-night, Denton nodded.

"We can try."

Janice came to him, then, pressing close, her face tilted up. It was no clandestine thing of the dark, now, offered and taken without commitment beyond a single night. It was a final completeness of understanding and a satiety for rough hungers of body and spirit long checked in uncertainty.

When they drew apart, Jan spoke softly. "We will stand tall in this man's town!"

Denton remembered that Lois Hatfield had said a similar thing. This, however, he believed.

THE END

ARGOSY'S TRUE WAR EXPERIENCE



MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

JUST before the Japanese completed their occupation of the Dutch East Indies, the remnants of the Marine Luchtvaart Dienst, the Royal Netherlands Naval Air Service, abandoned their base at Tjilatzap, Java. The official report stated that six officers and twenty-nine men flew to refuge in Ceylon. It did not mention that Officer-Vlieger Piet Soeurt, lieutenant and navigator-pilot, had stayed behind. He had something he must do.

With the aid of Tanaka, a Javanese who spoke the enemy's language fluently, Piet Soeurt made his plans carefully. The Japs took over the building which had been the headquarters of the Dutch squadron, and Piet hid in the cellar. Tanaka found a hiding place near the radio room.

One day he reported that he had overheard that a convoy, accompanied by an aircraft carrier, was expected.

"The carrier—what is her name?" Piet asked. But Tanaka didn't know.

The following day the Javanese picked up the news that the convoy had arrived and that the commander, Vice-Admiral Chu-sho Fukuzawa, was quartered in the resident governor's palace. That night Piet Soeurt and Tanaka went to the palace, planning to liquidate the admiral. But the admiral had departed. The convoy had left because of a reported threat from American carrier-based planes.

Disappointed, Piet and Tanaka turned back. On the way they overtook a high-ranking Jap naval officer and a member of his staff. Tanaka efficiently disposed of the aide with a knife thrust. Piet used a length of piano wire around the officer's neck.

Later, Piet examined the officer's papers. He gasped. He had killed Sho-sho Nogi, rear-admiral in command of an aircraft carrier squadron, with the *Kaga* as his flagship!

"Tanaka," he whispered hoarsely, "she's here—the *Kaga*!"

The following day, toward evening, Tanaka reported that the *Kaga* was anchored in a lagoon at the entrance to the strait. Camouflaged by palms in tubs on her flight deck, she would not be recognizable from the air.

The Japs expected American planes the next night, but the carrier was so well concealed that she would not be discovered—unless . . .

"Admiral Nogi's barge is still at its pier, isn't it?" the lieutenant asked.

Tanaka said it was.

Then Piet told the Javanese he was no longer needed. He said that this was his—his own mission. . . .

Back aboard the American carrier, a squadron commander of the torpedo planes that sank the *Koga* was concluding his operational report.

"Funny about that launch," he said.

"We'd about given up finding the *Kaga*. Then this small boat, traveling at top speed toward a spit of land at the entrance to the strait, opened up with a heavy-caliber machine gun, firing tracer. I'll be damned if searchlights didn't flash on from the Jap flattop! She was tricked into turning on her lights to fire at that lousy little boat!"

"Then the launch lighted up, its searchlight pointing the *Kaga* out to us. In the launch was one man. I saw him plainly just before the Nips blew up his boat. He was a husky bozo with blond hair and a yellow beard—"

There was a gasp, and Lieutenant Janssen, liaison officer from the Royal Netherlands Naval Air Service exclaimed, "Soeurt! That was Piet Soeurt!" His voice rose. "When we left he stayed behind. Said he had a mission to finish. Now I know what it was—the *Kaga*. Planes from that carrier sank the ship his wife and baby sailed on from Bali. Machine-gunned them in the water."

Deep silence filled the room, then Lieutenant Janssen spoke again. "I have Piet's papers here for safekeeping. I shall make one more entry in his log: 'Mission accomplished.'"

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by J. A. Ballard



"Now, how the hell am I supposed to know who this is from?"

Kevin Comes Aboard

(Continued from page 23)

looks just the same. The shock and the fall have brought things on before her time. She's going to have that baby on this tanker, without a doctor, and a month before it's due!"

"Radio for help," suggested Carrots.

Lofty shook his head. "Can't. The radio's dead."

We sat in bewildered silence. Then the steward asked in a hopeless voice, "Is there anyone who might know anything about—about what we should do?"

All around the fo'c'sle heads were shaken. He walked slowly to the open door. "Neither do I. Neither does her husband," he muttered as he stepped out onto the deck.

We sorted ourselves out into watches to fill in for the burned men. Carrots, swathed in bandages, sat on the end of his bunk, head in his hands, while we stared miserably before us.

Lofty got up restlessly. "I'm going on lookout again. An extra pair of eyes won't come amiss on a night like this." He headed for the foremast, and I went to the monkey island—a central lookout on the very top of the bridge.

It was very quiet up there. The sun had set in a purple and golden haze

of beauty, and now the sea and sky were dark, with a velvety softness that was lit only by the golden, unwinking eyes of the open portholes. I stood and kept lookout as I had never done before, straining my eyes to the far horizon for the lights of a passing ship. Once, I heard footsteps on the deck behind me, and I turned to see Mr. Sullivan. He did not speak; I doubt if he even recognized me. He went to the farthest end and stood with his head bowed.

Then, from her cabin below the bridge, I heard her scream—a scream wrenched from her by unendurable pain. It froze each man of us to the deck, and in his agony of impotence, young Sullivan beat his hands on the rail, while I felt the icy sweat trickle down my back. That terrifying voice continued, and rose, and died away.

On the deck below, the silent knot of men who kept vigil broke from their immobility and paced again.

The bells tinkled four: it was ten o'clock. Only two hours more, and I would be on watch again myself. There could be no sleep for me that night, but at least I could get a cup of hot coffee in the galley. As I came down the ladder,

I could see Rankin and the steward going into Mrs. Sullivan's room.

The galley was crowded. It seemed as though none of the men had turned in to sleep. They sat in silence, holding cups of coffee, sucking on unlit cigarettes and pipes long cold.

The cook, standing at the spluttering stove, looked up as I came in and pointed silently to the coffee pot. I took my cup, filled it, and sat down.

"Any news?" he asked.

I shook my head.

Nick, the brawny bosun, got up. "I've got a rosary," he said, "and I'll be using it for her this night." He slipped out into the moonlight.

In the corner, the deck boy, overawed by everything, sat and cried quietly.

Every head was raised in expectation as we heard someone running across the deck. Then the steward came into the galley in a flurry of wide-eyed, fearful excitement.

He spoke in a rush: "Put all the pans on the stove you can fill—it's going to happen soon!"

"The water's been ready for hours." The cook pointed to the top of the stove stacked with pans. "What's your news?"

"The skipper's up in his cabin getting ready to be doctor. He's going to stand by her."

We gaped in surprise.

"He's sent me for old sheets and water and all the clean towels I've got."

"How does Mrs. Sullivan look?" asked a voice from the deck.

The steward stopped his talk, and in the silence we could see the lines of worry etched on his sweating face.

"She looks bad," he answered, "real bad. But then I don't know—I've never seen anything like this before."

I picked up the empty coffee pot and started a fresh brew for the men who would shortly come off watch. When it was ready, I took the pot and went to the fo'c'sle. The ship was bathed in the bright, clear light of the moon so that masts and deckhouses stood out as though they were made of milky silver.

Up on the bridge the watchers paced back and forth in ceaseless vigil. The crew was still on deck; the gloomy fo'c'sle a bare and empty cavern. I went out and Carrots was waiting, the white bandages on his hands gleaming brightly in the moonlight.

"There's no one sleeping," he said. "A double watch in the engine room and all hands keeping lookout."

We walked to the rail and looked over. Lofty joined us, and we three shipmates stood and drank our coffee.

Then came the welcome relief of the bells again, summoning us to our posts—eternal reminder that come birth or death or sickness, the labor and vigilance of the ship must go on.

HIGH up on the crosstrees of the mast, the lookout post was quiet and peaceful. The men who clustered the deck seemed very small. I took the binoculars from the rack and searched the horizon. It was bare, empty.

Time crawled by on slow leaden feet as the moon followed her allotted course across the sky. Once I saw a great green streak of phosphorous knife the water close to the bows—the black dorsal fin of a shark.

Another man relieved me at the post, and I climbed down to the deck and then up again to the wheelhouse. It was dark in there: a pitch dark lighted only by the glow of the binnacle lamp above the compass that cast a pale green over Lofty's strained white face.

"North by west, point west," he muttered. I grasped the wheel. "North by west, point west," I answered. "Any news, Lofty?"

"She seems worse," he said quietly. "Skipper's in with her now." Then he went to the wing of the bridge and stood gazing out ahead.

A door opened to the deck. Rankin climbed the ladder and looked around. He spoke to the second mate. His voice was so quiet, so filled with care, that it did not seem to belong to the Bully Rankin we had known.

"Keep her steady as she goes. Don't alter course. Slow down to half-speed to cut the vibration." Then he went below, and I heard his voice again: "It's no use you worrying, Mr. Sullivan. I can only do the best I can. Get off to

the bridge and keep lookout. This is not in our hands now."

A door latch clicked in the night, and I heard the slow footfalls ascend the bridge ladder. Sullivan walked over to the far edge of the bridge and stood there, his body rigid.

How I kept the ship on her course I will never know. It did not seem important enough to worry over. We seemed to be in a state of suspended animation; all thoughts, all hopes, were lodged down in that stuffy cabin, with the woman, her struggle, and Rankin.

Spinning on his heel, Sullivan swung around and flung himself down the ladder. I heard him stop as he reached the door, and then the steward's voice: "You can't go in now, sir. The skipper'll call you in a moment."

The wheel slipped from my hands as I wiped the sweat from my face. Carrots, standing by me, did the same. We heard the door click and Rankin's voice: "Better come in now, Mr. Sullivan." Then the closing of a door, and footsteps again ascending the ladder.

It was Rankin, and the first faint glow of the dawn illumined his face—wet, shining, and infinitely worn. As in a dream he walked over to us and looked at the compass. Suddenly he stiffened.

"What the hell are you doing here!" he yelled, his back whipping straight. "What's your course?" He spun around. "What the hell has happened to you all?" He was silent for a moment as he looked around.

We were all gazing at him, tense and waiting, the one stark, unspoken question on our lips—the question he alone knew the answer to. And he smiled, suddenly and happily, a smile that changed his whole face.

"Heave to, lads," he said gently. "Heave to. They're both fit as fiddles. We have a new gentleman passenger aboard!"

Carrots gave such a wild, strangled yell of joyful deliverance that once again I lost the course. He rushed to the ladder and we heard his voice all the length of the *Advocate* as he shouted:

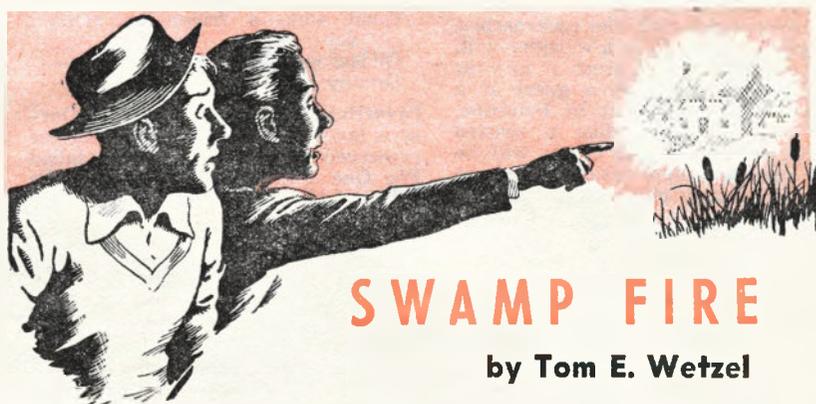
"It's a boy! It's a boy! Kevin's come aboard, mates! It's a boy!"

And all along the deck, men rose from their vigil and shouted with him, as the dawn rose and spread to the east.

I turned to see Bully Rankin hand a key to the second mate.

"Take this, and break out some rum from my locker," he said. "I guess we'll have to buy all these brand-new fathers a drink!"

THE END



SWAMP FIRE

by Tom E. Wetzel

SEVERAL years ago my buddy and I were hitch-hiking through the misty Georgia marshlands. It was a pitch-black night and the red clay road ran directly through the swamp. In the distance we could hear the chanting of the Indians.

We were agreeing that it was a pretty spooky place to be walking when, suddenly, on our right, a brilliant fire flared up. It burned briskly for a minute, then dropped to a yellowish glow. As it faded out completely, we were startled again by a similar fire on our left. We stared, both of us convinced we were seeing things. Then we realized these must be the minute-fires, caused by the marsh gas, of which we had heard.

A third swamp fire shot violently up. It seemed to form a house. I peered forward, then whispered, "Why, that looks like my house!" My buddy agreed. We walked on, but the image bothered me. It had been just as if someone had handed me a photograph of my own home. At the next town I put in a long distance call to my mother. Presently over the neighbors' phone she was assuring me that everything was okay, and I promptly forgot the whole matter.

A few days later I arrived home to find the entire second story burned off of our house. The strange part is that the house caught fire the same night I called, and while my mother was hurrying back home after talking to me. I hate to think what would have happened to her if I had not telephoned.



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With Teeth and Tail

(Continued from page 49)



FOOD and FINE FETTLE

Global gusto: In India, because Mohammedans won't touch hogs and Hindus reverence cows, the Army packing house is on two shifts: one of Mohammedans who slaughter the beef, and the other of Hindus who butcher the hogs . . . If you're a guest in a Swedish home for dinner, expect the host to make you a formal speech of welcome at the table, expect, too, to make a formal speech of reply yourself at the end of the dinner. It's the unvarying custom . . . In China, when you're served a bowl of live bugs which look like cockroaches, it's good form to grab a wriggler with your chopsticks and crush it in your mouth . . . If you're a guest at a Bedouin wedding feast in Palestine, one dish may look like a roasted camel, but inside the camel will be two roasted sheep, inside the sheep several roasted chickens, inside the chickens some fried fish, and within the fish, fried eggs . . . Because G.I.'s are getting used to British tea, steeped black, you can expect to switch to headier brews when the boys come home. Already tea men are preparing stronger blends . . . If you get drunk in Russia, you'll be treated royally. The police will take you to the station, bathe and shave you, provide dinner and put you to bed. Come morning, instead of a court summons you'll get a bill—about the price of a Turkish bath—and if you can't pay, you can work it out in the sanitation department. It's good for morale and it's said to help curb drunkenness.

Teetotalism—Know the origin of the term? It was accidentally coined in England years ago during a meeting between total abstainers and temperance advocates. A vehement abstainer got so wrought up while making a speech that he stuttered, "Nothing but te-te-total abstinence will do." The term was immediately adopted by his supporters as the name for their program.

One of the most fantastic professions is that of the men who serve as guinea-pigs in courts of law when damage suits involving foods and drinks come up. One of them, a university curator, has eaten over ten thousand bugs, innumerable bits of glass, and countless other foreign substances—all to prove that when you find something foreign in a bot-

tléd drink, a canned food, or a restaurant meal, it won't hurt you and it's no reason for a damage award. Man, say the professional bug-eaters, can eat almost anything—and they prove it.

His name was Henry Aldrich, he lived in the Seventeenth Century, he was Dean of Christ Church, and of all things, he wrote:

If all be true that I do think,
There are five reasons we should drink;
Good wine—a friend—or being dry—
Or lest we should be, by and by—
Or any other reason why!

Favorites of the famous: Jimmy Dorsey's favorite food is a Chinese cheese preserved in white wine sauce called Foo Gee and so strong it has to be kept outside the window sill . . . Octavus Roy Cohen's big mouth-moment is Brunswick stew . . . For Deems Taylor it's cheese soufflé, for Lowell Thomas it's roasted sweet potatoes made in campfire ashes, and for Jack Dempsey it's baked macaroni with plenty of cheese.

Thomas A. Edison died at eighty-four and to the last was mentally alive. His great-grandfather lived 102 years, his father ninety-four, and each of his father's six brothers more than ninety. All followed the diet recommended in a book called "The Art of Living Long," written by a Louis Cornaro. Cornaro's plan was moderation in eating, using twelve ounces of solid food and fourteen of wine daily. The diet included bread, soup, eggs, wine and meats. Cornaro wrote his book in the Fifteenth Century.

Here's a dish you'll like. Give the recipe to your wife to try! It's potato pancakes, favorite food of Igor Gorin, noted young baritone. Make them à la Gorin, like this: Grate four medium-sized potatoes, mix with half a cup of cracker crumbs, add one beaten egg, salt and pepper, and stir. Shape into pancakes, fry to a golden brown on both sides in a skillet filled with enough vegetable fat to cover half the pancakes. Serve with cold applesauce or sour cream, and your reputation is made.

by Lansing Coe

crossed to the big doors and flung them open. Then, instead of turning back, he stood for a moment looking out.

But what he heard made him swing around. Copley said, "By Jove!" in an amazed tone, and at the same moment Cousin Edith's voice was raised in a low wail, "Oh, my lovely pictures!" Then there was a sort of gurgle, and a soft thump. And he saw Cousin Edith lying on the stable floor in a dead faint.

"Wilbur! Quick!" said Mrs. Pope, and bent over her. Mr. Pope ran across to the harness closet and got out the whiskey. As he bent to administer it, he noticed to his amazement that Copley wasn't paying the slightest attention to what had happened, but had walked over to the easel and was examining the picture on it with little exclamations of pleasure. Mr. Pope looked inquiringly at Mrs. Pope.

"It's beyond me," she whispered. "Look at the pictures."

Mr. Pope looked. Where the putty wharves and all the horrible little boats had been there were now only swirls of paint. Beneath, one could still make out faintly the outlines of things, but it was as if a whirling hurricane of mist and sleet had swept across the landscape, blurring it almost entirely out of recognition.

He took a quick look at the other pictures. All but those hung highest on the walls were in the same state. Someone . . . He glanced at Ed's stall. Between the cretonne curtains the horse's hind quarters looked indifferent and innocent enough. And yet . . . Wasn't there a certain odd streakiness in the long hairs at the end of his tail?

Cousin Edith was coming to. She opened her eyes and looked up at Mrs. Pope. "Oh, Carlotta," she moaned, "all my nice pictures! Who could have done such a thing? All my months of work ruined—"

"Sssh!" Mrs. Pope whispered. She glanced around quickly at Mr. Copley, who had gone on to examine with evident relish the three ghouls—who now seemed to have become involved in a monsoon.

