BLUE BOOK

MAGAZINE
DECEMBER, 1947
25 Cents

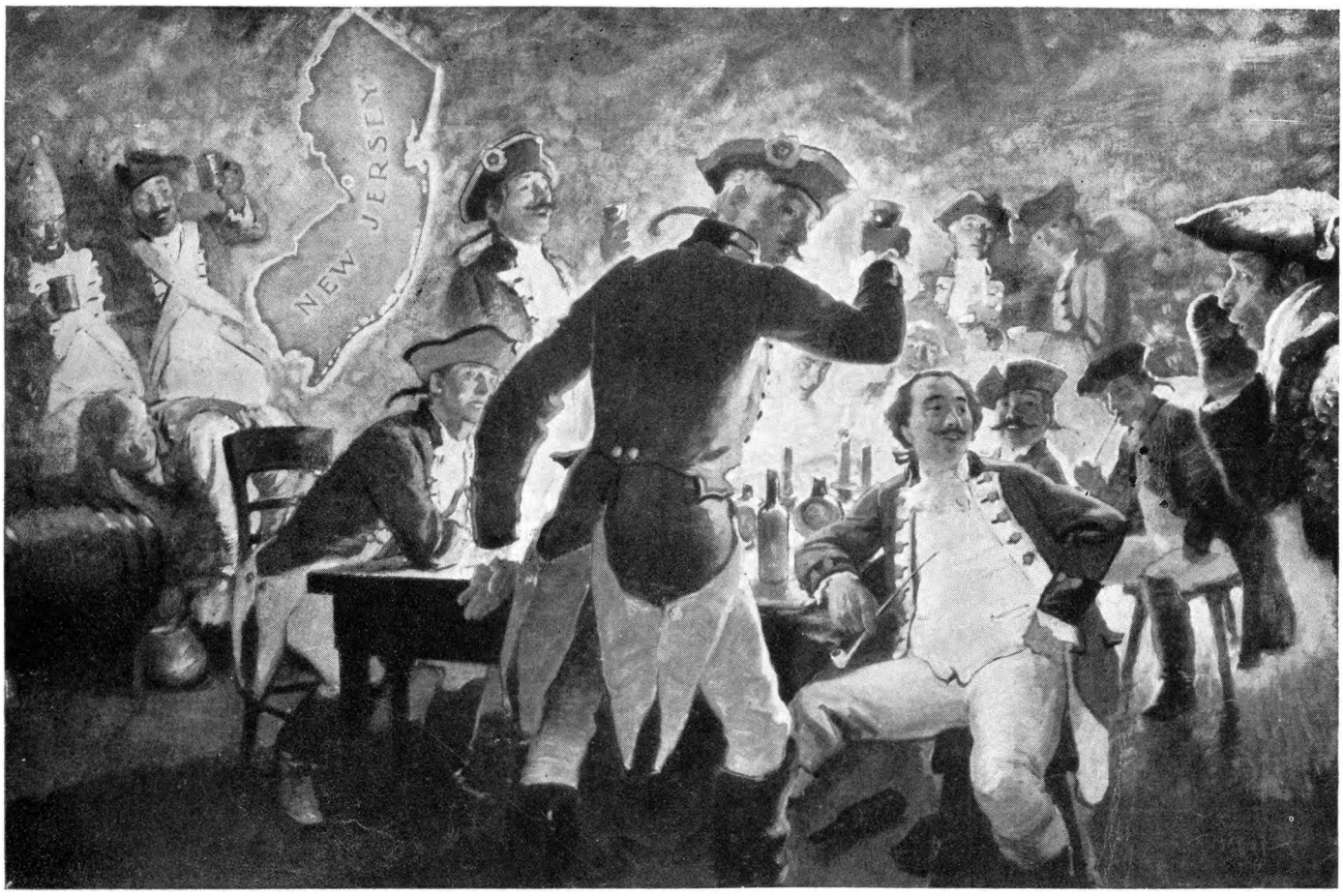
THESE UNITED STATES...XII—New Jersey
Painted by HERBERT MORTON STOOPS

TWO COMPLETE SHORT NOVELS

STRIKE HARD! BITE DEEP!
Adventures came thick and fast to a knight in King Arthur's day
by THEODORE GOODRIDGE ROBERTS

THE MAN WHO WAS AFRAID
A story of the Philippines today
by WILLIAM BRANDON

Sixteen Short Stories and Features



THESE UNITED STATES . . . . XII—NEW JERSEY

We Had a Cause

I WAS from Jersey myself; and like half the army, all that bitter winter I had no boots. I used to wrap rags about my feet; they were warm but not nice.

You know the story, of course—how we got across the Delaware River and surprised the Hessians at Trenton that Christmas time. Old as I am—eighty-six next April—I still get a thrill out of the memory. But do you know what was behind it all? No. You folks get these things out of books, but I lived it. I know!

Because I knew Trenton, I was picked to guide a squad after the river crossing. It was a tough crossing. We had some liquor but not much, just enough to wet your whistle. I was in the General's boat. He saw me at the oar and said: "You are one of the Jersey volunteers, I think." I was too cold and surprised to reply. "My friend," he went on, "you need boots—now, you get yourself a stout pair of Hessian boots this night." I said I would, and that was all. He did not gossip with privates.

You have seen pictures and heard yarns about it. Most of them are lies, but I shall not go into that. I aim to tell you what lay behind it all, and this is something you will not find in the storybooks.

WELL, we got across. The Hessians had been having a big Christmas party that night. And though they say some Tory who saw us land ran to give them warning, they were too busy with their feast and their rum-bottles to pay any heed.

So as you know we got our prisoners and boots and the town and a fat Christmas dinner—and for the first time in weeks, we got warm. We were sitting on top, and it was a mighty fine feeling, after all we had been through. I suppose you think that to us all this was the Big Thing? No, it was not.

We were an army, and we were not fighting for nonsense. Sure, we did take what we could get—why not? Looking at us, you would rightly say that in the main we were a shabby lot; yet we had something higher in us, a driving force. We had a Cause—nothing higher can so inspire a man to endure and work and fight. Causes, though, are few. Boots are not a Cause. This nation can go anywhere if it has a Cause—but it seldom has one. . . . I notice folks are talking about going to war with Mexico. Well, Texas had a Cause, and she won; but I cannot see that we have any to speak of.

Yes, we wanted to rule ourselves. Prate about liberty if you like—we seldom did, though the lads who fought in slippers and easy chairs mouthed it a lot. We believed in our leader. He too had a Cause, the same as ours; and he suffered and hungered with us because of his devotion to it.

He saw it as a victory, though not for himself—just for all of us. We reduced it to terms of boots and dinner. My folks in Jersey saw it as a chance to loot the parties of enemy troops scattered about. The preacher saw it as the torch of freedom—and so on. But by the Eternal, it was just a Cause, and that one word means everything, totals everything!

Readers' Comment

Why Not?

LIKE many other men who follow construction work and are seldom in one place from year to year, I have been a news-stand purchaser of BLUE BOOK magazine for many years. We buy what we can get to read at, or near, the job. Among those able to appreciate a better quality and variety of literary craftsmanship than the wild and woolly "Bang-bang!" formula story, BLUE BOOK ably holds "that line!"

I like the new format very much, the total absence of advertising "hocus-pocus" (the bane and blah of radio) and the wide variety of fact and fiction stories the reader has to select from.

As to the question of continued stories—why not? Especially if they are as excellently written as Gordon Young's "Quarter Horse." One of the best "out of this world" stories I ever read in BLUE BOOK was "When Worlds Collide," by Edwin Balmer and Philip Wylie in the old format years ago. How I'd like to see those two collaborate again on something like "When Atoms Collide in World War III"—even if it ran to a six-part serial!

Edwin D. Rennacker.

Statement of the Ownership, Management, Circulation, Etc., required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, as Amended by the Acts of March 3, 1933, and July 2, 1946

of THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE, published monthly at Dayton, Ohio, for October 1, 1947.

State of New York, County of New York, ss.

Before me, a Notary in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared John D. Hartman, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Treasurer of McCall Corporation, Publisher of The Blue Book Magazine, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, as amended by the Acts of March 3, 1933, and July 2, 1946 (section 537, Postal Laws and Regulations), printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

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John D. Hartman, Treasurer.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 8th day of September, 1947. Peter J. Fernandez, Notary Public, Bronx County. Bronx Co. Clerk's No. 205, Reg. No. 310-F-8. Certificates filed in N. Y. Co. Clerk's No. 206, Reg. No. 818-F-9. (My commission expires March 30, 1948.)

BLUE BOOK

December, 1947 **MAGAZINE** **Vol. 86, No. 2**

Two Short Novels

Twelve Short Stories

Stories of Fact and Experience

Special Features

Except for articles and stories of Real Experience, all stories and novels printed herein are fiction and are intended as such. They do not refer to real characters or to actual events. If the name of any living person is used it is a coincidence.

DONALD KENNICOTT, *Editor*

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An Officer Sees His

THE OLD MASTER WHO GAVE US "CAPPY RICKS" AND "THE VALLEY OF THE GIANTS" IS IN FINE FORM HERE.

by PETER B. KYNE

FENESSEY was happier that afternoon than he had been since deciding that Mary Farmer was not for him, and having told her so, had set himself the impossible task of forgetting her. They had been sweethearts in high-school days, when he was a senior and Mary a sophomore; and while such juvenile affairs are lightly referred to as puppy love, there was a solidity of character in both that made for an affection too deep for easy abandonment. So their attachment had continued after graduation until Fenessey, realizing he was on an economic and domestic treadmill, abruptly terminated it. He told Mary that while his mother lived, there could be no possibility of marriage, for she was his responsibility; he could not afford to support two establishments and found it difficult to support one. Common justice, he declared, indicated their engagement should end, since long engagements not only predicate selfishness on the part of one of the parties thereto, but too often rob eventual marriage of the privilege of parenthood. He was unwilling to render either Mary or himself ridiculous and subject to the unkind gossip of their friends.

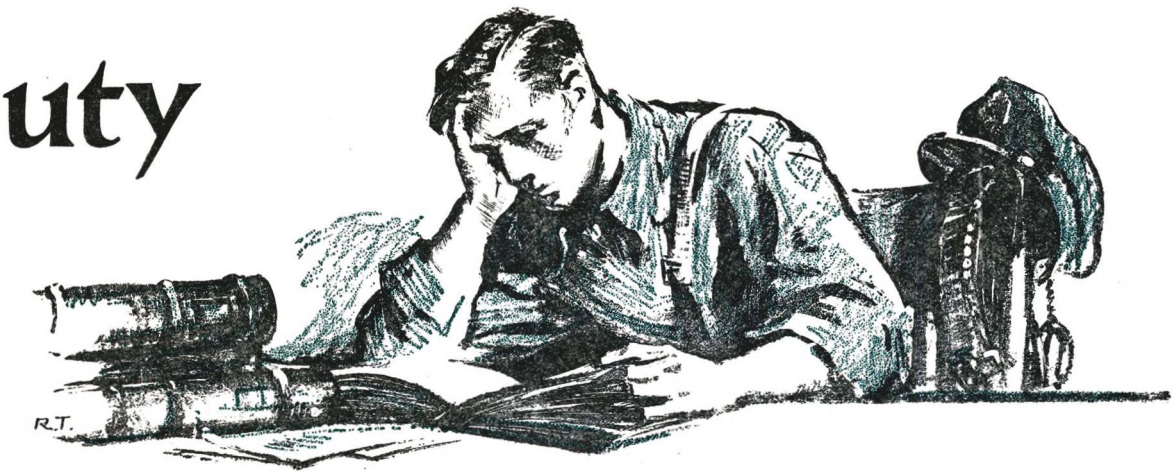
Mary met the issue without dramatics. She knew another and more potent reason, the one Fenessey would not mention. Because Mary was a woman, she knew his mother better than he did—knew her for an irascible, domineering, possessive old hellion, who would doom to unhappiness a daughter-in-law foolish enough to live in the same house with her. Indeed, after a twisted fashion, she was glad Fenessey had spoken his mind, for she had been on the point of making a similar pronouncement. So she had kissed him for the last time and parted from him without tears, merely reminding him that Time is a potent pain-killer. . . .

As he walked his beat now in the late afternoon sunshine, Fenessey knew he would never cease to think of Mary, but that he could now do so without heartache, as one calls to mind a loved one long since dead. And

Illustrated by Raymond Thayer

"Name? And show me your driver's license." "And this to me, Francis Xavier? Fie and two more fies!"

Duty



this knowledge was unsatisfying, because he would have enjoyed recalling the ancient mood, for with his Irish blood he had inherited the racial sense of martyrdom that makes sorrow somewhat enjoyable. However, he was doing rather well in the joy department as matters stood, because when he reported off duty at midnight, his resignation from the Department would take effect: and because he was still young and optimistic and adventurous, he found the certainty of uncertainty alluring.

HE saw an automobile parked by a fire hydrant and got out his summons-book: Violation of City Ordinance No. 765—unless somebody was sitting in the car prepared to move it in case a fire engine arrived. But the car was empty, and he was about to lean inside to scrutinize the State license in its leather case strapped to the steering-column, in order to secure the data required to fill out the summons, when a young woman emerged from an adjacent butcher-shop and announced defensively: "I was only gone long enough to pick up a package the butcher had ready for me, Officer."

Fenessey was inexorable. With pencil poised over his book, he said: "Name? And show me your driver's license."

The woman replied: "And this to me, Francis Xavier? Fie and two more fies!"

Fenessey flushed—and the old pain returned. Mary Farmer was smiling at him; nor had the years since he had seen her last taken toll of her loveliness. She went on, as casually as if this were not a world-shaking occasion: "I never thought I'd enjoy having my mother's car tagged for a traffic violation."

Fenessey decided to meet her mood of casualness. "Well, for old sake's sake, Mary," he replied, "I'll let you go this time, provided you get into the car and behind the wheel. I see the sergeant approaching in the middle of the block, so let him think you pulled in here for a chin-chin with me."

From behind the wheel Mary Farmer said on a note of disappointment and amazement: "So the brilliant Fenessey boy developed into a copper."

He leaned into the car and reached for her hand. "I'm not much at pretending, Mary. The sight of you makes my heart sing again. For better than three years you've walked my beat with me, and now, on my last patrol, you show up in person."

"That, Francis, is a very pretty speech, and *my* heart sings—at the sound of it. But tell me, Francis, why you became a policeman."

"I see I've lost caste with you, Mary. When the brokerage firm I worked for retired from business and I lost my white-collar job, I rejoiced, even though I knew a new job would be hard to find in some other line of business in which I had not had experience, and that I might be unemployed for months. Of course I couldn't afford that; with my mother to care for, I couldn't afford to pick and choose. So I took the civil service examination for the police force and passed with a high rating. I had no desire to be a cop, but the pay was sufficient to support the Fenesseys and meet my tuition fees at a private law-school. I was within three months of going up for the bar examination when Hitler wrecked my plans, and I went overseas as a buck private in an infantry outfit, from which I transferred to the O.S.S.—Office of Strategic Services to you, but in plain English I became a spy operating back of the enemy's lines. I suppose I did as well as the next man, because in 1944 I was commissioned a captain and received the DSC and a few scars. After V-E day I was demobilized and went back on the force for a year because I needed a refresher course and had three months study to make up. A month ago I was admitted to the practice of law and at once tendered my resignation. It takes effect at midnight tonight, so tomorrow morning you will have no reason to feel disappointed in me."

"I will—if you develop into a briefless attorney."

"I have a good fight ahead of me, but then fighting comes naturally to the Fenesseys. We enjoy it."

"What are your plans?"

"I've rented a little office *en suite* with a large and prosperous law firm, hoping a few crumbs may fall from their table. I'll do their police-court work. My telephone is on their private exchange, and the switchboard operator will take messages for me, and one of their stenographers will do my work after her regular hours and on a part-time basis."

"I'm rated a class-A legal stenographer, Francis. When you can afford such and we can agree on salary, I'll consider working for you."

"You wouldn't like that. I'll have to depend on criminal practice at first, and perhaps for a few years. My friends in the Department will shove business my way, but the going will be hard for a long time. However, I'll manage."

"Of course you will, Francis. Men like you always win. . . . By the way, I read your mother's death notice about three years ago and wondered who was taking care of you now."

"I was 4-F until she died. Had to be. The draft board agreed she had no other source of support but me and that the family allowance of an enlisted man would be insufficient for her care. But the day after her funeral I rented our home and the day after that, I enlisted. I didn't like the idea of being sent for."

THEIR glances met and held, and he knew what she was thinking. "I still have my way to make," he told her doggedly.

"Still prideful and unselfish," she commented, and started her motor. "Francis, I'm so glad to have seen you again. You've kept your figure, and you're as good-looking as you were

when you made my heart do nip-ups. Good luck to you, my dear."

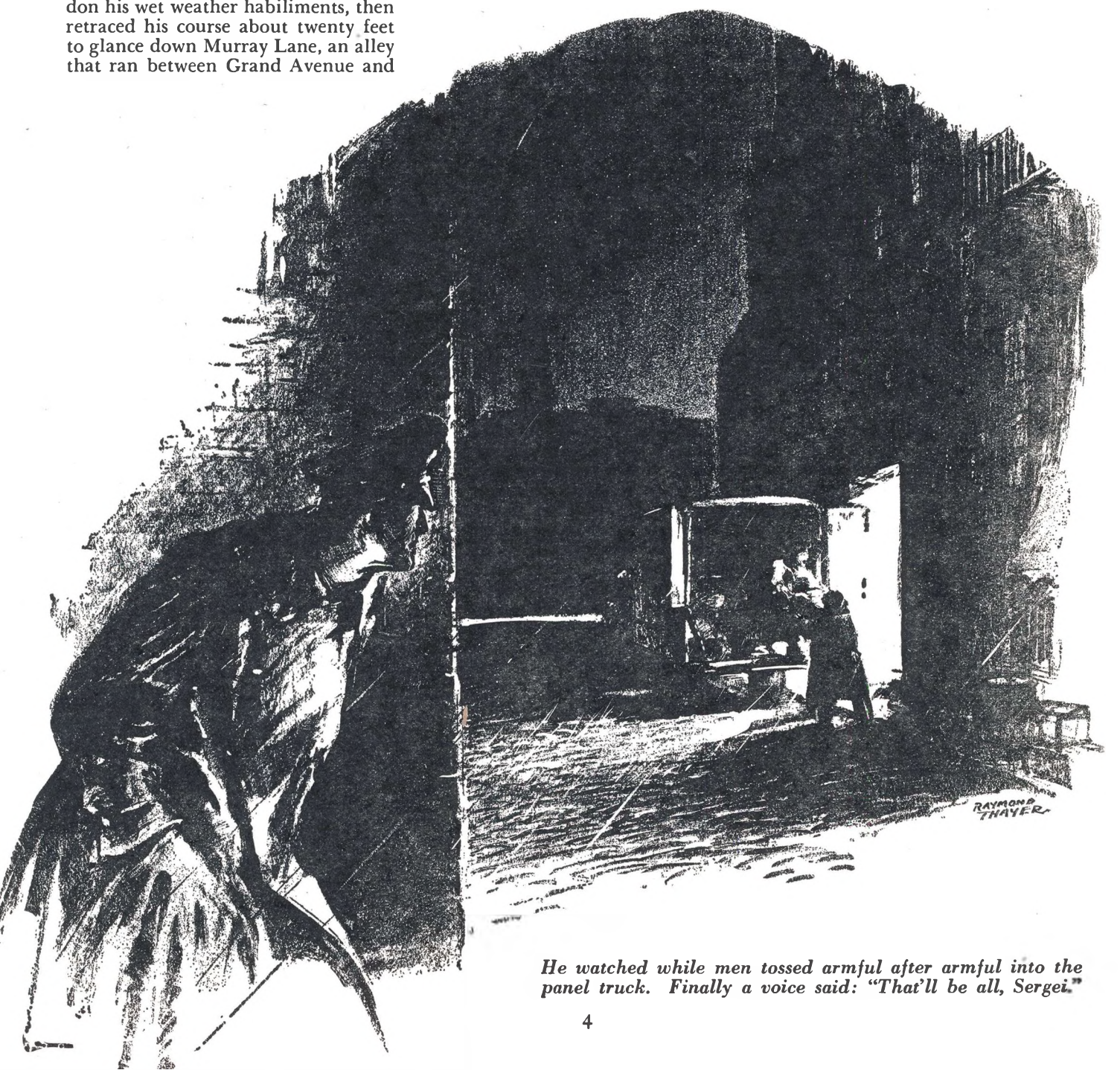
She pulled away from the curb, and Fenessey turned to greet the sergeant, a dour old dog, who berated him for indulging in social frivolities while on duty, to which Fenessey said lightly and without animus, "Oh, the hell with you, screwball," and resumed his beat. "I'll report you for unofficer-like conduct," the sergeant shouted after him, and Fenessey turned and thumbed his nose. Already he was savoring the air of freedom. . . .

The weather man had predicted rain before midnight; and when going on duty at four o'clock Fenessey had carried his rubber raincoat and cap-cover. He was coming up Melrose Avenue at ten minutes of midnight when, with only a few drops of warning, a heavy rainfall commenced, so he paused under a store awning to don his wet weather habiliments, then retraced his course about twenty feet to glance down Murray Lane, an alley that ran between Grand Avenue and Melrose Avenue. A city ordinance prohibited parking in it, day or night, and as a matter of routine, he always looked down Murray Lane for parked cars. In his haste to get under the awning to escape a drenching, he had neglected to give his last look. The alley was empty, however, so he resumed his patrol and was passing under the awning when he heard a loud backfire from an automobile and sensed that it came from the alley.

On the instant he stepped back under the awning again, as alert as a field dog that has scented game, and waited three minutes to see if a car would emerge from Murray Lane into Melrose Avenue, for there was no law against using Murray Lane as a thoroughfare, although it would have been strange if anybody used it at this late hour, when Spruce and Elm streets half a block to right and left of it, respectively, were wide streets, well lighted and free of traffic at midnight.

When no car emerged, Fenessey knew one had pulled into the alley from Grand Avenue and parked—*after a look-out had seen him cross its intersection with Melrose.* The mid-block electroliers on Grand and Melrose accorded the alley a ghostly lighting, and Fenessey knew it had silhouetted him as he passed. With Grand Avenue in the heart of the shopping district and unlimited parking space there after six o'clock, there had to be a reason for this driver electing to park in Murray Lane.

The reason presented itself automatically. The stores fronting on Spruce and Elm streets had rear entrances on Murray Lane for receipt and dispatch of merchandise; hence one bent on illegal entry would park his car there in order to load his loot.



He watched while men tossed armful after armful into the panel truck. Finally a voice said: "That'll be all, Sergei."

Fenessey sighed—a tribute to human stupidity. This job had been carefully cased. It had been discovered that the police officer on the beat was a man of meticulous habit. Punctually at eleven-fifty he came up Melrose and crossed its intersection with Murray Lane, continued on up to Spruce and down Spruce to the police call-box on the corner of Spruce and Grand Avenue, where, after reporting off duty, he would take the first trolley car coming up Grand and go home. The driver of the car had watched from the Grand Avenue entrance to the alley and seen Fenessey pass up Melrose, then had gone back to his car, waited three minutes and pulled into the alley with his lights doused, because the mid-block electroliers afforded sufficient light for his passage. At the moment he was, doubtless, engaged in jimmying a rear entrance. However, there was the possibility he might wait a few minutes to see if the sound of the back-fire might not bring Fenessey down the alley to investigate, in which even the fellow could continue on up the alley as he had a legal right to do.

SO Fenessey waited until midnight, when the mid-block electroliers, as a matter of municipal economy, were turned off, leaving Murray Lane in Stygian darkness. And while he waited, he considered his own situation. At midnight he would no longer be a member of the police force. What if he got into a gun fight and was killed or wounded? Crippled for life, perhaps. Would he then be entitled to the benefits of the retirement law covering policemen disabled in action? Would his heir be entitled to the insurance the Police Officers' Benevolent Association had set up, and to which he had contributed since joining the department? And would not other cops regard him as an altruistic duty-bound jackass for mixing it with a crook—after his resignation?

Of course Fenessey knew in advance what the answer would be. He was going after that prowler and take him! Then he brought his newly hatched legality to bear on the problem and decided that while technically he was no longer a cop, actually he would be one until he had surrendered his shield, handcuffs, pistol and cap, and reported officially conclusion of his tour of duty.

He reflected: *This may be a hot job, and if I get away with it, the newspaper boys will play it up. "Cop, single-handed, foils burglary. Arrests two desperate ex-convicts."* (Fenessey hoped there wouldn't be more. Two was enough.) He could almost read the lead to the story: *"Fifteen minutes after his resignation from the police force had taken effect, patrolman Francis Xavier Fenessey shot it out last night in Murray Lane with a pair (or trio) of hardened criminals he caught burglarizing the store of Gazookis & Company."*

He got his pistol out of the holster and thrust it into the side pocket of his raincoat, then headed down Murray Lane, walking in the gutter, the sound of his advance drowned by the beat of the rain. He counted his steps. At seventy-one he walked into the bumper of a car, and at that instant thought of a snappy ending for the story of his exploit. *"Patrolman Fenessey recently passed the bar examinations and has been admitted to the practice of the law. This morning he starts serving the blind goddess."* Good advertisement, that. He must be frank and tell the newspaper boys he wanted it. They were all good lads and would go the limit for him. Ethical lawyers did not buy space advertising, but Fenessey had noticed that they liked good free advertising.

He snapped his agile brain from fancy to fact and ran his hand over the radiator shell. Despite the cold rain that had been falling on it for ten minutes, it was still quite warm. He reached in and felt across the cushion on the seat. Two-thirds of it was cold, but the space in back of the wheel was still warm.

One man, Fenessey reflected. *It's an inside job. He didn't have to jimmy his way in. If so, he'd still be at it. Somebody lifted the draw bar inside and opened for him.*

He hurried up to Melrose and on to Spruce. Turning down Spruce, he commenced counting his steps, and at seventy-one found himself in front of the store of Papiloff Brothers, Furriers. He thought: *A panel truck to keep the rain off the furs. Why, that heap could hold a hundred thousand dollars' worth of them! And furriers keep their valuable furs in vaults. Hum-m-m! And who knows the combination? Papiloff Brothers, of course. They must owe somebody a lot of money they can't pay, so they're sticking the burglary insurance company for the jack, and little by little the furs will find their way back into this store.*

He tested the lock, as he did nightly, in case a lookout might be posted in Spruce Street. Then he turned his attention to a gray sedan parked at the curb. He ran his hand over the cushion and found two warm spaces and a cold one in the middle. He got out his flashlight, examined the State license and discovered the car was registered to Peter Papiloff, 2426 Mandan Boulevard. He made a note of this and the license number in his little black book.

Peter Papiloff had locked the ignition switch and taken the key with him, but had neglected to lock the car, for which Fenessey was grateful, because it saved him the trouble of breaking the lock, not an impossible task for a powerful man. He released the hand-brake and gave the car a push to start it rolling downgrade to Grand Avenue; then he jumped in and took the wheel. He had worked up to twenty miles an hour as he took the corner and rolled down Grand Avenue, still gathering speed.

AT Murray Lane he turned in and coasted up the slight grade about thirty feet before losing momentum. Then he set the front wheels against the curb and braked the car, after which he walked cautiously up the alley until he saw a perpendicular streak of light on his right and knew it marked the rear entrance of Papiloff Brothers' store. The embrasure of the rear entrance of another store two doors below gave him sanctuary; and there, in the darkness, he watched and waited while men tossed armful after armful of furs into the panel truck. Finally a voice said: "That will be all, Sergei. Now we'll tie Boris up."

Fenessey climbed into the panel truck, got out his handcuffs and pistol and waited. Presently Sergei emerged from the rear entrance, and Fenessey grinned pleasurably as he heard the man climb in behind the wheel and insert the ignition key. Without turning on his lamps, he pulled up the alley in low gear—and almost at the intersection with Melrose, Fenessey dug him viciously in the ribs with the muzzle of his gun and snarled: "Hands up, Sergei. The deal is to the left."

There was barely sufficient light for him to see Sergei's lifted hands. He cuffed one wrist, brought it down on the steering-wheel, passed the other cuff under it and ordered his prisoner

"Proceed with the financial report, Francis. I find that much more interesting."

"Yes, Boris, I know just how it happened," he said. . . . "As you entered the door, two men pushed you violently inside—"

to drop his hand for the other bracelet. "Now, my hearty," Fenessey declared, "you'll have to be a Houdini to get away from this truck." He possessed himself of the ignition key and ran up to Melrose and over to the corner of Spruce, in time to see a man emerge from the Papiloff store, look about and disappear into the store again. In a few minutes he came out once more and started up Spruce Street.

FENESSEY retreated to Murray Lane and watched him pass, and knew the man could not escape him. He hurried down Murray Lane to Grand and up Grand to the call-box and telephoned in and asked for Mannion, the deputy chief of police on duty at night.

"Patrolman Fenessey reporting off duty, sir."

"Where have you been?" Mannion demanded.

Fenessey chuckled softly. For more than a year, so punctual had he been in reporting off duty, that Mannion finally noticed it, and every night he organized a sweepstakes. To participate in this sweepstakes, the office help and night police paid a quarter to guess the exact minute and second Fenessey would report in, and the man who guessed the closest took the pot.

"I've been doing my duty with the zeal that has always characterized every Fenessey in history, Chief."

"You've wrecked my sweepstakes. You know it's all off after twelve-five, and here it is twelve-thirty. Unheard of! I was just going to send a car out over your beat to look for your body."

"I've been a busy ex-cop, Chief. Did a man named Peter Papiloff phone in less than five minutes ago to report the theft of his automobile—a gray sedan, license No. 5-G-892?"

"I'll ask," said Mannion. A minute later he came back on the line. "Yes, he did. He said he'd left it standing in front of his home—forgot to put it in the garage and only remembered when rain beating on his window awakened him. Then he had gone out to put the car in the garage, and it had disappeared. You pick it up?"

"No, I stole it. That is, I moved it from in front of Papiloff Brothers' store in Spruce between Grand and Melrose, and hid it in Murray Lane. Peter and Sergei and Boris have just burglarized their own store. Burglary insurance swindle. When Peter came out and found his car gone, he went back into the store and reported the theft to Central Station. Then, because he didn't dare phone for a taxi for fear the taxi-driver might remember when he read this morning's papers, the unfortunate man started walking home in this terrible rain—and him without an umbrella! I could weep for him."

"Later," Mannion suggested. "I'm sending a radio car to pick you up at the call-box. Then you pick up Peter. I'm a mischievous man, and it will interest me to have Peter explain how a man can be in two places at the same time."

Five minutes later Fenessey stepped out of the radio car and surrounded Peter Papiloff. "The hand has been played, Peter, and you've lost. Into the car with you," he ordered. And then, because he was careful in all things, he frisked Papiloff for a gun before pushing him into the car where another officer handcuffed him.

They drove over into Murray Lane, and Fenessey and the corporal entered the Papiloff store via the rear entrance, which had purposely been left unbarred because the Papiloff Brothers knew enough to remember that if burglars departed with their loot via Murray Lane, they would have to leave the door open. In the office they found Boris Papiloff rather loosely gagged and bound. "Yes, Boris, I know just how it happened," he said. "You came down to the store after dinner—you Russians dine pretty late—to work on the books. As you entered the front door, two men pushed you violently inside, and while one closed the door, the other held a gun against your back. They told you to open the vaults where the valuable raw furs are kept—or else; and you obeyed. What else could you do? Then they looted the place, and after gagging and binding you, they departed by way of Murray Lane. Come, my Baby Bunting, to a family reunion at the booking-sergeant's desk in Central Station."

Fenessey next handed Sergei over to the officers in the radio car, while he climbed up into the panel truck and drove it down to the police garage. Then he went up to Mannion's office to turn in his shield, his pistol, handcuffs and cap, and face a battery of cameras and the night police reporters. It was one o'clock when Mannion sent him home in a police car.

A month later Fenessey telephoned Mary Farmer. "Francis X. Fenessey, the not-so-well-known attorney-at-law speaking," he announced formally.

"And what's on your powerful legal mind, Mr. Fenessey?" Mary queried.

Fenessey thrilled. This was the old Mary, catching his mood, whatever it happened to be, and throwing it back at him. He thought: All of our married years there'll never be a harsh word. We'll never be done with bantering each other. He replied:

"A report on the Fenessey finances."

"Am I supposed to be interested?"

"As an old friend I thought you might be."

"As an old friend—I am."

"You read about that Papiloff burglary?"

"How could I help reading it, with your face smiling out at me on every front page in town. While I decry compliments on the ground they tend to swell the head—Hibernian heads particularly—still I will admit that was an adroit piece of police work."

"Thank you, Mary. The burglary insurance company thought so, so they've given me a retainer of twenty-five hundred dollars annually to act as an investigator-attorney. First I'm to run the swindler down and next I'm to prosecute him. For each job I submit a bill for professional services. At the moment I'm working on a diamond swindle—and oh, the beautiful lady that's mixed up in it! My heart'll break when I pinch her. If she were only honest I'd fall in love with her."

"Proceed with the financial report, Francis. I find that much more interesting."

"Well, the newspaper advertising brought me a bank teller who thought he'd discover an undiscoverable method of raising his salary without asking the board of directors. His father made good the theft—they caught him before he'd gotten in deep—but the bonding company prosecuted. I had my client plead guilty and asked for probation. I had the entire family in court weeping and I'd taken the precaution (how I worked it is neither here nor there) to have the case tried before Judge Madigan, known as Crying Eddie Madigan, because when confronted by a courtroom tragedy he weeps bitterly. Mary, I wish you could have heard my plea! Friends tell me—of course I don't believe it—that Robert Emmet's last speech was as the howling of a sick dog compared with my masterly oration. I set out to make Crying Eddie cry—and before I was finished the bailiff was asking for rubber boots. Of course the young crook was placed on probation and his grateful father gave me a thousand dollars for that speech."

"Keep on, Francis. You get better and better."

"Well, I secured a divorce for the wife of a pickpocket and the judge ordered him to pay my fee of two hundred dollars, but I told his honor I had too much respect for my profession to accept other people's money for a fee and would make no charge for my services. I charged that up to publicity. Did you read the editorial about me in the *Chronicle?*"

"I did."

"It tore my heart out to be noble but as the old saying goes: Be noble, and the nobleness that lies in other men, sleeping but never dead, will rise in majesty to meet thine. . . . A woman I never heard of is dying of cancer. She will leave an estate of about seventy-five thousand dollars and has made me her executor, because she thinks her estate will be honestly administered."

"What else?"

"That completes the financial report. By the way, Mother had a nice five-room cottage and I inherited it. I've sold every bit of the furnishings to a second-hand man and am going to have the little shack done over, inside and out. After that I'll be looking for a young woman who can double in any of three jobs for me. She'll have to possess exquisite taste to select the new furnishings for me, and she'll have to know how to cook and run a household properly. I seem to recall giving you A-plus on those jobs in days gone by. In your spare moments you might organize my office and do my stenographic legal work. I can't afford to pay you what you're worth but as I prosper you'll prosper with me."

"Francis, how dare you propose to me over the telephone?"

"You take too much for granted, mavourneen. I'm just about to take a taxi and come out and propose to you in person. All this chatter has been by way of preparing you for the shock!"

HE waited about thirty seconds for her bantering reply to that, but receiving none, he guessed the answer and hung up.

Practically all women weep when they are so happy they cannot talk!

Grandpa *and*

A STRANGE TALE FROM THE SWISS BOYHOOD OF THE ABLE AUTHOR OF "TAKEN AT THE FLOOD," "BROTHERS TO A HORSE" AND OTHER MEMORABLE STORIES.

Grandpa was very old, but strong-looking. Everyone said he was afraid of nothing.

THE winter had closed down early that year in the mountains of the French Jura. The snow had piled in deep drifts on the slopes and even going from the village to the nearest woods to chop trees was an adventure. But we were snug and warm on the old Changars Farm, three miles from the village of Saint-Pierre-aux-Bois, and I did not mind isolation much, as the school had been closed. The rumor that the wolves had come back started early in December, and at first everybody laughed.

There had been wolves in the region, but that was many, many years before. Some of the oldest people claimed to remember them. They even said that there had been a local breed, sprung from the mating of Russian wolves who had trailed the Cossacks across Europe during the Napoleonic Wars, and the native beasts. The schoolmaster insisted that this was fabulous, and showed books to prove that the last wolf killed in the district had been recorded at Goumois, early in the Seventeenth Century, the same year as the last recorded bear.

That caused many hot arguments around the fireplaces at night. And man after man reported having seen tracks in the snow that were not those of dogs and were too large to be made by a fox. People grew a bit uneasy as imaginations worked, and the women kept the younger children inside the yards. What clinched the belief that something very odd was roving outside was the behavior of the dogs. The old-timers insisted they knew that distressed yelp—one could always tell when a dog scented a wolf.

Then a good-sized dog was found dead, partly devoured. Whatever had killed him must have been large and ferocious—and hungry. It had even chewed the leather of the collar, and broken bones between its jaws. The schoolmaster found it hard to explain that one. Then something happened that was really frightening: A man saw a wolf—and he swore that it was a white wolf.

The stories around the fire sank to whispers: A white wolf was a queer parishioner. Dogs were so afraid of him that they would not give warning; they ceased howling when he came near, hid in their kennels and whimpered! Because, it was said, dogs used to be one family with wolves, away back, and there was something holy and special to them about a white wolf. By and by, the stories spread to the towns, and just before Christmas, a party of hunters came. They had fine rifles and dogs; they walked around a lot, ate and drank a lot, and went home without having done anything.

But the white wolf was around. He killed another dog, and he got into a farmer's yard to take away a goose. Choppers and smugglers reported from time to time having seen his shadow slinking beyond fringes of firs. . . .

One night in February, my father and the workmen had gone down to the village for a political meeting. Most of the time, we went to bed very early, but my mother was worried because Father had to get back from the village through the snow and there was always considerable drinking when politics were discussed. The owner and five other men were with him, but just the same she kept thinking of Papa falling into the snow, helpless and sleepy—and of wolves finding him. She had sent the older kids to bed, but she kept me on her lap for company—I was not quite six. She was reading a story from an old almanac, and Grandpa was dozing by the stove with his wooden shoes kicked off. I am not likely to forget that evening.

I ADMIRED Grandpa, who was in reality my Great-grandpa. He was very old, well over eighty, but strong-looking, with his brownish, weather-beaten face, kept clean-shaven, his brush of white hair and his clear blue eyes. He had been a very big man—he still loomed over most men despite his stoop—and for a very long time had been the most distinguished person in the village. He had served fifteen years in the regular Army, had won medals and a pension. He could tell stories about North Africa, Senegal, and a long trip on a sailing-ship transport to Martinique. During the Franco-Prussian War, he had hunted Germans with his shotgun. Everyone said he was afraid of nothing.

I chanced to look over at him at a certain moment, to see if he was follow-

the Werewolf

by GEORGES SURDEZ

Illustrated by Maurice Bower

A good-sized dog was found partly devoured; then a man swore that he saw a white wolf.

ing the story, and I saw that he had his eyes open, and his gnarled hands were gathered in fists on his knees. He seemed tense. Mother sensed something, and looked over at him in her turn.

"What's the matter, Grandpa?"

"Oh, nothing," he replied. "Just haven't heard the dog for a while. He's usually restless when your man's out."

We did not talk for some minutes, but listened. It was unusually quiet in the big yard outside. Grandpa rose and went to the little window opening on the enclosure; he parted the red curtains and brushed the pane to peer out.

"Can't see much with the lamp inside," he said, and Mother rose to stand between the lamp and the window. "The front gates are closed, all right!" He shoved his feet into his sabots and put on a coat, went out. He came back in a minute, looking serious. "The dog's hunched up in his kennel; he whimpers and acts scared. We'll have to keep an eye open." He hesitated. "It may be that white wolf's around somewhere near." He sat down at his place and kicked off the sabots. "It's nothing for a Christian to meddle with."

He reached up for his pipe and jar of tobacco. His arms were so long he did not have to rise to touch the mantel. I was vaguely frightened, and I shivered. Mother sighed and said softly: "I wish one of the men were here. They shouldn't all have gone."

Grandpa replaced the jar and the pipe where he had taken them. He slipped his feet into the sabots and rose.

"As long as you're so worried," he said casually, "I'll go and take a look."

Mother set me down on the floor and stood up. Grandpa and she looked at each other. They had had their differences before, about what was good for growing children and about business affairs.

"I didn't mean anything, Grandpa," she said.

"Who said you did?" he asked. He went into the shed through the back door and came back with a stable-lantern and a pitchfork. He lifted the glass chimney and lighted the wick.

"You can't go," Mother protested. "The men—they took all the shotguns along!"

Grandpa shook his head as he laughed. "Don't need a gun for a lousy wolf! Now, no matter what happens, keep this door shut." He looked at her, looked down at me, and shrugged. "I can't have people saying I waited for anybody to get vermin out of my farmyard."

MOTHER was beginning to weep, but even she knew that you couldn't argue with the old man when he was in that mood. He brought out a bottle, took a good swig of prune brandy, wiped his mustache. He walked to the door and stood very straight, straighter even than usual. "All right now, all set for the square dance—"

"Grandpa, please don't!"

"Don't worry, don't worry!"

He went out.

Mother went to the window, and I stood on a chair because I was still too short to see over that sill. You could see the strong path of yellowish light moving on the snow and Grandfather's long-legged shadow, surging and moving, growing and shrinking. He went from place to place, holding the lantern high in his left hand, the pitchfork poised and ready in his right. We saw him turn from the front gates, skirt the wall for some yards, then head for the manure-heap.

Again he held the lantern high, and suddenly we saw the white wolf, crouching on the snow-covered pile. You could see only his eyes and his mouth, really; the rest merged into the snow. You could see the fiery eyes and the fangs.

For a long minute, Grandpa held that lantern high and steady, as he and the wolf stared at each other. Then Grandpa backed away a few steps, very slowly and cautiously, keeping his eyes on the animal, and he put down the lantern slowly, easily, so that it wouldn't tip over into the snow and go out.

That wolf must have leaped over the wall somewhere to come in. But it was easier to get in than to go out, because the drifts had piled high against the wall outside, while the snow was kept clear inside. There was a lot of talk afterward as to just how he had

entered and why he did not run away from a man. Maybe it was because he could not make the leap in the other direction; maybe he was so hungry he wouldn't leave the scent of our coop; maybe he was sore and felt like fighting.

Anyway, he did not run. But it was Grandpa who attacked first. He was an old soldier and he handled that pitchfork like a rifle with a bayonet on it. He hit too, because we heard the wolf yell. But he hadn't killed him, for all of a sudden, Grandpa was backing away as the wolf leaped off the manure-pile. Grandpa was smart—and cool too, because he backed away from the lantern. He knew he had better keep that light going!

THE wolf had made up his mind to fight and was trying to attack—circling, circling before the tines of the pitchfork. Several times he shuffled close to the lantern, but dodged away from it, as if it scared him. We could see he was bleeding somewhere; he left dark traces on the snow.

Grandpa kept lunging at him, and struck him two, three times, but not just right. Mother was praying aloud, and saying in between: "Go away, dirty beast, go away—oh, why doesn't he run away, why doesn't he run away?"

By that time, the wolf's yells had awakened the women in the other building and they were at the windows, screaming. But there wasn't a rifle or a shotgun in the place; the men taken them all.

It went on like that for maybe three minutes. Grandpa was steady on his spread legs, hunched behind the pitchfork, and he was strong, for when he struck the beast it would show hurt. But, whether I imagined it or not, Grandpa must have been tired pretty soon, because he did not turn so quickly as before. Then he made a mistake—or felt he had to finish quickly—for now, instead of ke ping those keen prongs before the wolf and jabbing, he took a long step back, swung the pitchfork high, meaning to bring it down across the wolf's spine and kill it once and for all.

The blow came close, it almost hit—but the wolf moved to one side, the prongs were buried in the snow and before Grandpa could raise it again, that wolf leaped forward and caught him by the forearm.

