

September

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# BLUE BOOK

An illustrated magazine of Adventure, Mystery and Humor



**JUNGLE HOUSE**, by James Francis Dwyer  
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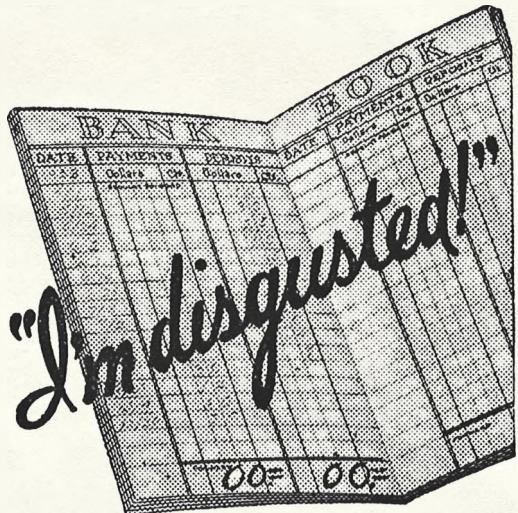


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SEPTEMBER, 1934

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Published monthly, at McCall Bldg., Dayton, Ohio. Subscription Offices—Dayton, Ohio. Editorial and Executive Offices—230 Park Ave., New York, N. Y. THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE—September, 1934, Vol. LIX, No. 5. Copyright, 1934, by The McCall Company, in the United States and Great Britain. Entered as second-class matter, November 12, 1930, at the Post Office at Dayton, Ohio, under the Act of March 3, 1879. Subscription Price, \$1.50 per year. Canadian postage 50c; foreign postage \$1.00. For change of address, give us four weeks notice and send old address as well as new. Special Note: Each issue of The Blue Book Magazine is copyrighted. Any republication of the matter appearing in the magazine, either wholly or in part, is not permitted except by special authorization. Special Notice to Writers and Artists: Manuscripts and art material submitted for publication in The Blue Book Magazine will be received only on the understanding that the publisher and editors shall not be responsible for loss or injury thereto while such manuscripts or art material are in the publisher's possession or in transit.

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# Jungle House

By JAMES FRANCIS DWYER

Illustrated by Margery Stocking

THE bulky Dutch naturalist Jan Kromhout was busy. A maroon-red monkey, a fine specimen of the Bornean sacred hanuman (*Semnopithecus hosei*) had injured his ear in a combat with a husky waw-waw. The stubby fingers of the Dutchman deftly bandaged the torn auricle; and as he worked, he talked.

"The ear is a wonderful thing," he said. "You can find out more from the ear than you can from any other organ. *Ja*. It has a lot to tell. Did you know that in all the anthropoids, it is only the gorilla that has the rudimentary lobule? Apes, baboons and little monkeys have ears that are nicely shaped; but it is only the gorilla that boasts a lobe. It is small, but it is there.

"Do you know why? Because the gorilla is the nearest to man, and because he has great strength and intelligence. If you have no lobes to your ears, you are not—*ja, ja!* I knew you would feel your ear! Your lobes are not great. Just medium; but you can console yourself when you look at persons who have none."

The small hanuman, so different in color from his slate-tinted Himalayan relatives, protested against the tightness of the bandage, and Kromhout cuffed him amiably.

"It is the strong nations that have the biggest lobes to their ears," continued the naturalist. "The Americans, English, Germans, Dutch, and the Norse folk. That is why I do not believe in the rise of the Japanese. There is not one big lobe in twenty of them. *Nein!* And without lobes to their ears, a nation is nothing."

The maroon-red monkey raised a little paw and felt the bandage with his sensitive fingers. He looked inquiringly at Kromhout, as if he wished to know how many days he would be forced to wear the linen fillet around his head.

"You will be all right in a week,"

growled the naturalist. "You must not fight with that big waw-waw. He is too strong for you. Now go back to your cage."

The little hanuman whimpered softly, slipped from the stool and hopped back into his cage. He made a face at the belligerent waw-waw who had inflicted the damage, and the waw-waw grimaced in return.

"Of course, if the monkeys had lobes to their ears, they might have got somewhere," said Kromhout slowly. "The Shans on the Mekong River believe that at one time the monkeys could read. Often you will see an ape holding a big leaf in his paws the way a child would hold a piece of paper, staring at it as if he saw something written there. The Shans think they have forgotten how to read. I do not know. Perhaps the monkeys that did the writing did not make nice stories for them. We might forget how to read, if all the stories that were written were foolish tales. . . .

"Of course they can talk! They can talk well. Once, years ago, I heard a mias, the *Simia satyrus*, or orang, tell a story to an old native who had been brought a hundred miles to find out what the mias and the other apes were saying. The native was a hundred years old, and could talk the monkey language. It surprises you? *Ja!* It surprised me. But I heard it with my own ears.

"YOU would like to hear it? Perhaps you will not believe, but it is true. Belief is the greatest of the virtues; and in the Orient you must have it or you are a fool.

"This thing that I tell of happened at Soerakarta, that is also called Solo. It is, as you might know, about six hundred kilometers from Batavia, and there is the Palace of the Soesoehunan, who gets a big salary from the Dutch Government for just sitting quiet and taking no notice of how the Dutch Resident runs

*THE long-to-be-remembered story of a child kidnaped by vengeful apes in Java, and of the partnership in paradise which she later shared in the heart of the jungle—by the gifted author of "The Splendid Thieves."*



"The Almighty knows His business, you bet! Sometimes when I think the world is a sad place, I remember that man and that woman in the House of the Apes."

the country. There are lots of native princes in the East, getting big money for shutting their eyes. The English and the Dutch have shown them that it is the easiest way out of trouble.

"At Solo there was a Portuguese named José Basto. One day he did not have five guilders, and the next day he had a million. No one knew how he had got the

money. People whispered to each other, but they did not ask Basto. He was a bad fellow, was that Portuguese. He could use a knife quicker than any other man I have ever seen; so no one said: 'Hey, Señor Basto, how did you get your money?' Not much!

"The Soesoehunan has a big menagerie at Solo—panthers and crocodiles and



"As Basto came by, they barked a word at him, fiercely. From the big mias to the little ring-tailed lemurs, they screamed that one monkey-word at Basto. It got that fellow pretty mad. He struck at the paws of the apes, but that did not stop them."

monkeys and all kinds of snakes. So José Basto with his million gulden wanted a menagerie. He wanted to be bigger than anyone else.

"I sold him many monkeys. A big mias, some macaques, ring-tailed lemurs and two gibbons. The gibbons were siamangs, with the index and middle fingers joined by a web, and the pair I sold that fellow Basto were very pretty. They were husband and wife, and they were a pale fawn-color, with a white stripe across the forehead.

"They loved each other a lot. They would sit for hours with their long arms around each others' necks as if they were afraid of the world; and when the Portuguese and his wife would come to look at them, they would cry softly, making the single note which is different from that of their blood brother, the waw-waw, who has two notes. They did not like that fellow Basto; and they did not care if he knew they did not like him.

"José Basto had those siamangs for two years, and they had no little ones. And he wanted them to have a little one. He is not a fool, the gibbon. Not much.

That pair did not wish to have a little baby that would spend its life in a cage to amuse a fat Portuguese.

"Basto spoke to me about it. I told him to put a male gibbon in the next cage so as to make the husband of the siamang jealous. Basto did that, and after a while that pair had a baby—a little male baby that was puce-colored, and who was more frightened of the world than his father and mother.

"When Basto came to look at him, the little fellow would hide behind his father and mother. All that Basto and his wife could see was a bright eye peeping at them, and that made the Portuguese mad. Very mad. His wife had a little girl who was about two years of age just then, and the wife wanted the child to see the baby monkey.

"One morning Basto sent a man into the cage to get the baby. It was a big cage, and the gibbon is the most agile ape in the world. He has no tail, but his arms are so long that he can move faster than any other primate. The natives say that a gibbon is so swift that he can catch a bird on the wing.



I have never seen that, but I believe he could.

"When the man went into the cage, the mother ape grabbed the baby, while the father started to trip up the fellow that chased her. The mother bounced from one side of the cage to the other, the baby clinging to her neck, while the male gibbon was giving hard kicks and scratches to the man.

"Basto thought the servant was a fool. He swore like a crazy man, and jumped into the cage to help. He didn't like those apes fooling him. He had a million gulden, and the apes were just funny things he had bought to amuse himself.

"The father gibbon jumped on Basto's shoulders when the Portuguese climbed into the cage. He was game, was that ape! Very game. He got a grip on Basto's hair, and he pulled it till the Portuguese squealed. And he poked one of his fingers into that chap's eye. The little puce-colored baby was a treasure, and they were not going to let anyone steal it without a fight.

"Basto yelled when the ape put his finger in his eye. One of the servants handed him a stick with lead in the end of it, and when he swung himself free of the gibbon, he brought that stick down on the ape's head. The blow knocked the father gibbon unconscious; then Basto and the servant cornered the mother and snatched the little baby from her.

"Basto was mad about that ape sticking his finger in his eye. He could not see out of it. He jumped up and down in front of the cage and he swore that he would never give the baby back to the gibbons. He told the servants to take the little fellow up to the nursery where his own child was playing, and to keep it there and feed it. Never would it go back to the ape who had nearly poked Basto's eye out.

"**I**T is bad business to steal a baby. Very bad business. Every morning for a week, when Basto and his wife came through the garden, those gibbons would be waiting—clinging to the bars of their cage, their wet noses pushed through. They would take up that position at daylight, waiting for Basto to come by. The poor devils thought that he would surely bring them back the little puce-colored baby. Not a whimper would come from them. They were quite silent, but the mother would point to her breasts as they went by. It was very sad.

"At the end of a week those two apes did something that was curious. Very curious. Up till then they were silent. They did not make a sound. Just looked at Basto with their wet eyes, the mother ape touching her breasts. But on the eighth day as Basto came by, they barked a word at him—just one monkey-word. Barked it fiercely! And the funny thing was that the other monkeys in the cages made the same noise. Every one of them! The macaques, langurs and capuchins joined in. Every monkey in the place from the big mias down to the little ring-tailed lemurs clutched the bars of their cages and screamed that one monkey-word at Basto.

"**T**HE next morning, and the next, they did it the moment Basto appeared in the garden. It got that fellow pretty mad. You bet! He would not have minded much about the little monkeys jabbering at him, but when the orang-utan started yelling at him, he lost his temper. The orang-utan is brainy. The cranial capacity of the ordinary human being is about fifty-five cubic inches, and that of the orang is twenty-seven, but the orang's is mostly filled up. His brain is very like the brain of a man, except in weight and size. He knows a lot.

"Basto struck at the paws of the apes when they yelled at him, but that did not stop them. Not one bit! That damned chorus went on all the time he was in the garden. The same monkey-word, over and over again. It was a little like some of the college cries that you have over in the United States.

"That monkey-word got into Basto's brain so that he heard it in his sleep. He would jump out of bed and cry to his wife. 'Listen!' he would scream. 'Listen to them barking at me now!' But there were no sounds at all. The apes were all asleep, yet Basto heard their barking. He would struggle to get a rifle, and the servants had to be called to stop him from murdering every ape in the menagerie.

"I heard about the trouble, and I went to see him. I listened to those apes barking at him. It was curious. 'Why don't you give the gibbons their little one?' I asked. Basto laughed like a madman. 'I can't!' he cried. 'The little wretch didn't like the food we gave him, and he went and died! But I wouldn't give him up if he were alive! I'll see those apes in hell before I let them beat me!



What I want to know is the meaning of the word that they bark at me?"

"I told him about a native who lived near the big temple of Tjandi Bororboe-doer, that is up beyond Djokja. The native was an old man, more than a hundred years of age, and people said he could talk with the apes that were around the temple. I had watched him myself. When the old man started to talk, all the monkeys would sit quiet and listen to him, their heads on one side; and when he finished, one or two of the oldest monkeys would reply to him.

"Basto was so crazy to know what those monkeys were calling him that he sent off quick for the old man, and in two days he was at the house. He was blind, and he was led by one of his sons, who was himself so old that he had to walk with a stick.

"That blind man was the oldest person I have ever seen. His age came out from him and frightened you. When he shuffled into the room, you were filled with queer imaginings: thoughts of Dubois and the *Pithecanthropus erectus* that he found here in Java; thoughts of the hairy mammoth and the big blind snakes that crawled in the slime of a world in the making. *Ja!* He made me cold. He was a bit of skin and some bones that linked us up with forgotten centuries. He was history on two legs.

"That blind man did not know that Basto had taken the puce-colored baby from the gibbons. No one had told him. He had come from another part of the country, and had heard no gossip.

"Come with me," said Basto, "and tell me what those damned monkeys are yelling at me!"

"There were six of us. Basto, the blind man, the son of the blind man, two servants and myself. We went into the menagerie, and the moment the monkeys saw Basto, they started to bark that word. Bark it in chorus! It was deafening.

"The old blind man stopped with a grunt of astonishment. For a minute or so he listened; then he opened his mouth and cried out something to the apes—something that made them shut up with a suddenness that was startling. It seemed as if he was asking them what the devil they meant by barking that monkey-word at Basto.

"All the monkeys were looking at the old man, their noses thrust through the bars, their little eyes showing astonishment. And in the silence the old man repeated his question.

"It was the big mias, the *Simia satyrus*, that answered the blind man. It was right that the mias should give the reply. He is clever, you bet. He thinks, does that fellow. His brain is greatly convoluted. That simian fold in the brain that scientists call the *sulcus*, and which was supposed to separate the great apes from man, has now been found in the brains of negroes in Africa, so the mias has a human brain. And he can think better than a dozen darkies.

"THE mias started to chatter to the blind man. I knew what he was telling him. He was telling of the kidnaping of that little puce-colored baby. The mias would nod his big head at the cage of the gibbons, and the gibbons would nod back. And the mother gibbon would shake her breasts, and tears would come out of her eyes and dribble down her nose. And the old man clung to the arm of his son and listened. And all the little monkeys listened. And Basto stood there with his big mouth open, glaring at the mias, knowing that the orang was telling the blind man that he, Basto, was a swine and a hell-hound and a baby-thief. And he was, too!

"When the mias stopped speaking, the old man turned to Basto. 'He has told me that you stole the little one of the gibbons,' he said, 'their little baby that they loved.'

"Basto didn't want to hear that. 'That's my business!' he roared. 'What is the word they bark at me? Tell me that! Quick!'

"The old man was silent for a few minutes, and his silence got Basto so

mad that he stepped across and shook him. The blind man got angry. He said he could not find any word in his language that had the same meaning as the monkey-word. Not one! It seemed as if he was trying to think up some terrible word that would blast the ears of Basto. Some word as spiteful as the tongue of a snake, as green as verdigris, and as hot as lava.

"Tell me as near as you can!" yelled Basto.

"That old blind man started to explain the meaning of that monkey-word. It meant a lot. *Ja, ja!* That old chap said that when one monkey used it to another monkey, it meant that the fellow it was flung at was a cross between a parricide, an illegitimate idiot, a baby-thief and a hangman's assistant.

"The old fellow was warming up as he tore the stomach out of that word and explained its inwards to Basto. He couldn't see Basto's face, he being blind. If he had seen, he might have stopped. Basto was white with temper. The old man said a monkey who earned that word would hang his mother for a handful of peanuts and sell his tribe to an Italian organ-grinder for a piece of orange-peel.

"Basto lashed out then. His fist caught the old fellow on the jaw and knocked him unconscious. It was wrong to hit that old man. Very wrong! I wonder how Basto had the nerve to hit him. There was an invisible armor of tremendous age about the blind man, but Basto was mad.

"It took three of us to tear that Portuguese away from the old chap. The apes were screaming, and Basto was



yelling out that he would kill the old fellow and every monkey in the menagerie. He fought and struggled with us as we carried him up to his room and locked him in. It was a bad business. A very bad business!

"That night something happened. That old man did not know that the baby of the gibbons was dead. He thought it was somewhere in the house, and in the night he went and opened the door of the cage in which the gibbons were, so that they could go and hunt for their little one.

"You would think those apes would make for the jungle when they were free, would you not? Not they! They remembered that little fellow, and they started to climb up the outside of Basto's palace, their long arms clinging to anything that helped them, and whimpering softly as they climbed. They thought they were going to get their baby back. They were only apes, but they had suffered. When I read of a kidnaping in the United States, I think of those two gibbons.

"They had some idea of the room where the baby had been taken. Perhaps they had heard him crying in the nursery. Perhaps they got the information in some other way. It is hard to tell how an animal finds out things. Often I have been puzzled. But those two knew. They knew.

"The window of the nursery was open. They climbed through without making a sound. A gibbon can move so swiftly and so silently that the lightest sleeper cannot hear him. He is swifter than the spider monkey, and the spider monkey is like lightning.



"Sleeping in the nursery was a Dutch-woman who was a nurse, and sleeping in a small cot near the nurse was Basto's little girl. And into that room came the two gibbons, wet-eyed, looking for their baby. Poor devils! Moving like ghosts, their arms being so long that their knuckles rested on the ground when they were walking upright. . . .

"I have wondered a lot about those two apes—wondered how they knew that their baby was dead. Something must have told them. Softly, without the slightest noise, they searched that room. They turned over the cushions; they searched under the chairs and the tables. You see, it had rained that night, and in the morning we found the tracks of their feet on every inch of the floor.

"I have thought of them stopping at last to think what they could do to Basto. Stopping and rubbing their noses in the darkness. . . . *Ja*, you have guessed it! They did that! When the Dutch nurse woke in the morning, the bed of the little girl was empty!"

JAN KROMHOUT paused in his recital and spoke sternly to the waw-waw, which had found a piece of old rag in his cage, and was annoying the hanuman by wrapping it around his head in mockery of the bandage on the little fellow's ear.

"Basto was really crazy then," continued Kromhout. "He offered a reward of one hundred thousand guilders. Five hundred men took up the search. They beat the countryside from Semarang to Djokjakarta, and from Soerabaja to Cheribon. It was a bad time for gibbons. Every ape those hunters met was in their eyes the kidnaper of Basto's baby. They were rough on the gibbons. They wanted Basto's money, and they did not ask questions. Not much.

"Basto started to drink. He would drink a bottle of schnapps each day. I took all the other monkeys away because he wanted to kill them. And the more he drank, the crazier he got. He thought that the big mias was waiting to kidnap him, and he would run round the house with a gun, thinking that an army of apes were in the place. Then one night he put that gun to his head and blew his brains out.

"After some months the hunt for the little girl slowed up. People thought that the gibbons had killed the child in revenge, so they gave up the search and went back to their work. You have seen

the same thing happen in America. There is a big hue and cry, with everyone running this way and that, and big headlines in all the papers; then it begins to get stale. People do not talk so much about it; the papers print very little, and presently it is all forgotten. The world moves at such speed that the things of tomorrow wash out the happenings of today. We Dutch have a proverb that says Monday's *gebraden Rindvleesch* is forgotten when Tuesday's *Kalfsbrost* is on the table. It is so. . . .

"Six months after the death of Basto, his wife met with an accident on the Java State Railway when she was traveling to Madioen. She was taken to a hospital, but she died after an operation. No relatives could be found. Not one! So the big house at Solo and all the money in the bank were put in trust with the Dutch Government, in case the little girl that was kidnaped returned to claim it.

"People laughed at the idea of that little girl being alive. They thought it silly. The gibbon lives on leaves and fruit, with a lot more leaves than fruit, and you cannot feed a little girl on leaves. So people shook their heads and laughed when some one said: 'Perhaps she will be found some day.'

"Five years passed—ten, fifteen. I took a trip to Amsterdam to see my sister, who is married to a man who keeps a restaurant in the *Stadhouders-Kade* quite close to the *Ryks Museum*. I came back to Batavia, and from there I went up into the province of Bantam to trap *kubins*, the *Galeopithecus volans*, that you call flying-cats.

"I had forgotten all about Basto. I had no thoughts of the little girl that had been kidnaped by the gibbons.

"IT is strange country, that western I end of Java. It is wild. The forests have been left to themselves too long, and they are a little frightening. The big trees, like the teak and rasmala, shoot up to a height of one hundred and fifty feet, and they are mostly covered with creeping vines that have flowers that look a little vicious. And there are masses of moss and enormous fungi, and there is silence. Quite a lot of silence. The only sounds you hear are the sounds made by the wild pigs and the muntjak deer.

"I was there two weeks when I heard a funny story. A native told it to me. He said that there was, in the very



"The apes blundered in crossing that river. They had climbed out on big limbs over the water, but when they were swinging the child from one to the other, she fell into the stream."

middle of the jungle, a hut in which lived a young Dutchman and his wife, and that this hut was known to the natives for miles and miles around as 'The House of the Apes.'

"'Why?' I asked.

"'Because the apes come and go as if they were friends,' he said. 'The young wife feeds them. They know her. If they are hurt or hungry, they go to the house.'

"I had little thrills up and down my spine when I heard that story. I was crazy to see that house. I asked a thousand questions. The hut was in the center of a clearing, the native told me, and he and dozens of other natives had squatted in the underbrush and watched the apes come from the trees when the woman called to them.

"I had work to do, but I could not work. That jungle bred thoughts that smacked of madness. I had to see that House of the Apes. I had to see the woman. I packed up my things, loaded my porters, and moved in the direction that the native gave me. I could not stop.

"I drove those porters eighteen hours

a day. I thought—I thought that I was on the point of finding out that a miracle had happened. It was the kind of country where miracles might happen. *Ja*, it was. There were big red flowers on the lianas that were like eyes in the gloom, and the tussocks of moss cried out when you stepped on them. But the thoughts in my head were what upset me, not the jungle.

"It was dusk on a summer afternoon when I came to the edge of the clearing on which was the House of the Apes. I crouched in the underbrush and stared at it. There it stood on a square of green grassland that was hemmed in by palms and bamboos. It was raised on posts to keep it free of the white ants, and it was very quiet. Quiet and a little soothing.

"I am not religious. When I was a little boy, I used to go to the Oude Kerk and stare at the '*Adoration of the Magi*' because I liked the color of the stained glass; but a lot of years had passed between then and the moment I stood and stared at the House of the Apes. Yet I muttered a little prayer as I watched that building. Do you know

why? I thought I was going to find out that a miracle had taken place! A great miracle.

"For a long while I waited—waited for the door of the house to open. The dusk was purple. There was a tremendous silence in the clearing. Then—then when my nerves were stretched till they hurt, the door opened, and she was standing on the little platform above the ladder.

"A girl, slim and graceful like the kantjil deer. She had two plaits of black hair falling down on her *kabaya*, and her bare legs and feet showed under a red sarong. And in the soft dusk she looked a little unreal. She was—she was like an apparition. Do you understand? I rubbed my eyes and looked again to make sure that she was there.

"Some one called from the jungle, and she answered. Then I saw that young Dutchman. He was in the late twenties, tall and strong. He came into the clearing at a run, and the girl skipped down the ladder to meet him. I watched them from the underbrush. I was looking at something that made me think of the world when it was young. Something that was sweet and clean, something that was far away from the filth of cities.

"Standing together, their arms around each other, the girl gave a call that startled me. The trees around the clearing became alive. Alive with apes—with lutungs, gibbons, macaques, and little lemurs! They slipped down from the trees and ran into the clearing. They raced around the girl and the man. She brought them food and played with them. And the little lemurs fought with each other to reach her hands.

"Once I saw a picture of Adam and Eve in the Garden with all the animals around them. It was just like that. In the soft dusk of the summer evening! It made me a little tearful as I watched. A little lonely. I thought I had missed something—something worth more than all the money in the world. Love, I thought it was. I was not sure.

"WHEN they went up the ladder, I called to them, and I walked into the clearing with my porters. I told them who I was, and the young man said he had heard of me. They asked me into the house; and when I saw that girl close up in the light of the candles, I wanted to cry. *Ja*, I had to wipe my eyes a lot. It was strange, that business. I was looking at the image of the wife of José

Basto. . . . I had a funny feeling in my inside. Just a little sick, and a little frightened about the ways of the Almighty. . . .

"After we had eaten, we sat on the platform of the house and talked. There was a big red moon. Now and then you would hear an ape tell his mate to move over so that he would have a little room. And into the soft silence the young Dutchman put scraps of his life to please me. He knew I was curious.

"He had been there since he was a little boy. His father had built the house. The father was a great botanist from the University of Leyden. He had written many books—books on the ferns and fungi, and on the big trees, the sun-wood, the upas, and the *Pterospermum javanicum*.

"My ears were as big as the shells of the giant clam as I listened. He was so slow in his speech—so very slow. The girl fell asleep, her back against the bamboo frame of the house, her bare legs stretched out. She was very pretty.

THE man looked at her with a smile; then he started to tell that which I was waiting for—started to tell of the miracle—in a low voice so that he would not disturb her.

"He was ten years of age at the time. Young, but he had been brought up in the jungle. One day he was close to a river that was some two miles from the house, when he heard a great hubbub. He ran to see what was taking place, and he saw about twenty apes trying to pull something out of the current, and howling with terror because the job was too much for them.

"The boy thought at first that it was the baby of one of them; then he saw it was a little girl. He jumped into the water and grabbed her, but the current was too strong. He was swept down the river for a mile or more; then he managed to get ashore on a swampy island. He thought the child was dead, but he worked her arms backward and forward till she opened her eyes and looked up at him.

"The apes had followed along the bank of the river, and they were howling like the mischief because they could not get to the little girl. They had blundered in crossing that river. They had climbed out on the big limbs over the water, but when they were swinging the child from one to the other, she fell into the stream.

"The boy and the girl were on the island two days before the father of the boy found him. They brought the little girl back to the house in the clearing, and all the apes followed them. They were not annoyed, those apes. They were pleased—very pleased with the boy.

"AND the girl grew up with the boy. They did not know her age, but they thought she was about three years old when they found her. And as she could not speak any language but the chatter of the apes, she could tell them nothing. Nothing at all!

"After she had been with them thirteen years, the old father was taken sick. He had a wish that those two could be married before he died. That was his desire. The boy set out for Labocean, that was fifty miles away, and with only a jungle path leading to it. He found a missionary, and he brought him to the house in the clearing, and the boy and the girl were married. . . .

"When he had told me all that, he looked around at the sleeping jungle, and the big red moon. It was very beautiful. There was a magic there that I had never felt before. A strange magic. It came from the earth, from the trees, from the love of those two. . . .

"He turned to look at his wife, who was sleeping softly. He smiled as he watched her. His hand stole out and touched her *kabaya*. Gently. He glanced at me, and I looked away quickly. He was much in love, was that young man. Very much in love. The world was his world. I felt a little jealous. He was like Adam. He had everything.

"After a long silence I got up and went quietly down the ladder. In the morning I left before they were up. I did not wish to intrude in their—*Nein*, I told them nothing! Nothing at all! What was a million guilders to them? Nothing! When he was telling his story to me, I felt as if the Almighty had drawn a string around my throat. Gently, but tight enough to stop me from speaking. It was a hint. The Almighty knows His own business. *Ja*, you bet! He did not wish an old fool of a Dutchman interfering. Sometimes—sometimes when I think the world is a sad place, I remember that man and that woman in the House of the Apes. It does me good to think of them."

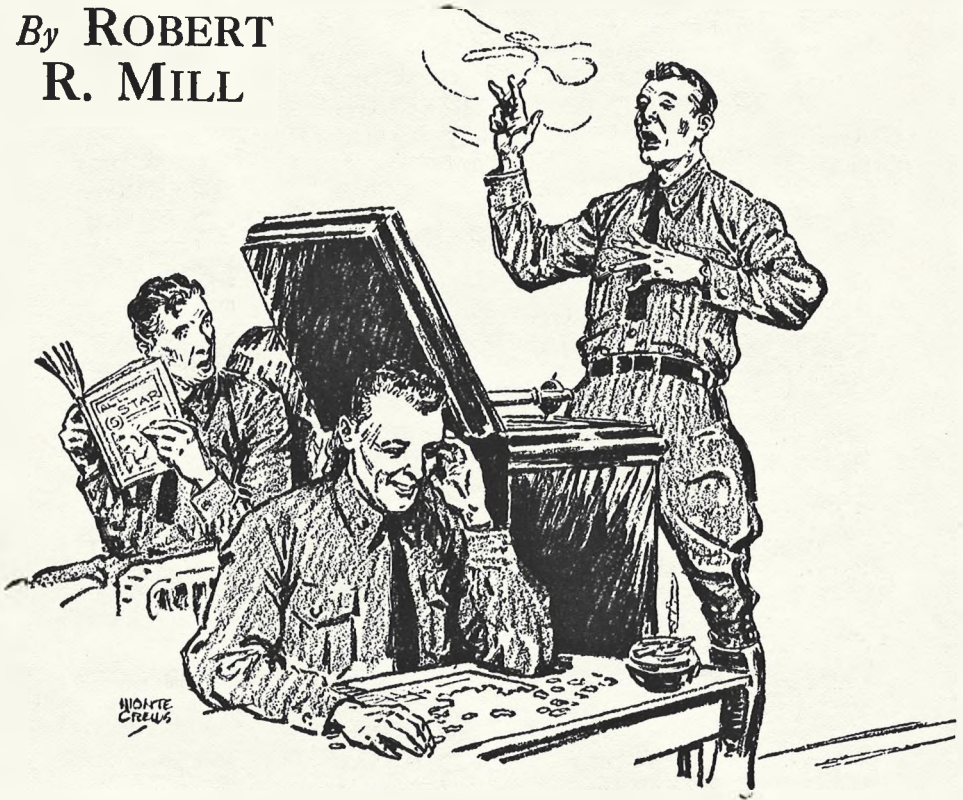
"Raft in the Sargasso," another unusual and colorful story by James Francis Dwyer, will appear in an early issue.



# Horse Patrol

*A lively story of adventure with the State police.*

By ROBERT  
R. MILL



WHEN the phonograph in the living-room of the barracks began, for the third consecutive time, the refrain of "Clap Hands, Here Comes Charley," Captain Charles Field, commanding officer of the Black Horse Troop, appeared in the doorway. He surveyed the group before him without favor.

Sergeant James Crosby was apparently engrossed in a magazine dealing with adventure. A rookie bent studiously over a jig-saw puzzle. But Lieutenant Edward David had given himself over entirely to enjoyment of the music. His hand, in which a cigarette was clasped, rose and fell to the rhythm. His deep voice sang: "Clap hands; here comes Charley, Charley with—"

There was a subdued snicker from the general direction of the jig-saw puzzle. The cover of the magazine quivered several times, then became still.

Captain Field walked to the phonograph and removed the record.

"Favorite of yours, Tiny?" he asked.

A look of concern crossed "Tiny" David's face.

"Yes," came the slow drawl. "I'm right fond of that piece, Captain."

"Too bad," was Captain Field's verdict. "I am afraid I have broken it." The record slipped through his fingers and broke into bits as it struck the hardwood floor. He turned to Sergeant Crosby. "You are treasurer of the Civic Association, aren't you? Charge the record to my account."

"That isn't necessary, sir," Lieutenant David protested. "I have three more in my room." A slow grin spread over his broad face. "They didn't look very strong, and I was afraid something might happen to them. So I bought four, and—"

"I see," said Captain Field. "Very thoughtful of you." He was smiling. "I



Illustrated by  
Monte Crews



Captain Charles Field surveyed the group without favor as Lieutenant David sang: "Clap hands; here comes Charley—"

must do something for you." He pondered. "It has been rather dull here lately. You haven't said anything, but I know you have been longing for the old days when you were a sergeant. Of course, a sergeant's pay isn't quite like a lieutenant's, but there are other advantages. Let's see. I don't know any reason why you can't go out on patrol."

His face brightened.

"Just the thing," he continued. "You and Sergeant Crosby can go out on a nice, long patrol—a horse patrol. You can ride Battle-ax, and Crosby can take Brimstone. The horses need the exercise as much as you do. You can make Black Lake tonight. It may be a little late, but I know that won't trouble you. If you can't get anything to eat at the hotel, there is a good hot-dog stand near the station. Tomorrow you can ride to Linton. If you leave Black Lake at day-break, you'll just about make it in time

for supper. The day after tomorrow you can call me up. I'll have some more nice rides doped out for you."

His smile was almost a benediction.

"Don't waste time thanking me. You have a long ride ahead of you. And when you pack your kit, put the records on the bed. I'll take care of them for you. They might get broken in a saddle-bag."

Twenty-five minutes later they rode out from the barracks. Fifteen minutes of that time had been devoted to overcoming Battle-ax's deep-rooted objections to a saddle. The services of the entire stable force had been required in the process. Brimstone, although he had submitted to the saddling operation, had a look in his eyes that hinted the choice of his name had been a wise one.

THEY reached the main road, and turned their horses toward the west.

"Got any more bright ideas, Tiny?" demanded Sergeant Crosby. "It was good clean fun all right, but it seemed a lot funnier in the living-room than it does on this goat's back. And now what are your plans?"

Tiny David was a picture of dignity as he replied:

"I am thinking."

"Well," Crosby retorted, "if you stand up in the stirrups, you'll take a big load off your brains."

They rode on in silence, a silence broken only by sounds of a struggle as Brimstone made a whole-hearted but unsuccessful attempt to unseat his rider.

"One good thing about it all," declared Crosby, when calm had been restored, "is that we can't go on making hauls like this every day. These goats can't stand it. A horse gives out before a man does."

"These aren't just horses," Lieutenant David corrected. "These are tough horses, the toughest pair out of forty-eight. That's why the Skipper wished them on us. And when we get them quieted down, he'll tell us to turn 'em over to some patrol and take *their* horses. —Why, you misguided—"

He devoted his entire attention to Battle-ax, who, although his stall overlooked the troop garage, was giving a convincing imitation of mortal terror as an automobile approached.

"What we need," continued Tiny David, as the car became a cloud of dust in the distance, "is a crime-wave. We won't find one in Black Lake, because we have a patrol there. But I am right hopeful about Linton."

"Yeah!" Sergeant Crosby was frankly doubtful. "And what is it going to get us when we find it?"

"If it is the right kind of crime-wave," Tiny David explained, "it is going to get us off these goats. We'll have to stay there and fight it."



He blocked Battle-ax's attempt to bolt toward an open field, and after a struggle brought the horse back to the road.

"When you are riding a horse, you can't be fighting a crime-wave. That's so simple even you ought to be able to understand it."

"Maybe," Sergeant Crosby admitted. "But will the Old Man understand it?"

LIGHTS twinkled from windows when they rode into Black Lake, and made their way toward the hotel. Battle-ax and Brimstone were installed in the stable at the rear. Captain Field had been right about the hotel dining-room; it was closed. The hot-dog stand he suggested also was closed, a victim of business conditions. They dined in the town's one drug-store, drinking milk-shakes and eating sandwiches of stale bread and thin, tasteless ham.

Back at the hotel they paused before the desk. "Call us at four o'clock," Lieutenant David directed the clerk.

"In the morning?"

"No!" roared Sergeant Crosby, whose disposition had not been improved by

the twenty-two-mile ride. "Some afternoon next week!"

"In the morning," Tiny David corrected. "We want to get to Linton."

"Oh!" said the clerk. "If you are in a hurry, why don't you leave your horses here and take the bus?"

"Why don't you take poison?" demanded Sergeant Crosby.

THE stable was dark when they entered it the next morning. A sleepy groom roused himself sufficiently to pour liberal portions of oats before Battle-ax and Brimstone.

"The goats get all the best of it," declared Sergeant Crosby, who was stiff, sore, sleepy and hungry. "When do we eat, Lieutenant?" The title was a sure sign of his ill humor.

"First stand we come to that's open," declared Tiny David. "We ought to hit one about eight o'clock."

"That's just swell," was Sergeant Crosby's verdict. . . .

It was after nine when they breakfasted on cold cereal, doughnuts and coffee. They ate their midday meal in a general store, which offered tinned meats, cheese, pickles, crackers and bottled soda. They sat on the porch of the store, watching Battle-ax and Brimstone doing ample justice to full portions of corn.

"Remember that piece that author-guy wrote about the affection between the black horses and their gray riders?" asked Sergeant Crosby.

"What about it?" demanded Lieutenant David. "It must be true. Major Warner, down in Albany, clipped it out and sent a copy to every troop. The old man framed our copy."

"Yeah! My aunt has a mustache, but that doesn't make her my uncle. Well, let's get the goats headed toward Linton. Maybe I'll last that long, but I doubt it."

They rode into that town at dusk. The clerk was sitting on the porch of the hotel as they rode up.

"The dining-room," he began, "is—"

"I know," Sergeant Crosby interrupted, "it's closed." There was a gleam in his eyes. "And I'll close both your eyes for you if you don't round up the cook and get us something hot to eat."

They climbed stiffly to the ground.

"Take these hyenas to the stable and feed 'em," Tiny David directed. "I'll see you later. I am going to promote."

They met half an hour later in the dining-room. Tiny David looked glum.

"Well?" demanded Crosby.

Brimstone seized Sergeant Crosby's cuff; there was the sound of ripping cloth. The girl gurgled: "I think that was the cutest thing! His way of attracting your attention, wasn't it?"



"No luck," Tiny admitted. "I had a talk with the constable. They don't even get drunk in this town. Swell chance of promoting a crime-wave!"

They ate for a while in silence.

"What time will you call the old man in the morning?" asked Crosby.

"About eight." Tiny David brightened. "Maybe he will order us in."

"My mother," declared Sergeant Crosby, "didn't have any feeble-minded children."

Sergeant Crosby waited outside the telephone-booth in the hotel office the next morning. The conversation was brief. There was no joy on Tiny David's face when he emerged from the booth.

"Today," he began, imitating Captain Field's voice, "you boys might ride over to Brentown. If you start right away, you can make it before dark. The hotel dining-room may be closed, but you will be able to get something to eat somewhere."

"Did he say anything about me?" asked Sergeant Crosby.

"Yes. He told me to take good care of the animals."

Hard riding enabled them to beat the deadline of the hotel dining-room at Brentown. Unsparring use of salves and

liniment made it possible for them to sleep that night. Their efforts to "promote" crime were fruitless.

Their telephone conference the following morning brought at least slight balm.

"The Skipper says we are to double back to Tranquil Lake," Tiny David reported. "That's only fourteen miles. We'll take it easy."

"Do you call fourteen miles easy?" asked Sergeant Crosby.

"Well, it's better than twenty-four—and it's better than a kick in the teeth."

"The only good thing about it," Sergeant Crosby declared, "is that Tranquil Lake is civilized. Lot of summer people there."

They rode onward, easily but steadily. Brimstone, ever the rebel, reared fiercely when a squirrel darted across the road. Crosby, taken by surprise, kept his seat with an effort. His left hand held the rein tight. His right stroked the glossy neck of the horse. His voice was quiet and soothing:

"Some day they are going to find you dead, Brimstone, and they won't need any inquest. I'll take a plea. It will be worth it to get rid of you."

They arrived in Tranquil Lake in time to see the chief of police before the eve-

ning meal, but they obtained little encouragement.

"I'll try to promote it," Lieutenant David declared, when they reached the hotel, "but I know it won't go over."

He entered a telephone-booth. Five minutes later he joined Crosby, who was stretched out on a bed.

"What's the verdict?"

Tiny David shook his head.

"The Skipper said he wouldn't ask men of our ability to hang around here wasting our time on a thousand-dollar burglary. He told me to notify the Saranac Lake patrol. Tomorrow, son, we ride to Tupper Lake, and it's a good thirty miles, unless your uncle and the road maps are all wrong."

Sergeant Crosby groaned.

"Incidentally," Tiny David continued, "a dame stopped me on the porch. She wants to get a picture of us with the horses before it gets dark. She said she thinks that is about the last stand of the picturesque and the romantic in this district—the trooper and his horse."

Sergeant Crosby raised himself on one elbow.

"What did you tell her?" he asked.

His companion paused in his task of unpacking his kit.

"Why, I told her you would be tickled to death. I explained how devoted you are to that horse. Told her it would break your heart if they put you on an automobile patrol. Phone down to the stable, will you, and tell them to saddle those goats."

Sergeant Crosby groaned hollowly.

THE picture-taking, however, proved to be less of an ordeal than he expected. The girl with the camera was friendly and easy to look at. She lingered after the pictures had been taken.

"What's his name?" she asked.

"Brimstone," said Sergeant Crosby, who stood at the horse's head.

"He is a beauty, isn't he? And so nice and gentle."

"Yes—er, yes. He's all of that."

Brimstone's head arched. He seized the cuff of Sergeant Crosby's gray coat between his teeth and tugged. There was the sound of ripping cloth.

"You—" Sergeant Crosby checked himself abruptly. He smiled. Only the angels knew the effort it cost him.

"And so playful." That contribution came from Tiny David.

The girl with the camera gurgled with delight.

"I think that was the cutest thing. I'll bet he was jealous. He saw you talking to me and not paying any attention to him. That was his way of attracting your attention, wasn't it? No wonder you are so devoted to him."

Sergeant Crosby's smile lasted until the stable was reached.

"Get that goat out of my sight," he ordered the stable-boy. "If you don't, the S.P.C.A. will be after me."

AT the hotel that night there was music and dancing. There was no dancing for Lieutenant David and Sergeant Crosby, who ached from head to foot.

The girl of the camera found them on the darkened porch.

"This isn't fair," she told them. "Not enough men to go around, and two good-looking troopers hiding out here! Don't tell me you are bashful."

No, they weren't, but they *were* dead tired. . . . They were even more tired when they sought their room three hours later. Just before he snapped the light off, Tiny David made an announcement:

"We have breakfast at eight," he declared. "We are going to take our time over it. What if we don't get started until after nine? The way I feel right now, I don't care if we never get to Tupper Lake."

Sergeant Crosby was humming. The tune was, "Clap Hands, Here Comes Charley."

"Shut up!" roared Tiny David. "If you don't, I'll kill you."

They breakfasted leisurely and well. It was well along toward ten o'clock when a trim groom led Battle-ax and Brimstone to the front of the hotel. He indicated Battle-ax.

"That horse has the devil in him today," he asserted. "Fought with him half an hour before I could slip a saddle on him."

"Only half an hour?" asked Tiny David. He grinned. "He'll be quieter by the time he gets to Tupper Lake." The grin vanished. "And so will I."

They mounted amid laughing farewells from the crowd on the porch. There was a pause while the girl with the camera fed Brimstone an apple. Battle-ax showed his resentment by snapping viciously at Brimstone's neck. A second apple was forthcoming.

"I think they are the sweetest things," gurgled the girl. "Just like two playful boys."

They walked their horses slowly along

the main street of Tranquil Lake, picking their way in and out of the traffic. Automobiles bearing the license-plates of almost every State in the Union passed by. Women in smart sports-clothes promenaded along the walk overlooking the lake. Off in the distance towered the mountains.

Tiny David pulled Battle-ax to a halt. He fumbled in his pocket and produced a patrol report. His thumb was pointed toward a building.

"That's the post office over there. I'll take this in and have the clerk give us a postmark. We'll need it when we make out our expense account."

"Give it to me," Crosby directed. "I hate to dismount, but I'm nearer the curb."

Tiny David passed the report over. Crosby slipped the reins over Brimstone's head and tossed them to his companion. Then he dismounted and entered the building.

The traffic was heavy, and honking horns indicated the annoyance of drivers as they piloted their cars by the horses. Tiny David, noting an empty space along the curb before the post office, pulled the horses into it. He lighted a cigarette while he waited for Crosby.

Battle-ax fidgeted uneasily. Directly ahead of him was a big limousine painted a battleship gray. Glancing through the narrow, heavy glass of the rear window of the car, Tiny David saw a scowling man sitting tense at the wheel. The motor of the big car was running, for the exhaust was discharging thin smoke, which was circling about the noses of the horses.

"That's funny," mused Tiny David.

**S**TILL gazing through the rear window of the car, he saw the driver catch the image of the troop horses and their rider in the mirror attached to the windshield. He watched the look of consternation that crossed the driver's face. He saw it replaced by a grimace of hate.

Thirty feet to the right of the limousine were the doors of the Lake Tranquil National Bank.

Tiny David stiffened in the saddle. He snapped the cigarette to the street. It might be something, or it might be nothing. But he would be ready.

"Damn these horses!" he growled.

Then Battle-ax forced the issue. He resented the fact that he was forced to stand idle along the busy street. He disliked the gas from the exhaust that was

curling about his nostrils. What Battle-ax disliked, he took action against.

He snorted loudly. He tossed his head angrily. He raised a hoof and sent it crashing against the rear of the limousine.

"Cut that out, Battle-ax!" roared Tiny David.

Battle-ax struck again, just as Tiny David pulled him aside. The flashing hoof grazed the rear of the car and struck the license-plate holder a glancing blow.

The yellow and black license-plate of New York State tumbled to the street. Beneath it—it had been hidden when the other plate was in position—was a Connecticut license.

Tiny David jumped to the street. He shot a quick glance at the rear of the car. Battle-ax's first kick had chipped the gray paint. But the metal beneath it was undented. It gleamed with the dull glow of steel in the exposed place.

"Armored car!"

His lips framed the words, although no sound issued from them.

**H**E saw the driver, still unaware of the revelation made by Battle-ax's sharp hoof, hesitate between flight and something that chained him to this spot. He watched him glance toward the bank, then decide to remain. He saw him compose his face as he stepped from behind the wheel to inspect the damage.

Tiny David was very sure now. He hooked the reins of both horses over his left arm. With his right hand, he drew his revolver.

"Stay where you are!" he ordered the driver. "And throw your hands up!"

Then the police officer slipped behind the protecting bulk of the armored car. Out of the corner of his eye he saw Sergeant Crosby walking from the post office next to the bank.

"Cover that guy, Jim!" he called.

Sergeant Crosby covered the driver with his revolver. He walked forward until he too stood behind the armored car. Tiny David hooked the reins over Crosby's arm.

"Bank stick-up!" he hissed. "Watch this bird! I am going in after them!"

Tense, and with his revolver in his hand, he walked toward the entrance of the bank, with its ornamental iron door and four white pillars, which supported the roof of a porch. The door was closed. Outwardly everything was peaceful.

He had moved just a few feet along the walk that led from the street to the door of the bank when the door was

thrown open. Three men darted out. Two of the men, who held revolvers and canvas sacks in their hands, sprinted toward the car. The third man paused, obviously to shout a warning to the people inside the bank, and then slammed the door.

"Halt!" cried Tiny David.

His answer was a volley of bullets, which whistled by him. He heard a horse scream in terror and pain. Behind him and to his left, he heard two more revolvers go into action.

The three men darted back to the porch of the bank and sought shelter behind the white pillars. Tiny David leaped behind a tree, which grew in the yard before the porch.

"You're licked!" he called to the men on the porch. "Throw me your guns!"

"I'll throw you lead, you dressed-up ape!" called one of the three, evidently the leader. "Come and get us!"

He followed the challenge with a volley. The bullets peppered the trunk of the tree.

Tiny David heard the low voice of Sergeant Crosby, who was sheltered behind the car:

"Right with you, Tiny. I got the driver. He tried to shoot it out when his pals charged out. And I shot a hole in

both back tires, so the car isn't going to help 'em much."

"Good work, Jim," Tiny called.

On both sides of the bank the street was filled with throngs of excited, milling people. The screams of women blended with the hoarse cries of men.

Then the revolvers went into action again. When the fire had subsided, Tiny David cried out:

"You haven't a chance. You haven't killed anybody yet. Your car is crippled. Quit, and make it easy for yourselves."

His answer was more shots from the men behind the pillars. He returned the fire, slowly and carefully. He heard Crosby's gun go into action. But the broad pillars offered safe shelter for the bandits.

Tiny David thrust his arm out from the shelter of the tree and fired. The guns behind the pillars spoke again. Something struck his elbow with numbing force. He staggered, clutching the tree with his left hand in order to steady himself.

Before his eyes a black mist was form-



ing. He tried to fight it back. He was going out. But he couldn't go out—that left Jim alone to fight it out with three men! He half turned, facing the crowd milling about out of range.

"One of you men get the local police," he called. "Quick, before—"

His voice ceased abruptly. He slipped down along the tree trunk, with his huge form sprawled in a heap on the grass.

Sergeant Crosby, crouching behind the armored car, fumbled in his ammunition-belt and reloaded his revolver. He saw that Tiny David's cry had not been heeded by the excited crowd. He cupped his hands about his mouth and shouted toward a window of the bank, which was open.

"Inside the bank! Call the local police!"

There was a hoarse cry of triumph from one of the men behind the pillars: "Yeah, let 'em call! We fixed that!"

Then one of the bandits darted from behind a pillar and made a rush for the

door of the bank. Bullets from Crosby's gun drove him back.

Along the street, from the south, came an open touring car. It was moving slowly. The girl at the wheel—she was the only occupant—drove along with calm disregard of the excitement about her.

There was a commotion among the men behind the pillars. Sergeant Crosby's lips tightened. He knew what that meant. The three men would rush that car, hoping to make their get-away in it.

**T**HREE to one! He would get one, possibly two. But one, or possibly two, would escape. As for himself, even if he escaped the rush he would be delayed before he could start in pursuit.

The horses had bolted at the first volley. Even if they had remained, they would have been useless in chasing a car. The automobiles parked about were locked. Precious moments would pass before he could locate an owner and get the pursuit organized. And in the mad rush, innocent passers-by would be sacrificed.

The car, with the girl at the wheel, was just a few feet away. But from the street to the north there came the clatter of hoofs. Sergeant Crosby glanced over his shoulder.

Down the street came Brimstone. He was being led by two policemen. Sergeant Crosby's heart gave a joyous bound.

"Let the horse go!" he shouted to the policemen. "Draw your guns, and come shooting!"

He saw the looks of surprise upon their faces replaced by grim determination as they obeyed him. Just then the three bandits charged.

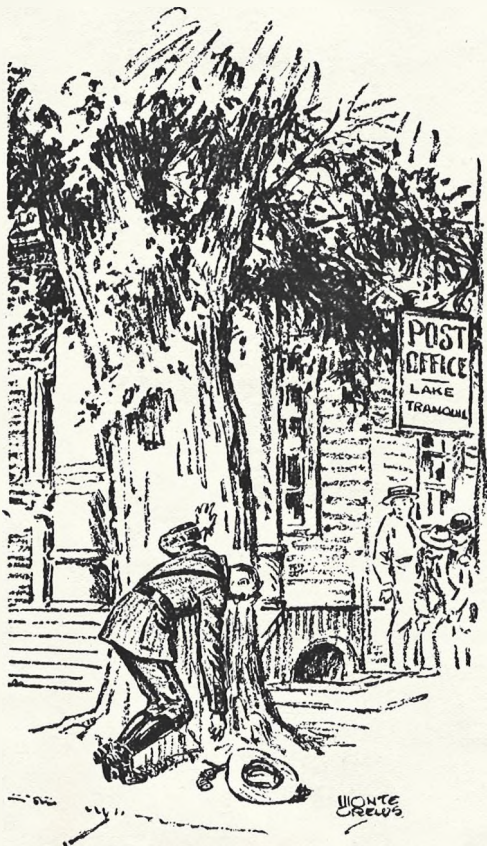
His first shot dropped the leader. The bullets fired by the other two men drove Crosby behind the armored car. A bullet fired by a policeman dropped a second bandit as he reached the curb. The third bandit paused just a second, then elevated his hands.

"Keep 'em up!" roared Sergeant Crosby. "And toss that gat to me!"

The bandit obeyed.

Out in the street, the girl at the wheel of the automobile gave a shrill cry and fainted. The car rolled on, swerved to the side, and came to a clattering halt against another machine parked not five feet from where Brimstone was prancing about.

The horse promptly snorted with anger, and launched out viciously with his



The guns behind the pillars spoke again, and Tiny David staggered, clutching at the tree. But he couldn't go out—that left Jim alone to fight it out with three men!

hoofs. But men in the crowd, now that the bullets had ceased, stepped out and seized him.

Slowly but surely order was restored from chaos. Sergeant Crosby's gun remained trained upon the bandit who had surrendered, while the local policemen searched him and placed handcuffs upon him.

The driver, who had attempted to shoot it out, was dead. The leader of the bandits was alive, but there was a hole in his right chest and blood was coming from his lips. The bandit shot by the policeman was dead.

Sergeant Crosby hastily gathered up the canvas sacks dropped by the bandits. They were stuffed with currency.

"What a break!" murmured one of the policemen. "We were at the other end of town. Then we saw your horse come by without a rider and we knew something was wrong."

Sergeant Crosby glanced over to where a horse stood, the center of an admiring throng.

"Good old Brimstone. Wonder where Battle-ax is?"

It was a small boy who came to the rescue.

"You mean your other horse? A bullet struck him in the neck. Some guys caught him down the street and took him to the vet's place. Doc Porter says he aint hurt bad."

"Thanks, son," said Sergeant Crosby.

Still holding the sacks in his hand, he approached the form lying beneath the tree in the yard before the bank. He saw a man, brusque and professional, kneeling there. There was a tight band about Sergeant Crosby's throat as he halted beside that man and asked:

"Is it bad?"

The physician turned.

"Bad?" he repeated. "It is about the most painful thing can happen to a man. He got the full kick of a .45 bullet right on the elbow. No man can stand that shock and pain, and stay conscious."

HE laughed softly as he saw the look of consternation on the face of the man standing above him.

"But it isn't exactly what I would call *serious*. There's nothing broken that won't heal. He's out now, but that will make it possible for us to do a little cleaning up on that elbow. By the time we are through, he'll be sitting up and asking for nourishment. Then it is a matter of splints for a few weeks, and

then he will be right back where he started."

The tight band about Sergeant Crosby's throat loosened. He and the policemen entered the bank. There they found an explanation for the silence from the building. The president and three employes were bound and gagged. Five customers had been herded into a private office, and locked there.

The president, freed from his bonds, gave a gasp of relief as he saw the sacks in Sergeant Crosby's hand.

The street was black with people when they stepped from the building. The scream of an ambulance siren sounded above the excited murmur.

Sergeant Crosby made his way to Brimstone's side. He patted the black head. "Hello, old-timer!"

He swung into the saddle. Brimstone's neck arched as he took a playful nip at the knee of his rider.

"That's the horse that went for the policemen," said a stunning girl, who attempted to stroke Brimstone's nose as he walked by.

"Yes," said a young man in flannels, who held her arm. "They are trained to do things like that. Wonderful, isn't it?"

Sergeant Crosby smiled as he piloted Brimstone through the crowd.

AS they sat on the porch of the hotel the following morning,—Tiny David's right arm in a sling,—many and long were the admiring glances thrown their way. But for heroes receiving the ovations of the multitude they were exceedingly glum.

"That doctor," said Sergeant Crosby, who had just returned from the telephone, "told the Skipper that you will be able to ride a horse by tomorrow. That vet told him Battle-ax will be ready to be ridden by then. So the Skipper said he couldn't see any good reason why we shouldn't go on riding those goats."

Tiny David nodded sadly.

"I was afraid of that," he admitted.

"It sort of surprised me," Sergeant Crosby admitted. "A smart lieutenant told me that if we could only promote a crime-wave we would get off these goats. But evidently the Skipper doesn't rate a bank-robbery with only three dead, as a crime-wave."

He paused to purchase a newspaper from a passing boy. He studied the front page.

"Get a line of this hog-wash," he commanded.



Then, in a falsetto voice, he began to read:

**TRANQUIL LAKE.**—The Black Horses and the Gray Riders of the Black Horse Troop wrote another stirring chapter in the history of the New York State Police yesterday.

Three armed bandits—they were accompanied by a confederate who waited outside in an armored car—entered the Lake Tranquil National Bank, and bound and gagged officials, employes and customers, while they scooped up \$24,000 in currency.

They worked so quietly that Lieutenant Edward David, who was sitting on his horse Battle-ax outside the bank, was unaware what was happening inside. But Battle-ax, displaying almost human intelligence, pawed at the bandits' car and knocked off a false license-plate, disclosing a second plate beneath it.

So Lieutenant David was ready when the bandits rushed from the bank. He was joined by Sergeant James Crosby, who was mounted on Brimstone.

Lieutenant David and Battle-ax both were wounded. Sergeant Crosby was hard-pressed, with his companion out of the fight. But Brimstone, without a word of command, galloped to the far end of the village where Patrolmen Howard Conley and William Foster were stationed. The riderless horse at once attracted their attention, and Brimstone led them directly to the scene of the gun battle.

There was a groan from Tiny David. "Don't read any more," he commanded. "I am sick now."

Sergeant Crosby turned his attention to another column.

"But you must hear this," he declared. And he read:

**LAKE TRANQUIL.**—This village next Monday night will be the scene of an event unlike any other ever held in this or almost any section.

More than five hundred guests will gather at a dinner in the vast arena. While the diners will enjoy a sumptuous repast, the guests of honor will be fed huge portions of oats.

You are wrong; this is not a practical joke.

The guests of honor will be two gallant black horses, and civic leaders, officials and prominent summer visitors will unite in paying tribute to their bravery and intelligence. The names of these guests are Battle-ax and Brim—

"Shut up!" roared Tiny David.

He looked up with a start as he saw a man in uniform of the State police standing before him. He and Sergeant Crosby arose and saluted.

"How are you feeling?" asked Captain Field.

"Fine, sir," said Tiny David.

Captain Field smiled.

"Just spoiling to get back in the saddle again, I suppose?"

A shadow crossed Tiny David's face.

"If I never see those goats again, it will be twice too soon."

Captain Field ignored the outburst.

"Battle-ax and Brimstone did a swell job on that bank-robbery. The newspapers all say so, and the newspapers always are right. There isn't a reason in the world why two smart horses like they are should be hazed around by two men who have let automobiles make them so soft they can't appreciate good horses. Anyway, they have a date here next Monday night. They can stay here until then, and afterward we can have them shipped back to the barracks. The Lord knows they do enough work in the winter when the roads are impassable for cars."

**T**HE commanding officer of the Black Horse Troop slipped into a chair.

"You fellows going to the dinner next Monday night?"

"Nobody said anything about it to us, sir," said Tiny David.

Captain Field nodded.

"I was talking with the Mayor before I came over here. He said the party belonged to Battle-ax and Brimstone, and that he didn't want anybody invited who wouldn't be agreeable to them. I told him those horses were so democratic they didn't care who they associated with, and he said to bring you along; you'll probably get the engraved invitations later. You guys are shining in the reflected glory of those horses so much that there was even some talk of giving you watches."

He rose, and walked toward the steps.

"You fellows better stick around here until after the dinner. Then take a train back to the barracks."

Halfway down the stairs he paused.

"By the way, what do you want done with those phonograph-records of yours?"

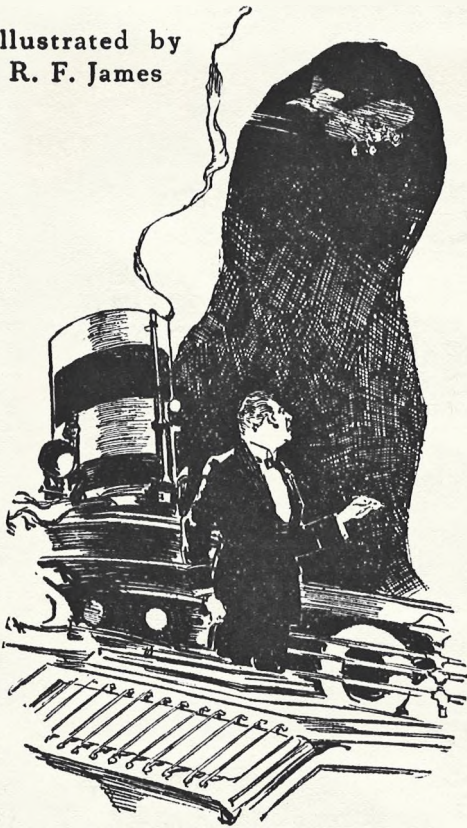
Tiny David swallowed hastily.

