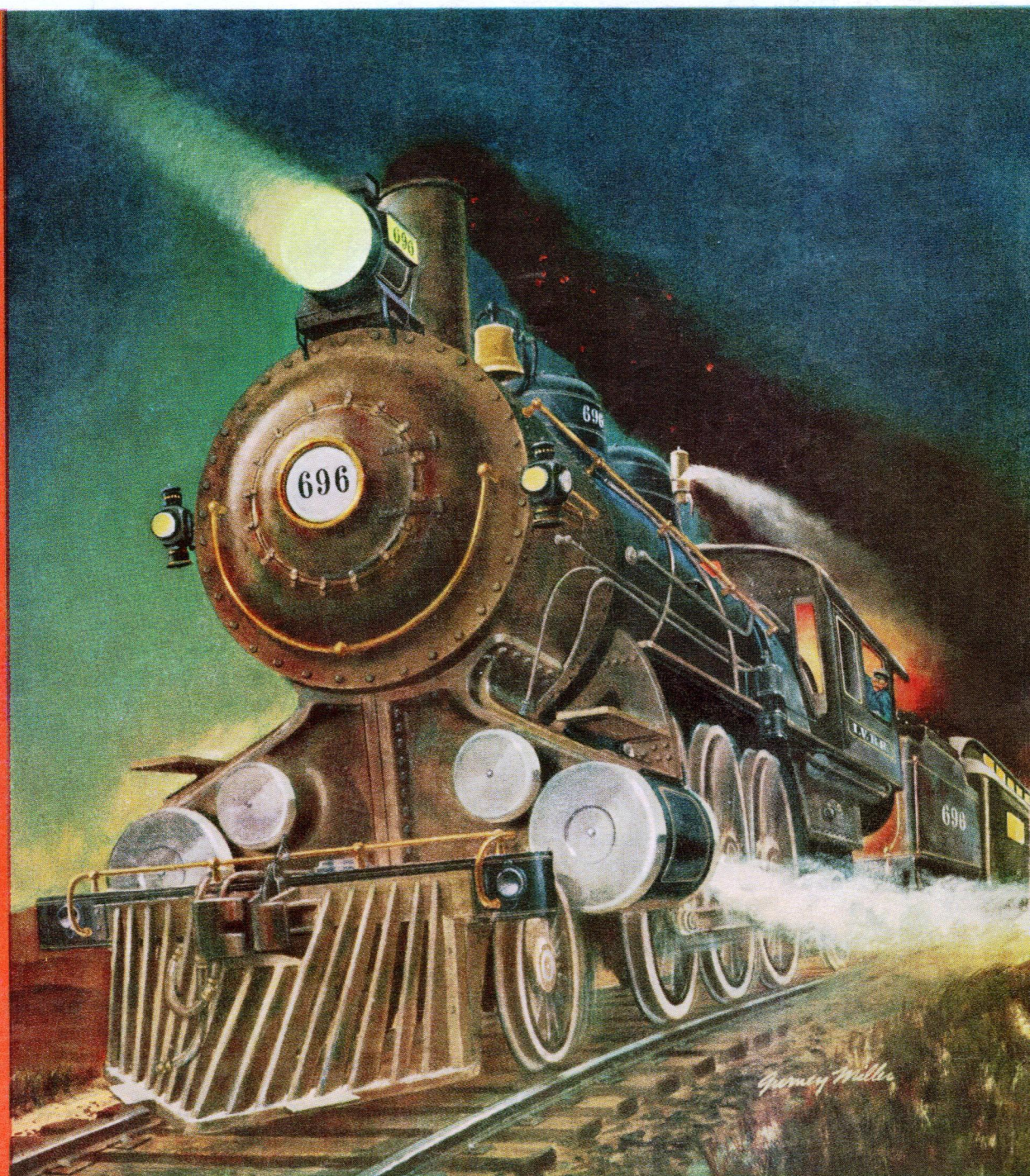
MEN!

WE CAN BUILD A SPACE SHIP —SHOULD WE?

Bluebook

NOVEMBER 1955 ★ 25¢



Even the Cops Don't Know the Traffic Laws
—page 14

★

Where To Get More Money for Your Money
—page 34

★

"Football Fans Are Crazy!"
—says L. A. Bowl mgr.

★

New Cure For Alcoholics?
—page 10

Complete Novel: *THE BIG IVY*
a fast-paced story of railroading's greatest days.

man into space

The man at left is to all intents and purposes about to enter space. He is being closed inside the world's only true space-ship simulator, a gadget in use at the School of Aviation Medicine, Randolph Air Force Base, Texas, and presided over by Dr. Hans-Georg Clamann (right) a German pioneer in the problems of breathing at high altitudes.

Current experiments are testing a human's ability to survive on a minimum of air at the various temperatures he'll find in outer space —from sub-zero cold to sub-tropic heat. Shortly these men plan to see if a tank of common green pond algae placed in the sealed chamber will provide enough oxygen to keep the man alive. If it does, this common algae may be one of the giant steps in man's march to the stars, for it promises not only to make oxygen out of the carbon dioxide he exhales, but to be a source of food (via its high protein content) and also to purify the waste products of his body.

This test chamber is only one more evidence of how closely men all over the country today are living with the reality of space travel. For more proof that this is no longer science fiction but practical fact see page 30.

Bluebook

NOVEMBER, 1955 Vol. 102, No. 1

Trademark Reg. U.S. Pat. Off.

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STORIES

NOVEL

FEATURES

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

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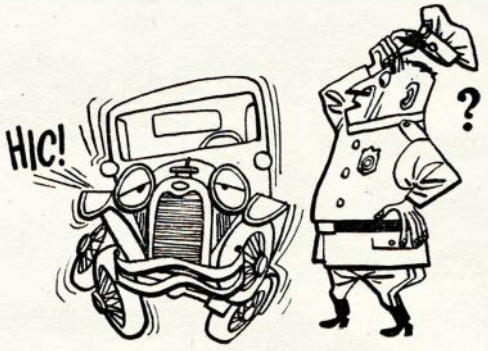
Pro and Con

What Gas Is Best?

With reference to the July letter from Albert M. Brown, I would like to back up our friend John Dunlavy on his opinion that whether high-test or premium gasoline is better all depends on the individual car and the driver's preferences. I've been an auto-engine mechanic for 15 years and I've seen some autos run fine on Ethyl or premium and then again I've seen some that wouldn't run worth a damn on it.

I have a 1951 auto now that will run two miles to the gallon more on cut-rate regular than on the highest-priced



or highest-test premium. I've made five trips to Kansas City, Mo., in six months and have proved it several times.

I know of a Model A that ran several miles on a quart of whiskey one time, but that's a shade costly. Also, there are some that will run on kerosene.

James D. Walz, *South Bend, Ind.*

Take us: we'll run like the dickens on kerosene, but a quart of whiskey just makes us want to lie down.—Ed.

Man of Distinction

Have just completed the wonderful job of reading your July issue. Especially impressed by your cover of the drinking buddies. We have to rely a great deal on magazines and papers that are brought in by sea and sometimes, if we're lucky, by air. It really is a treat to sit down with a gin and tonic in one hand and a Bluebook in the other and then get the feeling that you are getting to renew old acquaintance and have found a good drinking buddy. As the Reverend Ashby said, *Hamdullah!*

George E. Williamson
American Consulate General, Hong Kong

Two Wrights and Two Wrongs Are All Right

Three months ago, I asked my husband to bring me a copy of *Redbook* from town. He brought me a Bluebook. I was irked, thinking he had bought it for himself, as it certainly looked like a man's magazine. So I didn't read it. The next month he forgot again, and again came home with Bluebook. I resigned myself, and began to read, and was I surprised! Pleasantly so! It's definitely a good magazine for the whole family. I guess you know I went back to the issue of the month before and read it too. It will be a "regular" from now on.

Mrs. Ray Wright, *Route 1, Kosse, Texas*

Hope you'll also continue to be a "regular" for that fine little magazine Redbook, *which does try hard.*—Ed.

Saucers in Pennsylvania

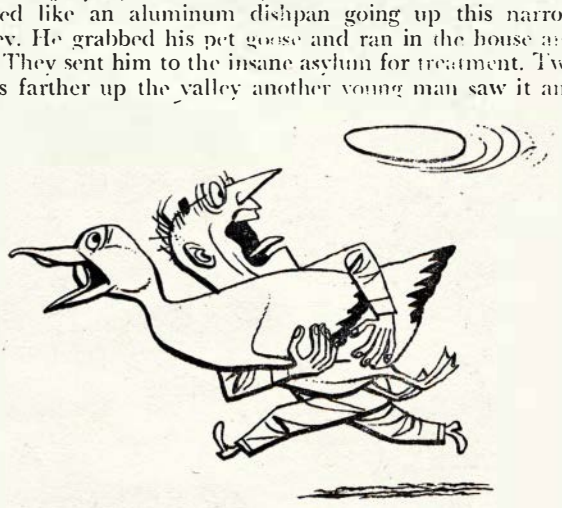
In the July Bluebook there was an interesting article on flying saucers ("Who Believes in Flying Saucers?" by Paul C. Benard). Up until May, 1951, I did not believe in them. Then a neighbor who lived half a mile away called me saying that four flying objects to the southward were leaving a vapor trail in the sky.

I saw them, then called the editor of *The Daily Record* at Renovo, 10 miles farther south. He got the degrees of height from there and I took the degrees from here. The different degrees between Hammersley Fork and Renovo showed the objects were 61 miles high and over the Mason-Dixon line.

Back in 1899 I was watching small clouds when two objects going from east to west crossed the sky leaving vapor trails. They were above the clouds. There were no jets then.

In 1952 an object leaving a vapor trail flew from south to north directly over Renovo. I took a sighting from Hammersley Fork which gave the object a height of 563¼ miles. No jet flies that high.

On July 6, 1940 a neighbor's hired man saw what looked like an aluminum dishpan going up this narrow valley. He grabbed his pet goose and ran in the house and hid. They sent him to the insane asylum for treatment. Two miles farther up the valley another young man saw it and



told his wife. She told him he was crazy so he took his rifle and blew his head off.

A friend was on a trip in Arizona when a saucer circled his car and he got a movie of it at 200 feet. He only got to show it once when two Army officers came and confiscated it. Only a few got to see the picture.

N. M. Cranmer, *Hammersley Fork, Pa.*

Bluebook *will pay $10,000 for a photograph of a flying saucer from outer space that, in the opinion of the editors, is both genuine and artistic.*—Ed.

More on Amphibi-Con

I was fascinated by your article, "The Small Boat That's Big" (August). My wife and I have, for some time, been looking for a boat of this type in a kit form, but as yet we have been unsuccessful in finding one as versatile as the Amphibi-Con.

I would appreciate it very much if you could tell me where I might get further information concerning this boat.

Dallas E. Baird, *Lowry AFB, Colo.*

Write to E. Farnham Butler, Mt. Desert Yacht Yard, Inc., Mt. Desert, Maine.—Ed.

Cast for The Cruel Tower

My husband has been buying Bluebook for at least the last 10 years since we've been married and ever so often he'll hand it over and tell me to "read this story." In the August issue it was "Big Boys Don't Cry" and "The Cruel Tower." I enjoyed them both, but we got so engrossed in "The Cruel Tower" that we could just visualize it in the movies, and we started talking about who we would cast in it. This was our pick:

Lancaster and Russell?

Tom would be Burt Lancaster.
Stretch—maybe Edward G. Robinson.
Casey someone like J. Carrol Naish.
Jane Russell got my husband's vote for Babe.

The story is so suspenseful, I'm sure it would be a success.

Mrs. R. E. S. *(No address)*

As we went to press, several movie companies were interested in "The Cruel Tower," William Brown Hartley's novel about steeplejacks.—Ed.

Glued-Up vs. Plywood

In your August issue ("What's New and Good") you indicate that our Glued-Up Lumber may provide competition for plywood. While this is true, the volume of Glued-Up at the present time is such that this competition, at least in point of volume, will not be serious.

The significant point about Glued-Up Lumber is that it permits the lumber manufacturer better to serve his customers by supplying widths which might not be available in solid lumber.

T. L. O'Gara, *Weyerhaeuser Sales Co. St. Paul, Minn.*

Rusty Reverend?

I agree with the Reverend Aylett Ashby (Pro and Con, July): Bluebook does improve as the years go by. But I believe his Arabic is a bit rusty. *"Hamdullah"* is not quite right for "God be praised." It should be *"Al hamdu lillaah."* He left out *"al"* (the) and a syllable. Literally translated it means "the praise to God."

Leland L. Howard, *Dhahran, Saudi Arabia*

Dusty Answers

Mr. Lagemann in his "Man Against the Dust Bowl" (August) makes the mistake of ending his article right after he starts it when he writes: ". . . the sun came through again . . . as the car passed through an area of rangeland where the unploughed sod still held tight against the wind." And the author might have added that we need the wheat farmer Lee Roy Coffey is trying to grow like we need a hole in the head.

Charles Elmer, *Painesville, O.*

Sure. But farmers have to make a living too, don't they? —Ed.

"Man Against the Dust Bowl" brought back memories of the dust bowl era of the early '30's. Lee Roy Coffey's story of the man being hit by a drop of rain and having a bucket of dust poured on him to bring him to, was one of many such stories going the rounds at that time.

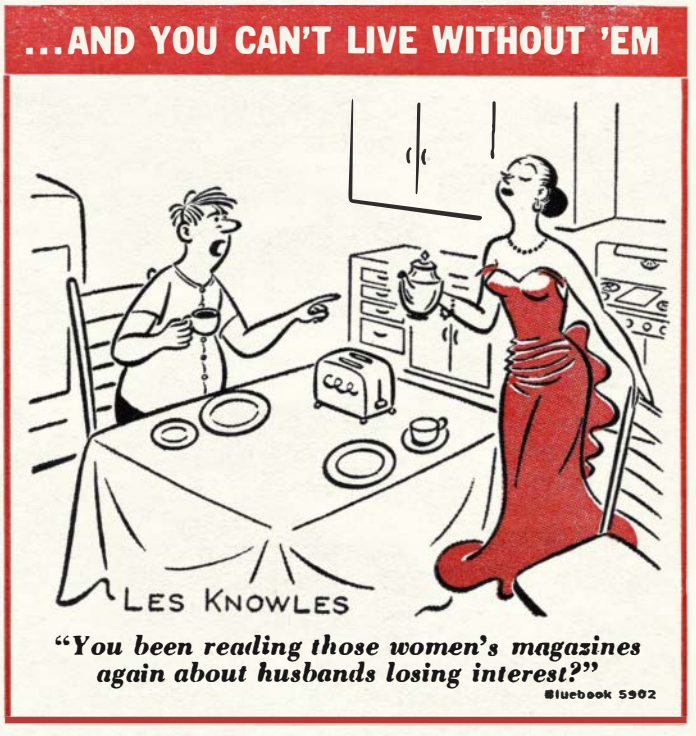
Things were so bad in the '30's that many a prairie dog burrowed up through a duster trying to find clean air and then got caught up a tree when the dust slackened. I have a photo of a "dog" doing just this.

Lived in the Roswell area and it got to be a game to taste the dust and tell what state it was from.

Worked on the old *Morning Dispatch* and got a call from the chap at the Albuquerque desk stating that a heavy duster had blown away his garden and giving me the general dope. After a bit of figuring I went home, set up a couple of tennis nets, and lo and behold, after the right interval I felt some bumps and pulled down the nets. I had his garden—minus a few cabbage plants—and replanted same.

L. E. Fay, *Jefferson, Iowa*

Address all letters to: The Editor, Bluebook Magazine, 230 Park Avenue, New York 17, N.Y.



THE HEAD MAN

BY OREN ARNOLD

As the head man in a family of individualists, I am respectfully listened to when I issue pompous orders, then ignored while each member goes right ahead using his own good judgment. The first keeps up my essential pride in myself; the second keeps me even more proud of them.

•

"A dollar doesn't do as much for me as it used to," said Ernie Douglas while stargazing on my patio last night. "But then, I don't do as much for a dollar as I used to, either."

•

Football and marriage are much alike. To succeed in either requires reasonable training, continual planning, forceful action, smooth teamwork. Either one of them can improve your health and happiness for a lifetime, or leave you painfully maimed.

•

Autumn leaves should be left on the lawn. They disintegrate in nature's beautiful way, enriching the soil so that grass will be greener next year. But just you *try* to convince your wife of this.

•

My good wife was taking 12 neighborhood kids to the park in our station wagon. When she almost ran a red light, a policeman yelled, "Lady, don't you know when to stop?" She glanced back at her 12 charges and answered, "I'll have you know they are not all mine!"

•

If you don't like the job you have, Mister, relax and stop worrying. Somebody else will have it soon.

•

Heard a radio lecturer saying that "items developed in the home by husband and wife working together as a team are invariably better than those produced by either one working alone!"

Sure thing. Children, for instance.

•

"Insomnia," reports Glen Jones, a new father, "is a vicious and contagious malady transmitted from babies to parents."

•

Our family bank account is low this month, but maybe we are getting ahead anyway. Old Sam Butler used to say that all progress is based on man's eternal desire to live beyond his income.

•

Thanksgiving is a day on which everybody in the family can impose on Mother and everybody, including her, will love it.

•

"Be thankful for the troubles of your job," counsels wise neighbor John W. Ford. "They provide about half your income. Because if it were not for the things that go wrong and the difficult people you have to deal with, someone could be found to handle your job for half what you are being paid."

•

Gentlemen, now is the time to order your Christmas cards to avoid the last-minute rush. And for Heaven's sake, do it. Then the printer can get your order out of the way by the time I get mine placed about December 18.

•

Did you guys hear about the new hobby of the governor of Texas? He collects miniatures, and he started with Rhode Island.

Be wary if you repeat that, though. I told it to a stranger who outweighed me about 70 pounds, and he turned out to be a native of Providence! Cost me some fast conversation and a set-up of drinks.

•

The way I figure it, a smart father will be good enough for his daughters to be proud of him, but not so good they can't find better men to marry.

•

Those big shots in Washington have one great advantage over us big shots in the home: whenever somebody asks *them* an embarrassing question, they can evade it by swelling up and saying, "No comment."

•

"He's so conceited," snapped my high-school sophomore about that new boy making up to her, "he'd walk down Lover's Lane by himself!"

•

Last Thanksgiving 10-year-old Doff Dana, Jr., shamed his pop. Saying the prayer at our two-family dinner, Junior concluded thus: ". . . and Heavenly Father, we thank Thee that America is not as bad off this fall as Daddy said it was going to be when he was paying taxes last spring."

•

No matter what snide comments your wife makes, Neighbor, do not endanger your health. Obviously it is too cold and damp now to risk repairing the garage roof you found it too hot to repair in July.

•

"Felt horrible when I woke up this morning," Bill Sykes groused on our bus going to work. "I'd had a few drinks at the party, and I felt grand when I went to bed. It was the sleep that did it."

Editor's Note:

One day last July Mrs. Frances Fishback, a slight, badly-crippled woman of 49, was sitting on the steps of her house in New York City when an ambulance, three police officers and a Welfare Department investigator drove up. They escorted Mrs. Fishback into the ambulance and carted her off to Bellevue Hospital for observation as a mental patient.

The thing that makes this incident worthy of note is its similarity to the thing that happened a couple of years before and some 1500 miles away to Major Charles H. Terry, AUS-Ret. Major Terry tells you about it in all its shocking detail on page 20. Thus it's only fair that we tell you a little about Terry.

He was born in Iowa in the '80's alongside a reservation of the Sac and Fox Indians and he quickly found that learning to swim, fish, trap, ride horseback and shoot bows and arrows was a lot more fun than learning from books. Things went on like this until he went to military school near Chicago, at which time the Army bug bit him and he won an appointment to West Point, class of '06. But after two years the monotony got him and he dropped out; whereupon his father dropped him.

He became a blacksmith's helper and ham-and-eggs fighter around Chicago for a while, then he inherited the family lumber business. He ran that until the first World War put him in uniform again. When it was over he banged around Europe for a few years, was one of the original members of Paris Post 1, American Legion, and finally came home to work all over the country as an industrial engineer. World War II put him back in uniform again until someone caught up with his real age (he coyly won't tell it, but he's probably in his seventies) popped him into a hospital, shipped him home (from North Africa), and retired him in West Palm Beach, where his wife was already living. He was doing "white collar" work in construction—estimating, drafting, inspecting—when the events he writes about occurred. This, as he reports in his article, cost him his job.

Wasn't daunted, though. He immediately enrolled at the University of Miami and spent three intensive years studying psychology, drama, creative writing and French literature, got an over-all "B" average and was elected to a French honorary society. (He was living on a small pension.) Then he bought a two-acre piece of land in Lantana, Fla., planted it with pineapples, papayas and avocadoes and because it was thus a "plantation" he got the banks to give him a mortgage which enabled him to build himself a house. That's where he's now living contentedly and busily with his wife.

And don't let us hear any of you lugs complaining that you're "too old" for something you'd like to do.

If you've been paying attention you will have noticed that pretty often we run a column-or-so feature called Wordly Wise, which tells you where familiar words and expressions come from. Guy who writes it is a college teacher from Nashville, Tenn., named Webb Garrison. Now he's pulled together a whole bunch of such items from this and several other magazines, and shoved them between hard covers in a book called "Why You Said It." It was published in September by the Abington Press, Nashville. So if you like that sort of thing, go buy a copy.

The picture hereabouts is of a football fan who is obviously sitting in the empty stands in the middle of July waiting for the season to start. This, of course, makes him crazy and it is no coincidence at all that this one happens to be the co-author of the article "Football Fans Are Crazy," which you ought to look at when you get to page 6.

Charles Francis

Well, this particular riotous rooter is Charles Francis, who insists that not only football followers are goofy. Viz: When he was interviewing Bill Nicholas, manager of the Coliseum, the phone rang. (Actually it had been ringing repeatedly, but how, in a case like this, do you differentiate *the* ring from all the others?) Nicholas answered and it was an agitated customer who insisted his year-old daughter had just consumed his priceless, finish-line ticket for the annual Coliseum Relays. What was he to do?

This was not a happenstance that would floor a man of Nicholas' experience. "Come on along without the ticket," he answered promptly. "Only be sure to bring the baby."—A.F.

Football Fans

Spence Air Surveys

BY BILL NICHOLAS

General Manager, Los Angeles Coliseum

As told to Charles Francis

This hardy leather-lunged species who wouldn't know a rain-check if he saw one makes his baseball cousin seem like a tradition-bound conservative

IT HAPPENED at last year's football game between U.C.L.A. and Southern California. This game between the traditional crosstown rivals is always one of the season's biggest.

At the half, U.C.L.A. was leading 7-0. But late in the third quarter, Southern Cal was on the Bruin's eight-yard line, first down, goal-to-go for the tying touchdown. At that moment there was an emergency call to get an ambulance to Tunnel 3 on the double. A woman was about to have a baby.

The ambulance arrived and the expectant mother was whisked to a hospital with only minutes to spare. When asked the next day why she waited so long before calling for an ambulance, she replied:

"I've been an U.C.L.A. fan all my life and I just knew if I left, those darned Trojans would score."

That's a football fan for you. The baseball fan may have a reputation as the most rabid and eccentric spectator in the world of sport, but in my opinion, for sheer goofiness and dedication, the gridiron follower has the diamond addict outclassed by a month of Saturday afternoons.

I probably should admit from the start that I am a bit biased in the matter. That's because for 25 years now I have been observing the strange and uninhibited ways of football fans as general manager of two of America's largest and most famous stadiums—Pasadena's Rose Bowl and the Los Angeles Memorial

Are Crazy . . .

Coliseum. In that time, I've come to two conclusions about the strange breed of pennant-waving partisans which jams the nation's stadiums every weekend from September through November: (1) They are all just a little bit crazy and (2) they enjoy every minute of it.

Few peope realize the mass idiosyncrasies of the football faithful. For example, did you know that the more excited fans get, the more they eat? My records show that our concessions sell an average of $8,000 more hot dogs, pop, candy bars and other refreshments during a close game than during a dull one.

Close games affect excitable Old Grads in still another way. After nibbling all the hot dogs they can hold, they try to calm their nerves by shredding game programs, newspapers, candy wrappers, ticket stubs and everything else they can get their hands on. A nip-and-tuck struggle, where the lead changes hands three or four times, will raise our after-game clean-up load from a normal 10 tons to 15, an increase of 50 percent.

Cleaning up a huge stadium like the Coliseum, by the way, is no half-hour job. It takes a crew of 100 trained men from seven to eight hours to sweep out its 30 miles of aisles and brush off its 101,528 permanent seats. Since we are the home stadium for three football teams—U.C.L.A., Southern Cal, and the Los Angeles Rams—our custodians frequently have to work through the night to get ready for another capacity crowd the following day.

At the Rose Bowl, which I managed from 1930 to 1946 before coming to the Coliseum, we had headaches of such magnitude only once a year—on New Year's Day. But there were other worries you don't have during the regular season. One of these was the post-game stampede to dismantle the losing team's goal posts. A mob of rooters would swarm onto the field and practically dismember each other in a frenzied attempt to take home a souvenir of the big game.

We didn't mind building new goals every year but we lived in dread of the first time someone would be injured in the spirited melee. An obvious way out, of course, would have been to install steel goal posts like those in use at most of today's stadiums. Still, this seemed a pretty unimaginative answer to the problem. Besides, it would put an end to one of football's finest old traditions.

The perfect solution came to me one night at a movie when I watched two comedians bust up a roomful of "breakaway" furniture over each other's head without hurting either one of them. The next day I had Rose Bowl carpenters construct goal posts on the same principle. They were fashioned from

¾-inch box wood, leaving a hollow center, were painted white, and put in place.

Those of you who watched the Rose Bowl game on television last year and saw the victorious Ohio State rooters crumple the University of Southern California goal posts like so many match sticks know how

. . . Continued on page 104


Dom Lupo

THE PRICE OF A TIN STAR

By RICHARD WORMSER

All John Torrey wanted was to be friends with his town and to have a little time to hunt. But while he was away somebody shot his boss, the Sheriff.

UP WHERE John Torrey had been all week, the trees had been pines and spruces and mountain mahogany, and these did not shed their leaves. As he rode down the mountain, he came into thickets of dead-oak, flaming red from the angry frosts of early fall; and then the trail descended until, as he topped rises, he could see the smoke of the town.

In here the aspens had been barely touched by frost, so that they had gone golden instead of red. John Torrey began to whistle as he rode along, riding easy and slow because of the huge weight behind his saddle. Sometimes he slid out of the saddle, and led his pony up the steeper rises, the horse blowing at the back of his neck.

He was very happy. And as aspen gave way to the chaparral that ringed the town proper, his whistling burst out into full, unmelodious song.

John Torrey was, at the moment, perhaps the most heavily-armed man in the territory. Under his left leg on the saddle was his 30-06, with which he had shot the deer that stretched across the cantle—biggest deer ever shot in these mountains.

Under his right leg was a fine twelve-gauge shotgun, and this had accounted for the bag of quail on his pommel, for the four cottontails, and for the pair —first ever seen around here—of grouse.

At his belt was his .44 and the only reason it was there was because he was deputy sheriff and people expected the gun to be there; it hadn't been out of its holster since he'd left town at the beginning of the week.

Now he was passing Wetwash Hill, and that was the beginning of town. He straightened in the saddle, and wiped the grin off his face. That deer would just sort of grow on people; looked like any other deer till you glanced twice and saw its size. Why, it would scale out at over 225 pounds. . . .

First person he passed was old Bill Lowe, who bought hides from the shirttail ranchers down the valley, and had a place almost up Wetwash Hill. Bill was driving his old spring wagon, hunched up in the seat, the way he did when he was out buying, looking like a poor, sick old man. Old Bill had the strength to load bales of skins all day, and the money to buy them, but it was his way to look measly.

But not with John Torrey, to whom he'd given rides on his wagon 10 years ago, when John was just pushing twelve. Always had a smile for John. Usually. Today he didn't.

John called: "Hi, there, Bill," and moved in the saddle so the cantle-load could be seen. Bill said: "Well, John, got a deer, I see," and drove on, hunched over, clucking to his team.

John stared after him, and then shrugged. Old Bill seemed to be coming down with something.

But then he passed Annie and Mike Dahl. Last month, when some kids had stolen Annie's wash off the line, John had deputized the case right out, and recovered the laundry before the sun set.

They didn't even look at him as they passed, and that really startled him. Usually they were a nuisance, fawning on him and his badge, and the free meat he handed around when he'd been hunting.

IT was that way all into town. People he'd known since he was knee-high to the town pump suddenly couldn't remember him. People he'd done favors for suddenly had dropped their gratitude into the canyon. He was just plain nothing to nobody in his own home town.

He pulled up on the street between the hotel and the Combes General Store. Mr. Combes was tacking

. . . Continued on page 97

Erik Collin—Pix

An English doctor is getting startling results with a simple technique. On the theory that most alcoholics drink because their bodies, not their minds, demand it, he uses an inexpensive chemical to remove the craving.

New Cure for Alcoholics?

BY WILLIAM B. HARTLEY

TWO SISTERS CAME to a doctor's London office with a desperate story. They lived with their brother in a remote Scottish valley. Before the war, it had been a happy existence—farming, fishing and hunting. All three were teetotalers.

During the war, however, the brother had enjoyed male companionship in the Army and had learned to drink. Upon his return from service he developed the habit of walking five miles to the nearest pub—where he'd proceed to drink until he'd have to be dragged home, a sodden mass. There would be contrition and promises; then he'd be back at the pub again.

The doctor treated him for a week, using a preparation which will be discussed at length in this article. At the end of the remarkably brief period, the man was apparently cured. He continued to visit the pub for masculine conversation, but he drank tomato juice.

One day he shocked his sisters by announcing that he was buying the pub. They promptly phoned the doctor and screamed for aid. To their astonishment, they were advised not to interfere with the purchase. As of late November, 1954, the veteran and his sisters were living happily above the rooms in which liquor is sold. The man still doesn't drink.

This dramatic case is only one of many in the files of Dr. John Yerbury Dent, distinguished editor of the *British Journal of Addiction*, practicing physician and author of several books.

Many doctors, especially general practioners, hesitate to treat the alcoholic. They assume they can't cure the compulsive drinker or even help him, and know that the alcoholic often resents a true diagnosis.

Dr. Dent has an answer for this.

It's an inexpensive drug called apomorphine hydrochloride that can be administered by the general practitioner with promise of at least semi-permanent cure for the alcoholic.

The British doctor's results indicate that American physicians may be overlooking an important aid for the tortured alcoholic, one which might at last be a partial or complete solution to the problems faced by your unfortunate family member, your friend—or yourself.

There are 60 million users of alcohol in the United States, of which an estimated four million are alcoholics. Assuming each alcoholic has at least two close relatives and one close friend, a minimum of 16 million persons are affected directly or indirectly by alcoholism —more than the population of New York State.

Unlike many other doctors, Dr. Dent holds that alcoholism has a physical cause. He is convinced that alcohol brings about important changes in the body chemistry of the compulsive drinker which can be brought back to normal by treatment with a chemical: apomorphine.

Dr. Dent has little use for Alcoholics Anonymous or for the psychiatric approach to the compulsive drinker. He says rather sharply, "You don't send the diabetic to a psychiatrist."

He claims apomorphine is safe, although he adds that there have been a few deaths during treatment. But he contends that they were due to causes other than apomorphine. Apomorphine cleanses the stomach and small intestine of alcohol, just as it does when used as an emetic in poisoning cases. But there is a further virtue, according to Dent.

In the base of the brain, about two inches back from the bridge of your nose, there is a tiny area—not much larger than the end of your thumb—called the hypothalamus. Its function is to regulate the chemical balances in the body.

In some people, alcohol interferes with the chemical regulating centers of the hypothalamus, and the blood becomes abnormal. But in the alcoholic, for reasons not yet clearly understood, this results in a craving for more alcohol, perhaps as a subconscious urge toward putting himself to sleep, in which condition the hypothalamus seems to do its best work.

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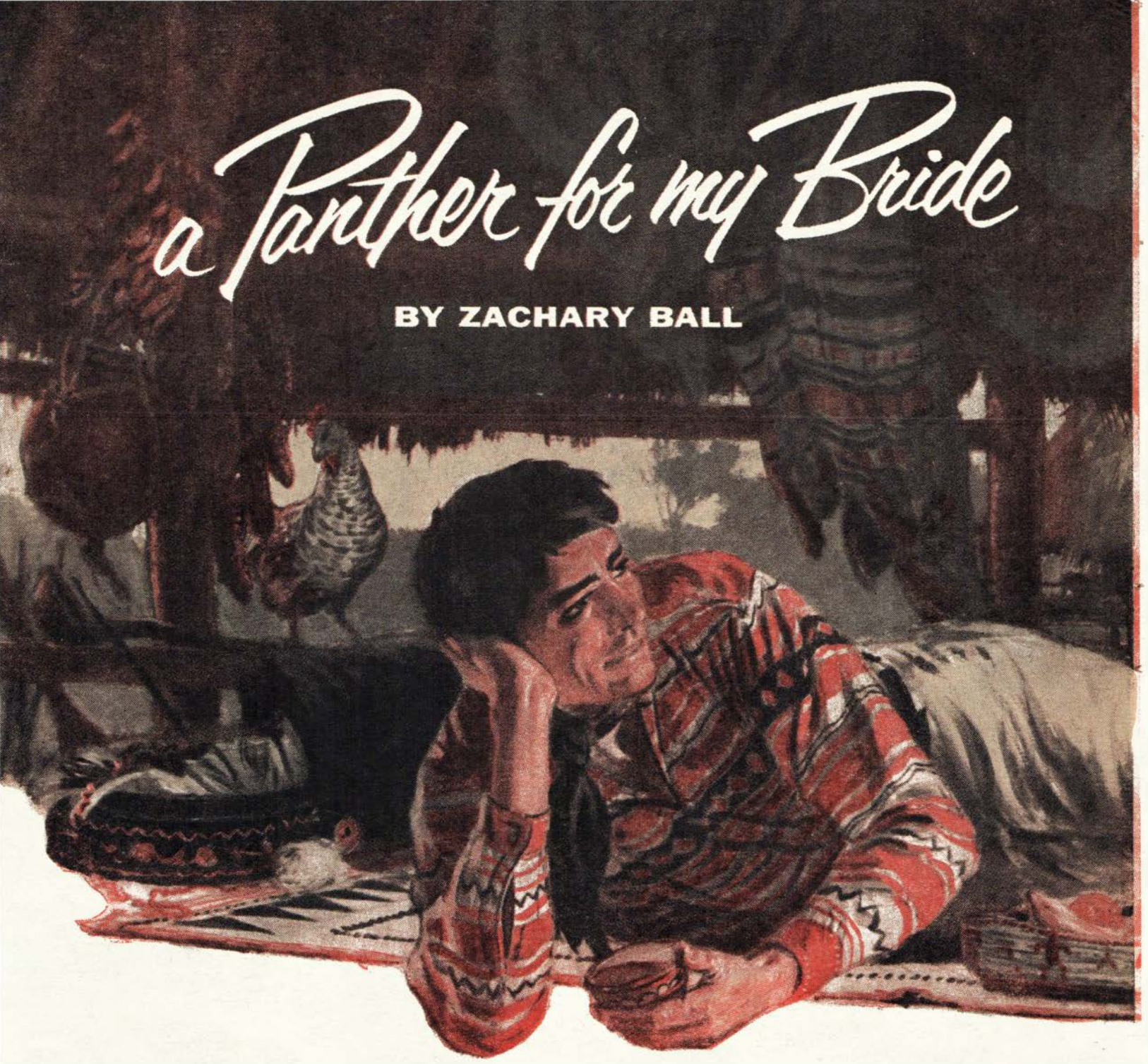
a Panther for my Bride

BY ZACHARY BALL



The wife of Joey Billy, he boasted, would be the only woman of all the Seminoles with a white panther skin on her floor. He was right—but not in the way he thought.

THE OBUNGAU HAUJO dance came abruptly to an end, and the Big Cypress Green Corn Festival was over for another year. The men who had taken part in the final ritual now stood about in groups, sleeving their faces and letting the night breeze cool them. Seminole mothers were already herding their children toward the river and the canoes, and young men and women were saying their hurried *awlyska-shaws* and promising to see one another again soon. In a short while all of the clans would be on their way back to their villages.

A low-hung full moon was lighting the clearing

like dawn, and Joey Billy stood in the shadow of a cocoplum tree and watched the crowd of boys and girls over by the dying ceremonial fire.

At last, he thought truculently, Storm Dixie is going to open his gift package. Now maybe I can get a word with Mary.

He watched the giggling, excited girls crowding around the straight-backed Storm Dixie and wondered why women would get that excited over a paper-wrapped parcel.

Delighted squeals burst from the girls as Storm Dixie held up a length of bright-colored calico. After they had all fingered the cloth and expressed their admiration in caught-breath exclamations, Storm Dixie folded the material and draped it around Mary Chokfee's shoulders.

Mary clutched the calico about her and turned this way and that for the other girls to admire it. The excited sounds the girls made burned in Joey Billy's ears, and jealous rage raked his brain to a hot rawness. To get away! To get away! Never to look on any of them again, not even Mary! He pushed away from the tree and started toward the river.

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CARS:

Even The Cops Don't Know Traffic Laws

BY DAVID DRESSLER

The author, a noted criminologist, traveled through 18 states for nine months, never violated a law and got tickets all the way. So what chance have you and I got?

Illustrated by Stuart Graves

LAST YEAR, I got a traffic ticket for *obeying* the law. It set me thinking and in the next nine months, my work had me traveling 100 to 300 miles daily, in 18 states. I had familiarized myself with local regulations and drove 100% according to law, even when it made little sense. I got as fine a collection of tickets as you ever saw. For instance:

In Los Angeles, at 5:05 P.M. I approached a teeming intersection near a manufacturing plant. Signaling a left turn, I did what Vehicle Code Section 551 said, and yielded to all approaching vehicles (1) within the intersection or (2) so close thereto as to constitute an immediate hazard.

I yielded and yielded.

The law said, "After a left-turning vehicle has yielded, then the approaching vehicles must yield the right of way to the vehicle making the left turn." Good!

Not a vehicle deferred to me.

I inched into the intersection until my right fender scraped the bumper of the car in the inside opposing lane. There I stopped, because the cars to the right of *that* driver wouldn't slow down. When it looked as if I'd be there come Michaelmas, I pressed my horn, bore in farther, tied up two opposing lanes. Between left-turners behind, and opposing cars ahead, I had me the neatest traffic snarl in decades. Horns roared, men yelled, whistles blew, out of somewhere a motorcycle cop darted. He gesticulated, cleared a path, escorted me to a side street, and presented me with a ticket—for obstructing traffic.

"I had the right of way!" I spluttered. "How many cars did I have to wait for?"

"Mister," the officer sighed, "if I knew that, life on a motorcycle would be a pleasure. You have to use your head and do the best you can."

And that, I discovered, is just about the size of it. The laws won't help you much; they're such a mish-mash of obsolete restrictions, unrealistic rules and contradictory interpretations that often even the smartest cop in the world can't figure out what they're supposed to mean. One driving maneuver will get an O.K. today and the siren tomorrow. Two officers will have totally different ideas of what's right in a given situation. So will two judges. I got into trouble in New York, Cedar Rapids, Knoxville, Miami, St. Louis and half a dozen other cities. As I did that afternoon in Los Angeles I made a left turn by the book and got a nod, I made exactly the same turn later and got a ticket.

Sgt. Frank Crewe, Traffic Education Section, Los Angeles Police Department, asserts, "I'd add one big

word to the left-turn law: COURTESY. That's the best answer to the problem."

Driver courtesy is certainly necessary, but it can't do the whole job.

You are in a two-way, three-lane street, the center lane for passing. You want to turn left. Do you do so from the center lane, or the one you are in? Observed by police in Los Angeles, I turned from the center lane a dozen times without calamity. I did it again and got a ticket. I argued the case in court and won. Weeks later, at the same intersection, I turned left from the right-hand lane. The same officer ticketed me. I won that one, too! Next time I passed, I asked the policeman what was the law.

"Jeepers!" he groaned. "I thought it was the right lane. The judge beat me. I changed to the center. The judge beat me. So far as I'm concerned, mister, there isn't any law!"

A police captain said the turn is made from the right lane. A Motor Vehicle Bureau inspector said

"I found that police sometimes want you to violate the law."

it was properly made from the center. A captain of the State Highway Patrol asserted Vehicle Code Section 526B established a driver might use either lane, whichever is safer at the moment.

How does a driver know which interpretation of a law holds on which block of which city? He doesn't.

In Chicago, I wrestled with the amber-light rule. State law seemed to say the driver must stop on amber unless so doing would endanger traffic behind. But individual officers told me amber meant: (1) The light is going to turn red. Hurry across! Don't get caught in the intersection. (2) Don't proceed unless stepping on the brake might cause a collision behind you. (3) STOP! No matter what!

Which didn't confuse me quite so much as did my experience outside Sacramento, California. Passing through a small town, I approached a sign proclaiming: SCHOOL ZONE. According to law, I must go 15 mph during recess, while children were entering or leaving school, or while the playground was in use. It was 9 P.M. Buildings and grounds were dark. I didn't reduce speed. ZZZZZZZ! Prowl car. Ticket.

"That school was closed tight as a drum!" I snapped.

"Still a school zone, ain't it?" the cop snapped back.

This seemed to me an interpretation flatly contradicting the law itself.

Leaving town, muttering under my breath, I took the highway for Roseville. Two hundred feet ahead, my headlights caught a sign: END 25 MILE ZONE. I speeded up. ZZZZZZZZ! Sheriff's car. Ticket. You don't speed up when you see the sign, only when you've cleared it.

That reminded me of my conversation with Judge Martin DeVries, of Long Beach Municipal Court. He told of a police officer who cited a driver for failing to honor a STOP sign. The motorist insisted he had stopped. Ah, but, the officer testified, the gentleman stopped eight feet from the corner. The law specified three. Technically, he was correct, Judge DeVries explained. The driver should stop at a distance of three feet between the front of his car and the outer curb. Got a tape measure?

It does not follow, from my experience, that there is no sane enforcement. I cite the exceptions, where obeying regulations led to variable treatment. But there were enough exceptions to spotlight unmistakably the fact that our laws are vague, unrealistic and difficult for any officer to interpret.

But inconsistent interpretations weren't the only things I discovered. I found that *in some situations two contradictory laws apply. You must violate one to obey the other.* How do you handle that?

The scene was Ventura Boulevard, Sherman Oaks, California. Time: Rush hour, cars hitting the speed limit, 35 mph. I intended turning left at the next block, was in the left lane, as required by law. I slowed down, as required by law. Whereupon the law, on shiny motorcycle, waved me to the curb and said I'd violated the law. Obstructing traffic.

"The law says I must slow down, approaching intersections," I argued.

The law nodded.

"The law says I must be in the left lane to left turn."

"That's correct, sir."

"I couldn't safely left turn without slowing down."

"True, sir."

"Then, how . . . what . . . ?" I stuttered.

The officer handed me my invitation to court and purred, "Your preparation to turn left was perfectly legal, sir. But you were slowing down the fast lane. Going 31 miles in a 35-mile zone."

Even three eyes can miss blinker lights in fog.

"If I had turned left from the slow lane, would you have given me a ticket?"

"Certainly!"

Even the judge didn't buy that. He dismissed the charge.

Then there were the times, in many states, when I was caught in pedestrian cross-walks as lights turned red. By one law I must clear the intersection, allowing pedestrians to proceed. By another, I must stop the moment a pedestrian sets foot in the cross-walk. I got my ears pinned back for halting, in Peoria, Illinois. I got my ears pinned back for not halting, in Peoria, Illinois.

I also got pinback jobs in situations revealing another hazard: *A driver may be following the only law he can reasonably be aware of, be cited nevertheless.*

In Louisville, Kentucky, I failed to halt at a boulevard stop sign—because it was completely hidden behind a tree.

In Houston, Texas, I drove 4.7 miles within the city limits, on one street, without encountering a single sign indicating the speed limit. Maybe no speed is too great for the great state of Texas.

In North Hollywood, California, at 2 A.M., I drove along Laurel Canyon Boulevard in a pea-soup fog. Visibility was about 20 feet, I crawled at 12 mph, one eye out for cars ahead, one straining for lights, a third eye peering out of my side window, trying to find the white line in the road. A prowl car stopped me. I'd passed a red blinker.

"I didn't see it," I said. "I doubt anyone could see it in this fog."

The officer made out the ticket. "Please sign here," he said. "You don't have to go to court, you know. You can just send $6 to the clerk."

I studied the citation, asked, "Did you indicate weather condition?"

He stiffened, pointed to some hieroglyphics which indicated "fog."

After I'd signed, he wrote in, above my signature, "Visibility 250 yards." If it was 250 inches, I'm a cuttlefish.

"Why did you put that in after I'd signed?" I demanded.

Said one judge, "In too many (traffic) cases it is assumed that the defendant is guilty merely because he's brought in by a police officer."

"Well, sir, you asked about weather conditions."

"How far is 250 yards?"

"Oh," he shrugged, "about down to that next light." He pointed vaguely.

"I can't see 'that next light.' Can you?"

He stalked silently off.

This one, I vowed, I'd fight. A blinker could easily be missed in that fog. The street was deserted. I was going 12 mph. The cop should have considered those things. And I was aghast at the impropriety of an insertion on the ticket, after I'd signed, absurdly claiming 250-yard visibility.

I hired an attorney, went to court, fire in my eye. Our main contention was that, under prevailing conditions, I shouldn't be charged with failure to stop for something I couldn't see.

The judge fined me $6.

Another jurist was more lenient in an incident revealing *there are times when a driver can't know the guiding rule because it keeps changing.* This is frequently essential, in the interest of safety. With sleet on the ground, only a two-headed driver would insist on going 55 merely because that's the posted limit.

I found myself completely sympathetic toward temporary modification of traffic rules in the direction of safety. What startled me was being required

Sometimes enforcement depends on how much money a town needs.

to take chances greater than I wanted to take. True, most officers were fair about this, but the occasional exception left me puzzled and frustrated.

I was doing 55, the legal maximum, in the center lane of a three-lane freeway in Los Angeles during peak period. I received a ticket. Why? Because the road ahead was clear, track fast. Cars to my right were averaging 60. "If they pass right, you're wrong."

I hadn't been honked to yield to the right. Some cars did pull left into the fast lane, but I assumed that was proper, if they insisted on exceeding the speed limit. Was I supposed to know that at this particular hour, if drivers to my right chose to violate regulations, I must do so too?

The court, while not fining me, thought so. "You must not drive so slowly as to cause other cars to turn out. Traffic officers may arrest you for driving too slowly the same as for driving too fast."

From now on, on freeways, I'm using a formula I've worked out to compute approved speeds by hour and/or patrolman's digestion: Divide the lane you're in by the square root of the last three digits on the license plate of the second car passing to the left; multiply by time of day; add mean temperature for 1955; subtract the number of spokes on the cop's motorcycle, and give yourself up.

The fact is, and this points up another oddity, *police sometimes want you to violate the law.* Some-

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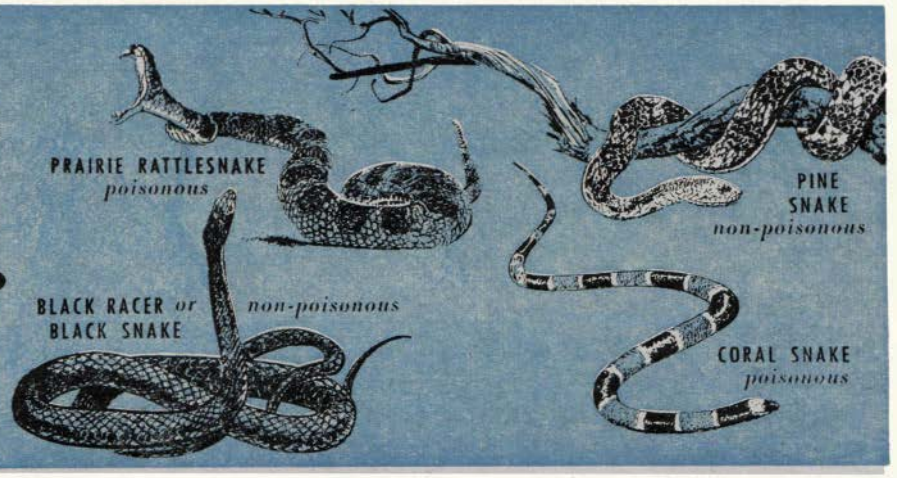
Read All About It...

BY JOHN T. DUNLAVY



SNAKES

THERE ARE NEARLY 3,000 known species of snakes, one-fifth of which are venomous. Ireland is not the only spot in the world where snakes are not found. Alaska, New Zealand, Hawaii and a number of other oceanic islands have no native snakes. In the U.S. there are some 250 species and subspecies.

THERE ARE MORE myths about snakes than about any other group of animals. Despite the fact that thousands of people are quite willing to swear to many of the following beliefs, zoologists state positively that:

Sweet music cannot charm a snake. It has no external ear openings and does not "hear" as other animals do. Instead, its entire body picks up vibrations through the ground. Innumerable studies show music has no effect at all.

Snakes are not slimy—their skin is as dry as your own and feels like soft leather.

Snake oil is pure, simple animal fat and has no special medicinal properties.

Snakes do not swallow their young to protect them in time of danger—it would be impossible for the little snakes to survive the powerful gastric juices.

Snakes do not hypnotize their prey.

Rattlers will not follow the movement of a gun pointed at them.

The body of a snake will not "wiggle until sundown" after being killed—a muscular reflex action can be present for a number of hours after death but this has nothing to do with the sun.

A rattlesnake does not give a deliberate warning before striking—it is a nervous vibration of the tail common to many snakes.

Constrictor snakes such as the python do not crush their victims—they suffocate them. Even the largest do not exert enough force to break bones. There is no evidence that the large constrictor snakes are man-killers.

IT IS HARDLY ODD THAT there should be so many myths about snakes when there are so many strange facts about them. Snakes have transparent scales instead of eyelids, no external ear openings, no breastbones, only one lung developed, and as many as 435 vertebrae. . . . The spitting cobra of Africa spits poison in the eyes of its enemies up to 10 feet away. . . . The *Chrysopela ornata* of the Far East can glide through the air like a flying squirrel . . . The pit vipers, which include all of the poisonous snakes in the U.S., have a sort of built-in radar system to aid their marksmanship. The pit organ on either side of the face between the eye and the nostril is a heat-sensitive organ through which the viper can detect the movement of warm bodies passing within several feet. . . . The deadly venom of the cobra is an accepted medication in blood disorders. . . . All snakes are able to engulf prey larger than their own girth because their jaws are connected by elastic tendons. . . . Snakes have a homing sense and return to the same dens year after year.

NOT ALL VENOMOUS SNAKES are equally dangerous. The bite of many species is only mildly toxic while that of others can be fatal in 10 minutes. . . . Approximately 40,000 persons die of snake bite each year, according to the United Nations World Health Organization. The overwhelming majority of these deaths occur in Burma and India, where the death rate from snake bite is around 15 persons annually per 100,000 population. . . . Until the successful introduction of serum in Brazil prior to 1930, the annual death toll from snake bite was 3,000 per year. It is now less than 100.

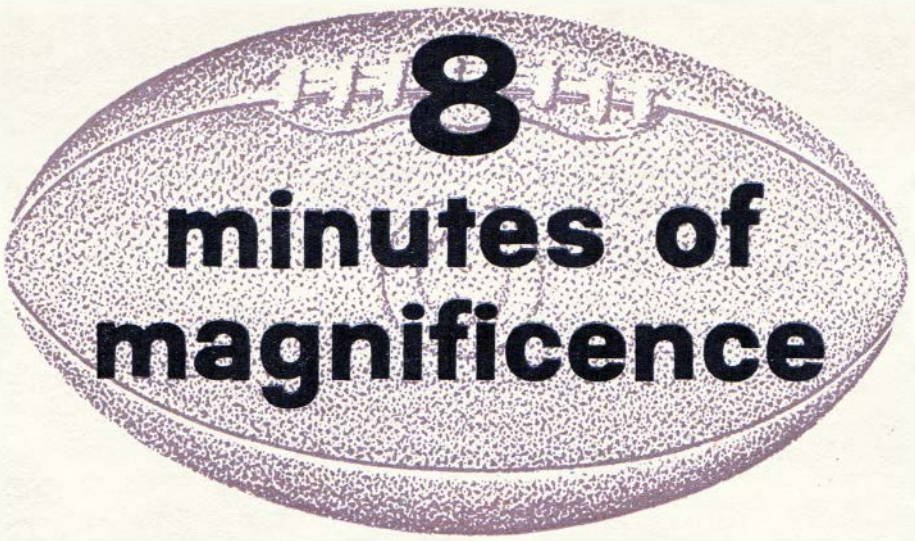
The greatest numbers of poisonous snakes are not to be found in the Far East or the jungles of South America but in the mountainous portions of New York and Pennsylvania and the coastal swamps of Georgia and South Carolina.

THERE ARE 19 species of poisonous snakes in the U.S. but only four general types: coral snakes, cottonmouth moccasins, rattlesnakes and copperheads. Cottonmouths bite more people, but rattlesnakes are considered more dangerous because of the potency of their venom. The coral snake is even more poisonous but it seldom bites man. Although there are hundreds of cases of snake bite reported annually in the U.S., better knowledge of first-aid and the availability of anti-toxin keeps fatalities down to about 15 per year.

ABOUT 75% OF SNAKE BITES occur below the knee. The simplest precaution is to wear high boots, leggings or two pairs of thick stockings when in snake country and gloves and long sleeves when picking flowers or berries. Stay away from rock crevices and tree hollows. . . . A bite from a poisonous snake is unmistakable. There is a definite burning sensation within three minutes. Most venom is not absorbed into the system instantly and therefore can be drawn out by suction. Lie down immediately, make a crosswise incision with a sterilized knife through the punctures a quarter-inch deep and a half-inch long. Suck the venom from the wound. Apply a tourniquet just above the bite. Take no stimulants. Get to a doctor as quickly as possible.

THE WORLD'S MOST DANGEROUS snake is the king cobra. Up to 18 feet long, its venom is among the most powerful and its temper among the worst. Along with the krait and the Russell viper, it was responsible for 21,880 deaths in one year in India. . . . The longest snake on record is 33 feet, a reticulated python of Malaya, although the biggest (300 lbs.) is a 25-foot anaconda of South America.

ALTHOUGH SOME SNAKES appear to be lightning fast, their speed is largely illusion. . . . Our fastest species, the Western whip snake, which often outdistances hunters over rough terrain, has been timed at a maximum rate of less than four miles per hour. . . . Snakes can go for long periods of time without eating. Poisonous snakes shipped from the Far East are often placed in sealed cages and go without food or water for six weeks en route without harm. . . . The snake most often used by snake charmers is the black-tailed python.



By KENNETH E. SHIFLET

His team had never beaten Centennial and a one-point lead was nothing to risk by sending in substitutions. But why, after all, were these kids playing football?

ANDY WALKED across the frozen scrimmage field to the gym and realized his feet ached a little across the arches. Every time his cleats struck the hard frosted ground he could feel it. Just moving around watching them practice, he thought, and you're already thinking of the chair at home by the radio and Alma's hot chocolate. You're getting old.

"You think they looked all right?" the boy carrying the bag of practice balls asked.

Andy glanced at him. "It was a good scrimmage, Fielding."

"Even the All-Americans looked good. They gave the varsity a real workout, didn't they, Mr. Andrews? Old Martenson was sure trying."

Andy paused before crossing the street behind the school. "Look son, don't call them that. They're seniors, all four of them; call them seniors. Okay?"

"Sure, Mr. Andrews. I didn't mean anything. It's what everybody calls them."

"Sure, sure, I know you didn't. But I don't think they like it. I don't think it was very kind of whoever started calling them that."

They crossed to the gym door and Andy entered his office off the locker room and hung up the whistle on a nail over his desk. The whistle was old and made of silvered metal, the plating worn off around the mouthpiece. Alma had given it to him 18 years ago. It didn't seem he had been with the high school that long. He went out to the locker room.

Some of the youngsters had finished showering and were dressing; others were sitting around pulling off their equipment. A few who saw him smiled. He moved among them, nodding, saying a word here and there.

Down toward the end of the lockers, away from the others, he saw the four scrub seniors. It was funny how the four of them traveled together, even had their lockers together. The All-Americans. Andy hated the phrase.

Martenson, one of them, was putting on his jacket in front of his opened locker. As Andy passed he asked. "Want us to dress tomorrow?"

"Sure, son."

"What do you think about the game?"

"We have a good chance."

"Sure hope we run up a big score early just to be safe," Martenson laughed, glancing at Bricker, who had the locker beside him.

The boy's laughter was unnatural, camouflage for his yearning that the four of them might play if the score was high enough. Andy knew.

"So do I, son."

Andy walked toward the door to the street and some distance away he heard Bricker's voice coming faintly over the top of the lockers.

"Sure hope we run up a big score," he mimicked Martenson. "Let us play in this one game before we graduate, coach. . . . You think he has time to worry about us, Marty? Why don't you grow up?"

"Why don't you? I asked him a question, that's all. I've got a right to ask a question."

. . . *Continued on page 113*

Illustrated by Anthony Kokinos

MY NEIGHBORS PUT ME IN A MENTAL HOSPITAL

By CHARLES H. TERRY

The nightmarish experience of a former Army major who was locked up with the insane merely on the say-so of neighbors who held a grudge against him.

On the Monday night of November 20, 1950, my wife Viola and I were in bed and asleep at an early hour in our West Miami, Fla., home. Both of us were tired, having been very busy at our jobs. I was then a building inspector for the Veterans Administration and Vi was a secretary in the X-ray department of Coral Gables VA hospital.

The doorbell woke us out of a sound sleep. I flicked on the bed lamp and looked at the clock. It was 10:30.

"Now who could that be at this hour?" said Vi.

Before I could throw on a robe and find out, the bell rang several more times.

The porch light revealed two men of average build. My scalp prickled when I noticed bulges in their coats that looked suspiciously like guns in shoulder holsters. But, then one flashed a deputy sheriff's badge. I opened the door.

"Is Mrs. Terry home?" he asked.

"Yes, she is," I said. "What do you want to see her about?"

"I'll explain that when I see her," he said.

Just then my wife appeared behind me, badly frightened.

"Is your husband quiet and behaving himself?" asked the deputy sheriff.

"Certainly," she replied. "Why do you ask?"

"We usually find them raising a ruckus. We have orders to take him to the VA hospital for examination. We hope he'll go quietly."

"What's all this about?" I demanded. "Examination for what?"

He showed me a form headed *CONFINEMENT FOR EXAMINATION IN LUNACY*. It was signed by a judge of the district court and stamped with the official seal.

"This—this is ridiculous!" I said. "What's the reason for it?"

"We don't know a thing about it. They may be able to tell you at the hospital."

"But—but—can't it wait until morning?" I said.

"We were told to bring you in right now," said the deputy.

It seemed the most fantastic experience I'd ever had. Obviously there had been an absurd mistake—one to be cleared up as soon as possible.

"This must be some sort of examination for the Army," I said to my wife, knowing very well it wasn't but, naturally, hoping to calm her. I had been graduated from West Point in 1906 and subsequently had spent 27 years in service with active duty overseas in both world wars. I had retired from the Army engineers with the rank of major and in civilian life had become a construction engineer and building inspector. I was now 69.

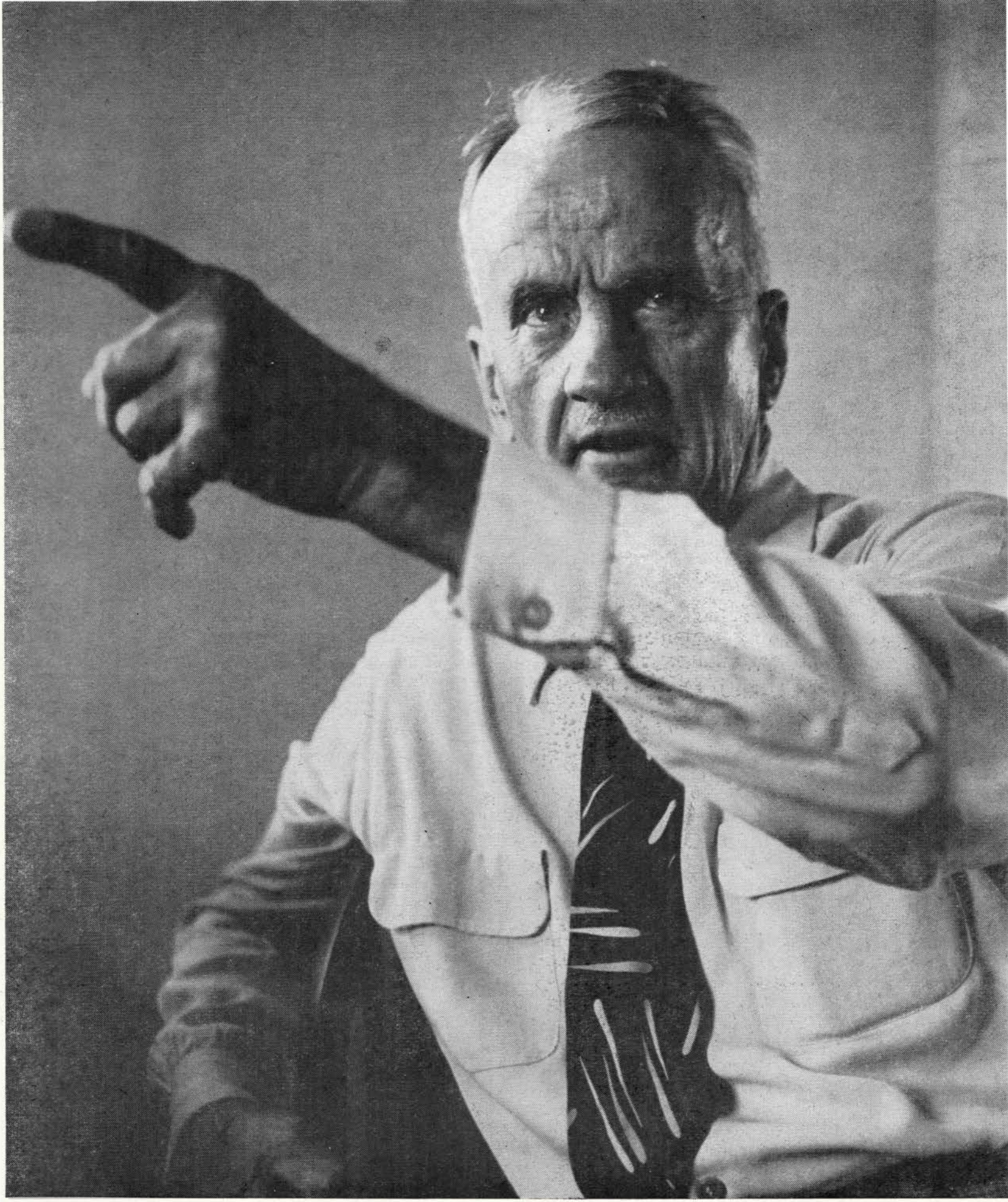
"I'll be right with you," I told the lawmen. "Won't you sit down while I dress? Will you have a glass of wine?"

"Or a sandwich?" Viola offered.

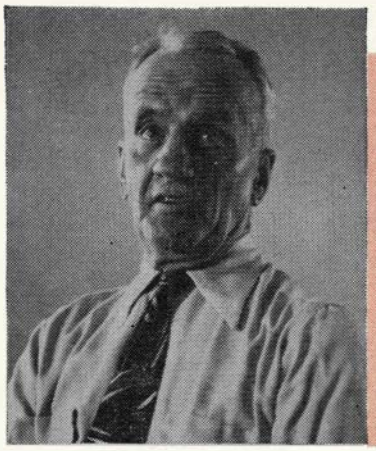
They refused, but appeared much relieved by our calmness.

As I got in the car, the second deputy remarked that I was lucky to be a veteran and that there happened to be a vacancy in the Coral Gables VA hospital. Otherwise they would have had to take me to the "retreat" or to the county jail. Having heard about the treatment in both places, I agreed with them heartily that I was "lucky."

At the hospital the judge's order was given to the doctor at the reception desk. He looked me over, then proceeded to give me the standard Army "nut test." He asked my age, occupation, education, poli-



PHOTOS BY HOMER PAGE



"Suddenly two hands were clamped around my throat and a wild shriek nearly shattered my eardrums."

tics, religion, other details. Then who was vice-president before the present one, what did I have for breakfast that morning, some problems in mental arithmetic. Then he blindfolded me, turned me around several times and asked where was north; then was my home life happy, did I like my job, did I have bad dreams, hallucinations or obsessions. All these questions I answered, I think, as any normal person would.

During the questioning, the chief of the X-ray department, my wife's boss, strolled in. He happened to be on duty as medical-officer-of-the-day. When finally I was asked if I had ever before been accused of being insane, I replied, "Only once, sir. The officer-of-the-day, over there, once said I was crazy for trying to be reinstated to active duty—at my age."

This brought a general smile and the doctor handed the judge's order back to the deputies, saying, "I can't hold this man for lunacy. He is as sane as I am—perhaps more so." They offered me a ride home.

As we were going out the OD took me to one side and suggested that I come back the following morning to meet the consulting psychiatrist and have the matter "completely cleared up." I agreed.

It was a happy trip home and a happy reunion with my wife. We thought the affair was ended. Had we known the truth we would not have slept quite so well that night.

The psychiatrist arrived at the hospital shortly after nine the following morning. I was there waiting for him. Earlier I had phoned the VA office where I worked, telling them I would be late and asking them to put a substitute inspector on my job.

The doctor started with about the same questions asked the night before, but in such a loud voice I had to tell him my ears, at least, were quite all right. At last he asked if I had any idea who had filed the lunacy charges against me and why.

I explained I did not have any enemies I knew of nor could I name anyone who would have started

. . . Continued on page 116

Maj. Terry, shown with his wife, Viola, kept his sense of humor even when things looked blackest.

FAMOUS FIRSTS IN SPORTS:

Illustrated by William Heyer

ARMY vs. NAVY

THE STORY of the first Army-Navy football game (Saturday, November 29th, 1890) is so full of charm, courage and comedy, that Hollywood should hurry up and make a movie out of it.

Navy, thanks to some sports-minded brass, had been playing football for about five years when it challenged West Point. The Army at the time had no sports activities outside of military gymnastics and horsemanship. But they did have Cadet Dennis Michie, who'd played football before going to the Point. And Dennis had a father called "Old Pete" who was a big wheel on the Academic Board. So Dennis nagged Pop, and Pop wheedled an okay from the graybeards.

Next, handsome Dennis enlisted the ladies at the Post, who formed the Sewing Brigade and fashioned the first West Point football togs. Cadet Dennis was Army's first coach, trainer, manager and captain, since no one else of the 250 students knew anything about the sport.

The game was started at 2:30 in one corner of the huge Parade Grounds. With the soldiers' band playing "Annie Laurie," the middies won the toss and took the ball. After about six minutes of pushing and tugging, they managed to shove Captain Charley Emrich over for the first touchdown in Army-Navy history. It counted four points, but Charley muffed his kick for the extra two points—as they counted 'em in those days. Charley scored another touchdown a couple of minutes later to make it 8-0.

Then, near the end of the first 45-minute half, the Navy fullback dropped back to kick. But instead quarterback Moulton Johnson, behind good interference, raced about 60 yards to the third score, while the Army, aghast at such chicanery, hollered No Fair!

Army's captain Michie and right halfback Timberlake made a couple of good runs, strictly on their own power. But Army, though beefy and willing, hadn't the slightest notion of just what they were supposed to do.

The Tars used the signals couched in the most salty nautical terms to confound their foes.

Army quarterback Walker was knocked out six times during the fray. Five times they brought him to with a bucket of water over his head, but the last time they carried him off feet first.

It was funny to watch the armed guards picket up and down the borders of the field, guns on shoulders, with the cadet corps standing stiffly on the sidelines, gray-coated, chests out, chins in, eyes front, while over on the other side Navy rooters hooted and hollered to the tune of a 24-0 walkaway.

Rankled by that first drubbing, Cadet Michie, with the connivance of the Army brass, pulled a sleeper play the next year, bringing in a paid football coach (Dr. Williams), and the soldiers walloped the sailors 32-16.

Eight years after he had brought football to the Army, Dennis Michie died a hero's death in the famous battle of San Juan Hill in 1898, and in 1925 the West Point stadium bearing his name was dedicated in his honor.

—BY BILL GOTTLIEB

A Short Story By Robert Sheckley

LONE SURVIVOR

The problem the two men went out in the sailboat to talk over was simple: one was in love with the other man's wife. The solution they reached was also simple—but which one came back?

ON August 5, the Coast Guard cutter Seabright *put to sea at 1330 hours, in response to information concerning the auxiliary sloop* Hope, *and its crew consisting of the owner and one guest. After steaming for three hours through heavy seas and gale-velocity winds, the* Hope *was encountered at a point four miles east of the Port Everglades offshore buoy. The sailboat was found derelict, and an attempt was made to take it in tow. There was only a single survivor, one man having been washed overboard in an attempt to aid the other . . .*

The *Hope* was running fast, her long, flat, overhanging bow pounding slightly in the Gulf Stream chop. Her owner, Theodore Debner, held the tiller lightly, watching for sudden gusts, edging the sloop up to meet them. George Matthews, his guest, braced himself against the coaming and looked west, trying to make out the low white coast line of Florida. Neither man had spoken since leaving Port Everglades.

"It's quite a sensation," Matthews said at last.

"What is?" Debner asked sharply.

"This sailboating, of course."

"Oh," Debner said, smiling faintly. "I thought you were referring to something else. Some of your recent activities have been sensation-filled, haven't they?"

Matthews stirred uncomfortably. "There's no sense starting that way. We came out here to talk about it. It's a damned uncomfortable situation."

"I'm going to tack," Debner said. "Handle the jib sheet, would you?"

"Jib sheet?"

"That line," Debner said, pointing. "Free it when we're in the wind, but don't let it get away from you. . . . You really don't know much about sailboats, do you?"

"My first time on one," Matthews said. "Mountain climbing's more my sport." He found the correct line and waited. Slowly the boat rounded into the wind, her sails flapping wildly.

"Now," Debner said.

Matthews took a double turn around his hand, set his shoulders and unfastened the line from its cleat. Suddenly the big jib filled with a crack.

"Make fast!" Debner shouted, leaning savagely into the tiller. Matthews didn't have a chance. He was dragged the length of the cockpit, the line jammed around his hand. It seemed impossible that a triangle of canvas could exert such a pull. He managed to wrench his hand free before the billowing sail could yank him over the cabin top.

The sloop completed its tack, and Debner set up the lee jib sheet one-handed, before the sail could fill.

"I warned you I wouldn't be much help," Matthews said, a little shakily, rubbing his shoulder.

"I know. You're the expert at other things."

The water was getting rougher, and the wind, which had been moderate when they left Port Everglades, was now singing wildly in the shrouds. Overhead, the sky was slate-gray, with wispy black clouds racing over it.

The long, slim racing sailboat leaned heavily into the mounting seas. She was a faithful image of her owner; neat and taut, beautifully groomed, a little too quick in her movements, a little contemptuous of the sea she scudded over.

"I guess we'd better talk about it," Matthews said.

Debner nodded. "That's what we came out for," he said. "The peace and solitude of the ocean, and a chance to discuss our mutual problem. Go ahead. Tell me the technique you used. Maybe I can try it on someone else's wife."

"It's been nothing like that," Matthews said. "Jannie and I—"

"So you call her Jannie," Debner mused.

"I've called her Jannie since college. I didn't even know she was in this town. We met last month at that water-color exhibit."

"Small-town art is such a fine excuse for mischief," Debner said.

. . . Continued on page 93


JOHN
FLOHERTY
JR

MIXED BAG

By RALPH W. SLONE

When you have an army of kids and a government salary, you need a lot of meat for the winter. But what do you do when your wife is expecting just as the moose season opens?

WITH 12 KIDS, the big problem is keeping them fed.