The two went down together. For a few seconds, they thrashed the snow. When they stood up again, the wolf still had his jaws clamped on the arm, but Grandpa had his hand on the wolf's throat. Grandpa was no runt, he was a very big man—but that wolf was so big he stood even taller. Grandpa finally got his arm loose and got both of his hands on the animal's neck.

The wolf kept snapping at Grandpa's shoulders and face, clawing with those big paws. They went down again, and Mother could not hold out any more; she picked up the hatchet we kept in the woodbox for kindling and ran out. I took the poker and followed her. I was scared, but if my mother was out there, I felt safer with her.

We reached them, and Mother lifted the hatchet. Grandpa was underneath; he had one hand on the wolf's throat now and he held the body with his left arm. He knew what he was doing, and he wasn't scared one little bit. I know, because he said in an easy but kind of breathless voice: "Don't, daughter, if he moved, you'd be liable to hit me!" He pushed that wolf's head up and up, and he talked in jerks: "Anyway—I think I can—handle this customer—" Then he said something else which I never forgot: "Don't, daughter, you'd spoil the pelt!"

And that's all there was to that: Grandpa half-strangled and half-stifled that white wolf with his bare hands! Because, in another couple of minutes, the beast collapsed. Grandpa did not let go, however, until I had gone for a rope and made a noose, which Mother slipped into place around the wolf's neck and tightened. When we were sure he had stopped kicking, Grandpa rose, laughing, and pushed the carcass with his foot.

"Eh, you boob, you should have picked on somebody else!" he said.

Then Mother noticed that he had lost his sabots, and she made him come in. He washed, and changed his shirt, because he was full of blood where the wolf had bled all over him. He wasn't hurt much, just scratches on his cheeks, not very deep. The wolf's teeth had worn through the thick sleeve of his winter coat, but left only little marks on his flesh.

"My arm's too thick up there to get a good grip," Grandpa explained. "But if he'd got my wrist, he'd have crunched through the bones. Why, when he snapped his jaws, it sounded like a steel trap." He passed a shaking hand over his face and shuddered. "I still can smell that breath of his, though. How it stank!"

WELL, as you can imagine, everyone flocked to see our wolf, and the schoolmaster took photos of it. The whole village was proud of Grandpa; he was our hero again, because he'd done with his bare hands what a lot of city hunters with expensive guns and trained dogs had not managed to do. We skinned the wolf, and it made a handsome pelt.

For a couple of days, Grandpa was all right, sort of proud of himself too, and looking from time to time at Mother as if he was kidding her. But he kept talking about the wolf's breath, said the stink must have gone up his nostrils into his brain. He went to bed with a bad fever on the fourth day. Then there were some bad hours in our farmhouse, like a nightmare, for the wolf haunted Grandpa, and he started to howl and click his teeth. He still had his teeth—all brown and snaggy, but he had them.

The doctor said there was nothing much to be done. It was either lockjaw or rabies. Grandpa had been bitten and scratched—and infection could have come from decaying meat between the fangs or germs from the manure-pile on the claws. The fits got so bad that Grandpa had to be tied with ropes at times. He knew he was going to die, and when he could think and talk clearly, the priest came in and got him ready.

IT was just a few minutes before the last spell that he called in his oldest son. The door into the room where his bed was had been open and he'd heard the talk about werewolf and a Satanic spell. When he had breathed his last, that kind of talk started again—and the son who had last talked to him held up his hand.

"Grandpa left a message," he said.

Of course, everybody became very quiet to listen. Even the women kneeling by the bed in the death-room stopped sobbing for the moment. Grandpa's oldest son, himself an elderly man, cleared his throat, embarrassed by the converging glances.

"Grandpa said first thing to tell you was that all the talk about a curse and a werewolf is plain crazy. He said he ought to know, as he was closer to that wolf alive than anybody else—just a plain, ordinary wolf, he was. Grandpa said the beast had strayed too far, got lost and couldn't get back wherever he came from, maybe because of the snow. He said most likely that wolf was white because he was very old and had turned white."

The man shrugged heavy shoulders under the starched blue blouse, and half-turned his head to look at Grandpa stretched on the bed inside the next room, as if he expected to be prompted. He coughed again and resumed:

"Then, last thing he did, Grandpa started to laugh, kind of low and weak, but like something was very funny. After that, he said 'Soon as it's over, I want you to say just what I'm going to tell you, and say it loud so everybody can hear you: Tell them that I had lived long enough to have good sense and long enough to die. That I don't want anybody to make a fuss, tell stories on themselves, feel bad or feel to blame. Tell them there wasn't anything to it, no werewolf and no curse, only a couple of old fools showing off."

For a long minute, Grandpa held that lantern steady, as he and the wolf stared at each other.

The Golden Cup

THE FIRST OF A NEW SERIES DEALING WITH ONE OF THE MOST COLORFUL CHAPTERS IN AMERICAN HISTORY—THE OLD-TIME CLIPPER SHIPS THAT SAILED ROUND THE HORN TO TRADE FOR THE TEA AND SILKS OF CHINA.

by H. BEDFORD-JONES

IN repose, Ezra Cooper was long, lank and solemn; his bony features were serious, not handsome. Life was a gravely serious thing; he had his mate's license, and was going up for his master's ticket after his next voyage. When his dignity slipped, however, a twinkling devil could light up his bronzed features, roughened by wind and sea. After all, Cooper was still in his early twenties.

He strode along the yellow tide-packed sand. His glances flitted over the wind-drifted dunes back from the shore, with their sparse growth of beach-grass and the wild pea and plum vines. Behind him stretched a patch of scrub pine, a few weathered houses and the once white summer hotel with its three chimneys, built thirty years ago and still a landmark for incoming mariners.

"Ezry! Ez-ree!"

Hearing his name carried shrilly on the wind, Cooper turned. On the porch of the Cooper house stood a figure, waving something white; his mother was signaling him with a dish-cloth. He lifted an arm, returned the signal, and started back; to his surprise, he saw her coming to meet him. Something must have happened, he thought.

This scene of desolation was deceptive. Sparkling sand and yellow sea, yes; but actually it was the south end of Plum Island, named for its plums, but usually spelled *Plumb;* a long and narrow strip off the Merrimack River, almost a part of the shore. Straight inland lay Newburyport, to which ran a turnpike from the hotel. Not that Newburyport was any metropolis, in this year of 1834, but it did have a tidy harbor and a good bit of shipping, both small and large.

Only two days ago, Cooper had seen a big square-rigger bowling in past the ruins of the two old movable lighthouses and making the tricky channel with masterly ease. That had been Cap'n Howe's *Martha,* a noble vessel in the Canton trade, home from China and the dream-hazed golden shores of the Pacific.

Cooper quickened pace to meet his mother, a stoutly brisk soul. Five years ago his father, master of a Portsmouth brig in the Havana trade, had perished almost within sight of home, caught by a northerly squall and driven on York Ledge. So, half through Yale College, Ezra Cooper had abandoned schooling and taken up the sea himself. He liked the hard and rugged life; and though he had never gone farther afield than Rio, he had a passion for foreign ports and lively cities and strange folk. Inherited, said his mother with a sniff.

As he approached her, Mrs. Cooper spoke, well aware that the wind would carry her words to him.

"Man here askin' for ye, Ezry. Come by the turnpike from town, drivin' a rig; but he's a wuthless vagabone if ever I saw one. Chawing tobacco, too, so I kep' him on the back porch."

Cooper laughed. "Is that hospitality, Mom?"

"I got no hospitality for tobacco-eaters. You keep him out'n the clean house, mind. He's a stranger." Tucking in her blown hair, she turned about and fell into step. Cooper moderated his pace. With her usual shrewdness, she added a significant word. "Seafaring man, by the knife on his hip; wears a kerchief o' fine Chiny silk, so I reckon he's from Cap'n Howe's ship."

China! The word always tugged at Cooper; a name to conjure visions. He said nothing; he was very good at this Yankee trick. A spark grew in his eyes, however. The Canton trade—that was the very aristocracy of his profession, the world over. Lordly East Indiamen from British ports had the monopoly of that trade, into which Yankee clippers had broken a way. Cap'n Howe very well knew his ambition, thought Cooper, and might even have an opening for him. His blood ran faster at the thought. China! China! Mandarins, pigtails, silks and tallow and tea! To Ezra Cooper, such words had the heady quality of old wine.

"If I got my chance, Mom—" he said, and paused. "If I got a berth in the Chiny trade, would you mind?"

HIS old twanging drawl had come back with unthinking speech.

"Course I would; what does that matter?" she replied. "A voyage o' long months; far gone from home by the year—bad as whaling, it is. But no differ, son. If you get it, take it. I ain't standing in your light. A woman can't lay down the law to her menfolks. Long as you stand square with your Maker, you can do what you take a notion to, and I'll stand by it."

Cooper slipped an arm around her.

"Probably I'm foolish to suggest such a thing. Forgive me."

"Bosh! What's in the heart must come out. You're no child, Ezry. College took the drawl off'n your tongue. Maybe Chiny will put flesh on your skinny bones. But I don't like this stranger. He's no honest Christian man, or I miss my guess."

Being a man indeed, and no child, Cooper nodded and accepted her words; he knew her judgment of men was shrewd and usually correct. They passed around the house. In its rear was the turnpike. Behind the house,

Illustrated by Cleveland Woodward

"I s'pose he wangled you into saying a word for him? Slippery, that's what he is."

tethered to a post, was the horse and rig. The man stepped from the porch to greet them.

Wool shirt, baggy breeches, at his throat a glorious kerchief of multihued silk, distinctly Chinese, and gold rings in his ears; white teeth in a deeply tanned face, his eyes bold and sharp, features pinched unpleasantly in a wedge.

"Mr. Cooper? Jason's the name, Hiram Jason, second mate of the *Martha,* Cap'n Howe."

Cooper shook hands; meanwhile his mother went on into the house.

"Howdy, Mr. Jason," he drawled. Instantly he fancied contempt in the bold eyes; then Jason put a hand to his mouth and spoke in a hoarse whisper.

"The quid's gone, sir. Forgot meself, I did, but I chucked it away when her back was turned."

Cooper nodded. "Looking for me, are you? Come into the parlor."

He conducted the visitor inside and led him to the spotless, stuffy little parlor with the big Bible on the center table.

Jason took a chair, gingerly.

"The Cap'n sent me," said he, "to have a word with you. I'll have one for him and two for meself, by your leave." A silent grimace meant for a laugh glimmered in his face and was gone. "We had a quick passage home; but three days out o' port, Mr. Quinby, the first mate died. His heart was bad, they say. Just as we were getting home, too! I signed on as third, so that give me a step."

BUT instead of pursuing this vital topic, Cooper let it wait.

"You're not a Massachusetts man, are you?" he asked, and the other grimaced in lieu of mirth.

"Me? No. Born in Nova Scotia—Bluenose. Got me master's ticket. Been in Canton and them parts three year and more." Jason sighed. "Well, to get back, you see that put the skipper in a hole. Making a quick turnaround, he is, quick as the holds are emptied, with big things waiting—sea-otter skins in Californy, and the mandarins fair cryin' to get them."

Cooper, perhaps through sheer perversity, divined that Jason wanted to stick to the subject of the ship. So, though this tore at him with eagerness, he again sheered off with a quiet question. His mother had been right in her distrust; Jason could talk educated if he so desired. So could Cooper.

"Canton—for three years, eh? You must know it well. Like it?"

"Ain't so bad." Almost with a visible effort, Jason forced himself to comply. He winked sharply. "Things are on the change there. The East India Company's to be dissolved right off, and the Britishers are taking over. Course, the mandarins and provincial Viceroy have their ironclad laws—no foreign women allowed in Canton and so on. Any wives and families have to live in Macao—Portugee colony close by. We ain't but foreign devils, barbarians, *fan kwei;* all sorts of restrictions. All sorts of chances, too.

Cumshaw. A man can pick things up. I'll show you something."

His hand went to his shirt, then paused.

"You ain't a master, by any chance?" he queried.

"No," responded Cooper.

The other nodded, and drew from inside his shirt a tarpaulin pouch, which he began to open.

Cooper liked him less and less as the minutes passed. Three years in Canton, and then signed on for a voyage home—why? Something fishy, obviously, about Mr. Jason. He forgot this, forgot his reserve, his caution, as the pouch disgorged a little mass of tattered silk brocade fragments, carefully wrapped about something small. When this was cleared, he leaned forward and with obvious pride placed the object atop the Bible. Cooper caught his breath, scarcely hearing Jason's words.

"There! That's the sort o' thing a man can light on—solid gold, it is. As we came downriver from Canton, we picked up a dying Chink in a boat. He give me this afore he passed out. Gold, real gold; heavy as lead, but it ain't lead. Don't cut—"

IT was not beautiful, perhaps, but the oddest thing Cooper had ever seen. At first glance it took hold of him. He would have given his right arm to own it.

A little cup, a bit over an inch high—but square. Gold, apparently, rich and ruddy. Each side, at the top, was two inches long; the bottom was an inch and a quarter square, and one side had an oddly shaped handle. A square cup, of all things! All over the outside, Chinese characters were deeply incised in the metal. Across the top ran a little square bar, as though to divide the contents at the top. Yet it could not divide liquid. That was curious, too.

While Jason covertly watched him, Cooper stared at it with eyes ashine. Why he craved it, he could not say, yet something about its oddity appealed savagely to him. Of art, of the power of its simplicity, he knew nothing. He was a practical man; yet this cup had his name on it.

He picked it up, cuddling it in his hands; the very feel was wonderful. He was not aware that generations of yellow men had probably done this very thing, their caresses lending a patina to the metal, as experts could tell. Cooper was no expert. He could feel and sense—he knew not what.

"What do those characters mean?" he asked, almost hoarsely. No drawl now. He spoke crisply, concisely, a ring in his voice. His words drew a swift, sharp glance from Jason—a startled glance. "The shape is queer—must have some significance," Cooper added. "Just what is the thing?"

Cooper laid his hand on the Bible, and swore to do as Jason had just

"I dunno, but being gold, it must be something special, maybe out of a temple. When I was ashore at Malacca, I showed it to a Chink and he throwed a fit or two over it." The words came like a snarl. As Cooper put down the cup, Jason caught at it, bundled it in among the scraps of brocade, and shoved it into the pouch. "Like it, do you? I might swap it to you, Mister. Your mother would like it for a pretty to set on the table."

Inward derision rose in Cooper, but he did not voice it. Little his mother cared for such things from foreign parts! She refused to clutter up the house with them. No, this belonged to himself alone—it must belong to him!

"Swap it," he said, and the words stuck. Anything, anything he owned, he would have given delightedly to possess that little cup—anything, even to his cherished quadrant. It fascinated him. Not because of the gold, but because of the intangible quality he sensed about the thing.

Jason nodded, thrust the pouch under his shirt, and brought out a plug. He bit hard at this, settled the quid in his cheek, and relaxed.

"Don't worry; I'll swaller my spit," he said. "Well, now we get to business, you and me. I got to take you to town—Cap'n Howe wants you, but first we'd ought to have a friendly understanding. The Skipper won't admit it, but he ain't well. He's prob'ly figuring on signing me for chief mate, and wants to give you a berth as third. Leastways, that's my guess. Anyhow, he's got to have a chief mate, that's sure."

Jason paused and swallowed. Cooper said nothing. He scarcely heard the words; his thoughts were all on

said. . . . "Good! It's a bargain," said Jason, and extended the pouch.

that little gold cup—what could he swap for it? Jason went on to make the matter clear.

"The Skipper thinks a lot of you; he said so, Mr. Cooper, out flat. He thinks mighty well of you and your advice. 'A level-headed Yankee'—his very words, sir. So the course I'm charting has its good p'ints. Now, for reasons of my own, I'm right set on that there first mate's berth; it's important to me. Course, nothing is settled yet. And there's a thing to mind. Nothin' must be said o' that gold cup. I don't want it known; penalties for smuggling in precious metal—besides, it ain't known that I have it. I hope you savvy my lingo?"

Cooper gestured. "Yes."

"Maybe you want that there berth yourself, eh?" came the sharp query.

"No. I'd take a third's berth gladly, if offered."

"Good." And Jason looked relieved. "Then all's fair and aboveboard. If your sheet's clean, let 'er blow and be damned, is my motto! Now, I'll make you a square proposition: I'll give you the cup outright—solid gold, it is, mind—if you'll pass me your oath to put in an honest word for me wi' the Old Man. Get me that chief mate's berth, savvy? You can do it, tight as oakum."

"You're mistaken," said Cooper, after his first flash of incredulity and delight. "I'll give you my word to speak as you wish, but—"

"Not your word; nobody's word goes in my pannikin. Lay your hand on that there Bible and swear it," Jason broke in.

"But wait. I can't guarantee another man's decision. Cap'n Howe is stubborn, and famous for it; he has a will of his own."

"I know it. But look; you know me; you've talked with me; you think I'm a good man for the job—that's what I mean. An honest effort is all I ask, and your oath to the Good Book there."

Yankee caution told Cooper to go slow, but Jason was pulling out the pouch, and sight of it blew away all thought.

"Done with you!" he exclaimed, laid his hand on the Bible, and swore to do as Jason had just said. It did give him a rather childish feeling, but sight of the pouch cured that, too.

"Good! It's a bargain," said Jason, and extended the pouch. "With my compliments, Mr. Cooper. And better get on your brass buttons if you're going with me to see the Skipper."

Conscious suddenly of his tattered old garments, Cooper excused himself and hurried to his own room to get into his shore-going Sabbath outfit of blue. He dressed rapidly, filled with exultation; sight of that pouch thrilled him, realization of what awaited him thrilled him too. The golden cup—actually his! At a small enough price, he reflected.

He sought his mother, told her hastily where he was going, got a list of things wanted from town, and rejoined his visitor. Jason was ready enough to eschew swallowing in favor of spitting, and upon gaining the back porch copiously achieved this purpose.

They climbed into the rig and started out by the turnpike, past the hotel, over the rattly bridge, and along the two-mile stretch past the flats into Newburyport. Jason kept up a stream of talk about Canton, with many anecdotes less nice than witty, but Cooper did not even pretend to listen.

HE was absorbed in his own thoughts, and they would not bear voicing. He was his cold self again, and critical. He had become imbued with an active dislike for his companion. Jason was devious, he told himself; a sly fellow entirely on the make, and certainly not to be trusted. There was some deep purpose in his desire to become first mate of the *Martha,* and Ezra Cooper could pretty near figure just what it was. Cap'n Howe was old and might well not survive another trip to China—in which case, the first mate would automatically command the ship.

Cooper had heard plenty about the "chances" in this Canton trade; a ship's master had almost unlimited opportunities to turn a handsome penny on the sly, if he were so disposed. Ventures in trading could be taken by any of the officers. Cap'n Howe had a half interest in the *Martha;* Newburyport people owned the remainder. Thanks to his knowledge of Canton, Jason would be enabled to

turn any sort of devious deal, were he chief officer of the ship; and there was little doubt that he had plenty of opportunities up his sleeve.

So, despite the mystery and glamour of the little square cup which so engrossed him, Ezra Cooper somewhat repented his bargain. He intended to keep it, of course; still, it had been unwise.

"Unlading will be done and the hands paid off by the Saturday," Jason was saying. Today was Monday. "Skipper's carrying all sail, working like a fiend. Right curious! No loafing around resting and getting acquainted with his family—no sir! Turn around and get back, says he. Big deals waiting. With the East India Company dissolving, this is the time to strike; the iron's mighty hot out in Canton. I reckon he's got things arranged with the hong merchants, too."

"Hong merchants? What are they?" questioned Cooper.

"Chinks licensed to trade with foreign devils—us. All trading is done through them. Every skipper has his own comprador or agent. If any hiring is done, the comprador does it. No other Chinese is allowed any contact with us." Jason winked hugely. "That's the lay. Of course, a sharp man can get around it; there's more'n one way of skinning a cat. Yep, a week from today, I expect, the new crew will sign articles—got to have that done afore a skipper can get clearance. Then it's crowd in cargo and be off, with all hands on the lines. Dummed if the Old Man ain't got a mess o' cargo waiting here, too. For his age, he's a wonder."

Cooper agreed grimly. No flies had a chance to settle on Cap'n Elias Howe, who at sixty was more nimble than many a man at thirty.

They gained the town—buildings to the left, endless piers and warehouses to the right.

"The Skipper's at his house, up beyond the north meeting-house," Jason told him. "Ship's discharging at the wharf; the other mate's in charge. Mind, now, you don't talk against me. I'm no hand to bear with such nonsense, Mister. This is a mighty important matter to me—life or death, you might say."

"You have my word," Cooper said stiffly and Jason nodded.

THE *Martha* lay snugged down at her wharf, and Cooper was amazed at the crowded bustle of men and teams, even up to her trucks. Cargo was discharging, carpenters were at work, the rigging was being overhauled, painters and caulkers were making repairs—the ship was a beehive of activity. Cap'n Howe must be in mad haste, indeed. The numerous shops in Market Square were said to present the busiest scene north of Boston, but this wharf and ship dwarfed it to nothing.

"It's a madhouse," said Jason, driving on. "I take over at eight bells, noon; got to return this rig and get me a bite, first. Shore life is sure terrible."

He dropped Cooper at the Howe house and drove away swiftly.

Cooper turned in at the gate, and the Skipper came to meet him. Cap'n Howe, despite carpet slippers and easy clothes, had the gnarled solidity of an oak. White hair, rugged features, a handclasp hard as iron, deep sparkling eyes.

"Glad to see you, Ezry," he said. "Come into the parlor—we can have a pipe there. I was afraid Jason might not find ye to hum. Never can be sure o' that feller."

Cooper followed into the parlor, neat as a pin yet redolent of tobacco and rum, the walls covered with souvenirs. Mrs. Howe appeared with hot toddies on a tray, and after a few words with Cooper, left the two men alone. The Skipper filled a long clay pipe and sighed in relaxation.

"Been working in the garden, got stiffened up. Well, Ezry, I got a berth for you like you wanted. Here's to luck and a quick castoff."

PIPE-SMOKE rose; they sipped the hot toddy, and with unusual alacrity the skipper attacked the business at hand. He spoke of the urgent necessity of getting back to Canton while the Britishers were in process of changing from the East India Company's trade monopoly to what he called "the William IV free trade," touched on deals already arranged at Capistrano on the California coast and at the Sandwich Islands, and said apologetically that Mrs. Howe was anything but pleased at his haste to get away. However, this was to be his last voyage, he added, and he meant to make it a whopper for profits.

"You say the word, and you'll be Mr. Cooper from now on," he said at last. "Lost my chief officer, Mr. Quinby, just before we got in, and that demands a complete new line-up. Ain't got your master's license yet, have ye?"

"I intended going up for it after next voyage," said Cooper.

"You'll get it easier, once you been around Cape Stiff. Now, I've knowed you and your pa before you, Ezry; you're the kind o' man I like, afloat or ashore. You're a mite loose in your head, dreamy-like, with queer fancies; but you'll grow out o' that. Good solid timber, and reliable; that's you. What d'ye say to a mate's berth?"

"Wonderful, sir!" Cooper lit up. "I'd like nothing better."

"Then it's settled. You need an advance?"

"Thanks, no."

"Hm! I'm going to have the ship clear by Saturday if I have to bust a gallus doing it. The Monday after, you show up to handle the signing-on."

Cooper's brows lifted in surprise.

"Me, Cap'n? But the first officer usually sees to that."

"What in tophet ye talking about? I said mate's berth, didn't I?"

COOPER stared. "You didn't mean chief mate—"

"You lost your mind, Ezry? When I say mate, I mean mate. I didn't say second mate, or third, or Chips."

"Well, sir, I misunderstood." Cooper wet his lips. "I'm deeply honored, Cap'n, deeply! But I took for granted you'd keep your present mates. Mr. Jason, I fancy, expects to move up to chief's berth. He seems like a good man, too."

Cap'n Howe grunted, and puffed hard at his pipe.

"Jason—engaged him for the voyage home. Fine sailor, yes, but drives too hard; rough on the men. I got a good crew, mostly local boys—too good to be knocked about by a blasted Bluenose. A killer, that's what Jason is, a killer. Just that. He killed two Chinks in Canton, and was to be jailed, when I slipped him off. Those yellow devils don't believe in trials, you know. Life for a life—that's them. Well, I got him away, and now I know him better, I wouldn't have him as chief mate—not free."

"Oh!" said Cooper.

The Skipper eyed him hard.

"I s'pose he wangled you into saying a word for him, huh? Slippery, that's what he is—so danged slippery he'd slide backward going down a mountain! Lemme tell you what he did yesterday, day after we berthed. He went down to old Ed Little's shop in Market Square and tried to sell him a solid gold Chinee cup he had sneaked ashore, me knowing nothing about it. The cup turned out to be plated; besides, Ed wouldn't deal with him anyhow, for smuggled goods."

Cooper listened in bewilderment. "Not solid gold, you say?"

"Nope. Ed told me about it. Solid bronze, it was. The Chinks have a way of plating—laying on a thin sheet of gold and baking it in the fire. Most people can't tell it from solid, but old Ed's too smart to be took in that way. No sir, I won't have that man aboard my ship. Dangerous, a conniver, that's what he is! His time's up when we pay off on Saturday, and after that he don't set foot aboard."

Cooper scarcely heard the fuming words: confusion held him speechless. Not solid gold—well, it was gold, all the same. Yet Jason had lied unshamedly, both regarding the cup and its secrecy. Everybody in town probably knew by this time of his fiasco

"Liar! Lost me a fortune!" fairly howled the man, livid with rage. "Well, you'll pay for it!"

with old Ed Little, who handled everything from books to quadrants, and who for years uncounted had published the four-hundred-page mariners' guide, the "Coast Pilot." Now, thought Cooper, he himself would not dare let a soul know that he had the cup. Probably, indeed, he ought to return it to Jason.

This reflection troubled him mightily. Gold or not, he wanted that cup more than he had ever wanted anything—why, he could not say. Cap'n Howe paid no attention to his silence, and rumbled on about freight and stowage problems, a new suit of sails that was going aboard, and then to salary. Cooper, in a mental haze, assented to everything said, took the three-month advance handed him, and nodded.

The toddy was finished, the talk was finished, and after a warm handshake Ezra Cooper went stumbling townward, mindful of his errands and the walk home. New chief mate of the *Martha*—a big step upward! He had not dreamed of getting such a grand berth. He said nothing of his new dignity, however, but accomplished his errands and strode away along the turnpike with his bundles. Now he was free until Monday, a full week, then must show up at the ship with his chest. Another week, and if the Skipper maintained his mad speed the *Martha* would clear and get away.

The walk home straightened him out mentally; it was all real. The following days kept him busy with odd jobs about the house, while his mother made ready his sea-chest with warm things for the long voyage around the Horn and across the Pacific.

Alone in his own room, Cooper spent many an enchanted hour with the little square cup, fondling it; he actually loved the thing. Something about it struck sparks from his imagination and appealed to him beyond words. He rather expected that Jason would be out to see him, for news of his engagement as chief mate must have flown around, but the man did not come. The cup must be returned —Cooper reluctantly made up his mind to this, but resolved he would try to buy it.

The long inscription, covering all four faces of the cup, mystified him. It must have importance; nobody would cut such a lengthy inscription for fun. The odd shape of the handle, and of the cup itself, was fascinating. Inside, on the bottom, was a square seal—this, too, must have a meaning. Cooper burned to discover the translation. He was not the man to lose his head over beauty; nor was this beauty, indeed. It had something more, something that quite evaded him. He sensed that the cup meant something; that odd handle, and the bar across the cup, must mean something, too.

He did not mention it to his mother, but kept it under his pillow.

Saturday came and passed; Sunday, with a pilgrimage into town for church, came and passed, and brought no word from Jason. Monday morn-

ing came Spiller, who lived farther up the island, with his wagon and team, to take Cooper and his chest into town. The duffel chest was made of light wood, brass-bound and painted. Cooper shoved the pouch, containing the cup, inside his shirt, put the chest on his shoulder, and with a farewell kiss to his mother and a promise to see her at evening, went out to the wagon.

He walked aboard the *Martha* with his chest, placed it in the cabin assigned him, then came on deck. The ship was crowded, and busier than ever—work going forward alow and aloft, cargo going into the holds, hammers ringing. Cap'n Howe introduced him to the other mates—Mr. Brindle, the hard-jawed second, and Mr. Tucker, the third, a melancholy-looking man of years; then calmly told him to take over and strode away home to work in his garden. Cooper took over, altered the stowage to suit his own notions, and told the crew to sign articles at four bells, ten o'clock.

BEFORE then he was well shaken down in his new job and had everything in hand.

The men came trooping down to the cabin where Cooper sat at the desk and affixed their names—everyone from quartermasters and A.B.'s to the cook and steward and cabin-boy. Three Cape Verde men, the others all local—many of them staying on from last voyage. Pegleg Deacon, the cook, was the last man to sign; his right leg was gone at the knee, but he got about nimbly with a wooden substitute. Cooper had known him from boyhood. He signed, laid down the quill, and looked at Cooper.

"Is it true that Mr. Jason ain't with us this v'yage, sir?"

"So I hear," replied Cooper.

"Dummed good thing. A fair bad 'un, he is, him and his cup."

Cooper handed him the usual three-month advance.

"Cup? What d'ye mean by that, Pegleg?"

"Why, it ain't no secret. He had a little cup—looted it somewhere in Canton, he did—thought it was gold. He went ashore at Malacca, and I was with him when he showed it to a Chink there." Pegleg pocketed his money and grinned. "A fine man that Chink was, interpreter for the Dutch. I heard him tell Mr. Jason the thing would be the death of him; give him a proper scare, too—blew off for an hour, he did. I hear he tried to sell the cup here, and found it wasn't gold after all."

Pegleg grinned and started for the ladder. Cooper called him back.

"You were with the ship last voyage. Coming downriver from Canton, did she pick up a dying Chinaman in a boat?"

"Not a chance, sir. Them Bogue forts 'ud open fire at any such thing—no communication allowed. 'Sides, the Old Man is mortal scared of picking up the plague—he wouldn't allow it, neither. No, it wasn't done, sir."

Pegleg stumped off. Ezra Cooper pinned together the ship's papers.

"He lied. All of it was a lie," he told himself. "All except the man at Malacca; that was true. It would be the death of him—why, that's just not possible! Why would any Chinaman predict such a thing? A pack of nonsense, all of it."

No, not nonsense; just the unknown. There was about that square cup something rare and delicate and graceful—not evil, but good. He could swear to it. Others could not feel it; he could, and felt it acutely.

A clumping on the ladder; Mr. Tucker, the melancholy third officer, came into the cabin and spoke with his gloomy intonation.

"I been looking at the cable in the locker. It'll have to be flaked, most of it. Ought to be done now, o' course."

"Very well; see to it," replied Cooper.

"Aye, sir. And that there Mr. Jason is on the wharf—wants a word with you, he says. The Old Man don't favor his boarding the ship, so—"

"True." Cooper rose. "I'll step to the dock and see what he wants."

As though he did not know! Going on deck, he looked around. Warehouses cut off his view of the town; opposite, the river rippled in the morning sunlight, and teams were working across at the old salt works eastward of Salisbury. He stepped over the rail by the 'midships stile to the motionless figure waiting—Jason, togged out in brand-new blue broadcloth with brass buttons. As Cooper approached, the other spoke softly almost under his breath.

"We might step around the corner of the warehouse, out o' this hustle where a man can't hear himself think. I ain't minded to put on a raree show for them ear-bending for'ard hands."

Cooper nodded, and followed to the end of the warehouse, which had a strip of wharf beyond, where two town boys were fishing. He was thinking only of whether Jason would sell the cup for a fair price; he joyed to the feel of it snuggling inside his shirt. He was entirely blind to the malevolence in that pinched face, the glittering fury in the eyes.

He himself walked quietly, surely, across the old brown boards; he always walked as he talked, quietly. Jason seemed to slide along, nervous and febrile in his movements, and sent a stream of tobacco-juice into the water, to the hot indignation of the two boys. Once well around the corner, Jason whirled and thrust his head forward at Cooper, his teeth aflash, his eyes slitted.

"So, you pesky varmint, ye said a good word for me, huh?"

"I did, Mr. Jason," began Cooper. "Unfortunately, Cap'n Howe had already made up his mind and I could effect nothing. Knowing how you must feel, I've brought your cup to return it. I'm perfectly willing to buy it—"

"Too much palaver. I don't want it." Suddenly Jason was in the grip of wild, uncontrolled fury. Almost incoherent oaths dribbled from him, and he glared like a maniac.

"Liar!" He spat out the word abruptly. "Lost me a fortune, you have—a fortune! Enough silver to ballast a ship, d'ye hear? And after you took an oath to speak up for me, blast you!"

Cooper was utterly taken aback by this savage attack.

"See here, Jason, I did my best—"

"None o' your soft soap, mister!" fairly howled the man, livid with rage. "Went sneaking to the skipper and got yourself the berth, aye! Slavering on the old man with your smart Yankee tongue—well, you'll pay for it or my name ain't Hiram Jason—"

Steel blazed in the sunlight. Jason whipped out his sheath-knife and thrust forward in a deadly lunge, all his weight behind it. No escaping the blow; Cooper saw the swift knife too late to parry or move. It was straight at him—it was plunging home! The shock staggered him, and he collapsed against the warehouse wall. A spasm of horror shot through him as he went down. Jason was on top of him, spitting oaths and froth in his face, rolling away—splash!

SHRILL excited yells burst from the capering boys. Carried away by his blind ferocity, Jason had gone over the edge of the wharf and into the water, a good ten feet below.

Cooper, the air knocked out of him, put both hands to his aching midriff. His fingers touched something loose and soft. Fear transfixed him—intestines? No; just bits of brocade. Plunged into him with fearful force, the knife had ripped his shirt and the tarpaulin pouch inside. His fingers came upon the knife-blade, loose; it

took an instant to realize the truth. The knife had gone into the pouch, into the cup itself, and had broken short off. He was unhurt.

With an effort he got to his knees and stood up, forcing himself, gasping for breath; the knife-blade fell with a tinkle on the boards. Around the end of the warehouse came two men, running, drawn by the cries of the boys. Cooper straightened up and pointed at the water, unable to speak. He grasped a bollard and looked over the edge; no sign of Jason in sight. But as he leaned forward, something bulged from the ripped hole in his shirt and fell—something glittering golden—the little square cup.

Cooper felt an agonizing sense of dismay, of loss, as he saw it go. It had slipped from the pouch, from within his shirt—before his very eyes, it struck the water. No, not the water, but something brown coming up, emerging from the water. In the fall it gained enough momentum to strike heavily; it hit Jason full in the face as he came to sight, clawing wildly at the spiles. Then it sank, Cooper following it with his eyes. He saw precisely where it plumped down beside two spiles that stuck up at angles, forming a V.

"Get a line!" he called sharply—his breath was back. One of the men ran hastily to obey. Jason sank out of sight—an odd thing, thought Cooper as he kicked out of his cowhide boots, for the water here was scant. The midriver channel was only two fathom. With the tide out, as now, there would be only six feet or so of water this side the wharf.

The boy with the fishing-pole was yelling something at him. Cooper caught the words and looked down, past the intersection of the two spiles where the cup had gone. Yes; sunken spiles all about—too dangerous for a dive from this height. The water was clear, not deep; a glitter caught his eye, and he jumped for it. His thought was all for the golden cup, not for Jason, yet the man was there.

Cooper struck the water, floundered, got his head down and looked around. He saw the glitter at once, reached for it, and got the cup. Something struck against him. He slid the cup into a pocket as he grabbed Jason, who lay limply motionless. His feet hit the bottom, and he thrust hard; almost at once his head popped out of the water.

THE two men above had a line; other men were coming on the run. Cooper made fast the bight under Jason's shoulders, and waited while he was hoisted. Water was nothing to him; he was at home in it. He did wonder at the limp, sagging figure—sufficient time had not passed for Jason to be drowned!

The line came back for him; he caught hold and was hauled up. The men were clumped about Jason's body at one side.

"Yep, he's dead," said one. "Funny thing, too,. Ain't hardly drownded in that bit o' time—"

Cooper paused not to inquire, but headed for the *Martha* and dry clothes. He was astounded at what he heard; it takes a lot to kill a man, and here nothing special had taken place, except that diverted knife-thrust. How the point had caught in that hidden cup was really astonishing; this filled his mind even to the exclusion of Jason's death.

In his own cabin he broke out dry clothes from the sea-chest, and took a good look at the golden cup before tucking it away at the bottom. Heavy as lead—yes; heavy enough to have gathered momentum in that fall from the wharf, yet not heavy enough to kill a man. He put the cup thoughtfully into the sea-chest, out of sight.

Stripping, Cooper changed into dry clothes, got his pipe alight, and then sought the deck. Mr. Brindle was standing at the head of the ladder, staring at something ashore.

"They're taking him away," said the hard-jawed second mate. "Good only for burying."

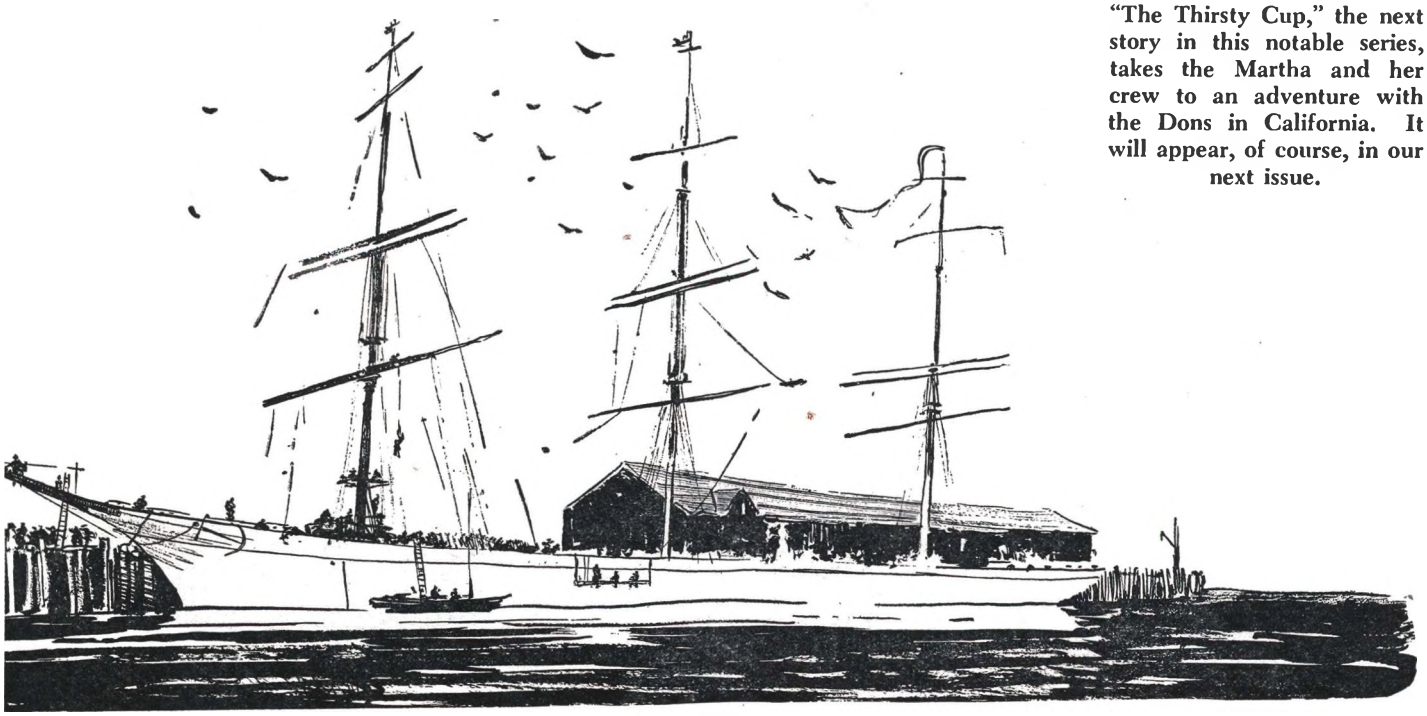
"I don't savvy it," said Cooper. "The water wasn't deep, and he scarcely had time to drown—"

"Nope, and he didn't. It was the shallow water done for him, Mr. Cooper. He hit them sunken spiles and broke his back, near as we could figure. There was a mark over his eye, like something had hit him, but not bad. You done a right smart job fishing him out, I hear; wa'n't no use, though."

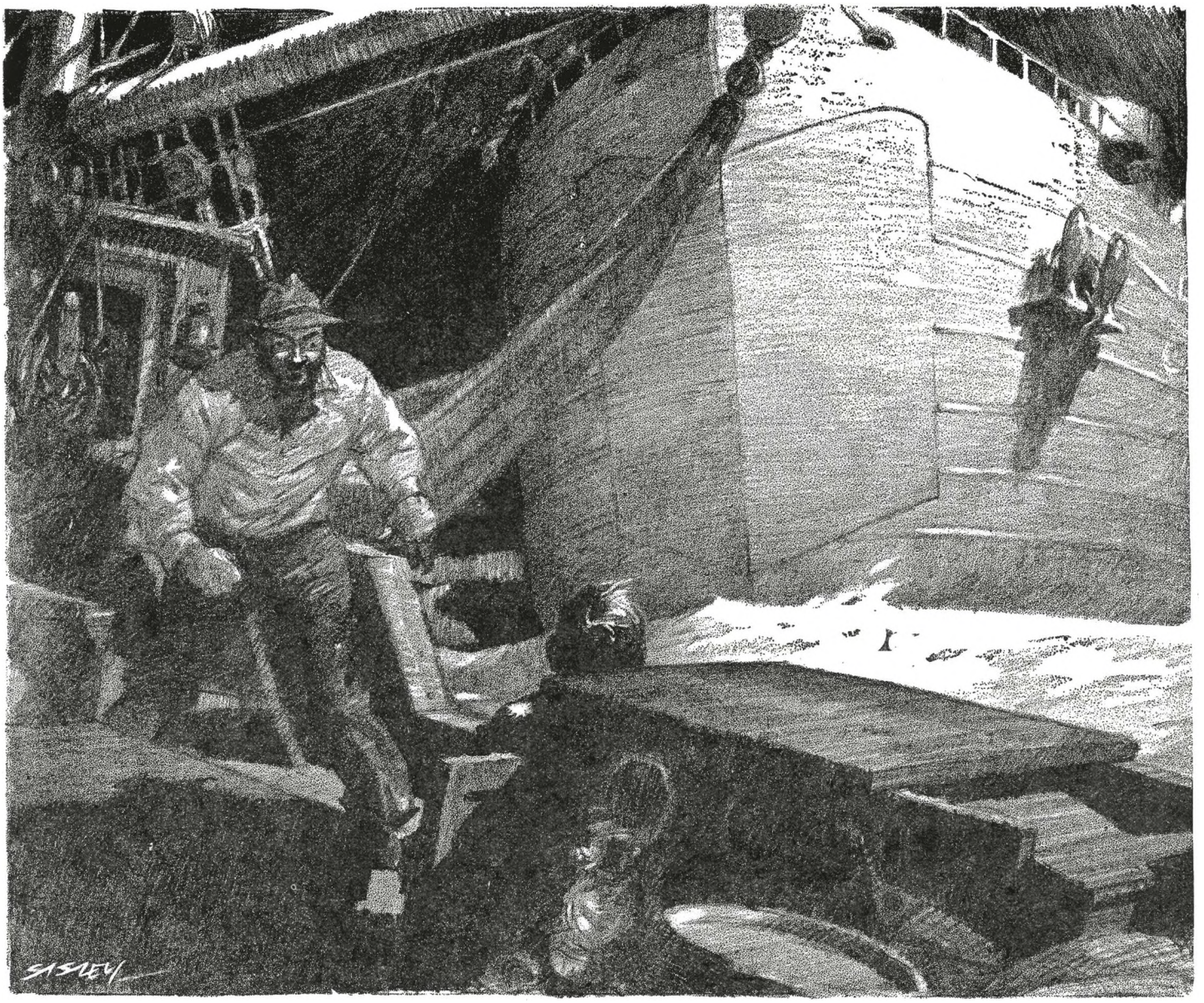
The men were coming back to work. Cooper looked at the group heading for shore with their covered burden. Yes, a corner of the cup had struck Jason in the face, but the blow had not been needed. . . .