"Will the Captain please break them? Thank you, sir; and I am sorry."

He turned to face an elderly woman, a determined seeker of knowledge.

"Yes'm," he assured her, "the horse is much better. . . . Yes'm, they are trained to do that. They are very clever. . . . Yes, indeed, we certainly are fond of our horses."

Illustrated by  
R. F. James



It came down as though some giant spider lowered itself on the end of a filament—a big bulb of dull metal falling from the sky. Something dropped from it; the muffled explosion jarred the yacht.

### *The Story Thus Far:*

ON the blue of the lake there was still visible the white wake of the big motor-launch where it carried Anderthal's guests, the members of the Fifth Disarmament Commission, back to Geneva.

"Dined and wined!" exclaimed Anderthal. "They are all charming men. It would be nice to give them a salute of twenty-one guns—loaded with shells."

A flicker of chilly amusement was all the expression on the face of his partner John Kingdom. There was something almost ludicrous in the contrast between these two men—the world's greatest munitions-manufacturers, who were perhaps the richest and certainly the most powerful men in Europe: modern Europe, where kings had lost their power, and secret men of no country ruled behind the curtain. John Kingdom was small and trim. He had never had his portrait taken. Anderthal, with his huge shoulders and round skull, was like some vivacious ape in evening clothes.

# The Man

By S. ANDREW  
WOOD

With his lovely ward Crystal Templeton, Kingdom said good night to Anderthal and Anderthal's lady-love the Countess Anna, and returned to his villa.

"Tired?" he asked of Crystal.

"Not at all. But I think you must be. It must be pretty awful to be always John Kingdom. Even men like you have a breakdown, sometimes." She thrust him gently by the shoulders into a chair. The vibrant youth of her set him shaking inwardly. He glanced at the tiny white mark at her temple.

That had been caused by a fragment of bomb-shrapnel. From the same missile John Kingdom still carried a small piece of metal in his own head, which at times gave him fearful headaches, in spite of all the surgeons . . . . Sixteen years ago, and black wings over London. He could see that house in Chelsea now, ablaze with the phosphorus bomb that had struck it, with Elizabeth lying among the flowers of the quiet garden, and the child bending over her. A second bomb had fallen as he carried the child away, making them both bleed. . . . Elizabeth was the woman he had loved, and the child her baby sister. John Kingdom had adopted the child. . . .

Crystal had long retired when a panel of the library wall slid back, and Chundra Dah, Kingdom's stout and able Hindu servant, stood aside to let a third person enter—a man who in face and figure was startlingly like John Kingdom.

"Wine for him, Chundra Dah," said Kingdom. "I beg to remind you that you are now John Kingdom, Brian."

"The hour approacheth," said the newcomer with an air of bravado. "Do you deliver me over to the police, Johnny, or am I to be used for experiments with one of Kingdom's and Anderthal's new poison gases? Your own blood cousin, by gad!"

"I kept my bargain," replied John Kingdom, "and you've kept yours. You asked for another year of that life you

# who Bombed the World

*The extraordinary story of the Man of Legend and the Princess of Armageddon—of the immensely powerful arms-master who undertook to browbeat Europe into a real disarmament—by the distinguished author of “Comrades of Chaos” and “Red Terror”*

were leading. I gave it to you, and you came here. Rather, Chundra fetched you.”

Sane and cold, Kingdom looked and felt. He had given Brian everything since that night he had come to him with the police at his very heels, after killing the girl in the frowsy Montmartre bedroom. Brian had accepted eagerly.

“I want to say,” added John Kingdom now, “that there’s not one iota of a chance of—well, shall we call it escape? Tell him, Chundra.”

The Hindu said in a soft voice:

“Aconitine. Specially imported from Nepal, where it is called ‘Old Man’s Poison.’ But it is good for the young too. I injected it early this morning when you slept, Mr. Brian. The expert can time the toxic effect. The time would be twelve forty-five, roughly speaking, if you survived present suicide episode. It is rather painful, when once it begins.”

Brian Kingdom laughed huskily.

“You cunning devil, Johnny! You’re mad. But a big madman.”

“Possibly. It’s immaterial. I do you a big honor, Brian. This is a great moment in your life, and the greatest in mine, so far. . . . Sanity is a relative thing, after all. I call a world insane that piles up death-weapons and shivers to think of the day when it will use them. It’s a grisly joke. But nothing, compared with mine.”

“What is that?” A forced grin of admiration was on Brian’s sweating face. Plainly, he meant treachery.

“My suicide,” said John Kingdom. “The self-destruction of John Kingdom, and a crash that will beat that of any previous defaulter hollow. After that—who knows what further jokes the ghost of a departed armament-king may play?”

And now John Kingdom rose, took a revolver from a drawer and laid it on the arm of the chair where Brian sat.

“Thanks, Johnny!” croaked Brian. “And here’s for you! Roland for an Oliver!”

He snatched up the pistol with a shrill laugh, took aim and pulled the trigger. There was the snap of an empty cartridge; and a second pistol sprang into Chundra’s brown hand where he stood behind the chair. The explosion of it at Brian’s temple sounded like the crack of doom. . . .

The first sensation of John Kingdom’s suicide passed through the world like a lightning-shock. Within a week it was proved that he had been a colossal swindler, who had built upon the quicksands of forgery, fraud and deception.

Far greater news followed: for London, Paris, Rome and Berlin were mysteriously bombed from the upper air with nitrous-oxide gas which did little harm, though it rendered thousands of people temporarily unconscious. Equally mysterious radio messages explained this harmless gas attack as merely a foretaste of what another real war would be like.

Only to Crystal Templeton, living in London, and to her suitor Larry Raeburn of the British Secret Service was the secret revealed: Bidden by a provision in Kingdom’s will, Crystal made her way, accompanied by Larry, to the tiny island of Martos in the Ægean, purchased in the name of James Van Horn, supposedly an American—and there Crystal and Larry found John Kingdom living!

He explained his plan. The island had been equipped as fortress, a powerful broadcasting station, a naval base; more important, its hangars housed a number of planes invented in one of his munitions factories—planes capable of navigating the stratosphere. He proposed by their aid to threaten and if necessary to force Europe into a real disarmament. He invited Larry to join the staff of picked young men helping him. (*The story continues in detail.*)

A TUNNEL pierced the rocky face of the hollow where the villa stood, a tunnel left by some volcano in the

days before even the prehistoric creatures which were the forerunners of man had begun to slay each other. It was lighted now by small Neon lights, and through it John Kingdom passed into a wide amphitheater that was the real crater of Martos. As Van Horn, the American, he had quietly combed the isles of Greece for months to find that, and taken three patient years to fit it to his purpose. White arc-lights burned over concrete sheds and buildings. A small generating-station hummed. The floor of the dead crater stretched as flat as a ballroom to where a clock-face glowed over the largest of all the buildings.

These were the hangars. Kingdom went across with his head uplifted a little. The dull gleam of metal was within, visible through the six open doors.

He smiled and waved his hand. His young men were there. There were others at work somewhere, mechanics, chemists, but these were his hand-picked ones; lean young men in overalls, his air-men. They could laugh even though they carried themselves with a certain gravity that was more real than the gravity of either Black Shirt or Communist—Bates and Russell, the two Englishmen, Leontov the Russian, the two German and Italian boys, and young Tim Ryan the American, who had first found the stratosphere with his machine. While the world marched, drugged, to the next war, Kingdom had found these young dreamers and adventurers, had trained them, grown to love them all.

"Ten minutes yet," said Tim Ryan, turning his shock-head to look at the clock. "Do you mean to come with me tonight, sir?"

"Yes."

**K**INGDOM passed into another shed over which radio antennæ spidered against the sky. Within the glow-worm radiance, he sat by Ludwig the operator, and in silence took the neatly written summary from him.

*Jacob Anderthal reached Belgrade from Geneva this afternoon. . . . A new flotation called Anderthal's Chemical & Steel Combine is reported from both London and Paris. . . . In Zagreb this evening an attempt was made on the life of the Prime Minister of Croatia-Slavonia. . . . In the House of Parliament this afternoon Mr. Tinkler asked if the Government were doing anything about the warnings*

*from the stratosphere. Since, at the moment, every nation seems powerless to deal with the raider, and the Soviet has denied any knowledge of him, would the Government not consider the advisability, in conjunction with other Governments, of treating his message seriously? Amid uproar Mr. Tinkler sat down.*

**S**LOWLY John Kingdom went back to the villa. As he came close to the house which now held Crystal, he could feel the resurgent blood, the resurgent dreams which he had kept back for so long—till the time was ripe. He had left them together deliberately, though his first instinct had been simple enough, God knew. At a word from him Chundra Dah, who was gentle humanitarian and brown steel robot in one, would deal with Larry Raeburn as he had dealt with Brian Kingdom. . . . How wearily yet patiently he had waited, watching her tranquil affection, praying sometimes almost and then focusing everything on the future, which was now! She had been the soft reality in all his hard dreams. He felt robbed, bitter, and—because he was John Kingdom—ashamed.

The two were looking at him, standing close together. But Crystal came forward quickly.

"I wondered where you were," she said, and laid a hand on his shoulder. "Is everything secret here? I'm not tired. I couldn't sleep for hours and hours yet. I want to see things."

"And you, Raeburn?"

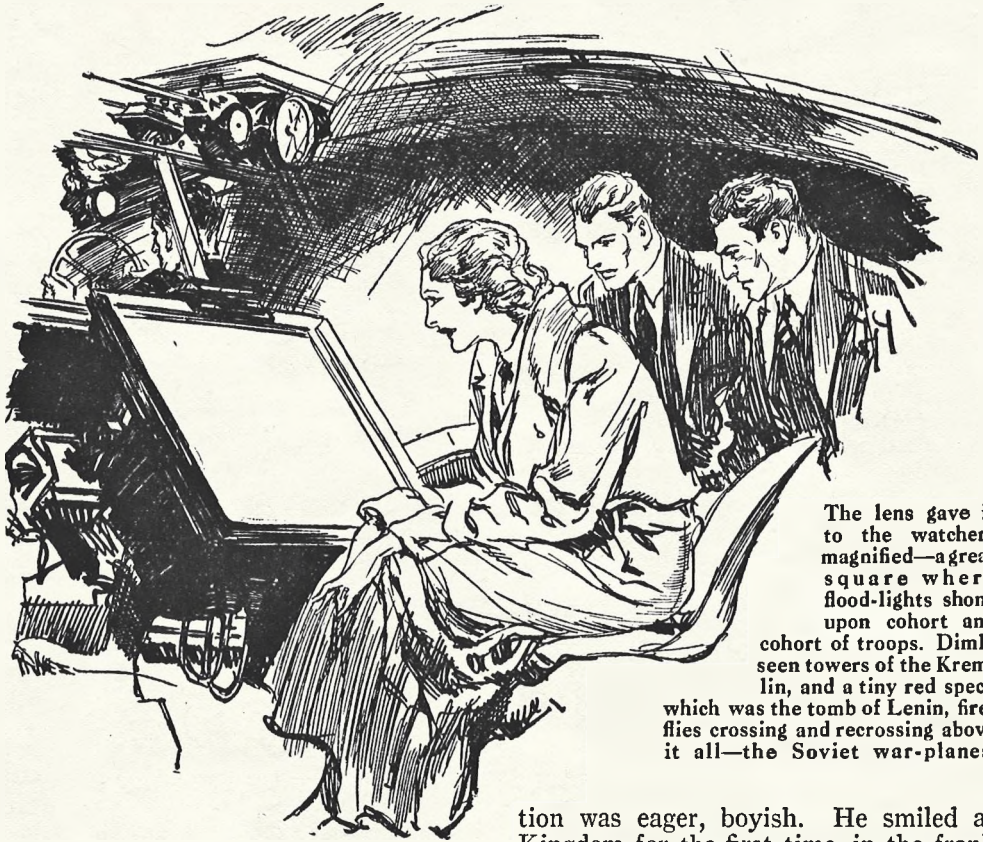
"I'm in your hands," said Larry with a queer laugh. . . .

It stood in the middle of the amphitheater, a bulb of metal with squat wings that gave out a soft drone. Tiny sirocco-fans of steel. Like the spinning blades of a turbine, but so swift that they seemed to stand still.

"Gyroscopes," said Kingdom. "They stabilize and make the upward thrust. Atmosphere or stratosphere, they're the same. They'll hover, too. Inside, you can't even hear the air-screws. We shall sit in a little cabin and watch Tim Ryan, that's all. Five years ahead of time. No more. Rather less, perhaps, if we manage a war—war, the handmaiden of science!"

Inside, it was like the cabin of any other airplane, but lined with metal and pervaded by the same ozone-smell of oxygenized air. Tim Ryan sat in his illuminated corner. The rest was a cozy half-lit chamber.

"Sit down," said Kingdom; and Crys-



The lens gave it to the watchers magnified—a great square where flood-lights shone upon cohort and cohort of troops. Dimly seen towers of the Kremlin, and a tiny red speck which was the tomb of Lenin, fire-flies crossing and recrossing above it all—the Soviet war-planes.

tal and Larry obeyed. The chamber seemed to sway slightly; the floor pressed against their feet ever so little. Small lighted figures began to run across the dial in front of Tim Ryan's eyes. On the periscope screen by his side was a rushing purple blackness. John Kingdom said:

"Four miles. All the air-policemen in Europe couldn't catch us just now. They have never come this high."

Crystal caught at her sense of reality. She saw Larry staring at Kingdom, who was absorbed. If there had been rushing wind, a sensation of being held there, it would have been easier. A sense of suffocation would have helped. But the air was invigorating to the pulse, and, save for that pressure on the feet, there was no feeling of movement. The periscope-screen was the only eye that looked upon the outside world. On it, a huge bright moon glowed and then died away into blackness and rushing stars. John Kingdom laughed, touched perhaps by the vitalized air, which affected them all.

"Meet the stratosphere!"

"Where are we going?" Larry's ques-

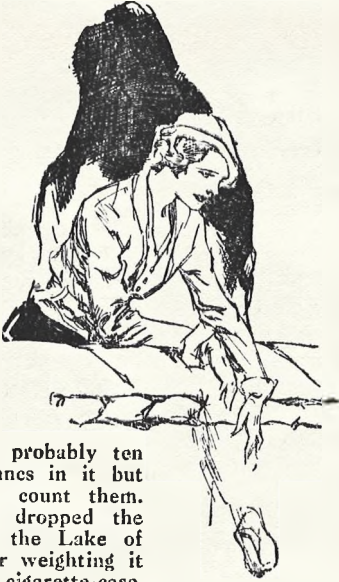
tion was eager, boyish. He smiled at Kingdom for the first time, in the frank way he had used to. It might be something in that new human experience, but Crystal felt unnervingly happy at a picture of herself and her husband Larry, both John Kingdom's friends and worshippers in a world that John Kingdom, the man of history, had cleansed of dread and suspicion and the powers of darkness. It came all at once, a bright vision, overwhelming.

"Wait!" said Kingdom.

It was all real, tremendously real now. More real than the gravid earth below. The clock showed almost an hour gone, and they had hurtled five hundred miles through air that was too thin to resist them. The compass pointed northeast. Rumania—Hungary—it could as easily have been Asia, or Africa. . . . Outside, instant death, and the giant hand of the stratosphere trying to crush their flying shelter in vain. Inside, that tiny hum and that magic exhilaration. Into it a woman's voice came trilling, the croon of saxophones and whisper of fiddles. Tim Ryan turned his head and grinned.

"Chicago, U. S. A." he said. "Peach-skin Soap."

*"Just a song at twilight,  
When the lights are low. . . ."*



There were probably ten thousand francs in it but she did not count them. Instead she dropped the bundle into the Lake of Geneva after weighting it with an old cigarette-case.

"Hell!" said Tim Ryan. "To think it comes up here on that Heaviside layer and goes back again to Sioux Falls and places!"

Time passed, like everything else, lightly, buoyantly, in a sort of dream. It was three hours since they had left Martos. A cool drumming came into Crystal's ears. She saw Tim Ryan bend forward, stiff and quiet. Kingdom pointed to an aluminum pedestal, the cup of which was made of thick telescope glass.

"Watch!"

It happened very quickly. Ryan's finger touched the radio again. A man's voice this time. Deep, fiery, full of explosive Russian sibilants, flung up from below. Kingdom said:

"Molovinov, to his Red Guards and the League of Aviation and Chemical Defence."

"What!"

"Look into the glass, man!"

The summer night must have been clear. The extra buoyancy of a moment ago must have been the plane dropping down from the heights of the wilderness to the envelope of life where the human race bred and lived and died. In the telescope-glass was a sort of flickering light that grew bigger, bigger. The lens took it and gave it to the watchers magnified: a great square where flood-lights shone upon cohort and cohort of troops. Dimly seen towers of the Kremlin, and a tiny red speck which was the tomb of Lenin, the shrine of a new people. Fireflies crossing and recrossing above it all.

The Soviet war-planes. Larry Raeburn, gazing in fascination, found the blood pounding in his temples. On all that! On all that foolishness and waste of mankind! A reminder from the steely hand of sanity, from John Kingdom. . . .

He gasped, "Bombs?" And John Kingdom answered: "Not the real stuff yet. But they've got to come in. They can't stand out!"

"By heaven, no!"

Larry did not know that it was himself who spoke. Tim Ryan had touched a lever, and the pressure was on their soles again. Rising, rising. The flare in the telescope-glass dwindled like the last embers of a fire.

The bomb had dropped, and on the Red Square in Moscow John Kingdom had sent his warning of three minutes of obliteration. . . .

Three o'clock in the morning by the clock above the hangars in the dead crater at Martos. As Crystal stepped out into the soft subtropical night, she was aware of a scent of wild lemon and cystus which the breeze brought. The air of the mundane earth, warm as it was, chilled and fatigued now; not a bodily fatigue but something in the brain that mocked at foolishness, that put the weight of æons of struggle and disillusionment upon it.

"I suppose it happened to both of us, Larry." The laugh she intended to give stayed in her throat.

"I was going to ask you that. I suppose it did."

They went ahead together through the tunnel which led to the villa, and once Larry stayed to pass his hand over his forehead. Crystal watched him. She felt that way also now—face to face with a bleak kind of reality. It was not to be explained. It was something to do with the hormones of the body perhaps. Something quite physical. But it felt worse than that to Larry Raeburn.



"I must see Kingdom," he said. "Crystal, you go."

He waited in the softly lit room with a cigarette smoking between his fingers. His brain still swung, but it was clear, disillusioned, back to earth. His jaw was set rather hard, and at the sound of John Kingdom's footsteps he stiffened alertly.

"I've sent Crystal away. I wanted to talk to you alone, for a few moments, if you've no objection."

KINGDOM picked a cigarette from the jade box on the sideboard, and with his back turned said:

"Everybody feels like that after their first trip. It's the prison atmosphere of the world again. Won't it wait till morning?"

"No," said Larry. "This is the real thing—not that we've just passed through. I was a bit dippy up there. I thought for a moment—well, I got carried away. I want to remind you that I'm supposed to be a part—a very small part—of the British Secret Service. An amateur, more or less. But still—"

John Kingdom did not turn round yet. He was lighting his cigarette.

"Tim Ryan was in the American Secret Research Department. Leontov was one of that gang on Red Square we saw tonight."

"You gave me everything," said Larry, gripping the edge of the table behind him. "I thought you were the greatest man on earth. I still do. But no man that God ever made has the right to make himself the sort of judge and executioner you want to be. Even if you're sane, as Crystal thinks."

"She thinks that? Nice Crystal!" The whimsical smile. He swung round and put forth his hand on Larry's shoulder. "Come in, Larry!" he urged. "I want you."

"There's another thing," said Larry, whitening more. "I'm going to marry Crystal. We meant to tell you long before—on that last night at the Villa Marigolda. She can't stay here, either. Do you think I don't know?" cried Larry, all at once. "You're in love with her yourself. That's why you arranged for her to come here. Oh, you're a bigger man than I am, I know—ininitely bigger. You'd make her happy—if she only loved you. But she doesn't. Not that way."

"No," said John Kingdom a little woodenly, "not that way. We'll leave

that just now. About this other thing: You feel it your duty to tell the authorities everything you know?"

Larry nodded. John Kingdom, he saw, was scanning him with an almost detached curiosity. Kingdom said:

"You're straight. You always were. I'm sorry to have to keep you a prisoner, Raeburn."

Though there was no irony in the tone, Larry Raeburn swung round and saw red through his jangled nerves. What happened, then, neither ever forgot. Larry struck, and Kingdom reeled back. In his day John Kingdom had been cursed behind his back; and once or twice men had tried to kill him; but no human being had ever before struck him. He stood motionless with his hands hanging, before the dazed gaze of Larry Raeburn, to whom he had given everything. There was a soft pad of feet. Raeburn's hands were pinned to his sides from behind, as though by cowhide thongs.

"All right, Chundra. Mr. Raeburn will go with you without resistance."

THE room was quiet after they had gone. John Kingdom glanced into a mirror at the angry blaze on his cheekbone where Larry had struck him, and turned away quickly from it. He saw then that Crystal stood in the doorway. It was impossible to know how long she had been there. A perceptible shiver passed over her.

"I knew something was going to happen!"—a low cry. "Larry didn't hit you? He didn't! He *couldn't!*"

"It's nothing. The boy never meant to. He's my prisoner now, Crystal; but I'll treat him well, child. . . . I've got to do it. You see that?"

"You must always remember that he didn't mean it," said Crystal, going close quickly and touching the bruise on his cheek. "As for me, even if Larry went, I should stay. You need a woman to look after you." She tried to laugh but broke down a little. "You couldn't do without me. I don't believe you could carry on with this great plan of yours without me—because you'd planned to bring me into it, hadn't you? I'll never try to argue against it. It's you. It's what you've lived for, whatever the end may be. I should think that out in the world yonder the women will be on your side, anyway. I'll represent them, then. I'm tired, fearfully tired. . . . Please forgive Larry."

THE big hotel suite in Geneva which housed Jacob Anderthal, of the new Anderthal Chemical & Steel Combine, and his staff, gave a magnificent view of the blue lake and the pale beautiful buildings which many successive peace-makers had reared to the glory and perfection of their ideals. Against the sapphire sky the flags of many nations waved in the same wind of God: a little smug, a little well-pleased, a little pathetically, perhaps. At the moment a patrol of waterplanes rested on the bosom of the lake, with very handsomely uniformed young men about them. Some of the delegates to the Seventh Danubian Conference which was politely squabbling nearer to war every day, were inclined to be nervous of nitrous-oxide bombs.

Jacob Anderthal grunted as he turned from the big window. The Countess Anna sat swinging a silken leg in one of the chairs, and looked up from under the brim of her tiny hat. Budding sophistication and an exquisite schoolgirlishness were somehow accentuated by a bandage she wore on her left hand.

"You look like a wood dryad," said Anderthal gravely. "I would like to show you to all the handsome diplomats in Geneva, in the costume of a wood dryad, so that they should know what I have. But all the same, you must go now—I am lunching with another woman presently."

"The newspaper-woman? Will you have beauty cream served up for that terrible complexion of hers, and give her a decent frock for the occasion? What cheek, too!"

"Go!" ordered Anderthal calmly, "or I shall shoot you again. And not through a door this time. . . . Ah, the little hand, the poor little hand! Brute that I am!"

"A big one," agreed Anna, scowling. "But it's nearly better. That darky—"

"An Indian gentleman," murmured Anderthal. "Do I have to carry you out?"

She was so exciting. Too much so, perhaps, pondered Anderthal, as the door closed behind the Countess Anna. He loved music and pictures, in a childish but passionate way. He played the cello, well. He could have been an international chess-player—of another sort than he was now. All quieter recreations than the Countess Anna of Gerolstein.

He pressed a button for his secretary, and sat hunched over as though he ac-

tually brooded over a chessboard. Complex human beast that he was, he knew that this was the game which gave him the fiercest thrill.

The little bullet-headed secretary set neat documents before him: flimsies, cables, notes—from his agents behind the curtain, and from small politicians of little mid-European countries whose patriotism had been so bedeviled and messed about that it could be bought for a song. He perused the summary:

*The Little Entente will break up within a fortnight. The Slovenian Delegates are marking time at the Danubian Conference. Voyvodina is bankrupt through the Kingdom smash, and nearly defenceless. When the Slovenes start, there will be another attempted return of the Hapsburgs, which will bring in Germany and Italy. After that—*

"The weakest to the wall," observed Jacob Anderthal. "Well, well! It may all be averted from the stratosphere yet!" He looked very ugly yet very powerful as he smiled. "Talking of which, what is the current message from the celestial regions?"

"The same," replied the secretary. "He promises to bomb Zagreb out of existence the moment war is declared. Not only that, but certain portions of the cities of the big powers will pay the penalty, he says."

"Absurd! Some mad internationalist out of Russia. They'll get him."

Anderthal looked at the clock, and presently rose. He opened the door and passed through it, so much the bluff ape, the playful Neanderthal of the cartoonists, that anyone who had not seen him a few moments before would have altogether underestimated the power of his balanced brain. It was a very delightful private little salon that he entered, and in the alcove of the window were set all the appurtenances of a very delightful luncheon. Jacob Anderthal bowed over the hand of Sally Allison of the London *Post-Mercury* and half a dozen American news syndicates.

"So we meet again? Last time it was in London with poor John Kingdom, and Crystal. She's your friend, eh?"

SALLY looked into the heavy, bland face. She had taken pains to beautify herself for the little luncheon à deux with the famous Neanderthal. A very pretty secretary-mistress of a Rumanian minister had given her a very pretty powder-box, and she had used it with devastating effect—in the literal sense of the word.



"Crystal's vanished."

"A long holiday?"

Sally sipped her Chateau Yquem. There were occasions when she could drink like a fish. But this, she decided, was not one of them.

"To the Norwegian fjords, I think. Though she did talk of the West Indies."

Anderthal nodded. He had the look of an urbane Buddha. The girl, he was convinced, knew of Crystal's whereabouts. But she was not saying anything.

"She was in love with Kingdom, I believe, the poor girl. It would be a terrible shock for her, the disgrace, the scandal. *Ach*, what a strange thing love is!" His eyes went up drolly. "Even I know it. Even you, I dare say."

Sally finished her caviar and smiled brilliantly.

"I'm going to write a personal sketch of you for my papers, if you don't mind, Mr. Anderthal. I think the world's got you all wrong. I'm sure you're just a polished, charming, grand chevalier, really."

Almost comically Anderthal rubbed his bald forehead. In one respect his education had been neglected. That was in regard to plain, clever young women, who earned their own living. They left him at sea, perhaps because, at heart, he was an Oriental. He persevered.

"The young man Raeburn, now—the rich young man who was in the Secret Service for a hobby. He too is in love with Crystal, though I think Kingdom never knew. It would be delightful if she married the young man."

"Oh, Larry Raeburn? He's just landed in Geneva, here," said Sally, lying fiercely, because she was not going to say one word of truth to this old pump-handle, though a dull flush came beneath her make-up. "I shall be seeing him this afternoon. He's quite a friend of mine. Platonic, you know."

"I do not know," smiled Anderthal, ponderously. "Platonic is bunk. I dare say you are in love with him."

"I dare say," sighed Sally. . . . "This is a lovely lunch, Mr. Anderthal. Can I have a photograph of you? For my papers, I mean. . . . It's queer that John Kingdom would never have his photograph taken, isn't it? He wasn't photogenic, you know, and actually he was as vain as a peacock. All mystery-men are, I suppose. Crystal used to tell me about that island of his."

"He had an island?"

"Off the North of Scotland, somewhere, I understood." Sally raised sleepy eyes, and Jacob Anderthal saw it all completely: She earned her own living, she let him know that she was not giving away anything for nothing.

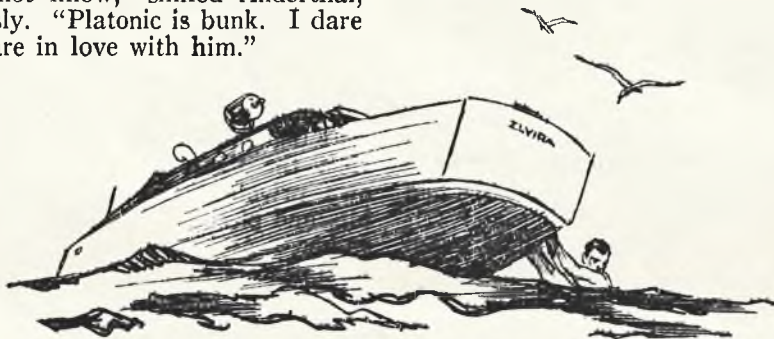
By the time Sally had finished her liqueur, she had lied so coolly and fluently that she was dully amazed at herself. It had reached a point when it kindled a spark of amusement and reluctant admiration in Jacob Anderthal's eyes. Why she did it, she scarcely knew, save that she defied the brute, even though he was one of the most dangerous and potent men in Europe at that moment. Why did he want to know about Crystal—and Larry? Sally found a whisper of bewilderment and dread starting within her.

"Actually," said Sally, beginning to be a little frightened of herself, though her smile at Anderthal was sly, "I think this stratosphere man is John Kingdom, really. He never committed suicide, you know. That's my theory. I have grounds for it. But I'm not telling anybody."

"Great!" roared Anderthal, in laughter. "You are the woman-comedian, eh? Well, well, I have enjoyed the lunch. Make that pen-picture of me a nice one."

With a clumsy courtesy he helped Sally into her light tweed coat. He even squeezed her in a fatherly manner for a moment.

"Come to see me whenever you like. Soon, remember!"





Kingdom pulled back Chundra Dah's arm. "Let him go," he said. Slowly Chundra Dah pocketed the long-barreled automatic. He sent a long glance to John Kingdom. "Gambler's throw? It is a wildly reckless gamble, sir."

Sally waited until she reached the Promenade du Lac before she put her hand into the pocket of her coat and took forth a crisp bundle which had not been there before she lunched with Anderthal. There were probably ten thousand francs in it, but she did not count them. Instead she walked to the low wall and dropped the bundle into the Lake of Geneva, after weighting it with an old cigarette-case. She stood watching the place where it had sunk, aware that the snow-breeze from the mountains was very sweet about her ears, the cherry blossom was fragrant, there was a thrill in sunlight and blue sky, and that she was very lonely and miserable. She had spent three months in Tibet and felt less alone. Sally Allison seldom hoodwinked herself. She wished miserably that one of the many lies she had told Anderthal was—not a lie. If only Larry Raeburn were in Geneva. . . .

"Idiot!" she muttered bitterly.

A voice said behind her:

"Me? Sorry, lady. Told you I was going to keep doggo on you and Anderthal. What did you feed the swans with just now?"

"Money. Filthy lucre—very filthy. Anderthal tried to buy me—not my virtue, you bonehead!"

Dick Challis, the young man who had suddenly appeared, drew her to a seat beneath the shaking blossoms of a tree.

"Marry me, Sally," he said.

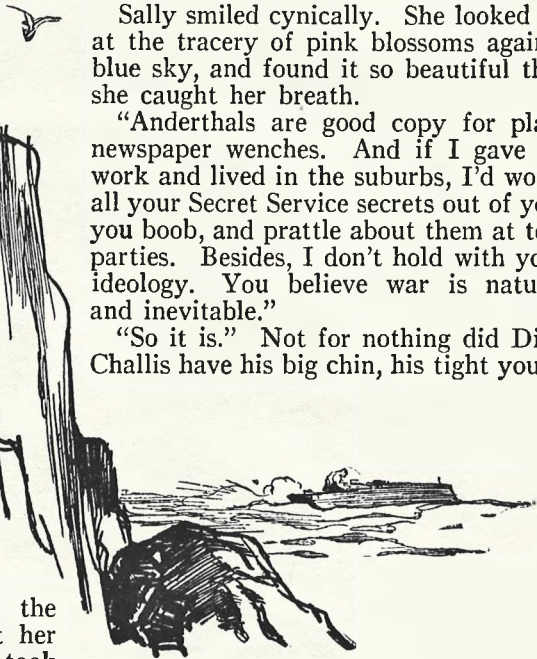
"I'll not," said Sally as curtly.

"I'll keep nasty bits of work like Anderthal from giving you bundles of notes."

Sally smiled cynically. She looked up at the tracery of pink blossoms against blue sky, and found it so beautiful that she caught her breath.

"Anderthals are good copy for plain newspaper wenches. And if I gave up work and lived in the suburbs, I'd worm all your Secret Service secrets out of you, you boob, and prattle about them at tea-parties. Besides, I don't hold with your ideology. You believe war is natural and inevitable."

"So it is." Not for nothing did Dick Challis have his big chin, his tight young



mouth, and the rather veiled gray eyes of the distinguished military family he sprang from. "There'll be precious few secrets, then. It's been mostly a case of finding out who was stealing a march on the others, till recently. Now we all go ahead hell for leather. It'll start soon, in spite of John Kingdom."

"Who?" flashed Sally.

Challis nodded indolently.

"Kingdom. I don't believe he died. He's the stratosphere bloke. It's my own private theory, but I've gathered bits and pieces and I'm fitting them together. And Crystal Templeton and Raeburn are in with him."

"On an island—a modern pirate's island." Sally felt very near to hysteria. "Say it, Dick darling."

"Maybe," said Dick Challis stolidly. "Though I rather fancy the other side of Poland. The Ukraine, in Russia. It's a vast place. But Kingdom won't matter a hoot as soon as the war comes."

"Hell!" said Sally under her breath. "I'm going."

She ran across the road, through the glittering and dignified traffic, without once looking round. Everybody, she told herself, was mad today, including herself. Though it was not until she was turning into the Grand Quai, almost knocking over a handsome gendarme in her flight from the insane Dick Challis, that she was fully convinced about herself.

She was then. A man was stepping from a taxicab, and he was so much like Larry Raeburn that she shut her eyes tight.

(Zagreb, Monday.)

At 5.0 p. m. yesterday a radio warning from the stratosphere to evacuate all munition-dumps of men was received at General Military Staff Headquarters. As a result, powerful searchlights and patrolling airplanes were set in immediate operation round the munition centers. As is well known, Zagreb is an armed camp at the moment, and there was little panic among the civilians, though the news of the warning leaked out. At eleven o'clock precisely, bombs were dropped. Ten munition-dumps were destroyed, and so great was the explosion in each case that the patrolling airplanes were rendered useless. Many lives were lost—all troops. It is stated that the stratosphere plane was glimpsed for only an instant before it completed its work.

(Prague, Monday.)

New factories recently taken over by the Anderthal Steel & Chemical Combine outside the city were destroyed completely by one of the stratosphere planes at eleven o'clock last night. A previous warning had been issued, and no workers were on the premises. Bombs of tremendous explosive power were used, and the buildings were reduced to ruins. The plane was not seen.

(Gibraltar, Monday.)

The British Mediterranean Fleet on air-war maneuvers in the Mediterranean was attacked last night by a stratosphere plane. No actual damage was done, but when investigations were made it was discovered that the control-tower of every capital ship had been turned a vivid ochreous color by some species of gas.

(Cologne, Monday.)

The ancient castle above the Rhine at Drackenfels, occupied by General von Stumer, whose bellicose speech regarding

the action of Nazi Germany in the event of war among the Little Entente was reported yesterday, was razed to the ground last night by a stratosphere bomb. General von Stumer was in residence at the time, entertaining a number of his staff, and all perished.

(Geneva, Tuesday.)

Today's radio message from the stratosphere threatens that if war breaks out among the Little Entente, it will be followed by the bombing with lethal gas of the capital cities of the four great powers.

#### STRATOSPHERE MADMAN

WILL HE PREVENT WAR IN EUROPE?  
Nations Form Gigantic Detective Force  
of Scientists and Secret Service Specialists  
to Track Down His Headquarters

NO CLUE

WHO IS HE? STRANGE RUMORS AFLOAT

LARRY RAEBURN had been a prisoner for three days.

He felt more than a little sick at heart in the big pleasant room in the wing of the villa which had been assigned to him. It crushed, at first, all desire to escape. Every hour he looked for Crystal, but she did not come; and that started a flicker of bitterness, though he told himself that John Kingdom probably prevented her. And that too made him feel jealousy and then shame—shame that he could trust neither Crystal nor Kingdom. Followed a sullen anger at his imprisonment. Kingdom was a madman and ought to be checkmated. . . . But it was Crystal he wanted to see. It became an ache.

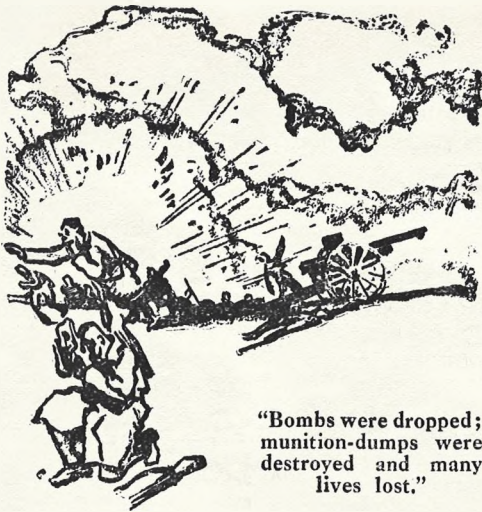
Chundra Dah saw to his creature comforts—impassive, courteous, an Indian gentleman. But Chundra Dah always locked the door, and Chundra Dah fastened the heavy window-shutters at night; and Chundra Dah, though they had always been the thickest of friends, would have cut his throat at a word from Kingdom. Larry knew all that.

Nor did John Kingdom come. That too hurt Larry. He sent a message by Chundra.

"Tell Mr. Kingdom I was a hound to hit him. I didn't mean to."

"It shall be conveyed, sir."

Presently the window-shutters got on Larry's nerves. The locked door and Chundra's soft footfalls he could stand. But the shutters, particularly in the early morning, were sardonic. On the third morning he awoke early and set to work on the fastening. Deadening the



"Bombs were dropped; munition-dumps were destroyed and many lives lost."

blows with his handkerchief, he took a bronze ornament and hammered softly. He would shorten the hours of darkness, at any rate, Larry told himself, aware that it was perhaps a touch of prison neurasthenia which made him pick on the shutters. It was hard work, but with his pocketknife and the improvised hammer he managed one of the clamps. As the shutter came back, the quick dawn was rushing up over the Grecian seas, a heavy dew-mist hung on the bush-covered rock and little canyons of Martos. It was all quiet, deserted, beautiful. Larry wanted, unbearably, to get out and see Crystal.

He wore a carved ring with a diamond in it. More than once before, it had been useful. Larry tried it on the glass, then laughed, and instead jabbed his elbow, padded with a cushion, into the window. If Chundra came, he would tell the man to go to hell. . . . The noise was considerable, but the fragments dropped into the bushes outside without tinkling too loudly.

Nobody came. The hole was big enough to let him onto the narrow sill. From there Larry jumped down into the bushes. . . .

An extraordinary and disagreeable thing happened. He dropped into the bushes, vanished, and went on slithering into darkness. He must have done that for twenty feet or more, before he was brought up with a crack of every bone. Overhead was a mere twinkle of daylight. Around him was blackness. It was a sheer hole he had jumped into.

Larry began to crawl. The whole little island, Kingdom had told him, was like a honeycomb. The tunnel went on

and on. Men had used it before, for in the light of a match he saw a rat-eaten piece of goatskin. Some kind of subterranean passage he must have crashed into. He didn't give a tinker's curse. But it went down, down, then up, up. There was a whiff of sea and wild citron, and then a bull's-eye of hot sunlight.

A minute later Larry sat down and stared. He was at the edge of the blue water, with a startled wild goat lolling up the precipice behind him. A hundred yards away in the harbor-cleft of Martos, cool white against the magenta rock, lay the *Elvira*, Kingdom's yacht. He could see a black cat that blinked on her taffrail, the sun on her brasswork, and the big motor-launch at her companion ladder. There was no sign of waking life aboard.

Impulse is a strange thing. Larry's first impulse was to send a hail, to be taken back to John Kingdom and to demand to see Crystal. His second was different, and he obeyed it. He was swimming quietly through the liquid indigo of water, almost before he knew it. He was under the gleaming side of the yacht, with his hands resting on the thwart of the motor launch, two minutes later.

There was a current running. The mooring-rope was tough, but his knife went through it at last. Through one of the open portholes forward somebody was audible, snoring steadily. The black cat came and stealthily watched him. But the big launch of the *Elvira* was drifting slowly away, stern first, with Larry Raeburn well under its counter. Not until it had rounded the point of the harbor-cleft did he climb aboard. The fuel-gauge showed a full tank.

Larry looked seaward. Empty as the Pacific, it looked. Neither smoke nor lateen sail. He set the engine throbbing. Thank God, the exhaust was all but silent. . . . Yet Larry felt no exhilaration, no triumph of escape. Somewhere within a hundred miles, he guessed, he would meet some ship which would bear him to the outside world that beat round ineffectually, trying to find the port of a piracy and blackmail which the world had never known before. He was going to enlighten it. But he felt no exhilaration.

Looking up just then before he turned the nose of the launch seaward from the water that ran inshore, he saw two people on a grassy shelf above him. One was a small taut figure, and the other a

large one with curves. They were John Kingdom and his servant Chundra Dah; and Chundra Dah's arm was pointing downward at him with something that gleamed blue-metallic. . . .

Kingdom took the muscular shoulder in his hand and pulled back Chundra Dah's arm. He stood and watched the motor-launch on the blue quilt of ocean beneath; Larry's crisp hair, wet and wind-blown, Larry's hard face looking upward, then away again.

"Let him go," he said softly.

Slowly Chundra Dah pocketed the long-barreled automatic. He sent a long glance to John Kingdom. There was no master and servitor when they were alone together, as now.

"Gambler's throw? It is a wildly reckless gamble, sir."

Kingdom smiled with a touch of weariness.

"*Faites vos jeux*, Chundra. I love the boy. I think he loves me."

And both of them loved Crystal. And Crystal loved only one of them—that way. Larry was gone, and Crystal was left. The yacht could overhaul the fugitive in half an hour, but he did not intend it to. Chundra's bullet would have been quick and clean, for the Babu was a consummate shot. No doubt many young men as fine as Larry had gone to eternity the night before with the Zagreb munition-dump. John Kingdom averted his face slightly. He knew he could not think of that, neither now nor in the near future. Besides, he had not loved them as he loved Larry Raeburn and Crystal—who loved Larry.

Perhaps Chundra Dah was a thought-reader.

"To do the obviously right thing under all circumstances is to lay many addled eggs, I agree," he said. "And logic is sometimes all punk, please excuse movie-slang."

LARRY was picked up at noon by the Italian mail steamer *Florina*, bound for Brindisi. When within easy distance of the steamer Larry scuttled the motor-launch. Ever since he had left Corfu that morning, she had threatened to sink, he explained. Another mad Englishman was added to the Italian captain's list.

There was a big telegraph-office in the station at Brindisi. He heard its tickers chattering as he passed on to the platform to the waiting transcontinental train. Wait till he reached Paris. Then

he would get through to Shieling at Scotland Yard by phone. His mouth felt dry; his pulse was thumping painfully. He must! He glanced across at the only other occupant of the carriage—a bumptious-looking commercial traveler of the more prosperous species, with a nauseous streak of hair brushed wetly over an otherwise bald forehead. The man said cautiously:

"Hello, Raeburn!"

It was Burke, of Room D3. They spoke nothing of their affairs. It was not done. But Burke said:

"Your pal Challis is in Geneva, I understand. So is Sally Allison, that newspaper-kid friend of his and yours."

Larry nodded. He said: "I know. I'm on my way to Geneva now."

Was he a weakling because he needed somebody to give him strength to betray and destroy John Kingdom? He could find no answer. . . .

And so it was that Sally Allison saw Larry Raeburn stepping from a taxi-cab in Geneva.

IT was quiet in the Café des Ambassadeurs at this hour. Geneva was busy with its peacemaking, as it had been for so long and often. Through the windows the white city reared up, smiling in the sunshine—perhaps a little wearily. The traffic droned somnolently along the boulevards.

Sally Allison put down the little mirror which she had been holding up to her face with a trembling hand. She would look like a smirking little stenographer, she decided, if she put her hair any straighter. But that was only subconsciously.

"So you're going to blow the gaff?" It was very seldom that Sally's voice was like that—unsteady. "What I mean to say is that you're going to do your duty? Naturally, you are. You're blood and iron, Larry."

"Don't, Sally!"

And, "Sorry!" said Sally.

It was all mad. As mad as John Kingdom. She was horribly in love with Larry, and here was a chance to get him from her friend Crystal Templeton, to make him famous, and to get the greatest scoop for herself that had ever happened since Caxton first smelled printer's ink.

"Even madmen do things," she said barely audibly. "I guess I could quote from the New Testament. . . . Oh, my God, let's keep calm, Larry. But mad-

men *do* do things. And the times are bad. Pretty bad."

"Where's Challis?" asked Larry with a touch of huskiness.

"Dick? He'd use thumbscrews and the scavenger's daughter on you if he got a smell of this. He's Cromwell and Torquemada rolled into one, where his work's concerned. He'd tear you limb from limb and not shed one tear over the corpse of a friend." Sally came to her feet so jerkily that she upset her tea-cup. "But please yourself, Larry dear. Nobody on earth can help you."

"I'll phone," said Larry. "Phone Shieling direct."

Sally Allison did not dare accompany him. He went out into the balmy sunlight and strode unseeing along the street. His thoughts were like a stopped clock. In his young life he had seldom passed through such a dull negation of all youthful happiness. In a good play, Larry told himself he would go out into one of the well-trimmed parks of Geneva and blow his brains out, afterward.

There was a private wire to Scotland Yard from a quiet room in one of the hotels. There were private wires everywhere in Geneva. He had almost reached the steps of the hotel when the handbag of a girl who passed coquettishly in front of him dropped and burst open. He almost trod into the litter of stuff before he could pull up. The girl fell blushing to her knees, and he had to stop to help her—a pretty little French thing, probably a lady's maid from one of the lake villas.

"*Merci, m'sieur!*" She had tripped on her way, and Larry was left with a piece of paper in the palm of his hand. The first impulse of his torn nerves was to throw it away, or at least to leave it until he had phoned to Shieling. But curiosity conquered.

It was in handwriting which seemed so familiar that his heart leaped up into his throat.

*Larry—I don't know if this will reach you. We came by airplane yesterday, disguised, and are at the Villa Marigolda. Please come. I am beginning to be a little frightened. There is only one maid, and she will admit you. Come after dark, because you may be watched. —C.*

LARRY RAEBURN stood still for a time, then began to walk mechanically. He tried to reason it out coolly and laboriously. Crystal's handwriting—or a marvelous imitation.

But they might have come by airplane. Their disguise would be the mythical Van Horn—and perhaps his wife. Larry winced abominably at that. He felt alert, though a cool skepticism was coming. The nightmare had gone from him for the moment. Was it Crystal and Kingdom? Say it wasn't. A trap, then. Nobody wanted to trap him—except perhaps Kingdom. And he would not have used such an everyday trick. It meant then that if Kingdom was really in Geneva, the police could arrest him like any other criminal. He took a room in the hotel and examined the letter again. It was palpably false.

HE slept until nightfall, for he was dead beat, emotionally and otherwise. . . . It was a night of stars when he hired a car which put him down half a mile from the Villa Marigolda. He experienced a certain happiness, like a man reprieved. All the same he knew, simply, that because the letter from Crystal was a forgery, he was walking into something that it might be hard to get out of; but something that carried him like a tidal current. He was consumed by a great curiosity, and there was a flat, fully loaded automatic in his hip pocket: two things which, combined, made up a good recipe for adventure, pondered Larry, in better spirits than he had been for many hours.

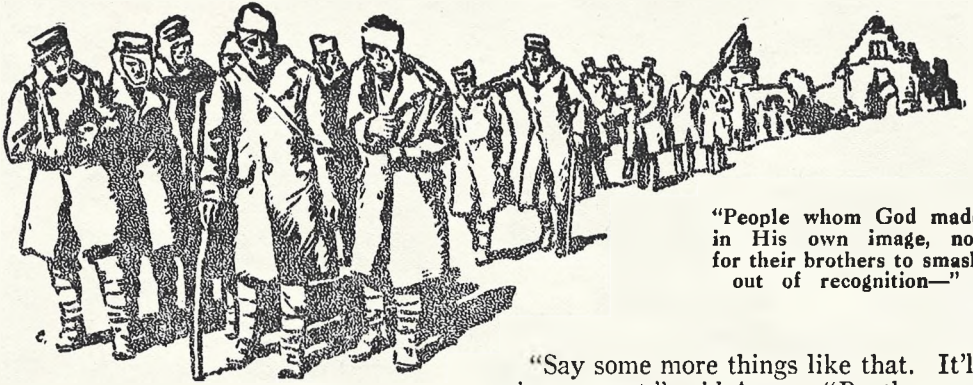
The Villa Marigolda was in darkness. Only one window glowed, and a discreet lamp burned in the flower-hung portico he knew so well. The door was opened by the girl whose handbag had fallen.

"Miss Templeton?" He tried to keep a little tinge of the ironic out.

The girl led him to a room which he had once called the Princess of Armageddon's tiring-chamber. The door snapped rather sharply behind him; and Anna Landeck, Countess of Gerolstein, sat upon the divan and smiled at him. Slit eyes, luscious mouth.

"So it's you? I wondered."

The Countess Anna laughed. She presented a most alluring aspect for the voluptuary. The strap of her evening frock had slipped from her white shoulder; her red hair was disheveled and falling into the nape of her neck. There was a glimpse of silken lingerie. But more than that, a little bronze table lay overturned on the carpet with an empty wine-glass or two about it. Every sign of a violent and amorous struggle having taken place was there.



"People whom God made in His own image, not for their brothers to smash out of recognition—"

"This is all for you," said Anna, with a dimple that contrasted with her close feline look. "You mustn't be surprised. Or it doesn't matter if you are. There's been a terrible fight between you and me."

"Movie-scene?" asked Larry in an almost velvety voice. "I don't see the cameras."

Anna lit a cigarette. There were the stubs of others scattered on the carpet about her. She liked lean, good-looking young men. This one particularly she liked, though he had never responded. Jacob Anderthal had once been jealous of him in his outwardly elephantine and playful way. That was how this plan had come into her brain.

She flicked the strap a little farther down her smooth arm.

"Don't," said Larry gravely. "I'm shy."

"You came when I was alone here," said Anna, her lovely green eyes widening and her small red mouth pursed. "I entertained you because I thought you were a gentleman, and—well we were friends, in a way, before John Kingdom *died*." She twinkled at the word, and Larry's wits jumped. She knew! So Anderthal knew—something! "Then you started to make love to me. Violent love. I think you made an attempt on my honor. Nobody does that with the Countess Anna of Gerolstein without suffering for it. I'm fiery-tempered and an Austrian aristocrat, you know. I like to take my own revenge."

Larry laughed. "I see. There's a lot more behind it, but that's the alibi, so to speak. I wish it had been true. Very likely I'd have spanked you as well. And there might have been a black eye. But there'd have been no love-making. I don't take old men's leavings."

He meant it to be brutal, though all the time, he smiled.

"Say some more things like that. It'll give me zest," said Anna. "By the way, if you had any sort of weapon when you came in, you haven't it now. That girl who let you in is one of the best pick-pockets I ever met. . . . Would you like to know the real purpose of this?"

"Please," said Larry courteously.

"You're going to betray John Kingdom to us," said Anna. "I know you'll only do it under some sort of torment. But we've arranged for that too. . . . Isn't this all marvelously melodramatic? Life is, in some parts of Europe. I couldn't think of anything better. When it's all over, if you're rather badly hurt—well, it was a private matter between you and me."

"Fantastic," said Larry. "Bit of a she-devil, aren't you?"

He walked to the door. And yet, marvelous thing, he hardly wanted to get away. He wanted to stay in the middle of all this fantasy, and gibber into the faces of whoever wanted him to betray John Kingdom—whether it was Jacob Anderthal, or the outraged nations of Europe. Some greater power had set him walking into it all. And nobody on this queer demented planet—save himself—had suspected that he would do anything but keep his mouth shut. Not Crystal, he knew. Not Kingdom, who had averted Chundra's pistol-arm. Not Sally Allison, and least of all this cheap little courtesan and her big lover.

He heard a footfall behind him as his fingers fell to the door-handle, turned and swung up at the loaded stick in the hand of the man who had appeared; but it dropped past his guard, and Larry fell, unconscious, according to program.

IS JOHN KINGDOM THE STRATOSPHERE  
MADMAN?

PARIS POLICE ESTABLISH BODY AS  
KINGDOM'S COUSIN

HUNT FOR CRYSTAL TEMPLETON—  
KINGDOM'S WARD

(Geneva, Thursday.)

A great sensation was caused here this morning by the news that the body of John Kingdom of the Kingdom smash had been exhumed from the churchyard of St. Sulpice under an order of the Mayor and Prefect of Police. At midnight the coffin was taken to the police mortuary and opened by surgeons. The result was kept secret. The amazing fact, however, is learned that there was no shrapnel wound nor signs of shrapnel in the skull. It was known by Kingdom's friends that he carried a fragment of shell since he was slightly wounded in an air-raid in the Great War. Rumor, which is flying all over the city, states that there were other indications to cast doubt on whether the body was that of John Kingdom. One astounding theory is that Kingdom did not die—that it was some twin or double who committed suicide. Far-fetched and sensational as this seems, it must be remembered that John Kingdom was one of the extraordinary men of his time, who managed by reason of his great wealth and influence to hoodwink the chancelleries of Europe and to keep his own private life wrapped in complete mystery. Nothing was beyond his cunning brain. Among the supporters of this startling theory is Mr. Jacob Anderthal, Kingdom's late partner.

"The body is not that of John Kingdom," stated Mr. Anderthal today. "I have seen it. He was a remarkable man, and inhuman in his cleverness. I am convinced that the body is that of some relative whom he probably killed. John Kingdom is still alive."

(Geneva, Friday.)

In an interview here today, Mr. Jacob Anderthal said: "Kingdom was a man of no country. He knew nothing of patriotism or love of his native soil. His arrogance was that of a maniac. He never disclosed to me any of his plans. He could have built up gigantic schemes without myself or anybody else knowing about them. If he is not the stratosphere madman, who is? Only John Kingdom, whose mind, I am convinced, was long unhinged, could conceive the idea of controlling by force the foreign policies of all the countries in Europe. If he is caught,—and I have no doubt he will be,—he should be tried by an international tribunal and punished like any other murderer."

**KINGDOM MUST BE HANGED!**

**T**HERE was a little carpeted dell high above the crater of Martos, where cuckoos called, and small colored lizards ran among the stones of an old temple. Crystal Templeton sat there with John Kingdom.

"I can't tell you when it began," said Kingdom. "I can't tell you anything about it, clearly. I've had nothing to do with women—nothing at all. You know that. I labeled you—'*Reserved for Me.*' That's arrogant, if you like."

**C**RYSTAL looked at his small sinewy hand, where it rested on her own. "I ought to have known it, and kept myself for you. There was never anything about you that I didn't think the finest thing in the world. I think any woman might easily switch over from that to—being glad to marry a man. But Larry came along—"

"Larry! My gamble came off. He hasn't given me away."

"I knew he wouldn't."

How straight and warm, her glance! No hope. None whatever. And perhaps, for her love, he would have yielded up all the fiery dreams and molten purposes that had brought him there. . . .

"You can go to him at any time. You know that."

"I mean to stay here."

Crystal drew a deep breath at herself. She wanted Larry, ached for him, was seized with a cold dread at times that she would never see him any more. But she would not leave John Kingdom. The woman of Martos! She was the companion of an outlaw for whom Europe screamed. He had not kept the horrors of his laboratories from her. To him they were not horrors, but swords of Gabriel: White phosphorus, that nothing could put out, that could only be taken off men by flaying them. Lewisite gas, one bomb of which would finish all life in twenty city blocks. Gas that a man would take on his clothes into any house where he made for shelter. A hundred or so sequences of gas that would maul slightly or kill dead, according to the war plan. Heat-rays. Electric rays—not quite perfect yet, but improving. He kept strictly to the weapons of the civilized world. No unfair advantage, except in the stratosphere planes, which he had just managed to corner in time, because he had brought young Tim Ryan to him by the white thread of his dreams. . . .

"And about my love for you." A tinge came to his cheek-bone. "I wouldn't try—or even attempt to persuade—"

"You mean I'm as safe as I always was with you," said Crystal for him. "I know that. Oh, how I wish— I don't know what I wish."



"You're going to betray John Kingdom to us," said Anna. "I know you'll only do it under some sort of torment. But we've arranged for that too."



Momentarily she felt an acute, surprising misery. She remembered, once, when he had flown home from Singapore because she was ill. And how cold he had been to all other beautiful women. One of them might have made him happy, gentled the flame in his soul. But he had been saving her up. . . .

They went down to the villa. One hour each day he dictated part of a diary to her. For there was no pretence between them that if he failed in that vast adventure, it was ever likely he would manage to escape. It was that which steadied and normalized Crystal. It was to be a posthumous diary. If he succeeded, if he browbeat and scared Europe out of war, it was to be torn up.

"You're going to use all that stuff?" she suddenly asked, her pen poised.

"It's necessary. Their own medicine. But on the war-mongers, the cabinet ministers, the generals, the Kingdom-and-Anderthal people who sell their damned death wherever there is a profit, and create the demand, if it isn't there. Not on harmless civilians, like theirs will. The safest place in this war that's coming, will be in the army. Troops and air-men will have protection—of a sort. But not much. The devilish thing about air warfare is that the attack always gets through. That is what I'm trying to show them!"

"Only one thing will stop the nations of the Little Entente, now that Anderthal and his sort have the strings in their paws: the big fist of the big nations. The governments, the people. Even in Germany and Russia, the government is the people. Whom God made in His own image, not for their own brothers to smash out of recognition, without ever seeing them—"

His voice croaked a little, broke off. A touch of gray dawned about his lips, vanishing as Crystal sprang to her feet.

"All right, child. Put that in the precious diary. Add: 'Nobody wants it. It's like a man who has let a disease get the better of him. Europe is a leper who thinks his sores are medals.' Is that coherent? Not just balderdash?"

"Quite clear," replied Crystal. But she knew her voice faded. For one instant all his resiliency and strength had gone. She pressed him down to the couch, and he allowed her—laughing, his chin arrogantly up. The warmth of her skin touched him. She knew she had been waiting for this, woman-wise. It hammered to pieces all her resolution to hold her tongue, to express no fear of any kind. She wanted to ask him, what if something happened to his brain? Instead, she said:

"Sit still. I'm frightened for you, in this one way: What if they find you?"

His hand patted hers.

"They might. They have their scientific instruments. They'll never spot the planes. They leave after dark, and they're practically noiseless. That's the gyroscopes. Out of the amphitheater and a mile up in thirty seconds, Crystal. . . . I calculated a month. I gave myself that."