Fortunately, mine like moose meat, they have been raised on it, and here along the Kuskokwim in Alaska there are moose—not a lot, but some. Unfortunately, the game laws do not distinguish between a man with 12 kids and a man with none. One man, one moose, they say.

There also may be other complicating factors.

That year—1952—at moose-hunting time, Dorothy and I had only nine children. The 10th was expected any time. There is no doctor within 300 miles of McGrath, and a trip to Anchorage for delivery runs about $500, what with plane fare, hospital, doctor, and incidentals. Besides, Dorothy is afraid of airplanes, an unhandy phobia in a country where they are the only common carriers. Our village has sometimes been publicized as the only town in America whose main street is an asphalt paved runway, used indiscriminately by dog-teams, Caterpillar tractors and Globemasters.

At that time we did have a good nurse in town —Mrs. Winchell, wife of one of the local pilots—and Dorothy had had nine children without complications, Mrs. Winchell and I having delivered the last four. But even so I was a little reluctant to get too far from home right then.

Still, the season doesn't last long, especially when you are working with other people who want a chance to get out and hunt. And we did need a moose. With beef going at a dollar a pound by the quarter, and a good moose dressing out at half a ton, it makes quite a difference in a man's budget. I thought I would compromise by making a few short overnight hunts when I could get away from work. I work for the CAA here as a radio operator and we stand round-the-clock watches. The second day of the season, I arranged to work the mid-watch, from midnight to eight in the morning.

My moose-hunting boat is *Long Green,* a 30-foot, flat-bottomed, flare-sided boat with a cabin, big enough to pack a ton of meat and two men and their gear besides. I gassed up the night before, loaded my gear, ran up the engine and checked it, laid a fire in the galley-stove for the next morning. When I got off watch Dorothy was still in bed.

"Anything happens," I told her, "you get Ben Myers to fly up and drop me a note. I'll get right back. How you feeling this morning?"

"I feel fine," she said. "You want me to fix you some breakfast?"

I didn't. Early in the morning like that, the boat loaded, everything stowed, not much time to hunt, I wanted to get going. "I'll eat on the boat," I said. "Make breakfast while I'm running. You sure you'll be OK?"

"I'll be OK," she said. "Just hurry home."

At 8:15 I got away from town.

About 6:30 that evening, almost too dark to shoot, I got my moose. It surprised me, but then it almost always does. Hunting early in the fall, in the willow brakes along the river bottoms, before you can call the bulls out, the big problem is seeing a moose. They are not really afraid of men, they just avoid you. You know there are moose around, you see plenty of sign, sometimes you even get close enough to smell one; but day in and day out you never get a shot. Each morning you wake up and think: Well, today's the day. Each evening you pile in dog-tired and dirty and wet and think: Well, another day gone and no meat. Then just when you are least expecting it, if you are lucky, you look in a lake or come around a bend and there is the moose, standing there looking as if he had been waiting for weeks and was beginning to wonder what kept you so long.

That's the way it was with this one. I had come up the Takotna 18 miles from town to the Forks, and then on up another 30 miles, hunting the bars and lakes along the way. There had been tracks of a young bull, very fresh, just above town; but he was bedded down back in some thick growth where I knew I could never find him. I passed him up. Then there had been sign of a cow, and then of a big cagey old bull I knew from past sad experience could outsmart me without half trying, this time of year. It had been raining all day, I was miserable and wet and cold, it was starting to get dark, and I had just about

... Continued on page 90

Illustration by Robert Doares

man on a HIGH ledge

A Short Short Story

by JOHN D. MacDONALD

It was a few minutes after three o'clock when the dark paneled door of his office opened abruptly and he looked up, frowning, to see that Miss Ferres had burst in without knocking. Both the action and the expression on her thin face were entirely surprising to him. Her features looked sharper and more vital and her eyes were glowing.

She stopped abruptly, flushing, as she realized what she had done. "Oh . . . I'm sorry, Mr. Kelty. There's a man . . . he's across the street. We have a sort of ringside seat. I came in to tell you."

On dark November days such as this one, Norris Kelty liked to draw the heavy draperies across the wide windows and work by the yellow-orange glow of the lamp. He did not care for the sterile glare of fluorescence, nor the silvery doom of the reflected glow of an overcast Manhattan sky.

He stared at Miss Ferres for a brief moment. then stood up heavily and pulled the cord that slid the dark-blue draperies aside. He saw at once what had excited her. The tan, ugly, pigeon-streaked building across the street was much older than the building he was in. There were myriad cornices and ledges. The man was to his left, and one story higher. He stood on a narrow ledge very close to the corner of the building, far from any window. He stood with his feet apart, his hands flat against weathered stone. He seemed to be staring down at the street a hundred feet below. The ledge was so narrow that his toes protruded over the edge. He was dark-haired, hatless. He wore a two-tone windbreaker in tweed and tan. The November wind fluttered the legs of gray unpressed trousers and ruffled dark long hair. His face looked very white. Many windows were wide open in the building across the street and people leaned out and watched the man on the ledge.

Miss Ferres stood close beside Kelty watching the man. Kelty became aware of her there, and with a tone of irony and withdrawal he said, "Thank you very much, Miss Ferres."

She glanced at him and flushed again and backed away, saying, "I thought . . . you'd like to know."

She made no sound as she closed the door.

Norris Kelty turned back to his desk. He wondered if Miss Ferres had glanced at what he was doing. Even if she had, the papers would have meant little to her, despite her quick mind. Lists of securities, bank balances, tax tables. Long years ago when he had been young and firm and agile he had relished the ability to dive into a pool so expertly there was hardly a ripple. For the past four months he had been planning his descent from life so that it could be accomplished with that same ease.

The decision had been building within him for the three previous gray years. He had had his full share of satisfactions from life. Health, love, success, money. Success was empty now because there was no more joy in accomplishment. The money was left. Love had been of the best, and had died with Edith three years ago, leaving him unfairly and forlornly alone. One son had died in a war in 1943. The other son was a successful architect in Southern California. They were on reasonably good terms now, but the years of estrangement had destroyed any chance of true closeness. His health was not good. The operation two years ago hadn't been successful. There was a possibility of recurrence and he did not want to face the pain again. From every point of view he saw himself justified. He felt a subtle uneasiness about his moral and spiritual right to take his own life, but that was all.

As with every other major undertaking of his life, he had planned this episode with great care. He had gradually shunted his work off onto the other partners. His will was up to date. His accounts and records were in perfect condition.

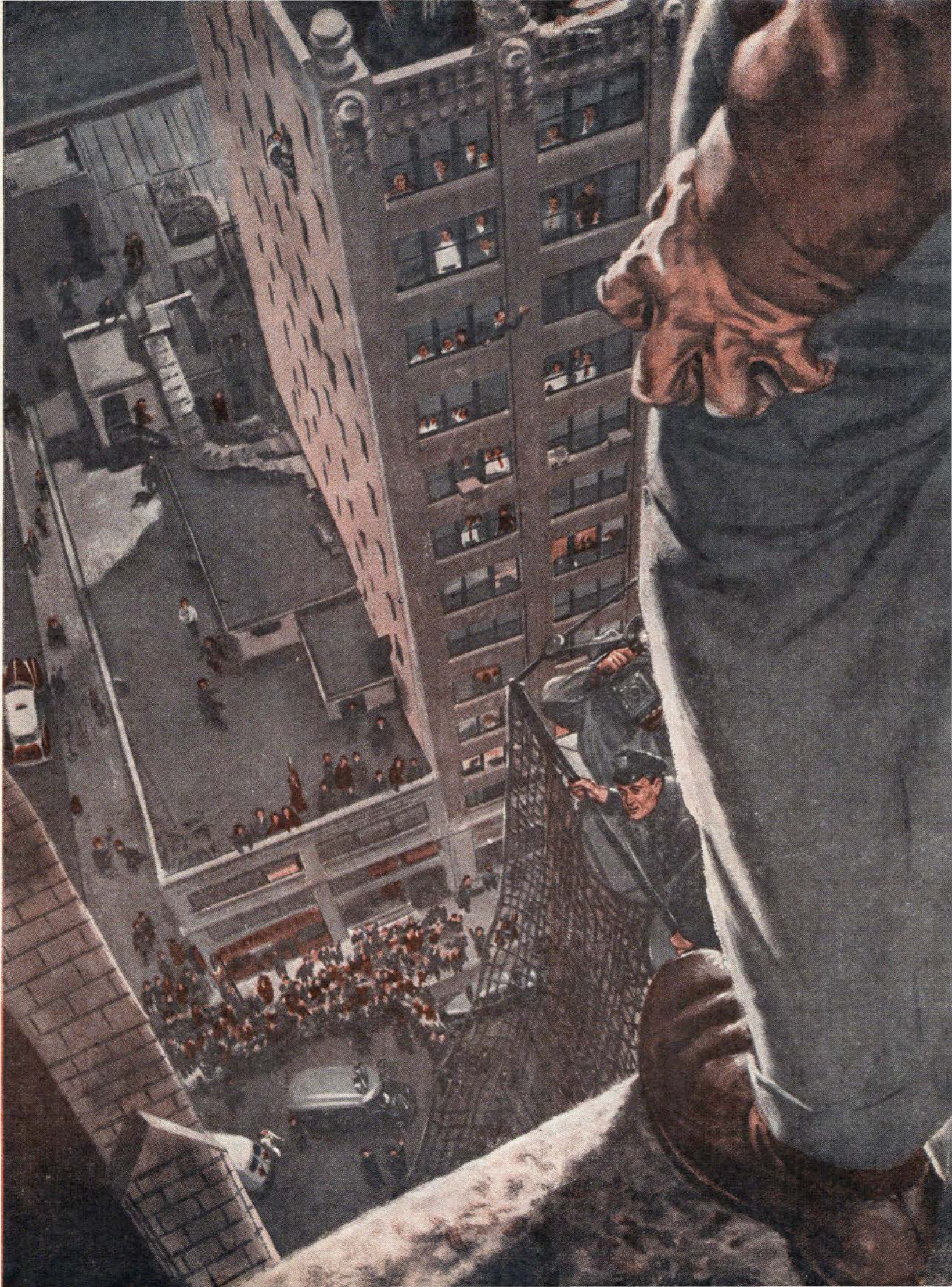
He was a fastidious man and he did not wish to cause any inconvenience for anyone. He planned to do it sometime before Christmas. With Edith gone, Christmas was the worst time of the year. He planned to get his car out of the mid-town garage and drive into the country and find a secluded place and take all of the sleeping tablets he had hoarded. He would pass easily from sleep into death.

It would cause no one any deep grief.

He tried to focus his mind on the tax tabulation and blot out the scene behind him. After an intensive effort he knew he could not do it. He found that he resented the man on the ledge. He resented the lack of dignity in the threat of self-inflicted death. There was no neatness, no consideration. Just frozen animal terror on a high place, and then a splash of flesh on the hard hide of the city. He could not

. . . *Continued on page 96*

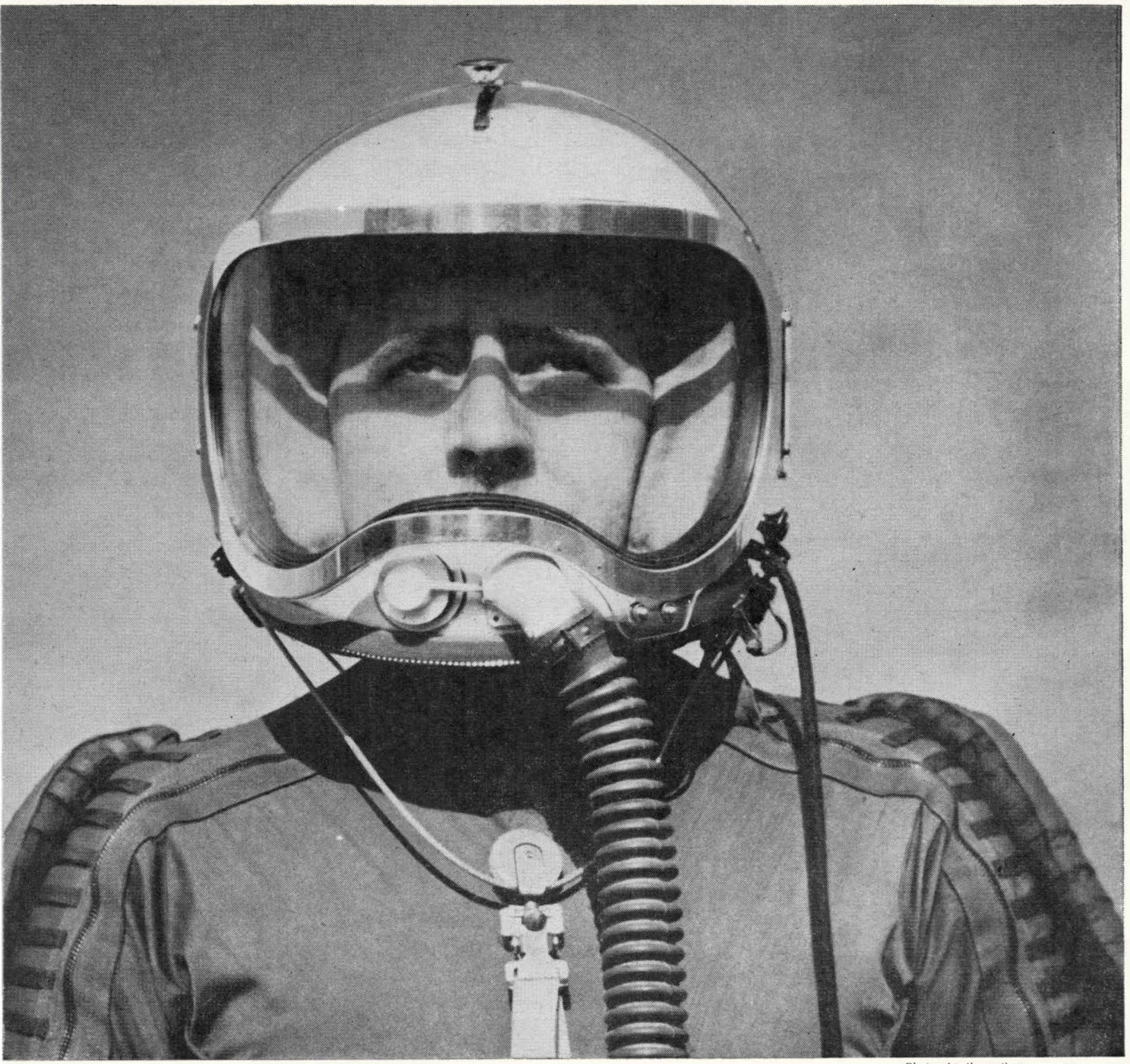
Illustrated by George Withers



The Age of Space:

WE *CAN* BUILD A

Shown here for the first time anywhere, is the Air Force's new full-pressure helmet (MA-1) designed to operate in outer space. Suit, a T-1 partial pressure outfit, doesn't go with helmet.



Photos by the author

SPACE SHIP—*SHOULD* WE?

BY LLOYD MALLAN

For half a century the more imaginative fiction writers have spun tales about man's travel to the Moon and stars; they have been entertaining dreams, not to be taken seriously by practical men. But last summer when President Eisenhower announced we would launch an artificial satellite within two years, all these fantastic dreams suddenly became reality. Then the old, bold idea of sending men out into space to explore the other planets moved overnight from the never-never land of fiction to the realm of the possible.

To find out just how possible, the author traveled some 18,000 miles, sought out the quiet men who for years have been wrestling with and solving the million problems of space travel. Among them are the aeromedical and space-biology experts, the research test pilots who actually fly through the big barriers—first sound and now heat—the specialized astronomers who chart the skies and design instruments to make visual explorations into the depths of space, and finally the rocket engineers who devise the power plants and airframes and electronic controls that will one day carry man to the stars.

Though they disagree as to when and how, all these men agree that we can build a space ship if we want to. Here, in tape-recorded interviews, Bluebook presents the views of 10 such experts. We believe their words will open for our readers, as it did for us, a door to a whole new world now ready for adventure and exploration.—The Editors

CAN WE BUILD A SPACE SHIP?

Ed Francisco: If we had a good power plant, yes! We're close to one right now that could accomplish the first stage of getting out there.

But it's less dependent upon the technology than on the desire and will to do it. In this respect it's only slightly dependent on technology. And I say this not glibly. I am quite aware that to set up a space platform alone would probably be the greatest engineering feat of all time.

Wendell Moore: Most people who are not in the rocket industry are inclined to scoff at the idea of spaceflight; they call it funny paper stuff. But we in the industry know that it's possible.

Lowell Randall: It's possible—just as it was possible for us to build railroads across the United States. But it will certainly take a lot of effort, a lot of people and a lot of money. And unlike the railroads, not many people will become passengers (of space ships, so they don't have the immediate interest).

Col. Boushey: I think that we're nibbling on the fringes of space flight right now. It's not something of the future: it's here. When the early Polynesians made their migrations to the east, they didn't set out across the ocean all at once, they took several little trips first, beyond the surf and back again, before they finally set out. In the same way, we're nibbling at the fringes of the atmosphere and gradually working our way up. Where the atmosphere ends and space begins is a rather vague line between black and white and gray. I think we are crossing those lines now.

(Several other experts agreed. Said one, "we recently held a conference with some engineers from Douglas Aircraft. Their attitude was amazing—'Give us the money to design it and we'll make anything!' That's the way they talk and I believe them. They

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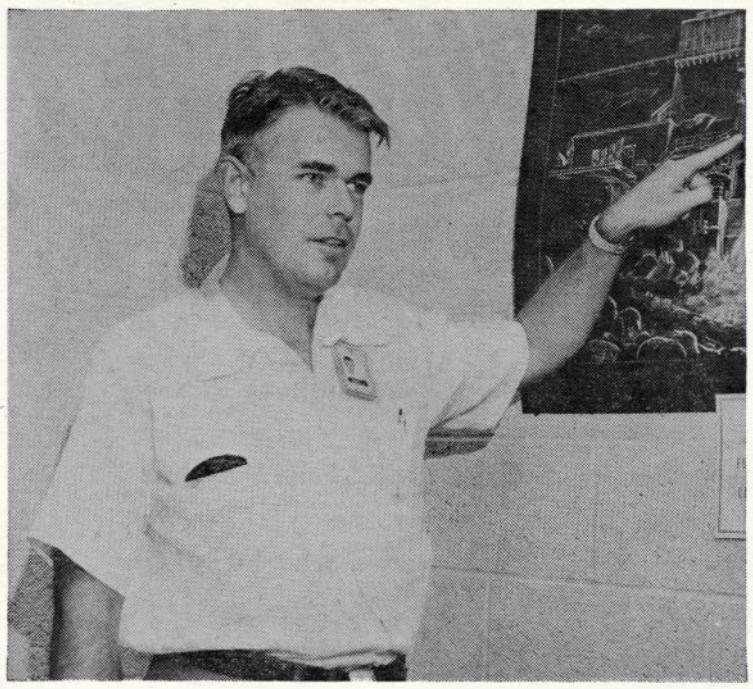
From the book, "Men, Rockets and Space Rats," published by Julian Messner, Inc.



U. S. Army Photo

Rocket-engines expert Ed Francisco feels that money invested in space flight will pay off.

demonstrated some of the stuff they're working on—and this is definitely secret so I can't tell you about it—but take my word for it, the stuff is incredible.")

WHEN CAN WE BUILD SUCH A SHIP?

Ed Francisco: We could do it today, if we set our minds to it. But this would mean that everybody—the public, Congress, the military—would have to really believe it was possible. I don't feel that they will be thoroughly convinced of this fact for another 10 or 15 years.

Colonel Boushey: I'd hazard a guess that we'll have spaceflight in about 20 years.

Dr. Henry: In no more than 20 years, we should reach the Moon. But the Moon is so fantastically close it's obvious that someone is going to whip around it in the next few years! And once you got to the Moon, interplanetary flight would be child's play. To get to Mars would be simple. I can imagine that occurring by 2000 A.D. quite easily.

Capt. Vail: Within 10 years, we could take our first shot at the moon—if we had a reliable space suit. I can't tell you how close we are to such a suit, because that is classified. I can say, however, that we are working on a long-term, full-pressure suit. (For more on this, see photo, page 30.)

Harry Stine: It all depends on how soon the government, or somebody, puts up the money and says, "Go ahead." If that would happen tomorrow, I would say that we'd have manned spaceflight in 10 years.

Col. Everest: If we were to go on a so-called "crash program"—similar to the all-out effort to perfect an atomic bomb—we should be able to have an airplane flying within the next two years, to start investigating the stars.

... Continued on page 108

THE 10 EXPERTS

Dr. Hubertus Strughold, Chief of the Department of Space Medicine at the School of Aviation Medicine, Randolph Air Force Base, Texas

Colonel Homer A. Boushey, Chief of Staff at Wright Air Development Center, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio

Dr. James P. Henry, Chief of the Acceleration Section at the Aero Medical Laboratory, Wright Air Development Center

Captain Edwin G. Vail, Project Scientist on the Altitude Suit Development Program at Wright Air Development Center

Ed Francisco, Jr., Chief of the Propulsion Branch of the Electro-Mechanical Laboratories at the Army's White Sands Proving Ground, New Mexico

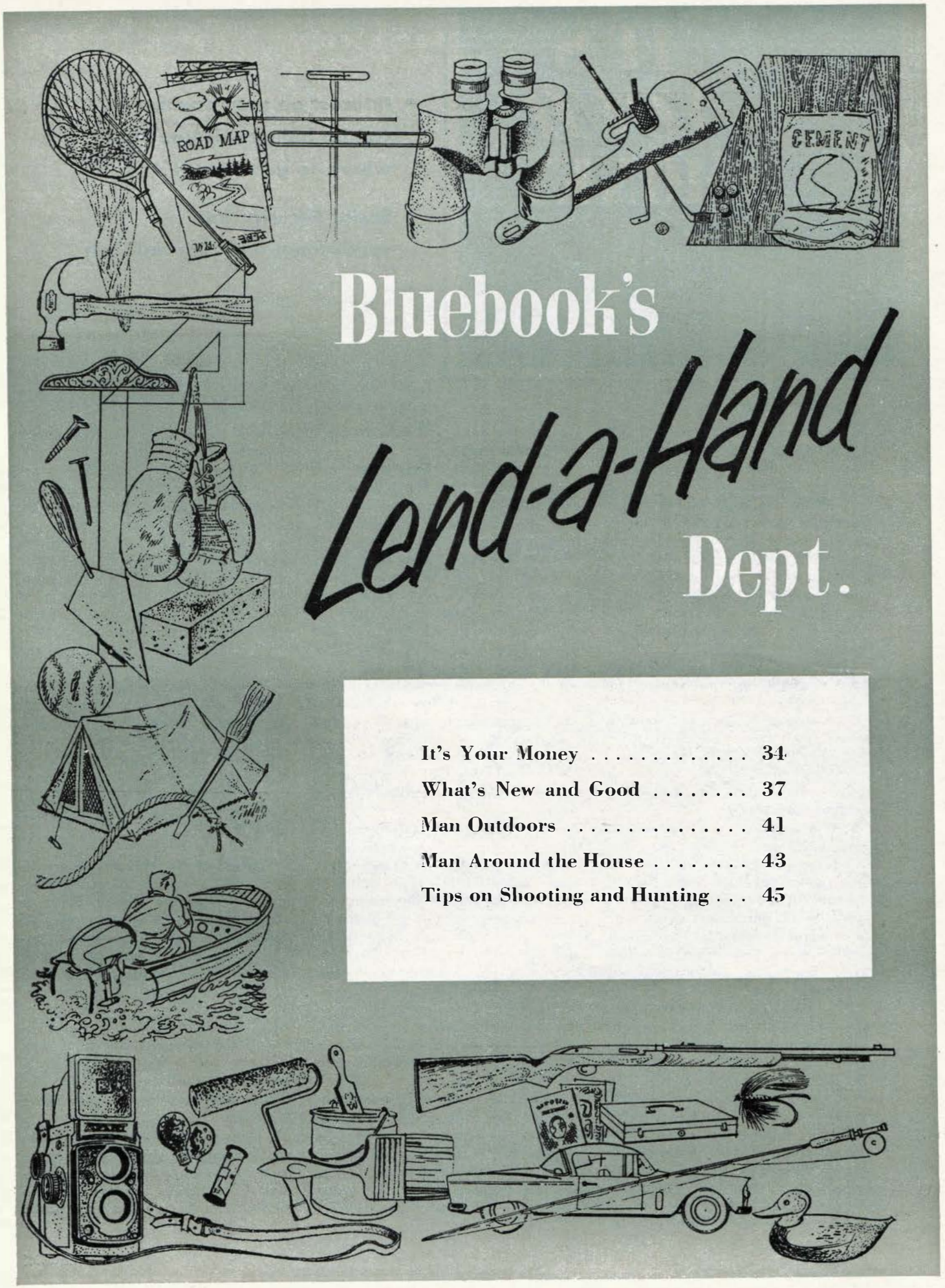
G. Harry Stine, Electronic Scientist in the Propulsion Branch at White Sands

Lowell Randall, Chief of the Operations Section, Propulsion Branch, White Sands

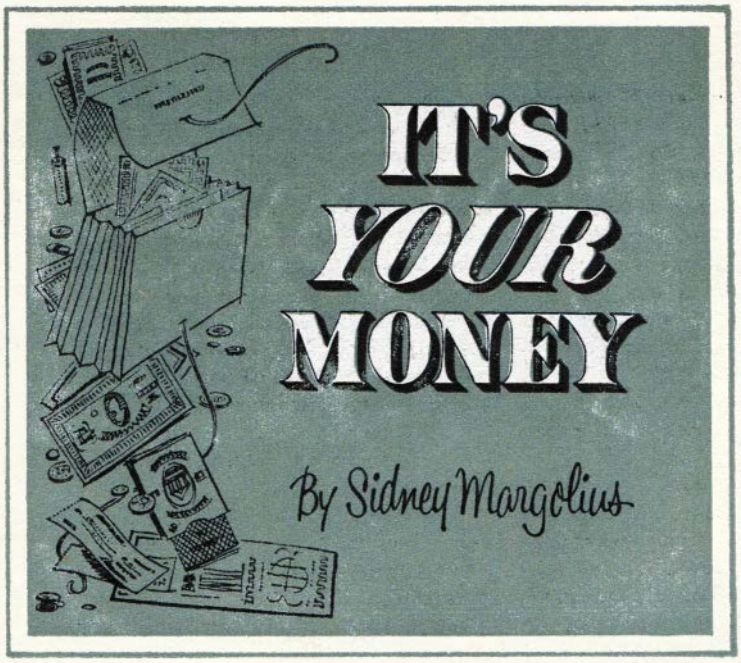
Wendell Moore, Rocket Installations Engineer, Bell Aircraft Corporation, Buffalo, New York

Lieutenant Colonel Frank K. Everest, Chief Test Pilot of the U. S. Air Force, Edwards Air Force Base, California

Commander Robert C. Truax, ex-chief, Surface Launched Missile Development, Bureau of Aeronautics, U. S. Navy; winner of the Goddard Medal of the American Rocket Society



Bluebook's Lend-a-Hand Dept.



- **Interest on your savings can be higher—if you know where to go to get it**
- **Social Security for servicemen and railroad men**

NOWADAYS IF YOU'RE a borrower, you have to pay higher interest rates to finance installment purchases, mortgages and other needs.

On the other hand if you're a saver, you can get a higher return of interest on your money. The building and car-buying booms have spurred demand for mortgage money and other financing funds. This demand in turn has warmed up competition for your savings among banks and savings associations who do this financing.

Hottest competition is among Western savings-and-loan associations, for long the highest interest payers, and Eastern savings banks, which recently boosted their rates. The bankers are also very conscious of the phenomenal growth of credit unions, which pay probably the highest dividends of all savings organizations.

As a depositor, you're in a little better bargaining position today than ever before, so get every dollar of interest you can out of the trend. Because one bank or association in your town pays a certain rate doesn't mean that's the standard premium for your dough. Another in the same town, or within car or even mailing distance, may pay substantially more.

An additional one percent return piles up a lot of extra money over the years. One man deposits $1,000 at two percent. At the end of 15 years he finds it has increased to $1,350. Another fellow mines a 3 percent yield out of his $1,000. In 15 years it swells to $1,665. A third man sweats 4 percent out of his $1,000. His money almost doubles; in 15 years it's $1,815. Significantly, a jump from 2 to 3 percent practically doubles the amount your savings earn, and a leap from 2 to 4 almost triples it.

People don't always make their money work as hard for them as they work for the money. In fact, they often do things that startle even their bankers. Many men go into a bank every week with a deposit for a Christmas Club account which pays no interest and sometimes even charges penalties, while they could stroll to another window in the same bank and get 3 percent or so interest on it. Often tellers observe that people draw money out of a savings account close to the end of the year just before it's ready to yield a dividend, to deposit in a Christmas account, thus forfeiting their almost-ripe interest. Honestly, there's no law against buying Christmas gifts with money saved up in an ordinary savings account.

One result of the present competition for your funds has been an increase in banking by mail. Many people now send their savings funds to corners of the country they themselves may have never seen, to get higher interest rates. Some high-paying depositories, like the four-percent Piedmont Federal Savings & Loan Co. of Manassas, Va., frequently turn down accounts; there's so much money from all over the country asking entry to their vaults. Many Easterners now save in California associations which generally pay 3½ percent.

That's the confidential reason why some big New York savings banks startled financial experts last summer by boosting their payments to 3 percent to entice back those ambulating savings accounts. People save in faraway places with greater assurance these days because of the modern system of deposit insurance.

However, not all depositories yet carry this insurance—and you most certainly should check on this point before depositing your savings.

One effect of the latest boost in interest rates has been to put in the shade the famous U. S. "E" bonds, which have long been rated the long-range form of savings paying the highest interest consistent with safety. "E" bonds yield 3 percent only if held the full 10 years. If you cash them earlier your earnings are less; in fact, they average only about 1.5 percent the first five years. However, "E" bonds still have other advantages if you play them right, as you'll see in this report.

Here's a checklist of the depositories competing for your savings, and some facts you ought to know about them:

Mutual savings banks are the ones boosting interest rates most aggressively right now. By mid-1955, over 160 of the nation's savings banks had brought their interest rate up to 3 percent, and a handful were paying even more. National average paid by banks is now 2.72 percent. New England savings banks are the highest payers, with New Hampshire and Massachusetts banks paying an average of close to 3 per cent. In some Midwest states savings banks still lag, as in Ohio and Wisconsin where they still pay under 2 percent.

Don't confuse mutual savings banks with commercial banks—the regular banks that do a general banking business. These usually pay lower rates on savings accounts than do savings banks.

Savings - and - loan associations invest most of their funds in mortgages, which means to you that (1) they generally pay higher interest than savings banks, but (2) their funds are not as liquid. As previously pointed out here, they can restrict withdrawals by requiring notice, although few do so nowadays. But what's important is whether the association carries deposit insurance. You can get as much as 5 percent from some associations that don't, but you don't have as much assurance of safety. Some 2,600 of the country's 6,000 associations still don't have deposit insurance.

Most building-and-loan associations pay at least 3 percent, and one out of six pays 3½, especially in the Far West and South, where interest rates generally are higher.

The boom in savings-and-loan associations accounts has led some securities dealers to specialize in securing deposits. These brokers have lists of high-dividend paying associations seeking deposits which they can suggest. There is no charge for brokers' services: the associations pay them. Among such established brokers are Amott, Baker & Co., 150 Broadway, New York, and 1420 Walnut St., Philadelphia; Insured Investments Associates, 176 W. Adams St., Chicago; Insured Association Dividend Bureau, 53 State St., Boston, Mass.; Joseph H. Meyers Corp., 170 Broadway, New York City; B. C. Morton & Co., 295 Madison Ave., New York City and also at 131 State St., Boston, and 1010 Penobscot Bldg., Detroit, Mich.; Daniel Pollock, 29 Broadway, New York; and B. Ray Robbins Co., 501 Madison Ave., New York.

Credit unions are surprisingly generous dividend payers. But you have to be a member of the sponsoring group to open an account. As you may know, credit unions are really cooperative, member-operated banks often sponsored by unions or other groups of employees with the benediction of employers, and by fraternal societies, churches and people living in the same housing development. Latest available report (1953) showed that the great majority of credit unions paid at least 3 percent or over, almost half paid at least 4, and one out of seven actually paid between 5 and 6 percent.

U. S. Government "E" Bonds yield you 3 percent only if you hold them the full 10 years. But "E" bonds still have certain advantages for long-range savings. If handled right, they can be the moderate-income family's tax-exempt security, just as wealthy investors have their tax-exempt municipal bonds. You are supposed to report interest paid or credited to you as taxable income, but with "E" bonds, you have a choice of reporting the increase in value each year, or the entire increase the year you cash bonds. Thus you can let bonds remain uncashed as long as 20 years without declaring any interest income. If you are squirreling them away for retirement or as a backlog against unemployment, you probably would have little other taxable income when you do cash them, and so may avoid, quite legally, any tax at all on the accrued interest.

Another advantage of "E" bonds is that if you need an outside authority to make you save, like the Christmas clubbers, you can buy bonds on a payroll-deduction plan.

Another type of Government bond, the series H, also pays 3 percent if held 10 years. But the interest is mailed to you instead of accruing as with "E" bonds, and thus is immediately taxable. For moderate-income savers, "H" bonds have the disadvantage of "E" bonds without the advantages.

Postal savings have dropped behind in the interest sweepstakes. They pay 2 percent (1 percent in Mississippi). But the interest is not automatically compounded as in banks and associations. It is kept separate until you call for it. You must buy new certificates with the interest money or it doesn't work full time for you.

Tips: Find out if your bank or association pays a higher rate for a long-term savings. Some savings associations pay a higher dividend on savings certificates than on demand accounts, on which you draw as you want. Also, some commercial banks pay only 1½ percent on savings accounts, but as much as 2½ on certificates held for a certain period, such as three years. This makes it worthwhile separating current operating funds from long-range savings.

Avoid large withdrawals just before the end of the quarter or half-year when interest is credited. Many banks and associations these days offer "passbook loans." You pledge your savings to repay the loan. Ordinarily this is plain foolishness since you pay more interest on the loan than your immobilized account earns. However, it's a way to avoid losing an almost-due interest credit if you need money urgently just before the dividend is due.

You need pay no income tax on interest earned by savings accounts in your children's names.

The best investment is still in yourself. You can't get rich earning 3 or even 4 percent while paying 5 for a mortgage or 12 to 24 percent on installment purchases of cars, appliances and other goods. You save most by using your own dough first.

Serviceman's Opportunity

"Would you clarify for me my Social Security status—what benefits I (or my family) am entitled to? I have a Social Security card I got in 1936. I entered service in June 1941 and served until November 1945. I paid Social Security for about six months in 1946 and came back in service in May 1947 and plan to remain in service until I retire."

—M/Sgt. W.H.H., Croix Chapeau, France

Actually you and your family are already fully insured for old-age and family payments in case of your death. Present or ex-servicemen get Social Security credit for both World War II and post-war service, up to July 1, 1955. (At this writing legislation extending military Social Security credit through May 31, 1956, is awaiting the President's signature.)

But if you will get any monthly benefits from the Army (including military retirement pay) based wholly or in part on the same periods of military service, then you can't have Social Security wage credits for those periods.

In your case you also have some civilian Social Security credits, possibly 20 or 21 calender quarters logged before and during military service. Assuming you were born after 1905, you need 40 quarters. If you can complete this requirement after retirement, or get in some part-time covered civilian work during Stateside service, you will

If you need information on money problems—insurance, investment, budgeting, government pensions, unemployment insurance, borrowing, etc.—write this department. Unfortunately, we can't give individual replies in all cases, but will try to do so in many; others we'll answer here. Write Sidney Margolius, Bluebook, 230 Park Ave., New York 17, N. Y.

have both Social Security and military retirement pensions. (Incidentally, V.A. benefits don't affect military Social Security credits; you get the Social Security credits even if you collect V.A. benefits based on the same service.)

Chance for a Railroader Too

"I worked from the time Social Security started in 1937 until April 1942 under Social Security, and on that date started working on a railroad under Railroad Retirement. I expect I will continue to work for the railroad until retirement. I will be 65 in January 1965, and note from your column that I need 28 calendar quarters to be eligible for Social Security. I probably have 25 quarters from previous non-railroad employment. Do I get back what I paid into Social Security, or can I combine the two and draw more money, or will I have to go back into Social Security and finish the 28 quarters to get any return for the money paid into it? A lot of the men on the railroad are vague about this question."

—J.S., Hickman Mills, Mo.

If you have 10 years of railroad service, your retirement benefits will be paid by the Railroad Retirement Board; if less than 10 years service, credits are combined and paid by Social Security. But if you can get in the additional three quarters you need to qualify for Social Security too, you will be able to draw both retirement payments. Any part-time work or sideline self-employment will do it, even if you earn only $50 a quarter through covered employment ($4 a week). Or $400 a year of self-employment will get you credit for four quarters. Otherwise there is no refund of the Social Security taxes you paid if you don't qualify for Social Security benefits.

Boost If Disabled

"I became disabled by a stroke in 1945, and became eligible for Social Security in 1953. But my payment was reduced because of the eight years I had not worked between 1945 and 1953. I have received one increase. But am I entitled to any further increase because of the disability?"

—P.M.B., Chicago, Ill.

There is an important provision that can help covered workers already getting retirement payments who became totally disabled before 65, and whose disability has continued without interruption. If you apply for the new disability freeze, your benefits can be refigured to see whether eliminating the period of no or low earnings while disabled, will raise your payments. Any physical disability or mental illness severe enough to prevent you from doing any substantial gainful work can be considered for the freeze. If your benefits have not already been refigured to take advantage of this provision, get in touch with the nearest local Social Security office very soon.

Canadian Vets' Benefits

"Could you give me any information as to Canadian veterans' pensions and medical care? I am a veteran of World War I with four years and 185 days of active service at Gallipoli and France. I came to the U.S.A. in 1919 and became a citizen in 1929. I guess there are lots of Canadian vets in the same boat as myself who would like such information."

—J.J.O., Grand Island, N.Y.

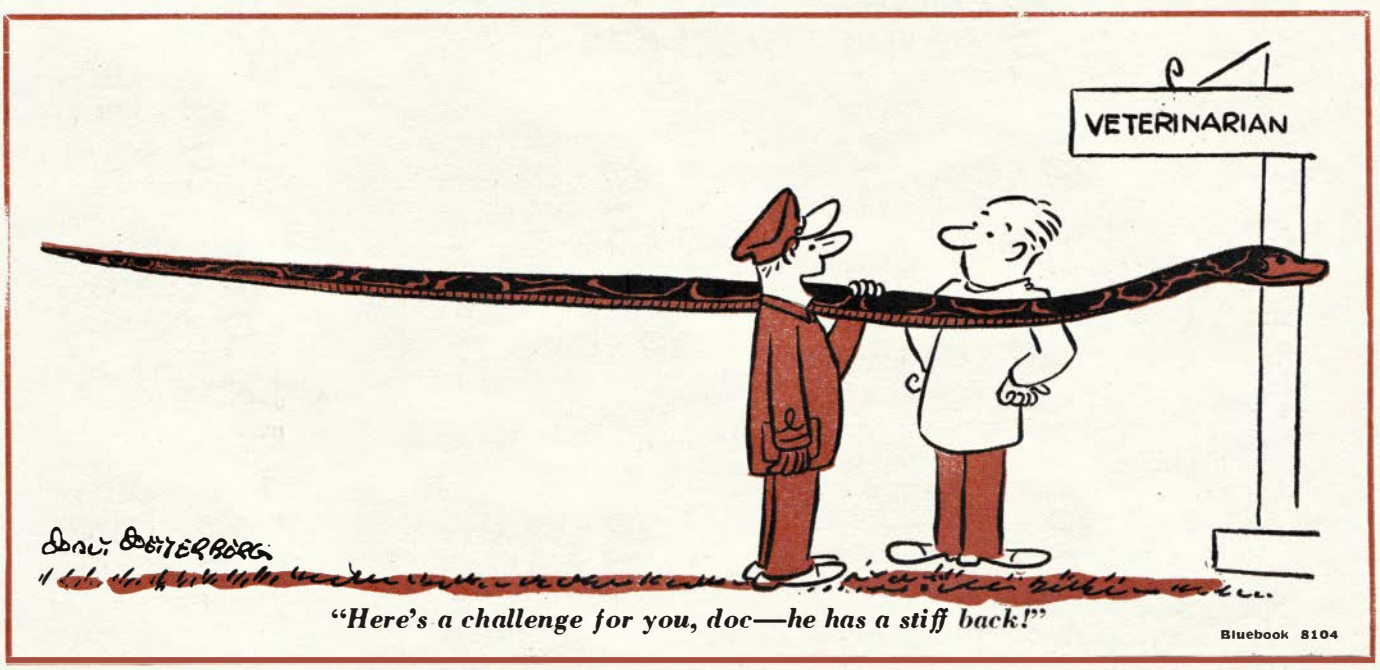
H.W., Chicago, also has asked about Canadian veterans benefits. The Canadian Department of Veterans Affairs informs BLUEBOOK that Canadian veterans residing outside Canada are eligible for certain benefits whether or not they became citizens of another country. Benefits for which they are still eligible are disability pensions, treatment for their pensioned disabilities, re-establishment credit for the purchase of veterans insurance, and veterans' insurance. Assistance may also be given for the higher education of children of those who have died as a result of service, if the youngsters return to Canada for that education.

But it is unlikely that a Canadian World War I vet would be eligible for any benefits unless he has a disability pension or is eligible for one. If you want to know for sure, write direct to the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Memorial Building, Ottawa, Canada, stating your regimental number.

Canadian vets in the U.S. can get medical treatment for service-related conditions through the U.S. Veterans Administration under a reciprocal arrangement. But they can get treatment for non-pensioned conditions only in a veterans' hospital in Canada.

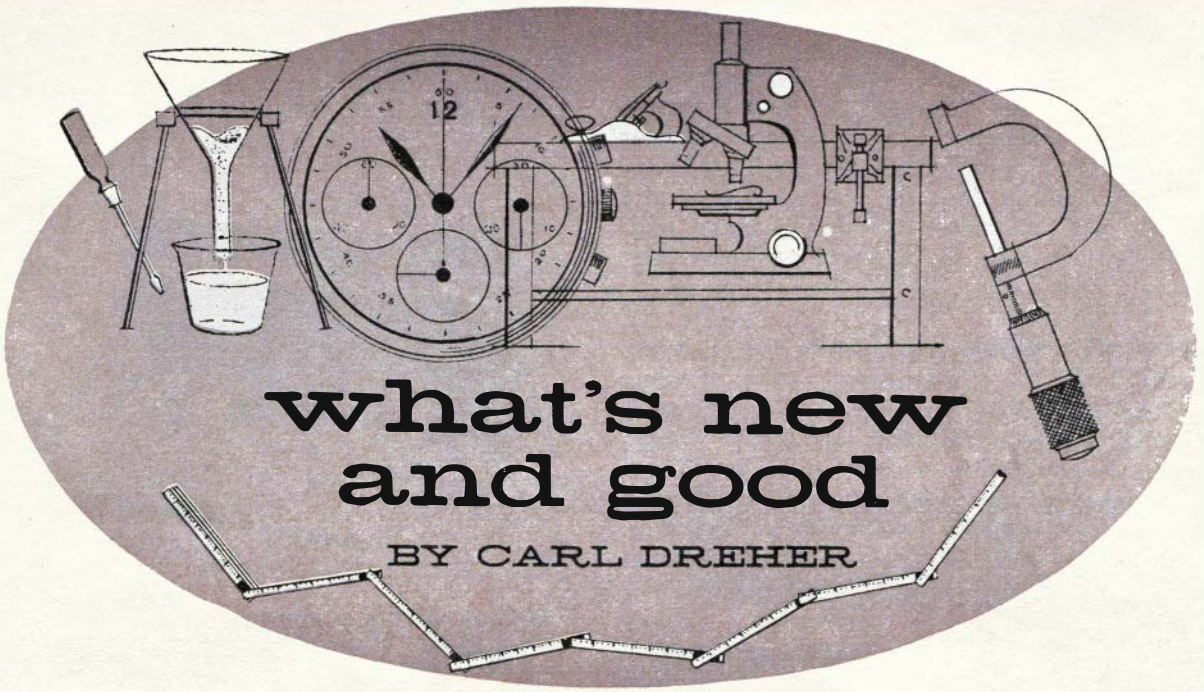
Canadian vets of the Second World War and the Korean Operation are eligible for a credit to aid in re-establishment in civilian life, but if living outside Canada, can use this credit or bonus only for the purchase of veterans' insurance.

—BY SIDNEY MARGOLIUS



"Here's a challenge for you, doc—he has a stiff back!"

Bluebook 8104



what's new and good

BY CARL DREHER

Calling all garage doors • Washing with—brrr!—cold water
No-measuring-needed wood patterns • A light to save your life

Garage-door operation by radio: This you can live without, but it's certainly a nice thing to have and in some suburban developments practically a necessity to maintain your social status. There are numerous electrical and electronic garage door mechanisms. This one, manufactured by the Perma-Power Company, 4727 North Damen Avenue, Chicago 25, avoids some of the faults experience has uncovered.

It consists of a small transmitter mounted under the hood of the car and an antenna underneath the chassis, a receiver in the garage, a motor mechanism actuated by the receiver, and all the necessary accessories. The circuit operates on an FCC-authorized frequency of 27.255 megacycles and will work over a distance of 100-300 feet. Since there may be several installations within range, 10 modulation frequencies are provided for discrimination and the transmitter is rigged so that it will operate only its own door and not lead any other astray.

If a child or pet should chance to get in the way of a closing door, a safety clutch will stop the door as soon as resistance is encountered. List price of the complete system is $199; Allied Radio of Chicago offers what is apparently the same equipment for $145.90 plus 100 pounds shipping.

Garage doors you can drive through: And, speaking of garage doors, for a good many years the standard size for the overhead kind has been eight feet wide, which is on the skimpy side, actually. Many drivers go through an eight-foot opening at three miles an hour with more trepidation than a New York or Chicago taxi driver feels in shooting through a seven-foot opening between two trucks. Nine-foot doors and wider garages are on the way and will ease the nerves of many women drivers and not a few men—provided they don't clutter up the space along the sides so that it will still be eight feet, or less.

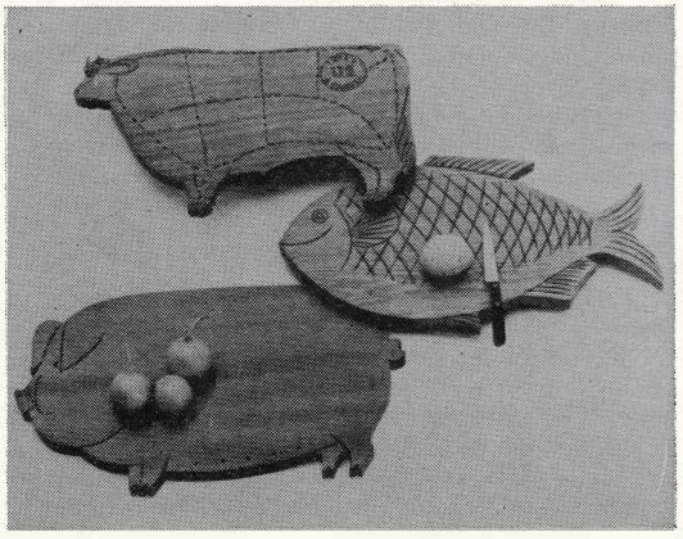
Cold water washes better: You can't be sure of anything in a rapidly moving situation like U.S. technology in mid-century. Most of us believed that to wash dirty clothes you needed hot water and plenty of it, and really hot—about 160°F. But now the chemists tell us it ain't so. Commercial laundries start with a cold water "break" because they've found that cold water dissolves blood, albumen, and some food stains, while hot water thermosets them. The soap-and-allied-products industries have developed synthetic detergents which work well with cold water. Progressive housewives have learned that you don't need suds to get clothes clean; they may adapt themselves to cold water as well. Mom didn't know all the answers.

Hot water costs more than cold—lots more, as the householder who makes out the checks for the gas, oil, and electric bills well knows. So there may be some contention in the offing between the water-heater interests and the detergent interests. But when it comes to washing people, you can't sell this

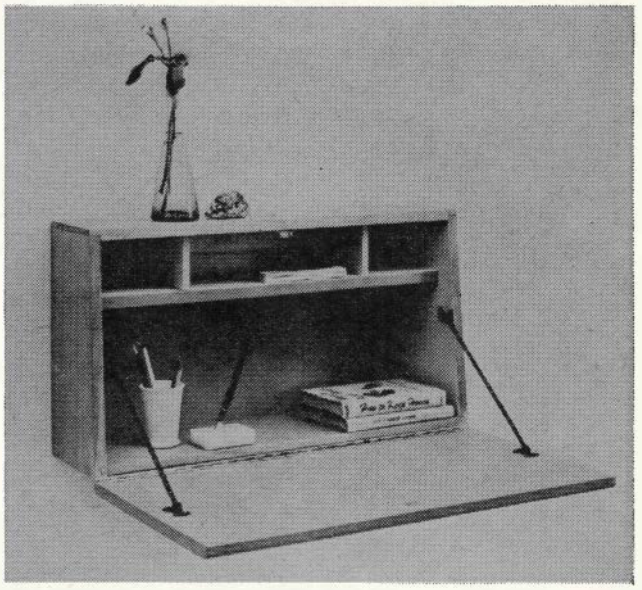
department on anything but a shower with hot water, soap, a hot-water rinse, and cold water to top it off—the colder the better. A hot-and-cold shower isn't only for cleansing: it's both a sensual and a spiritual experience. Cold water alone isn't for men and women; it's for fish. So we expect the water-heater manufacturers (and the gas, oil, and electric magnates) will still have their Cadillacs and their wives (only their wives, we trust) will still have their mink coats.

McCall's wood patterns: We on BLUEBOOK are under no obligation to praise anything connected with McCall Corporation merely because, along with *McCall's, Redbook* and *Better Living,* BLUEBOOK is published by it. Neither are we obliged to hide McCall's light under a bushel; as a matter of fact we haven't got a bushel around the office. We just like the McCall's Transfer Patterns because they fill a need in the do-it-yourself field.

These patterns are a new application for woodworking of a well-proved idea which women have been using for years in dressmaking and related fields. The pattern is printed on tissue paper with a special ink which traces on an underlying surface when pressed with a moderately hot iron. In furniture-making each piece is thus outlined, down to the detail of rabbet joints and irregular shapes. It does away with measuring and the use of measuring tools when you make the articles for which McCall's has designed patterns, which include plant stands; a dispenser for towels, waxed paper and metal foil; barbecue tables, benches, and utensil racks; decorative cutting boards and wall plaques; a wall cabinet; a wall desk (the most popular item right now); a spice rack, a child's room set; California-style outdoor pieces; traditional and contemporary furniture; toys and other items.



Decorative cutting boards made from patterns require no scaling, no free-hand drawing.



No measuring is necessary to construct this wall desk. Transfer patterns do it for you.

The designs are charming. And as far as toys and children's furniture are concerned, you probably know that a child will usually value the things he sees you make for him even more than those you buy for him. Creation, even the most routine, is magic for a child, but money he won't appreciate till he grows up.

With the patterns come direction sheets which for clarity and completeness beat nine-tenths of the instruction writing done by far bigger and heavily engineered industries—a subject with which we have had a good deal of experience and about which we shall have more to say.

This is of only incidental interest to master craftsmen—the fellows who design beautiful furniture and build it on the basis of a few rough sketches with never a mistake. But for every expert there are a hundred novices and those who are just starting to learn. Among the problems in Do-It-Yourself is that of protecting these newcomers from the opportunists and fast-buck boys who collect on the fringes of every new market. Then there's the problem of keeping the thoughtless and luckless in one piece, as far as safety instruction can do it. And third, helping them in their first attempts so they'll waste as little time and material as possible and not get discouraged by difficulties which aren't nearly as formidable as they look at the outset.

The McCall's patterns contribute to the last of these objectives. You can get them at lumberyards, department stores, chain stores, and hardware stores.

New names: In our publicity set-up it isn't necessarily true that a rose by any other name would smell as sweet. Nobody would smell it and nobody could sell it if it had the wrong name—otherwise why would hardheaded businessmen pay their adver-

tising agencies handsome sums to hire geniuses to think up synthetic names for everything new under the sun? But the geniuses can't just let their imaginations soar: there are psychological laws which govern this booming branch of letters.

The name must have a pleasant connotation, hence the use of terms like royal, victory, ideal, star, triumph, etc. It should promise to do what the user expects of it, hence the more complex constructions like workrite, bildrite, etc. The phonetic spelling of these last two is much favored and, carried a step farther, it results in countless E-Z products and the like. Color attracts attention and the favorite color is still red, despite international tensions. Another law is that mystery helps sell, and the best names are often those which sound good although the customer doesn't quite know what they mean; in consequence, bastard Latin and Greek—Graeco-Roman-Schenectady, as Dr. Lee De Forest once called it—are lucrative sources for prefixes and suffixes.

Occasionally, however, the industrial christeners can afford to be explicit. An example is BOVUNG, dehydrated cow manure. What does the cow produce? The cow produces bovung and milk. And now how about a strong, hard-hitting name for milk? BOWASH? The advertising agencies can do better than that if those interested will come across with a few thousand bucks to oil up their thinking.

More on renting tools: An article on tool rental has appeared in *Domestic Engineering* (July 1955) which indicates that in last month's BLUEBOOK we underestimated the opportunities in this line. *Domestic Engineering*'s story summarizes the experience of Guy P. Brown of Brown Plumbing, Dallas, Texas. Mr. Brown runs his rental business at the same address under the name of Dallas Equipment Rental Company. He's a comparatively big operator, with an annual volume in the thousands of dollars.

But he also rents a lot of small stuff to do-it-yourself customers. Examples: ¼" electric drill, $1 a day, 75c for four hours: ½" electric drill, $1.50 a day, $1 for four hours; 24" pipe wrench, $1 a day; 7¼" electric saw, $4.75 a day; 18" electric chain saw, $8 a day, etc.

Mr. Brown has found that he sells considerable equipment through his rental business, and that it helps his plumbing business in that some of the do-it-yourselfers get in beyond their depth and end up hiring him.

And it makes contacts, which is one of the primary necessities in any business. "I'd say this really is a perfect little extra business for a plumbing contractor with a store," Mr. Brown concludes, and it sounds like a good sideline for a certain number of others too.

These We've Tested

This could save your life: *"Do-All" battery-powered lantern with red flashing light at one end and constant white light at the other, four-way switch (off, flashing red only, both lights, white only); white light on 25-foot extension cord for use as separable work light; aluminum base and housing, total weight 2 pounds, 10 ounces; complete with Eveready No. 509 6-volt battery, extension cord, two extra bulbs; Cable Electric Products, Inc., 234 Daboll St., Providence 7, Rhode Island; $6.95, battery about $1.* The Merritt Parkway in Connecticut is one of the older express highways, but it's still a fine road—long-radius curves, two lanes in each direction separated by a broad strip thickly planted with trees and shrubs, and not a grade crossing or traffic light in its entire length. Considering the traffic density, its accident rate remains low. But God help the motorist who stops on its pavement! A few years ago the highway police figured that anybody who started changing a tire in the outside lane (let's not talk about the inside lane) had a life expectancy of just five minutes. That estimate needn't be taken too literally, but it gives you an idea.

A certain number of motorists driving at high speeds at night are half-hypnotized by the monotony and their own headlights and their fixed glare at the lighted strip of highway ahead. Semi-somnambulists, in other words. A few are tipsy and a few are joy-hopping. Some are tired and unresponsive. All alike are tethered, in a sense, to the tail lights of the cars ahead moving at more or less the same speed. A standing car is an apparition which looms up out of the darkness and calls for the reaction time and steely nerves of the professional racing driver, which these run-of-the-mill operators haven't got and can't be expected to have. The result: about 1,100 deaths and 87,000 injuries a year caused by stalled vehicles. The property damage we don't need to go into.

The first thing that everybody in the stopped car should do is to pile out and get off the road—but fast. If there's a flashlight in the car, one member of the party should be stationed a hundred yards back, waving it at the oncoming cars. But a flashlight lacks authority; some motorists will ignore it. A flashing red light will slow them down, avert disaster.

The Cable Electric product is an all-purpose lantern for use in camping, hiking, hunting, fishing, and during power failures. The red flashing feature is a disabled-car warning. It was tested on a moderately clear summer night at a distance of 1,200 feet and found to be conspicuously visible to pedestrians and to drivers with modern headlights in the high-beam position. The headlights appeared to have little effect on the visibility of the flashing light. The manufacturers claim visibility up to one mile in the dark. This was not checked.

The work light is very bright and can be used to furnish light for tire replacement or other repairs while the flasher is placed 25 feet to the rear of the car and pointed in the direction of oncoming traffic. Or the entire assembly can be placed at any desired distance to the rear and used as a warning beacon with somewhat greater assurance that unalert drivers will turn aside in time. Since the device carries its own power supply, it will work as long as its internal dry battery is okay. A light powered by the storage battery of the car, by plugging in to the cigarette lighter or otherwise, will fail when the car battery fails—and a considerable number of cars are stalled in just that way.

Vari-Products Co., 2450 S. Prairie Ave., Chicago 16, Ill., offers a reflector-type night flare, with a red flag for daylight use. This is the simplest type of stalled-vehicle warning, since it requires no source of power other than the headlights of an approaching car or truck. The reflecting lens is molded by Stimsonite, 3445 N. Kimball, Chicago, from "Lucite" acrylic resin furnished by Du Pont. The manufacturer claims visibility of ½ mile in headlight beam. List price is $3.35 for a single flare with flag. We haven't tested this but the design is one which has been used in the trucking industry for several years and which has now been adapted for passenger-car use.

Staplers: *Bostitch T5-8 tacker, capacity all sizes 5/32-9/16", weight 2 pounds, 8 ounces; Bostitch, Westerly, Rhode Island; $11.50. Craftsman tacker-stapler, Cat. No. 9-6844, capacity 1/4, 5/16, 3/8", weight 2 pounds, 3 ounces; Sears, Roebuck & Co.; $8.45 plus shipping. Duo-Fast Model CT-859 gun tacker, capacity all sizes 1/4-9/16", weight 2 pounds, 8 ounces; Fastener Corporation, Franklin Park, Illinois; $11.50.* This owner had a porch 16-by-16 screened on three sides, which made 48 linear feet of screens about 5 feet high. The screening was thinly galvanized iron which had been put up during World War II. Two or three years after the war it was rusting through. Getting it off and cutting new screening wasn't too bad, but the tacking! There were between 900 and 1,000 tacks and each had to be picked up individually, stuck in place, and driven. It was stupid, dull, irritating work.

Stapling machines were no doubt already available but how good they were this owner didn't know. They're good now, that's sure, yet a great many home mechanics are still using tacks on big jobs where staples would do it in half the time or less. Fastening insect screening is only one of the many situations in which no wideawake mechanic uses anything but a stapler. Others are tacking insulation (batts, blankets, foil), ceiling and wall tile, metal lath, building papers, moisture barriers, and in display work, labeling, some types of packaging, and some types of telephone and other communication wiring.

The machines have various trade names, such as stapler, tacker-stapler, gun-tacker, etc. Some types are used as a hammer, but the ones reported on here are the compression type, in which the firing end of the machine is held against the work and the handle is squeezed. The staples, which come in packages of 5,000, are slipped into the machine in sticks of about 80 and fed automatically. The individual staples are ejected by a powerful spring action and will fly 15-20′ when fired in the air. Keep your hands away from the business end of the machine and don't let the kids get hold of it. These are not popguns, although they're as safe as a tack hammer—safer, in fact, when properly used.

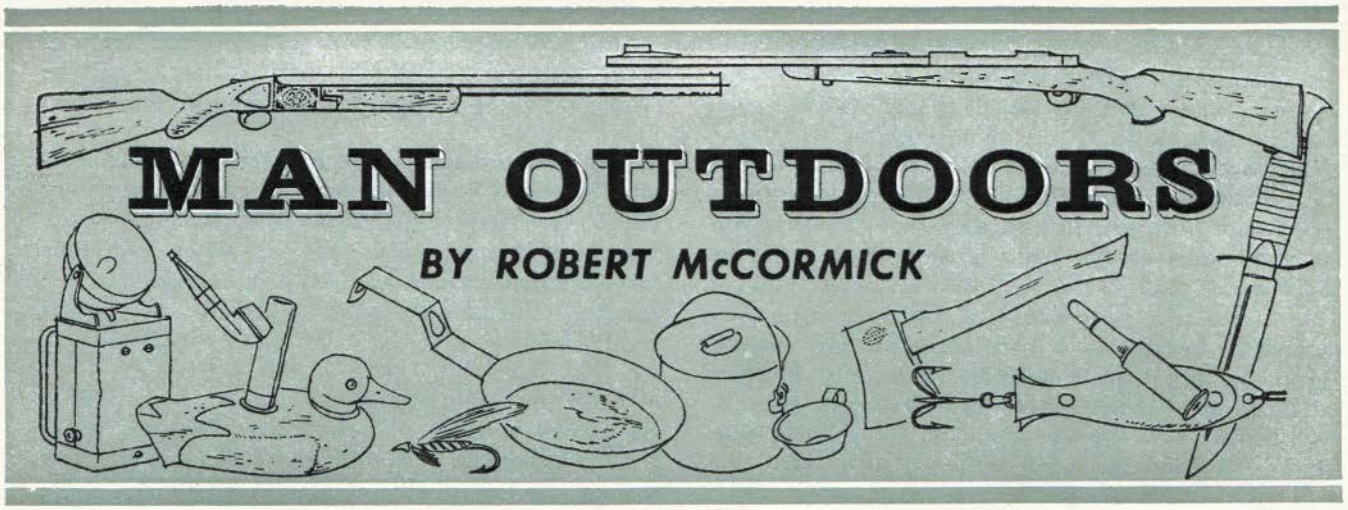
The saving and convenience are not only in the self-feeding feature, which enables a fast worker to drive at the rate of almost one staple a second, but in the fact that only one hand is used. Thus the other hand is freed to hold the work, and in many situations that means literally that one man can do the work of two.

BLUEBOOK's tester set a few hundred staples with each of the machines listed and found no operational differences to write about. It should be noted, however, that the Craftsman takes only up to ⅜" staples, which is fine for insulation, screen wire, and other thin materials, but for tile and other thick materials you need staples as long as 9/16". The Bostitch and the Duo-Fast will take these. Unless you're sure you'll never need staples longer than ⅜", therefore, we don't recommend the Craftsman, which is apparently manufactured by Duo-Fast for Sears—at any rate it's a Chinese copy of the Duo-Fast CT-850 (not tested). The Craftsman, however, has the price advantage in its stapling range.

All these machines are easy to load and operate. The Bostitch is front-loading; the other two, rear-loading. It is advisable on general principles to use staples of the same brand. Staples cost about $2.25 to $4 per 5,000, depending on size and where you buy them.

These are by no means the only good staplers on the market. We don't make any pretense of full coverage. Our purpose is to call attention to general types rather than particular brands; it just happens that the simplest way to describe a type is to evaluate more or less representative samples.

When we recommend a product it is always in the hope that our readers, the manufacturer, and the entire industry will all benefit substantially in the long run. —BY CARL DREHER



Don't throw away that deerskin—it's worth money!

A new gadget to keep your hooks and sinkers from snagging

SOME OF THE MOST wasteful men I know are the deer hunters who spend upwards of $200 to shoot their game, then eat the meat, mount the head —and throw the skin away.

"Time was," says Jim Styres of Little Falls, N.Y., who has made a career of fashioning custom-made deerskin clothing for hunters, "when a man could get only four pairs of gloves made from a single deer-hide, primarily because gloves were about the only things manufactured from it. Since most men have little use for four pairs of gloves a year, a lot of hunters used to throw the hide away as a complete waste.

"But today deerskin can be turned into all kinds of interesting products. Yet I'd say the hides of at least half the deer shot in America never get to a manufacturer. Why? Simply because deer-hunters aren't educated as yet to the fact that the hide, aside from the venison, is the most useful single part of their game. It's only common sense to have it made into something useful for a few dollars."

Styres is in a position to know what he's talking about. He's probably the only leather-goods manufacturer in the nation equipped to turn out everything deerskin under the successful slogan: 'You Shoot 'Em—We Make 'Em!"

For example, from one deer-hide in good condition Styres, whose firm name is J. R. Styres (P. O. Box 554, Little Falls, N. Y.), can make a pair of moccasins, a pair of gloves, and a ladies pouch-type handbag—and still have enough leather left over for a man's wallet. Total cost: $14.35, if your hide reaches him tanned and ready for business; if not, $3.25 more for tanning each hide.

Also available: Men's one-finger mittens, lined ($2.25 per pair if your hide is used, or $4.50 from Styres' own ready-made stock); men's chopper mittens ($2.25, or $4.50); hunter's mittens ($2.25, or $4.50); ladies' soft-sole moccasins ($3.50, or $6); ladies' vest ($8.40, or $15.50); men's vest ($8. or $15); men's belt ($2, or $4); tobacco pouch ($1.10, or $2); change purse ($.50, or $.75).

Best-selling items of all, though, are the deerskin

Moccasins, gloves, handbag, wallet can be made from one deerskin. Jacket takes four.

jackets, both in men's (Mohawk Special. Davy Crockett, Sirjac and Buckjac) and ladies' (Seneca Fringe, Seneca and Vagabond) styles. It takes four of your hides to make any of these except the Vagabond, which requires five, at prices ranging from $13.20 for the men's Buckjac to $18 for the Vagabond, provided you furnish the skins. Ready-made from Styres stock, the items range between $40 and $55.

Styres, who prefers to do a custom business with sportsmen because he is hard-pressed to buy enough hides for his own ready-made stock, makes every effort to see that whatever you order comes back to you in your own personal deerskin. When your hide arrives, it (and the products to be made from it) is assigned an identification number, and only if your skin is in no condition for manufacture will he write you for permission to fill in with skins from his own stock.

Biggest problem facing hunters who want deerskin jackets is legally to acquire the four necessary hides. One way to get them is to put the bite on your deer-hunting pals. Or you might visit your neighborhood taxidermist; you'll be surprised at the number of unclaimed skins he'll have at season's end. He'll be glad to sell you a couple cheap, too.

As for shipping instructions, a post card to Styres will bring you all you'll need to know to get the skins there in good condition. Meantime, Styres strongly advises rubbing at least five pounds of table salt into the fleshy side of your deerskin the minute it's cut away from the body as a proper preservative pending tanning. Store the skin in a cool place, and either ship it along as soon as possible, salt and all, or have it tanned yourself before mailing.

Bass — Weakfish

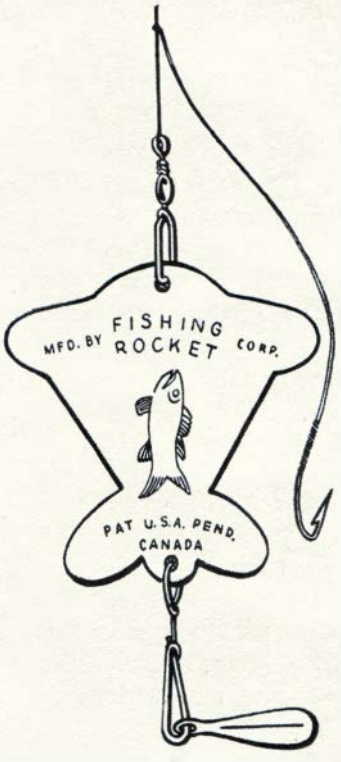
GOOD—Expert anglers, after trophy fish for den walls, hang around the northland in November; even around metropolitan New York, biggest fish hit best just before season's close in any City reservoir. Same is true of muskies, pike and walleyes wherever they're found. Trick is to still-fish just before freeze-up at same spots you'll fish through ice later on.

BETTER—Entire Alabama share of TVA Lakes (Wilson, Pickwick, Guntersville) also great now for bass, plus huge channel cats. Lake Champlain offers muskies and pike on New York side, there are walleye in Vermont, and Chesapeake Bay produces excellent striped- and channel-bass fishing as weather worsens. Special fall season on Great Lakes steelhead (rainbow trout) in Michigan streams offers fish to 5-10 pounds near the mouth of the Sturgeon, Betsy, Big Manistee, Rock, Mosquito and others.

BEST—November's the month, too, to follow striped bass into the Sacramento and Napa Rivers around San Francisco. Ten Thousand Island section of the Gulf of Mexico of Everglades, Fla., also is outstanding. And by all means don't miss late fall runs of weakfish (sea trout) all along the Gulf Coast from northwestern Florida to Padre Island, Tex. Fishing's better now than at any time of the year.

FOR STILL FISHERMEN ONLY: Good news for still fishermen is the invention of a new and aptly-named "Rig-Saver" just marketed by the Fishing Rocket Corporation of 721 St. Mary's St., Bronx, N. Y. Designed especially for bottom fishing on either salt or fresh water, the one I recently tested actually does prevent snagging of hooks and/or sinkers on weeds, rocks and other bottom debris, even when fishing deep, rocky drop-offs direct from shore.

Airplane-shaped, the new gadget is made of shiny aluminum plate and attaches to the line just above the sinker and below the snelled hook. It operates on the principle of resistance to water-pressure, inclining immediately towards the surface at a sharp angle the minute you start to reel in. Result: the entire rig moves upwards off rocky bottoms towards the surface before heading in to shore.



"Rig-Saver," for fishing.

Makers of the device also claim similar results in surf-casting or trolling, although I fail to see how it would help trollers, and have yet to test it in the surf. For ordinary, freshwater bottom angling along rocky shorelines, though, the thing can't be beat. Cost: one dollar, direct from the manufacturer.

man around the house...

BY
JOHN SHARNIK

The pros take lessons from week-end handymen

Ceramic-topped table kits • Plastic drawers for built-in chests

DO-IT-YOURSELF is outgrowing its amateur status. Now it's the pros who are taking lessons from the weekend handymen-around-the-house.

"I didn't pay much attention to this do-it-yourself thing at first," a high-salaried furniture designer told me recently. "Then I began to notice that some of these so-called amateurs were coming up with ideas around their own homes that I'd never seen in any showroom. Nowadays, when I visit a guy's house, and I know he owns so much as a broken-toothed handsaw, I look around to see what he's been using it for."

From another designer, an architect, a lighting contractor and even a plumber I've heard the same story: A slew of professional designs, ingenious solutions to household problems, are coming off the workbenches of the do-it-yourself crowd.

Of all these amateur triumphs, probably none can match that of a 24-year-old Californian named Jack Fletcher, whose feats of electronic wizardry around his own house have left even the most practiced professional gasping in admiration.

Fletcher's house is a push-button prototype of the home of tomorrow. Windows close automatically—like the convertible tops of those futuristic cars—at the first drizzle of rain or blast of wind. Lights shut off automatically when you walk out of a room. Floor lamps are cordless—they light when set down over electronic units in the floor.

Less breath-taking, perhaps, than Fletcher's achievements but still ingenious enough to command the pros' respect are dozens of other items being designed and produced daily in garage and basement workshops all over the country. Here are just a few that have been cited to me in admiration—and that you might find useful in home improvement projects of your own:

• Looking for "something different" to cover a wall in his wife's living room, a St. Louisan named Roy DeWille ran across some 1"-thick sheets of cork. He gave them a coat of white paint, sawed them into 2"x9" pieces, and glued them to the wall in a brick-like pattern.

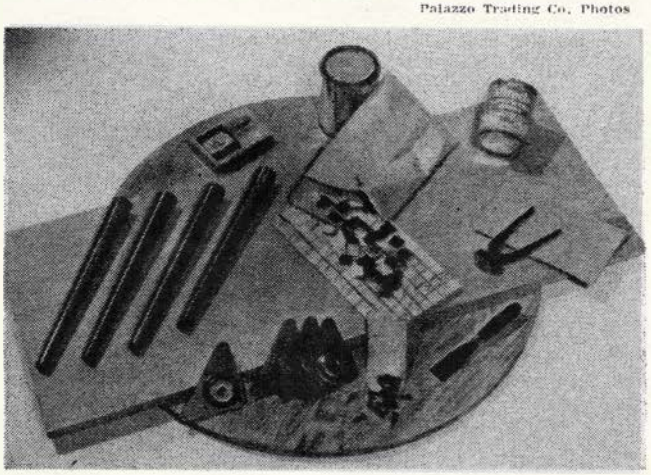
The result is a wall that not only has the handsome look of whitewashed brick, but that has a couple of extra advantages—added insulation and noise reduction. DeWille claims the cork surface has five times the sound-absorbing properties of an ordinary wall. And the whole deal—for a 13-foot-long wall—cost him under $25.