What was it that Chinaman in Malacca had said? That the cup would be the death of him; and so it had been.

Ezra Cooper went thoughtfully, seriously, about his work; neither now nor later did he offer any comment upon the congratulations extended on his efforts to save Mr. Jason. He was good at keeping his mouth shut.



"The Thirsty Cup," the next story in this notable series, takes the Martha and her crew to an adventure with the Dons in California. It will appear, of course, in our next issue.



The CONJURED

A SHIP, it has been said, is a living thing. It has been said and proved so often that it has passed out of the realm of scuttlebutt. Any sailor will tell you it is the word. So long as there still lives a man who has damned her, stem to stern, and bottom to truck, who has cursed his luck that ever he laid eyes on her—and has bloodied waterfronts from Toulon to Tampa slugging off slurs on her good name—she lives.

To be sure, it is mostly when she is manned, plowing along at her best speed, a bone in her teeth and a milky wake streaming out astern, that you are really conscious she is alive with a *will* and a *won't,* of her own. You know it when you give her helm right ten, and her bow falls off to port. When her coffee-grinders conk out and the grease monkeys from the Chief on down all have different ideas as to what ails her, you can diagnose it as pure contrariness. You love her for her aliveness on the days when she handles like a thoroughbred. Those days she slips into her berth against wind and tide as easy as nothing at all —and never a soul on the dock to see. You damn her for a mule on the other days when she goes for the dock like a rampaging bulldozer, while the Port Captain and his toadies set up a frog chorus on the pier.

In port too, the old lady's not likely to let you get any wrong ideas about who's the boss. When you are coming back from an evening ashore loaded to the Plimsoll with Marc or Ouzo or the red dog of Algiers, whatever the local poison may be, she looks pretty good lying there alongside the dock, her ladder swung invitingly over the side.

You make a grab for a rung, and just then she'll rise to the swell of the wake of some passing harbor craft. Oh, the smallest of swells, the slightest of rolls—but there you are in your shore-going blues, thrashing about in the oily scum with thoughts as black as your once white cap-cover.

She'd done her war job; and now they were going to sell her off for the South American guano trade when—an extraordinary thing happened.

by JOSEPH W. HOTCHKISS

LST

It is when you see her moored to her sisters in the quiet reach of some broad river, neglected, that you are likely to think the life has gone out of her. Her rusty decks and side which once reflected the gray and blue of running seas and sunny skies now mirror the muddy stream. The only step her decks echo is the clopping of the peg-legged watchman as he makes his daily rounds. But she is still alive. Asleep. Perhaps she dreams, as those who manned her sometimes dream, of other days. Perhaps the courses of her destiny and yours may cross again. . . .

The rust-streaked numbers were barely discernible on the bow of the LST lying outboard in a nest of four at the mouth of a Gulf Coast river. On her conning-tower the name, *The Rollicking Wreck,* and the masterly representation of a storm-tossed ark were faded with the sun and streaked with rain. Her area ribbons, American, European with three battle stars, and Pacific with one, painted on the iron wind-deflector, were flaking off.

COMMISSIONED and in the performance of duties assigned, an LST is something more than a ship. She is an experience. Her broad flat bottom has spanked the waves of every sea. Not to be outdone, the same combers have come right back and swept her deck, spitting in the eye of the officer on watch in the conn. No self-respecting ship should ever touch bottom, and so the LST makes a wild circle and heads for land with engines ahead flank, and the bow lookout ducking telegraph wires or coconut palms as she climbs the beach. Where you would say there should be a proud, fine-cut bow to slice through the waves, there is a plow that butts at the billows like a billy goat, and then opens up like a seasick whale to spew out its Jonahs on the sand. She wallows and wallops and plunges along, and the fishes that swim in her wake are well nurtured. She's the one subject on which the Army, the Marines and the Navy all agree—all but her own particular crew. They tell each other: "Mac, you never had it better in your life."

But laid up among the river weeds, with eel-grass dripping from their slack mooring lines, the ships looked like nothing but four old women crying into their beer. In spite of appearances, however, *The Rollicking Wreck* was ready for sea. She was fueled and her idling engines were kicking out the kinks of long months of inactivity. She was to be sold to a large chemical combine for use hauling guano; and her trial runs were scheduled for the following day. The port engineer who was responsible for getting her into operating condition sat with the watchman in the wardroom of another ship, where the watchman, the admiral of this ghost fleet, had his headquarters. They shook their heads as they discussed her fate. They were old Navy men, and they knew what *one* seagull could do to decks freshly swabbed.

"It shouldn't happen even to an LST," they agreed as they shuffled and dealt the cards.

There is no sewing circle as gossipy as a ship with engine warming and lines singled up ready to get under way. The pots chatter to the galley range. The great Diesels, in measured tones, ponderously exchange their views. The clock in the wheelhouse is fussy as a mother hen *cluck, cluck, clucking.* Your sailing orders may be top secret, Most Secret, *Très Secret,* but you cannot hide their content from the ship. You can feel in the manner of her getting under way, whether or not she approves. If you are ordered to the yard, for availability, drydocking with liberty and recreation for the crew, she seems to answer the helm with a will. Her Jack comes down smartly; her ensign and her signal flags float free; and as you ring up full ahead, there's an answering surge in your heart. And the thousand little ways she can express disapproval! It's a funny thing, but the way she reacts is usually the way you feel, whether you are handling her lines on deck, standing by her throttles below or conning her from the bridge. She's a smart old lady.

A guano-carrier!

The Rollicking Wreck was chattering with indignation when the storm struck. It came out of the east, black and implacable. The palms bowed in heathen obeisance before it. The muddy river turned for a brief moment to molten gold before the tarnishing fingers of the wind touched it, first tentative, ruffling, then with sudden violent fury. Ships strained at their moorings, demanding freedom to join the macabre whirling dance of destruction. Sounds of the rotten Manilas parting, loud as pistol shots, were lost in the gale as the outboard LST broke free of the nest and was swept toward open water. The engineer, who had started back the moment the storm struck, watched impotently from the deck of the ship next but one.

IN the Gulf, the waves caught her, throwing her back and forth like a toy. Her mast bobbed and danced, dipping so that it seemed her truck would meet the grasping arms of the sea, then with dignity rising high in boastful indifference to their cruel coquetry.

"Blow," her rigging seemed to scream the challenge, "blow! I've spurned your fancy sisters, Sirocco, Mistral, and Monsoon, with her kiss of death. Blow!" She screamed her scorn.

And with the suddenness with which it struck, it had departed. There was a strong sea running, and the black wispy mare's-tails scudded low in the wake of the storm. The ship wallowed in the trough of the waves, spent but triumphant, as night crept over the troubled waters.

THE men in the disabled fishing smack had given up hope of rescue until morning, when the LST drifted toward them out of the night.

"Ship, ship ahoy!" the man-on-deck's voice rose high. Almost a scream, it brought the four others tumbling up the companionway from the tiny cabin. The man who had first sighted the hull, a towering mammoth seen from the deck of the smaller craft, had loaded the Very pistol. By the firefly light of the flares, tiny spangles on the garment of the night, they saw that the open water between ship and boat was closing slowly. Shipping oars, they clumsily maneuvered the craft alongside.

"Ahoy, the ship! Cast a line."

"Disabled, from the looks of her; no running-lights, but there's an exhaust—she can't be deserted."

The smack was falling back along the ship's side toward the stern. From the bow a man jumped nimbly to the horizontal rail of the rudder guard, carrying with him a line.

"Be damned to you, we'll bring our own line aboard! You won't grudge us a tow to your next port of call."

He had climbed the ladder up over the stern to the fantail. His words seemed to vanish like steamy breath on a winter day. They were swallowed in the silence like a testing round of antiaircraft fire discharged at random on the high seas. He knew then, as surely as he would know when he had explored her every recess, that he was alone on the ship. And yet her engines throbbed, idling rhythmically, a pulse in the night. His heart beat faster. The need to speak, to be heard, to hear a human voice was overpowering. He leaned over the after rail, with an effort controlling his voice.

"I don't know what the story is. Sort of a *Mary Celeste,* she feels like. Best bring the .45 and the rifle and come aboard."

He passed the smack's line through the stern chock and made it fast on the starboard bitt. Hauling up on it, he brought the boat in to the ship's stern so that the others could scramble to the rudder guard.

The first over the stern rail was Kellam, captain of the smack. He swung his flashlight about. The beam picked up the four others as they stood on the fantail—uncertain, waiting for orders. All wore dark flannel shirts. The bandannas at their necks could quickly be raised to hide their features. Their faces appeared not the honest almanacs of fishermen, but sealed volumes, rather, hinting of dark lore.

"She's Navy, from the look of her." Kellam spoke rapidly. "One of them beaching boats." There was scorn in his voice for any authority which the single word *Navy* might imply.

The voice of Pierre, the fat Cajun mate, was a tremulous whine in the dark.

"*Capitaine,* perhaps is atom-bomb target. This minute, maybe, they fly to drop it!"

Kellam kicked out a reply toward the cringing mate. "Didn't the pigs live through Bikini?"

Luigi Bonifatti spoke in low oily monosyllables. "This may be a break, Kellam."

The whites of two eyes showed, teeth gleamed in the dark. "Mebbe it's de radah, Cap'n," said Rufe, the cook. "My cousin wukked radah on a cruiser in de war. He say it mighty pow'ful. Mebbe it done run riot an' disinteregate de crew." He clutched a bag containing rations from the smack's provision stores as though it were an outsized charm which would dispel evil spirits.

KELLAM turned to Despard, the only member of his crew in whom he had full trust, the man who had been first aboard.

"You take the rifle. I'll take the .45. We'll give her a going-over stem to stern. Pierre," he spat the order, "get up on the bridge. Maybe if you see it coming, you can duck the bomb. Rufe, even one of these Navy tubs must have a galley. Those bellhops have to eat too. Luigi—"

"I go with you, Kellam." His voice held a note of soft insinuation—like a length of rubber hose casually flipped in the palm of the hand.

For a moment they stood a silent nucleus within the atom which was the ship. Five men bound together in their sharing of a common danger, repelled by forces of hate and fear. The balance was terrifying in its equality.

Pierre turned abruptly and clambered up the after ladder to the bridge. The spell was broken. The four others started forward on the starboard side. Kellam's flashlight picked up a watertight door. Undogging it and sweeping aside the heavy swatches of blackout curtains, they stepped into the galley passageway.

Kellam's light darted before them. Its beam picked out a corner of the range. The refrigerator, pots and pans materialized, existed for the moment that the light played on them, then vanished into the fluid darkness.

"Your kingdom, Rufe," Kellam tried for lightness. "Rustle us up some chow."

Rufe put generations of Missouri into his reply.

"Not me, Cap'n—leastways till some light is shed on de subject."

Despard touched the switch close by his hand. It was a nervous, involuntary gesture, and his surprise was no less than the others when the galley was flooded with light.

Happily Rufe passed it off with: "An' de Lawd say 'let dere be light'!" In the dazzling glare his white bosses were men again, just plain men, not spirit voices in the dark.

Luigi's acceptance of the miracle of light was based less on faith, more on experience. He took an instinctive step back into the shadow cast by the galley door and said:

"About this deal, it stinks."

Kellam and Despard exchanged glances. With power-plant operating and engines warm, and if they were right in thinking they were alone aboard. . . . Kellam licked his lips.

"First time I ever see a seagoing maverick," Despard said. His eyes were on Kellam's face.

"Come on," Kellam said. "Now we got light, we can look her over quick."

Forward on the main deck, down through the port booby hatch, aft on the tank deck, troop spaces, storage compartments, engine-rooms, shaft alleys. . . . Fore and aft, up ladders, down ladders, they inspected the ship with the thoroughness of a white-gloved martinet commander.

Dawn was breaking when they returned to the bridge. "Luigi, get Rufe to bring up a pot of joe," Kellam ordered.

When Luigi had left the chartroom, Despard looked questioningly at Kellam. He made a gesture with his index finger across his throat. "And salvage-split two ways?" he asked.

Kellam smiled. Despard lacked subtlety, but it was as well. For that reason Kellam was captain and Despard only his lieutenant. He called up through the speaking-tube to the conn: "Pierre, come on down here. You may as well die with a belly full of java."

RETURNING, Luigi glanced at the well-arranged, compact room. "Nice layout. Lots of things you could do with this bucket—outside the twenty-mile limit."

Kellam took a cup of the hot coffee from the tray Rufe placed on the chart table.

"This is how I see it: This is Government property. Either she busted a tow or else she broke out of that boneyard over at the river mouth. How come she's warmed up, I don't know. We can't just take her over. . . . But you're right, Luigi, she'd have her uses in our business. Not until she's legally ours, though—and there'll be planes out searching for her as soon as

it clears. We'll clear some profit on the cargo of the smack if we can get it in, but that money doesn't buy tubs like this. I figure if we agree to pool our share in the salvage, I can raise the rest. It wouldn't be a bad investment for a guy who wasn't too particular about where his money comes from, and with her capacity and being able to beach most anywhere, we could make a good thing out of her in private operations, you might say."

"We could run a floating gospel show." Rufe's eyes shone as he said it.

"Girls." Luigi licked his lips, and the way he said the single word he made it filthy.

"Neither of those was the idea I had in mind. There's money in sugar, and there's people willing to buy it hot. There's much sugar in Cuba. . . . All we need is to own this boat with no strings tied. Pirates hang; but you-all should know—there's no reason a smart smuggler should get caught."

Three sets of eyes narrowed to grim slits, while one pair opened wide. Rufe spoke first.

"A boatload of sugar." There was awe in his voice. "The de-sserts I could make! The cherubim and seraphim theyselves would be waterin' at de mouf. But Cap'n!" His voice became troubled. "That ain't legal."

Kellam snarled: "What the hell's it to you? You'll get your cut. You think the revenuers wouldn't like to get a hold of that cargo we got in the smack right now? You signed on to cook for *us,* see, and we ain't no cherubs."

There was sorrow in Rufe's voice. Visions of cakes piled layer on layer dripping white sweet frosting vanished in the air.

"I can't do it, Cap'n. There ain't no commandment I can think of specifi'lly, but I know it ain't right."

"O. K., Rufe," Kellam's voice was hard. "We'll count you out. Get on back to your galley."

Luigi closed the chartroom door after the old man.

"That gospelizing hash-slinger's going to cook *us* if we don't get rid of him. Pierre, you signed him on; you'll get the job of signing him off. By the deep six. Understand? But not until the last day out. We're short-handed enough as it is." The captain spoke in cold, businesslike tones.

Rufe, who had been standing in the passage with his ear close to the door, went silently down the ladder toward the galley.

Despard, with bird-in-the-hand practicality, asked: "What about the smack?"

"We won't lose that cargo unless we have to. We'll tow it up close to the passes; then Pierre will head off for a bayou—if we can get it running again, that is."

"Your kingdom, Rufe," Kellam tried for lightness. "Rustle up some chow."

"We're making for New Orleans?" Luigi asked.

"There's a sea lawyer there who'll give us some advice. He'll know how to raise what money we'll need in addition to the salvage, to pay for the tub and outfit her." . . .

The morning sun was chasing wisps of low-lying clouds across the flat surface of the sea when Kellam, his position determined, gave the course to Despard at the wheel and rang up full speed ahead on both engines. Far below, Luigi, who was unawed by any mechanism from that of a fountain-pen tear-gas pistol to the turbines of a liner, adjusted the throttle, and she balked as the bite of her propellers churned water at the stern then thrust her forward. As she gathered way, the vibrations lessened, but the ship still shuddered slightly—protestingly.

THE New Orleans morning paper carried an item on the front page headlined, "LST Goes Over the Hill." The ship, one of several destined for the Caribbean guano trade, was expected to be recovered during the day. The Coast Guard had dispatched a searching plane, and the position of this menace to navigation would shortly be reported to all shipping in the area.

Not world-shattering news, but of sufficient interest to cause Ben Styles, after reading it, to pass it across the table to his companion, Gerald Craig.

"Here's an old girl that's escaped the fate worse than death."

Craig was an engineer. For him, words were nuts and bolts for practical use when and where needed. When he had been Chief Engineer on the LST of which Ben was exec, he had learned to be cautious about accepting any Styles statement at face value.

"Fate worse than death." With a skeptical "Hrrmph" he took the paper folded to the story. Characteristically, with careful attention, he read it through twice.

Fitting cogs to wheels is an engineer's business.

"That note the skipper left for us said he'd joined up for the day with the air arm of the Coast Guard. He's out with his hooligan pals looking for this old tub, or I'm a feather-merchant."

"But hell, he didn't leave us till after one this morning," Ben Styles answered, without much conviction. "The boat-battiest baboon in the 8th N. D.," Craig had once called their former captain. If not exactly respectful, it was, like most of the engineer's observations, accurate.

It was precisely this enthusiasm of "the old man" (a doddering twenty-eight years) which had brought the three shipmates together the previous night. Every month or so it was their custom to reune for a gam. An essential fourth party to the group was "the commodore." The commodore was of necessity different each time, for being liquid, mellow and bottled in bond, he was always a dead sailor by the time they had dropped the hook, rung off the engines and secured the steaming watch.

Last night instead of their customary cruises in the sea-lanes of memory —with stopovers at certain memorable ports—Bridges had broached an idea which they had batted back and forth half the night. When the commodore was finally sent to his last resting-place and they broke up, there was still no agreement among them.

Dave Bridges had tried his hand at several civilian jobs since he left the Navy, but his heart had been in none of them. He had been happiest as an agent for a large Gulf port and Caribbean shipping firm, but it had been tantalizing to hand the master his clearance papers, wish him a pleasant voyage, then watch the gangway taken in as he stepped ashore, and see the ship slip down the broad Mississippi toward the open sea. A part of him sailed with each ship he cleared, even if she were only bound for Mobile in ballast. The idea he had conceived and worked out in some detail was to round up as many of his old shipmates as could be persuaded, buy an LST, and go into business on their own on a small scale. The whole thing depended on the interest and cooperation of his exec and chief, two men in whose integrity and ability he had perfect confidence. They nibbled, but so far had not bitten. The three had decided to carry on the discussion at breakfast.

Styles and Craig on arising, therefore, were surprised to find the brief note which indicated that Bridges had passed up a night's sleep to accompany some of his Coast Guard friends on some sort of mission. They often asked him along when an assignment looked interesting. Also they were not averse on occasions to making use of his knack of seamanship. Craig's assumption that this particular job had something to do with the reluctant LST was not unreasonable. . . .

Rufe sat in the sun on the starboard bitt on the fantail looking for all the world as though he had no worry but to put a mirror shine on the pan he was industriously rubbing. But he was thinking fast. His militant refusal to do "de wrong" had several times before brought him face to face with the problem of self-preservation, and the Lord had always stood by him. On other occasions, however, he had been in a better position to help out with his own two legs. Mining camps and boom towns are better adapted to the fugitive's needs than is the Gulf of Mexico.

The fishing smack could be an answer. Fat Pierre had just climbed over the stern to board it and try to effect the needed repairs. If he was successful, Rufe thought doubtfully he might try to get away in it during the night. But tomorrow early they would be off the passes, and nightfall tonight might be too late. "O Lord, save our souls," he chanted. Rocking back and forth he rubbed and polished the skillet till it shone. "Save our souls!"

From the east the drone of an airplane drilled the stillness with unbearable persistency, its monotone growing louder and louder.

Despard called through the voice-tube leading from the wheelhouse to the captain's bunk where Kellam lay on his back, eyes open, listening to the pulse of the engines, to each of the ship's multiple sounds. "Damn!" he said softly. He was a realist; he knew a ship was all plates and welds and the engines that made her run. The tense feeling of enmity which gripped him was just nerves. That fat Cajun, the oily Luigi, they were enough to set a man's nerves on edge, to make him imagine such foolishness as this idea that the ship itself hated him. . . . Despard's harsh voice, "Plane on the starboard quarter, coming in low," was a welcome release.

IN a moment Kellam was on his feet. He passed through the wheelhouse without a word to Despard, and took the ladder to the signal bridge in three bounds. The flag-bag was uncovered. With quick, deft flips of the wrist he bent a hoist and had it in the air in what appeared to be one fluid movement. In international code, it read, *"Proceeding New Orleans; speed ten knots: do not require assistance."*

The plane circled the ship slowly, appearing to be no higher than the top of the mast, although keeping at least five hundred feet of altitude. Kellam watched from the bridge. When the pilot tried to communicate by flashing light, the captain made exaggerated gestures of non-comprehension and gesticulated toward the hoist, shaking it out that it might be more easily read.

Half in and half out of the engine hatch of the towed smack, Pierre wiped his hands on cotton waste and grinned up at the gleaming plane. He looked the part of an angel of hell. In his face were the malice and craft of the ages.

On the fantail, the sun gleaming on his polished pan, Rufe seemed scarcely to notice the plane. Swaying slightly, the ancient rhythm of his race seeming attuned to the rhythm of the ship, he rubbed and polished. Quick strokes, then slow, then quick, in threes. *"Save our souls,"* he chanted low. *"Lord, save our souls."*

Five times the plane circled. Five graceful sweeps, wings tilted so pilot and observer had a clear and unobstructed vision; then it departed on a northwest course. Kellam left the signal bridge to resume his wakeful listening watch. Savagely he kicked the bulkhead of the captain's cabin. On the scuffed and dirty paintwork one mark more or less was nothing; yet the spot where the toe of Kellam's boot had struck stood out black and ugly as a bruise. Kellam with a physical gesture made as though to push the thought away. He lay on his back on the bunk, fists clenched. He listened to the sounds of the ship. "Damn," he said softly.

After the plane had departed, Pierre ducked again into the engine housing of the smack. And Rufe on the fantail stood holding in his hand the polished pan. He watched while the plane disappeared beyond the horizon.

The LST, with a following breeze to urge her on, was turning up a good ten knots. Except for her pulsing vibrations, she was possessed of a quietness so strong it was fortissimo, drowning, it seemed, even the sound of the steps of the handful of men aboard. She moved in a spell of stillness; even from the lips of Rufe, pursed in the motion of whistling, came no sound. Slowly, steadily, she digested the miles as though, against her will, taking a paralyzing poison into her system.

AT one bell of the first dog-watch Kellam passed without a word through the chartroom and wheelhouse out to the wing of the bridge. Below him, at the rail outside the galley-passage door, Rufe was throwing a dishpan of spud-peelings over the side and watching them writhe and twist in the tormented water of the wake. The cook looked up. His eyes met those of the captain and locked. Kellam was the first to turn away. Half-formed decision on his face, he stepped toward the wheelhouse as though to give an order. Abruptly he stopped, turned, moved again to the wing rail, and scanned the horizon ahead.

"Despard!" His voice cracked the stillness like a pistol shot. "Craft approaching, two-three miles. Two points on the starboard bow. . . . Pierre—" He raised his voice. The mate sat on the after cargo hatch, his white torso unnatural, almost obscene in the afternoon sun. "Boats coming up, might be revenuers. Get rid of that damned cook, then scuttle the smack."

"I fix, *capitaine*," said Pierre. He was fondling the monkey fist of a coiled heaving line as he went aft.

Kellam rang up one-third speed on the annunciators, slowing her enough to gain the valuable minutes he needed, but not completely stopping, for he did not wish to excite the suspicions of the approaching craft. It was not as he had planned. Smack and cargo must be sacrificed. The murder of the cook would lack finesse, left entirely to the fat mate. It was regrettable, but those details were the price of safety, and in a sense, an investment. His crew—he had no delusions as to their loyalty, but they all were equally implicated. They would stand by him. This damned ship would be his then legally, rightfully. Captain of a three-hundred-foot ship powered with twin Diesel engines, a Navy ship! Never again a lousy fishing-smack; from now on he was big time.

Pierre came out of an after door and turning, made a sign to the captain. His thumb and forefinger formed a thick-lipped circle, and he made

"Save our souls," Rufe chanted low. "Lord, save our souls."

toward the stern and the smack. In the bilge was secreted a small demolition charge, but behind the Cajun's close-set pig eyes thoughts were racing. In him the superstition of his people ran strong. If the old cook really was a hoodoo doctor, if the ship had a "conjuh" on it as he said, nothing would save them. But if he, if Pierre the mate, refused to destroy the evidence, it would not go hard for him. What Rufe had told him before he had been silenced had served only to confirm what Pierre had felt all day: There *was* a "conjuh" on the ship. Standing on the fantail, Pierre shot off the small pearl-handled pistol he always kept concealed about him. The *capitaine* would take it for the demolition charge. *Bleu!* He spat over the side into the slowly churning wake.

Kellam watched the approaching boats as though by the intentness of his gaze he would be able to turn them away. He watched them draw in to a few hundred yards. Three craft, now two: One had detached from the formation and was making for a spot astern.

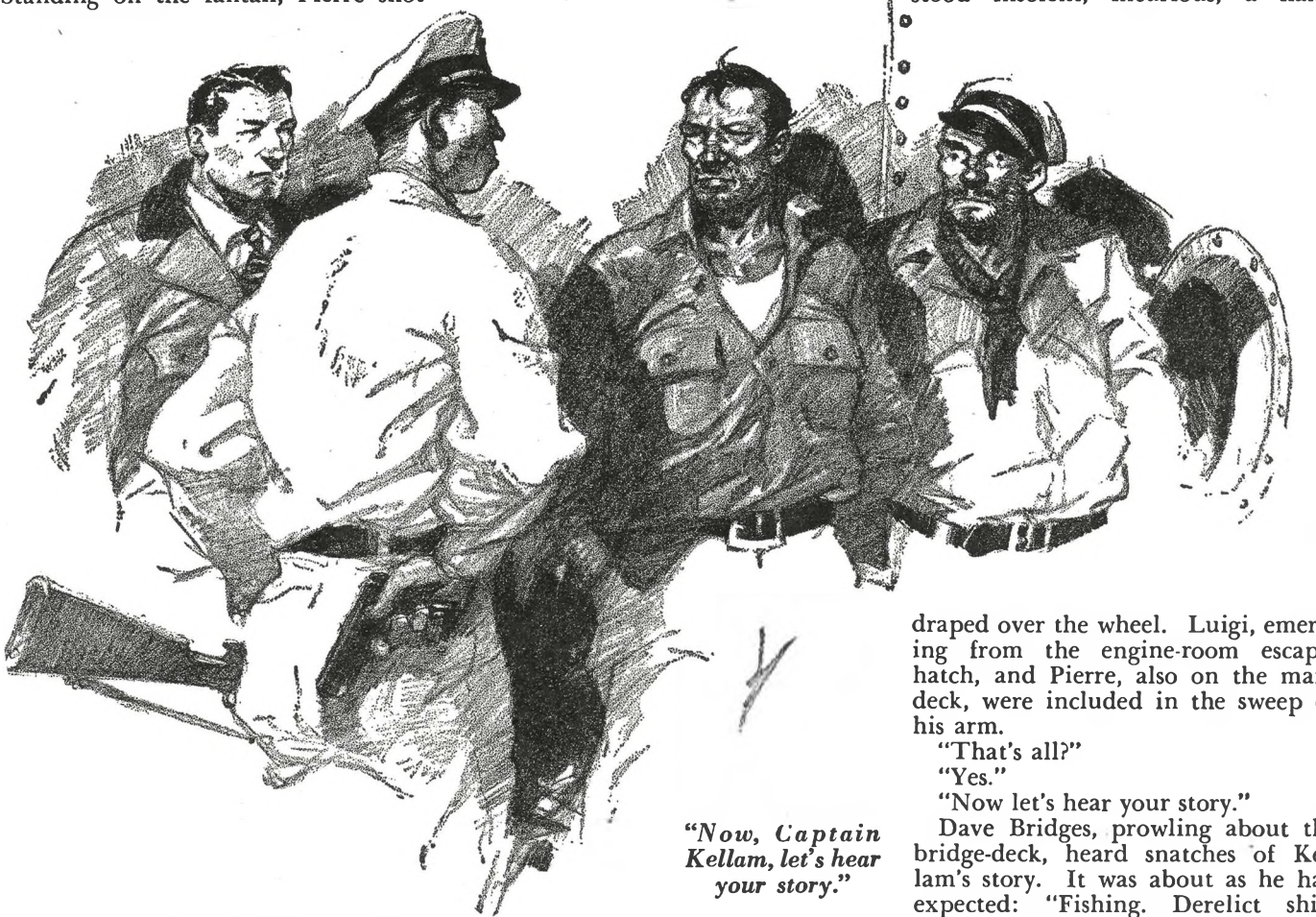
Impossible! That French pig could not have failed. Kellam had heard the sharp report of the demolition charge and there had been time for it to sink. He ran to the after-rail of the bridge-deck. The Coast Guard boat was putting a line on the smack.

"Pierre!" His voice was an ugly discordant snarl, half rage, half despair, but before the white, trembling mass of flesh, formless with fear, could speak, a hail came from the boat now drawing in alongside under the bridge.

"LST, ahoy!"

Kellam with an effort brought his voice under control.

Illustrated by Raymond Sisley



"Now, Captain Kellam, let's hear your story."

"Stand by, I'll swing a ladder. Stop all engines."

Bluff it! That was his only chance. The Coast Guard were stupid. That civilian—but no, no Government man would be togged out in sport clothes. Pin the blame on Despard, Luigi, Pierre. It was a scrape, but—there had been other scrapes.

Pierre without further orders had fixed the Jacob's ladder to the rail, and three Coast Guard officers followed by the civilian in sports clothes clambered up. As he swung a leg over the rail, the civilian half raised his hand as though beginning a salute, then quickly dropped it. Long training and custom become instinctive, Dave Bridges thought with a wry smile. Though she no longer rated it, the old girl still demanded the salute to the quarterdeck.

The boarders made their way to the bridge, where Kellam in hostile silence confronted them.

The senior Coast Guard officer, a young well-tanned Commander, said in a low guarded voice to Bridges: "That's our man. You were right, Dave. How, I'll never know." Then he addressed Kellam.

"Captain?"

"Kellam."

"Your crew?"

Kellam indicated Despard, who stood insolent, incurious, a hand draped over the wheel. Luigi, emerging from the engine-room escape-hatch, and Pierre, also on the main deck, were included in the sweep of his arm.

"That's all?"

"Yes."

"Now let's hear your story."

Dave Bridges, prowling about the bridge-deck, heard snatches of Kellam's story. It was about as he had expected: "Fishing. Derelict ship. Salvage claims—" The condition of the ship interested him far more than any tangled web in which Kellam chose to shroud himself.

"I'm going to take a turn below," he called to the Coast Guard Commander.

Once below decks, he quickened his pace. If his luck was holding, the search he was on would not take long. If his luck had run out—he did not let himself think. His was not the only luck involved.

The starboard bow-door machinery room is as inaccessible as any compartment on an LST. It was the gold-brickers' paradise aboard ship until Bridges had had it included in the rounds of the JOOD. If there were anything to hide—

A few minutes later Dave Bridges emerged from the starboard booby-

hatch and walked across the deck. In his hand he carried bits and ends of a cut heaving line. At his side was Rufe.

"I tell that Cajun mate this was a conjuh ship, an' dat I know, cause I was hoodoo doctuh. Ain' no ol' Cajun goin' kill the doctuh even so cap'n tell him to." Rufe grinned happily at Bridges.

"You know, Cap'n, course I aint really no doctuh, but I think this *is* a conjuh ship. *Good* conjuh, she got."

ON the bridge Dave Bridges said to the Commander: "We made it in time. Wouldn't have, though, if old Rufe here hadn't conjured up some conjure to save himself."

Kellam paled when he saw Rufe. He was breathing fast, and his eyes darted about like trapped insects.

The Commander smiled grimly. "It was a good hunt you put us on to, Dave. The smack's loaded with enough contraband liquor to float the Saint Charles Hotel, and—" Now he faced Kellam.

The two other officers had taken position at either side of the captain of the fisherman crew.

"This is the man you said it was, Bridges—William Kelso, signalman first-class USNR—deserter. Suspected for some time to be operating a small-time smuggling band in these waters."

Kellam started to take a step forward, but two sets of arms detained him. In a flash his wrists were cuffed together. . . .

William Kelso, alias Kellam, Despard, Luigi and the fat Pierre were all under vigilant guard on the main deck as *The Rollicking Wreck* steamed through the twilight on her course for the passes with a Coast Guard crew manning her. On the rail of the wing of the bridge the Commander and Dave Bridges leaned watching the changing light on the sea.

The Commander was the first to speak.

"You know, Dave, I nearly didn't take a chance on that tip you gave me today. It sounded too fantastic. How did you dope it out?"

Bridges smiled. "You hooligans wouldn't understand. After all, she was my ship, I told you. I could make out the old ark rollicking on the conn. She just sort of told me everything wasn't kopasetic."

The Commander hrrmphed ominously.

"O.K., O.K.," Dave said. "So you're my superior officer. Here's the way it was. I caught that flashing from way off. It looked like an SOS, but when we got closer your pilot was satisfied it was just Rufe shining the galley ware.

"But you see I used to be a communications officer too. When we got overhead I watched that bird Kelso bending the flags. He was good. Not just a fisherman running up the code. But when he set the speed numerals in *flags,* that was when I knew the guy was a signalman. Flags are Navy. Two and two, we were on the lookout for this bird Kelso. He was a first-class signalman at the time of his desertion. Even a hooligan should have been able to figure that one."

Just then Rufe emerged from his galley. Bridges called out, "Rufe, where did you learn signaling?"

The old man's teeth gleamed in a smile. "Anyone's knocked around as much as me knows how to make SOS with most anything handy. But never till this blessed day did I figure out what it means. *'Save our souls,'* the ol' engines kind of keep sayin'. *'Save our souls,'* I pray de Lawd. An' He done send the plane to do jes' that."

There seemed to be a sort of contentment about the ship, or maybe, Dave Bridges thought, it was just in himself. It was good to have the throbbing deck underfoot again. And in New Orleans, Styles and Craig would meet him with their decision.

He had a pretty good idea they'd be with him. When he'd telephoned Craig at noon, there had been excitement in the Chief's voice. The old girl was still in his blood, no mistaking that. Then he mused dreamily, they'd round up some of the old gang. His share in the reward for the capture of Kelso and his gang would help on the financial end. They'd buy the old wreck and make a go of it. Plenty of uses she could be put to in the Gulf. That chemical outfit would have to find another guano-carrier. What sort of work was that for a lady?

"Rufe," he called, "want to ship as cook on this conjuh ship?"

Rufe nodded happily. "Yes sir, Cap'n, the conjuh *she* got is sure a good one."

A SHIP, it has been said, is a living thing with a destiny of her own. If you have known a ship and been part of the spirit that makes her *her,* who can say, your course and hers may cross again. Stranger things have happened.

The Day the Senators Went Steal Crazy

by Harold Helfer

IF there's one date that Steve O'Neill, the manager of the Detroit Tigers, would erase from the calendar if he could, it would be July 19, 1915.

Now, a man has to be a good baseball man to become manager of a club; but it just goes to show that everybody has a bad day once in a while. For seldom, if ever, has one player ever had a worse day on the diamond than on that day thirty-two years ago when Steve O'Neill was catching for the Cleveland Indians.

The Washington Senators stole eight bases off of O'Neill in that game —in the first inning!

It just looked as if Steve couldn't get the Washington base runners out for sour apples. It was like a nightmare in which weird things happen all around you, and you stand spellbound. The Senators just seemed to go crazy suddenly on the bases, and young O'Neill seemed suddenly helpless to do anything about it.

First it was Moeller, the Senators' right-fielder and lead-off man. He had no sooner got on first base with a single than—*swish*—and he was on second. Then another swish and he had stolen third also. And—*swish*—and he was sliding into home plate, with his third pilfered sack.

Meanwhile, Clyde Milan, Washington center-fielder, had got on first. And then, pronto, he wasn't on first any more but on second. And a few seconds later he was sliding into third.

Now, you would have thought that O'Neill wouldn't have been given any trouble by Ainsworth, Washington's catcher. Catchers are notoriously not too fast on the bases.

But Ainsworth got the fever too; he stole second and then proceeded to commit larceny on the hardest of all bases to do that to—home.

McBride, the Senators' shortstop, brought the total of stolen bases for the inning to eight when he swiped second.

Well, you might think that was enough humiliation and misery to befall one player in a game, but it's not quite the end of the story of Steve O'Neill's black day.

At the end of the seventh inning, due mainly to the Senators' fabulous first inning, the Washington club was leading the Cleveland Indians 9 to 0. So, to rub it in, Clark Griffith, the Washington club's manager, took out Walter Johnson, his ace, and put in Nick Altrock, who wasn't really hired as a pitcher, but as a coach and a funny-man.

The Indians tore into him in no time flat, and scored four runs in those last two innings. But the old clown did manage to strike out one of the Indians who faced him.

It was, of course, Steve O'Neill.

Strike Hard! Bite

THE King and his court were but newly come to Carleon with a tail of captainless men-at-arms and bowmen, of itinerant armorers and smiths, farriers and horseleeches, magicians in reduced circumstances and prophets without honor in their own countries, quacks and fortune-tellers and self-proclaimed discoverers of the Philosophers' Stone and the Fountain of Youth, conjurers and jongleurs and tumblers, troubadours of inferior talent or in hard luck, blind harpers, preaching friars, packmen and piemen, cutthroats, cutpurses, mendicants, gamecocks, dancing bears and gypsies.

The dust of this invasion and envelopment lay like a sea fog on the landscape, and was thickened by the smoke of multitudinous fires. But by the time of the arrival of the Lost Knight, or Sir Lorn le Perdu, and his party, which was past midnight, the dust had settled and most of the smoke had dissolved in starshine. The young knight, a still younger gentleman named Dennys ap Rhys, and the swineherds Oggle and Maggon who served them as grooms, found accommodation at a crowded inn, after showings of teeth and iron and even a few buffets. Might was right that night, in and around Carleon. Sir Lorn bestrode as high and heavy a charger as any of the King's stable, and as ponderous of tread as if he were shod with anvils; and the knight cleared his own mailed feet from the stirrups and kicked forward and outward ever and anon, now to the right and now to the left, when the riffraff massed about them and were slow to give way. And Dennys on a strong mountain half-breed, wheeled and curveted, to clear a passage for the beasts of burden, which were hung about with spears and armor and provisions and gear. These were mountain ponies, small but of surprising hardihood. The grooms, flourishing boar-spears and bristling with black knives and spiked hammers, brought up the rear on two more ponies. The innkeeper protested at the door, but retreated when the warhorse splintered the threshold with a hoof. Horse and knight entered after him, bringing the frame of the door with them, both lintel and jambs. Sleepers on the floor rolled aside and staggered up in every direction, and their howls of fright and fury outrang the rending and splintering of timber. The ashed embers on the hearth were kicked to flame and torches were fired: but by the time the dark was dispelled, so were many of

Deep!

THE QUEST OF THE MAZED KNIGHT AND DIVERS OTHER STIRRING EVENTS IN ANCIENT BRITAIN, SET FORTH IN A COLORFUL SHORT NOVEL BY THE AUTHOR OF "YOUNG WINGS UNFURLING."

by THEODORE GOODRIDGE ROBERTS

the original occupants of the room, and the Lost Knight's party was in full possession, ponies and all.

A door opened at the foot of a staircase, and a gentleman draped about in a robe of red silk was disclosed, holding above his head a candle of beeswax in a silver stick. The top of his skull was polished and pink, but his face was whiskered and mustached and bearded magnificently in pure white.

"What's this?" he asked.

"NO doin' of mine, Yer Lordship!" cried the taverner. "This fellow—this knight—and his varlets and beasts, forced their entrance against my hand and voice, and have all but wrecked my house."

"What knight are you?" the old lord asked of Sir Lorn.

The knight, still in his saddle and stooped forward sharply for lack of headroom, did not reply. Dennys, who had dismounted, advanced and bowed and spoke respectfully.

"Sir, you put a hard question, to which neither my master nor I know the answer; but he is called the Lost Knight, or Sir Lorn le Perdu, and with reason; and now we are come a long and crooked road to Carleon for the joustings. That we entered here against this honest fellow's protests I admit freely, but I assure Your Honor it was done without thought of evil on this good knight's part. In truth, it was done likely without thought of anything, in a mental abstraction."

"Ah, so that's it," said the old lord, "a mazed knight. I have read of many such, and have even known a few in my adventurous years. Gentlemen given to mental abstractions, that's to say. They are ill people to have ado with, as I learned to my cost when I jousted with one who called himself Sir Devilbane, and was pleased to mistake me for an imp out of hell. I was but one of a dozen he laid in the dust on that occasion; and it was for that day's work he received knighthood from King Uther Pendragon."

He shifted his glance and addressed the innkeeper.

"Look you to me for the damages, good Gyles. I am taking these gentlemen to my own chambers for refreshment and couching. Look you to the varlets and beasts and gear—and well, if you value your life!"

He shifted his glance again, and addressed the silent young man doubled up there atop the tall white warhorse.

"Sir, I beg you to step down and break bread with me. I have rare French vintages in my private vault here, and a lark-and-pigeon pie in my private larder."

Sir Lorn dismounted and said, in a flat voice and without facial expression: "Gramercy, noble lord."

And so he and Dennys left their horses and grooms and followed the old man in the red robe up the staircase and into a fine apartment lit by a score of candles in branched silver sticks. The walls were hung with arras upon which scenes and figures were wrought in glowing colors and lively attitudes: the chase of a unicorn in a forest glade by black hounds and a white bracket; a cavalier in half-armor on a red horse; a lady in azure and gold on a white jennet and fellows in leather toiling afoot with short spears in their hands; the meeting of two knights in full force at the moment when the lesser departs his saddle backward over his horse's tail; a troubador twanging a lyre and singing to ladies and damosels in a garden of roses; knights at wine and meat in a hall hung with shields, and great hounds cracking bones among the rushes on the stone floor; the slaying of a fen-dragon by a young knight in a place of green reeds and waterlilies; and last a long cavalcade of chivalry crested with plumes and banners and uptossed spear-points, with the castellated towers of Camelot for background.

Sir Lorn le Perdu went around the room slowly, gazing at the tapestries without comment. The old lord looked at Dennys with a lifting of eyebrows as big as mustaches. Dennys nodded.

"Sir, he seeks something to touch his memory to life," Dennys whispered.

"Is it dead?" the other whispered back.

"It sleeps," Dennys told him. "But only in his brain. He remembers with his heart and hands."

"How do you know him for a knight, then, if he has lost his memory?"

"Sir, his golden spurs were on his heels when he was discovered in the wilderness, and the great white horse at his shoulder, and his arms and harness and shield no great way off."

"His shield? What is the device?"

"None, sir. A shield of unpainted iron scales backed with hide and wood. The only marks on it are dents from spear-points and scars of sword-strokes."

The old lord nodded, and was about to question further, but an exclamation from the knight stopped him; and even as he turned toward the sudden sound, even more arresting sounds assailed his ears, and he beheld action to match them. A panel of the arras tore away and crumpled down, and men rolled on the floor like fighting dogs—the knight and two others: but the two did the rolling, in vain efforts to get out from under the clutching and pounding hands and knees of the knight. Dennys leaped to his master's help, but by then the strangers lay limp and still. Sir Lorn got to his feet lightly and with a hint of animation on his melancholy face.

"They stirred behind the picture I was looking at, so I plucked them forth," he said simply.

He glanced down at the motionless figures in leather and added, just as simply: "I banged their heads, for fear they meant mischief with their knives, but I don't think I killed them."

"Shrewd bangs!" exclaimed the old lord. "They meant mischief, rest assured of that—to my goods and my life too! Gramercy, young man!"

Now three oldsters came in by way of two doors, tottering and stumbling in anxious haste, one clutching a fine gown about him and shuffling in slippers of Spanish leather, and two barefooted and tying their points with fumbling fingers.

"Have we disturbed your just slumbers?" asked the old lord softly. Then he cried out shrilly: "God's wounds—d'ye stuff your ears with pillows?"

The gentleman in the dressing-gown and the fellows in wool made deprecating gestures, but spoke no word.

"But for this alert and powerful young knight, we might all be murdered in our beds before dawn," continued His Lordship, but now softly again, in tones more of resignation than of wrath. "These two cutthroats were behind the arras. Bind them and carry them to the cellar, and fetch two flagons of wine and a crock of meat back with you. Give them the keys, Sir James, and tell Luke to lay the board with trenches and four of the silver-gilt cups, and the new pie."