**H**IS look was fixed on her now. The room was quiet.

"That shrapnel, Crystal. It's given me the time-table habit. It was too near the brain for the surgeons to take it out, you remember. Well, it gets nearer. A billionth of an inch or so, perhaps, with every beat of my pulse. That's my time-table."

Chundra Dah and one of the mechanics in the garden. Chundra wisecracking solemnly, with the mellifluous boom of a laugh in between. Crystal leaned over. She tried to guess how hot with tears and sick with dread she would have been in the past days, as she clutched at the meaning of what he said. Now she merely sought to keep herself steady.

"I don't believe it's ever too late for a clever surgeon. It's perhaps a rotten world, but they make strides in saving life as well as in taking it. Some American doctor took a bullet out of a man's heart not long ago, I read, all the time it was beating. And it's beating today."

Kingdom closed his eyes, laughed. "Why worry, child?"

"You could go to America from here. You're the American Van Horn who owns the island. If you went, I should go with you. We'd find somebody who could operate, and—and live there, ever after. I'd marry you."

She had said it, now. . . . A forlorn picture of Larry came, and was thrust aside. John Kingdom had given them everything. He was pulling her close to him now, as though to look at her. The tide, which had been piled up and held for so long, was breaking all over him.

"I can't, Crystal." Low, yet it was like a cry. "This is my destiny. Everything is destiny—with me. I thought you were too. You are! Just for a brief space of time. Would it hurt you—or Larry, even? One of those boys of mine is a priest, a priest in holy orders, yet. I'd be good, gentle. I'd ask nothing that you weren't prepared to give—"

He stopped. But it was terrible to sense his pleading. It was clean passion, as clean as Larry's. Crystal found her-

self thinking strange things. The woman of Martos! It sounded all primitive, though it was among stratosphere airplanes and laboratories, and poison-gases. For a brief month or two, till the end came, whatever it might be.

"Perhaps. Let me think it over a bit." She showed pale with the strain of everything, and a sound of contrition left him.

"I'm a selfish fool. That time-table is all so normal to me, that I didn't realize the shock to you."

Kingdom went out into the open air. At that hour of early evening it was hot and sweet, though, on the rock above, the myrtle bushes were waving in the sea-wind. He blamed himself bitterly that he had let emotion sweep him away. Yet there was a tinge of wild hope that barely dared to exist. Crystal had not been afraid of him, thank God.

His temple pained him more than usual. He went across the amphitheater to where Tim Ryan and Bates, the English boy, were wrestling each other in the gymnasium. They came to their feet, all the hawklike virile young creatures, as he entered, and that jarred a little. He was old, to them. To them, he was the giver of flashing adventure. . . .

What if he died too soon? And Anderthal, pretending to be a big genial ape which did not understand the mischief it was wreaking, would go on living.

Perhaps it was a brain-storm. He fought against it in vain, there in the stronghold which it had taken him five years of secret cunning and labor to build. A black, black mood. He would die, and the world, which was red in tooth and claw, would forever destroy and build, build, and destroy. Kill and be killed, breed and devour its kind, just as it had done in the primeval slime.

But Anderthal. . . . it was not fair that he should keep on living. Kingdom knew then, that there, in the control-tower, it was too confined to stay all the time till the end. His life had been too full of action for that. Tim Ryan could carry on for a few days. He had made his organization simple and perfect, and he had means of keeping radio-contact while he was away.

He must find Anderthal.

**A**T first Larry Raeburn wanted to burst into incredulous laughter at where he found himself. It seemed indeed quite unbelievable.

There was some sort of pillar of rock, and he appeared to be secured to it. Red-

rusted gyves clamped his waist, and something went round his forehead that kept it from moving the tiniest fraction. And every now and then, at regular intervals, something dropped with a tiny but nerve-jarring blow on the crown of his bare head. The air was musty, the light indifferent, and not improved by the fact that at every smack of that tiny mallet on his head it seemed to break into little jumping ribbons.

"Hello!" he said to Anna Landeck. "You here?"

**T**HE COUNTESS sat on a rock with a heavy coat wrapped about her. A lantern burned and threw up shadows on her heart-shaped face. There seemed to be two men in the background, which was all wet rock and thick stalactites and inky darkness.

"Enter the Countess Anna, to speak the part of Bloody Mary," said Larry. "Will you proceed, Anna—please excuse familiarity, as Chundra would say."

"It's hurting you," said Anna.

"Damnably, if it pleases you." He meant to keep up the flippancy, though his head seemed to have been smashed in a bad railway accident. "Can't you turn the water off?"

"Not if I tried. It's been dripping for several thousand years, at least. This is one of the Grottoes of Gottlieben. You seem to have a horror of melodrama, Larry. But naturally, I didn't have them built, as a movie studio-set. Actually this is only an old village custom. In the olden days the villagers used to bring their sinners up here and let the water drip on them—to cleanse them, I suppose. Those are the original fastenings which hold you. The water drips from a stalactite above, and you are fastened to a stalagmite."

"Clever," said Larry. "I never knew which stuck up and which hung down."

How long he had been there he could not guess. Vaguely he remembered a car-ride, but perhaps they had fooled him in some way. Anyhow, there he was, for attempting the chastity of the Countess Anna! He hardly caught the point of that until he remembered that he was supposed to be still one of the British Secret Service, and with some kind of ponderous caution, Anderthal wished to keep out of it all, perhaps. Or it might even be his way of amusing the Countess Anna. . . . The crack on his skull came once about every five seconds. It was bad enough when it made a hit. But

waiting and counting the seconds between-whiles, would be the worst before long, Larry guessed.

"If you'll tell me where Kingdom is, and all you know about him, I'll forgive you," said Anna carelessly, "though it's not material. There's a sort of delirium, I believe."

Again Larry grinned. "I do believe you want me to yell: 'Curse you, you red-haired viper! Do your worst!'"

"No." She laughed, though he was getting under that beautiful skin of hers, he thought. At heart she was not much more than a vulgar little harridan. "No. If you'd like to know, I was bored. And Jacob is always challenging me. He knew you were in Geneva. That newspaper-woman friend of yours told him. I said I'd like to deal with you first. A matter of vanity."

"Lord, what a brain you have!" said Larry in mock admiration. "Jacob's little cutie indeed."

Whether his words sounded jarred out by that hot-spot knock-out on his crown, he did not know. He tried to move a hair's-breadth, but the band round his forehead had been made by a very efficient medieval blacksmith. The strange thing about it all was that he felt quite exultant and happy. He was not marked to become John Kingdom's betrayer. His mouth was shut on it; his brain had snapped over it. He still felt like laughing, though he was growing very sick. The Countess had put her tiny hand on his shoulder, so to speak, just as he was reaching out for the telephone to Scotland Yard. Little bits of European history seemed to be being made everywhere by chance happenings. Hell and damnation wouldn't make him tell now—not unless he grew delirious.

There seemed to be no chance of help. The grotto must be several miles out of Geneva—he had heard of it, vaguely. There seemed no daylight. In the lantern-beams the roof went up into misty distance. The stalactites were like a great church organ. . . . Play the church organ. . . . Handel's "Water Music" or "The Harmonious Blacksmith." . . . *Drip-drip, drip-drip-drip.* Wow!

**E**ACH blow was a shattering one now. Thor's hammer. His head was red-hot, white-hot, incandescent.

"Anna darling!"

"Well?"

"Sit away from the lantern. It's cold in here. Do you know your nose is get-

ting red? Old Jacob will get another one. Cutie, not nose."

Anna smiled. It was feline, and eager. He knew the meaning of it. He was getting delirious. He saw the two men in the shadows move. One of them spat out. If he could only get Anna to hit him in the jaw, it might jar him straight again. But she wasn't having any.

He handed it to the Chinese. He had always been skeptical about their water-torture. But it was certainly the goods.

He said: "Throw these things off me, Anna, and I'll blab it all."

"Blab lies," laughed Countess Anna, throwing back her head and showing her white throat. "And make a dash for it."

"Correct," muttered Larry.

John Kingdom and Crystal. . . . Well, Kingdom had a right to her. A monomaniac doomed to failure, but one of the biggest men who ever lived. What a thing it was to think of that lair among the dotted islands of Greece! If Ander-

thal particularly wanted Kingdom for himself,—and he did,—a submarine by night might do it. Latitude 36, longitude 21, S.W. of Brindisi. Some devil was making him think that way. Think of another place before he toppled over into delirium. Russia. In the marshes of the Ukraine. Get that printed on his brain before the drops of water bored into it. He tried to smile at Anna Landeck, but it must have been a glazed sort of grimace. In the middle of it all he felt a wry anger that she had been able to bring off her melodrama so well. . . .

At what point Larry caught sight of Sally Allison, he never knew. Time had become a thing that slid up and down a hot, fine-drawn wire which went through his head and out at his chin. He had often called Sally a phantom of delight, meaning it ironically, when she was particularly curt and dry. But there she was now, well-clothed with the description. The small automatic which she was accustomed to grin at and keep in the bottom of her trunk, was in her hand.

"You dirty little cat!" said Sally to the Countess Anna of Gerolstein.



"You dirty little cat!" said Sally to the Countess Anna of Gerolstein. Behind her, trussing up the two men was Dick Challis. Dick had always been handy with the rope.

Behind her, trussing up the two men, was old Dick Challis. Dick had always been handy with the rope. He threw over to Sally some sort of big key he had filched from one of the men's pockets, and the girl unlocked the padlock behind Larry's head. It was heaven and hades combined for an instant to feel his head movable. Sally said hardly anything, but she looked at the Countess Anna, holding the lantern to the scared, vindictive face. There sounded a crisp hard smack, probably the first which the little ear, nestling among its red curls, had ever received.

Nor did Dick Challis say much. They left both Anna and her tied-up assistants behind, and walked out into the morning daylight, where a big car stood.

Sally gave Larry a pull at a flask, and he felt better.

"We shoved their car over the precipice," explained Sally laconically, then threw a look at Dick Challis' big chin



and obstinate eyes before she explained further, while the car crunched down into the amber mist of the valley. She had followed Larry out of the café—seen him receive the note, watched and waited until he went to the Villa Marigolda. Sally Allison had once slept three nights in a ditch in order to interview a Corsican bandit with fresh murder on his hands. It was easy to wait until Anna Landeck's car left for the Grotto of Gottlieben; to trail her on a motorcycle she found in an outhouse; and then, because there was nobody else to call, to fetch Dick Challis. That was all that happened, Sally said.

"Where are you going?" Sally snapped, suddenly leaning over to Challis.

"My rooms," Dick Challis answered without turning his head.

"AREN'T you going to give him any breakfast?" Sally demanded a quarter of an hour later. She was watching Dick Challis as a cat watches a mouse.

They had climbed the stairs to Challis' comfortable room at the top of a building high above the Old Cité. Larry sat with his head hanging slightly.

"Presently. Larry, old chap, cough it up. You know all about Kingdom."

A savage gasp left Sally. Dick Challis, though he grew more taut if that was possible, ignored it.

Larry felt very tired, dead beat. Challis now! From the Countess Anna to Dicky Challis, with whom more than once he had played perilous games with death.

Said Sally Allison: "Give it to him, Larry, whatever the hell it is, for the sake of the old school-tie and the jolly old Alma Mater, and all that. Then he'll stop being mad."

Challis flushed. He hated Sally Allison at that moment almost as much as he loved her.

"Third degree, Dick?"

"We're going to get Kingdom. Third degree, if you like, Larry. Rotten job for me. I shall phone to headquarters from here. Out with it, laddie! Where is he?"

Sally Allison strode to the telephone-receiver on the table. She snapped its cord with a strong tug and stood smiling stolidly. She looked ready to brain Challis with the receiver.

"In Russia, old man. In the Ukraine there. You should see the whiskers he's grown."

Larry looked out of the window at an automobile flying the little flag of the

Slovene Nationalists, which went past with a glimpse of little black-avised men inside. The tattered headline of a French newspaper fluttered on the wall opposite: MORT A L'ASSASSIN JOHN KINGDOM.

"Not funny enough," Challis snapped.

He caught Larry by the shoulder. Larry lunged feebly, missed and fell. Sally Allison picked him up, pressed back Challis and opened the door. Dick Challis stared at the small automatic in her hand; and because he knew Sally and worshiped her from her gray-green eyes to her harsh and lonely soul, knew also that she would use it. It concerned him that she might be hanged for murder. He could smash up any chance there was of ever having her, because of the blood and tradition that was in him. But he could not have Sally hanged. . . .

Sally took Larry up to her own room and fed him.

"You'll sleep here. A solid twelve hours. I'll lock the door; then I'll go out and find you a disguise or something. Oh, you must! Dick will watch you, and that Countess too, though she's cheap. And most of all, Anderthal. He used her cheapness, and he hasn't finished by a long chalk. They'll all try to get you. Disguise, or hide. Which is it to be?"

"Neither. Things are going to happen. Too big to keep away from, Sally."

"I'd hide you here." Sally was rather elaborately flippant. "I've no reputation to blast. No newspaper-woman has. Better stay for a bit, Larry, if you can abide seeing my face across the breakfast-table."

Larry made no answer. He was asleep. Sally, looking at his utter broken exhaustion, pondered that he had not even thanked her. She was one of the women born to be taken for granted; dependable and with little sex-appeal. Which simplified a lot of things, thought Sally, walking to the window and swatting a large bluebottle-fly which buzzed there.

FOR the first time since the great Kingdom smash which had victimized Mr. Jacob Anderthal almost as much as it had lesser men, Anderthal's palatial yacht was seen on Lake Geneva again. Each night, from grape-bloom dusk till velvety midnight and beyond, the Neanderthal entertained parties. The comic nickname had come back. One or two of the subsidized newspapers had started it again, quite affectionately. Such a

big, bluff animal made a charming host, these days. He kept the balance of temper among the diplomats of the Danubian Conference—or tried to. Nobody could suspect anything sinister in such a good-humored dancing bear. Sometimes there were women among the brilliant little receptions aboard the *Midi*. And then the beautiful Anna Landeck entertained.

Tonight, however, there was no party. In Jacob Anderthal's own cabin, an almost austere den of chromium and black cocus-wood, there were just two guests. The wine had been *Lachrymæ Christi*, one single epicurean bottle. The guests were General Bullerian and Mr. Dohnanyi.

"We can talk," said Jacob Anderthal.

He was no longer the gorilla. That skin had been shed. He quietly flicked the ash from his cigar now and then.

"Everything is ready. I speak for the army, and the air force and the General War Council. The plan is waiting for operation. There is not much else I can say. First and foremost, I am a soldier."

That was General Bullerian, speaking in precise German. One of the sleeves of his dinner-jacket was empty. On a dozen general staffs, twenty years before, had sat similar hard-bitten men, with minds that ran on the same iron track.

"The young Archduke is, at the moment, in Voyvodina—under strict incognito, naturally. I think there is some woman—the Viennese actress. Certainly he is there, at a chateau near Uzdin, and delivered into our hands for our use whenever we wish. At any time the end could come. Morning, noon or night. It would be an assassination by Voyvodinian Nationalists, of course."

That was Mr. Dohnanyi. He was thick-set and bullet-headed, like the peasant he was. What was stark and simple and fanatical in him had long been concealed beneath ice. He was a politician now.

"The Conference?" asked Anderthal.

"Our delegates will leave at an hour's notice."

The screw of the yacht pulsed softly, like a human heart, too steely to quicken. The water made a whispering sound.

"So history will repeat itself, as it always will," said Anderthal. "Any visitor from the moon would wonder. The child's house of bricks! Take out one, and all the other bricks will fall upon each other. A little duke is killed, and carries a hundred thousand dustmen with

him to paradise. . . . Pardon. Sometimes I grow as philosophical as John Kingdom."

General Bullerian frowned. "Why is this Kingdom not caught?"

"He is elusive," murmured Anderthal. Then: "How long, before the match is put to the gunpowder?"

"Three days," said Mr. Dohnanyi, a dull flare on his pale cheek-bones.

"Everything has its psychological moment. Even the Creation was a series of such moments, no doubt."

A strong tremor passed through Jacob Anderthal's huge body. Kingdom at his zenith had never felt that fierce thrill of power and foreknowledge.

"This Kingdom will not spoil things?" asked Bullerian, his eyes pale blue in their hooded lids.

"No! Not when it starts. He's finished, defeated, lost, then. I get him, that way. He can do nothing, when war has once broken out, I tell you! I know him. He'll break—break to pieces under the defeat. We shall never hear of him again."

Anderthal's voice had turned thick and exultant. He reached out his hands and dropped them again. For a moment, a wind seemed to unveil him.

"So! You can be human," said Bullerian dryly. "Obviously you would like to get him."

"In less than three days I may get him. But I tell you it is immaterial if you don't fail me."

"We shall not fail ourselves," said Dohnanyi coldly; and Jacob Anderthal bowed, suddenly quiet again.

"I forgot patriotism," he said. "One does. It is your department. We shall be at our anchorage in a quarter-hour."

THE *Midi's* quarters were within sight of the clustered white spires and roofs of the city which tonight shone like mica in the moonlight. It would have been clear enough to see the snows of Mont Blanc, but for the searchlights that played above the lake and the city. They flickered nervous fingers against the sky. For the fear that John Kingdom might come to spoil the Danubian Conference had awakened in the authorities. . . . Laughing-gas in the great Peace Chamber!

Anderthal watched the white lightnings impassively from the deck. The two Slovenes stood apart. There was no more talk. Presently they would slip ashore, noticed or unnoticed as the case

might be, by various secret services. Geneva was a replica of Europe just now and everybody watched each other . . . . His—Jacob Anderthal's—agents even watched the newspaper-woman Sally Allison, who was hiding the young man Raeburn.

"Intrigue!" chuckled Anderthal, the cloak of the genial ape once more upon him. "Like an onion. One skin after another."

Intoxicated. That was how he felt deep inside him. Three days; Kingdom, caught or at large, was already defeated. Kingdom's pinpricks would be nothing when the sword was out of its scabbard and flashing over Europe, stretching—who knew?—to America, to Japan. A child's house of bricks! He felt a demoniac power in every artery, but it was only because he was Anderthal, a man bigger than Kingdom had ever been.

The *Midi* slipped over the bright water, her engines at half-speed. The sparkling crescent of distant lights drew nearer. A covey of waterplanes huddled among their red and green light-clusters. The sound of music floated from one of the big hotels.

Anderthal looked up into the domed vault of the sky, just then. And he saw the stratoplane. . . .

It came down as though some giant spider lowered itself on the end of a filament—a bulb of dull metal falling from the sky. It hung one instant, or seemed to, and he cried out as he saw that it hovered over the bows of the slow-moving *Midi*. Something dropped down from it; he saw it—saw the glint of a shivering searchlight on it, felt the wind of it, as it fell past into the water. His throat was dry. He shut his eyes and hung on to the rail as the muffled explosion jarred the yacht, and a great bubble of water came blowing out of the lake, higher, higher till it was a huge smooth wave that broke at last and came onrushing, lifting the rail and himself up dizzily, swinging him down again.

Somewhere, Dohnanyi cried out, a mere terrified peasant faced with the sudden supernatural; and then Anderthal was in the water, swimming, swimming with a cold hysteria of fury that took out all animal fear. . . . Even then, as he saw Dohnanyi floundering, he remembered that the two men were keys that he must not lose, and caught hold of him.

"The yacht! She sinks!" Bullerian's guttural German. He could swim.

In a thunder of airplane engines and a glare of blinding lights, motorboats were dashing from the shore. Somewhere in the city a siren was droning. Two white launches were hissing forward, racing each other to reach the swimmers, it seemed, lifting crazily on the still-turbulent lake, as they came. But Jacob Anderthal found himself looking up at the sky. It was streaked with moving airplanes, but there was no sign of anything else.

The bigger of the two launches reached them first. It was one of the expensive craft which was for charter on the lake, and the American flag streamed at its forepeak, as it swooped round skillfully. Anderthal handed in Dohnanyi to the uniformed man who bent over.

"He cannot swim. The devil! Is the yacht gone, then?"

He sat dripping, calm and smiled ruefully through his throbbing rage.

"Sunk, monsieur. But boats are picking up the crew. It was Kingdom, Monsieur Anderthal!" The man was shivering with excitement as he turned the boat toward the shore.

Anderthal looked past him to an elderly man in horn-rimmed glasses, obviously the owner of the craft.

"An American gentleman, I perceive?" He ceased to splutter and wiped his mouth, the big unshakable Neanderthal of the cartoons. "This shows you what our European civilization has come to, eh? It was a bad shot. I have to thank you for being a good Samaritan to myself and my friends."

The American laughed. He seemed to be as cool as Anderthal.

"Delighted. It sounded to me like some kind of a depth-bomb."

Anderthal shrugged. He saw that both Dohnanyi and Bullerian had recovered their poise.

"Kingdom!" he said drolly, to the American. "This is the first sign of a sense of humor I have known in him. Look at me!"

**A**NDERTHAL stepped on the landing-stage, and smiled down charmingly at the square parchment-like face of the American.

"Again, thanks for us all. My friends' English is not too good. Perhaps we shall meet under more pleasant circumstances, Mr.—"

"I hope so," said the American pleasantly. "My name is James Van Horn, Mr. Anderthal." . . .

**KINGDOM MAKES AUDACIOUS ATTEMPT ON JACOB ANDERTHAL  
YACHT SUNK BY DEPTH-BOMB  
ON LAKE GENEVA**

**STRATOSPHERE SENDS IRONIC GREETINGS**  
Latest theory: Lair somewhere in the Mediterranean?

**YOUNG ARCHDUKE GOES  
MOUNTAINEERING**

(Vienna:) The young Archduke Francis Nicholas, exiled heir to the extinct Croatian throne, whose appearance near Belgrade a year ago was almost a *casus belli* among the Little Entente, is spending a mountaineering holiday in the Tyrol, incognito.

**MITZI NECKER FOR HOLLYWOOD**

(Buda Pesth:) Fräulein Mitzi Necker, the beautiful Viennese actress, is on her way to Hollywood to make her *début* in the movies. Fräulein Necker's departure was in answer to an urgent cable from a famous producer, and few of her friends knew of her departure.

**C**RYSTAL realized she was watching the silver maplewood door through which John Kingdom would presently enter, too intently. She bent to stroke the silky coat of one of the three dachshunds which waddled contentedly about her. Mrs. Van Horn, the middle-aged wife of the wealthy American who had landed in Geneva the day before, had a passion for dachshunds. A little old-fashioned and even frumpish in her taste, she yet must have been attractive as a young woman, the hotel servants had decided.

Crystal looked in a glass at herself. White-haired and dignified, she looked. Tinted glasses for the blinding white city that glowed in the sunlight outside. The dachshunds were to complete the middle-aged effect. She laughed shakily. Even when people had disguised to escape the scaffold, they used to laugh a little when they saw themselves, surely!

"I ought to be flogged, making you like that," said Kingdom's voice.

Crystal caught her breath. His doors and hers communicated. Even so, she was not used to his sudden appearance.

"Don't mention it. You mustn't. That's the essence of any disguise, I guess."

He limped a little, walked with the aid of a heavy stick. James Van Horn had always done that, it seemed. He too had a thatch of silvery hair. His face looked squarer in its big horn-rims. He had a bronchial cough; his voice was metallic. Van Horn had always been that way, it appeared. People knew him



in Geneva, people who had met him in Berlin, Paris, Rome. A man in the hotel lounge had greeted him, asked him about his island in Greece. . . . He introduced his wife. The man had heard about Van Horn's home-keeping semi-invalid wife. . . .

"Did it startle you, last night?"

"Nothing much startles me," she said.

"Tim Ryan. I arranged with him to scare Anderthal. It was I who picked the brute up. But the chance wasn't there."

"You've put yourself right into the hands of destiny, haven't you?" said Crystal.

"No!" he denied quickly. "Destiny is for cowards. I've no truck with it."

He came near, lifted her hand to look at the wedding-ring on her finger, and brushed her lips with his. It was very gently done, and Crystal gave him back an unsteady smile.

"There's no difference in your kiss. I shall—always remember."

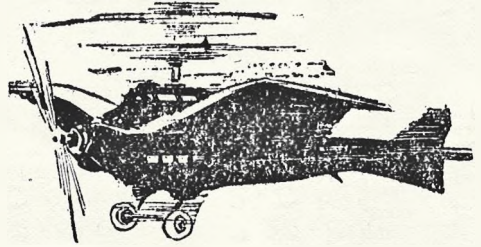
Kingdom turned away. He was silent by the window, looking out at the snowy peaks, but not seeing them. Her courage had humbled him. Sometimes he felt like an archangel—that was his particular madness, he thought, sardonically. But it was not to be expected that she would see him that way. In any case most women would be terrified at throwing in their lot with an archangel. His own tenderness hurt him. But it kept away passion. She was his comrade, his consolation in the strange and lonely places where he walked. She would be safe enough when it was all over, thank God. He had made sure of that. Somewhere there was Larry Raeburn. . . . He had seen to everything before they left Martos by yacht and came from Brindisi by plane. There was the miniature radio-apparatus he carried, and Tim Ryan was a good lieutenant.

Anderthal. He must get him. Monstrous that he should keep on living! But it must be done with subtlety. He must be able to return to Martos.

"Go out into the fresh air, my dear," he said.

As Crystal passed through the hotel lounge, a stout and benevolent Indian gentleman, wearing a green turban and the silky beard of the true Mahomedan, a delegate from the East to one of the Conferences, no doubt, was inquiring anxiously at the office after letters.

Crystal did not look at him, nor he at her. It was comforting to get out into



the traffic of the streets. She hardly noticed the undercurrent of excitement that was everywhere, the uneasy newspaper posters. A loneliness haunted her. Larry! Where was he?

In the Rue des Alpes she saw Anna Landeck, Countess of Gerolstein. They met face to face, as the Countess stepped from her car, and there was a momentary kind amusement on the exquisite lips at the prim and provincial *Américaine*. Crystal went on. . . . Larry! Could Larry, who had kept loyal to John Kingdom, be in Geneva?

Then something happened which tugged horribly at her loneliness. It was the sight of Sally Allison, striding ahead of her. It broke up all her discretion. Sally would know something. Now, she realized, she needed Larry's help, Sally's help, so badly. John Kingdom would need it.

Sally went up into the Old Cité. Her straight, angular figure in its plain tailor-made, vanished almost furtively into a doorway. Crystal set her teeth and crept in after her. A door closed cautiously up above.

To her knock, it opened again after a long interval. Sally, with a cigarette between her lips, one hand behind her back. "Well?"

Very low from Crystal: "Let me come inside, Sally."

Sally Allison backed slowly, staring. In the hand behind her dangled a short bar of iron.

"Don't hit me," said Crystal, and tried to smile. She took off her glasses. Even then Sally Allison showed her teeth and began:

"What the devil—"

"I'm trying to find Larry."

**S**ALLY ALLISON spoke no word. She closed the door and turned to look at a yellow baize curtain, with a rather crooked slant in the smile she sent at it. Larry Raeburn stepped from behind it.

"Crystal!" There was a silence in which Sally Allison blew smoke down her nostrils and murmured:

"Just the voice, and he knew. 'It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, open unto me'—" Sally choked, and laughed unnaturally. "He had an automatic pointing through the curtain. Anderthal, and possibly Dick Challis—I'm hiding him from them all."

"Crystal, dearest! What's all this?" Larry was close, holding her. Slowly she released herself. Through all his eagerness and amazement, Larry stiffened as he felt her do it. His arms fell. He sat down.

"Tell us—whatever it is. I'm dumb about it now. So is Sally. He's—is he here—in Geneva?"

SALLY peered out onto the landing, before the answer. In low tones Crystal spoke, her eyes unable to leave Larry's sharp cheek-bones, unable to meet his eyes. Nor did he look straight at her. Perhaps he couldn't bear the disguise. The story wasn't long after all. Larry had guessed the hard part.

"You married him?"—slowly.

"Yes, Larry. One of the men on Martos was a priest. He wanted me to; he always had wanted me. It's not the usual marriage. He believes there's—a period on his life. And afterward—"

It was too hard to say. She heard Larry draw a long breath in. He said: "I don't blame you, Crystal. I don't blame him, either. But it was foolish of him to come here."

A rather helpless silence fell. Both of them were suffering badly. If John Kingdom failed, and war came, men and women would still suffer from the immemorial emotions, even while the skies rained death. So whirled Crystal's thoughts.

"Larry can't do anything just now," said Sally Allison wearily. "He's watched. Like a mouse."

"I'll do something. But I couldn't stop him from trying to get Anderthal, Crystal. And failing to, perhaps. It's bigger than me."

"I know."

Crystal shivered. Had she failed? Perhaps she had destroyed John Kingdom by the very fact of coming there. Been followed. She had found Larry, true. He was there, when the time came. . . .

"Better go now," said Larry. "There's a little antique-shop in the basement. Slip in there, and make some purchase."

He looked out, opened the door for her. She was John Kingdom's wife. It

was novel, just as the thrust of a blade might be novel to a man who had never been stabbed before, but he took it without flinching. It was John Kingdom's right.

When Crystal had gone, Larry sat down. He looked at Sally Allison, who returned his glance impassively and said:

"I believe I could make you ask me to be Mrs. Larry Raeburn right now."

"I might do worse," said Larry.

"The old rebound stuff," said Sally. She suddenly fell on her knees by his side, her eyes greener than Larry had ever seen them: "You male infant! There's no time for it. On the edge of a volcano, love's a washout. It'll burst, any minute. I know it in my bones. Something's going to happen that you've never dreamed of, Larry. We're in it. Up to the hilt. History, and then some. Gosh, if I could only show you the next few days!

"Not," said Sally ironically, smoothing her straight black hair again, "that I'm not even more passionately fond of you than you are of me. But the show's really going to begin. That's all. I'm a soothsayer."

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KINGDOM  
TO BE  
TRIED BY  
INTERNATIONAL COURT

(Official)

|          |             |         |
|----------|-------------|---------|
| TOD      | KINGDOM     | KINGDOM |
| FÜR      | POUR LE     | MUST BE |
| KINGDOM! | GUILLOTINE! | HANGED! |

The ballroom-roof of the Hotel de Lac Bleu could be tucked away on warm nights, and this was a warm night. Moreover the great windows were mere glass doors which, when opened, made the lake balcony of the Lac Bleu an extension of the beautiful ballroom. In this way, Lake Geneva and half the mountains of Switzerland were brought in as part of the decoration.

It was a vivacious gathering this evening. A kind of fevered gayety was abroad in Geneva. John Kingdom could do his damndest. The Danubians could dog-fight among themselves. This was Jacob Anderthal's night. He had left his secretaries to carry on in their big suite for a few hours, and come to enjoy himself. A fine gesture of Neanderthal amusement.

The Countess Anna flitted among the guests like a lovely little firefly. Men's eyes warmed; women laughed. Judgment was suspended tonight. The Nean-

derthal lover. A Tzigane fiddler out of the band followed them round the room as they danced, like ape and butterfly. The wine flowed. A touch of delirium from coming events, perhaps. War threatened—but it always did.

There was to be a cabaret. Anna Landeck herself had arranged it. A cabaret of Old Vienna.

"A charming girl," said James Van Horn, the American. "And some beauty, too, I'll say."

Anderthal wiped his big cheeks. It was cool out there on the balcony above the shimmering lake, with wistaria blowing its scent about. This leathery American who had pulled him out of the lake attracted him vaguely. Saxon and Van Horn, steel people, of Pittsburgh. Kingdom had tried to buy them, and failed.

"She's an aristocrat. I am dirt—in my beginnings. Not now. *Ach*, you know what power is. It satisfies." Naïve, childish. That was his outward skin.

"We make munitions in America too," said Van Horn dryly, "and sell them."

THERE was an Indian whose green turban and soft beard looked incongruous with his European evening-dress. One huge diamond blazed on his finger. Anderthal had learned that he was the emissary of some half-barbaric rajah of North India, whose country had come under the nutcrackers. He said softly:

"Power is the bright sword. So says my religion."

"And that is not religion. It is shop with both Mr. Van Horn and myself, Mr. Akbar," said Jacob Anderthal good-humoredly. "A liqueur? Napoleon?"

Mr. Akbar preferred coffee, and so did Van Horn. It was brought for all three at the table there, above the gentle plash of the lake. The white-haired wife of Van Horn, in a not very becoming blue velvet frock, with a small dachshund on her lap, took no part in the conversation. She was very quiet and shy. When Anna Landeck came flickering forward on to the balcony, it was easy to see that she was a puritan of provincial America.

"Are you ready for the cabaret, Caliph?" Anna demanded.

"When you like. I am quite happy."

Anderthal watched this Van Horn from under heavy lids. It might be that he would succeed where Kingdom had

failed, and buy Saxon and Van Horn of Pittsburgh. When the war started, in three days. No, two days now. He would buy the earth then. The savage earth, too deep in death-grips to care who bought it.

"In your country, they do not believe in the sword, till it is placed in their hand, eh?"

"Pacifists. They're never going to touch Europe again," said Van Horn with his metallic-sounding laugh. Then he added: "Maybe."

MR. AKBAR had taken the green coffee-pot. He officiated lovingly upon each small cup—spread his dark palm over each one, in Oriental ceremony. Into one of them a tiny white pellet dropped from between his long fingers, but nobody saw it. Certainly not Jacob Anderthal.

"We are going to have the cabaret."

Mr. Akbar handed the coffee-cups. "In my country, we do not understand the horror against war. That is because, being a savage country, we are one of the last strongholds of civilized and honorable warfare. Our tribes fight against each other with simple weapons. Before a man is killed, he has the fierce pleasure of a hand-to-hand combat. The women and the children are taken to safe places, and the fight is between—"

One by one, the lights of the ballroom went out, leaving darkness save for the pool of light for the cabaret. It left the balcony in soft, velvety darkness.

"—the fight is between warrior and warrior," Mr. Akbar went on, finishing. "The Machine Age has not yet reached us either in peace or war. We are a happy country, though not civilized."

Jacob Anderthal sat with a thundering shock pealing through him. His brain stopped, and then focused itself to a lancet-point. Where had a disembodied voice like that reached his ears, in the dark, not long before? Where? The band blared and a sinuous girl began to dance, but Anderthal saw only himself, tense in the darkness of the Villa Mari-golda, with the voice of Chundra Dah, Kingdom's servant, mocking him. . . .

He made no sign. He reached for his coffee-cup and then put it down. Kingdom. Van Horn was Kingdom. It could not be—yet it was. Kingdom, delivered into his hands. He could not escape.

**All Europe seething with hatred and terror—war already begun in the Balkans. And the one man in all the world able to stop it is a captive. . . . Don't fail to read the next installment of this impressive story—in our forthcoming October issue.**



Bugwine emitted a squall—they were ganging him now!

## Ostriches in

*A dark detective hires out to both sides in a startling case—and tries to hide from the hell that follows.*

COATS, pants, and vests seemingly filled the air within the Columbus Collins detective agency (for colored). Entering it unexpectedly, "Bugwine" Breck, its overall-clad five-foot vice-president, paused aghast, then emitted a yelp worthy of a boy being stepped upon by a hippopotamus.

"Hold on dar! Dat's mine—dat's *my* suit!" rang the outraged outcry of Mr. Breck as he beheld sacrilege—for in the center of the room and of the rain of discarded garments stood the lank Columbus, thrusting one hurried leg into a pair of violently plaid plus-fours.

Columbus' answer was to encase the other leg, slip into the coat, and crown the insult and his ears with the also-plaid helmet of the white-folks' cast-off duck-hunting costume used by Bugwine to heighten his own faint resemblance to *Sherlock Holmes*. After which he gave his protesting helper a push in the face.

"M-m-my suit—" mumbled Mr. Breck stubbornly into his chief's ample palm.

"Gangway, germ!" barked Mr. Collins triumphantly. "Fixin' to put *you* in your place: *white-folks* done sent for *me!*"

"White-folks sont for you, I gits to gallopin' about, gittin' up de bail for you, den!" Bugwine wriggled morosely free. "But why cain't you git arrested in your *own* clothes?"

"Arrested? Who *gittin'* arrested?" Columbus whirled savagely.

"What else would de white-folks want wid *you?*"

"Wants to gimme a case of detectin' to do. Boy, you aint know *class* when you sees me! Major Kenilworth Lee done sent for me, take a big jewel-robbery case. Pearl necklace done been stole from his house—"

"Who cookin' for him?"

"Shet up! Aint no science to you. To cotch a sho-'nough crook like dat, I got to look like a detective, too. So shet up about dem britches also."

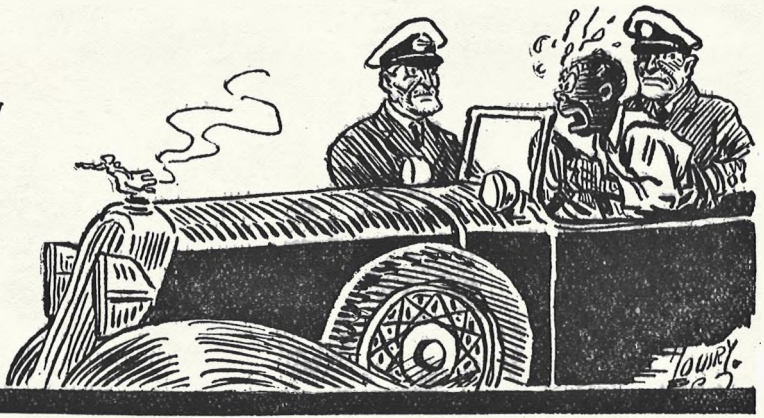
Bugwine gulped in dismay: let Columbus solve a case for the white-folks, and no five-foot vice-president could live with him at all! The Administration would see inflation that *was* inflation, then!

"Major say he crave hisself brains—and somebody what knows cullud folks—to git back dat necklace and cotch de crook," Mr. Collins bragged on. "So he gits me. But you stay here in de alley so you cain't gum up everything like you always is do, bein' so damn' dumb in de knob."

Dog-eyed and downcast, Mr. Breck watched his cherished detecting-suit pass out of Hogan's Alley on Columbus' back. Mr. Collins' foot had been on Mr. Breck's spiritual neck so long that it felt like a collar. But some day, yearned a vice-president, the worm would turn and then—

A knock interrupted longing. And in the agency's doorway stood one whom Bugwine had long admired anonymously

Illustrated by  
Everett Lowry



# His Ancestry

By ARTHUR  
K. AKERS

and from a respectful distance. From his two-toned tan shoes to his purple beret, this newcomer was a snappy dresser, a full syllable ahead of the mode's last word at far-away 135th and Lenox. And not only a dresser but discerning, as proven by his opening question: "Is you Bugwine Breck, de bright detectin'-boy?"

Mr. Breck's overalls instantly began to fit him.

"Decimal Willis is my name,"—the visitor took this swelling for corroboration. "And I got a little mess of checkin'-up I wants did."

Bugwine's garments strained further at their seams. Columbus was fixing to find out that Bugwine could do better business up an alley than his boss on boulevards. Let Bugwine set a mouse-trap in the woods, and mice built a paved road plumb from Birmingham to get their necks in it!

"Checkin'-up on who?" he condescended to details.

"On myself—"

Mr. Breck pushed his eyes back into place. "Says *huh*?" he croaked.

"Says I craves to git checked-up on myself; see how I's doin'."

"Why aint you ask yourself?" Bugwine's brain skidded before he could recover with: "How you doin' wid *who*?"

"Wid my boss-man, what I works chauffeur for—Major Kenilworth Lee, de big white-folks. What I wants is to

find out how much is *he* know about *me* steppin'-out nights wid his big car when he aint usin' it."

Mr. Breck gulped intelligently: Major Lee was the white-folks Columbus had been retained by in another matter! Making the agency fit into the rest of this situation like a fat boy into wet woolen pants. And if Columbus was high-hatting Bugwine out of one picture—and fee—why could not Bugwine keep Columbus out of another? Old worm would be not only turning but *whirling*, then!

"Takes charge pussonal," he rallied to opportunity. "Fee's two bucks, account de Major bein' sort of sudden, is he sniff nothin'?"

The client hesitated; but Bugwine was too far ahead of himself—watching himself taking good-looking women riding on that two dollars, like Decimal, to notice it. *Then* Columbus would see his aide's true size, be rebuked—

**B**UT the cloud over the client's features got into his voice with: "Boy, you said it. Major's de sort what's done rained all over you before you even knows he was cloudin'-up! Dat how-come I got to git a detective to keep me posted 'bout myself. Specially when I got dat gal Vi'let ridin' wid me now. Sho would hate to git *her* mixed up in no rumpus."

"Vi'let who?"

"Vi'let Massey, de big box-fightin' boy's new wife. Classy—and sho crazy 'bout me."



"Hold on dar! Dat's mine—dat's *my* suit!" rang the outraged outcry of Mr. Breck as he beheld sacrilege.

"Old fee's three bucks," Mr. Breck instantly readjusted compensation to complications. He knew the cauliflower-eared "Tornado" Massey by sight and reputation only—which was plenty. No wonder Decimal desired reliable weather-reports on himself!

"Dollar down; two bucks on delivery of de dope," horse-traded Mr. Willis.

Bugwine couldn't resist down-payments. But Decimal was no sooner gone than Mr. Breck's stomach heard about that dollar. Hurriedly applying it on his back wages, as a strictly confidential matter between a detective and his digestion, Bugwine reached for his hat, outbound.

But Columbus blocked his exit by entering. "Look after everything good now, runt," he looked down on his serf from elevations. "Us fixin' do more business dan a soup-kitchen in hard times."

"Doin' business how? So hongry, workin' for you, I'd—"

"Brush up dem brains, boy!" Mr. Collins cut him off. "Us fixin' to eat regular! Not only is I pawin' up de patch about dat necklace for de Major, but I got *another* client comin' here to see you. A lady—'bout a domestic case."

Mr. Breck's heart shot under his arches: a rush of business was all right, but in these domestic cases somebody was all the time shooting into the locked closet where the detective was.

"Commence lookin' bright in de head before I bust you one!" menaced his chief. "I sho is lonesome, havin' all de

sense around here! And lady-client liable be here to see you before I finishes solvin' de necklace. Git snappy in de knob!"

Bugwine involuntarily creased his faded overall legs between optimistic thumb and fingers: maybe the lady was a looker, and open to going riding with him, like Decimal's inamorata. In which event he would yet show Columbus—and all Baptist Hill—who was who around the agency!

But the door hadn't shut on Columbus before it opened on a new aspect of Mr. Breck's business. Again riding was out. For the doorway framed a married woman: feminine jaws never got under-slung like that, had been Bugwine's experience, until their owner had a husband to holler at. While, if she was small, her voice as she inquired, "Is dis here de Collins detectin'-shop?" missed being baritone by too little for any husband's comfort.

Bugwine admitted everything, including his own excellence, as he glimpsed a figure "5" on the corner of the green-back in her opened purse. "And all domestic cases confidential," he capped his verbal structure.

"I'd like to see him—or you—keep *dis* one confidential, once I gits de goods on him!" boomed the indoor-model Amazon grimly.

"All time gives satisfaction: crook wid every case," Mr. Breck battled an itch in both palms. Five dollars surely would wrap him around a mess of rations!

"Boy what I craves shadowed is my husband," continued this newest client. "Been steppin' out nights wid another gal while I been up in Birmin'ham nursin' my second husband—de low-down polecat—wid de pleurisy."

Mr. Breck's brow ridged, sorting epithets serially to fit husbands.

"All I wants is de goods on him," rumbled a wronged wife. "You give *me* de evidence, and I gives *him* a funeral he aint *never* gwine forgit!"

"WHAT he look like?" Bugwine's frogged gaze was glued to that five.

"Like good clothes on a bad actor. Got to be *married* to dat nigger to see through him."

"Sho is! What's he name?" Mr. Breck had never seen his brains working better!

"Decimal Willis."

"*Decimal Willis?*" Bugwine fogged: old name sounded familiar. "Says *huh?*"

"Mine's Mandy Willis. Decimal chauffeurs for Major Kenilworth Lee. Dat's how-come Decimal gits dat big car I hears he been ridin' de women round in. Jest lemme—"

With a crash Bugwine fell out between the ears. Every time he started getting bright, his business started getting in a jam. Experience, ethics, and epidermis all argued against a detective's taking opposite sides of the same case. . . . But this woman had five dollars. Keeping himself separate as Decimal's detective and also as Mandy's, promised a strain on the brain that Bugwine's wasn't built for. And any backing-out had to be done now or never. . . . Yet she had five dollars—

"Whar-at is you crave de evidence fotchd you?" Ethics and experience went down before the five.

"Kaufman's Alley. Everybody dar knows me, Mandy Willis. Now git sniffin'—I got to see a undertaker."

"Cain't hear me for my fuss!" boasted Mr. Breck hollowly.

But back in the interior of the agency the true inwardness of his new predicament began to attack him like a fanged worm. If he earned Mandy's fee now, it would be by automatically exposing her husband Decimal to her wrath. With the Major bound to hear the ruckus—the last thing Decimal wanted. While if Bugwine did not involve Decimal he got no five from Mandy. With the slightest misstep then bringing the Major down about Columbus' ears in the wholly separate stolen necklace case. It was a combination of potentialities calculated to make a boy on both sides of one case, and the wrong side of another, step higher and more softly than a cat on a tin roof in August.

"Boy, git bright, or git buried!" Mr. Breck summarized the resultant situation sadly to himself. "Brains, at ease! Rest yourself while I worries."

But as usual, when Mr. Breck undertook to worry, he fell asleep—to be aroused some indeterminate time later by cyclonic sounds and movements across the alley. At first Bugwine thought he was witnessing a tornado. Then he perceived that it was Tornado Massey, the box-fighting boy, in person and in action—action in the noisy periphery of which there suddenly burst a local bad-man descriptively known as "One-Ton" Young, in frenzied, speeding efforts to escape the fists and teeth of an outraged pugilist.

"Ugh-oh!" foreboded the dazed and chilled Mr. Breck as he watched Mr. Young pass unhesitatingly through a picket-fence, a week's wash, two chicken-runs, and a cluster of beehives. "Somep'n aint *suit* dat big Tornado boy!"

"Way he 'Yoo-hoo!' when he drive by my wife yesterday aint suit me. And I jest come up wid him," corroborated Mr. Massey as he dusted disdainful palms and reentered his favorite restaurant.

MR. BRECK'S eyes all but engulfed his stiffened ears: suppose Decimal got himself disliked by Mr. Massey? No wonder he wanted to keep posted about himself! And taking women out riding sure was risky for boys without cyclone-cellers—or a good intelligence service.

In the midst of which reflection a hand fell heavily upon Bugwine's shoulder. Instantly he was half out of his overalls, before his master's voice halted him on the half-shell, as it were. "Boy, I's *detectin'*!" exulted Columbus, in his first good humor in months. "Major gits de search-warrants; I does de searchin'."

"Searchin' whar?" Mr. Breck wriggled his way back into his clothes.

"House of every nigger what ever worked for de Major—including Decimal Willis' and two other boys what I aint never liked nohow. Lookin' for dat necklace and who hooked it."

"What you find in Decimal's house?" Bugwine trembled: Decimal was his hidden three-dollar client that Columbus didn't know about yet.

"Aint find nothin'," Columbus brushed a vice-president aside. "Dat boy's wife say he aint even fotch home a sandwich, he's so tight. Blows everything on his own back and on other women, she say. But I's closin' in on de crook—jest aint got no clue *yit*. And when I is, how much you reckon de Major gwine shell out?"

"Nine dollars." Bugwine set his sights high, to show he was used to big money.

"*Nine dollars?* Boy, was dey to give you de Government, you'd start sellin' peanuts on de post office steps! Major gwine gimme *fifty dollars!*"

Mr. Breck wilted. Let Columbus get fifty dollars for one case, and he'd be walking on a vice-president's face, spiritually, with spurs on! Putting it up to an under-dog to pull a *coup* and pull it quick, or be forever sunk—while carrying the handicap of being on opposite sides of the intertwined Willis cases and the outside of the necklace case as well.

"Brains, at ease! Git built-up for mornin'," urged Mr. Breck desperately of his intellect as he regarded his possibilities. "Feets, circulate in dey place!"

**I**N which latter process Bugwine circulated uneasily, until midway of Hogan's Alley his client Decimal Willis came upon him, and caused Mr. Breck's business to round another unseen corner.

Mr. Willis at the moment was magnificent at the wheel of Major Lee's shiny, locomotive-sized car, with its top down. "How you sniffin', Mist' Breck? How you sniffin'?" he hailed his sleuth in the latter's own language.

Bugwine sniffed—and gathered olfactorily that the Major's corn-extract was coöperating with his car to create that upper-class feeling in Decimal. "Four crooks broke into de jail-house last week, jest from seein' me comin'," he admitted.

"Aimin' to git you to help me out a little," Mr. Willis eased over onto the confidential side.

"Shoot de works."

"Major say for me to drive over to Rock Cut to git a pooch Latham Hooper's been boardin' for him. How about you goin', instead of me—in de car here—while I gits in a little risk-ruckus yander wid de bone-babies?"

Mr. Breck's dulled eyes shone. Driving *that* car through Baptist Hill would be the same as crashing the Sunday social page!

Decimal slid from under the wheel, and Bugwine scrambled into his place. Grandly, proudly, like a darkened frog in overalls on the cushioned leather, Mr. Breck steered into the Hill's traffic and his unseen future, giving the horn ecstatic try-outs. Admiring exclamations from the curbs punctuated the melodious blasts of the horn. All that an oppressed vice-president had to do now was to find Columbus and run over him, to make his own cup run over too!

The swollen Bugwine looked about him, seeking his superior—and saw instead a darksome belle in a yellow dress. She was standing slightly apart and on the curb, with admiration at the sight of him broken out on her face like a rash. All that she could see was Bugwine and his car—that much was plain.

Here, flashed over Bugwine's inflated spirits, was the crowning touch. Add that girl and gown to this car, and Columbus would have to take aspirin for his envy.

"*Yoo-hoo!*" yodeled Bugwine invitingly, and slowed down.

"Boy, I'd ride wid *you* to git to ride in a car like dis!" came gracious if obscure acceptance.

"Gits us a mess of air while I goes over in Rock Cut, git a fancy dog I owns dar," Mr. Breck took in still more territory and livestock ownership.

"Aint you got class, shorty!" giggled the climax to his new glory.

"Drives de fur way around, too, for *you!*" Gallantry grew like a gourd-vine in Mr. Breck.

"Around who?"

"Around Columbus Collins—long, tall detectin'-nigger; numb in de knob," Bugwine dismissed his superior airily.

A red traffic light at the corner nearest the restaurant where only a few hours earlier Bugwine had seen "One-Ton" Young in inglorious flight was but more grist to a glorious mill: the halt gave the populace that much better close-up of a shrimp-sized detective who was getting so good that he ached. Possible complication among opposing clients was something that Mr. Breck could not even remember. The present eclipsed the future like a dollar over a dime. Mr. Breck was at his apex.

—Then, out of a clear sky, it seemed, came disaster.

**A**S the yellow-garbed queen beside him made the distance from seat to sidewalk in one screeching leap, Bugwine saw and started too—but too late. Something the size of an Alp and with the red-eyed disposition of a famished grizzly with lockjaw was all over him. Mr. Breck's horror-stricken glance had no more than taken in a contorted face that fetched a terrified squawk of recognition from him, before two freight-trains and a bus ran over him. Right in the Major's car, it felt like. After which he lost count of the number of times he was flung from the car, then jerked back into it, as though steam-shovels were playing tennis with his shrieking form.

Followed by his final restoration to the car's seat with his ears more or less entwined among his ankles and his knees wrapped around his own neck. All culminating in disdainful dustings of mighty palms, and a rumbled: "Pickin' up *my* wife for a ride, is you, half-po'tion! Lemme tell you, you sawed-off little shrimp, is I even cotch you on de same *street* wid her again, I stuffs you so fur down your own throat you chokes to death on yourself! Now git t'hell out



of here before I gits out from under control!"

A five-foot sleuth gave Tam O'Shanter lessons in staying not for stick and stopping not for stone. With clash of gears and roar of horse-power he was off and away, while in his soul rang the recognition, "*Tornado Massey!*" Out of all the women in Demopolis, Bugwine had had to pick up Violet Massey, the pugilist's bride!

Before which searing revelation the wrecked Mr. Breck rode out of the alley like the proverbial bat. Dogs in Rock Cut were forgotten, while distance from Hogan's Alley became an obsession. An effort to impress the populace—and Columbus—had fallen so flat it sagged!

But as Bugwine drove, familiar scenes began to recall a familiar jam in a boy's business. No speed could get him away from the fact that he was committed to both sides of the Willis case. Safety and starvation lay in doing nothing, and no way to tell how long he could keep things in balance on that basis. Higher and higher loomed the certainty that with one false step a five-foot Samson would pull down the pillars of his agency's temple—with himself in the center of the débris! And false steps were Mr. Breck's record and specialty. When he did the right thing, it was an accident.

Immersed in these deepening forebodings and speeding to escape them and any afterthoughts of Tornado Massey, Bugwine failed at first to notice the *crescendo*-ing of sirens behind him. Then it was too late—two khaki-clad and goggled motorcyclists shot past him on either side, converged, and blocked his way.

*Cops!* Mr. Breck's soul shot into his shoes, and left word for him to follow.

There was the deliberation of hangmen about the khaki-clad pair as they dismounted, braced their machines, and waddled stiffly toward him with books in their hands. Speeding! Bugwine never had out-talked a judge, and he neither showed nor felt any symptoms of starting now, as the officers bore down on him.

"Where'd you get this car, boy?" barked the larger of the two, foot on running-board at Bugwine's elbow.

"B-borrows it from 'nother boy, Cap'n, to go git a dawg."

"What boy? Dog, where?" snapped the second skeptic.

"Chauffeur boy, Colonel. Dawg's in Rock Cut."



"You give me de evidence," rumbled a wronged wife, "and I gives *him* a funeral he aint never gwine forgit!"

"And you heading *away* from Rock Cut at fifty miles an hour, huh? Pretty thin!"

Mr. Breck gibbered weakly. Speeders got short shrift in Demopolis—especially if caught in other people's cars. Thirty days in the jail-house in lieu of a fine he couldn't pay, started looking a boy right in the eye. To be jailed for speeding, after his beating, with Columbus splurging with fifty dollars for solving the Major's necklace case while Bugwine had gummed-up both of his, would be the final fatal straw!

"General, I wasn't goin' a foot faster'n thirty—" Bugwine began a bromide. But, "Who said anything about speeding?" the bigger cop interjected.

"S-s-suh?" As a bad door slammed in a speeder's face, a worse one opened beside it.

"What we flagged *you* down for, Oldfield, was for car-stealing!"

**M**ARENGO COUNTY rose physically and smacked Mr. Breck for a loop. "*C-car-stealin'?*" he stuttered under the blow. "Stealin'—" Theft of a car like *this*, it ravaged him, was Big-House stuff! And he was caught not only with but in the goods.

"Fifteen minutes ago Major Lee reported this car stolen. And here *you* are, driving it. It's a clear case—caught red-handed," Bugwine heard fresh nails in his coffin.

New angles to old complications loomed over Mr. Breck and fell on him.

Already battered to a pulp as a result of Tornado Massey's mistaking him for Decimal Willis, he was facing new jams now, added to the old. But one thing could save him: keeping his business in widely separated water-tight compartments. Otherwise he would be safer building bonfires in a powder-magazine. Let his clients ever get together in one place—or court—now, and he would be sunk without bubbles. Clearing himself of this theft-charge by telling Major Lee that Decimal Willis had loaned out his big car to Bugwine would be like waving the entire annual output of a red-flannel underwear mill at a stockyards full of bulls; ruining Decimal in all four of his capacities as client, employe, husband, and human being. Keeping things like this from the Major was what Decimal had hired him for! Let Bugwine fail him in it, and all Mr. Willis would be, would be raw material for an undertaker. Leaving Mr. Breck without enough fees from either side of the Willis family to bury *him* decently—after Columbus got through with him.

Despairingly, as one officer slid into the seat beside him and the other prepared to follow on to the police-station behind them, the little sleuth lifted his gaze for a last look on freedom, when he collapsed like a pricked balloon. Shuffling gloomily toward him came the erstwhile exalted Columbus Collins. And when things got as bad as his gait and gloom now indicated with Detective Collins, they got infinitely worse for the hired-goat of the agency, Mr. Breck.

**B**UT—worse and more of it—half a block behind Columbus, and visibly talking to herself as she forged grimly forward, came Bugwine's other and unmentioned client, Mandy Willis!

Mr. Breck's explosive agony at sight of her in conjunction with Columbus and his plight set the cop outside the car to looking for blow-outs. But it also attracted Mr. Collins' jaundiced gaze.

"Says *huh?*" ejaculated that startled sleuth as he took in the granite-faced officers, the shining car, the battered and chopfallen Bugwine at its wheel. "Says *huh?* Now what you done, you stigmatized ape wid de pip?"

"Speeding—leaving the scene of an accident—and stealing this car," supplied and summarized the officer. "You know him?"

"*Stealin' de Major's car! Is I know him?*" Something new and sudden

seemed eating Mr. Collins' very vitals. "Is I *know* him! Cap'n, I knows dat little half-wit runt so good dat I's gwine be his head pallbearer tomorrer! *Him!* De vice-president my own detectin'-agency, he *was*—and out stealin' my white-folks client's car before I can git a good grip on dat stole necklace case! No wonder de Major—no wonder I los'—"

**F**RESH if undivulged features of the wall-eyed Bugwine's latest depravity here so overcame a head detective with incoherence that details grew unavailable, while overlooked angles of his own and others' business sank their barbs in Mr. Breck's quivering soul.

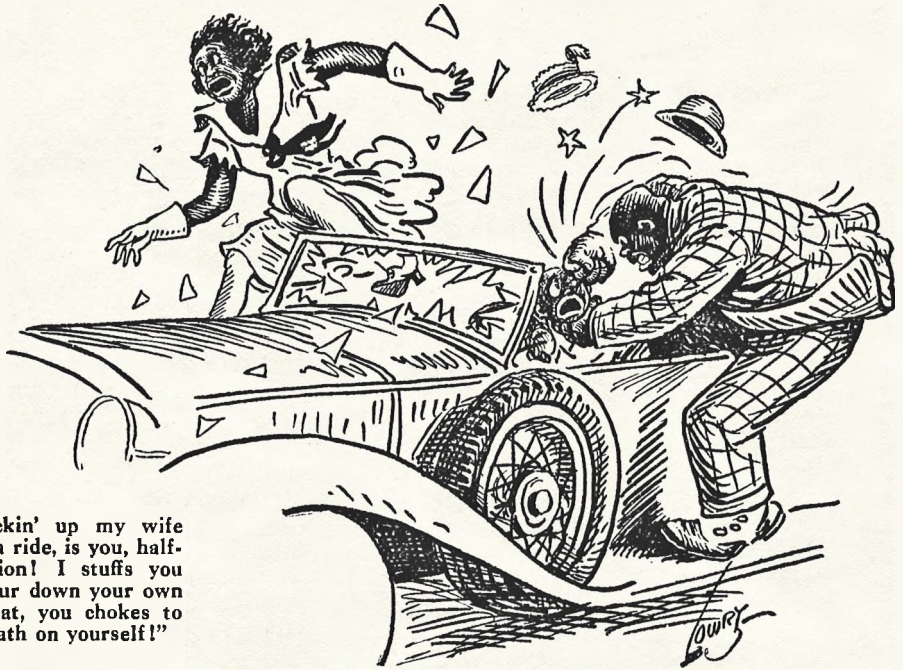
"Now I knows why Major Lee jest now fire me off de necklace case—it was you stealin' his car!" Mr. Collins came back to coherence. So Columbus had lost that case—and fifty dollars—had he? Then that, too, in Mr. Collins' eyes, would be Bugwine's fault! Abysses, graves, cemeteries yawned. . . .