STARING incredulously at Mr. Copley's back, Cousin Edith sat up. As the Pops helped her to the armchair, Mr. Copley turned suddenly. "Really, Miss Manley," he said, "this is extraordinarily fine work! I had no—" He broke off. "Is there anything wrong?"

"No, no," Mrs. Pope said. "Cousin Edith is a little weak. She's—she's just getting over the flu."

"Well," said Mr. Copley, "I'll be frank with you, Miss Manley. I hadn't expected to see anything like this. Such vigorous work! Look at the sweep of those brush strokes!" And he pointed toward the easel. "It's a treatment that is admirably suited to such metropolitan scenes."

"Met—metropolitan?" Cousin Edith stammered. She looked helplessly at Mrs. Pope. "But—"

"My husband and I," said Mrs. Pope quickly, "particularly like this one of the skyscrapers." She pointed to the ghoul.

Mr. Copley nodded. "I was just looking at it. Masterly! The theme so subtly understated, yet so delicately emphasized by these whirling rhythms. Really, Miss Manley, I am amazed!"

"S-so am I," said Cousin Edith. She gripped the arms of the chair and stared earnestly up at Mr. Copley. "Do you really feel that you could—that you would . . ."

"Of course!" he interrupted. "Oh, decidedly we can do something with these. Too bad there aren't more. Let's see—eight, nine . . . Well, enough for a start."

"But those others, above . . ." Cousin Edith pointed toward several of the higher canvases, the only ones that remained as she had originally painted them.

Mrs. Pope cut in with a quick artificial laugh. "Oh now, Cousin Edith!" she said. "Wilbur doesn't really expect you to try to do something with those. He only did them for fun." She turned to Mr. Copley. "Those are my husband's work," she explained.

"Really?" Mr. Copley glanced at them and smiled gently, then he turned his back squarely on Mr. Pope and started making arrangements with Cousin Edith for having her pictures sent in to the gallery. He would want more, he said. "Perhaps in the fall . . ."

MR. POPE turned away from them. He slipped a bottle of turpentine in his pocket, then saddled Ed and led him outdoors. But as he put his foot in the stirrup Mrs. Pope came out.

"Wilbur!" she exclaimed under her breath. "How could such a thing have happened? My first thought was that somebody had tried to spoil the pictures, but—"

"You want to remember," he said, "that theoretically any change would have been an improvement. I admit I don't see why Copley is so keen on them, but I don't understand this art business, anyway."

"But how could it have happened?"

"Somnambulism—that's the only possible explanation," said Mr. Pope, inventing on the spur of the moment. "Cousin Edith came out here in her sleep and changed her pictures. . . Haven't you read of people who were working on a problem, and then they went to bed, and in the morning they got up and went to their desk and there was the solution, all neatly worked out in their own handwriting?"

"Yes, I've read of it. But in the dark?"

"Curious thing is, they seem quite able to do it in the dark," said Mr. Pope. And he went on to develop his theory. Cousin Edith's subconscious mind was a much better artist than her conscious one, and in her sleep it had gone to work and fixed up the pictures. "And you'd better explain that to her, because she's probably pretty confused about the whole thing."

When Mr. Pope and Ed had ridden some distance up a side road, Mr. Pope

dismounted and got out his bottle of turpentine and started to clean the paint off the end of Ed's tail.

WHY did you have to stick your nose at it, when things were going along all right?" he demanded. "Copley would have told her the stuff was no good and she'd have gone. Now we've got her on our hands for lord knows how long."

"Sure, sure. But ain't it worth something to discover I got so much talent? Cousin Edith and me'd make a good team. She'd do the preliminary spade work, and then I'd back up to the picture and put the art into it with a couple whisks of my talented tail. It kind of—hey, go easy with that turps!—it kind of resigns me to havin' her around the place."

"Well, I'm glad you're satisfied," said Mr. Pope crossly.

"Look, Wilb," Ed said, "we both of us been too clever for our own good. Me with my tail-swishin' and you with your sleep-walkin' theory. If you'd shut up she'd have thought that somebody else had been monkeyin' with 'em, and while she probably wouldn't have said so to Copley, she'd know she couldn't do any more for him. Now she'll think she's some kind of a subconscious genius, and she'll stay here for months, paintin' more, and hopin' she'll fix 'em up in her sleep for Copley."

"I hadn't thought of that," Mr. Pope said. "But I had to produce some explanation. I was afraid Carlotta would notice the paint on your tail."

"Yeah, we both acted for the best," said Ed, "which is always a mistake." He chuckled. "I've played a lot of parts in my time, but I never expected to be cast as the subconscious mind of an old maid."

Mr. Pope said he thought Ed was probably pretty well cast. If what the psychologists say is right, prim old maids have pretty shocking subconsciouses.

"Yeah, none too fragrant, I'm told," said Ed. "But let's not get personal. You know, Wilb, those pictures, the way they are now—they'd puzzle old Freud, wouldn't they? I mean, he'd expect Cousin Edith's subconscious to produce somethin' pretty precise and shockin' instead of a fog. Somethin' like the designs old man Harkness used to make with soap on the mirror behind his bar. Of course he had some real art in his place—a couple of big pictures over the bar—they was much admired."

"I can imagine," Mr. Pope said.

When Mr. Pope got back from his ride, he found that without too much urging, Cousin Edith had been able to recognize in herself a somnambulist's genius. She and Mrs. Pope were still discussing it in the stable. "I didn't really believe Mr. Copley would want to give me a show after he'd seen my things," she said. "I always knew my pictures were old-fashioned. Yet I could always appreciate the other things, and wished I could do them. I suppose it's as Carlotta says—when I paint consciously, there are so many inhibitions or something that I sort of tighten up and paint in a kind of finicky way."

"But isn't it wonderful, Cousin Edith,"

Mr. Pope said, "that Copley is really going to give you a show! And he sells 'em, you know. He's a wonderful salesman."

"Oh, I'm simply too thrilled for words! Of course, Wilbur. But"—she hesitated—"he'll want more pictures," she said.

"I certainly wouldn't worry about that," said Mrs. Pope. "Sooner or later—tonight, or some night next week—you'll repaint all these others, just as you did the ones he's taking. There's certainly a stronger stimulus to do it now."

"But I'm not sure that I want to," she said. "Oh yes, I know that I *can*—that I *will* do it again. I can tell. I feel it—here." She smote her bosom with a light but dramatic gesture. "To have had a one-man show—yes, that has been my ambition. But to go on—to be a professional painter . . . Well, it becomes a routine. So many canvases to turn out a year. It isn't as if the money was necessary. I've always been an amateur and I want to stay one."

"Well, you can always stop," said Mr. Pope.

"I can't now, or he won't have the show. And I can't later. No one ever does. Oh, dear!" wailed Cousin Edith.

This bit of characteristic indecision irritated the Popes, the more as they knew that they were in for—at best—another two months of it. For although Mr. Pope was determined to prevent Cousin Edith's subconscious from doing any more painting even if he had to tie him in his stall, her conscious work would go hopefully on.

"Well," he said heavily, "let's go in and have a drink."

The next morning, Mr. Pope, hurrying through an early breakfast in order to ride Ed down to the station to catch the 8:36, was startled by a shriek which seemed to come from the stable. He ran out, and had just reached the door when Cousin Edith, panting and disheveled, burst from it and galloped toward him. She wore a sort of blue kimono thing with pink storks on it, and under one arm was what appeared to be a crushed and rolled up piece of canvas. She caught his arm.

OH, WILBUR!" she babbled. "Oh those dreadful things. It couldn't be me—I couldn't have such awful things in my mind! What will people think?"

Mr. Pope caught her by the shoulders. "Take it easy," he said. "What's the trouble?" He drew her toward the stable door. "What's wrong?"

"Oh, please don't go in there, Wilbur. Oh, after all we've said—"

"But I don't understand," he said. "What's that under your arm?"

She clutched it tighter. "You mustn't see it. Nobody must see it! I'm going in and burn it right away." And she pulled away from him and made for the house.

Mr. Pope looked after her for a moment, then turned and went on into the stable. The doors were open. Cousin Edith, hoping that her subconscious had worked while she slept, had evidently come out before breakfast and opened them. The paintings which Ed had put the art into with his tail were untouched,

but of the others, not one but had suffered alteration into something rich and strange. Cousin Edith's subconscious had certainly been on the rampage, and with all inhibitions off. On a road curving down past one of Cousin Edith's famous putty farmhouses, an automobile with two figures in it had been rudely drawn with red paint. The male figure was smoking a pipe, and underneath was scrawled, "Edith and Harmon." In another picture, which portrayed a wide stretch of beach, a stout blue nude reclined grossly on the yellow sand. More nudes, drawn with a wavering line but great attention to detail, sprawled in the foreground of other landscapes. And there were legends printed across other pictures: "Edith loves Harmon," "Wilbur is a stinker," and similar primitive sentiments.

Mr. Pope was horrified, but he choked back a cackle of laughter. Then he said, "Ed, come out here."

The horse looked out between the cretonne curtains. He looked uncertainly at Mr. Pope for a minute, then smirked and said, "Pretty vulgar display, eh, Wilb? I suppose I ought to stopped her when she come trailin' out here in her shirttail at two this morning and started in, but I got kind of a scientific interest in these here Freudian manifestations." He shook his head. "Such a nice folksy old girl she seemed like, too."

"What was the picture she was taking into the house to burn?" Mr. Pope asked.

"Boy, she'd certainly burned her brakes out by the time she got to that one, Wilb!" Ed said. "It was—" He pulled himself up. "Well, I didn't rightly see it—so dark in here and all. Maybe it's just as well if you didn't either. I expect you'd kind of like to remember her the way she was. Before her old subconscious boiled over."

"Remember her?" said Mr. Pope thoughtfully. "Yes, I suppose she'll go now. So I can't kick—is that the idea? Well, it seems as if you might have taken less drastic measures. However . . ." He examined the paintings more closely. "I suppose you used a brush?"

"Yeah. Held it in my teeth. It's a different technique than the one I employed before—an entirely different art, really," he said affectedly.

"The difference between your front end and your rear end," said Mr. Pope.

"I can't get them swirlin' rhythms with a brush," said Ed. "That comes from years of practice swattin' flies, I suppose."

Mr. Pope took down the saddle. "Well, we've got to get to the train. Carotta will have to handle this alone."

There hadn't been much to handle. When Mr. Pope got home that night Cousin Edith was gone, bag and baggage, paints and pictures. Mrs. Pope reported

that for once in her life Cousin Edith had shown no indecision. "And the funny thing is," she said, "that after she'd burned that one picture and got over shuddering, I think she was rather pleased with herself."

"She said she didn't want to become a professional."

"Oh, that too, of course. But I mean, pleased to find that she had so much good coarse vulgarity in her. And she still expects to have her show. She sent Copley the ones he liked."

"Did you see the one she burned?" Mr. Pope asked.

"She wouldn't let me."

So presently Mr. Pope went out to the stable and asked Ed again about the burned picture.

Ed seemed very happy. He pranced up and down, humming, "Wilbur is a stinker, Wilbur is a stinker," until Mr. Pope threatened him with a broom. Then he said, "I ain't goin' to tell you. It's just morbid curiosity on your part." And when Mr. Pope insisted: "Look, Wilb," he said, "there's times in your life when you really got to sock somebody for their own good. And the harder you sock, the kinder it is to the other party in the end. I was awful kind to Cousin Edith, and that's all I'm going to tell you."

And that was all he ever did tell.

THE END

Trail Fever

(Continued from page 29)

so from the wagon Squint reined up. "I'll bend off here," he said. "It'd be too bad if you got lost between here an' the wagon, wouldn't it?"

Whether Squint meant it that way or not, for the next hundred yards Nehemiah was sorely tempted simply to vanish into the darkness, hide out tomorrow somewhere in the brush and follow the herd on again at night.

But even as he thought of it, he knew it wouldn't do. If he was ever going to start being a man, this was the time. And it couldn't be done by hiding out like a skulking coyote. The only thing to do was to face his father. Tell him fairly and squarely that he was tired of hoeing corn and slopping hogs; that the one thing he lived for was to go up the trail, and the sooner pa made up his mind to let him, the better for all concerned. Because do it he would, sooner or later, anyhow.

"When pa sees how it is," he tried to reassure himself aloud, "he'll let me go. Plague take it, he'll have to!"

But somehow he had no faith in the drummed-up hope. How could he hope to make a farm-rooted, scaley-barked old hickory log like Jeff Belding realize the urgency of a boy's dreams?

On a sudden impulse he tied his pony to a bush and approached the camp quietly afoot. Maybe, by getting a good look at him in the firelight, he could estimate just how mad his father was, and decide what course to follow.

With an odd mixture of fear and caution, of rebelliousness and resolve,

Nehemiah tiptoed into the shadow of the chuckwagon. Tom Gregg and his father were squatted before the fire, drinking coffee. To the boy's surprise, Jeff Belding did not look angry at all. Instead he looked old and tired, and sad, and maybe a little bit baffled.

For the first time in his life, Nehemiah felt sorry for him. He tried to choke back the impulse swelling his throat, leaving no longer in doubt what he must do. He tried to think of words with which to say it, so he wouldn't sound like a blubbing baby. If he could just step out there and say, "Here I am, Pa, ready to go home," it would all be over.

As he stood a moment, bracing himself for the ordeal, he heard Tom Gregg speaking.

"It's up to you, Belding. I won't hire no runaway, but I could use a wrangler. Cricket's young an' he's green, but he ain't nobody's fool. I won't promise we'll take good care of him, for that ain't a trail driver's business. But if you want to let him go, we'll take him up the trail, an' if he ain't a man when he gits back, I'll put in with you."

Nehemiah could sense that Tom Gregg was not trying to persuade anybody about anything. What he had to say he said, take it or leave it.

Jeff Belding took a swallow of coffee and stared into the fire.

"I reckon it sounds funny from an ol' clodhopper like me," he said slowly, "but that's just the sort of thing I always had a hanker to do when I was a young 'un—only I never done it."

Nehemiah waited no longer. He stepped out into the circle of firelight.

"Ol' Luther's staked right out yonder, Pa," he said. "I'll fetch him an' we can light out for home if you want to."

Jeff Belding stood up, not tall, but straight. His voice sounded stern from long habit.

"Where's your saddle, Nehemiah?"

"Back yonder on a pony. I was just—"

"Better fetch it, Cricket," interposed Tom Gregg with half a grin. "Your pa wants to swap with you."

Nehemiah stared at his father with quick but unbelieving comprehension.

"You ridin' up the trail with cattle, son," said Jeff Belding, popping his horny knuckles, "I figgered you'd better take my good saddle. Your ol' chicken-catcher's stout enough for me. Your ma fixed up a bedroll, too—there by the wagon. I didn't have no pistol for you, but—"

"How about a razor?" broke in Tom Gregg, and both men laughed. But Nehemiah was not aware of it. He was too busy holding back something that threatened to bust him out blubbing. Then he remembered: If he was ever going to start being a man, now was the time.

With stiff formality he stepped up and put out his hand to his father, man to man for the first time.

"I'm sure much obliged, Pa," he said, trying to sound like the brief, sure-spoken voice of Tom Gregg. "I'll—I'll run fetch my saddle."

THE END

Canvas-Back Champ

(Continued from page 33)

Hap sat down, his back against the ropes, the sickness coming inside of him.

He looked up and saw Mike Hennessey standing directly over him, waving a hand at him, but he couldn't hear Mike's words. A few feet away the knock-down timekeeper was up, hammering the floor with his mallet, watch in hand.

"Four," was the first word Hap heard. He grabbed the lower strand with his glove and got himself up on one knee. He could see Ames across the ring, motioning for him to stay down till the count of nine.

Disgusted with himself, Hap waited. It had been another nice dream: another bubble burst. He got to his feet at eight, and let Hennessey dust him off.

Then Klein was coming in again. Flat-footed, disgusted, Hap waited for him in the center of the ring. He was beginning to feel sick inwardly, and it was not due to Klein's punches. He didn't particularly mind the physical punishment, because he'd taken that before. But tonight it was different. A guy was in front of him with leather-covered bombs—pushing him back, pushing him away from his baby.

And they were bombs that threatened more than merely the loss of this fight. If he really was a little punchy, then this hammering about the head wasn't going to help any. He felt a small core of fear form and grow inside him, and the fear bred sudden anger that focussed on the man before him.

Klein stabbed him on the nose with a long left, and Hap plunged after his man, flailing with both hands. He missed and nearly tumbled through the ropes. Somebody laughed at the ringside, and Hap pulled up very suddenly. That laugh went through him like a saw.

He looked past Klein, circling in front of him. He saw faces in the glow from the ring lights; he saw smiles, open laughter in the eyes, but they were still pulling for him! They liked to see him go in, and they cheered for him—but they weren't taking those iron-hard gloves in the face, and they didn't particularly care how many he took or how much they hurt!

Hap O'Day let this revelation sink in. He wondered how many years they'd been laughing at him when he was smacked from pillar to post by smarter fighters, harder hitters.

KLEIN came in again with his long left, and Hap slashed at the glove viciously with his right, knocking it down. He heard somebody laugh again. You didn't usually swing at a glove, if you knew what you were doing.

Hap stayed where he was, shoes flat on the ring floor. He felt the anger boiling inside of him. He'd been the clown, putting on a show all these years, making a sucker out of himself to please this crowd, and they could laugh!

He began to tighten his fingers in the gloves, one by one, making the fist very tight, very hard. He didn't move; he stayed in the center of the ring, watch-

ing Klein shuffle in and out as if he were shadowboxing.

Sammy came in with a fast left hook for the body. Hap took it on the elbow, and shot his own left, catching Klein on the side of the face. He knocked a little water from Sammy's wet hair, and he saw the surprise come into his eyes.

There was a sharp shock of surprise in Hap, too, at the solid way the left had landed. He had felt the impact of it from his knuckles clear down to the heel that backed it up.

He kept his right hand cocked against his chest, because his own surprise had lost him the split-second chance he'd had to throw it, and he stayed where he was, bitterly resentful, sore at everybody and everything—sore at the crowd, at young Klein, at the memory of a hundred fights in which he had taken punches like that without ever landing one himself.

Sammy waited for him to come out of his shell, but Hap refused to budge.

He knew now what he had to do, as clearly and surely as though he had planned it for months. He felt like a bomb, fused to explode.

Klein came in again with his left, jabbing for the face.