Within a short while, the four were at table and being served by an ancient called Luke. Sir Lorn was on their host's right hand, and Dennys was on his left, and old Sir James sat at the young squire's other side. Luke tottered around with a flagon, then with the great pie of larks and pigeons, then with the flagon again. The old knight moaned that to eat and drink at this barbaric hour would be the death of him, owing to a weakness of the stomach that was the result of a shipwreck on the coast of Ireland and the consequent enforced diet of shellfish.

"But for these gentlemen, good James, you'd be dead by dawn of more than a bellyache," jeered the old lord. "And as for your shipwreck—I dare say I have been wrecked on every coast of Christendom, but do you hear me complain?"

He looked to his right, at his guest of honor, with an engaging smile, and said: "I'll wager ten hides of good land against a cast horseshoe he was older than you are now, though still but a gawky squire, at that time."

Sir Lorn's only reply was a puzzled and apologetic smile.

"Gawky I never was," the old knight protested, with a flicker in his faded eyes, but in the same voice of self-pity and whining complaint. "A squire, yes. Knighthood was hard come by in those days. Golden spurs did not hang on every bush."

Then Dennys ap Rhys, who had drained his cup twice, spoke up hardily.

"Worshipful sir, permit me to inform Your Honor that if that shaft is intended for my master, you are shooting wide of the mark. Young my master may be, but he did not pluck his golden spurs from a bush!"

Sir James made no answer, but hunched his shoulders and wagged his beard skeptically, and eyed the succulent bits of lark and pigeons and pastry on his trencher distastefully.

"You speak with assurance, good youth," said the old lord to Dennys kindly. "And may I ask—since your friend will not speak for himself—if your high opinion of him is based upon hearsay or observation?"

"Noble sir, I have heard nothing," Dennys replied; "but I can tell Your Lordship that this knight's reason for not speaking for himself is that he knows nothing of his past, as I have said. He knows no more of himself than I have learned of him in the nine months since our first meeting."

"It should be a short story," said the host, smiling back and forth between his young guests. "But short or long, I am curious to hear it."

Dennys turned an inquiring look upon Sir Lorn le Perdu, who met it with a faint smile and a slight nod.

Chapter Two

Dennys Tells What He Knows

DENNYS told it simply: In the fall of last year, he and his father and six of their people went into the wilderness in search of strays from their flocks. They reached the high valley of that dark water called the Kelpie's Pond just before sunset of their third day out, and the serfs made a little shelter of fir boughs and a great fire of deadwood from a grove of wind-twisted hawthorn and mountain oak. It is an ancient and desolate land. Soon after sunset a white frost fell from the frozen stars. The herdsmen drew closer to the fire. Even after their supper of mutton collops and barley bread and ale, they continued to press upon the fire, but as much for its singing light as its heat; for this was reputed an unholy place, still frequented by more dangerous beings than its wild human and beasty denizens—than its heathen men and great wolves and the scaly things that bred in the crevices of its highest

Dennys hurled it so swiftly that the stool found its mark while the man's mouth was still open.

rocks. Even Dennys and his father were glad of the dancing shine and bright sparks, as well as of the heat.

One of the tethered ponies whinnied in the outer darkness behind the fire and the hut of boughs, and was answered by a louder whinny from the darkness beyond the opposite margin of firelight. Every eye moved; but no man there, gentle or free or in a serf's iron collar, moved more than his eyes: and the breath caught in every windpipe and the blood slowed in every vein. A tall man stepped into the circle of light and stood there, silent and motionless. The head of a great white horse appeared at his shoulder.

Dennys thought, "Kelpies don't ride horses!" and his breath and blood moved again. The same thought must have struck the father too, for he got to his feet and cried: "God be with you!"

The stranger inclined his head but said no word. Dennys got up then and passed around the fire, but shaking in his shoes the while. He stood close to the stranger, who was in leather save for his legs, which were armored from the knees down. But he knew enough of the polite world to recognize this leather, by stains and marks of bruises and abrasions which could come only from friction with plates and chains of iron, as the fighting underwear of a knight. "Sir, you have lost your harness," he said. And then he looked down at the spurs on the iron heels, and stooped and saw that they were of gold.

So they called him the Lost Knight, though he looked too young for knighthood. While he ate and drank beside Rhys ap Tudor, draped in that worthy gentleman's cloak of castor skins, Dennys tended the great white horse. He removed saddle and bridle and the plates of bronze from face and chest. The high saddle had been rolled upon and somewhat damaged, and the bit of the bridle was tangled with coarse herbage. Dennys rubbed him down, fed him a loaf of barley bread and tethered him on a patch of fine grasses and mountain clover that was close by.

IN the morning Dennys and his father and the herdsmen wandered about the margins of the lake, but now more in search of the Lost Knight's equipment than of lost sheep. The knight himself kept to the encampment, sometimes sitting with a hand to his brow and sometimes standing and gazing vacantly around at plain and lake and rocky tor and looming mountain.

Dennys came upon the knightly sword—sword and scabbard and belt studded with gold and bright stones, all together. One of the herds discovered a mighty spear with a bent point, and yet another serf stumbled upon the great shield. It was Dennys' father who found the helmet in a ferny hollow, its plume bedraggled with frost and dew, and the open vizard criss-crossed with a spider's web. The breast- and back-plates and thigh-pieces, and numerous parts of fine-linked, supple chain mail, and the knightly secondary armament—after spear and long-sword—of short-sword, Spanish dagger and the spike-headed mace, were found by noon.

The party returned to camp then, and to a surprising scene. The Lost Knight sat hunched on an outcrop of granite, elbow on knee and head on hand in an attitude of deep thought, and scattered about the sward in various final attitudes were four dead men with crushed skulls. They were heathens of the wildest and most savage of the mountain tribes. They had crept close, without using their short bows, and sprung upon the unarmed knight with boar-spears and knives. But he had leaped aside and snatched up a half-burned trunk of a young oak from the dead coals of the fire; and when he had smitten down four, three survivors had turned to escape back to their rocky fastnesses; and then the warhorse had broken free of the peg he was tethered to, pursued and overtaken one of the fugitives and killed him as a dog kills a rat. The knight had taken but little hurt—a shallow stab in the left shoulder and a shallower cut along a rib—and the great horse none at all.

They went home from the wilderness in less time than the out-trip had taken them by half a day, with a score of strayed sheep that had not fallen to savages or wolves trotting before them, and the Lost Knight riding between father and son on his white warhorse. It was Dennys' pleasure to act as the stranger's squire, bearing shield and spear, and with his half-breed mountain horse hung all about with pieces of armor. But when they came to the northern edge of the manor, which lay

in a wide vale of groves and fields and walled yards of apple trees and plum trees, the knight dismounted, at Dennys' request, and allowed himself to be harnessed and armed cap-à-pie. So they issued from the hanging wood of fir and were espied with wonder by a variety of people. Plowmen stopped their slow oxen and gaped and hallooed; children left off their games, and gammers and gaffers their gossip; herds and wards sounded their horns, and heads appeared above walls and at the windows of the manor house.

The family and all the household made much of the mysterious stranger. The ladies of the family devoted most of their waking hours to him. From Dennys' grandmother, Dame Gwyn, down to his sisters Edyth and Mary, by way of his mother and two aunts, one and all seemed to have lost all their former interests in life. They would learn his past, though he knew it not himself—mauger their heads! And they would teach him the present and even shape the future for him. His paucity of speech did not discourage them. His forlorn condition, his knightly state, youth, melancholy mien, gentle smile and good though dimmed facial features, won all hearts. And his two wounds.

But Dame Gwyn healed those in as many days with a salve of herbs of Druidical origin. And it was Dame Gwyn who found the name for him. She fixed his gaze and attention with her bright black eyes, and recited names to him, pausing briefly after each for his reaction. She opened with *Matthew, Mark, Luke* and *John,* but without effect. The names of the other Apostles, and of the Prophets and a score of Christian martyrs, were spoken to no more avail, as were those of hundreds of old kings and heroes; for the dame was deeply read in books, both sacred and profane. After that she went on haphazardly, offering anything that came into her head. And at last her persistence was rewarded: for at her utterance of the word *Lorn,* the distraught youth started in his seat and widened his eyes and gasped "Yes!" So Dame Gwyn pronounced his name and style to be Sir Lorn le Perdu, and hung a small charm from his neck that contained a splinter of the True Cross, and prophesied great things of him.

WINTER came early with storms of wind and snow: in the heart of the storm came a horde of savages and outlaws from the northern wastes, and mayhap even from the craggy fastnesses of No-man's-land beyond the Wall and just this side of Ultima Thule. Many warders and herds and foresters perished in their isolated huts, even in their sleep, stabbed and bludgeoned in the dark or by tossing torch-shine. Fire was put to hovels and houses and ricks; and confusion and terror invaded the great valley and was spread by cotters and farmers fleeing in clouds of snow and smoke.

The alarum reached the manor house; and it was not long before Rhys ap Tudor and his son Dennys ap Rhys led two score armed men through the outer wall of timbers and sharpened stakes, both horsed and afoot.

They had armed with as little disturbance as might be, for the ladies said that the knightly guest needed his sleep and was in no condition for mortal combat. But they were no farther than a bowshot from the gate when the warhorse overtook them, screaming and galloping, with the knight shouting in the high saddle. And horse and rider passed through their toiling ranks; and Dennys shouted too, and galloped after.

"A Lorn—a Lorn!" shouted the melancholy knight in a voice that outrang the gale. "Strike hard! Bite deep!" And Dennys, riding furiously, cried: "A Lorn, a Lorn!"

They came upon the main body of the raiders in a farmyard, massed in the awful light of flaming hayricks and a flaming house under a billowing, shaking canopy of smoke and driven snow shot through with sparks. Then the white horse and the Lost Knight fell on with teeth and hooves and sword; and Dennys on his half-breed gelding followed close and did what he could with an ancient sword that once was wielded by Dame Gwyn's father, who had been the Black King Owen of the old ballads. Screams of terror mingled with the battle-scream of the white horse and the shouts of knight and squire. Round targes of hide and the fur-clad savages behind them were cut clean through by Lorn's sword, and cracked and staggered by Dennys' antique blade of bronze; and limbs were torn and bodies crushed by chopping teeth and hammering hooves, for the mountain-bred gelding was soon biting and striking and kicking as viciously as the white stallion. When Rhys ap Tudor arrived, there was no fighting left for him and his men, but only pursuit into the white storm, and blind slaughter beyond the red glare of the fires. . . .

The rest of the winter passed peacefully in that remote manorial valley. The melancholy knight learned to smile when spoken to prettily by a lady or damosel, and even to laugh upon occasion, and once said six words in one breath to old Dame Gwyn, with whom he was on especially friendly terms. He and Dennys exercised at arms every day, using old swords of soft metal and blunted edges, and daggers of fir which broke on their leather jerkins like thin ice. Sometimes they donned their armor and mounted their horses bareback and tilted with blunted spears roughly made for them by Howell the wheelwright. Those mock spears of inferior wood broke at a touch; but a touch was usually enough to send either saddleless champion backward over his horse's tail.

At that game, the knight took almost as many falls as the squire. But afoot it was quite another matter. With any manner of sword, or with wooden staves or cudgels even, Sir Lorn could sweep Dennys away with a half dozen strokes. It was a notable thing that at all this play in rickyard or snowy meadow, the great white horse comported himself more like a lamb than a killer, without so much as a show of teeth or hoof, or a snort of his battle-cry, at Dennys or the brown gelding.

IN early spring, a wandering company consisting of a troubadour who claimed to be from Brittany, three jongleurs, a packman and an Irish scrivener came to the manor house and were received with good cheer. They were as hungry as wolves and as thirsty as the Questing Beast; and they supped so well on the evening of their arrival that they slept till the following noon. They would have returned to their slumbers after dinner but for the protests of the household, and especially of the ladies. The jongleurs were the first to respond to the demand for entertainment. Their leader, a plump man in his fifties with the face of a wrinkled boy and round, faded blue eyes, took a russet apple from a dish and presented it to Dennys, with a mocking bow and a sly smile.

"Gramercy!" said Dennys; but he felt the apple move in his hand, whereupon he dropped it quickly; and behold, it was a warty brown toad hopping on the flagstones; and between two hops it was gone, as if dissolved in air. Then, still smiling, the jongleur took Dame Gwyn's shawl of silk from her shoulders; and what he would have made of that, had she not snatched it right back from him, the Devil only knows. And she cried out at him, naming him a saucy rogue. Unabashed, he stepped away and took a boar-spear from a rack of sylvan weapons on the nearest wall. This he held close to his face for seconds, muttering the while in a strange tongue, then gave a sudden, fierce shout and flung it upward at the gloom beyond the rafters. All eyes turned upward, in expectation of its fall.

"It is already fallen down into its place," said the fellow; and there it was in its rack on the wall, sure enough!

Many gasped in wonder, but not old Dame Gwyn. "Hocus-pocus!" she scoffed. "It never left the rogue's hand!" Whereat she cackled with

laughter, and he laughed with her, as if all others present were their inferiors in wit and wisdom; and she gave him a silver three-penny piece, for which he thanked her humbly and sincerely. The second jongleur, a thin man who looked more like a learned clerk than a vagabond, gave an indifferent exhibition with four daggers, of which he appeared to be afraid. The third and youngest of that team, a mere lad, turned handsprings and air-springs. When the troubadour's turn came, he said, "This is a piece I learned of an old bard in Brittany, but out of Ireland, who told how he had sung it before all the kings and queens and courts of Christendom and won fame thereby, which he could not understand, for it was a common old nursery rhyme where he came from." And he twanged the strings and sang in a disconsolate voice:

Bright Lady, I had ridden far,
With a dream for guide, and a shooting star,
A milk-white doe and a golden bee.
I found you under the wishing-tree.

Long we wandered, hand-a-hand,
From Dublin e'en to Faërieland,
By hill and vale, by tarn and mere,
By leafy glade and silver strand.

Oft did we dally by the way,
At dark of night and heat of day;
Lip to lip and breast to breast,
Whilst moons and suns went East and West.

Far war-horns brayed—but not for me.
A fig for vaunting chivalry!
Let fools who will, and knaves who must,
Spatter their blood and eat their dust!

Bright Lady, pity me who ride
With only Will-o'-the-wisp for guide—
Forsook by thee—lost and alone—
By rocky track and grieving tide.

Ah, Christ, that I had labored then
In that red field of beasts and men!
Pity me now, O pitiful Lord,
Who did not perish by the sword,

But wander, desolate and alone,
Bruising my feet on stock and stone,
Crying upon a lost white hand
To lead me back to Faërieland.

THE troubadour had no more than drawn breath after his last pathetic note, than he uttered a cry of dismay—for the young knight had him gripped by the front of his doublet. The lost one's face was convulsed as if with anguish, and his eyes flashed madly, but he made no sound. For a minute—while the company stared at him spellbound—he shook the terrified minstrel like a thing of rags and sticks; then he flung him aside and dashed from the hall. Every man there, save the unnerved troubadour, gave chase. But it was a short chase; for the knight soon stopped of his own accord, and turned and came back to his pursuers, blank of face and heavy of foot. The troubadour and his fellows departed next day; but the words of that sad song remained, for curious old Dame Gwyn had paid the scrivener to write them down from the minstrel's dictation.

That was the end of the story as told by Dennys ap Rhys at the old lord's supper-table; and at its conclusion it was observed that Sir Lorn, who had sat silent throughout the telling, was sound asleep.

"Very interesting," said the old lord reflectively. "I have heard other versions of the same piece. Its theme is of no mortal lady, needless to say; and she goes by various names. Nothing is more likely than that our friend is one of her victims. I have known others—and some who recovered completely from the experience, which this young knight will do in time, doubt it not. In fact, I am not at all certain that I did not once come within a hand's-turn of encountering her myself, and have never ceased to regret whatever it was that came between us; for I have never been one to cry 'fie' or 'avaunt' at any aspect of romantic beauty, mortal or supernatural."

At that, old Sir James grumbled that it was time for bed.

Chapter Three

Dennys Has an Adventure before Breakfast

LATE as it was when Dennys got to sleep, he was awake again soon after sunrise. He saw the rich tapestries on all sides, flagons and cups empty and deserted on the board, and the Lost Knight sprawled in slumber on a couch of silks and soft furs; and so, in the blink of an eye, he recalled the incidents of their arrival at the inn, and the hospitality of the old nobleman, and he knew where he was. Sounds of the waking of inn and town and the encompassing camp came to him through walls and floors and windows, and stirred his blood and spirit. He dressed lightly and went down the winding stairs to the room which he had seen by torchlight and in wild confusion the night before.

Confusion and hubbub still reigned in level sunshine, but now only of impatient fellows demanding their morning bacon and ale, that they might be about their diverse and devious affairs and diversions. Servants of the inn struggled among them with jacks and tankards, being snatched at for their wares and then pushed aside, while they in turn snatched for farthings due them or for recovery of the mead or ale. Dennys tried to pass without attracting attention, through to the jagged aperture that had been the doorway before last night's entrance of Sir Lorn on his warhorse, for he was eager for a glimpse of Carleon and the royal court. But a big fellow with eyes but half open and his points still untied, laid hold of him by the shoulders before he was clear of the press, and demanded the jack of ale he had paid for.

"I know nothing of it," said Dennys.

"Ye lie!" bellowed the other.

"UNHAND me, knave!" said Dennys; and he moved both his arms at the same moment, sinking his right fist in the bulging belly, and his left in the bulging jowl.

The rude fellow subsided slowly, his eyes wide open now, but blank with surprise, and his mouth open but speechless. The pressure and shouting on every side was so witless and violent that the incident passed unheeded; and Dennys was clear of the mêlée a moment later. He went around back to the inn yard, and discovered his groom Oggle working the winch over the well with one arm while embracing a kitchen wench with the other.

"One thing at a time, good Oggle," he advised.

The groom released both his holds simultaneously and sprang away, and the rope whirred out; the bucket splashed in the depths, and the girl fell down.

"You see what I mean," said Dennys pleasantly: and he helped the wench to her feet and gave her a kiss and a black penny.

He was in high fettle. The day and the world were young; the sun was bright; and promises of new scenes and sensations buzzed and lilted and glinted all around him. This was Carleon, an open gateway to the world of chivalry. This was the threshold of Life. But he kept his feet on the ground and made an inspection of the stable to which Oggle had led him at a word. It was a strong place of mortised stone, and reserved for the use of customers of consequence. Here he found Sir Lorn's great horse Bahram (so named by Dame Gwyn from the depths of her knowledge), his own brown gelding Hero, and his ponies, and two high but aged chargers and several hackneys which, so a stout fellow in a chain shirt and armed with a short-sword and a halfpike told him, were the property of the King.

"The King!" Dennys exclaimed. "King Arthur?"

"There are other kings than Arthur Pendragon, young sir," the armed groom replied disdainfully. "And some of certainer parentage. There

is your honor's host and my liege lord for one—King Torrice of Har."

"I might have guessed it," said Dennys. "That old lord with the vast whiskers and pink scalp! He looks a proper king, sure enough!"

"I have heard such tales of his Majesty's youthful prowess from my grandsire, and of the mighty deeds of his prime from my sire, as would dumfound you, young sir," said the other. "And even I," he went on, "have seen him unhorse tolerably good knights, and hold his own on foot against gentlemen of one-fifth his years."

At that, Dennys cried out: "God's wounds! How old is he?"

"Older than the wizard Merlin," said the stout groom, with solemnity. "And he is lord of twenty baronies, and fourteen castles, and manor houses beyond reckoning. And yet he lives here at the inn, like a landless private old gentleman, while his vassals despoil him in the land of Har, and others rob him in this place."

"Is he mad?" asked Dennys. "But no! His eyes are sane," he added.

"That is truth," said the groom. "But he is a poet. He has made more and better poems, I wager, than all the beggarly troubadours afoot today in this island of Britain; and in Ireland too, where even swineherds and shepherds practice the art while the wolves carry off their charges. And he is a knight with a quest; and being a poet, the object of his quest is a thing, or a being, beyond the ordinary imagination. And after riding on that quest longer than the life-spans of three ordinary mortals, and over all Christendom, he settled down at this inn five winters since, because a gypsy who called herself the Queen of Egypt told him that his quest would be achieved here in Carleon if he would but stay still and abide his time: which irks His Majesty but suits that old fox Sir James very well, and poor old Luke and the other ancient knaves, but is hard on an active, adventurous man like me."

"What name does he give his quest?" Dennys asked; but before the groom could begin the answer, Sir James tottered into the stable with his feet in slippers, and a dressing-gown clutched about him, and his voice raised in snarling complaint.

"Horses before high noon! What itch bites him now? Hi, stir your sticks! Where are you snoring now, fellow? Is this what you're paid for, think ye—to guzzle an' wench all night and sleep all day?"

"I am here and awake, Your Worship," cried out the armed groom, with a sneer and a bite in his voice. "I have stood on guard here all night; and now I have the honor to report that every beast in this stable has been fed an' groomed an' watered—not only our liege lord's, but his guests' as well."

"Don't bawl at me, you rogue!" bawled the knight, with a vehemence which all but ejected his few remaining long front teeth. "Or you'll be sent packing, along with that sham knight and his cowherd squire and cutthroat grooms!"

Dennys was about to speak up, but checked himself at a warning glance from the armed groom and turned and slipped out of the stable instead. He walked haphazardly, shaken with hot anger against that malignant old knight.

"Were he two score years younger, I'd feed his crooked tongue to the

Illustrated by Frederick Chapman

"You are fortunate, young sir. If there had been an hour's delay in fetching me, you'd be dead now."

crows," he fumed. "A sham and a cowherd, are we? A pox to him!"

He wondered that King Torrice, though himself older than Merlin, could put up with the snarling, doddering old carper. . . . Screams tore him out of his abstraction. He found himself in a lane between huts and hovels and crooked palings. Here he glimpsed both dust and muck, and a variety of filth and a dead yellow cat. He did not pause for a second glance, however, but flattened the crazy fence on his left with a thrust of a foot and sprang into the narrow yard behind it. The screams, which were of childish terror and pain, and as pitiful as the death-cry of a rabbit, came from a hut at the back of the yard. Without a check, he leaped to the hut, flattened the shut door as he had flattened the fence, and leaped within. There was light enough to see by, from a small window and the doorway. He saw a woman holding a squirming naked child face-down across her lap, and a man stooped over them with a cobbler's awl in his hand. The awl had a red tip. Dennys smelled scorched flesh. (All this in a single second of time!) The man and woman had their faces turned to him, open-mouthed but silent. The child's cries still rang and sobbed.

SNATCHING up an oaken stool by a leg, Dennys hurled it with all his might—and all this so swiftly that the stool found its mark while the man's mouth was still open. The fellow went over backward onto the red coals on the hearth. The woman stood up, and the child rolled from her lap to the floor; but before she could move again, Dennys had her by the throat. It was a smooth round throat, but he gripped it without pity. Her bright black eyes were wide with terror; but he cursed them while he glared into them. He flung her furiously atop the senseless body on the hearth, then took the naked child in his arms and fled from there.

Dennys saw people clustering on his left, so he ran to the right. He saw a group in front, so he turned aside and leaped a fence and ran among scattering children and fowls, cats and pigs. A lean dog confronted him, but with more of inquiry than hostility in its air and attitude, and slunk aside just before he reached it. He crossed another fence and came to another vile and narrow lane and turned to his right along it. He heard shouts behind him, so kept up his hot pace. Now he noticed that the child in his arms had ceased its outcry, though sobs still shook it. He glanced down. It was gazing up at him with a look in its teary eyes which he could never after describe or forget.

He glanced up again within the second, yet only in the nick of time, for here was a rogue with a knife coming at him and not ten paces distant. But the approach was warily zigzag and therefore slow. Dennys checked and glanced quickly around and behind him. He saw the same lean dog within a yard of his heels, trotting with lifted head and one sharp ear cocked forward, but quietly withal. He thought fast: "No foe and perchance a friend." He turned, but kept his feet shifting and his eyes sliding, and extended the child toward the dog. The dog wagged his tail. Still shifting and turning, Dennys set the child on the ground, and still stooped double, charged the man with the knife, and drew a poniard with each hand at the same moment. The fellow stood, and after a fatal instant of indecision, made to throw his knife. But Dennys threw first.

Short one of his best daggers—for the ruffian crawled off with it imbedded in his middle—Dennys recovered the child, after freeing its arms gently from the dog's neck, and resumed his confused flight. Now a dozen pursuers were in sight, and a few stones were thrown, and ragged shouts of "Stop thief!" went up. The dog turned, with bared fangs and bristling hackles, but turned again and came on at Dennys' whistle. Dennys saw the glow of a forge, and red and white flakes of fire flying from hammered hot iron, close ahead and on his right; and his heart rose, for here was a smith of some sort. And if the smiths of Carleon were of the same kidney as the smiths of home, here was sure succor.

"A hand, a hand!" he cried. "Up, smith! To the rescue!"

The anvil stopped ringing and the sparks flying, and a man in an apron made of a ox-hide issued from the smithy. He was of heroic dimensions; and he swung a sledgehammer in his right hand and held before him with his left a great bar of iron with a point which pulsed from white to pink to red and threw off a thin haze of smoke.

"Good smith!" cried Dennys. "I'm no thief nor kidnaper! I took this small child from torturers who burned it with red iron, so hear me God —Jesu!"

"Take it inside," said the smith, with scarcely a glance.

Dennys sprang past him into the smithy, with the dog at his heels. It was a place of gloom lanced by a shaft of sunshine and pricked by the filming red eye of the forge; and even as he peered around him, he heard the smith shouting in the lane.

"A smith, a smith!" shouted the smith. "To me, smiths all! To me, Brothers of the Iron!"

Dennys heard the yells and hoots of the crowd. He set the child down on the clay floor and left it to the dog. He took up an iron bar from beside the anvil-block and returned to the lane. There the crowd was thickening and the smith was advancing upon it with slow and ponderous tread and still bellowing: "To me, smiths all!" The crowd was edging in on right and left. Dennys darted to the left and jabbed fast, using the bar like a half-pike with one hand, and a long dagger with the other. Staves and spike-headed clubs were swung at him, but never in time, for short jabs and stabs are faster than swinging blows. Three louts fell, and others retired upon the main body, one of them crawling on all-fours.

But the mob continued to grow and to close in, and the air was thick with stones and sticks. Dennys took such a knock on his left shoulder that he dropped his dagger, and while stooping to recover it, he took one on his leather cap that staggered him; the leather of that cap was from the hide of a wild mountain bull, however, and so his skull remained uncracked. But for a minute he reeled as though blinded, and went berserk and swung the iron bar with both hands, spinning the while like a top against the front rank of the mob and into it, crushing bones and weapons and driving the leaders back against the pressure from the rear until there was no room for an arm to be raised in attack or defense. Menacing shouts and whoops changed to yells of terror and yelps and grunts of pain; and now the smith was in action with hammer and hot iron; and of a sudden, more smoky men in cowhide aprons appeared at the rear of the mob and fell on with a variety of implements and weapons peculiar to their craft: whereupon utter panic possessed the crowd, and tore it and scattered it.

Dennys came out of his berserk rage and crumpled to his knees, and would have slumped forward on his face if a pair of horn-hard hands had not clamped his ribs and lifted him and held him upright. It was well meant by the smith, but it was a sorry service to the squire; for at that moment the final missile of the fray—a large cobble flung haphazardly—came whizzing to a violent stop against an unprotected side of Dennys' head.

Chapter Four

DENNYS HAS A BROKEN HEAD

DENNYS heard a voice he did not like.

"Vagabonds! I warned you. Frauds! Murderers—else how did they come by the armor and horses and gear? He has proved himself no knight—he tumbled at a touch! And this rogue here? He is a proven kidnaper!"

"You lie!" shouted Dennys.

It was conceived as a shout, but it came forth a rasping whisper. He opened his eyes, and saw the sagging jowls and mean mouth and shallow optics of Sir James. He essayed another shout of defiance, and this time achieved a louder and clearer whisper:

"You lie!"

THE thin lips and pale eyes above him snarled and glinted.

Another voice spoke.

"There's your answer, my bold James. He gives you the lie."

Dennys shifted his glance without turning his head, for his neck was as stiff as a board, and saw on his other side that hospitable old gentleman whom he knew now to be King Torrice of Har, and older than Merlin. The King smiled at him and Dennys whispered again, though his jaws were as stiff as his neck, and his tongue felt too large for his mouth:

"Where is the child?"

"In safe hands," said the King.

"I took it from torturers," said Dennys.

"It?" sneered Sir James.

"You did well, my lad," said the King.

"And the dog?" asked Dennys.

"The dog too," the King replied gravely. "Both are safe under this roof."

"You have not asked after your precious Sir Lorn le Perdu," sneered the old knight.

"What of him?" cried Dennys, starting up, but falling flat again instantly with a yelp of pain.

"Perdu," Sir James replied; and he chuckled meanly and said it again: "Perdu!"

Again Dennys started from his pillow, but only to subside again.

"He lies again," said King Torrice calmly. "In fact, I am beginning to wonder if he ever speaks the truth.

"Our young friend took a few tumbles yesterday, and may take a few more today, for experienced horsemen and spearmen have ever the advantage of very young cavaliers. Even I—but let it pass! I warrant you that, in a few years' time, our Lost Knight will be as firm in his saddle as I was at his present age."

"My wits are confused," mumbled Dennys. "You spoke of yesterday—of my knight taking tumbles then; but by my reckoning we were on the road yesterday and encountered only bagmen and like [illegible]. Yesterday? Lord, we met neither with tumbles nor occasions for tumbles yesterday—by my reckoning."

The carking old knight uttered a derisive hoot, but the old King of Har spoke gravely and kindly.

"Your reckoning took a buffet and a tumble, good Dennys; and while you lay here, with a leech from young Arthur Pendragon's train at work on your damaged skull—which the learned man pronounced the thickest he ever saw, glory be to God!—Sir Lorn rode for a few honorable falls in the lists only two longbow-shots away. In truth, it is a full twenty-four hours since the honest smiths brought in you and the child, with the honest dog at their heels. I rewarded them, in your name, and have seen to the comfort and safety of child and dog."

"Gramercy!" Dennys acknowledged. "Gramercy, Sir King!" He pressed his right hand to his bandaged head, but instantly flinched and dropped it. "But with me laid useless here, who squired my master? Who harnessed him and served him with new spears?"

"You would be surprised," the King murmured, smiling.

"Even you wouldn't believe it!" snarled Sir James.

"He was well tended," King Torrice went on, and now with a chuckle in his voice and a merry twinkling of his eyes. "He was well buckled indeed and latched and armed, fear not! No knight there, whatever his name or prowess or degree, was better squired—nor half as well, by the knuckle-bones of Judas!—than young Lorn le Perdu."

Dennys was silent with grief, believing that his friend had forsaken and forgotten him for a more experienced comrade and attendant, or a more powerful and fashionable: for some earl's son in search of adventure, perchance. But he was soon enlightened.

"In other words, King Torrice of Har hid his royal head in a squire's casque and played the varlet to that nameless vagabond's shameless pretensions," sneered Sir James. He paused, veering his shallow glance this way and that, but always avoiding the others' eyes. "And his reward was dust in his nose," he concluded, fairly snarling.

The King ceased smiling now and turned a bleak and considering look upon the carping knight.

"Mind your speech and your manners, James," he warned in a low voice. "Aye, and your thoughts too. They have all worsened fast, of late: not that they were ever good. Have a care that you don't force me to forget that you owe your miserable life to me—for it is a responsibility that irks me increasingly, the longer I know you."

The knight's jaw sagged, and his barbered face went white—even the sharp nose, save for a purple tip. He blinked his eyes, which were no more human now than scales of mica, and breathed noisily in short gasps through open mouth and long sparse teeth. Then he got to his feet and stalked from the room. King Torrice met Dennys' bewildered gaze with a smile and a nod.

"A most unpleasant old man," he said lightly. "But more fool than knave: at least I still hope so. Now I must see to our champion, and off with him to the lists. I shall tell him of your improved condition; and if he should feel in better spirits tonight than he does this morning—which I wager he will—I'll bring him in after supper. Now I shall send the leech to you—a renowned cirurgian."

The great doctor arrived, moving fast, with one of King Torrice's ancient servitors tottering far after him, burdened with a ewer and a basin and a roll of bandages.

"Conscious, clear-eyed and sane!" the visitor gabbled, stooping and peering. "Exactly as I predicted, and to the minute. You are fortunate, young sir. If there had been an hour's delay in fetching me, or if any other cirurgian in this realm had been summoned instead, you'd be dead now. And 'twas only by chance that I was disengaged at the time of the arrival of King Torrice's urgent messenger, for practically all the best vital organs and bones of King Arthur's court are in my care, including his own; and my written certificate that your head has been mended by me will serve you as an introduction to society as well as any warrant of knighthood or even a patent of nobility, I dare say."

While gabbling and bragging, the doctor's hands and eyes were as busy as his tongue. He unrolled yards of bandage from Dennys' tender head, examined and washed the wound, salved it and swathed all in clean linen.

"Most satisfactory!" he exclaimed. "Chicken broth for breakfast, and this pill directly after it. You, my good man, attend to what I say to this young gentleman, and look well to this pill, for Doctor Watkyn's words cost a silver penny apiece, and the very least of my pills the price of a firkin of butter. See to it that he swallows this pill with his last sup of broth; and that he remains recumbent till noon, at which time he will be so far recovered—thanks to my skill and God's mercy and a thick skull—as to permit the elevation of his head and shoulders on three pillows, and the consumption of another bowl of hot chicken broth."

"Gramercy!" said Dennys.

DR. WATKYN bustled off. Dennys addressed the old servant.

"What of my broth?"

"'Tis in the kettle, sir."

"And what of the child I took away from the two torturers?"

"She does bravely, sir. She is in Eliza's care, and the dog too. King Torrice charged Eliza, who is my daughter, to tend her like a princess, and the thin dog like a queen's pet."

"She? Is it a girl, then?"

"Devil a doubt of it, sir! And no common one, by my guess: or why were the two Yer Honor rescued her from—the man was found roasted on his own hearth, but the woman got away—trying to burn a brand on her? But Master Watkyn's salve will heal it in a day, so he says himself. And she be safe with Eliza, sir, never fear! For there's a wench that would have made a man-at-arms to match any knight alive. And now she wears knives in her garters, and keeps halfpikes and long-hafted maces standing in every corner of the room."

"I want to see her."

"She's a grand sight, sir, though no beauty from a young gentleman's point of view; and no chicken, neither; and I warn you, sir, she'll knock a man down with no more provocation nor a look."

"Are you mad? That pitiful child?"

"God forgive me! I thought you spoke of Eliza! I'll have her fetch her, sir—my daughter fetch Yer Honor's little damosel—when I fetch the broth."

"So be it, good fellow," murmured Dennys, closing his eyes.

HE dozed into confused dreams. A weight on his sore left shoulder wakened him, and he opened his eyes and looked sidewise at a broad black muzzle and yellow mask and amber eyes. A lip lifted and disclosed formidable fangs: but it was not a hostile grimace; and the eyes showed warmth of trust and affection through their amber shining. It was the dog of yesterday. The heavy head withdrew from his shoulder. He shifted his glance upward, and met the fixed regard of yet another pair of eyes.

These were neither amber nor trustful, but gray and black like the depths of a mountain tarn, and searching and cold in their regard. It was a woman who stood beside his couch and looked down at him. He guessed her sex by the two long and thick braids of hair which hung before her shoulders and down past her waist. This hair was coarse and black and strong, like the tails of mountain ponies. But for the hair, the head and neck and shoulders might well have belonged to a full-grown—nay, an overgrown—porter or swineherd or forester. Likewise the face; for the jaws looked to be as strong, and the nose as broad and depressed, as a bull-baiting mastiff's. He met that stare for as long as he could. He held it till his sore brain began to spin and his eyes to dim. He blinked and cried out suddenly and fretfully:

"God's wounds! What ails you, woman? What's your errand here? Speak up—or go away!"

She veiled her eyes and bowed her head, and spoke with voice and air of mock submission.

"I beg Your Honor's pardon. I am here at your bidding, with our little damosel. I am Eliza."

He looked lower and saw the child, and knew her only by her eyes; for only in them did she resemble the pitiful naked creature of yesterday's adventure. She stood close beside his cot. But this was not the infant of that mad rescue and chase. This was, in very truth, a little damosel. She wore a bonnet of fine lace, which hid her short and jaggedly-snipped pale hair. The face framed by the bonnet was like a white flower blushing to rose. Her parted lips were rose petals. She wore pearls at her throat, and a narrow gown of white samite threaded with gold. But her eyes, still misted with tears though her lips smiled now, looked into Dennys' eyes just as he remembered from yesterday. Embarrassment was added to his bewilderment. It replaced the spasm of childish anger, and fear which the woman's stare had inspired. He tried to think of something to say. He belabored his sore brain for appropriate words of greeting to an agonized, terrorized small child that had become, overnight, a smiling damosel in white samite. A small damosel, in truth—but just that, nevertheless. But the only result of the effort was a stammered question.

"What is your name?"

"The gypsies called me Cynara," she whispered. "But Eliza says that is a pagan name—a wicked gypsy name."

"The gypsies? But your skin—your eyes—your eyes are not like theirs!"

The woman said: "She's not one of those people, as any fool can see. But she cannot remember her own people."

"Those two fiends of hell were not gypsies," he said.

"True—but she had been in their hands only a sennight," said the woman.

Now the little girl's mouth began to tremble and change from smiles to the pitiful grimace of terror; and she shivered against Dennys, and crouched forward and slipped thin arms around his neck and pressed her face against his breast. As her arms tightened, stabs of pain shot through his head. It was all he could do not to cry out. Instead, he gritted his teeth and shut his eyes and drew the small body closer and held it so. Despite the pain he was in, he spoke with calm assurance.

"You have nothing to fear. You are safe now. I'll not let anything hurt you, little one."

The clasp of her arms loosened slightly, but vastly to the relief of his anguished head, and her trembles lessened perceptibly. It seemed to him that she listened for more, though she did not raise her face from his breast.

"Be happy," he went on. "Rest easy. There is no evil here to harm you, little Cynara. You are in my keeping now. You have Dennys to fend for you now—and from this time forth."

He felt the woman's disturbing gaze upon him, and looked up and met it again; and he was relieved to find less of hostility and black suspicion in it now.

"And who will fend for brave Squire Dennys?" she asked derisively.

But there was anxiety as well as derision in her voice and eyes. She stooped over him, and continued in an urgent whisper:

"Are you blind, poor lad—or demented, like your lost master? For lost indeed is that poor young knight—utterly, heart and soul! And you are in peril of your own soul and body, in this place. It was the curse on your master—for he is accursed, in very truth!—that brought you to this house. What do you know of this King? Even Peter the groom does not know his true age. He too is accursed or bewitched, this King Torrice, for all his learning and prowess—and a fool to boot; or how else would he suffer that old rogue Sir James? Beware of that hoary knight. He hates and fears your witless master, and you too, and will get rid of both of you, if he can. He is as crafty as wicked; and if he cannot trick you to your deaths, he will kill you himself."

"Why?" asked Dennys.

She lifted her head and veered it, then stooped lower and whispered:

"I hear him. Take this. Under the sheet with it! Accept nothing from his hands—and threaten to strike if he crowds you."

SHE stood upright quickly, only to stoop again as quickly and lift the little girl in her arms; and Dennys was alone three seconds later. Even the dog with amber eyes was gone. But he could not think he had dreamed that visit, for his right hand grasped the haft of a dagger beneath the sheet. *Is she mad too?* he wondered. *Is everyone mad here but me? And Cynara? And even she must be bewitched, to grow so fast.*

He glanced up and saw Sir James on the threshold, bearing an earthen bowl in his two hands. The ancient knight approached with greater speed than Dennys had credited him with the strength for. He drew a stool to the right side of the cot, and on it set the bowl. He straightened his back and smiled and spoke smoothly.

"Your broth, my young friend. Your chicken broth, just as prescribed by the great Doctor Watkyn. If King Torrice of Har sees fit to serve Sir Lorn le Perdu as squire, why should not I, poor old Sir James of Redrock, play butler to Squire Dennys? Think nothing of it, my lad. Drink it down. 'Tis at just the right heat. The good Watkyn made such a point of this

matter of temperature that I told him I would see to it myself. Here, let me raise your head and hold the bowl to your lips."

"I have no appetite for chicken broth, honored sir," lied Dennys. "Nor for any kind of broth, at this moment. The steam of it even raises my gorge. Stand away, Sir James—I warn you!—for my stomach heaves and quakes."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Sir James, gone sharp and jerky of a sudden in both voice and manner. "Quaff it off! Doctor's orders!"

He took up the bowl in his right hand. He was close now. With his left hand he reached for the pillow beneath Dennys' head. And then a strange thing happened. The bowl fell to the floor and broke, and the broth spattered and splashed abroad. With an oath, Sir James jerked straight and stood staring down at his empty hand and past it at the ruin on the floor.

"Something struck me!" he cried, his voice gone thin as a gnat's. "My wrist! Something hard!" His pale glance flickered the length of the couch and all around. "What goes on here? There's deviltry here!"

"I doubt it not, worshipful sir," Dennys murmured; and he smiled among his bandages, lying straight and still between sheets of linen, beneath a silken quilt.

To look at him, one would never guess that his right knee had been out and active.

"But here comes another bowl, so why worry over spilt broth?" he added.

Sure enough, here was that old fellow Eliza's father, bearing an earthen bowl on a pewter tray. This was just such a bowl as the other had been, but a horn spoon stood up in it. The fellow moved circumspectly and with downcast eyes and a suggestion of humble benevolence about the droop of his whiskers; but when the wreckage on the floor came within his range of view, he stopped and recoiled as if at a buffet in the face, and all but dropped his burden.

"Have a care!" cautioned Dennys. "Good Sir James had an accident with his offering, and I'm in no mood to be cheated of my breakfast entirely, for I feel hungry now."

HE looked where the old knight had stood but a few seconds before, just in time to glimpse the stooped and narrow back as Sir James glided from the room.

"This is beyond me," muttered the servant, beginning to shiver. "Sir James fetched broth to you, d'ye say? Then he stole it from under Luke's nose. Did you sup of it?"

"Not a sup, old man," Dennys assured him. "Your daughter Eliza told me to take nothing from him. Set it down here before you spill it, and calm yourself. Eliza is a grand wench, and I'd liefer call her friend than foe. Tell me your name, old friend; and help me with the broth."

Eliza's father's name was Matthew, and he was known as Matt. He was a timid soul; and it was hard for Dennys to believe that he had sired masterful and intrepid Eliza. But he was an excellent serving-man, for his years. He raised Dennys' head and shoulders on extra pillows and helped him to his broth as well as any nurse. He had a fund of information and a lively tongue, but a quavering utterance. He was a natural gossip and artless scandalmonger. Born in a swineherd's hut in one of the great forests of Har, he had herded swine till he came to his full growth, but as that growth had fallen short of requirements for warding against wolves and thieves, he had gone down to the nearest castle and been hired there for a scullion.

The wandering King Torrice had visited that one of his many castles between foreign adventures, and tossed pennies about so freely that Matt had stolen off in his train. There had been gray in the King's whiskers even then, but he was still a mighty man of his hands. And as for his adventures —a young gentleman would not believe them. Sometimes, in trying to recall them to mind, Matt doubted them himself. They were all undertaken, or encountered by chance, in furtherance of a quest which His Majesty had followed since his early manhood—but of the name and nature of that quest, Matt was as ignorant now as he had been when a scullion in his first scullery. But there was something queer about it. Many things about it seemed queer to honest Matt. The ladies concerned, among them. Nay, the ladies most of all. For there were ladies and damosels—aye, and queens even—in every adventure of that quest of King Torrice of Har, that strange and seemingly endless quest.

It was believed by some people, said Matt, that the King's quest had been for the Fountain of Youth, and that it had succeeded over a hundred years ago; but he did not share this belief. Whether or not King Torrice had ever drunk of the Fountain of Youth or of any other spring or well of a like character, or maybe of a magical elixir in a bottle, he didn't know; but in his humble opinion the royal quest was of a far more mysterious and perilous nature than that implied by those people, despite the fact that there had been a lady—one, at least—in every adventure of it.