But by now the tempo of events had grown so rapid that Mr. Breck was dizzy both ways from the neck. Wildly he looked about him for some escape—only, at a new and final straw, suddenly to emit one awful strangled squall before beginning to honk like a wild goose in a wolf-trap.

For, heading straight toward him, he had glimpsed over the heads of his joyous gallery a roadster. At its wheel was a distinctly worried-looking Decimal Willis. But the honking arose from something infinitely worse: the sight, grim-jawed beside Decimal, of the wronged and mercurial Major Lee!

For an awful instant Bugwine could hear nothing for the crash of his business about his ears. Every angle and every client—from the Major to Mandy Willis—was present and ganging him now! His gills grew gray, his face worked convulsively. The spectators, sensing a climax and a crisis well worth watching, ceased breathing. Anticipation ran like an ecstasy through them.

Then, like an overtaut string, Bugwine broke. Hemmed in, horrified, every case lost, and his doom closing in on him, old instincts seized him. And somewhere in Mr. Breck's ancestry evidently was an ostrich. For, with the cry and strategy of one, he strove to hide and bury himself, not in the sand but beneath the seat-cushion of the big car he had just been pulled from—until only size twelve feet protruded on thin shanks to mark



"Pickin' up my wife for a ride, is you, half-po'tion! I stuffs you so fur down your own throat, you chokes to death on yourself!"

the spot where a sleuth had sought sanctuary, as the roadster of the irate Major Lee halted alongside with Decimal Willis wall-eyed at its wheel.

"What's all this? What's all this?" first blustered the white man. Then choked on discovery: "Why—why, bless my damned soul, it's my stolen car!"

"Yes, sir," chorused two complacent cops, sensing reward. "We just caught this little coon red-handed, in it."

"So you did—so you did!" approved the Major. "—And I'd have had more sense, too, leaving my necklace case to you, instead of letting this wool-witted *Sherlock* here talk me into letting *him* mess it up!" The irascible gentleman loosed a blistering glare at Columbus. "Now, pull that car-thief out!"

Pushed forward by the surge of the curious crowd, Decimal Willis grew marked by a perturbation that could only mean he would know less than nothing of how Bugwine came by the Major's car. Willing hands, led by Columbus', seized and struggled with Bugwine's wildly waving legs. But terror lent strength to Bugwine's grip beneath the seat: when he came out, all would be over! Yet even terror was outnumbered; clutching, flopping, squawking like a hen being retrieved for slaughter from beneath a house, Mr. Breck came forth at last, his frantic hands still clutching—

Decimal's break here was his undoing. The Major had him by the belt before Columbus could focus his eyes on what Bugwine unwittingly gripped.

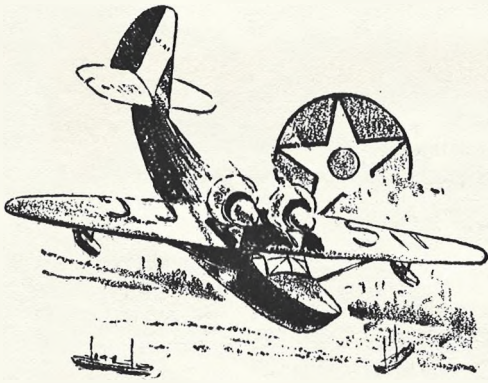
"Fore Gawd, Major!" the overcome and ashen Decimal wailed. "I was jest *keepin'* it under de big-car seat yander till I gits a chance to—"

But an employer whose employe had started checking-up on himself a bit too late was nodding now peremptorily to an astonished officer. "Lock him up till I get around to him," he delivered Decimal to the hands of the law. Then: "All I hired was the wrong detective: this little runt here still hanging on to my necklace was a better sleuth by accident than his partner was by design, is all. So *Bugwine* gets the fifty, and I get back my necklace—and you boys forget about the car."

And if for Bugwine two pieces still were lacking to perfect a picture from his puzzle, they fitted in shortly, swiftly next, in Columbus', "Boy, keep *on* vice-presidentin' now, before I busts you one!" And in a feminine baritone letting fall in accolade: "Mist' Breck, maybe you aint *catch* dat Decimal steppin' out wid women, but—*here!*—you sho Gawd earns dis half-price fee from me, jest de same—when you helps slap dat nigger in de jail-house . . . whar I *knows* from now till winter-time, dat he aint gwine step out no more!"

*A memorable novelette of*

# *The Ship*



**T**HROUGH the thinning dawn between Cape Florida and Dinner Key, a Coast Guard patrol boat with a bi-motored seaplane in tow was approaching the aviation base. The seaplane had a slight starboard list, and was drawing more than its customary amount of water. The patrol boat was running at slow speed, its bow wave a curling ribbon of green, flecked white on the crest.

Lieutenant Robert Hurley and Commander Newsom, the former having been on duty most of the night, stood on the apron in front of the gray Coast Guard hangar and watched the progress of the boat and plane. "I don't make it out," Newsom said. "It defies all analysis. Why would Palmar board the boat in the first place? And what boat was it? How did Palmar know it was there? We don't get reports of craft in British waters unless there's a rescue to perform."

"Likely it was Glaskill he boarded," Lieutenant Hurley speculated. "Glaskill has a schooner that fits exactly Jones' description. But it beats me that Ralph Palmar, as long as he's been in the Coast Guard, would go aboard him. That isn't the main point in my mind, however. I'm afraid they've murdered him. I know Glaskill's reputation."

The sun broke suddenly above the fringe of palms on the low-lying, distant cape, and flooded over Biscayne Bay, throwing the water into a dancing silver sheen with a long shaft of burnished brass across it. The patrol boat approached within five hundred yards, rounded the marker buoy and turned directly toward the beaching ramp. Still in deep water, just off the sea wall, it hove to. Two motor mechanics in rowboats put out from the hangar ramp, attached a towing line to the bit on the bow of the plane, and waved to the crew

on shore. A tractor dragged the plane up the incline from the water. The patrol boat put about and docked, and presently the seaplane's crew, bedraggled and gaunt-eyed, came into Commander Newsom's office.

The crew consisted of Baxter, chief aviation machinist's mate; Jones, chief radio man, and Warrant Officer Williams. They grouped themselves wearily in chairs near Newsom's deck. Lieutenant Hurley sat at one side.

"We got all your radios," Newsom said to Williams. "But we couldn't make out everything from them. This schooner captain kidnaped Lieutenant Palmar, beyond all doubt?"

"Yes sir," Williams said in a cracked, worn voice. "He went on board, and we waited for him to come back, but he never come back. Then all of a sudden somebody took a crack at our right engine with a rifle, and then the schooner moved off. Of course, we radioed immediately, sir. But I didn't know just where we were, so I guess I gave the wrong position. We heard the Seroson cruising around, way off to the west of us after dark, and we shot flares, but it didn't do any good. We tried to contact the Seroson with our radio, but couldn't get anybody but Miami—skipping the Seroson, I guess. The patrol boat found us with a searchlight about three o'clock this morning. . . . I'm sure sorry about Lieutenant Palmar, sir."

Commander Newsom, the day before, had been in Pensacola. Lieutenant Hurley had been off duty, and had returned to the hangar after Palmar had left the base to go out on this mission. So neither of them knew the full details. Palmar had handled the telephone call, had made the necessary notation of where his destination was, and had taken off immediately.

"**J**UST what was this flight Lieutenant Palmar started on?" the commander asked the warrant officer. "His report says, 'Rowboat reported smashed on sandbar south of Largo; two men strand-

*desperate adventure with the Coast Guard air service.*

# of Prey

By

LELAND JAMIESON

Who wrote "Murder Island."

ed.' That's clear enough, but how the devil did he come to fly out to sea and land beside this schooner?"

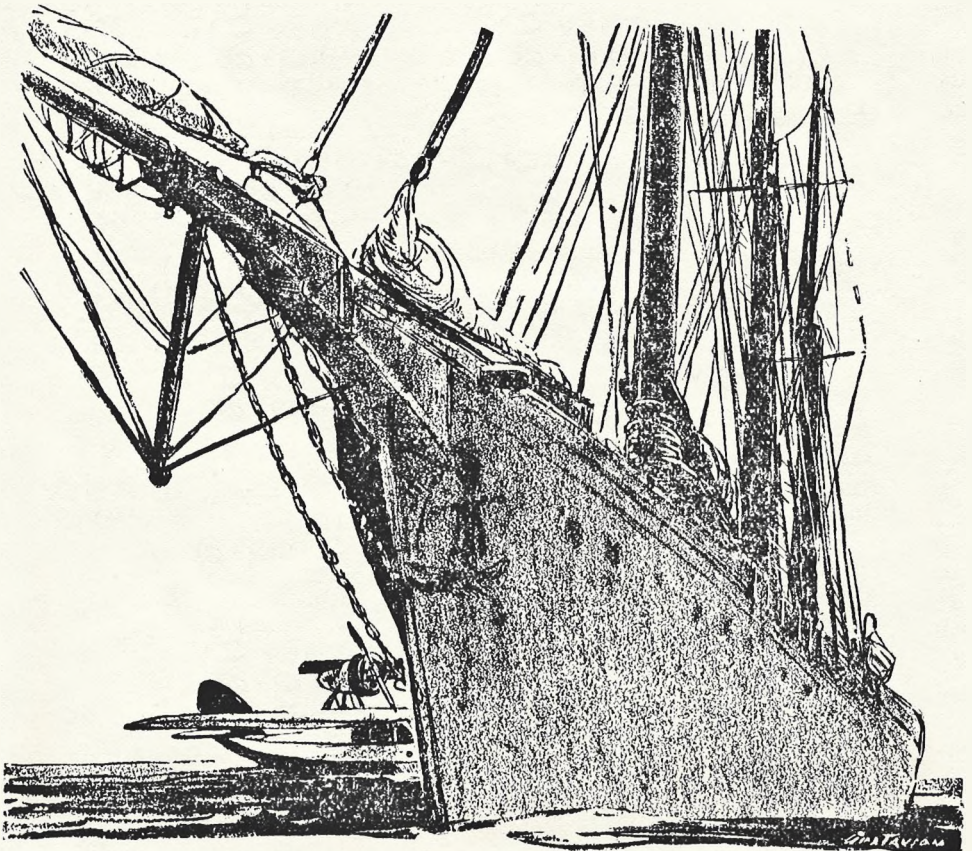
"We couldn't find the rowboat, or the men, sir," Williams related. "The Lieutenant cruised around for an hour south of Largo. We couldn't see a thing. We went halfway to Key West, and then the Lieutenant turned around and started back. A few minutes after that he turned straight east and headed out to sea. I don't know why. Pretty soon we saw a schooner under the port bow, way off. Lieutenant Palmar overhauled it and came down and landed. The sea was very calm. He got up within a few feet, opened the cockpit hatch, climbed outside and threw over a line. A seaman caught the line.

"The Lieutenant called down to us, 'I'll be back in a minute.' He said to the skipper of the boat, 'I'm boarding you. Not officially. I know you're in British waters.'

"The skipper was a tough-looking egg. He yelled down to the Lieutenant, 'No, you aren't boarding me. . . . Benny, drop that line.'

"Lieutenant Palmar said: 'Captain, I'm not trying to board you officially. You have an A.B. named Emerson. I want to speak to him. If you'll extend me the courtesy, I'll appreciate it a great deal.'

"This skipper stood there at the rail for a minute, looking the Lieutenant over pretty careful. After while he said: 'This is the first time one of you royal



Coast Guardsmen tried a stunt like this! If it's a trick, I'll cut your heart out. Come aboard."

"So the Lieutenant went aboard. This Emerson was just a plain, ordinary-looking A.B. But the Lieutenant went up to him and shook hands real friendly like, and they walked up toward the bow and started talking. About that time this seaman cut my line, and the schooner began to drift away from us. Then it got under way. I started my motors and began taxying after it, so as not to lose any time when the Lieutenant got ready to come back on board, because it was getting late in the afternoon. No more had I done that than somebody let loose with a rifle and knocked in the crankcase of the starboard engine—and there we were. You know the rest; I radioed right after that. All we could do was sit there. That schooner was hull down in thirty minutes, running a northeast course."

LIEUTENANT HURLEY asked: "What was the name of the schooner? What did she look like in detail?"

"Lieutenant, there wasn't any name. She was black all over. Not a white stick on her. About ninety or a hundred feet, I would say. Narrow beam. High bow, for a schooner, and a low, sharp fan-tail. Looked like a good sailer. It was fast."

Commander Newsom, his square face dark with anger, exclaimed: "Lieutenant Palmar just went aboard this boat in British waters, and they ran off with him? Is that what it amounts to?"

"As far as I could tell, sir," Williams returned. "Of course, he went aboard her voluntarily."

"What did this captain look like?"

"Tall. Real thin, and kind of sharp features. A hooked nose. I'm not sure, but I think his right thumb was missing, too."

"Left shoulder higher than the right," Jones, the radio-operator, put in. "I seen that, sir."

"That's Glaskill!" Lieutenant Hurley interposed. That boat was the *Glenna Mary!* He's a rough, tough baby. I could tell you stories about him that would make your hair curl. One time he tied up a bunch of Chinese aliens, when a cutter was getting close to him, and dropped them overboard in sacks half-filled with coal. . . . What the hell could Palmar have been thinking of, to board him that way?"

Newsom boomed: "In British waters, where we haven't a thread of jurisdiction! Palmar must have gone insane!"

"He wasn't, sir," Warrant Officer Williams declared. "He was as sane as anybody. I liked the Lieutenant; I knew him pretty well, sir, if I do say so, and he was as sane as you or me."

"Well, he was crazy to go aboard the *Glenna Mary!*" Newsom rumbled. "But that's neither here nor there. What we've got to find out is where they've taken him. Why he went aboard. What they're going to do with him, and why they're doing it. There's plenty here that we don't know."

But they could not learn more from questioning these three worn men who had spent an afternoon in flight and then a night at sea, adrift in a crippled plane. Newsom sent them home, and then, a cigar clamped ferociously between his teeth, turned on Bob Hurley and declared: "If I didn't know Palmar, I'd say he had sold out to Glaskill, or deserted. But I do know him, and you know him—and such a thing just isn't possible."

Lieutenant Hurley rapped his white knuckles on the table edge. "Ten to one we'll find him dead—if we find him. Where could Glaskill have run to, so our patrol boats missed him? I cruised around that area until after dark last night, and didn't see a sign. He's slippery. He's supposed to have killed at least a dozen men, not counting the aliens he's dumped overboard to keep from being caught with them, and he'd think no more of killing Ralph Palmar than I would of stepping on a sand crab. But let's go! Check with the radio first to see what the patrol boats have picked up down there."

The two patrol boats in that area, latest reports showed, had seen no trace of the schooner *Glenna Mary*.

ONLY three officers normally are stationed at the Coast Guard Aviation Base at Dinner Key, and except in unusual and pressing circumstances one of them is left in charge; but this time both Commander Newsom and Lieutenant Hurley were going out, together. They took a radio man, Luther, and a machinist's mate, Pascal; at nine o'clock they slid down into the water on the beaching gear, pulled up the wheels and folded them into the recessed wings and taxied out into the bay.

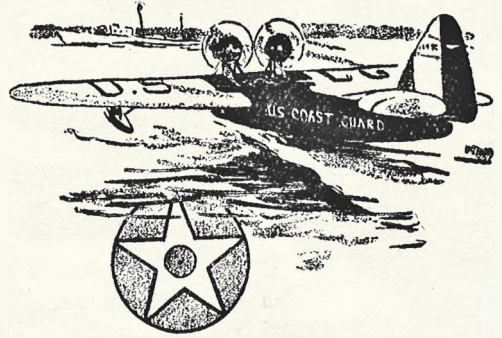
The Commander was flying. Hurley, in the co-pilot's seat, was busy with the hydrographic chart of this wide area which today they meant to search. He knew that Glaskill had fourteen hours' start, and at fourteen or fifteen knots an hour could have put at least two hundred miles between himself and the position where Lieutenant Palmar went aboard. In addition to this, there was an international aspect to the matter. Glaskill would naturally run deeper into British waters. Even if they found him, the Coast Guard would be powerless to board the *Glenna Mary*. But they could radio her position to the patrol boats in the area, which would keep her under surveillance, and then, through Washington, begin negotiations with the governor of the Bahamas for Glaskill's immediate arrest.

It would be an open and shut case against a man who had plagued the Coast Guard for ten years. Glaskill was a sea-rogue with a thousand legends, mythical and real, which formed a background that was both fabulous and frightful. Bob Hurley did not know it all, but he knew enough that the thought of Palmar in Glaskill's mercy made him shiver. Glaskill was a strange combination of pirate, smuggler, killer—and suave gentleman.

He was said to be a graduate of Annapolis. At the outbreak of the War, the legend ran, he had been a lieutenant. In the rocketing promotions of that day, he had become a captain of a destroyer on the North Atlantic. Those long, lonely, freezing watches in a convoy through the zones of submarines may have done it. Some said it was a girl, but nobody really knew. But they did know Glaskill drank too much, and presently they learned that he had been dishonorably discharged, cashiered, and sentenced to one year for collusion with a profiteer on ship's supplies.

That began a long degeneration. Glaskill served the year, and then one day the Coast Guard boarded a rummy between Nassau and Miami—in the old days of rum-running, soon after prohibition. Glaskill was in command of her. He knew sea law, and he was within British waters, so he got away. . . .

The Bahamas are pock-marked with miserable sand islands from the size of Andros, to minute cays, unnamed and unknown except to spongers who stumble on them, use them for a temporary lee, and then move on, perhaps never to



The plane gathered speed in a smother of spray, leaving a long white wake.

return. There are a hundred places where a schooner such as Captain Glaskill's could be hidden; for, shoal draft that she was, she could tread through narrow, shallow channels and reach bays that cutters and patrol boats could not penetrate. By sheer canniness Glaskill had eluded all efforts to rout him out and bring him into Florida. And not that he was idle, either.

**S**UCH was the man that Commander Newsom and Lieutenant Hurley were going after now. Newsom taxied out through the channel into the deep, clear water of Biscayne Bay, and turned into the wind and shoved his throttles open. The plane gathered speed in a smother of spray, leaving a long white wake before it climbed successively to the step and then into the air. Newsom turned upon an east-southeast course, climbing steadily, his eyes narrowed against the burnished sun and the reflections from the waves. Hurley sat with the charts in his hands, making drift calculations mechanically. His thoughts were busy, but he could find no niche to prod which would unearth any explanation of this fantastic situation.

Newsom climbed the plane until, over the tip of Cape Florida, he was flying at two thousand feet. Then he leveled off and settled to the grind. Bob Hurley had drawn an imaginary course which the *Glenna Mary* might have followed from the position where Lieutenant Palmar boarded her the night before; extending northeast, the line terminated—entirely by guesswork based upon the speed the schooner probably could have held—at a point a little to the north of Nassau.

They held their original direction for perhaps thirty minutes, and then the Commander swung forty-five degrees to

the north and straightened out again. They picked up a tramp steamer in the glasses on the right, and then a sloop with a patched brown sail upon the left. They scrutinized the horseshoe isle of Bimini with care, but the *Glenna Mary* was not anchored in the harbor. They went on, with the thunder of the engines falling constantly into their ears, with the Atlantic a ruffled cobalt blue as far as they could see.

**G**CRIM-EYED they were, alert to sight a speck in the distance that would grow into the boat they sought, though they knew this task was hopeless. There was an area here of at least four thousand square miles, pock-marked by the Bahamas. The *Glenna Mary* might be anywhere within a radius of two hundred miles. She might have turned last night and headed back toward Cuba; she might even now be tied up at some little filthy dock somewhere on the northern coast, safely hidden for as long as Glaskill chose.

Yet Newsom and Hurley went on stubbornly. They zigzagged the surface of the sea until a dark spot ahead materialized and grew into the town of Nassau. They circled over it, scanning the harbor, straining their eyes across the flat, shallow island on the other side. They saw a four-masted barkentine at anchor, a dozen spongers' sloops, a single-funneled tramp caked brown with rust. But the *Glenna Mary* was not there.

The return trip revealed nothing. They landed once more in Biscayne Bay two hours and five minutes after leaving Nassau, taxied up the beaching ramp and stopped the engines on the apron. Newsom went immediately to his office to telephone the patrol boat section base at Fort Lauderdale, to learn what news was there. Hurley stayed for some time in the cockpit, his charts spread out upon his knees, trying to imagine what he would do in Glaskill's place. But he didn't know the circumstances. Glaskill's activities had a dozen phases; the man was cunning, and he probably would do what no other man in the same position would have done.

In the office, Commander Newsom said wearily: "I'm running up to Lauderdale. No news yet, but I'll see Captain Perkins, and we'll lay out an organized campaign. You get some sleep. You look like hell." He got up and paced the floor, unconscious of the agitation

and increasing nervous strain that showed upon his face. "When a pirate like Glaskill kidnaps a Coast Guard officer, it's time something were done besides sit down and talk about it. Glaskill seems to want a war. By God, he'll get a fistful! We'll hang him like a rat!"

"We'll have to get our hands on him before we hang him," Hurley returned dryly. "Skipper, you look a little worn yourself. Seven hours in the air can knock the—"

Newsom savagely bit off the end of a cigar. "Well, I've thought of everything I can. Have you any new ideas?"

"Keep hunting," Hurley said. "That's all we can do. Keep patrol boats out there, and we'll go out every day until we find the *Glenna Mary*. I'll take the Antilles tomorrow; she'll have that engine changed by then."

Newsom clapped on his cap and strode in long steps to the door. "If you hear anything, you'll get me at Perkins' place in Lauderdale. And don't sit up here staring at that chart; you get some sleep so you'll be all there tomorrow."

He crossed the hangar, but before he could get into his car, a trio of newshawks approached almost in a run around the corner of the building. One of them thrust out an extra with a screaming headline:

COAST GUARD OFFICER DUPED AND  
KIDNAPED

"Any word yet, Commander?" one reporter asked without formality. "I'm from the *Times*. We got a deadline to make in fifteen minutes. You just came back from hunting for Lieutenant Palmar, didn't you? We got the story. We'd like an interview with you, and I brought a photographer out to take some pictures. Isn't this a yarn?"

**B**OB HURLEY, looking through the office door, saw disbelief pass sharply into anger upon Newsom's face. Hurley heard him roar:

"Who gave you this story? Did one of my men, who was on that plane last night, forget himself and—"

"Not a bit of it. But it was all reported by radio, wasn't it? A ham station operator, an amateur, picked it up. Like a fool, he didn't let us know until the middle of the afternoon. We tried to pump your men, but they won't talk. But what about Lieutenant Palmar? Any luck finding him? What is your personal opinion and reaction to this,



"Don't make it difficult!" she protested. "I had hoped you would not need explanations. Won't you accept the fact that he is in danger?"



and who was the skipper of the boat? That's one thing we didn't learn."

Commander Newsom, very red-faced, his shoulders hunched, declared: "You won't learn anything from me. Your editors must be fools to print this story, when—"

"It's news. Won't you cooperate with us, Commander?"

Newsom stood rigid for a moment. Finally he said: "I'll cooperate with you if you'll cooperate with me. We don't really know anything about this case yet, and any further story might hurt us in getting to Lieutenant Palmar. Apparently he has been kidnaped, but we have no slightest idea of why. I know it's news, but remember, a man's life is involved. You kill this story now, and when the real facts come out, such as they may be, I'll give them to you frankly and immediately."

"But Commander," protested the red-headed one, "we have this yarn started. We can't kill it now. It's too big. Do you know who kidnaped Lieutenant Palmar? Have you reason to think Palmar was—er—disloyal to the Service? If you would tell us what you really think—"

"I won't," Newsom grated. "You're wasting your time." He closed his mouth decisively, walked past them and got into his car and drove away.

The reporters, nonplused for only a moment, stood looking back into the cavernous hangar at the planes housed there. The photographer took out his camera for a shot of the seaplane Lieutenant Palmar had been flying. Lieutenant Hurley, watching them, stepped from the office.

"Let's see that story," he requested.

There was nothing new in it. Obviously it had been picked up by an amateur radio operator. The only facts were those supplied by Warrant Officer Williams and radioed to the base at Dinner Key; the rest was conjecture and imagination of the man who wrote the tale.

Hurley was bombarded with a dozen questions, but answered them evasively or not at all. He felt sure that Glaskill had connections in Miami, and that anything he said for publication would be transmitted to Glaskill as soon as communications could be made. He permitted the photographing of the seaplane, for there was no harm in that, and then, leaving the three still ruminating there beneath the vast uplifted hangar door, went back once more to take up the interrupted study of his charts.

His ash-tray filled with cigarette butts as he worked, unconscious of time, unconscious of weariness, but feeling more and more the racking urgency and strain this situation had imposed. He liked



They zigzagged until a dark spot ahead became the town of Nassau.

Ralph Palmar. Furthermore, Palmar was a member of the Coast Guard, an agent of the Government; men like Glaskill must be taught once and for all time that the Government was omnipotent and omniscient.

Yet in his mind lurked an unnamed and almost unrecognized fear. Palmar had boarded the *Glenna Mary* of his own free will. Why? The question plagued Hurley. Who was Emerson? Could it be that through Emerson Palmar really had a connection with Glaskill? Hurley felt disloyal and ashamed to think the thought, and yet he could not rid his mind of it. He looked up, and saw that it was growing dark.

The telephone tinkled, and when he lifted the receiver an agitated feminine voice said quickly: "May I speak to the commanding officer?"

"The Commander is out. This is Lieutenant Hurley, second officer."

"Lieutenant Hurley? Oh, yes, Lieutenant—I remember you. Dick Palmar mentioned you to me, I think. . . . Lieutenant, I must see you. A matter of extreme importance. I am at the Alcazar, in Room Nine-twelve. Please come at once—and alone."

Bob Hurley took a deep drag on his cigarette, remembering the inflections of her voice, while his mind darted out in keen conjecture. Perhaps three seconds passed in silence. His voice was biting when he demanded bluntly: "Who are you?"

"I will explain that when you get here. Please, Lieutenant, don't distrust me. I'm fearfully upset. You see, it is about Dick—Dick Palmar. I saw the papers, that story—and I am involved. At least I'm frightened that I may become involved. I must see you, Lieutenant!"

Hurley said stonily: "I don't know Dick Palmar. If you must see me, I'll wait here at the office." He paused, his mind filled with wonder and a dull, hard bafflement. Something intangible and as thin as water vapor warned him. He sat thinking, and suddenly came to a de-

cision. This woman, whoever she was, might really know something that pertained to this puzzling affair. Certainly there could be no danger in going to her room. He said. "No, I'll come. I'll be there in an hour. But first, who is *Dick Palmar*?"

"I thought everybody knew. He is Lieutenant Palmar's brother. You see, you must come quickly!"

"And where do you come into this?" Hurley was surprised at her statement, but concealed it.

The girl was silent so long that for a moment he wondered if she had broken the connection. Then she said: "I'm just a friend of his. A very close friend. I—well, that really doesn't matter. The thing is, we must get help to him and to his brother. I know where they are. Please come."

"Coming," Hurley said.

HE went quickly to his apartment, shaved thirty hours' whiskers from his face, changed to civilian clothes, and hastened once more to his car. He was stepping into it, fumbling in the dark to find the keys, when a figure moved suddenly from behind a thick-trunked palm and came toward him. Hurley heard his footsteps when the man was half a dozen feet away.

Thought of a stick-up made him whirl. He was unarmed. The man was a figure, dimly outlined, indefinite against the heavy night. Hurley, standing poised with one foot on the running-board, his key-holder in his fist, tried to determine if the other had a gun. But he could not see enough to be sure.

The man came within three feet, and stopped. His features were blurred, to Hurley's straining eyes. "Lay off tryin' to find Palmar," the man said. "He's safe now, and he'll be safe unless you mess around with Glaskill. Don't go looking for him, hear? Or you'll find him with his throat cut." He paused, and then started to say more.

But Hurley was on him in one leap. His fist lashed out a blow that grazed the fellow's head, but did no damage. He grabbed at a coat collar, missed. The man was gone, running swiftly in the dark, with Hurley after him. But the vegetation in that area of Coconut Grove is dense with palms and Spanish bayonet and hibiscus trees and bushes. The quarry leaped a low stone wall, crashed through a mat of vines, and then was lost in the darkness of a crooked, narrow

alley. Bob Hurley stopped, listening. The footfalls disappeared into the night.

Hurley stood there in the darkness for perhaps three minutes, and then, very thoughtfully, walked back to his car. He drove north on Miami Avenue, deeply concentrated in trying to unravel the meaning of this unexpected warning.

What hidden motive lay here that he did not see? He searched the meager facts at his disposal. Had this man followed him to his apartment for the purpose of telling him only to refrain from continuing the search for the schooner *Glenna Mary*? Had he meant also to add that the Palmars would be put safely ashore at some later time if the search were abandoned now? It had been a bad mistake to interrupt him. But why should Glaskill have an emissary bring this warning in the first place?

He found no ready answer to these questions. As he went up in the elevator at the Alcazar he dismissed his queries and turned ahead in speculation to this meeting. Memory of the woman's voice intrigued him. He walked down the corridor and rapped lightly at her door.

The voice sounded different than it had upon the telephone. Hurley went in at her command, and saw her sitting in a chintz-upholstered chair beside the open window. His first impression was one of mild astonishment.

She was not pretty, but Bob Hurley had never seen a more strikingly individual woman. Her nose was too big, and her violet eyes were set too far apart. Her hands were long and narrow, the fingers tapered gracefully. A strong face, strong hands, and a personality that seemed to draw him to her there.

With a faint smile she arose, and walked toward him with a peculiarly long and powerful stride, a flowing motion that showed the suppleness of a handsome figure frankly modeled, frankly attractive beneath the long lines of a pale green gown.

"Lieutenant Hurley?" she said, her tone at once aloof and intimate. "I had decided you were not coming. . . . You were so suspicious of me on the telephone. Won't you sit down?" Her voice, mildly chiding, changed to friendliness. "A drink?" She held out a package of cork-tipped cigarettes.

He accepted a cigarette. "No drink now, thanks," he said, and looked up suddenly from his match, and found her scrutinizing him with a covert look of sharp analysis. The expression was gone

from her dark eyes before he was entirely sure it had been there. "Now," he said, "what about Lieutenant Palmar's brother? I didn't know he had one."

She sat watching the smoke curl up from the cigarette in her fingers. "I suppose," she said at last, "you might as well read the letter. But first, let me explain my relationship, and the circumstances as I think I see them. Dick Palmar is a very charming, very adventurous young man. I have never met Lieutenant Palmar; but because Dick sent me this,"—she had produced from beside the chair cushion several folded sheets of paper, which she now tapped edgewise against her thumb nail,—"I presume he may also have written to his brother. Dick is a lecturer, a man who won't lecture on something he has never seen. He goes out and gets his material first-hand. I rather imagine he has been a source of embarrassment to Lieutenant Palmar, because Dick has a host of friends among rum-runners and men of their type all along the Atlantic coast. But that really is of no great importance. Read the letter and make what you can of it."

**B**OB HURLEY met her eyes, trying to understand just what his impression of her was. She had magnetism, but his strongest feeling was somehow of being disarmed in her presence.

He could not define it—and failing, accepted the letter and opened the pages. Written on a fine white paper that bore an engraved heading RICHARD PALMAR, it began:

*My darling Claudet:*

*If you could see me this minute, dressed only in shorts, sitting in the rotten dirty cabin of a rotten dirty schooner, and could hear the excited, unintelligible conversation of seventeen foreigners who hope to get into the U.S. in spite of their immigration bans, you would think I had either turned pirate, or gone raving crazy. But the truth is, I've changed my name, so no disgrace will fall either on you, or my beloved, well-meaning, proud and a trifle stiff-necked brother who is trying to uphold tradition in the Coast Guard. (Good old Coast Guard!)*



*Who would ever suspect that Dick Palmar could grow a mustache, get a good tan, and hire out as an A.B. under the name of Harry Emerson? Never in my life have I had such miraculous luck! You may not know who Captain Bill Glaskill is, but if you don't, you will when you read my new series of lectures, "Modern Buccaneers." He's the toughest bundle of real life I ever encountered, and to think that I'm a seaman aboard his old tub leaves me pinching myself to see if it's real.*

*We leave here day after tomorrow for a quick trip to Nassau for a little snow (so I hear), and then back once more to the Florida coast. From what I can learn, we're to put over the monkeys (the aliens, to you) at a flat beach near an old hotel south of Jupiter, sometime before daylight. I will have had enough of this by that time, and I'm going to jump ship. I'll call you from Jupiter, if I can get there. But don't be anxious. I'll look like a tramp, since I went aboard this tub like one, and will in all probability be entirely too tough for the bus or the railroad to bother with.*

*Just to torment the august Lieutenant, I'm writing a letter today, telling him I'm a member of the doughty Glaskill's crew, and will be home presently. I can see him writhe at the very idea! Disgrace to the family—and especially to Lieutenant Palmar! Well, Ralph's a great guy, but he'd get more fun out of life if he'd stop being so serious. He calls me incorrigible and that rot, but I think he kind of envies me, too.*

*However, the main thing I have on my mind is that you're sweet and charming. I sometimes think I'm in love with you; right now I'm nearer to it than I've ever been. No girl was ever so gorgeous. If living with you could always go on the way it has—Got to scram. Somebody coming in. Be ready to come after me. Tuesday.*  
—Dicky.

**B**OB HURLEY sat back in his chair, his eyes veiled to hide amazement. Knowing Ralph Palmar, he was beginning to understand the Coast Guard officer's actions. Palmar was a thin-skinned, proud man, always insistent upon the "right thing," officially, socially, personally. Hurley could imagine what Palmar felt and thought when he received a letter in the goading ironical vein in which this brother would probably write him. He could imagine the picture that had come to Ralph's mind: the unloading of aliens somewhere on this Florida coast, a Coast Guard patrol boat coming up suddenly and surprising them there, the arrest of the aliens, of Glaskill, and that tough, motley crew. The final

disclosure, amid a barrage of humiliating publicity, that Ralph Palmar's own brother had been in the crew. It had without any doubt left him aghast.

Ralph had seen his own reputation besmirched irredeemably, with perhaps his resignation as a Coast Guard officer demanded by Washington. He had imagined Dick in grave danger if a fight started during that swift beach transfer. And he had decided to stop it. He had decided to go out and get Dick Palmar, otherwise Harry Emerson, from the *Glenna Mary*, and bring him back to Miami in the Coast Guard seaplane. He had known about where the schooner would be, from Dick's letter. He had found it, and gone aboard. But something had happened; he couldn't get back.

**T**HAT much was clear to Bob Hurley, and as he sat there with that letter he wondered if Ralph had been right or wrong in what he did. He leaned forward, dragged at his cigarette and demanded: "How old was Dick? This thing is almost—inhuman. I know Ralph Palmar, and there is no finer man."

The woman walked to the dressing-table with that long stride that fascinated him. She tamped a fresh cigarette and lighted it, then turned to Hurley, half leaning, half sitting on the table edge. "Dick was that way," she said. "Tell me, Lieutenant, will the Coast Guard be able to help them? I'm so frightfully worried! Dick said they would land tomorrow night on the beach up there, and I hoped you would go there to see that nothing happened. . . . Enough men for the capture of this Glaskill without any danger, don't you see?"

Her voice trailed off to musing silence. She smoked reflectively, her searching violet eyes playing over Hurley's brown, handsome face, taking in his bearing, his attire with speculative interest.

Hurley, on the other hand, read the letter again, and then, finished, sat staring at it, not thinking of what was written on these three scrawled pages, but concentrating and groping at a vague sense of improbability which he could not define. This woman had not given him her name. Claudet what? He debated asking her, and decided that it did not matter.

"How old is Dick?" he repeated.

She seemed to hesitate for an instant, scarcely perceptibly, like a person wavering before a leap that may prove disastrous. Then the reply, perfectly self-



They jerked blankets from the bunks for shields, wrapped one around Hurley and took him by the arms; then plunged forward.

assured: "Twenty-four. Young. Younger, in fact, than I am. . . . What a frightful admission!" She smiled with a quick, mirthless expression. "But this is no time to hide facts, is it? Why do you ask?"

She herself, Bob Hurley considered, might be any age. Twenty-two or twenty-seven—thirty. Time had left no visible physical marks upon her. Yet she was not youthful; her face and figure might have been, but her eyes and mouth spoke of experience. Somehow Hurley, looking at her steadily, watching her return his look with dark, masked eyes, got the impression that she was acting now, was playing a difficult, exacting rôle. That was it. But why—what was her game?

He said, replying to her question: "I wondered if Dick were merely young, or merely irresponsible. I see that he is both." He held out the letter to her and she took it. "You spoke," he reminded, "of being involved, or afraid that you would be involved. I can see clearly how you would feel concerned about young Palmar, but—" He broke off, his tone suggestive and expectant.

Claudet tossed the letter on the dressing-table. She stood back against the edge of it, and put her long, white hands against her temples, pushing them up into her blonde hair in evident distress. "Don't make it difficult!" she protested. "I had hoped you would not need explanations, after reading— Won't you accept the fact that he is in danger, and—"

"I know quite well he is in danger. But no more than his brother, who got

into it because of him. We're doing all we can to locate this Captain Glaskill."

She dropped her hands, moved forward lithely and paced in that long-legged stride in front of him. "Don't waste time looking for him!" she said. "Don't look for him—that will merely frighten him away. You know where he is going to land—the letter tells you. Don't you see the thing to do? If you would take the Coast Guard forces there and meet that boat, you could protect Dick. Oh, I *want* you to do that . . . Please! I'm fearfully afraid!"

He arose. "I'll meet the boat and see that nothing happens," he declared. Watching her as he said this, he was aware of her sharp relief. At the door, as he was leaving, she gave his hand a gentle pressure, murmured in his ear: "I must see you again. You'll come?"

He smiled, with neither affirmation or denial, and walked down the corridor.

SCARCELY had Bob Hurley left the presence of Claudet when a man came through the doorway leading from an adjoining room. The woman, oddly transformed now, said in a cool, metallic voice which was not at all unpleasant: "Okay, Lefty. He swallowed it. You get to Glaskill and tell him this dumb Johnny is going to have the Coast Guard at the old hotel near Jupiter, ready to jump the *Glenna Mary* sometime tomorrow night. Tell him I want him to change his plans entirely. Don't bother with the snow—we'll get that later. Tell him all the Coast Guard will be up the coast tomorrow night, and he'll be safe

on the keys. Have him put the monkeys ashore on Elliott's Key—*tonight*—and I'll arrange to have a speedboat there to take 'em off. Tonight—as soon as he can get there."

She paused, thinking, and paced about the room, her long, expensive gown flowing gracefully around her knees. Glamour and beauty were in her body, but her face was a white mask, her eyes glittering and purposeful. With a sudden impulse she walked to the dressing table, pulled open a drawer, and took from it a small brown glass bottle, which she thrust out to the man. From another drawer came a hypodermic needle.

"Take these," she said. "Glaskill knows how to use them. Now get this: I want the Palmars drugged, and each one given an injection to induce quick embolism—Tuesday morning. Then bring them to Miami, and put them in a taxicab and send them to the Dinner Key base. They'll both be dead by the time they get there, probably, or soon after. Tell Glaskill I'll join him in Neuvitos Wednesday, and we'll hide out in Brazil for a while to see how we come out of this. You have that?"

Lefty was a tall, gnarled man, uncouth in appearance, but possessing a peculiarly shrewd and crafty brain. "Nina," he asked now, "what is embolism? You've used it before. I know it works, but what is it?"

Nina Manning smiled, her face at once sinister and amused. "You wouldn't understand it if I told you, Lefty. And it's something that wouldn't do you any good to know."

**L**IUTENANT HURLEY, riding down on the elevator, reviewed his varied, contradictory impressions formed in those few minutes in the presence of the girl who called herself Claudet. He remembered the warning given him as he left his apartment before going to her room. He tried to fit the two successive scenes together, tried to find a flaw that would reveal the key, if there was one, which would unlock the puzzled conjectures of his subconscious mind. Both the man, and Claudet, had told him not to try to find the *Glenna Mary*. Why?

But he had no solid ground on which to base theories of suspicion. The woman obviously was Dick Palmar's mistress. She had a letter, the writing of which could perhaps have been forged. But it would have been difficult to forge, in the four short hours since Lieutenant Pal-

mar's kidnaping had been made known to the world by a newspaper, the engraving on a letter-head as intricate as that one. Then too, he reasoned, using logic against an inner feeling that urged him on to doubt, the woman had known everything necessary to be convincing in the interview: Dick Palmar was a lecturer; he got his material first hand; he was an adventurer—all the other things that she had told him.

**H**E forced himself to dismiss thoughts of the woman when he got back to the base, took up his chart of Florida southern coastal waters, and studied intently the surroundings of the beach at the point where the letter had stated the landing of the aliens would be made.

The spot was quite familiar to him. He had seen the old, forlorn, half-finished structure that at one time in the boom days had been intended as a fashionable resort hotel. What happened in the construction of it he had no least idea, but now it stood, a mass of steel and concrete and dull red tile, weathering away, remote and inaccessible except by one abandoned road that wandered in among thick palmetto bushes from the highway.

No better point of landing than this one could be picked. The hotel furnished temporary housing for the aliens who, in case "connections" on the Florida end of this gang's activities went wrong, might be forced to live there several days. The place was completely out of sight from any point upon the main highway, and yet was only two or three miles from it.

He laid out a plan, making a pencil mark upon his chart to show the position of the hotel, another for the best place to station the ground crews, and others for the patrol boats that would be required. He put one of these in the Lake Worth Inlet, around the point yet only five miles from the scene. Another could patrol offshore all night, with lights out. When the *Glenna Mary* hove to and put its boats down, filled with aliens, the Coast Guardsmen would step quickly in.

With this plan in mind he called Captain Perkins' office in Fort Lauderdale, to explain the situation to Commander Newsom. While waiting for the connection he noticed idly that it was almost ten o'clock already. The operator at the other end finally reported:

"Commander Newsom and Captain Perkins went out on a patrol boat an hour ago. They expect to spend the

night, and be in Miami early in the morning—about daybreak.”

“It doesn’t take all night to run to Miami! This is Lieutenant Hurley—Dinner Key. I’ve got to get in touch with the Commander!”

“I’m afraid you can’t, sir. They’ve gone to West End. They’ll be back in Miami shortly after dawn.”

Hurley hung up, feeling peculiarly isolated, knowing that he was in command until Newsom should return. He had information which might be of the greatest importance, and a plan which at all costs should be laid out and followed through. Captain Perkins would have to order out the patrol boats; no one else had the authority. Tomorrow night was now only twenty hours away.

He called a restaurant and ordered a meal to be sent to the office, and went once more at the task of laying out the campaign for the *Glenna Mary*. He ate, and, the plan at last finished, stopped for a moment to consider how many men and boats would be concentrated at that point on the beach a few miles south of Jupiter.

The realization that most of them would be, gave him the idea. “What a swell time,” he said aloud, “to unload some booze some other place along this coast!”

His reasoning was rapid and sure from that quick point of contact. It was as if his subconscious mind had been released, and he saw this whole thing from a different angle. Claudet—What woman, a mistress of a man, would deliberately and voluntarily show a letter from that man to another one, a stranger, to prove that she was in fact his mistress? She would have read the letter to him, or shown him only portions of it. . . . He remembered his strong impression that she had been acting for his benefit. When he had told her that he would be there on the beach to greet the wily Captain Glaskill, her emotion had been relief instead of gratitude and the eager gladness which any woman, in love with, or truly concerned about Dick Palmar, would have shown. The information she had given him about Dick—he saw that now. Almost every bit of it had been contained in Palmar’s own words in the letter. The rest she had made up; generalities that might apply to any man.

**T**HIS, then, was a trap! She had somehow contrived to get that letter—how, Hurley did not know and did

not at the moment care—and she had used it in an effort to draw the Coast Guard forces *from* the place of landing, certainly not to it. In tense analysis Hurley tried to fit the remainder of this puzzle into a semblance of clarity.

Wasn’t it, he asked himself, a probability that if the landing were expected tomorrow night, then the Coast Guard would spend tonight in planning, in mobilizing and organizing for the coming conflict? Certainly! Then wasn’t it a safe guess that the landing would be made tonight, as soon as word could be put through to Glaskill that the Coast Guard had accepted the story Claudet had prepared for them?

**I**F this were true, the schooner had not, then, run back to British waters, but was somewhere near Miami now—hidden in any one of a dozen swamp-like coves that would have served; if this were true, Claudet was, or easily could be, in communication with Glaskill now. The unloading of aliens might be planned for early morning.

But where? A dozen places could be used, and it would be impossible to guard all of them. As he sat there, Hurley eliminated them one by one, and yet realized that these eliminations were in theory only; they might still be used. A bit of strategy crossed his mind. Claudet had tried to group the Coast Guard at one point, presumably. Why not let her now believe that at but one point, a different one than she had indicated, could a landing be accomplished? Impulsively he reached across the desk and grabbed the telephone and called her room.

When she answered, he tried to gauge her tone. It was cool, inquiring, perhaps a little puzzled, as she said, “Yes,” softly. “Who is it?”

“Lieutenant Hurley—Coast Guard,” he said evenly. “Just sitting here thinking about you, it seemed to me you would be relieved to know our plans—know just what we are doing to protect you—protect Mr. Palmar for you. If you like, I will outline the program.”

There was a pause, an utter silence, beyond which Hurley could almost see the woman sitting by the telephone. Then she said: “Oh yes, Lieutenant; how very nice of you. It will help my—my peace of mind so much to know.”

Hurley thought grimly, “No doubt it will.” He said: “We are extremely anxious to arrest Glaskill, as you know. We

know he is devilishly clever. So I have *already* had Coast Guard patrol boats put out. They will patrol the whole coast from Miami to north of Jupiter—there's no possibility of Glaskill's being able to come in up there. Then, beginning off the northern tip of Key Largo, two other boats are patrolling the keys, to Key West. There is not the slightest chance that we will miss him." He laughed and added in a carefully rueful tone: "That took all our patrol boats. There's a gap between Miami and Largo that we couldn't close without neglecting other places more important, but I don't think there's danger of his landing quite so near Miami. . . . Just thought you'd like to know."

He listened carefully for anger or disappointment in her tone, but none was there. She said: "You've no idea how glad I am. You know I am depending on you, Lieutenant. Thanks so much. . . . Good night."

Hurley hung up and sat for a moment with his hand upon the telephone. Then, by repeated efforts, he aroused Warrant Officer Williams, who had been on the patrol with Lieutenant Palmar. He explained nothing, but told Williams to get Pascal, Luther, Baxter, Jones, Hines and Engler. With himself, that made eight men.

He sank back in his chair, considering shrewdly the varied possibilities of this thing. He was convinced that Claudet had neatly set a trap for him in the beginning. He, now, had laid a better one for her. If she detected it, Glaskill would come nowhere near this coast tonight, tomorrow night, or until he had been reassured that it was safe to do so. If she didn't see it, if she thought those patrol boats were really out there in the darkness off the coast at certain points, she would believe a safe landing would be possible on the beach at Elliott's Key, and would so advise the captain of the *Glenna Mary*.

**T**HIS was a game, with Lieutenant Palmar's life—perhaps Dick Palmar's too—at stake. A grim game, but nevertheless intriguing. "If I keep this up," Bob Hurley mused, "I'll be pulling rabbits out of hats before I know it. I wonder if I gave myself away?"

The thing now was to take his men to Elliott's Key and there await developments. He would have felt more confident if Commander Newsom had been here, for after all, he might, he knew,

be wrong in everything. He might go out tonight and crack up in the thick, impenetrable darkness. He could not risk the use of landing lights tonight. If he did go out and wreck his plane, and then found nothing—

But he was convinced that he was right, and he saw no other chance. Glaskill might not land his aliens tonight where Hurley would be waiting for him, but he would not land them elsewhere on the coast.

The men arrived. They listened in silence as Hurley explained his plans. They had no comment, but put out the ship and cranked its engines. The plane was light, filled with a minimum of gasoline for this short flight; the men climbed in, squatting or sitting in the stretcher compartment in the cabin, or standing erect near the companionway behind the cabin. Bob Hurley slid down the beaching ramp into the inky water. He taxied out, clear of the channel markers, and gunned the motors. The water, with no wind to ruffle it, was like a smooth, vast field of cool obsidian. The seaplane took an abnormally long run.

**B**UT they got into the air, guiding for a marker on the lighthouse on Cape Florida. Hurley climbed, still using the lighthouse as a point of reference, and flew southeast. The air was unbelievably smooth. The lights of Coconut Grove, Coral Gables and Miami slid rapidly behind until the clusters remained only as reflections cast up against the base of clouds which drifted in the upper air. The jarring of the two exhausts seemed magnified a dozen times because of darkness.

Elliott's Key is a narrow strip of sand, lonely and desolate, which rises from the bottom of the sea and forms a long, low breakwater between the Atlantic and part of Biscayne Bay. Entering the bay, you pass the Fowey Rocks lighthouse, with Cape Florida on your right and Ragged Keys upon your left. Beyond Ragged Keys, almost adjoining them, is Sand Key, and then, beginning as Sea Grape Point, is Elliott's Key, which extends southward for possibly six miles. These are the beginnings of the Keys, sand-covered coral rock formations curving in a broken line that ends beyond Key West in an oddly crater-like formation called Marquesa.

The glamour of centuries is here, the tales of buried gold and pirate festivals along this string of isles. No man knows how true the stories are, but all of them,





Hurley had no idea where the Palmars were held prisoner—or if they were alive. But he climbed the anchor-chain and swung over the bow.

these legends now, have some long-forgotten nucleus in fact. Elliott's Key, barren except for palmetto and scraggly coconut palms, is uninhabited, a forlorn place where fishermen come now and then to anchor, or where small boys in sailing sloops ride up on the sand and go ashore to reenact the violent days of buccaneers. And occasionally a Coast Guard patrol boat pauses, and from the bridge the officer in charge surveys this miserable island for possible illegal operations.

Lieutenant Hurley watched the Fowey Rocks light slide below his wing, several miles at sea, and strained his eyes to see the first of Ragged Keys. Then, almost above Sand Key, he throttled back and started downward in a long, fast glide, the engines muttering in their stacks above. He meant to continue this glide, feeling the seaplane downward carefully until he touched the water, using the engines as little as possible in case *Glas-kill* with the *Glenna Mary* might already have hove to somewhere about.

It was a precarious undertaking, this attempt to land completely without

lights, in silence. He might strike the water in a shallow part, and rip the bottom from the hull. He might stall too high in trying to mush in at the last tense moment, and bounce and careen back again and cart-wheel on one wing. His experience had been almost all in daylight flying; night operations took in a scope that he had little knowledge of.

But he went down hardily, muscles taut and eyes straining against the slate-like blackness of the water. Sure that he was over water deep enough to be safe for this landing, he pulled the nose up when he saw the ragged fringe of palms materialize against the horizon two hundred yards upon his left. He delayed gunning his engines until the last

long second. And because of that, he stalled.

With the nose high, and the rate-of-climb showing an eight hundred feet a minute loss of altitude, he realized that he had leveled off too high. His wrist snapped forward as he "poured the coal" to the softly ticking engines. But before the engines answered him, the hull smashed down.

There was a slow, peculiar "whoosh!" that merged with the crunch of tons of water slashed suddenly to violent motion. The plane staggered, ricocheted, slithered drunkenly and blindly into the air once more. Motors roaring now, it settled back. Hurley snapped the throttles closed, hauled his control-wheel back into his stomach and sat waiting, unable to see anything because of darkness and the new rivulets of spray upon the windshield glass before his eyes. The Seroson bumped down and slid and slowed.

"Nice work, Lieutenant!" Warrant Officer Williams said from the co-pilot's seat. "Pretty black out here."

Hurley laughed shortly, nervously. "We'll get in and anchor—get ashore."

**T**HERE was an ebbing tide now, and they were afraid to go too close to land for fear the changing level of the water would leave the seaplane stranded here when they were ready to take off again at dawn. Williams climbed through the cockpit hatch and let the anchor down, feeling for the bottom. Presently, as they moved slowly toward the dully silhouetted fringe of palms, he called: "Hold it, sir!" The line payed out between his fingers, and he made it fast to the bit upon the bow.

They climbed out, one after another, and dropped into the water. They had to swim a dozen yards. The month was November, but the water was still warm in this southern latitude. Sitting in the sand on shore, they replaced their shoes, drained the water from their automatics and inspected them to be ready for the sudden action which might descend upon them when they crossed the ridge and walked out to the beach.

But when they finally did emerge upon that desolated place, no danger came. Palm fronds whispered almost inaudibly behind them, and the waves lapped in upon the sand with a sound that came as if from far away, unutterably lonely and detached. These were the only sounds. The smells were of rotting coco-

nuts, and a thin pungent odor of decaying fish, and the clean salt tang from the sea. There was nothing to see, for the tropical night was like a cloak about them. They strained their eyes and forced their ears to pick up a boat that might be anchored somewhere near, offshore. But there was none. They settled down to wait.

Hurley wondered if he had been a fool to come here at this hour of the night. Perhaps he had been wrong in his estimation of the woman who had posed as Richard Palmar's lady love. Perhaps she *was* his mistress, and this expedition was a folly conceived in an agitated moment of imagination. But he was stubborn. He deployed his men, with instructions that they patrol the beach in silence from one end to the other. By relays, each one would be in contact with every other one at intervals of seven or eight minutes. If Glaskill landed here tonight, he would have no chance of doing it unseen.

"You'll hear enough to know the boat is out there, long before the small boats come ashore," he told his men. "Sounds will travel far tonight. The wind favors us a little. If any of you hear anything at all, pass the word back and we'll mass our forces there. Then, I'll take Pascal with me and we'll swim out to the schooner. Warrant Officer Williams will remain here in command of the shore force, and we'll both strike at the same time. A good many of the crew will come ashore with these aliens. Glaskill himself might do so, for the final payoff. But look sharp. When we strike, don't be squeamish. This is a tough outfit we're dealing with. Remember that!"

The men moved silently into the darkness. Hurley, realizing suddenly that this was his second night on duty without sleep, felt a leaden weariness creep over him in spite of the sharp nervous strain that filled his mind. He sat down for a time, and then, like the other men who kept this solitary vigil, got up and paced along the sand, his ears and eyes alert. For the hundredth time he went over the whole thing from the beginning.

**J**UST then—shortly after three o'clock—he heard the faint, distant puckering of a heavy-duty engine on the invisible surface of the sea. His head came up as he stopped short, listening acutely. There was no mistake that the sound was out there, that the boat was moving steadily toward shore.

No warning came from the Coast Guard men there. They all stood silent, watchful, waiting to see where the landing would be made, if it would be made at all. And after minutes had elapsed, the *tuk-tuk* of the motor lagged and stopped. Against the purple-black horizon Hurley finally saw the tall, sharp outline of the rigging. The vessel was a schooner, and she had hove to perhaps three hundred yards offshore.

Blocks creaked, and the sounds of them carried through the still night air across the water. Bob Hurley forgot the weariness of his body in a swift gathering of excitement which lifted, raced his pulse. He heard the footsteps of a man behind him, and a soft voice reached his ears:

"Lieutenant? Somebody coming in!"

**Q**UICKLY the men assembled there. They stood impassive, rooted to the sand, every ear alert. They heard the high squall of a davit arm, and the lesser protest of a pulley followed by a splash.

"Boat down!" Warrant Officer Williams whispered hoarsely. "Heading here!"

"Wait till all of them get on the sand," Hurley instructed tensely. "Pascal, we'll get under way." He stripped out of shoes and shirt. Gun and extra ammunition were secure in his pockets. With Pascal by his side, he walked out into the water, noiselessly dropped down and started swimming. He could see the *Glenna Mary* much more clearly now, its hull and masts standing out against the sky.

With the soft splashing of water in his ears as he moved forward powerfully, he could not locate Pascal after the first five minutes. He kept his eyes upon the schooner, and at the same time tried to see the boats that were being brought from her to the beach. One of them passed within half a dozen yards of him, and disappeared. He did not see the other one, although two had been launched, apparently, from the sounds.

Halfway out he stopped, treaded water silently and listened to catch the sound of Pascal coming up behind him. Without meaning to do so he had out-distanced the other man considerably, and, when sure that the big machinist's mate was coming steadily, turned and drove ahead.

This action, after hours of ineffectual puzzling and searching, was like a tonic to his nerves. Yet a keen-edged and steadily increasing excitement was surg-

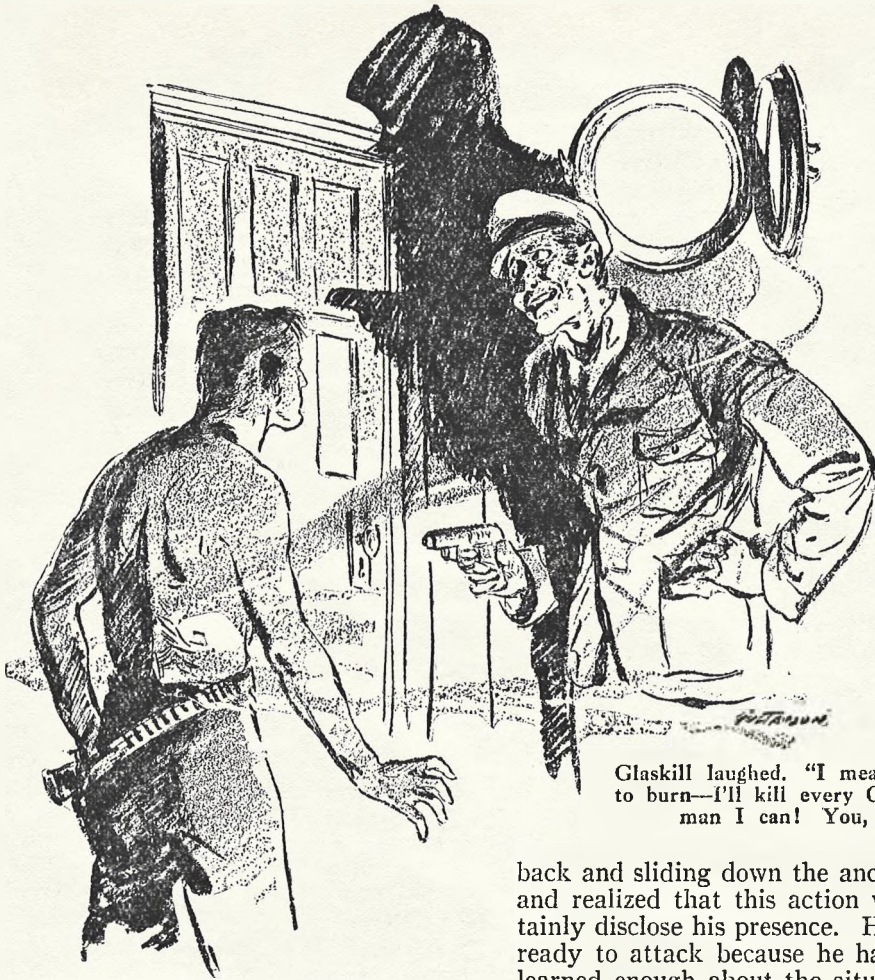
ing up within him. This kind of thing was what the Coast Guard offered to a man only at the rarest intervals; the rest was waiting, and futile, almost meaningless routine.