Hap let the glove slide by, and he shot his right, short, very hard for the chin. Klein did a little dance to stay on his feet. He looked toward his corner, a kid in trouble, not sure what to do and wanting advice.

Ames was shrieking unintelligibly. Hap ignored him. He started to wade in then, shooting punches, short punches to the body and to the face, getting his

weight behind them. He knew how to hit a man, but he'd never hit hard before because he'd always been moving, always boring in so that the crowd would yell for him.

Now he was down on the soles of his shoes and he got lethal power into every blow.

KLEIN fell into the ropes, hair mussed, eyes wild. Hap hit him with a short left to the point of the chin when he came off. Klein spun around, tried to grasp the top strand with his glove, missed it, and collapsed to the canvas floor.

Grimly, Hap waited while Mike Hennessey looked on with a dazed expression on his face. Hennessey's mouth was open, eyes popping.

Hap walked to the farthest corner and leaned against the ropes. He watched Bucky George stand up, slow motion, the cigar drooping in his mouth, the sweat breaking out on his forehead.

"He looks punchy," Hap thought with grim humor.

The certainty was in him, brighter than the ring lights, that whoever was punchy it wasn't Hap O'Day. They had had him worried, with their talk of head punches and law suits—and the worry had caused him more trouble than the punches.

Maybe it took the O'Days a while to tumble to an idea, but when the idea did pop up, it had a good clear field to work in. Johnny Ames hadn't tumbled to it; Mike Hennessey hadn't guessed it; Bucky George wouldn't have dreamed it. It had taken Hap O'Day to figure out Hap O'Day's particular way to fight.



"If he comes here again with that 'eeny, meeny, miney, mo,' I'll scream!"

Sammy Klein didn't move till the count of seven. Then his right glove slid off his chest and slapped against the ring floor. Hap had to help carry the boy to his corner.

All the way down the aisle to the dressing room Johnny Ames was mumbling to himself. In the room, with the door closed, he sat down on a chair and began to punch his face—first with the left hand and then with the right—very gently.

"All my life I didn't see it," Johnny yelled feebly. "All my life I let you bounce in and take it on the chin when you're a natural counter-fighter. You see it, Hap?"

Hap grinned. He eased up on the rubbing table and he lay there looking up at the ceiling. He held up his right glove and looked at it queerly.

"It's right down your alley," Ames went on enthusiastically. "You could always hit, Hap, but you never got yourself set. Now you stand and wait for

Your Copy May Be Late

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those guys—and you pop 'em. You lay 'em low."

Ames got up and began to pace excitedly.

"They won't hit you half as much," he said. "Because you got a wallop, they'll keep their distance. You're a counter-fighter, see? You make 'em come to you, Hap."

Hap grinned. "In other words," he said, "I'm a counter-fighter."

Ames shot him a surprised glance, but Hap was looking at his right fist again. He was thinking that he was other things, too. He was one of the leading challengers for the title. He was not too old to reach the top. The kid could have the real cash now. But more important than that, he had an old man who had all his buttons, and figured on keeping them.

"Relax, Gang," he said softly. "Your old man has got everything under control."

"You talking to yourself?" Ames asked.

"Let's see somebody say I can't support him now, Johnny," he said. "Let's see somebody try to take him away."

"Who?" Ames asked.

Hap O'Day hummed the tune softly. It was an old one—a song you don't hear any more.

Ten baby fingers, ten baby toes . . .

"Hell," Johnny Ames said wearily.

THE END

Track Clear at Algodones

(Continued from page 43)

Foley flung out, "it's bad enough to have that big stiff of a McCuen ridin' me, without you stickin' your nose in. Lay off."

The black eyes regarded Foley thoughtfully. It was clear that the new man was going to be difficult, but the Canyon Division needed operators, just as it needed men and women in every department.

"A man is liable to have a little trouble the first night on the job," Mike said. "But do the best you can; the boys are depending on us."

"Don't give me that hog-wash," snapped Foley.

Mike shook his head. He couldn't understand Foley. To Mike, the war was very real, and very grim.

In the days that followed, Foley had frequent clashes with the trick dispatcher; he was constantly wrangling with train crews. Foley's Morse was wickedly fast, and he was intolerant of operators who had trouble reading it.

He soon had the dubious distinction of being known as a first-class stinker.

The only person who got along with Foley at all was Mary Callan. Foley thought Mary was swell, and he fell into the habit of coming to the telegraph office early to help with the train orders. He taught her to use the typewriter to copy Morse, always difficult for the beginner. He smoothed out a lot of the rough spots when the pressure was on heavy.

Sometimes he found himself thinking how swell it would be if he had a daughter like Mary.

When Mary got a letter from Johnny, she brought it to the station and read it to Foley—well, most of it.

"I pray so hard that he'll come home safe," she said once. "You say a prayer, too, won't you, Foley?"

"Yeah. Sure." Foley hadn't been to church in years; he'd forgotten how to pray. But he kinda liked it—Mary askin'

him to say a prayer. As though the Lord would pay any attention to an old bat like him.

Sometimes Mary seemed gay; sometimes the corners of her mouth drooped and her eyes were leaded with worry. The Tokyo Express was coming down the Slot; Jap bombers and submarines were jabbing wickedly at American warships. A fleet was in the building—the greatest fleet in the world—but in those grim days it was slugging it out against fearful odds.

Mary was always saying, "Gee, it will be a great day when Johnny comes marching home. Johnny and all those other kids over there."

"Yeah, a great day," Foley would growl. "I'll be on the bum again."

And Mary would grin and wrinkle her nose, and say, "You don't mean that. You know, Foley, you're not half the sour-puss you try to make out. I'll bet you're just an old softy at heart."

"Don't kid yourself," Foley would say.

FOLEY had been at Algodones a month, which was a lot longer than he'd figured on sticking around. It wasn't because the road needed operators—the hell with the railroad. It was just that bein' an op again had sorta got him. That and something else.

Sometimes Foley tried to figure it out. What had got into him, anyhow? Old Rumdum Foley, a city guy, buried in a dump like Algodones; he might as well be dead. Mebbe it was this kid on the second trick. Somebody had to help Mary through her Morse growin' pains. Mebbe it was Johnny, over there on the wall. Mebbe the lousy desert had got him, an' pretty soon he'd start talkin' to the crickets, like a sheepherder. Then the crickets would start talkin' back, and he'd know he was off his nut. . . .

It was around three o'clock. Things were quiet, except for the crickets and that damn coyote out there. Foley had

just come in from a little conference with old John Barleycorn. The operator was calling him on the Western circuit. He reached for the pad of yellow receiving blanks.

The sounder rattled off the message number, the date and the address. (To "Mary Callan, Algodones . . .") Mebbe some of her folks were sick, or somethin'. The sounder clattered on, cold, impersonal.

"The Navy Department deeply regrets to inform you . . ."

It hit Foley between the eyes.

John Edwin Callan was missing in action!

This good-looking kid, grinning down at him, was dead, or wounded, or maybe a prisoner of the stinkin' Japs.

Foley ran his hand across his eyes, shook his head. He got up and went outside where there was room for a guy to think, to breathe.

He stood on the weathered planking, his pale face lifted to the stars. Foley, the iconoclast. "God have mercy!"

Suddenly the desert was a great cathedral, with gleaming candles on the high altars. Foley, who had forgotten how to pray, found himself murmuring "Our Father."

The night wind in the cottonwoods played a soft lament. On the flats a coyote lifted its voice mournfully.

Foley stared at the Sangre del Salvador, a hazy frieze under the eaves of the sky. Once Mary had told him that these mountains had been named by explorer priests long ago. Sangre del Salvador—the Blood of the Savior.

Funny how a guy's thoughts turned to that sort of thing when the going got tough.

UNTIL tonight, the war had seemed vague, remote to Foley. Service stars, bond drives, casualty lists hadn't meant a thing. War trains storming down the rail, the blurred faces of homesick kids

at the windows. Flat cars loaded with tanks and guns. Just a passing parade.

And then suddenly the war had come home to Foley.

A westbound freight screamed for the board. Foley cleared the signal, and went out to make a running inspection. As the thundering locomotive came opposite the windows of the telegraph bay, the fireman in the cab saw the operator heave a bottle at the whirling drivers.

When Mike Gonzales took over the transfer at eight, Foley showed him the telegram. Mike said, "*Madre Dios!*" and crossed himself.

Foley thought of Mike's boy, killed at Bataan, of his other boy in a Jap prison camp. Seemed like everybody was in the war but him. Through it all he'd been crabbin' and bellyachin' an' feelin' sorry for himself. He'd done a lousy job at Algodones, always raisin' hell an' tyin' up the railroad, like that night he had failed to hoop up the orders for the Main train.

"Who is going to tell Mary?" Mike said. "You or me?"

"I'm off duty," Foley said. "I'll stop by her boardin' house on the way to the hotel." He tried to hold his voice steady. This was his job—the toughest thing he'd ever faced in his life.

"Us Irish have got to stick together." That was what Mary had said once. And that other time: "I'll bet you're an old softy at heart, Foley."

Him—soft? Something wet rolled down his cheek. He turned away so Mike wouldn't see. . . .

Mary wasn't up, but the woman at the house where she boarded said she'd call her. Foley waited in the parlor, sitting on the edge of his chair and twisting his hat into a shapeless wad.

When Mary came in she took one quick look at him. Then she swallowed hard, and said, "It's about—Johnny?"

Foley didn't trust himself to speak. He simply handed her the telegram, spread open, so she could read it at a glance. He'd figured there'd be a scene, and he braced himself. But there wasn't any scene. Mary Callan just stood there, staring straight ahead, crushing the yellow paper in her clenched hand.

Foley cleared his throat. "Missin' don't mean he won't turn up." He forced assurance into his voice. "Hell, lots of guys get lost an' then turn up again."

Her eyes turned to meet his and her hand relaxed, and the crumpled telegram dropped to the floor. "I know, Foley," she said huskily. "I know he'll come back. I'll never give up praying."

"Sure," said Foley. "Sure, he will." Then, awkwardly, "I—I'll work your trick tonight."

"Thanks, Foley." Mary came and put her hand on his shoulder. "It's nice of you to offer, but I'll be on the job."

MCCUEN was in the dispatcher's office at Del Rosa. "How's the great Foley making out at Algodones?"

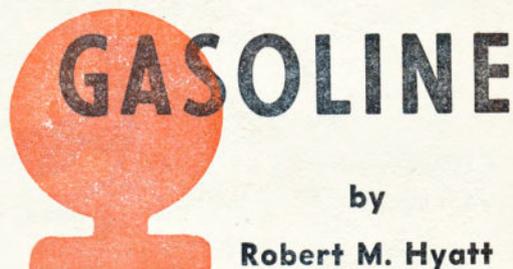
"He was hard to take for a while," the chief said, "but things are running like clock-work down there now. The night dispatcher says Foley's the best man we've got on the Second District."

THE END



AIR

INSTEAD OF



by

Robert M. Hyatt

RECENTLY I had the unique experience of driving a startling new motorcar which has no gearshift, clutch, starter, carburetor, ignition or cooling system—and uses no gasoline! I drove it sixty miles an hour along California roads without the slightest sound, smoke or vibration—and did those sixty miles on a single gallon of six-cent fuel!

From my corner, it looks like the nearest answer to the autoist's dream of cheap, trouble-free motoring ever conceived.

For the mechanically minded, Frank R. Perry's new engine is a four-cylinder V-type hung under the floorboards. It is nine by eleven inches over all, weighs sixty-five pounds and develops thirty horsepower. Internal combustion in design, it functions much like a steam engine, with a conventional crankshaft, valves and pistons—and those are about the only conventional touches.

Perry calls his invention a "liquid and air" motor. The pistons are pushed down by a combination of air and liquid—both of them first expanded in the heater under the hood.

There is no fire in the engine. The motor runs at about two hundred degrees Fahrenheit, which means no cooling system is needed.

The fuel—and the Perrymobile will burn butane, kerosene, distillate or stove oil—is used only to supply the heat to the tubes which prepare the liquid-air mixture before it enters the cylinders. Since there are no explosions in the motor, no carbon ever forms; hence you never grind the valves. Because there is no dirt, no excessive friction and little heat, the crankcase oil remains pure, eliminating the necessity of changing it frequently.

The liquid mentioned before is Perry's own concoction. It boils at about one hundred and sixty degrees, or fifty-two degrees below the boiling temperature of water. Thus, expansion takes place in the heater much faster than if water were used, which, incidentally, can be substituted if none of this fluid is available. One gallon of it, which a Perrymobile owner mixes himself for about forty cents, operates the car for several hundred miles.

Henry Kaiser has endorsed the engine as sound and practical. It is whispered that he would like to man-

ufacture them after the war is over.

To drive the Perrymobile, only one operation is necessary—moving a hand throttle under the steering wheel. There is nothing on the instrument panel except the pressure and oil gauges and the ammeter and switch. A single pedal protrudes through the floor—the brake. To start up, you slide into the seat, snap on the switch that lights the pilot under the heater, and then pull on the throttle.

To stop, you simply close the throttle and step on the brake. The engine doesn't "idle"; it is geared directly to the rear drive wheels. When the car stops the engine stops.

There is a logical explanation for the Perrymobile's uncanny quietness and smoothness of operation. Liquid-air power is pressure gradually applied to the piston top. When this pressure becomes great enough, the piston slides down the cylinder instead of being driven down by a sudden sledge-hammer blow, as is the case in the regulation gas engine.

One of Perry's demonstrations I witnessed was most convincing. He drove the car up against a stone wall and left the throttle partly open. The car stopped but the rear wheels kept turning, the tire treads smoking and screeching on the pavement. That's power in any language! Try it sometime in your own car.

Perry's plan for marketing the cars is just as unique as the car itself. He will sell you a complete set of blueprints for \$25 from which any good machinist can build the power plant for about \$350 or less. All you need is an old chassis in which to install the engine. And you may build the Perry engine now, without a priority, since few critical materials are used in its construction.

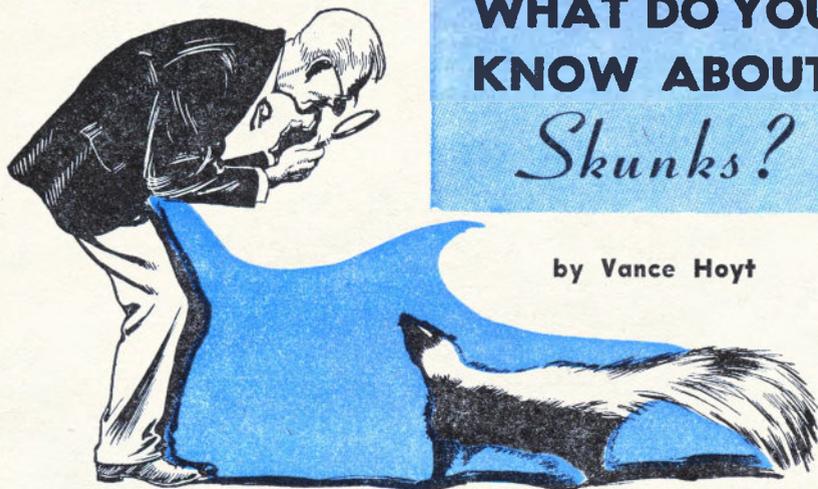
The central idea for his amazing motor occurred to its inventor back in 1939. Quietly he worked for five years, building all the parts himself, working out every detail without help. Except for minor changes, his power plant is the original model.

Frank Perry, with his puckish grin, at the close of my first interview with him, told me of the plans he's working on now—for a helicopter, using the same engine.

Well, why not an air motor for an airship?

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT *Skunks?*

by Vance Hoyt



THE skunk is by no means the stinker that hearsay brands him. He is always a perfect gentleman when not molested, uses his ammunition only in self-defense, and gives three warnings before firing. First, he stamps with his forefeet. Then he raises his tail with tip drooping. Lastly, the tip spreads out like a fan. After that, look out!

The skunk's "fire power" consists of musk glands, with small barrel-like teats for aiming purposes. The glands emit a strong acid fluid, *B. butyl mercaptan*, that has been known to cause blindness. Any alkali wash, such as baking-soda water, will neutralize its effect. Each gland can discharge separately in any direction up to fifteen feet, or both can be fired simultaneously as a spray for short-range action. It is quite true that, if held up by the tail, the skunk cannot discharge his smell guns.

Skunk essence is worth twenty-five dollars an ounce, and is now used in perfumes to give them clinging qualities, replacing the formerly imported "binders." Frontier doctors have employed it as an anesthetic, since it produces deep sleep, and it has been used in treating asthma.

One type of wood pussy, the little spotted skunk, can climb a tree as readily as a squirrel. This species is sometimes called the hydrophobia skunk because campers in the Southwest have been known to die of rabies from its bite. But the coyote is the real villain. More than any other wild animal, the skunk is bitten by rabid coyotes, because he depends upon the powers of his musk glands and rarely seeks cover from danger. He is simply a carrier of the dreaded rabies.

When fighting his own kind, the skunk uses only fangs and claws, reserving his smell guns for defense against his other enemies. Of these, the worst are great horned owls, coyotes, foxes, badgers, eagles—and man. Many skunks are taken each year for their fur, which is sometimes marketed as sable. Indians and the old trappers are said to have eaten them. Today many farmers and sportsmen look upon skunks as friends, for they destroy insects as well as the eggs of the snapping turtle, which is so destructive to ducks. They are also great mousers.

Some states have passed laws for the skunk's protection, and one of the largest cities in the world was named after him—Chicago, from the Cree Indian word, *Shee-gawk*, meaning skunkland.

Mr. McHugh and the Maharajah

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could wear for a week." Without surprise he accepted three dollars.

McHugh looked up and down the street. The marquee shadows were sharply black along the clean sidewalk; the chromium fronts of cheap restaurants had a valiant glitter. "Understand, Mac, I'm staking you on one condition."

"Name it, mister." The bum shuffled his feet.

"Dedicate this brannigan of yours to me. Make it the Thomas Jefferson McHugh Memorial Drunk. Got that?"

"I don't get you, mister. The Thomas Jefferson McHugh Memorial Drunk?"

"I don't get it myself, Mac. But this morning, just this morning, understand, I would like to be a male water lily in a cool pond surrounded by female water lilies." A hint of apprehension showed in the bum's eyes. "Go in peace, my friend, and make it a lulu." Tom left the man rooted, staring after him.

RESTLESSNESS sprouted like milkweed inside Tom McHugh as he wheeled into Sixth Avenue. He felt harried, as though suddenly at the mercy of circumstances. Something was going to happen to him this beautiful day, some-

thing out of the ordinary, that might conceivably alter the course of his life.