Take the adventures in Spain, for example. Once the questing King had won his way, by wit and physical prowess, into the Queen of Spain's boudoir, only to excuse himself and back out, after a few questions. Matt had been told this the following day, by a gentleman then serving Torrice as senior squire. Yet she was a straight round queen with starry eyes —or had been, for she would be a grandmother by now, if still anything. But the King of Har had done the right thing by her pride. He had sent her, the very next day—before she could have him dispatched by poisoner, strangler or stabber—a grand song of unrequited love and a necklace of rubies to match it. Always the perfect gentleman: that was King Torrice!

IT had been the same with the Abbess of the White Abbey of Salamanca. After the toils and perils of winning to her, he had lost interest within the minute. That episode too had cost him a poem and a necklace, though both were shorter than in case of the queen. And it was always so, said Matt. It was always as if the questing king expected to find something different, each time, from anything he had yet found. He was after something more than human beauty, so it seemed to Matt: but when Dennys suggested that the royal search was for heavenly beauty, or for the Holy Grail perhaps, the old gossip shook his head with a skeptical air.

"There be witchery in it, as sure as God gave me two eyes and a nose," he said. "And maybe deviltry—for the one runs parlous close to t'other, as any hedge magician will tell you for a horn of ale. Which God forbid, for King Torrice is a good and generous lord."

While Matt rambled on, Dennys' glance wandered idly and was arrested by a black cat. The animal came into his field of vision from the outer chamber, walking slowly but with assurance, and its tail straight up. It had eyes of topaz, and a sleek coat. It marched straight to the wreckage on the floor and went to work on it, beginning with the fragments of white and brown meat, and then licking up every vestige of broth, but Dennys was so intent on old Matt's jabber that he did not give the cat's behavior a thought.

"Has Sir James a quest too?" Dennys asked.

Matt looked all around before answering.

"Aye," he whispered. "All the lands and goods of the King are his quest. 'Tis his doing that we bide here, year in and year out. He is the devil, that old knight!"

"Then why does the King befriend him?" asked Dennys.

"For pity. We saved him from robbers in a wood, in his shirt. They had him tied to a tree, and he was crying like a baby, and a knife was at his throat. It was a sight to melt any

heart. But at King Torrice's first shout, the knife was dropped, and all the rogues fled and got clean away. But I have thought since that the fellow with the knife could have stabbed or slit before he fled, if he had a mind to, and still got away. There wasn't a mark on that knight—and him squealing like a stuck porker; and when his bonds were cut, he wriggled on the ground like a worm—the loathly old snake!"

"What ailed him?" asked Dennys.

"Nought ailed him. It was all a play for the King's pity. It was a sight to twist the heart worse than a hurt baby—that old knight crying an' squirming at King Torrice's feet for mercy an' deliverance, an' clawing at his knees—and his skinny shanks sticking out of his shirt. Aye, a pitiful sight—but it was all scurvy trickery. The robbers, the knives, the squawls an' tears—all a play! The rogues were in his service. I see it now. And the King, all bemused with his mad quest an' his rhymes, clothed him and armed him from the skin out, and horsed him an' put money in his poke an' took him into his care.

"And what now? Why do we bide at this inn? A fortune-teller—as black an old gypsy queen as ever you saw—told the King his quest would be achieved here, to his eternal glory an' joy, if he would but wait it. Aye, she read it in the stars, and the palms of his hands, and her crystal ball—an' well was she paid for that telling by Sir James—with a bracelet of rubies from the King's strong-box. And now I see it like the nose on your face, young sir. The old viper fears you and the mad young knight; for King Torrice has shown a returning of his old spirit since your arrival at this inn. So look to yourself, Sir Squire. And look to your befuddled knight. Beware Sir James!"

"Gramercy!" said Dennys. "Your daughter Eliza has already warned me, and given me a dagger from her garter."

He produced the dagger. Matt goggled at it.

"The wench never showed a favor before to any man," the old fellow mumbled.

Chapter Five

Deviltry, Witchery and a Battle

Sir Lorn le Perdu took three more tumbles on the second day of the joustings; but with his fourth spear he had better luck, unseating his opponent without coming to earth himself. His score for the two days was one win against six falls—nothing to brag about. The Lost Knight took it philosophically, however, and King Torrice, his acting squire, made the best of it.

"The Faërie Hand! Little Brigid! I've found her at last!" cried the knight.

"There was a time—but a very short time and a very long while ago—when even I dented the sod with my rump-plates almost as often as I stopped in the saddle," said the venerable King.

"This doesn't signify," said Lorn, with a far-away look in his eyes. "This child's-play means no more than did our exercises in the stableyard at Dennys' home. Sharp spears and swords are what we like, Bahram and I. When it's an affair of sharp iron, then we both fight."

"Tell me, my boy," prompted the King, with gentle urgency.

Lorn pressed a hand to his brow and thought hard, but could not recall any other mortal combat than the battle with savages in a storm of snow.

"But there were others, I assure Your Lordship," he said earnestly. "I have worsted—aye, and slain—strong knights as well as mountainy savages. They are here, but they sleep." And again he pressed a hand to his head.

The main event of that sennight of jousting was to be a battle unto death or surrender of thirty knights of King Arthur's train against thirty knights collected, for the occasion, under the banner of a Welsh chieftain or prince named Llewellyn. It was to begin in the morning, and if need be, last all day. It was not till after supper on the second day, and when King Torrice and Sir Lorn sat with Dennys, that the young knight's intention to take part in the morrow's conflict became known to his friends. The King had given an amusing account of his squelching of the rumbumptious grandson of the late Sir Rustard of Ruswick; and Dennys had laughed at the picture of those royal and venerable whiskers emerging from that humble squirish helmet, pressing both hands to his own tender head in the act. Lorn had sat throughout the recital with his wonted far-away look and air of melancholy abstraction, and never a word; so when he spoke at last, the effect was startling, though his voice was mild.

"It will be different with me tomorrow. Sharp spears and swords."

After half a minute of startled silence, King Torrice said: "We'll take a good rest tomorrow, lad, while those zanies bash and slash like unicorns and wild boars; and so you'll be ready for the knightly combats of the next day. Mob fighting is for them that

like to grovel and roll like mad dogs, and butt and slash like rams and wolves, without art or honor."

"I like it," murmured the other. "And so does my horse."

"But 'tis to the death or surrender!" cried the King.

"I'll not surrender, worshipful sir," murmured Lorn.

The King protested with a dozen arguments, and Dennys protested too.

"Would you have Bahram killed?" asked Dennys, on the verge of tears. "You promised him to me if ever you had no more need of him."

"Aye, consider that noble horse!" urged the King, glad of another argument. "They'll hamstring him! Then they'll slaughter him! I know what I'm talking about, dear lad. It's the riffraff of chivalry that engages in mêlées. They fight for ransoms and harness and horses. A knaves' business!"

"Not a suitable form of exercise for a green knight, certainly," said a voice from the shadows; and Sir James advanced into the candlelight.

"What the devil?" cried King Torrice.

"Nay, puissant lord, 'tis but your poor servant James of Redrock," whined the old knight. "I nodded at the supper table. I dozed. Weight of years and my enfeebled stomach and head. That grilled marrowbone. And that second cup of sack. But permit me, young sir, to add my voice to my royal benefactor's sage counsel. The rough-an'-tumble of sixty murderous, greedy battlers armed sharp of point and edge is not for untried and delicate young gentlemen like yourself. I beg you to heed the advice of King Torrice, my young friend."

Then Lorn le Perdu stood up and swore by the knucklebones of all the Apostles that he would have to-do in the morrow's tournament, and show friend and foe alike the stuff he was made of. Sir James sighed profoundly, and turned and went away, bowed as if with sorrowful resignation.

WHEN Dennys awoke, the sun shone level through the window, and Lorn le Perdu was gone. His heart was like a cobble in the very pit of his being—as hard and heavy as the great stone that had laid him low in that foul lane. He sat up. His head did not stab or spin. Good! He would arm and join that battle and save his knight, mauger his head! He was on the edge of his couch when Matt arrived with a bowl of broth. The old fellow cried out at him to lie down.

"Have no fear for your master," the old fellow cried on. "The King will fetch him out alive, mauger his head!"

Dennys would have argued the point, but for Matt's threat to fetch Eliza from the nursery.

"I don't object to your daughter," he said. "We're good friends." But his mind was distracted from one loyalty to another. "I want to see her. And her little charge Cynara. How does she fare?"

"Like a princess," Matt assured him.

Dennys spooned up half the bowl of broth, greedily but with his thoughts shifting and flickering.

"What of Sir James this morning?" he asked.

"Faugh!" cried Matt. "That viper! He mopes in his chamber—but there's a gloating glimmer in his snaky flat eyes."

"Your daughter warned me," Dennys mumbled, as if talking to himself. "Gave me a dagger. Charged me to take nothing from him. So I knocked the bowl of broth from his hand with a knee, quick as winking. But it wasn't wasted. The little black cat lapped it up."

"Hah!" exploded Matt; and he stooped and gripped the front of the squire's nightshirt with jerky fingers. "Black cat, d'ye say? How d'ye know that? Speak up, young man!"

"Not so loud from you, old man," Dennys reproved the fellow, with squirish dignity. "And spare my shirt. You might have seen it for yourself, but for your babbling about King Torrice and the Queen of Spain. A small black cat came in and ate the gobbets of chicken, and licked the floor clean and went away. What of it?"

Matt released the shirt and straightened up. He cried "Hah!" again, rocked on his heels and finally folded up on a stool.

"They found her this morning," he whispered. "That little mouser—stiff an' stark under the King's bed."

"Stiff an' stark?" queried Dennys, with a stiff tongue, as if a sudden frost had struck its root.

"Dead," Matt whispered. "As dead as you would be if ye'd drunk it." He got nimbly to his feet and came close to Dennys again, and continued to whisper, but now with a note of relish: "We've got him! I'll tell the King. You'll tell him. This will open his eyes. We've got 'im now, the snake! This will pull his fangs! Now we'll be rid of 'em—as soon as the King gets back from the tourney."

Dennys was vastly shaken by the thought of his narrow escape from death. And such a death! A cat's death! So deeply was he shaken, that he set the half-empty bowl aside and averted his glance from it, with a shudder. He got between the sheets again at Matt's bidding, but refused to finish the broth. Matt went away with the bowl, after charging him to lie still and at the same time watch out for treachery, and promising to be back in a few minutes.

There were two doors to the room. With his head high on the pillows, Dennys could keep both doors under surveillance without moving anything but his eyes. He had not been alone more than two minutes before his vigilance was rewarded. An edge of one door stirred, then remained so still for the count of ten that he began to doubt his eyes. But it stirred again. It came away an inch from the jamb—another inch, three inches—moving softly and slowly. Dennys narrowed his eyes and watched through the lashes. A head came into view around the edge of oak, and the flat, shallow, mica-pale optics of Sir James appeared, sliding and glinting. That horrid scrutiny remained upon Dennys' face for seconds, then slid aside. Now the scrawny neck appeared, weaving and twisting. A thin shoulder followed. Then all became still, as if struck to bone; and a moment later head and neck and shoulder with withdrew, and the door closed as smoothly as it had opened.

DENNYS got out of bed and into his clothes at top speed, without a thought for his damaged head; and he was tying the last of his points when a door opened—not the one around which Sir James had looked in—and old Matt's Eliza entered hurriedly, with the little girl in her arms and the tall dog at her heels. The dog sprang past her and fawned on Dennys. Eliza came close to Dennys and stood staring at him, and Cynara turned in the woman's arms and smiled and put out her hands to him. He took the little hands in his, and smiled back through his bandages. But the stalwart woman Eliza wore a grim visage.

"I heard of the cat," she said, in a voice to match her face.

"I owe you my life," said Dennys. "But for your warning, I'd have drunk the stuff instead of knocking it from his hand. Gramercy, good Eliza! Look to me for protection, from now on. I'm not a king, nor yet a knight, and I have a broken head—but Dennys ap Rhys ap Tudor is at your service, good wench. Look you to our little damosel, and I will fend for both, mauger my head!"

For seconds she continued to regard him with hard, inscrutable eyes, and then eyes and mouth softened suddenly, and she said, "I believe you," and pressed the child into his arms.

Cynara clasped him about the neck, and he held her tenderly. He was deeply moved by the woman's belief in him as a protector, and yet more deeply by the pressure of the little girl's arm and face, which seemed to him expressions of something more and sweeter than mere faith. He tightened his hold slightly on the small soft body, and stood in a daze until Eliza spoke again.

"Our good king is mad, for all his kind heart," she said. "Mad an' bewitched. And your young knight is

mad. . . . Mad, and bewitched too, as any fool can see. I can smell madness and bewitchment in both of them, for all the King's learning an' twenty baronies, and your master's gentle an' melancholy visage. But you are whole in mind an' heart, for all your broken head. Skulls mend. So I beg you to take our little lass away from here before further evil befalls her."

"She is safe here, in our care," Dennys protested. "The only menace in this house is Sir James, and the King will deal with him soon enough. No peril from outside can touch her."

"You speak like a numskull!" flared Eliza. "What of the rogues your master caught behind the arras? Were they from inside—of the King's people, or the taverner's even? They were from outside, where hundreds more like them slink and watch, ready to slit a throat for a tuppenny bit, and where that woman is. You were the death of the man, but the woman got clean away. D'ye think she will not try to recover what you robbed her of—what she paid silver to the gypsies for—and you hold now in your arms? Why did they burn the child's flesh? For love, think you?"

"God knows!" Dennys exclaimed. "I don't, that's sure: but I do know that hellcat will never wrest her back from me! Do you know the answers to your own questions, woman?"

ELIZA glanced fearfully around, then came even closer to him and lowered her voice to a whisper.

"It is the mark."

"What mark?" he said. "I saw but a red burn."

"There's no burn now," she told him. "The cirurgian's salve cured it like magic, and now there's only the sign God or Satan or the fairies marked her with before she was born."

"What is it?"

"Do you want to see it?"

"Why not? Who has a better right to see it? 'Twas I brought her away from the torturers. God's wounds—I am her savior and guardian!"

"Swear then by those same holy wounds you will never fail her or desert her in her need, while you have life!"

Dennys swore as bidden; whereupon Eliza took Cynara from his arms and undid the gown of samite and gold, and bared the narrow back to his view. And he saw the mark half a span below the left shoulderblade, blushing on the milk-white skin like a wild rose, like rosepetals in tint and texture, but in shape a little hand, as though the right hand of a newborn babe had been laid there and had left its imprint there by some trick of alchemy. Looking closer and blinking a quick mist from his eyes, Dennys swore again by the wounds of spikes and thorns and spear; and he stooped yet lower and touched his lips to the mark quickly, and then stood straight as quickly; and at that the child twisted around in the woman's arms, quick as a kitten, and laid hold of him with both hands and drew him down to her till their faces were pressed together. To straighten himself, he had to take her from Eliza, for the grip of the small soft arms was like the strangle-hold of a wrestler. Eliza, who had released Cynara without protest, uttered a strange note of laughter.

"Are we all mad?" she cried. "All of us bewitched and bedeviled?" She laughed again, but the sound was of consternation and bewilderment and at once an acceptance and a defiance of fate. "Ye've swore a mighty oath, young sir, and a parlous, liker than not, God have mercy on us!"

Dennys, trying gently to ease the pressure of the small damosel's arms and face with his left hand, and at the same time holding her body closer, all unwittingly, with his right arm, paid no attention to Eliza. It was not until Cynara was wrenched from him—the embraces of both broken suddenly and violently by that powerful woman—that he became aware of Matt's advent. The old man came on with upflung arms and waving whiskers, tottering in his haste.

"All's well!" he cried; and he tottered against Dennys and clung to him for support. "Word from the tourney," he gabbled, gasping and clinging. "By a trusty messenger. The King is safe. An' your witless knight too."

Eliza told him to sit down and recover his breath and then tell all he knew; and he obeyed her; and this is the gist of his tale:

SIR LORN LE PERDU was of the Welsh prince's party. When the signal to join battle was given, Lorn's white charger, the mighty Bahram, refused to move; and so it was that twenty-nine knights of the prince's banner rushed in thunderous line to meet King Arthur's onrushing thirty, leaving Sir Lorn like a statue at the starting-point, to the surprise of all beholders. Then Sir Lorn cast away his spear and drew his sword and dismounted and ran afoot toward the battle; and the great horse lay down. Sir James had drugged the horse's corn, swore Matt. But to no avail, praise be to God, for Sir Lorn soon found an unhorsed knight of King Arthur's party and cut him down with the third stroke. And he cried, "Strike hard! Bite deep!" and pulled a large knight from his saddle to the ground, and helped him courteously to his feet, and then mastered him with five strokes.

Then a horsed knight—but a knave at heart—rode at Lorn with his spear, but to his own undoing, for the Lost Knight avoided the point, and cut it off, and smote him through the middle in passing. And when King Torrice saw that foul attack from his place among the squires, he mounted and dressed a spear and hurtled into the battle. Seeing that, the squire of one of Arthur's knights hurtled after him. And then all the squires of both parties took to horse and spear; and so it became a double and mixed tournament of knights and squires all together and in equal numbers, the like of which may not happen twice in a century.

THE heralds ran and bawled to the unruly squires to desist, withdraw—only to be knocked and rolled like skittle-pins by squires and knights alike, until King Arthur signaled from his high seat to carry on. Then there was the strangest to-do, and the most jumbled and least decorous and yet, I dare say, the most diverting, that was ever seen on the great field of Carleon. Many a haughty knight was tumbled from his high saddle that day by an ambitious squire; and many a squire was rolled end-over-end by an indignant knight or another squire; and even the great Sir Kay, high seneschal of Camelot, received such a thrust on his visor from a froward fellow on a hackney, that he all but went over his warhorse's tail for pure chagrin.

There was a squire on a tall horse—an aging and crafty horse—who unseated three knights with his first spear, then got a new spear into his hand as if by conjury, and tumbled another of Arthur's champions, then rode clear of the mêlée and the dust of it to breathe himself and his horse. But by and large, the knights had the mastery mounted and the squires proved themselves the better men afoot, save in the case of Sir Lorn le Perdu, who had joined the battle on his own legs (thanks to Bahram's strange indisposition) and continued to cut down knights and squires indifferently, as they came at him or he sought them out.

So the battle raged back and forth, and this way and that in swirling eddies, with some losses of life but more losses of arms and harness and horses; and no onlooker dared say if the victory would be with the chivalry under King Arthur's banner or with the followers of the Welsh prince, Llewellyn by name, who was still in the saddle, but groggy from loss of blood. (King Arthur, be it understood, did not lead his party in person—not for lack of courage or hardihood, God forbid! but for reasons of state—and sat in judgment over both sides.)

The battlers had lessened greatly in both numbers and fury when the most extraordinary thing of all the wonders of that morning happened for all to see: Bahram, that great white war-

horse, raised his armored head from the sod and sniffed and snorted. He got his hooves under him and heaved himself up. So he stood for a half-minute, glaring and snorting at the strugglers in the field; then he shook himself till all his war-gear creaked and clanked; and then he bared his teeth, vented a bloodcurdling scream and charged at and into the thickest of the battle. He overthrew horses and their riders with the impact of his weight and fury. Many horses, riderless and otherwise, wheeled and fled at his approach. He dragged a stout knight from a high saddle with his teeth, and would have crushed him in his armor like a clam in its shell but for a shout from his master. Then he wheeled to the Lost Knight, who mounted him straightway, still with his sword in his hand and all but a mere cupful of his blood still in his veins; and at the moment when Bahram carried Sir Lorn into the fight again, the squire and tall horse who had withdrawn to recover their breaths returned to it with renewed gusto.

It was not long afterward that King Arthur signaled for hostilities to cease, and the heralds repeated and multiplied the order with voice and trumpet. The victory was given to Llewellyn and his party; and that prince summoned Sir Lorn le Perdu and the squire on the tall warhorse to him; and so the three rode slowly to a space of greensward before the galleries full of ladies and great lords and Arthur in their midst, and there dismount-mounted. The Welsh prince leaned against his horse, and the squire leaned against his, though lightly; but Sir Lorn stood as straight as a tree. Now, at a sign from King Arthur, Prince Llewellyn's helmet, from which the red dragon crest had been shorn away, was unlaced and removed by a gentleman of the court; whereupon Arthur descended swiftly from his place and embraced the prince, amid the applause of the multitude, and passed him tenderly into the hands of Doctor Watkyn, that matchless cirurgian, who led him away tenderly.

And now, at a word, Sir Lorn le Perdu sank lightly to one knee; and when his helmet came off and that pale and bemused and romantic countenance was seen, the shrill applause of the ladies rose above the wondering acclaim of the men, and a shower of roses fell. Arthur gaped, forgetting his kingly manners for a moment, then raised him and embraced him.

"Have I seen you before?" the King asked, in a bewildered voice and with a bewildered yet searching look.

The knight replied: "Not to my knowledge, sir."

"How are you called?" asked the King.

"Lorn le Perdu, sir," replied the knight.

The King muttered, "More of this anon," and stepped to where the formidable squire stood at a shoulder of his tall horse. The squire would have knelt then, but Arthur checked him.

"Do you know that young knight?" he whispered.

"I am his squire," said the other.

"More of this anon, young man—at dinner and supper," said Arthur; and at his nod, the squire stooped to the unlatching and unlacing hands of the courtier.

At the appearance of the bald pate and the magnificent snowy whiskers of King Torrice of Har from a squire's casque, Arthur gasped and recoiled a pace, and uttered an astonished oath, and the startled courtier vented a yelp and dropped the helmet to earth, as if he had scorched his fingers.

All this was hearsay to old Matt, but from the mouth of the head groom Peter, who had beheld every stroke and then crept forward at the tail of King Torrice's horse to hear every word.

Chapter Six

More of Cynara

DENNYS sat alone for hours. His first exultation for his friend's mighty deeds and their royal recognition soon began to sour within him. He did not begrudge the Lost Knight his success, nor was he surprised at it, but he envied the old king—older than Merlin!—his part in that tournament and his share of that glory. He, Dennys ap Rhys, had been cheated by Fate of his rightful place and opportunity. But for a cobblestone flung by a base knave in a disreputable slum, he, not King Torrice, would have squired Sir Lorn this morning and joined the fray at the first excuse and acquired merit and renown. He did not doubt, at the moment, that his deeds of arms would have matched the old king's. He told himself that even if his mounted performance had not matched the King's, he would, like Lorn, have wrought such prodigious havoc afoot, after and if he had been unhorsed, that King Arthur would have knighted him on the spot. *Arise, Sir Dennys!* How would that have sounded? But no, by a scurvy trick of Fate, his great opportunity had fallen to the lot of one who had no need of it—to a puissant lord rich in baronies and manors, and a knight who had been a known champion long before the birth of any other contender in that tournament. And he cursed the injustice of it. Tears of self-pity and unreasoning anger misted his eyes.

"And now my head feels almost as good as ever it did!" he cried. "By tomorrow I could have given and taken hard knocks with the best of them. If the battle had been called for tomorrow instead of today, I'd have been there, mauger my head! Or if that accursed cobble had hit me a day sooner. But that could not have been, for we were still on the road then. If it had never hit me—that would be better still. That would be best—if I'd never got my head broke in a brawl with lousy rascals—if I'd but stopped in my bed that morning."

And then he heard himself. The meaning of his wild words struck in to his heart, and his jealous anger and self-pity were consumed in a hot flare of shame.

"God forgive me!" he cried.

He sprang to his feet and paced the floor, cursing himself for a knave. All he felt for himself now was loathing. Again he heard the screams of a terrified tormented child. Again he saw the small quivering body, and the red-tipped awl in the man's hand, and the faces of the tormentors turned to him like gaping masks.

"I killed him," Dennys muttered. "Good! It was well done. And I brought the child away—little Cynara." Again he felt those thin soft arms about his neck, and that soft face against his lips. "It was well done. No knightly deed at joustings and tournaments was ever better done! Lord Jesus, I thank you! I fought on Your side then, and You on mine!"

Now he felt in better conceit of himself, and his rage against Fate was forgotten. Now he sat down and thought with a degree of composure; and though the sense of gratitude to the Divine Mercy was still with him, all the pictures in his mind were of the child Cynara, as he had first seen her and held her in his arm and run with her for dear life, and as he had last seen and held her this very day.

Old Matt entered on the tottering run, with more news. Sir James was nowhere to be found. Matt himself, and several others, had searched the inn from cellars to garrets. And the strongest of King Torrice's strongboxes had been broken into and emptied. The King had always kept his most valuable jewels and a few full purses in that box. Well, it was empty now.

"He's well rid of the old snake, even if he took the worth of five thousand crowns with him," said Matt. "For his plan was to beggar us all to the bone. But when he saw that the King was beginning to distrust him an' to weary of him—which was the very night you an' yer worshipful master came to this place—he lost his cunning. He tried to poison you, but only killed a cat. He poisoned the great warhorse, but not to kill him. I see his snaky plan. He would have had that horse on his legs for just long enough to carry the knight into the

Cups of wine and horns of mead and ale were thrust into their hands from every direction.

battle, but sluggishly, and then to fail him suddenly in the first fierce clash. But it did not happen so, and your master joined the battle afoot, unscathed and vigorous and in a destructive temper of concern for his horse. When that viper heard the truth, he saw the failure of all his cunning and the end of his wicked play. And so he robbed the strong-box and stole away."

"Did he take a horse?" asked Dennys.

"Nay, nor yet a mountain pony. He left his knightly arms and harness too. An old cloak and hat of Luke's are missing. He has not gone in a guise to catch the eye, but like a poor whining mendicant, or maybe a sufferer in a lost cause or for a new philosophy, mark my words. No longer a snake with a snake's fangs and cunning, he is a worm now with wormy cunning—an' with a prince's ransom hid next his skin!"

"You talk like a philosopher or a clark yourself," said Dennys admiringly.

"You are a young gentleman of uncommon discernment, sir; and I'll not deny that my mind and soul are far above my worldly station, sir," the old fellow replied, with a mock-modest smirk.

"If ever I come by a castle of my own, I'll make you my seneschal," Dennys promised him.

The old man moved closer to the young one; and now he had a new look in his eyes that was at once considering and anxious and hopeful; and he spoke in a lower voice:

"And in the meantime ye'll maybe say a word to the King on my behalf, sir—just in case he should think that I had neglected my duty in the matter of the ravished strong-box?"

"I'll do that," Dennys promised.

"And now," he went on, "I must ask you to fetch victuals and drink to me; and I don't mean chicken broth. I am hungry and thirsty as a hunter. Let it be red meat, and pudding, and a horn of ale. Nay, a jack of strong ale. And bring word of my little lass. See that your daughter wards her safe and sure."

Matt departed; and Dennys took to pacing the floor again, but calmly now. His head felt as good as new, save to the touch, and as clear as glass. And his limbs were vigorous. Nothing was amiss with him now, physically, save an empty stomach and a dry gullet; and his spirit matched his head and limbs. He was at peace with his soul. He had lost an opportunity to shine on the field of glory, but now he felt nothing of regret for it, nor of his first jealous envy of the old king. And there would be other opportunities. Once he had Cynara in the great valley of home, where every hand would befriend and protect her, and even the ghosts of his ancestors would stand watch and ward, he and his enchanted knight would put forth again on the quest of glory. He was still Sir Lorn's squire and oldest known friend. King Torrice was older, true enough—older than Merlin!—but had known him for less than a sennight: whereas he, Dennys ap Rhys ap Tudor, had known and cherished the lost knight these nine months past. And if Lorn and the King held to each other's company, well and good! As they were both bewitched, what could be more natural? In that case he, Dennys, would squire both of them.

HIS train of thought was broken by the entrance of Eliza, Cynara and the tall dog. Once within the room, the little damosel released the woman's hand and came running to him

and laid hold of him as high as she could reach. Eliza and the dog advanced much more soberly. Cynara clutched the breast of his jerkin and pulled on it.

"I would buss you, Denny," she piped. "But you are too high. Come down. Or take me up."

Dennys was about to stoop to her, when Eliza's voice checked him.

"Leave be!"

Dennys glared at the woman, then stooped and kissed the child's upturned face lightly, then stood straight and glared again. And she glared back at him. But his eyes did not waver, and he bent his brows fiercely. He was no longer helpless in bed. He saw her black gaze change and waver, vastly to his relief. But he gave no sign of relief or uncertainty.

"Mind your manners, wench!" he said, in a voice so harsh and menacing that he scarcely knew it for his own. "Have a care lest I look for another nurse for my little ward."

AT that, the rugged cheeks went as gray as a dishclout, the mastiff-jaws quivered, the formidable head drooped, and the shoulders, as wide as a wrestler's, sagged and trembled. Then, moving swiftly but heavily, she sank to her knees and clasped him about his knees before he could check or avoid her. Dennys would have wrenched himself clear with violence, but for the little girl; for she too had been caught in that embrace, and was now pressed between the woman and himself.

"What the devil?" he cried in sudden panic. "D'ye mean to crush the child? Ease your hold, or I'll twist your neck!"

Cynara, pressed tight though she was, managed to look up at him with a smile and to speak, though somewhat breathlessly.

"Don't hurt 'Liza. She's crying. Poor 'Liza."

It was true. That masterful being of bone and muscle and arrogance was sobbing and blubbering and quaking in a pitiful manner; and as her convulsions of grief increased, the clasp of her arms loosed. Dennys swore in consternation and again in pity. His anger fell away with the slackening of the pressure of those terrible arms.

"Give over!" he begged. "I didn't mean it. You're a grand, trusty wench —and if Cynara wants you, so be it! Now unhold me—let the little lass clear, and get up on your feet."

She obeyed, moving with an appearance of slow heaviness, but swiftly, as bears move. She turned in the act of rising from her knees, and withdrew a few paces and stood with her back to him and Cynara. Her massive shoulders, still stooped, continued to quake with half-stifled sobs, and her head remained bowed. Cynara, still close against Dennys but pressing now instead of pressed, laughed softly and spoke softly.

"Don't cry, 'Liza. Dennys will be good to us. He won't ever send you away. But if you ever again try to stop me when I want to buss him, maybe I will send you away."

Dennys stared down in astonishment at the childish upturned face, which smiled instantly back at him. He was amazed. He was confused.

"No, no, my little Cynara, you would not do that!" he protested. "Not to brave good Eliza—who loves you so dearly, and will guard you like a dragon."

The child laughed up at him again and said: "You love me dearly too."

"Yes. Certainly I love you. Haven't I proved it—with a broken head? And you love Eliza, who takes such good care of you, and doubtless thinks she does everything for the best."

"I love 'Liza, but I love Dennys more."

At that moment Matt entered with a horn in one hand and a trencher in the other, and a fellow from the kitchen bearing a great covered dish.

"A horn?" exclaimed Dennys. "Are you deaf, good Matt? I told you a jack; and now I am even thirstier than I was then."

"Ay, sir, a jack of strong ale it was," Matt agreed. "But Eliza said no, 'twould be too much for Yer Honor's poor head an' like to rouse a fever. So 'tis but a horn, young sir, and of small beer, at that."

After a moment of hesitation, Dennys took the horn. He saw the woman raise her head and look at him over a shoulder.

"Eliza was right," he said. "I'd be a fool and a knave to question it. She saved me from a cat's death—a fact I forgot a few minutes ago, God forgive me!—so why wouldn't she save me from a fever? Gramercy, Eliza!"

He drank then; and by the time the long horn was drained, the woman and the child and the dog were gone, and also the scullion who had fetched the great dish, and only Matt remained. The old man stood goggling at Dennys with round eyes, and wagging his whiskers and muttering.

"I never saw the like of it. Tears in the eyes of that masterful wench. Tears of humility an' devotion, by Judas! She has brought tears to others' eyes many a time, by the slapping of faces an' banging of heads on floors on' walls—of herds an' foresters an' saucy scullions. But her own eyes! Bewitchment, mark my words, young sir! The little damosel has bewitched her."

"You talk like a fool, old man," Dennys replied, but good-humoredly. "She's fond of the child—an' why not? She has a soft, motherly heart behind her iron ribs."

He uncovered the dish and set to work, with fingers and a small dagger and a horn spoon, on a stew of beef and dumplings. Matt looked on in silence until fully half of that mighty stew had passed from the dish to the squire's interior. Then he spoke again.

"I say she's bewitched!"

Dennys replied without looking up from the stew, and indistinctly because his mouth was full of dumpling.

"You're mad. Go to!"

"An' have a care for yourself, young sir," warned Matt.

Dennys swallowed the dumpling and looked up at Matt's solemn face. He frowned, then laughed lightly.

"If I be in peril of witchery too, don't tell me Eliza's the witch!" he jeered.

"Nay, not that great wench," said the ancient slowly, and still as solemn as an owl. He stooped lower and went on in an anxious whisper: "Harky to me, young sir! These eyes have seen things of fair fame an' foul, of this poor human life mostly, but of hell an' heaven too: of all manners of witcheries an' sorceries, an' sleights of magic both black an' white, an' evil in many an innocent guise. Day an' night, the imps of Satan beset our paths in fair an' cunning shapes—of lost an' bereaved damosels an' ladies and—"

"Have a care!" Dennys interrupted, his voice low but dangerous. "One wrong word now, old fool, and I'll feed your clapper to the crows!"

"Ye mistake me!" protested Matt, shaking with fright but standing his ground. "'Tis the mark I warn ye of. I glimpsed it by chance but an hour ago. The birthmark."

"What of it?" Dennys asked, his voice still low and deadly, but now curious too.

MATT'S whisper thinned almost to nothing.

"I saw it once before—on a dead king's back—in Ireland, long ago. And I heard of others who carried it—princes an' queens—for good an' evil, but mostly for evil, so I heard in that perilous country. 'Tis the mark of a high royal race—the highest in all that land—branded on them before birth by angels, or maybe devils."

"What of it?" Dennys asked again, but with a quaver of apprehension in his voice now.

"She was stolen from a king's house. Gypsies stole her an' carried her off for a ransom—an' dared not take her back. Sooner or later, they brought her into this country; an' the best they could do was sell her to a pair of jongleurs; an' they too feared the mark, an' so tried to burn it off. Or it may be the gypsies stole her in revenge for cruel acts. However that may be, young sir, a child with that

kingly birth-badge on her should be in stronger hands than in a poor squire's."

"What do you suggest?" asked Dennys.

"Give her into King Torrice's keeping."

"Nay, that old king is mad. He cannot guard his own property from knaves and thieves. And he is bewitched, by your own telling."

"To King Arthur Pendragon, then. Aye, to that high overlord himself! Go to him and tell him all, young sir; and he will send men-at-arms to this unsafe inn to fetch her to his castle; and he will take Eliza too, for her nurse."

Dennys stood up slowly; and Matt backed away from him.

"Your years and infirmities save you," he said quietly. "But have a care, old man. Should King Arthur hear of the little damosel, I'll know whose neck to wring. I took her from her tormentors. I shall take her to safety. And I have sworn, by God's wounds, never to fail her or desert her. A poor squire, am I? So be it. And bewitched? So be it. But the word of Dennys ap Rhys ap Tudor is as good as any king's. Go away now—get out—before I lose my temper."

Chapter Seven

The Return of the Champions

King Torrice sent for enough fine articles of raiment from his wardrobes to furnish forth both himself and Sir Lorn to match even King Arthur, and a warning to all concerned not to expect him until they saw him.

The afternoon passed slowly for Dennys ap Rhys ap Tudor. His temper took on an edge. He thought with increasing irritation and contempt of Matt's homily on witches and evil enchantresses. He thought of the object of the old fool's wicked, ridiculous, cruel suggestion. Cynara, tortured and helpless—that pitiful baby! Cynara, clinging and trusting, that innocent child! He clapped both hands to his head in the stress of thought, and did not notice that he felt no pain from the pressure. Cynara, that small damosel. Cynara, laughing, into his eyes with misty stars and against his lips with dewy petals of roses. He sat down, still clasping his bandaged head. Old Matt entered, with apprehensive looks and conciliatory gestures. Dennys leaped to his feet and shouted:

"What now, fellow?"

"Nothing!" yelped Matt, ready to turn and run for his life—or for his tongue, at least.

Dennys calmed himself with an effort. He blinked at the old man, then spoke quietly, but with a sneer.

"I feared that Sir James had come back and pried open another of King Torrice's strong-boxes."

"Nay, Yer Worship. Master Gyles has doubled the guard. Eliza sent me, sir. I asked her, sir. If you have no fever, sir—her own words—another horn of small beer will do Yer Honor no harm."

What with the beer, and a visit from Gyles the taverner, who feared that King Torrice would hold him in part responsible for the loss of the jewelry and money, and who begged Dennys humbly to say a good word for him, the squire's mind was distracted from a distressful train of thought. His temper returned almost to normal and his manner with Matt to its usual friendliness. After a supper of roast duckling with green peas followed by a strawberry tart, he told Matt to fetch a cup of French wine without reference to Eliza. The old fellow obeyed, for now he stood more in awe of Dennys than of his masterful daughter. After the wine, Dennys insisted upon a game of chess. They both played very badly, what with sleepiness on the young gentleman's part and nervousness on the old servant's. Both their kings were in check, but without their awareness, when Eliza came into the room. She entered and approached the chess-players with a strange air of timidity; and when they looked up at her, she spoke in a voice as timid as her demeanor, and with her gaze on the chessman between them.

"I have brought her from that chamber at the back, and the dog too—all three of us—to one beside this, which I think will be safer," she said.

Dennys came wide awake.

"You did right," he said. "I was about to suggest it. Something of the kind, anyhow. 'Twas well thought of, Eliza. Beside this, d'ye say? Which side?"

She pointed to a wall and said; "You enter it by that door," and pointed to a door, "and then by the door on the left."

"One bang on that wall, good wench, and I'll be with you with sword an' dagger!" cried Dennys.

"Gramercy, young sir," murmured the woman, but with her eyes still lowered to the ivory pieces.

But her father uttered a little muttering cry of protest.

"But I sleep there—an' Luke an' Dick along with me—at the King's beck an' call! It won't do. He won't like it."

"Fiddlesticks!" exclaimed Dennys, who felt splendid after his pint-sized cup of wine.

His heart felt invincible, and his brain vigorous and nimble.

"You and your Lukes an' Dicks can move your cots out back," he said, with a generous gesture of the right hand which overturned half the chessmen. "And if they bandy words about it, or so much as hem and haw, send the rascals to me," he added, with a threatening gesture which overturned the remaining chessmen.

"The beds are already rearranged, kind sir," Eliza murmured, with a quick glance and smile at Dennys.

She turned and went away as she had come, but now with her perturbed sire scurrying after. Left to himself, Dennys nodded and slumped until he slept at last with his face on the chessboard.

Sudden clatter of iron on stone and a hubbub of voices brought Dennys straight up on his chair. His first thought was of a threat to Cynara—that Eliza's fear of attack was confirmed—and he leaped to his sword. But he realized his mistake before the blade was clear of the scabbard, for there was no suggestion of stealth in the disturbance, to which sounds of banging on wood and the voice of the taverner pleading for patience, and a rattling of bolts and bars were added from within the house. He heard the front door slam open against a wall, a voice raised raggedly in song, and stumbles and bumps in the narrow staircase; and he knew the champions were home, and discarded his sword.

A door of that chamber flew open, and King Torrice, still singing, barged in, with Sir Lorn moving less energetically in his wake. That indestructible cavalier and perpetual quester, bearded like St. Peter and older than Merlin, flung himself upon Dennys and embraced him. Dennys returned the embrace in self-defence, and they swayed and staggered together; but the young knight sat down on the nearest chair, with a pleasant but vacuous smile on his face. Three old servitors, Matt and Luke and Dick, entered the room. At sight of them, the King released Dennys and advanced upon them and laid hold of Matt and Luke, each by a beard.

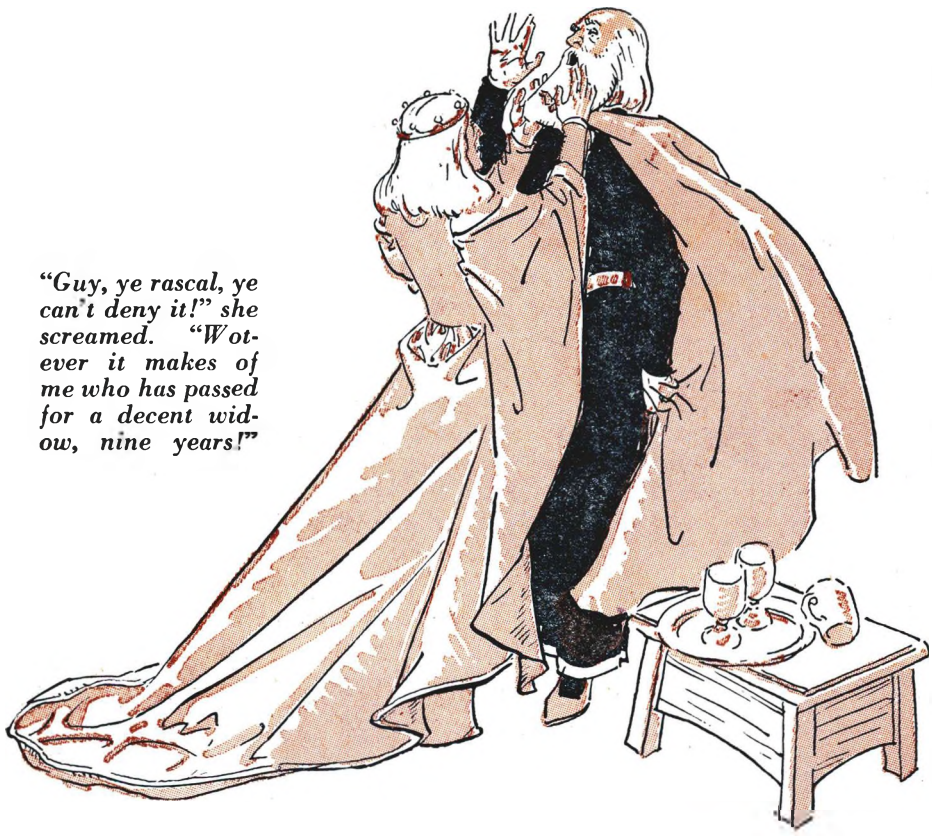
"Sir James?" he demanded. "Where is Sir James?"

"Stole away—run off—with all Yer Majesty's jewelry!" cried old Matt, the note of distress in his voice heightened by the painful pull on his whiskers.

"Hah!" exclaimed the King. "Stole away, d'ye say? Run off with jewelry? So I'm rid of him at last, praise be to God! Fetch wine! Cups and flagons of the best!"

He released his hold on the two beards; whereupon all three servants dashed away to do his bidding.

The wine came, in flasks and flagons accompanied by cups; and the King, the knight and the squire drank to themselves and one another and the confusion of their enemies. The King was toastmaster. Some of the toasts



"Guy, ye rascal, ye can't deny it!" she screamed. "Wotever it makes of me who has passed for a decent widow, nine years!"

he proposed, and all three honored, were beyond Dennys' comprehension. "To the joint quest!" was one of these. "To the soul of beauty in seven shapes!" was another. But Dennys was not in an inquiring or analytical state of mind. His heart glowed with affection and admiration for his companions. Was there ever before such a good comrade and glorious champion as Lorn le Perdu, or so friendly and generous a king as Torrice of Har? He sat on his cot and applied himself gallantly to the task of acknowledging every toast by draining a full cup. Old Matt saw to the replenishing. And the Lost Knight sat on the other cot and drained his cup—a smaller one than the squire's—every time old Dick filled it; and Dennys noticed that the vacant look had taken on a simper of complacency.

But the King did not sit, nor even stand still. He could not have stood still if he had tried to, for his body was in constant danger of toppling and crashing like an ax-smitten tree; and so, to avoid the fall, he had to keep his legs under him by quick footwork in spurts of speed now to the right, now to the left, now in a circle. This did not interfere with his vocal cords or his swallowing muscles, however; but it was hard on poor old Luke, whose duty it was to keep the royal cup replenished.