He reached the high bow of the *Glenna Mary*, or rather, he came to the rust-caked anchor chain that slanted up from the water to the bow. He clung there, waiting for Pascal to arrive. The thing was starting now. In a moment Williams on the beach would turn loose six men upon the crew that Glaskill had ashore. And at that same time, Hurley meant to be on deck with Pascal, to carry out a sweeping surprise flank attack that would make the *Glenna Mary* his. He waited, wondering that Pascal was so slow.

As the thought crossed his mind, a gurgling scream came from an invisible spot in the direction of the beach. The cry broke upward on the silent night with a sound of frenzied agony. It split the darkness, and then died as suddenly as it started. Hurley, listening with bated breath, tried to determine if that cry had come from Pascal or from some one on the shore. Distance on a night like this meant nothing. Sound floated through the darkness as easily from a mile away as from a hundred yards. He could see nothing; second after second passed and Pascal did not appear beside the anchor chain.

Just then, before Bob Hurley could decide what move to make, he heard a fighting shout from Williams. A pistol barked, and then a dozen staccato reports came in quick succession, blending and drifting, reaching Hurley's ears almost like a deep-voiced roar of thunder. This was the beginning! The ending would remain unknown until it came. Should he swim back to look for Pascal, in case that cry had come from him? Or should he, alone and single-handed, climb up that anchor chain and board the *Glenna Mary*? He turned to face the shore, considering swiftly. He would never find Pascal on a night like this. If that had been a barracuda— He stifled a shudder, grasped the chain more firmly and went up hand over hand.

**H**IS whole plan of attack could fail easily, without Pascal to protect him from a rear assault. He had no idea of how many men might be left aboard this boat, or where Lieutenant Palmar and his brother were held prisoner—if they were alive. But he swung over the bow rail and down upon the rough foredeck.



Glaskill laughed. "I mean for them to burn—I'll kill every Coast Guard man I can! You, too!"

Barefooted, he made no sound, but his white, nude torso was a swiftly moving, wraith-like form against the dark.

The secondary plan in this campaign was that Williams, after subduing the beaching crew, was to commandeer the boats and put out immediately to the *Glenna Mary* to reinforce the two already there. As Hurley moved along the slanting deck beside the rail, he crouched low and tried to see his adversaries. He heard voices, a curse, then an urgent, violent shout that carried out across the sea:

"Put back! Put back! Don't—"

"Put back, hell!" some one else exclaimed. "They aint got time to put back now! We staying here, or going to help them?"

"Staying," the first voice said. "Who tipped those — — that we were coming here? But they'll never find us in this dark, except by accident."

A figure formed suddenly near the stern, coming up the long, sloping deck toward Hurley. He thought of fleeing

back and sliding down the anchor chain, and realized that this action would certainly disclose his presence. He was not ready to attack because he had not yet learned enough about the situation here on board. But discovery would force him to attack—and that would end disastrously. A wave of fear swept him as the man came closer. He moved to one side, found the cabin roof, crawled over it and dropped down behind the box-like structure of a ventilator.

"Close!" he thought tautly, his pulse pounding. Lying there, thinking of the many ways in which this campaign could lead to sure disaster, he realized that his situation was extremely desperate. He must necessarily wait for Williams. If Williams in the shore assault should fail, Hurley would be left alone aboard this craft, surrounded by men who would be in killing mood after the attack. The schooner was much too big to take alone, for there were too many places where his enemies could hide and snipe at him. After daylight, if help did not arrive before then, it would be easy to corner him.

The conversation from the cockpit continued, harsh and deep-voiced, but enunciated so poorly that Hurley could

make little of it. He gathered that Glas-kill was on board, was, in fact, one of the speakers; but he wasn't sure. Once he heard the name of Nina mentioned, but that meant nothing to him.

On the bow, the man who was on sentry duty moved restlessly about the deck. And Hurley, unable to move without running the risk of being seen, was forced to lie prone on the cabin top and wait. The sounds from shore continued, but there was now no firing. Voices, low and muffled, spread across the water, but Hurley could not tell whose they were.

L YING there, his ear was near the slats of this old-time ventilator that rose eighteen inches from the roof level. And suddenly he became aware of voices that issued through them. He pressed his ear against the shutters, and tensed violently as he recognized the words of Ralph Palmer somewhere there below.

"No, Dick," the words came, scarcely discernible. "I don't blame you. You didn't mean for it to end this way. But I wish I could be as optimistic as you are that we'll come out of this alive. The Coast Guard has been after Glas-kill for a long, long time. I think we'll be shark meat before tomorrow night."

The other voice was recalcitrant and angry: "He wouldn't have the nerve. He wouldn't run the risk of killing us, I tell you! You, a Coast Guard officer, and me—hell, I'm not important, but I'm known too well for him to do that."

"It's been done before. He's done it before. But Dick, why else has he kept us prisoners? I don't think he's tried to use us as hostages for driving off the Coast Guard."

"He couldn't do anything else. He'd have been a sap to let us both go back to Miami in your plane—so you could turn around and hunt him down, knowing where he had been an hour or two earlier. But I think when he unloads these monkeys, he'll turn us loose somewhere. . . . I wish I knew what all the ruckus was about outside. I know damn' well I heard guns going. The ship's hove to. But we weren't supposed to dump these Polacks until tomorrow night."

A shout across the water interrupted Hurley's listening. He felt just then the faint jar as if a boat had bumped into the *Glenna Mary's* hull. And then a seaman's voice:

"Comin' up the line! No time for hoistin' us! They're right behind! We dumped the monkeys overboard just as

we hit the beach. They got the other boat—they're in it right behind us. . . . Quick!"

A frenzy of activity began around Bob Hurley. The sentry on the bow worked furiously at the anchor winch, and the chain came up with a clinking rattle. The engine of the schooner throbbed to life, and almost before the last man had scrambled up the line and dropped to the deck, the vessel was getting under way.

When it moved, shots winked suddenly from a spot fifty yards from its port rail, quick orange spurts followed a split-second later by the crash of the reports. But Williams was too late. The *Glenna Mary* slipped ahead, turned sharply, and put steadily to sea.

There was still time for Hurley to dive overboard and swim to shore. Every second that he lay here decreased his chances of escape. What could he do if he remained? Alone against half a dozen or more men! Dawn would break within an hour; discovery would be certain.

Yet he made no move to leave. On the contrary, he seized the opportunity to drain his automatic and wipe it out, ready for instant use. The Palmars were prisoners aboard this craft, and since every other plan had failed, he meant to stay and see them through.

The *Glenna Mary* picked up speed until the bow wave was a steady, soft-voiced roar. They were heading east now, and the morning star was a bright flare off the starboard bow. Bob Hurley racked his brain for ideas. The pattern of his whole campaign was shattered.

There was laughter there in the darkness near the schooner's wheel. The seaman walked back from the bow and joined his mates. Voices came through the heavy night, but now, with the rush of water and the flow of wind against his ears, Hurley could distinguish nothing that was said.

To be effective, he must surprise that crew; and that seemed impossible. If he got up now and approached them on the deck along the rail, he could not see through the companionway into the cabin until after he was in the cockpit. He would even then be forced to watch the helmsman in front of him, and the others in the rear.

YET in his active mind he laid out a plan that might work perfectly if he had the helmsman in his power, and the others where they could be watched. He meant, if he could do that, to force the

helmsman to put about and run into the bay past Cape Florida, and directly to the Coast Guard base at Dinner Key, single-handed! Commander Newsom and Captain Perkins were scheduled to arrive in a patrol boat at dawn. They would be there by the time this schooner could run in to Dinner Key.

He could do it—but first, he must get back there to the cockpit and subdue the helmsman, moving quickly and striking an adroit blow of surprise. If he failed in that, the whole plan failed. And he could not see how he would be able to get back unobserved.

Then, studying the situation, he saw that the mainsail boom was chocked directly to the rear, above the cockpit. The schooner had been running under power for some time, apparently. Hurley glanced up at the sky, to see how much light already was showing in the east.

He stood up and, moving barefooted and soundlessly, shielding himself behind the mainsail mast, stood erect and looked down into the cockpit. Two men were there, the others having gone below. The helmsman stood slouched at the wheel. Even as Hurley watched, the second man said something, and turned and disappeared into the companionway.

The crew was turning in, leaving only one man in the cockpit, leaving the *Glenna Mary* running at full speed over a smooth sea toward British waters. There was no swell. In a quick decision Hurley decided to walk out upon that mainsail boom to a position where he could turn and drop to the deck. He stepped around the mast and balanced himself upon the boom.

Slowly he moved back, step after careful step. The thudding of the heavy exhaust drowned any sounds of creaking rigging. He was shielded from the helmsman's view by the bunched sail that hung down on both sides of the boom, and forty seconds after he had started back, he dropped to the stern deck, catlike, and whirled.

AS the jab of his gun against the seaman's spine brought the fellow up in frozen rigidity, Hurley spat softly: "Keep your mouth shut! Your first cheep will be your last! Now swing around—slow—slow—and head back toward Cape Florida. Run past the cape into the bay. Then I'll tell you where to go."

The helmsman for an instant seemed paralyzed. Then his hands relaxed some-

what on the wheel, and the bow of the *Glenna Mary* gradually swung out of the graying east and into the north. It continued turning, until it was pointing northwest toward the Cape Florida lighthouse, with the Fowey Rocks light four points to the starboard.

Hurley realized that he was playing with pure dynamite. If Glaskill or anyone else below should sense the change in direction, this strategy would end disastrously. What if the patrol boat did not arrive at Dinner Key before the *Glenna Mary*? What if he succeeded in maintaining command of the schooner for an hour after daylight, and then found himself engulfed by a half dozen fighting demons? Anything could happen. But he forced these thoughts away.

THE boat ran on through the night. Below, if anyone was awake, he gave no sign of it. The cabin lights were off, and no reflections struck down upon the spreading bow wave. Hurley, relaxing to weariness a little, shifted his automatic to his other hand. He watched the Fowey Rocks light sweep past upon the starboard, and realized with a vast satisfaction that they were making at least fifteen knots an hour.

They entered the cut, abreast of the low cape now, and the lighthouse beam was a thin finger of yellow against the growing dawn. From here on, until they cleared the cape, the channel was a winding lane of deep, clear water, but on one side was the sandy cape itself, and on the other were a number of low bars, visible in daylight beneath the water at low tide. Hurley knew this; he had seen the channel from the air, and knew that navigation would be difficult in doubtful visibility. The markers were not lighted. He strained his eyes to see.

While looking ahead, he did not observe the helmsman swing the bow a trifle. But, thinking that there was a flowing tide carrying them inward and that they were going much too fast for safety, he wondered about cutting down the engine. "Don't try it," he decided finally. "Change in the exhaust may wake somebody down below." He watched the indefinite shore line as it glided past.

The *Glenna Mary* went aground an instant later. It struck a sandbar with shuddering, racking violence, and slowed and stopped much like a car that stalls in sand. Hurley was thrown forward by the impact, and, having stepped to one

side a moment previously, there was now nothing with which to brace himself. He went down, his hand outstretched with the gun still in it. Rolling quickly, he saw the helmsman lurching at him. He had no time to bring the gun around enough to fire. But he did, barefooted, raise one leg and smash the fellow in the groin.

That had no least effect. The other plunged and sprawled on top of Hurley, fighting for the weapon which the Coast Guard officer had now drawn back and held in one hand above his stomach. As the helmsman fell, Hurley pulled the trigger.

He was up an instant later, a little dizzy from the quick exertion coming after too many hours without rest. He seemed part of some frightful unreality, and yet the seaman was lying there in a dark pool that formed upon the planking.

A shout came from below, and then a medley of blatant voices. Hurley sat down on the stern rail, giddy, fighting for physical control. He repeated to himself: "Steady! Things are going to pop fast now. Steady does it."

The engine was still running, thrashing the stationary propeller. It ran for perhaps ten seconds, and as a background to its labored clucking was the frenzy of voices in an angry, wild tumult below. Hurley heard one man yell: "Aground! That Jacobs never did know how to run a boat!"

JUST then something let loose in the engine room. It may have been a shaft, or the transmission, or the propeller may have sheared off; whatever it was, the engine leaped suddenly into a series of chattering accelerations. A crash followed the third one, a roar, and then a quick, thin silence through which the voices of the men came dully. Some one yelled: "Good God, look at that! Get out—get out of here!"

"I'm going to kill Jacobs for this!" some one else bellowed in a rage. Footsteps sounded on the companion ladder, and a dark form burst through. A spurt of reddish-yellow flame erupted there, and the bullet spat against the hard wood of the chock behind which Hurley sat, protected. He raised his gun and pulled the trigger. The man, a shadowy form in the half light, dropped the weapon and clutched both hands to his stomach, crouched and collapsed slowly to the deck outside.

The demoniac turmoil in the cabin area below did not subside, and Hurley, a fresh clip of cartridges in one hand and the automatic in the other, sat waiting, wondering why the others did not emerge upon the deck to see what had brought about that first shot in the night. It was possible, perhaps, that they had not heard the shot, that it had failed to penetrate minds filled with dismay at the grounding of the boat.

BUT then he understood—heard the roar of fire as a door down there was opened. Flames darted through a port-hole at one side and licked up outside the rail. The seamen were busy fighting fire. Hurley went cold at the thought of the Palmar brothers, locked and trapped in a forward cabin of this craft. If he went to help them now, Glaskill and his crew might easily escape. Yet if he waited to determine the extent of this fire in the engine room, it might then be too late to get the Palmars.

A voice was shouting: "Get back! Get back! It's in the tanks! They'll blow up—you can't put out gasoline—"

The voice trailed off in the roaring of the flames. It was frightful, the sound of rising, rushing, super-heated air. The flames were coming through the port-holes on both sides now, licking up around the hull, the tips dancing, leaping higher than the rail.

"Out—get out! Before those tanks explode! . . . Hell, we can't save it with the tanks on fire!" There came, then, a stampede of feet across the cabin.

Hurley reasoned quickly. If the tanks were on fire, an explosion would rend this ancient schooner in a thousand parts at any second. What he meant to do now required all the nerve he had, and it might be too great a task. But he jerked forward and crossed the deck and started down through the dark companionway into the cabin.

It was not dark in the cabin, although the lights were out. The *Glenna Mary* had that usual construction found in Gloucester fishing boats: the engine-room was directly aft of the main cabin, where the engine's heat would supply warmth to the room. The flames inside the engine room were darting out against the cabin ceiling. The place was filled with a hellish crimson glow that flickered with the rise and fall of licking flames.

Men were hurrying about the cabin, throwing things together, bumping into

one another in their haste to get out and to the boats. Hurley, his automatic in his belt, walked unnoticed through the main cabin, opened the door and went on through the next one, and thence finally to the third. The lights were burning here.

He had counted the cabin ventilators on the roof, and knew that Palmar and his brother were prisoners in the fourth one from the stern. The door to this fourth room, now, was closed. Hurley heard a shout behind it, and then someone pounded on the panel. He tried the knob and found it locked. As he stepped back to lunge at it, he saw the man who had been standing by a clothes locker door when he came in. For an instant Hurley stood immobile, memory of the Palmars frozen from his mind.

This man before him was towering in height, with hawklike features and blue-black, porcine eyes. Hurley, as in a daze, saw that the other's right thumb was missing, giving the hand a grotesque, claw-like appearance as it held a gun unwaveringly on Hurley's breastbone.

**W**ITH maddening, almost unbelievable deliberation and delay, the fellow said:

"Glaskill is the name. I don't believe I've had the honor." His thin lips formed into a twisted sneer.

Trembling, Hurley nodded, thinking that the fire would cut them both off in a minute. It would be fatal to reach for his automatic. He studied Glaskill, and it seemed to him that the light in those deep-set little eyes was one of partial madness. He recalled in a flash the stories he had heard of this piratical marauder of the West Indies. Smuggler and murderer. Bob Hurley now could well believe the tales. A sane man did not do the things that Glaskill did, and a sane man would never have those eyes.

Behind the cabin door the cries increased, tumultuous, fearful. Hurley said: "We can fight about this later, Captain. Your ship's burning. You have two men imprisoned who will burn alive if we don't get them out."

Glaskill laughed, enjoying the anxiety, the apprehension he saw in Hurley's face. "I mean for them to burn!" he whispered. "I like to hear their yells." His face sharpened and turned savage. "I served my country well—and what did I get for it? A year in prison for something I didn't do!" He laughed, his white teeth showing between half-parted

lips. "But I'm paying back that year. I'll never go to prison again—ever. I'll kill every Coast Guard man I can! You, too!"

His features had a dozen facets. His voice was like a gusty wind, roaring, then falling to a meager whisper, then turning unexpectedly to a pleading confidential tone, or to an acid, biting rasp, and then a mocking coolness. Hurley stood transfixed, knowing for a certainty that this man was partially insane, knowing that every word he uttered he meant to carry out. There was no way on earth to make him miss when he chose to pull the trigger. But it was Glaskill's moment now for gloating.

Hurley cried: "Don't let them die like rats in there! If you must kill them, take them out and put bullets through their heads—but not alive in fire!"

Glaskill's face was diabolical. "You are afraid of fire? Good!" He held the gun steadily, and moved with smooth step toward that door behind which the Palmars were shouting pitiful entreaties. They had heard. "I'll let you roast with them!" cried Glaskill, as he put the key into the lock.

A detonation in the stern shivered every timber in the *Glenna Mary*, and the roar of flames came like the snarling of a hurricane. Glaskill changed his mind abruptly. There really wasn't time to do this thing. His gun came up a little and he pulled the trigger.

**B**OB HURLEY did not lose consciousness. The bullet creased his body underneath his arm. He fell from the shock, crumpled upon his hands and knees as Glaskill retreated to escape the flames. He crouched there in a daze, not realizing fully everything that now took place around him. The fire in the stern was a faintly rasping sound against his ringing ears. Outside, a davit shrieked as the crew prepared the one remaining boat.

Hurley slowly raised his head, and followed Glaskill's tall figure as it moved in sharp silhouette against its reddish background. He fought to stifle nausea and faintness that swept over him. Glaskill stopped, and, standing for a moment at the main cabin door, seemed uncertain whether he could leap across that space and make the safety of the steep companionway. Hurley, driving his muscles, forcing coördination against the searing pain, dragged out his gun. He lifted it, and aimed. The crash of the report



rocked him down again upon his hands, and the weapon dropped from his clutching fingers.

How long he stayed there he had no least idea. In the awful light of that spreading conflagration he could see Glaskill's feet and legs across the cabin entrance. An insane exultance lifted him and gave him strength, collected his jarred senses. He had got Glaskill! Even if Glaskill had got him, and both the Palmars, Glaskill's reign was ended.

He fought against the buzzing in his ears, the surging of a growing giddiness. He got to his knees, and reached up along the wall and staggered to his feet. Seconds counted now. He almost fell as he lurched across the room on sagging knees. The Palmars were silent now beyond that door. Hurley turned the key, and the door burst open and Ralph Palmar stood there with that hellish, dancing light reflecting on his face.

"Get going!" Hurley gasped, his voice thick, as if the smoke had strangled him. "Get going! No time to—lose!" He turned and tried to lead the way, hindered by the ague of his muscles.

**T**HEY stumbled over Glaskill's legs. The fire now was in the after cabin, glowing with an infernal smoky redness. It was too much for human flesh to bear. They were too late, Hurley realized without any grasp of fear. Too late. They'd never get out, here.

But Lieutenant Palmar jerked blankets from the bunks and made shields with them. Dick Palmar wrapped one around Hurley, and both Palmars took him by the arms. They poised there in the doorway, looking at the exit through those smoky, licking flames. And then they plunged, with Hurley being dragged along.

They reached the deck, their nerves crying against that cumulative agony of searing skin, their lungs bursting for the want of air. They poised there, and then scrambled forward. The last small boat, with Glaskill's crew, was gone, already out of sight around the sandy reach of shore. But they found life preservers, and put them on and leaped into the water. The flowing channel current was an endless thing, and they seemed forever in the water. Hurley left a pink streak there behind him, but no sharks came. . . .

Riding back toward Dinner Key in the patrol boat which had come quickly when the *Glenna Mary's* smoke was

sighted, Hurley, between deep drinks of thick, black coffee, tried to piece the fragments of the thing together. It was like seeing through a mist that rolled along the ground, hiding some things and leaving others clearly visible. Dick Palmar had explained his part of the affair, and Lieutenant Palmar his. And Hurley asked:

"You really wrote a letter to Claudet?"

Dick Palmar's eyes showed quick surprise. "Yes. How the devil did you know?"

"Is she blonde and tall? Do you know the letter reached her?" He turned in his chair and called a seaman, whispered, when the man leaned down to him: "Radio the base and ask Commander Newsom to find out if the party in 912, the Alcazar, is still in the hotel. If so, tell him to hold her for investigation. Is that clear?" The man nodded and moved away. Hurley said once more to Dick, "Tall and blonde, an intelligent woman."

"No. The devil—no; she has black hair! Say, I wonder. . . . I gave that letter to a man named Hucks to mail. . . . Well, I'll be damned!"

"I wonder where Williams got to?" Hurley ruminated. "He can taxi the Seroson back to Dinner Key—if he hasn't both hands full of aliens. Newsom can go down to help him—there won't be any trouble there. . . . Ralph, where did the *Glenna Mary* run to, after you went aboard? We hunted everywhere we thought she'd be. . . . Pascal, poor devil—"

"We weren't far away. But the cabin portholes had been blacked, and I don't know exactly where."

The seaman came back and said softly: "The hotel reports the guest in 912 checked out last night. They don't know where she went."

**H**URLEY nodded and dismissed the man. He looked out beyond the stern, across the white wake at the licking flames that had now consumed the *Glenna Mary* almost to the water line. "We got Glaskill—after all these years. Too bad we missed the woman. . . . I wonder who she really is? . . . But," he grinned, turning back to Palmar, "we got you two. You're a precious-looking pair right now!"

There was a silence, and then Ralph Palmar started to reply. But he did not. Bob Hurley was snoring softly as the boat swung in toward Dinner Key.

# Death in the Desert

*A desperate exploit of the Intelligence officer who had come to be called the Red Wolf of Arabia.*

By WILLIAM J. MAKIN

A SILENT spectator at a strange drama: a lean brown face staring from beneath the hood of a black burnous.

Occasionally a slim brown hand delicately lifted the mouthpiece of a Turkish pipe to his lips. A dribble of smoke smeared his face. The eyes seemed half closed. Nevertheless he sat immobile in a doorway, and watched.

Over the rough stones of the street padded an Arab soldier. Like a man shot, he pitched forward. His fingers clawed the dust for a few precious grains of maize spilled from a donkey-bag.

"Allah O Akbar!" he groaned, cramming the maize into his mouth. "Allah is indeed great!"

But the next moment the shadow of another Arab descended upon him. A second hand desperately clawed the dust. There was a snarl, a yapping as of fighting mongrels, and a knife gleamed in the sunshine. The first Arab writhed and moaned, a dying man. Unheeding, the second Arab sheathed his knife, scabbled up the few remaining grains of corn and thrust them into his mouth.

"Allah is merciful!" he cried, and passed on without a backward glance.

The eyes of the man beneath the black burnous seated in the doorway narrowed a little. But indifferently he veiled the scene with another dribble of smoke.

"Holla! Aiee! Make way there, you jackals!"

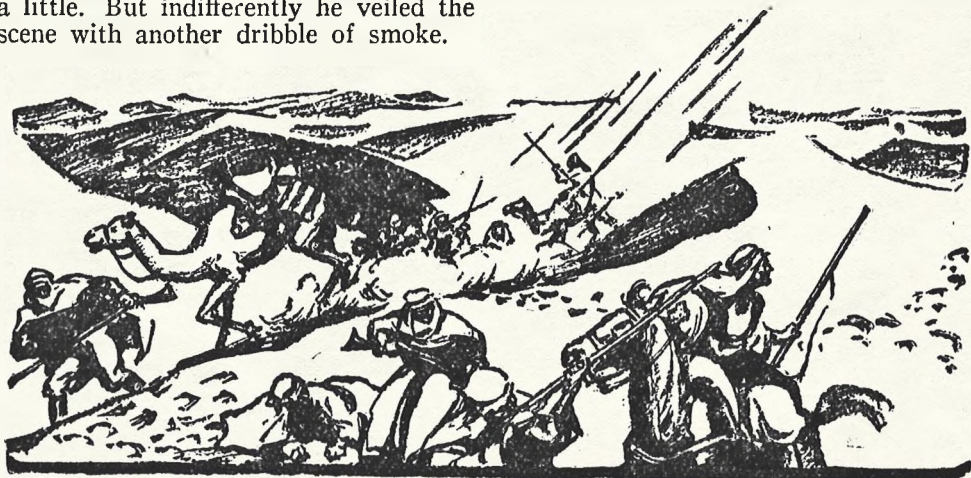
The cry screamed along the narrow street and was followed by the thudding of pads. Some twenty camels, with men swaying drunkenly in the saddles, came in a brown spate. The camels were lean and gray with the dust of the desert. They uttered protesting moans from mouths dry of saliva. And with fear in their faces, the riders kicked the mangy gray flanks, urging the beasts into a stampede.

Hairy legs pounding like pistons stamped the still twitching body of the Arab against the rough stone. And the dust of their passing rose in a cloud. Above fluttered a tattered green silk flag. Scrawled in yellow thread in Arabic were the words: "*And We Have Given You a Great Victory.*"

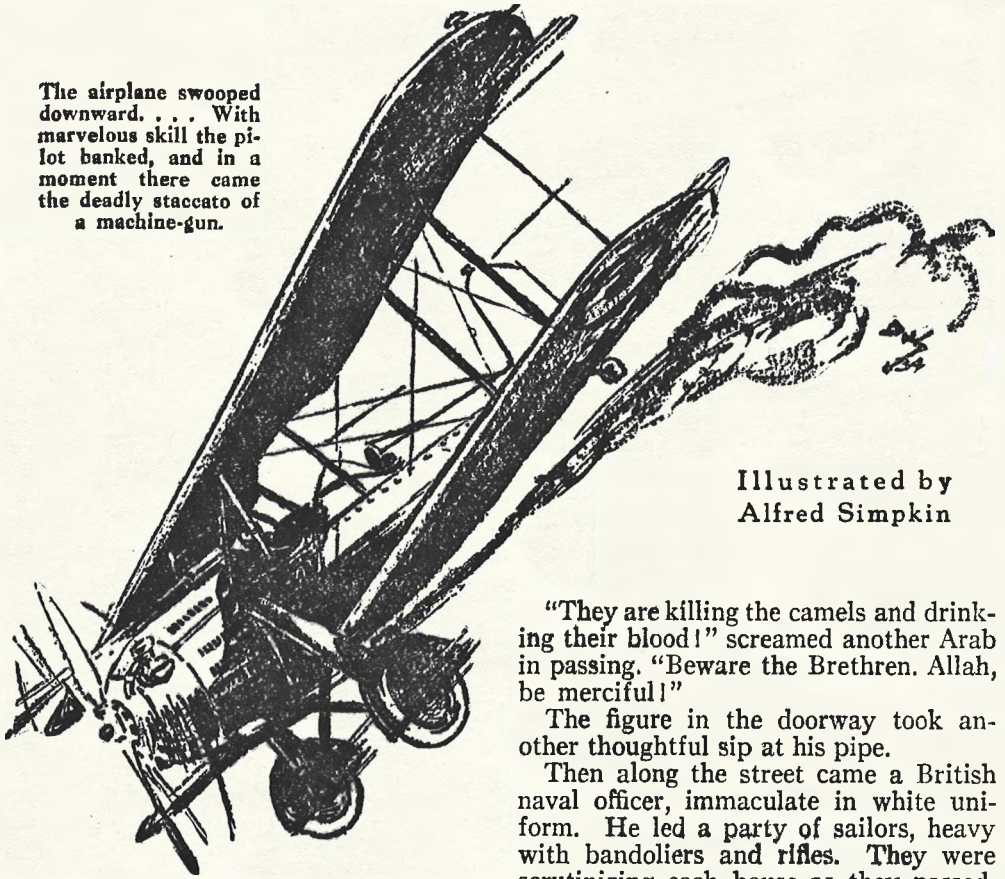
"The *Ikwahn*, the Brethren, are coming," screamed the carrier of the flag. "Their swords have tasted blood. Flee for your lives!"

Like a curtain the dust descended after their passing, smearing the street with a neutral gray that cloaked even the huddled body on the stones.

But still the man in the black burnous seated in a doorway did not move. For



The airplane swooped downward. . . . With marvelous skill the pilot banked, and in a moment there came the deadly staccato of a machine-gun.



Illustrated by  
Alfred Simpkin

a moment his eyes slanted toward the sky. Against the blue silk he saw circling black objects: vultures. He shivered slightly, then calmly resumed his pipe-smoking.

An Arab army in retreat. Into that huddle of houses drenched with the smells of coffee and rotting fish poured the remnants of the Imam Yahya's fighting forces. Hodeidah, the Red Sea port, was their last chance of escape from the advancing Brethren of Ibn Saud. A British naval sloop and two tramp steamers were anchored among the coral reefs. Dhows packed with refugees banged their crazy masts against the steel hulls as though emphasizing these hysterical last hours.

The stragglers on foot appeared. Sweat and dust smeared their frightened faces. Some carried old-pattern rifles. Others clutched naked swords, or helped the wounded who dripped blood as they walked. And behind these men, tongues lolling forth and fangs bared, slunk a pack of hungry dogs. One nosed the heap of dust that had once been an Arab. Then, dutifully, it slunk after the pack.

"They are killing the camels and drinking their blood!" screamed another Arab in passing. "Beware the Brethren. Allah, be merciful!"

The figure in the doorway took another thoughtful sip at his pipe.

Then along the street came a British naval officer, immaculate in white uniform. He led a party of sailors, heavy with bandoliers and rifles. They were scrutinizing each house as they passed. Suddenly he caught sight of the man seated in the doorway.

"Well, I'm blessed!" he muttered, a grin spreading over his face at the calm aloofness of that figure. Then, raising his voice, he called out: "Hi, you! Get out of this! You'll have your throat slit if you stay here much longer."

The man in the black burnous ignored him. The officer swiveled his head.

"Where's that interpreter?"

"Yes, sair?"

A uniformed Egyptian hurried forward.

"Tell this *buddu* to get a move on if he wants to live," commanded the officer. "There's room for him in one of the steamers."

The interpreter swaggered toward the man in the doorway, and gabbled in Arabic. The figure in the black burnous listened, took another pull at the pipe, and replied slowly.

The interpreter listened. He protested. He waved his hands. It made no impression. He even pointed to the body in the dust. The man in the black burnous remained unmoved. Baffled, the Egyptian returned to the naval officer.

"He say, sair, that he no intend to go. He like Hodeidah."

"He won't like it much longer," retorted the officer grimly. "Doesn't he realize that these Wahabis will have the gutters running red before nightfall?"

The Egyptian tried a final plea. Then, hesitantly, he turned again to the officer.

"He say, sair, go to the devil!"

The naval officer snorted.

"Does he, by Jove! Then he'll see him long before I do. Come on, you fellows. Leave the damned *buddu!*"

And with fine precision the naval detachment hurried down the street.



The gaze of the man in the black bur-nous followed them. There seemed a regretful gleam in his eyes. He sighed.

"Fine fellows," he muttered in English. "Perhaps I'd been better with them. But there's work to be done; and—"

His thin brown hand once again lifted the pipe to his lips.

FOR the next ten minutes the street was strangely silent. A rat scurried across the stones and burrowed into another house. A flutter of wings, and a vulture swooped down within a yard of the dead Arab. Then it saw the seated figure in the doorway. With an angry squawk, it rose again in the air.

Far away, ships' sirens hooted. There came a soft murmur, like a whispered

apparent carelessness along the empty street. She came to the body of the dead Arab, and her rouged lips twisted into a little *moue* of disgust. Then, with a start, she looked up. She had become aware of the scrutiny of a thin brown face almost hidden by the hood of a black burnous.

"Who are you?" she asked in Arabic.

The figure in the burnous hesitated for a moment. Then he spoke, in French.

"Keep your hands above your head," commanded the officer, jabbing at him. "Don't be so fierce, Sayed," said a feminine voice. The officer turned. The woman had thrust aside the rugs and was standing there smiling.



prayer in the mosque. Again the sirens hooted. The ships were steaming away. Hodeidah was abandoned to the advancing army of Ibn Saud.

Again the silence of a tomb in sand descended upon the street. The figure in the black burnous waited. . . . Then a step sounded. He looked up. The eyes narrowed. Where he had expected the advancing camelmen of the Wahabis, strolled a woman, a white woman.

She was dressed in a filmy gray frock of Paris design. A wide-brimmed hat covered her coiled black hair and oval features. And over her shoulder she dangled a gray parasol.

Delicately stepping in French shoes over the rough stones, she strolled with

"You had better come inside, mademoiselle. This is not the Rue de la Paix."

She smiled at the French. Then her shoe stirred the body in the dust.

"So I see," she murmured, and without hesitation entered the doorway, where the figure in the black burnous stood aside to let her pass.

THEY climbed a flight of stairs and entered a room that was draped with rugs—Bokharan, Turkish and Caucasian rugs hung in dazzling display against the walls. Several rolls of rugs were stacked in corners. Sunshine filtered into the room through a window of fretted Arabic design.

"And now perhaps you will explain," said the man, closing the door. He was still speaking in French.

"There is nothing to explain," said the girl, calmly drawing off her gloves and revealing wrists of a milky whiteness rarely seen in Arabia. The parasol she had closed, and leaned it negligently against a roll of rugs.

She produced a jade cigarette-case, flicked it open and selected one. A lighter also materialized, and in a few seconds she was smoking away with evident enjoyment.

"Marvelous, how the moment helps one to enjoy a cigarette," she remarked.

The man in the burnous watched her closely. He was obviously puzzled by her behavior.

"I suppose you realize," he said quietly, "that the camel raiders of Ibn Saud will be entering this town at any moment?"

She nodded.

"Maybe we can watch them, together, from that window," she smiled.

"Please understand," went on the man in the burnous, "that this is war—not an affair of Hague Conventions, such as you have in Europe—but war between Arabs, who neither ask for mercy or give it."

"My spine is properly chilled," she remarked. "What then?"

"I want to know who you are, where you come from, and how in heaven's name I'm going to get you out of here, now that the last steamer with refugees has left?"

The creature was powdering her face and studying it in a little mirror.

"So the last steamer has left," she nodded. "How tiresome! I did want to see it."

The man in the burnous uttered something like an oath. The woman heard it, and smiled.

"If you must know," she said, "I come from Marseilles."

"And where are you going?"

She shrugged her pretty shoulders.

"Ah, that I do not know."

"Your name?"

Her carmined lips twisted into a roguish smile.

"Shall we say Simone Valdieu?"

The man in the burnous nodded.

"It will do as well as any other," he growled.

"And now," she remarked briskly, "as I have introduced myself, perhaps I may have the honor of learning the name of an Arab who speaks such perfect French, and—"

Shouts and shots suddenly burst forth in the street beneath. The padding thunder of camels could be heard. The Wahabi warriors, the Brethren, were entering the town. They shrilled excitedly at the loot awaiting them.

An answering shrill came from the French girl, Simone Valdieu. She hurled herself at that fretted Arab window, and peered into the street below.

"Come away from there, you fool!" commanded the man in the burnous. "They'll see you."

EVEN as he spoke, one of the shots ricocheted into the room and thudded against one of the rolls of rugs. But the girl showed no sign of fear. Her dark eyes glistened with joy at sight of the Brethren, hurling themselves pell-mell into the narrow streets of Hodeidah. She even fluttered a yellow silk handkerchief in her excitement.

"*Atee!* Allah brings us victory," shrilled the fanatics below. "Death to the Yemenites and the unbelievers."

A steel-like hand descended upon the girl's shoulders, tearing the filmy gray frock and twisting her round. She gave a little cry of fear. The eyes beneath the hood of the burnous were blazing with anger.

"You little fool!" cried the man. "The sight of your silly painted face will bring those fanatics charging in here at any moment."

"*Mais, mon vieux,*" began the girl, "*je suis—*"

She got no further. There was a thunderous knocking on the door below, which the man in the burnous had closed when he left his seat.

The girl looked up with a white face. The man nodded.

"They're here," he said grimly. "A nice mess you've landed us into, *ma petite*."

The knocking was redoubled in fury. There followed a smashing of wood as rifle-butts were brought into action.

"Get into this roll of rugs," ordered the man in the black burnous. His hands unrolled a large Persian. "Hide in this. There's just a chance—"

The girl even smiled.

"I seem to remember that the Queen of Sheba was taken to Solomon in a roll of rugs," she said calmly.

"I could wish that you were going to Jerusalem," snarled the man in the burnous.

She pouted adorably as he smothered her face in rugs.

At the same moment the door below crashed in. There was the patter of feet on the stairs. Then the door was flung open, and a khaki-clad officer, a white robe draped from his shoulder, and an automatic pistol in his hand, entered, followed by an Arab tribesman carrying a modern rifle.

"Put up your hands!" commanded the officer in Arabic.

Slowly the man in the burnous raised his thin hands. The Arab with the rifle was already nosing toward the rugs.

"A seller of rugs, eh?" snapped the Arab officer contemptuously.

"Allah has willed it," replied the man in the burnous calmly.

"But living in a room that hides something more delectable than prayer-rugs for the holy," went on the officer. "The face of a white woman, an infidel, was seen looking down from that window."

The man in the burnous drew himself up proudly.

"I am of the Faith," he said. "What should I be doing with an infidel woman? Allah is great, and I do not lie."

"You do lie!" cried the officer, a brown finger pointing.

The man in the burnous followed the direction of the finger. That damning gray parasol was leaning against the roll of rugs. He shrugged his shoulders.

"It is but a thing I bought, and—"

"Keep your hands above your head," commanded the officer, jabbing the automatic forward.

"Don't be so fierce, Sayed," spoke up a feminine voice in Arabic.

The man in the burnous turned. The woman had thrust aside the roll of rugs



The Red Wolf

and was standing there, a queer smile on her face.

The Arab officer also smiled. He did not seem surprised.

"Allah protects you, Simone," he said. "Who is this dog of a rug-seller?"

The woman came forward, and with a swift gesture tore back the hood of the burnous, revealing a fiery crop of red hair above those lean brown features.

"A spy among us," she laughed. "A poor fool who thought he would be chivalrous. Don't you recognize him, Sayed? He is the famous Paul Rodgers, called the Red Wolf of Arabia."

"The Red Wolf of Arabia!" gasped the officer. "This is a capture that will delight the soul of my master."

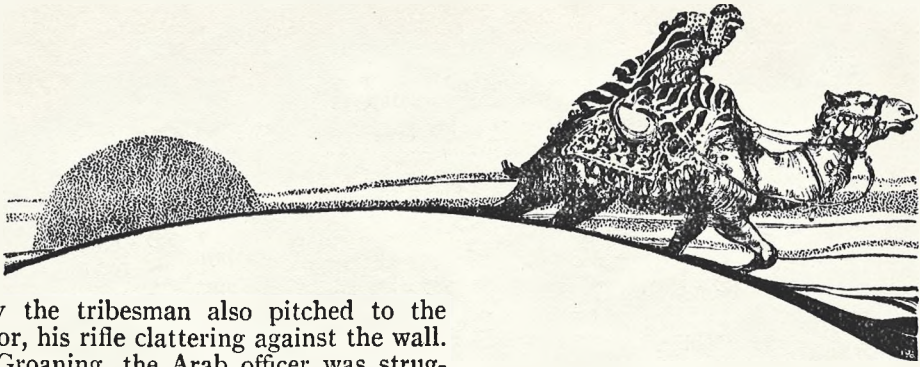
"And my master, Abdullah," nodded the woman. "Is the motor-car bringing him to Hodeidah?"

"Even now, Simone," replied the Arab, "it is churning through the desert sands with your lord and master."

"Good!" nodded the woman. "Then we will take this man, and— *Gardez-vous, Sayed!*"

Her explosion in French was caused by the sudden kick that Rodgers launched at the officer with the automatic. It was entirely successful. With a yelp of pain, the khaki-clad officer clapped his hands over his stomach, dropping the automatic pistol to the floor.

The Intelligence officer pounced upon it, and swung round to meet the Arab tribesman, who was leveling his rifle. Quickly Rodgers fired. With a choking



cry the tribesman also pitched to the floor, his rifle clattering against the wall.

Groaning, the Arab officer was struggling to his feet. But the automatic thudded upon his head, and he went down like a log. At the same moment the French girl made a grab for the rifle, but even as she stretched out her hand that steel grasp caught her, swung her round and sent her spinning against the wall.

"Be quiet, *ma petite chatte!*" ordered Rodgers grimly. "Any more of your tricks, and your lord and master Abdullah will have to go to Marseilles to purchase a new lady for his harem."

The passion of defeat in the girl's face was struggling against a grudging gleam of admiration in her eyes. She recovered herself quickly. Once again the cigarette-case materialized, and calmly she flicked her lighter.

"Well, Monsieur Rodgers, you win for the moment. But the odds are heavily against you. Remember, Abdullah is on his way. What do you intend to do, may I ask?"

Rodgers was stripping the dead tribesman of his white robes. He indicated the unconscious officer in khaki.

"You'll oblige me by getting into that outfit at once," he commanded. "Take off that ridiculous frock and shoes."

"Really, monsieur—" began the girl.

"Do as you are told!"

His gray eyes were narrowed in determined fashion. Simone Valdieu realized that this was not the moment for argument. She bent to her task, and in a few minutes stood upright. In the khaki uniform with the white cape draped from her shoulders, she presented an attractive figure. She had crammed her coiling black hair beneath the flowing white head-dress.

"And now for the automatic pistol," she said gayly.

"Thank you, but I will take care of that," said Rodgers—who, dressed as an Arab tribesman, had concealed it beneath his white robe.

"What is the next move, *mon garçon?*?" asked Simone.

Rodgers peered from the window into the street. Troops were passing, but they were hurrying toward the center of the town, where looting was in full swing.

"I have two camels saddled in the courtyard below," he announced, over his shoulder. "I intend to make my way out of this town. You will accompany me."

"I am a prisoner, *hein?*"

"A prisoner, and a hostage," nodded the Red Wolf. "And believe me, however desirable you may be to Abdullah and yourself, I shall not hesitate to shoot you if you dare by any sign or word to make known to the Wahabis that we are escaping. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly."

"Then come along."

He led the way down the stairs, along a passage, and into a courtyard at the back of the house. There two camels were couched in a kneeling posture.

With a gesture Paul Rodgers indicated one of the beasts.

"Get into the saddle."

The woman obeyed with a smile on her lips. She seemed actually enjoying the episode. Rodgers cursed himself for that chivalrous action in inviting her into the house. He ought to have realized that she was one of the foreign harem beauties of whom the Sheik Abdullah was so boastful in the Arab coffee-houses. Obviously she had been taken by motorcar to the outskirts of Hodeidah, and in that absurd French dress sent to wander the streets and gather information about the fleeing European merchants and business-men. By luck she had chanced upon Rodgers and guessed that he was there as a watcher who would afterward carry the details of the invasion to British Headquarters at Aden.



"Are we going far into the desert, *mon garçon?*"

Her pert face was smiling up at him.

"As far as Mokka," he announced, with no answering smile.

"*Mon Dieu!* Two hundred miles!"

He nodded.

"A little more than a casual stroll along a street in Hodeidah," he added grimly.

He gave a sharp command in Arabic. Obediently, but with a slobbering moan, the camels rose. A moment later they were riding toward the famous Gate of Sinners, beyond which lay the desert. But about them were the frenzied excited Wahabis, looting, and firing their rifles with great joy.

Glancing at her companion, Simone Valdieu saw that the automatic pistol was ready for action beneath his white robes. And the rifle was slung Arab fashion at his saddle. His thin face was set and stern. But he rode his camel in the easy fashion of a born Bedouin.

"Halt, there!"

The command came in Arabic from a group of soldiers at the Gate of Sinners. Another Arab officer in khaki uniform came out of a coffee-house to regard them.

The Red Wolf was equal to the occasion.

"Allah give our camels wings!" he growled out. "We ride on business of the Sheik Abdullah."

"*Atee!* A Bedouin gives orders!" laughed the officer.

His gaze shifted to the lithe figure in khaki mounted on a camel. Obviously he was waiting for the other officer to give commands.

Beneath his white robe Rodgers gripped the automatic. It seemed certain he would have to fight his way through. But to his astonishment, the girl was snapping out commands in Arabic.

"Make way, you dogs! Did you not hear? We ride on business of the Sheik Abdullah."

Cowed, the tribesmen fell back. Even the officer who was guarding the gate stiffened to attention and jerked his hand in salute. A moment later they were out of the town, riding into the desert.

AS their camels began striding with their piston-like legs over the sand, Rodgers gave a sidelong glance at his companion.

"Why didn't you shout for help," he asked. "Were you afraid?"

That derisive smile was still on her lips.

"Would you really have shot me?" she countered.

He shook his head.

"You knew well enough that I would not. Why, then, didn't you give the alarm?"

"Perhaps I rather liked the idea of riding through the desert with such a notorious companion as Paul Rodgers," she murmured.

His face stiffened. Women, he reflected, were all the same. Coquetry seemed to him inherent in them. He urged his camel forward.

A ripple of laughter followed him. She seemed to have guessed his thoughts.

"But you don't seem to agree with me," she added.

His glance traveled to the boyish figure in the khaki uniform, riding the camel with perfect ease.

"What made you bring that cursed parasol?" he asked, pointing to the absurd gray object.

"Vanity, monsieur. Just vanity."

IT was on the next day that the Red Wolf saw they were being pursued. A group of figures on camels, silhouetted in the evening from the top of a sand-dune, a distant shout of recognition, and then night closed upon them.

"No camp tonight," he announced. "We must ride through."

Sore and stiff from these two days in the desert, Simone Valdieu pouted in protest. But although she had not seen those silhouetted figures, she guessed what had happened.

"They're on our trail, *hein?*" she whispered.

He nodded.

"Luckily, they've only just seen us. But their camels will bring them here within the hour."

The girl rippled with laughter.

"I expect Sayed, with a bandaged head, will be among them," she said. "He will be anxious to come to grips with the strange rug-seller of Hodeidah."

She moved obediently toward the kneeling camels, but a remark from Red Rodgers caused her to turn.

"One moment, madame!"

"Yes, *mon vieux?*"

He hesitated.

"You may have your liberty now. Take the camel and ride back to your friends. Abdullah is, no doubt, anxious about your safety."

There was a touch of irony in his words. She flushed a little.

"But am I not your prisoner, Monsieur Rodgers?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"You were."

"I see." She came nearer. "And now I am not. You would rid yourself of me, *hein?*"

There was anger gleaming in her dark eyes.

"You don't comprehend," said the Intelligence officer. "I am carrying notes and information, valuable information, to the British. I do not intend, under any circumstances, to be taken alive. I shall fight to the last."

"And you think that Simone Valdieu, favorite wife of the Sheik Abdullah, is better out of it?"

Her lips were curled in scorn.

"I am advising you for your own safety," protested Rodgers.

She stamped the sand with her riding boot.

"I refuse to be released," she cried. "I insist upon being taken a prisoner to Mokka. And if there is any fighting, I will fight with you. *Quel dommage!* Let us ride into the night."

There was a gleam of admiration in his gray eyes.

"You are a brave woman, Simone."

"*Alors,*" she replied cynically, "I am a coward. I am not brave enough to go back to that bearded fanatic Abdullah. That is all."

Without another word, Red Rodgers mounted his camel. Together they rode into the empty desert. Hour after hour they plodded on in the darkness. Both realized the futility of the attempt to escape. Their camels were leaving a trail in the sand which even a child could read. It was only a matter of time before the pursuing Arabs would be upon them.

Except for a handful of dates, they had not eaten during the day. And the last water-hole had been dry. Even the Red Wolf, inured to desert travel, was feeling the strain. The French girl, after two days of this hardship, must be in a bad state.

AT two o'clock in the morning, to add to their desperate situation, the girl's camel stumbled, staggered against a boulder and gave a slobbering moan. Simone was flung into the sand, but in a moment was struggling to her feet.

Not so the camel. It lay there in stubborn helplessness. At one glance, Rod-

gers knew the worst. It had broken a leg, and would be useless for riding. Silently they gazed at the poor beast.

"At least we can drink," said Rodgers through his clenched teeth.

He drew forth the automatic and put it to the ear of the beast. Simone turned away. There was a loud report, the camel made a desperate plunge, and then flopped back to die.

IN the moonlight, a knife gleamed in Red Rodgers' hand. An instant's hesitation, then he plunged it into the belly of the dead camel. Water of a greenish color began to trickle forth.

"Drink!" he commanded.

The girl shuddered.

"I can't."

"You must. You'll die of thirst before dawn, otherwise."

With an effort she stretched out her blistered hands and cupped some of the liquid. She carried it to her lips. Then once again she stretched forth her hands.

"They say it is an Arab's last drink when he has to kill his camel to quench his thirst," croaked the Red Wolf.

He too was scooping that green liquid into his mouth. There was precious little of it. A minute later, and they were both clambering on the remaining camel.

"How far to Mokka?" she asked.

"Fifty miles," he said bluntly.

There was no need to lie. The truth had to be faced. He wondered whether either of them would see the dawn rise over the desert. . . .

A nightmare journey. That shot in the darkness would have roused the pursuers to fresh efforts. They would discover the dead camel. It would tell the tale of the desperate plight of the fugitives. They would yell their war-cry fiercely into the night, and urge their camels forward.

Swaying in his saddle, and conscious that the girl was clinging to him with the desperation of exhaustion, Red Rodgers found a strange Bach-like theme throbbing in his mind to the rhythm of the camel. Point-counter-point! His fingers stiffened, as though reaching for a keyboard. He delighted in Bach. There was richness in the musical context. But why should the rhythm of one camel provide that complex point-counter-point? And then he realized. There were other camels pounding on behind.

"The dawn at last!" laughed Rodgers in light-headed fashion. The gray horizon of the desert was tinged with the

The Red Wolf saw that they were being pursued. A group of figures on camels, silhouetted in the evening from the top of a sand-dune, a shout of recognition. . . . "No camp tonight," he announced. "We must ride through."



flame of the rising sun. Within a few minutes a golden radiance would race across the desert and reveal the fugitives to those who pounded on in pursuit with a grim determination to kill.

**E**VEN as the first flame streaked the horizon, the camel sank to its knees with a dying slobber. It was exhausted. Rodgers slipped to the sand. He caught the girl as she pitched forward. With an effort he carried her to the shelter of a sand-dune. Ironically, and with feminine perversity, she still clutched that absurd parasol.

The Red Wolf stumbled back to the camel. He retrieved the rifle, the camel-bag containing the last handful of dates, and the saddle. Then he reached the safety of the sand-dune, laid a bandolier of cartridges at his side, and waited.

Not for long. The abandoned camel, sensing the presence of other beasts, had struggled to its feet and pounded back in their direction. It had stampeded into the midst of the pursuers. There were shouts of alarm, shots—and then silence. The pursuers knew that their two victims were only a few yards away.

A tribesman crawled with his rifle to the summit of a dune. Cautiously he raised himself. Simultaneously there came a crack from a point some yards away. With a bullet in his throat the tribesman slithered down the dune.

Nestling the cheek of his blackened face against the rifle, Red Rodgers waited for the next attacker to appear. He realized, despairingly, that it was only a matter of time before the enemy closed in upon them. Already some of these Arabs, like sand-rats, were crawling forth with intent to circle them.

"I'm sorry, Paul."

A whisper in his ear from the girl.

"Why should you be?" he asked, without removing his gaze from that ridge before him.

"I ought to have gone back when you asked me. You could have got away."

"Don't be a fool," he retorted; and once again his rifle spat forth. The dying moan of a tribesman came toward them in the morning air.

Simone Valdieu shivered.

"*Parbleu!* A nice sort of end for a girl from Marseilles," she murmured. "I suppose I ought to be ashamed of myself."

"For what?"

"Running away with Abdullah. But in Marseilles he was different, somehow.

He was, how shall I say, *gentil!* He took me to cinemas, bought me *marrons glacés*—I always loved *marrons glacés*; and then begged me to sail with him to Arabia."

"Why are you telling me this? Keep quiet, can't you!"

"We shall both be dead in a few minutes, so why get angry, Paul? Of course my head was stuffed with nonsense about sheiks. I had read many *romans*, *feuilletons* and similar rubbish. . . . *Mon dieu!* Six months in his harem at Jidda taught me all I wanted to know about sheiks. . . . *Gardez-vous, Paul! A gauche!*"

Rodgers swiveled his rifle to the left. A shot crashed forth. A tribesman fell flat. At the same time several bullets whistled uncomfortably close to the crouching fugitives.

"Take this. You might like to use it—at the end."

Rodgers roughly thrust the automatic pistol into her hand. Her fingers closed upon it. Tears were trickling from her eyes, down her sun-blackened cheeks. With a pathetic gesture she fumbled for her powder *cachet* and began dabbing her cheeks, with the last remnants.

"At least I'll die white!" she babbled.

**O**NCE again the Red Wolf fired. He cursed loudly. He had missed—and ammunition was precious. The ring of crawling tribesmen was now closing in upon them. Instinctively, for a second, his eyes slanted toward the blue silk of the sky. The desert sky! He had loved it, suffered under it, lived under it. It would be hard to close his eyes to it.

With a snarl he couched his cheek once more against the barrel of the rifle. There was a strange humming in his ears. It droned steadily through his brain—a roar, like the approach of an avalanche.

"Paul, *mon vieux!* Regardez!"

The girl was pointing excitedly to the sky.

"Keep down, you fool! What is it?"

"*Un avion!* It comes toward us. Look!"

Even the crawling Arabs were looking upward. Rodgers could see it clearly. An airplane, a British Bristol fighter, flying low over the desert. Its red, white and blue circular markings could be distinctly seen. And the pilot and the observer were leaning out, obviously having detected the crouching figures in the sand.

"Must have flown from Aden—on reconnaissance," muttered Paul Rodgers.

Then he realized, in despair, that the

two occupants of the plane would glimpse only Arabs, in Arab uniforms, fighting in the desert. They would not interfere.

**S**AVAGELY his rifle barked out again. Another tribesman tumbled from the dune. But the noose of men was drawing tighter. They were preparing for the final rush.

"If only I could attract their attention!" muttered Rodgers. . . . "There's a chance—just a chance," he went on excitedly as an idea came into his mind. He thrust his rifle into the blistered hands of Simone Valdieu. "Can you hold them off, for two minutes, *ma petite?*" he asked.

She nodded, and couched herself against the dune.

The Red Wolf crawled a few yards. He stripped himself of his white robe and laid it flat on the desert. He grabbed two large stones to hold it down against the desert breeze. Even as he did so, bullets whipped the sand at his feet. But at the same moment the French girl fired, and the tribesmen ducked again.

The airplane was droning in circles overhead. Obviously the pilot and observer had seen the landing-signal, and were puzzled by it. But they were taking no chances. It was not their business to interfere in tribal affrays.

Rodgers glanced round despairingly. Some further signal was necessary. It was then he saw the gray parasol, that absurd object, lying in the desert. He seized it, opened it, and with a fine flourish sent it curvetting into the air. The desert breeze caught it, blew it up, an incongruous dancing object in the sky.

The airplane swooped downward. As it came roaring past, Rodgers tore off his head-dress, displaying that fiery if desert-smearred crop. He pointed toward the advancing tribesmen. The plane, with the breeze screaming through the ailerons, tore in that direction.

The tribesmen pointed their rifles to the sky and sent a hail of bullets in the direction of the machine. But with marvelous skill, the pilot banked, and in a moment there came the deadly staccato of a machine-gun. Three tribesmen pitched forward. The remainder scuttled for the shelter of dunes.

Back again came the droning machine. The engine was shut off. With a *swish-swish* through the air it slid toward the desert, bumped and landed. The pilot

taxied in the direction of the man and the girl.

"Who the devil are you, anyhow?" he shouted above the crunch of the engine. Then he saw that blackened face with the fiery crop. "Good God! It's Paul Rodgers."

The Intelligence officer stumbled toward them.

"Thanks, old man," he said casually. "Another five minutes, and there would have been no need to land."

"What's the game?" asked the pilot, pushing up his goggles.

Rodgers chuckled.

"The usual game. A little fight among friends. Got any water?"

The observer slung out a water-bottle. Rodgers seized it, and carried it to the girl who was still couched with the rifle.

"Here, drink this!" he said. "No need to worry now."

Simone drank greedily. She seemed dazed.

"Glad I stuck to the parasol," she laughed, a little hysterically.

Then she swayed. Rodgers caught her in his arms and stumbled back to the airplane.

"Who's the boy friend?" asked the pilot.

"It's a girl, a French girl who has been in the hands of those damned Arabs," retorted Rodgers. "We've got to get to Aden."

The pilot's eyes had opened wide in astonishment at the sight of the girl in the khaki uniform. But Rodgers' final remark caused him to scratch his ear, thoughtfully.

"No can do, Rodgers," he explained. "At the most I can only carry one more person. Just got enough fuel to last us back to Aden."

**T**HE girl opened her eyes. She had heard. She attempted to struggle from Rodgers' grasp.

"*Laissez-moi, Paul!*" she murmured. "I'm all right. I can walk back to the Arabs—take my chance."

"I said you were a fool, *ma petite chatte*," replied Paul Rodgers. "And now you are a bigger fool than ever. —Here, lift her in."

The pilot stretched out his arms and dragged the girl into the cockpit. He settled her comfortably.

"And what about you, Rodgers?"

The Intelligence officer grinned.

"I've a job of work to do in Mokka. And I see our Arab friends have left a

healthy-looking camel beyond the sand dunes there. "I'll capture it, and ride on. In the meantime—" A hand dived into his loin-cloth and brought out a packet of maps and papers. "You might deliver these to Intelligence Headquarters at Aden. They'll be anxious to have them. Incidentally, there's a few notes about the girl."

The pilot took the notes.

"I don't like leaving you in this howling desert, Rodgers," he said. "And your *buddu* friends are hiding just beyond the sand-dunes."

Rodgers nodded, and shook the pilot's hand.

"Don't worry about me. You might hover for a few minutes while I get that camel and about a mile start. Then I'll look after my own skin."

The pilot agreed, and brought down his goggles.

"All right, Rodgers. Give me a swing on the propeller."

Rodgers clutched the blade.

"Contact?"

"Contact!"