This is absurd, he thought. I am Thomas Jefferson McHugh, thirty-four and in fair health. I have a good job. I am lucky by nature; I have survived four flights across the North Atlantic and a number of bombings in several capitals. I am engaged to Liz Wynyard, who loves me, has money, and is a pip to look at. I am on my way to cover an assignment admirably suited to my specialized knowledge in the field of political economics and foreign affairs. Later today I shall probably be promoted to a position of some dignity, carrying a modest but substantial raise in pay. Now will somebody kindly tell me what in the hell I am worrying about?

It was at this point that he reached an even more disquieting conclusion. He was not at the mercy of circumstances. He was at the mercy of himself, of some obscure inner rebellion.

Something was going to happen to him. All right. The explanation was elementary. He wanted something to happen. And he was prepared to go out of his way to make something happen.

Down the avenue a jeweler's clock showed nine-thirty. Like a despairing wail, common sense made itself heard. *Grab a cab*, it told him. *Get to work*.

He walked to the curb. The sunlight was warm on the back of his neck. He watched four cabs go past.

He strolled into a cigar store and telephoned Liz.

THE Wynyards owned a real, honest-to-God butler with an imported high-church voice. His name was Merritt. "Miss Wynyard will be on the line in a minute, Mr. McHugh."

Inwardly he was apprehensive. Whatever this thing was, it had too much impact to suit him. He had always been a seeker of security, patient to routine. But now . . .

"Maybe I swallowed a pixie," he said aloud.

"Swallowed what?" said the receiver.

Then: "Oh, hello, dear." Liz sounded cool. That was the way she looked, cool and blonde, slender, quietly dressed, streamlined, with no more than the most discreet emphasis on the characteristics of the female figure.

Liz said, "Tom, what did you swallow?" There was a note of alarm in her voice.

"A pixie." He could feel her opening her mouth for "A what?" and went on hurriedly, "Liz, darling, say something very sensible to me, will you?"

"Tom, what in the world!" Annoyance crept into the alarm. "Where are you? What are you doing? Are you off today? You didn't tell me . . ."

"I've just discovered," he said slowly, "that I'm a bum at heart. Liz, how about grabbing a cab and getting down here and putting me back on the track?"

"I don't think," she said, "that I find this very funny."

"It's not supposed to be," he countered sharply. "It just sounds that way." He was suddenly enraged at her obtuseness; then, remorsefully, critical of himself for his fury at her.

"Aren't you working, Tom?"

"I'm due at the League for Advanced Study of Foreign Affairs. Overdue, in fact. Liz, do come! Come and have a drink. Come and have a flock of drinks, and . . ."

"At this time of day?" The chill was on.

"And then we'll go down to the Lafayette for a hell of a lunch with chicken casserole, and maybe after that . . ." He was surprised at the desperation in his voice. If only Liz would lend a hand, maybe he could buy off this demon inside him.

"I'm lunching with Teresa Shaw."

"This is a cry for help, Liz. No fooling."

He heard her draw her breath. In that instant he knew a new fear. He was afraid she would come.

"Tom, I can't. I'm not sure I want to see you in the state you're in. But Tom . . ." There was a catch in her voice.

"Yes, dear?" He sounded like a patient husband now.

"Do go on to work. You'll feel better. And don't forget you're coming to dinner tonight. Father mentioned it this morning. He's got something he wants to discuss with you. You *will* come, won't you?" There was real feeling in her voice; even a suggestion of far-off tears.

"I'll be there. Don't worry. What I've got is probably nothing that a bromo seltzer won't cure. About seven?"

"Yes. And Tom"—a long pause—"where are you going now?"

He was tempted to say, "To Alison's." But instead he answered, "To work. So long, kid." He hung up.

You just didn't throw up your job because you didn't feel like working one gorgeous morning.

The jeweler's clock said ten. No use taking a cab. He was late, anyhow.

His feet rather than his mind charted his course through Rockefeller Plaza. It was dangerous, and he knew it. There were flowers and people in large quantities, and splashing water over which the sunshine sent a rigadon of gems. McHugh felt calm again, but with the calmness of a deep melancholy, as though he had lost, somewhere along Sixth Avenue, a treasured friend.

AT THE balustrade under the flags he stopped and surveyed the scene. His sense of loss was very real.

The plaza seemed unusually full of girls in thin dresses; girls with fine legs and round arms and nice eyes.

"Summer dresses in new bloom."

A man beside him turned and stared. "I didn't get you, friend," said the man.

Tom looked him over. The man was tall; tall as Tom himself, but heavier. The cut of his gray double-breasted suit announced that he was from far out of town. He had a broad, weather-beaten face.

"Omar Khayyam," said Tom. The man shook his head, but not unfriendlyly. He looked like a thoroughly decent sort of fellow. Tom said, "Look, you wouldn't care to join me in a fight, would you?" Strangely enough, as he said it, it sounded like a reasonable request.

The man's face reddened a trifle, but his eyes showed no alarm. "Here?" he said. "Why?"

Tom said, "It's a beautiful day for it. And it would draw well."

The big man looked around him. He looked tempted. But he shook his head. "Too damned well," he said. He ran his eye along Tom's lean lines, took in the good shoulders. "No," he said, almost sadly. "I've got my wife and daughter along. They're down by the fountain. They wouldn't understand. Something eating you?"

"Yes."

"Anything special?"

"Can't seem to pin it down. Well, thanks anyhow."

"Sorry. Know how you feel. Might buy you a drink, though."

"Thanks again, but I'm not sure that's what I need."

The big man took out a fat, shiny leather wallet. "If you decide that's what you need, give me a ring. I'm at the Park Plaza. I've had three days of this burg, and four to go, and my wife's W.C.T.U." He held out a card.

Tom took it. It read: "Paul T. Higgins, Oil Properties, Dallas, Texas."

"I might, at that. If I do, we'll have a honey."

Higgins looked wistful, then resigned. McHugh, following the direction of Higgins' glance, saw a buxom woman approaching with a fat little girl.

"Well, so long, Mr. Higgins," he said. "Thanks for listening. Most men would have called a cop."

"Not in Dallas, brother." Higgins smiled.

TOM crossed Fifth Avenue and worked this way east. The sunshine had turned brassy, and there was no savor in the air.

Under the lee of the Waldorf he allowed himself a single glance upwards. Somewhere in that heaven-aspiring pile was Carla Allyn. Probably asleep, with her dark hair a silk mass on a rumpled pillow, and her piquant nose tilted at the ceiling. Or perhaps she slept on her stomach.

Perhaps she was not even alone; all those English actresses seemed to have husbands. He wondered why, in the office, her picture had produced the fleeting image of Theodosia Ravenscroft Longnecker, of Gray's Falls, Idaho, in his mind.

Theodosia had been—well, not exactly dumpy, but almost. Far from willowy, like Carla Allyn. But dumpy or not, there had never been anything sweeter than that kiss. Even Liz—he shuddered loyally away from the thought. Liz was swell. But Theodosia had been only fifteen. The loves of a hundred caliphs, over half a millenium, rolled into one, would have been a pale adumbration of love if matched against that kiss. Suppose, right now, he were to take a ticket for Gray's Falls. . . .

Tom swore softly to himself. Theodosia must be thirty now. In Gray's Falls that would make her a matron.

He went on to the League and took notes mechanically. Between sessions he lunched in a one-arm joint on a hamburger. Boleslavski had been serious and rather dull. During the afternoon session, Sir John Ordrupp was even worse. Mc-

Hugh returned to the Day office and pounded out a good, sound, dry piece which Connelly accepted without comment. And Tom accepted without comment a late assignment—it seemed that the Maharajah of Pandobar had turned up at the Waldorf, and an interview on the Indian question seemed in order.

The files showed little on the Maharajah, other than that he was young, fat, and, to judge by the single cut available, of a serious turn of mind. Tom called the hotel, but the Maharajah was out. A member of his entourage said that he might be back for dinner.

Then came the interview with O. P. Penfold. It was a brief, rather curious affair, far from what he had expected. When he returned from Penfold's office he told Connelly he would try to reach the potentate later in the evening, and would report to the night desk. Then he went to his hotel and flopped heavily on the bed. He felt as though vast armies had been battling for days up and down his emotional tract. Now there was a lull in the battle.

CHAPTER THREE

FROM the moment of Liz's quick, searching glance as she entered the Wynyard living room, which was slightly smaller than an auditorium, the evening was touched with tension.

Liz kissed him feather-like on the cheek. Her manner said, "You were certainly a funny little naughty boy this morning, and I am relieved to see that you have come to your senses. We shall just say no more about it, and pretend it never happened."

Mr. Wynyard took a cocktail glass between an aristocratic finger and thumb and said, in his consequential way, "Well, Tom, what do you think of the Polish question?" He sipped his cocktail. . . . "Yes, Merritt?"

"Your office is calling, Mr. McHugh."

"Thank you, Merritt. If you'll excuse me . . ."

Mr. Wynyard did not care for the telephone call. It created a tiny flaw in the smoothness of things, like a man coughing during a prayer.

The call was from the night city desk. The desk had heard from Tookerby at the Waldorf. His Highness the Maharajah of Pandobar would not be available to the press during the evening, unless the press wished to take a chance on finding him at El Toroblanco, which he might visit around ten o'clock. The desk said, "We're a little short-handed . . ."

"I'll catch him."

Returning to the living room, he paused in the doorway. Mr. Wynyard was pouring Liz a dividend; for perhaps three seconds they were unaware that he was back. In those three seconds he had a sensation of utter detachment. It was as though he had never seen them, nor the room, before.

"What am I doing here?" was the question that rocketed up in his mind. This overwhelming room; these calm, rather overpowering people . . . He was Tom McHugh, son of Cadmus McHugh, principal of the Gray's Falls High School.

Tom said, "Liz, how would you like to step out among the cads and bouncers with me tonight?" He explained the Pandobar assignment.

"I'd love it."

Mr. Wynyard did not love it, although he did not say so in so many words. They had dinner, and Mr. Wynyard confined himself rigidly to topics of the day; so rigidly that Tom, extraordinarily receptive to impressions this night, knew that he had something on his mind. Inside Tom, nerves and muscles began to draw themselves taut.

IT CAME with the port. Mr. Wynyard's opening gambit could not have been improved upon. He said, "Tom, you gave me the impression, a while back, that you are not entirely satisfied with your present work. I gathered that your ambitions lay in the direction of the editorial rooms."

"Yes." He let the affirmative lie flat and unadorned.

"Last night," said Mr. Wynyard evenly, "Elizabeth and I happened to run into your publisher, Mr. Penfold, at the Andersons'. While you and Elizabeth were off with the young people, I took the liberty of discussing you with Mr. Penfold." He smiled, as one man to another. "I hope you don't mind."

Tom smiled back. "That depends entirely on what you said."

Mr. Wynyard, expecting flattered acquiescence, was not prepared for this. "Mr. Penfold spoke highly of your ability," he said.

"That's nice." Tom felt Liz's eyes sweep his face.

Mr. Wynyard's mouth retained at least the semblance of a smile. "I took the further liberty of suggesting to Mr. Penfold that in view of your work as a war correspondent and your intimate knowledge of the problems of Europe, perhaps the *Day* was doing itself an injustice in not availing itself immediately of your talents as an editorial writer." Mr. Wynyard drummed lightly on the arm of his chair.

Liz cried, "Father!" in a tone of pleased surprise that did not quite come off.

"Mr. Penfold paid close attention," said Mr. Wynyard.

"Perhaps," said Tom, "he had a special reason. He's a very poor listener, as a general thing."

Mr. Wynyard touched his port to his lips and set it down. "He has," he said, a shade grimly. Then, lightening his tone, "I made it quite clear to him, of course, that I spoke out of a personal interest, and that he was to act entirely according to his own view of the situation. I stressed the fact that he was not to take into consideration the circumstance that our firm has for years had a heavy investment in *Day* stock, nor the additional circumstance that Elizabeth inherited a somewhat more than modest block of that same stock from her mother's estate."

"In other words, you were careful not to put any pressure on him."

Mr. Wynyard was not a fool. He glanced up sharply.

"Precisely," he said at length. "And the reason I have mentioned the matter

tonight is that, in case Mr. Penfold approaches you in the next few days, you will be prepared."

Tom drank his port. This explained the peculiar stiffness of his talk with Penfold. No doubt Penfold thought he had asked Mr. Wynyard to put in a word.

Under Tom's left ear a pulse was thumping hard. "Mr. Penfold anticipated you," he said, controlling his voice. "He called me in this afternoon."

"Ah!" said Mr. Wynyard, and Liz made a small soprano sound of delight.

"Old Mr. Acheson, the chief editorial writer, is retiring at the end of the year," Tom said.

"Ah!"

"I was offered the post. Quite a compliment, too." It was a little harder to control his voice now. "You see, it meant jumping me over the heads of at least five men, all of whom have been there some time."

"Excellent. I may tell you that I have felt, and I think Elizabeth has, too, that mere reporting, with its uncertain hours and peculiar associations, leaves something to be desired as a foundation for married life."

"I see." Tom's hands began to tremble.

The moment had arrived. No use attempting to explain. Tempers might be lost, and the only one really hurt would be Liz. Keep it casual.

"I really hated," he said, "to have to turn it down."

"I beg your pardon," said Mr. Wynyard slowly, a tiny cloud appearing on his brow.

TOM tamped out his cigarette before replying. "I've had a little trouble orienting myself since I got back from abroad," he said smoothly. "I'm not at all sure I want to continue in newspaper work. I felt it would be hardly fair to Mr. Penfold to accept this offer and then, possibly in the near future, resign."

"I see." Mr. Wynyard's tone was brittle. "May I ask what you have in mind, Tom?"

"You certainly may." Tom smiled; Mr. Wynyard's jaw hardened. "But I'm afraid I can't give you a definite answer, because I'm not sure myself. But please believe I appreciate your interest."

"But that puts Elizabeth . . ."

Liz cut in. "Tom, really, I think—"

Tom looked into her eyes. "I knew you wouldn't be satisfied unless I was happy in my work, dear."

There was a lengthy silence, which they took with them into the living room.

In the cab, Liz said, "Tom."

"You want to talk about it?"

Defiantly, "Yes."

"All right, then," he said gently. "I couldn't take the job that way. I might be able to handle it after a while. But Penfold and those guys in the office . . ."

"What do you care what they think?"

He thought, "Let 'em eat cake." But he said quietly, "Not too much. It's what I'd know myself that would bother me."

"Tom, why must you be quixotic?"

"I'm not. I'm just poor and trying to be proud."

"But what do you want, then?"

"Right now, you and a good time." He pulled her to him. She came not too

willingly, and her lips, for the first kiss, were reserved. The second was better, though, and the third a marked improvement over the second.

Liz said, a little breathlessly, "You're mussing my hair. I wish I didn't like it."

He handed her from the cab into a sable evening flecked overhead with gold. The air was thick and sweet, like mist on a garden. As he strode after Liz into the black-and-scarlet medley that was the night club El Toroblanco, he sent up, like a distress signal, a brief, shuddering prayer that nothing out of the ordinary would happen.

From the captain of waiters Tom learned that the Maharajah of Pandobar was neither in the club nor expected. That cleared him with the office.

A transaction involving a two-dollar bill procured them a desirable table, not too near the music. The seats were against the wall. Tom leaned his head back with a feeling that he had come a long way for this single, luxurious moment of peace. He closed his eyes. When he opened them he was looking into the eyes of Carla Allyn.

CHAPTER FOUR

SHE was across the dance floor, seated against the wall in an attitude oddly like his own. There was weariness in the slope of her white shoulders.

Then his view was blocked by a waiter. He ordered Scotch and soda for Liz and a double Scotch for himself. The waiter dematerialized. The eyes came into view again. They were singularly large and lustrous.

Tom turned rather abruptly to Liz. "Have you ever seen Carla Allyn in the movies?"

"The English girl? Yes, once. In 'Coach to Edinburgh.' Did you see it?"

"No, I've never seen her."

Liz turned her head, struck by something in his tone. "What made you think of Carla Allyn?"

"Isn't that she over there, dead ahead, across the room?"

Liz stretched her neck. The girl was now gazing vacantly toward the orchestra. Beside her, Tom saw, was a small man with a hooked nose. He was talking, but she was not listening.

"Why, yes, it is!" Liz sounded thrilled. "How did you know?"

"I didn't. I just wondered."

Liz relaxed. "Quite pretty, isn't she? Aristocratic."

"Yes," he answered absently. In another second, he knew, Carla Allyn's glance would swing back to meet his.

It did. Gravely, purposelessly, he nodded. Carla Allyn stared briefly; then her red lips made a tiny smile, accompanied by an equally tiny inclination of the head. Most celebrities, Tom knew, would acknowledge a greeting even if the face of the greeter was unfamiliar. But this was no perfunctory response.

Without turning away, Carla Allyn asked a question of her companion. The hook-nosed man glanced quickly across the room with small, sharp, suspicious eyes.

"Your health, sir." Liz's voice, edged, woke him. He flushed. Before him was his drink; he had no recollection of the waiter bringing it.

Liz had her own drink in her hand. "It's nice to have you back," she said.

Some explanation seemed called for. "I thought for a moment I knew her," he said. "Salute." He raised his glass. Over its rim his gaze returned to Carla Allyn. The hook-nosed man was patting her hand, talking volubly. Her eyes were blank. She was not having a good time.

Liz said, "Put your glass down now. It's empty."

He put it down, wondering how the Scotch had tasted. "I'm sorry, dear," he said. This sounded to his critical ear like a husband's weary reply to a nagging wife, and he added, "She reminds me somehow of a girl I used to know in high school back home." He flung it out at random. It was outraging the appearance of Miss Allyn to compare her with Theodosia Ravenscroft Longnecker. Theodosia had had cornsilk hair of an indefinite shade; her face had been too plump, and her skin hearty. This Allyn girl was a racehorse.

"It must have been quite a romance," said Liz. She was cool now, above annoyance.

He turned and looked her in the eye. A large, honest wish formed in his mind. He wished he had not brought Liz along. Without her, sometime during the evening, somehow, he might have met Carla Allyn. He might have stepped over and said he had met her at Ciro's, and then asked her for a dance.

The lightning campaign faded. Tom did not want to quarrel with Liz. "Look," he said suddenly, earnestly. "I'm not giving you much of a time, dear. Would you like to go home?"

"Oh, let's try one dance. Then we'll see."