Dennys reclined on his cot, then lay flat. His right hand sank to the floor, his limp fingers relaxed their grip, and he heard the empty cup clatter and roll. He smiled and closed his eyes; and his cot became a cloud, a floating and gently swaying and slowly revolving cloud, upon which he was lifted like a cherub, up and around and through the ceiling to Heaven.

Chapter Eight

The Awakening of Dennys

DENNYS became conscious of a wet face, and of more drops and dribbles of moisture descending upon it, and he supposed himself to be out in the rain. Asleep on the mountainside, that was it. Nothing new in that. Nothing important enough to wake up for and inquire about, certainly. So he sank back to unconsciousness without having so much as attempted to open his eyes. . . . Again he became conscious of a wet face, but now it was not a mere drip and dribble, like a rain from the south on the hills of home, that caused the awareness. This was a blow, as if from a wild surf—as if a wave had struck and broken against his face and deluged his head and breast.

Suffocating, half-drowned, choking and gasping for air, he sat up and opened his eyes. Eliza! She stood over him, with a dripping but empty bucket still bottom-up in her hands. Her face was haggard, and her eyes were tragic; but they changed for the better instantly, as if despair had changed to hope quicker than thought. He got his breath, closed his eyes and would have fallen back to his wet pillows and disrupted slumber, but she was too quick for him. She set the bucket aside and grabbed and held his wet shoulders.

"No, no, ye've slept long enough!" she cried.

He brushed a hand across his eyes; and now he saw the taverner and Matt where they stood a few paces off, regarding him.

"What now?" he mumbled. "I was asleep. Unhand me, good wench. I was late to bed last night."

"Nay, not last night," she told him, in a shaken voice and with fear in her eyes. "You slept like the dead all last night—and all the day before, too. Rouse ye now, for Christ's sake!"

"D'ye say so? What ails me, then? Did some rogue break my head again?"

"Nay, 'twas the wine you drank with the King and Sir Lorn."

Wine? Ah, he remembered it now—that wine in flasks and flagons and cups; and the old king staggering this way and that, and ranting of quests and adventures and the seven shapes of the soul of beauty; and the Lost Knight sitting on his couch with a far-away but kindling look on his face, lifting and lowering his cup of silver-gilt in silence.

"And what of them? Do they still sleep?"

"Nay, they awoke betimes, and bestirred themselves, young sir—but that was yesterday."

"Yesterday? Do they joust again, those two champions? And me still skulking with a sore head!"

"They went away, horsed and harnessed—but not for the joustings here in Carleon. They're gone on a high quest—to the world's end, like as not—or into Faërie Land."

"Nay, Lorn would not leave me thus—just for the want of waking!"

"'Tis God's truth, young sir!"

"The Devil's truth!" cried old Matt. "Both mad! The King as mad as yer bedeviled young knight! Bewitched, the both of them, to forsake us here!"

Dennys, dumbfounded, regarded the old man with stricken eyes. Eliza, still stooped over him, though she had released his shoulders, spoke again, and yet more gently.

"It is better so, good sir. Those two feystruck champions would prove mad company for a sane gentleman and" (she lowered her voice to a sigh) "unsure, untrusty guardians for a little, imperiled lass."

The taverner advanced and spoke for the first time.

"Enough of this!" he exclaimed. "Heed her not, Sir Squire—nor old Matt, neither. The King will return soon, and yer noble friend with him. He told me so. They but ride on some chance small adventure of chivalry to pass the time till Yer Honor's full re-

covery. His Kingship told me so, in them very words. An' he left his great horse Rex in his stall, saddle an' rich trappings complete, and a mort of arms an' gear an' knightly harness. You an' yours can rest easy in my strong house an' my trusty care, Sir Squire."

"Gramercy, good Gyles," muttered Dennys. "Let me sleep now, good friends, for my eyes are hot and heavy."

SO the three left him; and despite the weight of his eyes and the ache in his brain, he saw, and wondered at, the taverner's care in herding Matt and Eliza from the room before him and in closing the door. But he was in no condition to wonder long. He closed his eyes, and drifted into black oblivion. . . .

Dennys sneezed once and again and sat up and grabbed with both hands even before he got his eyes open. He stared at finding old Matt in his clutches.

"Hush-hush!" shushed Matt. "Quiet now. I but tickled yer nose with a feather, to wake ye. Lay back now, an' if that rogue taverner comes back, shut yer eyes. For rogue he is. Eliza's right. Lay back now—he's maybe spying on us—an' harky to me, if ye love yer life."

Bewildered but impressed, Dennys lay flat again.

"Eliza's right. The little damosel's not safe here. Nobody nor nothing worth a groat's safe now the King's not here. An' I've a bag of silver crowns he gave me for the road; and the horse Rex is for you, with all else he left behind. We got to clear out before another dawn, or the rogue taverner will have all, an' the little lass, an' our dear lives. Eliza spied on him last night, an' saw him hiding lordly jewels in cracks in the wall, like a magpie. Maybe he was hand an' glove with Sir James. If that false knight is ever found, 'twill be down a well. An' the king an' Sir Lorn will never return for ye, young sir, mark my words."

"Why not?" whispered Dennys.

"Quiet now! The King has got the notion into his poor head yer bewitched knight is his grandson, or maybe great-grandson. I heard him telling it to Sir Lorn. And it could be, even if he cannot name the grandmother offhand. So they've gone in quest of her."

Matt stopped short; and Dennys beheld such an acute grimace of warning on the old man's face that he checked a stream of questions on the very tip of his tongue. He saw Matt straighten up and step back a pace; and then he heard the voice of Gyles the taverner, smooth and unctuous, from a few yards off.

"How fares our poor young gentleman now?"

"Fever," sighed Matt. "The wine fuming inside the cracked skull—God forgive us! He mutters an' raves, poor lad!"

At this Dennys began to mutter, for he could think fast at need. The innkeeper entered his field of view; and he narrowed his eyes and continued to mutter. Gyles came close and stooped, with a smile on his wide ruddy face. Dear Lord Christ, what a smile; It bared the greedy teeth, and all but hid the gloating eyes. Dennys felt a grip on his heart as of icy fingers, but he kept on with his crazy mutter; and he widened his eyes into what he hoped was a crazy stare.

And now he glimpsed, beyond the taverner's stooping shoulders, that which all but silenced his muttering and deflected his stare. Old Matt, standing straight in rear of the taverner, raised his right arm high—and in his hand was a short-shafted, spike-headed mace: but it was not until the mace began its swift descent that Dennys shut his eyes and lost his voice entirely. He heard the impact of mace on skull—the crack and crush of bone—and simultaneous grunts from striker and stricken. The sudden corpse, still quivering, fell across him, and rolled and thudded to the floor; and while in the act of quitting the cot himself, he heard old Matt gasp proudly: "As stark a stroke, by Judas, as ever I struck!"

Chapter Nine

Dennys Heads for the Hills of Home

THEY rode softly, as the saying is. Once mounted, and until they were clear of town and camp, they showed no evidence of haste or the need of it. No one would guess, by their movements or appearance, that they had left behind them one man dead and two men bound and gagged. The leader was up on a tall, pale, gaunt warhorse which trod with impressive deliberation rather than vigor. He was in full armor even to the plumed helm, but the visor was open. The armor was of the best quality, but an outmoded style. The great shield, which hung on his left shoulder, was dented, and displayed an imposing though somewhat dimmed device; but any herald could have read it—gules, a unicorn rampant and armed, argent and or.

But within those knightly plates and that great casque was a mere squire, and a none too self-assured squire, at that—Dennys ap Rhys ap Tudor. At his charger's heels came two mountain ponies with a curtained litter slung between them. Close behind the litter came a formidable figure in a squire's harness and casque, astride Dennys' good brown gelding Hero. Bundles and baskets and a leather bottle dangled from the saddle along with a mace and a battle-ax, but from the rider's big right fist stood up a two-edged sword of extraordinary length and weight. Then came old Matt and the herdsmen Oggle and Maggon astride mountain ponies, all in leather and iron, and armed to the teeth and hung about with goods and knightly gear; and through and around all trotted a tall dog.

Clear of the cobblestones of the town and the rank dust of the camp, the little cavalcade broke into a trot; and when they drew rein at the first lift of dawn, the curtains of the litter parted, and a little, frightened face looked out. A soft cry issued from the squire's casque, the sword fell from the great fist and the formidable figure flung itself from the brown hackney's back and dashed to the litter, still crying endearments. There it lifted the occupant up and out and held her close, but tenderly, to a breast of iron; and the child clasped the iron-clad neck with both small arms, crying "'Liza, my 'Liza!" between tears and laughter.

"A mad world!" muttered Dennys, still up on his high saddle. "And a perilous! An' a haphazard, God wot! My lost friend finds himself a mad king for a grandfather: and both of them witch-ridden. And I find a king's daughter—may all the angels shield her an' guide my hands an' wits!—to carry to safety, mauger my head!—and to her royal home over the sea even, when she is big enough to travel so far."

He dismounted with deliberation befitting his lordly shield and harness and the height and dignity of the ancient warhorse. His responsibilities weighed on him heavier than his armor; but when he saw Cynara smiling at him across one of Eliza's mailed shoulders, his heart and brain felt like blowing thistledown, and his helmet like a velvet cap, and his foot-gear of cunningly wrought links of brass like slippers of morocco leather.

AFTER a few hours' rest, Dennys and his party resumed their northern way, but not on the open road. Fearful of pursuit from Carleon, Dennys led his little company through copses and forest fringes. They went by easy stages and at a snail's-pace all day, but when the stars glinted again they returned to the trodden track and made better time. Thus they progressed, at varying speeds and generally northward, and without human interference, until noon of their third day out of Carleon, when Dennys called a halt in a forest glade.

"Water and grass," he said; and he was about to dismount, when a short spear came flying and glanced and pitched from his gorget.

The attackers were upon them from all sides—a score of rogues in leather and rusty iron for the most part, but a few in tags and rags of stolen finery, but all armed with knives and boar-spears. Dennys wheeled into action on his tall horse, stooping and striking to right and left; but Eliza, on the brown gelding, was quicker. Eliza roared defiance and damnation while she slashed and thrust; and the hackney kicked and struck and bit and screamed, even as he had been taught to fight by the mighty Bahram, in the distant valley of home.

BUT the attackers were not easy marks for long-swords; as all they wanted was horses and goods and gear, they changed their tactics after seven or eight of the more reckless of them had been cut in two by just so many strokes. Now they tried to avoid the knight and squire—little did they suspect that the "knight" was but an apprentice squire and the furious "squire" but a nursemaid!—and at the same time, dispatch the grooms and panic and stampede the beasts of burden. Once in the surrounding tangles of timber and brushwood, where a reserve of their gang watched and waited, the ponies and all they carried would vanish like smoke.

They were as agile as weasels; but Oggle and Maggon were agile too, and old Matt was crafty. The grooms and Matt were afoot and the five ponies in a tight little herd with the litter in the middle of it, within two minutes of the first rush of the attack. The dog sprang here and there, gashing leather and flesh to right and left. Dennys was about to dismount, the better to come to grips with the elusive foe, when the old warhorse spared him the effort by stumbling to its knees and pitching him clear of the saddle and everything. He landed on all-fours, but was on his feet and running before any advantage could be taken of him. He chased a dozen of the enemy twice around the snorting ponies, shouting a battle-cry—"A Lorn, a Lorn! Strike hard! Bite deep!"—the slogan of the friend who had forsaken him.

He came up with them and struck, and struck again; and at the screams of the victims the others turned on him, and yet others joined them, and in a twinkling, they were all upon him like a pack of wolves. They went over him like a wave. He came up, still hacking and jabbing and giving far worse than he got. He went under again, still struggling, but without hope; he awaited the vital stab, the last mortal agony—but instead, and too suddenly to be realized instantly, the weight of battering feet and knees and groping hands was withdrawn. He staggered up, staring in amazement at what he saw.

No living enemy remained in the glade. A great white horse—Bahram, or was he dreaming!—stood within ten paces of him; and there was Lorn, in half-armor, running toward the ponies, which had finally panicked and broken away in every direction; and there were the grooms and Matt and the tall dog dodging this way and that, and Eliza on the brown hackney wheeling and shouting—one and all bent upon reherding the pack-train. The curtained litter was wrenched from its lashings, and the little damosel Cynara was spilled to the ground, screaming. Lorn snatched her up. In the same tick of time, Eliza hurled herself from the saddle and snatched the squirming child from the knight's hands. Between them, the frail gown and the frailer shift beneath it were torn from neck to waist.

"God's wounds!" cried the knight. "The Faërie Hand! Little Brigid! I've found her at last!"

Now Dennys bestirred himself. He staggered to them. Bleeding from several shallow cuts, and bruised and dazed, he steadied himself against stalwart Eliza, who by now had the little girl clasped to her iron bosom.

"I found her," he said, with a thick tongue.

And now old King Torrice emerged from the forest on a winded old horse, with mounted grooms and pack horses following.

Now they had nothing to fear from attack. Reinforced by the King and the knight and their four attendants, the party was too strong for any wandering company of outlaws. But King Torrice, after hearing the extraordinary thing Sir Lorn had to tell, was impatient to be up and away again.

"I knew it the instant I saw it," said the Lost Knight; and his tongue was so stiff from disuse that it could hardly shape the words. "I remembered it then—and everything. Nay, not everything. I sought her for years—little Brigid—by that mark—till I forgot her and it—and my sacred vows."

"One thing at a time, dear lad," said the King. "Are you telling us that you know this child?"

"Yes, by the Faërie Hand. I set out to find her—long ago. A small infant then—not a year old. I would know her by the mark she was born with. They are not all marked so. One now and then, from remotest times—always of that race. Some call it Queen Mab's Hand. She was a queen of Elfland in ancient times."

"Never mind Queen Mab now, dear lad," said King Torrice. "It's yourself and this little girl we want to hear about, and how and where you met her before and all that. You said 'little Brigid' just now. What's the rest of it? Brigid who?"

"Cavanaugh," said the knight. "That's the name. Her mother is Queen Brigid. Her father is King Malachi. She was stolen out of the castle. Gypsies couldn't do that. It was Prince Seumas. He denied it. But he confessed at last to giving her to a gypsy, and said he would get her back—but that could never be, for in his rage Malachi killed him then without stopping to think."

"Just a moment, dear lad! This Prince Seumas? Who was he?"

"Why, King Malachi's half-brother. Younger by thirty years. They promised him the crown, Malachi and Queen Brigid both—that he would be The Cavanaugh some day, if they never had a son—and it was not likely, at the King's age, there'd be any more babies after this one. But when he heard that the Faërie Hand was on her, he knew they'd not keep that promise—for fear of offending the faëries. So he did what he did—and died for it. I made a vow, on a splinter of the True Cross, to seek the infant, and find her and take her home, or perish in the quest. Five others made the same vow. Three were kin to Malachi and three to the queen. Four were knights, so the King knighted two of us. Then a bishop shrived and blessed us, and we rode our six separate ways. Bahram was a young horse then, not come to his full growth. But Bahram was not his name then—and if he had one then, I cannot recall it. He is a gift from Queen Brigid, and of a noble race. Dame Gwyn named him. That was but last winter."

"Never mind the horse now. Tell us of yourself, dear lad, and your quest. For how long did you follow it? Why did you forsake it, and where and when? And when did you cross the sea from Ireland?"

"Three summers and three winters I searched over Ireland. I don't know when I crossed the sea. I know nothing about that. I was in the mountains of Killarney. A voice called to me from a tower, at the fall of night. There was singing and music sounding from the windows of that tower. A door opened and showed red torchlight. I rode to that door—and came, afoot, to Dennys' camp-fire in the mountain of Eidyn."

PRESSING a hand to his head, the knight sighed.

"You came a long way without knowing it, poor lad," said King Torrice, stroking his beard thoughtfully. "But that was by necromancy, to say the least of it. Killarney, hey? But we haven't time to investigate that now. One thing at a time—or only two, at the most: that is my rule. Our immediate task is to return the child to her parents' arms and you to your kith and kin. To which of those two are you sib, by the way? The king or the queen?"

"The queen, who was a Kelly," said Sir Lorn—but you could see he was thinking of something else, or trying to, anyhow.

"Har! A Kelly!" exclaimed Torrice. "But never mind that now. We'll see what we see when we get there. We're practically on the way. A bite of dinner and we're jinking."

Then Eliza spoke up. The great wench had laid aside her armor and all her weapons save a dagger, and now she did her best to look and sound meek and maidenly.

"Your Grace, Master Dennys took wounds and hard knocks and lost a deal of blood. He will be fitter for the road tomorrow than he is today, Your Grace."

KING TORRICE looked from her to Dennys, who reclined nearby on the sward and looked at the green leaves overhead.

"Forgive me, good lad!" he exclaimed. "So many things on my mind—and so sudden! I've been remiss." He got to his feet stiffly. "I shall now search and dress your wounds, good Dennys."

"Nay, they've already been searched and dressed, Your Grace," said Eliza—but now there was a shade less of meekness in her voice and likewise in the carriage of her broad shoulders.

"Quite so, good wench," returned the King hastily. "In that case, good Eliza, we shall press on—and you with us, of course, to mind the child—for we must not delay that sacred reunion a moment longer than need be; and Squire Dennys can follow after at his convenience."

She was about to reply to that, but Dennys sat up and checked her with a glance. Then Dennys got his legs under him and eyed the old king, and spoke levelly.

"Sir, I doubt that one day more or less now will make or mar that reunion: but I have no doubt that it had better be a day late than never. And so I shall not let you and Sir Lorn take her from me—nay, not even in true Eliza's care! She is my charge, and I am her guardian, under heaven and despite hell! Cynara or Brigid—tortured waif or princess—I will hold to her and bring her to safety, by my halidom! I found her and took her from her tormentors. I have never forgot her nor forsook her. But what of you, Sir King? For all your wisdom and great heart and open hands! Another adventure, a new quest, and you are up and away! And what of this young knight? He forgot his quest and the vows he took on a splinter of the True Cross. I am his proven friend and tested squire, yet he rode off while I slept. I tell you—both of you—with all due respect for your rank and your golden spurs—you are bewitched and not to be trusted. I will die before you take her from me—and not with an unblooded sword neither, by Christ's wounds!"

The old King stared at him, struck speechless by conflicting emotions. Even Eliza was shocked at the squire's frankness and audacity and the deadliness of his tone and look. Then Sir Lorn rose quickly and close to Dennys and gazed at him earnestly.

"God's truth!" he exclaimed. "I forsook my quest," he went on mournfully. "And I deserted a friend while he slept. Forgive me, my friend. 'Twas the head that failed you, not the heart. Bewitched? Aye, devil a doubt of it! Or how else did I forget my vows?"

He turned from Dennys to King Torrice, who was still breathing gustily through his high nose and plucking at his beard.

"Dennys speaks truth, Your Grace," he said. "I am bewitched and so untrustworthy. And you too, sir—or something like it. Forgetful, anyhow. Two of a kind, sir. But Dennys is different. As for me, sir—well, I'll take my time from Dennys; and I pray you humbly to do the same, dear sir."

After a brief silence, during which his breathing became quieter, the old king smiled and said, with a sigh, "So be it, dear lad!" And he smiled at Dennys too, and then at Eliza, and added, "But don't keep me kicking my heels here any longer than need be, I beg you!"

Chapter Ten

CAVANAUGH CASTLE

THOUGH it was five years since the loss of their infant daughter and only child, King Malachi Cavanaugh and his young queen were still as doleful a couple as you would find in Ireland. It was close upon five years since the six knights, three of Cavanaugh blood and three sib to Queen Brigid, had ridden away so bravely to recover their little kinswoman or perish in the attempt; and as nothing had been heard of any one of them, it was only natural to believe the worst. Malachi, though neither young nor physically fit (he had been dragged, more dead than alive, out of many an intertribal battle in the years of his long, lean bachelorhood and hard apprenticeship to the crown and lands of Cavanaugh), continued to lead local search-parties whenever he was able to fork a horse, from which he was always brought home in a litter, cursing.

At sunset of the winter solstice, he returned from the last expedition of the kind he would ever make and was carried straightway from the litter to his bed, as usual; and, as usual, Queen Brigid knelt beside the bed and tried to comfort him. But it was cold comfort, for she wept. They were thus employed—the man cursing his helplessness and the woman sobbing with grief and pity—when the bray of a horn caught the queen's attention. She raised her head and stilled her sobs.

"Hark," she whispered.

"What now?" he complained.

"A horn on the hill. There—again—and shouting below. And the inner gate!" She sprang to her feet and turned from the bed to the door. "They are opening the gate—and everyone shouts—in the yard and on the walls—everywhere—all shouting like mad!" She took up the candle and ran from the room.

NOW the hall was full of people and clamor and the tossing red and black of a dozen torches. A great wench, unhelmeted but armored to the chin, placed the little girl in the arms of the dazed queen. And three knights knelt before her, looking up at her. She knew one for her young kinsman Lorn, who had ridden away so assuredly so long ago. Now he muttered, "Better late than never, Brigie," with a shamefaced smile. And the old one, whose gold-inlaid breastplate was half-hidden by a snowy beard, smiled at her too, but roguishly. But the third, who was no more than a youth, looked at her gravely, even critically. She whispered down to him, stooping above the child in her arms: "Is she—I'm afraid to look—truly my baby?"

"The mark is there, as it was when I found her," said Dennys; whereupon the Queen uttered a glad cry and turned and ran up the winding stairs.

The three cavaliers rose from their knees and were instantly jostled and clasped and pulled from hand to hand by ladies and damosels of every age and favor and courtiers of every rank and condition. Lorn was kissed by Kellys and Connells, Cavanaughs and MacMurraughs, Bryans and Ryans and Flynns and Geraldines, for the hero he was; and King Torrice and Dennys, though strangers, fared very well too. Cups of wine and horns of mead and ale were thrust into their hands, or splashed on them, from every direction. Two fiddlers struck up the far-famed Jig of Cavan; and every heart and foot started prancing to that tune, including those of King Torrice and Sir Lorn, armor and spurs and all; but Dennys went out to see how old Matt and the grooms and horses were faring.

King Torrice was looking for a quiet corner to sit down in and catch his breath and maybe another cup of wine, when something flew against him and grabbed his beard and screamed a name that stood him stock still in his tracks. It was a little old lady in brocade and gemmy gold

chains and bangles, with eyes like green fireflies and a tiara of emeralds askew on her white curls.

"Guy, ye rascal, ye can't deny it!" she screamed. "And I'll not deny it, wotever it makes of me who's passed for a decent widow these last nine years!"

He took hold of her thin wrists to ease the drag on his whiskers.

"You're mistaken, madam—for I haven't the honor—my name being Torrice," he gabbled.

At that she fell to laughing and to twisting his beard gently instead of pulling it; and then she whispered: "Don't lie to me, me grand Guy Harper—me poetical husband—for I'd know ye any time, anywhere, by the roving gleam in yer eyes and the fly-away twitching of yer high nose."

"But madam, I am King Torrice of Har!"

"I'm not talking about who ye are, me darling, but who ye were when I married ye."

"But you mentioned nine years of widowhood, madam; and I assure you, and can prove it, it's over three score years since I was last in Ireland and this is my first visit to Cavanaugh Castle."

"But wot about Castle Kelly, ye rascal? And the sweet little Molly O'Kelly who married Guy the troubadour despite her fond parents' prayers an' sneers? I was first widowed by yerself, ye tyke, the night ye stole away from me bed an' board and the daughter ye'd never seen—and all that was over sixty years ago, sure enough! Don't try to tell me ye've forgot all that now!"

He did not try to tell her anything, but only scuffled his feet and tried feebly to disengage his beard from her fingers. She took him by a wrist with both her hands and led him to a bench against a wall, and there she set him down and herself close beside him, still with the grip on his wrist.

"Now harky to me," she said. "After the birth of our little girl, a man came to the castle and told how Guy the Harper had been slain by robbers and he had seen the corpse with his own eyes. It was a grand story, even if me proud father did invent it and pay the poor man ten silver crowns to tell it—which he confessed on his death-bed, but into nobody's ear but me own, like the grand gentleman he was. Now wot have ye to say to that, me fine flitting troubadour?"

King Torrice said nothing, nor did he so much as glance at her, but she could see he was listening hard and thinking hard too.

"It wasn't long before I married again," she went on, "but this time an Irishman and a gentleman for a change, and was a good wife to him till he went to glory nine years ago; and I've been a good mother to all my children. Me second girl, Kate Connell, married before her half-sister Mary Harper did—she was all Irish—a forty-second Kelly cousin; and their daughter, me own granddaughter, is Queen Brigid O'Cavanaugh herself. Now wot d'ye say to that?"

"What of your oldest child—Mary, I think you called her—by your first marriage?" he mumbled, slanting a quick look at her.

"Our own little Mary—is it herself ye're curious about after sixty years?" she cackled. "Well, I'll tell ye, Guy Harper or King Torrice or wotever ye call yerself: She married a Geraldine, and I gave her a grand wedding. She's not here, being at Mount Gerald; but her son's here, as ye know without me telling it, ye fox!"

"Your daughter Mary's son, madam?"

"Ay, and yer own grandson!—and if ye don't know it without me telling ye, how come the two of ye to turn up here together as thick as thieves?"

"Madam, if you are referring to my young friend Lorn le Perdu, I assure you that we met quite by chance last June at Carleon, when neither of us knew anything about the other—that's to say he didn't know me to be King Torrice of Har till he was told—and he, poor lad, didn't know anything about himself either, at that time. It's a long story—about bewitchment and the baby he was searching for and everything—and I'll be delighted to give you all the particulars tomorrow, madam, but you really must excuse me now."

That old quester was out of her clutches and vanished into the confusion of dancers and drinkers and torchlight and queer shadows, as quick and limber as an eel, before she realized what was happening; and she didn't set eye or hand on him again that night. There were hideouts aplenty in that great castle; and nobody interfered with anybody that night unless it was to urge another cup of wine of usquebaugh on him. It was a great and joyous occasion: but the grandest celebrations of the return of the little Princess were yet to come.

THE castle was late astir, though it was a glorious day of sunshine and white frost. It was one hour past noon when the head of the parade issued from the gate in the outer wall. Four heralds in tabards of green and silver and gold rode abreast, blowing on silver trumpets. Next came King Malachi and Queen Brigid, stirrup to stirrup. Malachi, on a black charger, sat straight as a young knight; and you could see his laughter, though it was drowned by the trumpeting and shouting. The queen, all in white samite and ermine, rode a white palfrey and blew kisses right and left from rosy fingers. Three cavaliers in rich armor rode in line, with their shields on their shoulders and their visors raised. On the right was an ancient with snowy whiskers and an eagle-beak and the plume on his casque sprouting from a crown of gemmy gold. In the middle, on a great white stallion whose hooves shook the frozen earth, rode young Lorn Geraldine, who had fulfilled his vows of five years ago by bringing home the stolen princess. On the left, on a horse of remarkable height and dignity, rode the youth whom rumor already named as the greatest champion of the three, though but a Welsh squire called Dennys ap something or other. And the crowd bawled "A Har, a Har!" "A Geraldine, a Geraldine!" "A Dennys, a Dennys!"

Next, high on the shoulders of eight cadets of the best families in the land, came a litter with parted curtains and the recovered heiress of the Cavanaughs, in white fur, laughing out of it to right and left. "A Brigie, a Brigie!" bawled the crowd. Beneath the litter stalked a tall brown dog with amber eyes, and close behind it rode a great wench, fully armored and with a naked sword in her right hand, but unhelmeted. Then came the local chivalry, harnessed and armed, their horses neighing and curveting, followed by archers and pikemen in shirts of mail and steel caps. The grand procession passed through the town and clear around it and back through it again.

There was a kingly feast in the castle that day. It began in sunlight and went on in candlelight, torchlight and fireshine. At the start, Malachi made a knight of Dennys ap Rhys and rich gifts to Sir Lorn and King Torrice; and Queen Brigid gave each of them a kiss—but she took the fun out of it for Torrice by whispering in his beard, "I've been told all about you by Granny O'Connell."

The feast went on. The queen and all the ladies retired, but the feast went on and on. King Malachi and young Sir Dennys fell asleep in their chairs. Other gentlemen were overcome by slumber, some on chairs and benches and some on the floor. But King Torrice kept both himself and Sir Lorn wide awake, with whispering and nudging.

Sunrise found King Torrice and Sir Lorn well on their way somewhere.

"That's no life for us, my boy," said the King. "We were born to rove. But should you ever want to settle down, just say so, for you will find me reliable and trustworthy and reasonable, no matter what your grandmother told you about me. Yes, no matter what my failings as a husband, I'll never fail you as a grandfather or a fellow-quester, mauger my head!"

"Gramercy, Grandfather," replied Sir Lorn, almost cheerfully.

HILL 314

"The Lost Battalion of Mortain," in our September issue, provoked a great deal of comment because of its dramatic quality, and because many American soldiers fought there or in that neighborhood. Mr. Shugart, whose letter we published last month, has here written a brief story of the ground action as he saw it. Probably no two witnesses would have seen or reported so confused and bitter a battle just alike. . . . Surely there was glory enough for all.

by FORREST W. SHUGART

OPERATION LÜTTICH had failed; Field Marshal Von Kluge knew it; his Fuehrer knew it. But down in the blood and smoke and dust of Mortain, four crack Divisions of Nazi supermen didn't. They were hurt, desperately hurt, their ranks decimated, and the smoke of their burning tanks clouded the sultry August air of Normandy; but before their battle-grimed eyes was the glorious picture of themselves in Avranches, the speeding spearheads of the American First and Third Armies cut off in Brittany, and France once again in the hands of the Reich.

These were no ordinary divisions but the élite of the German armed forces, a cream destined to be skimmed there in Normandy and never to rise again. Three of them were SS; The 1st SS Panzer Division *Liebstandarte Adolf Hitler;* the second SS Panzer Division *Das Reich,* filled up the remnants of the 17th SS Division *Goetz Von Berichingen;* the 2nd SS Panzer Division; and (how did these common soldiers get in here) the 116th Panzer Division, a Wehrmacht Division. They knew what stood between them and their goal—Colonel Kleinschmidt of XLVII Panzer Corps had estimated it for them: about three infantry divisions and one armored division.

They had collided with these forces, and had the grapes of their wrath crammed down their throats, and they were inclined to believe the good Colonel had erred on the conservative side. But the Colonel had erred in quite another direction: Those three infantry divisions were actually the 30th Infantry Division plus the 12th Infantry Regiment. The Armored Division was a combat command of the 3rd Armored Division under Colonel Truman E. Boudinot, whose habit of making a combat command look like a division made him unpopular with the Herrenvolk.

The sun that rose over the hedgerows of Mortain on August 9, 1944, disclosed a scene of carnage and destruction that would have discouraged lesser hearts than those of the men of the 30th Infantry and the 3rd Armored divisions. Under strength when the attack struck them, they were not much more than half-strength now. The battalions were scattered; among and between the elements were German troops. In many cases they shared a hedge, a hill, even a house with the Germans.

The most serious situation was that of the 2nd Battalion of the 120th Infantry. Six hundred and seventy were surrounded on Hill 314. Now, 314 wasn't much of a hill; it didn't have a name, and they just used the altitude as shown on the maps. The Americans had it; the Germans wanted it. The Americans kept it, and in the keeping made room for a lot of Germans who never left the place.

THE story of this battalion began early on August 7th, when the full tide of the German onslaught washed up the sides of Hill 314. It seemed to come from all directions. Tank fire swept the American position; groups of Germans infiltrated up the hedgerows and along the ditches paralleling the road. Tree bursts filled the air with splinters and shell fragments. Company G on the north slope of the hill dwindled from 212 to 100 men under the first blow; the other companies were nearly as badly hit. The battle raged until the afternoon of the 7th, when Lieutenant Weiss, a forward observer of the 230th Field Artillery Battalion, managed to place time fire on the attacking enemy infantry.

The night of the 7th and all day of the 8th followed a similar pattern, the nights a nightmare of harassing fire from German 88's, the day a succession of attacks. German infantrymen were discovered and killed within the position; at least one tank penetrated the perimeter and was dispatched by a bazooka. On the morning of the 9th, the battalion commander, Colonel Hardaway, and his entire headquarters with the exception of two officers and four enlisted men were captured. Food and water were becoming increasingly a problem. The food problem was solved by raiding French garden patches; the water was more difficult, and cost lives, especially in E Company, where it was necessary to dash across several hundred yards of open ground to a farmhouse. Still, there was no thought of surrender.

By this time the other elements of the 30th division and the 3rd Armored Division had pushed the Germans sufficiently off their necks to take stock of the situation and attempt relief of hard-pressed Hill 314. Combat Command B of the 3rd Armored was banging its way up the main Avranches road toward Mortain, strewing its path with burning German armor and blasted roadblocks.

The 1st Battalion of the 119th Infantry slogged up to the outskirts of Romagny to the west, was stopped and remained bitterly engaged for two days. Their greatest satisfaction came when the confident Germans tried a World War I type of attack, and came in standing up and yelling, only to be mown down by the concentrated fire of the American guns.

Division decided to use the artillery's private airforce and parachute supplies to the beleaguered doughboys. Two Cub observation planes were loaded, and piloted by Lieutenants Trigg and Johnson, made the attempt; both were hit by flak, and the reluctant conclusion was drawn that a Cub was never meant to play in that league.

IT was time for Division Artillery to make its try; accordingly the 230th F.A. Battalion tried firing 105-mm. smoke-shell cases loaded with medical supplies. Of the first six fired, none were recovered; of the second six, five were recovered; on the next salvo the batting average hit .1000. None of the blood plasma arrived intact, so the 113th F.A. tried it with 155's. They too failed to get plasma in, but considerable quantities of bandages and morphine arrived safely.

Back on Hill 314 the Nazi tried another tack. An SS captain, accompanied by a heel-clicking soldier bear-

ing a white flag, entered the Battalion lines, where he informed Lieutenant Rohmiller of Company E that he was prepared to accept the surrender of the Americans. He elaborated on the hopelessness of the situation, and informed the Americans of Colonel Hardaway's capture. If surrender was not forthcoming by eight P.M., the Americans were to be "blown to bits." This message was delivered to Lieutenant Kerley, E Company C.O. Lieutenant Kerley's reply was classic: "Tell that so-and-so we'll surrender when there's not another bayonet to break in a German belly." The wounded lying about the CP cheered this defiance; they understood that kind of talk. The German attack that night featured tanks, and infantrymen who shouted "Surrender!" as they charged.

Four requests were made to the Air Force for a para-drop on August 9; these resulted in the dropping of two days' supplies at 4:30 P.M., August 10th, many of these bundles landing in enemy territory. Lieutenant John G. Gerl raised the effectiveness of this drop to fifty per cent and earned a Silver Star by leading patrols behind the enemy lines to recover some of the bundles. On August 11 at 7:30 P.M. another day's supply was dropped by the C-47's, most of this falling into enemy hands.

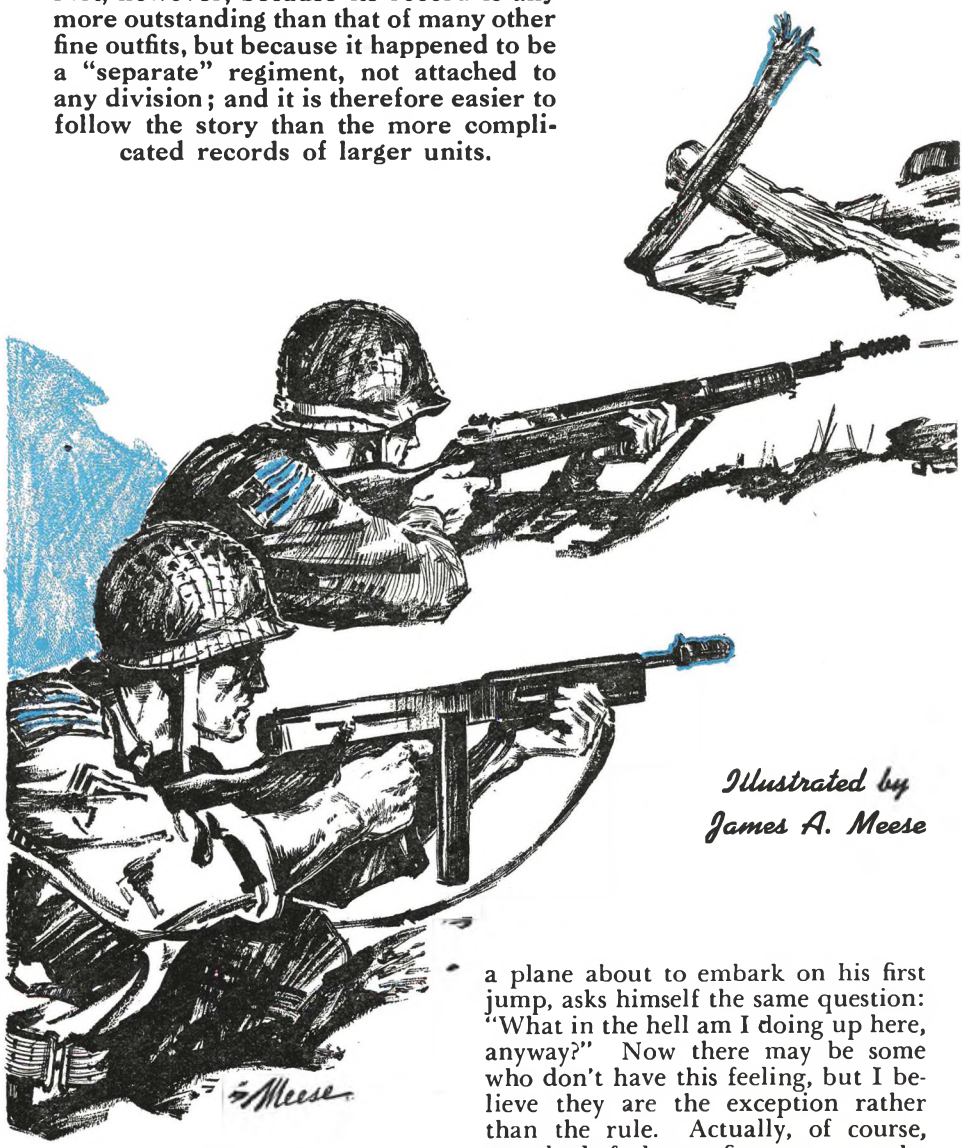
One of the outstanding performances of the whole show was put on by the 230th F.A. Battalion, whose accurate fire made possible the prolonged resistance. From their positions west of Mortain they threw a ring of protective fire around the position each night. They knocked German attacks back on their heels before they started, due to the direct observation furnished by their two forward observers on the hill, Lts. Weiss and Barts, ably abetted by the Cannon Company observer and the several company commanders who were only too eager to point out enemy concentrations.

THE morning of August 12, the rising sun revealed a beautiful sight—every road and lane leading away from Mortain in the direction of Domfront was filled with wagons, tanks, trucks and plodding Jerries all headed for Berlin. They never got there, for up the road at Barentan a task force of the 3rd Armored was pouring fire and brimstone on their bowed heads, while other armored columns circled wide to close the Falaise Gap. The cream was being skimmed.

Three hundred and seventy men came down from Hill 314 to go on and on into the homeland of the supermen and complete their share in crushing the 3rd Reich. The other three hundred were gone before—prisoners, casualties and heroic dead.

COMBAT

WE are printing herewith the story of the 517th Airborne Infantry, because it is a deeply interesting story. Not, however, because its record is any more outstanding than that of many other fine outfits, but because it happened to be a "separate" regiment, not attached to any division; and it is therefore easier to follow the story than the more complicated records of larger units.



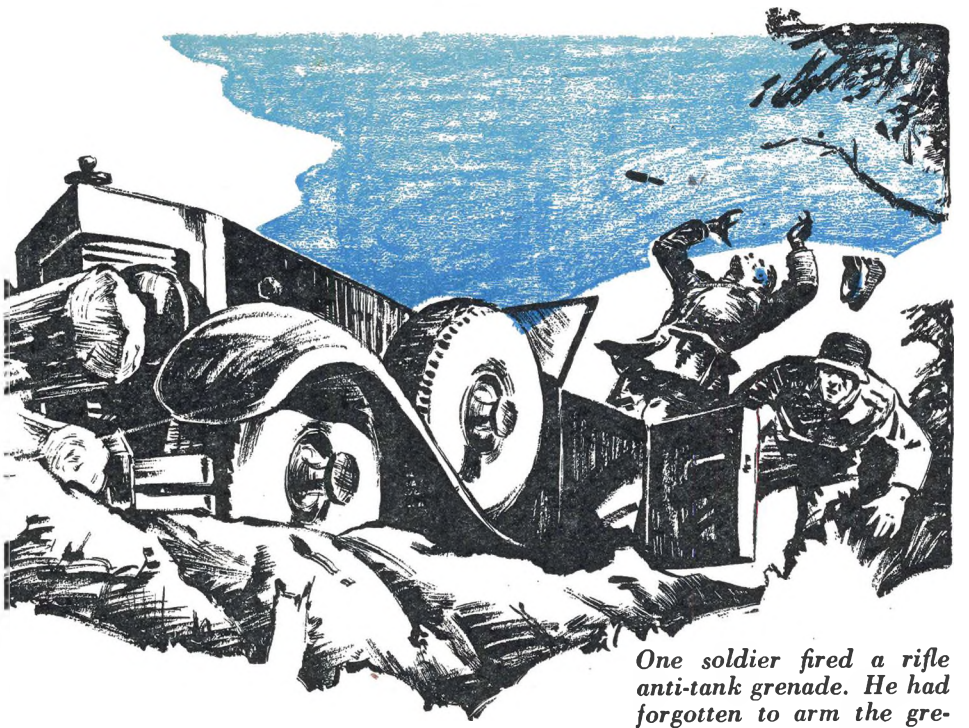
Illustrated by James A. Meese

A PARATROOPER had to be in good physical condition. At the parachute school he had to be in good shape to take the jogs, the tumbling, the calisthenics, the landing trainer, the harness drills, the tower jumps and live jumps, and pack his own parachute. He not only had to be in shape, but he had to be a pretty determined character to fling himself out of the door of an airplane just when he was settling down to enjoy the ride. I believe almost every paratrooper, when he finds himself on a plane about to embark on his first jump, asks himself the same question: "What in the hell am I doing up here, anyway?" Now there may be some who don't have this feeling, but I believe they are the exception rather than the rule. Actually, of course, everybody feels very fine as soon as the chute opens and he realizes suddenly that it is really a very simple operation, and nothing to worry very much about after all.

In this parachute regiment as well as in all regiments preparing for overseas, the work of the paratrooper did not end when he finished the school, but continued just as hard and in many cases much harder. For example, at Tocoa, Ga., where this unit first started training in the summer of 1943, there was a mountain called Curlihee. It was a common practice to jog the paratroopers over

TEAM

by COLONEL RUPERT D. GRAVES



One soldier fired a rifle anti-tank grenade. He had forgotten to arm the grenade, however.

this mountain or march them over carrying full equipment. Perhaps there was too much emphasis on physical conditioning, but it did serve to weed out any who were not determined to stick along with their buddies and with their outfit. These characteristics helped a lot in later days of combat, where hardships were taken easily and in stride. Many times later on in combat, officers and men were heard talking about how rugged it had been back in training or on maneuvers, even though they were then being subjected to artillery or mortar fire, and perhaps to snow or a cold rain.

THE ones that lasted through this training till time to go overseas were about the finest bunch of men it was possible to assemble into any unit. They were tough, and determined, and there was not very much they couldn't stand up to in the way of hardship and long arduous combat. It was almost an impossibility to wear them down; and as a matter of fact, this characteristic was the headache of many a unit commander, when after a long day of drill or training, they would think nothing of hiking ten or fifteen miles to town to let-off some of the exuberance.

In spite of the countless hardships and privations in training, I believe everybody was glad when the regiment, together with its supporting artillery battalion and engineer company was detached from the division to proceed overseas as a regimental combat team. Although the destination or purpose of this move was not known, the plans for the invasion of Southern France were already being made, and the troops who were to participate in the airborne phase of the invasion were being set up. Even after leaving Hampton Roads on the steamship *Santa Rosa,* and it was found we were headed for Italy, nobody was informed of the ultimate destination of the combat team. Anyway, with four hundred Wacs on board, and the former American Fruit Lines sailing peacefully over gentle seas and beneath azure skies, what difference did future events make?