A roar from the engine. Simone Valdiou struggled and leaned forward. She shouted something to Rodgers, but it was lost in the thunder of the engine. The machine ran forward, lifted and roared into the sky.

By the time the pilot had banked and swung back again, Red Rodgers was astride the enemy's camel, riding easily in the direction of Mokka. He waved a hand in farewell as the machine droned away. He was left, a solitary figure in the wilderness. . . .

Two days later, in one of the old houses at Mokka, a British sailor from a cruiser anchored in the roadstead, saluted and handed the Intelligence officer a message.

"Radio from Intelligence at Aden, sir."

Rodgers slit the envelope and read:

*Many thanks valuable information stop.*

*Acting on your advice stop. Girl Simone*

*Valdiou offered free passage back to Mar-*

*seilles stop. She insists staying Aden*

*waiting your arrival stop. Are you re-*

*porting here personally soon query*

*Maxwell*

"Any reply, sir?" asked the bluejacket.

Red Rodgers nodded.

"Take this down!" The bluejacket produced pencil and pad. "*Rodgers to Maxwell, Intelligence, Aden. Go to the devil stop. Get rid of the girl stop.*"

"Is that all, sir?"

"That's all."

# The Last Laugh

*An Old Guard Blue  
Book writer con-  
tributes a little story  
with a big punch.*

By

LEMUEL DE BRA

Illustrated by Bert Salg

IN a sudden lull in the roar of traffic beneath his windows, Leo Lawson, better known as "Loot," caught the sound of stealthy steps outside his apartment door. He looked up quickly from the letter he had been writing. Tense, motionless, his fingers gripping the pen, he stared at the door, listening with ears sharpened by a life of thirty years spent in conflict with the law.

The steps passed on. Dropping his pen, Loot arose, went swiftly and silently to the door. Again he listened; but again the evening rush of traffic was thundering in the street beneath his window. He could hear nothing else.

Loot Lawson laughed—just as he had laughed at everything and everybody all his life. Handsome in a dark, dapper way, fond of good clothes, good food, all the good things of life, it was that habit of laughing at life's cruel vicissitudes that had kept Loot Lawson young. Not even three terms in prison had marred his unfailing good humor.

"Funny how I imagine things since I saw Wong Lee!" he reflected as he turned away from the door. "That was probably just the Chink houseboy. Huh! So busy writing I didn't notice how dark it's getting!"

He punched on the lights, drew the shades over the windows, switched on the reading-lamp on the table, and quickly finished his letter.

Loot had a fair education, but the writing of this communication had cost him a great deal of thoughtful effort.



"You choose a strange time to laugh, Lawson," said Wong Lee. "It's your last laugh!"

On the table lay a first draft in pencil, showing many changes. This draft Loot now crumpled and carefully burned in his ash-tray.

He glanced at his watch. "Better get this letter started on its way!" he decided. "Got all night to write the other."

Rising, he shoved the letter in his pocket, got his hat, and went to the door. From force of habit, he put his ear to the panel and listened. There was no sound. He turned the knob.

Instantly, the door was thrown back against him. Loot caught a glimpse of two Chinese in American clothes; then, before his hand could flash to his gun, an automatic was jammed against his abdomen.

"Back!" whispered the foremost Chinese. "An' mo' betteh you kip still!"

Loot was no coward; neither was he a fool. He stepped back. And over the shoulder of the man with the gun, he saw now the face of the second Chinese. It was Wong Lee.

"Put your hands up, Lawson!" whispered Wong Lee, quietly closing the door. "Watch him closely, Ah Sam, while I search him. Loot Lawson is clever—and dangerous."

"Thanks for the flowers!" chuckled Loot, raising his arms. "But who—"

"Silence!" ordered Wong Lee. "You know who I am. And you know why I am here. Ah!" He found Loot's automatic and slipped it into his own pocket. "Now you may put down your arms. But don't try any tricks. Sit down at

that table. I wish to talk with you a moment."

Loot said nothing as he went back to the table and dropped into his chair, but he was doing some swift thinking. As the two Chinese seated themselves across the table from him, he studied Wong Lee's face. Wong was about Loot's age, but now he seemed much older. His saffron face was almost haggard; his black eyes burned with a fanatical light.

Involuntarily, Loot shrank back in his chair. Then his gaze fell on the gun in the other man's hand. Ah Sam had rested the automatic on the edge of the table, the muzzle aimed at the white man's chest.

Suddenly Loot Lawson laughed.

"Don't let that thing go off, Chinky! I want to hear what this washee man have say. Besides, I haven't eaten my rice yet. Savvy?"

"**LAWSON,**" said Wong Lee quietly, "there is no use pretending you do not recognize me. And there is no harm in telling you now that Chun, the house-boy, helped me locate you. Ah! I see you remember me now!"

"Sure I do!" chuckled Loot. "You used to be the porter at the Old Hermitage saloon."

Wong Lee's face darkened at the insult, but his voice remained calm.

"*A dying serpent wastes his venom,*" he quoted. "If it gives you any pleasure to strike at me, go ahead. I can afford to be generous to one about to die."

"About to die!" Loot smiled. "Say, you're crazy! I never felt better in my life."

Wong Lee waved a slim brown hand in a gesture of dismissal.

"Let us proceed to business, Lawson. It was about two years ago that you and your brother—"

"Leave my brother out of this!" snarled Loot. "You hear?"

Wong Lee's slant eyes widened. "Why should I leave your brother out of this?" he inquired evenly. "He was with you when—"

"Because," Loot Lawson broke in, his voice softening, "my brother—is dead."

"Dead!" Wong Lee frowned. "Is that true?"

"Why should I lie about it?"

"To save him from my vengeance."

"Bah!" Loot sneered. "Neither Eddie nor I were ever afraid of you."

A ghost of a smile flickered over Wong Lee's dark lips. "Of course, it is only stupidity on my part that it has taken me two years to run you down. Can you give me any proof that your brother is dead?"

"No, I can't. You'll have to take my word for it. Eddie died in Phoenix about a year ago. I didn't even know he was buried. And I don't know where he was buried. All that I—say, maybe you'd take this as proof!" Loot took a thin leather folder from his inside coat pocket and drew out a telegram, so worn and creased that it was almost in pieces. "Almost forgot I had that," Loot said, laying the telegram on the table in front of Wong Lee.

"Watch him, Ah Sam," cautioned Wong Lee—then read aloud:

*"Phoenix, Arizona, May 2, 1932—Leo Lawson, Western Hotel, San Francisco:*

*"Eddie died here at seven this morning stop Can you come? —Budge."*

"I couldn't go just then," said Loot grimly. "I was in jail. And when I did get down there, I couldn't find Budge Scanlin. Neither could I find Eddie's grave. So—"

"So," broke in Wong Lee, nodding his head, "perhaps now you understand how I feel. My brother, you recall, is—dead."

"Yeah?" Loot showed mild interest. "Did I know him?"

WONG LEE chose to ignore the question. His slant eyes aglitter, he drew back in his chair as if preparing to spring at the white man.

"As I started to say a moment ago," his calm, precise voice cut through the silence, "it was about two years ago that you and your brother held up our jewelry store in New York City. My brother and I had worked hard to build up our business. We had started heavily in debt after our father's death. We were succeeding—slowly.

"On that evening when you entered our store we had in the safe ten thousand dollars with which we were to make the last payment to old Hop Leong, the money-lender. We also had a small fortune in diamonds and other gems, including some rare pieces of valuable jade.

"When we faced your guns, we faced ruin. You understand?"

"YEAH," snarled Loot Lawson. "And when I faced your brother with that long knife 'n his hand, I faced death, and a damned messy one! So—I burned him down."

"Ah!" Wong Lee snapped forward. "So it was you! I held both of you responsible, but never knew which one actually killed him. Well—*tsau kom lok!*"

"If that's inviting me to have a drink, I accept."

"I said—*let it be so!* For my brother's death, you are to die."

Loot sat up.

"The devil you say! You mean—you came here to kill me?"

"Precisely."

Loot glanced at the automatic aimed steadily at his chest, then back at Wong Lee.

"Why, you're goofy! The cops will have you before you get a block away. You'll hang for murder!"

"Do you think I have not prepared for my—what is the term you crooks use?—for my get-away? Ah! I see you have been writing. Good! Take a sheet of paper and that pen and write what I say!"

Loot hesitated, glanced again at the automatic, then picked up the pen.

Wong Lee dictated:

*"I am tired of fleeing the vengeance of Wong Lee, whose brother I murdered."*

In the middle of a word, Loot jerked up, an astounded look on his face. For a moment there was silence—only the muffled roar of the streets.

"Well, I'll be damned!" muttered Loot. "So you're going to make it look like suicide?"



"Precisely."

Loot flung down the pen. "I won't do it. It's murder, and you'll have to face it. I—"

"That, too, I have prepared for," Wong Lee broke in. "I do not like to stoop to such tactics, but you force me. Ah Sam will—"

"Wait a minute! I suppose you're going to use a little ancient Chinese torture?"

"I had hoped it wouldn't be necessary."

"It won't," said Loot grimly. "I've seen enough of that. So I'm going to be rubbed out? Seems funny! How long are you going to give me to get ready for the execution?"

"As long as you gave my brother."

Loot said nothing to that. He looked away, his dark eyes thoughtful.

"So I'm going to be rubbed out," he repeated. "The cops will find this note and— Say, that reminds me!" He took from his pocket the letter that he had started to mail. "Here's something I'd rather the dicks wouldn't find—when they find me. This guy used to be a crook, but he cut the game and now is going straight—married and settled down. But if the dicks got hold of his address they'd sure make him trouble. No use in that. How about mailing this letter?"

Wong Lee took the letter, saw that it was addressed to "J. M. Smith, Whitfield, Oregon," and shoved the envelope in his pocket. "I will mail it," he promised. "I can afford to grant that little favor to one about to die."

"You must like the sound of that!" said Loot grimly. "Well, here goes!"

He picked up the pen, quickly finished the suicide note, signed it with a flourish and tossed it across the table to Wong Lee.

"Quite satisfactory," approved Wong, nodding. "And now—"

Wong Lee arose. He got out the automatic he had taken from Loot Lawson, examined it carefully, and started around the table.

**T**HEN, suddenly, Loot Lawson flung back his head—and *laughed!*

Wong Lee stared.

"You choose a strange time to laugh, Lawson! I fail to see anything amusing in the situation. . . Well, it's your last laugh!"—with sudden rage. . .

At the door, Wong Lee turned and looked back. Loot Lawson, with blood

oozing from a powder-blackened hole in his right temple, had fallen forward across the table. His left hand was almost touching the suicide note. His automatic, wiped clean of Wong Lee's fingerprints, was in Loot's right hand.

Piercing the muffled roar of the street traffic, Wong Lee's whisper sounded weird and eerie in that room of death:

"I wonder—why he laughed."

**E**DDIE LAWSON recognized his brother's handwriting on the envelope. He flung down the papers and other mail the rural carrier had just left, and looked around cautiously. Mrs. Lawson and the baby were down in the orchard.

Quickly Eddie tore the envelope open, and read:

*"Well, Eddie, I've been taking stock the last few days and here's how things line up: I've been a constant worry to you ever since you cut the game, got married, and settled down. I wish I'd followed your lead, for this game doesn't pay. Now I'm a three-time loser and the dicks are apt any day to collar me for my latest job, which means that this time the judge will throw the book at me. At that, I might have the laugh on them for the croaker says the old pump is liable to stop any minute.*

*"Moreover, who do you suppose I saw a few days ago. Nobody but Wong Lee! That yellow devil sure had dogged my trail. I'm afraid his next move will be to get the drop on me and use a little Chinese torture to make me tell where you are.*

*"Of course, I'm still carrying that phony wire you sent me about your death. But, honestly, Eddie, I'm afraid I'd crack, about the time Wong Lee got going good with his damnable stuff.*

*"So I'm going to do one decent thing for you. I'd have had my gizzard cut to ribbons that night Wong Lee's brother came at me, if you hadn't burned him down. You saved my worthless life. Now that you're going straight, you and Margie shouldn't have to live in fear any longer. For whatever you've done, you've paid.*

*"I'm going to mail you this letter, addressing you as J. M. Smith, as usual. Then I'm going to write a note saying that I killed Wong Lee's brother and that I'm tired of dodging Wong's vengeance. Then I'm going to blow out the lights and call it a day. That'll square everything for you and give me the last laugh. Eh?"*



# The Trouble

By HORATIO WINSLOW

Illustrated by Henry Thiede

## *The Story Thus Far:*

THE whole gosh-awful business was started by that infernal professor's lecture on the secret of success. All the great men of history won out, he claimed, by getting in touch with their suppressed impulses; and he sold me a book for ten dollars (\$10.) that told how to do it.

Well, I carried out the funny exercises and directions in that book faithfully; and—one morning, I woke up in my room at Mrs. Lammick's where I lodged, and there was another party in bed with me!

"I demand to know who you are," I said.

Stretching his arms and yawning, the party replied, "I'm Young Excelsior's Double, or the Mystery Man of the Second Floor Back."

"That is no answer," I said coldly.

He kicked back the covers, and I saw he was wearing one of my night-shirts. "Elroy," he said, "why not buy us pajamas instead of flour-sacks?"

Whereupon he got up, and in spite of my protests dressed himself in my best blue serge suit. He had gradually backed toward the window, and the morning sun threw his shadow onto the carpet. But though the serge suit and hat cast the usual black silhouette, the head and the two hands cast nothing at all. Where there ought to have been a shadow, there was not even a film. "Now I understand," I exclaimed. "You are just an optical illusion. You haven't even got a shadow. Ha-ha!"

"Ha-ha yourself, Elroy," he replied in a grating voice. "Ha-ha while the ha-ha-ing is good. Listen, did you ever hear of an optical illusion borrowing lunch-money? Watch me. There's a ten-dollar bill in the old wallet. Let's have it."

That was the dreadful beginning; and my Suppressed Comrade—or Suppy, as he called himself, proceeded to make my life a nightmare, in that hitherto placid town of Quantus. For example:

He astonished a church sociable by offering to sell kisses to the girls at a quarter apiece; and he actually got by with it, and turned in quite a bit of money—all this, of course, being laid at my door.

He borrowed money from my office friend Ray Buckbee and lost it at poker.

He pestered me for money and spent it on a spree at a road-house—in the course of which he pilfered a banjo from the musicians and proposed marriage (in my name, of course) to two unknown girls whom he met at that tavern!

I was already engaged, I must explain, to Miss Mullet of Elm Center; but Suppy wrecked that too—by kissing another girl in her presence.

And then he committed an even more serious crime. He met Mr. Van Hulsteyn, my employer, who intrusted him (as he often intrusted me) with over a thousand dollars to deposit at the bank. But Suppy disappeared without depositing that money. Mr. Van Hulsteyn found the deposit had not been made,



# with my Double

*This sprightly chronicle of an upright youth fighting valiantly against his sinful shadow here rushes on to its amazing climax.*

Decorations by Margery Stocking

and discharged me. He gave me until Friday to restore the money or—go to prison.

Well, I found my Suppressed Comrade at a cock-fight, where he had won a lot of money. Before the place was raided by the sheriff, he pretended to turn over the money to me. I escaped out a window and chartered a taxicab—and then found Suppy had stuffed a roll of paper instead of money into my pocket. And the driver had me jailed because I couldn't pay him.

My friend Ray Buckbee paid my bill and fine next morning—just in time for me to reach the great Old Home Week celebration of the Young People's Advancement Society, over which I was to preside. This, I may note, was an important occasion, for several famous natives of Quantus were to attend—in particular Mr. Davenanter, the Master Mind of Wall Street, whom my employer Mr. Van Hulsteyn hoped to interest in his business. And there, presiding, was my diabolic Suppressed Comrade! I draw the veil over many of Suppy's outrageous performances at that gathering. But as a climax he maneuvered the pompous Mr. Davenanter into upsetting a bucket of water over his own head, and the meeting broke up in a riot. . . .

"Where is that money?" I demanded of Suppy as soon as I could find him.

He replied that he had spent part of it—and placed the rest of it with a stakeholder in a bet that he (or I) would

next day jump off the bridge into the river seventy-five feet below! I actually did make that foolhardy jump, only to find that the sum wagered was a mere ten dollars!

Next he maneuvered me into a prize-fight with a professional—and by jabbing a stickpin into me so that I was wild with pain, so roused me that I won with the first frantic blow. Rebellious now, I put the thousand dollars of prize-money into my own pocket and took it to Mr. Van Hulsteyn's house. He was out, and I left it for him with his wife.

And thereby brought about fresh calamity: For my infernal double called shortly thereafter to take Julie riding, and persuaded Mrs. Van Hulsteyn to give him back the money—he wanted to give it to Mr. Van H. himself! I was hot on his trail, however; I concealed myself in the rumble seat of his car; and when he stopped and got out at Peek Inn, I presented myself to Julie, who was waiting in the car. There was a misunderstanding, however, which ended in her boxing my ears and going home on the street-car. (*The story continues in detail:*)

I WAS standing there trying to decide on whether to run after her or take up the pursuit of my Suppressed Comrade, when a sharp voice brought me out of my trance.

"You've done it again, have you? Well, old muddler, you can be counted

Deliberately he touched the note to the candle; then smilingly lit the brunette's cigarette with the blazing thousand-dollar note!



on to tangle things up worse than a cat in a thread-factory. Don't explain. You saw her, you opened your trap, and she beat it. Well, all right, all right, let her get over it. I'll catch her on the rebound. As far as you're concerned, you ought to be padlocked."

I pulled myself together.

"I have not come here to discuss my actions," I said. "I demand that you turn over to me that one thousand and eleven dollars intact in the envelope."

"Keep on demanding it. When you finish, call up Central and demand what time it is in Tasmania. Right now, old spoil-sport, I've got the cash in my pants. Try and get it."

"I demand what is rightfully mine," I retorted without conceding an inch and at the same time resolving on a desperate stratagem. "I have come here prepared to act. If you do not turn that envelope over to me in ten seconds I will shoot you down." As I said this I pulled out my pocket-knife and, holding it so that the moonlight glistened on the metal backing, pointed it at my Suppressed Comrade as though it was a pistol.

"Wh-what's the idea, Elroy?" he said in a scared voice.

"If you hope to avoid the consequences," I said ominously, "produce the envelope and place it in the car and keep your distance from me."

After fumbling first in one pocket and then in another, he pulled out the envelope and with a peevish gesture tossed it so that it fell into the open rumble seat compartment. It clinked heavily.

Still keeping my Suppressed Comrade covered; I retreated toward the car and climbed into the back. I was just bending over for the envelope, when an unexpected push squeezed me down to almost my former position, only this time the catch clicked shut. I was locked fast in the rumble-seat compartment.

"Let me out!" I yelled, as loudly as possible. "I demand to be let out."

"Keep right on demanding, Elroy. There's no law against demanding. Maybe you'll develop a good chest tone and get into the talkies. 'Out' is where your little Suppressed Comrade is now, and there's not room for both of us. You've always wanted to spend a real night out. Here's where I do the job for you, Elroy. Watch my heels twinkle!"

I protested violently but ineffectually.

"When you get the keys and what-not I slipped into the envelope, maybe you'll decide I have the grand plus. Your reasoning will be sound. I have, Elroy, I have. This is a big night. Your little Suppressed Comrade is due to watch the stars pale and see the orb of day as it rises in the eastern heavens to let a little sunshine in."

## CHAPTER XXII

IN spite of all my yelling and hammering, it was four long hours later when a helping hand turned the catch to release me from the rumble seat. At the cost of intolerable pain I straightened my back while a little old gentleman I had never seen before addressed me by name.

"Heh, heh, Mr. Simmons! Up to another of your pranks?"

I rubbed my aching shoulder.

"You're certainly a card, Mr. Simmons. Heh! Heh! You're sure one live wire. You made me laugh yesterday at the Y. P. A. S. Quantus needs young fellows like you. What's happened here? A practical joke that backfired? Well, better luck next time, young man."

I climbed out of the car and made my way to a point near the entrance to Peek Inn.

I had no money or anything else of value, except the keys to the car, which had been enclosed in the envelope. For this reason I hesitated about entering like a regular patron until I had located Suppy or at least made sure he was still there.

Through the wide doorway I could see a row of booths or private dining-rooms, most of them with their red velvet curtains drawn so as to hide any view of those inside. Facing the last of the booths, out on the edge of the dancing floor, a table had been prepared for a party of seven, which consisted of young Mr. Spinford, Doc Linnahan, Nate Cullen, Buck Wilmot—and, sitting between the blonde cashier of Ye Olde Tea Shoppe and a brunette unknown to me, my Suppressed Comrade!

As I stood there, shaking with rage, I could hear them break into gales of laughter. The sound seemed to madden me. I now made up my mind that, even if it were necessary to denounce my Suppressed Comrade publicly, I would try desperately to save what might be left of the money I had gained by knocking out Bad News Billings.

While I nerved myself for the ordeal, the orchestra began a languorous waltz, and at the same time all the electric lights overhead went out, leaving as the only illumination the rose-shaded candles on each table.

This semi-darkness provided the opportunity to reach the side of my Suppressed Comrade without being seen crossing the big room. But I had barely

stepped across the threshold when I found myself practically forgetting my purpose in the glamour of the spectacle.

It was the first time that I had ever set foot in Peek Inn, and though I had often wondered what such places might be like, the reality went beyond anything I had imagined. From the balcony a shifting red spotlight played on the crowd, picked up first this dancing couple and then that; and once Mr. Antonio (Spaghetti) Antonopolous himself, who stood out by reason of his white teeth and an extremely purple dress shirt. Bordering the dance enclosure twinkled the glowing ends of the cigarettes of diners at the tables. The music was broken by subdued laughter and little cries of pleasure, and through and over all came the scent of mingled perfumes. The combination was overpowering.

The sight called up boyhood dreams long past. Often I had pictured myself in a place like this, the gayest of the gay, spending with both hands, and from time to time astonishing my friends by lighting a cigarette with a one-dollar note.

With a convulsive start I remembered why I was now present. Slowly and on tiptoe I made for the table at which my Suppressed Comrade had been sitting, and was just passing the last booth when the red spotlight centered on me. I stopped, confused by the glare. At that instant a white arm reached out between the curtains, and before I was aware of what had happened, a hand closed tightly on my collar and I was jerked inside the booth.

"Sit down, Petty!"

It was a voice I knew only too well. The command left no room whatever for argument. I sat.

MOST of the space in the booth was taken up by the table. The chair into which I had been forced backed against an outside window of the building. In front of me the red velvet curtains hung slightly apart, thus giving me a view of the diners and dancers. Directly opposite, facing away from the main floor, sat Lottie Hackett, the Tiger Girl torch-singer. It was plain she had mistaken me for my Suppressed Comrade.

Wiping her eyes with a pink handkerchief, she reached down, and extracting from her person a long, wicked-looking dagger, stuck its point into the table-top. She sobbed twice, and then blew her nose violently and began to sing:

*"You left a knife in my heart  
When you wanted to be free.  
You've made me crazy jealous, honey—"*

She stopped and looked at me in a fixed way.

"What seems to be the matter?" I asked, hoping to quiet her.

Before answering she sobbed again and yanked loose the dagger. After trying the point with her thumb, she tossed it onto the table.

"Why did you tell me to scram, Petty? You know, ever since the first night here, I've been that way about you. And there's not a jury on earth, Petty, that would convict me if you've been trifling with my affections. Eddie McGuffin, the Chi newspaper boy, told me so."

"I am sorry if I have offended you without meaning to do so," I said, hoping to smooth matters a little.

AS I spoke the waltz ended; and my Suppressed Comrade and young Mr. Spinfeld, who had been dancing with the blonde and the brunette, returned to their table in the main room.

The Tiger Girl reached forward and caught my sleeve. "Don't get me sore, Petty," she said in a voice that trembled as she struck the blade of the dagger into the table-top again. "Please don't get me sore!"

At this moment something began to happen at my Suppressed Comrade's table. Grabbing the sides of my chair, I stared through the curtains. The brunette sitting next to my Suppressed Comrade had produced a silver case and extracting a cigarette, placed it between her lips.

"Light, Suppy."

My Suppressed Comrade fumbled in his pockets while a queer smile crept over his face. "Here you are!" he answered. "I offer my own invention: Suppy's Superfine Cigarette Lighter De Luxe, patent number 10,842,736."

While I remained in what was practically a petrified state, he pulled out of his trouser pocket the one-thousand-dollar note!

It was only after breathing three times abdominally in a concentrative manner and summoning every last ounce of will-power that I found myself able to start from my chair. But no sooner had I made the motion than, displaying a strength which would hardly have been expected in one of such frail appearance, the Tiger Girl placed her hands on my shoulders and slammed me back again.

"Don't try to scram, Petty. You stay quiet if you don't want me to make the front page again!"

My Suppressed Comrade waved the thousand-dollar note.

"Watch me closely, friends. The epoch-making miracle. You are about to witness a public demonstration of the only cigarette-lighter that always works."

Slowly and deliberately he touched the end of the note to the wick of the nearest candle, waited while the fire kindled and flared, nursed the flame till it was burning steadily, and then, bending over, smilingly lit the brunette's cigarette with the blazing thousand-dollar note!

Above the tremendous applause which greeted this outrage, the blonde cashier of Ye Olde Tea Shoppe cried shrilly:

"Don't you just love it!"

My Suppressed Comrade tossed the charred end of the thousand-dollar note over his right shoulder.

"Thanking you kindly, one and all," he said, "I shall now leave you for a moment to get a breath of fresh air. On with the dance."

As he started toward the door, I risked all by jumping to my feet. The Tiger Girl barred my way.

"Petty!" she hissed, tugging at the dagger—which, fortunately for me, had been driven so far into the table-top that she was unable to wrench it free. "Petty, you're asking for it!"

My first thought had been to dash directly after my Suppressed Comrade. Even though the money was gone forever, the time had come to settle our differences once and for all. But common sense halted me with the realization that if I rushed past the Tiger Girl, the ensuing struggle might end in an open scandal and perhaps police interference.

Picking up the chair, I turned and smashed the window behind me. Whatever was left of the frame I carried along as I dived through to the ground outside.

## CHAPTER XXIII

FROM the broken window the Tiger Girl called out something, but without trying to answer, I sprinted to the main entrance of Peek Inn just as my Suppressed Comrade stepped briskly from the illuminated doorway.

A cigarette dangled from his mouth. As far as the naked eye could see, his expression did not suggest the least remorse. At sight of me he halted.

"Did you see it? I ask you, Elroy, was it good? How the old dream came true! You remember that book we read about gambbling hells in the old West where Kid What's-his-name was always lighting small smokes with big bills?"

I braced myself for a rush. "You have played your last dastardly prank," I said gratingly. "The time has come for a final reckoning."

"Put it on the pink slip, Elroy. That's my system. Charge it."

Tensing my muscles, I prepared to plunge forward. "In less than one minute you will be laughing on the other side of your mouth."

"I demand to know what you mean by the other side, Elroy. Right or left? Like this—ha-ha? Or like this—ha-ha?"

Drawing back my fist, I snapped: "You are going to find out in a hurry."

He raised his right forefinger. "*Poppus woloppus*, Elroy. An old Latin proverb meaning, 'Tiger, tiger, who's got the Tiger Girl?'"

My blood boiled. "Oh, is that so!" I retorted.

"Buy a little brass polish, Elroy, and rub up those come-backs of yours. They're getting rusty. Something is about to happen to you, Elroy. Trust Mahatma the Mystic; he knows all and tells all. Look behind you!"

This last was said in such a tense whisper that involuntarily I did as suggested. From the corner of my eye I saw my Suppressed Comrade duck into the shadow of the nearest tree.

"You are not seeck, Mr. Seemons? No?"

In the doorway stood Mr. Antonio (Spaghetti) Antonopolous, the proprietor of Peek Inn. He was dressed in perfect evening clothes except for his purple shirt, which, though of obviously fine quality, made you think of a sunset picture on a calendar.

Beside the proprietor stood the biggest waiter I had ever seen in my life. He seemed to be as broad as he was long and he towered over me by at least nine inches. His arms, which hung down to his knees, were like a gorilla's. In the matter of faces the gorilla would have stood out as a handsome animal. The waiter's lower jaw stuck so far to one side it looked dislocated. His half-shut eyes stared at me while his hands opened and closed with a sort of eagerness.

"No," I said, my breath coming with an effort, "I am not sick."



"Patty," she hissed, tugging at the dagger, "you're asking for it!" . . . I smashed the window and dived to the ground outside.

Mr. Antonio (Spaghetti) Antonopolous smiled, showing his teeth, which in the glare of the electric light seemed whiter, larger, and more numerous than ever.

"Oh, pardon—escoose, Mr. Seemons. I see you go out. I am afraid you are seeck. I come look for you."

Once more I stated that I was in good health and that I had just passed the doorway to get a breath of air.

"Fine, Mr. Seemons," he continued, still smiling. "And am I glad? Yes. Pretty soon you come inside again and you feel all right some more and much better. Hey? You take care of Mr. Seemons, Pete."

The gorilla waiter stepped closer, giving me a look which would have made perspiration start out on the forehead of a seasoned African explorer. No argument was possible.

"Yes, I'm feeling better now," I muttered after a moment's despairing review of the situation. Here I was without a cent in my pocket, not even a lucky piece, and plainly faced by the problem of paying the bill run up by my Suppressed Comrade.

Stomach contracting, I started back into the building, while from the clump of trees behind me came a low mocking laugh.

As I made my appearance in the main



"Escoose, Mr. Seemons," said Mr. Antonopolous. "I see you go out. —You take care of Mr. Seemons, Petel!"

room, with Mr. Antonio (Spaghetti) Antonopolous, flashing his teeth from one side of me and the gorilla waiter scowling from the other, you would have thought I had just come back from a long trip abroad.

It began at the table lately occupied by my Suppressed Comrade, where all rose to their feet singing more or less in unison, "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow." As they sang, they accompanied themselves with knife-handles, bottles, watchmen's rattles, and with blasts from small tin horns.

But the celebration did not confine itself to this one table. All over the room it was picked up. In ten seconds everybody was tapping, applauding, stamping, singing and whistling. Confetti went into the air. Toy balloons floated above the tables, and the air was white with napkins. Every now and then somebody would stand on his chair and yell out: "Whoopie—boopee—doopee!" Total strangers shouted at the top of their lungs, "Oh, you Suppy!" or rushed up and shook me violently by the hand.

"All for you, Mr. Seemons," said Mr. Antonio (Spaghetti) Antonopolous, smiling till he looked like a set of false teeth in a display window. "Everybody crazee about you, Mr. Seemons."

There was nothing to do but drop into the chair lately occupied by my Suppressed Comrade, with the brunette on one side and the blonde cashier from Ye Olde Tea Shoppe on the other. As the noise reached its height and began to die away, the latter cried shrilly:

"Oh, Suppy, don't you just love it!"

Despairingly I looked over the party, all of whom were decorated with fancy caps of tissue paper, ribbons, buttonhole souvenirs and the like. Nate Cullen was having great difficulty in keeping himself awake. Buck Wilmot was laughing to himself, apparently about nothing. Doc Linnahan was telling amusing stories, though nobody listened. Young Mr. Spinford was balancing a cut-glass carafe on the point of a knife-blade. The brunette and the blonde cashier of Ye Olde Tea Shoppe, each of whom seemed to think I was engaged to her individually, snapped at each other in a polite but sinister way.

On the table before me lay a small yellow slip with the words, "*To breaking window—\$10.00.*" Looking at it, I grew cold from my feet up.

I do not know where the Tiger Girl came from, though it is possible she had remained in the curtained booth up to this moment. All I can state positively is that she suddenly appeared behind us, and by the use of physical violence threw the brunette out of her chair, plumped herself down, and planted an enthusiastic kiss on my right cheek.

The brunette screamed and was apparently about to make a fight of it, when two waiters and the proprietor of Peek Inn, who did not lose his smile for a minute, led her forcibly to the ladies' dressing-room.

"Don't you just love it!" said the blonde.

The Tiger Girl now drew my head down close to hers, and in a booming whisper that could have been heard clear in Quantus, remarked: "Oh, Petty, I love you so much! If you ever beat it again, I'll cut your heart out!"

**DOC LINNAHAN** interrupted himself in the middle of an anecdote to say: "That's telling him, Lottie. Is the knife sharp?"

"Shut up, you big boob!" said the Tiger Girl, unloosing one hand to grab a plate, which she threw at Doc's head. It passed close by one ear to smash against the side wall.

As though this little incident was just a matter of course, she went on in the same breath: "You and me, Petty, how happy we'll be by the old apple tree! Waiter, where's the handsome waiter? Two bottles more, and let 'em bubble!"

There was no use yelling for the waiter, because from the first he had



taken a position about six feet back of my chair. He looked uncertain for a moment, blinked a couple of times, and then weaved back to Mr. Antonio (Spaghetti) Antonopolous.

The Tiger Girl resumed her whispered comments. Though my ear was not more than a half-inch from her mouth, what she said was practically the same as broadcast.

"Petty, I never felt about anybody the way I feel about you. When we get married tonight and go back to Chi with all your money—baby, will we burn up the Loop!"

She jumped onto my lap and threw her arms around my neck.

IT was as though all those present had been waiting for this. Everybody at the table jumped up and began marching past our chairs, at the same time singing, "Here Comes the Bride." The idea spread over the entire room; the orchestra broke into the melody, and presently all the diners were tramping past us. Some of them made noises with various devices for that purpose, while others sang to the orchestra, "*Tum-tum-te-tum.*" But everyone stopped behind our chair to extend the usual good wishes and throw paper streamers over us, or stuff a handful of confetti down the back of my neck. Two individuals began throwing shoes till stopped by the management. One intoxicated character started to kiss the bride—but nobody else tried, after he was helped to his feet.

As the pandemonium reached its height, two bottles, in buckets filled with chopped ice, were placed on the floor by the gorilla waiter. Smiling more than ever, Mr. Antonio (Spaghetti) Antonopolous stepped forward and said: "Pardon—escoose, Mr. Seemons. I offer felicitations."

"Go pull them teeth, Popoloplouse!" said the Tiger Girl gruffly, tightening her hold.

Still smiling, the proprietor laid down another yellow slip before my place. "Leetle memorand", Mr. Seemons."

Looking down mechanically I turned the paper business-side up. It read, "*To two bot. Chateau Yquem, \$40.00.*"

In the worry caused by the reappearance of the Tiger Girl, I had momentarily forgotten the catastrophe that with each passing second was drawing nearer and nearer. From the two yellow slips which I had already investigated, and

from a wealth of others scattered about my chair, there was no conclusion to be drawn but the one that had occurred to me when I had been forced back into Peek Inn. The gorilla waiter kept eyeing me sullenly from one side of the table, while from the other the proprietor smiled and showed his teeth. The crash was coming.

The whole room grew livelier and livelier, the table where I sat being no exception.

"Come on, Petty," whispered the Tiger Girl. "One more little drink, and we'll ditch this mob. In the sticks—hicks are hicks—hit 'em with stones—hit 'em with bricks. You're the only one that's different, Petty. Woof! How I love you! Rub your ear, Petty, and it won't hurt. Petty, if you ever look sideways at any other doll, I'll ruin you! —Hey, handsome, two more of them South Poles."

The gorilla waiter turned to Mr. Antonio (Spaghetti) Antonopolous, who walked hastily to the girl checking the waiters' trays as they came from the kitchen.

"Pardon—escoose," he said, returning with a long slip of pink paper. He was smiling as though he had just come to give me a piece of pleasing information. "Pardon—escoose, Mr. Seemons." He laid the pink slip, evidently the final bill, on the table before me.

THIS was a long list of items and prices that apparently covered everything consumed by the party during the entire evening. It began with a telephone charge and went on to include, among others, such entries as these:

|   |              |
|---|--------------|
| <i>To damage to bass drum while leading orchestra</i>                   | .....\$ 6.75 |
| <i>To splc confetti dance</i>   | .....\$16.50 |
| <i>To dmge to chandelier from acrobat act by guest</i>                  | .....\$28.25 |
| <i>To refrshments</i>   | .....\$40.00 |
| <i>To ditto</i>   | .....\$40.00 |
| <i>To ditto</i>   | .....\$40.00 |
| <i>To 1 sandwich, salisbury</i>   | .....\$ .65  |
| <i>To refrshments</i>   | .....\$40.00 |
| <i>To ditto</i>   | .....\$40.00 |
| <i>To dmage to glassware, guest's gown etc., while acting as waiter</i> | .....\$84.98 |
| <i>To msclneous</i>   | .....\$93.12 |

The grand total was \$612.66.

"Don't you just love it!" observed the blonde in a high-pitched voice. Following this, she began to laugh.

Automatically I ran over the addition, discovering an error of ten dollars in my favor.

With his white teeth showing like tombstones on a moonlit night, Mr. Antonio (Spaghetti) Antonopolous bent politely over the shoulder not occupied by the Tiger Girl.

"Something ees wrong, Mr. Seemons? No?"

"Yes," I said, trying to gain time to think, "the total is ten dollars off."

Muttering to himself, he ran up and down the column of figures. When he had finished, he laid back the bill with another smile, saying: "Ees my mistake, Mr. Seemons. Pardon—escoose. Here we have him right."

The amended result now footed up to \$638.53, an increase over the original total of \$25.87.

**T**HE blonde laughed harder than before. She seemed unable to stop.

If I had cared to check it in detail, I could have demonstrated his error to the satisfaction of all. But what was the use? Five thousand dollars or five cents, I was equally unable to pay.

A final fleeting hope vanished as I remembered that, just after breaking the last bottle, young Mr. Spinford had shaken me by the hand and departed with the words: "Topping time, old hot potato! Sorry, but I'm cheerioing. Must catch the midnight flyer to New York. See you where the lilies bloom." There was no financial help to be expected from any of those remaining.

The blonde cashier of Ye Olde Tea Shoppe seemed to be going into hysterics as Mr. Antonio (Spaghetti) Antonopolous tapped me on an unoccupied part of my shoulder and, still smiling, said: "Question of leetle beel, Mr. Seemons."

"Back to the Painless Parlors!" snapped the Tiger Girl.

The gorilla waiter, breathing hard, edged a step closer to the proprietor.

"Beel now payable, Mr. Seemons. Pardon—escoose."

For the first time since I had taken my place at the table, the Tiger Girl let go her grip and bounced from my lap to her feet.

"Listen, you big toothpaste ad, he'll toss you for it. He'll toss you—double or nothing."

I sat there frozen. I knew it could not be worse even if, after the toss, I owed twice the present total. I might just as well take a last chance.

Mr. Antonio (Spaghetti) Antonopolous smiled even more widely than before. "Agreeable to me, Mr. Seemons."

He put his hand into his pocket. "Here ees half dollar. I toss; you call. Eef I am luckee, you owe me two times this beel—two times \$638.53 is \$1397.06. Eef you are luckee, you owe me nothing. Say how she come, Mr. Seemons."

At this he tossed the coin in the air, letting it fall on his left hand and covering it with his right.

With a feeling that maybe all was not yet lost, I straightened up in my chair.

"Tails!" I called.

He lifted his right hand, showing the coin which rested in the other palm, to all present.

"Heads, Mr. Seemons. Vairy sorry—pardon—escoose. I have ween. You owe me \$1497.06; with war tax ees \$1582.34. Beel now payable, please."

Letting out a wild shriek of laughter that made me want to stuff a napkin in her mouth, the blonde shrilled:

"Don't you just love it!"

Though I did not have a single cent, I slipped my hand into my pocket amid encouraging murmurs from all at the table. "Attaboy, Suppy! . . . He can take it on the chin and smile! . . . Some game little sport!"

It was the Tiger Girl who diverted once more to Mr. Antonio (Spaghetti) Antonopolous. She had been looking at him fixedly. Now, with a sudden move, she drank up the champagne in my goblet and her own, and then remarked:

"Listen, dentist's delight, get out that half-dollar again. This time I'll call the toss."

He produced it from his pocket. "Pardon—escoose, ladee, but please, for what?"

"Listen, you mouthful of double blanks. Six times tonight, you ast me to sing a torch. If I don't call the turn, I slip you a couple of 'em. If I guess right, you gimme that sunset shirt of yours. —Shut up, open face."

This last remark was addressed to the blonde, who had started to pull another wild shriek of laughter.

**A**LREADY a crowd of diners and waiters had gathered about our table. Though all hope was lost, I prayed that the inevitable might be postponed as long as possible.

Teeth showing whiter than ever, and black mustache wagging, Mr. Antonio (Spaghetti) Antonopolous said: "I ween—you seeng two torch songs? I lose—you get my shirt?" He looked down at the article in question, which seemed

more purple than ever. "Ees a bet. You call."

He flipped the coin into the air.

"Heads," snapped the Tiger Girl.

Removing his right hand, he exhibited the coin in the palm of his left. It showed tails.

"Pardon—escoose," he said with the most offensive and whitest smile thus far displayed. "Vairy sorry. I ween. You seeng—"

WITH a move as quick as that of the animal for which she was named, the Tiger Girl reached out and slapped the half-dollar from his hand. Jangling to the floor, it separated into two separate disks, which rolled in opposite directions till individually picked up by diners standing outside our little circle. A mutter of indignation rose, as in no uncertain terms the secret came out that it was a trick half-dollar, bearing heads on both sides, and capable of being covered with the shell stamped tails.

But this muttering was nothing at all to the remarks which now issued from the Tiger Girl.

Eyes blazing, she shouted: "You big crook, you can't pull a nifty like that on me and the boy friend! Gimme that shirt!"

With this she sprang forward, while the blonde cashier of Ye Olde Tea Shoppe screamed with laughter and rolled about in her chair.

"Don't you just love it!"

There is no use even trying to detail what happened next because I have no clear idea myself.

The rush on Mr. Antonio (Spaghetti) Antonopolous must have made a good many people think of the Charge of the Light Brigade. The Tiger Girl went for the shirt, and to the best of my recollection, the only moment she turned aside from this object was when she picked up a bottle from beside the table, brought it down on the head of the gorilla waiter, and collapsed him onto the lap of the blonde, who shrieked, "Don't you just love it!" as she shoved him off onto the floor.

The milling now became general, with everybody taking a hand, including the brunette, who somehow had emerged from the ladies' dressing-room.

The waiters did their best, but with the gorilla out of action they seemed to lose heart. It was as though they were answering the call of duty under protest.

Entirely surrounded by the Tiger Girl and other souvenir-hunting guests, Mr. Antonio (Spaghetti) Antonopolous, though lost to sight, could be heard screaming at the top of his lungs.

It seemed to me this might be as good a time as any to leave. Though cluttered, the floor between me and the main entrance was what might be called a broken field. Straight-arming a small foreign waiter, and leap-frogging over a semi-prostrate guest, I reached the door just as the Tiger Girl jumped to the top of a table.

In her hands she was waving the major portion of Mr. Antonio (Spaghetti) Antonopolous' purple shirt.

I cast a last hasty backward glance at the room as, encouraged by cheering participants in the late battle, she sang: "It's his shirt—he did me dirt—and he got hurt—the little squirt—that's why I'm wringing out the Peek Inn booze—let him snooze. —Petty, come back, you little hot potato, or I'll ruin you!"

Summoning the last ounce of such energy as remained, I launched forward, ramming my head into the stomach of the doorman. Then, gasping, I spurted out into the cool air of the early A. M.

STUMBLING, running, tripping over roots, I made my way through the grove in just a blind effort to get as far away from Peek Inn as possible in the shortest time. Meanwhile the screaming and breaking of glass reached a climax, while guests boiled out of the Inn's front door.

It was on regaining my feet after a heavy fall across a bench that I caught sight of the sports roadster not five yards away and still parked where I had left it. A cigarette-end gleamed from the front seat. As I stood there a little dazed from my stumble, the red spark shot out of the car in a curve which ended six inches in front of my shoes.

"Brawling again, Elroy?" said an unpleasantly familiar voice. "Understand, sir, this must stop at once. What do you mean, Simmons, by frequenting places like this? Give me those keys, sir, and your explanation at one and the same time and also simultaneously."

Summoning as much of my strength as was left, I tottered over to the car.

In the same mocking voice my Suppressed Comrade continued: "I demand to know what you mean, sir, by going into a notorious roadhouse and there impersonating and disgracing me before all

my fellow-citizens! I demand to know why you started this vulgar fight which seems to be still raging? And I particularly demand to know why you hit Mr. Antonio (Spaghetti) Antonopolous over the head with a bottle?"

"I did not hit anybody over the head with a bottle," I replied indignantly.

"Then you missed a good bet, old negligent; you let a golden opportunity ripen and rot. Still, Papa's proud that Junior lasted twenty minutes in Peek Inn. Papa thought Junior would be thrown out on his ear at the end of twenty seconds. Hop in, hot potato, and tell me the heartrending story as merrily we roll along. Did you slip the Tiger Girl my love? No? Another good bet gone wrong. Out with those keys."

I fished them from my pocket.

"That's the way to get along, sailor. When I speak—jump! Climb in. We're ready to start."

**M**OVING over to the other side, I pulled myself up onto the seat as the motor turned over.

"Where are we going?" I asked.

"It will dawn on you, Columbus. The curtain is up on the last act. You're getting ready to exit, laughing. In a word, you're being taken for a ride."

"Where am I going?"

"That's up to you, old gypsy foot. Follow your legs. Just so long as you go away—far, far away—and stay there, it will be all right with Papa. Work and win, Elroy. That's your game. As an avocation, you might take up tatting. Do as you please, but don't come back."

"And you propose to stay on here in Quantus, pretending to everybody that you are Elroy Simmons?"

"That's almost the right answer. Send it in with a sworn statement that you have received no help from family or grown-up friends and wait for Form Letter Number Xix, which will tell you what to do next."

"I will never allow such an outrage!" I protested.

"All right. What are you going to do about it? Don't keep me waiting, Elroy. I'm all a-twitter."

"I won't keep you waiting," I said, my voice getting a little stronger as I realized the justice of what I was about to remark. "You pose as a human being, but you are nothing of the kind. You are just a bundle of wishes, hankers and emotions that carry you too far and will always carry you too far."

"Well put, old moral lesson," he said with an unpleasant laugh, at the same time slackening the roadster's speed. "But let me ask you one thing: Am I getting away with it or not? Yes or no?"

He stopped the car. "Shove out of the car, Elroy. I've got something to say to you and something to show you."

Crowding me out, he followed.

The car was parked in the shadow of some arching elms, but the County Turnpike lay shining under the moon. Grabbing me by the arm, he forced me into the moonlight.

"Take a slant at those two shadows, Elroy. You remember how they were at first. Look at them now. Mine, black as the ace of spades; yours, the deuce of diamonds painted in water colors on mosquito netting. Fair question—who's the real thing now, Elroy? Who's the optical illusion?"

It was a bitter moment.

"So you are going to be Suppy Simmons in Quantus, while I drag out an existence somewhere else as your Suppressed Comrade?"

"You've guessed it, Elroy."

A horrible thought came to me.

"And suppose you—"

"Suppose I should develop some of your qualities as well as my own? Suppose in time I should not only be myself but you too? In that case, Elroy, I'm afraid I'll have to absorb you into my make-up. Little by little, you'll fade away. The undertaker won't have anything to bury but a suit of clothes."

**A**S I stood there aghast, he slapped me on the back again.

"Don't worry, Elroy. I'm not on the reform wagon yet. You've probably got a long, sweet pale existence ahead of you. Climb into the car, and I'll take you as far as Elm Center. Tomorrow morning you can tell Miss Codfish it was all a mistake, and lead her and her mother to the altar. Make hay while the stars shine. And now here we go."

I climbed in. He threw in the clutch.

"I would like to ask one favor before leaving Quantus," I said, in a voice as sincere as it was subdued.

"Always give the condemned man a cigarette. What's biting you, Elroy?"

"I would like to have you pass by the Van Hulsteyn residence," I said. "I want one final look."

"Very reasonable, Elroy. Very reasonable indeed. Papa will tickle the percolator, and we'll be right there."



With a quick move, the Tiger Girl reached out and slapped the half-dollar from his hand. It separated into two disks.

WE rolled rapidly through Blyman's Woods, where the Y. P. A. S. had once enjoyed a picnic; past Mrs. Lam-mick's; over the Wolf River Bridge; down Grover Street, where stood the Fix-it Shop which had given me my first job. At each instant some memory of the past four years was called up. It seemed as though my heart would break. As we turned into Greenway Court I spoke for the first time.

"Would you kindly drive slowly?"

"Yours to command, old Personally Conducted."

"Slower than that, please."

"O. K. Get your last eyeful."

We were crawling along at about eight miles an hour when we came in sight of the Van Hulsteyn residence. There was somebody in white visible on the side porch. As I recognized Julie, I swayed against the door of the car, which suddenly swung open and dumped me onto the road.

Brakes squealing, my Suppressed Com-

rade brought the car to a stop as he snarled: "What's the big idea?"

I struggled to my feet. The fact that my Suppressed Comrade was now several yards distant, added to the fact that my right shin-bone felt as though broken, caused me to snap automatically: "None of your business!"

He started to leave the car.

"If you take another step," I said, while shooting pains ran up and down my entire right leg, "I will swing at you, and we will both explain before the judge. I am going to say good-by personally to Julie Van Hulsteyn."

The words had hardly left my mouth when I was amazed at my own audacity and also at the surprising way in which he accepted this ultimatum with a shrug of the shoulders.

"O. K., Boopus. Queer me some more. I'll untangle it tomorrow. But remember, two minutes from now, when I toot the horn, you come back to the car. You're leaving Quantus tonight."

Without a word in reply I tiptoed toward the house. As I drew nearer the porch, I heard a suppressed sob. Clearly visible by the light of the moon, Julie was sitting in the hammock staring out at the trees.

Very carefully I stole up the steps to the porch.

"Julie!"

"Who's that?" She had started up, and her voice was frightened.

"Elroy Simmons," I replied truthfully.

She took a step in my direction. "Go away, Mr. Simmons," she whispered. "Go away. Didn't I tell you I never wanted to see you again? Never—never—*never!* Why don't you go? At once!"

This greeting seemed to take the last ounce of strength out of my legs. Without meaning to, I looked down at the shadows cast by my head and hands. They were barely visible. They might have been made of faintly clouded glass.

"Why don't you go?" she repeated. "Elroy, why don't you go?"

It was now and for the first time, that I realized to the full how much I cared for Julie. My head throbbed at the bitter thought that I was leaving her forever. This final yearning to hold her in my arms was going to be crushed down and suppressed; and with that, the emotion would revert to my Suppressed Comrade. . . . I brought my teeth together.

"What did you say, Elroy?"

"No," I told myself, "*no!* All my life I have been suppressing things I had no business suppressing. And here it ends. I will say good-by to Julie. I *will!*"

Forcing myself to one last effort, I gasped aloud: "Julie—Julie—I *will!*"

**WHAT** happened then was like the smashing of one of those ice-jams in Wolf River, which in spite of their solid appearance, suddenly split and crash and go on thundering downstream. Before I realized the change in me, all resistance had been swept away. My head was clear, my muscles relaxed, fit, ready for use. Taking two steps forward, I crossed my right arm behind Julie's shoulders.

"You know I told you to go, Elroy," she begged plaintively. "Why don't you go?"

But there was nothing in her voice or in her posture to back up these words. She was leaning toward me, her eyes glistening with tears, her chin uptilted, her lips puckered.

"Close your eyes, baby," I said.

She did.

Tightening my arms about her, I bent low and slipped her a big extra-special super-kiss.

**SOMETIME** later, with a little contented sigh Julie raised her head from my shoulder. "Elroy, I never suspected anybody could be so nice."

She dropped her head back where it had been before, then straightened up, retreated a step, and caught my two hands in her own.

"Elroy, I'm not a very remarkable person, but I have one good quality, anyway. . . . No, please let me talk to you seriously. I have one good quality. I'm sincere. . . . Please, Elroy, let me finish what I have to say. I've liked you from the first, Elroy, for I felt at heart you were sincere too."

"I am sincere, Julie. I have always been."

"I know it quite as well as you, Elroy. But sometimes it seemed to me almost as if—it's hard to express it, Elroy—almost as if you were two totally different persons. I'd meet you, and you'd be sincere,—I could sense that,—but oh, so bound up and frozen! In spite of your sincerity I just hated you."

I tried to speak. She pressed her fingers against my lips and continued:

"Then the next time I'd see you—I won't hurt you, Elroy, if I say exactly what I think?—you'd be nice and friendly, and not frozen at all. But with a leer. Oh, Elroy, how I hate leers! You'd say just the right things, but always you seemed to have your tongue in your cheek. You made me so unhappy."

I felt obliged to comfort her. It was some seconds later that I heard the raucous horn of the sports roadster. Vaguely I realized that it had been honking at intervals ever since I first kissed Julie. Its hoarse cry had developed into something like a scream of anguish. The effect was as striking as if the darkness of a coal-cellar had been suddenly illuminated by a hundred-watt lamp. In the flash I saw clearly and distinctly the reason for everything that had happened, from the first appearance of my Suppressed Comrade to the present interview with Julie.

Every time in the past, when I had shrunk from doing something I wanted to do, I had lost just that much force and vitality, while my Suppressed Comrade had gained a corresponding amount. Now that the system had gone into reverse, I was gaining and he was losing.

What added to my exhilaration was the fact that the proof of the theory was before my very eyes. The moonlight told the story. Though by no means back to normal, the shadows of my head and hands were at least ten times as dark as they were when my Suppressed Comrade had scornfully pointed them out on the paved surface of the County Turnpike.

I tingled all over. It was not only because of the near presence of Julie, but because of the certainty that here at last I had hit on the general lines along which I might hope to win out.

**D**ELIBERATELY, now, I kissed Julie again. From below, the auto horn turned loose another agonized squawk. To my ears it was most gratifying.

"Julie," I said, "it's only fair to me to say I have been suffering from a sort of nervous breakdown. You can't imagine the state I have been in."

"But you feel better now, Elroy?"

I drew her closer. "The worst is over, Julie. In the future I will always be just as I am now. Always."

"Nice?"

Without words I showed her that such was my firm intention and resolve.

Another honk came from below.

"Is that your friend making so much noise down there, Elroy? The one you were telling me about?"

"I'm afraid so," I admitted.

"Of course, Elroy, I believe you're right in what you said earlier this evening. Everybody ought to be loyal. But in this particular case—"

I finished for her, "—in this particular case I have come to feel about this fellow, Julie, just as you do. He has taken advantage of me, and I am going to put him where he belongs."

"He's not worthy of you."

"I know it, Julie. I have been too patient. But that is all over now. I can promise you that after tonight he will never bother us again."

There was another brief interlude. The horn screeched, but neither of us gave it any attention.

Julie spoke. "It does seem, Elroy, as though I'd known you always. Somehow I've managed to cling fast to my confidence in you, even when you made me lose my temper. I've never believed Dad when he was indignant about you, as he's been lately."

"Your father is mistaken," I said, "badly mistaken. He misjudged me because I was the innocent victim of cir-

cumstances beyond my control. But all that is changed. I will talk with him in the morning. Is he back from Chicago?"

"Yes, Elroy. He came in on the ten-forty."

I stood up to say audaciously: "Julie, please tell your father to come to my room tomorrow morning at half-past ten."

I had hardly finished my remark when the horn on the sports roadster let out a tortured honk that was more poignant than anything which had so far broken the silence of the evening.

From the second story of the house a window shot up. The rattle of the sash was followed by the familiar growl of Mr. Van Hulsteyn. A wrenching and crash, produced by the screen as it ripped violently from its fastenings and fell to the ground, was succeeded by the sight of Mr. Van Hulsteyn himself. Clothed in his night-shirt, he leaned out of the window to shake his fist violently in the direction of the sports roadster. His voice rose to a scream.

"Stop that noise! Do you hear me? I say, stop that noise and stop it at once! If I hear one more hoot out of that horn, I'll call the police! Do you understand that, sir?" The window slammed shut.

A hoarse but uncertain voice from the curb shouted with baffled rage: "Comb the sand out of your whiskers!"

Julie looked at me. "He's not worthy of you, Elroy. Please don't see him again tonight."

"I give you my word, Julie. I won't."

"Elroy, I believe in you. Oh, so much. I believe you can do anything you really want to do."

"Honestly, Julie?"

"Do you know what your name means in Spanish, Elroy? 'The King.'"

**A**FTER this remark it was a good deal of trouble to say good night, or rather to stop saying it when we started. I felt I could have charged single-handed against a flock of wild elephants, and as for lions or tigers or even Mr. Davenport, I would have faced each and all without turning a hair. In the case of the latter I resolved to attempt this feat before noon the next day.

"I can't stay any longer, Elroy. Father might come down, and he mustn't see you here. If you slip through our back yard to the alley, and then out to Heliotrope Place, Elroy, your friend in the car can't bother you. Greenway Court is a one-way street."

Half walking and half running, I followed the route indicated, and had just reached Cherry Square when, from the distance, sounded a last faint and despairing honk.

I stopped and turned to express my opinion of my Suppressed Comrade in a gesture I had not used since childhood. As I looked down at my shadow, I could see that the head, the nose and the hand with thumb and fingers spread, painted the moonlit road with dense silhouettes.

AT one o'clock that morning I had reached Mercantile Street and was turning down Cadwallader when from a doorway almost in front of me there stepped a gentleman who at sight of me started violently, jumped back, and at the same time put up his hands in the position recommended by books on the manly art of self-defense.

It was Bad News Billings.

The street lamp revealed a confused expression on his face as, gingerly extending his right hand, fist undoubled, he remarked:

"No hard feelin's, Mr. Simmons."

"Not a one," I said, taking his hand and shaking it. "Nothing like that, Bad News."

"You gotta purty left, Mr. Simmons. I never see nutt'n like it. Wham! Bingo! An' dere it was."

"You're not so bad yourself, Bad News," I replied.

"Tanks, Mr. Simmons. But I'm fought out—fought out. Gonna retire. Already I bought me a little chicken farm out in de sticks."

"That's a splendid idea," I said with assumed heartiness, at the same time steering Bad News away from the hotel.

I had my reasons for avoiding the bright lights of Mercantile Street. It was too early to get in touch with Mr. Davenanter. A hotel room was impossible, because I had no money. If I started back to Mrs. Lammick's, I would almost certainly run into my Suppressed Comrade, ready to use any strategy and perhaps even physical violence to get me out of Quantus before daybreak. More than probably he was even now cruising about the streets looking for me; and at all costs I must elude him until after my interview with the Master Mind of Wall Street.

Bad News stared at me and shook his head. There was a wistful expression on his face as he said: "I wanna ask you one t'ing, Mr. Simmons."

"What is it, Bad News?"

"Where's she at now, Mr. Simmons?"

I was distinctly puzzled. "Who?"

"Aw, you know who, Mr. Simmons. Honest, I'm wise she's all for you, and she don't never want nutt'n more to do wit' me, but I'd kinda like to see her for de las' time before I goes out to raise chickens in de sticks."

It dawned on me. "You mean Lottie?"

He agreed eagerly. "Dat's her. A little vi'let, Mr. Simmons, in a big city. But wrong idees. I guess you'll get her outta dem wrong idees, Mr. Simmons."

His misapprehension was pathetic, but it brought back to me the fact that my troubles with the Tiger Girl were not yet at an end.