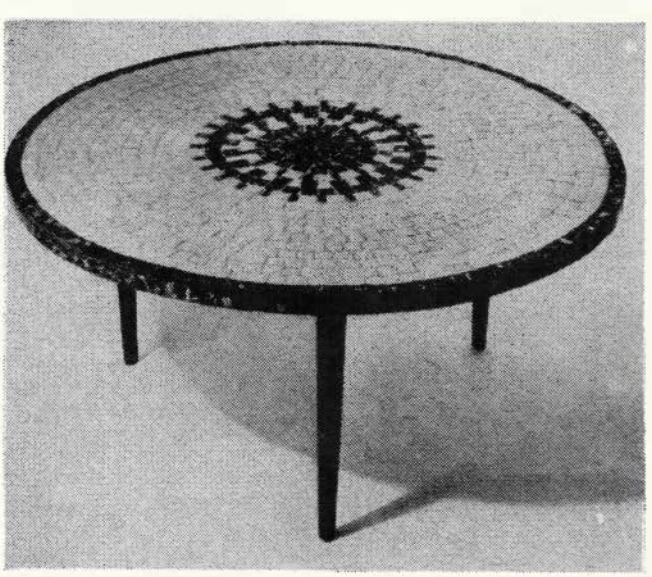
• For a New York apartment-dweller, it was the same problem, with a different solution. The problem was slightly complicated by cracks in the wall. The tenant wanted something unusual that would conceal the cracks, but he didn't want to sink a lot of dough into a place he was only renting.

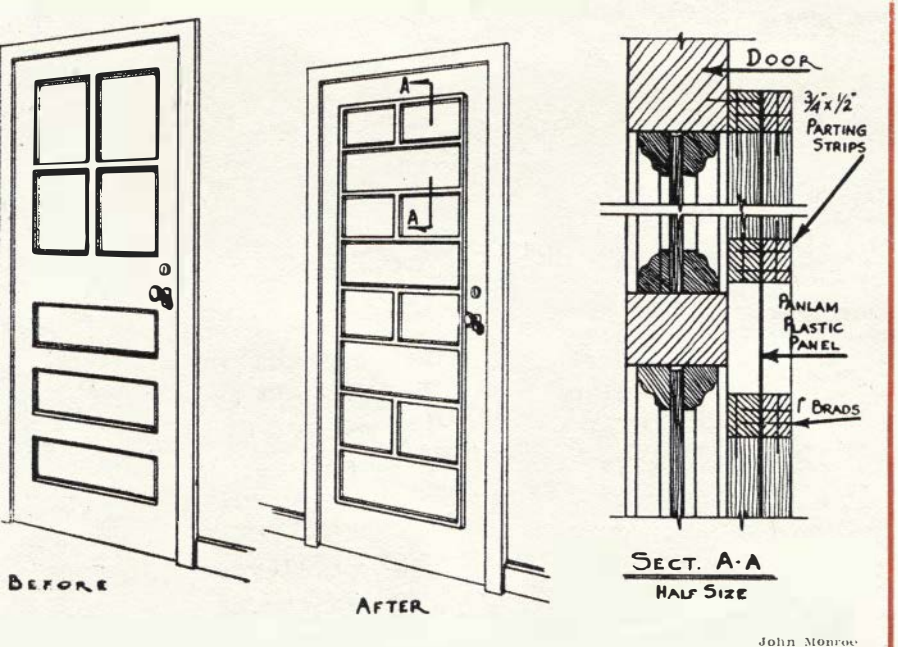
The material he used was unusual, all right; and

Colorful coffee table surfaced with small ceramic tiles can be assembled from kit.

Palazzo Trading Co. Photos







John Monroe

Old beat-up door was converted into modern door by adding sheet plastic and wood strips.

it couldn't have been cheaper—egg-crate paper, the squares of dimpled cardboard that are packed between layers of eggs when they're shipped by the gross. He picked it up for free at his neighborhood market, glued it to the wall and painted it.

● Sometimes, when you set out, like that apartment-house amateur, to hide damage, instead of repairing or replacing it, you wind up with something better than the original. Guy repainting a breakfast nook, for example, was stopped by a door leading out of it into his back hall. In the first place, the door was so old and beat up that no amount of paint could cover the scars. And, incidentally, it grated his wife because it was a glass-paned job that presented an unappetizing view of the clutter in the back hall.

With just two bucks worth of parting strips (½" x ¾" wood molding) and a sheet of the heavy, durable plastic material called Panlam (you've read about it in this corner before) he overcame both complaints. First he painted some of the wood strips black, then nailed them to the inside surface of the door in the over-all design he'd worked out. Over this framework he lightly stapled the sheet of plastic in one piece. Then came the rest of the wood strips, nailed through the plastic into the first strips, securing the plastic firmly in place and converting the eyesore into a kind of Japanese screen . . . handsome, up-to-date, and brand-new-looking.

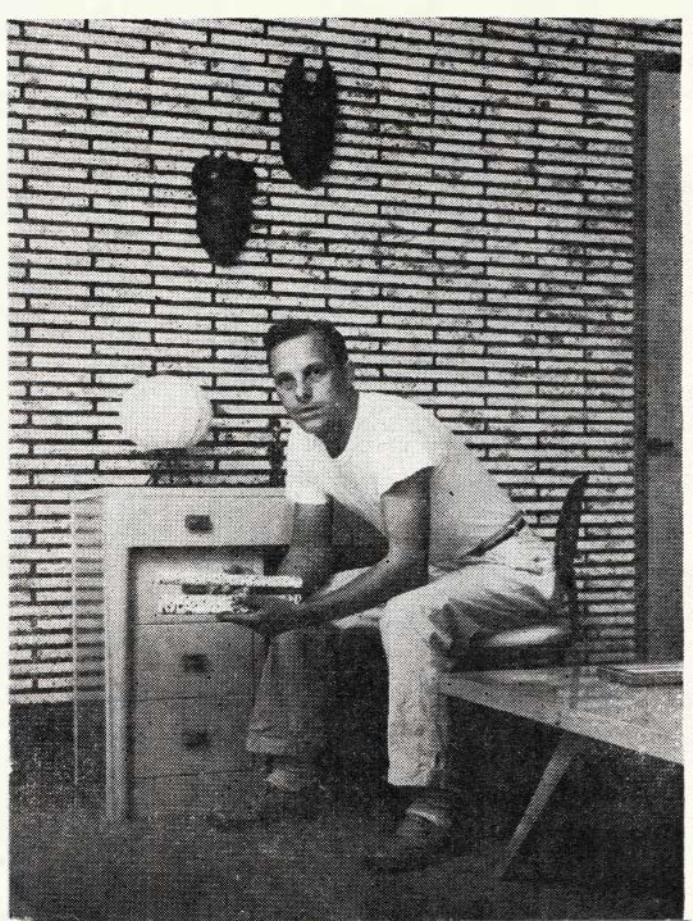
The plastic is washable; it's patterned, so it takes the place of curtains; and it's transluscent, but not transparent, so the hallway mess is happily out of sight.

● Some of the most useful gimmicks of all are produced out of apparently useless scrap materials. Consider the brainstorm of a Connecticut gent, who, after putting up a pegboard wall in his kid's room, found himself with a lot of 8"-wide strips of the perforated board on his hands—too narrow for any usual purpose. He found an *unusual* purpose for it—to make a strip lighting cove over a row of living-room windows. He got not only the effect of conventional indirect lighting, but also an interesting pattern of direct lighting, shining in pinpoints through the perforations.

CERAMIC COMEBACK: In this age of miracle synthetics, one of the most old-fashioned of materials has been making a strong comeback. That's ceramic tile, which has been around for a couple of thousand years and which is coming back into its own as a material for table tops and countertops, as well as floors and walls. Now it's entering the do-it-yourself field, in the form of a knockdown kit out of which you can assemble a colorful coffee table or lamp table.

The 1"x1" tiles, cemented with a special adhesive to a plywood base, give you a surface on which a hot coffee pot can be set or a Martini spilled without damage.

Kits containing the whole works—plywood top already cut to size, wood or metal legs, tools, plus tiles in a choice of colors—are available in local do-it-yourself shops, or by mail from Palazzo Trading Co., Inc., 1055 First Ave., New York 22, N. Y. Prices for the kits run from around $30 to $55, depending on the size table you want to build.



The "bricks" in this expensive-looking brick wall are made of inexpensive sheet cork sawed to size.

St. Louis Post Dispatch

MOLDED DRAWER: Got a built-in project going? If you have, don't waste time laboriously cutting rabbets and dovetails to build drawers of your own. Brand new on the market is a one-piece molded plastic drawer that comes ready to install.

Naturally, it requires no finishing or painting, and the seamless construction eliminates dust-catching corners. It's being produced in a variety of sizes, for various uses in bedroom, kitchen, bath, or in a storage wall that might be installed anywhere in the house. (For information: Boonton Molding Co., Boonton, N. J.)

FROM THE EXPERTS:

TIPS ON SHOOTING AND HUNTING

By IRVING T. MARSH

HERE IT IS November, and it's high time you started being able to hit the broad side of that barn. Well, here we have some boys who want to be your friends: Dr. C. E. Hagie, who used to be the best running-game shot in all Montana. Claude Parmelee, professional exhibition shooter. Jack O'Connor, author of four textbooks on hunting. Hal Sharp—who started blazing away when he was four and now does a nationally syndicated outdoors column.

And Dr. Henry M. Stebbins, for many years organizer and coach of junior and senior rifle clubs. On the next pages, as adapted from their writings, they give you some steers that should be good for any gunner. . . .

And here's some advice from BLUEBOOK: Barns make fine trophies, but they ain't such good eating.

Illustrated by Wesley McKeown

Tips on Shooting and Hunting . . .

LARGE GAME

BETTER MARKSMANSHIP

C. E. HAGIE

Every hunter should train himself to hear and distinguish the impact of the bullet on his game. Sound travels so much slower than the rifle bullet that the sound of the rifle's report is out of the way before the thud of the bullet's impact can reach the shooter's ear. This sound, once identified, cannot be mistaken easily. It is a dull, hollow thud.

Altitude, temperature and humidity all affect a bullet's trajectory. A rifle sighted in at sea level will shoot high on a mountain top because the density of the air decreases with altitude and as its density decreases less energy is required to push it aside during the flight of the bullet. Consequently the bullet will go farther in a given time than at sea level and gravity will have a shorter period to operate on it in a given distance.

JACK O'CONNOR

Position of hand in offhand shooting.
(From "The Rifle Book")

It is best for every shooter to begin from the prone position with a sandbag rest or from a bench rest. Keeping the rifle steady then doesn't amount to much. You can concentrate on squeezing the trigger and learn to let off your shot without disturbing the aim, thus gaining confidence in rifle and yourself. Practice from no other position for some time and keep shooting until the majority of shots land within the bull.

CLAUDE PARMELEE

There's a common practice of holding the rifle on an open spot and waiting for the buck to come into the sights. Sooner or later you'll discover that a deer isn't that obliging or else doesn't think the way you do. Don't ever try to outguess him when it comes to picking his way in high gear.

Rifle stance.
(From "How to Be a Crack Shot")

HAL SHARP

Some of these old deer-hunters' tricks are still in use:

Don't wear light-colored clothing.

A growth of beard or deep tan on your face makes you less conspicuous.

Hide yourself as much as possible. Climb rocks or trees and remain motionless.

Don't use shaving lotion, hair tonic or scented soap before you set out.

Rub old clothes with cedar oil and hang them in a barn before wearing.

Everyone has a "master eye" that dominates the other eye, usually the right in right-handed people and the left in left-handed. Yet it's natural to see best with both eyes at once. Prove it thus: Point your finger at an object with both eyes open. Close one eye at a time. The "master eye" retains the alignment but the finger jumps away as the other eye is used alone. With practice you'll sight faster and better with both eyes!

DR. HENRY M. STEBBINS

Shots at standing game become difficult as the range lengthens, or for that matter, as the breath shortens! It's well to do a bit of practice firing when you're puffy from hill climbing, and if your shooting is to be at long range, study wind tables for the ammunition you use. High velocity and length or sectional density of bullets both help to beat wind.

Learn to make hits in deliberate fire with the aid of your forward hand rested on or against a tree or rock, the forestock held in the fork of thumb and forefinger, not touching the support. When it does, your shot will go wild—at least from a light barrel.

SMALL GAME

There is one piece of advice that should be strictly adhered to, and that is not to let the sights get off the game while squeezing the trigger. In other words, follow the game constantly with the rifle with no regard to the exact fraction of a split second that the bullet may emerge from the barrel. This practice will take care of most of the problems involved up to 50 yards on game when shooting the high-speed .22-caliber ammunition.

When training for fast, relatively accurate brush shooting here's a stunt worth imitating. On the local range is a series of boulders about a foot in diameter at 150, 100, 75, 50 and 25 yards. It's possible to get fast off-hand practice by shooting at the farthest stone and working up to the nearest or vice versa, keeping the butt at the shoulder and firing every shot the instant the sights are on. The man who goes through that routine once a week isn't going to be a bad game shot.

When hunting with the Hornet or Bee, use the open-point bullet that breaks up on impact with the ground. Solid bullets, even the .22 long rifle, fired at a low angle will ricochet a long way in open country. However, the really high velocity bullets like the .220 Swift and .222 Remington disintegrate on striking the ground and thus are comparatively safe.

Ideal rabbit cover is criss-crossed with regular paths the rabbits use most often. In dense cover of brush and briars it's difficult to unravel but in weedy clearings you can usually pick the main avenues of entry. When a rabbit is in such a clearing and is disturbed into leaving, it picks one or more of the paths to use because it can make faster time. The final path it turns into will lead to its home or a brush pile. Station yourself at one of these crossings.

There are three different ways of firing at moving game: One is the continuous swing, which starts either behind or ahead of the mark, and continues on through the let-off of the shot when the muzzle is well ahead of the target. Less favored is the interrupted swing, the gun being stopped abruptly well ahead of the crossing, incoming, or outgoing mark. A third is the snap-shot, the gun tossed up and aligned quickly but accurately, just far enough ahead for the game to "run into it."

CARE OF THE RIFLE

Great care should be exercised that a rifle's sights are not bumped against trees or rocks while carrying. And when you lean a rifle against a tree or the side of a tent, or anywhere else, be sure it's steady enough not to fall down, and that it isn't where someone is likely to knock it down and thus jam the sights out of alignment.

Refinishing Your Rifle Stock

To refinish your rifle stock, first take out the barrel and action. Apply a commercial varnish-remover. Sometimes two applications are necessary. Then smooth the stock with fine sandpaper, taking care not to harm the checkering. After the first sanding, rub the stock with a wet rag, then dry quickly over a flame such as a gas burner. Go over the wood again lightly with fresh fine sandpaper. Repeat the wetting and drying several times until the stock is glass-smooth.

Then simply use pure linseed oil. Warm it and sop on all it will take. Allow the stock to sit a few days. Then another application of oil, which probably will not be all absorbed. Wipe off with water and powdered pumice on a rag until all of this old, gummed oil is off. Then put a few drops of linseed oil on your palm and polish well into the stock. After 10 or 15 minutes go over the stock with a dry rag and wipe off surplus oil. Allow the stock to set for a week. Repeat at intervals.

—Jack O'Connor

If you stumble or fall and get your rifle full of dirt or snow, by all means don't fire your rifle again until all matter is removed! Unload the gun, tap or shake out as much as possible. Then blow through the breach to the muzzle of the bore. Now fire a primed cartridge after first removing the bullet and powder. It safely finishes the job. You might carry a primed empty for such use.

It is well to wipe clean and lightly oil the sights and the action parts that are readily accessible and just as readily overlooked. The firing pin, or striker, and the mainspring of most bolt-action high-power rifles are easily removed and should be looked after occasionally, also the inside of the bolt cylinder. They can be treated with a non-freeze lubricant or left to dry in very cold weather to avoid the possibility of misfires.

Tips on Shooting and Hunting . . .

TARGET SHOOTING

C. E. HAGIE

Every change applied in the point of support for the rifle, and every change in the pressure on point of contact between the shoulder and butt plate will make a slight difference in the point of impact of the bullet, in spite of the most accurate holding of the sights for every shot. This is inevitable, since the bullet applies a backward pressure on the barrel during the time the bullet is traveling the barrel's length.

JACK O'CONNOR

When target shooting from a sitting position some riflemen make the mistake of sitting upright and balancing elbows on top of wobbly kneecaps. For best results, face away from the target at 45 degrees. Then "hook" your elbows over your knees, an unnatural, but steady position. The left elbow should be directly under the barrel, with the barrel's fore-end resting on the heel of the palm.

CLAUDE PARMELEE

Overshooting is often caused by checking the stock and then raising the head to look for the target. Once down on the stock, *stay there.*

HAL SHARP

Here is one exercise that, after two or three weeks of 15-minutes' daily practice, will greatly reduce waverings. First, practice holding an aim on a target for a minute at a time. Later, hang a weight on the barrel for practice. After a few sessions you'll be able to hold for longer periods. When you think you're good, aim without the weight. Your gun seems as light as a feather and the wavering unnoticeable! And how your shots improve!

DR. HENRY M. STEBBINS

It's a good idea to check your .22 long-rifle ammunition. Gauges are sold to check rim thickness, so that cartridges affording different amounts of head-space in the rifle chamber can be sorted out. One way is carefully to wipe almost all the grease from your .22's before you think of firing them at a record or even a practice target. Another is to wipe them clean and relubricate them, perhaps using a micrometer on the bullets before dunking them.

ON THE WING

The pheasant likes settled communities where there are plenty of grain crops. Therefore it is best to limit their shooting to shotguns, rather than the rifles used for migratory waterfowl.

Do's and Don'ts of Decoy Shooting

When hunting with a partner, place your boat sideways to the set with the muzzles of the guns pointing toward the decoys. More than one accident has resulted from suddenly grabbing a gun which has not been safely pointed away from the hunters.

Don't have a screen of rushes or reeds in front of the set which would obscure you and your blind from another hunter who might take a shot over your decoys and have you in his line of fire.

Don't be a duck's best friend by opening up a barrage at an incoming flock at the approximate range of a deer rifle.

And again don't be anxious to meet a duck. Hopping up over a perfect blind to look for him every two minutes is the best way not to get acquainted. Usually he'll phone you in time for you to spread the Welcome mat.

—Claude Parmelee

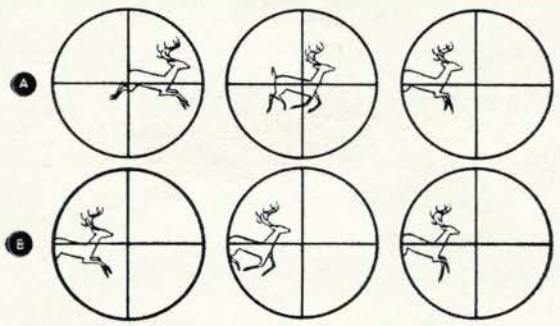
To be a better hunter know the habits of the hunted. A grouse or partridge flies off his evergreen roost at sun-up to begin his stroll for a drink feeding as he goes. If his roost is on a mountain he may fly quite far down to favored feeding areas. He prefers to feed near water. Then he rests in the sun. By mid-afternoon he starts feeding back toward the night-roost. East and south hillsides are preferred early in the day, west and north later. In bad weather they stay in thickets.

Also, pheasants may be found along the roadsides early in the morning picking up gravel to grind their food with later in the day. Knowing this, many hunters leave the cornfields until later. Eastern slopes of meadows or fields are choice roost areas because of the early-morning sun.

—Hal Sharp

SAFETY

Never pull a rifle or any other gun, muzzle first, toward you—out of a car, through a fence, from a boat or anywhere else. Rifles of some makes will discharge, occasionally, from a jar on the butt when setting them down. Yet many sportsmen habitually drop their rifle to the ground butt down, with considerable force, in the process of using it to lean on. Sometimes the bullet misses the hunter's chin.



Two methods of shooting running game.

(From "The Rifle Book")

The Decalogue of Gun Safety

1. Treat every gun with the respect due a loaded gun. This is the cardinal rule of gun safety.

2. Carry only empty guns, taken down or with the action open, into your automobile, camp and home.

3. Always be sure that the barrel and action are clear of obstructions.

4. Always carry your gun so that you can control the direction of the muzzle, even if you stumble.

5. Be sure of your target before you pull the trigger.

6. Never point a gun at anything you do not want to shoot.

7. Never leave your gun unattended unless you unload it first.

8. Never climb a tree or a fence with a loaded gun.

9. Never shoot at any flat hard surface or at the surface of water.

10. Do not mix gunpowder and alcohol.

—Claude Parmelee

When a misfire occurs, don't open the bolt or let the muzzle wander around until a full minute has passed. It may be a long hangfire and explode in your face if you open the action at the wrong moment.

GENERAL HINTS

For either slow fire or rapid fire the only satisfactory method of releasing the trigger is by gradual pressure, using only the finger, with arm and hand remaining rigidly in place. This applies whether game is standing or running and is one of the first things the rifle-user must learn to do if he is ever to be an effective shot.

If nothing better is available, "dry shooting" at miniature targets or silhouettes of game in one's own living-room is helpful and far better than nothing. The man who religiously squeezes off and calls 10 shots a day with an empty rifle is going to be surprisingly good if he can also have a little practice with live ammunition between times.

Smooth continuity of motion is necessary for expert shotgunning. Any irregularity of swing, such as stopping the gun or jerking the trigger, is likely to cause a miss. So concentrate on your shooting form. Experience in the field will soon enable you accurately to judge, or sense, the necessary lead for the center of the shot charge to hit the particular target at which you're aiming.

Tinted shooting glasses are a great help when shooting into the sun at game. The best hunting hours of the day are when the sun may be right in your eyes. With glasses, a shooter's eyes are also protected from an accidental backfire of gas, unburned powder, etc., if a primer or case should be ruptured when firing non-hammerless types of guns.

The tips printed herein are from "The American Rifle for Hunting and Target Shooting," by C. E. Hagie (Macmillan); *"The Rifle Book," by Jack O'Connor* (Knopf); *"How to Be a Crack Shot with Rifle and Shotgun," by Claude Parmelee* (Greenberg); *"Sportsman's Digest of Hunting," by Hal Sharp* (Barnes and Noble); *"Small Game and Varmint Rifles"* (A. S. Barnes & Co.); *and "Big Game Rifle," by Dr. Henry M. Stebbins* (Combat Forces Press).

Language of Freedom

LET A MAN commit a crime today, and the law will watch his every move for years, spend thousands of dollars, and if necessary, track him to the ends of the earth to bring him to justice. But not so long ago, all that English criminals had to do to go scott free was to read Latin!

That's right. Be they murderers, robbers or arsonists, all they needed to do was stand up in court and plead benefit of clergy. That benefit entitled them to escape civil punishment. And to prove their right to it, criminals needed merely to read a few lines of Latin.

Usually, they read the first verse of the 51st Psalm. In fact, so many of them saved their necks from being stretched by reading that verse that it became known as the "neck verse."

The English poet, Ben Jonson, apparently knew all about this strange custom of criminal law when he was arrested for manslaughter in 1598. Queen Elizabeth happened to be making a special effort to eliminate dueling then. So when Jonson killed Gabriel Spencer, an actor, in a duel, a "true bill of manslaughter" was returned against him.

Jonson was then only 25. He had served with the Army fighting in Flanders and returned to London to begin his career as a dramatist and writer. When the manslaughter indictment was voted, Jonson was arrested and placed in Tyburn Prison.

On the day of his trial, Jonson was brought to court in Old Bailey. He heard the clerk read a charge accusing him of attacking Spencer "with a certain sword of iron and steel called a Rapiour. wilfully beating, striking and slaying Spencer against the peace of their Lady the Queen."

"How do you plead?" Jonson was asked.

"Guilty," he answered, "and I ask pardon by benefit of clergy. May I read the Bible?"

The court was thrown into confusion. No one had suspected that this curly-haired ruffian who worked at that then vulgar profession, the theater, had sometime in his life learned Latin. Actually, Jonson had an excellent command of the language.

The judge dispatched word to the Bishop of London asking the Bishop to send someone to court to judge Jonson's fluency. When the delegate arrived, the murderer stood up, opened the Latin Bible to the 51st Psalm and read in precise accents:

"Misere mei Deus, secundum magnam misericordiam . . ."

When Jonson was done reading, the Bishop's delegate said, *"Legit.* He reads well." The court accepted the verdict, confiscated the poet's few belongings and set him free.

(And Jonson went on to compose such poems that the nation which had once tried to hang him, eventually named him poet laureate instead.)

Theoretically, Jonson was then supposed to have been tried and punished for his crime by church authorities. But it didn't happen that way. For even by Jonson's time, some 300 years after the strange custom first appeared, it was being strongly abused.

In the 13th Century, all English bishops were ordered to maintain prisons for the punishment of those who escaped civil judgment by pleading benefit of clergy. Thus freed, the criminal might then be punished by the church, which whipped and imprisoned men, but never executed them.

At first, to make such a plea, you had to prove you really were a clergyman. Later, the privilege was extended to "those who helped at services," including readers, doorkeepers and organists. At this point, according to one legal historian, the custom was "already becoming little better than a farce."

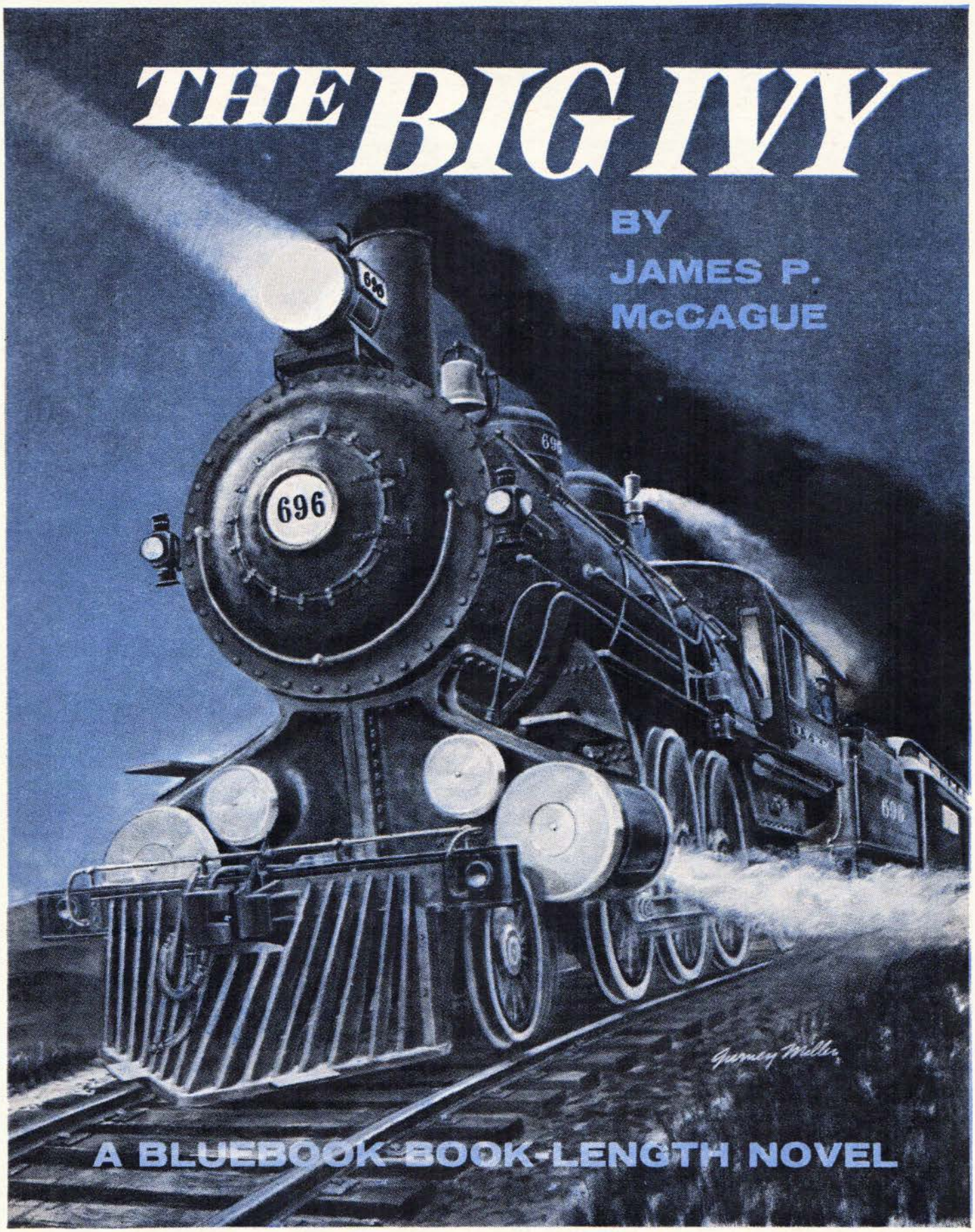
Proof of that came in 1388, when a man pleaded not guilty to a crime but was convicted and jailed. Then he heard he could plead benefit of clergy, did so successfully, and was set free.

Gradually, the privilege was broadened to include those who were thought "to be capable of becoming" a clergyman. And being able to read Latin was the best way of proving your capability!

BY 1705, you didn't even have to know Latin to qualify as a potential man of the cloth. But then, civil authorities began to fight the custom. Various misdemeanors were removed from the list of offenses for which you might be pardoned.

Treason was ruled out first. Then murder—first in churches and on highways—then wherever it occurred. Next to go were arson and piracy.

By 1841, when James Thomas Brudenell, Earl of Cardigan, pleaded benefit of clergy after engaging unlawfully in a duel, Queen Victoria was ready to end the strange practice. His plea was denied, and he was tried in the House of Lords. Lord Cardigan later lead the Light Brigade in its historic charge at Balaclava. —BY JERRY KLEIN


THE BIG IVY
BY
JAMES P.
McCAGUE
696
Gurney Miller
A BLUEBOOK BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL

THE BIG IVY

BY JAMES P. McCAGUE

Big Jem Gandee was the wild-man type of engineer, a ballast scorcher who'd make the time or go to hell across lots trying. And hell sure seemed his destination when they cleared the tracks and ordered him to roar that crack locomotive through for what would have to be a world speed record.

THE TRAIN LAY like a big, tired serpent in the thickening dusk, an abandoned dinosaur left to die in a forgotten ice age. Thick snow tumbling down the slant of the whooping wind hid the head and tail, and scourged the boxcars that stood one after another and faded gradually and were lost in the gloom. Santa Fe, read the heralds on their faded red flanks, Soo Line, New York Central and Hudson River, Indiana Valley. . . . They were swaybacked with the loads they carried, stained with the dirt of unending miles, awaited by a hundred hungry American needs along more miles eastward, and their dead weight held the train pinned down, helpless.

But the serpent fought. A vast, convulsive shiver writhed out of the head-end murk, jerking and crashing in a rolling shock that passed and spent itself in the wind and snow. Another spasm followed, the beast gathering its strength, each car starting into slow movement with a groan of drawbars and a creak of axles in cold journal packing, the motion hanging on for long, clawing seconds, dying finally of its own unwieldiness, while from far ahead the blasting pant of labored breathing came faintly along the wind.

The crowd at the crossing groaned and stamped its feet. There were hot suppers and the welcoming warmth of glowing stoves beyond; the yellow lights that gleamed and twinkled from between the cars seemed to mock them with the vision.

"Better'n half a damn' hour; I been timin' 'er!"

"Consarn railroad's got no regard fer people's rights!"

The crossing watchman drew his old head turtlewise into the collar of his sheepskin coat and swung his lantern noncommitally. Out in the middle of the street a shadowy figure ducked under the gate, and the watchman stumped forward with a tired bellow. "Hey you, boy—git back there! Can't y'see he's takin' up slack? Y'wanta git yerself killed, climbin' in between them cars?"

Unabashed, the boy stooped back under the gate, grinning. "Know what I heard? They say the engine's clear up at Milford, stalled. Gotta wait'll they git a relief engine outa East Bend, they say."

There was a rustle of profane resentment at the news. "That's the Ivy fer you—try t'haul the whole state a Indianny in one trainload, what the hell they expect?"

"Well, there's yer damn Big Interests!"

The watchman flogged his arms across his chest against the biting cold. The horses hitched to the rigs tossed their heads restlessly.

But the engine was a long way short of Milford. She squatted huge and black on the embankment just out of town, headlight glaring balefully into the blizzard like a sullen Cyclop's eye, steam swirling in tattered wreaths around her. It erupted out of the safety pops suddenly in a hoarse, slobbering roar, and inside the cab the fireman let his scoop clank on the deck and straightened up to glance at the steam gauge.

"Stinkin' hot," he announced with a sidelong look at the big, shadowed figure on the right-hand seatbox. On the other side of the cab the brakeman nodded.

"Don't think she'll do it, Jem," he muttered.

The engineer didn't answer. He didn't even hear: his mind was a hot crucible within which his baffled will to make this stranded monster get up and go generated fresh fury. Doggedly he swung the reverse bar over and back, reached up to crack the throttle, feeling the hollow clatter go crunching down the train as the slack bunched. Now, he thought, you bitch!—and heaved the reverse bar up the arc of the quadrant and down into the forward corner. He flicked the sander valve and lifted his hand to the smooth brass of the throttle again, not feeling the sweat in the leather-lined palm now, not feeling anything save the slow and ponderous gathering of power under him as steam surged into the cylinders. The big Consolidation shuddered. The squat drivers turned grudgingly to the thrust of the long main rods. She leaned heavily into the train's vast weight and started to roll as the exhaust exploded sharply up

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the stack. The slack came out, car by car. She lost her footing suddenly; the drivers spun; the exhaust raved down the night like a bellow of panic.

Jem slammed the throttle in. Staring across the cab at him, the fireman shivered a little. The brakeman shook his head. "Won't do it, Jem."

The thin shine from the water-glass lamp caught the hard stare of Jem's eyes and glinted briefly on a white flash of teeth under the black sweep of mustache. "By the Almighty," he said softly, "she'll do it or pull out every damn drawbar in the drag." He was a big man; his shoulders seemed to fill the whole right side of the cab with massive shadow as he hauled the reverse bar back around the quadrant and slammed the locomotive back to take slack once more.

The fireman fiddled nervously with the injector valve, squinted at the water glass and took his hand away. Well hell, it ain't my place to try an' tell 'im nothing, he thought.

Sweat seeped down inside Jem's hatband, and he was aware of it with a stab of irritation. Somewhere deep within this big engine lay the power to move her hulking tonnage; he groped for it with the very seat of his pants on the seatbox, everything in him drawing together in a hard focus in his left hand as it eased the throttle out notch by notch, feeling the great bulk stir, sensing the first hiss and rumble of live steam building up in thrusting pressure against the piston heads. She moved. The drivers ground ponderously on the sanded rails. The slack ran slowly out behind her. The rods came around full circle against the growing weight that fought them. She kept moving. The eight drivers came around again in a slow and massive turning that set gauge cocks and loose piping ajingle in the cab. The thunder of her bellowing shook the houses along the right of way. Imperceptibly the pace grew, drivers slipping and spinning madly for a moment, catching again as Jem fed them another spurt of sand and adjusted the cut-off, lurching back into their swinging, heavy-footed stride. The white eye of the target came abreast of the cab and winked to red as the first cars swayed past.

Jem grinned across at the brakeman. "Wouldn't do it, hey?"

The brakeman grinned back, shaking his head. The fireman was down on the deck baling coal through the firebox door. He straightened now, drawing the back of a hand across the stubble on his chin.

"I'd a bet a month's pay they wasn't a runner on the West End coulda done it!"

Fifty-odd cars back, the caboose rolled out of town. Through the rear window they watched the town lights dwindle and go out, and cautiously relaxed. The conductor let loose of the edge of his desk and flexed his cramped fingers. "Lord!" he muttered feelingly.

Slack running in and out as Jem mauled the train had shaken the caboose as a big dog might shake a rat; gear had spilled out of lockers and racks, the coffee pot had bounded off the stove, and spare lanterns rolled and bumped over the floor as the drag picked up speed. The flagman chased them down and stowed them away, found the mop and dabbed half-heartedly at the smoking mess of coffee grounds.

"Guy's a hogger though, you know it?" he said over his shoulder.

"Damn lucky he didn't pull a drawbar." The conductor licked at his pencil point and bent over the wheel report, his voice trailing off into a grumble.

"He's pattin' 'er on the back now, boy," the flagman grinned, swaying to the roll of the caboose. "Must be in a sweat t'see Bess Teach, hey?" He chuckled and swung up the ladder into the cupola.

It was chilly up there; drafts poured in around the edges of the windows and the snow beat against the panes with a hard, icy rattle. The flagman shivered. They were still gaining speed. The long wail of the whistle floated back and rolling smoke was momentarily splashed with crimson up ahead as the firebox door opened and closed.

Across the cupola a cigarette's dull glow brightened to outline a man's lean profile for an instant. The flagman jumped. He'd forgotten the railroad telegrapher who was a riding with them.

"Wake y'up back there?" he asked sociably.

The telegrapher—or boomer—grunted. "That woulda waked up a ten-day-old corpse." After a pause during which the flagman chuckled politely he added: "This guy acts like he's wheelin' the flyer."

"Well," the flagman agreed smugly, "I guess we railroad on the Ivy, all right. We lost more'n a half an hour back there, an' we got Number 10 right behind us. Ten's a mail train." He waited awhile, but the boomer didn't seem disposed to keep the conversation going. "Besides, y'never poke along much behind ol' Jem."

"Jem Gandee?" the boomer asked.

"Why, yeah. You know Jem? Hell, I thought y'said you was from down in Texas."

"Born up here, though. Jem Gandee an' I were raised right here on the Ivy; Barcelona—little town down on the East End."

The flagman was appropriately amazed. "Well I'll be damned! Wondered what you was doin' up in this part a the country this time a year. Don't usually see you fellas till warm weather."

"I guess not," the boomer said.

"Not but what they's plenty a jobs, if yer lookin'. You said you was a brass-pounder, didn't you?"

The boomer nodded. "That's right."

"Well, they'll prob'ly take y'on, all right. This damn blizzard don't let up, they'll be takin' anybody on."

The boomer grunted, without indicating whether he might be interested or not. He wondered himself: Why in hell *had* he come back, anyway? Homesickness, maybe. It was about as close as he could come to a reason, though part of his mind scoffed at the thick sentimentality of the word. He was glad the flagman finally seemed to have all the chatter out of his system. But it *was* funny about Jem Gandee being up there on the head end of this particular drag, though. . . .

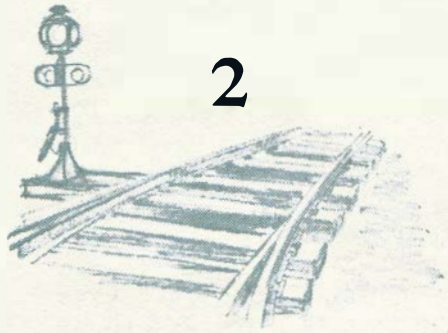
Up ahead the engineer whistled and scattered lights began to glide past. "Milford," the flagman said, craning out the front window. "Clear board; we'll go inta East Bend a-whoopin' now."

The whistle hooted and wailed, deep-throated and mournful. A sudden gust of wind brought the blasting pant of the engine's labor back to them. Below, something rattled in a loud staccato as the vibration hit just the right pitch for a moment. Rail joints clicked away behind the wheels.

"Yeah," the boomer said slowly, "I remember."

"Been away long?" the flagman asked.

The boomer drew a long breath. "Fourteen years."



2

FOURTEEN YEARS AGO the gangly kid sitting forlornly on the baggage truck was himself, Lee Wire, going on 17 and all but through with school. It was late April and spring hung thick and warmly heavy in the air. Number 23 westbound wasn't due till eight minutes of midnight, but he'd got there at 10 o'clock, because Number 23 was going to mark an ending in his life and the awareness of it lay restless and foreboding on his soul.

By craning his neck a little bit he could see Mr. Christy, the operator, drowsing in the warm yellow cone of light in his bay window. But this was one night he wasn't interested in Mr. Christy or the train orders that might be crackling with fasci-

nating urgency over the wires. He kept looking past the bay window toward the corner of the depot, where Jem might come into view any minute—if Jem was really going to show up. He couldn't quite convince himself that Jem would, the doubt sneaking into the dismalness of his thoughts and becoming a shaky hope he wouldn't let himself admit.

But after all, beating up the schoolmaster as Jem had done wasn't such a catastrophe; the big yokels out at the little country schoolhouses did it all the time. There wasn't any need for Jem to leave home over it. That was an awful big step to take; maybe Jem'd lose his nerve.

He told himself all that, and was almost convinced. It got to be 11 or a little after. Tension grew and knotted in him and it was almost a relief when Jem actually strode around the corner of the depot with a big straw suitcase in his hand.

Lee watched him set it down on the platform and go into the waiting room. So it was true after all; so their long, boyhood plan to go off to East Bend together a safely vague but impressive "sometime" had been knocked into a cocked hat because Jem had had to get stuck on a girl and take it out on the schoolmaster.

Presently Jem came back out. He stood shuffling his feet and looking all around; he saw Lee then and came down the platform with a wide, half-sheepish grin. Gee, Lee thought with a pang of envy, he looked like a *man,* all right—so big he was almost busting out of his Sunday suit, with a fancy striped shirt and a stiff collar and tie and a hat shoved onto the back of his head. And most of all, Lee thought, the nerve to *go.*

"Takin' ol' 23 out, hey?" Lee said.

"Yep. I said I would, didn't I?"

There was a long, awkward pause. "Uh—what happened?" Jem asked. "I mean afterwards?"

Lee shrugged. "Nothin' much. They hadda let school out. Most everybody was on your side. He had it comin'."

"What'd Clara Beddow say?" Jem asked hesitantly.

"Well . . ." Lee looked away, seeming to study the lonely lamp over the waiting-room door with its wheeling halo of night bugs. "Well, nothin' good about you, Jem! She hung around cluckin' an' makin' over Willowston till everybody was laughin' at 'er. I guess she's stuck on 'im, all right." Jem ought to know this, he thought. It was all Clara's fault. Swift, bitter resentment welled up in him. "I wouldn't be surprised'n he's been gettin' somewhere with her, the damn slick-talkin' snake." He stole a glance at Jem and plunged recklessly on: "From what some a the fellas say, that ain't so hard, neither. If the school board knew . . ."

He saw the dark, ugly look come into Jem's eyes. Jem's big fist balled up, half lifted, fell jerkily back to his side. "All right. Just leave Clara outa this, will you?" Jem said huskily.

Lee shrugged.

"He didn't have no business makin' a fool outa me in front a the whole class," Jem said sullenly. "His damn sarcastic remarks—just showin' me up . . ."

"Well," said Lee, "you showed 'im, I guess." He grinned suddenly. "Lordy, what a wallop—ol' John L. Sullivan in person!"

A silence fell between them, gradually becoming warm and easy in the greater, overpowering warmth of the drowsy spring night. Suddenly there was no more need to put anything into words. Right there before them lay the soft shine of the Ivy's steel rails, bedded on the solid strength of timber ties and Indiana limestone ballast. They spanned almost half a continent without a break, those rails. At one end lay New York, the legendary wonderland of wealth and bustle and high living that any red-blooded American boy could win for his own if he just had the right stuff in him. At the other lay Chicago, the lusty fountainhead of this cornfed midland in which they lived. And here lay the Indiana Valley, the Ivy Line, the pulsing artery that tied the guts and the brains of America together. This was the symbol of the thing they'd built their plans around.

"Decided not to come, hey?" Jem asked finally.

"Yeah. Well—I thought I might's well finish up school while I'm at it. I'll be along, though—you keep an eye open for a brass-pounder's job down there, y'hear?"

"Sure."

They heard the faint, long whistle of the locomotive and Lee said: "What'd yer paw have t'say?"

"Plenty," Jem said. "He didn't stop me, though." He thought of the storm that had broken around his head at home: Maw crying and carrying on and then, when he wouldn't be shaken, setting her lips in that tight, thin expression of hers and refusing to say another word, but sniffling and wiping her eyes when train time got near. And Paw raising hell and then reasoning with him, and finally, right at the end, taking him aside to slip him the thin sheaf of greenbacks and shake hands.

All at once Jem's eyes smarted and a lump swelled achingly in his chest. He groped for words shining enough to tell Lee about Paw. "He finally seen it my way," he said.

Lee sighed. "Well, here she comes!"

The big white spot of the headlight came down the track, getting bigger and bigger, brightening till it filled the whole night with glare. The engine panted by, bucking to the drag of the brakes, wreathed mystically in hot white steam; they had an instant's glimpse of the engineer leaning out the high cab window against the crimson flicker of the firebox.

"That's you one a these days, boy!" Lee shouted.

Mr. Christy went past, wheeling a truck up toward the baggage car. "Good luck, Jem!" he called.

Jem put his hand out and Lee grabbed it. "Well," they said together, "Well . . ."

"I'll write you," Jem said. "Take care a yourself." His eyes looked past Lee, frantically searching the empty platform. He'd had a kind of a sneaking hope that Clara . . . Well, it didn't matter a hell of a lot after all, did it? He wheeled and picked up his suitcase and strode toward the daycoach.

Half-awake passengers, like sluggish fish in the tanks of an aquarium, stared incuriously out at this latest in a tedious journey of jerkwaters, eying Lee without approval as he searched the long row of dimlit windows. Then he saw Jem slip into an empty seat and press his face against the glass. Jem's lips moved, but it was impossible to make out what he was saying. Lee's moved too, without saying anything.

"Bo-o-a-ard!" the conductor called impatiently. The engine tooted twice; the train jolted into motion; Jem's face began to glide away. For a few steps Lee kept pace with it, then began to fall behind. One step, two steps . . . And Jem was cut off by other windows sliding past, faster and faster, and the train was nothing but a pair of twinkling red marker lights being swallowed by the night's deep blackness. A little foolishly, Lee let his waving arm drop to his side.

"Well, there 'e goes," said Mr. Christy in his ear. "S'pose you'll have t'be pullin' out next, hey?"

"Yeah, I guess so," Lee said, and abruptly started to walk away. Only now—not till this very dead and empty moment in onflowing time—was he really aware of a terribly final, wildly unbelievable thing that had come to pass. Why, he and Jem had been best friends for—Lordy, for as long as he could remember. And now Jem's going left a hollowness in him, showed up a lack of something in him that was somehow a kind of shame. He quickened his pace along Railroad Street, as though he might escape from it if he hurried.

JEM WASN'T MUCH of a writing man: there was just one short letter from him:

Dear Friend Lee

Well here I am working on the I.V. like I said

I would old son. They didnt put me to firring right off though, it seems like they're prety persnikety about a mans age around here, I lied about mine and you better do the same but they got me working in the old roundhouse learning the busines and I guess it wont be to long till Im on the board, that means your a real fireman and Mr. McQueen hes the roundhouse superentendint he promissed me hed give me the chance soon.

Old son you never saw so many engines in your hole life as they got here, I tell you this railroading is the life old son I bet you say the same when you get here, lets hope itll be soon.

Well I guess I beter hit the hay now. Best regards to everyboddy and even say helo to that skunk Willowston, boy he aught to come up her and find out what a mans job is like. With best regards I am

Your Friend
Jem Gandee

It was scrawled on a big sheet of yellow paper with the Ivy's famous mail bag herald up in the left corner—carefully carried home to Jem's boarding house for the purpose—and it told all there was to tell about a home-town boy who'd made good. But Lee wasn't much of a writing man either, apparently; he never answered it.

So the months rolled on, and without any more to report anyway, for almost a year—and then things happened so fast that Lee was knocked right out of Jem's mind for a long time.

It was the day McQueen called him into the office.

He had an armful of work reports, each one in its flat tin case with the hinged glass cover so the roundhouse gang could read the work-report clerk's scrawl. The glass cover extended only over the left two-thirds of the big yellow sheet; the rest was left bare so the man who did the work could scribble his initials next to each job the engineer or the inspector had said needed doing.

A continuous bickering went on between the engineers, the inspectors, and the roundhouse gang over those work reports. The roundhouse gang snorted in derision at most of the jobs they were supposed to do. The inspectors doubted out loud that the roundhouse gang ever so much as touched most of the engines, while maintaining on the other hand that no locomotive engineer was smart enough to know what needed doing on his own engine—or smart enough, for that matter, to come in out of the rain. And the engineers believed with unshakable conviction that *no* job was ever done unless it absolutely had to be to keep the poor old mill from falling apart. But no locomotive was ever marked up on the board till *somebody's* initials were down opposite every job on the sheet.

A long wooden handle extended down the left side of each tin case, and Jem went down the long, curving line of engines, checking numbers and sticking the handles into the flag stanchions on their pilot beams. The 424 had a leaky waterglass, he noted; the left side injector was sticking, and the pilot bolts needed tightening. Well, some of that would get done, maybe. But here's the 732 with the right number-two driver brass running hot—and the boss machinist sure as hell wasn't going to get any chuckles out of that one. The 732 was a high-drivered eight-wheeler; she was crack passenger power, and somebody'd be skinned alive, rubbed down with salt, and eaten raw with mustard by John McQueen if she ran hot the next time out.

Jem stuck the work report in the stanchion and shook himself out of a brief daydream as the caller came rapidly around the curving row of pilots and waved at him. Me?, he gestured, and the caller nodded and called something that was lost in the grumbling uproar from a dozen stacks. He came up to Jem and bawled: "McQueen wants y'in the office right away!"

Jem gaped. "Me? What for?"

The caller shrugged elaborately and lost himself in an inspection of 732's tall and austere beauty.

"Well Jeez," said Jem nervously, "then finish puttin' these around for me, will you?"

"Ain't my job," the caller told him crisply.

Jem bristled. "Listen—I put 'em in the cases this time, instead a makin' that lazy work-report clerk do it. That wasn't my job neither; you finish puttin' the damn things around, if McQueen's in such a rush."

This was another running feud, this eternal argument between roundhouse gang and office force as to whose job it was to prepare the work reports for final deposit on the engines. Sometimes one side did it, sometimes the other; sometimes, as now, the subject came up for open debate. The caller ran his eyes over Jem's obvious edge in weight and reach and decided that in the interests of keeping the Ivy running he could stretch a point this time.

"Well, gimme 'em then—shame t'keep McQueen waitin' when he's in such a big hurry t'haul a fella over the coals."

For what?, Jem wondered nervously as he hustled around the long arc of the roundhouse. He got more nervous as he passed engine after engine, emerged at last into the chilly sunshine beside the turntable, and strode long-leggedly over the cinders toward the office door. He'd never so much as exchanged the time of day with McQueen since the morning, months ago, that the roundhouse superintendent had impaled him with a cold eye and said reluctantly that he guessed they could take him on as roundhouse helper. Maybe they were laying him off now, he thought with a wrench of the heart—but shucks, McQueen himself wouldn't be bothering with a piddling thing like that.

The engine dispatcher looked up as Jem closed the door carefully behind him. "In there," he said with a jerk of his chin before Jem could get a word out. "Hey, wait a minute," he added, "if yer name's Gandee, here's a letter fer you that's been layin' around I dunno how long. Don't y'know enough t'look in the mailbox once in awhile, kid?"

Jem took the dirty, crumpled envelope without seeing it at all. He had eyes only for McQueen's door, which stood ominously open as though the hungry man-eater inside awaited his meal. He hesitated on the threshold, took a deep breath and went in, remembering at the last second to snatch his cap off.

The roundhouse superintendent, hunched over his rolltop desk with a sheaf of papers between his big, freckled fists, didn't even look up. Jem waited a slow, painful minute. He coughed softly. As soon as he did, the big dry knot in his throat began to tighten and swell till he thought it would strangle him, and he had to cough again. It was a real warwhoop this time, and McQueen looked up and fixed him with a chilly glare.

He had the hardest eyes Jem had ever seen; they reminded him of the ends of two polished steel rods that had been hammered into a vast granite slab of face. McQueen was not a tall man, but the bulk of him was as impressive as a mountain. He sat there, filling the big swivel chair to overflowing, looking like some impervious natural phenomenon that would be planted right where it was, unmoved and immovable, long ages after everything else on the Ivy had crumbled away to rust and ruin. The round head stood massively on the beefy shoulders, the rock-hard chin seeming to rest on the great chest, buttressed by vast, wrinkled jowls. There were awesome tales told in the roundhouse of McQueen's physical prowess when aroused—and standing there looking at him you had no difficulty at all in believing every last word of them.

"You're Gandee," McQueen rumbled. "Wanted a job firing when I hired you."

"Yessir," Jem gulped.

"Lied about your age."

Illustrated by Gurney Miller

"Nossir! Uh—almost twenny now, Mr. McQueen."

McQueen glared at him. "Still want to fire?"

"Yessir!" Jem said thickly. He'd heard around the roundhouse that they wouldn't take on a fireman till he was 21, but he didn't dare stretch the truth any further.

McQueen picked the butt of a cigar off the edge of the desk, clamped it between yellow teeth, took his sweet time finding a match and lighting it. "Go home and get some sleep—tell Sanders I said it's all right. Get back here about six tonight and check the board."

"Yessir," said Jem. "Uh—thanks!" The news galvanized him into action and he turned and moved jerkily toward the door.

"Know the Book a Rules?" McQueen growled.

"Yessir—uh, some, that is; I been studyin' it."

"Learn it," McQueen said. "I don't suppose you got a railroad watch."

Jem didn't. "But I been savin' up. I guess I could get one purty quick."

McQueen grunted and picked up his sheaf of papers. Jem waited a minute to be sure he was dismissed, and backed humbly through the door.

He was three blocks from the roundhouse, treading the air with seven-league strides, before he happened to remember the letter. It crackled as he got it out of his pocket, a square white envelope, battered now and smudged with finger marks in coal dust and grease. A lot of dirty hands had pawed it over looking for their own mail, he guessed; it had laid around a long time, the dispatcher had said. Jem had never thought of the possibility that someone might write him at the Ivy roundhouse. Back home, they all knew the address of his boarding house. Or at least, the folks did.

The flowing feminine copperplate of the address offered a clue, but he couldn't let himself believe it. The postmark was blurred, but he could make out the date—over two months old. Well, you ninny—open it!

He turned it over. On the back was a blob of green sealing wax, daintily stamped with an ornate B. He felt his throat go thick and dry and a looseness came into his knees. He jammed the letter back into his pocket and started to walk faster. He had to be up in his room, alone, before he could read this. Like a kind of rite. Maybe it was a good omen, it occurred to him, coming like this the very day he was going to fire his first run for the Indiana Valley!

The letter read:

> Dear Esteemed Friend Jem:
>
> After all these unhappy months, I now take my pen in Hand to write you about my True Feelings at last. It was all My fault that a Certain Party was led to believe that there could be Anything between us. Only to late, Dear Jem, I have Come to realise that, but I hope it is Not really to late and you can Forgive the One who cares for you so deeply.
>
> Do you think of Me to, or have you forgoten me since you are there in the Big city of East Bend, ha ha. Please, please say you have Not forgoten and Write soon to
>
> Your Loving Friend
> Clara

There was a discreet little row of X's along the bottom, and the whole letter gave off a faint, sweet perfume that hadn't quite been obliterated by the coal smoke absorbed during its long wait at the roundhouse. Jem read it and reread it. It was almost as though he felt Clara's presence there in the room with him. The urge to grab paper and pen and pour his wild yearning out in an answer flared up in him, was consumed in its own fervor, and flickered out again. Not yet, Jem—wait till tomorrow, when you'll be a man that's actually fired his first run for the Ivy, and she'll know she's picked herself a somebody to be stuck on!

He couldn't sleep a wink, but nothing could stop him from dreaming the long afternoon away.

4

WALKING BACK to the roundhouse in the chill-edged dusk, vast nervousness and a gnawing awareness that, love or no love, he was in for a night that was likely to make him or break him.

But stopping at the big blackboard right outside the crews' room was an epochal moment. And there it was, official as hell: Engine 39 for the coachyard. Engineman: Hallet; fireman: Kregg, Gandee.

It was a sudden comfort to know he was going out as student with another fireman; he tried to remember who Kregg might be, but wasn't sure he knew him. He took a deep breath and went on into the crews' room.

It was a narrow rectangle separated from the engine dispatcher's office by a couple of windowed partitions. One window let you look into the work-report clerk's little cubicle; the other overlooked the dispatcher's desk, and just to the right of this, behind a tall, narrow, third window, stood a massive wooden drum set upright on an iron pole and studded all over with rows of neat brass hooks. Some of these were bare, but most held round, metal-rimmed cardboard tags, each with a name neatly lettered on it. This was *the board*, the inanimate oracle of this division of the Indiana Valley Railway. The engine dispatcher was its high priest, the caller its acolyte, and it ruled the lives of every engineer and fireman working out of East Bend. The tall window permitted its devotees to look at it from the crews' room, and a circular iron handrail on its lower edge projected through a slot in the wall so that it could be turned on its axis to show a man at a glance just what run he held, or, in case he was bucking the extra list or in the freight pool, just who had been laid off, what runs were open, and where he stood on the list.

Jem resisted the impulse to go over and search it for a tag bearing his name. Instead, keeping his head bashfully down, he crossed to the dispatcher's window and signed out on the register on the wide sill. A pair of coal-stained firemen and an old engineer lounged idly before the bulletin board that took up most of one wall, and one of the firemen glanced up curiously.

"New man?" he asked loudly.

"Yeah," Jem admitted, feeling a hot, itchy flush begin to spread all over him. "This's my first time out. I been workin' in the roundhouse purt'near a year, though, waitin' for the chance."

The engineer turned and looked him over. Not critically; not really kindly, either. "Looks like you got the build for it, anyway, young fella."

The other fireman stuck his oar in: "Say, since when're they puttin' a new man on with another fireman, anyway? Time I hired out, they showed me the engine an' handed me the scoop an' by God it was up t'me!"

"Yeah," the hogger agreed, "an' it ain't no damn picnic, neither, with some green kid right off'n the farm botchin' things up every time y'take yer eye off'n 'im!"

"Mebbe they figgered Sim Kregg'd need a little help keepin' ol' Gus happy," suggested the first fireman, and guffawed loudly. They all laughed, and Jem seized the opportunity to escape into the night.

He hadn't had a chance to digest the news that the engine he'd drawn was old 39, but the first glimpse of her, spotted lonelily away up at the far end of the lead, drained away the very last dregs of his self satisfaction. She was a little 0-4-0, and she'd obviously been out-shopped about the time General Lee was calling it quits at Appomattox. Successive shoppings

had taken away the old balloon stack and the fluted brass dome covers; they'd made her a coal-burner instead of a wood-burner, but nothing had been able to alter the basic old-fashioned look of her. She squatted low in the smoky dark, her four stubby drivers tucked in under the broad running boards, steam leaking from around her valve chests making a wheezy hiss like the contented purring of an ancient alley-cat dreaming of long-gone conquests.

Jem stood and looked her over with growing dismay. He'd never really noticed the old 39-spot before; all his looking had been concentrated on the newest and flossiest eight-wheelers that pulled the varnish, the rugged Moguls and Consolidations, the gleaming, high mounted ten-wheelers. And all his dreaming, too. But hell, he reminded himself resolutely—she was a beginning. And he'd better be getting to work. He hoisted himself into the cab.

Striking a match to light the lamps, he saw that the steam gauge showed less than 50 pounds. He opened the firebox door and studied the fire, admitting mentally that the departing fireman had done a pretty good job of building up a bank. He took the long hook out of the tender and churned it up some and began to shovel coal in, remembering to spread it out and lighten up the dark spots, keeping it up till the growing heat got uncomfortable on his face. The steam pressure climbed gratifyingly. He checked the water, but the day-trick man had left him a full glass. He was down shoveling again when he heard shoe-leather scuff on the gangway steps and a harsh voice jeered:

"Attaboy, kid—glad t'see y'right on the job!"

Jem whirled. "W-well," he stammered. "You must be Mr. Kregg, hey?" He hadn't had the slightest intention of calling this other fireman Mister, and the slip put him at once on the defensive. "Steam was gettin' purty low," he said sulkily.

"Real good way t'start out railroadin'," Kregg approved, showing a pair of rabbity front teeth in a superior smile. "Y'oughta do all right—if y'don't go killin' the job right off." He looked a very few years older than Jem—a rawboned, foxy-faced youth with cocky eyes of bleached-out blue and a big, wide slash of mouth under a beaky nose. There was a drop of colorless liquid hanging from the very tip of the nose like a dewdrop; it swayed and trembled with every movement, and Jem found himself watching it in fascination.

Kregg brushed it away with the back of a hand and snuffed loudly. "Well, le's see how yer doin', kid, with all this vim an' vigor y'got." He stooped and gave the fire a long and knowing scrutiny from behind the blade of the scoop shovel. "Hell, you'll bust the railroad buyin' coal fer you, the rate yer goin'!"

"What's wrong with that fire?" Jem demanded.

Kregg wagged a scornful finger in his face. "Look, young fella—always remember a *good* talla'pot uses his noodle, not jist his back. Looka here now, an' pay attention, 'cause I don't aim t'take up the rest a the night showin' you ag'in." He got the clinker hook and laid into the fire viciously, grunting and straining as though each movement took all the energy he could give it. Jem watched the performance wooden-faced, feeling his instant dislike for this Sim Kregg grow.

"There!" Sim said at last. "Take a looka that—that there's a real fire, not jist burnin' up comp'ny coal. See the difference?"

Dutifully Jem stooped and looked. He couldn't see any monumental improvement, but something told him he'd be doing himself no favor by saying so. He grunted something Sim could take for assent if he wanted to.

"Jist one a the tricks y'gotta learn if y'ever expect t'make good on this road," Sim said. He dropped onto the left-hand seatbox and propped his feet high on the backhead, shoving his cap back to reveal a stiff roach of ginger-colored hair. "Don't worry, you'll get onto it—I'll see that y'do."

"Damn right I will!" Jem said truculently. He made a sudden discovery: his nervousness had all disappeared amid his mounting irritation at this know-all.

There was plenty of work to be done, and he went ahead with it. He filled the water jug and stowed it in the tender. He checked the gauge cocks and filled the lubricators and the cab lamps and the big box headlight. He went out onto the running board and climbed up to make sure the sand dome was full; he came back and climbed into the tender and broke up the coal with the pick and hosed it neatly down with the tender hose. He wiped the cab woodwork and got the broom and swept the deck to spotlessness. Through it all, Sim lounged on the small of his back, paring his nails with an evil-looking jackknife and volunteering an occasional gem of criticism.

"Yer sure an ambitious cuss," he said when Jem was at length through. "I figgered I'd have t'git onto yer tail about them jobs, like with most greenhorns."

"I ben around almost a year," Jem said shortly.

Sim shrugged. "Say, what am I s'posed t'call you? Y'got a first name, ain't you?"

"Sure. Jem."

"Jem? Y'mean *Jim*, don't you? Jem, hey?" Sim almost, but not quite, sneered. "That's a funny moniker."

"Well," Jem admitted, his ears reddening, "my folks named me Jeremiah. I always been called Jem, though."

"Good Lord," Sim said.

Jem opened his mouth to inquire exactly what the hell Sim might stand for, if Jeremiah was such a gutbuster of a name—but Sim suddenly cocked his head on one side and cut him off abruptly. "Hey, y'better hustle yer butt off'n the engineer's seatbox, kid—here comes ol' Gus!"

Measured steps crunched on the cinders below, and in a moment the engineer ducked around the weather curtain and paused to stare deliberately, first at Sim and then at Jem.

"Evenin', Gus," said Sim airily.

The engineer grunted. His mouth worked slowly around the cud of tobacco that had dribbled a little thread of brown juice out of one corner. Nose and chin seemed almost to meet on each upstroke of the lower jaw, and the skin of his face was brown and wrinkled like an apple left too long in the barrel. Watery, old-man's eyes disapproved of Jem from under the bill of a cap that looked too big for the narrow old skull.

"New man ev'ry new moon, seems like!"

Without another word he turned to the seatbox, lifted the lid and dropped his dinner pail into it. He took the big copper oilcan off the shelf on the backhead and stumped down out of the cab.

"Cranky ol' son!" said Sim under his breath. He leaned closer to Jem. "Gus's jist about the oldest man on the West End; give up his road rights, though—can't hold nothin' but yard jobs. So he ain't such a dumn much. Jist you keep an eye on me an' handle 'im like I do."

"Sure," Jem said doubtfully, feeling the nervousness start to come back.

But he had little leisure to think about it, for Sim took a look at the gauge and decided it was time to be getting a real head of steam on old 39. He did this by sitting up a shade straighter and telling Jem bluntly to get busy. Jem did. The knack seemed to have come to him now, and the one eye he kept on the gauge showed the needle fluttering reassuringly up around the dial. By the time old Gus finished oiling around and climbed back into the cab, they had their 120 pounds pressure and the safety pops were blubbering on the tall steam-dome. Gus inspected the fire, permitted his silence to express grudging approval, and settled his bony buttocks into the seatbox cushion. He released the engine brakes, reached up to jerk twice on the whistle cord, and cracked the throttle with a yank that looked as if he meant it to show old 39 who was boss. The bell sent its mellow tone pealing into the night, hot vapor *whooshed* from the cylinder cocks, and they were suddenly underway.

Sim cut short the magic of the moment with a growl: "Gonna take water in a minute, Gandee—git yer tail up there on the tender!"

Coal slipped and slid under Jem's feet as he clawed his way onto the narrow rear deck; he straightened up just as the high, shadowy bulk of the water tank loomed overhead. The jerk as Gus slapped the brake valve around nearly threw him headlong. Then, to his disgust, he found that the spout was just out of reach. He had to call down for Gus to spot her a couple of feet back, sensing unhappily that he wasn't getting off to a very cordial start with his first engineer, even though it wasn't his fault. He got the big pipe into position at last and groped for the lanyard; his hand closed over it unexpectedly and his too-quick jerk loosed an icy flood that soaked him from the thighs down, exploded off the deck with a roaring splash, and went dashing in a white cascade down the tender's sloped back. Cursing himself fervently through chattering teeth, he bent and groped for the latch on the manhole cover.

"Say, what the hell's goin' on up there?" Sim bawled. "Y'aint supposed t'water the flowers, Gandee!" Gus said something, and Jem heard Sim grumble back: "Well, hell—any damn fool oughta know how t'take water without y'have t'hold his hand while he's doin' it!"

His bruised fingers finally got the manhole cover swung back; he located the spout again, and this time the water gushed docilely enough into the tank where it belonged. He let it overflow and soak his feet again, but that was a small matter. He remembered to secure the spout, and gave Gus the highball with a vast feeling of thankfulness.

"Jeez!" Sim remarked in disgust as he floundered back into the cab. "What'd y'do, kid—take yerself a bath in comp'ny water?"

The night didn't improve any.

As the 39-spot waddled out into the yard approach, Jem discovered that her appetite for steam had suddenly become a monstrous thing. Gus called his attention to it first with a mumbled growl translated by Sim in a curt: "Looka yer steam gauge!" It was down to 90 pounds, the needles dropping in a series of swooping jerks, and Jem took one agonized look and grabbed the scoop. His fire, that had been such a thing of white-hot beauty, was marred now by leprous patches of black, dead clinker. He churned them frantically apart, baled in new coal in a mighty spate—but Gus, working a heavy throttle with the reverse bar tucked far down in the corner as he trundled a cut of cars out toward the coachyard, blasted it relentlessly up the stack. When they got there and uncoupled Jem began to gain a little; then they got the highball, Gus horsed the bar over and opened the throttle wide—and back down the dial came the needle.

He came to hate that steam gauge. It grinned at him, mocking his frenzied impotence. When he got a load of coal into the firebox it wouldn't burn; while he shook the grates, the needle danced teasingly down five or 10 pounds; when he started to build a bank again, Gus blasted it up the stack. And when, in a burst of superhuman energy, he literally rammed the pressure back up with raw will-power—then Sim twisted the injector valve and the rush of cold water into the boiler dragged it right back down again.

Gus Hallet paid him not the slightest attention. The old hogger sat high on his seatbox and handled throttle, reverse bar and brake valve in a morose, godlike aloofness. Sim Kregg lounged on the left side and watched with a baleful sneer on his hatchet face. At rare intervals he got down and looked at the fire; once or twice he took a brief turn with the scoop. But his jeering, nasal complaints nagged at Jem every minute. And gradually Jem lost all awareness of what went on.

The 39-spot clanked back and forth across the yard like an aimless night beetle. They rattled over switch points, stopped, started again, now backing up, now going ahead. . . . And every thrust of the pounding rods meant another greedy gulp out of his precious hoard of steam. Old Gus was a rough hand with an engine; every time they coupled into a cut of cars they did it with a jarring crash that sent Jem reeling tiredly across the cab. He missed the firebox door completely every now and then, and sent the black lumps of coal rebounding every which way off the backhead to the awful disgust of Sim.

Other locomotives panted past the cab windows like dark, Cyclopean night beasts on the prowl. Lanterns bobbed along the ground beside them or waved through the smoky night in mysterious signals which Sim and Gus relayed back and forth across the cab in monosyllabic grunts. But Jem's world came to be bounded by the ache in his back and the salt sweat that glued the long drawers to his body so tightly that every movement hurt in a different place.

Toward daylight they coupled into a cut of deadhead coaches and, Jem gathered from the comments that crossed the cab, headed out onto the mainline for a run out to Eastside, where a branch crossed the Ivy. They clanked past a target's white eye and settled down to a steady jog, with the 39-spot rolling comfortably to the leisurely pound of her drivers. Even her unladylike greed for steam seemed slaked for the moment. The pressure held steady, and the temptation to lean in the gangway for a cool gulp of life-giving fresh air was too much for Jem. The sky was starting to lighten in the east, he noticed; not too long now till quitting time. Hold out just awhile more an' you'll make it, he told himself hopefully.

A roar from Gus brought him cruelly back to earth.

His heart skidded coldly into his belly at sight of the needle farther down the gauge than it had been the whole night long. He fought his weariness and snatched up the scoop. But it was too late. The fire flickered, dull red and smoky, around the coal he hurled to it. It spat at him, a long tongue of flame licking out the firebox door.

"My God!" yelled Sim, coming belatedly off the seat of his pants, "she's layin' down on you!"

Another tongue of flame writhed sluggishly at them, and a puff of black smoke filled the cab. Jem recoiled in bewilderment. "Something's went wrong with 'er!"

"Nothin' but yer damn sloppy firin'," Sim snapped. "Git outa my way . . ." The glare highlighted sweaty panic on his face.

"Close 'at damn firebox door!" Gus's bellow cut across their wrangling like Jovian thunder; the old man's eyes crackled at them from under the long bill of his cap like an outraged old eagle's. Jem shrank into himself, abashed. Hastily, Sim slammed the firebox door.

"Useless boobs!" Gus grunted, ramming the throttle clear to the backhead with a gesture of savage contempt. Without another look at them he tore open the cab window and flung himself halfway out to peer back along his train.

Jem stole another glance at the steam gauge. The pressure was dropping like a bucket going down a well. Abruptly, the switchman who'd ridden the cab out from town with them got off the seatbox and went down the gangway ladder like a cat; in the deep silence that followed the dying of 39's exhaust they heard his shoes grate on the cinders as he hit the ground running. The engine drifted at a labored crawl, slower and slower. It seemed an aching eternity before she lurched pon-

derously through a switch and nosed into the siding. One by one, they heard the cars clank through the switch behind them. The engine wheezed to a standstill at last, and Gus hauled himself back into the cab and sat, hands on knees, glowering.

"Shut down an' let 'er drift in!" said Sim. "Nice piece a runnin', Gus!" But the forced heartiness in his voice hit the icy aura that enveloped Gus, and fizzled, and died to a sickly grin. The engineer got slowly to his feet, stepped over the quadrant to the cab deck.