"Swell!" He made it sound as though he meant it.

The waiter floated by like ectoplasm. Tom halted him, raised his eyebrows at Liz. She shook her head. "Double Scotch," said Tom.

From the bandstand came music. Tom put his hands against the edge of the table, gave Liz what he tried to make a look of eagerness. "Ready?"

"Yes." Her smile was forgiving.

Tom stood up, moving the table back. As he did so, a large voice, a hearty, friendly voice tuned to the wide open spaces, boomed genially in his ear: "Well, I'll be a monkey's uncle if it ain't the Battling Kid!"

MR. PAUL HIGGINS, of Dallas, Texas, clapped him on the back. Tom rocked under the blow. Mr. Higgins turned. "Say, Ma, this is the young feller I was telling you about tried to pick a scrap with me in Rockefeller Plaza this morning."

The buxom woman Tom had seen with the little girl drew up beside her husband. She had a round, good-natured, red face under a hat on which good money had been wasted, and she looked heavily corseted.

Tom glanced at Liz. Her face, he saw, would require further study.

Mrs. Higgins eyed Tom in a motherly manner. "You wouldn't have had a chance with Paul," she said. "He just loves to fight."

Tom recalled that Mr. Higgins had been kind to him. "Won't you folks join us?" he said, and felt, rather than saw, Liz stiffen.

"Hey! Say . . . !" Mr. Higgins looked around. The place was full. "You were just about to dance. Beside, we don't want to gum your date."

"Do sit down." This, surprisingly, came from Liz. "We can dance later."

A waiter hustled up with chairs. They all sat. Tom performed introductions, a little apprehensively because of Liz.

The waiter waited. Mr. Higgins glanced at his wife, then looked hard at the waiter. "For the lady," he said, "Pepsi-Cola. For me"—he held out three fingers horizontally—"White Plush. Get it? Tall glasses of White Plush?"

"What's that?" said Mrs. Higgins sharply.

"That's the way you order milk in a night club, Ma. Just a fancy name for a tall glass of plain milk." His face dared the waiter to contradict him.

"White Plush for me too, then," said Mrs. Higgins.

Mr. Higgins paled. "Aw, Ma, maybe you better stick to—"

"Nope." Mrs. Higgins turned to Liz. "We been making the rounds since pretty near eight o'clock, and I'm so

full of Pepsi-Cola I feel all gassy and burpy. And Paul, he's had six or seven of something called a coke-with. I tasted one but I didn't like it. . . . White Plush, Paul."

Tom eyed Mr. Higgins with some interest. For a man carrying six or seven rum cokes, he was in excellent shape.

"How do you folks like the Park Plaza?" He had to say something.

"Not any more," said Mrs. Higgins, straightening her back and wriggling it a little. "We moved to the Waldorf."

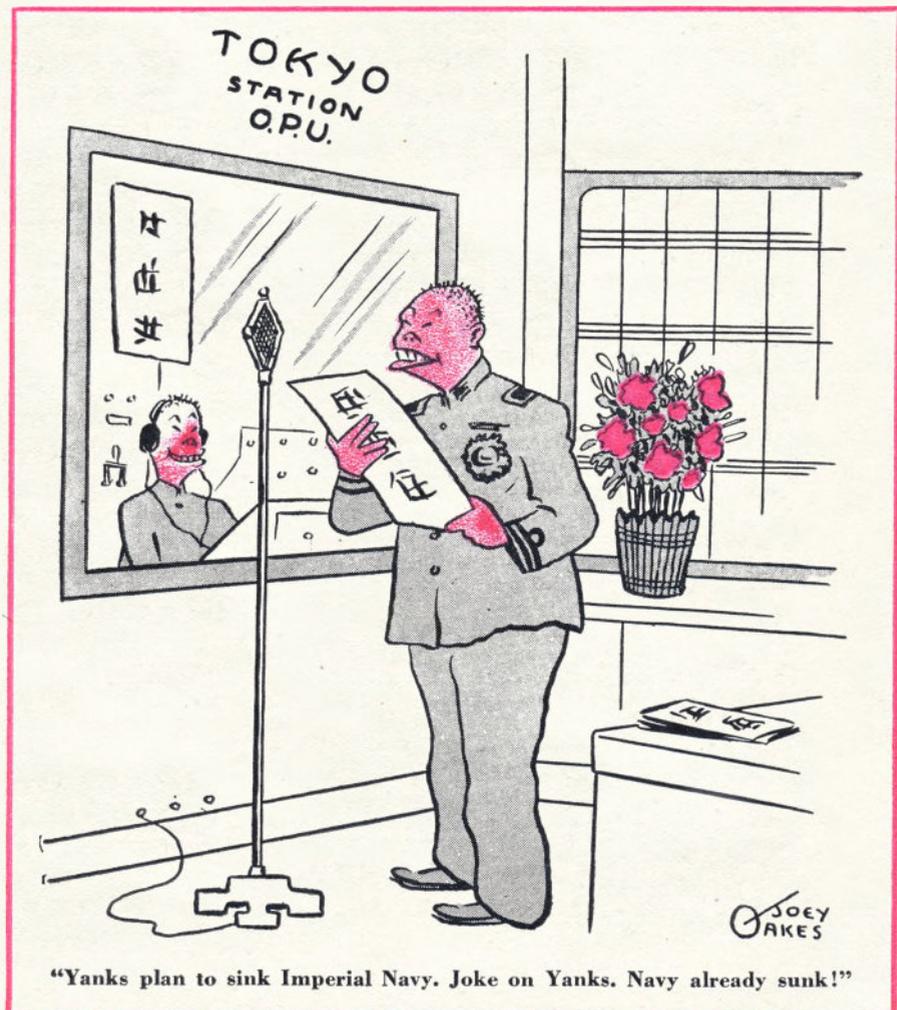
"Ma found out they had bars in the Park Plaza," explained Mr. Higgins uneasily.

"Not that I'm narrow," countered Mrs. Higgins defensively. "But I'm president of our local chapter—we live outside Dallas. Those girls, if they ever found out I'd actually stopped at a place with barrooms in it—" Mrs. Higgins raised her eyes, let them drop.

"Kind of fun, over at the Waldorf, at that," contributed Mr. Higgins. "Ran into some right interesting people in the —when I went down for a coke this evening before Ma come down to dinner. One guy in particular—funny-looking feller, foreign, but real democratic and smart . . . Oh!"

Tall glasses of White Plush were set before the Higginses. Before Tom a double Scotch appeared.

Tom shook his head. "Changed my mind," he said. "Make mine White Plush,



too." He smiled at Mrs. Higgins. "Yours looks so tall and cool. How about you, Liz?"

"I think I'll have a White Plush, too," Liz looked calmer now, less wary, like a porcupine whose quills have receded. Tom flashed her a grateful smile that matched the one Mr. Higgins had just given him.

Mrs. Higgins' pudgy hand closed around her glass. She drank, one, two, three swallows. Mr. Higgins, staring at himself in the mirror, had gone gray.

Mrs. Higgins replaced her glass in its saucer and wiped her mouth with a napkin. "Funniest tasting milk I ever drank in my life," she said. Tom, watching her face, exhaled silently. She was not suspicious, yet. "Do they put something in it?" she inquired.

For a ghastly second no one could think of an answer.

Then: "Yes, madame."

No one had noticed the waiter standing by. Tom swallowed. Even Liz showed alarm.

"Just a touch of burnt-caramel flavoring, madame," said the waiter confidentially. "Our patrons prefer it that way."

"Well!" said Mrs. Higgins. "You know, it's really not bad."

MR. HIGGINS looked at the waiter in speechless admiration, then surreptitiously took out his wallet. Mrs. Higgins drank again. While she drank, a ten-dollar bill changed hands. Then her husband lifted his own White Plush and drank it down. "Aha!" he said, for no reason in particular.

"Nice place," said Mrs. Higgins vaguely. "Don't forget what you promised now, Paul."

"I won't, Ma. Just haven't tagged any of 'em yet. Waiter!"

"Yes, sir."

"More White Plush, waiter."

"Coming right up, sir." The waiter set two more glasses of Plush on the table. Liz picked hers up and stared into it with noncommittal eyes a moment before drinking. She drank deep, with something of self-immolation in her manner. Tom raised his own. He was annoyed to see three men at Carla Allyn's table now. One, with horn-rimmed glasses and a flaming shock of red hair, he recognized as Brendan Shea, the producer. That was, in a sense, a relief. But Shea was not talking to Carla. He was talking with the hook-nosed little man. Carla was talking to the third man the third man . . .

"Promised Ma I'd get her a look at a real movie star," said Mr. Higgins, somewhere in the dim blue distance. "Only way I could lure her out to all these saloons in one evening."

To Tom McHugh, his eyes riveted on Carla Allyn's vis-a-vis, the evening had already lost what reality it might have claimed before the advent of the Higginses. He was fuzzily aware that Mrs. Higgins had engaged Liz in a conversation about girdles.

Never in his life, he thought, had he seen a man whom he disliked so instantly as Miss Allyn's friend. He was a tall man, beautifully barbered, beauti-

fully dressed in the Broadway style. His nose, his jaw, were long and sleek; his long face was marked by a slit of a mouth. Miss Allyn was looking up into his face and hanging on his every word as though her life depended on it. And he was talking calmly, confidently. . .

"Have much trouble getting sugar for your canning?" he heard Mrs. Higgins inquiring of Liz. What Liz said, he missed.

Maybe the fellow was Carla Allyn's leading man.

"Movie star," said Tom suddenly to Mr. Higgins. He set his glass down, empty.

"Yep. Ma's nuts about the movies."

"Ever see Carla Allyn?"

"Carla Allyn? Seems to me I seen a picture in the *Daily News* today—girl in two cents' worth of bathing suit like a diaper."

"She comes from England," Tom explained. "She's quite a star over there." He had expected Mr. Higgins to be impressed, but Mr. Higgins, he found, was not paying attention. Mr. Higgins' eyes, wide and pleased, stared over Tom's shoulder to the entrance.

"I'll be eternally damned," he said excitedly, "if that ain't Winkie just came in! Well, what do you know!" He raised a hand, inflated his lungs. "Winkie!" he bellowed. "Winkie!"

For a split second their table was the hub of the dining room. Tom looked at Liz. What he saw in her face did nothing to increase his comfort.

"Paul," said Mrs. Higgins. "stop that belling!"

"Ma, it's the guy I told you about, the foreign guy I met in the—when I was down getting the coke. Say, you ought to see the . . . Winkie! Come over here!"

Winkie was a very short, stout young man, sunburned to the color of medium toast. He wore a dinner jacket, with a scarlet cummerbund that matched the velour of the seats.

Mrs. Higgins addressed her husband. "Boy, you can certainly pick 'em."

"He's nice, Ma. No kidding. Talks English. I mean, English English, not American. Hey, Winkie, you old son of a gun, have a seat." Mr. Higgins bethought himself of his manners. He bowed to Liz. "That is, if you don't mind, Liz?"

"I don't mind, Mr. Higgins. Not in this world." Liz laughed. There was a bit of hysteria behind the laugh.

Winkie arrived with a rolling gait. It was not sunburn, Tom saw. It was race.

MA. LIZ, meet my friend Winkie. Winkie. this is Tom McHugh. Feller I told you tried to pick a scrap with me this morning. Sit down. Winkie. Say, I been telling Ma—" Mr. Higgins stopped dead, astounded. "Say! I've seen 'em do that in the movies, but never until this moment did I expect to. . . Say, Ma, how'd you like that?"

The Maharajah of Pandobar had bent over Mrs. Higgins' be-ringed hand and kissed it noisily. He did the same for Liz. Then he bowed to Tom and smiled at Higgins. "Old friend," he said dreamily. His eyes were gentle, like a calf's, and trusting; his face was that of a kew-

pie doll of thirty. He was just drunk enough. He sat and smiled on everybody. "Had a deuce of a time getting away, you know. Old Barkstraw, that's the Resident's aide, you know, who tags along, sort of nurse maid, is getting fearfully clever about me."

"But you got away," said Mr. Higgins, as though it had been a personal victory.

The maharajah pursed his cupid's-bow lips. "I fooled Barkstraw. I slipped out and walked up here. And what a jolly walk it was, gangsters and all that, and little shops where they sell things. I say, you know, this is really a very jolly country." He gazed around the room.

"Gangsters?" said Mrs. Higgins.

"Quite. I'd read about them, but never hoped to meet one, you know. Quite a genuine one, I assure you. What luck! With his coat collar turned up, and a little gun, and a quick, harsh way of speaking. I would consider it a great honor if you would allow me to buy champagne. It is deuced good of you to let me join your party this way, you know."

Mrs. Higgins' eyebrows rose. Tom said quickly, "We're drinking milk, Your—er—Winkie—American style."

The maharajah frowned. "Milk, American style? Now, that's new. Is it different from other milk?"

The waiter was there. "White Plush all around, Oscar," said Mr. Higgins grandly. "And keep the cow handy."

The Maharajah of Pandobar said shyly to Higgins, "Would you consider me bold if I were to ask the charming Mrs. Higgins to dance with me?"

A QUARTER-HOUR passed, with five White Plushes; at Winkie's urgent request, seconded by Mrs. Higgins, five more had just been delivered.

By a major effort, Tom had held his gaze from Carla Allyn's table for the greater part of the time. At the Allyn table the talk had become general; the leading man (Tom had decided definitely that was what he was) no longer monopolized Carla, and Tom felt easier.

Tom was only dimly aware of Liz. She had drunk her White Plush grimly. Now there was determination in the composure of her face. She was going to see this evening out, for reasons of her own, if it killed her.

Winkie rose and bowed. Mrs. Higgins got to her feet with a small struggle and made the inevitable adjustment of corset. She was pinkly flattered. Winkie was a surprisingly personable young man, for all his rotundity.

They left. Liz leaned over. "I gather, Tom, that Winkie is the maharajah."

Higgins pricked up his ears. "The what?"

Tom said, "The Maharajah of Pandobar. My paper sent me here to interview him."

"I don't get you."

"He's Indian. From India. He's sort of a king—a junior king, you might say."

"Well, I'll be!" Mr. Higgins turned to goggle at the dance floor, whereon the maharajah and Mrs. Higgins rotated solemnly, like joined basketballs, in a waltz. "Say, wait'll that bunch of low-

lives we run around with hears about this!" Mr. Higgins gulped at his White Plush and eyed Liz. He came straight to the point. "How about it?" he said. "Tisn't often I get a chance like this. Ma usually makes me dance with her."

Liz stood up. The face she showed Mr. Higgins indicated nothing but pleasure and anticipation. It was not until she was gone, with Higgins in her wake, that Tom felt the chill aura of her going and knew he had been expected to beat Mr. Higgins to it.

But he was not surprised, seconds later, to find himself on his feet and heading straight across the dance floor.

CHAPTER FIVE

BRENDAN SHEA needed a shave. The red stubble and disordered red hair made him look like an underfed Airedale. There was anguish in his eyes and mouth. He was speaking so impassioned that Tom, arriving shaky-kneed and uncertain at the table, was not noticed, so intent were Shea's listeners. "I tell you, it's a holdup," Shea was moaning. "Who ever heard of fifteen grand down before the theater's leased?" "You have," said the long-nosed man in a flat, hard voice. "I just told you."

The little hook-nosed man writhed anxiously. He glanced from Carla to Shea, from Shea to the last speaker.

"Maybe we can compromise, Kimball," he bleated.

"Save your breath, Klein," said the long-nosed man.

Shea looked long at Kimball. In his eyes Tom read some of his own feeling toward the man. The producer said, "You're pulling this; Klein hasn't got the guts. Carla, I thought you . . ."

Carla Allyn made a helpless gesture. She said in a low tone, "I told you, Brendan, Harry's my representative in New York."

"Pretty recent job, isn't it?"

Kimball said, "I wouldn't get tough if I were you." Behind the bored tone there was menace. He smiled thinly. "Why all the palaver? You need Carla for this play. The damn thing's bound to hit dough; nine million dames read that novel. When you got something good, you better sell high." He rubbed his hands together. "Carla gets fifteen grand cash down tomorrow when the lease and contracts are signed. That's for being a good girl and being in your show. And each and every week she plays in that show, four grand. What's the kick? Out in Hollywood that's chicken feed."

"Hollywood!" wailed Shea. "I keep telling you, Broadway's different . . . Look, I paid thirty grand for 'Letitia Hanbury' when it was still in proof."

Tom coughed. It had just occurred to him that this was none of his business.

All four looked up. Carla Allyn's eyes looked almost hopeful.

"My name's McHugh, Miss Allyn. Met you in London, Ciro's, in '38. Tom McHugh. I was in the *New York Day Bureau* then. I . . ." His throat dried up. A voice within him said spitefully. "Well, you messed that up." And between his shoulders, along the back of his neck, he felt Liz watching him.

Klein and Shea ignored him, returned to their talk. Kimball did not. He began, in that flat voice, "Carla, you--"

To Tom's astonishment, Carla Allyn sprang to her feet. "Let go, Harry," she told Kimball, who was looking belligerently at Tom and trying to pull her back. Her eyes became suddenly, dramatically gay. "Tom McHugh!" she cried.

Kimball turned his long nose away. Tom took her hand. It gripped his hand almost convulsively. Before he knew it they were on the dance floor.

The paradisiacal woman held her arms out. He clasped her timidly, then held her closer, until her silky dark hair was touching his chin.

He said, "I don't really know you."

"Are you sure?" Her tone was pleasantly English.

He said, "I wasn't in London in '38. I didn't get over until '41."

"I wasn't in London in '38 either," said Carla Allyn. "Harry Kimball almost took you up on that. That's why I was in such a hurry to get you away."



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Something frank and friendly about her eyes and mouth made him go soft inside. "But I wanted you to ask me to dance. I've been having a—terribly dull evening." She had almost said "terrible," he knew. He had an impulse to leave her and punch Mr. Kimball in his supercilious nose. "I kept looking over at your table. You all seemed to be having such a good time, and on milk, too."

He sketched the White Plush situation briefly and she shook with laughter. The music stopped, and he clapped furiously. It started again.

Carla Allyn melted against him. "I wanted you to ask me to dance," she said. "I kept projecting the thought, every time I found you looking over our way." She laughed.

"I kept looking," he said, "because something has been bothering me all day, ever since I saw a picture of you this morning. I warn you, it's going to sound like a line. But if you'll try to believe it . . ."

"I'll do my very best," she said solemnly. "Cross my heart."