"The last time I saw Lottie, Bad News, was tonight at Peek Inn."

"She aint dere no more, Mr. Simmons," he said moodily. "No sir. Like usual, she starts sump'n, and dey gives everybody the bum's rush. Dat's what I hear. And where is she now?"

His plaintive eagerness touched me, and there came to me an idea at once simple and practicable.

"You want to see her very much, do you, Bad News?"

"I certly do, Mr. Simmons."

"Then we'll find her together. There's always another place open."

His face registered happy surprise. "You got de dope, Mr. Simmons. You got de complete dope. Youse is a t'inker, Mr. Simmons. Benny's place is open all night, and it's big odds we find her dere. Yes, Mr. Simmons, I love dat girl, and I wanna look at her one last time."

TO further my plan I demanded nothing better than the possibility of finding the Tiger Girl. Keeping a careful watch, to be able to duck behind something if the red roadster appeared, I accompanied Bad News down Telmachus Avenue to River Street, and thence along the water-front. As we walked, Bad News confided his heartaches.

"Dat girl, Mr. Simmons, she's just a little vi'let." He snuffed. "An she's like dis about youse, Mr. Simmons—jus' like dis. I don't blame her, and I don't blame youse."

"There was never anything between Lottie and me, Bad News," I said quietly. "As the so-called Tiger Girl, Carlotta Hackett interested me. For that reason I studied her. She's a remarkable girl, Bad News."

He looked at me doubtfully.





"She's a little vi'let in a big city, Mr. Simmons. But wrong idees."

"Exactly, Bad News. Only she doesn't know she has the wrong ideas. She thinks they're the right ideas. She doesn't suspect that, as a woman, her greatest desire is to be dominated."

"Huh? W'at's dat?"

I explained: "Carlotta has the habit of looking on a man as a toy, to be played with, broken, thrown aside. She thinks she enjoys this domination. As a matter of, fact, she is waiting for a man who will be firm with her, who when necessary will tell her to pipe down. In a word, she's waiting for a cave man."

"Huh? Where does he work at?"

"By a cave man, Bad News, I mean a man who knows what he wants, and who takes it without asking leave of anybody. I mean a man who will tell Lottie just where to get off, and who will see that she gets off right there. Bad News, you are going to be that cave man."

He stopped, and taking off his hat, scratched his head.

"You mean I'm gonna tell her where to get off at?"

"That's it."

There was a pleading note in his voice as he answered earnestly: "Respec' for womanhood, Mr. Simmons. I learns dat at me mudder's knee."

"You can respect her afterward, Bad News. There often comes a time when it is our duty to do things that otherwise we should never even consider. You are right to respect womanhood. Your mother did well to impress that on you."

"I'll say she pressed it on me. She used a broom-handle, same's if it was a baseball bat."

"But," I continued, "there comes a time when we have to do violence to our better natures in order to help others. No matter what she thinks, Lottie isn't happy in her present state. She wants to be dominated. She wants you, Bad

News, to be her cave man and tell her where to get off."

He stopped again, his eyes wider open than I had so far seen them.

"Mr. Simmons, dat girl—dat girl's dangerous."

"Not to anybody who can dominate her."

"She purty near croaks t'ree guys a'ready. She says she'll send de nex' job to de undertaker's." He laughed nervously.

"She won't croak you, Bad News, if you follow my instructions. It's your last chance. I'm here to help you go through with it."

Up the street was a small illuminated sign bearing the words, *Benny's Place*. We stopped on the sidewalk in front of the sign. An open stairway led to an upper story whose drawn curtains did not shut out the lights within. The windows were open, thus allowing the jazz music to float out on the evening air.

"I guess she aint dere, Mr. Simmons," he said pleadingly. "Anyhow, I gotta catch de t'ree o'clock back to Chi."

"If she isn't there, we'll find her somewhere else. And she'll go back to Chicago with you."

At this instant a melody burst forth, sung in an unmistakable voice:

*"I'll go moaning alone  
If you don't come back to me;  
You left a knife in my heart,  
When you wanted to be free.  
You've made me crazy jealous, honey;  
If you don't come back, my own,  
I'll drive my knife in your heart  
And go moaning alone."*

"Dat's her, Mr. Simmons. And now I guess—"

I slapped him on the back.

"That's the way to talk, Bad News. And now you guess you're going to go right up and dominate her."

In what amounted to a scream, the Tiger Girl was saying to some one among

those present up in Benny's: "Don't you wink at me, bozo! I'll cut you up and shoot craps with the pieces!"

The face of Bad News lost its color.

"Dat's her, all right, all right, Mr. Simmons. Much obliged to youse. I guess I gotta catch de t'ree o'clock, and go and raise chickens in de sticks."

Grasping his arm, I jerked him back. It was no time for halfway measures.

"Bad News," I said, "I'm going to tell you what to do; and when I finish, you're going to do it. Listen to every word, because each syllable means something."

HE nodded and muttered, "Yes," in an almost automatic manner.

"Yes, Bad News, yes, there is hope. . . . There is hope for every man, woman and child within the sound of my voice. The secret is to depolarize the hydrogen. In a word, dominate. What was the suppressed secret back of George Washington? Abraham Lincoln? James J. Jeffries? Buffalo Bill? They dominated. Do you deny that?"

I brought my face so near to his that our eyes were not six inches apart.

"No, Mr. Simmons, I don't deny dat."

"No, you'd better not try to deny it. It's those old zinc salts. That's why we pass the current through the cell in the opposite direction and reverse the whole process. That's the suppressed secret about which everybody from Julius Cæsar to any given historian has remained mendaciously silent."

As I went on, with my voice growing louder and louder and more and more decided, and with my eyes always fixed on the base of his nose, Bad News began to act like a hypnotized subject on the stage. Every time my head went forward, his went back, and vice versa. I saw the moment had now come to clinch my hold on him. Throwing my body and all my energies into the rhythm, I began to chant:

"She's a torch—she can scorch—get a stick—get a brick—dominate the lady quick—for she's waiting for her cave man—she sings hot as the equator—but go on and dominate her—yes, go on, you hot potater—make it snappy—make her happy, Bad News."

As I finished chanting the final eight words, I ran Bad News to the hall and with a vigorous shove started him on his way up the stairs.

Then, limp and perspiring from the effort, I stood on the sidewalk listening while he shuffled to the second floor.

From above I heard the voice of Carlotta the Tiger Girl torch-singer.

With a burst of shrill laughter she chanted: "Oh, that rundown palooka—he's a scum—he's a bum—he's a rummy—he's a dummy—he's a great big false alarm—he bought a chicken farm. . . . Oh, where's my knife—I'm fulla strife—get outta my life—"

Her remarks ended right there with a scream and a crash.

A burst of laughter, evidently from the crowd in Benny's, was followed by muffled expostulations from the Tiger Girl. But above the uproar could be heard the sound of a hand smacking down regularly. . . .

The smacking stopped.

The voice of Bad News Billings rose in a low growl.

"All right, Lottie. Dat's over. Stand up. Get wise to yourself, and from now on play nice wit your zinc cave man. Because he won't stand for nutt'n. Nutt'n whatever, see? Grab your coat and hat, dominoes. We're takin' de t'ree o'clock back to Chi."

"Yes, Bad News, I'll get my coat and hat."

It was as meek and friendly a voice as I ever heard. There was one job that would never have to be done again.

Drawing a long breath of relief, I hurried away from Benny's.

## CHAPTER XXIV

IT was half-past six in the morning. Following my hunch, I edged down the path from the top of the bank toward the old swimming-hole. Mr. Davenanter looked around cautiously, and ducking behind a berry-bush, threw his coat and hat to the ground. I had guessed right.

Though having no idea how I was going to ingratiate myself after my Suppressed Comrade's outrageous practical joke before the Y. P. A. S., I was confident that in some way or other I would make everything come out all right.

He took off his shirt. Humming a little tune, I ducked behind the berry-bushes and began to undress myself. Out of the corner of my eye I could see Mr. Davenanter from time to time glancing in my direction.

I piled my clothes and walked gingerly to the edge of the swimming-hole. Once in deep water, I started swimming toward the raft.

I swam a dozen strokes and then turned about to raise my right arm and yell out, "Hello, Champ!"

The expression on Mr. Davenanter's face was something between a glower and a grin.

"H'm," he said, "it's my young friend the practical joker."

"Aw, Champ, what's the use of having hard feelings? You got away with it often enough. Come on in, little feller. I won't duck you."

FOR the first time he really smiled a little. "Where do you get this 'Champ' stuff?"

"Aw, Davvy," I said, "what's the use of pretendin' you don't know? Everybody in the old crowd knows you were the champ swimmer and diver till I came along. Watch. I'll show you something."

I climbed up on the bank, raised my hands above my head, and then, just as though I was trying my last dive, hit the surface of the water in a belly-flopper. As I shook the water out of my ears, I could see that Mr. Davenanter was laughing—really laughing at last.

"That was a mistake," I said. "My foot slipped."

"What are you champ of?" he called out. "The paralytics' home? Boy, I'm more than thirty years older than you are, but if I couldn't do a better dive, I'd stay away from the water."

"Seein's believin'," I snapped back. "C'mon in. Water's fine." I waded out a way, treading water and holding up an arm above the surface as though I had one foot on the bottom. "It's only so deep."

"You're pretty slick, kid," he said. "You're so slick I'm going to show you a few more tricks. Now watch." He poised on the bank.

It was a perfect jack-knife dive. You had to hand it to Davvy. Doc and Buck and Nate had turned fat and soft with the years; yet here Mr. Davenanter was, his body still slim and well muscled, as quick and sure as a cat.

I rather suspected he was going to swim under and duck me, so I was prepared when it happened. We came up together, blowing water.

"Beat you to the raft, Davvy," I said. "Last one there's a bullhead."

That was enough. We started. Maybe if I had tried my best all through the race, I might have won, because swimming is the only sport I have ever been

able to manage with any degree of satisfaction. But Mr. Davenanter lived up to his old reputation. He beat me to the raft by about six feet, and we pulled ourselves out and lay there in the morning sun. He was panting a little. I had to take a couple of long breaths myself before I felt right.

"You're not so bad, old bullhead," he said after a moment. "I don't claim you're good, but if you had a decent handicap, I bet you'd come in ahead of a lot of boys. Especially if they had broken arms or something."

I could see that he was feeling better toward me. He sat on the raft swinging his legs in the water and with a far-away look in his eyes as though he felt about forty years younger. Probably I had a far-away look myself, because I was thinking of the time when I was twelve years old, and used to swim regularly with the boys in my old home town.

I rolled over on my stomach and let the sun play on my back. "Gosh, Davvy, I wish the old gang was here now."

"Old gang? What do you mean? My old gang, or yours?"

I stuck my feet into the air. "They're all the same, Davvy, and you know it. The only difference is that some folks grow up and some don't. You're a kid yet, no matter how old you claim you are. As for Mr. Van Hulsteyn, I don't believe he ever was young."

He looked at me sharply. "You know human nature, young man. . . . How did you know you'd find me here?"

"I didn't know. At the hotel the clerk said you'd gone for an early morning walk. So I gambled on finding you at the old swimming-hole."

"What do you want of me? Going to say a few words about how slick you were Wednesday noon?"

"No," I answered, "I'm here to give you a sales-talk about rechargeable dry batteries."

"You're one of Mr. Van Hulsteyn's bright young men, aren't you?"

"He fired me Tuesday."

MR. DAVENANTER seemed to be seeing me for the first time. "Live and learn," he said. "Well, Simmons, what do you want to say about recharging dry batteries?"

"I'd just like to tell you it's possible."

"So I've heard. Why does a dry battery run down?"

It was not necessary to stall here. I had talked often enough with Mr. Cattell, the head of the Van Hulsteyn research department, and had studied a bit myself. I really knew.

"The zinc's eaten up," I said. "The manganese dioxide—that's the depolarizer for the hydrogen—is used up and the current's cut off by a precipitate of zinc ammonium chloride and basic zinc salts."

Mr. Davenanter stared at me.

"Seems to be the right dope. I don't know anything about electricity myself, but I talked with Cattell after Van Hulsteyn fired him. That's his story. He wants me to finance him while he goes after the problem in the right way."

**T**HIS development was a surprise to me.

"Yes, I've got a fair idea of the situation. Your boss has worked out something that won't stand the gaff. The only way he can sell his gadget is with a trick guarantee that he can't get away with. But eventually Cattell can produce the real thing, or my judgment isn't worth a cent." He squinted at me. "Simmons, what was your job with Van Hulsteyn?"

I told him.

"Costs-clerk, eh? What's the difference between the job cost system and the continuous production system?"

I told him that too.

He began asking me what I understood by such cost details as power, insurance, taxes and depreciation, and the like. I fired back the answers as fast as he shot in the questions.

"You're good, Simmons," he said slowly. "You're a fresh kid, a smart-alec, a village cut-up, and all that, but you've got something back of you. My organization's looking for young men like you. How'd you like to go in with us?"

The offer knocked me off my feet. I tried to speak, but was unable to find the right words.

"Why not? I've pretty nearly come to an understanding with Cattell to do a little industrial research. I'm not stealing any patented processes from your old boss. And you know as well as I do, that Van Hulsteyn is running himself into bankruptcy. String along with me. You can handle the costs end of it while Cattell does the experimenting."

"Mr. Davenanter," I said, "I wish you would give Mr. Van Hulsteyn a chance to develop his battery."

Mr. Davenanter snorted. "You think I'm going to let him waste my money making fake gimcracks? I haven't fifty million dollars, and I'm not known as the Master Mind of Wall Street anywhere outside of Quantus. I make a pretty good living developing projects that seem worth while. This rechargeable dry battery is something that's mighty big if it's feasible. Why let the old bullhead fool with it?"

"Mr. Davenanter," I replied earnestly, "give him another chance. I think I can bring him around."

"What do you mean by bringing him around?"

"I mean I can get him to take Mr. Cattell back and develop the process the way it should be developed. His factory is equipped to do the work; and under a little direction, Mr. Van Hulsteyn would cooperate with your ideas to the fullest extent."

"And just who is going to give him that little direction?"

"I'm prepared to do it myself, Mr. Davenanter."

"But you said he'd fired you."

"I'm going to see Mr. Van Hulsteyn today, Mr. Davenanter; I'm going to have a serious talk with him. When I finish, I will be with the company once more, and in a position where, if you decide to take an interest, I can guarantee that every cent of your money will be spent in efficiently developing our rechargeable dry battery."

Without giving him a chance to ask any more questions, I dropped back into the kid talk. "Say, Davvy, I bet you can't stay under water as long as I can."

"You're on. No cheating now."

"Nope. Fair and square."

"All right. When I count three, we dive off. First one up's a nigger baby. Ready. One—two—three!"

**W**E dived. I swam under water and came up below the raft, where there was a space big enough to throw back my head and breathe. Just as I expected, I found Mr. Davenanter had tried the same trick to stump me.

We laughed and ducked under the logs to open water. Mr. Davenanter was still chuckling. His smile looked like the sun rising over the hills.

"Say, Suppy, how about a race to shore?" he shouted.

"You're on. Last kid in eats mud. Say when."

"Right now. Go!"

It was a good little race, and I didn't have to hold back to be a close second. We were threshing along at a fast clip when I noticed Mr. Davenanter twist around at me with a forced smile. He was trying to tread water, and his hands seemed to be pressed to his stomach.

There was no mistaking what that meant. Without trying to make it look too evident, I slipped alongside and touched him.

"Tag," I said. "You're it."

He reached back and slapped my shoulder with his hand.

"Tag yourself," he gulped, and left his hand where it was while I towed him the yard or two to shallow water. I gave him a lift as he climbed out on the bank, and he didn't object. The sun was warm and dried us off.

He lay there on his back for a moment, massaging his stomach. Then he sat up and whistled.

"Touch and go for a bit," he said. "Look here, young man, you're not fooling me. You knew I had a bad cramp, and you didn't pull any mock heroic stuff, but helped me ashore just the same. I'm beginning to believe you've got something."

"That's what I think," I replied as modestly as possible.

He continued studying me. "I knew you had one kind of nerve when you played that fool joke on me at the Y. P. A. S. reunion. I knew you had the other kind when I heard about your jump off the bridge and your battle with that Chicago pug. A hot potato, as the present generation puts it! Well, I don't object. As a young fellow I was that sort myself. And if Mr. Van Hulsteyn fired you, it's pretty near a recommendation with me. Now I want you to tell me your ideas about this recharging business: Facts, figures, possibilities. Come along to the hotel with me. I want to talk to you before I catch my train. Dress in a hurry."

I turned to pick up my underwear and shirt. The knots were the hardest and toughest that anybody had ever tied.

"Aw, Davvy!" I said. And I wasn't acting this time, because it was a complete surprise. "For the love of green cheese! Whatcha think you were doing? Aw, gee, is this a joke?"

I'll bet they could have heard him laughing back at the hotel as he squatted down to wait for me, yelling at intervals:

"Chaw, Suppy, chaw! Chaw or go raw!"



IT was five minutes past ten Friday morning when I let myself through the side gate into Mrs. Lammick's backyard, picked up the red-plush-covered brick, and walked around to the street entrance.

The sports roadster was parked at the curb. On the front steps sat my Suppressed Comrade, glowering at me.

"Here, hey?" he snarled as he got up stiffly. "You and me are going to have a little talk, Boopus. When I get through with you, maybe you won't think you're such a wise hazzollup."

I unlocked the door. "All right," I said, "come up to my room."

"Your room? More funny talk, eh?" He followed me up the stairs. "Just a great humorist; that's what you are, Boopus. Well, you'll find you can't get away with that stuff any longer."

I said nothing, unless a short laugh could be classed as a remark.

Once inside the room I threw down the brick, and obeying a sudden impulse, caught up the banjo and ran my fingers across the strings. As I expected, he made a face as though swallowing a dose of castor oil.

"Lay off the noise-box. A good many guys, Elroy, would have passed you up after that stuff you pulled last night. But I'm still willing to give you a lift out of town. I'm sorry for you, Elroy; otherwise I'd let you go out under your own leg-power."

I cleared my throat. "I'm not leaving Quantus," I said with another chord from the banjo. And I began beating out a little parody very popular with some of the younger set who did not belong to the Y. P. A. S.:

*"K.K. Killjoy had a long, long face.  
He would never laugh or grin;  
A banana peel  
Greased his starboard heel  
And let a little sunshine in.  
Let a little sunshine in, hot potato!  
Let a little sunshine in.  
His suspenders, pants and shirt,  
They gave until it hurt—  
Then they let a little sunshine in."*

THE effect of this musical effort was extremely surprising. Before I had finished the second line, my Suppressed Comrade had collapsed across the foot of the bed as though the Tiger Girl had hit him with an ax.

With a convulsive jerk he jack-knifed to a sitting position. His fists closed as he shifted to his feet and advanced menacingly.

"No more monkey-shines, Boopus, no more monkey-shines. We're all through with that stuff. From now on we talk business. Quantus isn't big enough for the two of us. You can't stay on here. I can. Get started, Elroy. Go somewhere else and work and win."

"I've decided to work and win right here," I remarked calmly. "Am I reasonable? Yes or no? Ask me. Ask me."

For the first time, he seemed genuinely at a loss. "Let's cut out the kidding, Elroy," he said in a more subdued voice. "Let's try to be rational, thinking human beings."

I did not have to dig up the retort. It practically said itself: "There's only one human being present, Boopus, and that's me. You're just a temporary phenomenon. And now I know how you work. Every time I cut loose and do something I've always wanted to do, you drop just that much vitality. *Poppus woloppus*, Boopus. An old Lithuanian saying meaning, 'When I get through with you, molecule, you'll rattle around in a keyhole.'"

As I finished this speech, I reached behind me, and selecting a cigarette from a package on the table, lit it.

The effect on my Suppressed Comrade was striking. He had to hang onto the bedpost for support, while his head went back, his eyes closed, and his general expression was that of a man suffering from toothache.

"I—I've got something very important to say to you, Elroy. I'm ready to make a big concession, Elroy. I'll leave town myself."

"Who says you will?"

"I won't interfere with your happiness in any way, Elroy. All I ask is just a little independent existence. I'll live in a house by the side of the road and be a friend to man. You know you can't refuse me that, Elroy. We've been together too long. Comrades, comrades, as the old song says, ever since we were boys."

"You're just a suppressed comrade, Boopus, and before I finish, you're going to be right back where you were before I bought that book from Professor Upomenos. Shudder that off."

Slowly and painfully, he worked to his feet. His fists doubled.

"All right, Elroy—take the consequences! I'm desperate. I'm going to walk out of this house, Elroy, and don't try to stop me. I'll get my strength back, and then we'll see who's jailed as an impostor."

He ducked my extended arm and started for the door. I was right after him, when with a shock of pain that stabbed through my right foot, I fell over the red-plush-covered brick.

My foot had stubbed violently, tripping me to hands and knees, while every thought of my Suppressed Comrade was obliterated by a torrent of words which rushed out of my mouth of their own accord. Kneeling and shaking my fist at the red plush-covered object, I spoke, or rather shrieked, as follows:

"Omit that omit brick! Omit the man who made that omit brick! Omit the omit man who wouldn't get up at night and tear his omit shirt to strike a light to omit the omit man who made that omit brick!"

Then, still out of control, I seized the brick and hurled it violently through the broken window.

IT was only at this moment I remembered my Suppressed Comrade; the first thought I had was the horrifying possibility that while I was addressing the red-plush-covered brick, maybe he had beat it. I sprang to the door.

Panting and prostrate, my Suppressed Comrade was lying at the top of the stairway. As he saw me, he muttered feebly: "What's the idea of talking that way, Elroy? The brick doesn't know what you said."

"You knew what I said, all right, all right," I answered. "And now come back into the room before I haul you there."

Catching at the banister, and aided by my hold on his collar, he pulled him-

self up just as I heard familiar footsteps approaching the front door.

"Take your hands off me, Elroy. Somebody's down below. If you don't let me go, I'll yell for help."

I tightened my grip on his collar. "Go on and yell," I grunted. "It's old Van Hullabaloo, and you can't please me better than by yelling."

A LOUD rap resounded downstairs, followed by Mr. Van Hulsteyn's impatient bellow: "Is anybody in?"

My Suppressed Comrade was evidently at a loss. His mouth opened, but not a sound came out, and he offered no resistance as I hauled him back into the room and forced him down onto the bed.

Mr. Van Hulsteyn had wrenched open the front door and was slowly mounting the stairs. As rapidly as possible I shrouded my Suppressed Comrade from head to foot with the heavy comforter, trying to arrange it in such a way as to conceal the body underneath.

Then, lowering my voice, I whispered final instructions:

"If you know what's good for you, hot potato, you'll lie there perfectly quiet. If you don't, it'll be your own funeral. . . . What's that?"

There was no doubt that he was trying to talk back, but his voice was so weak it did not get past the comforter.

Before I had finished my "Come in," Mr. Van Hulsteyn had crashed the door.

I smiled at him in a genial way, shook the ashes from my cigarette, and at the same time pulled out the rocker with a hospitable gesture. Taking my place on the sill, I picked out a couple of chords on the banjo.

Apparently Mr. Van Hulsteyn looked on this as the last straw. With a snort he broke out of his pose and stalked in my direction, saying in a series of barks: "Well, well, Simmons? Well, well, well?"

I rendered a few additional chords, mostly bad. Then, removing my cigarette, I answered in a calm voice: "Very well indeed. And you, Mr. Hulsteyn—how about yourself? Sit down in the rocker; give your legs a vacation and spill what's on your mind."

The effect of this speech on my Suppressed Comrade left nothing to be desired. The comforter quivered violently, as though some one underneath the mattress and springs were shaking the bed.

But the consequences visible in my late employer were even more striking. He rushed forward as though about to

proceed to physical violence. Then, as I kept right on banging out chords on the banjo, he stopped short in front of the chair, and after glaring for another fifteen seconds, dumped himself down and began to rock violently.

Perhaps a minute passed while I continued experimenting with the banjo and puffing at my cigarette. "You sent for me, Simmons," he said at last, stopping the rocking of his chair and pointing a finger at me. "Well, well, where is it?"

"Where is what?" I asked, as though unaware of his meaning.

"The money, sir, the money. The thousand and eleven dollars. Where is it, Simmons? Well, well, well?"

I stopped my banjo-twanging.

"The money—oh, yes. To tell the truth, I didn't bring you here to discuss financial matters. Mr. Van Hulsteyn, your daughter Julie and I are going to be married. We thought you ought to be the first to know."

I could see the bed shake in a convulsive tremor. As he dropped back in the rocker, Mr. Van Hulsteyn's face was deep purple.

"This is no time for horseplay, sir," he finally snapped, after opening his mouth several times without audible result. "Since you don't appreciate the consideration I have shown you, I shall put the matter of the stolen funds into the hands of the law. At once."

I crushed the end of the cigarette on the windowsill. Then, accompanying myself with some miscellaneous chords on the banjo, I replied by singing a refrain which had been popular some years before:

*"It's a favorite prescription:  
It will never sour nor spoil;  
It's a dose for all dilemmas—  
It's that old banana oil."*

"Play that over twice on your hot-air furnace pipes, Mr. Van Hulsteyn," I added, "and you'll get the idea."

HE had looked like full-blooded indignation before, but now his appearance suggested apoplexy. On the bed the comforter leaped and quivered.

"The law will take care of you, sir. And I'll see that it acts at once."

"There's no law against getting married," I remarked in a mild voice.

"There is a law against stealing, sir. And you will find it out to your cost. I came here to give you a last chance to explain—"

I interrupted so forcibly that he stopped in the middle of his sentence:

"Hoovey is out, Mr. Van Hulsteyn. You came here for just one reason: You thought I was going to hand you that one thousand and eleven dollars. We're talking about something else. Do you give your consent to my marriage with Julie, or shall we have to elope? Answer yes, no or maybe."

"Blackmail!" shouted Mr. Van Hulsteyn. "That's your idea, is it, Simmons? You plan to marry my daughter, thinking in that way to escape the penalty you so richly deserve. In the first place, sir, you won't marry her. In the second place, sir, if you married her a hundred times, I'd see that the law took its course. I've had enough of this. Turn over the money at once or accept the consequences."

I lit another cigarette.

"I hope you don't suppose," I said, blowing a half-dozen successful smoke-rings, "that I'm looking for the old job back?"

He leaned forward, bellowing. "You won't get it back, sir."

"I don't want it," I observed. "I'd rather work for a tiger with a toothache."

He stiffened as though the rocker were an electric chair in operation. I went on:

"Nobody wants to work for you, Mr. Van Hulsteyn. You're as popular as the school bully. When you start well-welling, everybody in the plant wants to quit. You can throw more monkey-wrenches into the office machinery than an efficiency expert. You pulled your biggest boob stunt last week when you fired everybody in the research laboratory."

The comforter on the bed gave what might be called an anguished shudder.

"That's why," I resumed, "I'm obliged to tell you I won't even consider an offer to go back on the job. Now that Julie and I are going to be married, I am prepared to accept only a position where merit is recognized and rewarded."

**A**TREMOR shook the comforter. With an obvious effort Mr. Van Hulsteyn pulled himself together, and rose.

"The law will take its course, sir! I advise you to get ready for a long stay at one of our State penal institutions."

I whirled the banjo up into the air, like the orchestra boys at Peek Inn, caught it, and swept my fingers across the strings.

"Julie won't like it," I said. "Neither will Mr. Davenanter."

This brought him up short. "What do you mean, Simmons? What has Mr. Davenanter to do with all this?"

I yawned as though bored. "Well, Mr. Van Hulsteyn, Mr. Davenanter seems to appreciate initiative, courage and imagination. I've got 'em. He's willing to pay for 'em."

"Do you mean—"

"Just that and a lot more, Mr. Van Hulsteyn. And here's a little trade secret to lock up in your safe: Mr. Davenanter has planned to go after that rechargeable dry battery on his own hook. Maybe I'm going to help him. He's made me an offer. So, Mr. Van Hulsteyn, the only point remaining to be settled is whether or not you care to be present when Julie and I are married."

It was fortunate the bedsprings did not creak, because the whole bed shook.

**M**R. VAN HULSTEYN'S voice was a falsetto as he said: "Enough of this nonsense, Simmons. I have been wrong to consider your feelings; you have none. You are a low character, sir. You are a bridge-jumper. You engaged in a degrading combat with a professional prize-fighter."

"And I won both times," I said calmly. "How'd you like to tie up the family with a winner?"

"I have stood enough of your insolence, sir. Turn over that money at once, or take the consequences."

"What consequences? What consequences?"

"The legal consequences, sir," roared Mr. Van Hulsteyn, to my quiet amusement. "You are a confessed criminal, and I shall lose no time in so informing Mr. Davenanter."

Taking a quick step forward, I stared hard into his eyes.

"Mr. Van Hulsteyn," I said slowly, "be careful, sir. Watch your step, or there may be serious complications. In telling your baseless suspicions to others, as you have already done more than once, you have damaged my hitherto spotless reputation. One word more to any other person, and I'll bring a libel suit against you, sir, for substantial damages."

He laughed, but it was pretty hollow laughter. "Spotless reputation! Ha! Mr. Thacker, the cashier of the First National Bank, saw you carrying on disgracefully at Peek Inn."



"I suppose he's prepared to go into court and swear that he was on the premises himself?"

Having some acquaintance with Mr. Thacker, I knew he was not prepared to do anything of the kind. Mr. Van Hulsteyn seemed to have the same hunch.

"You never turned over that thousand and eleven dollars to Mr. Thacker, Simmons."

"What does that prove?"

"I gave you the money, sir. I placed it in your hands personally."

Snapping a match on my finger-nail, I lit another cigarette. "Who saw you do it?" I inquired. "Did you count it out to me before witnesses? Did I give you a signed receipt for that one thousand and eleven dollars?"

"You took the money. Admit it, sir!"

"I'll admit that perhaps somebody took the money, though I never laid eyes or fingers on it myself. Answer this question, Mr. Van Hulsteyn: are you or are you not known to be short-sighted?"

He sputtered something, but not in a way that could be understood.

"Don't bother about admitting your short-sightedness. Everybody is aware of it. Now then, are you prepared to swear you turned the money over to me and not to some one who in a general way resembled me? Have you any way of upsetting my absolute and perfect alibi that all Monday morning I remained in your office, never out of sight of Ray Buckbee?"

"You are making statements, Simmons, that you can't prove. I may not have the sight I had as a young man, but there is no one in Quantus who so closely resembles you as to be able to pull the wool over my eyes."

"Then I'm going to prove to you, Mr. Van Hulsteyn, that you're wrong." A faint quiver shook the comforter.

"I'm waiting, sir."

I WALKED over to the bed. The morning sun was shining through the window. On the floor the shadows cast by my hands and head were of a gratifying solid black.

"Are you ready, Mr. Van Hulsteyn?"

"What does this mean? Simmons, who is concealed there under that comforter?"

He took a step forward and bent over, assuming a position suitable for receiving the good swift kick which I now realized I had always wanted to slip him. In an instinctive way I was pulling

my foot back, when I remembered that, whatever his faults, he was my prospective father-in-law. Instead, I caught the nearest corner of the comforter and yanked it clear.

If Mr. Van Hulsteyn was surprised at the result, he was not half as much so as I was myself. I had expected to hear the whining excuses of my Suppressed Comrade, and to see on the spread the wretched caricature of myself.

THE disclosure was so entirely different that I could feel my heart jump at the shock.

Because of its thickness, the comforter had remained bulged out, thus giving the impression that it was solidly supported underneath.

The support had vanished. On the bed there remained only my best tan shoes, a pair of silk socks, fancy garters, pink-striped silk underwear, a black-and-white silk shirt, a tie which must have cost at least five dollars, and my Sunday blue serge suit.

*As for my Suppressed Comrade, he had completely and utterly disappeared!*

Mr. Van Hulsteyn stood looking at the bed like a small boy at a magical entertainment.

"And what does all this tomfoolery explain, Simmons? Well, well, well?"

My brain was running like a freshly-oiled ball-bearing machine going into full speed. My last bit of anxiety had vanished. Though Mr. Van Hulsteyn went on talking and sputtering, I did not hear him.

I looked at the blue serge suit, at the trousers, the wrinkled coat, the vest beneath. It was the suit which my Suppressed Comrade had worn continuously from his first appearance. The upper vest pocket bulged slightly. Just as the glimpse of a portable stove in a sporting-goods house will make you remember an entire camping-trip, the sight of that vest pocket recalled my old continuous longing to tuck away money there and then forget about it. At that, the solution came:

The day Suppy had taken Mr. Van Hulsteyn's one thousand and eleven dollars, he had been wearing that suit. Following my old hanker, he had shoved the money into the upper left-hand vest pocket and forgotten about it. He had started the poker-game with what was left of the ten dollars borrowed from Ray, and eventually lost back only what he had won at the beginning.

Thrusting my hand into the vest pocket, I casually pulled out a flat oblong of folded bills.

"Mr. Van Hulsteyn," I said, turning the money over to him, "of my own accord and at a great deal of trouble to myself, I have recovered the one thousand and eleven dollars which you very foolishly confided to a stranger of my build and general appearance. I bear no hard feelings, Mr. Van Hulsteyn. I realize it is not your fault if you are short-sighted physically and otherwise."

As he stood there, with his mouth open, I could not resist a last remark.

"You are Julie's father, Mr. Van Hulsteyn, so I have not the slightest intention of instituting a libel suit. Perhaps I may even try to interest Mr. Davenanter in advancing funds to perfect your rechargeable dry battery. . . . Don't try to thank me, Mr. Van Hulsteyn. No gratatitute, sir, no omit gratatitute. Just count your money, and when you've done so, give me a written receipt for my files. *Poppus woloppus*, Mr. Van Hulsteyn—an old Chinese proverb meaning, 'Well, well, well, why don't you snap out of it?'"

#### EPILOGUE

"WELL," said my Aunt Paula as she laid down the last page of the final version of my complete true confession story, "so that's the end."

"Yes," I said, "that's the end."

She pulled out a cigarette and lit it. "You certainly told a life-full. You relieved your conscience. And I don't see where you have any kick coming."

Though I did not speak, the expression around my mouth probably suggested to her that I was not wholly in accord with this conclusion.

"Think it over, Elroy. Happily married, aren't you?"

"Yes, Aunt Paula."

"Proud papa of that baby boy over there in the play-pen?"

"He's a wonder, Aunt Paula," I said after clearing my throat.

"On good terms with your father-in-law?"

"As much as anybody could be, Aunt Paula."

"The rest of your in-laws like you?"

"Yes, Aunt Paula—especially Julie's little brother. The first thing I did was to buy him an American Youth's Chemistry Experiment Set No. 6."

"That's the way to be popular in the family circle, Elroy. And did you get Julie's big father his rechargeable dry battery?"

I GAVE Aunt Paula a brief résumé of facts about our work in this direction, and explained how, after many experiments, the battery had finally passed all laboratory tests and inside of six months would be on the market. "Mr. Davenanter says it's a sure thing, and he's recently doubled his investment."

"Hot potato! And if I remember the last letter-head, you're now treasurer of the Van Hulsteyn Battery Works and assistant manager of the Research Department."

"Yes, Aunt Paula," I admitted.

"Then precisely what has been wrong?"

"Well, Aunt Paula," I said, thinking hard, "for six months after my Suppressed Comrade disappeared, I kept getting bills for silver-mounted flasks, gold-chased cigarette-lighters, and what-not."

"Your salary was big enough to settle the bills, wasn't it, Elroy?"

"Yes. But there were other things, Aunt Paula, which had nothing to do with money. Often when I was walking along the street, some blonde would give me the eye and make me break out into a profuse perspiration and wonder where, if ever, I had met her before."

"They didn't throw their arms about you in public, did they, Elroy?"

"No, Aunt Paula," I said. "They never went as far as that. But it was very embarrassing."

"That doesn't seem to me, Elroy, to be anything to worry about. You seem to me, really, to have come out on top of the heap. I repeat I don't see where you have any kick coming!"

"I guess I really haven't, Aunt Paula," I said honestly.

"Q. E. D., Elroy. By the way that old Chinese proverb you quoted to Mr. Van Hulsteyn has been variously translated. Some authorities claim it means, 'You can live without experience, but the longest way round is the shortest way home.' My own translation is slightly different."

As she was evidently in a kidding mood, I decided to humor her. "What is your translation, Aunt Paula?"

"In my opinion," said Aunt Paula, "the meaning is: 'You met yourself and it did you good.'"



# Hunter's Warning

By RICHARD HOWELLS WATKINS

*The brief drama of a strange duel to the death.*

PAUL HENDERSON'S heart felt as if a cold hand were squeezing it. He sat very still in the sternsheets of the rowboat. His gaze turned from the marshy shore, dimly visible in the misty gray hour before dawn, to the fleshy, dark-red face of the barrel-chested man at the oars. For ten long minutes Jim Murdock's eyes had not left his face.

Suddenly Murdock, with a quick glance toward the shore, let the oars trail in the water. He sat up, reached into his hip pocket and pulled out his pint flask. Although it was already half empty, his hand was as steady as a rock as he raised it to his loose-lipped mouth.

"Here's to us—and I don't mean me an' *you*, Henderson!" he said with gloating emphasis. Noisily he sucked down a drink and then thrust the flask away. But he did not start rowing again. He sat there as the boat lost the last of its momentum, staring with vindictive, slaty eyes at the younger man. Those eyes were open windows of hell—a hell of frustration and hate.

The icy fingers closed more tightly around Paul Henderson's heart. Although nominally he and Jim Murdock were friends, he could not pretend that he had accepted blindly Murdock's invitation to try his hand at duck-shooting. He had divined that Murdock had asked him in Helen Lane's presence in order to show him up as a weakling and milk-

sop. And Paul had accepted, to demonstrate to Murdock and to himself that, despite the discrepancy in weight and athletic ability, he was not afraid of Murdock.

But he had not counted on—murder.

IN a way it seemed grotesquely impossible to think of Murdock, the loud, popular, sport-loving hotelkeeper, committing murder—killing him, a studious teacher in the high school. Ludicrous! Did things like that happen to people like Jim Murdock and Paul Henderson? And the motive—the love of a girl—that too emphasized the absurdity of the thought.

Murdock's flaming eyes now probed at him with evil triumph unmasked. The barrels of the two shotguns, behind Murdock, glinted with much the same steely hardness.

Helen Lane, Henderson remembered suddenly, had money as well as charm. Did Murdock think it was he, Henderson, whom she favored? Paul had never dared hope so; but his heart leaped momentarily at the thought.

"Us!" said Jim Murdock, with leering relish. "Us—Helen and I! Never reckoned you'd act as matchmaker for us two, did you—you white-faced softie?"

"You haven't proved me that, Murdock," Paul said steadily. But his voice sounded to him thin and weak, and Mur-

dock laughed gratingly deep down in his throat.

"I will—soon!" Murdock declared. "I'll prove you ought never to have stuck your nose out of your schoolroom—that you don't know enough about guns and boats and salt water to be a safe hunting companion. I'll prove it—right!"

He jerked a finger at the two guns behind him, and then leaned toward the smaller man stiffly erect in the stern seat. He nodded at a leaflet on the seat. To escape Murdock's glaring eyes, Paul had been trying to make it out in the early morning light.

"You should ha' read that warning to hunters the game warden handed out with your brand-new license, Henderson," Murdock said. "I read mine five days ago. It gave me an idea. One of the paragraphs says: '*Remove the shells before laying a gun down in a boat. A shotgun can blow a big hole through the bottom planking!*'"

HIS lips twisted grotesquely. "That's what's going to happen to us, Henderson," he said. "Your gun's going to stove a hole in this boat. An' after the accident, may the best man get to shore alive!"

"You know I can't swim," Paul Henderson said, fighting to keep his voice level. There was cold sweat on his forehead, but he did not raise a hand to brush it off.

"Yes, I know it," Murdock said, parting his fleshy lips in a grin. "Aint it swell? The best man *will* get to shore!"

"It's—murder," Paul said slowly, his eyes falling to the gray, bitter-cold water.

"It's—matrimony!" Murdock replied. He leaned forward. "That's where I come in, you pink mouse, you! What girl can resist a hero? I try to save you, Henderson. In spite of the icy water and your crazy struggles, I finally drag you ashore and stagger up the road with your undersize carcass on my shoulders. Only you're dead, see? You're dead! I drop exhausted, half frozen, sunk with grief that you're dead; but I'm a hero, anyhow!"

He nodded, tightening his slack lips. "I make damn' sure you're dead, Henderson."

Paul Henderson was rigid on the thwart. He felt as if that cold hand around his heart had frozen his body too. Was he a coward—doomed to die

like a rabbit, without fighting, craven cold—stricken motionless?

"How about a little begging, you pup?" Murdock said with relish. "Can't you talk, even?"

Paul looked toward the two shotguns—and the big, wary man between him and them. He knew something about boxing—but there was no chance for that here, and Murdock was forty pounds heavier.

Struggling to preserve his composure, his eyes dropped to the leaflet weighted down on the seat. They fixed themselves upon it.

Stiffly, with infinite effort, he picked up the game warden's warning to hunters, and looked at a printed line. He had read it before. He read it again, and suddenly he shuddered violently.

"I can't!" he gasped.

Murdock laughed. He pulled off his boots, and then reached backward for Paul's shotgun, eyes unwinkingly fixed upon his victim.

"Just a hole in the bottom—not in you, Henderson," he said mockingly. "Won't we make a swell couple—Helen an' me? She thinks a lot of you, you yellow pup!"

Paul Henderson looked up suddenly at the sound of the girl's name. The chill that paralyzed his heart and body was going.

"I *would* be yellow—if I left her to a beast like you!" he said in a hoarse voice.

Murdock did not answer. He had caught up the gun. Now, bringing it to his shoulder, he pointed the muzzle at the worn, half-rotten bottom planking, almost between the other man's feet.

Paul Henderson bent swiftly and thrust toward the barrel steady fingers.

At almost the same instant the gun blared out.

ROCKING gently, the boat drifted on in the growing light of dawn.

In the bottom of the boat lay the game warden's *Warning to Hunters* between the living man and the dead. It was now unreadable.

But Paul Henderson, twisting a tourniquet about the stump of his forefinger, whispered a paragraph from it that he would never forget:

"*Always lay your gun down when not in use, so that no mud, sand or snow will get into the barrel—a gun with even a slight obstruction in the muzzle will burst when fired.*"

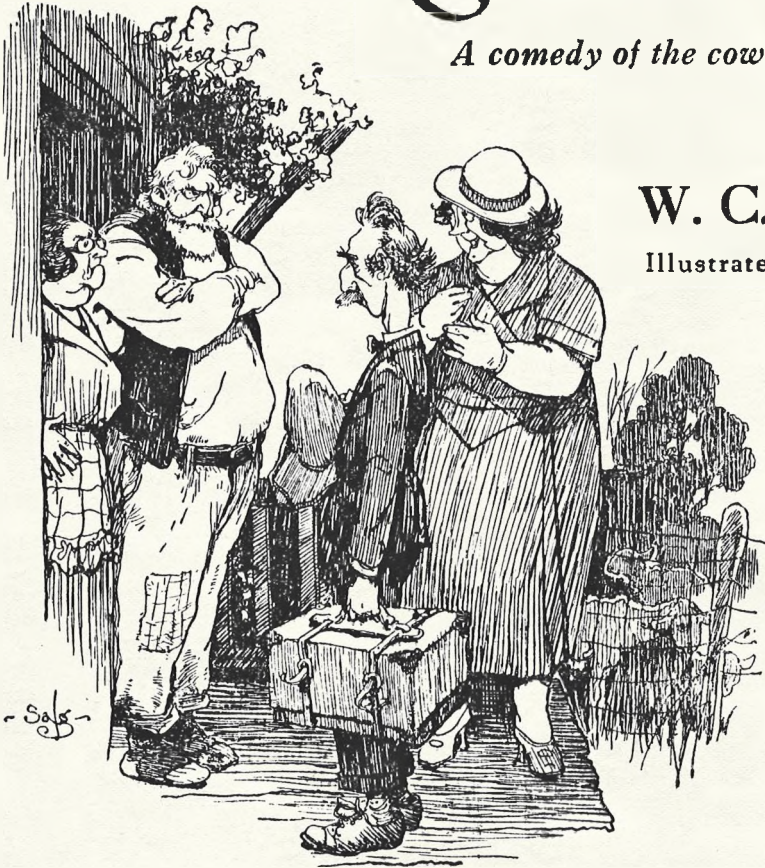
# Live and Learn

*A comedy of the cow-country.*

By

W. C. TUTTLE

Illustrated by Bert Salg



We went to her house, where we met Pa and Ma. My new father-in-law looks like a Clydesdale horse with a beard.



Haywire, Wyoming  
(At Home) June 5.  
MR. CACTUS CULLISON,  
E-SQUIRE  
Ocotillo, Arizona.

Dear Sir and Frennd I hope:

Well, old Cactus, I reckon you and the boys of the Lazy K are all wondering how I and Emily are gitting along, spending lots of money like a pare of drunken sailers and wearing fancy duds and me not having to wear overalls and hiheel boots no more.

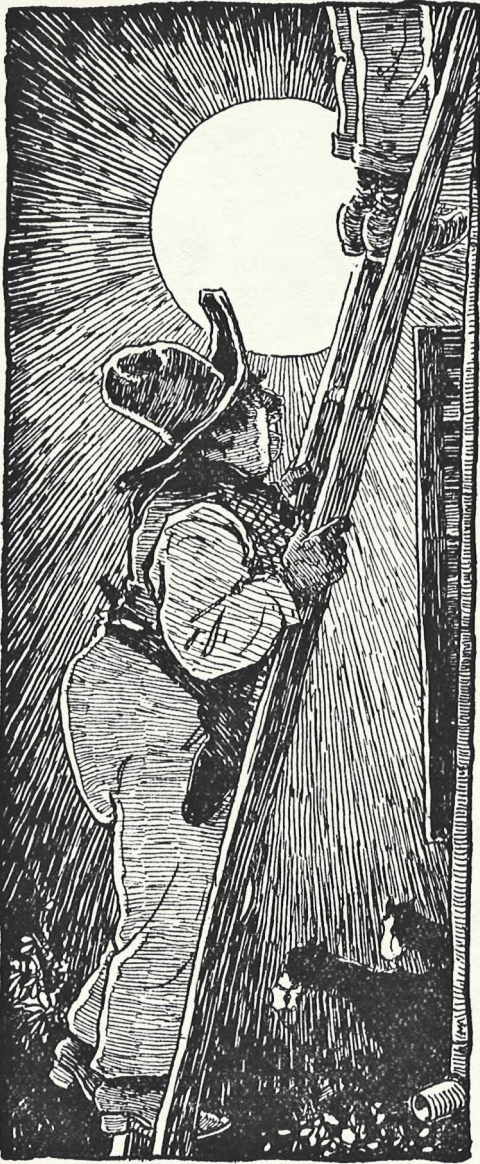
I will bet you are all saying he's a lucky devil to marry a erris and not have to work no more, because I *vs* Work always was a perfect match, as you might say. Didn't we have a grate time at that shivaree, Cactus! It sure done my hart good to see what a fuss the boys made over us. But you can tell Shorty Dolan for me that next time he wants to hit me with a tomato, he ought to have respect enough for me to take it out of

the can. It took seven stitches to cover up his mistake. Emily sends him her love. She says his idea was grate, but he underestimated his strength.

Sometimes I wonder if Shorty was jel-lus of me marryin' a rich girl. But it is like Emily said, I was too good to waste on a lot of dogie cows. You see she didnt want me to be a ordinary puncher like you and Shorty and Zibe and Ike and Blazer. You'll never git no place, until you all die and then it's indefinite.

Well, after the shivaree and the stitching on my head, I and Emily got on the train and come here to Haywire, where her pa and ma is rolling in wealth, as you might say. They didn't know Emily had taken unto herself a husband, until we got here. Emily said we'd keep it a secret and shock her father. She has some funny ideas, Cactus.

Well, we got there at night, and went to her house, where we met Pa and Ma. Cactus, it aint like me to cast slurs at



We went up that ladder to where we could peek down into the parlor, which is full of sheep-herders.

anybody, not even my new father in law, but I tell you he looks like a Clydesdale horse with a beard. Ma is also big but they say she's got a leeky valve in her heart. Emily says, "Pa, this is Dobie Dobbs, which is my husband."

And Pa says "Migod, have you joined in holy wedlock with this?" I says, "Pa, I am your lawful son," and he says, "We won't go into the legal end of the matter." Then he says to Emily, "Have you gone plumb nuts or is it the Jones' sense of humor?" And she says, "Pa, I married Dobie for better or for worse," and he says, "I never did like local option ideas."

Emily and her mother went upstairs, leaving me and Pa in the parlor. I says to him, "Wh:t's your business, Pa?" And he says, "Well, it looks as though I'd qualify as a sire of a half-wit. But as a matter of fact I am in the sheep business." I says, "Well, that explains it all, Pa." He says, "Explains what?" And I replies, "Well, I've been wondering if I was crazy or you was crazy, but now I know."

Well, Cactus, we all make mistakes, I suppose. I woke up in a bed upstairs, with Emily putting cold water rags on my head. I asked her what was the matter and she said I had a relapse. I don't know what that means, but don't never git one, Cactus. I felt of my head and I said to her, "Why, my stitches are all busted, and the doctor said they'd have to stay there until next Sunday," and Emily says, "Yesterday was Sunday, Dobie." Time sure does fly, Cactus. I had my relapse on Thursday night.

Emily confessed to me today, Cactus. They say that confession is good for the soul, but it did not do my soul any good. She aint no erris, unless Pa dies and leaves her a gob of sheep. And he is so tuff, I will bet they have to shoot him on Judgment Day to make it a clean sweep.

Ma may not last long, but she'll make a showing while she does. She asked me if it made any difference to me if I called her Mrs. Jackson, instead of Ma. You know me, Cactus. I said, "Names don't mean a thing to me." I says, "Every time I call you Ma, I think of my own sweet mother."

P. S. My mother run away with a tinhorn gambler when I was six.

Well, Cactus, this is all for this time. The doc just left. He had to put in a couple extra stitches, where I kinda ripped, and he said I will be all right as soon as I got heeled up again. Mrs. Jackson may have a leeky valve but it don't cramp her none from throwing alarm clocks. Regards from all the Jacks- ons and yours truly

Dobie Dobbs, E-squire.

P. S. I hear that there's a little trouble here between the sheep and cow people, but I hope to settle it quick, as soon as I get all heeled up. I asked Pa Jackson if he cared if I called him Pa, and he said, "No, because I'm broad minded enough to know that mistakes happen in the best of families." Write soon, Cactus.

Dobie.

Haywire, Wyoming  
June 27.

MR. CACTUS CULLISON  
Ocotillo, Arizona.

Dear Sir:

You cant haw haw me and git away with it. I suppose you and Shorty and Ike and Zibe and Blazer thought you was reading between the lines of my letter. You said you knowed Emily wasnt no erris. I suppose you could look at her teeth like a horse and tell that. All four of you are pretty smart you think. I could buy and sell all of you right now. A cowpuncher aint much in this world. He never has no influence. I didnt realize what a dum and sordid way it is to make a living punching cows until I looked back at it.

Well, Cactus, old frend, how are you, anyway? I and Emily are fine. This is a great town, Cactus. Living with the right kind of people, you kinda rise above the common herd. Everybody around here is talking about me. They think I'm great. Even the doctor says I'm a fizzical marvel. Emily comes up every day. Just to see that nobody bothers me, the sheriff sets on the outside steps most all the time and makes everybody answer questions, before they can see me. You'd be a long time punching cows to git that much attention.

Do you remember Len Crossman, Cactus? You wont admit it, because he said that you and him used to steal horses down in New Mexico. He is a awful big man now, and kind hearted, he says. I and him had a few drinks and he tells me I am liable to be one of the biggest men in this part of the country. I let him go ahead, not letting him know I knew this a long time ago.

Well, that night at supper Pa Jackson takes me to one side and he says, "Dobie, I want you should keep away from the house here tonight. Us sheepmen is having a meeting to decide on a limit that each of us can have in shooting cowpunchers, and I don't want you here. Some of the boys might see your bow-legs and think you was a spy, instead of getting bow-legs from walking too young."

Well, that was all right with me. I meets Len uptown and we has a few more drinks, and I tells him about the meeting at our house. Cactus, would you believe it, but poor Len busts right out crying. After while I gets him calmed down, and he says, "Dobie, I

didn't think they'd do this to me." I says, "What has somebody done to you, Len?" Then he kinda gulps, and he says, "Dobie, it is because all my sheep are black sheep. I am just a hard-luck guy. I come here to attend that meeting, and they turned me down. Dobie, I'll pine away and die, if I cant attend that meeting."

I says, "Well, I will have a talk with Pa Jackson. And he says, "No, dont do that, because I dont like him. I will just go away and pine myself to death. Why, Dobie, I would give ten dollars to be where I could hear everything about that meeting and tomorraw I could go to the other sheep men and say, 'Well, you done this and said that.' See what I mean?" "Well," I said, "if you have got ten dollars that is going to waste, I might get a idea. I've always knowed that sheep men was crazy, but I didnt know they was so hard-hearted that they would turn a feller down just because all his sheep was black." Well, we had a few more drinks, and then we went down to my house in the dark.

I knowed there was a ladder against the woodshed; so I got it and leaned it against the house at a upstairs window.

Len says, "We must go darned quiet, because if they discover me, theyll take my union card away from me." I asks him what the union card is for, and he said you had to have a union card or they couldn't make union underwear out of wool from his sheep. I knowed that was true but I just wanted to be sure that Len knew what he was paying dues for.

Well, Cactus, we went up that ladder and through the window into a dark room, which we crawled through into the hall and along the hall to the top of the stares, where we could peek down into the parlor, which is full of shepherds, all talking and smoking at once. Then Pa Jackson calls for order, and he says, "Gentlemen, here's the way I see it. This country is sheeped out, and we've got to expand or sell out. If we can get our sheep into Porcupine Valley all hell cant drive us out. Them cow men over there are 1/2 expecting us, but they dont know when. My idea is for us to get all ready for a big drive. Then we will take a few thousand sheep to the south end of the valley and make a bluff at coming in. They will send every fighting man down there to repel us, and while they are down at that end,

we will swoop in on the north end. Hows that for a idea, gents?"

Another sheep man gets up, and he says: "Boys, that's the only way we can work it. I say, let's give three cheers for Caleb Jacksons idea." But just when they was opening their mouths, as you might say, two men comes in, and one of em says to the big sheriff, whose name is Sheep-Dip Sorensen: "Sheriff, we lost track of both of 'em."

"Lost track of who?" asks Pa Jackson.

"Len Crossman and your son-in-law." Pa Jackson says, "What? You don't mean to say that my son-in-law is trail-in' with that cattle spy!" And one of the men says, "They've been drinking together most all day." And Pa Jackson says, "That 1/2 wit better not let me catch him. I will bust every bone in his body, the trater."

It was dark up there and I do not know how Len took this. I would hate to have anybody brand me as a trater and a 1/2 wit. Anyway, I never did throw down a frend; so I stands right up there, where they can all see me and I says, "Caleb Jackson, you may be the loving father of my sweet wife, and a father-in-law to me, but you can't stand up and desecrate the name of a man who is a frend of mine."

Cactus, I heard somebody go outside and shut the door. I suppose it was somebody who cant stand carnage and

they could recognize menace in my voice. I put my right hand inside my bosom, like Bonapart, and I says, "I defy you to prove that Len Crossman is a trater and a 1/2 wit."

Pa Jackson says, "Dobie, is Len with you?" And I says, "He certinly is." And he says, "A hundred dollars to the man who gets him."

And just then the lights went out. Well, Cactus, a hundred dollars is a hundred dollars, and if the werst comes to the werst I can afford to buy Len a new union card. I aint as big as Len but you know the Dobbs have a motto which states that the taller they are the further they fall. Well I pawed around until I discovered that Len wasnt with me, and then I makes a run for the door of that room, figuring I'd nail him before he could get on that ladder. . . .

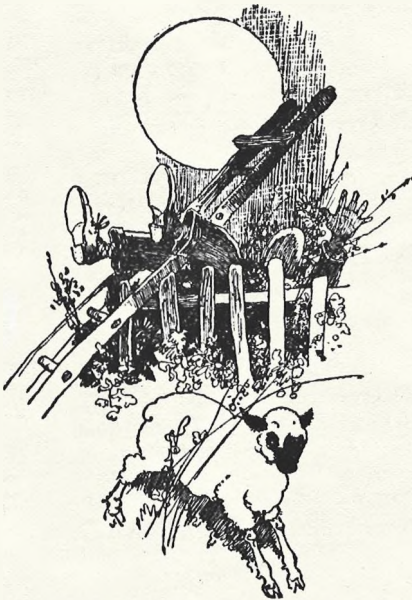
Well, Cactus, the doctor was just here, and he fixed me all up for the night. He said he wanted to do a little more work on me, but he had to go and doctor a sick horse at the livery-stable and then get back to his office to operate on a dog. Well, Cactus, I hope these few lines will find you enjoying life as much as you ever can. Emily would probably send her regards. As soon as I am heeled up we are going to have a big celebration. The doc told me that Pa Jackson said that as soon as I was on my feet again they was going to open a keg of something and pick a couple turkeys. You can see how prominent I am getting, Cactus. So I'll close for this time.

Yrs Respy

Dobie Dobbs, E-squire.

P. S. I forgot to tell you that I found Len right at the top of the ladder; so I dived right into him, shouting my battil cry. I got him around the neck, and I says in his ear, "Stop struggling and I'll give you 1/2 the reward." But I suppose he was hole hog or none, like 1/2 the world is. Well, you know that a Dobbs never lets loose when he once gets a holt; so when he rears back, trying to shake me loose, the ladder swayed away out, and here we went.

I heard men yelling and shooting, and I yells "You damn cowards to shoot at two helpless men on a ladder!" And just then we hit the picket fence. Well, Cactus, I felt every bone in my body break, and I felt that I was tore limb from limb, but I kept my presents of mind. Len never said a word, when I got the busted fence and ladder off him. I suppose he seen that it wasn't no use



Well, Cactus, I felt every bone in my body break, and I felt that I was tore limb from limb.



struggling against me. Both of my eyes are almost swelled shut and my body is all twisted, but you know a Dobbs never quits. It was a terrible chore, but I got one of Len's big feet under each arm, and I drug him across the yard, up the steps and into the house.

There aint a one of them shepherds in there, but I can see Emily, my lawful wedded wife, and Mrs. Jackson, her mother, standing there, bug-eyed, looking at me and my prize. I says, "where's them men gone? And Mrs. Jackson says, "They've gone chasing Len Crossman, the spy." And I says, "Next time they'll know that it only takes Dobie Dobbs to capture a 1/2 witted trater." And Emily says, "Migod, Dobie, what have you done to Father?" Anyway, that's what I think she said, because just at that time something hit me from the rear, where Mrs. Jackson was standing, and I woke up here in the hospital. I dont know yet what Emily meant, but I suppose she meant that I hadn't ought to have brought Len down to the house. Oh, well, live and learn, I suppose.

Dobie.

Haywire, Wyoming  
July 20.

MR. C. CULLISON  
Ocotillo, Arizona.