"You no-good sons-a-bitches, you!" he said.

He bent and opened the firebox door, and again flame and smoke spat out into the cab. He took a good look, craning his creased old neck to peer into every corner of the firebox before he finally slammed the door and came slowly erect.

"Know what makes 'at?"

"Nossir," said Jem.

"I never seen a fire act like that'n b'fore," Sim said sullenly.

"Oh you ain't, hey?" bellowed Gus in a voice loud enough, suddenly, to raise the cab roof. "An' you got the brass-bound, copper-bottom' gall t'call yerself a fireman? Even this damn green kid here had sense enough t'see *somethin'* was wrong—an' that's twice as much sense as what you got, you poor brainless mutt!"

He paused to take a long, wrathful breath. *"Plugged flues!"* he roared. "If you'd a stopped t'take one damn' look, instead a shootin' yer face off, you'd a seen them rings a soot as big around as the damn doughnuts at Mother Murphy's boardin' house. But not you! I dunno what the hell this railroad's comin' to, the fools they're hirin' now'days!"

Sim's face turned a dull, raw-beef red. He kept his eyes on the deck and said not a word while Gus made a little side oration on the habits and forebears of the boilermaker crew at the roundhouse and then wound up and got back to the business at hand:

"Now we're gonna set right here while you clean up 'at fire an' them flues an' git a head a steam on 'er ag'in. Not this new kid here, neither; *you* do it, Kregg!" He gathered up torch and oilcan and turned at the gangway to stab Sim with a final glare. "An' by God, you lemme catch y'one more time with yer butt on 'at seatbox an' I'll see y'serve time or my name ain't Gus Hallet!"

He clumped down the ladder to look the 39-spot over, and Jem sat limply and watched Sim get to work in a thick, unpleasant silence. Gradually the knotted tension in him relaxed under the weight of his bonetiredness. It occurred to him that he ought to get down and watch what Sim was doing, and maybe learn something, but the effort was just too much to think about. Presently Gus climbed back into the cab and took a long look at the fire.

"Keep at it," he said tersely. He scowled at Jem. "Didn't y'bring no lunch, boy?"

"Yeah," Jem remembered, saliva starting to flow hungrily at the very thought.

"Well fer Lord's sake, why don't y'eat it then—now y'got the chance?" Gus demanded. He went back down the ladder muttering testily that by God, a man'd have to wipe their noses for 'em next.

Jem got his dinner pail out of the seatbox and tied into a thick sandwich, feeling his empty stomach sit up and grab for it as he swallowed. Sim rolled a resentful eye at him.

"That's right—set there stuffin' yerself while I do all the work!"

"You et yours back there while I was workin'," Jem pointed out.

"That was different; it was yer job, wasn't it?"

"I done it, too. Ain't my fault 'er flues is plugged."

"Flues plugged!" Sim straightened up and spat scornfully. He stepped to the gangway and peered cautiously out. "That ol' buzzard—hell of a lot *he* knows. By gosh, time I git as much seniority as *he's* got, I'll be pullin' mainline varnish, not fussin' around on a damn yard goat! I guess y'think yer purty smart, gittin' me bawled out, hey? Well, yer gonna find out that kind a stunt don't go on this railroad, Gandee."

"Aw no," Jem protested. "Jeez, Sim, I'm sorry. . . ."

Sim snorted. "Water off'n a duck's back, kid! Think it bothers me any? Hell!" He got back to work again, and after awhile Jem finished eating and got down to help. By the time Gus got around to his final inspection they had the needle well up around the steam-gauge dial.

They set their cars out on the branchline siding, picked up a string for the car shops, and started back to East Bend, backing up, with the dawn breaking out pinkly beautiful all over the eastern sky. Hardly a word was spoken by anybody all the way in. Gus spotted the engine on the coal-dock lead, got up without an aye, yes or no, and climbed down out of the cab. Sim looked at Jem. "Well, y'comin' er y'gonna set there all day?"

They paused at the door to the crews' room, and it seemed a century or so since Jem had left it last night. "Jeez," he said diffidently, "y'think he'll say I'm all right, Sim?"

"Gus?" Sim sneered. "Why the hell not? I gotcha through all right, didn't I?" He jerked his head at the door. "Come on in; I s'pose it's up t'me t'show y'how t'make out a time slip now."

"I never thought student firemen got paid," Jem objected.

"Well fer Pete's sake—y'gotta know how anyways, don'tcha?" Sims snapped. "Yer gonna be firin' from now on, I guess."

5

He never did answer Clara's letter. He was too all-gone weary that first morning. But the letter crackled softly under the mattress as he rolled into bed; Clara, he thought pleasantly as black oblivion stole out of the corners of his room and began to flicker around the edges of his senses . . . Clara, with your hot green eyes and your warm pink mouth . . . I'll tell you all about it, Clara . . . Tomorrow.

But he never did.

The Ivy kept him busy from then on, and he was tired all the time till he toughened up. He didn't stay under Sim Kregg's wing on the 39-spot very long; he took to firing an engine too readily to stay under anyone's wing very long. Three days after that first night, they marked him up for a mainline drag, and he kept the old Mogul hot all the way into Chicago yards. A long wait in the hole at Hollister saved him once, when he let his fire get a little heavy and the steam pressure dropped—but he made it, and for the first time began to feel he was really an Ivy fireman.

And around him, the Ivy was burgeoning.

Shadowy groups of financial giants met in paneled rooms in the dim, Valhallalike reaches of Wall Street, and out of the meetings the Indiana Valley pushed hungry tentacles to engulf other railroads and smooth out some troublesome competition and keep things rolling down the rich midland highline. Not that Jem knew anything about all that, though some free-souled editors screamed stridently about the Trusts and the Big Interests, and a man named Debs began to be talked about endlessly at the cinderpit committee sessions up and down the right of way. A knight in shining armor or a wild-eyed anarchist—depending on which paper you read. The cinderpit committee though, was pretty well agreed that he was the man to help them show the Big Interests where to head in at. And Jem guessed so too. But all he really cared about was that they began to call it the Big Ivy, and business seemed to be booming so that the pickings stayed pretty fair on the extra list.

So things were happening to him, all right—but nothing, really, worth writing Clara about. And he wasn't much of a writing man anyway.

But slowly a yearning homesickness began to build up in him. He found himself thinking more and more about Clara.

and about cutting out for a few days and taking a run down to Barcelona, just to see what would happen.

Then, just as the first hot spell of July began to set in, it was all decided for him. He was cut off the board.

The Big Ivy was a winter road, as they explained to him when they broke the news; things always slacked off a little about this time of year—in fact, he was lucky to have stuck till July. He'd be called back in the fall, they told him. Don't take it to heart, kid—everybody got laid off a time or two, till he got some seniority in. And after the first shock, it wasn't such a bad blow at that. He'd bought some snappy new clothes, had a little money laid up. . . .

Everybody back home was mighty glad to see him. Everybody but Clara; she'd run away with a drummer just a month or so before.

A real flashy sport, the boys said; a real Dapper Dan—and old enough to be her father, too. Clara'd always liked 'em older; remember that schoolmaster, Willowston? Traveling in hardware, this guy was—in fact, they'd met right in Swiggert's store, it was said.

Nobody was real sure they'd even bothered to see a preacher, Maw declared, clamping her mouth in righteous disapproval in the way she had. It'd just about been the death of poor Miz Beddow, too. Nobody'd heard a word from Clara, Maw said, and like as not nobody ever would—the little hussy. You could tell from the way Maw talked that the scandal had just about rocked old Barcelona to its foundations.

Oh, Clara . . . my pretty Clara . . . and I'd always meant to write . . .

6

THE HOARSE BLASTS as the engineer whistled for a board came faintly back through the wind. The drag slowed and clattered through switch points, and lights glided past the caboose windows.

"Comin' inta East Bend yards," the flagman said cheerfully, stirring himself to climb down out of the cupola. The brakes took hold sharply, slowing them to a crawl; more switch points bumped underneath, and wheel flanges squealed through a short curve. Lee yawned and somewhat reluctantly followed the flagman down.

At his desk the conductor shuffled his waybills into a neat sheaf and thrust it into a pigeonhole. He got his watch out and studied it with satisfaction. "Didn't lay 10 out after all."

Slack ran out with a surging bump and their speed picked up; then brake-rigging thumped and grumbled underfoot and they slowed again. The flagman came in from the rear platform, snow thick on his shoulders, a blast of icy wind whooping in with him.

"It's gittin' colder ev'ry minute," he announced plaintively. "Snowin' harder too—hell of a night!" He turned to the conductor. "Hey, George, this brass-pounder's a friend a Jem Gandee's—born an' raised in the same town; whatta y'know about that?"

"That so?" The conductor seemed to warm up a little. "I'll be damned! Well, if yer as good a railroader as Jem Gandee, Mister, yer all right."

A tiny pang of formless irritation came and went in Lee. "Yeah," he said, "last time I saw Jem was the night he left home to hire out here." He had a silly impulse—the memory still strong in him—to go on and tell the story about Jem and the schoolmaster and all. But what the hell? The vague stab of annoyance went through him again; it seemed that Jem had already made his mark on the Ivy. "That was a lotta years ago," he finished lamely.

"Whatta y'know about that!" the conductor said.

The caboose stopped with a soft jerk. "Well boys, we're over the road," the flagman said.

Lee got his overcoat off a hook and stooped to drag his suitcase from under the bunk where he'd stowed it. "Much obliged for the ride, fellas."

The conductor nodded. The flagman took Lee's arm and wheeled him toward the window.

"Depot's straight acrost the yards an' a ways to yer right—y'can't miss it. Now, if y'wanta see ol' Jem, Bess Teach's place is where he'll be, jist about as soon as he can git there. Take that street right the other side a the depot, an' Bess' is about a block down t'yer left." He grinned and dug an elbow into Lee's ribs. "You jist mosey on in there an' have a look at the gal yer ol' friend's stuck on." He smirked and clucked his tongue ecstatically. "Some chicken, take it from me!"

"Thanks," Lee said. There was something in all this he resented: This apparent interest in Jem; Jem's girl; their own ready acceptance of himself as Jem's friend; Jem's this and Jem's that. . . . He couldn't quite put his finger on it, and let the thought go. "See you again, mebbe," he said.

Out on the platform the wind hit him with a savage pounce, and the cinder grit was hard as iron underfoot when he dropped to the ground. He turned his coat-collar up, bent his head, and struck out across the yard.

He stepped carefully over a final rail and paused to get his bearings. To his right was the depot, the flagman had said. He headed that way, stumbling past the squat shapes of three or four dark buildings and presently feeling a brick platform under his feet just when it seemed he must be hopelessly lost. He crossed it, grateful for the sheltering lee of the depot wall. Right across the street, cheerful radiance spilled out into the storm from the big front window of a hotel, and he had an instant impulse to head in there and call it a night. But something in the flagman's smirk as he'd told of Jem's girl returned to him. He shrugged deeper into his overcoat and turned left.

And there it was: a row of lighted windows that marked an ancient daycoach, off its undercarriage and set flush with the sidewalk, a lighted globe over the door bearing the simply stenciled announcement: DINER—GOOD EATS!

The air inside was steamy and warm, rich with the smell of strong coffee and fried meat. A pair of men humped over the counter near the door glanced up at him incuriously and went on with a low-toned conversation. He walked down to the far end and sank onto a stool, content for a moment just to let the thick warmth begin to soak into him. He had noticed the girl fleetingly; now, as a glass of water was set before him he looked up and caught a pair of brown eyes studying him. She flushed faintly and looked away.

"Good evening," she said. Her voice had a pleasant Midwestern matter-of-factness. Her mouth, he noticed, was wide and red and generous, her eyes long and very thickly lashed under serenely arching brows.

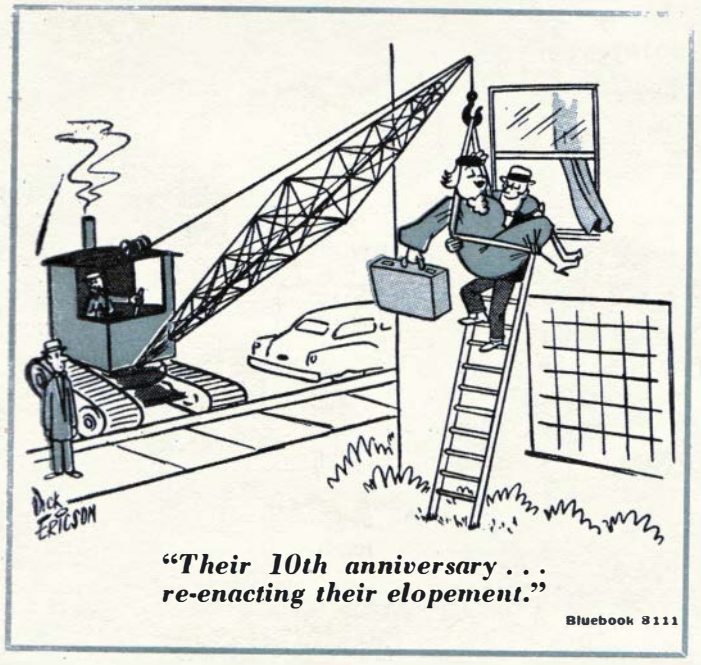
Good Lord, he thought suddenly with a kind of delayed shock, this gal of Jem's is a real looker! He said, "Evening," and became aware that now he was in out of the bitter cold he was starting to shiver uncontrollably.

"Terrible night, isn't it?" she said. "Coffee?"

He nodded, watching as she went to the big urn to get it, feeling an odd, urgent compulsion to drink in everything about this pretty girl in one hungry glance. A tall, full-bodied girl, deep-breasted and round-hipped under the starched white apron. He found himself trying to visualize the long white thighs under the skirt, and pulled his mind up short, telling himself cynically that he'd been out on the Texas desert too long, with nothing but the coyotes and rattlesnakes for company. He dropped his eyes in some embarrassment when she set the steaming mug in front of him.

"Do you want something to eat? We have steak . . ."

"That's good; stop right there!" he decided. "An' all the fixin's, hey? Man needs an awful lot a grub in him t'stand up to this beautiful Indiana weather you got around here."



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She smiled. "Boomer?"

"How'd you guess?" He grinned back and jerked a thumb at the bosom of his black sateen shirt. "My old thousand-miler here, I bet."

"I can almost always tell. My father was a railroader; I grew up here on the Big Ivy." She was still smiling. "Little early in the year, isn't it?"

The two other men finished their coffee and got up just then, and she moved off down the counter. He watched covertly over the rim of his mug as she punched their pie cards and said good night. He continued to watch as she busied herself with his meal, not glancing in his direction at all. The hot, strong coffee chased the last of the chill out of him, and he was pleasantly aware that the diner seemed a snug, intimate place now. He wished she'd look his way, but she didn't.

What if I spoke up and told her I rode in behind Jem tonight?, he wondered. That'd probably get her attention, all right. All at once it was important to him to recall the flagman's exact words about this girl and Jem. That wise grin of his had hinted at something pretty thick between them. . . . If old Jem was that lucky, more power to him.

Presently she came and set his meal deftly on the counter. The steak, sizzling in its own rich gravy beside a huge mound of fried potatoes, made him realize suddenly that it had been a long, long day since a late breakfast in Chicago, and he attacked it hungrily.

"Looking for a job?" she asked idly.

"Well, I dunno. I honestly don't. Mebbe I am at that. Just got homesick, I guess; I was born here in Indiana, an' 'way down there in Texas . . ." She nodded absently, as though she'd asked just to be pleasant. "I might take a job on the Ivy for awhile. All depends."

She didn't ask on what it depended, and he didn't quite know himself. She leaned against the back counter, arms folded, eyes far away, and he had the feeling that she listened for something out in the windy night that didn't concern him. Jem, probably. It ought to be about time for Jem to be coming along, he reflected as he finished his dinner. Mentally he calculated how long it would take to uncouple from the drag, back down the yard to the roundhouse lead, leave the engine, report in . . . Again he had the impulse to mention Jem's name, just to see what she'd say. But he let it pass and sat back, rolling a cigarette thoughtfully.

The door opened abruptly and let the gale in, shattering the comfortable silence. The girl looked past Lee and her eyes came alive. "Jem!" she cried, her whole face lighting.

Well, he told himself sardonically in the split second before turning around, you were wondering if it would. Now you satisfied?

This was the way it could happen. Just like this, 14 years could blow away down a March wind and never have been. You stood by a jerkwater depot on a warm May midnight and watched markers fade away down a track, and you sat in a yardside diner in the middle of a raving blizzard . . . and everything was the way it had always been.

The big voice that boomed "Hello, Bess honey!" was deeper and fuller than he remembered—but still Jem's. Lee looked down into the dregs of his coffee, putting off looking at Jem as long as he could, unaccountably, now that the big moment was here.

"I nearly gave you up, Jem," Bess was saying, "when the storm got so bad."

"Couldn't stop me, honey! Purt'near stalled at Winnemona, but we come on through. Rough, though."

Lee looked up then, slowly. It was Jem, all right—and it wasn't. He'd have known him anywhere—or would he? Jem, yes, but with 14 years added to him. A big, rangy Jem, no boy any longer. His shoulders seemed too massive to have come through the door, an he must stand six-foot-two or -three if he stood an inch. Almost the same eyes though—warm gray and bright in the weather-ruddied face—and the face hadn't changed too much except for the mustache like a thick black bar over the white grin. And the grin hadn't changed at all.

Jem wore the round, black, felt hat a lot of engineers preferred; he lifted a big hand now and shoved it onto the back of his head, and the same black forelock came slanting down across his forehead.

He'd've recognized Jem anywhere, Lee knew then.

Jem dropped his grip to the floor and straddled a stool, glancing carelessly at the fellow down the counter. "What a night, Bess! Thought I'd pull every lung in the drag takin' slack, but the ol' girl finally done it . . ." He looked at Lee again, frowning. His jaw dropped.

"Howdy Jem," said Lee, getting up.

"Lee! Lee Wire!"

They each took a long stride and shook hands violently.

"Lee!" Jem roared. "Why hell's fire, man, where'd you drop from? How long's it been? Ten, fifteen years?"

"Fourteen this May," Lee grinned.

Jem's booming laugh shook the diner. He brought his left hand up and clapped Lee on the shoulder. It felt like a tall pine crashing. "Lord, Lord, it's good seein' you ag'in. Fourteen years—think a that!" He wheeled to the girl. "Bess, honey, this's Lee Wire. We grew up together. Lee—here's Bess Teach; girl I'm stuck on!" His huge laugh filled the diner again.

Bess said: "Yes, Mr. Wire and I've already met." She turned away and started to fill two coffee mugs, and Lee felt a brief, uncomfortable certainty that she could have done without his being there. Maybe he was spoiling some plan she'd had for the evening, he thought, remembering how her eyes had lighted when Jem came in.

"Listen," he said as she brought the coffee, "I prob'ly oughta be moseyin' along—I still got to find some place to bunk tonight."

"Set still, man," Jem roared. "You can bunk with me. You crazy? Come along after fourteen years an' all you can say is you guess you better be moseyin' along?"

Lee shrugged. Bess's eyes came up from under their long lashes and met his in a brief, blank stare before she moved away to busy herself at the range. "Well—I guess there's no hurry at that, is there?"

"Sure not!" Jem creamed his coffee liberally and tasted it with noisy appreciation. "My God, Lee, I often wondered what'd become a you. Get back home once in awhile, but nobody's ever heard from you."

"No," Lee said slowly, "I never wrote home much." He was remembering: It had been six or seven weeks after school ended before he'd mustered up to make the break in his turn. And because Jem was on the Ivy, he'd had to pick another road

for himself. There'd been an obscure reason for that which he'd never quite been able to understand, but it had been very real and somehow disturbing. So he'd ridden the rods on a drag on the branchline down to Fort Wayne and gotten himself a job on the Vandalia. He'd never felt that anyone had missed him much.

"Your aunt's still spry as ever," Jem said.

"That's good," said Lee. He'd never felt very close to Aunt Cass, even if she had raised him the last 10 years, after his mother had died and his father had hit the road and never bothered to come back. "Say—how's ol' Christy, Jem?"

"Fine. Still on the job. Last time I was home, he ask' me if I ever heard from you; asks me that every time I see him. An' Clayt Shoemaker's brakin' someplace on the Monon, last time I heard. Remember Clayt? There was a wildman for you! Remember that time . . ?"

They slid easily into the past, one thing bringing up another, like landmarks on an old but unforgotten road. Bess moved quietly behind the counter, setting out a meal for Jem, refilling Lee's coffee mug.

"Tell you what," Jem said at last, mopping his plate clean with a tremendous slab of bread and butter. "This calls for a drink! Then you come on an' turn in with me. Got a nice big room . . . Where's your bag?"

The diner was still empty save for them. Down the counter Bess looked up from a newspaper as they got into their coats. "Time for Old Home Week to adjourn to Fallon's?" she inquired.

Jem grinned, a little sheepishly, Lee thought. "Got to give Lee a real welcome, honey." He handed a meal ticket to her. "His too," he said.

She shrugged. "See you in the morning?" Lee thought she tried to make it sound casual and offhand; he didn't think it did, quite.

He hesitated as they started to leave. "Awfully glad to've made your acquaintance," he murmured awkwardly. "Mebbe I'll be seein' you again."

"Maybe." Her eyes slid over his impersonally. "If you decide to stay around awhile."

He sure hadn't made any hit with her, he thought wryly.

Outside Jem led the way across the street and down another block, through snow that was halfway to their knees now and still whirling down like flying spume on the raging river of the wind. "Here we are," he grunted presently. FALLON'S RAILROAD BAR, said the big red-and-gilt letters sprawled in a broad arc across the window.

"Evenin', boys," said the man behind the bar. "Jist git in, Jem? Fierce night out, aint it?"

7

OPENING THE DINER DOOR was like last night all over again, and seeing Bess behind the counter, Jem's warm surge of gladness was tinged with irritation at old Unc Harpster for letting her carry so much of the load. It passed as he wrestled the door shut against the wind and the snow that still raged in the street.

Bess smiled at him tiredly. There were shadowy smudges under her eyes, and Jem felt irritation come back over him.

"Where's Unc? Seems like the ol' goat could take some a this work off'n you."

She shrugged. "Oh, his lumbago . . ."

"Sure. His lumbago!"

Again she shrugged. "How about ham and eggs, Jem?" He nodded, and she went about putting his breakfast on the big range. There was a coolness to her this morning that took a little of the edge off their being alone together. Not like other mornings, he thought. Or maybe it was just that she was tired.

"Bess," he said, "I'm sorry about last night."

"That's all right, Jem." She glanced at the windows, coldly opaque with the driving snow. "You'd've had to get your rest anyway. How's your friend this morning?" she added, changing the subject.

"Lee?" He chuckled. "Sleepin' like a baby when I left. Wouldn't that kill you—his ridin' in behind me last night, after all them years?"

She slid his eggs out of the skillet, forked a dripping slice of ham onto the plate beside them. It was almost like sitting in their own kitchen, he thought suddenly. Like being married—all the meals she'd fixed for him . . . He might as well be married to Bess, he reflected. What was it Lee had said last night. . . ?

"Honey," he told her, "you sure made a hit with him. You should a heard him—got me a little worried, to tell you the truth!"

"Oh," she smiled scornfully, "his kind! Boomers!"

"An' not only him, Bess—I guess half the men on the West End'd be stuck on you, if it wasn't for me."

"Oh yes, *me!*" she mocked him, smiling, coloring a little, making her voice husky and pompous.

They both laughed, Jem a shade ruefully. Their relationship had grown to be like this. Easygoing. Pleasant. Maybe not too much there, really. But his lips remembered the warm feel of her mouth, in a rented buggy in the dusk out on a country road, in the narrow, shadowy entrance to her light housekeeping apartment in the late night, after shows at the Orpheum. There had to be something to it. A lot of something. And suddenly he felt full of a yearning pride in this lovely girl who was his. He wished he was just getting in, now, instead of just getting out. . . .

He finished his breakfast. His watch showed 10 minutes past six. "Well," he said grudgingly, "time to be hittin' the ball, I guess."

"Jem—" she glanced at the windows again with a worried frown, "it'll be pretty bad, won't it? Be careful!"

"Sure. An' you get some rest. You tell that useless Unc I said for him to start givin' you a little more help around here, hey?"

Unc Harpster owned this place, but for a long time now she'd been the one that kept it going. She'd thought, sometimes, of using her savings to buy in—but then Unc would only be more of a problem than ever.

The morning crawled along. By the time the brief spurt of breakfast business started coming in she was glad of the excuse to get away from her own slow-circling thoughts. Business slackened again toward nine o'clock. She drew some coffee for herself and got up on a stool in a corner with the morning paper. Then the door opened again, just as she got settled comfortably.

"Morning! Still feedin' the starvin' railroad men?"

He was a stranger, but he met her arched brows and the chilliness in her eyes with an engaging grin. When she recognized him after a long moment, the chilliness melted only a little. Jem's friend of last night.

But he looked different this morning. The lean face was relaxed and rested. He had shaved, and there was a tie knotted neatly at the collar of his thousand-miler shirt. His grin widened; she noticed how it lifted a corner of the wide mouth first, spreading slowly all over his face. Only the dark eyes, though they crinkled at the corners, kept a deep, half-serious reserve as if he wasn't used to grinning often. A nice-looking man, she thought, recalling that she'd thought so last night, too.

"Oh, good morning," she said with a cool smile. "What'll it be?"

"My! All business, ain't we? Well, make it a couple eggs an' some bacon. Flop the eggs over."

As she set his breakfast out he suggested: "Why not sit

down an' have that cup a java I interrupted with me? Nice sociable welcome for the new brother."

She lifted her brows.

"I'm hired," he explained. "Just come from the office. Operator at Yella Crick quit on 'em last night—they greeted me like an ol' flame."

"You're going to work on the Ivy?"

"Yep, soon as I can get there. What kind a place is this Yella Crick, do you know?"

She pursed her lips. "Oh, just a little town about thirty miles west. How's come you decided to go to work on the Ivy?"

He grinned again. "By George, ain't sure I know myself. Unless it was the scenery."

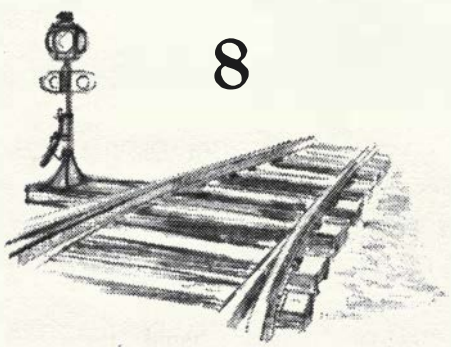
"The scene—?" She stopped short, feeling her cheeks flush warmly. "Now you're kidding me."

He chuckled. "No—honest! Why else does a boomer ever stop off anywhere, unless it's the scenery? Not for money—whoever heard of a rich boomer?"

"Or a shy one!" she said.

He laughed so genuinely that she had to join him, and all at once the little diner was warm with companionship. She wasn't sure whether to be irked or amused by this line of conversation he'd started, but the decision seemed to have been taken out of her hands, and it was a slow and lonesome morning anyway. With the ice broken, talk flowed smoothly between them.

8



"WHITE EYE!" Ollie Meadows called.

"White eye," Jem acknowledged.

A crew of snow shovelers scattered and stood wearily back to let them pass, their upturned faces flashing by like ghosts as the tall eight-wheeler picked up speed to the sharp music of the exhaust. The headlight beam washed over the yard-limit sign, leaped beyond to beat against the pale, shifting curtain of the snow and fall back, defeated. A whistle post swam out of the murk and Jem quilled the whistle long and mournfully, the steam torn from its brass lips and ripped to instant tatters by the wind.

"High stepper, snow'r no snow!" he called across the cab.

Ollie grunted, getting down to scatter a couple of stingy scoopsful into the firebox.

Markers showed like dim rubies on the westbound track. The faded red shape of a caboose came into focus, rocking and waddling along through the snow. They drew abreast and passed it, picking up speed steadily, the jostling boxcars fleeing backward past the cab window. They came even with the lumbering Mogul on the head end, clouds of steam spewing out of her, the three low drivers under the big boiler churning with ponderous dignity to the main rod's thrust. Jem lifted a hand to the shadowy figures in the cab; the deep-lunged pant of her exhaust mingled with their own for a span of minutes, and they were past her and running alone into the white void.

"Frank Edgerton," Ollie shouted across the cab. "Sure wisht he was the one hadda stay ahead a us inta Hollister instead a Chet Stears."

"Chet's all right," Jem shouted back.

Ollie shook his head soberly. "Got too much reputation for gettin' on the other fella's time t'suit me. Day like this'n, that's no kind a guy t'be runnin' behind."

A chilly knot formed under Jem's wishbone for an instant, and was gone again. He got his watch out. They were two hours and 43 minutes off the timecard. Hell, he thought roughly, you had to figure the other guy was onto his job too; when you got to feeling nervous on an engine it was time to quit and hunt a job keeping store somewhere.

He slowed for the crossover that put them back on the westbound iron, and they snorted into Milford. But his watch showed eight more good minutes lost. And on the other side of Milford the wind seemed to gather new fury, the snow like a milky river flowing on its mad current, blotting even the smokebox to a tenuous gray mass that loomed darkly against the pale splotch of the headlight glow.

Getting onto his seatbox after another look at the fire, Ollie saw Jem frown as he put his watch away. Lord, thought the fireman, he ain't figuring on makin' up time today, is he?

They fought the slow miles to Winnemona and got the highball and blasted out, three hours and 19 minutes late now, the reverse bar tucked well down the quadrant, the high drivers turning through clogging drifts that built up steadily. An eastbound passenger train labored by like a wailing ghost, and Ollie dug his watch out.

"If that's 90, he's more'n six hours late. It must get worse the farther west y'go."

Between Winnemona and Yellow Creek the right of way ran tangent for 15 miles through flat, serene farmland. The wind had a clean sweep there; snow filled the ditches to the brims, but the track was scoured almost clean and the lanky eight-wheeler ran howling like a banshee through the storm as Jem hooked the reverse bar back and cracked the throttle wider. They held even with the ticking minutes, even gained a few of them back. . . .

Ollie shook his grates down, fed in his three scoops of coal, got back on the seatbox to peer anxiously ahead through the narrow front window. You caught all kinds off the extra list, he thought resignedly; the rappers who mauled an engine till it broke a man's heart trying to keep a fire on the grates; the rough ones with a hand like a sledge hammer on throttle and brake valve; the careful geezers who never should've left the old farm; and the wild men, the ballast scorchers who'd make the time or go to hell across lots trying. So this Gandee was one of those. Ollie was a wise old fireman, older in years than his place on the left-hand seatbox indicated. He thought unhappily of Chet Stears somewhere out ahead of them in the murk with his reputation for getting on the other man's time. He glanced across the cab at Jem, who gave no sign.

A whistle post reeled up through the snow and fell behind as Jem hauled down the whistle cord. The Barrow road crossing just east of Yellow Creek—time to be shutting down for the board. The whistle's moan was a long, lost lament in the lost snow world; the pale steam rolled down the boiler's slope and around the cab, and was slashed aside by the wind as he released the cord. Another long, long one and a pair of shorts. . . . And as the steam was whipped aside, the thin radiance out in front had changed. There was a bloody tinge to it. Or was there? He closed his eyes tight, opened them, and it was still there, brighter, growing into a crimson stain that burned and glared like an angry eye beyond the snow.

The mutter in his throat jibed with Ollie's strangled yell across the cab:

"Good God, Jem—a red fusee!"

His left hand dropped from whistle cord to throttle for the automatic motion of shutting down; the spasm of his reflex shoved it all the way to the backhead, sent it streaking for the brake valve like a living thing with eyes of its own; he felt it close on the smooth brass handle and slam it around into the big hole, felt the smashing buck and shudder under him as the brakes locked. His eyes, and his mind behind them, stayed frozen on the fiery splash of the fusee coming down the right of way. Now he could see the lantern waving in a frantic washout. The flagman's dark figure went floundering down the embank-

ment as they plunged past with sparks streaming from under every screaming wheel.

The fusee's glare was suddenly gone as they went over it, and a nagging voice somewhere in Jem's head was reminding him that the flagman might not have got very far back on a day like this—panting and swearing, slipping on the icy ties, breaking into a frantic, shambling run as he heard Number 9's whistle . . .

A torpedo exploded under the wheels.

Jem fought to horse the reverse bar over. It went at last, and he yanked the throttle open and hit the sander valve, hauling down on the whistle cord with the same motion. Markers blinked, and the rear end of a caboose took shape through the snow with the stark suddenness of an ugly dream; fantastic little details stood out with ridiculous clarity: A handrail was bent on the right side of the platform; a window had been broken and patched with cardboard . . . The whole picture hurtling at him with awful speed . . .

They stopped with a wracking jolt that pitched Jem forward off the seatbox, tore his hand from the cord to stop the whistle's hoarse raving. He seemed to feel the big engine's whole iron fabric subside around him in a cloud of steam and dust and snow and scorched-metal-smell.

Ollie Meadows was down on his knees against the backhead. "My God, Jem . . . !"

Then silence, save for the low hiss of steam beyond the staybolts, the grumbling crackle of the firebox. Jem got up, his body feeling numb and clumsy, an awkward other self that wasn't really part of him. Mechanically he reached up and whistled out the flag; the four sharp blasts sounded loud and jeering, like something his ears had never expected to hear again. He parted the storm curtains and stepped out into the gangway. At the foot of the ladder stood the freight conductor, both hands on the grab-irons, his upturned face shiny with sweat in spite of the cold.

"God A'mighty Jem—I thought you was goin' to hell an' gone right through us!" He stepped back warily as Jem climbed down, and suddenly anger surged into Jem like a rough, irresistible tide.

"Damn you, if you couldn't keep off'n my time why wasn't you in the hole where you belonged?"

"Time!" the conductor snarled back. "You an' the damn dispatcher! We got a brake riggin' down—think we done it a'purpose?"

Sherm Carnes, Number 9's conductor, came running heavily up from the head end car, snow already powdering the shoulders of his blue coat, the white vest that clothed his paunch no whiter than the fat face above it. The questions that bubbled from him died as he came far enough to see the nearness of the caboose.

"Holy Moses! Close, wasn't it?"

The freight brakeman came running back. The flagman came along, still dusting off the snow and cinders of his dive down the embankment, his mouth hanging open in expectation of disaster. A few male passengers spilled out of Number 9's smoker and floundered up toward the knot of trainmen. Sherm Carnes grumbled at them.

"Nothin's wrong, men, nothin' a'tall. Better get back in the coach 'fore you all catch cold.

"What happened, conductor? We hit something?"

"Nope," Sherm said testily, "just a freight in front a us—we'll be goin' again in a minute."

The flagman discovered that, somehow, he'd torn the seat out of his pants. Everybody laughed and the tension was all at once gone. "Come on, boys, better bust up the prayer an' indignation meetin' an' git that brake riggin' up 'fore the delayer busts a gut," the freight conductor suggested.

They got into Chicago just nine hours and 45 minutes later, Jem's watch told him as they slid out of the curtain of snow into the high, smoky vault of the train shed. He shoved it back into his pocket and leaned back on the seatbox as the engine sighed to a stop just short of the bumping post, and only then did the full, crushing weight of all those hours come down over him. He sat and rolled a cigarette and watched the passengers straggle past under the cab window, finally shaking himself out of it to get down and look the engine over.

Almost humbly, for a locomotive was no piece of machinery to be treated with perfunctory efficiency, he moved along her length, drawing off a glove to lay the back of a hand against the brasses of first one and then the other of the tall drivers. He moved on forward, where the tall stack snarled its exhaust up into the train-shed ceiling, and stopped to feel the truck wheels.

"Jem!" a voice said. "Jem Gandee!"

A vagrant draft blew steam around him in a thick, warm fog like the lost years of his boyhood rolling back. No, he thought, straightening slowly, it can't be; it's somebody else I used to know . . .

"Clara Beddow," he said simply.

She looked amazingly little different. The same narrow, eager face with the same faint hollows under the cheekbones . . . Pale dusting of freckles across the short little nose . . . Lips parted a little breathlessly . . . Above all, the same warm green eyes, shining now from behind the veil of a splendid black hat poised like a great bird about to take flight off the dark gold upsweep of her hair. The ripe fulfillment of that earlier dream he'd had.

"Imagine running into you like this, Jem!"

"It's been a lotta years," he said foolishly.

She came closer, tilting her head back, crinkling her eyes at him. "Oh, you look marvelous, Jem—and so *big;* why, you're even taller than I remembered. Poor little me, I feel like a *shrimp* beside you." And she giggled, folding her hands around his arm.

"You'll get yourself dirty," he warned, but she only grimaced at him.

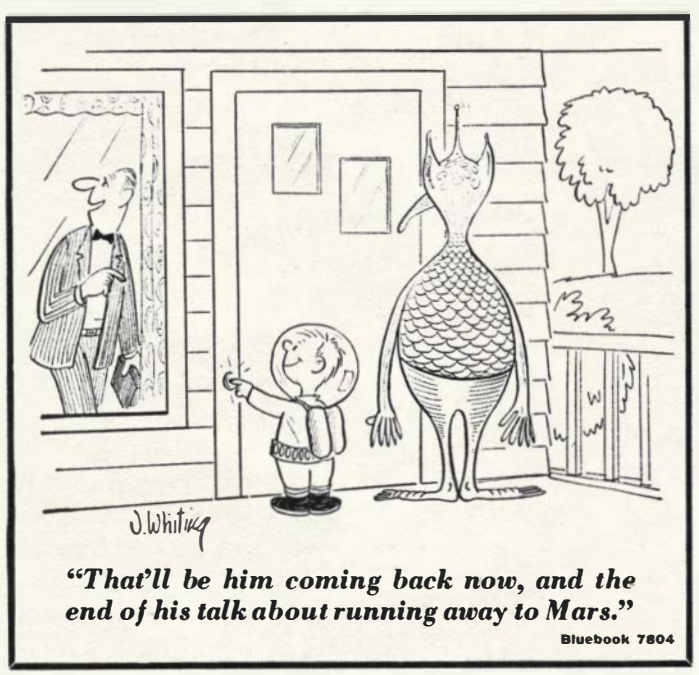
"I'm dirty now, and all rumpled from waiting for the train so long—it was supposed to leave at three this afternoon, Jem. I must look a fright—and just when I ought to be making you think, My, how pretty she's grown after all these years!"

"That's what I did think. You have, Clara."

"You'd forgotten all about me, Jem Gandee!"

"No," he said earnestly, "no, I never did. But you never got back home—well, neither did I, much . . ."

"I'm going back now," she said, suddenly solemn. "The telegram came this morning. Mother . . . passed away, quite suddenly . . . " The green eyes looked up at him, deep and soft and brimmed with tears that clung and sparkled in the long lashes. The red mouth mourned at him, and he heard himself mumbling some vague, awkward condolence. He recalled Mrs.



"That'll be him coming back now, and the end of his talk about running away to Mars."

Bluebook 7804

Beddow only fuzzily: a thin, nervous woman who wore nose glasses and seemed always discouraged by some great burden of care.

" . . . so I guess I'm all alone now," Clara was saying, "and, oh Jem, you don't know how *good* it seemed when I saw you . . . Like a friend in need. And I'd've known you anywhere, Jem, even with your back turned."

"I'd a known you anywhere too, Clara."

They stood apart and looked at each other. Their eyes clung, a cloudy urgency in hers that set him groping for something more to say, to hold them fast in this moment he didn't really believe yet.

A booming voice smashed the moment to bits, echoing hollowly through the train shed's vastness: "On track six, for Laconna . . . Hollister . . . Winnemona . . . East Bend . . . Waybridge . . . Barcelona . . . "

"Number 20," Jem said, nodding at the daycoach on the next track. "That your train?"

"Yes. I guess it's really going at last."

Her suitcase was there. He picked it up. "Well, I'll put you aboard, anyway."

They walked along the train, her heels clicking on the platform bricks, the swish of her skirt pleasant in his ears.

"Be a purty tiresome trip, I'm afraid. With this blizzard an' all . . . "

"But I have to go," she said mournfully. "Oh, Jem—I wish you could be down there too. What a nice long visit we could have."

"Yeah, I sure wish I could." It was too damn soon for this chance meeting to end, he thought resentfully. If it had happened, now, that he was deadheading back on 20 . . . Vain thought. He wasn't. The brakeman nodded to him, took the suitcase and handed it up into the vestibule. Clara rummaged in her purse.

"Do you have something to write on, Jem?"

He found the wad of train order flimsies in his pocket and handed one to her. She smoothed it out on the side of her purse and scribbled on it.

"There. I've written my address for you. I'll be home in a week or two, surely—will you come see me sometime, Jem?" Her eyes hung on his, smoky green, pleading.

"Sure I will."

Air hissed as the engineer made his brake test. "Board!" the brakeman said sharply. Her hand clung to Jem's, squeezing hard.

"Good night, Jem."

"Good night, Clara."

She went up the steps, hesitated in the narrow vestibule to smile back and wave. The train jerked gently and began to glide away, the brakeman grinning slyly at Jem as he swung up the steps. The markers slid away down the train shed's smoky length.

It was as if he had dreamed it all. Except for the train order; the flimsy crackled in his fingers and he lifted it and read what she'd written, thinking for a moment of that one letter she'd sent him at the East Bend roundhouse so long ago. The faint perfume he remembered from then seemed to come back. The address was out south on Calumet Avenue—not so far from the Big Ivy roundhouse, he realized. There was a telephone number too, and across a corner of the flimsy, like an afterthought, she'd written: Clara Swann.

Swann, hey? Well, of course her name wouldn't be the same; she was married. But she'd mentioned being all alone now. A widow . . . ?

He finished looking the engine over and climbed back in the cab. Ollie Meadows, lounging limply on the left-hand seatbox with his feet propped high on the backhead, gave him a knowing grin.

"Left number-two driver brass's a little warm," Jem said.

"Sure wisht I was a big, brave engineer with the beautiful dolls makin' up t'me every time I pulled inta the depot," said Ollie. "Man, she shined up t'you in a hurry. A chicken, too!"

"Just an old friend," Jem said, reddening a little. "Girl I use' t'know back in the ol' home town."

9

THE DEPOT was deserted when Lee dropped off the local at Yellow Creek. He strode through the waiting room and let himself into the little office, feeling an odd sense of homecoming as his eyes wandered over the desk in the big bay window, with its three brass keys and sounders, its litter of green and yellow and white forms, the chipped granite cup with the cold dregs of old coffee that stood precariously on one corner. The order hoops on their hook close by, the big clock on the wall, even the brightly lithographed Big Ivy calendar with the stately locomotive of the Ivy Flyer steaming headlong out of it—they all gave him an easy feeling of having been here before.

And why not? he thought. Jobs were all alike. The clock said 17 minutes past four, and automatically he got his watch out and compared it.

One sounder clicked and clattered away in a soft monotone. Freight consists; it was the relay wire. That other, he guessed, must be Western Union. The third, placed handiest for the operator on the desk, was the train wire, silent for the moment. After a minute or two he shrugged and got out of his overcoat and hat and bent to look at the fire in the little pot-bellied stove. As he did so the outer door opened and closed noisily and quick steps echoed across the waiting room.

"Howdy, fella—you must be my relief, hey?"

"Yeah," said Lee, turning and offering his hand. The operator was a thin, sparrowy man with a pale, hook-nosed face and a broad grin that showed a gap on one side where two teeth were missing. He was perhaps 25, Lee guessed, but he had about him the bright, foxy, old-man look that some men carry from the cradle.

"Name's Flincher," he announced, "Joe Flincher. An' Jeez, am I glad t'see you! I'd a walked out on the damn job, only I'm too conscientious, I guess." He shucked off coat and cap and flung them onto a hook beside Lee's, turning with a quick, birdlike motion to squirt tobacco juice at the cuspidor in a corner. He missed it and swore absently, as though he always missed it. With his cap off he revealed a shock of whitish blonde hair that exaggerated the beaky triangle of his face.

"Quit, hey?" Lee asked.

"Broth-er," said Flincher, "did I quit!" He grinned his gap-toothed grin and waved a hand in a short, jerky sweep that seemed to take in the desk, the depot, even the right of way outside. "I got me a bellyful, friend. Work like a damn dog all through this blizzard—day man down sick, no relief, no eatin', no sleepin', the wires burnin' up with every kind a cock-eyed order the crazy delayers could cook up . . . An' where the hell's it git a man? Nowhere!"

"Oh?" Lee got out makings and took his time rolling a cigarette.

"Hell, I don't need the damn job anyways. Got a father-in-law over't Milford jist beggin' me t'go into his grain-an'-feed business with 'im. I should waste my life slingin' lightnin' for the Ivy in this hick town?"

Lee nodded, not really listening. He looked out the bay window. "Say, did you ever OS the local I come in on?"

"Oh Jeez, no." Flincher reached hurriedly for the key. He didn't have a very good fist, and Lee, dropping his half-smoked cigarette into the cuspidor, felt a little sneer go through him. Mostly for this windy little op, but partly, he reminded himself wryly, for this two-for-a-nickel job he'd so blithely taken on a whim, sight unseen.

"Took me five years," Flincher said, leaning back and swinging his feet to the top of the desk, "but I finally got smart."

"Look, Flincher," Lee said, "I'm ready to take over any time, if you wanta get away."

"Nah, no hurry. I'm all packed up ready t'go, but they's nothin' outa here till the 6:18 east, an' Lord knows how late he'll be runnin'. Whyn't y'mosey on over an' git yourself a room? I guess y'could have the one I jist give up. House right across the tracks—y'can see it from here, it's nice an' handy. Miz Gilley's—her ol' man's a section boss. Sets a purty fair table."

Lee shrugged. He hung one hip on a corner of the desk, the thought hitting him that he could change his mind and take that 6:18 out himself. Down under the hot southwestern sun, the hotshots of the Espee and old John Santa Fe would still be thundering east in the last surges of the winter's spate of tonnage. And the boomers would already be thinking of pulling out; all summer long there'd be work a'plenty for the restless brethren who'd follow the sun across the ripening plains and the high northern passes. And here he sat with wet feet and the beginning of the sniffles, in an insignificant whistle-stop on the Big Ivy.

He grinned ruefully at himself and picked up the train sheet. It was sloppily filled out, entries scrawled in and crossed out, a good half of the trains that must have gone through hours ago not yet on sheet. He felt an aversion growing for little Joe Flincher.

"How about this?" he asked sharply.

"Oh, them morning trains. Well, hell, this's Ferd Ambrose's job by rights, he's the day man. Sick, he says. Like hell he is. Jist lazy."

"Fix it up," Lee said, scaling it back to the desk.

The train wire-sounder suddenly clattered out the Yellow Creek call. "Hi Joe, still on the job I see. Did the new man get cold feet?"

Quickly Lee reached for the key, brushing Flincher's hand aside. "Howdy homeguard, glad to meet U," he sent, making it one ripping crackle of sizzling Morse.

There was a short silence at the other end. Then: "Howdy boomer. Orville Bates at Winnemona. Be talking to U."

Flincher snickered. "I guess y'took the wind outa *his* sails fella." He couldn't quite keep the respect out of his eyes. "That's a purty fast fist y'got there, y'know it?" He found a pencil in the litter on the desk, gave the point a brisk swipe with his tongue and got to work on the train sheet.

Presently a long whistle sounded to the west.

"Extry 112," Flincher said, looking at the clock. "Jeez, I got an order fer 'im, too." He started to scramble out of the swivel chair.

"I'll get him," Lee said, suddenly glad of a chance to get out of the little office's stuffiness. The cold air felt sharp and pleasant on his face as he stepped outside, order hoops in hand. The snow had stopped now, and the white of the houses on top of the opposite cutbank stood out stark and crisp against the lead-colored sky.

He watched the drag come pounding around the curve, the big Cross Compound Consolidation lugging her oversize right cylinder like an awkward satchel. The black smoke boiling out of her stack was cut off abruptly as the hogger shut down and let her drift. She rolled up and stopped with a creaking air application just short of the siding switch stand, the fireman coming out into the gangway and leaning down to take the hoop.

"You don't go in the hole here," Lee shouted up, catching a glimpse of the head brakeman going down the ladder on the other side to throw the switch. The fireman shrugged and turned to hand the flimsy through the storm curtain, calling something after it. In a moment the engineer stamped out into the gangway.

"What the hell's this? Don't we go in the hole here for 98?"

Lee shook his head. "Superseded; 98's runnin' late."

"God A'mighty," the hogger exploded, "we figgered on havin' time t'git over't the beanery here. What the hell's the matter with 'em . . . ?" He was a fat man with a red face and popped blue eyes that glared at Lee like an angry baby's.

"Yeah," the fireman chimed in, "y'got any idea how long we been comin' this far?"

Lee shrugged, a man who had heard it all before.

"Don't give a man much time," the hogger grumbled. "Gotta take water here anyway—the delayers never think a things like that!" He rammed the flimsy into a pocket and turned back to the cab in disgust.

Lee watched the cars creak past him to another stop, and handed the duplicate order to the conductor who dropped off the caboose platform and strolled up along the train. They passed the time of day while the hogger spotted the locomotive under the water tank and the fireman climbed up on the tender. They made a quick job of it in spite of their frame of mind. Presently the flag was whistled in and the Consolidation grumbled off, her exhaust racketing sharply back and forth between the cutbanks as the engineer started to flog her.

Afterward Lee lingered out on the platform, in no hurry to go back in and resume stale conversation with Flincher. As the drag's bellowing died away eastward an utter quiet settled down over Yellow Creek. Up on the cutbank lights started to come on in the houses, sparkling through the bare trees like low-hanging stars. Westward, a bank of clotted gray cloud still towered high and ugly, but under it along the horizon lay a band of clear, luminous sky that gleamed with cold green fire against the dusk. The wind that fingered Lee's cheek had swung around to come out of the south. He drank down a last long breath and turned to go inside.

Maybe it wouldn't be so bad, he thought.

10

Jem paused on the sidewalk and got the slip of paper out of his topcoat pocket. He didn't need to look at it; this was the place, all right. But now that he'd come this far he felt his nerve fluttering just a little.

It looked impressively—almost forbiddingly—nice and respectable: A sedate two-flat building of gray stone, set far enough back to afford a strip of what would be lawn come summertime. There was a neat row of shrubs beneath the bayed front window, and stone steps with wrought-iron railings led up to a tiny porch at the first floor level. Big, polished brass numbers over the door told him it was the address she'd given him.

Well, what the hell're you waitin' for?, he asked himself—a brass band to come out an' play "Hail the Conquering Hero Comes"? And with the thought he goaded himself into going long-leggedly up the steps.

The front door had a big window edged all around with alternate squares of bright red and blue glass; it let him into a bare cubbyhole of a vestibule with two other doors, each with its own push button beside it. The name under the one on the right was Mrs. E. M. Swann, done in a flowing, curlicued script that had been cut out of an engraved calling card. Very elegant indeed. E. M. would be the husband, of course—either divorced or deceased, Jem assumed hopefully. He took a moment to adjust the knot of his tie, and pushed the button.

Somewhere inside a bell tinkled shrilly, and at once the panic began to churn in him. All of a sudden everything came clear as crystal, now that it was too late: He was a damn fool to have come! But she'd asked him to. Sure she had, but hell—in those few excited minutes at the depot, naturally she'd've said something like that, just to be friendly. And here comes ol' Jem like a friendly dog, practically the first chance he gets . . . There was sudden motion behind the lace curtain that veiled the glass oval in the door. The door opened a tentative foot or so, and then swung wide.

"Jem!"

For just an instant, seeing only her wide, surprised eyes, he thought she was going to fling herself bodily into his arms. It was like the flash of an electric spark that snapped and crack-

led between them and was gone so quickly you couldn't be sure it had been there at all. He snatched his hat off, grinning.

"Hello, Clara. I . . . Uh, I had a long layover; thought I'd take y'up on that invitation."

Her eyes wouldn't leave his. "Why Jem—I'm so glad to see you." Her voice was husky and sweet, with an ascending trill that was like cool fingers caressing the nape of his neck. Her eyes were as deep as clear green seawater; he had the feeling that for a moment they looked right through him, at something far away and serious and beautiful, and a little sad.

"I hope I didn't bother you," he said. "I just thought . . . "

"I'm so tickled you came, Jem." She smiled at him suddenly, radiantly. "But I'm afraid you kind of swept me off my feet," she said breathlessly. "Come in and take off your things. We've such a lot to talk about . . . " She closed the door behind him and helped him off with his coat, her hands deft and light along his arms. "Goodness me, Jem, you look like a banker!"

She hung his hat and coat on a hall tree and danced back to catch both his hands in hers, as though she had to touch him to believe this. They stood and looked at each other.

"Oh, you look wonderful, Jem—I didn't really get to see you there in the dark old depot."

"You too, Clara. Purtier'n a picture!"

It was getting a little overwhelming, he thought dizzily, but she drew her hands out of his with a breathless little giggle. "It isn't every day a girl gets such a nice surprise from an old beau, you know." She rustled ahead of him into the little parlor. "Sit down and make yourself comfortable, Jem. I've got something on the stove in the kitchen, but I won't be a minute . . . " She paused before a wide doorway hung with deep red portieres, half turning so that the skirt of her pale green dress swirled and clung to her slim hips. Her hair was swept up in a shining gold pompadour with a scrap of black ribbon tied perkily into it on top. The dress was cut low at the throat, with a cascade of crisp ruffles framing the swelling white arch of her breast. She tilted her head and gave him a slow smile as she drew the portiere aside and slipped away behind it. By golly, he thought, she was prettier than Anna Held!

He sat down in an overstuffed rocker, but he was too full of sudden, bubbling energy to stay there. He got up and prowled the room, revived self-confidence seething and swelling in him like a full head of steam. She was a beauty—by God, she was! And damn happy to see *him,* too.

He caught sight of himself in a mirror and paused to pat down the thick forelock that swept like a black wing across his forehead. He smoothed the long, brushed-back locks over his ears and moistened a forefinger with his tongue to run it carefully along the thick black bar of his mustache. Gray eyes looked back at him out of the glass; one of them winked in approval. Ah Jem, Jem—you handsome dog, you!

It was a pretty room, small and cozy. Each piece of the big overstuffed suite bore its complement of lace doilies on back and arms. The sofa was filled with ruffled, gaily embroidered pillows. A brilliant pink one bore the legend SOUVENIR OF NIAGARA FALLS across it, with a reasonable facsimile of the falls themselves printed in the background. Another expressed the coy reminder that DAISIES WON'T TELL, along with appropriate needlework decorations. The heavy lace curtains at the windows let in light that was softly filtered and subdued. Standing there, he had the overpowering sense—pleasant and at the same time vaguely disconcerting—that he wallowed deep in frilly femininity.

A photograph in a corner on an onyx-topped brass stand caught his eye. It was a portrait of a man about 40, he'd guess; a long-faced fellow with a square, cleft chin and big chisel teeth exposed in a stiff smile. Heavy-lidded eyes seemed to look at Jem with a sardonic sneer. E. M. Swann, without a doubt.

Close beside it was another curtained doorway; on a sudden impish notion Jem pulled the curtain aside and peeked in. He got a fleeting impression of a bedroom done in pink-and-blue wallpaper, with a big double bed under a frothy pink spread and a fussy feminine dressing table. Guiltily he dropped the curtain and looked down again at the photograph. Into his mind swam a vision of Clara, slipping something pink and floaty from about her and crawling, naked and pearly white, into the big bed where a leering E. M. Swann waited lustfully. He turned away in embarrassed haste as Clara came back into the parlor.

"That was my late husband," she said matter-of-factly, putting a tray down on the table and coming over to stand beside him. "Poor Ernie's been gone for . . . It's been six years last November."

"Oh," Jem said woodenly. He tried to arrange his face into an appropriate expression of sorrow.

"Oh, it's all right, Jem." The green eyes smiled meltingly up at him. "Six years is a long time. Poor Ernie and I . . . Well, he was awfully good to me, but we were married when I was terribly young—he was much older than I, of course—and I've come to realize since his . . . passing . . . that we weren't really terribly close. Am I awful to say that, Jem?"

"No, course not, Clara. I guess I know how you feel . . . " How the hell should he know, he wondered, feeling a warm flush spreading up from under his collar.

"My goodness," she mused, "I was such a silly girl. A silly, moonstruck little girl . . . Remember, Jem?" The green eyes brooded, misty and wistful. "And then of course he was away such a lot, too. He was a traveling man, you know. In hardware."

"Yeah," he said, "I heard you run away with a drummer."

"But you went away first, Jem."

She slipped an arm through his and drew close. Looking down at her he saw the narrow, pale face take on a tight-drawn stillness, as if she waited. "You never even answered the letter I wrote you," she murmured, so softly he had to stoop to hear the words.

"Well," he said lamely, "I always meant to . . . " And felt the moment slip away. *Fool,* he thought miserably, she *wanted* you to kiss her!

She bounced up and got the tray she'd brought from the kitchen. There was a cut-glass decanter of whiskey on it, and glasses and a tall seltzer bottle with a siphon top. She set it down on a low stand by the sofa and dropped lightly down beside him.

"Now don't tell me you wouldn't like a little drink, Jem—just to celebrate?" She flashed a flirty, nose-crinkling little smile over her shoulder at him as she busied herself with the decanter. The drinks she poured were stiff ones, he noticed. He accepted one in stunned silence.

"To us, Jem!"

Her eyes danced at him over the rim of the glass. She caught the look on his face and lowered it with a giggle. "Why Jem—I'm shocking you with my wild city ways!"

He blushed furiously. "No, it ain't that a'tall, Clara." But he realized his jaw had been hanging. In his circles, nice women didn't drink, except for maybe a glass of dandelion wine, or a beer or two in the back room of some nice respectable family saloon. But he stubbornly fought down his first shock. He took a long pull at his drink. It was good whiskey, smooth and gentle on his tongue, slipping down his throat and reaching out all through him with a warm, well-mannered glow. Clara set her glass down and sank closer against him.

"It's all poor Ernie's fault. He always liked to have a drink or two before dinner—I suppose he got used to it from eating around at hotels and places, on the road. And he sort of got me to doing it. But of course, I never drink by myself, Jem—that's supposed to be a very bad sign, isn't it?" She giggled. Her hand glided lightly along his arm and clasped his hand tightly. "Jem—you're thinking what a loose woman I am. I know you are!"

She let her head fall lightly onto his shoulder as they both laughed. He could see down into the low neck of her dress, where the cleft white slope of her breast disappeared barely in time beneath the lacy edge of some bit of undergarment. "You're not listening to me at all," she protested, lifting her face to him. And this time it was impossible to let the chance get away. He lowered his head and fitted his mouth over hers, that came warmly up to meet it.

She pushed him away after a long time, and her laugh was

high and breathless. "My gracious, Jem! And I was just going to ask you to stay to dinner—if you'll behave!"

"Dinner?"

"You can, can't you? Please?"

"Well, I guess so," he assented. "I was purty far down the board when I left. If you really want me to."

"I told you." She put her head close to his. "If you'll behave yourself." They both laughed, for no particular reason. Suddenly they were laughing a lot; suddenly there was a lot to talk about. Old friends and what had happened to them. Old places. And themselves.

Talking it out made it all come fresh and alive again, with the sharp, bitter sadness all gone, though, because it had all meant nothing. And now here they were together again.

Rain was spattering loudly on the window panes by the time they finished dinner. Clara had put the coffee things on a tray and carried them into the parlor, and they sat on the sofa again in a dim, rosy circle of lamplight, not saying much. It was as though they'd talked the past out and the present waited, not quite able to get off dead center.

"I s'pose I oughta be goin'," he said.

"But why, Jem? It isn't late. And it's raining cats and dogs outside."

"Shucks, a little rain won't hurt me. An' I don't want a wear out my welcome . . ." He got his watch out. It was after nine o'clock; the evening had certainly galloped along, at that. He didn't want it to end yet. Not somehow incomplete, like it was.

"Well," she was pouting, "if you have to . . ."

"Yeah," he said reluctantly, "I'm afraid I do, Clara." Maybe she was just being polite, he reminded himself. Maybe he'd already stayed too long. Good Lord, he'd been here since the middle of the afternoon. It was better to just go now; there could be other times. But he knew, in a deep certainty that if he left now, with that earlier glowing promise unfulfilled, there wouldn't be. "I oughta at least be checkin' with the roundhouse," he said.

"Why don't you call them?" she suggested tartly. "The telephone's in the dining room."

He was all at once not very interested in the Big Ivy roundhouse or its extra board. But what else could he do now but go through with it? Groping his way into the dark dining room, he remembered to be a little impressed by the telephone. It was a luxury of a piece with whiskey out of a cut-glass bottle before dinner, coffee in the parlor afterward. High-class living. And it came to him that the evening had gone flat for just one reason: He'd fumbled away its fine, gay excitement, somehow. Except for that little spell when the whiskey had loosened him up, he'd acted as awkward as a fish out of water, as shy as a kid in his first long pants. And why? What the hell was the matter with him? He'd never felt shy around Bess Teach, for instance . . . But he'd just as soon not think about Bess Teach. He yanked the receiver out of its prongs and spun the crank, grumbled the Big Ivy's number at the disembodied female voice that floated out of space at him.

A kind of anger began to burn in him as he stood and listened to the faraway ringing at the other end. There was a click. A voice started to answer. He hung up.

The parlor was empty, but a dim thread of light showed beneath the drawn curtains of the bedroom. He caught his breath.

"Clara?"

"I'm in here, Jem."

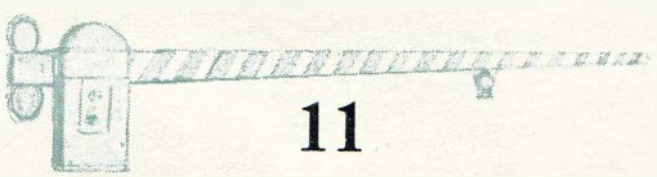
He hesitated for a second, then put out a tentative hand and slowly parted the curtains. Big, soft shadows crowded the room around the dim pink glow from a lamp on the dressing table. Clara sat there, wrapped in a frothy, frilly something with the dark-gold hair loose about her shoulders.

"I was getting ready for bed," she said, looking up over her shoulder. "I supposed you'd probably have to go . . ."

"Did you?" he asked hoarsely, the words barely getting out past the thick tumult in his chest. "Well—I don't." He thought he could see the sheen of flesh through the flimsy stuff of the negligee as she rose. Beyond her, he got a quick glimpse of her clothes tumbled every which way into a chair; there was something white and satiny, still molded lusciously by the contours of her body, a ruffled garter trailing down over the chair's edge. A warm, melting excitement flowed all through him and drew together like a ball of dull flame in his loins.

She put her head back and invited him silently as he took a step closer, the green eyes going misty and bottomless, as though he could dive headlong into the deeps of them and never come up again.

The negligee opened and fell away.



11

"NO TWO DAMN WAYS about it," said Sim Kregg loudly, standing at the bar in Fallon's saloon. "The workin' man'll always git the dirty end a the deal from the Big Interests, long as they run things!"

"Sim, y'talk just like that radical paper yer always readin'," observed old Ike Babcock mildly.

"By God, it prints the truth about things!" Sim said hotly. The years had done little for Sim's looks, except to stamp his aggressive homeliness with a hard maturity. The skin around his big mouth was gullied with two deep parentheses of discontent, and his hatchet face was as fiery red now as an old turkey gobbler's wattles.

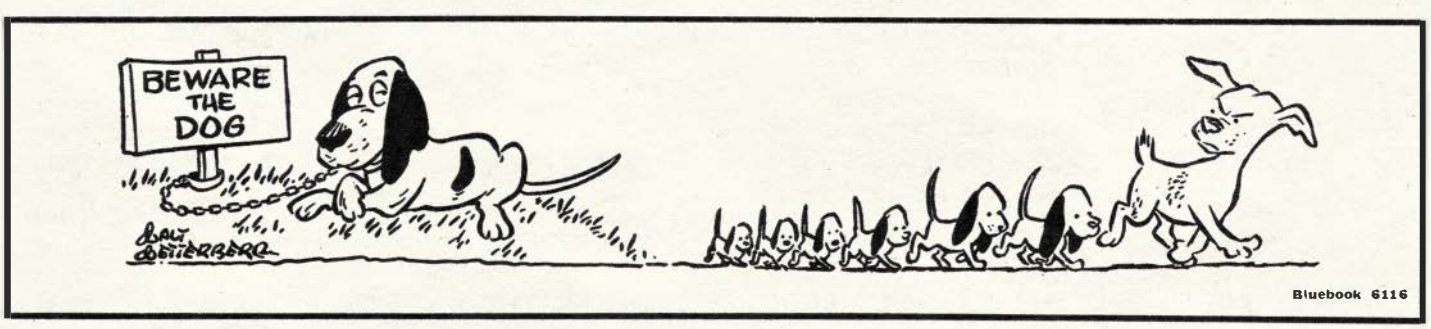
"Well, hell," a young switchman ventured, "I got nothin' ag'in the camp'ny . . ."

"Ah-h-h-h-h," snarled Sim, "y'make me sick!"

Milo Fallon sauntered down behind the bar to where Jem leaned thoughtfully over a beer. "Well, the cinderpit committee's at it ag'in, hey, Jem?"

"Yeah. Damn fools . . ." Jem's mind was still drowsily full of last night's wonder, the full-bodied passion of Clara's flesh and his, meeting, mingling like hot flames blending . . . The breathless, dizzy miracle of it still past belief though the memory, warm and sensuous, had hung teasingly at the edge of his thoughts all day.

Milo chuckled. "A stranger comin' in here'd think they was about t'fly at each others' throats, wouldn't he?" The bar towel dabbed at the wet circle left by Jem's beer mug. "By the way, how is Bess?"



"She's fine, I guess," Jem grunted.

"Purtiest girl in East Bend, that Bess. An' just as nice as she is purty. Yer a lucky man, Jem." Milo's dishwater-colored eyes stayed wide and guileless as a baby's. "Say, speakin' a Bess, whatever become a yer friend from out west? Remember, you interduced us that night?"

"Lee Wire? Went t'work at Yella Crick. Why?"

Milo shrugged. "Oh, no reason."

"But why 'speakin' a Bess?' "

"Well, speakin' a Bess just reminded me: Last time I saw her, she was with him. Mebbe y'better watch that friend a yours, Jem." Milo leaned closer across the bar, fingers plucking at his red sleeve garters with little snapping sounds. His voice dropped to a hushed, oilily confidential mutter. "Wadin' along through the snow right in the middle a that big blizzard a couple weeks back. Went right past here, havin' a high ol' time t'gether, looked t'me like. Laughin' an' smilin'—sure seemed t'be enjoyin' each other's comp'ny. I got the idee he was takin' 'er home, some way . . ."

Jem looked up at Milo from under his brows. Their eyes met for a moment and Milo's dropped; he straightened up and the bar towel resumed its slow circling. "Shucks, Jem—fergit it. Mebbe I shouldn't a mentioned it; it just kind a popped inta my mind like things will . . ." Milo pursed his lips regretfully under the drooping mustache, but imperceptibly his whole face had sharpened into a faint, foxy smirk. "It's none a my business, a course—just tryin' t'kid you, mor'n anything else. But I figgered mebbe I oughta tell you, at that . . ."

"All right, you told me," Jem said. He stared at Milo till the moist eyes blinked and shifted nervously away along the bar and back. A cold, rough, wholly illogical anger began to grow in him. At Milo; at Lee and Bess; last, and most, at himself.

He reached in his pocket and tossed 15 cents on the bar to pay for the three beers he'd had, and wheeled and went stamping out. A car knocker just coming in almost collided with him and stepped aside hastily.

"Well!" he wondered out loud. "What's eatin' *him?*"

12

At Yellow Creek, Lee Wire settled into routine with hardly a ripple.

Sometimes, he was a little disturbed at his own willingness to stick in such a lazy man's job. He was the night-trick operator. Also station master, ticket agent, freight agent and expressman through the long, dark hours from six to six. But there was almost nothing to be done save OS the trains as they went through and handle an occasional order. Ferd Ambrose, an amiable middle-aged bachelor who held the day trick, was a hard worker who seldom left him anything to catch up on, despite the long-gone Flincher's ominous warnings; all in all, it was hardly more of a job than that first one he'd held on the Vandalia so long ago.

But he found himself liking it. For awhile, the urging restlessness in him simmered down and was almost quiet. *Almost.* The trouble was, he kept telling himself, the damn job left a man too much time to think. And he caught himself falling back on that as an excuse for thinking more and more about Bess Teach as the days and nights plodded by into spring.

There came a Sunday morning in April.

There was an eastbound plug due at noon. He'd be on it.

"I'm awfully glad you came, Lee," she said gravely.

"Sure enough?" He put a hand under her elbow and helped her onto the step and into the buggy, noting as he had that first night the grace of the tall and pliant body. He went on around and climbed in the other side, gathering up the reins and clucking happily to the old white horse. "Well, then, I'm glad too."

Hoofs clippity-clopped rhythmically on the bricks. Ahead stretched the tree-lined street with the white houses seeming to doze behind the thin screen of spring greenery. They seemed to have the town of East Bend all to themselves; everybody else was full of chicken dinner and snoozing on the parlor sofa. And it struck him, ridiculously, that all of a sudden he wasn't even half regretful of having been so foolish as to spend the money to rent this rig.

"Where to, Bess?" he chuckled. "The town's yours today—I make you a present of it!"

"I'll just take this, it's much nicer," she laughed. A deep, soft little laugh, bubbling out of her like a caress. Glancing sidelong, he marked the rosy flush in her cheeks and the sparkle of brown eyes under the sweeping hat brim.

Why, he thought with a feeling almost of awe—she ain't just pretty like I thought before; she's a real beauty.

"Let's just drive, Lee," she suggested. "I don't care where. If you turn left there at the big house with the gallery, it'll take us out on the river road."

The brick pavement gave way to dirt, the road made a long, slow sweep to the right, and presently they were out into the country where the sun lay warm and still on the rolling brown fields. Another half mile or so and they topped a low knoll and dipped down into a hollow, and a broad bend of the river came to meet them, the water glinting brightly through the trees. The road lost itself in a patch of meadow and the horse stopped and bent his neck to crop the sere grass. Now they were both aware of a small, pointless embarrassment.

"A lot of folks come out here on picnics," Bess said.

He looked about him with approval. "I bet. An' stick around after dark t'watch the moon come up?"

The long lashes fluttered. "I suppose so," she murmured.

He jumped down and helped her over the wheel. The ground was soft, but a thick carpet of last year's grass kept the footing clean as they strolled down to the river. Old, blackened campfire sites made it plain that a lot of East Benders had been there before them over the years, but they had it all to themselves today. They gravitated to a huge old willow that leaned over the stream, one big limb curving low to make a natural seat, its bark worn smooth and powdery by a succession of romantic rumps. As he helped her up onto it, it occurred to him to wonder teasingly how many times she might have sat there before. And who was he teasing, he wondered—himself or her? He didn't put the thought into words, but leaned there silently beside her, pleasantly aware of the fullness of her thigh against his forearm; aware too of the savor of rich, earthy fertility that seemed to rise up about them out of the damp black earth and the brown river coiling and swirling along its dark, lazy way to the ultimate ocean.

"Such a thoughtful face," she said presently. "About what, Lee?"

He grinned and stretched luxuriously. "Y'know, I been a lot a places in the springtime, but there's nowhere like this Indiana when the sap starts runnin'. I guess that's what dragged me back."

"Boomer," she teased softly.

"Yeah." He thought he detected a faint, accusing seriousness under the banter. "It can get to be a purty dull life, if a man don't move on every so often, Bess." It would be purty dull right now if it wasn't for you, he thought, the words almost forming themselves on his lips. Well, he thought, let it go, don't get serious about it. It's a nice day; be satisfied with it.

"I didn't mean anything by that, Lee," she said contritely, and put a hand lightly on his arm. "I was brought up to be leery of boomers, I guess. But you're different." Her face turned rosy pink. "And now I'm flirting with you!"

The long keening of a whistle floated along the river, getting higher and sharper as it approached. Down around a bend, wheels rumbled hollowly over an unseen trestle. The whistle moaned again, receding.