Something in her accent, her phrasing, caught his ear. "Where were you in '38?" he said abruptly.

"Not for publication?"

"Not for publication." He thought, "My God, I'd forgotten I ever worked for a newspaper."

"I was washing dishes in a restaurant

at Reno, Nevada, and supporting a husband," Carla Allyn said calmly. "Shortly before that, I had been supporting the same husband by washing dishes in Hollywood, and working as an extra. Not so very long after that, a little less than a year, I was signing a contract with London Pictures at Wembley for one hundred and fifty pounds a week. I'd gone over as companion to Mona Leslie, and she helped me. My husband was not along. He was in jail in California." She looked up again. "That's the career of Carla Allyn."

"And where is your husband now?" Tom sounded proprietorial. He felt that way. And angry.

"Over there," she said, "gouging Brendan Shea. We're divorced, by the way."

"But if you're divorced, why?"

"Oh, just because." She left it there, but the rebuke had been a gentle one. "And now, what about this story you promised me?"

"It's really not much. I kissed a girl at home once, back in Idaho, on the way home from a school dance. She wasn't specially pretty. But I was nearly nineteen, and I'd never kissed a girl—like that, I mean, with her kissing me back as though—as though she really loved me."

"What was her name?"

He laughed. "Theodosia Ravenscroft Longnecker."

"Why do you laugh? That's a nice name. Perhaps a little ornate."

"This morning, in the office, I saw a picture of you—leg art. Couldn't even see your face, just your nose."

"Oh, God!"

"And I thought, 'What a hell of a lovely girl.' And, then, through no connection I can place, I began thinking of Theodosia. And she's been with me all day. Maybe it was the sunshine. I walked past the Waldorf today. I thought, 'Carla Allyn's up there somewhere. I'd like to kiss her.' And then, forgive me, I thought, 'But what I'd really like would be to be back home in Gray's Falls and be eighteen and walk home from that dance with Theodosia, and just when we get to her gate, and my heart is going a mile a minute . . .'"

CARLA ALLYN stopped dancing. He looked apprehensively at her. She bit her lip. Winkie and Mrs. Higgins danced slowly by. Mrs. Higgins' eyes were shut.

"That blonde girl at your table," said Carla Allyn, "is she yours?"

"We're engaged."

"Will you come outside with me a minute," said Carla, "even at the risk of causing trouble in the home?"

"Certainly. Let's go." It would have been the same if she had invited him to jump into the river. He was beyond curiosity. And quite happy.

She took his arm as they walked from the dance floor. At the entrance stood the black-and-white and austere captain of waiters. Carla said, "Jean, is there a private room?"

"There is my office, Miss Allyn, if that—"

"Dandy, Jean."

Jean led them down a short side hall,

switched on a desk lamp in a small, neat office, closed the door on them.

Carla Allyn faced Tom. "Now I want you to do exactly as I tell you." Her eyes were very bright. "Put your arms around my waist. There! Now hold me"—her voice shook the least little bit—"very tight, the way you held Theodosia that night. There. Now . . ."

Further instructions became superfluous at this point, even if she had been physically able to give them, which she was not.

A minute later, as though through a lump in her throat: "Well?"

Tom said, "I'll be eternally damned!" He shook his head slowly, wonderingly, searching her face. He could see it now, like a face in a cloud when someone pointed it out to you. At first, you couldn't see a thing; then, all of a sudden, the outline is clear, evident, obvious. Carla Allyn, the girl in his arms, was Theodosia!

"Imagine," he said, "running into something like that twice in your life! But then, I was always lucky."

"We'd better go back now."

"Either that or never go back." He shook his head again. "Theodosia!" He shut his eyes, opened them. "When am I going to see you again?"

"On the stage. In 'Letitia Hanbury,' I hope."

He opened his mouth to protest, but she held up her hand. Meekly, dazedly, he followed her back into the dining room.

As they reached the dance floor, he said, "Why?"

"I'm bad news," said Theodosia Longnecker.

"Not to me. You're a summer night in Gray's Falls."

"I refuse to cry. My make-up will run. Go back to your girl, Tom."

CHAPTER SIX

MR. HIGGINS opened his large mouth, then looked at Liz and shut it again.

Tom sat down. He looked at Liz.

She said, "Was that Carla Allyn?"

"Yes."

"I thought you said you didn't know her."

"I didn't. It's just one of those nights."

Mr. Higgins waved a hand over his shoulder. "Oscar, lead the cow around again."

Across the room the Carla Allyn party was leaving.

The White Plush arrived. Mrs. Higgins drank first.

Mr. Higgins said, "Now look here, Ma . . ."

Mrs. Higgins shot him a barbed and pointed glance. "Milk," she said simply, and Tom saw Higgins shrink inside his clothes.

The music started up. Tom caught Liz's eyes. He said, "Care to try?"

"No, thanks." She smiled. "I'm a little tired."

The Maharajah of Pandobar looked affectionately around the table. "If only the Resident could see me now," he said rapturously.

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"The Resident?" Liz was making conversation.

"Yes. He is my keeper. He rides cow on me."

"Rides herd, Winkie," Higgins said.

"Yes. I must do this. I must do that. I must get married. I must."

Mrs. Higgins roused herself, her hat at a coquettish angle. "You married, Winkie?"

"Five times."

"Five times!" Even Tom roused himself at this.

The maharajah's mouth drooped. "Once, really. I do not see her much. Sir Arthur, that is the Resident, arranged it. The other four, they are not exactly wives." He looked nervously at the ladies.

Tom said, "Look, Winkie, do me a favor."

The maharajah's eyes widened. "But with pleasure, Tom. Simply call it."

"Don't say any more about your wives till I get back." He stood up. "I'll be back in two shakes." He left quickly. On his way out he stopped in the bar and had a glass of rye whiskey. He was moving entirely on impulse now.

There was a phone booth in the bar. He called his office.

MacIntyre, the night city editor, leaped at his "Hello, Mac" like a hungry dog. "Got anything on the maharajah, Tom?"

"Would the *Day* be interested in a story about the maharajah having one wife and four what-you-call-'ems?"

"What-you-call-'ems?"

"Babes, then. That live in the palace."

"Hell, no. This is a family sheet. What about the Indian question?"

"He's in no condition to answer it. He's getting canned at El Toroblanco."

"Drop it then. Anything else doing?"

"Has O. P. come in tonight?"

"He's here now."

"Tell him I'm resigning, as of now."

A very long pause. Then: "How drunk are you, Tom?"

"I'm not kidding, Mac. Don't argue with me. I might change my mind." He precluded the possibility of argument by hanging up, and had one more rye before returning to face Liz. He had expected, once the chore was done, to feel light of heart, free, exalted. But it didn't seem to work that way. Maybe in the morning . . . If he could only get that kiss, those kisses, out of his mind! He was not sure which one it was that was bothering him now. What was it Carla—Theodosia—had said? "Put your arms around my waist. Now hold me very tight . . ."

He sat down at the table. "Okay, Winkie," he said. "Sorry to've interrupted you."

THE Maharajah of Pandobar said sadly, "There is really little to tell. I thought that when my wife, who is a very plain girl and much given to sniffles in the head, depressed my spirits, I might amuse myself. So I purchased four dancing girls. For pets, as it were. But they are not much fun."

"Say, listen here, Winkie," Mr. Higgins protested vigorously. "You mean to sit there and tell me that with four good-lookin' chorus girls around the place—"

"Paul!" said Mrs. Higgins.

Liz was leaning back in her corner. Once again she smiled palely. Her eyes were slightly glazed. Tom's conscience sent up a final cry. He said, "Liz, if you're tired, I'll just see that you get home and—"

"No!" She sat up, her eyes awake now, with anger behind them.

Mr. Higgins coughed. One more blow, he sensed, and the party, already tottering, would topple with a crash and never rise again. He was having a good time. It might be years before he got out on a bender like this again, with Ma right along. He had an inspiration. "Say, listen, Winkie, show the girls and Tom those pocket pieces you showed me in the bar today."

"You think they will be interested?" Winkie asked doubtfully. He was delving in his pockets as he spoke; he brought up both hands closed and opened them over the tablecloth.

Tom caught his breath. Mrs. Higgins gave a little squeal. Liz said, "Oh," and leaned over, her eyes glowing.

A hundred lights of a thousand shades, from the palest electric blue to the gaudiest golden yellow, sparkled and danced as the gems stopped rolling. Then there was just a soft, cool fire burning in little pockets of many colors.

"I told you," said Higgins, delighted.

Tom recognized jasper, chrysoptase, an incredible spinel ruby, and a black opal like a lion's eye in the dark. There were two star sapphires, three amethysts and a piece of turquoise.

Liz said suddenly, "Put them away, will you, Winkie?"

The maharajah smiled. "I know. It is too much at one time." He put them back in his pockets. "I have also," he said, "some bubble-gum and a very wonderful little book of Dick Tracy pictures, but I suppose they are no novelty to you."

Higgins was pawing at his shoulder. "Show 'em the old he-coon of the whole outfit, Winkie. You know, that one you had in your vest pocket."

The maharajah shook his big head, looked apologetically at the ladies. "That I am afraid I cannot do. I am sorry if I disappoint you. But that is the one I lost tonight."

"Lost!" Higgins bellowed.

Tom said, "You're kidding."

The maharajah frowned, puzzled. "I thought I told you when I first came in. I mean about the gangster fellow. I suppose the blighter must have seen me showing my little pieces to Mr. Higgins in the—"

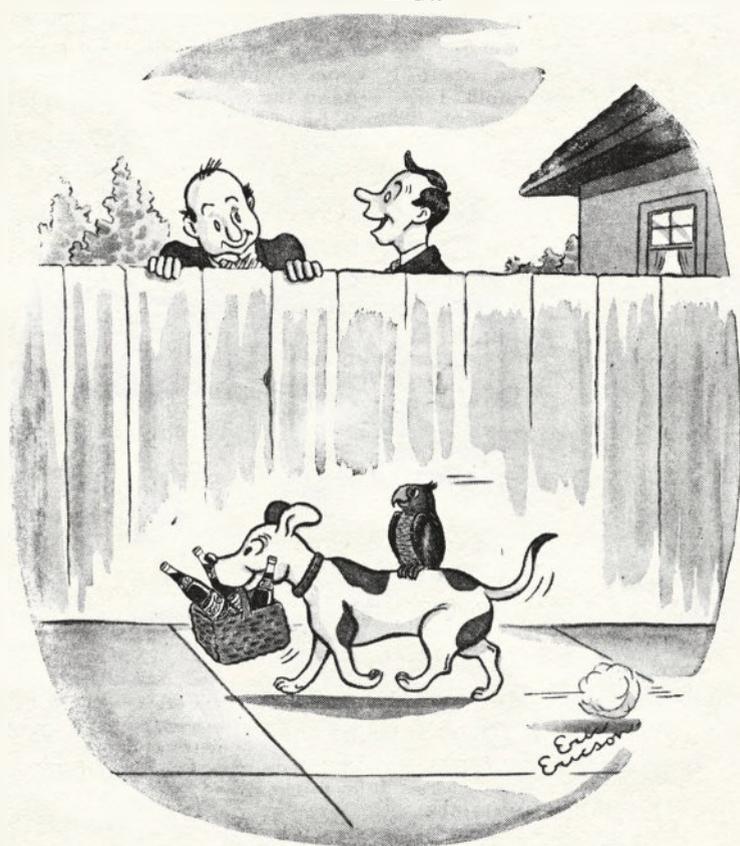
"They call it the coffee room," said Mr. Higgins quickly. "Go on."

" . . . in the coffee room. It is no matter. But tonight, when I gave old Barkstraw the slip, I went for a little walk, and came to an elevated railway."

Tom said, "Third Avenue."

"Perhaps. Anyhow, I thought, 'This looks like a jolly good place to meet a real gangster.' You see, my first thought, on arriving in New York, was to meet a gangster. But of course old Barkstraw would have a fit and perhaps write the

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Resident Commissioner. So there you are. I had gone barely two blocks along that street under the railways when, in a very dark spot, a man who had been walking behind me stepped up and pushed something against my side."

The maharajah paused, rapt, reliving it. "He said, very quietly, 'Just step into this alley a minute, bud, and take it easy, and you won't get hurt.' He had a small automatic pistol with a mother-of-pearl handle. I said, 'I thought you gentlemen always carried .45-caliber weapons.' That seemed to anger him. He said..." Winkie hesitated.

"What did he say, Winkie?" Higgins demanded, his face dark.

"He said, 'Listen, you fat little punk, step in that alley.' So I stepped. He made me hold my hands up, and took the big stone from my vest pocket. And then he went away. He was a good type, as the French say—tall, with a gray hat pulled low over his eyes, and his coat collar turned up beneath a very long nose, so I could not see much of his face."

"How much was that rock worth?" growled Higgins.

"I have never had it valued. Perhaps twenty thousand, perhaps thirty thousand pounds. I shall miss it. It was an emerald, a beautiful shade."

"And you mean," rasped Higgins, "that you let some torpedo take you like that and never even reported it?" He clenched his thick hands. "Look, we'll get right down to a police station and—"

"But no! Oh, definitely no!" There was genuine alarm in Winkie's voice. "Oh, that would never do." He glanced apprehensively at Tom. "The minute it got into the papers—"

"For your information," Tom said, "I don't work for a paper any more." He looked across at Liz. "That's where I went," he said, "to call Penfold. I resigned . . . Go on, Winkie."

Winkie was shaking his head. "No, the moment Barkstraw heard of it, he would

call Sir Arthur. I would have to go home. And I like this country."

Higgins looked helplessly at Tom. Mrs. Higgins adjusted her hat and tugged one last time at her corset. "Now," she said, "I've heard everything." She spoke a little thickly. "Let's all have one more glass of milk and then get on home to bed."

"Okay, Ma." Higgins looked around. Oscar was there. "Double White Plush for everybody, Oscar."

They had their double White Plush. After that, there was some little difficulty in getting the party out and into a cab. The Maharajah of Pandobar showed a tendency to doze off on his feet while walking. Mrs. Higgins was afflicted in the same way. The problem was finally solved by convoying Liz and Mrs. Higgins to the taxi first, and then returning for the maharajah, propped up in the lobby.

Liz waited in the cab outside the hotel while Tom went in with the Higginses and Winkie. He wondered if Carla was in the hotel, or whether the "Letitia Hanbury" argument was being continued elsewhere. Then he tried to stop thinking about Carla, for he found it caused something very like a physical pain in his throat.

With the help of an alert bellhop, Tom got the Higginses to their room, and delivered the maharajah, who promptly fell into the sleep of the righteous dead, to his suite on the floor above, where he was received by the frozen-faced Barkstraw and a handful of bustling, swarthy gentlemen.

Tom was crossing the lobby on his way out of the hotel when he saw, coming in a side entrance, Carla and her three men.

They went to the elevator. Tom stopped. The elevator door closed. Tom took a step toward Lexington Avenue, where Liz waited in the cab, then turned. As in the morning, his brain had ceased to function; his feet seemed to be in full command of his route.

At the desk a clerk, after some hesita-

tion, gave him the number of Miss Allyn's suite. There was a wait for an elevator, during which he looked blankly at the shining metal door. He thought he saw, reflected there, a fool, but he was not sure.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THROUGH the door of Carla's suite came voices, too low for the words to be distinguishable. Tom tried the knob. It turned temptingly in his hand. The door was not locked and it made no sound as he opened it. The voices smote his ear, Kimball's even tone predominating.

Tom found himself in a small hall. The sitting room, where the conference was taking place, was to his right. He closed the door, stood irresolute.

Brendan Shea's high voice momentarily was dominant. "Then you're sticking to it, Kimball—and you, Carla?"

It was Kimball who answered. "Yep."

"Suppose I tell you this will blow the works, that I'll have to give up the production." He hesitated; he was getting beyond the subtleties of bargaining. "Carla said she was willing to come in with me for a grand a week and a percentage of the gross over ten grand weekly. I've made commitments, not in writing, Kimball, but I've got a good name and I intend to keep it. Joe Lascelles has started the sketches; Koblansky has turned down one offer to give me a refusal on the theater as late as tomorrow. The thirty grand I gambled on the book cleaned me personally. For the production itself, I've scraped this town. I've got, roughly, fifty grand. That's not even enough for first-class scenery and costumes. If I could raise it, I'd give Carla a hundred-grand production, which is what it really needs. If I lay out fifteen grand, cash down, to Carla or you, Kimball, we start with two strikes on us. And contracting to pay Carla four grand a week from the start—great holy Mike, Kimball, we'd never get off the nut!"

Klein murmured, "But Carla's got a name, Brendan. After all . . ."

"That tears it." There was a creak of springs and Tom knew Shea was standing up. Shea said, "I haven't brought this up before, Carla, but did you think I don't know about Superb? They couldn't find a play to fit you. Not your fault, I know. One of those things that happens out there. But for the time being, you're washed up in the West."

"London Pictures wants her." Kimball sounded restless.

"That's what you say. I say you're bluffing. I saw Dickinson of London Pictures yesterday, and he didn't sound so anxious. He's wondering what happened in Hollywood. What he did say was this: that with a success in 'Letitia Hanbury' under your belt, Carla, he'd want you."

Carla said wearily, "That's right. Harry, I've got to have 'Letitia.' It's not just the money. Hollywood knocked something out of me. I'm not even sure I can act. Brendan knows that, and he's willing to take a chance. Harry, you couldn't just go off somewhere and die.



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could you?" She spoke from the depths; the tight feeling in Tom's throat returned.

"With fifteen grand, I could go off. Fifteen grand and a cut of four grand every week, I could."

Shea said softly, wonderingly, "You're quite an animal, Kimball."

"Listen, you punk—"

"I thought I'd seen most varieties of bastards," said Shea, still in the same gentle tone, "but . . ."

There was a flurry of movement in the room. Tom stepped to the doorway as Carla cried out and Klein whinnied, "Harry, take it easy!"

Klein saw Tom. "Hey, you!"

Kimball turned quickly, cat-like, without loosing his grip on Shea's shirt-front. Kimball's lean face was ugly. His free hand made a motion toward his breast.

"Who the hell are you?" He hesitated, then let Shea go.

Carla was on her feet.

TOM said, "I'm McHugh, of the Northwest Mounted." He was rather surprised to find that he was frightened. Whether it was fear of Kimball—and Kimball, at that moment, looked dangerous—or fear that, by tangling with Kimball, he might appear in an absurd light before Carla, he was not sure.

"Get out," said Kimball. He moved to the center of the room.