Sir:

I don't know what I have to prove you stole horses down in New Mexico with Len Crossman. He said you did and I aint never caught Len in no lies yet. I didnt say you are a horsethief but I merely said that you used to steal horses. Maybe you signed a pledge like a drunkard, as far as I know. They say theres a little bit of good in all of us, and maybe yours cropped out. Or wasnt there any more loose horses in New Mexico. Ha, ha, ha. See the joke? Maybe you got scared theyd catch you, eh? Some folks are nacherally timid.

Well, Cactus, old frend, alls well that ends well, as they say. I got out of the hospital O. K., but I found that I am a misunderstood man. I argued with a lawyer for a hour, and I got so mad that I punched him right in the nose. He said that Caleb Jackson was going to have my marriage with Emily a-nulled on the grounds that I was incompetent to understand the marriage vows, whatever those things are. Hell, all you have to say is I do or I will, and everybody understands them. I said, "I didnt know you had to make a life study of them



Len said you and him used to steal horses and he tells me I am liable to be one of the biggest men in this part of the country.

few words," And he said, "If you only know it, they cover a multitude."

I says, "I dont care what they cover. I married Emily Jackson for better or for worse and I can prove it by the preacher, and she done the same." I says, "I'm going to pull off a rumpus with Caleb Jackson that Haywire will date time from, unless he agrees that everything is all right."

You know me, Cactus. I never quit. Well, me and the lawyer had it hot and heavy, and I popped him in the nose. Well, everything was all right, except when I went out through the window he hit me in the back of the head with a iron paperwate, and the doctor down at the jail said I had the words "Patented October 1898" printed right on my scalp. He showed it to the sheriff, and the sheriff said, "Oh, well, in 1898 there was a lot of freek patents taken out."

I was in there two days, resting and getting heeled up again. I had a talk with the sheriff about my coming battil with Caleb Jackson, and he said we ought to sell tickets for the big show. Well, Cactus, I didn't want to humiliate Caleb Jackson in public; so I said, "No, I dont want to show him up for the white livered shepherd that he is publicly, but I'll

make him wish he'd never seen me." The sheriff says, "Well, that dont require no bloodshed, Dobie." I suppose he meant that I wouldnt need to hit Caleb Jackson very hard to make him squeel with pain. Them big fellers aint so awful tough. Its boys my size that can stand a lot of agony and not turn a hair.

Well, I met a feller named Dynamite Dugan, which is a camp tender for a sheep outfit. Dynamite is a fine feller, except that he's a rough diamond with big whiskers and a thirst. I spoke about you boys, and he said him and Zibe and Blazer herded sheep a few years ago for a outfit in Montana, but Zibe and Blazer got run out of the State for dealing crooked poker. I know now how come they always took my wages so easy. I got to figuring that they beat me out of thirty-seven dollars and eighty-five cents by crooked taktiks.

But thats all right, Cactus. I am glad I am away now, because that old Lazy K was a fine den of horsethieves and card-sharpers. Well, old frend, I was telling my troubles to Dynamite, and he said I sure got a terrible deal from Caleb Jackson. He said for me not to take the word of a lying lawyer, but to see Emily and have a talk with her.

He says, "Dobie, to hell with Jackson. You didn't marry him." I says, "Well, you'd think I did from the way he acts." He says, "Why don't you take your loving wife and move away from here?" And I told him I didnt have money enough to git far. He asked me how much I had, and I said I had twenty-five dollars.

"Well," he says, "a hundred would take you quite a ways." And I says it sure would. "Well," he says, "I've got to leave before dark and all the banks are shut up for the day, or Id lend you seventy-five dollars." Theres a frend for you, Cactus. Old Dynamite is sure fine. He only knowed me a few hours, and here he is offering to lend me money. I says, "I'm sorry the bank aint open," and he says, "Well, heres what we can do. I'll write you a check for a hundred and twenty-five and you give me the twenty-five in cash." You see, Cactus, he didnt have to loan me that money, because he nad a good excuse of the banks not being open. Well, we made the trade, and he said, "Dobie, you get to see her in private and make her go away with you. I feel sure you'll be a awful success."

Well, Cactus, I've always knowed that. With any break of luck I could sore to

hites I never dreamed about. Anyway, I decided to leave my licking of Caleb Jackson to the last, as I could do that at any odd time. I knew that my loving wife always went to bed about nine o'clock p. m. so I hung around until a little later than that, before I stole the ladder and put it up to her window.

I figured we'd get a train about ten o'clock and leave the Jackson tribe flat. It wasnt hard for a man of my ability to climb the ladder and open the window. I can here my loving wife snoring away; so I know the coast is clear. I crawls into the room, sneaks across the floor and shook her gently. It's pretty dark in that room.

I says, "Honey, it's me." She sets up in bed. I says, "Honey, its your lover, who has been done awful wrong."

Well, Cactus, old frend, I knowed that Emily had a good singing voice, but I didn't know she could screem like a cally-ope. She cut loose a screek you could hear in Eourip. I says, "My heavens, dont you know your own lawful wedded husband?" And then she cuts loose again. I says, "Calm yourself, woman, all I want is a square deal, and if I can't get it from you, where can I go, I ask you?" I says, "I didn't come here to be tough and harsh, but to win back the tender love of you. Honey," I says, "Ive always loved you, in spite of your folks, which is the greatest drawbacks to love I have ever met." I says, "I've come to take you away with me on the ten o'clock train tonight; so shuck off your nightie and jump into some clothes."

Well, Cactus, she let out another yelp, and about that time the door opens and I sees a hulk about the size of a elephant in the dark, which I know is Pa Jackson. But I aint scared. I says, "Listen to me you big, cock-eyed shepherd, if it wasn't for you, everything would be all right. This woman loves me and I know it, and I'm going to take her away with me. Lay hands on me at your parel."

You know me, Cactus. I aint afraid of anything and I can whip most anybody. Well, Caleb Jackson grabbed me, and I socked him right in the nose, but he got a fowl grip on me, jumped on my chest with both of his big feet, and then he grabbed me by the legs and started whirling me around. I suppose that he wanted to get me so dizzy I couldn't do anything, but his hands slipped and I went through that window on the fly.

It took me quite a while to bend my neck back into line with my shoulders,



I knowed that Emily had a good singing voice, but I didn't know she could scream like a callyope. She cut loose a screek you could hear in Eourip.

but I was getting madder and madder all the time. I says to myself, "Dobie Dobbs, this is the time to assert your manhood and take your wife away from her inhuman father." That's just what I said to myself, and here I went back to the house.

I kicked the front door open and walked right in.

I dont see none of the Jackson family there but here is Thor Swensen a brother of the sheriff, who is also foreman for Jackson's sheep outfits. He's bigger and hairier than Caleb Jackson. I says to him, "So Caleb Jackson, the coward, is using you to guard him against me, eh? Stand aside, you mattress-faced Swede, because a Dobbs is all painted up for the war-trail and he's come to get some scalps."

Well, Cactus, you know how I am when I am mad. Nothing can stop me. I just go berkshire, as they say. I had made up my mind to take my lawful loving wife out of the house, or die. I suppose I have always been successful that way because of my power of will.

Well, Cactus, I wish youd kinda hint to old man Lucas that Dobie might get tired of the fleshpots and come back to the Lazy K. Of course, I cant get back yet, because my case comes up next week, but they cant do anything to me.

I will probably defend my own case. The lawyer says they are suing me on six counts, but nothing less than ten counts would ever put a Dobbs out. Ha, ha, ha. But you just hint to the old man about me, will you, old frend? Well, I guess this is the last letter you will get from me here, unless Caleb Jackson relents in sackcloth and ashes, because when I get tired of a place, I'm just tired of it, thats all. Regards to Shorty, Zibe, Ike and Blazer. Emily will probably send her regards from Tucson.

Yrs Respy  
Dobie Dalton, E-squire.  
c/o County Jail.

P. S. You know as well as I do that I am as smart as they make them, but I am no mind-reader with a glass ball to look into. How would I know that Mrs. Jackson and Emily had moved to Tucson for Mrs. Jacksons lecky valve, and that Thor Swensen and his wife had taken Jacksons house. The doctor says my jaw was broke in two places two ribs busted and one ear turned around on its axel. Oh, well, live and learn, I suppose.

Dobie

P. S. No. 2. You talk about people being dumb and absent minded, Cactus. Dynamite Dugan forgot to leave any money in that bank. He meant well. Live and learn, I suppose.

# Catamount



A NEWSPAPER account of the killing of a boy by a mountain lion near Okanogan, Washington, a few years ago, stated that this was the first authentic report of the unprovoked attacking of a human by one of these animals. But I know of another such instance; this one happened forty-two miles north of Haliburton, Ontario, in the winter of 1895.

I was employed as a teamster that winter for J. W. Howary and Son, whose headquarters were in Saginaw, Michigan. We were hauling pine logs out of the woods down to a lake, which I believe was called Hawk Lake, where we slid them out on the ice to wait for the spring thaw. The tote-roads were made hard and slippery in the sled-tracks by first plowing out the tracks with a snow-plow, and then flooding these tracks each night with water from a tank-sled which carried about two thousand gallons, and which had stopcocks that allowed the water to run out just behind the runners as the sled moved along. This made a slick trail for the log-sleds.

Water was not used on the down grades, however, the problem there being to slow up the heavy sleds rather than to speed them. With a load on, the sleds had a tendency to "ride" the teams going downhill; therefore it was necessary to sand the tracks in the worst places, or to bed them with marsh hay. Sand was more effective, and each bad stretch of road had a man assigned to tend the tracks so that the teamsters could keep going without losing any time. There were fourteen teams working out of this camp, and the first teams started out very early each morning, sometimes shortly after two o'clock, so that the last ones could be through work and back to camp by evening. This made it necessary for the men who tended the grades to start out almost in the

middle of the night, for they usually had to build a fire against a sand-bank to thaw out the sand, which they then scooped up and distributed on the tracks.

My two horses, Bert and Tom, were the best working horses I have ever driven. They never needed any coaxing, and they were so familiar with the work that they always knew just what to do. Bert was the smarter of the two; he was almost human. Back him up to a down log and tell him to "gee" or "haw," and he would turn on a dime to get into position, never pulling ahead away from the log like most horses would. When the tongs were fastened and he heard the ring drop, you wanted to be on the safe side of the log, for he started going without any orders the second he knew things were ready. He broke one man's leg that way before I had him, but of course it was due to the man's carelessness.

Bert was known as a vicious horse, and on one occasion he picked up the foreman by the back of his mackinaw and dropped him in a snowdrift. It was always necessary to put a twist on his nose to shoe him, or to harness him either, for that matter; but for some reason I never had any trouble with him, and once harnessed, he would buckle down to any job as though he enjoyed it.

A couple of miles from camp the road passed close to a ledge of rock that loomed up twenty-five feet above my head. Every morning as we approached this place, Bert would begin to snort and blow as though something frightened him. When we had left this rock some rods behind, he would stop his blowing and proceed as usual. I had a lot of respect for this horse's sagacity, and presumed he smelled some animal there. It was pretty wild country around there in those days, full of game and little touched by civilization. We frequently found deer that had been killed, presumably by lions or wolves.

A man whose first name was Joe tended the road for a mile out of camp, and the next stretch was sanded by a short,

# PERIENCES

By D. C. EVANS

chunky Frenchman of some seventy years, whose first name was Pete. I cannot remember the last names of either of these men. They always walked together as far as Joe's sand-pit; then Pete would walk on alone to his own piece of road.

One morning old Pete's lantern had the "blinks." It went out once before he got out of camp, and again before he got to Joe's sand-pit, about a mile away, for Joe walked that far with Pete and told us this later. We decided later that Pete's lantern must have gone bad entirely, and that he had been forced to plod along in the dark.

I was lead-off man that morning; and when I started my team down the trail, it was still dark—darker than most mornings, in fact; for there was a thick fog, and the snowy landscape did not reflect the light much. I had no lantern, but of course the team needed no light to follow the tracks. Everything was unusually quiet. We were due for a thaw, and the horses' hoofs and the sled-runners made little noise as we moved along. The fog made everything look queer, almost ghostly.

As we approached the turn where the ledge of rock overhung the trail, Bert suddenly began to snort and blow. This was as usual; but then Tom, his team-mate, did likewise, and finally they stopped altogether. I tried to get them to go, but they refused, trying instead to pull out of the trail, first one way and then the other. I got down and walked to their heads, but without a lantern I couldn't make out what was frightening them.

I returned to my sled, and then I heard another team approaching. There was a little grade just behind my sled, and I shouted a warning to the driver so that he would not come plunging down and run into me.

"What's the matter?" a voice called out. "Who's up there?"

It was Bob Clark, the foreman, riding on the load behind the teamster.

*EVERY man's life, it has been said, would make an interesting novel. At any rate, every man's life has included at least one episode that deserves record; and so we offer each month prizes for the best stories of Real Experience. (For details see page 3.) This first story shows that a mountain lion is not always too cautious to attack a man.*

"The damned Yank," I answered. (That was what they called me, the only one in the outfit who was from the States.) "I don't know what's the matter. They won't go."

"Make 'em go!"

I tried them again. But it was useless, for they wouldn't budge. Bert just kept on snorting, and stared ahead with popping eyes.

Bob Clark finally climbed down from his sled and came forward. He had a lantern with him and we walked down the road ahead of my team to see what had frightened them.

They'd had reason enough to stop, we found. In the middle of the road, just where it passed the ledge where Bert had always acted so nervous, we found old Pete, horribly clawed, and sprawled in a patch of blood-soaked snow. His head was torn completely off! There were huge catlike tracks all about, tracks that could have been only those of a mountain lion, or catamount, as they were called in that district.

**T**HEN, too late to do old Pete any good, we investigated the ledge above the trail and found a shallow cave where the lion, judging by the amount of litter lying about, had made its home for many days. I shuddered as I remembered the mornings I had urged Bert past that spot. Probably the noise of the team and sled had protected me, as a lighted lantern had undoubtedly saved Pete on other occasions. Or possibly the animal had only recently become so hungry that it forgot its normal fear of humans.

Some Indians took the lion's track, and after following it for two days and two nights, killed the brute. I saw it when they brought it in, and it looked plenty huge enough to me. The natives thought it was very old, and called it the biggest one ever seen in that territory.

# The Newsboy Detective

AT the time, I was a paper-carrier delivering a route for the Fort Worth Press. My territory was in the residential section, but there were several negro families living on it in small houses facing the alleys or in rooms above garages.

One Saturday afternoon as I was delivering my papers I had to stop at one of these garage apartments to collect from a colored customer who hadn't been in when I came by that morning. I went up the rather rickety steps, but just before I knocked, I heard something that froze me where I stood.

"Now, looka yere, Tenola, you cain't be traipsin' roun' de neighborhood like you done dis mawnin'. You gotta be mo' keerful! You jes' stick yo' haid outa do' one mo' time, an' it's jes' gwine be too bad fo' Tenola, tha's all! A cop'll ketch you as sho' as Ah'm a-standin' yere!"

I instantly recognized the irate colored voice as that of my subscriber Agnes Fet-tus, but what caused me to stand there like a statue with my hand still raised to knock, was the name she used.

*Tenola!*

It wasn't by any means a common name—it couldn't be just coincidence. And she had spoken of cops, too! Boy, had I run into something! Tenola Mosse!

There had been a particularly vicious crime—a stick-up and murder. A grocer on the East Side had been about to close up a few nights before when a burly negro had come in and held him up. He had given up every cent in the store, not very much at that, but the black stick-up man, drunk and disgruntled, had deliberately fired three shots into the grocer's body, killing him instantly.

The murderer had gotten away easily in the darkened streets, but another negro who had been loafing around the store identified h'm to police as one Tenola Mosse, who had been convicted of robbery once before, been mixed up in boot-legging and other crimes, and had been in several serious knife scrapes. An all-round bad man—strong as an ox and mean as the devil.

Man, I'm telling you, my mouth got as dry as a brand-new blotter, and I thought

for a minute I was going to keel over. But since I had already come up the steps, I was afraid to try to sneak away, for fear I might be spotted by the killer, in which case I'd probably know from experience how it felt to be dead.

I swallowed hard once, gathered all the courage I could find in me, and knocked on the door, expecting every minute to hear the roar of a pistol and to see slugs come ripping through the door—and maybe through me. There are lots of places I'd rather have been right then!

The talking inside ceased abruptly. I heard the woman give a "Sssh!" A moment later she opened the door.

As she saw me, she let loose of a relieved sigh and turned her head back into the room.

"It's jes' de pape' boy, honey—tha's all! Jes' a minute, sonny."

"Y-yes'm," I stuttered, and stood there nervously while she went back inside for the dime.

She came back, paid me the coin, took the paper I held out. She peered at me closely.

"Whut's de matta wid you, boy? You lookin' pale roun' de gills. You aint gittin' sick, is you?" she asked.

"No'm," I gulped. "I—I just don't feel so good today."

And I didn't, either—not until I'd put a half a block between there and me. Then I slowed down and got to thinking. What should I do? I looked again at one of the papers in my bag. "Five Hundred Dollars for Capture of Tenola Mosse!" A lot of money for a hard-working route carrier! Should I call the police and tell them where to find the murderer? At first I thought of that; then I decided differently. I'd heard stories before of police in other cities gypping private citizens out of rewards. But they wouldn't gyp me; no, sir!

Then I had it! Officer Sullivan: a swell cop and a swell guy!

He lived on my route, one street over and several blocks down. I'd tell him; then he could make the capture and split the reward with me. That was it!

From there on I flew through the rest of my route with such celerity that I passed up three of my regular customers.



*He overhears an incriminating conversation and goes after a reward.*

## By J. OLIVER DAVIS

see what happens. I found him, didn't I?"

He frowned, finally shrugged. "Okay, kid; but be darned sure you stay out o' the way."

I don't mind confessing that I felt a little nervous as I stood around the corner of the garage and heard Sullivan walking up the wooden stairway. And when he stood to one side of the door and knocked—not a loud, sharp, authoritative knock but just an ordinary, everyday rap—I momentarily expected to hear the blast of gunfire.

I heard the door creak slightly as it opened.

"Nawsuh, we don' want nothin' dis mawnin'—" I heard the negress start out; then she broke off as she recognized the official air. "Tenola, hit's de Law!" she screamed; but she was too late.

Sullivan had already pushed past her, and a moment later I heard a despairing, high-pitched negroid voice wail out:

"All right, Offisuh, you kin put dat gun away! Ah'll go wid you! But Ah'm tellin' you, Ah cain't pay dat woman no alleymoney—Ah aint had no wu'k in two months, an' she knows it, too! Lawd, Ah dunno how Ah evah got hitched up wid dat female snake nohow. Dis is foah times she's had you cops on me, but Ah didn't think you'd fin' me yere!"

FOR the second time that afternoon my throat went arid as the Sahara; then Sullivan came down the stairway towing a short, scrawny, fate-bewailing colored man.

The negro woman stood at the top of the stairs and sent oral recriminations after the piteous runt.

"Don' you fo'get dat Ah wa'ned you, Tenola Jones!" she reminded him. "Dis is jes' whut you git fo' traipsin' roun' town dis mawnin' when Ah'd told you to stay inside yere till Magnolia done got ovah her mad spell an' called de cops off'n yo' tail!"

As he and the negro passed the corner where I had remained unobserved, and where I now stood dumbly, Officer Sullivan shot me a sideways glance, sighed resignedly—and grinned. . . . Oh, well!

(And next day my district manager gave me holy hades for having complaints!)

As soon as I'd tossed the paper at the last house, I cut back over to Gray Street, on which Sullivan lived. Even then I was tall and lanky for my age and I must have presented a comic sight for the folks along the way as I tore down the middle of the street, full speed ahead, with my paper bag billowing out behind me like a living thing.

I knew Officer Sullivan would be home, for he had the night trick that week, and I had seen him in his front yard watering the lawn when I passed a half-hour before. I slowed my wild speed a little before I reached his house, but even at that, I was puffing like the deuce when I finally saw him still busily plying his garden hose.

"Mr. Sullivan! Mr. Sullivan!" was all I could gasp out at first.

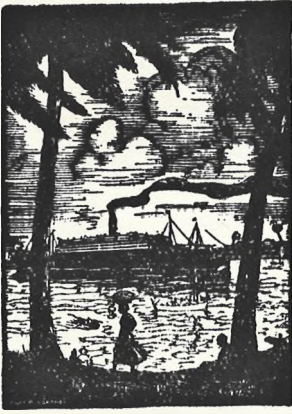
"What's the matter, Slim; seen a ghost?" he asked.

I gulped, caught my breath, plunged on: "It's Tenola—Tenola Mosse!" I blurted out. "I found him!"

He saw I meant it. "How do you know, kid? How'd you find out?" he asked quickly, and I told him—why I'd come to him instead of phoning the police station. He frowned and stood a moment in indecision. "Lord knows, if it's really Mosse, I *should* phone for a squad car and not take any chances," he muttered slowly, while I stood waiting. "But then he might leave in the meantime—and with things going the way they have been, I could easily use credit for taking that fellow." He strode determinedly into the house, came out buttoning his coat. He patted his coat pocket.

"You wait here for me, Slim, and I'll let you know later how things turn out," he told me, and started up the street. I followed right along.

"Heck, Mr. Sullivan, I'm not going to stay here!" I refused indignantly. "Of course, I'm not going right up to the door with you, but I want to hang around and



# The Voyage

By CAPTAIN GEORGE H. GRANT

AS the *Monarch* had progressed across the Atlantic, the food shortage had become decidedly acute. The sailor-men were sullen and taciturn, only opening their lips to heap abuse on the head of the Chinese cook when he placed the salt beef and preserved potatoes on their plates.

One evening in the second dog-watch I was sitting alone in the starboard half-deck studying navigation from my books when one of the sailors asked me to come down to the fore-castle. I followed him thither, and found the men engaged in their usual leisure-time occupations.

"What do you want me for?" I asked—half-fearfully, for I knew the almost mutinous temper of the men.

Pat Greenaway told me: "It be loike this, young-fellow-me-lad. We be starvin' to death, and we've got to be after askin' the ould man to be puttin' into port. You've had schoolin' an' ye can be after writin' down what we has to say. It'll all be polite-like, an'—"

"Polite, d'ye say?" interrupted Hoskins, swinging around from where he was reclining on a bunk. "It 'as to be firm. We 'as rights, we 'as. 'E must know that we mean wot we 'as to say!"

The petition was drawn up with many an argument and correction. It was after eight bells when I had it finally transcribed on the block of paper, and they had all signed their names to it. It read:

*To Captain McFarlane:*

*We, the sailor-men, respectfully request that you make for the nearest port so that provisions may be obtained. If you refuse to do this we will make a claim on arrival in England. We have kept a list of food shortages. We will submit this to the shipping master.*

*Respectfully submitted by:*

And the sailor-men's names followed.

Wiping the perspiration from my brow I sat back against the ship's side, and asked: "Who is going to present this on the bridge?"

A silence! Each looked from one to the other. It had not occurred to them, I believe, that some one must confront Captain McFarlane with the petition, running the risk of his wrath. No one wanted to go aft. The reins of discipline held them too firmly in check. Various schemes were suggested, but finally it was agreed that they would go in a body to present their grievance. I preceded them along the deck, carrying the petition and the hurricane lantern. I walked with assurance, because I felt that Captain McFarlane was my friend; they straggled like children, each jockeying to be last.

Two streamers of light came from the ports of Captain McFarlane's cabin to pierce the darkness of the lower bridge. The door was hooked back, but a curtain covered the opening. I halted before it, and waited until the sailor-men had ranged themselves along the guard-rails of the gig. I raised my hand to knock—but held it poised in space, for a voice from the flying-bridge had asked: "What do you want?"

Some one laughed quietly, and the sailor-men moved back to their places against the rail. The voice had been recognized as that of the second mate, whom we called Lord Percy. He was on watch. In his white uniform he was a gray blur against the black sky. I turned around and looked up at him.

"It's me, sir," I answered. "The sailor-men are here too. They want to see the old man."

"They'll have to wait a bit then," Lord Percy said. "We're going into Barbados. He's just altered the course. He's gone down to tell the Chief."

I glanced around to see how the sailor-men were taking it, but they had gone as though the trade-wind had wafted them away into the haven of the sky.



# of the *Monarch*

## V—Murder in Barbados



NEXT morning Captain McFarlane came on deck and took the *Monarch* into Carlisle Bay to anchor her in sixteen fathoms of water, a mile or more from the town. The port officials came on board, and after they had given us pratique and gone, Mr. Johnson emerged from the saloon alleyway, and walking over to where we stood by the bulwark rail bargaining with the boats lying alongside for fruit and curios, he said:

"Don't change your clothes. The old man is giving a bum-boat. You can each spend five shillings—no more."

A bum-boat was what we all wanted. It saved us from changing our clothes for what we wanted to buy. The bum-boat woman—they were mostly women—kept an account-book which was signed by each member of the crew on making a purchase. It was presented to the Captain for settlement before sailing.

Mr. Johnson leaned over the rail, looked down toward the sparkling sea, and from the jabbering horde of gesticulating negroes selected one whose name was Bum-boat Mary. (Her name was painted on the stern-sheets of her boat in large blue letters.) She was a fat old negress with a jolly smile on her broad face, which shone like ebony in the morning sun. She wore a printed calico dress; her feet were bare, and from beneath the gay bandana handkerchief which covered her head, two large silver ear-rings hung almost to her shoulders.

Her boat was made fast to the lower platform of the accommodation ladder, and she came on board, waddling under the weight of the baskets she carried, and followed by two male assistants who were similarly laden. Under the awning, to port of the fiddley, she displayed what she had to sell: there were oranges, grapefruit, bananas, mangoes, and candy to eat; cheap cigars, plug tobacco and cigarettes to smoke; and conk-shells, beads and baskets made by the natives, bay rum, and sundry knickknacks to take back as curios to the folks at home.

Mr. Boxley had declared a holiday and, after becoming satiated, we remained on deck to bargain for the curios. As I toyed with them, Bum-boat Mary asked me with a humorous glance:

"What will be yo' pleasure, my love?"

I looked down at her and smiled, amused by her expression of endearment, although I knew that it was used by all the negro women. I was tempted to return it in kind, but there was so much of the imp in her black eyes that I refrained.

Instead I answered: "You have so many pretty things to sell I do not know. I can't make up my mind."

"Yo' is a new boy on the sea?" she asked.

"Not quite," I told her. "This is my third voyage."

"Ah!" she exclaimed, and her broad face beamed. "I know what yo' wants—somethin' fo' yo' sweethearts."

I laughed to cover my embarrassment, and said: "Not for my sweethearts. I haven't any."

She cried scoffingly: "Fie! Yo' has none, an' yo' is a sailor-boy with blue eyes! Shame is with yo'! De good Lo'd gave de sunshine fo' de earth, an' de sailor-boys fo' de gals."

"Well—well—there is one," I stammered. "Nellie—and—"

Bum-boat Mary laughed, and shook a finger before my face. "Yo' has one!" she cried. "Yo' has enough!" And then she said more quietly: "I has got somethin' fo' yo'." She turned toward her wares, but changing her mind, she faced me again, and said: "My love, he was a sailor-man. He was de grandest nigger in all Barbados. He sailed way, an' he never come back no mo'. De hurricane done caught him near Gran Cayman. I has got somethin' fo' yo'."

She turned again toward her wares, but paused again. Captain McFarlane, dressed for the shore, was coming from the saloon entrance toward us, accompanied by the agent.

"Find Mr. Boxley, laddie," Captain McFarlane ordered; and when Jamie had fetched Mr. Boxley from his cabin, he went on: "I'll be awa' ashore for an hour or so tae see aboot the stores, an' tae cable hame tae the owners. Be ready tae sail when I come back. Ye'd better keep a watch for stowaways in the meanwhile. The agent tells me there was a murder committed a few days gone by. The murderer has no been apprehended. He might try tae come on board."

He smiled a farewell to us all, and followed the agent into a launch that was waiting at the foot of the accommodation ladder. Mr. Boxley turned to where we were standing. He said:

"You'll each take a turn on gangway duty—one hour each. . . . See that nobody comes on board. If you have any trouble, let me know."

He stalked off again toward his cabin to recapture if possible the sleep from which he had been aroused. We waited until he had disappeared, swung toward Bum-boat Mary and asked:

"Who was murdered?"

Bum-boat Mary raised her hands and rolled her eyes up toward the sky.

"Fie! Fie!" she cried, sitting down heavily on her box. "Yo' is wretches, boys!" For a minute she surveyed the silver rings that adorned her chubby fingers; then she told us: "A nigger done kill his boss-man, who speak vile tongue to him. De boss-man better dead. He is de harsh taskmaster with the ear of the government people on his side. Dey is offerin' fifty pounds for de apprehension of de murderer. But dey will never find him. All de niggers of Barbados have de eyes of nigh."

"I'd like to find him!" cried Spifkins. "Fifty pounds is a lot of money. I could have a holiday on it."

Bum-boat Mary sniffed her disdain.

"Yo' has a heart of stone," she said, "like de government people. Dey is not human to de niggers." She nodded her head contemptively. "I think I leave them an' stow-away from Barbados." For her to stow-away sounded so funny that we all laughed. But she asked, unheedingly: "Where could I hide myself from de sight of pryin' eyes?"

When none of us answered, she repeated her query, and to humor her, I

answered: "You could hide under the canvas cover of one of the lifeboats. No one would ever find you there."

She beamed on me. "Yo' is de only one with de heart of gold," she said. "I has somethin' fo' yo'." She patted the region of her heart with a podgy hand, and twisting sideways, groped among her pile of curios and pulled out a small square basket. It was a pretty thing of colored straw, with shells ornamenting the lid, and green silk sewn inside for a lining. She held it up to me. She said: "It is fo' jewelry, boy. De gals of Barbados make them with de songs of love in their hearts. It is fo' yo' sweetheart."

Ernie, Spifkins and Jamie were watching me. I didn't want to accept it. I felt that if I did I would be kidded all the voyage home. If I could buy something it would make a difference.

"Thanks," I said, and I asked: "But couldn't I buy some beads to put in it?"

She looked at me for a full minute, and her black eyes were very dark with scorn. Then she cried: "Has yo' no romance in yo' head? Is yo' heart like de ice in yo' blue eyes? Yo' want beads—what fo'?" Ernie, Spifkins and Jamie were laughing loudly. My cheeks were hot. She was quiet for a second or two; then she went on, her voice low and musical like the trade-wind sighing across the Bay: "Yo' is young, but yo' should know dat memories is de jewels of love. Yo' sweetheart will fill de basket to de brim. Dey will take yo' place when yo' done gone away." She held out the basket to me again. "Heah! Yo' take it from old Bum-boat Mary befo' she catches yo' an' kisses yo'."

She laughed and patted her fat sides. I grasped the basket and muttered, "Thanks," and to escape the banter of my shipmates, walked away hastily.

**WE** kept our gangway duty in turn, keeping off the vociferous negro boatmen, who would have stolen everything in sight, and the disappointed bum-boat women.

About noon some excitement was caused by a gigantic devil-fish that appeared. Lord Percy pumped bullets into it from his revolver with no effect. We even put off after it in a boat, but were angrily called back.

Mr. Boxley was waiting for us when we ascended with quaking legs to the deck.

"So this is how you obey orders!" he barked. "I give you a holiday, and

this is what I get in return! Well! I'll make you pay. Get busy, and give the police a hand to search for stowaways. But if there's any more nonsense, I'll skin you alive, no matter what he says!"

He stamped off along the deck.

Three members of the native police waited near the cross bunker hatch. They were negroes, dressed in sailor's uniform, and they had HARBOUR POLICE woven into the ribbons of their caps. I sent for Ernie and Jamie; and they, with Spifkins, each took a policeman to search in different parts of the vessel, while I maintained the watch by the accommodation ladder.

When they had gone, Bum-boat Mary waddled over to my side.

"Yo' mate sure is de debbil himself," she said. "I could cut his throat from eah to eah." She laughed and gave me a few oranges to eat. She looked this way and that, then dropped her voice to a whisper: "Yo' is de boy with the kind heart. I go to see de Captain, an' I tell him so. But while I is gone, no one mus' reach my hidin'-place in de boat. My soul is dere. Yo' keep de searchers back."

She ambled along the deck, and ascended to the lower-bridge. She was a queer old codger, I thought, with the superstitions of her race inherent in her. Perhaps her soul was in the boat and she was sending it to "de grandest nigger in all Barbados," who had been drowned in a hurricane off Gran Cayman, where the *Monarch* would be passing in a few days' time.

When the policemen returned to the bridge-deck, and were about to ascend to that where the boats were lashed, I said:

"You needn't go up. I've made a search. There's no one there."

"Thanks, sah, kindly, sah," they said, and they saluted, went down into their boat, and rowed off toward the shore.

I watched them go. I couldn't understand why I had lied. Perhaps it was because I felt grateful to Bum-boat Mary for the gift of the basket which might some day contain the jewels of love!

**I**N the afternoon the *Monarch* sailed with her storeroom replenished; and by dusk she was well out on the Caribbean, rolling along before a moderate following sea toward where the setting sun had left a blood-red streak on the dark line of the horizon. It was hot and sultry. I sat alone on the bunker derrick, which was lashed on chocks to port

of the after deck-house, and, with my hands and chin resting on the cool iron of the bulwark rail, I lazied away the time until I should go on watch.

I was lonely, too, and weary. To the stars twinkling dimly through the haze of the tropical night, I sang an old Hebridean song that seemed to fit my mood:

*Back to back they lie,  
Lifeless lie.  
Breath nor sigh  
From their cold lips coming.  
Sea-wrack their shroud,  
And their harps  
The sea's sad crooning.*

Tiptoeed footsteps sounded on the steel deck. I stopped singing aloud, until the intruder on my solitude should pass; but the footsteps halted; I heard a whisper: "Tommy! Is that you?"

Looking back over my shoulder, I saw Spifkins peering down at me through the pale darkness.

"What's the matter?" I asked in a husky whisper.

Stepping over the bunker derrick, he sat down beside me, and leaned over until his head was close to mine.

"There's some one hiding in the star-board lifeboat, Tommy."

"What!" I exclaimed. "You're seeing things."

"I'm not!" he asserted. "I was scouting around in the dark, and I saw the canvas cover bulge up more than once."

I recalled, in a flash of mortification, that the boat-deck had not been searched before sailing. Bum-boat Mary had asked me to keep the police away, because her soul was there. Had she deceived me with her romantic tongue and her flattery?

"Come on, Spifkins," I cried. "We'll soon find out!"

"Wait a minute, Tommy. It might be the murderer!"

"Gosh! It might be, too!"

"We'd better get armed. We may have to knock him out to capture him."

"Hadn't we better tell the mate?" I suggested.

"No, no, Tommy! We can't do that! We'll have to capture him ourselves to get the reward. Old Boxley'd claim the whole fifty pounds, if he were there!"

From the half-deck we took our sheath-knives and belted them around our waists; from the rail under the mainmast we fetched belaying-pins; and like two buccaneers armed to the teeth with murderous intent, we moved like shadows along the deck, so as not to

disturb the officers in their cabins, and crept stealthily up the iron ladder.

Only the stars illuminated the environs of the starboard lifeboat. The funnel seemed to dwarf us, and created a feeling of awe within our hearts as we slunk across the deck, picking our way carefully over the small mushroom ventilators which reflected the dim light. We halted near the forward end of the lifeboat. A bulge showed in the canvas cover like a dromedary's hump. The lashing near it, we saw was loosened.

"That's him!" whispered Spifkins, nodding with his head. "Give him a whack with the belaying-pin, Tommy, and if he jumps out on us, I'll pin him with my knife."

He pulled his belt around, and withdrew his knife from its sheath.

"Right-o!" I whispered back, my heart fluttering with excitement.

Raising the belaying-pin high above my head I gave the hump a hard whack. Wood seemed to crack against wood. The canvas tented up with a suddenness that caused me to jump backward. A gruff voice exclaimed, "Ouch!"

"Come on out, whoe'er you are!" I commanded in my deepest tones.

The voice answered: "Ah's a-comin', sah! Ah's a-comin' so fast as de flyin'-fishes 'scapin' from de ravenous bonito!"

THE canvas rolled back, and a black face appeared, scarcely discernible against the deep darkness of the boat. But the teeth flashed, and the whites of the eyes seemed abnormally large.

"Who are you, and what are you doing here?" I demanded, swinging my belaying-pin back and forth.

The white eyes rested on my face.

"Ah's a hungry nigger, sah, and Ah's 'scapin' from de clutches of de unjust law."

Spifkins gasped with delight.

"Get out!" I ordered the negro. "If you try any tricks, we'll club you. You come along to the Captain!"

"Ah is pleased to agree with you, sah," he answered, leaping from the gunwale to the deck, "fo' ma bones is crooked with de crampedness of ma position."

In single file, Spifkins ahead and I behind, we reached the lower-bridge. Captain McFarlane was sitting reading in his easy chair with the door of his cabin wide open. I knocked on the jamb. He looked up over his glasses, and when he recognized my face in the glow of the lamp, he smiled.

"Weel, laddie?" he asked.

"We have found a stowaway, sir," I reported. "I think he's the murderer the police were searching for."

His brows went up in surprise.

"Where did ye find him?"

I told him.

He took an electric torch from a drawer. He came out to where we stood, and flashed the light on the negro's face. It revealed a scar on the left cheek. He nodded with significance.

"Yar name will be Jackson?" he asked.

"It is dat, sah."

"Ye are the murderer, are ye no?"

"No sah! Ah is no murderer. Ah done jus' kill a man in de name of de Lo'd."

"Mebbe so—mebbe so," muttered Captain McFarlane. "It's no f'r me tae say. We'll ha'e tae let the authorities decide that." He raised his head. "Mr. Boxley! Mr. Boxley!" he shouted. "Just a meenute!"

Mr. Boxley hove upon the scene from the flying-bridge and Captain McFarlane drew him into consultation as to the best means of confining Jackson.

After a minute or so Mr. Boxley nodded with understanding, and as Captain McFarlane went back into his cabin, he swung toward me.

"Take him aft," he ordered. "Tell the second mate to get a pair of handcuffs from my cabin and shackle him to a stanchion under the poop. See that he has food and water."

"Yes sir!"

We turned away. We had reached the top of the ladder leading down to the bridge-deck when we halted as one, and startled, swung around toward the bow.

Loudly on the still air had come the warning cry of the lookout-man: "*Vessel right ahead, sir!*"

Mr. Boxley ran to the windbreak of the lower-bridge. He looked this way and that, his eyes blinded by the light from the Captain's cabin. He shouted: "Where? Where's the vessel?"

The lookout-man answered, but his words were muffled by the banging of doors as the sailor-men came from the forward alleyway. My eyes, much younger than Mr. Boxley's, caught the shape of a sail against the gray sky. It was like a dull cloud close under the bow, growing larger every second.

I shouted to Spifkins, "Take care of Jackson!" and racing to Mr. Boxley's side, I cried: "There! *There!* It's a sailing vessel—close aboard!"

"Which way is she heading?"

I craned over the windbreak. I peered for distinctive marks on the drifting shadow until my eyes seemed to pop out of their sockets with the strain. I caught the dark line of a jib.

"It's a schooner, sir!" I yelled frantically. "She's crossing the bow to starboard!"

Mr. Boxley swung his head back and up. He opened his mouth to shout, but before words could spring forth, a voice above us ordered: "Hard-a-starboard! Put the helm hard-a-starboard!" The engine-room telegraph clanged as the handles were swung back and forth.

While we had remained at the windbreak, Captain McFarlane had ascended to the flying-bridge. He had perceived the one chance in a thousand to avoid collision, and he was taking it. He was trying to pass to windward of the schooner and swing on to a parallel but opposite course. Mr. Boxley hastened away to join him.

"She's closing fast, sir," I heard Mr. Boxley say.

I could see that too! The sails had grown to giant proportions until they seemed to blot out the star-stippled sky. Blocks creaked as tackles were let fly! The schooner, towering over us, seemed to hang there, and the air vibrated with a shuddering expectancy as the *Monarch* seemed to pounce forward like a great beast of prey. Then, as though by a miracle, the schooner drifted clear on the starboard side, her long main boom raking along our hull with a frightening rat-tat, but without doing any damage.

"Midship the wheel!" Captain McFarlane shouted. "Hard-a-port! Quick's the word! Hard over with it!"

The wheel grunted on its cogs. The steering-rod squeaked in its bearings. The *Monarch* steadied against the stars. I ran over to the starboard side to see the schooner clear the poop by inches, and disappear into the blackness astern.

I SIGHED with relief and walked toward the flying-bridge ladder; but with one arm outstretched toward the hand-rail I halted, for—

"Help! Help!" came Ernie's high voice, somewhere near the galley. "Man overboard—Spifkins has gone overboard! He—he went after the nigger!"

"Full astern!" ordered Captain McFarlane, his voice sharp and peremptory.

I waited to hear no more—I leaped from the bridge and tore aft.

In seconds only I reached the poop. Without pausing in my stride I grabbed a life-buoy from its rack on the starboard rails, and reaching the counter, peered down. When I thought I saw a splutter of white well clear of the churning wake, I threw the life-buoy with all my might toward it.

"Look out there, Spifkins!" I yelled, and imagining I heard an answering hail, I continued: "Hold on to it! We'll be after you!"

The engines were going full astern, vibrating the *Monarch* throughout her length, and the sailor-men were clearing away a lifeboat when I returned forward. I joined them. Mr. Selkirk was in charge. He had come hurriedly from his bunk, and he wore a long night-shirt that ballooned out behind him as he walked fore and aft giving orders.

The boat was swung out and lowered to the level of the deck, where it was held by a bousing line. Six men stepped into her. I was ordered to the stroke oar, Ernie to the bow. Lamps came from forward with a lighted hurricane lantern. Mr. Selkirk took it from him, and holding his night-shirt around his legs like a woman holding a skirt, he walked along the fore-and-aft thwart of the lifeboat and sat down in the stern-sheets with an impatient grunt.

It seemed, as we waited at stations, that the *Monarch* would never come around, and I could scarcely contain myself. Spifkins—out there alone in the water! He could swim, I knew, but if he had gone in pursuit of Jackson, perhaps they had fought and he had been beaten unconscious. Perhaps he had been attacked by a barracuda, a fish more ferocious than a shark and with fangs like a wolf.

The *Monarch* steadied on her helm, and after going astern again, the engines wheezed to a stop.

"Clear away!" Captain McFarlane shouted from the bridge.

Mr. Boxley glanced around to assure himself that every man was at station. "Lower away!" he ordered.

The bousing lines were cast off. The rope falls stretched and strained as they were surged around the belaying-pins. The lifeboat sank below the level of the deck. The dark water heaved up in gentle swells, a furl of white where it touched the hull.

Ernie stood by the painter. Jamieson fended the bow off with a boat-hook, I the stern. Hoskins bent over the re-

leasing-lever, which was under the thwart on which I sat. The sailor-men held their oars vertically, at the ready.

Mr. Boxley shouted from above: "I think I can see him away out on the beam. Search there first. If he's not there, row round in a circle!"

"Let go!" Mr. Selkirk ordered.

Hoskins swung the releasing lever. The lifeboat took the water with a splash. Jamieson laid his weight on the boat-hook. The bow headed out, and Ernie coiled the painter down between his legs. Without further orders the sailor-men lowered their oars into the rowlocks and commenced to pull.

**S**UDDENLY Ernie shouted: "I see him! I see him!"

Mr. Selkirk stood up in the stern-sheets and peered over our heads.

"Aye! That seems tae be him!" he said. "Way enough!"

The boat was carrying her way, and we were all on our feet for a glimpse of Spifkins. Suddenly his voice was heard, directing us. I wondered how he could be so calm. If Ernie hadn't seen him go overboard the chances are he would never have been found.

Mr. Selkirk ordered: "Pull away easy!"

We had resumed our positions on the thwarts when a bright phosphorescent streak cut the dark water with the swift-ness of a stabbing knife.

"A shark! A shark!" I screamed, leaping to my feet.

The lifeboat became a turmoil of commotion. The sailor-men shouted warnings. Mr. Selkirk blew his whistle, which must have been hanging around his neck. I raised my oar to flop-flop it on the surface of the sea, when Hoskins gave me a clip under the ear.

"Cut it h'out!" he shouted; and he dived over the side, and splashing like an attacking grampus, he went swimming in the direction of Spifkins, who was splashing too.

Ordered back again to the oars, we pulled easily, and within a minute or so we had them both on board, wet to the skin but unharmed.

No sooner had Hoskins the water out of his eyes and stomach than he shouted:

"I'm a bloomin' 'ero, I am. Saved 'is blarsted 'ide, I did—by the snip of a bleedin' cat's tail!"

"Shut up!" some one said unsympathetically. "A pity you didn't drown!"

On the way back to the *Monarch*, Spifkins sat on the stern-board at my feet with my jacket wrapped around his shoulders. He seemed very depressed.

"He got away, Tommy," he muttered dolefully. "I was too slow. He swam to the schooner and got away."

I didn't speak. It didn't seem to matter very much that Jackson had escaped. Spifkins was safe. . . .

When the lifeboat was hoisted into its place and I had leaped out to help Spifkins to the deck, Mr. Boxley shouldered his way to where we were.

"The old man wants to see him, Grant. Take him along!" he shouted.

Captain McFarlane came down from the flying-bridge as we approached his cabin door. Before he could speak, Spifkins blurted out: "I'm sorry I gave you a lot of trouble, sir. I'm sorry he got away!"

Captain McFarlane chuckled. "Dinna be sorry, laddie. Ye did fine. His escape will save me a heap o' bother. We're weel rid o' him."

"But—but I won't get the reward. Bum-boat Mary said that the government was offering fifty pounds for the capture of the murderer!"

Captain McFarlane laughed.

"She's an auld rascal, laddie. She telt ye a thumpin' big lee. They didna offer a penny."

Spifkins searched for a place to hide his face as the tears streamed down his cheeks. Captain McFarlane patted him kindly on the shoulder.

"Dinna tak' it sae much tae heart," he said. "It wouldna ha'e been a nice Christmas present, laddie. Ye ken, it's Christmas the morn. An' it would ha'e been tainted wi' a murdered man's blood. Ye see, laddie?"

Spifkins sniffed and nodded.

Captain McFarlane said: "Run awa' an' turn in. I've telt the steward tae ha'e a bit o' cake an' some hot tea for ye. Ha'e a guid sleep. Guid nicht."

"Good night, sir."

We answered together, and ran away. Spifkins, when he had tumbled into his bunk, turned to me as I was about to blow out the lamp, and said:

"He was right, Tommy. The money would have been tainted. We couldn't have enjoyed a holiday on it, could we?"

"No," I lied, "we couldn't."

He yawned wearily and snuggled under the blanket. I blew out the light and left the cabin.

*A young Canadian found himself in bad company—with a dangerous adventure in consequence.*

By THOMAS  
C. STEWART



## *Twenty Minutes to Live*

I HAD known the man I will call Pat O'Reilly (his real name was Irish too) many months—had known him as an ex-fighter, hard, cruel and quite immoral, but had nevertheless been intrigued by his wit, and his generous and fair treatment of me.

Until this particular evening however, I did not know that he was one of a group of crooks—a group, which, according to O'Reilly and two of his cronies, had decided that I should join in their ventures. I gathered from the remarks of these men, who sat facing me, that Pat had recommended me only too well—so well, in fact, that the boss had decided to take me in on a job that night. The idea simply left me speechless, and so my informers talked on about the night's job: running a package of dope over the U. S. boundary into Blaine, a three hours' trip from Vancouver. I was to drive one car with the dope, while the others followed, well armed, in another car. My pay for the trip was to be two hundred dollars, half before leaving and the balance when I returned. Everything was arranged and ready except me.

I found my voice at last and told them so, most emphatically. I told them I could live well enough on my job in a local office, without resorting to crime, of that sort anyway. I told them their secret was safe, but they would have to count me out, most definitely. They told me I had better explain that to the boss, as he would not take no for an answer—further, that my throat would be slit if there were any "leakage." Pat also told me that I was several kinds of a fool. I returned his remarks with added embellishments of my own, but was knocked across the room for my trouble. The trio then left.

I was in bed several hours later when some one knocked on the door. When I unlocked it, Pat pushed his way in and stood with his back to it. With his left hand he took out his watch, while with his right hand he took out a pistol. As I sat down on the edge of the bed, he delivered his ultimatum: "I'll give you just twenty minutes to live; then I shoot." No more, no less—then silence.

With difficulty I took my eyes off his face and looked around the room for something, anything, to stop this tragic drama. One look at Pat was enough to convince me of his seriousness. His face was flushed with drink, and the glitter of his eyes spoke only too clearly of indulgence in the dope in which he traded. His love for melodrama had caused him to arrive early enough to give me the benefit of it. In less than twenty minutes, now, a car would be waiting at the back of the hotel, or perhaps it was already there. Unlighted back stairs also provided him with an unseen entrance and exit.

THERE must be some way to stop this madman, but what—how? I looked around the room again. A chair, shoes on the floor, the usual equipment on the dresser, and nothing more. Nothing within reach, which I could throw or get behind. So I sat on the edge of the bed and perspired, while Pat stood immobile and silent. Daring escapes of film and story-book darted through my mind, only to be rejected. I candidly admit there was a dead sort of feeling in the pit of my stomach as I again looked at the gun pointed at me and the ghastly face above it. I looked at my shoes on the floor and wondered what damage a shoe could inflict, or whether

I could smash a light with it. But whatever I did, it must certainly be done very soon now. The minutes were slipping along. "Ten minutes more," Pat growled huskily.

Then I remembered: my room was on the third floor, directly across from the sloping roof of a house. Though the roof was steep, I remembered there were some ventilator pipes sticking through, which I might hold onto; if I missed them, then at least there was the eaves trough. A jump of six or seven feet in the dark onto a sloping roof? What a hope! Still I must risk my life, if I were to save my life, for I felt fully convinced that Pat would pull the trigger when the time was up. I made a tentative reach for my shoes, half expecting a greeting of lead. As none came, I slowly continued dressing, with shirt, socks, trousers and shoes—the socks inside out, but no matter.

My eyes were aching to look at the window but I dared not. This must be a surprise to be effective. I knew the window was wide open, that one step and a jump would land me on the sill. . . . There could only be a few minutes left now. As I tied my last shoe-lace, I bent to give myself the balance for a spring.

One step onto the sill, and before Pat realized my intention or before he could turn his gun, I had leaped into the night. I landed with a crash, striking my head on the shingles. Dazed, I started sliding down and over the edge. My head cleared just as I was halfway over. I grasped the trough with my hands and began working my way toward the back. Could I but get to the end, I could climb up, using the sloping edge of the roof for a grip. But as I neared the end about thirty feet of the trough gave way. Slowly at first, then quickly I dropped, landing sloping-wise on the three-inch top of a gate of crossed slats. This caved in slightly, and threw me into a lilac bush, from which I slid to the ground. It was several minutes before my mind cleared enough to get things straight. I could hear a car leaving in a rush from the rear of the hotel. Then I felt my legs and arms and knew there were no broken bones. Truly a miraculous escape.

Needless to say, I left the hotel and neighborhood the next day. I had Pat locked up in jail that night, but did not place a charge. He has since been indicted for murder, and is now, I am informed, in the penitentiary.

# Japanese

*An airplane salesman's exciting experience at Shanghai.*

AT four o'clock on the afternoon of February 28th, 1932, word went out for the Volunteers to mobilize. The Japanese authorities had issued a manifesto that they were going to land marines and spank the 19th Route Army, which had refused to move from Chapei. Whereupon the Shanghai Municipal Council declared a state of emergency and called out the Shanghai Volunteers.

We took our posts along the boundary-line between the International Settlement and Chapei. For some length this line was Soochow Creek; along the rest, simply the other side of the street.

Hurriedly we threw up breastworks of sandbags, and strung barbed wire. Camouflaged in the second story of a ramshackle Chinese restaurant, my Lewis gun squad commanded an excellent sweep. With magazines loaded, we waited tensely—hoping for action.

In an afternoon publication the Japs had stated exactly what they intended doing. "At eleven P.M. we will land marines in Hongkew. At 11:05 they will take up the march. At 11:09 they will reach Range Road (Chapei-Hongkew boundary). At 11:14 we will take the North Station. At 11:18—" and so on.

Shortly after 11 P.M. we heard rifle-shots and the rattle of machine-guns several hundred yards off on our right.

"At your posts!" I whispered. If the Japs were correct in their anticipated maneuvers, we could expect the retreating Chinese troops to attempt to cross over into the International Settlement. That was our job, to stop them.

Midnight came. One o'clock—two—three. The firing continued unabated. A light drizzle of rain had begun.

About four o'clock I heard a familiar drone; I couldn't mistake the sound: An airplane motor! Gradually the sound grew in volume. Soon I distinguished another, and another. Through the dripping blackness of the night there suddenly appeared six tiny lights. Wing navigation lights! A squadron in flight!



# Bayonets

By

HARRISON  
FORMAN



For an hour they circled about overhead, their engines droning.

Familiar as I am with the sound of aircraft motors, even I began to feel a tingling sensation up my spine. What terror then must those superstitious coolie troops feel, with that eerie roar above their heads, coming and going in the ominous darkness?

The first light of dawn was heralded by a terrific *whoo-oom!* Another followed, and another, in quick succession. The planes were bombing the Chinese from the air! The Chinese troops would surely break loose and run, now.

It was fascinating to sit and watch the great silver teardrop-shaped bombs as they were loosed from the bomb-rack, and began their slow, deadly descent. The terrific *whoo-oom!* which followed was accompanied by a cloud of smoke and flying débris.

The North Station stood about five hundred yards from us. They concentrated upon it. In a sort of deadly follow-the-leader, they dived, one after another, at the building, dropped a bomb, zoomed upward, then circled and repeated.

Dozens of machine-guns rattled desperately as each plane swooped toward the station. The building caught fire.

We chafed. Five hundred yards away was a war, and we could only watch it!

Morning brought our relief. We refused to give up our posts but compromised eventually by lying down for a sleep beside our relief comrades, so we'd be right there if anything started.

At noon I awoke. Jimmy B— sat near by, munching sandwiches, a cup of coffee in his hand. He was scowling.

"Helluva war this is!" he muttered. "What's the idea we get left out?"

I didn't like it either, and said so,

"Poke Kaintuck over there and put on your tin hat," I ordered.

We tramped a half dozen blocks and piled into my parked roadster.

"What's that they say about Mohammed and the mountain?" I asked. "Well, boys, we're going *to* the war!"

We rode down Nanking Road, across the Szechuen Road bridge, past the post office and on to Range Road.

At Range Road we were stopped by a Jap patrol. "No can go more far!" the Japanese corporal ordered.

Argument was out of the question; so we turned around. But I knew my Shanghai. Darting toward the Whangpo waterfront, I sped up deserted Broadway. By various other routes we finally came out on North Szechuen Road near the rifle range (where the Jap artillery was stationed a few days later).

We started down North Szechuen Road toward Range Road, a mile or so down the street. Windshield and top were down. Jimmy sat beside me with our rifles between us, while Kaintuck sat in the rumble seat with a Thompson sub-machine-gun. An American flag and an S.V.C. insignia fluttered from my radiator cap.

Down the deserted street we went. The houses on each side were full of Chinese snipers.

At every corner was a sandbag emplacement, behind which crouched a detachment of Japanese marines. The Japs had succeeded in pushing the front line of the Chinese back from the street. Shots still cracked near by—snipers firing at some unwary Jap trooper.

We began taking photographs, and movies, with my camera of the havoc done in the night's fighting.

Suddenly I heard a hoarse shout. I

looked up to see six Japanese civilians running toward us. Six bayoneted rifles were poked menacingly close to my face.

"No can take pictures," said the leader excitedly. "Give camera—quick!"

We were in a tough spot, particularly myself, with six bayonets a dozen inches from my nose!

I looked at Jimmy. He smiled. I shot a glance over my shoulder. Kaintuck looked bored.

"Hey! What's the big idea?" I said suddenly, pushing the six bayonets upward. "What do you mean, give you the cameras? G'wan, beat it!"

**T**HE sheer abruptness of this left the Japanese speechless for a moment.

"Now, look here!" I continued. Their hesitancy gave me the upper hand temporarily and I meant to follow it up as long as it would last. "We are Shanghai Volunteers, in full uniform. We represent the authority of the Shanghai Municipal Council, the governing body for the Shanghai International Settlement. This is an S.M.C. road." (North Szechuen Road is Settlement property and patrolled by S.M.C. police, though the houses on either side of the street are in what is called Chapei.) "We have every right in the world to be here. You are civilians. *You have no right to carry those guns!*"

Their jaws dropped. Their nationals at war—they themselves targets for every sniper; and they are told they may not carry guns!

They looked over their shoulders. Two score Jap marines behind near-by emplacements bristling with rifles, hand-grenades and machine-guns, two armored tanks and three armed motor-bikes reassured them somewhat.

Down came the six bayoneted rifles focused on my nose. The leader began to splutter and fumble for his English.

"You with me, boys?" I said, not daring this time to remove my eyes from the Japanese leader.

"O.K.," said Jimmy.

"Yeah," drawled Kaintuck. Then: "Ahem!"

I followed six pairs of slant eyes as they moved toward the rumble seat. I turned. Kaintuck had very nonchalantly brought out the Tommy-gun, significantly pulled back the cocking bolt, which automatically drew a cartridge from the fifty-shell drum magazine and jammed it into the chamber with an ominous click.

Bluff? Yes! But people do crazy things when actuated by the exigencies of the moment. We knew we really didn't have a chance—with the whole Jap army twenty yards away. But—

The six rifles slowly lowered. The leader looked back at the entrenched marines who, understanding no English, looked on in bewilderment. Then he began:

"But—but—no want you take pictures!"

"Oh! All right! If you say so, we assure you we won't take any more pictures," I replied. That would "save his face," and also my two cameras.

I stepped on the starter. I had just begun to shift gears when Jimmy cried:

"Look! The Odéon Theater is on fire! What a beautiful shot!"

He reached quickly for the camera. I could have throttled him!

Hurriedly I turned to the Jap leader. "Now don't get excited. I said 'no pictures'—and I meant it," I asserted.

He glared at me with rising anger.

"We will escort you to Range Road," he said curtly.

He mounted the running-board beside me, signaling to one of his companions to do likewise on the other side.

I protested. We would draw all the sniper-fire along the way. As Volunteers, with our American and S.V.C. flags we were more or less safe. But with a couple of Japanese escorting us—My argument, however, was to no avail.

**W**ITH our hearts in our throats we started to run the gantlet. Careering madly down North Szechuen Road, dodging dangling, spark-spitting trolley wires, clipped by machine-gun fire, we dashed down that roadway of death.

It seemed as though we drew the fire of every sniper on the street. Courageously, defiantly, the two Japs fired their pistols back at windows and doorways. Jimmy and I were somewhat sheltered by their bodies as they stood beside us on the running-boards. Kaintuck had ducked down into the rumble seat—until a bullet crashed through, missing him by inches.

He let out a stream of oaths, bobbed up and blazed away with the Tommy-gun—he was that angry.

Eventually we reached Range Road. The two Japs bowed and scraped politely. We did likewise in return. They surely had nerve. And we? We'd had our fill of adventure for that day!

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