"Number 6," she murmured.

He looked at her, grinning a little wryly. "You never get very far away from the Ivy in this town, do you?"

"Well, I was raised on the Big Ivy." She blushed again, on the defensive now because she'd twitted him about being a boomer. He sensed impatiently that it was a subject they could differ about forever.

"I suppose I'm a regular homeguard," she admitted.

There was a long, heavy silence before he asked: "Seen ol' Jem lately?"

"Huh-uh, not very."

But she couldn't quite keep the stiff carefulness out of her voice, and presently he broke another long silence to remark that maybe it was time to be heading back to town. She didn't offer any protest.

They walked silently up across the meadow, but at the buggy she saw the wooden look on his face and knew all at once what was going to happen next.

"Bess!" he said thickly, stepping in against her, pinning her against the buggy as his arms went around her and his face came down to hers. She kept her body rigid, letting her head fall back, half turning away. But why should she?, she thought fiercely, and met his mouth as it came down over hers, feeling her stiffness dissolve meltingly under the hot, rough strength of the emotion in him. He let her go after awhile and stepped back, eyes pinned on her cloudily.

"I guess you better count me in the race, Bess," he said with his slow, twisted grin. Without another word, not even looking at her, he handed her up into the buggy and went around to untie the horse and climb up on his side. They rolled out into the road.

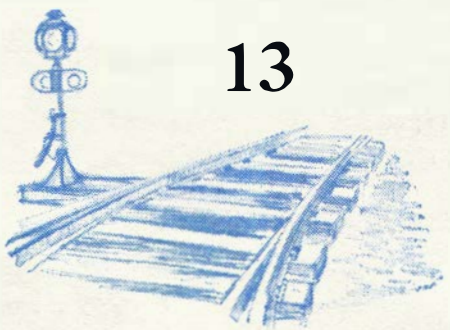
"There isn't any race, Lee," she murmured.

He looked quickly at her, and away again. "Because it's Jem?"

"Because it isn't anyone."

"You mean that?"

She nodded, smiling.



13

They gave Jem Number 10 back out of Chicago. Number 10: five cars of mail and express and a lone daycoach behind a tall and lanky Brooks 10-wheeler, getting out at 4:17 under a black sky with a raw spring wind whining in off Lake Michigan—getting out 27 minutes late because the dispatcher had held him for the western mail off the Rock Island.

The target blinked green through the windy dark, and he swore under his breath and eased the throttle in toward the backhead.

"Won't do much runnin' with 'at dummy in front a us." the fireman said from the left seatbox. A brash young extra fireman, stating the obvious with the knowing air of an old-timer.

Jem didn't answer. Tiredness hung between his shoulder blades like the weight of original sin, and lack of sleep was a dry ache under his eyelids. They jogged slowly between the brick cliffs of warehouse walls and factories, only here and there a lost, wan rectangle of yellow light showing that the big city never went to sleep, completely. Down in the street below, a trolley car crawled along with them for awhile, its row of windows glowing like the segments of a giant, phosphorescent night worm, and presently dropped behind even their slow pace.

At the coachyard the tower gave him a red block and he reached up to drag at the whistle cord, half his mind thinking to wonder if Clara might be awake to hear the lonesome mourning and be reminded sleepily of him. Why couldn't they have let him alone a couple of hours longer, after a big night like last night? . . .

Ta ra ra BOOM de-ay . . . Ta ra ra BOOM de-ay . . .

He could feel the beat of the band now, rocking through him with a swing that was enough to set the juice flowing in a cigar store Indian. His right arm, inert on the arm rest, all at once ached with the memory of Clara there in its crook; Clara's body coming warm and lithe against his, her lips reaching up close to his ear.

"You're a swell dancer, Jem!"

"You too, Clara—lighter'n a feather."

The music ending with a brassy crescendo, the band leader beaming toothily while the dancers clapped and gradually broke apart to flow slowly back to their tables. Him clapping louder than anybody, feeling hot and flushed and good inside his clothes, it coming to him that he'd never in his life had such a good time, as Clara twined an arm in his possessively.

"Isn't it *fun*, Jem? Oh, I've missed you so since the other day . . ."

"Green!" the fireman said sharply.

Jem jumped; guiltily he saw that the target had changed to caution; it went white while he stared at it, and he reached in a hurry for the whistle cord. "Damn smoke blowin' down over the boiler . . ." He opened the throttle and let her bellow down in the corner for a few minutes, picking up speed past the dark coachyard with its rows of silent, empty varnish; he worked the bar up the quadrant, and felt a hint of sluggishness in the big engine's response. The steam gauge showed the needle dancing skittishly down from the peg.

The fireman grinned at him across the cab. He was a lean young Hoosier named Clyde Hostetter, and he looked sleepy too in the thin glow of the water-glass lamp. He had a thing or two to learn, Mr. Hostetter did.

They came around the sweeping curve into Englewood and the headlight beam ran briefly along the platform and briefly picked out the file of baggage trucks, topheavy with the high loads of mail sacks, spotted lonelily under the feeble cones of light. Jem caught his landmark through the dark and shoved the throttle shut, reaching down in the same motion to twist the brake valve gently around. The engine wheeled on down the platform as if she'd never stop, disdaining the weight dragging on the drawbar as the brake shoes squealed, but the air whining in the hoses slowed her inexorably, the platform dropping past slower and slower, and Jem moved the independent brake valve around to bring her to a halt.

He glanced again at the steam gauge and got up stiffly, stepping over the high quadrant to the deck and bending to open the firebox door. The cockiness dropped off of Clyde Hostetter as he hustled down too.

"Told you back at the roundhouse not t'load green coal inta her like that," Jem growled. "Now shake this damn' fire down an' get her hot while y'got the chance!"

Not waiting for an answer, he went out to the tender and had a long drink out of the water jug. When he got back on the seatbox and leaned out the window they were still handing mail bags through the yellow upright of the head-end car door. He looked at his watch. They'd lost two more minutes with that slow board out of the terminal, but the orders in his pocket put everything in the hole for him as far as Laconna. He tried to calculate how much of the time he might make up, if this Hostetter could give him steam, but his head felt thick and woolly and the bleak loneliness of this lost border hour between night and day came down over him with dragging weariness. He lost himself in the sleepy remembering of Clara's eyes, looking archly into his over a huge stein of amber beer, and of himself leaning over the table at her with fierce joy.

"Clara, tonight you're even purtier'n I thought before."

"You mean it, Jem? I wondered . . . what you'd think . . . I wondered if you'd ever come back to me. Oh, I did!

And it scared me, to think I'd ever . . . feel like this again." The green eyes made him melt inside.

"Like what, Clara?"

But the band was hitting it up suddenly in a long staccato. The spotlight flicked over to a placard in the wings:

MOE AND JOE
FROM KOKOMO

A pair of comedians in baggy, loud-checked suits came on and gales of laughter began to explode through the beer garden. You could hardly hear most of the jokes through it, but you couldn't help laughing yourself just watching them, and Jem guffawed louder than anyone. Clara's eyes sparkled at him.

"Isn't it wonderful, honey? Oh, I just love it!"

A thought crept in under the gaiety. Who'd brought her here before . . . ?

A lantern swung the highball. Hostetter let the firebox door clank shut and got back on his seatbox. There was sullen triumph in the glance he sent across the cab as the safety pops lifted with a roar out on the high steam dome.

"White eye!" he called as the engine stirred.

"White eye."

The drivers picked up their long stride, turning faster and faster. Number 10 swung on around the curve and pointed her white headlight beam east, where the black sky was lightening to luminous gray. The whistle moaned eerily as the right of way came down off the embankment and they began to thunder over the empty street crossings. The houses were all dark, save for here and there an occasional dim window that marked some other early toiler starting half heartedly forth to earn his daily bread.

"Stinkin' hot now!" Hostetter exulted.

Marsh water glinted beside the right of way in the growing steely light. They roared past a tiny depot, lightless and forlorn. Lakeside. Jem fumbled his watch out: 28½ minutes off the advertised. Beyond the weaving silhouette of Clyde Hostetter feeding his fire, Lake Michigan lay gray and restless along the brown shore, and they were racing between the rippled slopes of the sere dune country. They came up on the dummy and passed him with a rush, two old open-end coaches behind a stubby tank engine slowing for another crackerbox depot. The sky ahead was a welter of rosy red and molten gold, the first hot sliver of the sun's arc just lifting over the edge of the earth down the long, straight right of way.

"Oughta be a nice day," Clyde shouted, pausing to sniff the breeze in the gangway.

Jem grunted. His watch gave him two minutes of the lost time back again, and the next 20 miles ran straight as a die into Howardsdale, where there should be a drag in the hole for him. He got the flimsy out, irked with himself for doubting his own memory. Clyde studied the water glass and reached to twist the injector valve, one eye cocked obliquely Jem's way.

"Jeez, we must be doin' seventy!" he bawled above the engine's roar.

Jem nodded. The hard brilliance of the sun stabbed through his goggles, and behind them his eyes felt swollen and gummy and sleep-clogged. The rocking pound of the high drivers beat up through him. Sand hills and clustered trees flashed past the cab window on the racing wind. This same clear sunshine would be seeping pinkly through the dainty curtains in Clara's bedroom now . . .

Steam hissed and water gurgled in the injector underneath the cab. Jem leaned forward for a look at the water glass.

"Watch that damn injector!" he bellowed. "No tradin' steam for water this trip, boy!"

"Yeah," Hostetter nodded hastily, twisting the valve tight. "I guess I kind a let 'er git away from me that time—but don't worry, Jem, I ain't one a them high-water guys."

It sounded like a pretty lame excuse, even in Hostetter's own ears. And the big, black-mustached hogger cracking the whip up there on the seatbox looked kind of mean this morning. The fireman covered his confusion by getting down and grabbing the scoop.

The guy was a runner, though—had to admit that. Staggering to the heave and roll of the cab, watching the telegraph poles whip past the gangway, he guessed he'd never been over the road at a clip like this in all his brief railroad career. Lord, he thought, if the folks back home could see him now, firing the fast mail . . .

They thundered out of a shallow cut and the brown, rolling fields stretched away on either side, rail fences running crookedly along under their trailing, tumbling coils of smoke. A farmer stopped halfway between a house and a big red barn to watch them pass, waving as the whistle hooted long and hoarse and quavery.

"White eye."

"White eye."

The first sprinkle of sheds and back fences of Howardsdale began to stream by. The switch stand showed clear and the drag stood in the siding. Rusty red car sides flipping past with a stuttering *whoosh*, the big black drag engine hissing momentarily at them as it dropped away behind. Hostetter sneaked a look at his timecard, got his watch out, and grinned.

"Hey by gosh—y'got seven minutes of 'at time back a'ready!"

But east of Howardsdale the first faint rising of the land toward Wolf Hill began to worry the flying drivers. The milepost still went by like white straws on a gale, but it was a hairsbreadth longer now from each to the next. Still they chewed another half minute off the running time and howled through White Prairie just 21 minutes late.

The tilt of the ground was perceptible from the cab window now. The tall 10-wheeler leaned into the first easement of the long reverse curve up the hill, Jem cracking the throttle wider, listening to the hammering cadence of the drivers on the rails, easing it back and hitting the sander valve an instant before they would have lost footing and started to spin. He worked the reverse bar grudgingly down the quadrant, Hostetter hustling down to pour the coal in as the raving exhaust sucked his fire hungrily up the sack. Their speed dropped and dropped as they canted to the curve, flanges screeching, Jem feeding the sand again, heaving the bar farther down toward the corner. The fire danced in white-hot fury on the grates and Hostetter scooped the coal in, grunting, swaying on widespread legs, flicking an anxious glance sidelong at the steam gauge. They stormed over the hill with a ragged plume of steam whipping defiantly at the blow-off cock, black smoke catapulting high against the cool blue sky.

"By gosh, how's 'at?" crowed Hostetter.

Jem grinned, remembering all the times he'd come to hate that nagging steam-gauge needle, remembering the times good-natured hoggers had gone into the hole when they needn't have, to give him a chance to get some stubborn old hog hot again. He'd had no call to be so grouchy with the kid.

"You'll make a fireman yet!"

They made their station stop at Laconna, the operator hooping up an order as they rolled past the depot, and he swung down to look the engine over. On the ground his legs felt stiff and wooden, and he thought ruefully of all the dancing last night, in another, gayer world so far behind him now. Methodically he moved around the panting engine, laying the back of an ungloved hand on driver brasses and truck journals. Nothing was running too warm. His watch gave him another minute made up, Wolf Hill grade and all. He unfolded the flimsy, scowling as he read it:

> No. 10, eng. 1018, run 24 mins. late Laconna to Yellow Creek. Pass X112 at Yellow Creek.

"Reefer hotshot runnin' ahead a us, accordin' to the operator," said the conductor, strolling up from the rear end. "I guess Flowers didn't expect we'd make up time so fast."

Jem shrugged in disgust. "Leave it to a damn delayer!" He stuffed the flimsy into his pocket and went angrily up the gangway ladder.

Far ahead, in an office over the depot at East Bend, Clem Flowers, night-trick dispatcher, took the OS from Laconna and

paused momentarily over his train sheet as he marked it. The engineers never did what a man could calculate they'd do, he thought with a sharp sense of annoyance; it was one of the host of human frailties that warred forever with the perfection toward which Flowers' mind strove. His eyes darted to the big silver watch, face up on the desk before him. His fingers hammered the key in a testy call to Kellersburg, first station east of Laconna.

"Isn't X112 by yet?"

"Going through now," Kellersburg reported.

"Are U making your OS reports promptly?"

"Of course." The man at Kellersburg was an old hand; he made the brief burst of Morse eloquent with scorn.

It was lost on old Clem Flowers, to whom for 25 years the Indiana Valley Railroad had existed as not so much a physical property as a vast mathematical equation in space and time, to be kept always in precise balance in Clem's head on a gyrating tightrope between the two immutable truths of the Timecard and the Clock. Now, still thinking of Number 10 and the run-late order, he methodically picked out the name Gandee from the neat compartment in his mind labeled "Engineers," earmarked it tentatively as a name that could make up time when time needed to be made up, and dropped it back again. From Clem Flowers, a grudging accolade. And for him, a new question to nag subtly at the back of his mind as he turned to other things:

One of the younger men, wasn't he? Maybe one of those speed-hungry wild men? If he'd just stay on the order. . . .

At Hollister, as they picked up speed out of town, Clyde Hostetter put his watch away and shrugged. "What the hell —can't make time if they won't give y'the road, Jem."

Jem grunted through a yawn, only half hearing. His tired thoughts glided back to last night like homing pigeons . . .

"White eye!" Hostetter called.

Twenty-three minutes off the advertised, Jem's watch said. He let the high drivers roll, crowding the order; the reefer red-ball should be well out ahead of him now, blasting the last few miles into Yellow Creek. The rhythm of their speed was a steady high chant; the mileposts flashed by, faster than the flying minutes.

Tatters of smoke hung against the sky ahead as they hit the long curve into Yellow Creek. He shoved the throttle in and let her drift. The trestle boomed briefly underneath and he whistled and applied the air grudgingly against the chance he'd crowded the order too hard. Then the curve straightened, the siding swinging into sight, X112's parlor brakeman just lining the switch for him. Over the depot the order board lifted to show clear and he hauled down triumphantly on the whistle cord.

"Jeez," roared Hostetter above the racket of reefer sides flicking past, " 'at was cuttin' it sharp, Jem!"

"Make up some time now," Jem grinned across the cab.

Thirty miles into East Bend now, straight as a die, level as a table top. They covered them a-flying, roaring in past the files of dead, boarded-up engines on the backshop storage tracks, past the smoky hump, past the high, sooty bulk of the coal dock with the roundhouse beyond, and Jem twisted his brake valve and slowed past the people along the platform and brought the panting 10-wheeler to her stop with the long pilot just short of the Main Street crossing.

"Seventeen minutes late," he said, putting his watch away for the last time. He let himself relax in a mammoth yawn, and a stretch that made his muscles crack.

"We was makin' a hell of a run till the delayer spoiled it," Hostetter said with a wide grin.

A wrench rapped against the tender to tell Jem he was uncoupled, and he whistled off and pulled ahead to clear the turnout. Another 10-wheeler moved lithely up to take their place, the high, blank stare of her headlight seeming to reproach them silently for the 17 minutes they'd left her to make up on the East End. The car knocker's stooping figure moved jerkily along the train in the bright, cool sunshine.

"Nice day," Hostetter remarked, getting his grip out of the seatbox. "What y'gonna do with it, Jem?"

"Hit the hay," said Jem shortly.

Later, in bed with the quilt up around his ears and the pillow wadded soft and deep beneath his head, he opened an eye for a last sleepy look at his dim room. A bright golden edge of light knifed in around the window shade, and some kind of a bird twittered happily in a tree outside.

He seemed to sit with his hand on the throttle still, careening in a rush of speed down a vast black emptiness, and far ahead along the shining pathway of the headlight beam a figure floated, palely white, twisting and spinning in the graceful movements of a dance. Its white arms beckoned him . . . And he was falling dizzily, whirling faster and faster into the smoky green depths of Clara's eyes, with somewhere a low, sad voice calling his name, but he couldn't answer no matter how hard he tried.

He slept, muttering fiercely into the pillow's unresisting depths.

14

So spring rolled along. April passed and May came in, green and golden and almost idyllic, except for a couple of things.

There was a new sign-up and Jem was set back into the freight pool. It hit him as no great surprise; business always slacked off on the Big Ivy this time of year. But the plodding pace of drag service, the endless hours in sidings waiting for some high-stepping string of varnish to run around you, the slow, backward and forward shuffling of cars at every town along the right of way, the labored tramping down the main-line at bellowing, pounding, full stroke . . . They all amounted to putting him a hundred miles farther away from Chicago and Clara, with the layovers shorter and far less frequent too.

And Bess began to bother him.

Nothing much was happening with Bess. And that was the trouble. He took to stopping in at the diner again, his conscience all set for fireworks that, somehow, never came off. She simply met his embarrassed silence with a blank absence of either friendliness or resentment. He might have been any yahoo who just happened along. And that was the one thing he wasn't prepared to accept from her. There was no point at all in her pretending they hadn't once been pretty sweet on each other, or that she had no more feeling in her than a damn wooden Indian, for he knew better than that. But there always seemed to be others in the diner every time he was, and the chance to have it out with her didn't come in a hurry.

The evening he did catch her by herself was a bad one.

He was just in off a way freight that had taken 12 hours getting over the road, and they'd been rough hours. The remains of his dark mood still clung heavily about him as he clumped wearily into the diner that evening.

"Hello, Jem," said Bess matter-of-factly. When he looked up, her eyes slid unconcernedly away to become intent on something out the window.

"Bess," he blurted, "what's wrong, anyway?"

"Wrong?" She brought her gaze back from infinity and looked at him. He'd half forgotten the clear brown of those eyes, and the thick, curling lashes that fluttered down over them now. In spite of herself, two pink splashes began to spread under the pale skin along her cheekbones. "Why in the world should anything be wrong, Jem?"

"Aw come on, Bess—all I want is t'be fair an' square about things. I thought . . ." But the sentence turned aside and lost itself in aimlessness before her cool lack of response.

"For goodness sake," she said, her glance meeting his for an instant before sliding obliquely away, "I never thought we *owned* each other, did you?"

"Well, a course not, not exactly. But I guess I figgered y'might at least be wonderin' . . ."

"So you waited two months before you said a word?"

The flat justice of that stopped him for a moment. "Well, yeah," he admitted humbly. "But I kept meanin' to—always somebody around though, or something . . ." This didn't seem like the right line, he thought, watching her face. And he was fed up, all at once, with this stumbling around in his own words like a tame bear. "It's just that I happened t'run inta a girl I used to know up in Chicaga," he said bluntly. "I mean, Chicaga's where I run inta her—she's from my home town. We used t'be stuck on each other 'fore I ever come railroadin'."

Bess's lips parted and her big eyes opened wide. For a brief, freezing moment he thought he'd hurt her terribly, and squirmed with contrition. Then he saw she was just amazed.

"Not Clara, Jem?"

"Huh?" His jaw sagged.

"Lee told me about you and Clara once," she said lightly.

He felt his temper beginning to smolder. "Oh, Lee told you. Good ol' Lee. So he's been hangin' around, hey?"

"He's been in to see me a few times, yes."

Frustrated rage seethed in Jem. It occurred to him that this was the first time he'd actually *known* they'd been seeing each other. And somehow, it hurt; it hurt like hell. "I guess I needn't a bothered after all," he said bitterly. "If I'd a known you was chasin' around with my best friend . . ."

She started to turn away in disgust, turned back with the patient air of one who reasons with a child. "Oh, for heaven's sake, Jem! Can't we just—well, just stop talking about it?"

"There's nothin' I'd ruther do," he assured her in a bellow. "Just forget the whole thing! Forget I ever come in here in the first place!"

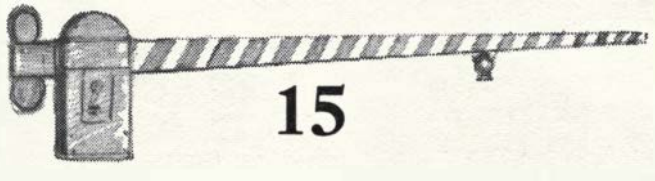
She jerked her chin up. "All right, that's fine. Why in the world *did* you come in, Jem? Not to see me, I'm sure."

"I come in b'cause I was hungry," he roared, getting up, "but they's plenty a other places a man can eat without gettin' in an argument every time he opens his mouth!" He strode to the door and banged it behind him almost before he realized he'd made up his mind to leave.

"Jem!" she cried softly.

But he didn't hear, of course; she didn't really want him to. He'll be back in, she thought desperately, after he's cooled off a little—he won't want to leave it like this . . . But he wasn't coming back, she realized dully as the minutes ticked away and time ran on and on unbearably. So it must be all over, finally.

And it was like a woman to want to cry about it.



15

LEE STARTED TO HUM "Yankee Doodle" as he went long-leggedly down the street from his rooming house. Another cluster of shots went off over across town, and an elderly man with a faded Union forage cap on the back of his head looked up from his puttering in a flower bed and nodded friendlily.

"Sounds jist like the dum battle a Gettysburg startin' out all over ag'in, don't it? Y'look like you're all set for a glorious Fourth a July, young fella."

"Wouldn't miss it," Lee assured him cheerfully.

Opposite the depot a narrow path angled down the cutbank. Lee took it in a couple of long strides, trying to keep the dust off his new shoes, and stepped carefully across the rails. A half-dozen Oddfellows and their families stood in groups on the platform, and there was one shy-looking couple off by themselves at the far end of the depot. Most of the men nodded cordially to Lee, though he'd never bothered to go to meetings here in Yellow Creek.

Ferd Ambrose, lounging in the waiting-room door, beamed a greeting. "He's right on time, Lee." He looked Lee up and down, whistling softly. "My, my, ain't we purty, though! 'Most *too* purty fer a picnic."

"Not for this picnic," Lee grinned.

"Yeah," said Ferd, and quoted from the big yellow-and-black poster that had been tacked up on the waiting-room wall for two weeks past: "Special Oddfella's Excursion fer Round Lake an' the Monster Fourth a July Picnic, Rally, Spectac'lar Fireworks Display an' Games, Prizes an' Fun fer One an' All. . . . Man oh man, I wisht I was young an' full a sap ag'in!"

Down the right of way a locomotive whistled, and a swirl of excitement went through the assembled Oddfellows. "Here she comes!"

"Do me a favor an' point out this peacherino a yours when y'git on the train, will you, Lee?" asked Ferd. He put a hand on Lee's shoulder and leaned closer. "An' don't fergit, boy—them white pants of yours'll show ev'ry little grass stain somethin' awful, so behave yerself!" He cackled gleefully as Lee punched him lightly in the ribs and moved out onto the platform.

The locomotive whistled again and came panting slowly in, an old 8-wheeler with her narrow smokebox front seeming to rest right down on the pilot beam between the fluttering white flags of an extra, her long wagon-top boiler giving her a humpbacked, old-man look. The bulky shoulders leaning from the cab window struck an instantly familiar chord, and Lee recognized Jem Gandee as the engine grumbled past. Something seemed to draw a cloud momentarily across the sun.

Hell, he thought with a deep surge of resentment, does he have to horn in today too? Next moment the feeling evaporated and the sun came out as his eyes searched the first row of coach windows for a sight of Bess.

This is the day I take her right out from under his damn nose! he thought. This is the day I'll ask her to marry me. And she'll say yes!

Then he saw her, waving to him anxiously, and ran for the coach steps. It seemed an eternity before the massive haunches of the Oddfellow's wife ahead of him toiled up onto the platform and through the door, and he stepped into a long cavern filled with heat and people and joyous noise.

She was in crisp, cool white, save for a neat blue ribbon at the throat of her shirtwaist, and by some miracle the Big Ivy's soft-coal smoke had left the whole delectable confection without a blemish. Beneath the brim of the perky straw sailor her eyes glowed at him with warm pleasure, and he couldn't seem to take his eyes off the curve of her red lips as she smiled.

"You're the purtiest girl on the train, Bess!"

She blushed and dipped her head, making a pleased little face at him. He realized that he'd seized both her hands in his. Through the window he saw the cutbank gliding by, slowly, but picking up speed. The big day had begun.

A little girl popped her head up over the back of the seat ahead and eyed them gravely. "Is he your fella?" she asked Bess.

"I sure am!" Lee said.

There was a ripple of laughter from the seats all around, in the midst of which the little girl was hastily snatched out of sight by her mother, and Bess blushed more warmly than before. But her hand gave Lee's a quick little squeeze.

"I really was afraid you'd miss the train," Bess smiled. "Did you work last night?"

He nodded.

"Why, you must be almost dead, Lee."

"Never felt better in my life," he assured her. It was true, too. The dancing, sparkling aliveness bubbled in him like fizzing soda-water; the long howl of the whistle from up ahead was like a howl of glee from his own throat; the jouncing speed of the train under him was the rhythm of his own racing energy.

"I fixed a nice lunch for us," she said.

He leaned close to her, letting his hand fall lightly on her thigh. "That ain't really what I'm hungry for," he whispered with a grin.

"Now stop that!" she whispered urgently, the pink staining

her cheeks again. But she didn't sound as if she meant it too emphatically. They both laughed, their heads coming together.

The train was rolling along at a good clip now, past fields of glossy, knee-high corn and rippling alfalfa and fat cows standing placidly in the sun. Heat collected in the high arch of the clerestory and pressed thickly down in spite of the breeze whipping in through the open windows. Over the children's ceaseless, crickety chirp, snatches of conversation drifted:

". . . But who's gonna beat out them Giants? That fella Mathewson an' his fadeaway . . ."

"Say, wait'll y'see this boy that's pitchin' fer the Leans ag'in the Fats this afternoon . . ."

"Crops look good, don't they?"

". . . may be catty of me to say it, but her husban' away so much an' that lazy brother'n-law . . ."

". . . Now hold on, Ed—*why* d'we need a canal acrost Panama? Go on an' answer me that, by golly!"

They pulled into Hollister and a new contingent of Oddfellows got aboard, welcomed with loud hospitality, a brief, harried rounding up of youngsters, another crackle of firecrackers, a burst of rhythm by the hot rock with the mandolin. Draft gear groaned and flanges squealed as they lurched through a sharp curve away from the mainline and began to pick up speed northward on the Round Lake branch.

A burst of applause greeted the flagman as he came through the car with the grinning announcement: "Be at Round Lake in twenny minutes, folks—git them lunch baskets ready!"

Bess turned from the window, brown eyes shining. "Oh, Lee, it's going to be fun!"

"The time a our lives!" he assured her. Just you wait, my girl, he thought ecstatically.

A distant part of his mind wondered idly if she knew Jem was up there on the head end. Not that it made any difference. Not today . . . And never again after today, either . . . !

He waited in front of the row of bathhouses, his bare toes curling nervously into the wet boards of the walk. An uncomfortable feeling of embarrassment grew in him. The rented bathing suit, he knew, must be hanging on his skinniness like a sack; he felt the legs of the trunks flap about his knees as he took a tentative step or two, and looking down at himself wished fervently that they'd had something in his size other than red and yellow stripes—faded and washed-out though they were. Behind him, the joyous screams and splashing down at the lake no longer seemed so tempting.

Maybe his idea of a swim hadn't been such a hot one, he thought.

If not, it was the first misstep he'd made. Bess's lunch had been wonderful. The free beer had been cold and plentiful. Everybody'd been gay and full of laughter and friendliness, and state representative Proudfoot had delivered an Independence Day oration that waved the flag, stirred the blood with pride in the grandeur and the glory of the U.S.A., blistered the Democrats unmercifully, and stayed reasonably short into the bargain. There'd still be dancing in the pavilion come dusk, and romance could have its final innings . . . If Bess didn't die laughing when she saw him in this goddamn scarecrow outfit . . .

Then he saw her coming shyly down the walk, and his heart bounded with sheer awe at her loveliness. The great puffed sleeves and flaring bloomers of her bathing dress made her figure seem even taller and more lissome. He bounded forward and took her arm. "All set?"

"I guess so . . ." She bent her head to tuck an errant puff of brown hair up under the bathing cap, and the dark lashes brushed her cheek timidly. "It isn't too soon after lunch, is it, Lee?"

"Nah. Bess—you ought a go swimmin' every day, as purty as you look in a bathin' suit!"

She wrinkled her nose at him saucily, but her smile thanked him for the compliment.

"Come on," he said happily, "that ol' lake looks wonderful," and urged her into a run across the hot sand. She gave a breathless little scream and tried to hang back, but he hustled her relentlessly along with him, the water splashing up onto their flushed bodies in stinging, icy jets, boiling whitely around their churning thighs, tripping them at last so that they went sprawling headlong.

They came up gasping and laughing, and the water was at once no longer cold but warm and caressing. He put his hands on her wet, slippery shoulders and drew her close and kissed her with resounding ardor.

"Lee!" she gasped, pushing him away, "not out here where everyone can see us!"

"Nobody can see us, Bess." He waved an arm toward shore, which did seem a long way off all at once. On the other side of them, well out in deeper water, a noisy group of young sports were silhouetted against the sky as they vied with one another in daring dives off the float. "I reserved this particular section a the lake just for us," he assured her. "Even come out early an' chased the fish away."

"I'm afraid of a city slicker who's so smart he thinks of everything," she laughed, ducking his reaching arm and striking out again.

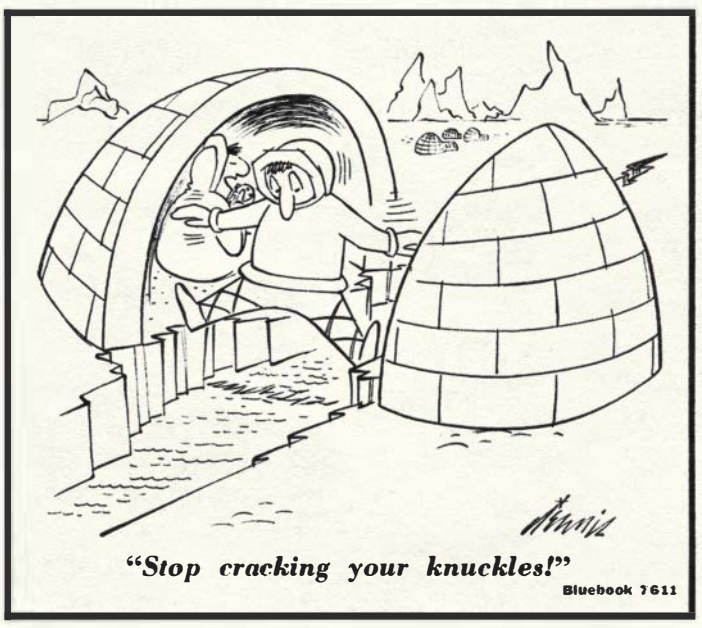
He let her get a good start and then went after her with a leisurely stroke, amazed after a minute or two at the way she stayed ahead of him. He wondered fleetingly where she'd learned to swim so well. Maybe down at that place by the river; maybe Jem had taught her. Well, thanks, Jem, for teachin' my girl to swim, he thought mockingly, an I hope you're havin' a high ol' time for yourself up there on that nice hot engine!

She was back in shallow water before he caught her; she stood up, dripping, and went staggering ashore in a wide-legged, ineffectual girl's run. He seized her and mastered her in a long, hungry kiss, not letting her go this time till she gave up and put her arms tightly about him and kissed back.

The chase had taken them out of sight of the beach and around a tiny wooded point that jutted out into the lake. They stood in a tiny glade right at the water's edge, ringed on three sides by the deeply dipping branches of trees through which the sunshine splashed in little dapples of light and shadow. A melting hunger ran through him like fire.

They sank down into the deep, soft grass as if by common consent. She reached up and took the bathing cap off, throwing her head back to shake the tumbling masses of dark hair back from her shoulders.

"Bess!" he muttered thickly, and took her in his arms. She didn't resist; he felt her mouth turn hotly to his, their two bodies sinking back till the cool moistness of the grass was all around them, enfolding them in its lushness, the crushed fragrance of it in their nostrils, and the glade darkened and reeled as though



"Stop cracking your knuckles!"

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they slid dizzily down the tilt of time to its sultry beginnings. His hand cupped her breast, and hers made a hesitant little effort to push it away and gave up, and it was gliding down the cloth that kept it from her body, till the flesh of her thigh lay soft and cool beneath it.

"Lee, we mustn't!" She struggled to writhe away.

"I want you, Bess—marry me!" The words were out; there they lay, hot and real and eager between them, and he didn't know whether he'd planned them or not, but there they were.

"You mean that, Lee?" She lay still, her voice so soft the words barely came out through the panting of her breath.

"Sure! We could be on the early train in the mornin'—do it up in a blaze a glory, fool the homeguards silly! We can get a license in Chicaga, see a J.P. an' catch a train west tomorra night . . ."

"A train west?" The dark eyes went wide and cloudy.

"Sure, why not? Let ol' Harpster run his own beanery. Let the Big Ivy run without me—it won't fold up. We'd have t'hustle, but we could make it."

"But *why*, Lee?"

"Why? Good Lord, Bess—we couldn't live in Yella Crick the rest a our lives. Me gettin' the day trick when Ferd Ambrose dies, an' not a blessed thing else to look forward to . . ." But the spell was broken. He felt it, and panic started to grow in him. "Bess, I got to have a lot more'n that t'offer you, can't you see it? I want something big for us, something . . ." He ran out of words and floundered breathlessly in his own eagerness.

"Out West," she said flatly.

"But that's the only place I'd have a chance—some place new, where the homeguards ain't got every good thing sewed up tight. An' why not? One place's as good as another, if we got each other."

She lay still under the fierce urging of his hands on her shoulders. A frown drew its tiny wrinkle between her brows.

"I know," he said dully. "You're afraid 'cause I'm a boomer."

"It isn't that, Lee . . ." She smiled ruefully and lifted a hand to his face, then let it fall back beside her. "I—I'm not sure what it is. I was born and raised on the Big Ivy; maybe *I'm* just a homeguard."

It was the old difference between them, and what was there for him to say to her? He sat back, watching darkly while she sat up too and ran her hands through her hair to shake out the bits of grass that clung in it. Even the grace of the round, white arms made him hurt inside; everything about her filled him with the frustrated pain of wanting her. And he could've had her for just an instant there, he reflected dismally . . . Till he'd thrown the chance away like a fool, him and his big mouth.

"What if I said I'd stay here, then?" he asked.

"It wouldn't work, Lee. Would it? I'd be holding you back, and some day you'd want to go more than you want me now, maybe." Her voice was so low he hardly heard.

"No, Bess . . ." But he let the denial fade in his throat. Maybe she was right. He had no answer for the deep, tender wisdom he sensed in her.

Across the lake the sun hung, a flaming globe of gold slipping steeply down the sky. The cheering at the baseball game had distantly subsided. The wet bathing suit felt chill and scratchy against his skin.

"I guess we better get back," he said. "Time we get dressed it'll be gettin' on toward evenin'." And fireworks, he thought bleakly, and dancing in the pavilion, and laughter and a high old time that might help to give a man his perspective back. He got up slowly and took her hand and pulled her to her feet.

"I'm sorry, Bess."

"Don't be, Lee. Please." She put her arm through his and hugged it to her briefly. "Maybe . . . It was just too soon. Maybe I'm the one that should be sorry," she murmured ruefully.

They stepped into the warm, golden water, walking slowly, not finding anything more to say.

16

THEY TURNED THE TRAIN on the wye and backed down to the depot, and at 9:30 on the dot the slow tolling of the bell began to signal the end of the Oddfellows' Monster Fourth of July Picnic and Rally.

The picnickers straggled up from the pavilion in couples and threes and bunches, giggling shrilly on the high edge of exhaustion or just trudging along in grim silence, the men with collars off and coats folded over their arms, the beer starting to go flat in their bellies and the children limply asleep on their tired shoulders, the women lugging empty lunch baskets and walking as if their feet hurt. The parade quickened to a reluctant urgency as the sonorous ringing went on and on.

Jem chuckled and flipped his cigarette butt away. "The end of a grand an' glorious Fourth, hey Clyde?"

The fireman's scoop clanked on the deck and coal hissed softly as it hit the fire. "Yeah. Easy enough day's pay, I s'pose—but who the hell wants t'work on the Fourth a July?"

"Wish to hell I'd laid off an' rode the cushions up to Chicaga," Jem said. He'd been wishing it off and on all through the long, monotonous day, every time he'd wondered how Clara was spending the Fourth. But he hadn't quite been able to justify passing up the day's pay. It was getting a little expensive, running around with Clara.

"Say," Clyde complained, "we'll be lucky t'git this damn ol' mill back t'East Bend, y'know it, Jem?" His sweating face was briefly highlighted by the water-glass lamp as he looked up. "Them flues're leakin' worse'n ever."

"Yeah." Jem glanced at the steam gauge. The needle was up there now, but he wondered irritably how long it would stay up once he started to work the engine.

"I guess these damn excursion extries always catch the busted down ol' mills," Clyde said philosophically.

Mort Cass, the fat conductor, came clumping along the platform and shouted at the gangway. "I guess we can pull out'n a couple more minutes, Jem. The last of 'em's comin' now. Say, how's the engine?"

"Worse'n ever."

"Half-baked boilermakers they hire these days . . ." Mort got his order out and bent over the lantern to reread it. "We're s'posed to leave Hollister at 10:15 an' run ahead a 64 inta East Bend. That's gonna take some steppin' if we don't git the hell outa here soon. Give the whistle a couple toots, mebbe that'll get some strays in."

"We'll never stay ahead a 64 in this mill," said Jem grouchily.

A final three or four couples broke into a giggling run across the platform as the long, brazen wail sent its echoes mourning back from the dark countryside. The conductor nodded up to Jem and went lumbering back along the train. Faint lights from the summer cottages on the other side of Round Lake laid their wavery scrolls across the water, and some kind of night bird called an eerie answer to the whistle. From one of the coaches a mandolin tinkled lazily and a few voices lifted in a snatch of song that was slow and sweet and achingly sad.

Mort's lantern traced the highball on the dark.

"All right," said Jem, "le's go home, Clyde."

It had been too long a day, Lee thought tiredly, and its fag end was bogging down. The old coach creaked and jounced, crawling slowly through the dark cavern of night that brooded outside the window.

"A penny!" Bess said, turning to smile at him.

"Uh?"

"A penny for your thoughts, Lee."

"Oh, I dunno . . . Guess all I was thinkin' was that we must be purt'near to Yella Crick." Not meeting her eyes, he leaned across her to peer out the window, but there was nothing there except the dark countryside crawling past in formless clumps of shadow, and a lone, dim light of a farm house in the distance.

Mort Cass stumped grimly through the car, the flagman at his heels. ". . . Prob'ly go in the hole here . . ." he flung over his shoulder as they passed. The flagman paused at the far end of the coach.

"Yella Crick. Yella Crick!"

Lee sat up straighter. "Well . . ." he said.

Her hand clung to his. "Oh, it's been *wonderful,* Lee—I wouldn't've changed a minute of the whole day. And . . ."

"Well, I would a, I guess. But . . ." He grinned, and leaned over on an impulse to kiss her hard, full on the lips. "See you soon," he said, and got up and strode down the aisle. At the door he paused and looked back; he thought her eyes looked big and dark, and they clung fast to his. Or was it just his imagination? He lifted a hand in a brief wave and stepped out onto the platform.

The train crawled slowly around the curve into the familiar cut, the locomotive's panting soggy and labored up ahead. Down on the bottom step the brakeman grumbled under his breath as slack bunched and they stopped with a tired sigh of air. "Damn—almost didn't make it . . ."

Lee dropped to the ballast and headed swiftly across the westbound track toward the dim splash of light in the depot bay, a woman's querulous complaint at the long step fading away behind him. Jem had stopped a good way short of the depot at that, he noticed, and looking ahead he saw the headlight beam wash along a long row of boxcars already in the siding. That might complicate things, he thought, the tired realization growing in him that now he had the long hours of the rest of the night trick ahead of him, with time owing to Ferd Ambrose to boot. Pausing in the waiting-room door for a last look, he noticed Mort Cass's bulky figure go tramping past the tender and pause at the gangway ladder

He was in the office taking over from Ferd when the conductor hulked in and thrust a scowling face up against the ticket-window grill.

"Git on the wire an' tell that delayer we're goin' inta the hole here. The ol' bucket a scrap won't make it no farther."

"That's a purty long drag in there now," Ferd said. "Sixty-four might have t'saw by if y'do."

"Let 'im saw by then!" Mort snarled.

Ferd shrugged, jerking his chin at Lee. "Tell him, it's his trick now."

Lee's feet hurt inside the snappy new shoes, and the collar was tight and stiff around his throat. He ripped it open in annoyance as he gunned the message out with his other hand.

"Does he want a relief engine?" Clem Flowers contrived to make the bristling Morse heavy with disgust.

"Sarcastic son, ain't he?" grunted Mort when Lee relayed the question. "Tell 'im Jem says we can plug up the ol' bitch enough t'go on in."

"Well, I guess I might's well git on home an' leave you boys with yer happy little problems," Ferd yawned.

Lee walked out onto the platform with them. The old eight-wheeler had pulled into the siding now, her long pilot close up behind the drag's caboose, but the second coach stood in the switch with the third and fourth still out on the main-line. Through the thick, moonless dark they saw the flagman's lantern go jogging around the curve and out of sight.

"What's ailin' 'em on the drag?" Mort wondered crankily. "Why the hell aint they pullin' ahead fer us?" He strode doggedly off to find out.

"Well," Ferd said, yawning again, "g'night, Lee—I'll leave y'alone t'dream about yer lady fair." He cackled softly. "Y'git what y'was after, boy?"

"Go to hell," Lee said.

Standing there in the cut, the cab was oven hot, and helping Clyde clean the fire was a miserable chore that was enough to make a man wonder why he'd ever hired out railroading in the first place. Jem presently had his fill of it and went down the gangway ladder to the ground for a smoke. No telling when they'd get in now, he thought sourly, and again wished yearningly that he'd cut out and gone to Chicago as he'd wanted to. If he had, chances were he'd be with Clara right now . . . But it was too hot even for that, he told himself disgustedly, feeling the sweat go crawling down his chest in thick, prickling streams.

Mort Cass came walking down the line of silent boxcars, swinging his lantern jerkily, digging his heels into the ballast like a man righteously wrathful.

"Well—we ain't gonna be movin' fer a spell. They got a busted air hose up there." He got his watch out and scowled at it. "Good Lord, we're on 64's time right now, y'know it?"

"They prob'ly held him in Chicago for the western mail," Jem said.

Back around the curve the flagman had dropped a fusee, its crimson glare laying an eerie stain on the darkness. Tree frogs and crickets hammered a pulsing chorus through the sultry stillness. Up in the cab the clank of the scoop shovel paused and Clyde came over to lean in the gangway and mop his dripping face.

"Gittin' steam back on 'er, but Jeez, I dunno."

The inevitable sprinkle of male passengers had spilled out of the coaches to stand around the right of way and talk. A few of the louder voices carried up to the engine, their remarks not complimentary to the Indiana Valley Railroad.

Mort sighed heavily. "Well, might's well git on back there an' listen t'them wise jaspers complainin'. My damn fault if one of 'em gits hit by 64, I s'pose. By God, I hope somebody kicks my tail from hell to breakfast if I ever take another excursion train on the Fourth a July . . ." He trudged off, still muttering.

"Say," said Clyde, "ain't 64 about due?"

"He's late, looks like."

Back in the last coach the mandolin player came to life with a long, jangling chord. He picked idly for awhile and all at once launched into a tune. Bored voices picked it up in twos and threes and presently the chorus pealed out loudly.

"Da da da—dada dada dada . . . There'll be a HOT time—in the ol' town—toni-i-i-i-i-ght!" It rolled through the cut in a bouncing swell of sound, and as it died away a whistle moaned and moaned again, deep and sad and lonesome sounding like the ghost of a lost old gray wolf remembering how it had been on these rolling prairies long ago.

"There 'e comes," said Clyde.

"Yeah."

A lantern came bobbing down the length of the drag ahead. "Looks like we'll be movin' in a minute," Jem said. "Just in time t'clear the switch for him, too." He turned to start up the ladder, but the lantern stopped, hesitated, and went back up toward the head end of the drag.

The whistle came again, loud and clear now; on the stillness that followed, the night bore the half-heard ring of wheels on rail and the whispered pant of the locomotive's fast exhaust. Then they were singing again in the last coach, the words a soft, sad sighing to the mandolin's muted tinkle:

"A-a-after-r-r-r-r the ball-l-l-l is o-o-over-r-r-r, a-a-a-after-r-r-r the brea-a-a-ak-k-k of day-y-y-y-y . . ."

The minute ran out its slow seconds. Back on the curve the fusee's glare stained the night. The rumble of wheels came louder, deepening briefly as 64 hit the trestle.

"Jeez, listen to 'im maul 'er!" said Clyde.

"Man-n-n-ny-y-y-y's the heart that is brok-k-ken-n-n, a-a-a-after-r-r-r-r-r the ball-l-l-l-l-l-l-l . . ."

"Hey," said Clyde loudly, "hadn't 'e ought a be shuttin' down?"

A torpedo cracked sharply back there and 64's big headlight came around the curve and laid its hard white brightness along the cut, throwing every gully, every weed into sharpening relief, sending a long weird shadow reeling back from the feet of Mort Cass's figure as he ran back waving a frantic washout.

"God A'mighty," Jem gritted harshly, "big-hole 'er! Big-hole 'er, you damn' fool . . ."

A high, thin scream arose, steel sliding on steel . . . Or maybe the terrified shriek of a woman chancing to look out the rear door of that last coach. Fire flashed in spinning circles under the high black bulk of the locomotive, and the scream went on and on till the hoarser cry of the whistle rose to blot it out . . .

And then the titanic thunderclap of the crash rode over everything in a vast, ripping roar of rended steel and splintering wood and the whole solid mass of the earth reeling in a lunatic convulsion. The last two coaches opened up in a slow, jagged, car-splitting explosion, half seen against the angry eye of the headlight plowing through them; then the third coach lurched out of the switch and up against the cutbank like a great, scared animal.

Jem was running in a screaming, roaring, stumbling nightmare past the end of the tender, under the lighted squares of the first coach's windows that made isolated little pictures as he labored by . . . The rumpled blond head of a boy, lifting in sleepy irritation from the sill . . . The fat, frowsy face of a woman, blank and incurious, the folded paper with which she'd been fanning herself still moving in its steady arc . . .

The shadows were all at once chaotic with other passengers struggling out of the second coach, a woman beating at a broken window pane with bloody, frantic fists, her face twisted with panic. A hand snatched at Jem's sleeve. "What's happened? For God's sake—what happened?"

He tore away. Beyond the dark bulk of the derailed coach was a vaster confusion of writhing shapes of steam and smoke and stark jaggedness thrust across the headlight's continuing glare.

The silence that had fallen on the heels of the crash was bubbling now with formless sound. A man's low, grating moan rose all at once to harsh agony. A scream started and was cut off and started again, and died in a series of shuddering sobs. And a thin, mewing whine seemed to lay over it all like the shallow pulse of disaster.

Panting with effort he went up the cutbank, clawing a way around the splintered, buried coach platform, fighting through the dazed passengers who milled out the door and slid and stumbled and fell around it. Something huge and black and shapeless loomed above him; he ducked instinctively, blinking in the glare, then recognized it as the shattered roof of the third coach canted crazily skyward over the locomotive's high boiler. The last coach was gone, ripped apart, gored and smashed and trampled in berserk fury by the engine, great misshapen chunks and splinters of it strewn along her black length. She leaned against the cutbank like a dying dragon, steam blowing out of her into the night with a bubbling roar. Somewhere in Jem's mind was a flicker of amazement that he himself was unscathed; it seemed somehow wrong that he should be. He stumbled over something and looked down and saw a hand and arm thrust out from the mass of wreckage that had piled up like a great bow wave around the pilot. He stooped and took hold of it. But it was rooted as solidly as a sapling, and there was no life in it anyway. He dropped it with a numb sense of futility.

But there were lanterns bobbing along the mail train now, and other men around him.

"Hey, somebody, for Chrissake gimme a hand!"

It was a mail clerk, eyeshade still on his head, struggling with something down beside the big Number 1 driver. A woman; her head and shoulders and one plump, bare arm stuck out from under the demolished cane back of a seat; her eyes were tight shut and her bloody face was as utterly empty as a mask made in dough by an unskilled sculptor, but the mouth was open and she was wailing with a flat, monotonous regularity. Jem reached in and braced himself to pry the broken seat off her, and the mail clerk, sobbing with effort, dragged her free. Her skirt hung in dirty, bloody shreds and one leg was a raw pulp that dragged loosely as they got her off onto a patch of grass beside the track and let her down as gently as they could.

"I've always been this way. First I was boy crazy, then I was man crazy. Now it's old men!"

Bluebook 7903

The mail clerk stared at Jem. "My God, she'll bleed t'death, won't she?"

"Oughta be a doctor around somewhere . . ." Jem said vaguely. But there was nobody. Through the trees along the top of the cutbank he could see lights coming on in the windows, and lanterns came jumping and bobbing from all directions. But there at his feet the woman went on wailing like a mechanical thing that had been wound up and wouldn't stop till it ran down. He wiped damp palms along the legs of his overalls and looked at the mail clerk, who stood wringing his hands in sick horror.

"God A'mighty, can't y'help me do something for 'er?" Jem roared. He knelt beside the woman, ripping off a long strip of her skirt, his hands fumbling as they touched the cool softness of her thigh.

"Y'gonna be all right," the mail clerk mumbled at her over his shoulder, "y'gonna be all right, now . . ."

The leg was a mass of blackened bruises, blood oozing in thick, hot spurts from a jagged gash a foot long. There was a lump there too, as though the broken end of a bone might be trying to rip through. Lord, he thought in sick rebellion, I'm no doctor, what can I do? Awkwardly he wrapped a strip of skirt around the leg, tore off another and made a rough tourniquet. Maybe she'd lose the leg, he thought helplessly; maybe he'd done the wrong thing. But the bleeding seemed to stop, at least.

"You lay still now," he told her, "an' they'll get a doctor here purty quick . . ." The wailing ended abruptly; she rolled her head and her eyes opened and looked at him. He saw with dull surprise that she was quite a pretty girl.

"Y'gonna be all right . . ." the mail clerk said.

Two men came staggering with a third sagging between them, a fat man with a crushed straw hat jammed and broken about his ears. The head lolled loosely on his chest as they let him down beside the girl.

"Hell, he's dead a'ready!"

"Mebbe not—he was sure hollerin' loud enough when we got to 'im . . ." This second man looked at Jem and his mouth dropped open. "Jem Gandee! Good Lord, Jem . . ."

With a start of surprise Jem recognized the blue coat and brass buttons of a conductor, the round red face and snowy mustache of old Sherm Carnes.

"This your train?" Sherm shouted. "What is it—the excursion? God A'mighty, Jem—how'd it happen?"

"Your engineer run our flag!" The question that had

hung in Jem's mind ever since 64's headlight had come around the curve burst out: "Who was it, Sherm?"

"Sim Kregg."

They stared at each other, then wheeled and ran for the locomotive. The angle at which she leaned against the cutbank put the gangway ladder out of reach but the tender had torn loose and jackknifed across the track, and spilled coal made a loose and slippery ramp up which they scrambled to the cab.

"Yeah, he's still in there."

The thin glow from the water-glass lamp showed Sim slumped in a huddle on the seatbox. A patch of shadow partially hid his head, that seemed to sag on his chest as though he slept. His left arm still reached stiffly out to the hand clamped on the brake valve. It was all the way around to the big hole; the reverse bar was still too far down in the forward corner—because Sim had always been a rapper—but the throttle was shoved clear to the backhead. All the little professional details a man's eye saw and his brain noted without knowing it, while he caught a handhold and levered himself across the canted deck . . .

"Sim!"

He got Sim by the shoulders as gently as he could and tried to ease him against the backrest. There was a ragged cut across Sim's forehead, leaking its thick red trickle down one side of the homely, rawboned face; Sim's lips moved stiffly and the breath came out of him in a long, rough exhalation halfway between sigh and moan. The pale eyes flickered open.

"Hello Jem—where was yer damn flag?"

"Take it easy, Sim; we'll get y'outa here."

"Hold on!" Sherm whispered hoarsely. His breath sucked in sharply. "Jesus—looka there. His belly . . ."

The lower part of Sim's overalls were heavy with a spreading stain that looked black against the faded denim. A freezing numbness lanced through Jem's own intestines as he saw the broken end of the pipe that had impaled Sim: it was part of the air line, sheared from under the running board and curled viciously back through the from cab window like a striking snake. Sim groaned loudly and tried to draw his knees up, but one foot was wedged between the seatbox and the brake stand and he would have slumped forward again but for Jem's arms around him. He hung like that, breath coming and going in shallow, gasping spasms; all at once it choked and rattled in his throat for a long span of seconds, and he died.

". . . where the fireman is?" Sherm Carnes was saying. "Joined the birds y's'pose? Or down under all that coal? It was Ollie Meadows . . ."

Jem let go of Sim's shoulders and slowly straightened up, dusting his hands together absently.

"Dead?" Sherm whispered. "My God . . ."

"What was the matter with 'im, Sherm?"

The conductor shook his head slowly, pursing his lips. "I dunno. They doubled 'im back outa Chicaga—when we compared watches he was growlin' about no sleep fer twenty hours . . . But you know Sim; he was always growlin' about something . . . Let's get outa here, Jem."

Outside, feet scuffed and scrabbled in the sliding coal and voices came loudly into the cab. ". . . still in there, hey? The son of a bitch, it was his fault . . ." A man's head and shoulders lifted above the edge of the deck sill, the face streaked with dirt and sweat, hair straggling lankly into the wild eyes. One of the Oddfellows. "Yeah," he shouted, "he's still in there, damn 'im . . ."

"Shut up!" Jem said. He put a hand on the man's chest and shoved him roughly back down the coal pile into the milling group that had gathered. "He's dead—leave 'im be."

"Take it easy, boys," Sherm said heavily.

A man's mind was built with a safety valve, that let him see things with a terrible clarity yet cut off the part of his awareness that might go mad from knowing what they meant. Afterward, you'd never be able to fit them all together, but you knew as you looked at them that you'd close your eyes and see them for months and years to come—forever, maybe—in a squirming torment like a maggoty wound in your brain.

Like half-a-dozen of you straining and heaving at a section of smashed coach planking while a man begged hideously from under it; you got it up at last but his bloody head shook feebly at you when you tried to drag him out. "No, no, my wife—she's back there . . ." But the only other thing back there was a smeared pulp without even a face left on it.

Like the man with a broken arm dangling, who recognized you as a railroader by your overalls, and started to curse you in a shrill, hysterical gibberish. Like the little boy, unhurt but crying for his folks, dirty faced and heartbroken and scared . . . And you'd never know whether he found them alive or dead.

And always, the rows of dead excursionists dragged aside and laid along the cutbank, getting longer all the time. . . .

Jem heard a whistle moan down the right of way eastward and looked over his shoulder to see the headlight laying its pale shine along the rails.

"Four, five more in under there," Mort Cass was telling the freight brakeman, "but they ain't a chance a gittin' 'em out till the big hook gits here. The last fella quit hollerin' quite awhile back, anyway . . ."

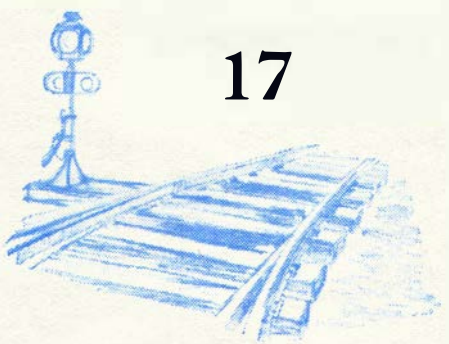
"The hook's comin' now," Jem said. They all reached for their watches.

"Purty fair job a gittin' 'im out, at that," the brakeman said. "Y'know it's been jist fifty-four minutes since 64 come around that curve?"

The wreck train came slowly into the cut, its whistle snorting impatiently once or twice, the tall black shape of the locomotive seeming to wade carefully through the scattering crowd that took its time getting out of the way. The big boom of the wrecker lootned high and gauntly shadowy beyond the smoky glare of the headlight. The bell tolled in long, sonorous peals like a requiem for the dead.

"They just found Ollie Meadows," said 64's brakeman, joining them. "He jumped back there—dunno if he's gonna live'r not, though."

Mort Cass said suddenly: "God A'mighty—the hell they'll be raisin' about this tomorra!"



17

THE OFFICIAL YELLOW SHEET crackled between John McQueen's thick fingers as he picked it out of the pile. His eye lingered with a species of affection on the Big Ivy herald up in one corner, and dropped reluctantly to the first line of the letter below. His lip curled as he reread it:

To All Division Superintendents:

Your attention is again directed to the fast mail special, Extra Number 11, to be run westbound between New York City and Chicago, Illinois, on September 6th and 7th. As you were previously informed, this train is to be operated on a test schedule for the purpose of determining the practicability of a running time of eighteen (18) hours between the two cities. Extra Number 11 will carry through mail for Chicago and points west, with scheduled stops at division points only.

It is asumed that you are familiar with the present highly competitive situation as regards the awarding of United States Government mail contracts. Successful completion of an eighteen-hour

run by Extra Number 11 will place this company in an advantageous position in bidding for and holding such contracts, cutting as it will two full hours from the best present schedules of this and competing railroads.

You are accordingly instructed to take all steps necessary to insure that employees in all operating departments cooperate to the fullest extent in assuring this train's on-time performance while under your responsibility.

Very truly yours,
R. V. Cates
Gen'l Superintendent, Lines West

On the wall above McQueen's rolltop desk was a framed photograph. His eyes, gradually focusing on it as he sat back and relighted his cigar, saw—really *saw*, for the first time in years—the old Rogers eight-wheeler and the line of men posed proudly beside her. He dwelt thoughtfully on the massive headlight on its scrolled bracket, the tall diamond stack, the high domes gleaming in their burnished brass glory. The men's faces stared intently back at him from behind the dark whiskers and the thick mustaches. That lean youth lounging on the running board, smirking cockily from under the bill of the angled cap, was McQueen; he recognized himself with the kind of flustered start a man felt waking up and looking at the clock and realizing he'd overslept. Good Lord, he thought—how many years ago was that?

The photograph's shadows had faded to flat, brown smudges, its highlights to bleached-out white nothingness. Most of the men in it were undoubtedly dead. McQueen tried idly to remember some of their names, and was vaguely annoyed to find that he couldn't. But that had been a damn good roundhouse crew, he reflected fiercely, back in the days when a man took some real pride in the railroad that paid him wages.

He dropped his eyes back to the present, to the letter from R. V. Cates, Gen'l Superintendent.

A testy, pompous man with a perpetual scowl and a microscopic eye for things to criticize. Up from somewhere in the accounting end of the business, if McQueen remembered aright. How the hell would R. V. Cates know what it took to put a train over the road in 18 hours? What the hell good would it do if he did know? It wasn't Cates' idea; Cates was just passing it down the line. It was, he thought savagely, the damn higher-ups back East.

And so a succession of division superintendents would grow fresh crops of gray hair till Extra 11 had made the time or gone to hell trying . . . And John McQueen, on the West End where he'd fall heir to everyone else's delays, was sitting in the hottest seat of all. He snorted and slid the letter away from him. It had bothered him too damn much already, he thought resentfully.

This was the seventh of September, and X11 was—he dug the watch out of his pocket—X11 was already just an hour or so east of Toledo. At Toledo she became his responsibility, not a foot nor a second sooner. Meanwhile, he had work to do. What the hell did R. V. Cates, Gen'l Superintendent, Lines West, think he'd been doing, anyway? Him and his damn letter; didn't he realize that practically its twin had been peeling off of bulletin boards all over the property for the past week? Lord—they heckled a man.

But he'd never used to let it get his goat like this in the old days. Was this how old age began to hit a man?

He lumbered up out of the deep swivel chair and over to the window that looked out over the tracks. That out there was railroading, he told himself with a dour, resentful stirring of deep pride. Freight cars bulging and swaybacked with payloads that were the whole blood and guts of America. A big Cross-Compound Consolidation came tramping in with a long westbound drag, chuffing past the depot with an odd, offbeat cadence to her exhaust. Compounding steam like that meant a definite, calculable saving in coal costs every time a locomotive got over the road. And that was a tangible thing, the kind of idea a railroader *ought* to be putting his mind to, instead of playing daredevil with a breakneck schedule just to toady to the U.S. Postal Service!

But there had been something more immediately important about that Cross-Compound locomotive.

"Sweitzer!" he bellowed.

His chief clerk thrust a prompt head through the door.

"Call the trainmaster and tell him McQueen wants t'know what kind of brakemen he's hiring these days."

"Yessir," said Sweitzer, not moving. An old man, grown grizzled and stooped during the years that had brought him up where he was, he didn't dream of questioning the order. But he knew the trainmaster would demand, and not politely, what the hell was wrong now. He knew McQueen knew it too.

"That drag just in from the East," McQueen rumbled. "Tell Harrison next time I see a brakeman standing on the footboard of a moving locomotive using both hands to pack a damn pipe with—somebody'll be in here explaining why. A dead brakeman's no use to the company. Or himself either."

"Yessir," Sweitzer said, hurrying out with a gleam kindling in his eye. Let the trainmaster ask his question!

But his show of Argus-eyed authority did little for McQueen's mood. He stifled an impulse to call the chief dispatcher and find out what he had on X11. The fast mail was duly entered on the train sheet; the orders that would send him flying over the West End faster than any train had ever flown before had all been written and put on the wire long ago. An engine had been picked, and serviced with special care, and marked up on the board out in the roundhouse. The engine dispatcher had the crew down on his call sheet. A man had to leave a few things to his subordinates, didn't he? McQueen shoved X11 out of his mind and made himself turn with invincible finality to the pile of paper work on his desk.

At exactly noon he took his hat off the rack and went to lunch. Coal dust gritted faintly under his feet as he strode down the short hall to the dispatchers' office. That same soft, gritty whisper, it seemed to him, had walked along with him every step of his working life; he was aware of it now as a reassuring reminder of his fitness for this tough world of steel and steam that he'd long ago made his own. He opened the door, and the muted singsong of many sounders washed over him.

"Anything on X11 yet?"

The chief dispatcher glanced up from under his eyeshade and pulled the train sheet toward him. He didn't need to do that, McQueen thought; he'd been watching the extra like a hawk . . . And McQueen had the oddly startling conviction that it was a way of showing resentment at his visit. The same sort of resentment that letter from R. V. Cates had aroused in him.

"He's four minutes late outa Toleda," the dispatcher said.

"What engineer?"

"Poole."

McQueen nodded. Down East, they'd've marked up the crack crews of each division for this fast mail extra. It was a measure of McQueen's stubborn independence that here in his territory she'd be handled by men off the board, like any other extra. If the higher-ups wanted to commit the Big Ivy to a crazy schedule to please the U.S. Mail and their own egos, they'd better do it in a way that regular operating procedure could make good on. But a chilling twinge in his belly reminded him ominously, now, that it was his neck on the chopping block if anybody fell down.

Four minutes late. The right of way lay as level as a board and as straight as a die for 130 miles from Toledo to East Bend. A race track, where four minutes delay could be wiped out in a hurry by a good man. But it irked him subtly that X11 should have come across three-quarters of the railroad on the advertised—by God, they must've scorched ballast at that—only to lose time as she came under his responsibility. So thinking, he went down the stairs and stepped out into hard noon sunshine to cross the street to the Railroad House.

He forced himself to take his time plowing through a heavy lunch and paused for his usual handful of cigars at the counter in the lobby. . . . And there was Sweitzer coming through the front door at a hurried shamble, swinging his skinny old head like a questing bird dog. He spotted McQueen and bustled up importantly.

"They're lookin' fer you, Mr. McQueen . . ."

McQueen eyed him coldly.

"The extry's laid out with a blowed cylinder head jist this side a Parsons! Happened about twenty minutes ago . . ."

"The relief engine's through Parsons," the chief dispatcher said crisply as the sounder stopped clacking.

McQueen nodded. Harrison, the trainmaster, nodded. "Forty-six minutes," said Harrison heavily. But the statement was no longer true even as his lips pushed the words out; the delay grew with each tick of the clock, while X11 sat out there on the right of way eastward and the 18-hour schedule skidded off the edge of the world into impossibility. The minutes fell, one by one, and added themselves to the great, crushing weight that rode McQueen's back. The vast lunch he'd shoveled into himself over at the Railroad House wadded into a sour, soggy lump under his breastbone.

"Lemme know as soon as he's movin' again," he said, turning to the door.

Going down the hall to his own office he wondered if there hadn't been a relief engine to be found somewhere closer than Toledo. But his mind ran swiftly over the timetable and he guessed not. The dispatcher had been the man on the spot; there'd be time enough later to have him on the carpet if his judgment had been bad. Just as there'd be time to check work reports and fix responsibility for the blown cylinder head . . . And Lord help the poor son who might have shirked a job the engine's last few times in. Meanwhile, McQueen told himself bleakly, 46 minutes was already too much time to be made up, with God's help or without.

The telephone rang, long and loud, as he dropped into his chair.

The relief engine couldn't have got there yet, he thought, looking at his watch. The telephone went on ringing. He eyed it with distaste for a long moment before reaching out and sweeping it up in a slablike fist. "This is McQueen," he snapped.

The voice that came out of it, thin and filtered by the miles of wire till it seemed like a buzzing inside his own head, had the chill edge of honed steel:

"Hello McQueen. Cates speaking. What . . ." The words ran together in a crackling jumple and were lost.

McQueen hesitated, feeling the sweat break out coldly in his armpits. "What's that? I can't hear you."

"I said, what the hell's the matter out there, McQueen?"

"Nothing's the matter, except X11 . . ."

"Nothing! By God, I rode that train from Buffalo to Toledo and we never lost a minute all the way. I get off here and try to enjoy my lunch and they tell me you've got him laid out already! What's wrong with you people out there on the West End?"

"He blew a cylinder head. We've got a relief engine almost there . . ." McQueen despised himself for the way his own voice yammered in his ears.

The silence crackled briefly, and Cates' voice lashed him again: "Almost an hour's delay—d'you realize that? By God, McQueen, you'd better jack up your motive-power departments. Blew a cylinder head! What caused it?"

"We don't know yet. We'll investigate . . ." Damn Cates to hell, McQueen thought wildly. What caused it! He knew there'd be no way of answering that yet.

The voice at the other end went suddenly as high and thin as the whicker of blue steel on a whetstone. "Listen, McQueen: I want that special into Chicago just as damned fast as you can get him there! I want the best locomotive you've got on that train out of East Bend; I want the best crew on the West End in the cab—d'you understand? Put 'em over the road faster than you ever put a train in your life. And I'll expect a personal report from you when you've done it!" There was a long, vibrating silence. "Is that clear?"

"Yessir," McQueen said, hating himself.

The distant click dismissed him contemptuously, and after a moment he hung up too. He sat with his elbows on the desk and his eyes on murky infinity, and Cates' voice went on inside him like a hissing whip slashing him into raw, bleeding chunks. Out of the welter in his brain came a thought that seemed to hang in the air like a buzzard waiting for him to die:

He could lose out over this!

It was quite awhile before the telephone jangled again. He stared at it like a wounded bear brought to bay, but when he finally answered, it was only the chief dispatcher reporting that X11 was now moving west behind the relief engine. The delay had grown to an hour and eighteen minutes.

He slammed the receiver down, lifted it again. "Gimme Fred Sparkman at the roundhouse."

The master-mechanic's voice sounded wary, as though he'd been expecting this call.

"Fred, who's marked up for X11?"

"Why—Gandee an' MacVeigh're first out. Your orders was to use men off'n the extry list . . ."

"What engine?"

"Number 696. An' we've got her shopped to within an inch of her life!"

"Fred, we'll need the best crew on the division to handle X11 out of here." McQueen recognized the faint note of apology in his own voice and bit the sentence off abruptly. The back of his neck stung with a hot rush of blood.

He could imagine Sparkman's brows lifting; he could almost hear Sparkman's thought: So the old boy's got his tail in a sling! The thought would have its kernel of mean satisfaction for the master mechanic; he'd questioned McQueen's decision to let the extra men have her in the first place. Now he permitted himself the dangerous pleasure of an oblique reminder: "Gandee an' MacVeigh're as good as anybody on the extry list, Mr. McQueen."

"Extra men won't do," said McQueen heavily. "I just talked to Cates, from Toledo. He's raising hell, Fred."

"Well . . ." said Sparkman dubiously, "Ned Grooms is in Chicago—got out on the Flyer this morning. We could double Jack Newell out, I guess; he got in less'n an hour ago."

"Double him then!" McQueen snapped. "Give him any fireman he wants, and get 'em both on the engine as soon as you can!"

Maybe he should've said something about the engine, he thought, sitting back and mopping his face. But 696 was one of the spanking new high-wheeled Brooks Prairies—just back from exhibition at the big fair in St. Louis, as a matter of fact—and while he himself, and a few other skeptics, might question the track-holding qualities of a two-wheeled truck for a fast passenger locomotive, R. V. Cates and his ilk could never quarrel with her selection for the fast-mail extra. And that was all that mattered anymore, he admitted sullenly. He was whipped.

The telephone rang. Sparkman again:

"The caller can't locate Newell. The neighbor says him an' his Missus left awhile ago fer his sister's place out in the country; time we could send out there it'd be too late . . ."

"Leave the extra crew on there," McQueen said.

"What?"

"I said we'd stick with the extra crew!" McQueen listened with satisfaction to a stunned moment of silence. "You hear me, Fred?"

"Yeah," Sparkman said slowly, "leave the extry men on there. But . . ."

"That's what I said," McQueen growled, hanging up.

He sat back and absent-mindedly fumbled a cigar out of a vest pocket. Tomorrow, he thought, he might be an old man out of a job. But today, by God, he was still running the Big Ivy's western division!

There was still a tall stack of paper work on his desk. He eyed it longingly, a cozy refuge that was denied to him. Better get going, he thought wearily—he had a lot to do.

18

FROM DOWN BELOW 696's high cab window a reedy voice called, its words lost in the blower's hoarse roar. In a moment the caller, Louie, came up the gangway ladder, red-faced and puffing.

" 'Sall off, men—they re leavin' y'on here."

Charley MacVeigh leaned on his scoop shovel and got a gnawed plug of Mail Pouch out of a hip pocket. Deliberately he worried off a chew, looking the caller up and down, saying nothing. Jem swung around on the seatbox.

"Hell, what's their trouble in there?"

Louie spread his hands in a gesture of disgust. "Jeez, don't be jawin' at me, I ain't runnin' the damn railroad. All I been doin's runnin' my poor butt off! Git Jack Newell, an' hurry up about it. On'y Jack ain't home. Then jist as I git back, here's ol' Sparkman with fire in his britches. Tell them extry men t'stay on the engine. So I'm tellin' you, an' Jeez, I hope they got their minds made up this time, 'cause I'm about wore out!"

Jem and Charley looked at each other, shrugging.