"Oh, shut up, Kimball." Shea was adjusting his tie. "You're boring enough as it is. Let's get the business over with." He looked at Carla with finality in his eyes; even Kimball could see it, and his saturnine face darkened. "Carla, why don't you just cut loose from Kimball? Order him out. If he won't go, call a cop."

"Or call me." Tom ramm'd his hands into his coat pockets lest their trembling show. He took a step toward Kimball. To his intense surprise, Kimball stepped back.

Kimball said sharply, "Take your mitts out."

Tom said, "Why?" and took another step.

Carla cried, "Tom, he—" From Klein came a groan; Klein tried to get up from an armchair, fell back, white-faced.

Kimball said, "The mitts." He took another backward step. There was a gun in his hand now, a small gun; it was his eyes, rather than his pose, that stopped Tom in his tracks. He took his hands out.

Kimball jumped forward, gun in hand, and assured himself, with a practiced hand, that Tom had no weapon, before he slid his gun back into its shoulder holster.

Shea laughed. "Cheap crook, act two," he said, and ran a hand through his hair. He was really amused. It was catching. Tom found himself grinning.

Kimball was not amused. His cheeks showed dull red spots. Shea's laughter seemed to have cracked the shell of his self-control.

Oddly, his anger directed itself first at Carla. He said, "Okay, kid, you've been asking for it."

Carla said, "Okay, Harry, suppose I have?"

Kimball whirled on Shea. "Try to muscle me out and I'll blow the gaff on Carla and wash your whole show up. Get this: I know who your backer is. Old Mansfield. One hunk of mud on this proposition and he'd yank his dough out so fast it would make your head swim."

Shea sat down. "Speak your piece."

"Tell it, Harry. It's a pretty story." Carla had not moved.

"Where do you suppose Carla was in '38?" demanded Kimball. "Doing six months in the county jail at Fresno."

"It was comforting, having my husband there with me," said Carla, without expression.

"Sure, I was with her. That ain't the point. The point is, she was there. Now laugh, damn you, and after you get through laughing, ask Carla about our kid. Then add it all up and see how it would look in newspapers. And think how old Mansfield would take it. Now what have you got? Carla Allyn, the English movie star. Hell, she was born in Gray's Falls, Idaho. Her name is Theodosia Longnecker. She's been married to a two-time loser, me. She had a kid by me when she was eighteen. The kid's in school in California now; she's twelve and she don't know nothing."

Carla's face was stone. Shea said, very softly, "Ah!"

"Yeah, 'Ah.' Now, where's Carla Allyn? She's a smear in the tabloids. Listen to me, you skinny little punk . . ."

It was as simple as that. Tom seemed to hear Winkie describing his gangster—the long nose, the physique, the words "little punk." Tom said slowly, "Look here, friend Kimball—"

"Shut up. Listen, Shea. I got to have fifteen grand. Tony the Wop, out in Reno, is into me for twenty grand on his crap game. You see, I got to have it. I figure you're good for fifteen, and—"

Tom said, "Just a minute, Mr. Kimball."

Kimball ignored him. "Now you see why I'm runnin' Carla's business here, Shea. If you want to put on a show with Carla Allyn, cough it up. If you don't, I—"

Tom said, "Carla, do me a favor." She looked at him with empty eyes. He said, "Go in the bedroom a minute. You too, Mr. Shea. And you." He nodded toward Klein. "Maybe if I can get a word alone with Mr. Kimball I might be able to persuade him."

Carla shook her head. "It's no use, Tom."

Tom turned to Shea. Shea looked curiously at him. Shea said, "Oh, all right. Come along, Carla. Come on, Klein."

Tom waited until the bedroom door closed. Kimball's hands were crooked at the wrists, ready, and his angry eyes were puzzled.

"I'm going to search you," Tom said. "I think you've got something on you that belongs to a friend of mine." He watched Kimball's eyes, took a step forward. "You can get your gun out," he said, "and do the best you can with it. And if you don't get me with the first one, I'm going to get you. If you do get me"—Kimball's right hand went inside his jacket and stayed there; other than

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that, he did not move—"they'll probably fry you. You're a two-time loser. You said so yourself."

Tom drew breath. "That's about all," he said. He took a second step. "If you're smart, you'll let me have that rock you took off the little fat punk in evening clothes down on Third Avenue tonight, and then you'll check out." The timing had to be good. "Don't you see, Kimball?" He made his voice as persuasive as he could. "You'd be able to—"

Here he flung himself at Kimball's knees. He had run out of talk.

CHAPTER EIGHT

TOM felt, rather than heard, the shot. It felt like fingers poking suddenly at his eardrums.

From there on, things became confused. His initial rush had borne Kimball over against a divan. Tom reached up for Kimball's right wrist, missed it, and then, in a flurry of elbows and knees, punched Kimball enthusiastically in the stomach, twice; at the same time it dawned on him that Kimball was lashing him across the head with the gun. He left off punching and raised his head under cover of his left arm. The thought of being deprived of the pleasure of smashing Kimball at least once in his thin mouth outweighed, for the moment, all others.

Kimball chopped downward with the gun barrel. Tom took the worst of the

blow on his left forearm, and with his right hand got a grip on Kimball's right wrist. He held it just long enough to use the leverage as an aid to getting to his feet. Then Kimball yanked backward and freed his hand. As Kimball brought the gun to bear, Tom hit him. It was a sensuous experience, the feel of Kimball's lips and teeth on his knuckles. Kimball went backward.

Tom, starting after him, was only mildly surprised to find that his knees, instead of driving him forward with a rush, refused flatly to function. Instead, he seemed to be walking down into the floor, as though a flight of stairs had suddenly opened up for him. And the small voice inside him, mean and pointed, said, "Messed this one up, too, didn't you?"

There was a crash, quite a loud crash, but whether it was the gun, or his elbows hitting the floor, or just a sound inside his head, he could not tell. And then, through the fog that seemed to be clinging to his face and getting in his ears, he heard Shea's voice, strangely shaken, saying, "Well, I had to use something."

Tom got to his feet. He thought for a moment that he was getting to his feet by himself, until he discovered that Carla had one arm and Klein the other. Carla was saying something, he could not quite understand what. He shook his head to clear it. It felt as though it were coming apart in great, agonizing sections.

But some of the fog was dispelled, and, as it thinned, he saw Brendan Shea standing over a recumbent Harry Kimball. Kimball looked extraordinarily peaceful, lying here on his back, for all the great gash in his forehead and the blood pumping strongly. In Shea's hand was a shard of a blue china vase, most of which was scattered in fragments around the rug behind Kimball's battered head.

Klein said hoarsely, "Let's get him into the bathroom. He's bleeding all over the rug."

Tom thought he meant Kimball. The thought that Klein was worried about the rug struck him as uproariously funny, and he began to laugh. Then he discovered that Klein meant him. Carla was tugging at his arm. She said, "Tom, please come along." In her excitement she had reverted to her English accent, and that added to his mirth.

Suddenly he found that he had stopped laughing. "Look in his pockets," he said to Shea.

Shea shook his head. "I've got his gun."

"It's not his gun I mean. Look for an emerald."

Shea obeyed deliberately and found the emerald in Kimball's hip pocket, knotted in the corner of a white silk handkerchief. Kimball moaned. His head moved slightly. He had begun to breathe stertorously through his nose.

Shea put the emerald on a table. No one seemed interested in it or paid it any attention.

TOM found that his brain, after Kimball's short course of treatment, was amazingly clear. Carla was dabbing at his head with a handkerchief, but he shoved her gently away. It seemed immensely important to get things done in a hurry, for Liz was waiting, it had just come to him, downstairs in the cab.

He said, "Carla, Kimball's out, I think. The maharajah won't prosecute; but we can tell Kimball that if he ever opens his yap about you we'll force a prosecution. He won't squawk. He can't. And—"

"That's not worrying me." He wondered at her tone. She was very pale, and her hair was disheveled and she looked, oddly enough, somewhat lovelier than she had at El Toroblanco. "That's not what's worrying me," she repeated.

Tom took her hand. It was cold again. "What is worrying you?"

"Those things Kimball said. They were all true, you know."

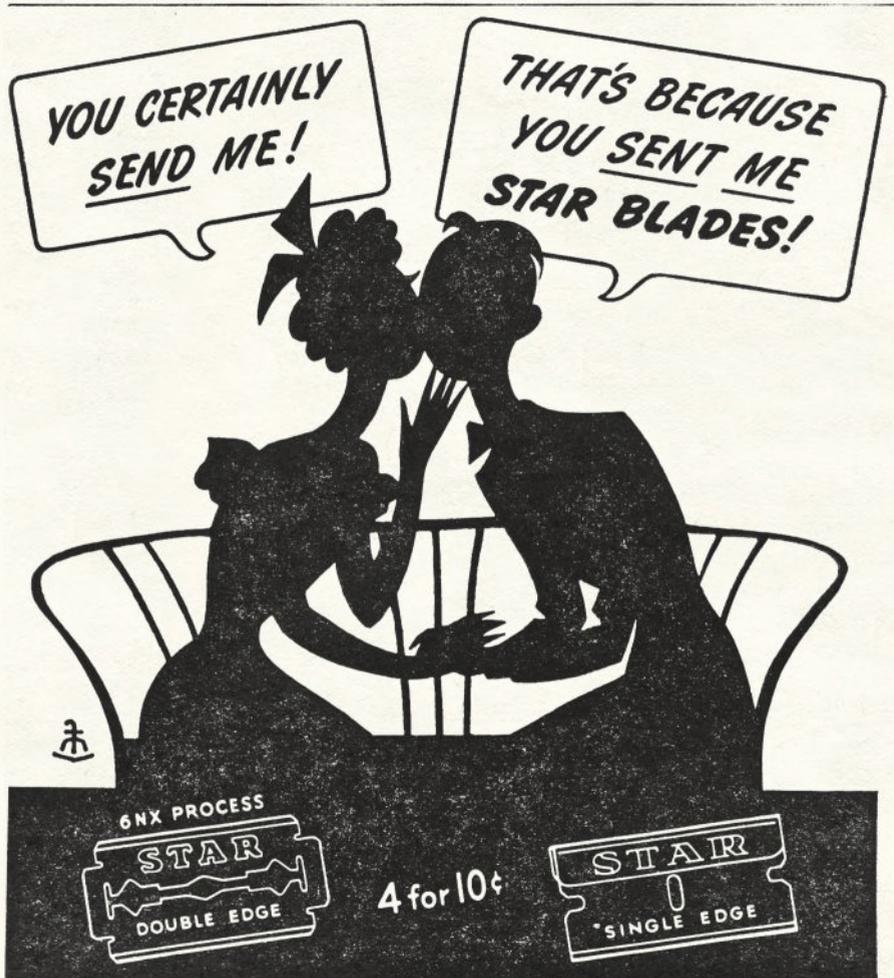
"What of it?"

"I was just wondering," she said faintly, "whether you might be wanting to see me again."

"Well, you can stop wondering." He turned to Shea. It was wonderful how swift and sure his mind seemed to be. "Look," he said, "if I were to raise some money for 'Letitia,' say fifty thousand, would you give me a job? It would have to be a pretty good job. But I can—"

Shea said, "Will you repeat that question, please? Fifty thousand?"

"I think so." And why not? Higgins was apparently rolling in money; he would jump at the chance. And Winkie—with his pet pocket piece returned to



him, Winkie could shell out half the sum and be none the worse off. "Yes," he said positively. "Fifty grand."

"Job?" Shea laughed. "My friend, I would be happy to welcome you as co-producer."

"Okay. And now, if you people will give me a hand, I've got to get cleaned up in a hurry. I've got a girl waiting for me in a cab."

It was Carla who led him into the bathroom and worked over him with a wet towel until he was fairly presentable. She kissed him once, lightly, on the mouth. "There," she said, and escorted him tenderly to the door.

He went down in the elevator alone. He was not happy. But it had occurred to him, out of his madness, that he had a very definite commitment to Liz. Other than that, he dared not try to analyze his situation. It seemed as though a long while ago—actually, adding it up as he walked stiff-legged through the lobby, he realized that it was something less than twenty hours—he had tripped over his own life and spun headlong into a dream. Now he felt chilly. This was the awakening, the morning after.

THE Waldorf lobby seemed very long, and walking a major effort.

Yes, now he was waking up. He blinked at the lights. It was hard to tell what was real and what was not.

The lobby looked very real and solid. Could it be true that those were real people upstairs? The Higginases, awash with White Plush the Maharajah of Pandobar, who carried priceless gems and bubble-gum and Dick Tracy books in his coat pockets; a crook named Kimball. Tom looked at his knuckles. Those marks were certainly genuine enough. And Klein. And Shea of the red hair—it surely could not be true that he was going in with Shea in the production of a play in which Carla was to have the starring part.

He was at the entranceway now, taking the stairs slowly, carefully.

And Carla? Carla Theodosia Ravenscroft Longnecker Allyn. Could she possibly be real, with her soft body and her soft hair and her lips?

Hardly. He was on the sidewalk now. The cab should be here, and Liz. Liz was the reality; Liz and the *New York Day*. Tomorrow he'd be calling Penfold, and then he'd be back covering the League and all the other workaday assignments. An immense weariness covered him at the thought, and he flinched.

A night doorman, seeing him weaving a little, gazing up and down the street, came up. "Can I help you, sir? Get you a cab?"

Tom said, "There was a cab here with a young lady. Maybe you saw her. She was a blonde, waiting for me."

"Oh, that young lady. I'm afraid she's gone, sir." The doorman seemed discreetly amused. "Been gone twenty minutes."

Tom frowned at him. "Twenty minutes?"

The man controlled his mouth. "She waited nearly an hour, sir. I'm sure she was the one. She got out of her cab after a while and began to walk up and

down and smoke cigarettes. Then a rather funny thing happened. It was after she'd been walking for near half an hour." A ghost of a smile escaped the doorman. He said, "Your name couldn't possibly be, by any chance, Mr. Thomas Jefferson McHugh, could it?"

"My name's McHugh. Did she ask about me?"

"Oh, no, sir. It was while she was walking. I saw this panhandler come up—he was drunk as a billygoat, sir—and start to work her for some cash. So naturally, I stepped over near, in case he didn't move on quick enough. But he was mumbling something to her, real earnest, and she seemed to be listening, so I didn't interfere just then. Figured she might want to give him a buck, after all."

"But where did I come in?"

"That's the funny part, sir." The doorman seemed divided between amusement and puzzlement. "I heard her say, real sharp, 'What did you say? I'm not sure I understood you?'. And the panhandler mumbled some more, and she grabbed him by the shoulders and shook him—she seemed real wrought up, kind of hysterical and mad—and said, real loud, 'Answer me! What did you say?' And then the bum got sort of peeved, and he straightened up and looked her right in the eye and shouted, 'Lady, I said I got to have some money. Because I'm doing a guy a favor by staying on this drunk. He said so himself. And I got to be true

to him.' And he said, 'Lady, I'm on the Thomas Jefferson McHugh Memorial Drunk!'" The doorman paused.

"And what happened then?"

"She threw up her hands, sir, like somehow that was all she could take: like what he said was the last straw. And she said, 'Oh, my God!' real loud, and started for the cab."

"Was she crying?"

"Not her, sir. She was sore as hell."

"Well, thanks." Tom turned and started back into the hotel. It came to him, with the sudden, violent pounding of his heart, that he had been wrong—wrong all along. Liz—Liz and Mr. Wynyard and the Wynyard's living room and the grind at the office—all of that was the dream now.

The reality of this other matter could be tested easily enough.

At the desk he put in a call for the Allyn suite. When the receiver at the other end was lifted, before he could speak, Carla cried, "Tom . . . Oh, Tom!"

"I'll be right up," he said. He hesitated. "Fast as I can get there." He hung up.

It came to him in the elevator that one of his major problems had washed away on the tide of events so unobtrusively that he had not been aware of it until this moment. He no longer needed to worry about his parents coming to New York. They would have a good time now.

Carla met him at the elevator.

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Pennant Punchy

(Continued from page 18)

machine. None of the other players had arrived. Flip groaned. "Beany! This joker turns up with a sore flipper. Look at it, Beany! Do something!"

Beany goggled. "No! The hell you say!"

"It's just sore," said Al helpfully. "It hurts, sorta."

Flip walked the floor, waiting. Beany stretched Al on the table and worked with knowledgeable, patient fingers. Al let out a howl which shook the rafters. Flip jumped six feet.

Bobble came in. He looked old and tired. He said, "What is it now?"

"It's a ligament," said Beany. "You better get Doc."

Bobble turned ponderously, like a performing bear. His expression was

grave, but his eyes were steady. "Up to you, huh, Flip?" he asked mildly.

Flip said, "Doc—the baking machine . . ."

"When those strong-arm guys go, it can't be fixed in no hour," said Bobble.

"The other pitchers—Caruso, Blake. Can't one of them go a few innings after—after I get mine?"

Bobble said curiously, "You're such a cocky one—I never saw you scared before."

"Scared?" said Flip. "I'm frightened to death! What good am I without Al behind me? Bobble, you know I'm no pitcher. It was Al's speed behind my nothing ball that got them. I'm a fake and a bluffer. You know it, Bobble!"

"Sure," said Bobble. "But you been mighty loyal. You give what you got. I never asked no more from a man. And all that horsin' around—it helped the club. Kept 'em on their toes. Hell, Flip, you pitch. If you lose—okay. I can take it if you can."

Flip went to his locker like a man in a dream.

As they went to the field, the catcher said, "Now look, busher, this is the payoff, see? I don't want no trouble with you."

Flip said, "You call the signals, Gib. I'll try to throw to you."

Warren stared at him. "You don't sound like you! Are you sick?"

Flip said, "I'm not sick, just scared. Go take your cut. I got to warm up."

He threw to the bullpen catcher. The stands were filling fast. Bleacherites who had spent the night in line had long since filled the sun seats. Homer Etherly entered the owner's box, his face set in stern disapproval of everything and everyone. Flip looked hard and almost dropped the ball he was fingering.

Mary O'Hara, wearing her new short fur jacket and a pert black hat, serene and beautiful as the bright October day, sat alongside Homer Etherly. She had said there was little difference between Flip and Etherly—and now she had come to the game with that jerk! She waved smugly.

FLIP forbore to answer. He threw the ball. The bullpen catcher said, "Easy does it, pal. You ain't got arm to burn."

Flip snarled, "Did anyone ask you?" He worked furiously, until the sweat began running between his shoulders and his joints were oiled and supple.