Although schools were conducted on board ship and plans for use either as ground or airborne operations were being made, there was still time for many a boat-deck romance, and many a Wac's heart was captured in the fourteen-day voyage to the port of Naples. The irrepressible spirits of the troopers also found expression in talent shows and countless pranks played at the expense of brother officers and comrades. For example the cruel and heartless masquerade of a handsome lieutenant as a love-smitten female was a topic of conversation for many days afterward. The dashing young officer who fell madly in love with the adorable lieutenant only to be betrayed, certainly learned the value of a personal reconnaissance, and I hope has not suffered too harshly for the amount of amusement it afforded his comrades. Also to the many Wacs on board who fell in love with gay young officers, only to find later they had been merely posing as bachelors, I must offer my apologies and remind them that if they had asked me, I would have told them; but nobody asked me. Therefore it was assumed that they didn't want to know. . . .

The fighting in Italy at the time we arrived was centered about Rome, the capital. This city fell suddenly, however. Then started the German delaying action to the north of Rome. From our bivouac on the outskirts of Naples, in the crater of an old volcano, we were moved by LST to Civitavecchia, and thence by truck to the 36th Texas Division Area, to which division we were attached. We were terribly anxious to get into combat to prove that we could fight as well as anybody. At General Walker's headquarters near Grosseto, I had the opportunity to meet General Clark, the commander of the Fifth Army. He was very much interested in the combat team, and told us that this was a splendid time to get into the fight as ground troops and gain combat experience. General Crittenberger, the commander of the IV Corps was also there, and welcomed us to his command.

WE were assigned a sector of generally hilly terrain to the east of Grosseto for our first venture, and after issuing the plans for the next day and moving up to assembly positions, we almost unbelievingly waited for the dawn of our first day in combat. To command a regiment in combat was an honor almost beyond my comprehension. Would we acquit ourselves well and be able to take our objective, or would we run into a stone wall in the face of the famous German army we had read and heard so much about? Perhaps somebody would call the attack off before we had a chance to get into battle and put us back in reserve somewhere. These were some of the thoughts that came into our heads as we moved up the dusty Italian roads that June after-

noon of 1944 and sought a covered area beneath the olive trees in the gently rolling countryside. Once in a while some enemy shells would land in our vicinity, but in our advanced stage of ignorance we sort of welcomed them, as they gave us a chance to test ourselves and to become battle-scarred veterans all the more quickly.

To say that we kept busy that first day would be a masterpiece of understatement. Not knowing much about what was in front of us, it was decided to attack in column of battalions.

This was the approved solution of an exercise at the Infantry school that I remembered, but was not quite sure whether it fitted this situation or not. The First Battalion, with Lt. Col. Boyle in command, was to lead the way. A company from the Third Battalion, the reserve battalion, was put out on the flank into the hills, and promptly went over into the sector of the 141st Infantry and ran into all kinds of trouble. I guess this company must have eased the way for the 141st, though, as all the Jerry artillery fire and mines seemed to be on their front, while the 141st advanced rapidly with little or no resistance.

When Boyle started his advance early that rainy morning, it was hard to see more than a few yards to the front. To keep his men from getting lost, and since we had no contact with the enemy, the standard advance-guard formation was used. As Boyle went up over the first hill and reached the reverse slope, we received our baptism of fire. The enemy had hidden himself very cleverly in the brush and trees, and as the advance party came into close range, the Jerries let them have it.

As Lt. Col. Cato, the artillery battalion commander and I came forward, we could hear the *br-r-r-r-p* of the German automatic weapons, and could see Captain Sullivan, the battalion surgeon, giving blood plasma to several men who had been hit. When I saw Sully, he had propped up a broken branch of a tree, placed a bottle of the plasma in the crotch, and was really going to town. We could see several Jerries running around over on the next hill, and in the absence of anything better to do, Cato directed some fire onto this hill. The First Battalion got some of its mortars going, and started dropping shells back into the low ground in front of where he was held up.

We tried to get Boyle to move forward again but he had apparently been up with the advance party, and it was some time before he could get anything started. However, they finally started out again after putting

On nearing the ground I could see that we were certainly not near the drop zone.

some 81-mm. mortar fire on a stone building that could be seen down in the next valley, and where one or two Germans had been seen. We found later that this very quiet-looking building was not only the CP, but housed the aid station, with about a dozen wounded Turcoman soldiers, and also was used as a place of detention for approximately fifty Italian civilians, mostly women, who had been rounded up in that area to prevent them from giving warning to the approaching Americans.

SEVERAL women, apparently murdered for some reason, were also lying in the wooded valley near the building. Perhaps they had decided to escape, or perhaps the Germans had killed them to teach the others a lesson. However, as we reached the building, the German surgeon, a major, was administering hypodermic injections to his wounded. Capt. Dearing, regt'l S-2, got the women started back toward Grosseto. They were a pretty scared bunch, and whether they figured they were in worse hands or better, I have never found out. The German surgeon objected very strenuously to the placing in the ambulance of some of the women who had been hurt, as he could not understand why a woman, particularly an Italian woman, should receive priority over a German soldier, even though he was only a Turcoman. However, the surgical instruments left at the aid station were of a very high quality, and deeply appreciated by our own surgeon.

As the attack moved on, we used the same building for a temporary CP and also used part of it to hold prisoners until they could be questioned and sent back to the rear. Some of the men must have got pretty well worked up over the way the Germans were fighting, and against these Asiatics that were being used as sacrifice troops. Generally these Turcomen would remain under cover until our troops got up pretty close; then they would fire all their ammunition before yelling *"Kamerad."* This method of fighting was very economical of German troops, and yet served the purpose of delaying and inflicting casualties on the Americans.

We advanced about seventy-five miles farther north with the 36th Division. However, most of the fighting was similar to the first day except for minor variations. Our sectors of advance were generally through the Italian hills. We got so we liked the hills, because we did not catch so much artillery fire as down on the plains, which the Germans always had under good observation. The men had to carry most of their heavier weapons and ammunition as the trails were generally unsuited for vehicles; and although this was very tiring work, I believe they preferred to be tired and alive rather than fresh and dead. The resistance was about the same most of the way until toward the last of it, when we ran into German SS troops. When these people decided to hold a place, there was only one way to get them out, and that was to kill them.

We used the Italian partisans continuously. Captain Dearing had rounded up parties of them, and they were a heterogeneous-looking bunch. They wore civilian clothes, of course, but with the Tommy-guns that we gave them, boxes of ammunition and grenades stuffing out their pockets and shirts, they looked quite fierce. They had suffered so much at the hands of the Germans, many of them having lost members of their immediate families, as a result of artillery fire or mines, that they hated the Germans with a deep and intense hatred.

Dearing used to take them on forays behind the enemy lines, where they would surprise groups of Germans working on the roads. We tried to use them once in a while as guides, but this didn't work very well, as they would get into long and animated conversations not only among themselves but with every Italian we came across.

During this time we got a good picture of the Italian countryside with its rolling hills covered with olive trees, terraced vineyards and medieval-looking stone and masonry, towns which were perched almost always on the top or side of a high hill. To see an Italian woman cook a meal with a few stray faggots in the little holes in the floor on each side of the big fireplace was a source of wonderment to me. If she had a lovely electric range at her disposal, I doubt if the meal could have been prepared any better or more quickly.

As one town after another fell, Batignano, Montesajo, Sticciano, Fellonica, we had a chance to see the friendly spirit of the Italian people. They didn't have very much else, but they did have wine and bread, and always celebrated the liberation of their town. I can easily remember driving up the winding road to Sticciano, with a man and his wife perched precariously on the hood of the jeep, each of them holding a bottle of wine and a loaf of bread, waving and yelling deliriously at everybody they passed, whether American or Italian.

General Clark had been exactly right: this was a splendid time to get combat experience and get shaken down. Our casualties had been extremely low, and in the fast-moving operation we learned many lessons that helped us later on. As the regiment had been sent overseas within less than a year of its activation, we knew we had a lot to learn, and this gave us the framework on which to base our future training. We were all very tired after our two weeks excursion over the Italian hills, and were not at all reluctant about moving back to the vicinity of Cimpini airfield, about six miles south of the metropolis of Rome, on being relieved by the Japanese-American regiment, the 442nd. Why we had been pulled out so suddenly was a mystery to most of us at first, but we soon found that we were to get ready for the mission that had caused our detachment from the 17th Airborne Division and rushed us overseas in such a hurry. This mission was the invasion of southern occupied France.

OUR new bivouac area south of Rome was delightful. The nearest town was Frascati, apparently the home of the famous wines of the same name. In the fight for Rome this town had been pretty well bombed, and like other Italian towns, the people lived in a very primitive manner and of course were very poor. Instead of trying to house the men in the limited facilities of the town, and as it was a beautiful Italian midsummer, we had the men pitch their tents on the shaded slopes of the hills outside of Frascati. Anyway, we didn't want them to get too soft, for we knew we had work to do later. When I said beautiful Italian summer I meant just that, provided you forgot about the countless hordes of flies, held your nose against the general filth and lack of sanitation, and succeeded in escaping the GI's—a common name given to a form of dysentery which almost everybody seems to contract in Italy. But with passes to Rome, most of the evils could be forgotten in that wondrous city.

In Naples we admired the beauty of a city where from your hotel balcony or from a vine-covered patio you could look across the city to the bay reflecting a sky of the deepest blue. But there was without question a greater regard for Rome, with its beautiful churches like St. Paul's adorned with magnificent works of the old masters, its other historic monuments such as the Colosseum, the Catacombs, its ancient squares and parks such as the Borghese, its beautiful buildings like the Palazzio Venezia and ancient street fountains, its up-to-date hotels and restaurants, like the Excelsior and Broadway Bill's, that had been set aside for the use of enlisted men and officers; perhaps it was just because there were more women, for there actually were quite a few in Rome.... Now, I will admit they were hungry, and it was quite a common sight, so I have heard, that when a meal was brought to the table at Broadway Bill's, usually the winsome young Italian date would sweep about half of it into the ample purse brought along expressly for that purpose.

IN between the visits to Rome, everybody was very busy preparing for the 15th of August, the day we would enplane and fly away to another place still held by the enemy. This date was always in the back of our heads—sometimes very clearly, sometimes dimly but nevertheless always present. All our training, all our preparations, were based on being ready for that day. We hauled all our parachutes by truck from Naples; and Captain Freund, the parachute officer, set up a packing shed in Mussolini's Science building which had been constructed of purest marble to impress visitors to Mussolini's Worlds Fair. Where he was he didn't need it any more, and it served admirably to pack the some three thousand parachutes that we would need. General Frederick, the former Special Service Force Commander, was designated to be in command of the airborne task force under General Patch, the 7th Army commander. Plans, troops and equipment were gradually rounding into shape. In addition to our regimental combat team were the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion, which had flown from England to Africa the year before under Colonel Raft; the 551st Prcht. Inf. Bn. under Lt. Col. Juareg, later killed in the Battle of the Bulge; the 2nd British Parachute Brigade under General Pritchard, or I should say Brigadier Pritchard; the 550th Glider Inf. Bn. under Lt. Col. Sacks; the 406th Glider F.A. Bn.

In addition to these airborne troops, several units like the Anti-tank company of the 442nd, and a 4.2 chemical mortar company were trained as glidersts and attached to the airborne task force. Tactical exercises were drawn up and practiced similar to the missions required after reaching France; war rooms were set up at each regimental and battalion command post, where sand-tables and maps portrayed the various objectives and surrounding areas, and where units down to squads were briefed on what they would do after hitting the silk in Southern France.

As the days stretched into August, everybody worked a little more feverishly; some had forebodings of what was going to happen, but each was anxious and eager to get at least one combat parachute jump under his belt, or in case of the glider units, to get at least one combat glider landing. Finally under the warm Italian skies, near the ancient city of Rome, and to the lilting tune of "Lili Marlene," everything was set for the move to the departure airfields and the great adventure.

Generally the plan was fairly simple. The airborne task force was to land on the early morning of D-day, the 15th of August, just before the amphibious forces of the 7th Army struck the heavily defended beaches. The airborne plan centered around the little town of Le Muy about fifteen miles inland from Frejus. The 509th was to come in first at 0415, land to the south and southwest of Le Muy and capture the high ground overlooking that town. We were to come in next about 0430, and seize the high ground a few miles to the west and north of Le Muy, and covering the main roads running east and west to Toulon and north-south to Draguignan, where the German Corps CP was located.

The British were to land about 0600, seize the hills to the east and northeast of Le Muy. The gliders were to come in about 1800 on D-day with their heavier weapons and equipment and reinforce the paratroopers already on the ground. The British were to capture the town of Le Muy, where about one battalion of Germans were supposed to be billeted. We had the job of capturing La Motte just to the north of Le Muy, and Les Arcs along the main road to the west. All units were to prevent reinforcements from reaching the enemy garrisons along the coast, and to prevent troops from the coast from withdrawing along the main roads running north and south. The 36th, 45th and 3rd divisions, after forcing a landing, were to attack north through our sector and pass through us by at least D plus 4 days. The drop zone where we were supposed to land was about one mile to the northwest of Le Muy. We didn't know it at the time, but the Germans had prepared this field with anti-airborne poles about fifteen to twenty feet high and about the same distance apart. This didn't bother us much, however, as we didn't use the drop zone, anyway.

At our airfields, which were distributed to the north of Rome, the men were divided into plane-loads, bundles loaded and checked, escape kits issued and last-minute briefings conducted. Each battalion was at a separate field, including the artillery battalion. I went with the 2nd, which was under the command of Lt. Col. Seitz of Kansas City. Although we had two days at the airfield, it was none too long. Everybody thought of additional items he should take along or should discard. Camouflage paint was issued, and everybody painted his face to go with the camouflaged clothes. Extra ammunition was issued for men to carry in their already well-loaded field bags. Berlin Sally had been busy on the radio and had announced that it was unnecessary to get short haircuts for the jump into France, as the war would be over by then.

A P.X. ration was issued at the airfields, uselessly as I thought, for we already had three days K-rations, and I know many an overloaded field bag was torn loose later on the opening shock of the parachute. About midnight we loaded on the planes for the take-off at one-thirty A.M. We tried to get a little sleep on the floor of the plane, but it was pretty uncomfortable, and we were glad when the plane finally taxied around into position for the take-off.

OUR course lay across the Ionian Sea with Corsica as a check point. The Navy had also spotted ships along the course which could serve as markers. The night was fairly clear at first, with about a half-moon visible in the sky as Major Kinser the artillery liaison officer, Major Patton, the regimental operations officer and the rest of us tried to get as comfortable as possible for the two-and-one-half-hour ride. We had intended to remove at least some of our equipment during the ride, but rather than go to the trouble of getting all that equipment back on again in a blacked-out ship, we left it all on and simply unfastened our leg-straps so that the webbing would not cut into our shoulders too much.

The time seemed to pass quickly enough, or at least as I remember it. Maybe I was too numb to remember very much about it. My clearest recollections are from after 0400 on. We were supposed to hit the coast, and make a landfall, as the Air Corps called it, about 0420, thereby reaching our drop zone inland around 0430. As 0420 approached, we started watching for land, but all we could see was a big blanket of fluffy-looking haze beneath the ship. We could see the other ships in the formation clearly enough, but whether we were still over land or sea, we couldn't tell.

No parachutist in his right mind wants to land in water with over a hundred pounds of equipment on, so perhaps you can imagine our feelings. As we were straining our eyes to see some land, the lights that showed the equipment bundles were still on went out. We had the men standing up and hooked up at 0415. I started to ask the crew chief why in hell he had released the bundles so soon, but before getting any answer, the red light went on, and we had the men move up to the door. It was now 0425, and we still could not see whether we had reached land, not to speak of reaching France. After about two minutes the green light went on and we went out.

We were still hitting about 160 miles an hour, and the blast cracked the parachute open with an awful wallop. However, just before going out the door, we saw the peak of a high hill or mountain rising above the blanket of haze. To me it was as comforting as the crest of Mt. Ararat must have been to Noah after the big flood. We had expected a lot of flak on reaching the coast, but, because of the heavy fog over the land, I guess the Germans couldn't see us any better than we could see them; and if there was any flak, I didn't know about it.

Certainly the Germans knew we were coming, because everybody in Rome apparently knew what we were doing. In fact, some of the civilians seemed to know more about it than we did. This operation seemed to be one of the poorest-kept secrets of the war. However, how to keep a lot of airborne troops hustling around near a large city and not have the entire population guess that something was coming off would have been still more of a miracle.

It seemed like a matter of hours to reach the ground instead of less than a minute. The planes had flown higher than planned so as to keep above the fog, and we must have jumped at about two thousand feet. I saw other troopers jumping just before I left the plane; but going down through the haze, I lost sight of everybody. On nearing the ground I could see dark shapes that looked like trees,

and knew that we were certainly not near the drop zone, which was an open vineyard. I bent my knees slightly, and as I landed, my carbine, which I had tucked under my reserve, came up and smacked me in the face. The parachute descended almost vertically, and the next thing I knew, I was tangled up in a mass of silk and suspension lines.

I got out my pistol for protection in case there were any Germans about, and started to cut the webbing with my knife. The webbing was tough and soon I was dripping with perspiration, not only due to the exertion, but also because I had put on a heavy wool undershirt, which I now regretted. Finally I succeeded in getting clear and started to look for my pistol, which I had placed carefully on the ground while sawing away. After searching carefully in the dark for about ten minutes, I couldn't find the darn' thing anywhere and started to look for Kinzer and Paxton, who had jumped right behind me.

Several times I fell into deep rocky gullies and got mixed up in underbrush and fallen trees in the dark. I did succeed in picking up two men whom I heard also thrashing around, but they were from another stick. Where we were we had no idea, but we did know that we were probably somewhere in France near the top of a wooded and rocky hill. We decided to wait another hour till daylight and then get our bearings before starting toward the assembly area, whereever that might be.

As daylight approached we could hear firing toward the bottom of the hill. We began to pick up more men wandering around, and finally ran into Captain McKinley, the C.O. of F company. We could see a town down in the valley, and according to the pattern of roads, decided it must be Le Muy. As F company was supposed to capture La Motte as rapidly as possible, we bypassed Le Muy, which was in the British sector and where a lot of firing was still going on. As we went along we kept running into small groups of Germans, but nothing particularly formidable.

One German, whom we couldn't see in the thick brush, kept yelling, *"Kamerad! Nicht schützen Sie!"* Somebody worked up close and started to throw a hand grenade when somebody else said: "Don't throw that darn' thing—I'm right in front of you." Nobody saw the German after that, so I guess he was simply covering somebody's rapid departure and had then drifted back through the woods himself.

I asked the lieutenant in charge of the advance party why he didn't put out any flank protection. He said that you couldn't do that in this type of country. Well, if you can find any better country to put out flankers, I would like to see it, as we were by this time down on the low ground near the town, and we came upon others who had been hiding from German patrols. One youngster we picked up asked us what kept us so darn' long. He apparently had been having a hard time all alone, dodging a German patrol that had spotted him when he landed close to Le Muy.

As we neared La Motte, we sent out a patrol to find out the situation. It returned quickly and reported Lt. Col. Seitz and the remainder of the 2nd Battalion had the town in their possession and were now moving to their objective along the road towards Draguignan. So we kept on through the town, Co. F to join up with the 2nd Battalion, and I to reach the Chateau St. Rosseline, which we had selected on the map as the regimental CP. Lemansky, my combined runner and bodyguard, also joined me near La Motte, and stuck pretty close after that. At St. Rosseline, which we reached about noon, we found Paxton had already taken charge of things and had started work on getting some of the anti-airborne traps removed so the 551st and the gliders could come in that afternoon.

I also found Capt. Fraser, who was in command of the regimental reserve of two companies. He had his own company from the 1st Battalion, but the company from the 3rd Battalion was not yet to be found. Major Vella, the regimental surgeon, was setting up his aid station and treating jump casualties as best he could. There were quite a few broken ankles from landing on the rough terrain. Among these were Capt. Peirce, the S-1, Lt. Col. Walton, regimental executive, Major Cross, exec. of the 2nd Battalion, and Capt. Armstrong, CO of the

Co. D, who had landed on a sharp stake where he sits down.

As the chateau was occupied by a Frenchman and his family, we simply set up in the carriage shed and appropriated only one or two rooms of the main building. Later in the afternoon we got a radio message from the 3rd Battalion that they had landed at Callian, about twenty-five miles away and were then en route to join the regiment. Lt. Col. Boyle, always in the thick of trouble, had got pinned down in a building in Les Arcs and was having a hot time keeping body and soul together. Major Bowlby, however, the battalion executive, had managed to work his way to the objective gathering up about half the battalion and was now holding his objective as planned.

Nobody as yet was on the 3rd Battalion objective, so we sent Capt. Fraser out there temporarily to occupy it with his lone company of the regimental reserve. Lt. Col. Cato had magnificent luck with his parachute artillery, and had been set up ready to fire since 1100 that morning with the bulk of his guns. All except one battalion had landed pretty close—that is, within a few miles of its objective. By the afternoon of D-day, all the regimental objectives had been occupied, and the artillery was in position and ready. Now all we had to do was to see how the situation developed, get Boyle out of Les Arcs and get the 3rd Battalion back into the fold so we would have at least a small reserve to play around with.

THAT afternoon of D-day we went down to watch the rest of the task force come in. It was a fine sight to see the hundreds of gliders being towed overhead, cut loose, and then come in trying to find a place to land. A lot of them crashed pretty badly, and soon our regimental aid station was going full blast with injured glider pilots and others who were hurt while landing. Major Vella placed them around the inside courtyard of St. Rosseline, and with Lieut. Dickerson, who had made his first jump into combat, made them as comfortable as possible. The 551st paratroopers also came in and went off immediately to relieve the 2nd Battalion on its objective as planned. The 2nd then went over to the 3rd Battalion objective, and we had our regimental reserve back again.

That night we started getting a little artillery fire from down the valley to the west, and the situation began to develop. The threat began to loom up. From the west in the valley we could see Germans running around apparently headed toward Le Muy. At first we were slow to fire on them, as at a distance they were indistinct and we thought there was a possibility that it might be more of our troopers moving in toward their objectives. However we didn't feel too badly, as now the 4.2 company had joined us by glider and also the anti-tank company of Japanese-Americans.

On D plus 1, the 2d Battalion moved down and captured Les Arcs without too much trouble. Lt. Col. Zais and his 3d Battalion came staggering in very tired after their long march through the hills, and arrived about 1600. We put them in some woods in the valley so they would be in position to move against the enemy now obviously filtering eastward up the valley. In the maps and on the terrain models, we had figured that with battalions occupying objectives on both sides, they could see and fire on anything moving up the low ground.

This was true to a certain extent, and the 1st Battalion from its position was getting in some good mortar fire on located targets. Actually there was a lot of cover and concealment, and many gullies and ditches along which the enemy could move unobserved, and this was what they were trying to do. Where they came from I don't know, but believe they must have been Germans who finding they might be cut off from the combined airborne and seaborne attack, were trying to break a way back toward Draguignan, already mentioned as the enemy corps CP. After talking with Col. Ellis, the task force G-3, it was decided to let the 3d Battalion attack that same evening in spite of their fatigue, with a view to clearing the valley and joining up with the 2d Battalion at Les Arcs. Six o'clock was set as the time of attack, and as we heard the amphibious attack had been successful, we decided to use plenty of ammunition, about seven hundred rounds in the preliminary 4.2 concentration.

The 4.2's started in on their first target around the railroad track that crossed the valley, and as the 3d Battalion started forward, lifted to an area beyond the railroad. Quite a lot of white phosphorus was fired, and how any Germans could be left in the area was beyond me; but as they crossed the tracks, Lieut. Freeman of Co. H and his first sergeant were both hit by machine-gun fire. However, the attack went along smoothly otherwise. Shortly after dark the 3d Battalion, which had landed twenty-five miles away from its objective, had staged the attack which relieved the pressure against us from the west. There was no more trouble from this direction.

While my personal experiences on landing were rather tame, there were many others who had somewhat more startling adventures. A group from the 3d Battalion had to leave about ten injured and wounded men in Callian, a town held by the Germans. These men were aided by the French Maquis, and about a week later were rescued. Several German trucks were encountered loaded with Germans and marked with the Red Cross insignia. These trucks were surprised and many Germans were killed or captured. Capt. McGiever, and a group from the 3d Battalion were strafed by P-38's on their way back to St. Rosseline. However, on lighting a yellow smoke-candle, they finally convinced the planes that they were not Germans and were not bothered after that. . . .

Sergeant Heckard, who was injured slightly on the jump, remained behind with an officer from the O.S.S. and arranged with the German commander of the fortress at Le Roch near Fayence for its surrender. Many convincing arguments had to be presented to the German commander before the surrender, but the fear instilled by the airborne invasion finally prevailed. Although some of the Germans filtered back from Le Roch, a sizable group of exactly one hundred and seventy-four were rounded up by Heckard and the O.S.S. captain.

A group from Company B, 1st Battalion landed near Draguignan. They captured two German trucks containing officers and men. They killed three officers and captured twenty-five prisoners on their way to their objective. A patrol was sent out near Draguignan which did not return. It was found later that the members of the patrol were captured by a German unit which in turn was surrounded by French F. F. I.'s. The Germans, rather than surrender to the French, surrendered to the patrol leader, Pfc. Gray, who turned them over to the French anyway. There were two hundred and fifty in this group.

The artillery landed fairly well together except one group gathered up by Major Franks, with about thirty men who had been dropped near the coast, adjacent to the town of St. Raphael; they had put together two 75's and were pushing them up the road to rejoin Cato near Le Muy. Some Frenchmen warned them of their location of a German artillery battery up the road a way. Frank had his guns set up, went forward himself with a few men and a radio to set up an observation post. After ranging in with smoke, Frank had them fire for effect. The Germans were completely surprised, suffered many casualties, and were thrown into confusion. What remained of the German battery pulled out in great haste.

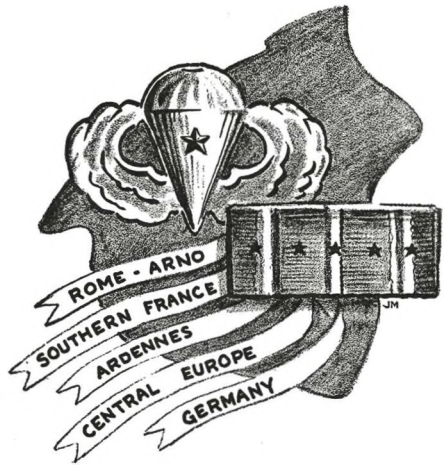
ON D-day plus one, a soldier from the First Battalion drove up to the CP in a big black German car built rakishly low to the ground. It was a welcome present, as we had no transportation and we needed vehicles at headquarters in which to get around

on visits, and get written reports back to Task Force headquarters. The back of the car was quite a mess, however, as it was about half full of blood, and what looked like brains were scattered around on the floor. When I remarked that the car was a little untidy, the soldier said, "Colonel, don't worry about that," and shot a hole through the floor which permitted the blood to drain out. This car, according to the soldier, had been captured by a platoon under Lt. Rearden, of the 1st Battalion. Rearden had set up a road block on the road running past the 1st Battalion objective into Le Muy. Shortly afterward the German car came along and very inconveniently stopped at the road block, and the officers in the back of the car gave the Hitler salute, thinking that these must be German soldiers. One soldier fired a rifle anti-tank grenade at the car, striking one of the officers in the head. The soldier had forgotten to arm the grenade, however, and the grenade did not explode. Nevertheless it proved quite effective, for it broke the German's skull wide open and he slumped over into the bottom of the car. The other Germans, realizing their mistake, tried to escape by jumping out of the car and making a dash for cover. They were also cut down by rifle-fire, and the car sent over to the regimental CP. The car belonged to Gestapo officers who were on their way from Marseilles to the interior of France. To find American soldiers fifteen miles into the heart of a heavily defended defensive zone, practically before the attack began, was simply beyond belief.

There were literally hundreds of stories passed around within a few days after the landing, and the above minor incidents are a fair sample of the others. Not much has been told or written about the southern France invasion, and I am not one to say that it was nearly as rough as landing in Normandy. However, I would like to say that the area was occupied in force and heavily defended. On viewing the seacoast defenses along the beaches later, I was surprised at the vast amount of work and preparation that had gone into them. In dozens of places where amphibious troops might pick to land particularly along good stretches of beach, there was a veritable honeycomb of thick pillboxes, blockhouses, and barbed wire entanglements. Many of the pillboxes and blockhouses were cleverly camouflaged to resemble bathhouses, restaurants and stores, including the appropriate signs clearly visible.

It is true that there were no large concentrations of German armor in this area, such as a panzer division. In addition, the Normandy operation had already been concluded and a segment of France was now in our possession to include Paris. The Germans could not afford to strip the Normandy areas to fight in Southern France, and consequently, the occupation troops of Southern France were left to their own resources. At the same time, the American forces thrown against Southern France were comparatively small initially, and remained that way for some time.

I believe, however, that the French Maquis and F.F.I. in this area were of great assistance. The southern hills of France were a veritable stronghold of free Frenchmen. They had already been at work, but as soon as the invasion started, they were all over the



place. They greatly hampered the movement of German troops, as any Germans caught out in the fields or woods at night were usually pretty well taken care of. As a result, the enemy huddled into the towns and villages, and it was comparatively easy to locate and capture a company or a battalion at a time. Information from French sources also was of great abundance and usually accurate.

The people of southern France did not fear the Germans as did the people of northern France, and for a good reason. Southern France had not been overrun and destroyed as was northern France in World War I, and this must have been still vividly impressed into the minds of the inhabitants of such places as Rheims, Soissons, Arros, Lens, Château-Thierry and many others. . . .

On the fourth day, elements of the 36th and 45th divisions reached our area, and we were temporarily out of a job. However, this condition did not last very long, as we were next assigned the mission of relieving the 141st Infantry Regiment, which was then protecting the right flank of the Seventh Army. The special service came in and relieved the 2nd British Brigade, the job of pushing forward toward the Italian border reducing whatever resistance we found on the way. The S.S.F. was on the right with the 509th and 551st, and 517th was on the left, well inland and in country that was hilly at first and mountainous later as we drew closer to the Italian border. In the meantime the bulk of the 7th Army was to drive straight up the Rhine Valley.

It was taking a little time to build up supplies on the beach, and at this time we were pretty limited in both vehicles and rations. We did use sometimes the jeeps of the anti-tank company who had brought them in by glider, but the six two-and-a-half-ton trucks allotted to the regiment were pretty small to take care of the long ration and ammunition haul, and precluded any ideas of transporting men by truck. Cato also had only a few trucks to haul his artillery, ammunition and rations and ended up working out a plan where he would rush his guns forward with skeleton crews and start the rest of the battalion marching up to the new gun position. Actually, I believe that if Cato didn't have any transportation at all, he would have figured out some way of keeping his guns in close support of the infantry.

I believe all the Infantry felt the same way about Col. Cato and the 460th, for with those 75-mm. pack howitzers in support, they attacked with absolute confidence that the artillery fire would be where they wanted it and not in their own lap. Later on I used to hear enlisted men talk of the best artillery in the U. S. Army. When they did this, they were referring to their own. Later on when we were supported by artillery from other units, and it would sometimes land among them inflicting casualties, they would wish that they had their own 460th supporting them again.

AFTER relieving the 141st on the right of the Seventh Army, our first mission was to capture Fayence. As the fortress of St. Roch overlooked the town, we thought at first that this might present some difficulties. As a preliminary, we shelled the town in the late afternoon and sent patrols to reconnoiter that night. During the afternoon, Capt. Bigler was trying to find a place to set up the CP and came across some likely-looking buildings fairly close to the town of Fayence. As they started to unload the radios, they suddenly came under the fire of a 20-mm. gun from the top of the hill in front of them. They beat a hasty retreat without too much damage, but a patrol had to go there that night to get the radios and medical equipment they had abandoned in haste. This was the second time within a few days that Bigler had come under accurate German fire, and his remark of, "You're gotta be nimble!" became a motto in the regiment.

However, the situation changed quickly the next morning, as by the first rays of sunlight we saw about two hundred Germans with their

hands in the air march down the hill from the town and give themselves up to the outposts of the 2nd Battalion. Unbeknown to us, the O.S.S. captain, accompanied by Sgt. Heckard, had been arranging the surrender of the town, and had completed the final arrangements shortly after dark of the day before. Our artillery fire had clinched the O.S.S. captain's arguments, as they conferred with the garrison commander at Fort St. Roch.

Callian was the next town to be liberated. It was the place where most of the 3rd Battalion had landed a few days before, and so this made the second time it had been liberated. The first time the 3rd Battalion had marched through its streets all the children had appeared with flags and cheers to welcome the Americans. It had been rather pathetic to march away to their assigned objective, leaving the town for the Germans to come back in. The French, particularly the children, could not understand why we had done this as they had been looking forward for years for their liberation. However, the second time the town was liberated it was for good. The people were not quite as warm as on the first liberation, but nevertheless were very hospitable. As we had been existing mostly on grapes picked up from the vineyards en route, the C-rations cooked up by the proprietress of the local hotel, and seasoned with onions and garlic, seemed very much like a royal feast.

TWELVE miles farther on was the town of St. Cesare, situated at the peak of a very formidable-looking hill overlooking a long, narrow valley. To approach the town over anything but a steep, precipitous slope would involve many miles of circuitous travel over roadless terrain. No enemy was encountered on the way to St. Cesare and from an observation post, it looked as if the town was deserted. One company of the 3rd Battalion was ordered to cross the ravine and attack the town frontally while another company cut around and hit the town from the other side. The attack was to start at seven P.M. During the afternoon, Cato ranged his artillery in, and as the advance on the town started we could see Germans rushing from the buildings to positions overlooking the ravine. It looked as though Co. I was going to have a tough time, scaling the steep and long approaches to the town, as already mortar fire was beginning to fall. However they kept on climbing and most of the mortar fire seemed to land in back of them. As they approached the top German machine-gun fire could be heard for a while and then suddenly died out. Darkness now had fallen and the advancing troops could no longer be seen. Finally the message came back that the town had fallen. . . .

Early the next morning everything looked pretty rosy. Company I had scaled the cliffs in the face of enemy fire and killed the German gunners in their positions. Many of them were still lying around in the rocky field near the town. They were young Nazis from a reconnaissance battalion that had been sent to hold the town. Most of them looked to be about eighteen or nineteen years old. However, these were the best of the German army, rabid Nazis, and as ordered had held their positions until killed.

Our casualties fortunately were extremely light as most of the mortar fire fell in back of the attacking companies who had pushed on out of range. The darkness also had given our men protection as they reached the top of the steep incline. The people of the town who had all kept very much under cover during the attack now appeared and were bent on staging a big celebration. However we had to move on to the next town of St. Vallieres before the Germans had too much time to get set. It was with reluctance therefore that we started the march eastward, leaving the hospitable inhabitants of St. Cesare.

As the 1st Battalion advanced on St. Vallieres, the 2nd Battalion took another route via Grasse, and the 3rd Battalion remained in reserve at St. Cesare to rest up from their previous night's exertions. Except for the long marches everything for the next few days went rather easily. Except for a few mines to move, St. Vallieres gave no resistance. Grasse had been heavily fortified and apparently the Germans had intended to defend it strongly. Several vehicles including an .88 were found by our artillery observers and demolished. However the defense apparently changed their minds for when the 2nd Battalion started into the town they encountered no opposition and we all pushed on to Bar Sur Loup.

As the Loup River was quite an obstacle we wanted to get the bridge near Bar Sur Loup intact in order to keep supplies moving up to the advancing troops. A strong patrol was sent on ahead of the column to try to capture the bridge. However as the patrol approached the bridge the Germans blew it up and placed machine-gun fire on the advancing patrol. As the river ran through a deep gorge with the surrounding hill rising steeply from the river's edge, we were forced to find other routes over which to get supplies. However the men with their equipment forded the Loup with some difficulty and started for the Var River, our next objective. While at Bar Sur Loup the regimental CP was set up at the house of a very charming French family named Gabriel. They consisted of the father, mother, daughter aged sixteen, and son about twelve years old. They were so kind and solicitous it was hard to do much work because every time you withdrew to be alone for awhile, they would interrupt every few minutes wanting to know if you wanted some tea, or some wine, or a bath or something else. It was generally true that some of the French seemed to realize there were other towns to capture, still many German troops who had to be pushed back. They seemed content to settle down and enjoy life as soon as their particular town was free of Germans.

We were now leaving the hills of France and getting up into the higher and more massive Mountain Alps. Instead of the rich vineyards, farms, and gardens we now found only here and there a lonely goat herder with his herd of goats grazing on the side of a hill. Instead of the broad fields of jasmine cultivated for the perfume industry of Grasse we now found only wild and rocky hillsides with a few patches of scrubby grass and flowers.

IT was in these towns such as Bouillon, Coursegoules, Broc, and Puget Theniers that many members of the French Resistance forces had taken refuge. In spite of the poorness of the country they arranged a banquet at Bouillon, consisting of many courses, that would have done credit to one of the better hotels in New York City. Where all the supplies came from, I don't know, but apparently it had been hidden out from the Germans on their raids through the mountains. The town of Puget Theniers was the largest of the above towns and was veritably the center of French Resistance in the Maritime Alps. It was here that the American woman Isobel Pell had hidden out for months prior to the invasion, while broadcasting information to the outside world over a high-powered radio set. All this was done at no small cost to the French, as the German searching parties on at least several occasions made examples out of the ones they did catch by shooting them in the public square of Puget Thenier and in the presence of the remainder of the family. The cemetery on the outskirts of town bore many evidences of many of these massacres; however, it served only to increase the hatred of these mountain people against the Germans and make their resistance more fierce and determined. They had estimated that it would take the Americans three years to recapture France after its fall. We were over a year late now but had no reasonable excuse to offer them, and could only offer our apologies.

The story of the 517th Airborne will continue in our next issue.

Southern France Landing

You have read Colonel Graves' story of the 517th Airborne landing. Here the Air Force job in the Southern France attack is vividly described.

by C. DONALD WIRE

Illustrated by W. H. Brooks

THE air was strange, that night of August 14th, 1944. It had an unfamiliar lack of movement, utterly devoid of the usual crisp breeze that swept in from the Tyrrhenian Sea. It spread crystal clear under winking stars, yet its quality was oppressive and sultry.

The land below, running a narrow finger out into the Mediterranean, was called the Boot. The Italy of the post-Mussolini era—quaint shops along the cluttered back streets of Naples, Broadway Bill's and the Red Cross in Rome, the rocky crags of Castellana, up north in the midst of its own unpredictable war, the battered city of Leghorn.

During this night it would be a land awake with the thunder of roaring aircraft.

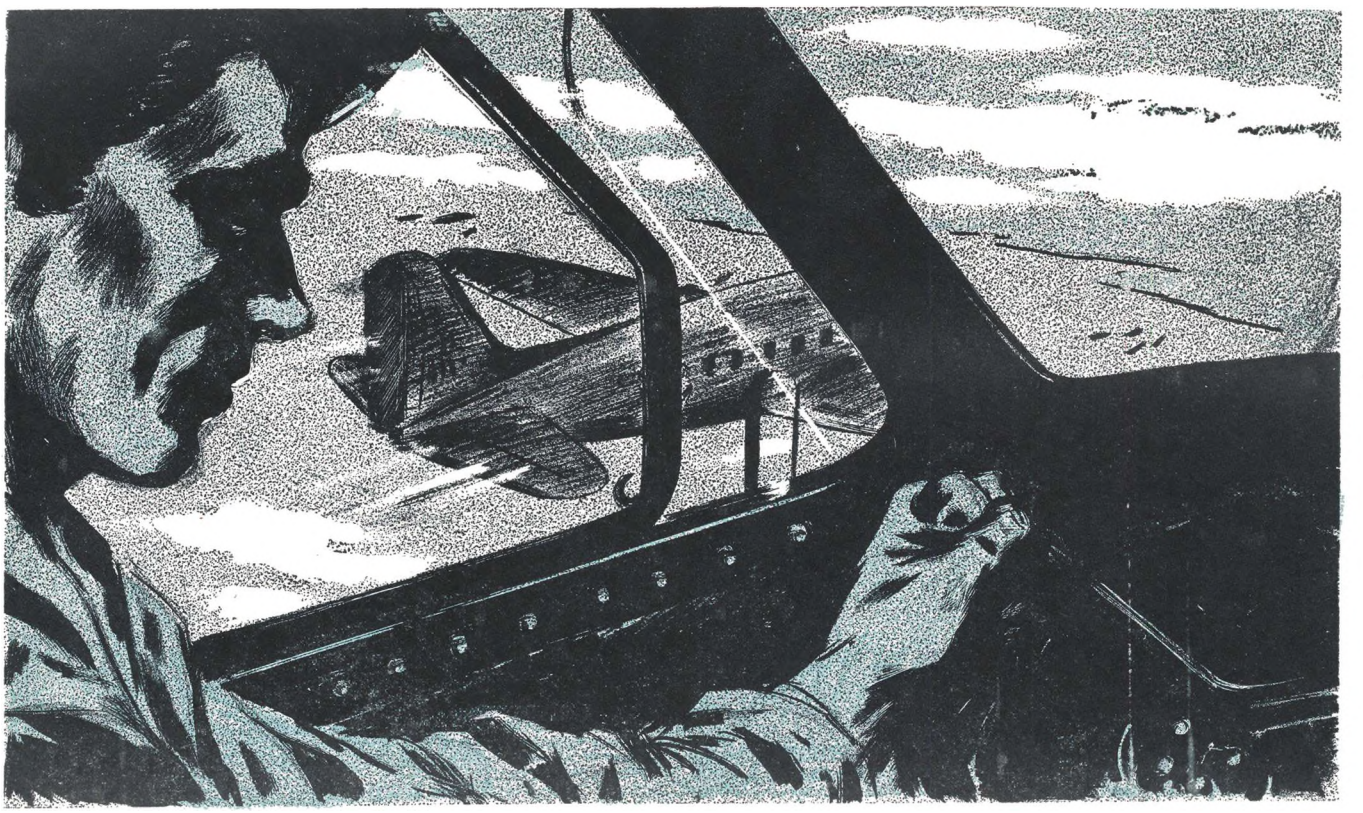
The scene was set as the many airstrips carved out of the flat lands of the peninsula. High-shouldered, camouflaged C-47 transports marshaled on dirt runways. A quiet, attentive knot of paratroopers slumped down on the ground beside each one, inspecting equipment or listening to anecdotes born of Sicily and Anzio, and that aërial grand slam that surpassed all previous airborne operations, Normandy.

Then through the night the whine of gears and a cloud of dust as a jeep or weapons-carrier shrieked along the runway edge. The shouts that were many, the intense, crowded activity of ground personnel. The monotonous procession of six-by-six trucks clanking across the gutted road from the bivouac areas, headlights bobbing, hushed loads of paratroopers clutching at each other to keep from spilling out over dropped tail-gates.

And the silence, the giant C-47s tranquil to the point of gaining dignity. Now in repose, soon to roar with power given by the flick of a finger on a starter switch.

In two hours' time, Italy would be the springboard for the airborne invasion of Southern France. Troop Carrier units of the Mediterranean Command, augmented by the 50th Wing dispatched from Britain, would vault the meager defenses of Hitler's southern bastion and again assault the enemy with aërial invasion.

Italy was the Britain of the south, Southern France the second Normandy of Europe. A logical place for a diversionary attack, they all admitted that. Hitler needed reserves, and in a desperate effort to dam the flood of Allied might pouring inland, he had virtually ripped the defenses of the Riviera up out of the ground. Photo reconnaissance revealed almost non-existent naval defenses. As for the Luftwaffe, it was bowing to superior Allied air power and keeping pretty much to its own territory. Troops were observed in continuous movement away from the coast, taking with them all-mobile armor and riding any vehicle that would provide transportation.



Goodwin tucked himself in close to Anderson's wing as they approached landfall on the coast of France.

The advantage of surprise, a factor that helped insure the success of Normandy, was in this case lost. Corsica, the staging area, was paid daily visits by German reconnaissance planes. It isn't with ease you hide an invading army and its supporting naval elements.