"Tell y'one thing fer sure," the caller added, "I don't envy you guys none! If 'at time ain't made up, it's gonna be both a yer tails." His official duties done for the moment, he turned his attention to the gleaming interior of 696's cab. "Jeez—sports-model, ain't she?"

"Jist back from St. Looey," Charley said with pride.

The company had gone overboard on her all right. The whole massive expanse of the boiler backhead was nickel-plated, and burnished till it shone like minted silver. Throttle and brake levers, the spring grip on the reverse bar, the rims of all gauges, every fitting and lever and lamp housing, was pale golden brass polished to a satiny luster. A bronze plate bolted above the firebox door announced with the impressive dignity of rich simplicity that this locomotive, No. 696, was exhibited by the Indiana Valley Railroad Company at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, St. Louis, Missouri, 1904. As if the company suspected that some far-future archeologist might come poking into this cab some day and, scraping away the verdigris of history, give awestruck credit where it was due for this mechanical monster created by 20th Century man to wage his war on space and time.

"I remember when they was testin' 'er last spring," said Louie importantly. "Had 'er on the Flyer fer awhile. Y'never have 'er before, Jem?"

"Nope." Jem looked at his watch. "Hadn't you better get on back, kid? McQueen'd eat you up raw if he wanted you back at the roundhouse an' you wasn't there." He winked at Charley.

The caller sighed. "Yeah, I s'pose. Jeez, I hope the fuss calms down some when you guys pull out. Makes a man nervous as hell—everybody scairt t'death, an' they all wind up takin' it out on me, seems like." He shrugged in man-of-the-world fashion, took hold of the grabiron, and stepped off the deck.

Charley laughed, reaching for the scoop and bending to the firebox door. Jem took the oilcan out of its rack and followed Louie down the gangway ladder.

There was something almost of worship in the careful ritual of oiling around. He felt the keyed-up tautness, the half-fear, gradually go out of him as he moved along the engine, losing himself in the devotee's intentness with which he guided the long copper spout among the warm metal intricacies of her running gear. The lean bulk of the boiler sat high against the sky on three spidery 8-inch drivers to a side; they and the tall, spoked wheels of truck and trailer gave 696 a lightfooted, lanky look, a promise of leashed and restless speed. White striping set off each lean spoke and outlined the tires and the graceful crescents of the driver counterweights; more striping emphasized the pilot's long forward rake, the compactness of the sloped cylinders, the rangy length of running boards and tender. Her cylinder heads were polished nickel plate. Her slim, fluted rods, gleaming with an oily sheen, seemed poised in frozen motion, awaiting the first thrust of the hot steam that grumbled in her vitals. High up in front of the tall stack, the headlight stared serenely into limitless distance. There hung about her some of the same dim aura of awe that had surrounded the great beast-idols early man had worshiped, brought down in the sluggish flow of time's bloodstream to be reborn, perhaps, as the symbol of man's new religion of mechanization.

Jem walked around the pilot and oiled leisurely down the other side. He went on around the tender, lifting each journal-box cover, noting the fresh dope with satisfaction. He went back up the gangway ladder to find Charley still sprinkling careful scoopsful of coal into the corners of the firebox. The steam-gauge needle quivered delicately on the 200-pound mark. . . .

The whistle squalled plaintively from the edge of town, and Jem said: "Yeah, that's Poole all right." Then the gray-black smoke and the sparkling white of the exhaust billowed up from beyond the rooftops east of the crossing, swelling high in a big, rolling, twisting cloud, its near end rushing swiftly along above the buildings and the tree tops as the crossing bell began its frantic clangor and the tall gates swung down. The locomotive slid abruptly into sight, the dusty train taking shape as he came bursting around the curve.

"Sixty-two minutes late," Jem said, and slid the watch back into his pocket. "Newt got sixteen minutes of it back, at that!"

"Why the hell shouldn't he—on that East End racetrack?" grunted Charley.

They got their high sign the minute the big ten-wheeler was uncoupled and began to pull ahead. Jem was already drifting down toward the switch as he went past, headed for the roundhouse lead, the fireman lifting a hand in weary greeting from the cab window. The stooped car knockers scurrying along the train hardly hesitated as 696's rear coupler jolted softly into the head end car.

"Hell of a crowd," Charley commented, leaning in the gangway. "Word must a got around."

Under the depot's broad eaves the platform was alive with people, the closer ones watching the big Prairie raptly, the others keeping their eyes prowling over the train as though expecting they knew not what to pop out of a mail-car door and suitably embellish the occasion. There were storekeepers with their aprons still about their waists; Benny Klem, the barber, was there with his scissors forgotten in his hand; there were all the regular depot loafers, plus a thick sprinkling of sharply groomed drummers from the Railroad House across the street. A fat man in a pearl gray derby looked to Jem like pictures he'd seen of Mayor Hardenbaugh, and he recognized the old boy with him as one of the officers of the Farmers' and Merchants' Bank. Boys dodged in and out through the crowd, yelling shrilly. Men kept getting watches out and putting them back, shaking their heads doubtfully. Word had, indeed, gotten around.

The fat man who looked like the mayor folded a time-table and jammed it into a pocket. "Too bad!" he announced in a big, speech-making voice that carried to the engine. "They'll never make it up, not in any hundred an' seven miles, on no such schedule as that!"

Andy Wymer, the conductor, came striding up the platform with the trainmaster, and Jem got off the seatbox and went down the gangway ladder to meet them.

"We own the railroad, Jem," said Wymer briefly, handing over a thin sheaf of flimsies.

"That's right, Gandee," the trainmaster fussed, "we've cleared the right of way for you! This run's mighty important to the officials, you know . . ."

Jem thumbed through the orders, not answering. What answer was there to a fool statement like that? He handed them up to Charley when he was through, and the fireman, too, took his time studying them, squatted in the gangway, black stubbled jaws working away at his chew of tobacco. Without a word he handed them back to Jem. They compared watches, all this having about it the slow, purposeful tempo of rote well learned, the instant seeming to stretch interminably while the trainmaster fidgeted beside them.

"Well," said Jem, "what're we waitin' for?"

"Just a minute . . ." The trainmaster craned his neck to stare anxiously over the crowd. Relief came into his voice as he said: "Here comes McQueen!"

The bulky, blue-serged figure of Superintendent McQueen came hurrying ponderously through the press, a scuffed tan grip swinging from one fist.

Wymer said dryly: "I guess you got a passenger in the cab this trip, boys." The conductor was a spare, rawboned man with a long, solemn horse face. He glanced sidewise at the trainmaster, and there might or might not have been a glint of laughter deep in his eyes.

McQueen came puffing up, letting one short nod do for the four of them. He hoisted himself heavily up the ladder without a word, Charley taking the grip from him and dropping it into the left-hand seatbox. Jem got up on the right-hand side, fitting the goggles to his eyes. McQueen's big face was filmed with sweat; he swabbed it with a handkerchief, still puffing.

"Decided to ride with you, Gandee—this is a pretty big run, for the company."

Jem nodded, getting the signal for the brake test, reaching for the valve to make it. Air hissed and shuddered in the trainline. He closed the valve.

"The Pennsylvania's buckin' us pretty hard on these mail contracts," McQueen said. A kind of gruff diffidence came into his voice. "I—we don't expect you to make up all this time, Gandee . . . But the company'll appreciate it if you do the best you can. . . ."

Far away from him, it seemed, Jem felt his hand on the reverse bar, and looking back along the seven-car length of the train he saw Wymer's arm lift in the highball. He reached up and yanked the whistle cord in two quick blasts, flicked the sander valve, cracked the throttle, waiting the long, stretched-out seconds while live steam flashed down the dry pipe into the cylinders. The big engine quivered; the high drivers moved slowly around to the main rods' thrust and pull. They spun for a moment while steam barked angrily in the stack; they bit the sanded rails and rolled ponderously into their 80-inch stride. Cradled in the leather palm of Jem's glove, his watch showed 5:31.

"Sixty-one minutes off!" he shouted across the cab. McQueen nodded grimly, his own watch out.

The exhaust growled deep and heavy in the stack as they gathered speed past the end of the depot, 696 seeming to wade knee-deep through alternate banks of rolling fog as Jem cleared the cylinder cocks. They passed the long bulk of the freight house, where the clerks were all out on the platform to watch; past the water tank and the roundhouse lead, and the switchmen and the roundhouse gang and the men out of the backshops were all gathered along the track to see them go. The long cuts of cars in the yards streamed past, faster and faster; the dead boarded-up engines on the storage tracks flung back the echo of their thunder.

"White eye!" called Charley.

"White eye," Jem nodded.

He hooked the reverse bar back, cracking the whip, and 696's great bellowing smoothed to a staccato pant. Backyards began to go by, filled with the strewn debris of the common man's living; broken-down wagon bodies, dented ashcans, rusty-red piles of junk among the tall sunflowers and the dusty weeds. This had all happened an uncounted number of times before. . . . But never, he thought with a surge of the heart, as clearly, as sharply, as unforgettably as it was happening now. The whistling post for the Valley Street crossing came racing up and dropped behind, and 696's voice was the brazen challenge of a machine-age Minotaur, the wind of her speed whipping the steam along the boiler like a snowy banner. The drivers settled to a smooth, steady pound, the big Prairie rolling to the pace in great, swinging arcs, the deck plate raising its clatter of vibration on the tender sill. An old man on a back porch put his paper down and dropped his sock feet off the railing to gape, swivel-necked, at the fast mail roaring out of town.

The houses scattered, and open fields and fences ran along the right of way; rows of brown furrows and sere corn wheeled around and away and back like ranks of stolid soldiers. Telegraph wires dipped earthward from each pole and soared to meet the next, racing along with X11 in swoops that got shorter and faster as the pace relentlessly quickened. The Milford road came up over the crest of distant ridge and angled in to run along beside the embankment.

Ahead, an automobile speeded up in a cloud of dust; it had been waiting to race them, and the driver peered back over his shoulder and bent grimly to the wheel, the crazy contraption bouncing and jouncing wildly as it hit the ruts. But 696 screamed derisively, drawing even and sliding past, engulfing the machine in the rush and roar and smoke of her own blistering speed, while the driver dared not even lift a hand from his wheel to wave, and the goggled and dustered men in the back seat hung on for dear life. Jem reached up and gave them another taunting blast of the whistle, his teeth flashing under the black bar of mustache.

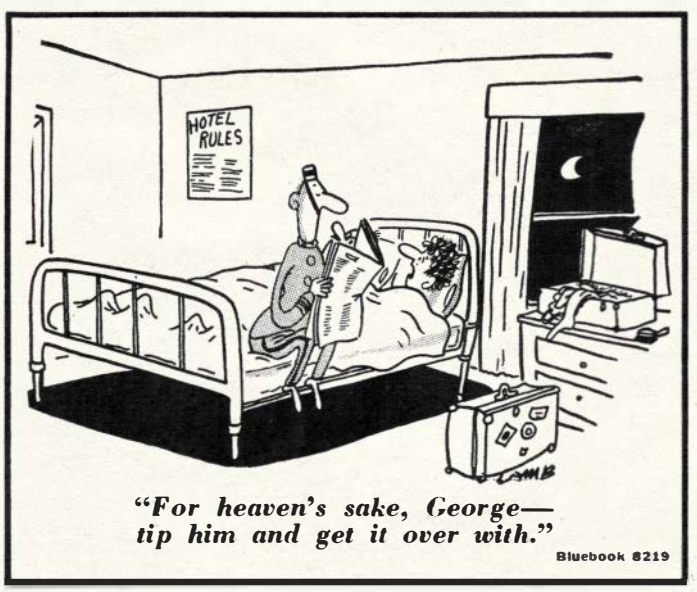
"Got 'er high-heeled shoes on today!" he exulted across the cab.

Charley grinned. McQueen didn't change expression. He studied the watch in his big paw and straightened to slip it down the curve of his paunch into a vest pocket.

The gray straggle of buildings that was Milford showed down the track ahead, and Jem let her scream again, holding the cord down while the hoarse wail rolled and echoed out across the fields, giving them another long, long one and a pair of blasting shorts as they hit the edge of town. They were seven miles out of East Bend; his watch showed seven minutes and 10 seconds since he'd whistled off. Better than two minutes less than the timecard allowed him.

But it came to him in a lurch of the heart just what he was up against, trying to clip time off this 18-hour schedule, and he glanced covertly across at McQueen as he brought the reverse bar a couple of notches around the quadrant. McQueen's rocky face told him nothing.

The needle fluttered skittishly on the steam gauge and Charley swore, hustling off his seatbox to study the fire over the edge of his scoop. He straightened hastily to get the clinker hook out of the tender and bent again to probe at the fire. He picked up the scoop and started coal flying into the



"For heaven's sake, George— tip him and get it over with."

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blazing maw. The needle climbed jerkily and settled steady on the 200 mark.

"Can't bank it ag'in the sides er up under the arch," Charley roared, leaning close to Jem. "Ol' girl's touchy as hell about the way she's fired!"

McQueen turned his scowl on them suspiciously. He inspected the water glass with a coldly questioning eye, leaned out around the backhead to look at the steam gauge, sucked his lips in and let them out again as though he thought of saying something and decided not to, finally lumbered around on the seatbox to resume his vigil down the flying right of way.

Lee Wire heard the OS from Winnemona; it came sooner than he'd expected, and looking at his watch and doing a quick calculation in his head he whistled soundlessly.

"B'God, he's got a wheel on 'er, ain't he?" said Ferd Ambrose.

There was a westbound drag in the siding, and the flagman had dropped into the office for the latest on the extra. He glanced up now. "That wasn't him ag'in? Jeez, not a'ready?"

They all three got up as though by common impulse and went out onto the platform. There were a couple of dozen people out there, and a stir and a rustle ran among them at sight of Ferd, the agent on duty.

"She comin' yet?"

"Just went through Winnemona doin' more'n eighty miles an hour," Lee said. There was a tinge of cynical annoyance with himself, anyway, for having come down to the depot at all, like all the poor country hicks waiting around for an hour or two just to gape for a second at the fast mail. Then all of a sudden their high expectancy infected him too, and he was glad he was here.

"You folks better stand back, there!" said Ferd fussily. "It's mighty dangerous t'be standin' too close t'the tracks when a fast train comes through."

"Jist what I been tellin' 'em," an old man agreed loudly. "Suction'll pull y' under the wheels if y'aint dang' careful!"

There was a general movement back against the depot wall, a nervous peering eastward down the right of way. The drag flagman said: "Folks must a come from miles around fer the big e-vent, hey?" He gestured with the stem of his pipe at the cutbank across the tracks. It was crowded with people, sitting in the tall grass or squatting like turkeys on the top fence rail.

". . . too dang' fast," the old man was saying. "Seems as if people don't think about nothin' any more but speed, speed, speed. An' why? What's it git 'em? Answer me that, somebuddy!"

"It's a speedy world we're livin' in, grandpaw!"

"Yeah? Well—back when I was your age we got there jist the same, young fella, an' don't you fergit it! Speed *crazy,* that's what this country is t'day!"

"Eighty mile' an hour's too blame' fast fer me, Mister," a skinny farmer agreed.

"Shucks," a shock-headed twelve-year old observed scornfully, "ol' 999 went over a hunnert!"

"Listen!" someone yelled. *"Here she comes!"*

The whistle sounded thin and far away through the afternoon hush. The headlight was a pale star blinking in the horizon haze. The shock-headed boy broke from the crowd and streaked out to kneel and lay his ear to a rail. His mother screamed, but he jumped up and darted back before anybody could make a move to grab him.

"He's comin' awful fast," he cried breathlessly, "y'oughta hear them rails a-hummin'."

"Git back, now!" Ferd shouted. "Everybody git back!"

Unbelievably fast, the locomotive took shape, a tall, glaring-eyed creature that seemed hardly to move, yet grew bigger and bigger right before their eyes. It swayed a little, jerkily, as it grew. Steam jetted up, dazzling white against the dark boil of smoke rolling back over the long boiler; a moment later they heard the hoarse panther-scream of the whistle, long drawn and lustily menacing, the pitch soaring.

The ground under their feet quivered. The black bulk hung over them, blotting out the sky with its murky breath. She thundered by in a hurtling mass of hell-bent motion, whirl of speed-blurred drivers and thrashing churn of rods, a redhot blast from the firebox and a dizzy, reeling, rocking flash of dark mail cars going past . . . The rush of her passing flogged them with brief violence, dashed stinging coal smoke into eyes and nostrils, flung cinders in a hot hail on the depot roof. Dust and scraps of old paper eddied and flapped in the wake of the swiftly dwindling markers.

"Glo-ry be!" the flagman bawled exultantly.

The Yellow Creek depot shot by under the cab window in a dark blur and blobs of upturned faces as the others had. Jem thought he recognized Lee's lean figure, and a small, vague sense of regret touched him and was gone in the same instant. He hauled the whistle cord down for the crossing west of the depot, watching the long curve out of town, wheel slowly before him down the boiler's long length, 696's eager snout pointing reelingly into the broad, blank blur of September foliage as the track shifted smoothly away to his left. He didn't touch throttle or air, and sensed McQueen's dour eye upon him; the tall Prairie rolled into the easement, kept her stride, seemed to settle closer to the rails like a running greyhound. Charley staggered a little, brought up against the right side of the gangway with a clatter of spilled coal, and regained his footing with an effort. He dashed sweat off his face with the back of a gloved hand, and swung the scoop viciously into the coal pile. The Yellow Creek trestle boomed hollowly beneath them.

It was 5:45. Thirty miles out of East Bend now; 23 minutes and 15 seconds. Jem grinned at McQueen and roared across the cab:

"How d'you like it?"

McQueen put his own watch away with a bleak nod.

They were 52 minutes off the advertised.

The 20 miles into Hollister climbed in a long, almost imperceptible grade as the land rolled gently up out of the Yellow Creek bottoms. Jem felt the first slow drag of it in a tiny faltering of the drivers' hurrying stride. He felt them almost begin to spin, almost get away from him, and the back of his mind remembered the idly made remarks of other men —of Ned Grooms and Jack Newell and men who held the Flyer as a regular run—that the new Prairies were damn good engines, but slippery. He cracked the sander valve and eased the throttle in, and felt 696 catch her long stride again and buckle down to running.

He leaned out the window, and the wind of their passage lashed at him with berserk fury, shrieking like the dead and restless ghosts of all the Indians that had ruled this rich black land before the likes of him had come. It smashed the brim of his hat flat to his forehead and snatched with fierce fingers at neckerchief and goggles, dashing the sweat off his face with its stinging slap.

Ducking back in, he felt himself surrounded and swallowed up in the raging heat of the firebox and the racking uproar of the great engine's labor. The seething whisper of water swelling irresistibly into steam just beyond the staybolts made a steady undertone to the pounding steel chant of the drivers, the fiery monster-roar of the draft in the firebox, the dancing clatter of the deck plate, the swinging creak and groan of trailer springs and drawbar underneath. Charley's scoop bit into the coal with a solid *chunk;* he grunted as he pivoted and swung, the coal sliding with a tiny, scraping rattle off the smooth steel as the fire sucked it greedily in. Sweat darkened the scrubbed blue of the shirt on Charley's back, and glistened in little trickles through the dark stubble along his jaw. The minutes skipped away, too fast.

The westward miles unrolled before them and were overtaken, ridden down, obliterated beneath the long onreaching pilot. They raged through Hollister yard, switchpoints clanking under the flying wheels, the target showing white and clear. The broad depot platform was alive with men's waving hats and women's fluttering handkerchiefs; rigs were parked at each crossing, people massed behind each lowered gate; workers had left their machines to crowd the tall windows of factories along the right of way and cheer the fast mail's passing.

It was 6:14. They'd clipped two more minutes off the jealous schedule.

Charley came off his seatbox to bellow in Jem's ear. "Takin' water at New Buff'lo?"

Grudgingly, Jem nodded. This high-drivered Prairie was a new engine to him; he guessed at her ravenous thirst and dared not take a gamble. . . .

Dusk reached up the western sky toward the low sun, and the watch stayed in Jem's leather-clad palm now as he crouched forward on the seatbox. His left hand lifted to the throttle, dropped to the reverse bar, feeling with slow, yearning exactness for a more perfect balance still between steam and valve cut-off.

In theory, there was no limit to a steam-engine's speed, as long as steam pressure stayed up and steel hung together . . .

This was the stretch to turn her loose: 17 level, tangent miles to Laconna, five more to the crest of Wolf Hill . . . Twenty-two miles for this tall and lanky Prairie to show her heels to the racing minutes. The rushing wind outside, the strident clamor that filled the cab, rolled over Jem like a battle madness.

He felt himself soaring dizzily among the boiling clouds and the forked lightnings of the sky; he was a mile-high giant with a mile-long stride, stepping high and light over this darkening land of Indiana. As though it was the beat of blood in his own veins he felt the power in the great, hot heart of the engine under him. Steam surging in the cylinders in time to the flashing cutoff of the valves was the swelling breath in his own lungs. The thrusting swing of main rods against crank pins was a mighty awareness in his own muscles, as if he willed it so. He did will it. For now everything he'd ever thought and dreamed and done down the years—all he'd learned through the ache of his back and the hard-wrung sweat of every endless hour since the night he'd climbed aboard the local to go firing on the Ivy—had been preparation for this day and this hour on the right-hand seatbox of 696.

They went through Laconna like a big black bat out of hell. Seventeen miles in 11 minutes; it was 6:26.

Down on the deck Charley fed his fire with the steady pivot and swing of an automaton that sweated. Water jiggled and danced in the glass, held low, traded for steam by Jem's grudging hand on the injector valve. Evening thickened over the rolling prairie now, and the sun was a sullen red eye bedded in purple fleece on the horizon. The 696 rolled and rocked as she headed into the start of the spiral for the long reverse curve down Wolf Hill, and Charley scattered a last scoopful into the firebox glare and straightened up, shaking the sweat out of his eyes as he leaned around the backhead to look out the front window. The dark hulk of an eastbound freight loomed at them and shot by, panting in long, laboring sobs from the climb. Their headlight beam slid palely along the boxcar sides that came jostling around the curve. Charley, glancing across at Jem with a worried furrow between his eyes, put the scoop aside and got up on the seatbox behind McQueen.

"No use tryin' t'fire down this hill," he muttered darkly, "man couldn't hit the firebox door with a scattergun . . ."

McQueen moved to give him room, peering around the backhead at Jem. He didn't answer Charley; the fireman felt his quick intake of breath, felt him exhale slowly, leaving whatever he thought unsaid.

The locomotive screamed, then screamed again, long and hoarse, as she laid over into the curve's great sweep.

Jesus, prayed Charley soundlessly, feeling them lean to a relentless pressure. A vast, soft weight seemed to press him helplessly to the cab's side, and he heard loose coal rattle across the deck as the right side lurched ponderously up. He felt McQueen's iron grip on his arm, and had the sickening, bottom-gone certainty in his belly that the right side drivers lifted off the rail to spin in empty air . . . God A'mighty, he thought, we're goin' over!

He felt himself flung mightily back the other way, and heard the drivers drop onto the right-side rail again—he'd remember that clear, ringing *clang!* all the rest of his life—and stiffened his legs against the bucking deck as the cab all at once fell downward away from him. The left-side drivers reeled up in their turn, and across the cab Jem's big body was a crouched black silhouette against the rushing ground a long, long way below. Charley felt his rump slide across the seat's slick leatherette; it became a matter of hanging on now for one half of a second . . . And the next . . . And the next . . . Hanging on by gritted teeth and dumb will while the screaming instant stretched and stretched intolerably and the pounding drivers fought the slippery arc of steel . . . No thinking any more; the instant stretched too long, and snapped, and there was nothing left but frozen numbness and red hell yawning down the embankment . . . And in the midst of it, McQueen sprawling off the seatbox into the backhead, clawing wildly for a handhold in the maze of pipes.

"Ow!" A hoarse grunt of pain from McQueen. But he held on.

And the banked rail came up to meet the left-side drivers with another slamming jolt; the engine staggered and reeled into the tangent with the crazy right of way pinned down once more under the headlight beam and the scattered lights of White Prairie rushing at them out of the gloom. Jem grinned across the cab, the thin gleam from the water-glass lamp laying a shine on his goggle lenses.

"Think she wasn't gonna make it?" he roared.

Charley got stiffly down off the seatbox and reached for the scoop, staggering to the whipping roll. His legs were rubbery under him, and he realized with a numb disgust that his teeth were clenched into his chew of tobacco so tightly his jaws ached. He tried to spit out of a dry month. "Yeah," he mumbled flatly.

"Three miles down the hill in a minute an' 28 seconds!" Jem bellowed jubilantly. "Fast enough for you, McQueen?"

Hot crimson light leaped from the firebox door, washing over the solid shapes of McQueen's big dome-toed shoes, flickering like red lightning on the exhaust that rolled back over the cab roof. Coal scuffed off the scoop and the firebox door clanked shut. In the shadow, the superintendent grumbled like a wounded bear.

"Hey?" Charley asked.

McQueen had one hand up close to his face, leaning toward the dim light. "Grabbed a damn hot pipe back there . . ." He became aware of Charley watching, and rubbed the hand gingerly along the tight blue serge of his thigh. "Nothing," he grunted shortly.

All that was left of the sun now was a red ember in the western cloud bank. It slipped off to their left as the right of way swung gently north toward the lake shore. Steam blubbered at the safety pops and Charley stood up and got his watch out, stepping over close to Jem. "Only thirty-five minutes off!" The awe was heavy in his voice. "By God, Jem—you can make it *all* up! By God, y'can!"

Farm-house lights swam along beside them and were swallowed dizzily into the distance behind. The roar of the fast mail's passing filled the night. The drivers' 80-inch stride slashed away the miles. They flashed like a fiery meteor through Howardsdale . . . Through Malaga . . . The whistle whooped its brazen, longdrawn challenge to fading Time. The low sand hills of the dune country began to slip past the cab windows. A rabbit bounced across the track like a small ghost in the headlight beam, and a hunting fox paused on the edge of a cut, pricked its ears at the rushing monster with the glaring eye and slunk back into darkness. They went through Hamilton 27 minutes off the carded time, through Barberton 23 minutes off. . . .

Far on their right the hazy glint of starshine on Lake Michigan showed between the dunes. They ran through sere ranks of dead grass in a wide and lonely marshland, the Prairie swinging her long smokebox back and forth across the right of way like a hunting hound, for Time, the unseen quarry, lagged and was overtaken by her thundering pace as the first glare of Chicago's industry stained the sky ahead. All three watches were out as they went through Kelsing like a howling nightwind.

It was 6:33.

"Eleven minutes off," McQueen rumbled out of the deep shadow of the backhead.

"White eye!" Charley chanted.

"White eye."

The minutes of the schedule ran out and the well-remembered landmarks spun out of the night at Jem as he flogged 696 through the outskirts of Chicago. The lights of the signal bridges winked red and green and white . . . Always white for the fast-mail extra as his heavy hand on the whistle cord sent the arrogant challenge out ahead. People clustered on the edge of the embankment, held back by sweating railroad police. The right of way widened into the steel maze of the yards and they roared around the long curve into Englewood.

Jem thrust the throttle all the way to the backhead and dropped his hand to the brake valve. Wheels groaned under the brake shoes; they slowed . . . and stopped . . . and the sudden absence of roll and clatter and pounding speed was a strange, unnatural thing with the dreamlike quality of dim remembrance from a long and vague time back. . . . Jem's watch showed 6:51.

"On the advertised, McQueen!"

McQueen swung heavily about on the seatbox. His lips moved around the sodden stump of a dead cigar as he read his own watch, and sweat glistened on a face whose rocky crags and gullies broke slowly into a tired smile.

"A minute ahead a time," he said softly. "Gandee—I didn't think it could be done!" And shook his head, not really thinking it yet.

Charley leaned in the gangway and gulped the smoky air gratefully. Over a shoulder he said: "One a these days, Jem, you're goin' to hell across lots!" Back along the train they could hear the thump and scuff of western mail being unloaded for the Rock Island.

"I never saw a better job of running," McQueen said. "Or firing either. And the company won't forget it." He drew a long, weary breath and glanced at his right hand, an angry, swollen, blistered red.

"But it was too damned fast!" he said with conviction.

19

THERE WAS A bubbling excitement in him as he got off the trolley on his way to Clara's, the wild, ripping recklessness of the fast-mail run refusing to die, kindling instead a swelling joy that was like walking on clouds as he swung down the familiar street. He felt his whole body yearn for her with a lusty, pleasant hunger.

But her flat was dark.

His momentum carried him up the steps and into the vestibule, and he hesitated there, then punched the bell with a tiny, sinking premonition of disappointment. There was no answer. He punched it again. She'd never before been away when he'd called, but of course it was bound to happen sooner or later. The fine, high expectancy drained slowly out of him, a sulky irritation taking its place. He rang again, keeping his thumb angrily on the button.

Steps creaked at last and the door next to Clara's opened. A fat, pink, Irish face was thrust out at him, blue eyes wide in inquiry. Thos. O'Malley, he recalled, was the name inked on the card beside that door.

"Oh," the face said irritably, "thought it was my bell a ringin'. Y'lookin' for *her*, hey?" He accented the "her" unpleasantly, jerking his head at Clara's door.

"Yeah. I guess she ain't home, though."

O'Malley sneered. "She's home, Mister, don't worry."

"Whatta y'mean?" Jim asked, feeling something like a cold fist clench in his belly.

The Irishman laughed nastily. "Sure an' did y'think you was the only one on 'er string? Why, it's the scandal a the whole neighborhood—her an' 'er gentleman callers! Think we ain't fed up with bein' disturbed by yer kind—"

"Thomas!" said a woman's voice sharply.

"I don't give a damn!" said Thos. O'Malley, his face getting red, his voice starting to shake a little. "It's high time decent people had their say about this kind a thing goin' on right under their feet! As fer you, Mister, wantin' t'lay arou—"

His eyes met Jem's and his indignation froze. Hastily he tried to duck back in and slam the door, but not quite hastily enough; Jem's big hand shot out and grabbed him.

"Now just what the hell're you drivin' at?" Jem roared.

"Leggo me!" shouted Thos. O'Malley, squirming and struggling. But he was helpless in Jem's angry grip—a little, fat man in undershirt and sock feet, still clutching the evening paper in one hand. The woman's voice gave a frightened little scream. "Mary," cried O'Malley, "call the police!"

Clara's door opened, and Clara's voice was like a shrill voice cutting across the confusion.

"Jem! What's the matter?"

Behind him as he wheeled, Jem heard the O'Malleys' door slam. The dark gold hair was loose about Clara's face, and she was in her kimono, held sketchily about her with a frantic hand. Her pink mouth was moistly open, and her eyes widened in something like fright as she retreated into the warm darkness of the parlor.

"Jem, honey—what is it? I was in bed, asleep, and I heard all that loud talking . . ."

"Yeah," he said. He was shaking all over with the rage he hadn't been able to vent on the hapless O'Malley. He gulped, choking some of it down with an effort. "Y'hear what he said, Clara?"

"Oh, Jem," she wailed, "those O'Malleys, those awful people! They hate me: the terrible lies they tell about me. . . . They're nasty, shanty Irish, that's all they are . . ." She swayed into his arms, putting her pale face up to his, wet mouth fastening on his hungrily.

"I should a wiped up the floor with him!" he said fiercely.

They stood in the dark as they'd stood so many times before, the scent of her coming up around his head, her body fitting itself pliantly to his, his hands slipping greedily along its soft curves. The old hot, full-bodied magic came back, making his head swim. But there was still the picture in his mind of Thos. O'Malley's round Irish face filled with honest, respectable, middle-class indignation, more telling somehow than the words O'Malley had spat at him.

"Listen," he said awkwardly, feeling like a fool, "*was* somebody here with you tonight?"

"Jem!" she said. She giggled. "I was *in bed!*"

Pink lamplight washed out of the bedroom and lay across the parlor floor. There was whiskey on her breath. But what of it? He knew she took a drink sometimes. But alone? Something nagged at his mind, crying insistently for attention, and he tried to put it aside, but could not: A dim thread of light below the dining-room portieres, and why should there be a light out there—if she'd been in bed, asleep?

"Jem!" she wailed.

He shook her off and strode across the parlor and flung the portieres aside. The light came from the kitchen; another stride took him to the door, he stopped dead in his tracks.

A man stood by the back door. He teetered on one foot, the other thrust halfway into a leg of his pants. His suspenders trailed on the floor, the tails of his shirt standing out in stiff, starched wings about his hairy thighs, and his coat and hat lay on the kitchen table, his collar and tie on top of them. He was a big, sleek-looking man, older than Jem, and he somehow had about him a look of substance, of self-assurance—even with tousled hair falling into his eyes and his plump mouth gulping like a stricken fish's.

"Take it easy now, friend," he said anxiously, "I'm just going!" He got the pants on with a convulsive effort and straightened up, breathing heavily.

The blood began to pound in measured hammer strokes in Jem's head. "You—you—" he said thickly.

"Now hold on . . ." The man put out both hands in a gesture of sweet reason, but his pants began to fall and he had to grab for them. "Now listen, friend—can't we just forget this, like a couple of gents that weren't born yesterday?" He looked soft and prosperous, Jem thought. A big business man, a slick sport, a fast-talking drummer—like Ernie Swann.

Hate boiled up in him, hot and wild and glorious. He gathered himself to go raging across the kitchen like a juggernaut and knock this sleek sport sprawling, to beat him to a shapeless pulp with hammering swings of his great fists, to make him squeal like a hog and crawl and grovel and beg for mercy. Jem crouched on the mighty springboard of his wrath —and there suddenly was no wrath; it went out like a flame doused with ice water and there was nothing left in him but the emptiness of sick disgust and the numb, uncaring realization of what this all meant.

There was Clara, flattened against the wall like a tragic statue, her smoky green eyes clinging to him, her mouth twisting and quivering like a little girl's about to cry.

"Hell," he said, "don't go, Mister—I'm the one that's goin'."

This wasn't now, a voice mocked somewhere in his head. This was Barcelona, Indiana, long years ago, and he'd just knocked the schoolmaster galley-west, and what had it got him? And tonight he'd leave town and never see his darling Clara ever again. This was the merry-go-round coming full circle. Time to get off. He reeled a little going through the dining room and the dim-lit parlor.

A stray gleam of lamplight showed him Ernie Swann's toothy grin from the onyx-topped stand, as though Ernie leered at him and reminded him that he'd been the winner all along. He swung a big fist at it in passing, and knocked it across the parlor in a small crash of breaking glass.

But Clara was ahead of him at the front door.

"Jem, honey—you can't go like this. You're the one I love, Jem . . . But you were away so long, and Joe kept coming around . . . Oh, Jem . . ." Tears sparkled in her long lashes, and her voice climbed shrilly toward a scream.

"Joe!" he said. "You hang onta Joe!"

The kimono had fallen open, leaving a pink-tipped breast bare. Take a good look at her, Jem, he thought; this is the last of her you're ever going to see! He shouldered past her, tearing away from her clutching hands, her wailing of his name silenced by the slamming door.

The O'Malleys' door was open a crack. It closed with a hasty click. He went out and down the steps.

20

THE RECORD RUN was in all the papers—the big Chicago papers as well as the East Bend *Clarion*—and Jem glanced through them greedily, feeling a dizzy flush of mingled exaltation and embarrassment go all over him. His own name kept jumping out from the thick blocks of type:

> . . . engineman Gandee of East Bend . . . top speed over a three-mile stretch west of Laconna, Indiana . . . said in some quarters to constitute a new railway speed record . . . pointed out by Indiana Valley officials here that the achievement . . .

That was the *Tribune,* in a somewhat prosaic account. The *Inter-Ocean* had permitted itself a considerably more lyrical vein:

> Although the fast mail left East Bend more than an hour behind the epoch-making schedule set for it, engineer J. A. Gandee, iron-nerved veteran of 11 years in the cab . . . on time to the minute . . . hit the incredible speed of 120 miles per hour . . . eclipses the 112 miles per hour record set by celebrated engine No. 999 of the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad in 1893 . . . officials interviewed by this reporter stated . . . stands as new railway speed record . . .

It was a nice touch, he thought, mentioning him as the conquerer of the legendary Charley Hogan and old 999. Jeez, he thought, it must be wonderful to be able to sling words around like that!

But it was the *Clarion*, ever mindful of the Big Ivy's kingpost role in East Bend's economy, that really pulled out all the stops. The *Clarion* lauded everybody from John McQueen up and down the ladder, went into prose rhapsodies over "the highest speed ever attained by a human being in all recorded history," extolled the management whose genius and enterprise had given the nation such a modern marvel of transportation machinery as No. 696, and, finally, saw in Jem Gandee a native son of Indiana who might well stand forever as an inspiration to every red-blooded American boy and a model of the American working man at his finest."

He put the paper down at last, his cheeks tingling.

They'd deadheaded him back, and he was mighty glad to be home. That was a out all the capacity for feeling left in him, at least till he could get some sleep. But he'd had plenty of time to think, riding the cushions in the smoker, and the sum total of his thinking had sent him around to the diner as soon as the train got in.

He looked down the counter with careful casualness as Bess punched a freight-brakeman's pie card and began to clear away his dirty dishes. The brakeman drifted toward the door, his face lighting up as he saw Jem.

"Readin' all about it, hey boy?"

Jem shrugged, grinning.

"Man, what a job a scorchin' ballast that must a been!" The brakeman laid a hand on his shoulder. "Lord, Jem, I'd a been scairt stiff back there in that combine about the time y'started down Wolf Hill, an' I admit it! Y'really hit a hunnerd'n twenty like they said?"

"Accordin' to my watch," Jem nodded gruffly. "Wymer an' McQueen had theirs out too; I guess we did, all right."

The brakeman shook his head in grinning tribute and went on out into the early dusk. Jem looked at Bess again. They were alone in the diner now, but that didn't mean that somebody wouldn't come tramping in at any moment. A tight sense of urgency mounted in him. When she finally turned around, she caught his eyes full on her.

She smiled warmly. "It *was* a wonderful run, Jem."

He stirred the last of his cooling coffee with great concentration. "Just happened t'be me," he said. "I sure appreciate you savin' all the papers, though."

"Well," she shrugged, "I suppose you've seen the Chicago papers already. I always get them—they just happened to be still around."

"No, I never got t'see 'em. I was—I was busy."

The brown eyes stared guilelessly at him for a long moment before retiring behind their thick lashes.

"Bess," he blurted, "any chance a us makin' up?"

If the question filled her with any great surge of joy, she managed not to show it. It seemed to him that the pleasant red fullness of her mouth lifted a little at one corner, that was all.

"Look, Bess," he plunged on desperately, "I been actin' like a fool. Nobody knows it better'n I do, believe me . . ." But she didn't say anything, or even *look* anything, and his words failed him like a tired old dray horse that falls in the street and refuses to get up and go again.

"I just wanted you t'know how I felt about it all," he mumbled at last. "I'm sorry, Bess."

"Oh, that's all right, Jem."

Well, he thought sulkily, if she didn't want to meet him halfway, she didn't have to. He had a quick notion to get up and leave. Then his mind saw the street outside, as

clearly as if he already stood with the door closing behind him. There was Fallon's, and in a minute he'd be heading in there between the swinging doors. A few drinks, and the same old cinderpit gossip with the boys—well, tonight'd be a little different because he was the big man of the hour, but that'd all be over soon enough—and then up to his room with a mild glow on . . . The whole thing repeating itself through a long succession of days down the weeks and the months . . .

It all came and went in his mind and he looked up and Bess was still standing there, her own eyes liquid and soft and faraway, and he had to say something to keep this going; it was all at once vastly important.

"How's Lee?" he asked.

"Fine, I guess. I suppose you heard he's quitting."

He gaped at her. "Quittin'? How come?"

"I don't know." She shrugged. "Don't the boomers usually head south this time of year?"

"I kind a thought his boomin' days might be over."

She tossed her head. "I guess you thought wrong."

"He seemed purty stuck on you, Bess."

She gave him a long, disdainful look and started to turn away.

"Wait a minute," he pleaded, "I didn't mean t'butt inta your business, Bess. I just . . . Well . . ."

She didn't say anything to help him along. But she stayed.

"You turned him down! Didn't you?"

A blush came pinkly into her cheeks, but before she could answer the door slammed wide for a pair of car riders off the hump. Their big feet scuffed across the floor and their voices, loud in some inconsequential scrap of talk, rode over the intimacy of the moment and crushed it to nothing:

"'. . . an' if yer a railroader,' I tol 'em, 'I'm the king a England's second cousin.' Any ol' time I gotta take his kind a cheap lip . . ."

Bess gave him a brief, unfathomable look and moved down the counter to take their orders. There seemed no point in hanging around any longer, Jem thought disgustedly. He got slowly off the stool and lounged to the door. "See you later, Bess."

He wandered idly up the street toward Fallon's, the thought of Lee's quitting only a feeble satisfaction in him. He was almost at the door when old Unc Harpster bustled out, licking the foam of a beer off his stringy mustache. Unc took a quick second look and rammed his right hand at him.

"By gosh, Jem, h'are you? We was jist talkin' about y'in there—damn if y'aint the man a the hour around East Bend t'night!"

It seemed to Jem that they pumped hands interminably.

"Damn if some a these other throttle artists won't have t'take a back seat from now on, hey boy? By gosh, Jem, they never *was* sich a hell of a job a runnin' . . ."

"Ah, hell," said Jem.

"The caller come in yestiddy an' said you was the one takin' the extry west outa here. An' I said then—ask 'im if I didn't—I said, 'Well sir, Jem'll make up 'at time if any man can!' An' y'oughta seen Bessie drop ever'thing an' hustle over't the depot t'watch . . ."

Jem's jaw dropped. "She did? Honest, Unc?"

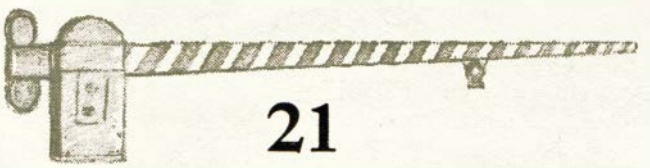
The old man cackled and poked him knowingly in the ribs. "She sure did—but don't y'never let on I tol' you. She'd wring my neck fer me. Say, whatta you two got yer backs up about, anyways? That brass pounder down't Yella Crick? Hell—a blind man could see it's *you* she's stuck on!"

He went rambling on, the fulsome praise foaming out of him like beer out of a bottle, but Jem no longer heard him. He put a shoulder against a lamp post and leaned there, busy with his own sudden thoughts.

Off in the western sky the last deep gold of sunset darkened to blue night. Chicago was off there, he thought. And Clara. But this time, thinking of her, there was no stab of pain at all. Just a deep, mildly regretful memory that would get smaller and smaller down the years till all that was left would be a bitter-sweet nostalgia, and he'd still remember, but without caring. He guessed he'd known all along that it had to end sometime. It had been too hot to last. . . . An unreal kind of thing, like a dream.

But Bess was real.

It would be like getting to know her all over again, he thought with a warm, comfortable feeling of expectation.



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THE WIND WHIPPING in under the train shed had an early fall edge to it; Jem noticed it with a shiver as he finished oiling around and stopped at the gangway ladder to roll a cigarette. He bent to the flame cupped in his hands and inhaled deeply, his eyes trailing the blue smoke that whirled away and vanished, and that was when he saw the tall figure striding out of the train shed's gloom into a shaft of smoky sunlight.

It was Lee Wire.

"Hello, Jem," said Lee, setting his suitcase down and thrusting out his hand, grinning a little warily.

"How are you, Lee?" said Jem, just as warily.

"Just got in on the plug," Lee said. "I thought it was you I saw oilin' around—struck me all at once I better stop an' say good-by."

He looked a little somber, a little out of character, in a freshly pressed blue suit and black thousand-miler shirt. The lean face, Jem realized suddenly, was a stranger's face.

"Yeah," he said slowly, "I heard you'd quit."

"While ago," Lee nodded. "I stuck around long enough t'break in the kid they hired for Yella Crick, though."

They continued to pump hands with self-conscious vigor, then let go quickly as if they both realized it at the same time.

"Thought y'might stick around this time," said Jem. "The Big Ivy's a purty good road t'work for."

Lee shook his head with the old slow and crooked grin. "Winter's comin', Jem—time for us boomers t'fly the coop."

A long pause built up, heavy with important things they ought to be saying to each other. But what things?

"Think you'll be gettin' back this way again?"

"When I go I'm gonna be a long time gone, Jem!"

Jem shook his head. Poor Lee, he thought. Poor drifting boomer. He'd never amount to a damn. . . . He had a brief, foolish impulse to say something about writing, but it drowned immediately in the sea of its own unlikeliness. As though either of them ever would!

Lee was looking at his watch, saying briskly: "Well Jem—I gotta go. Sure glad I got to see you. An' tell Bess good-by for me . . ."

"Sure. Good luck, Lee—take care a yourself."

"Sure," Lee said. "You too, Jem."

They shook hands briefly, and Lee bent and picked up his suitcase and wheeled and strode swiftly off into the dusky tumel of the train shed, walking with long-legged strides and not looking back at all. Jem thought he half-turned once, but he was a long way down by then, a vague figure all mixed up with the passengers streaming in through the gates.

The conductor came along the train with the orders in his hand.

—By James P. McCague

NEXT MONTH: "MISSING WITH ALL HANDS," by George C. Appell—an exciting modern sea novel, filled with frank, realistic action.

Even the Cops Don't Know Traffic Laws

Continued from page 16

times that makes sense, but it's hypocrisy, just the same.

On the one hand we are warned SPEED KILLS! On the other, we are subtly or bluntly urged to step on it. To complicate things further, a city will conduct a drive on pokey motorists, then a drive on speeders, instead of consistently enforcing all laws at all times.

Going at top legal speed, I have been pressed by irritated cops to go faster in New York, New Jersey, Ohio, Indiana and Washington, D.C. I'm not arguing the cops were wrong. But if traffic can safely move faster, let's raise the legal limit, not run on a bootleg one.

On Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, the sign said 25 mph. Fifty feet ahead, another read: SIGNALS SET FOR 30. I didn't care what the signals were set for. I was going to obey the law. I went 25, in the fast lane, got stopped for impeding traffic, although not ticketed.

Here's how a police official explained the SIGNALS SET FOR 30 doubletalk:

You can be ticketed for doing 30, because the limit is 25, and some drivers have been.

You can be cited for doing less than 30, if you're impeding traffic thereby.

"The signals being set for 30 doesn't give you the *right* to go 30," he explained calmly, as if this added up.

"What *does* it do?"

He sighed. "It confuses."

I was reminded of the Mad Tea Party in Alice In Wonderland.

A sign outside Baltimore announced: MEN WORKING. SLOW TO 15. I did. What the cop said wasn't nice.

In Omaha, I stopped to let a pedestrian skitter across. You'd think I was committing mayhem, from the officer's comment.

In New York's Times Square, I wanted to right turn *without* ploughing through the mob trying to scurry across. That was insubordination of some sort.

Some laws are clearly obsolete. For instance California has one which says if I propose to turn left in the middle of a block to get into a driveway on the opposite side, I must signal, stop, and "wait until all cars approaching from the opposite direction have passed." That was fine in 1910. I tried it in 1955, on Van Owen Boulevard. in the San Fernando Valley. I signaled, stopped. So long as I could see a car approaching, I waited. I could always see a car approaching. Others piled up behind me. By the time the line stretched several blocks, a motorcycle cop zoomed in. What he told me is unfit for a family magazine.

"But the law . . ." I cried.

"To hell with the law!" he roared. "You're obstructing traffic!"

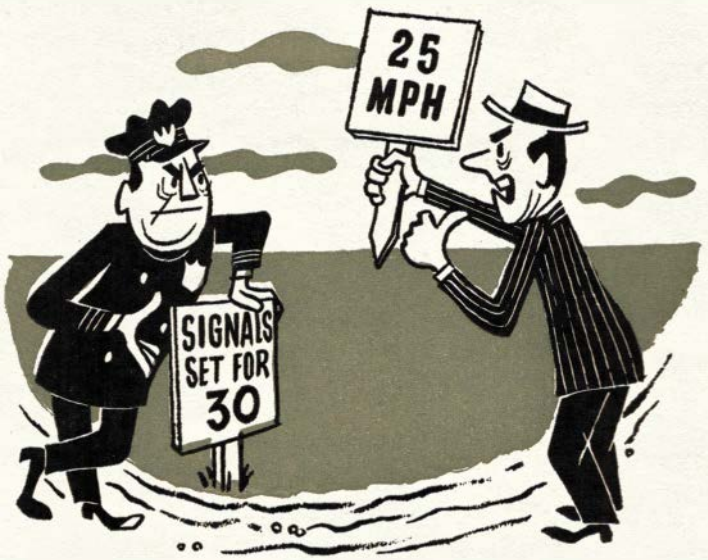
Of course he was right. He expected me to use common sense. But Vehicle Code Sec. 544a doesn't allow me to use common sense. The only way out is to change the law so it makes sense for 1955.

Another item that confounds the confusion is that sometimes enforcement depends on how much money a town needs. It is well known that some towns count heavily on fines. They particularly stop out-of-town cars. Drivers must pay a fine, then and there, before a justice of the peace. If they won't plead guilty, they must put up bail or be jailed. If bailed, they must return for trial. Most drivers pay the fine and don't worry whether the law was on their side.

I entered a Florida town at 2:30 A.M. A red blinker controlled the main intersection. That meant I must come to a full stop, proceed when safe.

I had been told by an attorney that "full stop" meant the vehicle must cease moving. As soon as safe, even if one second later, I might proceed.

Approaching the intersection I saw the prowl car lurking around the corner. Otherwise, the streets were as empty of humans and cars, as an Everglades alligator swamp. I tapped my brake, came to a full stop for two seconds, then proceeded.



One sign said lights were set for 30, another said speed limit was 25. How could you win?

Around the corner came the car, red light on, siren screaming. I surrendered without drawing my gun.

A uniformed Senior Citizen approached.

"Di'n'tcha see the blinker?" he quavered.

"Yup."

"Whyntcha stop?""

"I did."

"You di'n't."

"I won't argue, but what do you call a stop?"

"Lessee your license."

"Look," I told him, "I'm not paying a fine. I'll put up bail and come back for trial with my lawyer, unless you satisfy me that what you call a stop is a stop I should have made."

Grudgingly, he explained. "A stop means you gotta stop dead, so's you hafta shift gears to go on."

"I stopped dead. I couldn't shift gears. This car has an automatic shift."

"A damn Sunday driver!" he snarled. "Get goin'!" (It was a Monday.)

In New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Iowa, and Ohio, I was forewarned against traffic traps. I drove through them time and again. I didn't always get a ticket, but my batting average was higher than justified, considering I never violated a law. I got cited for "speeding" 28 miles in a 30-mile zone; having a "weak tail light"; arguing with an officer.

Sometimes not the town, but the officer would benefit from my largesse. In Chicago a traffic man whistled me to a stop, peered in, and seeing seven riders in a five-passenger car, inquired ominously, "Crowded, ain't you?"

"Oh, we're pretty comfortable," I allowed.

"Know the law about overcrowding a car?"

"No. What is it?"

He didn't say. He didn't pronounce me a violator. Instead he grinned and pulled out a book: "How many tickets to the _____Ball would ye like to buy?"

We purchased no tickets—and received no summons. Maybe the cop was just funning with us.

I wouldn't want to leave the impression I encountered much discourtesy. Most departments had officers so polite, even when writing in that little black book, it was almost a pleasure to be stopped. One trained its men to say, "Good evening, sir. I'm Officer Smith. May I see your license, please?" Now, after meeting a man socially, you're not going to get mad at him, are you?

Of course, the best department might have one officer whose wife bit him that morning, so he was bound to bite the first motorist in return. And the most discourteous force would have a living doll who somehow didn't get fired.

But whether cops are polite or surly, more traffic courts ought to listen to Municipal Judge Charles T. Smith of Long Beach, California: "Some judges don't seem to apply the principle that a defendant is presumed to be innocent until proven guilty, in traffic cases as well as any others. In my opinion, it is assumed in too many cases that the defendant is guilty merely because he is brought into court by a police officer."

I tried, in my test runs, to see the officer's viewpoint, and usually succeeded. He is concerned over the fact one person is killed in a motor-vehicle accident every 14 minutes. He wants to cut that rate down. He's working in our interest. He knows that as per capita operation of cars rose, as they became more efficient and highways grew speedier, some of our laws became obsolete.

But most departments had officers so polite that it was almost a pleasure to be stopped.

But the answer, as traffic engineers, city planners and the AAA see it, is not to wink at violation, or penalize drivers for not violating. The answer is to update obsolete laws; clarify ambiguous statutes; use the latest mechanical devices for safely speeding up traffic; modernize traffic arteries. We will always have to allow flexibility to meet prevailing conditions, but we can do a lot to bring sanity into traffic, thereby preserving the sanity of driver and policeman.

If a 25-mile limit is too slow or too fast—and both could be true—let the law so state.

A country with our genius for engineering and organization can lick any traffic problem. Mr. Al Pryor, of the Edison Company of Southern California, and a national authority on street and protective lighting, asserts there already are electronic devices giving traffic lights variable intervals at different hours. With such a device the crowded street would automatically get a longer run than the uncrowded that crosses it. We could, today, install electronically controlled signs which would flash a 25-mile limit one hour, a 30-mile limit another. The motorist wouldn't have to guess. If we wanted him to crawl or detour, we could officially notify him, by remote control.

After my experience, I'm for better driver education, too. Our frenetic traffic isn't just due to laws or enforcement vagaries. There's no substitute for the human element, human consideration. And we're making progress. But so is technology, and population. We must continuously close up the gap between modern conditions and less than modern enforcement. Otherwise, something like this can still happen:

I was in the fast lane in a 25-mile zone. The car ahead was doing 20. I honked the driver to yield to right, let me pass. He wouldn't. I honked again. That was legal, in fact required. His refusal to yield was illegal. I got the ticket—for making noise in Beverly Hills.

—By David Dressler

Mixed Bag

Continued from page 26

decided to give up. I was in the little skiff hanging in the mouth of a creek watching some ducks on the bar across, getting ready to try a shot at them, when I happened to look the other way and there was this young bull, standing out on the bar blowing his nose and sniffing at smoke drifting downwind from the galley-stove, where *Long Green* was tied a little way above.

It was a poor shot, about 175 yards, bad light, and I was standing with one leg hooked over a little birch to hold the skiff against the current which was jerking it around. But with moose a man can't afford to be particular. I laid down the shotgun and picked up the rifle and loosed off and heard the bullet hit. He took about two quick steps and stopped with his feet braced and his head hanging down. I watched with the gun in my hand till he laid down and started kicking. Then I started the kicker on the skiff and ran across and bled him. He was a nice, fat, two-year-old, just coming out of the velvet.

I brought *Long Green* over and tied up to his horns—he was just about 10 feet from the water—broke out the bottle of rum and had a good stiff nip. I dried my hands over the galley fire and smoked a cigarette and had a cup of hot coffee with something in it besides my thumb, just sitting there by the stove watching the steam come off the knees of my overalls where the heat from the stove struck them. I had my meat now, and Dorothy could take all the rest of the month if she felt like it. I felt pretty good.

THEN I got out again and started butchering. If you have never butchered a moose on a gravel bar in a good hard rain in the dark, try not to. About two in the morning I finished, with poles under the meat to get air around it, and pieces of tarp and one of the blankets from the bunk propped on sticks to keep some of the rain off. I had worked eight hours the night before, hunted all day, butchered most of the night. I'm not as young as I used to be either. I notice it especially times like that. I got my wet clothes off, turned in and slept till daylight.

When I got up the clouds were breaking and it looked like a good day. I loaded my meat and nailed the head to the bow, so people seeing me come in would know I had got my meat. About 8:30 I backed away from the bar, swung hard over against the bank to hit the narrow chute below, and started for home. The only thing that bothered me now was that the moose I had was so small. I guessed he would dress out between 350 and 400 pounds. Twelve people eat a lot of meat, and the moose would last about three months, with a little stretching and with the salmon I had caught in the summer. But I needed meat to last the winter. Another just like this one, I thought, would fix me up right.

Just above town, I saw the one I needed, another young bull. He swam across in front of me and scrambled up the bank, digging in deep and throwing big chunks of dirt back down into the river. I didn't have to struggle at all with my conscience. There are two game wardens in our village and even if they weren't down at the beach to check me in, with 10 kids you can't keep the town from knowing what meat you have on the table. Still I hated to pass him up. It seemed downright wasteful.

He went off slow through the trees, looking back now and then, and I went on toward town, thinking about it.

WHEN I pulled up at the dock my second oldest daughter, Patty, was there. She had heard the engine on her way home from school for lunch and had come down to see me in.

"How's Mama?" I asked.

"She's OK, Daddy. Oh, boy, you got a moose. Was it a big one? Where'd you get it? Gee, I better go tell mama."

"Listen, Patty," I said. "You watch this meat, see no dogs come in the boat after it. I want to run home with your bike for a minute." I took the bike and peddled home. Dorothy was just fixing lunch for the kids.

"You're home early," she said. "Did you get a moose?"

"I got one," I said. "But not very big. You feel up to shooting another one?" I told her about the bull I had seen coming home. "He won't go far," I said. "He's heading back toward that lily-pad lake, and he'll have to cross the Talalina. If we get right back up, we might catch him there. You think you could make it OK?"

"Well, I was just fixing lunch," she said.

"Onessia can fix the lunch," I told her. "That's what we pay her for. What counts is, do you feel up to it yourself?"

"Oh, sure," she said. "I feel fine."

"OK," I said. "I'll go back down and gas up and unload some of the gear to make room for more meat. You stop at the post office and get a license and come right on down to the boat."

By the time I had the boat squared away she was there.

"Did you get the license?" I asked.

"I got it all right," she said. "But I didn't have any money, and I forgot to bring a blank check. I told Frances I'd pay her for it later."

"That's OK," I said. "Just so you got the license. You still feel OK?"

"I feel fine," she said.

"OK," I said. "Let's go."

When we got back up river, the bull had already

crossed the Tatalina, just about where I expected. The tracks were still muddy and fresh, heading back toward the lake. There was a little creek draining the lake. I tied up *Long Green* and we climbed in the little skiff and started up it. I sat aft and paddled and Dorothy sat on the middle thwart, facing me and holding the rifle.

"What do I do if I see him?" she whispered.

"Shoot him," I said. "Just like shooting tin cans. Look through the peep and put the top of the front sight right on his middle and pull the trigger."

"What if it don't kill him?"

"Listen," I said. "You get a bullet in him to make it legal, I'll take care of it from then on. Just put the sight on his middle and shoot."

We edged around a bend in the creek and I saw there was a sweeper across in front of us, too big to push the skiff over. I paddled over to the bank and stood up to jump out and tie up.

"How do you feel?" I asked. "You think you can walk a little way?"

Dorothy didn't answer and I looked down at her. She was sitting with her mouth hanging open, staring past me up the bank. I turned and looked over my shoulder and there was the moose, standing on the bank 20 yards away, ears picked up, sniffing at us.

I flopped down in the bottom of the boat, out of Dorothy's way, but she just sat there with her mouth open. It was the first time she had ever seen a live moose that close, I think. They do look big.

"Shoot him!" I whispered.

She picked the gun up and I twisted and looked around at the moose. He had started away a couple of steps and was standing at the edge of the brush now looking at us not afraid, but ready.

I WAITED for the gun to go off. Nothing happened. I looked at Dorothy again and she was sitting with the gun to her shoulder and a blank, surprised look on her face.

"It won't shoot," she said.

"The safety, dammit, the safety!" I whispered.

"Oh," she said. She kicked off the safety and scrunched down to squint through the sight again, one eye shut, just like shooting tin cans with the .22. I remembered I had forgotten to tell her about the difference between a .22 and a .30-06, but she was holding it good and it is a good heavy rifle, an Enfield. I thought now would be a poor time to distract her, she was doing well enough.

The moose had turned and was looking at us over his shoulder.

"Come on!" I yelled. "He's—"

The gun went off.

I jerked around in time to see the moose jump and take off through the brush.

"I missed him," Dorothy said.

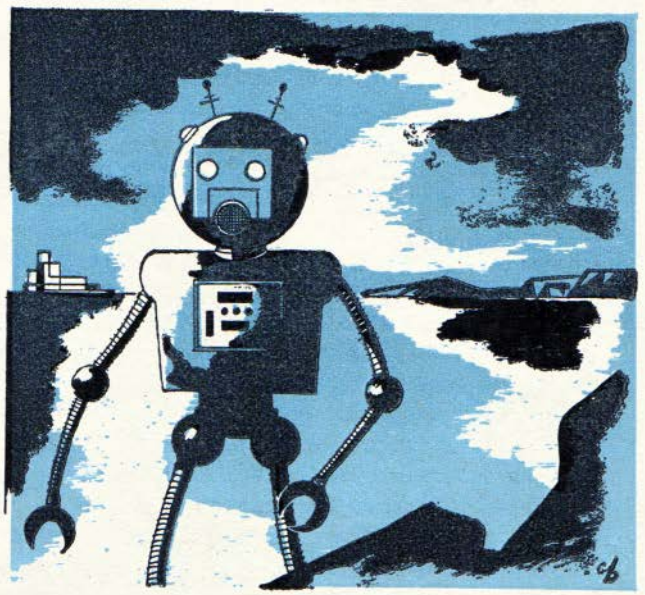
"You didn't miss him," I told her. "I heard the bullet hit. You did fine, just right. You feel OK?"

"I feel fine," she said. "Stop worrying about it. Let's go see if I hit him."

I shoved the skiff over to the other bank and we climbed out and went up to where the moose had been. There was plenty of blood, big splatters every other jump. "Listen!" I said. "He's down! Hear him kicking?" I ran up and found him down in a little pot-hole. He started to get up and I shot him in the neck with the muzzle almost touching him. Dorothy had made a fine shot, through the liver and lungs and out the throat, and I didn't need to stick him. We went back to the boat to get the axe and saw and my rope hoist while he was bleeding out.

Dorothy sat down on the thwart while I rummaged under the foredeck for my butchering gear. "You know something," she said. "I just had a pain." She grinned at me. I suppose I looked startled. I

wordly wise



ROBOT

KAREL CAPEK was a comparatively obscure Czech playwright, until he wrote a play called *R. U. R.* (Rossum's Universal Robots). The action of this centered around the revolt of a group of mechanical monsters against their makers. Abbreviating *robotnik*, ancient Czech term for a serf or slave, Capek used *robot* to designate the imaginary machine-man of his story. It proved a tremendous hit. Few dramas of the 1920's provoked so much discussion, and science-centered modern culture adopted "robot" into a dozen languages.

—BY WEBB B. GARRISON

had been thinking about the moose and had just about forgotten her.

"Listen," I said. "That's not funny. You just sit right there and don't move a muscle. I'll gut him and leave him lay for now. We'll get the hell back to town."

"I'll be all right," she said. "It was just a light one. It'll be a long time yet."

"OK," I said. "But you sit still just the same, just sit there and think pleasant thoughts. I'll be back in a few minutes."

I ran back to the moose and started gutting him, working fast and not bothering to make too neat a job of it. It was a little bit awkward. He was down in that little pot-hole, and I was heaving on a foreleg, to get him over and roll the paunch out, maybe swearing just a little, like a man does sometimes when he is in a hurry and things don't go just right; but not really having any serious trouble, even if I may have sounded a little rough; when I looked up and saw Dorothy heaving on the hind leg.

"Dammit," I said. "I thought I told you to sit down and be quiet. I'm not going to get stuck with delivering a baby out here in the woods, with two moose to take care of besides. Now you go sit down and keep out of the way."

"I feel real good now," she said. "I had another pain, but it was just a little one. I think they've stopped now."

"You sit down on that log," I told her. "And don't you move till I say you can. I'm not fooling."

She sat down and I went back to butchering. I took the rope hoist and anchored to a tree and pulled him over the way I wanted him and got the paunch out and then cut a piece of birch bark and laid the heart and liver on it.

"OK," I said. "Let's go, I'll get you back to town, come back and get the meat later."

"I'm OK now," she said. "You go ahead and finish butchering. We might as well get it done."

SHE looked pretty good now, at that. I rigged the hoist up to a tree and pulled the carcass up off the ground, didn't bother with the saw, just took the axe and split him as fast as I could, cut the fore and hind quarters Indian style, back of the ribs. It was a fast job, kind of messy, but I didn't feel like being particular. I hauled the first quarter down and loaded it and when I came back for the next I saw Dorothy had a funny look on her face.

"You having a pain?" I asked her.

"Just a little one," she said.

I ran down to the boat with the second quarter, threw it in any old way, and ran back up again.

"I could carry one of those," she said. "I'm feeling all right again now."

"I'll carry the meat," I said. "You can bring the axe and the rope, though, if you want to."

I rushed the rest of the meat to the boat and yanked the bow-rope loose. "Sit down," I said. "We're going home." It was only a 20-minute run back to town, but up on the bridge deck I couldn't see Dorothy or speak to her. I was pretty glad to pull up at the dock.

"I feel good now," Dorothy said. "Haven't had a pain since we started home. I guess it was just false labor."

"I hope so," I said. "I've still got to work tonight."

I made arrangements with one of the other boys to work for me for a couple of hours—I was supposed to be on watch at four in the afternoon—got the tractor, hauled my meat home and hung it up. When I went back to the house to shave and change my clothes Dorothy was getting dinner.

"You feel OK?" I asked.

"Sure, I feel fine," she said. "I don't think it'll be for another week."

Well, that suited me fine. I wasn't in any hurry now. I had my meat.

IT was a quiet evening at the station. We got all the planes out early and about nine I let the fellow who was working with me take over and went home. Sitting around in the warm station with nothing much to do, I was having trouble keeping awake. I had had only about four hours sleep in two days and I had been pretty much on the move.

Dorothy was in bed when I got home. "I'm having pains again," she said. "Good ones. You'd better call Florence."

"Oh Lord," I said.

I called Mrs. Winchell and put a rubber sheet on the bed and fixed the bassinet and set up a table for the instruments.

"It'll be a little while yet," Mrs. Winchell told me. "You look pretty peaked. You'd better lie down on the couch for a while. I'll call you when I need you."

I had just dozed off when she came out and shook me. "You'd better get up now, Ralph," she said. "She's dilating."

The baby came fast but easy. I had ether ready but Dorothy only wanted one whiff. It was a big boy: nine pounds something. Mrs. Winchell oiled him and wrapped him and I cleaned up, and then we went out in the kitchen and had a cup of coffee. I made a piece of toast for Dorothy and took it in with some coffee. She had dozed off, but woke up when I came in.

"How you feeling now?" I asked.

"Tired," she said. "I'm glad it's all over—moose and baby and everything."

I was too. Eight quarters of meat hanging up in the shed makes a man feel pretty good, solid and independent, and a new boy baby is nothing to sneeze at. But, to tell the truth, I would just as soon they spaced out a bit more. All at once like that kind of rushes a man.

"You know," she said. "I'll bet I'm just about the first white woman that ever shot a moose and had a baby the same day." —BY RALPH W. SLONE

Lone Survivor

Continued from page 24

"If you're finished with your amusing comments . . ."

"I am a betrayed husband," Debner said, smiling. "My emotions get the better of me."

Matthews felt baffled, and a little unsure of himself. He had dated Janice—she was Janice Layton then—in college. It was casual, at least for him—lunches squeezed between Vector Analysis and Stress and Strain; movies, when he wasn't too busy studying for an examination in Heat, Part II. But there had been a growing undertone of seriousness that the war interrupted.

In the Philippines, Matthews tried to analyze that undertone. It bothered him to find that a straightforward application of engineering principles gave him no coherent answer. And then one day, as the result of no analysis at all, he knew he was in love.

By the time he came home, it was too late. Janice was married. Matthews had firm ideas about marriage, and he didn't like to think of himself as a homewrecker.

But the home had been wrecked long before he ran into her again. Not that Debner was particularly cruel to his wife; that would have implied some interest in her. He simply ignored her, ignored everything except the handsome monthly receipts from the Layton wool mills.

"Let's get it over with," Matthews said directly. "You've given her a pretty rotten time. Do you love her, Debner?"

The question caught Debner by surprise. He glanced at the swell of his mainsail, then said. "Love is an adolescent's word, Mr. Matthews."

Matthews turned quite red, and asked. "Why did you marry her?"

"Janice is a very pleasant woman," Debner said. "As I'm sure you know. And there were other considerations."

"Such as money?"

"Well—why not?"

"All right," Matthews said heavily. "I never thought you'd admit it."

"Why shouldn't I?" Debner asked. "It's just between ourselves. The question is, what now? Ease out on the jib, please."

Cautiously this time, keeping the strain on the sheet winch, Matthews let the jib out. Debner uncleated the mainsheet and swung the boat before the wind, her boom at right angles to her beam, and dipping into the tops of the crests. He had to steer with his whole body, for the following sea was lifting the sailboat's long flat counter, swinging her sideways, trying to make her broach. The sky had grown darker, and ominous wind-puffs tore white streaks in the waves.

"The thing I hate," Debner said, "is the sheer messiness of it all. I suppose you and Janice have been defaming me all over town. Huddling in dark little bars holding hands in the last row of the movies."

Matthews square face stiffened. "No. And we haven't discussed this with anyone."

"I can hardly believe that," Debner said.

"It's true, not that it matters. Will you give her a divorce?"

Debner shrugged his shoulders. "I'll think about it. We're starting back now. See if you can spot the whistle buoy."

Matthews took the binoculars from their case, adjusted them and stood up, bracing himself against the coaming. There was nothing visible but the white-capped waves racing. When the sailboat dipped into the trough he could see nothing but a crazily tilted sheet of white-veined water. Spray was clouding the glasses, and he shielded them with one hand. There was something in the distance, but he wasn't sure if it was the buoy or another boat. If he could hold the glasses steady for another moment . . .

Debner screamed, "Get down!" Matthews looked around and saw, dreamlike in its clarity, the boom bearing down on him like a blunt-edged guillotine, lashed to express-train speed by the force of the wind behind the sail.

At the last moment he dropped to the deck, feeling the boom brush the top of his head.

"Hang on!" Debner shouted. The boom whipped to the end of its arc, narrowly missing the backstay, and was brought up short by the cleated mainsheet The impact ripped the cleat out of the coaming. The mast bent like a green sapling, but held. The sailboat heeled over, putting her deck under water, then slowly answered the helm.

"Wind shifted," Debner called. "Lucky we didn't lose the mast in that jibe. It's going to be a little tricky getting back, now."

MATTHEWS was still dazed. If the boom had hit him, he would have been dead.

The wind was shrieking a gale now, whipping the tops of the waves in sheets of spindrift. Green water poured over the bow and down the spillways each time the sailboat dipped her bow. But Debner was keeping the boat on its feet and moving. He had drawn the jib taut and let the main go free. When the wind puffed, he swung the sloop to meet it, then quickly let the sails draw before the boat's way was stopped.

"Will you give her a divorce?" Matthews asked again.

"What a one-track mind you have!" Debner laughed. "Doesn't all this impress you?" He waved a hand at the sea.

"It scares me, if you want to know. But I suppose you can get us back."

"I suppose I can," Debner said, "if it doesn't get much worse. That handle over there is the bilge pump. Would you?"

Matthews pumped the bilge dry. When he looked up, the wind seemed to have increased in force. He took another look through the binoculars, this time keeping his head low. There was no sign of the Port Everglades offshore buoy, but he could make out the distant hull of a boat.

Debner started the engine and slid the boat into gear. Even at full throttle he was barely able to maintain steerage way in the steep, breaking seas.

"I'll give her a divorce," Debner said abruptly.

"You will?"

"Yes, why not? I've been bored for some time. And the Layton Mills income isn't the fortune you might imagine. But there's a condition attached to my acquiescence."

"What's that?" Matthews asked.

"I want custody of the sailboat," Debner said, grinning.

Matthews had to laugh in spite of himself. "I'm sure Jannie doesn't want it."

"Right," Debner said. "I'm glad we talked this out in an intelligent manner. Sometimes marriages just don't work out. When it happens, there's no sense getting dramatic about it. Now let me concentrate on getting us back."

DEBNER looked toward the northwest, where thick black clouds were piling up. He said, "I'm afraid the worst is yet to come. Here, hold her in the wind. I'm going to drop the main."