He crawled into the dugout and watched his mates go to bat against Slimbo Harrigan, the Bakers' star pitcher. He tried hard not to think about Mary's dereliction, without much luck.

Three Whales went up and looked at the wares of Slimbo Harrigan. One by one they tossed their bats down and returned, shaking their heads. Flip got up, nodded at Bobble and went onto the mound.

He used his practice pitches, and the plate was right there with big Gib Warren behind it. Flip had control and curves. That was all he had. No fast

one, to burn through in the pinches. Not too much experience, either. Just a glove and a prayer and that control.

The umpire signaled. Flip toed the slab and looked around. He had been half-dazed until this moment, but now the infield chatter came sharply to his ears and he was suddenly very much alive.

The grass seemed greener than usual. The brown base paths and white foul lines made a pleasant geometrical pattern. The umpires in their blue suits were neat gnomes, overlooking all.

It was, after all, a thrilling setting. It satisfied his soul. He would miss this when he was back at law school.

Tiny's voice shrilled from short, Pug bayed over at third, Heck rasped from second and Duke's booming bass encouraged Flip from the first base sector. They were the lame and the halt, the lucky slobs who had stumbled into a pennant and through three games of the Series, everyone said, and today they would get their lumps off the class team of war baseball, the Bakers. But they could make that chatter sound real to a pitcher they had never liked much. Over on the bench, Al Jordan, in uniform with his arm hanging useless, was yelling with the others. Flip tightened his jaw. This was for Al, too.

LAYDEN was at the plate, wagging his bat. He was a plate-crowding, annoying, cocky lead-off man. Gib gave the sign for an inside curve, just to Christianize him.

Flip nodded. The pitch broke prettily and Layden had to hit the dirt. The umpire said, "Stuhrike!"

Flip really never thought about anything after that, except to throw the ball where Gib wanted it. The old catcher squatted on sturdy piano-legs and called them. Flip just threw.

Layden hit a weak grounder to Tiny, who threw him out. Slope drove one toward second and Heck made a fine sharp play and got him. Green, burly and determined, lashed an outside curve to the bleachers, but Heenan, playing as per Bobble's instructions, tore it off the boards for the third out.

Again the Whales could do nothing with Slimbo's good throws. Flip patiently went back to the box. Fleeason was up, the great Jim Fleeason, hardest hitter in the game. The lean, graceful center fielder stood at the plate, loose as ashes. Gib called for corner balls, hoping against hope. Flip threw them with great care, bore down on every pitch.

He had one strange little pitch, which Gil called the "skitterball"—a sort of shy curve which acted something like the old spitball. It hurt his wrist a little to throw it and he used it seldom. He worked a three-and-two count on Fleeason now, and Gib called for the skitterball.

He threw it with all he had. He saw Fleeason lunge with his long ashen stick. He heard a loud, crunching sound.

It was sickening. The ball seemed lop-

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sided as it flew over Heenan's head, soaring up and out of the park, while Fleeson touched the bases and scored a run for the Bakers.

Gib waddled out to the mound. "Well, we ain't got to worry about him for a couple innings. The thing broke okay. He's just a murderer. You okay, Regan?"

"What more can he do to me?" asked Flip. "Let's work on those other bums."

"Yeah," said Gib. He peered at Flip. "Yeah—okay!"

Downey, another slugger, was up. He squirmed in the batter's box.

Gib worked on that anxiety, calling for slow stuff. Downey undercut one. Flip caught it without stirring.

Black came next and hit a towering foul, and Gib managed to run over and catch it almost in Mary O'Hara's lap, as Etherly ducked.

Flip looked vacantly at Mary. She seemed bright—brighter than usual. Flip shrugged and threw slow curves where Gib demanded them. Jake Horne took one of them without moving and the ump called it the third strike.

Flip went to the bench. He sipped some water. He did not look at Bobble. He knew how the old man was suffering from that homer Fleeson had hit. Harrigan was still going wonderfully for the Bakers. Slimbo was a real, sturdy pitching ace.

Then Flip was up. He went in there and stood watching Harrigan's speed with admiration. He struck out minus fanfare. He couldn't hit a bull in the tail with a number eight scoop.

But he could keep trying to pitch. He did not strike out anyone. He just kept the ball low and where Gib wanted it. The infielders got a lot of work. They proved letter perfect. When a man scratched on, Tiny and Heck would work a double play like Crossetti and Gordon in their prime.

Fleeson kept lacing it, but the slow stuff hampered him and he was out on

fly balls. The Bakers' vaunted power did not crash Flip from the mound through the fourth, fifth, sixth. He had expected to be long gone by the sixth.

Suddenly it was the seventh. Flip had to scan the scoreboard to believe it, but there it was, a big 1 for the Bakers, a goose egg for the Whales. He looked into the dugout, but Bobble was sitting tight, not giving signals.

He looked at the box containing Mary and Etherly. The owner was stroking his mustache, and Mary was mangling something in her hands.

Flip felt all right, he supposed. The Bakers, always wielding formidable bats, looked a little unhappy, too. They had been swinging like gates for the most part, trying to hit Flip's nothing ball. It was pretty silly, Flip thought, the way they grunted and sweated and the Whales put them out.

He threw the ball some more. Gib, growling and sweating, was making no mistakes. Flip just threw at the massive target the old catcher made. He was beginning to feel very good about Gib. The rugged veteran was handling the team afield quietly and untiringly.

The last Baker grounded to third and the seventh ended. Flip went into the bench and said, "Where's Al Jordan?"

"Sent him on an errand," Bobble said. "Can't you characters get one measly bingle for Flip?"

The middle of the batting order tried very hard. But Harrigan downed Decker, Zazalli and Raymond in order. Bobble said to Flip, "You stay with 'em. Just stick in there!"

Flip worked the eighth, getting McNulty, Harrigan and Layden without trouble. His arm still felt good. He came back to the bench and wondered. He missed Al and scowled. Bobble shouldn't have sent that dumb hillbilly on an errand. Al should be here for the finish. Al was his luck, sore arm or no.

It was the beginning of the ninth. Gib took his bowlegs and big stick to the

plate. For the first time that day Bobble called in the third-base coach and went himself to take over.

Slimbo did not seem the least bit weary, working on his one-run lead. Flip crouched in the on-deck box and stared. It was getting down to the real pay-off now. It was fish or cut bait, and he had a feeling he might not come to bat again.

Slimbo threw a contemptuous curve, a waste ball, having two and none on the desperate Warren. Gib strode into it like Colossus, meeting it at the road before it broke.

Flip jumped straight into the air, howling. The ball bounced in left field. Any other man would have had a triple. Gib puffed into second and pulled up.

Flip looked over to Bobble near third. He wanted to finish, but Bobble might figure he had to put in a pinch hitter. A single would tie it up . . .

Then he saw that Bobble was waving him to bat, and he suddenly understood. The manager was hoping the head of the list might manufacture that tying run, but he would need Flip to finish pitching, Flip took his bat to the plate. He had only to stand there until Slimbo struck him out, then Heck and Duke could take over.

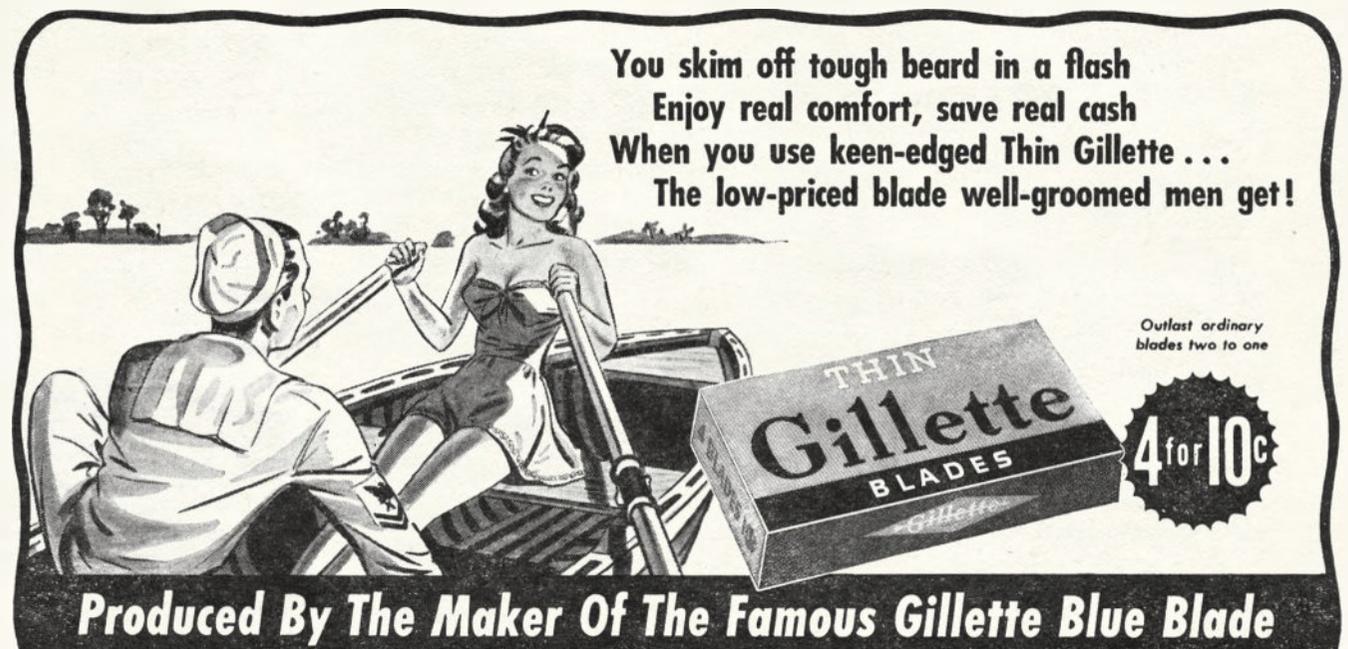
On the bench they were whooping it up like Comanches. The crowd was bel-lowing defiance. The Bakers were talking in nervous undertones to their pitcher, who seemed coolest of all.

Flip stood weak-kneed, fully conscious of the trust Bobble was putting in him. He stood while Slimbo threw two fast ones for strikes. Flip drew away, wiped perspiration from his hands, knocked imaginary mud from his spikes, adjusted his belt. The Bakers' backstop said, "Get up, you bum, you ain't gonna do nothin', anyhow!"

Flip said, "Like you, huh, McNulty? How many hits you get today?"

The umpire said, "Play ba-a-all!"

Flip went back in there. He saw Slim-



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Outlast ordinary blades two to one

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Produced By The Maker Of The Famous Gillette Blue Blade

bo get set for another curve. It was an established fact that Flip couldn't even see a curve ball, much less hit it. He drew back his bat. As the ball hung, twisting in mid-air before it broke, he closed his eyes, clenched his teeth and swung.

He was so amazed at the crack of bat on ball that he almost fell down instead of running like a madman for first. But his legs acted for him, and when he got the sign he turned and raced for second. He took a long slide, raised a cloud of dust, going past the base and having to grab for it to keep from going into left center field. He clung there, panting.

He heard Bobble actually laughing, with the score tied. He got up and humiliation bit into him. The ball was just coming in. He could have gone for third if he had not slid so uselessly. He dusted himself and they brought him a jacket to keep his precious arm warm. It was because he had never before in his career hit more than a single, and a double was a gift from heaven. He must have looked an awful fool.

But Bobble was waving his arms and giving the old "Eeyeah!" yell, and Heck Fyer was up. Flip hopped desperately back and forth, while Slimbo, with commendable poise, whiffed poor Heck. Slimbo, Flip thought humbly, was a truly great hurler.

Duke was next. He slashed violently at the first ball. It went down toward first and Flip took off like a runaway horse. He went into third, heard Bobble say, "Chance it, boy!"

The ball, taking a bad hop, got by Green for just a moment. Flip galloped, not gracefully, but wildly, down the base path to home plate. He saw McNulty, a big bruiser, set himself, mask off. The plate was blocked completely. He took

off into thin air and prayed desperately.

He came down feet first. He collided with something very sturdy. It went away from his spikes. Flip sat upon the rubber plate and peered at the umpire. That worthy spread two arms wide, palms down.

Flip sighed. "Oh, thank you, sir! Thank you!"

"Don't git smart," snarled the ump. "Okay, yer safe!"

Flip went wobbling in to the bench. They mobbed him. Al was back, sweating. They patted Flip and mussed his hair and swore at him gratefully. He rested, shaking like a leaf, now conscious of what had happened.

He had retained just so much energy. Unconsciously, perhaps, he had saved enough to get out the last three Bakers. Now it was gone. Now he was through.

The exertion and nervous strain of going around the bases to score the last run had finished him. His arms and legs were like string.

He held himself tight, elbows close to his heaving ribs, hoping the Whales would get more hits, gaining time. He might be able to come back if he could sleep. He fought it and himself. He reached the depths of humility, knowing he could not go out there and finish.

He had come so close, and yet was still so far away. He knew now that he would crawl out there and try it if he killed himself. He wanted more than anything in the world to beat the Bakers. If his arm fell off, he wouldn't care. He just wanted to finish.

Johnson and Heenan were out, stranding Duke, leaving the score two to one, with the Bakers in for last raps. Flip pushed himself off the bench and staggered forward, his face white. He drew

on his glove, working his fingers in it. Gib was putting on his shin guard. He started over to talk to Gib about it.

Someone touched him gently. He turned and saw that it was Bobble. Gib looked up, fastened the last buckle and grinned. He came over and the two oldsters patted him. "Take a shower, kid," said Bobble. "You pulled it out."

Flip said, "I have to finish—three more men . . ."

Bobble said a bit shamefacedly, "Al can take care of that. His arm—it's all right."

Al was already going to the mound. The sweat he had shown was from the bullpen, where he had been warming up. A light dawned on Flip.

He said, "You—you smart damned bums! You framed me!"

"Take your shower," Bobble urged. "Al will kill them for an inning. Sure we framed you. Go on. . ."

HE TURNED blindly away. He heard the clapping, thunderous, without cheers, then the stamping feet which is the age-old tribute of baseball crowds. He realized it was for him and turned his face up to them. He touched the peak of his cap and they roared, and then he ran for the tunnel beneath the stands.

He made the turn toward the dressing room, and Mary O'Hara stopped him with one hand on his chest. He leaned wearily against the wall, staring at her. A man came and fumbled with his hat and his mustache, and lo, it was Homer Etherly. Amazingly, he said, in little puffs of disconnected words, "Mary told me . . . Congratulations. Take everything back . . . Forman very smart, knew what he was doing . . . Fine spot for you next year—bigger contract, of course. Do congratulate you." Then he was gone.

Mary said, "It was my idea. If you didn't have Al behind you, it would make you try harder. And if you won it would make Bobble look so good Homer could never fire him. I mean, with you going back to school, of course, I was thinking of Bobble, mostly."

Flip said, "Nobody seems to be thinking of himself or herself today. Everybody talks and sounds like a stranger."

"Yes," said Mary. She seemed full of diffidence. "Well, what Homer meant by all those congratulations—you see, he kept asking me to marry him, just pestering me. And I wanted to stop him, so, sort of forgetting we were angry, I—well, I sort of told him . . . You see?"

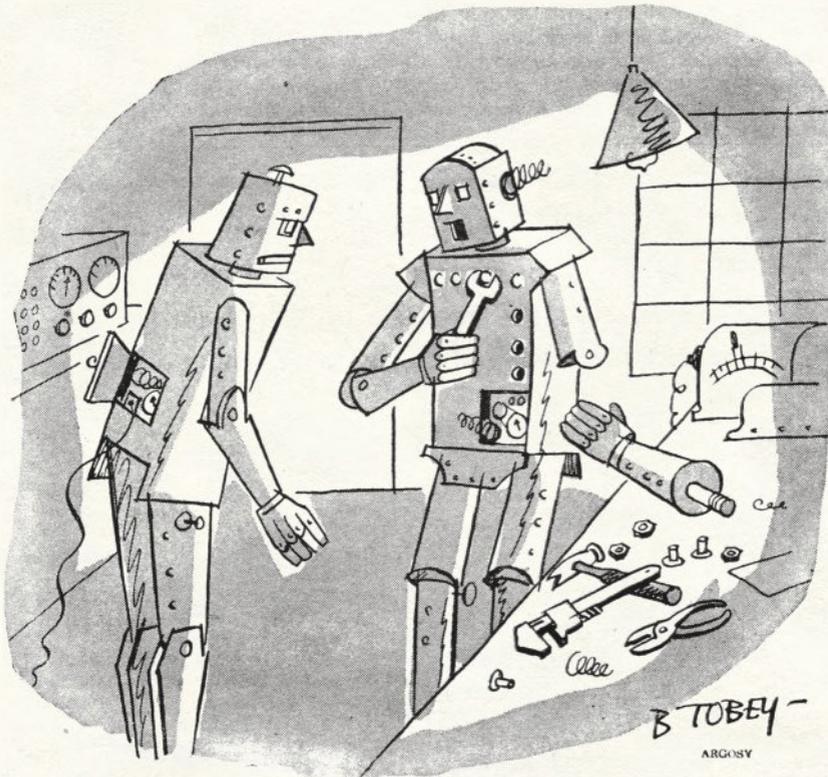
"Oh, yes, I see. Mighty big of you."

"But you were wrong, you and your logic, because when you didn't have Al, you did fine and you even made a hit, which I still can't believe."

"It's all right," said Flip. "I closed my eyes. Okay, getting back to your original proposal. Ahem. I'll break down. I'll marry you—on one condition!"

"Ohhhh?"

There was a roar from the crowd which could only mean that Al had set down the Bakers, one, two and three. Flip said rapidly, "That I study law nights—and play again for Bobble next season."



"I just want to see what makes me tick."

THE END



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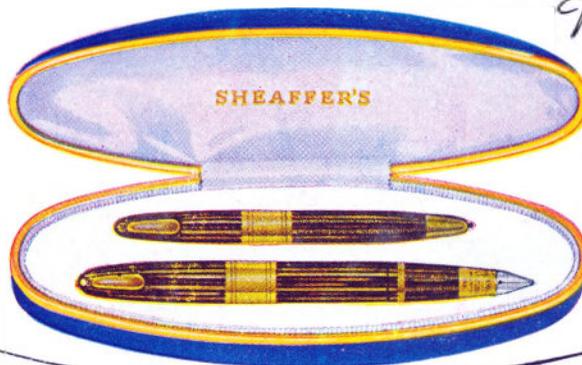


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