Before Matthews could answer, the tiller was thrust into his hands. It was like gripping a live thing. The sailboat quivered and groaned as, under full power, he thrust her bow into the wind.

Clutching the grab rail on the cabin top, Debner fought his way to the mast. Matthews could see him gripping the mast with one hand, working at the lines with the other. In a moment he returned and took the tiller.

"The main halyard's jammed," he said.

"What does that mean?" Matthews asked. "What's a halyard?"

Very quietly Debner told him. "The halyard is a rope that hauls a sail up the mast. The main halyard passes over a wheel that's set into the top of the mast. Our jibe apparently jarred it out. Now I can't get the main down."

"Can't we continue with it up?"

Debner shook his head. "We should be double-reefed by now, and there's more coming. She isn't built for this kind of driving." He located a big screwdriver and stood up. "Take over."

"What are you going to do?"

"Well, we can't live much longer with full mainsail, and we're almost as bad off with no sail at all. There's only one thing I can do. Climb the mast and pry the halyard back on."

"You're crazy!" Matthews said, looking at the wildly swaying mast. "You wouldn't last a minute up there!"

"You exaggerate the difficulty," Debner said. "Just about every ocean wanderer has done this at one time or another. The old square-rigger men did it every day of their lives, in worse weather than this."

"Will the mast hold your weight?"

"It'll hold a lot more than that. Now take the tiller and listen closely. Keep her as close to the wind as you can, and still maintain steerageway. Don't let her fall off, or you'll be chancing a knockdown. But above all, don't get her in irons. She'll shake herself to pieces and you'll never bring her out. Got that?"

"No," Matthews said. "I can't handle this boat. Give me the screwdriver."

"What? Oh no, my friend. You don't look like a mast-climbing type to me."

"IF your damned mast will hold me, I can get up it," Matthews said grimly. "But I know I can't sail this boat. Give me the screwdriver."

"All right," Debner said. "No fancy stuff. I don't want to go in after you. Slip the halyard and get down as quickly as you can."

"I'm not planning on eating lunch up there." Matthews said. He tucked the screwdriver into his belt and fought his way to the mast.

It wasn't as hard as he had imagined; certainly not as hard as climbing a rock chimney. He stayed to windward of the sail, and the gale pressed him firmly against it, steadying him. He was able to grip the mast with one leg and use both hands on the halyard for climbing. When he reached the lower spreaders he stopped to catch his breath. Down below, Debner was hunched over the tiller. In the distance, Matthews could see the gray hull of a power boat, laboring toward them through the seas.

The next part was harder. He could feel the mast sway and buckle under his weight. The sail narrowed, giving him nothing to lean against, and the wind was trying its best to tear him loose. The deck looked alarmingly small beneath him.

He clamped his jaws together and pulled himself to the jumper stays. The top of the mast was still 10 feet overhead.

The wind was stronger up there, screaming wildly in his ears. Matthews reached the top and took a firm grip on the halyard. One-handed, he eased the screwdriver out of his belt and started to slip it under the halyard.

And stopped. The halyard was firmly seated in the deep-grooved wheel. There was nothing wrong.

He felt the boat heel as fresh gusts reached it. Could the line have sprung back into place? Or had Debner been mistaken? The wind pressure might have held the sail up.

And then it occurred to him that Debner was trying to kill him.

This was no thought to have, 40 feet above the deck. But it was inescapable. Accidents came easily to a small boat in a gale. He had read that sort of

thing in the newspapers: Man lost from fishing boat in heavy seas off Montauk, or Cape Charles—or Port Everglades.

The boat began to heel, swinging him inexorably outward. Matthews tried to grip the mast with his legs, but couldn't get them around the jumper stays. He dropped the screwdriver, hanging on to the halyard with both hands, swinging pendulumlike over the water.

It couldn't be true, Matthews thought desperately, wondering why Debner didn't straighten the boat. Debner had been perfectly agreeable about the divorce. Or had that been part of the plan? Like pretending he was going to climb the mast. He'd known that Matthews couldn't handle the boat, had known he wouldn't even try.

His hands were slipping on the halyard. He saw Debner leave the cockpit and crawl toward the mast.

Debner had even asked him if anyone knew about him and Jan, Matthews thought. If he were lost from the sailboat there would be no reason to suspect foul play, no apparent motive.

Debner was at the foot of the mast now, looking up at him. Something bright glinted in his hand. A knife? What would he be doing with a knife?

The boat heeled still farther, her rail went under, water coursed along the cabin sides.

There was an explosion. Matthews felt himself flying through the air.

THE Coast Guard cutter *Seabright* had been driving for three hours, and her crew was wet and disgusted. It never failed. With storm warnings flying from Cape Hatteras to Key West, someone had to take a pleasure trip.

When they found the sailboat, she was a wreck. The gale had wrenched her open, ripped her sails to shreds, flooded her engine. She was lying beam-to the wind, drifting slowly seaward. A man was bailing steadily and mechanically, not looking up even when the *Seabright* made a lee above him and put a man aboard.

"Your wife reported you were out here," the man said. "We better get you off. Where's your passenger?"

"What?"

"Your passenger. Where is he?"

From the bridge of the cutter, a man shouted. "Hurry it up! Get them off there!"

"Where is he?"

"Washed overboard. There was nothing I could do. The sails were gone, and her engine's dead."

"OK. You can make a full report inside, Mr. Debner."

"My name's Matthews. Debner was washed overboard. He was trying to help me. I was up the mast. We were heeled so far over I couldn't get down. Debner would have been safe if he'd stayed in the cockpit. But he came forward and slit the sail to let the boat straighten. Then he couldn't hang on."

"It was a brave thing to do," the man said. "Come on, let's get off here."

They took the sailboat in tow, but her seams had opened too far. Soon her cabin top was awash, and the *Seabright* had to cut her loose. Matthews watched her sink. He remembered that Debner had wanted custody of the *Hope*. Well, he had it.

They took him below and gave him a steaming cup of coffee. He told them again what had happened, keeping it short. There was no sense in going through the whole story, and no satisfaction in maligning the dead. It was finished.

But he wondered if Janice would guess the truth.

He knew that he would always remember the sound of the overburdened mainsail exploding, the green water sweeping everything, the shock of seeing an empty deck where a moment before Debner had stood, knife in hand, stark hatred in his eyes.

And Matthews would remember that halyard he had climbed down, to find two of its strands cut neatly through, and the third strand notched and unraveling.

—By Robert Sheckley

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Man on a High Ledge

Continued from page 28

ignore the parallel between his own plans and the man on the ledge. It seemed an invasion of his own privacy, an obscene comment on his own decision.

From his windows he could see a notch of the river. He remembered that it had been a long time since he had used the small Japanese binoculars to watch the great ships in the river. He found them in the bottom drawer of his desk.

He turned to the window and focused them on the face of the man on the ledge. The man was older than he had thought. In his mid-thirties, perhaps. There was a smudge of dark beard, acne scars on the cheeks and forehead. The eyes were pale and they were wide and seemed to look at nothing. There were small ropes of saliva at the corners of the mouth. The face was very still. The chest lifted and fell slowly and deeply.

Kelty stood at the window and focused on the police, men with wide cold-reddened faces, expressions of anger and exasperation and pleading. He saw a woman brought to the window. She was poorly dressed, with thin colorless face, dark-reddish hair, weak-looking eyes. She was crying. He saw her mouth work as she called to the man on the ledge. She called and then hit a thin fist on the window sill and called again.

Norris Kelty put the binoculars aside and raised the window. He leaned out and looked down at the street. The police had roped it off, and were directing traffic around it. Thousands of people stood closely packed, looking up at the man on the ledge, all their faces upturned. They looked silent and waiting and avid. Other men were working with pulleys and ropes on the face of the building several stories below the man, trying to rig a safety net. There were other policemen on the roof.

The man on the ledge shifted his position and there was a long rising moan from the crowd that faded away. Across the way office girls in thin blouses leaned out the windows and hugged their arms across their breasts and watched the man on the ledge. There was a flavor of holiday.

Kelty suddenly realized that he, like the others, was waiting for the man to jump. He felt both nausea and a primitive eagerness. He put the binoculars away, closed the window, drew the draperies. He put his papers away, and left his office.

Miss Ferres was at the window with another secretary. She turned and came quickly back to her desk, and glanced at his topcoat, the hat in his hand. "Will you be back today, sir?"

"No."

"Good night, Mr. Kelty."

"Good night, Miss Ferres."

When he reached the street he couldn't avoid looking up at the tiny man high on the ledge. Suddenly it came to him that this was death. A rigid psychotic on a high place, differentiated from his fellows by his madness. High there on the ledge the pump of blood through the miracle heart, squeeze of lungs, nerve tremor, gland secretion, convoluted waxy lard of the brain. Life, the ultimate miracle, in kinetic state above a pasty death on the street. He flexed his own hands and as he pushed his way through the crowd he was aware of the bulge and stretch of the muscles of the thigh, the flick and focus of the incredible lenses of the eyes.

He passed the corner and walked down the avenue, now out of sight of the man on the ledge, but still within hearing distance of the deep harsh noise of the crowd. He tried not to hear the sound. He told himself that within the eight-block walk to his club he would put that sound out of his mind.

When he was halfway down the block the sound changed suddenly. It became a sudden explosive roar and was shifted into a much higher key by the mingled screams of women. It lasted a long moment.

Kelty stood quite still and then walked on more slowly than before. Life was gone, as utterly as though it had never existed. Laborious climb from foetus to adult to ledge, then smashed not by height but by a flaw in one little area of the waxen brain. The flaw had demanded death on a heroic scale; a protest death, to ring down through centuries. A death never to be forgotten. A great brave climactic death. And, blinded by the flaw, the brain never realized that it was a dirty death, a small, shabby, forlorn and meaningless death.

His own death would not be like that. Yet—the thought came as suddenly as a door opens—was it not of the same pattern? Was not his own intense care and preparation as egocentric as the flamboyance of the man on the ledge? What did he want people to say? Norris Kelty had nothing more to live for. And was that what he was really trying to do? To show everyone the tragic extent of his loneliness?

He tried to recapture his determination but he knew that in some way he had gained an objectivity that made his plans seem melodramatic.

He stood outside his club and the first snow of November began to drift and tilt down into the streets, thick fat snowflakes that melted as they struck. He looked up at the slice of gray sky between the buildings and he did something he had not done since childhood: He stuck out the tip of his tongue and moved his head to one side and caught a snowflake on his tongue, tasted the familiar dusty icy nothingness.

A well-dressed woman grinned at him. Norris Kelty smiled back at her with irony and wisdom and self-knowledge. Then he walked quite briskly into the club.

—By John D. MacDonald

The Price of a Tin Star

Continued from page 9

up a sign about prunes being especially cheap this week. John Torrey said: "Hi, Mr. Combes."

Mr. Combes said: "Hi."

John said: "I've been hunting."

Mr. Combes said: "So I see."

Great fire on the prairie, he'd been named after Mr. John Combes. He said "Thought I could hang my take in your ice house."

"It isn't locked," Mr. Combes said, and drove a final nail into the sign and went into the store.

So John Torrey went around to the opened ice house and lugged that big deer carcass in by himself; he'd expected to have a half a dozen volunteers. He hung the bag with the birds and the rabbits, too, and came out and kicked the sawdust off his boots. Viciously, until he grinned and remembered he wasn't mad at the boots. All they'd done was keep his feet warm.

He had a shack on the edge of town, with a corral and snow-shed for his horse and a porch to sit on when the weather was warm. He'd kind of planned on a hot bath before he went home, though, and doggone if this hostile town was going to cheat him out of it. So he took the horse down to the livery stable, and Jake Pine, the hostler was busy in back, so he put the animal in a stall and gave him a good feed of hay and a scoopful of grain. Then he went on over to the hotel, going in through the barbershop entrance. Ken Winslow was shaving a face he couldn't make out under the lather. "Bathtub busy, Ken?"

Ken scraped the razor down the face; the bristles made a pleasant, grating noise as they came away. "No hot water."

"I'll start some." He waited, but Ken just grunted. So he went back and put kindling in the water heater, got it started, and chunked it with fat pine. Now—he'd done this for nickels when he was a kid—it would be 20 minutes till the Ajax Patented Rapid Water Heater gave out a bath. The way things had been planned, he ought to go loaf in front of the ice house and buttonhole people and take them in to see his bag. Way things had turned out, he didn't care to.

He went through the hall to the hotel proper. Desk clerk was napping in his chair behind the desk, but there wasn't anybody else in the lobby. Good deal of clinking and chinking was coming from the dining room, though. He could go in there, though he hadn't planned to until he was bathed and spruced up.

He went anyway. Cathy Richards was bustling around, seeing that the waitresses set up the tables just right. She was a thorough kind of gal, Cathy. He said: "Well, I'm back."

She said: "We're busy in here, John."

At least she remembered his name; better than anybody else in town had done so far. He said: "Got me a 200-pound deer. Dressed-out weight."

"That's fine." But she sounded plumb mad, where the rest of the town had only sounded indifferent, like they'd thought him over while he was away, and decided he'd never amount to much.

He looked at her. She had mighty pretty eyes, and just about the best figure in town, but for some reason the thing he had always liked best about her was the way her neck rose, white and proud, from the pretty collars she sewed on her dresses. He said: "Well, at least, I didn't break a leg and freeze to death."

She'd been showing a new waitress—red-headed gal, pert-looking number—how the forks and knives and butter and so on went. She stopped doing it and came over to him. "I don't see how you dare come in here."

He said: "Well, golly, Cathy, you've seen me dirty before. I'm just waiting for the water to heat in Ken's old boiler. . . . Say, I had an idea, comin' down the mountain. Everybody always barbecues a steer for an election party. Let's give a deer roast instead. With that big old carcass I got out there, people'd just flock. It'll just about carry your dad into office, next month's election."

She caught her breath. All of a sudden, before she said anything, John Torrey knew what was wrong. Knew it, with a dull thud against his ribs. There was only one thing that could make the town turn against him, and he hoped he was wrong. But he wasn't. Cathy shoved her little chin up at him, and said: "Father was killed Wednesday. Shot to death, and the killer got away—while you were out deer hunting on the mountain."

Then she turned on her heel and almost in the same breath told one of the girls to start cracking ice for the water pitchers.

LATER he found himself in the tub, without hardly knowing how he got there. And, lying facing Ken Winslow's ceiling, he thought of a lot of answers. In the first place, Sheriff Richards had told him he could have a week off. In the second place, he hadn't wanted to be deputy in the first place; only taken the job because the sheriff was Cathy's father. In the third place—

It didn't matter. The county wasn't going to listen. It made too good a story. The only deputy the sheriff has was out hunting the first time he'd really been needed for anything more than locking up a drunk or running down some pilfering kids. . . .

He tried hard to see the town's point of view. Nothing made people feel worse than being scared. And they were scared; he could see that. Sheriff shot,

and no law left to protect them from Indian raids—there'd been one fifty years ago—bank robbers, ghosts and stampeding buffalos. It struck right at the people's security, and they had to strike back at something.

But it wasn't going to be him. There wasn't that much money, or a star shiny enough, to make him stay and be their scapegoat.

He'd go to California. Always wanted to see the ocean anyway. Plenty of girls in California, prettier than Cathy Richards maybe, and around a place called Santa Barbara, there were supposed to be dudes a good guide could round up shots for.

Or maybe go up to Idaho. Lot of homestead land up there.

Or Texas. Another place that he'd heard was worth seeing, and they were building a railroad down there. He could be a meat-hunter feeding railroad workers.

Or he'd go up on the mountain and live off his gun; deer, rabbits, quail. There were Indians up there, still wandering around, who knew how to dig roots and which berries were safe to eat. He'd be an Indian.

He pulled the plug on the bath and let the water gurgle away. He took a towel off the wall, and dried himself.

There wasn't any use in running away. Sheriff Richards had been a good man. Old Steve Peterson, who would have run against him in the next election wasn't a good man at all, in Sheriff Richards' opinion, and Richards had known. He had said that Peterson just wanted the sheriff's office so he could use the badge to foreclose on people's places when they didn't pay their bills at Peterson's lumberyard or his hay-and-seed store.

Even a dumb fool like John Torrey knew that wasn't what the sheriff's office was for. So he would have to beat Peterson, have to run in Sheriff Richard's place.

Only way he could do that was to catch the man or the men, or whatever, who had killed the sheriff. And he wasn't going to do that in Ken Winslow's bathroom.

He finished dressing, and threw Ken a four-bit piece and went out on the hostile street.

First place to go was the jail. Sheriff's office was the front room of it; he wondered who'd be at Sheriff Richards' desk, who, for that matter, would be at his own little table in the back.

Wasn't anybody there. Door was unlocked, open to the street. The rack of rifles was in place, padlock all right, the safe was closed. Guess nobody in town but him knew the combination. . . . He went on back to the jail. The cells were all empty, sandy dust gritted under his feet on the cement floor. Nobody. Not even a drunk. . . . Hey!

The lock on the big cell was all smashed up. He bent over, looked at it. Looked as if somebody had taken a crowbar to it. The keyhole was so big, you could get the tip of a fairly big wrecking bar in there; and it looked as if that was what somebody had done; just ripped the cover off the lock and flipped the tumblers back.

Apparently the sheriff had been killed in a jail break.

He squatted on his heels, staring at the lock, whistling between his teeth. Now, where would a prisoner get a wrecking bar?

Sheriff Richards had been proud of his office. had run it right. In the middle drawer of the sheriff's desk, John Torrey found the day-book that the sheriff had always kept posted so well. Yeah.

There had been three men in the jail. John Smith, Bob Brown and Will Jones, they gave their names. Didn't mean a thing. Charge: trespassing on railroad property. Complainant: Railroad Detective Harold Lacey. Disposition: five days apiece.

Hoboes they were. Plain, free-riding bums taken off the cars. Didn't seem likely that men like that would kill the sheriff, could kill him. . . .

John Torrey went over the jail house once more. In the backyard he found old Mel Gordon, the swamper, sleeping behind a pile of old lumber. He woke him up. Mel said at once: "Hello, Sheriff. I was just about to shake a leg an' git that jail house spotless."

John Torrey couldn't help laughing. It was the first thing Mel Gordon always said when you woke him up. He'd been mopping out the jail, carrying meals to the prisoners, since before John Torrey was born. John said: "Can you tell anything about what happened to Sheriff Richards?"

But poor old Mel couldn't. Of course. He stood in the sun, blinking under his mop of gray hair, wrinkling up his stubbled cheeks, trying to be helpful. "Sheriff Richards? Now, I remember him. Sure enough. He was sheriff right after Mr. Webster. or

Native Wit...

I had been stationed at a base in west Texas for nearly seven months and it had not rained once. One evening in town I fell into conversation with an elderly native and our talk turned to the weather. I asked the old fellow if it had *ever* rained in that part of the country. "Why, sure," he drawled. "You know where it says in the Bible that it rained forty days and forty nights? We got two inches then."

—S/Sgt. Richard K. Palmer
Ellsworth Air Force Base, S.D.

Bluebook will pay $25 for each story of "Native Wit" that is published. Each must be previously unpublished and none can be acknowledged or returned.

was it right before? Around that time, sure enough—"

John Torrey patted him on the back and went away.

Down at the railroad station, he got his first kind word out of the town, and maybe things were changing over. Dennis Pincher, the ticket agent, came out of his little booth, and said: "Glad to see you back an' on the job, John. Gonna catch them three scoundrels?"

John Torrey said: "Aim to start out, Dennis. Tell me about them."

Pincher shrugged and took off his glasses, rubbed the bridge of his nose. Inside his office, the telegraph instrument clicked away against the old tobacco tin he'd shoved into it to make it louder. He said: "Not an awful lot to tell. Railroad's been having a mite of trouble, not much more than usual. Y'know, cars broken into in transit, stuff stolen, so Detective Lacey, he rode 812. Found these three bums ridin' a gondola, not bothering nothing, but you know how them railroad police is; he dropped off here an' turned 'em over to Richards."

JOHN TORREY nodded. It was about what he'd expected—nothing. "Anything else about them?"

"Nothing that stood out." Pincher chuckled. "You should have heard Conductor Barbour squawk, when Detective Lacey held up the 812 all that time! My, my, my, Sheriff Torrey, he was angry!" The railroad man chuckled, got back to business. "My call," he said, flipping a thumb at the telegraph instrument. "Well, I reckon you'll go about catching those varmints a lot slicker than Mister Peterson ever will! He just didn't seem much interested." He started for the office, calling: "I'm comin', I'm comin'," at the telegraph key.

John Torrey called after him: "Tell Lacey to see me next time he's through," and got back on his horse and rode up to the sheriff's office. He was beginning to get thoughtful.

Town didn't properly have a hardware store. Bill Cartright tinkered up broken things, and the lumberyard sold new ones out of a little store next to Peterson's office. John Torrey went out into the street, and rapped on Bill Cartright's window. "Want you to come fix a broken lock, Bill."

Old Bill came out, carrying his tool kit. "If I can, John, if I can." His voice wasn't over-favorable. When he saw where they were heading, he said: "Who'll pay me for the job? I don't rightly know that you got the right to spend county money."

"Who else?" John Torrey asked. "I was deputy. Sheriff Richards is dead, that makes me sheriff."

"Steve Peterson's been saying around that since he declared for the office, and his only opponent ain't gonna run, he ought to be sheriff right now."

John Torrey fought down a rising wave of anger. But Bill Cartright was too old and too stupid to hit. So he just said: "I'll pay you and take my chances on getting it back from the county."

"Good enough for me," Bill Cartright said, and went into the jail with his tools. John Torrey stood there on the street, stroking the nose of his tied-up horse. Mighty peculiar. He could go up to the lumberyard right now, and face Steve Peterson down. . . . Or he could bide his time.

THE hotel served supper early for all those who wanted to make it back to the ranches before dark. He headed that way, and then stopped. Town thought he was ashamed of being hunting when he was needed; town wasn't going to catch him admitting it.

So he went around to the ice house and got his two grouse. He sat on the ice-house steps and plucked them, carefully, singeing the last little feathers off with a couple of matches. Trimmed them up nicely, and went across the hotel lobby, swinging them from his hand.

The lobby wasn't deserted now. He saw a dozen people he knew, a couple he didn't. But one and all, they stared, first at him and then down at the birds. He saw a certain light come in some of the men's eyes—the hunters. And he knew them. He knew everybody in this town; the couple in the lobby that were strangers were just salesmen passing through. He'd never lived any place else, didn't want to live any place else, in spite of his angry dreams in the bathtub before.

But even old Chill Mellen, who hunted or fished just about every day in the year, didn't speak to him, didn't ask where he'd gotten the grouse. John Torrey shrugged and went into the dining room.

There was that snappy little red-head he'd noticed before. New girl in town. No ring on her left hand, so she was probably the daughter of somebody who'd taken up a foreclosed ranch from Peterson. There wasn't any homestead land left around here. Well, it wouldn't do any harm to get Cathy a mite jealous, though it seemed kind of trifling in face of all the other trouble.

So he took the red-head's table. She was all over him at once, straightening his water glass, lining up the knife and forks that didn't need it. "What'll it be, Sheriff?"

He brought the birds up from under the table and she squealed a little, maybe at the blood. "Get Cathy Richards. I want the cook to fix these."

Blue eyes were doubtful under the red hair: "Miss Richards—"

"I'm a customer. She's head-waitress. Get her over here."

So Cathy came over after a while, standing stiff and formal. The red-head went away a few feet. John Torrey said: "That's a real attractive gal you've hired, Cathy."

A girl doesn't have to have red hair to have temper. Cathy's eyes flared. She said: "You wanted some special service, Mr. Torrey."

"I want these birds cooked for me. Just broiled nicely. Stay mad-looking, Cathy! Listen to me.

Somebody in town brought those three men in. To kill your—the sheriff. I aim to get whoever it was. Now, Cathy, did he say anything to you about anyone who'd want to—you know?"

She said: "If he'd expected anything like that, he wouldn't have let you go off playing cowboy and Indian on the mountain. Your birds'll take some time, Mr. Torrey. The soup's very good. Ask Margaret to get you some."

He nodded. She didn't believe him. Or if she did, it wasn't going to do him any good revenging her father. She was through with him. It was right unfair, but— Red-headed Margaret was standing there, waiting for the order. "Soup, Margaret. Celery an' olives. Man who's been out in the pines needs things fancy. Got a last name, Margaret?"

"It's Driscoll," she said. "But you don't have to use it, Sheriff."

"Just John," he said. "Just plain John."

"I'll get your soup, John."

Well, he didn't have to be all alone any more. A little company like the red-head's would make up a lot for the town's treating him like he was a town fool. She was a lot of girl, and a lot of nice girl, too. When she came back with the soup, he said: "Do you live in town?"

"They have rooms at the hotel for us girls. Upstairs. . . . My folks bought a farm out aways."

She'd come from the East to use that word farm. . . . John Torrey laughed at himself. He was being a real sheriff, only not about the case he was supposed to sheriff out. Just about a girl. He ate his soup slowly, thinking.

HE looked up, and Steve Peterson was coming towards him. Just the way the tall old man walked spelled trouble. John Torrey said: "Set another place for Peterson, Margaret. Maybe we could walk out later?"

"Not if you're a friend of Steve Peterson. He cheated my father something awful on the farm."

"Sheriff's business. Set a place for him."

By that time Steve Peterson was standing over the table. Past fifty, and tall and straight and hard as a burnt-out pine. With just about that much juice in him, too. "So you got back, Torrey."

John Torrey looked up. He grinned. Usually when he grinned, people grinned back; it was a thing he'd learned a long time ago. But not Steve Peterson. He hadn't figured out how much to charge for a smile, so he never smiled.

John Torrey said: "Sit down, Mr. Peterson. Got them cooking some grouse out in the kitchen. Eat one with me."

Peterson said: "Well." But it was his weakness; he could no more pass up a free meal than John Torrey could see a stag buck and not reach for his rifle. He sat down. "Hear you've already been up to the jail."

John Torrey said: "Well, had to report in. It's where I get paid."

"As deputy."

John Torrey said: "Well, sure." The red-head came back, and he said: "Mr. Peterson's eatin' with me. Better bring us each a steak after those birds, Margaret. They're mighty small."

The girl nodded, put down another plate of soup and went off sniffing, as though Steve Peterson smelled bad.

"Didn't know you ever ate beef," Steve Peterson said. It could have been a friendly remark, but not the way he said it; it was put like John Torrey was some sort of wild man who oughtn't to be allowed in where people wore shoes.

"Seems a shame to do so when a man has over 200 pounds of venison in the ice house," John Torrey said. "So you'll be the next sheriff, huh?"

PETERSON was taken aback. His thin throat twitched once, and John Torrey could hear his breath change. Finally he said: "Why, Torrey, heard you had other ideas."

John Torrey said: "Eat your soup." Down on the tracks a train hooted. Number 812, the manifest. Prob'ly Detective Lacey'd still be riding it . . . he kinda hoped so. He said: "Way I see it, Mr. Peterson, I'm sheriff till the election; then you take over."

"There'd be time to run for it yourself."

"Why, Mr. Peterson, it'd cut into my hunting time too much, being full sheriff." Cathy Richards was standing near the door, greeting the eaters as they came in. But he could see how she turned to look at him every so often. . . . Too bad. "Deputy's all right for me."

More noise and steam whistling down on the tracks. Manifest 812 had come and gone. Lord, there wasn't a noise in this town he didn't know the meaning of.

Steve Peterson was relaxed, as much as he could ever get. Which wasn't much. He said: "Don't see why I shouldn't keep you on as deputy."

"I kindly thank you. It's a job that suits me to a fare thee well."

Peterson nodded. Sniffy Margaret came and took their soup away and brought them the grouse. The cook had done them fine as silk. Peterson said: "You're about the best shot anybody's ever seen around here."

"Reckon. Eat your bird. . . . Y'know, it's funny a rich man like you'd want to be sheriff. Don't pay much."

Steve Peterson was tasting the grouse like he expected it to fly away. He seemed to like the first taste, and went on, chewing each bite to get the most out of it. "Last year I paid the sheriff two, three hundred dollars in fees, serving papers for me. Seems I could keep the money."

John Torrey nodded. Anybody would believe that. Yeah. Except John Torrey. And only because he could remember what Sheriff Richards had said when Peterson declared against him. Had said the judge had denied Peterson as many foreclosures as

It wouldn't do any harm to get Cathy a mite jealous, so he took the redhead's table.

he'd allowed him; but with a badge on, Peterson could foreclose and the people would be out of the territory before the circuit rode around again and the judge heard about it. Yeah. . . .

There came Detective Lacey. He looked at John Torrey, but John made a little shake of his head, and that railroad man was smart; he went and sat by himself.

And so they finished their meal, not saying anything more; John Torrey because he didn't have anything to say, and Peterson because he didn't like to waste words.

Didn't waste time, either. Went away while John Torrey was having his second cup of coffee. Never said thank you for the meal. John Torrey got the check from Margaret, and she said: "I'm through at eight."

John Torrey had been bracing himself, getting ready to carry his check to Cathy Richards, to pay it under her cold eyes. What he said next surprised

him. "Lord, gal, I've been on the hunt a week. I'll be asleep before eight."

Now, why had he said that? It was purely the remark of a fool. Man who passed up a chance to get to know that red-head better had no more brains than a cottontail in the springtime. He said, quickly: "But some other night, Margaret."

She said: "Oh, sure," and he was aware she watched him while he walked away.

CATHY took his money, gave him his change. She did all this just looking at his hands, and then she dropped her eyes down to his boots and said: "You didn't waste any time getting together with the new sheriff."

He said: "Cathy—" But his mad was coming up. "Known each other a long time. You don't have to think everything dirty about me there is."

"You'll have a lot more time off with Sheriff Peterson." The way she said the name was like a word a nice girl wouldn't have known. "He'll want to be left alone in the sheriff's office as much as possible. The deer on the mountain better watch out; John Torrey's coming."

"I'll bring you a haunch now and then," he said. "So's you don't get tired of hotel cooking," and walked out.

Full dark was coming down on the street. A fair crowd of ranch folks had chosen the night ride back home in order to live the wild life—stand on the street and see each other pass up and down. It was time for the piano player in the saloon to start playing, and pretty soon he did, one of the six or seven songs he knew, all of them sounding pretty much alike.

Old Man Ware's daughter, Flo, who wasn't any better than she should be, passed by slowly, walking arm in arm with a girl named Bella who'd been in town about six months.

Things were just the way they always were, always had been. His home town.

After a while Lacey came out of the hotel, a toothpick in one corner of his mouth, and started walking down towards the railroad, shortlegged as a wild hog, built solid as a bull.

John Torrey unkinked his long legs and started after the railroad detective. When he passed his own horse, tied to the rack, he gave him at pat on the nose. The horse opened his eyes and blew, and then went back to sleeping on three legs.

He caught up with Lacey down past the livery stable. Lacey was leaning against the shed of Bob Lane's house, chewing his toothpick. "You want to see me, Torrey?"

John Torrey said: "Yeah. . . . I want to know about those three hoboes."

Lacey looked angry. "Fine thing," he said. "I had them dead to rights. Riding a gondola, leaning back smoking cigars, like they owned the railroad."

John Torrey let out his breath. He'd been right! But the detective had some more to say. "And what does your J.P. here do? Give them five days! And then the sheriff lets them go before the day is out."

John Torrey said: "Well, now, the sheriff hardly meant to. They killed him."

"What kind of a sheriff is it that lets three hoboes jump him in his own jail? Word'll get around, so's nothing the railroad owns is safe!"

That man surely liked his little old railroad. John Torrey said: "They weren't hoboes, Lacey."

"Huh?" That had brought the detective up short. His toothpick dropped.

John Torrey said, slowly: "A man's following coyote tracks and they suddenly climb a tree, he knows it's no coyote he's following; it's some kind of cat with crippled feet. It's easier to have the wrong kind of feet than it is for a dog-critter to act like a cat-critter."

Lacey sounded tough. "Listen, Torrey—"

"Hoboes don't smoke cigars. Hoboes don't lie in a gondola, an open car, when the word's out that there's railroad police riding the trains. They get inside, where they got a chance not to be found."

Lacey said: "By golly."

"Men don't break the outside cover off a cell-lock when they're inside the cell." John Torrey said. "That's what your three hoboes did."

Lacey said: "It was an awful easy arrest."

John Torrey said: "Let's break a door and a couple of laws. Steve Peterson sells hardware. Steve Peterson don't ever throw anything away that's got good value in it. Like the crowbar he ripped the jail door open with. Let's go see."

Lacey stood there. He tipped his hard hat back and rubbed his thinning hair. A man near old enough to be John Torrey's father. He said: "Well, now, John. Don't know. About two-thirds of all the freight comes into this town goes up the Peterson spur. A right good customer."

John Torrey made his voice hard. It was a trick he'd heard Sheriff Richards do, and it had worked for the old man. . . . "Railroad is the only

make it easy

TO REMOVE LEAD from the bore of a gun, plug either breech or muzzle and fill with mercury. Let stand one or two days, depending upon how leaded the bore is. Then wipe dry and all lead will be removed. Due to the affinity between lead and mercury, the mercury will absorb the lead without harm to the bore. *(Other readers sent in similar Make It Easy items.—Ed.)*

—M/Sgt. John A. Parr, Tucson, Ariz.

railroad around here. Peterson can do business with it, or go out of business. What are you scared of?"

Lacey stood there in the bad light, gulping. He said: "Well, now," a couple of times. Then he brightened and said: "I ain't got no call to work except on railroad property."

John Torrey said: "I'm deputizin' you."

Lacey said: "Well, now," and was silent.

John Torrey took a hitch in his gunbelt. He said: "Railroad'll fire you if the sheriff of this county says you refused to cooperate. They'll get a man who will. They can't fire you any worse if Peterson complains."

Lacey said: "If you put it that way." And he looked at John Torrey and John Torrey knew he'd made an enemy. He said: "Come on."

STEVE PETERSON was cheap. Like Lacey had said, most of the money in the town lay on the Peterson spur, in the Peterson Lumberyard, in the Peterson Hay-and-Feed, the Peterson Cattle Commission Co. But all the night watchman Steve Peterson would pay was an old man that couldn't have scared a fly.

He came out of the night, now, walking the ties of the spur, and crying: "Hold on, now, hold up, who's there?" in a cracked old-man's voice.

John Torrey said: "The sheriff," and the old man came on, carrying his rifle up and ready.

"You can't come in here, sheriff. . . . You ain't the sheriff. You're young John Torrey!"

John Torrey said: "I'm searching the lumberyard."

The old man said: "Now, John, you ain't agonna. Why, you want I should shoot at you? I'm a good shot, remember I used to take you huntin' when your pants weren't no longer than a bobcat's tail."

It was true. John Torrey had forgotten. This piddlin' old man had once been Jake Megargan, and a good hunting man. He said: "Jake, I'm sorry."

Old Jake said: "Look, John. There's a U.S. Marshal at the capital. Whatever's gotta be done, let him do it. He gets big money for it."

"Yeah," John Torrey said. It was a way out.

But why the marshal got that money, John Torrey saw now, was not for being smart. It was also for being lonesome. Lonesome and out ahead, all his life. There was no doubt; if he went and proved Steve Peterson guilty, he'd be a big hero. . . . And condemned to a life of wearing a star, and all he'd ever wanted was plenty of time for hunting.

John Torrey said: "Go on and shoot, Jake," and went forward. The old rifle came up in the old hands. Jake yelped something about it being his job.

As he came towards that gun, a lot was going on in John Torrey's head. A lot of things to remember. Quail scurrying across the pine barrens and taking the air with a roar; a four-point buck picking his way down the stones of a chaparral hill, the sun shining on his hide.

He made a sudden lunge, and his hands closed on the rifle, and he threw it away. It went off in the air. His own rifle had made that self-same noise, knocking over a mountain lion once, and the air had smelled of old-man sage and yerba buena, and there had been a little mountain spring nearby and the water had tasted better than any bottle on a bar.

John Torrey said: "I'm going in. Come along, Lacey, Jake. I need witnesses."

From back in the shadows, Steve Peterson said: "Take another step, and you won't need anything but a coffin."

"The lumberyard sells 'em," John Torrey said. "Send the bill to the county."

Peterson came out of the dark, and he was wearing a gun. He said: "You're making a mighty poor start of being my deputy, Torrey."

"Maybe I'm running for sheriff."

Steve Peterson said: "You're drunk. Take that badge off! It's not used for breaking into taxpayers' property."

John Torrey said: "If I go in there and don't find what I'm looking for, I'm through. I know it. But I'm going in."

He took four steps towards the lumberyard. They were as hard steps as he'd ever made.

And on the fourth step, Steve Peterson fired, and John Torrey got his own gun, and he was the best shot in that country; his bullet hit Steve Peterson's right shoulder and the rich man went whirling around, and John was on him and had his gun and was yelling to Lacey to go look in the tool store.

And Lacey went, as a man would go from now on when John Torrey yelled. Lacey went and then called back that he had what they'd wanted, and it was all right. Lacey didn't hate John Torrey any more; it could be heard in his voice. Didn't love him, either; just respected him.

The last thing John Torrey had wanted. But Sheriff Richards was dead, and he had counted on John Torrey to take his place. So here he was.

But the price was awful high.

—BY RICHARD WORMSER

Native Wit...

SEVERAL construction workers were standing at a bar discussing tough bosses. One grizzled veteran with a peg leg listened quietly, then finally said: "You fellers think you've seen some tough bosses. Well, I used to work for Bill Savage as a stump-dynamiter. I was right good if I do say so, until one day I went and used too short a fuse. When that charge went off, I went off with it—and was docked for the time I was up in the air for leaving the job."

—JAMES N. CORNELL
Elkhart, Ind.

Football Fans Are Crazy

Continued from page 7

well the idea works. Nobody gets hurt and everybody takes home an authentic "trophy-size" splinter of the Rose Bowl goal to display proudly in his den.

The overwhelming majority of fans who attend football games are pleasant, orderly people out for an afternoon of fun and excitement. But when you put a crowd the size of the population of Sioux City, Iowa, into a concrete oval covering less than six acres, there are some unique problems. Because we are careful about such things, the Coliseum has had few front-page mishaps like the time an overenthusiastic University of California booster dashed on the field at Berkeley's Memorial Stadium and tried to tackle Michigan's Tommy Harmon. Nevertheless, football fans have plenty of other ways to show their pent-up emotions.

For example, gridiron enthusiasts get so carried away during an exciting game that they lose everything but their tempers. The Coliseum could stock a thriving pawn shop with the flood of lost binocular cases, lap robes, seat cushions, false teeth, women's shoes, wedding rings, eyeglasses, car keys and other personal articles turned in every fall. After one hair-raising Stanford-U.C.L.A. donnybrook, we even had custody of a custom-made toupee for several days until its owner recovered sufficiently to give our lost-and-found department a call.

Some fans even lose their children. I had so many lost youngsters in my office at one time last season that I had to make an announcement over the public-address system asking all parents with lost offspring to gather under the scoreboard at half time and reclaim them.

Incidentally, there has to be an extraordinary reason before we will page someone over the Coliseum public-address system. For several years we have advertised in medical journals advising physicians to leave their seat numbers at the box office so we can send a messenger for them if they receive an emergency call. Otherwise, there would be so many public announcements the crowd would have difficulty concentrating on the game.

When you stop to think about it, you can tell a lot about a fan's personality by the amount of paraphernalia he lugs to the stadium. The easiest to spot is the "Arkansas Traveler" type. He arrives laden with seat cushion, thermos bottle, binoculars, portable radio, the morning paper and a raincoat—even if there isn't a cloud in the sky. He's obviously a pessimist and likes his comfort. Right next to him will be another football *aficionado* without so much as a pair of sun glasses in extra equipment. He's the optimistic type and hates to be tied down.

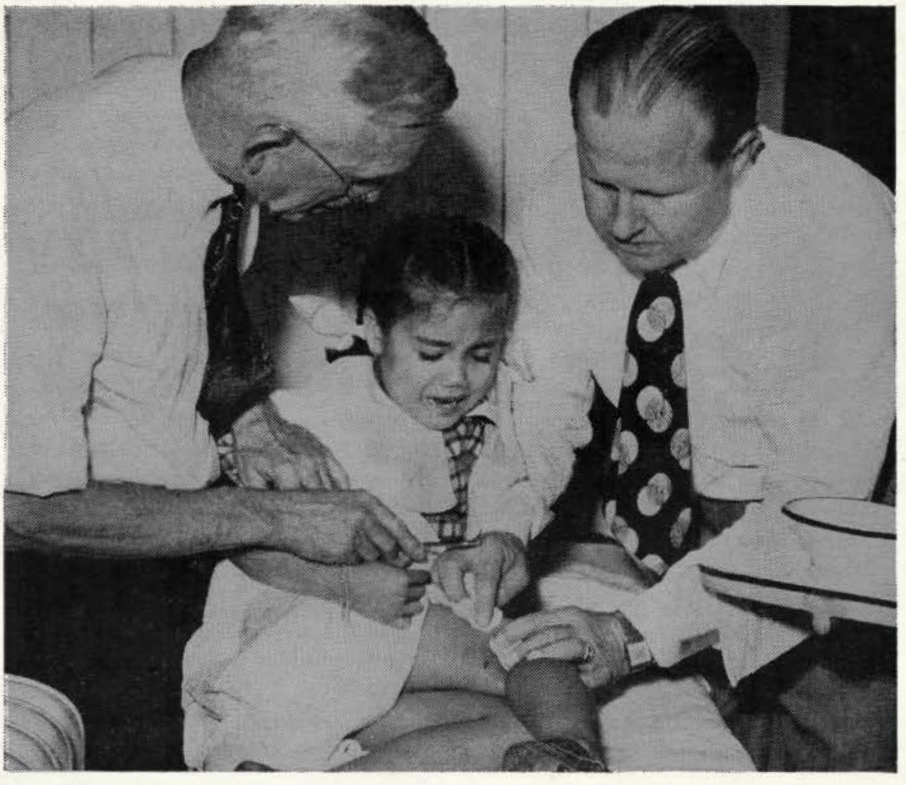
Now that the Coliseum has turnstiles, we don't have much trouble with gate crashers. But to get in a small parking lot we reserve for officials and press, some fans dream up schemes that would do credit to an All-American quarterback.

One man roared up to the gate in a panel truck last year and pointed to a box of tools on the front seat.

"Hope I'm in time," he said breezily. "I just got an emergency call to fix your electric scoreboard. You won't mind if I park here, I suppose?"

The volunteer repairman was sent back to the public parking lots with everybody else as our guard knew without checking that the Coliseum always has a

Auto Club of Sp. Calif.



On Saturdays, Coliseum is like a small city, even has its own hospital. Here, two doctors extract sliver from girl who slid down one too many trees.

full-time electrician on duty in case the electric scoreboard, public-address system or night floodlights should go out unexpectedly.

Others of these "One-Eyed Connellys" try to crash the gate with empty newsreel film cans, fake special-delivery messages for the coaches, towels for the dressing rooms, and press cards issued when they were sports editor of their college paper back in 1929.

In all fairness, though, I suppose the gate-crashing trophy must go to the non-football fan who arrived at the Sheriff's Rodeo in the Coliseum a few years ago brandishing a 12-gauge shotgun. He told me he had a hurry-up call to come over and shoot a horse.

A close relation to the gate crasher is the "ticket collector." Members of this acquisitive clan are not scalpers because they rarely sell the tickets once they get their hands on them. Apparently, they just like to have a fist full to flash around the office or neighborhood bar. One of the most indefatigable of these pasteboard misers is a well-known newspaperman of my acquaintance. I've known him to have as many as 50 tickets in his possession right up to game time. What he does with them I'll never know.

To keep an eye on scalpers, pickpockets, gamblers and other undesirables who flock to big football games like flies to sugar, we have 20 to 30 plainclothes detectives stationed around the Coliseum at all times. There is no legal way to keep the professional gamblers from attending the games, of course, but, as basketball and other sports have learned to their sorrow, the gamblers always bear watching. As far as I am concerned, nothing could ruin either college or professional football faster than letting the gambling element get mixed up with it. While we are on the subject, I think football fans who patronize football pools, weekly game cards, and the like, do a disservice to the sport whether they realize it or not.

Short of a million dollars and a date with Marilyn Monroe, there is nothing on this earth the average football fan would rather have than a pair of tickets on the 50-yard line. You'd think there wasn't another seat in the house.

One of our toughest public-relations problems is the woman whose husband sends her to the Coliseum ticket office with strict instructions to buy six tickets on the 40- or 50-yard lines about 20 rows high. The best we can do is explain that 50-yard-line tickets are the rare filet mignon cuts from a mighty large cow. "But, if I go home with tickets on the 10-yard line," she mournfully replies, "I just know Harry is going to be furious."

Actually, many football scouts and officials will tell you that a high-up seat in the end zone is one of the best spots in the stadium to watch the things which really count in football. There it is easy to see, for example, if the ball carrier had only a tiny opening over tackle or a hole wide as a barn door. From an end-zone perch, you can also see much more clearly today's beautifully intricate pass play patterns and defensive shifts.

One of my favorite football stories is about a fan who tried one of these end-zone seats against his better judgment one afternoon and saw for the first time what he thought was an inexcusable lack of blocking for the home-team's star halfbacks. Incensed, he charged up to the coach after the game and demanded:

"How many students do you have at that college of yours?"

"14,000," the coach replied.

"In that case," snarled the fan, "is there any rule against putting two of them in front of the ball carrier?"

More and more of the fans who go to football games these days are women. One reason, I think, is that football has become a social as well as a sporting event. A lot of men I know who wouldn't think of taking the little woman to a baseball game buy football season tickets for two, autumn after autumn.

All in all, I think this increased female interest is a good thing for the sport. For one thing, when women go overboard for something, they really go overboard. They are responsible, in my opinion, for the fact that football crowds dress up more these days and are better behaved. In the Coliseum, at least, drinking at the game has decreased 60 percent since 1946 and there is little doubt in my mind that the womenfolk have had a hand in that too.

Auto Club of So. Calif.

After game, there are 10-15 tons of refuse.

"Arkansas traveler" is prepared for anything.

A stadium filled with 100,000 football fans is very much like a small city. And for a few hectic hours each week that is just what the Coliseum is, with all the accompanying problems of police protection, health and sanitation, traffic control and food supply.

To handle a big Saturday crowd requires a small army of 300 police officers and sheriff's deputies (there is a police station right in the Coliseum), 825 ushers and gatemen, 500 concessionaires, 20 groundskeepers, eight firemen, and dozens of other specialists like ambulance drivers, bank tellers, program vendors and telegraph operators.

We even have our own receiving hospital staffed by two physicians and 12 trained nurses. Since much of California's grid season is played in warm weather, the most frequent illness treated is heat prostration. But we also have two or three persons stricken each game with heart attacks (usually Old Blues who get overstimulated), and we do a land-office business patching up the hands of kids who try to get in free by scaling the Coliseum's wire fences. In addition to the hospital, we have several first-aid stations located about the stadium which hand out aspirin by the carload. There even has been a baby born at the Coliseum hospital.

With 25 football games a year, the playing field at the end of the season gets to looking as if the entire Russian infantry had just marched over it, all wearing football shoes. To keep it presentable at all, we sometimes have to spray it with a special green dye developed for us by the late Dr. John Monteith, Jr., turf consultant for the U.S. Golf Association.

Monteith's green dye proved itself for all time, as far as I am concerned, one day in 1948. A pro game had been played in the Coliseum the night before on a field so muddy that only heavy dousings with sawdust kept it playable. With a big college game scheduled for the following day, I told our groundskeeper in desperation to spray every inch of the sodden mass with the green dye. Then I prayed that the sun would firm it up enough to play on. It did and everybody raved about how good the field looked. It was probably the only football game in history played on a mat of luxuriant green sawdust.

Since both college and professional football teams use the Coliseum, a lot of people ask me if there is any difference between college and pro fans. At the risk of making one or the other of the two groups mad, I think they do differ.

For one thing, more men bring their wives to college games than pro contests. College rooters arrive earlier and dress more formally. I feel confident that I could tell blindfolded if the stadium was filled with college fans. That's because they are always buzzing with talk. A pro crowd will cheer for a spectacular play, stop, and then cheer again as something excites them. College crowds keep up a steady hum all the time whether anything is going on or not.

If football fans are crazy, they are at the same time among our finest sportsmen. I don't know of any football referee who has been crowned by a beer bottle, and heckling of individual players from the stands is almost unknown. Despite the fact that football audiences are two or three times the size of those which attend other sporting events, riots or serious disturbances are equally rare.

One of the reasons for this, I believe, is that the football crowd is a happy crowd. The fans come to the stadium to root for their favorite and to blow off steam. And they go away afterward feeling relaxed and better for it. As long as football affects people in that way, I think we ought to be glad to have it around.

—By Bill Nicholas

"Rush call, officer. Gotta shoot a horse."

New Cure for Alcoholics

Continued from page 11

However, this additional alcohol just makes the chemical condition of the blood more unbalanced by interfering further with the proper functioning of the hypothalamus. And on and on the vicious cycle goes.

Apomorphine, by anaesthetizing part of the brain, produces a condition in which the hypothalamus can begin to function properly as it does when the person is asleep.

In advising other doctors on the use of apomorphine, Dr. Dent states in an article in *Medical World:* "There are two classes of addicts and they need different treatment: those who have been eating fairly well and can be off alcohol for a week occasionally without risking delirium tremens; and those who do not fit this description or who possibly have had DT's in the past.

"The former, who include the dipsomaniacs or intermittent drinkers, can and should be treated at home by the general practitioner." (The others should have hospital supervision.)

He suggests interviews with the patient and family members during which the doctor points out that no moral lapse is involved and that alcoholism is a disease somewhat similar to diabetes.

"You must explain that the alcoholic [has had a subconscious urge to take] drink as a medicine to treat a disease temporarily and that apomorphine treats this condition permanently, and unless he drinks again he will need no further treatments."

After further simple preparation — encouragement and an explanation that apomorphine isn't morphine, and that an overdose is automatically expelled from the body—the patient is given apomorphine in tablet form. He allows it to dissolve in his mouth, not swallowing for 10 minutes. The dosage is increased every hour until vomiting results. The process is repeated, with further vomiting, for three or four days during which a mild diet is maintained. Dr. Dent also suggests B_1 over a four-to-eight-week period.

Apomorphine has long been associated, to Dent's regret, with the so-called aversion technique. In this drastic procedure, as practiced in Central Europe, patients are placed in a room and given drinks along with apomorphine. Vomiting results, but there is no cleaning of the room. This horse-whipping treatment goes on until, in lay terms, the patient is so disgusted that he hates alcohol.

Dent himself started off by using the aversion technique in a more modified form, but he noted that apomorphine seemed to quiet his patients. "Drunks when treated this way were much brighter, much less self-pitying, much less hung over than in other methods." He now gives apomorphine with or without alcohol, depending on the patient's fear of deprivation.

The doctor came by his interest in the properties of apomorphine through a series of unhappy events. "In 1940," he told the BLUEBOOK researcher, "I suffered a terrible family tragedy. I don't want to tell you what it was, but it turned me to alcohol. It was during the blitz, my patients were gone, my practice non-existent. There was nothing to do. Then this tragedy happened. When I realized what alcohol was doing to me, I took enough apomorphine to make me sick. When I got up, I took more. I made myself keep at it until I was sick again. I slept. When I woke up, I was sane. I have never had any trouble since."

Dr. Dent is 66 years old—a dignified man of medium height with thick gray hair and a graying mustache. His office in the Kensington district of London is as interesting as the man himself. Hogarth prints (1751) hang in the vestibule; the office itself is a cluttered place filled with papers, books, a couch, paintings, two aquariums and two dogs—a Scotty and an Airedale.

Dr. Dent will tell the inquiring visitor about his more dramatic cases. There was the soldier in the Indian Army who had been used to drinking several quarts a day. Dent treated him with apomorphine. After two years, he is still apparently all right.

A doctor lost everything through compulsive drinking—his wife, his children, his patients—even his instruments. For 20 years, he drifted around the world —sometimes as a common seaman. At last, he tried apomorphine. He still has periodic lapses and treatments, but he has his family back and manages to hold down a practice in a London suburb.

"There was this girl—a genuine compulsion case —only 18 years old. Couldn't eat unless she had a stiff drink; and, like many compulsion drinkers, she had a loss of knee jerks and was terribly shaky. She couldn't even write her name unless she had knocked off a quarter of a bottle of gin.

"I gave her apomorphine and pulled her back to near normality. I believe she has been teetotal for months now."

There Is No Magical Cure

Cases like these strongly indicate that doctors both in Britain and the United States might well consider Dr. Dent's use of apomorphine. Dent, of course, has had his share of failures as well as his successes. There is no magical cure for the compulsive drinker unless he cooperates completely following treatment.

But any inexpensive help for the pitiful alcoholic of our troubled world—particularly at the direction of the G.P.—is certainly worth the most careful examination. —BY WILLIAM BROWN HARTLEY

BLUEBOOK *does not recommend any given therapy, drug or procedure for the treatment of the alcoholic. This article is presented as a report on a treatment not well known to American readers.*—ED.

We CAN Build a Space Ship - SHOULD We?

Continued from page 32

Air Force's Col. Boushey in 1941 became first man to fly an airplane on rocket power alone.

Wendell Moore: I personally feel that we'll have a manned space satellite within 20 years. From the rocket power plant standpoint alone, we could do it in 10 years. And I believe 100 percent that rocket-powered aircraft will be flying outside the atmosphere very commonly in 10 to 15 years—that's a good 600 to 1,000 miles out.

WHY SHOULD WE BUILD A SPACE SHIP?

Ed Francisco: All right. Just take power plants, if nothing else. A space platform would give us a new environment. We'd have no atmosphere, we'd be in a no-gravity, or practically a zero-gravity, field. We could run tests on entirely new systems of propulsion. Present day rocket fuels are not very efficient. There's a lot of talk about nuclear applications to the rocket, but we're limited even on these. In a rocket you have to eject mass for propulsion. (Similar to a jet engine—Ed.) You might use a nuclear reactor to heat hydrogen, for instance, so that expanding gas would be ejected. But you'd have the weight of the reactor plus the weight of the hydrogen to carry. Burning the hydrogen alone would be four times more efficient. Using nuclear power alone is impossible: the atmosphere would be contaminated with radiation. So a whole new method of propul-

USAF Photo

Test pilot Everest: "It has always been my dream to be the first man to land on the moon."

sion is needed. Out in space there are many possibilities. The ion-propulsion idea is just one. It would literally be a thousand times more efficient and effective than the chemical propellants. But it wouldn't work within the atmosphere; it only works in a vacuum. You know how a TV tube works? You squirt a beam of electrons through a vacuum and guide them with charged metal plates so that they'll hit the face or screen of the tube. You could do this on a rather massive scale out in space, using a rocket tube instead of a vacuum tube. The tremendous beam of electrons being ejected through the nozzle would drive the power plant at speeds undreamed of today. Electrons travel at the speed of light.

Dr. Henry: Spaceflight will be one of the most significant biological events in Time. It is as important as life itself. It represents the seeding of other parts of the Universe with life from this planet. And one of its most interesting aspects to me is that it might change the whole pattern of society, much as this was changed when the New World was opened up. There are certain differences in our

American Rocket Society photo

Commander Truax is one of very few rocket men to get American Rocket Society's Goddard Medal.

culture and that of Europe; I imagine that there would be even more profound differences between our culture and a new one in outer space. I can conceive of fresh, wholesome societies, and a new, a higher order of man spreading throughout the Universe.

Col. Boushey: It's all-important! Just as the early Polynesians kept exploring eastward in order to live, we have only the planets left for our own migrations.

Col. Everest: If we want to get the lead over other nations that are quite possibly working along such lines, we should start investigating the possibility now instead of waiting.

Cdr. Truax: The energy requirements alone of mankind might force him into outer space. For example, the tremendous untapped energy resources of the Sun can not be adequately taken advantage of on Earth. No matter how great a solar mirror could be devised, particles of dust and friction of the atmosphere would corrode it in time. But on the atmosphereless Moon, such a mirror could be a cheap means of supplying power for a scientific expedition, or to a way-station that would retransmit this power to Earth electronically. This is one of the practical reasons for getting to the Moon.

Wendell Moore: It would supply valuable information to astronomers and physicists on the real nature of space. Once you're a thousand miles out, there's no atmosphere to interfere with either optical or electronic observation.

Harry Stine: Sitting where we are, we have a very distorted notion of physics, of the Universe. We've got this milky, murky atmosphere about us and we're always in one gravity field—we really can't visualize the ultimate possibilities of spaceflight. We have to get out there first, to know what we can do.

CAN WE AFFORD TO BUILD A SPACE SHIP?

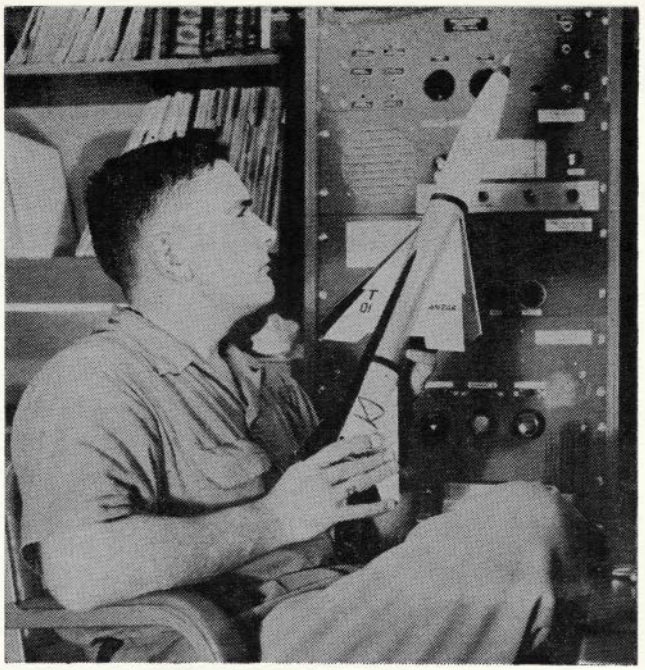
NOTE: Depending on its crew-capacity, fuel and planned range, the cost of developing and building a space ship has been estimated by engineers at anywhere from a hundred million to more than five billion dollars.

Wendell Moore: Private industry won't do it, won't be able to make the tremendous initial investment. This was the same situation as with the founding of the commercial air lines. It will have to be Government-sponsored. And this requires two things: public support and the establishment of a need for the space ship. A military need could easily be established. The scientific need is self-evident. But the whole thing will have to come from taxation and I would suspect that it would take perhaps a dollar or two per capita per year to support such a project. I'd certainly chip in two dollars. I'd give two hundred dollars a year for it!

Col. Everest: We would need a large research and development budget from the Government.

Ray Kelly-Bell

Engineer Moore fitted pioneer rocket engine into the X-1, first plane to break sound barrier.



Electronics wizard Stine, holding model rocket, thinks possibilities of space flight are infinite.

Aircraft contractors (couldn't manage it because they) have to make money for their various stockholders.

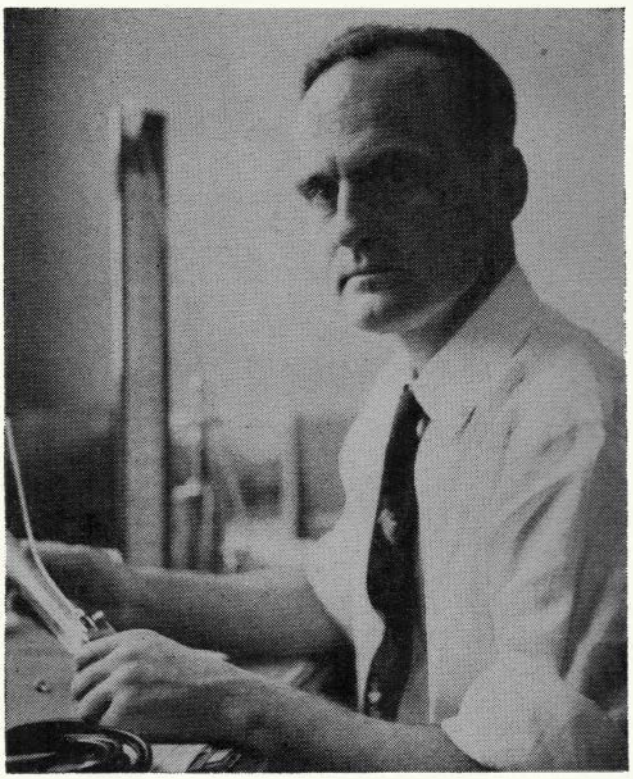
Lowell Randall: I feel that there are much better ways to spend money. For instance, everyone is crying for funds to support cancer research. That's a much better place in which to put money than trying to build a platform in space or sending a manned rocket to the moon!

Ed Francisco: I think it can pay off from many important angles—the military, the scientific and the commercial. A manned space platform, for example, which requires a space ship as its basis, could be quite profitable. Last year in New York I was talking with John Pierce, head of electronic research for the Bell Laboratories. He told me that if they had a platform out in space the Bell Telephone System would save five hundred million dollars in maintenance costs the first couple of years. It would do away with all their radio relay stations, all their microwave stations and long lines. This is strictly from Bell's point of view. Now take the national television networks. They'd need just one transmitter to cover the entire United States, three to cover the whole world. Power consumption would be less. The problem of antennas would be zero. Everybody would save money. And these are only minor aspects, commercially.

Col. Boushey: Cost is just relative: the expense of the Polynesian explorations, on their own terms, was probably much greater than spaceflight exploration will be to us, with our resources.

BUT CAN MAN LIVE IN SPACE?

Dr. Henry: Physiologically, any kind of space flight is possible—if the engineers design vehicles properly for human protection. The machine requirements are approximately the same as those of humans. So if the engineers can design a gadget that will go out there and continue to work, there's no reason why a man can't go with it. I feel that people would very soon get used to a zero-gravity—

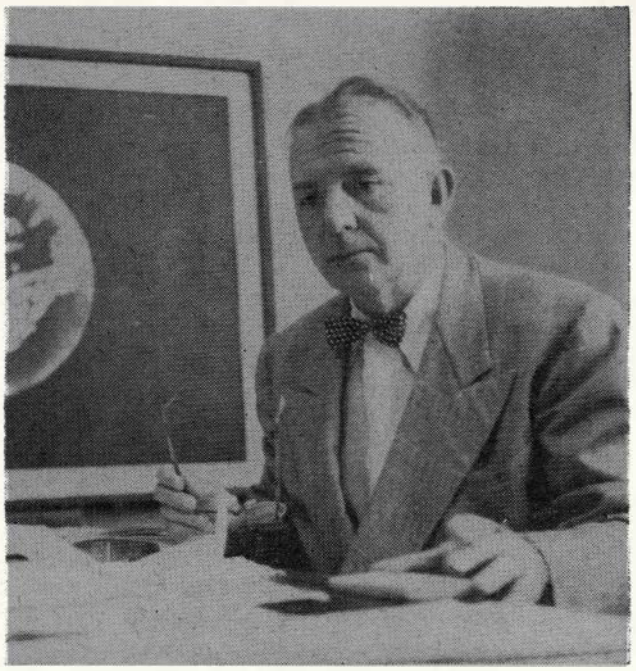


Dr. Henry, space medicine expert, developed the first practical high-altitude pressure suit.

or weightless—state, just as Nelson and others got used to the high seas: ocean travel was a pretty nauseating experience in the early days, yet people managed to colonize continents.

Capt. Vail: I think that spaceflight is entirely possible, physiologically. All this apprehension about cosmic radiation today is very much the same as the apprehension earlier about the sonic barrier. That barrier has been successfully broken; and the people on the surface of the Earth receive a fantastically large amount of radioactive bombardment every year, with no apparent damage. The average person isn't even aware of it.

Dr. Strughold: If the engineers can do it—and I hope they can do it soon—I am optimistic enough regarding the medical side of spaceflight. There are five space-equivalent conditions within our own atmosphere. The first begins at 50,000 feet, where oxygen lack can be fatal; the second, at 63,000 feet, is

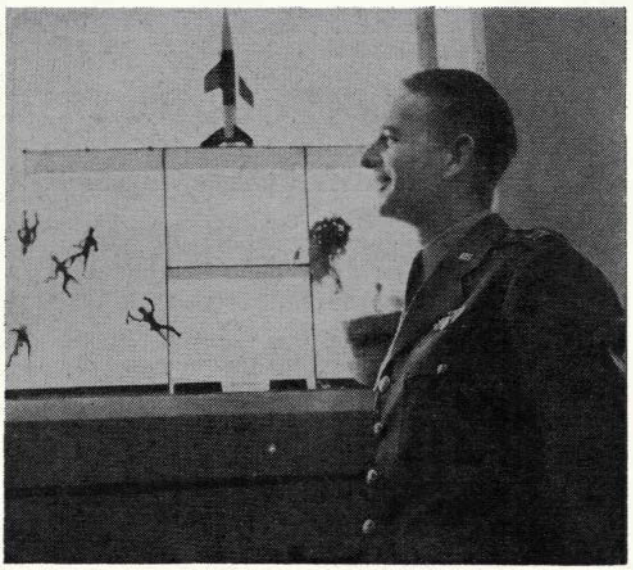


Dr. Strughold, noted aeromedical scientist, thinks there's no doubt man can conquer space.

the point where human blood boils spontaneously because of lack of atmospheric pressure; the third, at 80,000 feet, is so lacking in both oxygen and a pressure that a hermetically sealed cabin is required for survival—ordinary breathing and pressurizing devices will not do for long; the fourth condition, at between 120,000 and 140,000 feet, is exposure to the full force of cosmic and ultraviolet radiation as well as to the danger of meteors; at 120 miles (about 600,000 feet) and above—the fifth condition—there is no longer air resistance of any sort. This is a complete approximation of outer space within our own atmosphere. Now, if we look at records made by rocket-powered aircraft, we discover they have achieved altitudes of 70,000 feet commonly; they have surpassed 80,000 feet occasionally; and at least one has gone beyond 90,000 feet. This is very significant. It means that men have already flown through three of the most important space-equivalent conditions of the atmosphere and are approaching the fourth. Mice and monkeys have already traveled far beyond this in a rocket and survived. So I am quite optimistic that, physiologically, spaceflight is possible.

WHAT WILL HE FIND?

Harry Stine: Most astronomers say that the other worlds in our solar system are extremely hostile to life. How do they know? Have they ever been there? Take Mars, for example. Professor Clyde Tombaugh discovered the planet Pluto and is an authority on Mars. Even he says that only grass and lichens can grow there. But last time we went home to Colorado Springs, I deliberately made a point for us to climb to the top of Pike's Peak and look for growing things. Now I think we can pretty well assume that the type of climate you have on top of a high mountain like that would be fairly similar to what you might have on the surface of Mars. The temperature barely hits seventy during the summer months and it just gets cold as hell in the winter and the air is very thin. You know what we found there? We found flowers. We found insects. We found all kinds of growing things among those rocks. You couldn't see them if you were 30,000 feet up in an airplane. You can see them when you're on the ground. My wife is a botanist. She has reasons why she thinks there are probably more than grass and lichens on Mars. The possibilities for discovery in



Capt. Vail is a physiologist who is working on development of full-pressure space suit.

spaceflight are infinite. I'm saying that we just don't know anything right here and now!

NOTE: It should be mentioned that many eminent astronomers—Dr. Walter Henry Haas of New Mexico State College, for instance, who has a crater on the Moon named in his honor—do believe that there are mineral deposits of value to be found on Mars and Venus, at least, which conceivably "could turn out to be most profitable," though he doesn't think the likelihood strong enough to make it a good commercial gamble.

HOW FAR CAN HE GO?

Ed Francisco: Flight to our own planets, even flight among the stars is possible with the proper power plant.

Harry Stine: There's really no limit to space travel. After we do get there—with a space platform, say—we can set up a laboratory to study some of the phenomena we're worrying about, like gravity. Once we understand gravity, every known form of pro-

Parking Is Tough . . .

A DETROIT TRAFFIC REFEREE promptly dismissed an illegal parking charge when Arthur Bensmiller's mother explained: Arthur, 18, pulled into a parking space at the Federal Building and went in to enlist in the Air Force. The sign said "Reserved for Military Vehicles." Arthur figured his car would qualify by the time he got back. It didn't. Arthur couldn't come to argue the parking ticket because he was in Texas, taking Air Force basic training.

A BATTLE CREEK, MICHIGAN, driver got sleepy driving his car through Omaha one evening, and pulled off the road to a bumpy stop. A little later two local youths dragged him from his car a few seconds before a Union Pacific freight train roared down the track upon which he had parked. The car was demolished and his fine in the local court for illegal parking was $25.

IN HIS 10 YEARS as an Oakland, California, parking-lot attendant, Harold R. Williams parked about 100,000 cars without damage. His record ended when he backed a car into a pole, causing $150 damage. It was his own car.

IN A RECENT SURVEY made by Oklahoma A. & M. College officials, the biggest worry of the freshman was: "Where can I park my car?"

A CINCINNATI, OHIO, businessman "solved" his parking problem for several months by using his own fire hydrant. He found an old fire plug at the waterworks. Every day the porter at his business establishment would roll out the plug about 6 A.M. After the boss parked, he would bring it **in.**

Then a policeman got curious about a fire plug which sometimes wasn't there.

—BY JOHN L. KENT

pulsion will become obsolete. We'll wind up with a reactionless drive.

For example, there's no expenditure of matter in an electric generator—it's all induction, a swapping of directional energy, force fields. Motion might be produced this way in space, electromagnetically. And even this might prove to be peanuts. Once we're out there, we might even discover an interstellar drive. Something that would allow us to go from here to a star in several days rather than in hundreds and hundreds of years. We really don't know very much about space. We don't even know a damned thing about motion through space.

Col. Boushey: I went over Dr. Robert Goddard's* papers after his death and he had dreams of spaceflight even to another solar system. He speculated on methods of survival in space for various generations that would be born, grow up and die on the long flight. He was quite ahead of even science-fiction in his theories and dreams—but he thought it well worthwhile to get to another planetary system. I rather agree.

Dr. Henry: By placing fairly large telescopes on the moon, where there is no atmosphere to distort optical images, it should be possible to locate whatever other suns there are within our neighborhood of the galaxy that may have planets revolving about them. I'm sure there are not a few. It might take 1,000 years to journey to one of those stars. But if there's a big enough capsule for a crew of men and women—big enough to allow them to breed and find diversions—they ought to be able to sit the thing out. This was hardly more than was experienced—on a relative scale—by navigators and seafaring crewmen of the Sixteenth Century.

*NOTE: Dr. Goddard was the father of all modern rocketry.

Eight Minutes of Magnificence

Continued from page 19

There was a silence, then Bricker said, "Look at your uniform there. Go on, look at it. See *last* year's game socks? Look in my locker, last year's jersey. All four of us have our badges. The seniors who couldn't make the team. The All-Americans. Sure, we play all right; we scrimmage the all-mighty varsity."

"Nobody made you stay out three years running. Nobody made me, either. They didn't say you play varsity because you're seniors. Why didn't you quit?"

Johnson, another scrub senior, said, "Aw, keep it down, you guys."

Ebbets, the fourth, a short, skinny youth, looked at them but didn't say anything.

"You know why," Bricker said, his voice not angry, only sort of highpitched and oddly subdued. "Yeah. The same reason. Because we keep hoping we'll get to play somehow. You get sick of excuses for your parents. Maybe one time you won't have to make up something. You like seeing your dad after a game?"

Martenson's hands worked with the zipper on his jacket. They were big hands, with long, blunt fingers, and they fumbled with the metal slide. "All right," he said. "Don't you think we know it?"

"Well, it's finished tomorrow," Bricker said, his lips trembling. "When it's over we can quit sweating."

Andy half-turned toward them, then opened the door and went out. What could he say? That he was sorry? They didn't need sympathy, or want it. He thought of the cruel title some student hung on them and he felt guilty because he was unable to help, even to let them play enough to get their letters. It was a lousy day, he thought, going to the parking lot.

Alma was waiting in the car, bundled in the yellow cardigan she liked. She was bareheaded and her short hair was arranged in neat, fine, gray-black lines that waved slightly on the sides. Andy got in and they drove past the scrimmage field toward the corner. The leaves had sifted over along the gutter, golden orange, matting, the late fall. He looked at them silently, hardly seeing them.

"Hey, what's the matter?" she asked, the words casual and kind of bantering. "You don't act like the coach who is going to beat Centennial."

Andy turned and grinned. "Coaches don't beat anyone; their teams do. Will you stop singularizing eleven people?"

"What is it, Andy?" Her eyes probed him, their blithe expression gone. "Something happen to one of the boys in practice?"

"No, it's the seniors. The kids who have tried to make the grade and couldn't."

"Oh, the All-Americans."

"Alma, don't call them that."

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean it the way it sounded. I just meant the ones you're always talking about. Why do they keep trying, Andy? It isn't anything to be ashamed of, not to be able to play football."

He paused, wondering, why do they? "I don't know. Why do you keep at anything? Like me, I've always sort of thought of coaching some college, back in my mind somewhere. Thinking there might be a day when I'd be good enough and somebody would ask me. Eighteen years, Alma. And I'm still here with old Servelle High. Maybe it's something like that for them."

Alma tossed her head and laughed. "Don't try that on me. You're a good coach. They wouldn't let you keep running the team if you weren't."

Andy laughed, too. "You're prejudiced. Oh, I don't really care much, not with a specific passion, but I think it's because they can't afford someone else. With me, they have a gym director and coach for the same money. They can't afford two men."

"Well, I think they've got two men," Alma announced and they both laughed again.

She turned on their street and began slowing. Ahead was their house, its white, buttress porch with the trellis of vine Alma carefully tended barely visible in the dusk. They pulled in the driveway and Alma stopped.

She looked over at him and said, "Maybe it would have been easier if you had cut them from the team."

Andy paused with the door handle and sighed. She was probably right. "I don't know, Alma. You look at them and see their sincerity, the way they try, and think if you let them stay on the squad maybe it's some consolation."

THEY got out of the car and went in the house. Andy hung his coat in the hall and sat down beside the radio and after awhile she brought some hot chocolate and they sat together, drinking it.

"Are you still thinking about them?" Alma asked.

He nodded. "A little."

"Andy, it isn't your fault if everyone isn't born alike, with the same ability."

He turned his head without raising it and looked at her, the lamp on the table reflecting twin yellow images in the circles of his glasses. "I've considered putting them in a hundred times, I guess. But you know, Alma, there are three thousand people in the stands watching me, depending on me. I know they don't think I'm much as a football coach, but there's no reason to prove it, publicly, by taking out Levine or Harkness or somebody like that and sending those kids in."

Alma heard the evening paper land on the porch and she rose to go after it. Returning, she smiled and tossed it in his lap, saying, "Here, read about the trouble they have with monsoons in Sumatra or something."

The paper lay there and he didn't move. "We'll have all we can do holding our own with the regular squad," he said.

THE banner around the side of the bus shouted in bright blue-and-white Servelle colors: BEAT CENTENNIAL! Andy stood outside the door as the players passed him, hitting them on the buttocks as they loaded on the bus.

Andy saw Martenson and the other three seniors standing toward the end of the line and went back to them.

"I would like to see you four in the gym a minute."

The boys' faces changed imperceptibly. "Sure, Mr. Andrews."

Andy went in the gym and they followed him to his office, their cleated shoes cracking on the wooden floor. They stood around awkwardly.

"Today's your last game," he said. "You know Centennial is tough this year, maybe tougher than they've ever been. I want to be honest with you; there's no use in building your hopes up. I doubt if we'll be able to use more than two or three men outside the regular squad."

They shifted their feet; the boards creaked.

Andy looked around at them, meeting their eyes. "You have been pretty faithful, coming out for practice, playing wherever I asked you in scrimmage. I wish there was some way I could give you points for that on your letters. I think you've earned them."

Andy knew it was wrong and he was sorry. They didn't ask for charity, he thought, his eyes roving from Martenson to Bricker to Johnson and Ebbets. Ebbets, the smallest, maybe a hundred and fifteen pounds soaking wet. And Martenson. Charging, bulling in helplessly and getting dumped every time, getting up his long-legged, clumsy way and coming in the same way again. Bricker. He looked soft. A whole scrimmage one day with ripped cartilage, cotton stuffed in his nose to conceal the bleeding. Len Johnson, the blond, quiet and unfathomable, who played any place you wanted him to, who couldn't remember a play overnight. Even if they couldn't play football there was an indefinable quality they had, the four. Sometimes, Andy felt, there is a greater thing than ability.

They heard the bus horn blowing outside.

"What I wanted to tell you was that, well, I appreciate it." He looked away from them and said, "You better go get on the bus."

They filed out of the office and pretty soon the gym was quiet. He was glad the bus was already pulling away when he went outside.

He rode to the stadium in the car with Alma and after they parked he walked with her to the side entrance and stopped outside.

Alma smiled. "Good luck, Andy."

"Thanks, Alma."

He watched her disappear in the crowd and walked down the corridor to the high-ceilinged, drafty room where his players were.

Andy looked at all of them a minute, their young plaster faces stark against the clean blue jerseys.

"I think you can beat them. If you're not good enough to do it nothing I can say will make you better. You know how I feel about speeches. I think sometimes the faculty doesn't believe I fire you up enough."

There was some scattered nervous laughter.

"Just play fair and honestly. Do your best. Don't play alone."

Andy nodded to the team manager and they passed by Fielding grabbing sticks of gum and yelling as they crunched down the graveled tunnel to the field. Andy followed them and stood behind the bench and watched them moving around the field, their occasional shouts floating in to him.

After a while he turned and looked up to where Alma was sitting and saw her wave, but he didn't wave back, only smiled and nodded his head in acknowledgment. He looked across to the other side of the stadium at the flowerbed of faces. A lot of people must have driven down from Indianapolis, he thought, to watch Centennial.

Andy watched Harkness toss with the other captain and he felt a pinching tautness in his stomach as Centennial lined up to kick off. It came down brown-spiraling and twisted in the cold sun and Levine caught it fairly deep and three Centennial players were on him.

Servelle huddled and came out hurriedly and was offside on their first play. Andy's face didn't change. Even when he saw Levine glance toward him as they walked back with the penalty. They ran two more plays and Harkness kicked an arching high punt.

The Centennial team didn't show any special power or unusual running plays and the first quarter passed evenly, although more of it was played in Servelle territory.

TOWARD the end of the half, Andy rose and walked down past the seated players, his shoulders stooping a little in the heavy mackinaw, his hands pushed deep in its folds. Centennial had begun a drive which carried them down within a few yards of the goal.

Centennial went over on the next play but missed the extra point. Without turning, Andy called a name to the players behind him. The boy came up beside him. "Tell Levine to pass more. They're heavy for you, that line. Tell them they're doing all right," Andy said.

The youth went loping out pulling on his helmet strap. It was the first substitution Andy made.

When the half ended Andy took only a few minutes in the room under the stands to talk to them. Once, he was aware of the four seniors listening intently and afterwards, when they all were running past him to go back out on the field, the four jogged by with their faces fixed almost exaggeratedly ahead, as if they didn't see him.

It came in the third quarter, quite unexpectedly, for Servelle was once again defending deeply in their part of the field. Harkness sliced in between a Centennial player and intercepted a short pass and snaked through the scattered, moving bodies and scored. Servelle made the extra point and the people in the stands behind Andy rose and against their collective, wind-tunnel roar, there was the discordant, independent sound of the school band.

For Andy, standing beside the young, shouting Fielding, it was an ageless triumph. It was truthfully the first time since he had been with the school that they had been ahead of Centennial.

In the last quarter of the game Servelle still held the one-point advantage and he made a few cautious substitutions for some of the tired regulars. These few times he came along the bench the four seniors sitting together on the far end managed to stare interestedly across the field at the play, avoiding his eyes, anything that might prevent any open, momentary consideration of them.

Andy realized it was the local humiliation they were afraid of, knowing the others might see and know when he passed them for someone else. Underneath their masks of pretended concentration on the play was their longing.

He sat on the wooden bench, hunched over, feeling the cold more around his legs and ankles, his hands warming in the pockets of his mackinaw. One point ahead. What had he used, maybe thirteen, fourteen men. They would think he was crazy; and the other kids, what about them if they lost the game now? He had no right to chance it. . . .

Up in the stands, Alma glanced over at the big black-and-white clock on the opposite side of the field. She pulled the robe tighter around her legs and looked down at her husband, the plaid cloth of his coat beside the hooded figures of his players.

The man sitting next to her said to his wife, "If they can just hold them for eight more minutes."

Alma looked down at Andy again. He had risen and was motioning to some of the seated players. Four of them pulled off their hooded parkas and grouped around him. Then they ran across the field toward the referee, their fresh jerseys sparkling.

The inert cluster of speakers began talking and while it droned its information, the man beside Alma said, "Putting in four new men now. He must be crazy. Look," he showed his wife, "they aren't even on the program. They are not even on the program."

There wasn't any sudden change after he put the four seniors in, except perhaps Centennial gained a little more on their plays than they had. Andy sat watching and after Centennial moved the second time for new downs, he glanced along the bench at the varsity men, looking for their accusals, searching out Levine and Harkness, the stars.

They weren't looking at him, any of them. Harkness had slid off the bench and was kneeling in front of it and the others were leaning forward on their arms watching. Most of them were yelling. "That's the way, Marty!" "Give it to 'em, Brick!" And one of them shouted, "Come on, you All-Americans, smear 'em!"

But it wasn't a cruel name now as the varsity shouted it. It was the hand reaching out and touching you when you needed it; it was a glorious title and its magnificence grew as the others along the bench picked it up.

And that was what Andy had been playing for. Winning the game was important to him---to his job and to his opinion of himself as a coach. But more important was what the game did to the men who played it. They needed to believe in themselves—all of them, good players and bad. And it seemed to Andy that this was what they were supposed to get out of school, this personal faith.

HEARING the varsity's shouts brought a hotness to Andy's eyes and they stung a little from the cold air. He was blinking them when Fielding came back and handed him a folded piece of paper. Fielding was trying to look at him and watch the game as he talked.

"Mrs. Andrews sent it down to you."

"Thanks, Fielding."

He opened it and read the scrawled lines she had written on the program. *You have two thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine critics. Love, Alma.*

He looked up toward where she was sitting in the quiet, sullen crowd and smiled although he knew she couldn't see it.

And then he was hardly aware the game had ended, even though they all began shouting and jumping around him. He wasn't even concerned just then about whether he had won.

—BY KENNETH E. SHIFLET

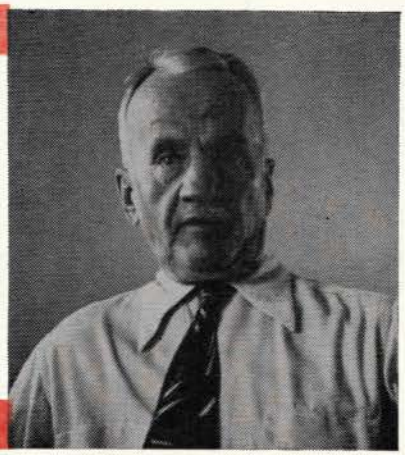
make it easy

TO PREVENT that hard-to-remove frost from covering the windows of your car after a night outdoors, cover them with a thin coating of glycerine which can be bought at any drug store. The windows will be clear in the morning, and the glycerine may be left on as it does not obstruct vision. One treatment usually lasts several days.

—*Charles Merhib, Worcester, Mass.*

My Neighbors Put Me in a Mental Hospital

Continued from page 22



such an action except, perhaps, two of my neighbors with whom I'd had a bitter argument.

"Humph, come with me," he growled. He led me to the chief of the psycho-neurotic department, to whom he handed his report with a few whispered words. The chief compared the report with some other papers on his desk, then said, soberly, "Major, we have an order here to hold you for a complete mental examination which will take several days. You should not have been released last night, but since you have now presented yourself voluntarily we shall not restrain you by force. However, if you leave now, you will be picked up immediately and brought in by whatever means are necessary. I would advise you to submit now to confinement."

I was so stunned I couldn't talk—I couldn't even think. I could only gasp, "May I phone my wife? She works downstairs."

"Yes, while you are at liberty. After that there will be no communication except by censored mail and with your wife only on visiting days. There is no need to phone your lawyer—*you cannot be released on bail.*"

Viola came up at once and I explained the situation in a few words while the chief stood by. I gave her the keys to our car, parked across the street, my wallet, watch and notebook. We said good-by with tearful smiles.

A burly guard quickly appeared, unlocked a heavy, oak door that had a small barred peep-hole near the top and led me down a corridor into a small room with thickly padded walls.

"My God," I gasped, "you aren't going to put me in here already?"

"No, not yet," the guard grinned. "Just take off all your clothes."

I stripped down and was given cotton pajamas and a bathrobe, with no belts, and straw sandals. The guard tied my clothes into a bundle and tagged them with my name.

"You'll get these when you go out—*if* and *when*. Come with me."

We continued down the corridor and came to another heavy door. The guard rapped and a face appeared at the peep-hole. Just like a speakeasy. I was admitted into a high-ceilinged ward, about 20 x 40 feet, with windows closely barred, double doors leading onto a porch, and perhaps 30 pajama-clad figures in different positions of rest and unrest. The heavy door was closed and double-locked behind me. I fell on the nearest cot.

I don't know how long I lay there. But suddenly I became aware of two men marching up and down the aisle between the cots, arms entwined, shouting "Madelon" in attempted harmony, stamping the cadence with sandaled feet.

As I sat up, a short dark-complected guard came to point out the cot assigned to me and to say it was not permitted to lie on a cot during the day except by special order. He also said the "doc" had told him I might stay in the "quiet" ward during the day, but would have to return here to bunk since there was no vacancy over there just then.

My cot was No. 1, next to the entrance door. I sat down on a steel camp chair and looked around. Next to me, a middle-aged man had pulled his cot out from the wall and was walking around and around it, without looking up. Someone threw a pillow in his path and he reversed his course each time he came to it. He would not step over it.

At No. 3 cot, a tall young man had the forefinger of his right hand up in front of his nose, gazing at it rapturously and talking to it softly, while walking back and forth.

The two singers were still marching, trying now to harmonize on "Mademoiselle from Armentieres." They could remember only one verse but were working hard on that. Each time they reached the far end of the ward a very old man with white hair raised up from his cot and shouted, "Keep away from me, you sons-of-bitches! I know what you want. Keep away or I'll shoot." They paid him absolutely no attention.

The doors to the porch were open. There was sunshine out there. *Perhaps I could be alone.* No, two young men were playing cards, grumbling, quarreling and cursing each other. Then one threw the cards in the other's face and stalked away. The other laughed wildly, "That guy can't play rummy! I beat him every time. . . . Want to play, Mister?" I thanked him and refused. He too strolled away leaving only an old man with his nose buried in a dog-eared *Argosy*, reading aloud to himself. I could hear the words he stopped to spell out.

My mind was beginning to function again. *How long would this ordeal last? Would my job be kept open? What could my lawyer do? What sort of a third-degree would they give me? Could I endure it and appear sane and competent?* I started pacing up and down and biting my nails, for the first time in my life, when fortunately the guard called, "Mess."

A few of us were herded through the corridor into

the mess hall adjoining the "quiet" ward, while food carts were brought back for the others. About 20 men were already in line, pushing and crowding, yelling, wise-cracking, razzing, exchanging dirty jokes. *If this was the "quiet" ward, what would the other be like—at night?*

The meal over and the knives and forks carefully checked in, I was admitted to the ward-room. The inmates were led out to "shop-work," leaving me alone with the nurse. *Perhaps she could tell me something about the standard procedure?* She could.

First, there would be all sorts of physical exams. Then, meetings with the neuropsychiatric board, with the department psychologist, and with each of three members of a committee appointed by the district judge. Finally, a formal hearing before the judge, himself, who, on the basis of all these reports and my own pleading, would decide whether I should be released or sent to the state asylum or a VA neuropsychiatric hospital for an indefinite period. The court hearings were on Thursdays—my hearing *might* be called the following week.

Ten days or more of this? I really will be "nuts"—they won't have to examine me—just give me a one-way ticket to Chattahoochie. There goes my job and $300 a week in fees I've been working so hard for. Where will I get another of any kind at my age?

I started on my nails again, pacing up and down until the nurse became nervous and brought out writing paper and pencil. "Here, write a nice long letter to your wife," she said. "I'll see that she gets it."

I was much engrossed in that when, suddenly, two hands were clamped around my throat and a wild shriek nearly shattered my left eardrum. I jumped to my feet, broke the hold and turned—to find a half-dozen pajamed men gathered around, clapping hands and laughing. It was evidently my initiation to the "quiet" ward.

The "gang" had returned from the shop and now broke up into card and checker games, reading, writing, while others resumed pacing the floor, up and down, forward and back, sometimes running into each other in their abstraction.

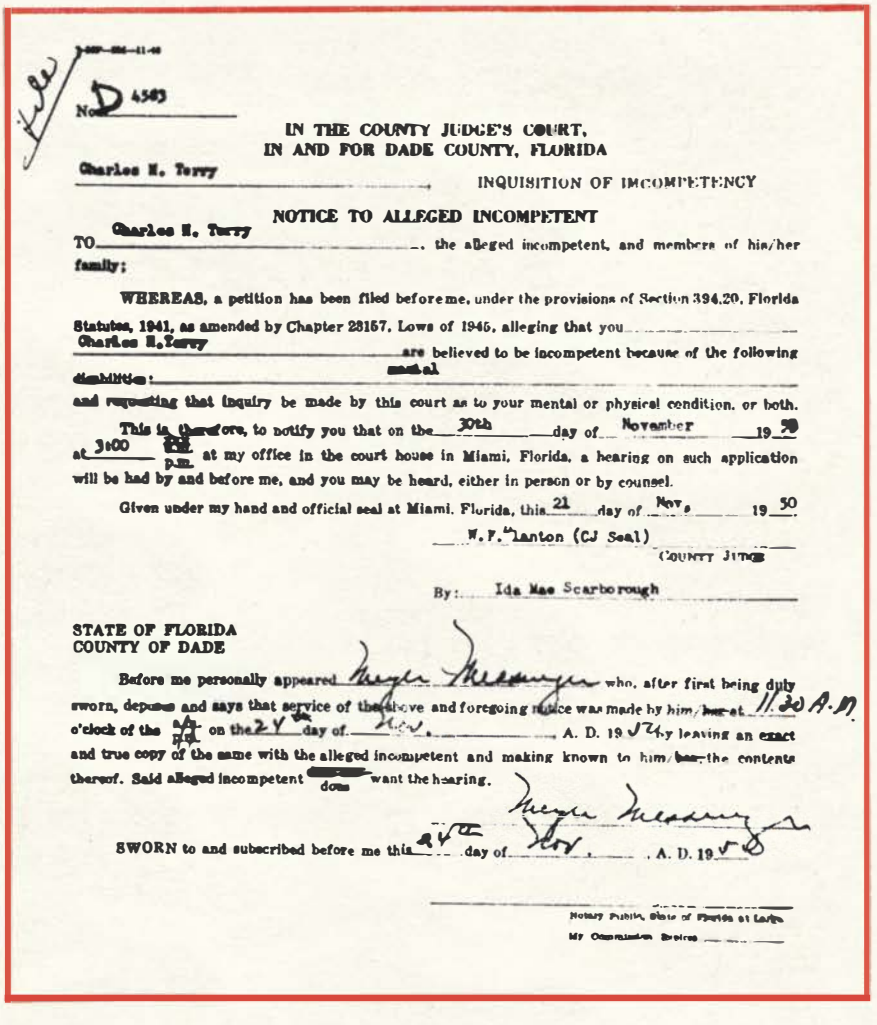
I pulled my chair into a corner where I was protected at least on one flank and the rear, and was making progress with my letter when someone slid into a chair alongside, pulled my sleeve and whispered, "What's wrong with you?"

"Eh—uh—" I gasped and stammered, "Nothing—I hope."

"Me neither. I just came in here to get rid of those little guys—they follow me everywhere. There's three of them now, over on the clock. See them? At night they climb on my pillow and whisper in my ear—tell me all kinds of crazy things to do. When I'm alone I feel like I have to do what they say, but here—I feel safer. Know what I mean?"

"Ye—es, no doubt you are right. I'd stay right there, where you are *now*."

I gathered up my papers and retreated to the porch. I felt safer there. It was open on three sides, screened and barred, but overlooking the deserted golf course. One felt a little more at liberty, if only in fancy, and I was alone. I finished writing Vi what I had learned from the nurse, urged her to try to expedite my exams in any way possible, gave the letter to the nurse and returned to pace the porch deck until supper.



No. D 4543

IN THE COUNTY JUDGE'S COURT,
IN AND FOR DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA

Charles H. Terry — INQUISITION OF INCOMPETENCY

NOTICE TO ALLEGED INCOMPETENT

TO Charles H. Terry, the alleged incompetent, and members of his/her family;

WHEREAS, a petition has been filed before me, under the provisions of Section 394.20, Florida Statutes, 1941, as amended by Chapter 28157, Laws of 1945, alleging that you Charles H. Terry are believed to be incompetent because of the following disabilities: mental

and requesting that inquiry be made by this court as to your mental or physical condition, or both.

This is therefore, to notify you that on the 30th day of November 19 50 at 3:00 P.M. at my office in the court house in Miami, Florida, a hearing on such application will be had by and before me, and you may be heard, either in person or by counsel.

Given under my hand and official seal at Miami, Florida, this 21 day of Nov. 19 50

W. F. Manton (CJ Seal)
COUNTY JUDGE

By: Ida Mae Scarborough

STATE OF FLORIDA
COUNTY OF DADE

Before me personally appeared [signature] who, after first being duly sworn, deposes and says that service of the above and foregoing notice was made by him/her at 11:30 A.M. o'clock of the A.M. on the 24 day of Nov., A. D. 19 50 by leaving an exact and true copy of the same with the alleged incompetent and making known to him/her the contents thereof. Said alleged incompetent does want the hearing.

[signature]

SWORN to and subscribed before me this 24 day of Nov., A. D. 19 50

Notary Public, State of Florida at Large
My Commission Expires

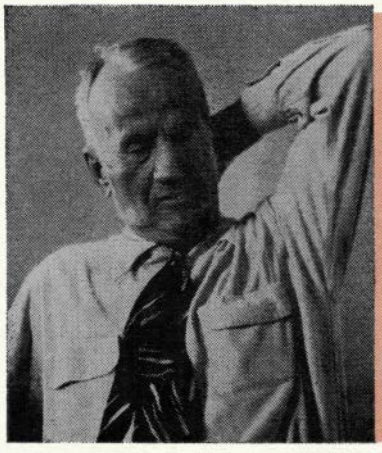
After supper all the lights were turned on and a noisy poker game—for cigarettes and matches—was started. I started to nose through the bookshelves, hardly knowing what I was looking at, when a colored boy asked me to help him with a letter. It was a welcome diversion.

It seems his wife had him committed for coming home late Saturday nights and "holding out" on his pay envelope. Yes, maybe he had been playing a little

"cuba" and some "numbers," but he sure didn't want to go back to his wife after what she had done to him. He was writing to his father to get him out.

At nine o'clock the corridor doors were thrown open and a guard called, "Shower." We filed through to the big bathroom in the other ward where we bathed in groups, then were given bath towels and fresh pajamas by the big, good-natured colored orderly, Ben. He was a spare-time professional wrestler —and built for it.

I went to my cot in the corner and arranged my bedding in the dim light that was left. Most of the men in here were already in bed and apparently asleep. I turned in but was still too upset to sleep in those weird surroundings. I tried the self-hypnosis I



" 'Frankly,' I told the board, 'I don't know who asked for this lunacy examination.' "

had used successfully overseas, even during an artillery barrage. I concentrated on each part of my body, starting with my hair and working downwards, *willing* each to slumber. But it didn't work. As I arrived at the nose or lips, a wild shriek would come from down the ward, or someone would fall out of bed, and I would have to start all over.

Soon, a slipping, dragging sound approached along the rubber mat between the rows of cots. It was someone crawling on his hands and knees, whimpering softly, plaintively, "Don't let them get me—please don't. Oh, no—please don't. Get away!" He suddenly dived under a cot. Ben, the orderly, pulled him out gently, shook him like a baby and led him back to his bed, his sobs gradually subsiding.

I must have dozed off because at my next awareness I was standing on my feet, scared stiff, with a series of yells ringing in my ears from directly across the aisle. There, in the half-light, backed against the wall, was an enormous figure of a man swinging out viciously with both arms as if fighting several enemies on all sides, cursing and yelling, "Come on, you bastards, you can't get me—I'll kill every one of you."

Ben and two other guards came on the run. One shouted to the other, "Get Bill and the nurse. We'll have to give him a shot or he'll hurt somebody." Ben lunged in with a tackle that brought the wild man down and the one remaining guard lay on his head until the two other guards and the nurse burst in. Then, with one man clamping each limb, the nurse plunged a hypodermic into the big man's wrist, and almost immediately he became a sobbing, blubbering, quivering mass. They dragged him into one of the padded rooms, and the heavy door closed and locked.

"Good Lord," I said to Ben as he passed by, wiping the perspiration off his face. "Is it like this every night?"

"It's always worse at night. The dreams git 'em. Just wait until the drunks start comin' in."

I really didn't choose to wait for that next performance, but there was nothing much I could do about avoiding it. I was an enforced spectator in the very front row and very much awake when the only casualty was brought in—but very quietly—tied to a stretcher. His face was covered with blood, his head thick with bandages, one arm in splints. He did not move nor speak. "He's full of dope," a guard said.

I felt as if I could use a shot myself, and asked permission to go out on the porch for fresh air. "The porch is locked off," said the guard. "Here, take this cigarette and go in the washroom. You'll feel better."

I did—well enough for a few snatches of sleep until 6 A.M. reveille.

Shortly after breakfast, the nurse told me to get shaved and cleaned up. I was to have a preliminary physical at 9 and appear before the neuropsychiatric board at 10. A guard who was shaving several others in the washroom handed me a razor with, "You're old enough to shave yourself."

The physical exam was the usual Army induction routine. At 10 I was called to the mess hall to find an imposing gathering around the long mess table. The chief, himself, at one end, a clever-looking gentleman at his right and three ladies.

The chief identified the gentleman as his assistant, and the ladies as the head nurse, the department psychologist, and a "Gray Lady."

He wasted very little time with stock questions. "We already have two reports on your mental condition and shall probably have three or four more. This board is interested in knowing *why you are here*. In other words we want your story. Go ahead."

For a moment I was stumped and admitted it. "Frankly, I don't even know who asked for this lunacy examination. I'm sure my wife didn't, and I can't think of anyone else who would call me crazy."

From the general smile, I gathered everyone was married.

"Have you had any arguments or disputes with anyone lately?" the chief asked.

"Yes," I answered. "Sunday I trapped two of my neighbors' dogs in my little garden. The owners tried to have me arrested but were refused a warrant."

"What were their names?"

I mentioned two names. "If those two and one or two others signed that complaint, then that is why I am here."

The chief looked at a paper on the table for a long minute, then asked, "Why did you set traps for those dogs?"

"They were not set especially for those two dogs, but purely to identify whatever had ravaged my garden several times and infected my wife's hands with ringworms. There were skunks, muskrats, cats and plenty of stray dogs loose in the suburb. I had to know definitely which or what was doing the damage in order to take corrective measures."

"Were the dogs injured in any way?"

"No. The traps were the smallest I could buy, smooth-jawed, and not even attached to anything. When the owners claimed and released them, the animals ran away very happily."

"Had you consulted anyone before making this move?"

I named my next-door neighbor, who holds an important government position.

"What did he say?"

"He told me his young fruit trees had had their bark scratched off until he had to put wire mesh around them, so he thought I had something there."

With no further questions from the others, the chief asked if I had anything more to say.

"Only to offer my apology for appearing before these ladies in pajamas and bare feet," I said. "I did not choose this costume."

He smiled slightly and replied, "They are accustomed to that. That's all."

I marched out smartly, with my shoulders back and my chin drawn in, but I did not feel that way.

What impression had I made on the board? Did they think I was crazy for trapping dogs? Had I been too bold? What would they decide, and when?

Barely past the heavy door I nearly collapsed, but the big guard, who had been standing behind my chair all the time, hit me a friendly slap on the back that nearly broke me in two. "Buck up, kid, you did all right—you're on your way out. Go hit the sack until mess call. Tell 'em I said so." It made me feel better but I still did not know. Uncertainty was having its effect.

That afternoon I was sent out with the "shop gang," herded across the courtyard in our bathrobes and slippers to the physical-therapy shop. There the men had been working with wood, leather, clay and paints, making little articles of their own fancy: pocketbooks, drawings, trays, and statuettes.

I was given some watercolors and a wooden bird to decorate. It turned out all one color—blue. I apologized that it was my first job of the kind

The Terrys recently bought two acres of land in Lantana, Fla., cleared it and planted 2,000 pineapples, thereby got a building loan. The major drew plans for the house, supervised construction.

since kindergarten days and that I was very fond of bluebirds. My excuses were accepted.

About 4 P.M. I was called to the mess hall to meet the psychiatrist appointed by the district judge. He was direct but courteous. After the routine questions which, by then, I knew almost verbatim, he asked if I had any idea as to why I was there and who had me committed. When I related my dog story he shook his head. "It's remarkable what some people will do."

But he was thorough. As I found out later, he went immediately to my wife to corroborate all I had told him. He said to her, "I don't believe your husband is crazy, do you?" His opinion was approved quickly and with vigor.

It seemed long until visiting hour that evening, but at last I was led through the three locked doors out into the main corridor, fitted-up as a reception room, where Viola was waiting. She gasped at my costume but quickly plunged into a recital of urgent events. The car was still parked across the street—she didn't have a license and so couldn't move it. She was sure the two neighbors had made the lunacy charges and was frightened, especially at night, about what they might try next. My lawyer could do nothing at present except to keep after the judge's committee to complete their reports on my case. He had explained to my wife that while persons charged with murder and other crimes may be released on bail to await trial, there is no such provision for the release of a person accused of being insane.

She had brought writing paper, cigarettes and magazines. At home she had an 18-pound turkey all ready for Thanksgiving dinner the following day, and our annual reunion with the Macks, mother and son, former neighbors at West Palm Beach. I insisted they go ahead with the dinner and asked her to bring them over to see me afterward—there would be a special visiting hour in the afternoon because of the holiday. She had phoned my boss who suggested I see him after I got out, but who said nothing about holding my job for me. I told her of my interviews and exams, but soft-pedaled on the happenings in the ward. Then the hour was over and she had to go.

That night was almost a repetition of the one before except that the old "Colonel" at the far end got profane and abusive and was carried screaming and cursing into one of the "little rooms." About midnight a "mean" drunk was brought in, saved from the county jail because he was a vet. He submitted to a shower, cursing and yelling, but refused to go into a cell. Big Ben neatly pinned his arms behind him, grabbed the seat of his pajamas and turkey-trotted him through the door, slammed and locked it—a notable example of gentleness through strength. Then there was quiet, broken only by occasional outbursts that were usually quieted by a shower or a powder. The giant from across the room was still locked up.

Thanksgiving morning broke bright and warm. The little Cuban guard said he was going to take the entire "violent" ward down in the courtyard to play volleyball and asked if I cared to go along.

"What, you alone?" I gasped. "That I want to see."

"Oh, I can handle them all right during the day," he explained. "It's only at night we need more guards."

It was a wild game with no umpire. "I let them fight it out," the guard said. "It wakes them up." Some of the players became excited and tried to make every return, others would not move from their tracks even when the ball hit them on the head, and a few would start after a ball then suddenly stop and stare. There were interruptions—the "Colonel" got foul-mouthed and had to be taken upstairs, and once the "crawler" invaded the court on his hands and knees. But the game went on until everyone had the opportunity to play.

After my turn, I strolled over to chat with the guard, a night pre-med student, who seemed to know a lot about the different cases. They were all at the hospital for examination, he said, and would be judged sane and released, or sent to the state asylum or a VA neuropsychiatric hospital for treatment.

He pointed out cases of *senility,* like the "Colonel"; of *paranoia,* like the "giant"; *paresis* and *epilepsy* that might never be cured: and others like myself who were here because of the malice and spite of their enemies. He indicated an ex-pilot lieutenant whose wife had him committed because he would not live with her, another man whose wife put him in for infidelity, and several in for drinking and non-support.

"Will they be released?" I asked.

What the psychiatrist said:

"On admission the patient appeared in good contact, speech was coherent and relevant, and there was no evidence of hallucinations or delusions . . . He showed good insight into the situation, and his judgment appeared adequate. The patient showed excellent ward adjustment, was pleasant and cooperative, and participated willingly in all ward activities. He explained the incident which had led to his hospitalization in a very reasonable manner . . . Emotionally the patient appeared stable and pleasant during the whole period of his hospitalization, and did not show any evidence of psychotic or neurotic symptoms . . ."

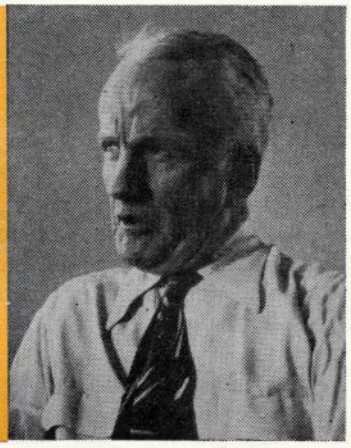
—Excerpt from hospital report on Charles H. Terry

"Certainly. If they cooperate and don't 'break' during the process. A man can't be convicted of insanity because he gets drunk or doesn't love his wife."

"What if he traps his neighbors' dogs in his garden?"

He stared at me for a moment, puzzled, then smiled. "Don't be silly," he said.

Promptly at two o'clock my name was called. Vi was waiting in the reception hall, alone. Only one visitor could be admitted at a time, so she soon withdrew, and Mrs. Mack came in. She seemed so shocked at my costume and the environment that she remained only a few minutes. But her



" 'You cannot be released on bail,' the attorney told me. 'It's a custom dating from witchcraft days.' "

son, a lawyer, was much interested in the entire affair.

After I had related briefly all that had happened to date, I asked his opinion on what to expect. He confirmed what the nurse had told me—that I still had to meet with members of the judge's committee and the staff psychologist, after which I would have a formal hearing before the judge next Thursday.

"There goes my job," I said.

"Well," he said, "all you can do is wait. You cannot be released on bail. It's a custom dating from Salem witchcraft days."

I spent the rest of Thanksgiving Day pacing the porch deck, trying to stay calm, fighting to keep a firm grip on myself.

Friday morning the others and I were given blood-tests and X-rayed. I managed to get in a word with Vi in the X-ray department. She said our lawyer had phoned. He had contacted and was pushing the members of the judge's committee. He wanted photos of our garden, house, fences, etc.

Someone was working for me on the outside.

After dinner the staff psychologist sent for me. and gave me her special tests—copying odd designs and fantastic patterns, doing mental arithmetic, tracing out figures from ink blots, drawing a picture of a house and of a woman's face. I admitted I was a construction engineer by trade and said I would need more definite specifications on the house, and then sketched her profile, rather flatteringly. She smiled and dismissed me. "You can find your own way back. You don't need a guard." Then, as I arose, she added, "I have your case history here. I'll do what I can for you."

In the evening a social organization brought in a small organ, lady volunteers played and sang, we did some group singing and then played bingo for cigars and cigarettes. A little later I was called to the mess hall.

It was the physician appointed by the judge. He seemed accustomed to such interviews and came directly to the point. "Well, what's wrong with you?"

I took a deep drag on my newly won cigar and replied as calmly as I could, "Doctor, I have *dog* trouble."

He stared at me doubtfully. "What do you mean?"

He had, of course, been expecting something crazy but nothing quite so *outre*.

"Dog trouble," I said. "I trapped a couple of my neighbors' dogs in my garden last Sunday and I've been here nearly ever since."

At that he relaxed, looked at me intently for a moment, then smiled. "Well, tell me all about it."

I related briefly what had actually happened and what I surmised.

He asked a few questions about family life, occupation, dreams and hallucinations, then showed me a 3 x 5 inch card on which he had written under my name, "Intelligent, alert, cooperative, no hallucinations. Recommend discharge."

"That is my report to the judge," he said kindly, and stuck out his hand. "Good-night and good-luck."

Saturday morning was too cold for outside activity. There was nothing to do but play cards, checkers, read, write, and walk the floor. The guard organized some kindergarten games, and he and the nurse took turns sitting in the poker game to keep it alive, but it was a long, long day.

I wanted to phone my lawyer about my last exams but that required special permission from the chief himself and he was off for the week-end.

The ex-pilot and the colored boy whose wife had put him in were processed out. The ex-pilot's sister had gone to bat for him, and the boy's father was to take him home and be responsible for him. We were happy for them, of course, but also a little envious. Their release left a vacant cot for me in the "quiet" ward and I was told to transfer my toothbrush, comb and towel.

Sunday morning the day guard came in wearing an overcoat. He said it was 27 degrees at his place and felt like "minus zero" in the ward. He told us to stay in bed until breakfast (loud hurrahs) and, passing my cot, that he had phoned my wife.

It was a weird "chow line" in blankets and bath

towels, which we were allowed to wear through the day. Even so there was more coughing and sneezing, and by visiting hour my throat was raw.

Vi was astounded at our costumes and the temperature in the corridor. She hurried down to the PX and came up with a long-sleeve sweater and some wool socks, which I put on.

Our attorney had phoned. The "business man" of the judge's committee was going to accept the physician's opinion of my condition and would not interview me. My exams therefore were completed and a request would be made for my release without the formal hearing. We were both elated but were afraid to expect too much.

By nine on Monday morning the good old Florida sun had come out to raise the temperature and the animal spirits in the ward. We moved our cots out onto the porch to air and warm. There was loud whistling and some raucous vocalizing.

About 10 the ward secretary came toward me with a paper in his hand and a grin on his face. I tried not to hope.

"Come and get your physical," he said. "You're getting out."

"Where to—the 'big house'?" I wanted to be sure.

"No—home!" he smiled. "The judge has accepted the reports and turned you loose. Come on."

I darn near kissed him. The assistant chief was waiting with his scales, tape, pressure gauge and whatnot. "Your blood-pressure is up a bit—from the nervous tension, probably," he said finally. "And you have gained three pounds—but we won't charge you for that. You are through. Get out." The sweetest words I'd heard since I was married.

Down to the registrar's to sign out, into the locker room for my clothes, and I walked out the front door—A FREE MAN.

I was in bed for two weeks. Feverish with grippe, I was delirious at night, fighting "little men" and giants, but Viola nursed me through until I was finally able to phone the office. As I had expected, two other inspectors were on my job.

"Sorry, nothing else open just now—call in later," the boss said.

I haven't had a job since. Nobody wants to start a man all over again, at my age, and especially with that stigma on his record. So Viola and I are struggling along on my retirement pay and her wages.

We filed suit for damages against the neighbors who made the lunacy charges against me. The case came to trial 28 months after my release. My attorney was able to prove my neighbors made false and unfounded statements about me. The jury awarded $25,000 damages—but since then the sheriff has found no assets on which to levy and *I haven't been able to collect a dime.*

However, I can be thankful that my terrible experience wasn't even worse—that I am a vet, that I met with such intelligent treatment, and that I had a faithful wife and capable attorney working on my behalf.

I can't help but wonder, though, about the non-vets, and even the vets, who, in the absence of well-organized hospitals and trained technicians, are crowded into local jails or "retreats" and held there without bail until they actually go insane or, on the decision of some incompetent judge, are sent to an overflowing insane asylum for an indefinite period—simply *because someone had a grudge against them or wanted them out of the way.*

I often wonder—and so does my attorney, a down-to-earth man with 30 years of practice—what would have happened to me if one of those doctors had made a mistake and reported that in his opinion I was insane. Suppose he had misinterpreted something I said or did, or the way I looked? Suppose I had become excited or angry and had made some remark that he didn't like?

Though five years have now passed, those thoughts still make me shudder.

—By Charles H. Terry

Native Wit...

The following letter was received by the executive officer of a large U.S. aircraft carrier:

"Dear Captain: I know I should be back to the ship by now, since my leave was up yesterday, but I have had some bad luck. When I arrived at my brother's farm in Arkansas, his brick silo had been struck by lightning and damaged at the top. I said I would help him fix it. We rigged a platform at the top and hoisted a barrel of bricks up. Then we climbed up and repaired the damage. At this point my luck ran out. I climbed down and untied the line which held the barrel which was still half full of bricks. Since the barrel was now heavier than I was, the barrel came down and I went up. I hit my shoulder and skinned my legs going up. When I reached the top my head hit the platform and my fingers got banged up in the pulley block. Meantime the barrel hit the ground and the bottom got stove in. The bricks fell out and the barrel was now lighter than me, and it come up and I went down. When I passed the barrel going up it banged me in the chest. I hit the pile of bricks at the bottom and sort of turned my ankle. At this time I must have lost my presence of mind, because I let go of the rope and the barrel came down on top of me.

"That is why I have overstayed my leave and as soon as I am out of the hospital, I will be back for duty."

—Ernest M. Kenyon
Medfield, Mass.

A Panther for My Bride

Continued from page 13

"Joey! Joey Billy!" And Mary was clutching his arm. "Joey, look what Storm Dixie gave me! It is *hinklas?*"

Joey stopped and she made a full turn for him to admire her. "It is good enough," he mumbled.

The others were there now, and Storm Dixie said to Joey, "What's the matter you, Joey? You don't like the present I brought to Mary all the way from the white-man settlement?" He turned to the girls. "Maybe Joey gives girls better presents than this. Do you, Joey? Maybe you give them presents from the woods? *Allapataws* or *awpatanaws?*"

"Yes, Joey would give alligators and frogs!" one girl said and the others laughed. Mary Chokfee laughed with them.

Joey's anger built to a choking hot flood in his throat, and it was all he could do to keep from smashing a fist into the face of Storm Dixie, this smiling, handsome youth whom no one of the Bear clan had ever seen until two months ago. He had come down from some northern clan, Joey had heard, and he had shown an interest in Mary Chokfee from the first moment he saw her. But he had stayed at the Bear Clan village only two days that time, and Joey Billy had not expected him to return at Green Corn time, bearing gifts for Mary.

Joey Billy turned abruptly and tramped off toward the river. He got into his canoe and set his paddle viciously into the black surface of the river.

He hadn't thought to be returning to his village alone this night. All the winter he had planned how he would bring Mary back from the festival. He would show her *Umatilla,* the place of water rippling over sand. Then there was the tall tree of the great white flower that he would climb and bring her many of the blossoms, as pure and silvery as the moonlight itself. He could hardly remember when he hadn't loved Mary Chokfee, the most beautiful girl of the clan. She was as much a part of his life as his canoe and his gun. She was the sunrise and the sunset and all of the rainbows of the deep 'Glades country.

He himself had given her plenty presents when they were boy and girl. He had many times brought her the flower of the *tuckthlauluste* and the *chofemussee.* And the time she stepped on the big thorn and couldn't leave her bed he had gone to her *chikee* every sundown and sung her the "Catfish Song," the "Fox Song," and the "Horned Owl Song." He had done all that when they were boy and girl. But now they were man and woman. Why would she want present now that she was a woman? Gifts were for children.

And thinking these things, ancient Indian determination flowed through him in a fury, deadening his fingers on the paddle. In all his being he was a primitive man of the jungle, determined to have his woman.

All right, he told himself fiercely. If a present is what she wants, she shall have it. And she shall have it from Joey Billy, who has loved her from little girl to big girl. And my gift shall be no paper package from the settlement of the white man. It will be a Seminole present, a thing that only I, Joey Billy, can give her. She will see. He stabbed his paddle at the dark water, his jaw hard and his eyes spearing straight down the moonlit river.

His canoe was the first to reach the village. He was leaving his *chikee* with his hunting knife at his belt, his food sack over his shoulder, and his rifle in the crook of his arm as Mary Chokfee and her parents came up the bank slope toward the village. Mary stopped, and her parents went on toward their *chikee.*

"Joey, you're going into the 'Glades at this time of night?" she asked. She had the new calico folded over her arm.

"Aseschay," Joey Billy told her.

"Why you go now? When you be back?"

"Fitloteschee."

"Joey Billy, you are good man for the hunt," she said, and smiled up at him.

The moon was spreading its silvery softness over the contour of her oval face, making a little dark pool at the base of her throat and bright stars deep in the liquid depths of her eyes. Her hair was still down from the *Itshobungau* dance, and that was the way he liked it best, reaching to the waistband of her skirt of many colors, shiny and black and lovely. Looking down into her face, Joey Billy couldn't let go of his breath.

"This is time for sleep, not time for talk," a voice said, and Joey turned to see Storm Dixie standing near.

"Joey Billy is going for the hunt," Mary told Storm.

Storm Dixie nodded and took her arm. "Then come. I take you to your *chikee.*" They started away and he said over his shoulder to Joey, "Bring back plenty frogs and 'gators, Joey."

JOEY watched them walk away through the moonlight, laughter alive between them.

"He will see," Joey Billy said in an angry whisper as he swung around and strode toward his canoe. "And it will be Joey Billy and Mary Chokfee who do the laughing together when I come back."

He stepped into his canoe, set his paddle and pointed the slender prow toward the deep swamp country. He knew exactly where he was going and what he was going after. Deep in the Dead Cypress Swamp lived Black Tip, the finest panther specimen

in all the 'Glades, a tawny animal with a black-tipped tail, whose cunning was legend among the 'Glades hunters. Some of the older men had tried for many hunting moons to bring the big cat in, and Joey Billy was always fearful when he saw a hunter's canoe returning to the village until he made sure that Black Tip had not fallen under the rifle. Joey Billy himself could have taken the panther a half dozen times if he had wanted to. But he never killed except for food, and even then he spared the animals he loved best. And that was always a hard thing to decide because he loved them all. The 'Glades bear was his brother, the deer were his cousins, the alligator was his grandfather, and always he talked in friendliness with the eagle and the wild turkey and the furry ground animals. And now, deliberately setting out to take old Black Tip, he could take no pleasure in the hunt. None at all.

Not for myself would I do it, he kept saying in his mind, but this is for the one I love.

AND so it was, with determination still strong within him, determination fringed with sadness, that he pushed his slim canoe into the Dead Cypress Swamp country at sunset of the second day. He had just drifted into the blue shadows of the west bank of the river when he saw another canoe coming around a broad bend farther down. He sat motionless in the shadows, watching it. When the other craft was 200 yards away, riding the middle of the stream, he recognized old Wildcat Sam of his clan.

"*Elaha,* Wildcat!" Joey called softly, and the hunter instantly rested his paddle and put his gaze on the shadows where Joey Billy sat.

Joey Billy chuckled and moved out to meet him.

Wildcat grinned when he saw who it was. Joey Billy, *echosee!*" he called. "I'm six days out, Joey. Maybe you got water?"

"Plenty," Joey said, and dug in his stuff and brought out his canteen. He drifted his canoe close and held it out. Then he looked into the bottom of Wildcat's canoe, and what he saw stopped the breath in his lungs. And it was as if the living fiber of his body had suddenly dried up, crumbled, and the twilight breeze was eating it away. He tried to say something but the words his mind framed were only dead things that stayed deep within him.

"How you like him, Joey?" Wildcat asked, and handed the canteen back. "Long time now I hunt that one."

Joey tried to smile against the deadness in his stomach. "You're fine hunter, Wildcat. You got to be good hunter to take old Black Tip."

"I'm good enough to bring him down, all right, Joey." He set his paddle. "Maybe you have some luck too, Joey. *Awlyskashaw,* Joey."

"Good-by," Joey said, and dipped his own paddle. And as he again moved toward shore, he could see the long monotonous way he had come, he could see Mary Chokfee dressed in Storm Dixie's calico, he could hear them laughing together. And in his soul lived a knowledge that it was useless even to go on living now.

As night came on, he pulled his canoe out onto the river bank, made his fire and ate his food. At moontime he lay in his blankets listening to the jungle world about him, feeling lonelier than he had ever felt in his life before. Lying on his back, he stared up along the trunks of the trees that rose arrow-straight to clasp their tops above eternal twilight. Time stood still in this musty shut-in world where even the silence seemed to have taken on the moldy smell of long-dead trees and motionless black water. And for a moment he hated this place that he had always loved so much.

A breeze moved across the jungle roof and pressed down over him, and with it came a sound that cleared his mind to instant alertness.

It came again, far off, the quivering weird call of a male panther out on forage, stalking the jungle for fresh meat.

Joey got to his knees, listening. Then he sank back onto his blanket. Of what use? Anyone could bring in an ordinary panther. Perhaps even Storm Dixie could do that.

No, if I can't take her something special, he told himself, I will take her nothing. And there was nothing special anywhere in the 'Glades now with Black Tip gone.

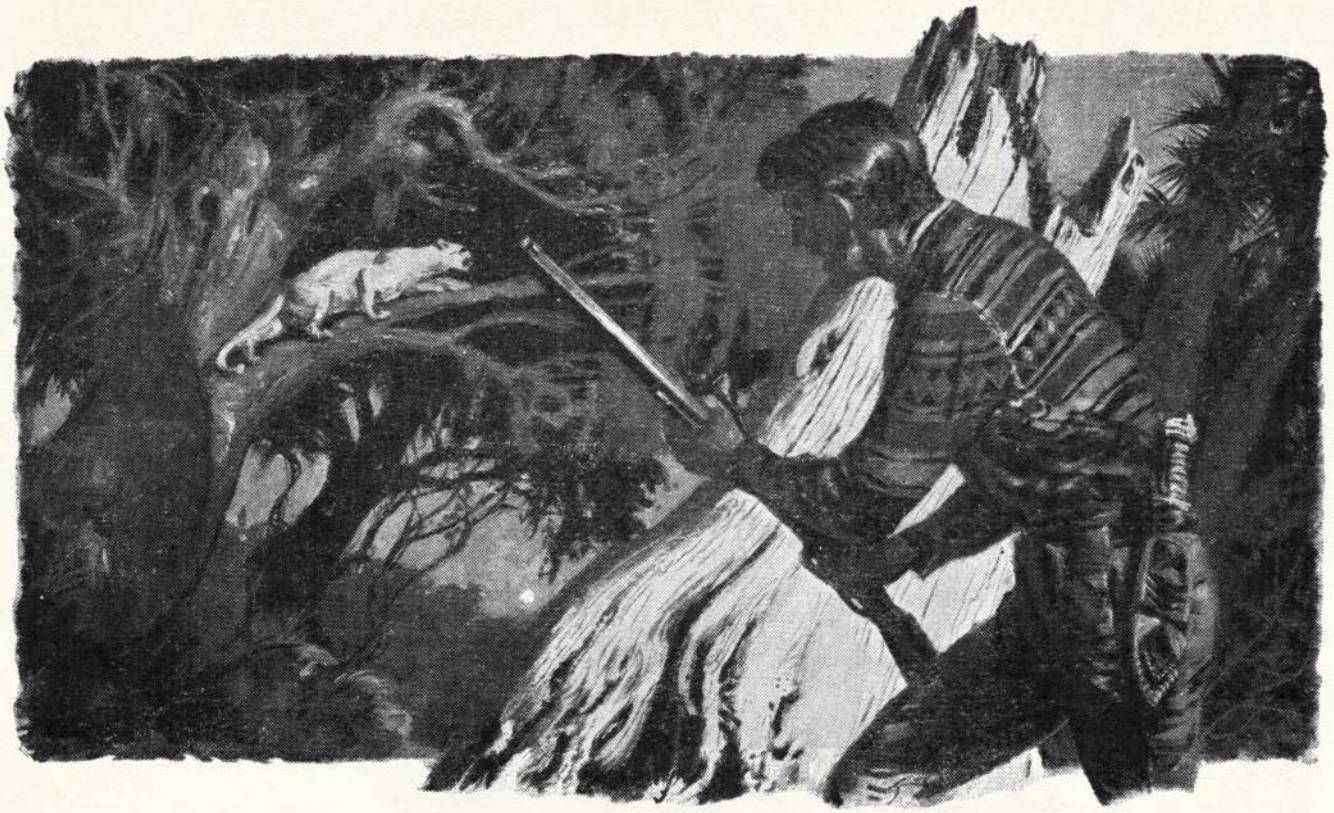
The panther screamed again and it was closer. Without really thinking about what he was doing, Joey Billy built his fire up to lure the animal in close. And when after several minutes it screamed again and was no closer, he took up his rifle and melted into the jungle.

When he had followed the panther for an hour he was going to turn back, but something kept him trudging on. He was a born hunter, and it wasn't easy to ignore a fresh trail, nor to quit one once he was on it. On and on he went, making his silent way through the moss-hung jungle, changing direction when the cat did.

WHEN the moon was washed out white and the dawn came creeping through the swamp like a gray old man blowing his cool breath before him, Joey Billy sat down on a log, his rifle across his lap. The panther had quit sounding now, and to continue the chase meant a tedious job of finding the spoor and following it for hours under the sickening pressure of the tropical sun. Discouragement gripped him, and he decided to sleep through the cool of the morning, then head for camp.

He slid off the log and started to scrape up some leaves. And that was when he saw it.

He froze there in a squat, staring. At first he refused to believe what he was seeing; then the big clump of white on the oak limb, no more than 80 yards from where he knelt, moved ever so slightly. He crouched lower. It was a panther, all right, but such a panther as the Seminole had never seen. It was as big as Black Tip, and was pure white.



It was a panther such as the Seminole had never seen—huge and pure white.

Time stood still as he watched the cat move along its limb in slow undulations of primitive gracefulness. Joey measured the distance between the animal and the two squirrels it was stalking, then crouched down behind the log and eased the barrel of his rifle up over it. He was shaking so his teeth were clicking together. He clamped his jaws hard, laid his cheek against the rifle stock, closed his eyes and took a deep breath. And gradually steadiness came to him, creeping over him like a paralysis. And now he was a man without nerves.

He opened his eyes. The first rays of the sun were touching the huge white animal up there against the morning sky, making it into a clump of pink gold. The great tail began to sway like a snake preparing to strike. That meant that at any moment now the panther would make its leap. Joey Billy moved his finger in against the trigger and gently squeezed.

The explosion ripped the jungle stillness to shreds. There was a dull thump as the panther hit the ground and lay still. Somewhere a startled water turkey squawked, the squirrels scampered out of sight, and a crow cawed in the distance, making three long scratches in the silence. And that was all.

Joey Billy walked over to the dead panther and stood a moment with head bowed, the way he always did, so that Great *Micco* in the Beyond would understand that this kill was necessary. Then he knelt and rubbed a hand over the white coat and inspected the pink-amber eyes.

This was the most magnificent beast he had ever seen. He had heard tales of an albino panther in this swamp but he had always considered them idle hunter-talk, as did everyone else except the men who claimed to have seen it.

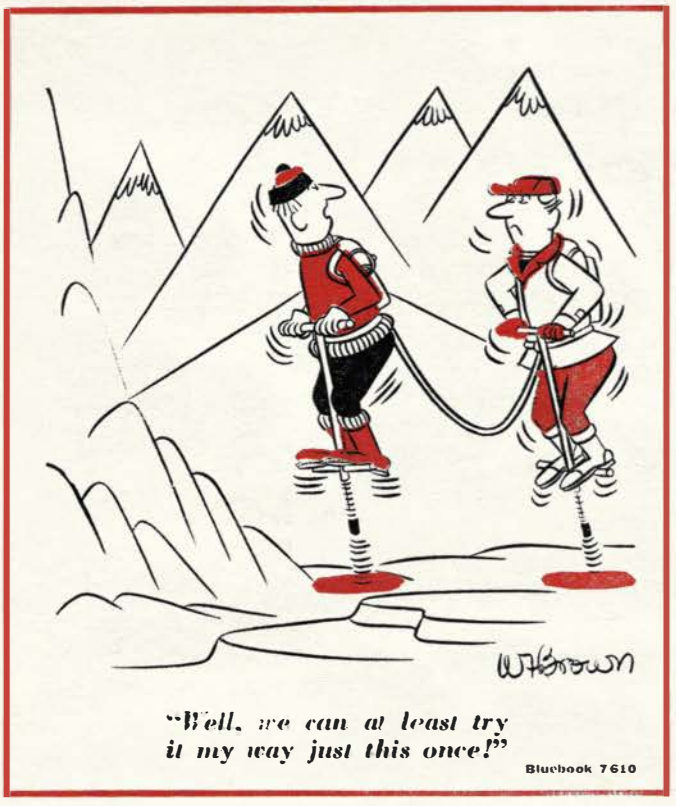
Now we will see, he said exultantly in his mind. We will see whose present she likes best. This will be more than a skin to spread on the floor of her *chikee*. This shall be my wedding present to her. What you think of that, Storm Dixie?

The big cat was almost more than Joey Billy could handle, but he finally got it on his shoulders and started for the river, glad that it wasn't far. He put his kill down where the bank was low, covered it with brush and set out for camp. He was tired and hungry, but there was no time now for food. He must get back here with the canoe before the 'gators found the panther.

Coming up-wind toward his camp, he was still a half mile away when he smelled it. He began to run. When he reached his camp site, all that was left of his canoe and equipment was an oblong heap of cold ashes. He stood staring at the charred spot. The fire had burned only a 15-yard area then the river on one side and 'gator wallows on the other had snuffed it out.

What a hunter you are, Joey Billy, he thought bitterly, not to clear the brush from your fire before leaving it!

He had never done such a thing before. And he realized now how disturbed his mind must have been when he left here last night. Well, there was nothing to be gained by standing here staring at the ashes. He'd have to go back and skin the panther and hit out for his village on foot. The skin was all that he really needed to take, but he had wanted his people to



"Well, we can at least try it my way just this once!"

Bluebook 7610

see the beast before skinning, and he would liked to have shared the meat with all of the families.

He started back through the steaming jungle. He was still a very lucky man, he told himself. He could build another canoe, anybody could do that. But no hunter had ever brought in a white panther skin. And, he thought pridefully, his own Mary Chokfee would be the only woman who could boast of a white panther rug on the floor of her *chikee*.

He made his way through tangled brush and vines, feeling good now. But the weather was certainly the hottest that he had ever experienced. Three times he stopped to kneel at the river's edge and wet his face and head. And the third time when he got to his feet he noticed how the heat was sapping his strength.

When he got back to where he had left the panther, he had to sit down and rest before starting the skinning job. Finally the hide was off, and he staked it out and scraped it then rolled it into a bundle and tied it with small ground vines. Then he again knelt at the river and wet his face and head, and decided he had better eat before starting for home, for his strength was badly in need of some building up.

He got a fire going, cut some strips from the panther carcass and cooked them over the flames. After that he drank thirstily from a traveler palm and started out. He hadn't gone more than a mile before he had to have more water. He scooped out a place in the ground and waited for it to fill with seepage. The heat was now a searching beast that prowled the jungle, gorging itself on every living thing.

Joey Billy was always as much at home in the swamp as in his own village, but something strange and a little confusing had settled over him. He found himself wondering how far he had come, a thing that he always knew instinctively. He plunged on, the jungle heat, without a good breath of air in it, washing over him, coiling around him like a snared moccasin, fingering at his throat and lungs and keeping him constantly on the lookout for palm fronds with water at their base. And when he found one he would gulp every precious drop, then plunge on, clawing his way through matted undergrowth, relying blindly on his homing instinct to keep him going in the right direction.

It was late in the afternoon when he finally had to give up. He dropped his panther skin, which was now almost more than he could carry, and sank down on a needle blanket under a tall pine and stretched out with his head on his arm. The next thing he knew it was breaking day, and he had never known it to be so hot at daylight before. His mouth and throat felt as if he had been swallowing sand all night. He simply had to have water.

When he stood on his feet, all the surrounding jungle made a slow revolution then came to a stop. He carefully bent over and picked up his skin, slung it over his shoulder and went toward the river. He lay on his belly and drank of the black river water, a thing he almost never did. And lying there with the cool dampness of the muck under him, he was sleepy again. And that was a foolish thing, for he had just awakened.

He gave in to the drowsiness and closed his eyes. After a while there was a soft splashing of a canoe paddle near at hand. Then Mary Chokfee's voice was saying, "Stand up. You'll have to stand up. Now step into the canoe." No, it wasn't Mary's voice. It was something like hers but it wasn't hers, because there was no laughter in this voice. It was calm and gentle and somehow a very good voice, but it wasn't Mary's. Then the voice was gone and Joey Billy felt a softness under him, then another softness was pushed under his head. He wished the voice would come back. Well, he'd wait, and maybe when it did come back it would be Mary's.

When next he opened his eyes he was staring at the thatched roof of a *chikee*. And that certainly was a strange thing. He should be looking at the jungle roof.

Now a voice spoke and it was that same gentle one. It said, *"Humbidaloneschay?"*

He rolled his head back and forth for no. The last thing he wanted was food. Now he saw the face that owned the voice. It was a plain face with large dark eyes and a soft sober mouth. But it was only there for a moment then it went swimming away into nothing.

When he awoke again the only light was from

a big fire outside the *chikee*. There were men's voices close at hand now. Someone pried his mouth open and spooned medicine into it. The medicine was *possau*. This was the first time anyone had made him take the stuff since he was a small boy. He slept some more, and when he woke up he was given more *possau*. That happened several times, then he came fully awake and it was morning. He was so tired he could hardly move his arms, but he was cool. And he had never realized before how wonderful it was just to be cool.

He tried to sit up but that was no good. In a little while the girl of the plain face and large eyes came in. When she saw that he was awake the soberness left her mouth and she was smiling. It was a nice smile.

"*Hinklas,*" she said, "you are better."

"What is this place?" he asked weakly.

"It is my *chikee.*"

"Why am I here? How long have I been here?"

"I found you on the river bank three days ago. I brought you here in my canoe."

He tried again to sit up. "My skin! My white panther skin!"

She gently pushed him back down on the pallet. "Plenty of time, Joey Billy. Your skin is taken care of. No man of the village has ever seen such a one before."

"How do you know my name?"

"I was at Green Corn Ceremonies. But you have been very sick. You need much rest."

"There's no time to rest! I have to get back! I have to take my panther skin—" He swung his feet to the floor and stood up. The *chikee* spun about him like a whirlwind.

Then he was lying down again and the girl was saying, "Now you see? Plenty rest for you. I will bring *sofkee.*" And she went out.

He lay there perspiring and angry. He simply couldn't stay here. He had to get back to his own village. He had to take the skin to Mary Chokfee.

The girl came in again with *sofkee,* made thin and hot, and fed it to him.

"What is your name?" he asked her.

"Edna Osceola. This is the Motloe Village."

Joey knew of the Motloe Village, of course, but he had never been here before. "You brought me a long way in your canoe," he said.

She nodded. "You were sick. I could do nothing else."

He watched her face while she fed him. Her eyes were nice, but they were too large for her little face, which was like the little faces you see peeking at you from the shadows in the deep 'Glades. Looking at her, he thought of his Mary, and again asked about his panther skin.

"Tomorrow," was all she would say. And when he had finished the *sofkee,* which wasn't nearly as much as he wanted, she took the dish and left.

Every time he awakened during the day she brought him more food, but never enough. The next morning the gray-haired old physic maker of the clan came in, looked Joey Billy over, grunted once and went out. Later, Edna came with two men who brought Joey's white panther skin and spread it out for him to see.

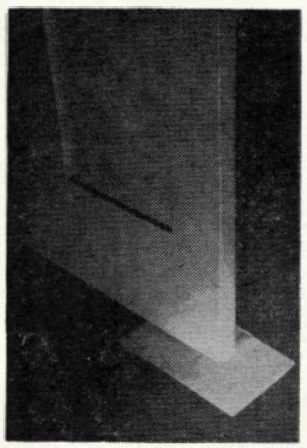
Joey sat up to admire it. It was the most beautiful thing he had ever seen. And the men had done a good curing job on it too. The men left the skin and went out and Edna spread it where he could put out his hand and touch it. Then she sat beside his bed and he told her about how he had set out to get Black Tip but had got this white panther instead. "And that's just the best thing that ever happened to me," he said. Then he told her about Mary Chokfee.

"And soon we will have our own *chikee,*" he told her. "Mary Chokfee and Joey Billy. You should see my Mary, Edna. She is most beautiful girl in any village."

He noticed that her mouth had gone sober again now. And when he finished telling her about Mary, she stood up and looked down at his white panther skin, her big eyes seeming to take it apart hair by hair. Then she laughed, a shrill unlovely laugh, spun around and ran out the door. Joey thought what a queer one she was.

After that a bent-over old woman with shoulder blades like sprouting wings brought his food to him, and he didn't see Edna again until the morning that he was well enough to leave. He was rolling up the panther skin when she stepped through the door.

make it easy



If a door rubs slightly on the threshold or floor when it is opened, place a piece of coarse sandpaper underneath the door with the sand side up and work the door back and forth several times. This removes enough wood from the bottom of the door to make it open and close easier. *(Other readers sent similar Make It Easy items.—Ed.)*

—E. W. MacMullan, Norristown, Pa.

BLUEBOOK *will pay $5 for each "Make It Easy" published, but none can be acknowledged or returned.*

"Good morning," he said. "I am well again, you see. You came to tell me *aelyskashaw?*"

The lids were half down on her large eyes but her voice was very calm when she spoke. "I came to tell you that you are a fool, Joey Billy."

"What is this, 'I am a fool'?" he flared, staring at her.

She held out his hunting shirt. "It is washed and mended," she said, and put her eyes back on the panther skin. "She is not for you, Joey Billy. What kind of woman takes present from another man than the one she loves—if she loves him?"

"How did you know that?" he demanded.

"I told you I was at Green Corn Ceremonies. I saw it. You are a fool."

"You will see!" he said angrily. "The wife of Joey Billy will be the only woman in any clan with a white panther skin on her floor."

She turned her eyes on him now and they were very bright. Her mouth was soft, too soft. She had to harden it a little to keep her lips from quivering. She turned abruptly and walked straight-backed out of the *chikee.*

He saw nothing of her when he walked across the compound and down to the river and stepped into the canoe he had borrowed from one of the Motloe men.

He hadn't paddled far when he noticed the bundle in the prow of the canoe. He opened it and it was food, tied in a clean cloth, more than he would need on his entire trip. He knew a moment of illogical anger, then he was glad she had put it in. It would save him having to stop to shoot and cook game, and he would be with Mary that much sooner. He paddled on, not swiftly but steadily, not wanting to use up too much of his strength the first day.

When he arrived at his own village late in the afternoon of the third day, he pushed his canoe prow in among those lining the river bank, picked up his rolled-up present and went toward the village. As he neared the compound there was a softness in his knees that was not from weariness.

Most of the clan were down at the cook *chikee,* but he went straight on to Mary Chokfee's *chikee.* He saw she was alone and stepped through the door. She turned, a piece of Storm Dixie's calico in her hand, and she was surprised to see him. Joey Billy, his heart pounding, spread the white panther skin and held it out to her.

A soft sound caught in her throat as her hands reached for it. "Oh, Joey!" she exclaimed, and put her lovely face against the white softness of it.

"So the man of the frogs and alligators has come back," a voice with laughter in it said, and Storm Dixie was standing in the doorway. "Ho, Joey Billy! Looks like you'd ask a man's permission before going into the *chikee* of his wife."

Joey heard himself say "Wife!" and his voice sounded like an old man's voice.

"Yes, Joey," Mary said. "I am his wife." She handed the skin to Storm Dixie. "See what Joey brought me." Then she looked at Joey and said, "You're not angry because we're married, are you, Joey?"

Joey stood a long moment with the drums of sadness beating fiercely at the soul of him. "Not angry!" he said then, and yanked the white skin away from Storm Dixie and tramped out and toward the river. He stepped into his canoe and set his paddle. And as he headed back the way he had come, he felt sicker than when the fever had pulled him down on the river bank.

He knew he shouldn't do it. Every mile that he put behind him he told himself that he was a fool, just as Edna Osceola had said. Else he wouldn't be trying to cover a three-day journey without any rest.

But he did. He paddled through the nights that were chill, endless, bitter and lonely, cut through by occasional unfriendly swamp sounds. He paddled under the molten sun that shot up into the brassy sky as soon as the darkness was blown away, to beat mercilessly at the jungle and send every living thing to shelter, leaving only an empty ravaging silence for a man's soul to feed on.

Early sun was burning the tops out of the trees to the east when he came again to the Motloe Village. He banked his canoe, picked up his panther hide and stepped out. And again it was as if the fever had him. The green morning world about him went black and that was all he knew until the coolness came. It was a wet coolness. And when he opened his eyes Edna's face was above him and she was wiping his forehead with a wet cloth.

"I got back," Joey said, and tried to make his parched lips into a smile.

"Yes," she said, and there were tears in her eyes and in her voice. Then she tried to assume a light tone. "Always I find you like dead on the river bank, Joey Billy." She laughed and it reminded Joey of the sound a bird makes when it tries to fly with one wing shot away.

After a while Joey was able to stand up, and they walked together to her *chikee* and she again put him on her own bed.

"Now you must rest some more," she said. "A very long rest this time."

"Mary Chokfee and Storm Dixie are married, Edna."

She caressed his cheek. And it was strange how that seemed the natural thing for her to do.

"You were right, Edna," he said. "I am a fool."

"You are good man, Joey." She was smiling down at him. "You are best panther hunter in all the 'Glades. And you are also man of wisdom." Joey was puzzled. "Truly you are, Joey. Did you not say that the wife of Joey Billy would be the only woman of all the clans with a white panther skin on her floor?"

And she bent down and spread the skin on the earth floor of her *chikee.* —By Zachary Ball

Crisis

By LYDEL SIMS

Voices Through a Window

He was not a big man, but he was heavily muscled and in good condition—even after a year of despair and bootleg whiskey. When the familiar pain stabbed his eyes and he gasped, his chest swelled out like an accordion.

Stumbling aimlessly about the darkened bedroom in his pajamas, he heard a car pass in the street just beyond his open window. But he did not see the reflection of its headlights.

And he never would. He would always stumble aimlessly in darkness. What kind of God inflicts blindness on a young artist?

Don Anderson groped for the bed, fell across it, and tried to will himself back to those days before the dark and the bitterness had come. . . .

The kids at the YMCA had been loaded for him that day. *Gee, Don, this guy's just a street-carnival wrestler, and he thinks he's so good! Says he can beat anybody in town! Come on, Don, come on!*

And Don Anderson—boxer, swimmer, state amateur welterweight wrestling champion, Sunday School teacher, "Y" worker, art chief of an advertising agency with an income that went into four figures a month—gave them his easy, good-natured grin.

"All right. I'll take him on."

He didn't know, of course, that the carnival wrestler had trachoma. . . .

Don Anderson, ex-artist, ex-advertising executive, current unemployed blind man on the skids, lay on his bed and clawed at the counterpane. Then, after a long silence, he pulled himself up and stumbled across the room.

The bichloride of mercury solution for his eyelids. It should be about here.

His fingers found the bottle and he removed the top and drank it down. Then he felt his way back to the bed. The landlady would find him in the morning—dead.

A voice came through the open window.

It was a little girl's voice, and it was calling someone. He stirred, opened his sightless eyes, and sat up.

There was another small voice. One was urging the other to hurry so they wouldn't be late for Sunday school. Then there were footsteps, and he could tell one of the girls was skipping. He moved toward the window. Other sounds came in, fresh and clean and clear: a church bell, the rustling of leaves, a bird singing. A breeze found his forehead. He felt rested, strangely at peace.

Then he remembered the bitterness, the despair, the final desperation. "Good heavens!" he whispered, shaken. "I wasn't born for that!"

He had gone to sleep dead. He had waked alive.

Don Anderson interrupted a busy work schedule recently to show a visitor about his home—a rambling, modern house set in 3½ wooded acres. There was a radio script to be written; the advertising agency he works for needed some fresh copy; he and his wife (he met and married her after establishing himself) were deep in work on a book. But he took time out to show their office, the new gate he helped build in the back yard, the tree they were going to remove, the flowers they had worked on together, the breezeway where he writes on clear days.

And what of the old bitterness, the crying out against fate?

"I have learned," he said, "that the Kingdom of Heaven is within us. That the capacity for happiness is inside the cornea, not outside."

"HELP!"  *"HELP!"*

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