The Riviera offered a rugged coastline, broken only occasionally by stretches of beach suitable for an amphibious landing. Hills overlooking the sea provided excellent positions for hidden defenses. Whatever was there, whatever escaped the lens of the aërial camera, was a threat that only the actual landing itself would reveal.

The only component lacking in Italy for a major invasion was sufficient Troop Carrier units. Mediterranean Command groups had been bled for the invasion of Normandy, and after the success of Operation Neptune-Bigot, airborne became a prime requisite to cover landings along the southern coast.

On July 16th, the 50th Troop Carrier Wing left Great Britain in mass flight for Italy. The Wing moved south across the Bay of Biscay into Marrakech, Morocco, then flew northeast across the Mediterranean to various bases on the Italian Peninsula. July 18th found all personnel standing by awaiting further orders.

Official communiqués reported the flight as routine, with no interception by enemy aircraft. But official communiqués don't reveal the feelings or emotions of men. They failed to paint that vivid picture of weary hours in the air, plowing through a starless sky with a violent electrical storm ripping the night apart and blinding the tense crew members of the C-47s. The better to picture this historic flight, let us follow it from the viewpoint of one participant:

Lieutenant John Goodwin of the 95th Squadron was the boy in the Number Two slot off Colonel Irvin Anderson's right wing. Anderson was the squadron's skipper, and a good man to follow in a muggy sky like this.

Number Two was a familiar position for Goodwin. He'd flown it on D-night over Cherbourg, and on D-plus-one he'd hung onto that right wing until a cluster of fragmentation bombs blew him out of the sky. Miraculous rescue from a cold English Channel followed, and Goodwin came back again to take over as deputy leader of the 95th.

They called him a kid. Maybe he was, if you reckoned his age only on the basis of the twenty years he'd spent on earth. But if you looked a little closer into the blue eyes that were always tight in a squint, you saw additional years. Experience and responsibility can shatter the time element.

He was thin, and his color wasn't always good because he worked too hard. He was sensitive, and all of it drained into his fingertips. He was quick in the sky, edgy but sure of himself, capable of working himself into a sweat, but never making the same mistake twice.

That night over the Bay of Biscay he stayed with Irvin Anderson without once losing sight of Anderson's blue formation lights. Lightning flashed across the sky in a one-hundred-eighty-degree arc. At the instant of its flare, it illuminated billowing cloud masses and dread stacks of towering thunderheads rising into the sky to form layers of ice-crystals at forty thousand feet.

His eyes were half closed with fatigue, and pain filled the sockets as the first pastel wash of sunlight silhouetted the black clouds. He saw a ship miles to the left, hanging in the air as if it had been spawned by the rising sun. Anderson was ahead, weaving through the cloud hills, dropping down into valleys made by currents of air. . . .

Two days later, sprawled on the beach in his cotton undershorts with the blue Tyrrhenian Sea as placid and unruffled as a mountain lake, Goodwin looked back on that night. He'd packed a parachute bag, taken off in a drizzle of cold British rain, and twenty-eight hundred miles and twenty-two flying hours later was sprawled out under a warm sun clad in as close to nothing as he could manage and still remain "in uniform."

Life on the Ombrone airstrip, the 440th's assigned operational base, had proved a welcome change to Goodwin from the strict operational schedule

adhered to at the 440th's permanent base in Devonshire, England. Due to the shortage of gasoline, flying was held to an absolute minimum. He made a few orientation tours of the surrounding territory. A few cargo "milk runs" to Corsica rounded out the 440th's air war the first three weeks. Goodwin was beginning to develop an inferiority complex in the presence of his airplane.

Chow ran heavily to C-rations, but there was one welcome addition that Britain couldn't offer. Ice-cream was on the menu two or three times a week. This plus combat rations and plenty of fresh vegetables from neighboring farms rounded out a food situation that at first looked rather glum.

THE first undercurrent of the impending operation came on August 6th. Goodwin took to the air in a simulated airborne invasion, run in full daylight. All Groups in the 50th Wing flew out to sea and turned back in to landfall south of Ombrone. No personnel were carried. Message-sticks, imprinted with the ship numbers, were dropped on the drop zone. Results were reported as good, and a few days later a night drop was made utilizing the same course. Marshaling the armada occurred without a hitch, and only one ship in the 440th wandered out of formation. The pilot followed a star in place of his lead ship. It happens.

In the next few days, Goodwin stacked up a few more hard flying hours and got the rust out of his joints. He towed CG4A combat gliders up from a depot in Naples. The 440th was committed for a tow as their second mission in the invasion. Assigned glider pilots of the Group were supplemented by additional pilots flown in from England by Air Transport Command.

That feeling got around. It's a peculiar one—it seems to be a blend of overworked imaginations, of speculation over what may happen. Goodwin was aware of one thing: The aircraft they flew, the Douglas C-47, was highly vulnerable to enemy interception in any form. Ground fire could cut them to ribbons at their night-drop altitude of seven hundred feet. At four hundred feet on the daylight glider tow, they were sitting ducks for marauding fighter craft. They'd all seen gas tanks blow. And with no self-sealing skin it only took a few incendiary bullets to do the job.

It would be Normandy again. The close, compact formations, airspeeds at 110 miles per hour, troopers surging through the door and dropping out into the night—

And the prop-wash from the lead squadrons, throwing you around like a cork in that vast ocean of air. Your fluttering wings, your wings that were like autumn leaves, your wings you thought would snap if they were buffeted with much more violence.

The Field Order covering Operation Dragoon was received on August 11th. On the 14th at 1500 hours, Group briefing was held in operations, a sprawling tent alongside the oiled runway.

It was hot that day. They poured across the sun-baked, dusty airstrip—pilots and co-pilots, navigators, crew chiefs and radio operators. They filled the tent and gave out with the small talk that was a long way from war. Goodwin was in his undershorts, smoking and adding to the blue haze that hung like a layer of stratus clouds. He made notes, but mostly he just listened to the talk, the endless talk, it seemed. . . .

But the briefing was short. There just wasn't much to say. The course was outlined. It consisted of two legs—flight westerly past the island of Elba to the northern tip of Corsica, then northeast to landfall just below Nice, and straight in to the drop zone at the small town of Le Muy. They were to drop 720 paratroopers of the 517th Parachute Infantry.

The weather was expected to hold good, although low clouds might be present over the coast of France. Flak emplacements were spotted. Everything was mobile, the stuff that could be moved quickly, making the most painstaking overlay useless. Ground batteries could be used to the best advantage, since course from landfall into Le Muy was through a narrow valley. The situation was confused because of rapid German troop movements. But this was no surprise invasion. They were expected.

Close to one thousand Troop Carrier C-47s made up the invading armada, Mediterranean Command bolstered by four groups of the 50th Wing. The northern tip of Corsica was the marshaling point. Each Group had its time of arrival figured to the split second.

Assigned altitude was fifteen hundred feet across the Tyrrhenian Sea, with let-down to seven hundred feet from landfall into Le Muy. After the drop, a right climbing turn would be made out of the target area, and course re-flown at three thousand feet. This was a departure from the Normandy tactics, when all ships went into the deck and came out as close to zero altitude as possible. Le Muy's position, at the stem of the valley and land-locked by high mountains, prevented any hedge-hopping or contour flying.

The 440th Group was committed to forty-five aircraft, eighteen from the 95th Squadron, nine from the 96th, and eighteen from the 97th.

Station time was 0200 hours on the morning of August 15th. . . .

Johnny Goodwin rolled out in time for hot coffee and a few cigarettes. He walked to the runway, in the stillness of that heavy, unmoving air. He thought about the take-off down a dirt strip that boasted only thirty-five hundred feet with its full length. Now the first third was taken up with marshaled aircraft. Eighteen troopers in each, their arms and ammunition and equipment. A normal crew of four, with flak helmets and vests. Six para-racks fastened under each flat belly, fully loaded, sticking out into the airstream and increasing drag tremendously. Plenty of weight to pull off the ground and clear that line of trees at the end of the runway. Plenty of weight, and the air that hung like molten lead—

At 0232 hours, Group Commander Frank Krebbs, leading the nine ships that made up Headquarters Squadron, released his brakes and rolled away. Krebbs blasted a cloud of oily dust into the air, and before he was halfway down the runway he was lost from sight.

Goodwin heard the bellowing engines, wide open, taking every available inch of mercury that could be put into them. Propellers thrummed as they were brought into synchronization. But there was still only sound, sound dwindling out as the dirt runway did before it.

Goodwin peered through the windscreens of his aircraft, staring into the black smudge that rolled like fog, praying for the sight of blue formation lights lifting into the night sky.

Like points of flame, unwinking and forming a neat "T" with six lights on the cross arm and three on the shaft, those formation lights rose out of the dust and staggered across the trees.

HEADQUARTERS SQUADRON followed the leader; visibility was reduced to a few yards; every pilot made an instrument take-off, holding the runway heading with gyro compass.

Goodwin tagged Anderson's lead C-47 down the field. Unable to see Anderson, he had allowed the required ten-second take-off interval. Now his eyes were glued to the gyro compass, holding his heading to the exact degree. He had everything firewalled, and the old bird was bumping herself silly in the gullies and shallow rain washes. He'd been on the ground too long, he knew that. There was too much runway behind him and not enough ahead.

He sucked the wheel back. The C-47 staggered. She wallowed for a moment in a gust of prop-wash from Anderson's lead ship. Then she bit the leaden air and dragged herself out away from the field.

Something scraped the transport's belly, and Goodwin pulled up a low left wing. The line of trees fell

away behind, their topmost branches shredded and torn. By the time the entire 440th was in the air, those trees looked as if they had taken a direct hit by an H.E.

The Group assembled at fifteen hundred feet. She flew her customary assault formation of five squadrons, nine ships in each, each squadron flying a trio of three ship elements arranged in a V-of-Vs.

The course out to Command assembly point on Corsica was made without incident. Formations held tight with no stragglers. The island of Elba showed under bright moonlight, a mysterious, unyielding rock in a mirror of ocean, veiled in history and a reminder of a conqueror of a bygone age.

Goodwin tucked himself in close under Anderson's right wing as the Group approached landfall on the coast of France. Fog shrouded the shoreline, and huge fires dotted the beach, throwing a phosphorescent glow across the layers of drifting mist. The Navy was down there, pounding away in a softening-up process for the amphibious troops that would soon hit the beach.

Goodwin expected anything as they crossed the white coastline. Beneath lay fog, like a pallor of death. The blue raging fires, devastating yet as soundless as the night. The mountains on each side, humps of shadow, formless, concealing.

And not a line of tracer in the sky, not a single red splatter of 88-millimeter. . . .

If they had guns why didn't they use them? Was this another smart Heinie trick? That was it, Goodwin told himself. They were concentrating all their fire-power on the drop zone, waiting to get the massed formations as they quivered at seven hundred feet, airspeeds 110 miles per hour. You had to hand it to them. . . .

The descent to drop altitude began. Goodwin felt the moisture in his hands. The fog, the sky, the mountains. Couldn't they see? Were they down there, blind, hearing the roar of engines and helpless? Or were they waiting, just waiting—

Goodwin saw biscuit-guns wink green from Headquarters Squadron. A few seconds later, the green blazed from Anderson's astro-dome. Goodwin hit the *Go* toggle on his switch panel. He flipped the para-pack salvo release. His stick of troopers dropped through the cargo door, and he rode free and unweighted across the drop zone.

Automatically he bent his throttles forward and wheeled right with Colonel Anderson. In a few minutes water was beneath him again. The fog was there and the roaring fires. He tried to relax but found it impossible. He was unable to realize that

not one puff of flak, not one red, probing finger of 20- or 40-millimeter had lifted into the sky.

For the 440th Group the initial stage of the Southern France invasion had been successfully completed. Later reports showed that their drop on the target, through impenetrable fog that required pinpoint navigation and split-second timing, had been ninety-eight percent accurate. Abortive aircraft through mechanical failure were zero. Loss to enemy action was zero. One aircraft received minor damage. A stray .30-caliber bullet bored a neat hole through its vertical stabilizer.

The returning C-47s of the 440th had but choked out their last r.p.m. when refuelers swarmed into the dispersal area and began the serious business of checking gas and oil. Weary crew chiefs removed cowlings and delved into engine innards. Engineering personnel carefully went over tires and control surfaces.

All these things were of prime importance. An airplane taking off with a glider in tow is a temperamental, unpredictable machine that can quickly transform itself from an airborne giant into a flaming, fatal crash. With a CG4A combat glider on the end of three hundred feet of nylon rope, rudder control can be completely lost and elevators rendered useless by an unruly glider. Here, then, the pilot of a powered aircraft, always considered the master and control over his ship, finds it absolutely necessary to rely on the skill and extensive training of his glider pilot. Co-operation

Goodwin hit the Go toggle, and his troopers dropped through the door.

in air maneuvers, between individual aircraft or groups of aircraft, has never been developed to the degree existing between tow and tug pilot.

At 1610 hours on that same day of August 15th, General Chappell, Commanding 50th Wing and in this instance flying lead ship in the 440th Group, pulled the first glider off Ombrone airstrip. The dust rose, and even in the full daylight ships were lost from sight by the time they reached the end of the dirt strip.

Johnny Goodwin was again flying in his Number Two position as deputy leader of the 95th Squadron. Two other men were stepped off Goodwin's right wing, forming a four-ship echelon. This series of four-ship echelons in trail was standard operating procedure for executing a combat glider tow. The stepped-back aircraft gave the gliders in tow more freedom of lateral maneuver.

Intelligence had offered one warning at the briefing that afternoon. They had cautioned that the absence of ground fire on the previous night may have been due to the thick ground fog. With the fog dispersed by an unmasked sun, the 440th could expect its full share of opposition if fortifications existed.

IT is safe to say that if intense opposition had been encountered over the coast of Southern France on that afternoon in August of 1944, losses of Troop Carrier units under Mediterranean Command would have been staggering.

Holding fast off Anderson's right wing, a sight met the eyes of Goodwin that was almost beyond imagination. What he saw was a prediction of aviation's prophet with delayed honor, the late and greatly beloved General Billy Mitchell.

The entire sky, from horizon to horizon, was blanketed with aircraft. At the 1500-foot altitude, and in a gradual let-down from the coast to Le Muy, was an unending, vast umbrella of C-47 transports with their gliders in tow. At three thousand feet, ships that had released their gliders were beating a hasty retreat back out to sea. Interwoven at all flight levels, darting about like capricious sparrows, were supporting fighter craft. And at higher altitudes, light and heavy bombardment cleaved the air on their journeys to inland targets.

Over the landing zone was a tangle of ships going in all directions. Great clouds of battle smoke rose from burning hillsides. Goodwin fought with his aircraft to avoid mid-air collisions. Visibility closed in.

There were only seconds left until cut-off over the L.Z.

Then the 440th, still intact but in danger of stacking up because of loss of airspeed, swerved heavily to the left. At first Goodwin thought the lead ship had received a recall from the base. A hasty survey of the panorama of mingling CG4A gliders and C-47s revealed a swarm of tow ships coming out of the L.Z. at the same level as in-going traffic. The formation had failed to climb to the three-thousand-foot return level.

Goodwin swung with Anderson, out beyond the L.Z., beyond Le Muy, up into the stem of the valley. Close in to the mountains they turned 180 degrees for a second try at the landing zone.

It was like coming down out of a funnel. You were so low you could see grass rippling in the wash of disturbed air. You wondered about those fellows who flew at thirty thousand feet, and thought it would be nice to have that much air.

Into the target again. The first glider swinging brazenly away from its tow ship. The second, third, fourth. . . . Headquarters all out!

Goodwin held his breath. The instant Anderson cut off, he pulled his release. His C-47 leaped ahead as if he had thrown water injection into her carburetors. He heeled right with Anderson, throttles forward and r.p.m. at twenty-four hundred for swift climb. Below, the Waco kites joined the swarm blitzing into the L.Z. and added another chapter to airborne history.

Troop Carrier's part in the invasion of Southern France was finished. Although the Command stood by on twenty-four-hour alert for the next week, no airborne re-supply missions were necessary. In the following months, after the 50th Wing had returned to Britain to prepare for the invasion of Holland, Mediterranean Command carried on with its airstrip re-supply and its daring combat cargo sorties into Yugoslavia.

NO article on the airborne invasion of Southern France would be complete without a few words—it would take a whole book to do them justice—on the courageous performance of the glider pilots.

Their target area was briefed as a group of fields broken up by hedgerows and low stone walls. Actually these fields were surrounded by rows of trees, rising to heights of forty and fifty feet. The fields, appearing on the photo overlays as cleared land or covered with wheat stubble, were filled with stakes and strung with grapevines.

Adhering to combat training, the glider pilots had come in on low approach, "blitz" landings. Expecting to clear three-foot hedgerows, they had been obliged to "hurdle" 50-foot trees. A good many just didn't make it. Those that did found their approach too high, overshot the next field and washed out in a farther row of trees. Casualties were many, and very few gliders landed without crashing.

In spite of these obstacles, personnel and equipment were delivered where they were wanted, and the town of Le Muy fell to the airborne on the next day.

After this invasion there were the usual commendations from higher authority. Perhaps the most satisfying was a personal touch added by Lt. General Ira C. Eaker, commanding the AAF in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations. He summed it up quite simply with: "You Troop Carrier people put up a grand show."

They were all to remember that in their next major operation, the airborne invasion of Holland—a battle that became as unpredictable as the European weather.

A Head Sho' Beats Feet

OUR CRACKER DEPUTY DETECTIVE SAM ROBBINS DEALS WITH A STRANGE MURDER AFTER HIS OWN PECULIAR FASHION.

by RICHARD HOWELLS WATKINS

"COPS!" said Ham Sinclair. He spoke most bitterly. Supported by a couple of pillows on the elegant bunk, he fussed with the first-aid pads that sandwiched his right shoulder tightly between them. "Cops! What good are they?"

Sam Robbins was surprised. He had just stuck his sun-wrinkled head and deputy-sheriff's shield inside the brightly lighted stateroom up forward on the flossy houseboat for a look at the killer, Ham Sinclair. And now this!

"You sho' are disgusted about cops," Sam said. He was mild about it. "Real disgusted. What fo'?"

Sinclair curled up his pain-twisted lips. "Cops!" he repeated. A scrawny little-bitty man, his sudden round paunch was revealed by the blanket that kept him from nakedness. His flamboyant tropical worsted coat and pants, hanging over the door of the closet, were still soggy from the tea-colored water of the inland waterway.

Ike Bartlett, the mahogany-headed deputy guarding him, flung himself back into his rattan easy-chair with a guffaw.

"Sinclair don't like us, Sam!" he bellowed. "Wha'd I do with my hanky? I got to cry!"

But Sam was bothered. The little prisoner's scowl was withering in its contempt.

"Got you, didn't we?" Sam argued.

Ham Sinclair sneered at him.

"Real disgusted!" Sam mumbled to himself. "Mor'lly disgusted, seems like. No call fo' it that I see."

Ike heaved up from the suffering rattan chair.

"Take over a second, will you, Sam?" he asked. "I'm due for a coke. Seems like this salt water we're on gives me a thirst."

He slapped Sam halfway across the cabin with a friendly hamlike hand, and tramped aft toward the shining galley.

"What fo' you disgusted with us?" Sam asked invitingly.

But Sinclair snarled, clamped shut his lips and stared miserably at the moonlit night outside the porthole. Sam meditated.

"You sure Jack Hungerford's dead?" Sinclair rasped. His narrowed eyes peered with suspicion, hope and fear at Sam.

"Seems like," Sam answered. "Man's apt to be, when you shoot him th'ough the heart."

Silence. Still bothered, Sam sat watching the prisoner. Restless, that's all Sam made out of him. Restless and indignant.

Ike Bartlett came back, empty-handed but grinning.

"You get service on this boat," he said, leaning a massive shoulder against the door-jamb.

A moment later four bottles of coke, still frosted, were thrust through the crack of the door by two big hands.

"Here you are, Sheriff," somebody said.

"Ah!" said Ike. "Thank you, sir." He took them and looked challengingly at Sam Robbins. "You want one?"

"B'lieve not," Sam replied, standing up. "A cold stomach when I'm workin' my haid gives me the pee-doodles."

"Who told you your haid was working?" Ike said.

"I'm just hopin', maybe," Sam said, and went forward along the passageway. . . .

The body, which had been Jack Hungerford a couple of hours before on that pleasant Florida night, still sat behind the desk in the study. The room, complete with fireplace and books, commanded a fine view forward on Hungerford's right expensive yacht.

Wilkins, another deputy, welcomed Sam.

"Photographer ain't come yet," he said. "The Sheriff's gonna do this up fancy." He flicked a thumb, in a hard-boiled gesture. "*He* don't mind waitin'!"

Sam looked soberly at the dead man.

Hungerford just sat there, with his thin gray hair neatly parted, leaning forward a little so the broad, swelling chest was supported against the edge of the desk. Fat hands, with a diamond flashing from one, lay open before him. His eyes were closed.

"Po' fellow!" Sam meant it. "Got took off right unexpected."

"Poor, nothing!" sneered Wilkins. "That bookie outfit o' his gave like it was snowing jack."

He pointed to a small black tin box, miscalled a strong-box, that stood on the desk blotter, next to a glass and a bottle of beer. "Supposed to ha' been more'n a hundred thousand worth of his wife's ice right open in that box waitin' for Sinclair to grab. Takin' it North for her."

"Handy," Sam Robbins said, eying the box.

Through the side door he walked out onto the deck, still troubled by Sinclair's contempt for cops.

He stood at the rail of the anchored houseboat, staring over at a brightly lighted expanse of the waterway bank. An almost unoccupied section of the Florida Gold Coast here, costing too much, it seemed like, for folks to buy. The scrub-covered land was all staked out into lots, but the stakes and a few narrow roads were its only improvements.

The light that poured down on the young mangroves, standing out of the water on their thin, arching roots, came from a powerful searchlight. It was mounted on the houseboat's pilot-house top, high above Sam's head. The houseboat swung a bit. The soft wind from the ocean, half a mile across the barrier beach, was contending with the current of the waterway.

BEN DUNN, Sam's brother-in-law, stood over on the bank, commandingly, as befitted the Sheriff of Colusa County. He oversaw the activities of four deputies who, with trouser-legs rolled up, paddled gingerly knee-deep

in water among the mangrove roots and lumps of coral.

Sam Robbins strolled on aft. He came upon three men who sat together on the softly illumined after deck among some of the finest-looking porch furniture Sam had ever seen. They too were following the brightly lighted search along the bank.

"Sho' sorry," Sam said to the three spectators. "I got heah a bit late. Mind if I ask a few—"

"No," said a plump young man. His voice was clipped, impatient. He twitched a right stylish brown mustache. "I am Robert Hungerford, son of—the victim."

He pointed to the man in the next chair, a leaner man in his thirties, not sun-tanned, with a big square nose and a round chin.

"Mr. Paul Hungerford, my half-brother. Mr. Hungerford is an attorney, practicing in Westchester County, New York. He flew down to cruise up the waterway with us."

"Charmed," said square-nosed Paul Hungerford.

"And this is Mr. Ely—Buz Ely, my father's executive assistant."

Ely, younger than the other two, nodded his baldish pink head. He continued to look shoreward with keen eyes.

"You in the bookie business with yo' father, Mr. Hung—"

"Certainly not," plump Robert Hungerford snapped. He sounded insulted, and smoothed his mustache. "I don't know the first thing about his enterprise. I am an amateur of the arts, more specifically a playwright."

"Sounds like int'restin' work," Sam murmured apologetically. "Expensive, is it?"

NO answer. Sam looked at Paul Hungerford. "Your law business connected with the bookie—"

"Good God, no!" said Paul Hungerford with sudden violence. He too was biggety. He turned his nose on Sam like a gun. "It would ruin me if some—if anything of that sort were hinted at in the newspapers. I have ambitions—political ambitions. Please keep to the subject. What have our affairs to do with this murder or a jewel robbery."

"Well, o' course somehow Ham Sinclair got to know about Mrs. Hungerford's jewelry goin' north—"

"These two gentlemen weren't aware it was to be aboard," bald-headed Buz Ely said. "I was. Also, I know they have had nothing to do with their father's business, though now they each own half of it."

Robert Hungerford gave a shudder. "But not for long," he said.

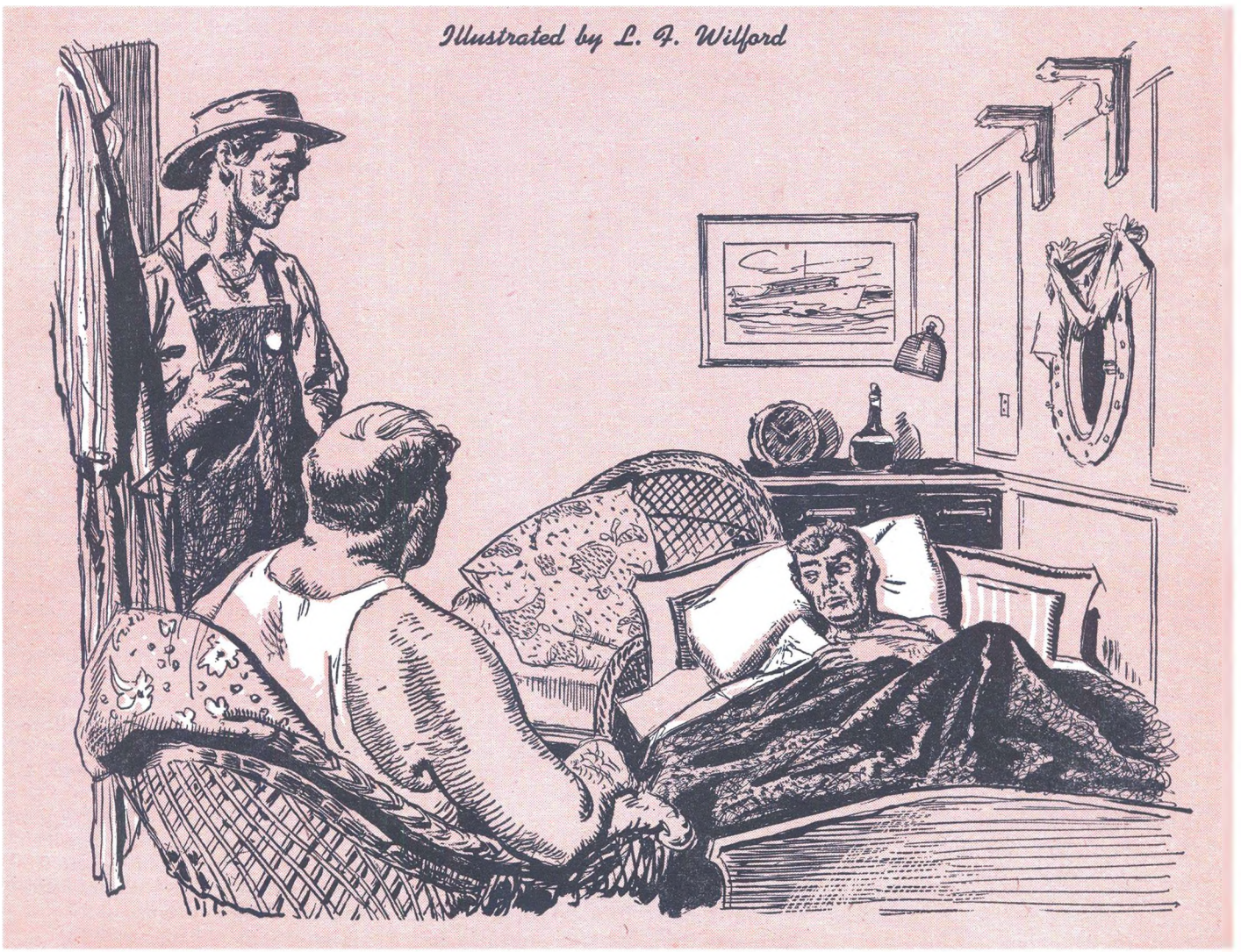
"Nor will I," his half-brother said.

Buz Ely took his sharp eyes off the search on shore to look at Sam Robbins.

"You know how jewelry is spotted by Miami Beach thieves at night-clubs? My boss was well known, and he went places with Mrs. Hungerford. It took no great brain to figure that Mrs. Hungerford's valuable jewelry might be on this houseboat, even though she was not to join us till we reached Jacksonville."

He waved a hand to indicate the size of the boat. "Sheriff Dunn thinks Sinclair sneaked aboard early today at our Miami Beach dock. He could hide in a closet or one of three empty staterooms to await his opportunity."

Illustrated by L. F. Wilford



"Sinclair don't like us, Sam!" Ike Bartlett bellowed. "Wha'd I do with my hanky? I got to cry!"

"He don't mind waitin'!" said Wilkins. . . . The dead man just sat there.

"Seems like," said Sam. He looked across the narrow waterway. "Easy to jump off."

Robert Hungerford shifted his plump body. "That's what he did. Slipped out tonight, flitted around, saw my father alone with the box in his study and shot him. He grabbed the gems, including a diamond lavaliere—that's a necklace and pendant, Sheriff—and dived overboard."

Paul Hungerford had been silent for quite a while, for a lawyer. Now he said:

"If it hadn't been for Ely's rapid sharpshooting—"

"Not so sharp," Buz Ely said with half a laugh. "I meant to kill the rat, not wound him. I heard a shot, caught up my automatic and ran into the study. When I saw Mr. Hungerford—" His voice rasped now. "I only winged the fellow in the moonlight as he climbed the bank. Just one hit, though I emptied my gun at him."

"Jewels missing?"

"All in Sinclair's pocket when a deckhand swam to him," Paul Hungerford said crisply. "He was too hurt or scared to run."

FROM the bank came a yell of triumph. A deputy ankle-deep in the brown water was holding up a glinting nickel-plated .38 revolver.

"That's the murder gun!" Robert Hungerford heaved himself to his feet, fast though fat. "They knew Sinclair took it with him."

Ben Dunn, gripping the gun in his big hands, stepped into a boat. He stood in the stern, massive, assured, calm, as one of his men rowed him toward the houseboat.

A car from the direction of the Federal highway came poking its glowing lights jerkily up to the mainland bank. Sid Lodge, another of the Sheriff's men, got out and hailed:

"Hey, Ben!"

"What you got, Sid?" the Sheriff answered.

"Miami says this Ham Sinclair is just out o' the pen' four months," Sid reported through his cupped hands. "He's a jewelry specialist—did his time for a hotel-room robbery in which he winged a guy."

"That adds up," Ben Dunn grunted approvingly. "Same stuff."

"Miami says Sinclair was broke till three weeks ago," Sid Lodge said. "Washing dishes—and then bingo! he got flush—rented a car—good hotel—races—night spots—"

"Save it!" Ben commanded irritably as Sam Robbins slanted his head. Sam sighed. Ben purely did hate complications in a case. . . .

Sam rested against the rail. Ben Dunn climbed the accommodation ladder. He displayed the .38 to the Hungerfords and Ely on the after deck.

"This wraps it up," he said. "Jurors always get a kick out o' handling the gun that did the job."

"Good going," said Buz Ely. He whisked a mosquito off his shiny skull. "I like efficiency."

"Ben," Sam said softly.

Ben Dunn whirled as if a hornet had sat on him. His eyes took in his brother-in-law without joy.

"So you got here!" he said. "Well, the fire's out."

"Has he authority to question me?" Robert Hungerford asked, swelling up more than usual.

Sam walked forward invitingly a little way from the Hungerfords. Reluctantly, almost against his own will, Ben Dunn followed.

"Ben, heah's a right odd thing," Sam said. "That Ham Sinclair in theah is feelin' mor'lly disgusted 'bout cops. Us! He's acting mor'lly s'perior, like. Now that—"

"Well, dang—my—boots!" said Ben Dunn. His weathered face was darkening fast: Sam had seen it go purple on occasion. "Morally disgusted, hey? I better turn in my badge, fast."

His massive fingers clamped on Sam's lean arm.

"Look!" he said through his big front teeth. "Just go away, will you, Sam? I got a living to earn. I got things to do. You apologize to Sinclair for both of us. I'm busy. Get it?"

Ben flung away, heading forward. "Captain!" he shouted. "Captain! Soon's we get my dep'ties aboard start her moving, will you? I want her berthed at the Colusa docks." When the Captain answered meekly, Ben paraded back.

PAUL HUNGERFORD came toward them, his square nose held high. "Our congratulations, Sheriff," he said. "I'm sure you'll not misunderstand my desire to go North—"

"Come into the saloon," Ben commanded. "I need all three of you to fill out this thing. "Mr. Ely, I want your .45 automatic and any other guns aboard as exhibits so the jury don't get mixed up."

The grinning crackers of the search-party were rowed to the houseboat. Her anchor came up off the bottom. Her twin motors shuddered, swinging her. She headed southward, bearing prisoner, corpse, jewelry, scene of the crime, witnesses, guns and everything right spang toward the middle of the city of Colusa, where folks could get a good view of Ben Dunn's latest accomplishment.

Sam, sitting in a noble easy-chair on the after deck, looked at the palm of his hand as if trying to read something there. No doubt about it. This Ham Sinclair just perfectly despised Sam Robbins, Ike Bartlett, Ben Dunn. Sam found it distressing. And puzzling.

From the pilot-house came three prolonged blasts of the whistle for the bridge half a mile to the south.

Sam sighed. "Perplexin'," he said. "Let's see now."

He closed his eyes, though he knew this was dangerous. A man could fall asleep much easier than he could solve anything. But Sam took the chance.

Was this Sinclair feeling superior because he knew the cops were being stupid about this crime? But if he had something in his favor why didn't he talk? Why so disgusted?

"Could be," Sam told himself. "Sinclair figgers if *he* told us cops we wouldn't believe him an' yet we too

dumb to see it by our own selves. Irr'tating, that would be."

Ben Dunn surged busily out of the saloon. He was halted by the sight of Sam sitting there alone. He growled in his throat and shook his head at Sam.

"Never satisfied!" he said. "Here we got the guy with the loot in his pocket, an' the gun he did it with, and still you ain't satisfied."

"I ain't satisfied, an' Sinclair's plumb disgusted, somehow," Sam said.

"Let me explain it to you," Ben said. He was savagely polite. "Sinclair is a jewel-thief with a record of using a gun. He fits."

"Like a six shoe on a seven lady," Sam admitted. "But, Ben, what sticks in my craw is—"

He stopped suddenly. Above the swish of the houseboat as she slowed to pass through the drawbridge he had heard a splash on the mainland side of the canal. He ran to the rail.

"Mullet jumping," Ben Dunn commented. "They get lively in the moonlight."

Peering down, Sam saw nothing. Probably it was mullet. While he stared the houseboat crept up to the long span of the open swingbridge. Her ungainly breadth crept through the narrow gap. The bridgetender and his helper leaned on their long bar, waiting to get back to bed, more than half asleep. The houseboat cleared the draw; her speed picked up.

From somewhere forward came a sudden roar:

"Ben! Ben! Where's the Sheriff? Sinclair's loose!"

It was the voice of Wilkins, the deputy who had watched over the dead man.

Ben Dunn, for all his bulk, got going like a charge of buckshot. He hurtled forward. Sam was a mere lengthening tail behind him.

IN the stateroom where Ham Sinclair had fretted on the bunk, Ben Dunn now glowered at the thick body of Ike Bartlett, who sprawled on the floor. A coke bottle lay beside the deputy's mahogany head. Sinclair's wet suit wasn't hanging over the closet door.

After one look at the smallish swelling on Ike Bartlett's head Sam picked up a coke bottle and smelled it judiciously. Then he tried another.

"Maybe a little something in these heah to make him sleepy," he said to Ben Dunn. "Befo' he got hit on the head. Now, who passed Ike those open bottles—"

But Ben Dunn had left. Already his voice roared outside, commanding the captain to lay the boat alongside the bridge abutment and be blasted fast about it.

Waiting inside the doorway, Sam Robbins watched Ben Dunn's massive forefinger apportioning his forces for the search.

"I heard the splash," Ben said. "He's making for the mainland side, not the beach. Bein' wounded, he won't move fast. You, you, you, spread out from the road to the bank. You, Wilkins, take the beach side just in case."

Sam closed an eye. "It could ha' been mullet, like Ben said," he told himself.

Ben whirled on Robert and Paul Hungerford and Buz Ely.

"You'll help, too, and the crew. Drag through the mangroves an' palmetto scrub."

"I retract my congratulations, Sheriff," Paul Hungerford said with legal heaviness. "When a wounded man—"

The houseboat hit the bridge piling with a solid thud that nearly knocked them off their feet. The current had brought her up hard against the newly-closed bridge.

The searchers led by Ben Dunn, poured off and spread themselves along the western, inland side. Wilkins ran across the bridge and started north along the eastern bank. Houseboat guests and crew scrambled to make her fast and then melted after the first wave of hunters.

On the quiet boat Sam Robbins drew another thoughtful whiff of the coke bottle. With all this running maybe one man who didn't cotton to running could be spared to think.

"Somebody started Sinclair to escape by doping Ike Bartlett," he told the bottle. "Risky." He looked at the narrow bridge draw, scant feet wider than the boat. "Seems like a wounded man in a hurry would wait ten seconds an' step onto that bridge approach 'stead of jumpin', splashin',

From the bank came a yell of triumph.

"I got a knife!" Sinclair shrilled. His empty hands were groping for something to fight with.

swimmin' an' all. I bet it *was* mullet. In that case he won't be draggin' up on either bank."

He cocked his lean head sharply. He turned toward the barrier beach. The first time Sinclair had escaped he had made for the beach bank. Sam cupped his hands to his ears.

It was quiet over on the beach side of the waterway. Only Wilkins had been ordered over there. He was in sight in the moonlight, working quietly north along the bank, scanning the surface of the waterway for a bobbing head.

Sam's ears were good. It seemed he could hear a man's feet some distance away now going a steady lickety-split along the hard surface road on the barrier beach. Not like a wounded man's feet. Too fast and certain. Had somebody disobeyed Ben?

"Hurrying, seems like," Sam told himself. "And prob'ly not Sinclair. He'd have to sneak, not run." He glanced up, waited a patient minute for a cloud to sweep over the moon and then stepped onto the bridge. He drifted unobtrusively across the draw to the beach bank and slipped into a thicket, almost a hammock, of uncleared land to the south of the bridge approach.

No stentorian voice commanded him to return and start rushing around.

It was dark in there among the young coco-palms, the cabbage trees, the creeping vines and the luxuriant sea-grape. Sam edged along without haste and without noise in the general direction, as well as he could figure it, that the running feet had taken. He paused, to listen acutely again.

"I mean!" he murmured.

HE was not alone in this small wilderness. In spite of breezy noises he could make out somebody else creeping painfully along. If his ears were playing fair, a man in here ahead of him was following most stealthily the line the hasty feet had taken.

Not as simple, this thing, as Ben Dunn had wanted it to be!

Sam moved, too. The thicket thinned to roadside scrub.

He saw a road among the staked lots. He walked ahead on the sandy verge. It wasn't until the moon came out again that he saw the slinking figure ahead.

It was Sinclair all right. The mor'lly disgusted scrawny little man was sloping, now, with a hand pressed to his injured shoulder. He was swaying a little. He knew where he was going.

Impulsively Sam started to run; then slackened his pace obstinately. "Easier to use feet than haids," he warned himself. "He ain't solved yet."

He dropped back a little. In this barren waste of lots for sale good cover was scarce; distance would have to hide him.

The road Sinclair was dragging along led toward the sea. As the man drew closer to the swash of the breakers he slowed down. He crouched and slipped into the palmetto scrub, working on beside the road.

Sam Robbins closed up. Reluctantly he too took to the saw-edged scrub. Topping a rise of the rolling

beach, he straightened up and caught a glimpse of the gleaming steel top of a car. It was parked by the ocean end of the road, right where nobody would suspect it was anything but the car of a courting couple.

"Well, now!" Sam murmured. He slipped out his gun.

Sinclair was edging up on this little coupé right cautiously. Sam doubled his own pace through the palmettos at some cost to his pants.

THE car looked empty. But Sinclair was taking no chances. He started circling it and closing up soundlessly, inches at a time. Finally he froze altogether behind the fronds of a young cabbage tree. Minutes passed.

In the dark car the top of a man's head lifted slowly above the door level, lifted just enough to give the man a chance to look around for an instant. The head sank out of sight.

Sinclair began to crawl away from the car. There was fear in every line of his flattened, creeping body.

Sam Robbins picked up a chunk of coral. He flung it at the cabbage tree near Sinclair. The fronds rasped loudly as the stone brushed through and thudded to the sand. Sinclair dropped on his face.

The door of the coupé flew open. A man leaped out, a man with a glinting bald head. It was Buz Ely. He gripped a flat thing, like a tire-tool, in his hand. He ran toward the cabbage tree.

Sinclair heaved himself to his knees.

"I got a knife, Ely!" he shrilled. His empty hands were groping in the sand for something to fight with.

Buz Ely's charge slowed. Warily, with his weapon raised, he closed in.

"Gi' me a chance to get away!" Sinclair cried, his voice high with desperation. "Ain't framing me for murder enough? Ain't trying to kill me enough? Let me get away, Ely! I won't talk. I couldn't make these dumb cops believe me."

"Sorry, sucker," said Buz Ely. "I thought you'd be dumb enough to try to escape if I opened the way. This time I'm not missing."

He kept on coming, moving carefully through the loose sand, eyes fixed on the wounded man behind the cabbage palm.

Sinclair uttered a thin wail of terror. Ely jumped at him, tire-iron swinging.

Sinclair managed to break his fascinated rigidity in time to dodge. His hands clutched at the iron, but Ely wrenched it away and lifted it again.

Sam was stepping in. He tapped Buz Ely scientifically on the point of the jaw with the butt of his gun. Ely dropped.

"Man, you sho' better talk fast!" Sam said to Sinclair. "We Flo'da cops are mighty dumb an' disbelieving."

Sinclair was panting, bug-eyed, wagging his jaws. He tried to talk, licked his lips and pointed a scrawny arm at Buz Ely.

"He got next to me at the Beach, staked me, then hinted at an easy chance to lift some ice. Fifty-fifty."

The words tumbled from his mouth. "I fell. He give me some real dough and told me about Hungerford taking his wife's stuff North in his houseboat. Today he told me to drive up here in this car and leave it for my get-away. He said to wait by that bridge tonight for the boat to come along an' jump aboard as it eased through the draw."

His arm was making jerky gestures toward the waterway bridge.

"That's what I did. Old Hungerford was asleep at his desk. Maybe he was a little doped or drunk. The strongbox was open in front of him. I should ha' tumbled! Too easy! I cleaned the box and started for the rail. I heard a shot behind me. I jumped fast and swam for it. He—my pal, Ely, there—*he* come out on deck an' shot at me! As I swam! How I was framed—an' due to die to cover him!"

He licked his lips again and hurried on: "I made the bank. Then he dropped me. I must ha' fainted. I suppose he chucked the other gun he'd used to kill Hungerford at the bank. When I come to I was a murderer, all sewed up an' no way out. Even if they believed my story, murder'd been done and I was still in it, wasn't I? So when that big cracker guarding me got dopey I slugged him and jumped to the bridge. I got dizzy and hid in some bushes. Ely knew about that car here and I was afraid he'd be laying for me. He was."

He stopped and raised miserable eyes to Sam Robbins.

"An' I'm still in it for murder, ain't I? Because I robbed the guy an' he got killed during it?"

"B'lieve not," Sam Robbins said judiciously. "'Cause we got to convict this heah killer, an' we cain't 'thout you as a witness."

He nodded slowly. "But you'll do some time, likely, time enough to figger that we dumb ones, like you'n' me, got one mo' reason than other folks fo' goin' straight. It's right complicated, goin' crooked."

"You got something," Sinclair muttered. He sat on the sand and wiped his wet face.

SAM looked down curiously at the late Jack Hungerford's executive assistant.

"S'pose Buz Ely heah figgered neither o' the old man's snooty sons would soil theah hands with his bookie business," he said aloud. "So it would be Buz alone who'd have the handling of it. A fast fortune—fo' a crook."

"That's why he wanted Hungerford dead!" Sinclair cried. "He knew I wouldn't figure it!"

"Sometimes quick money means quick death," Sam said. "You been close, yo'se'f, Ham Sinclair."

Buz Ely stirred.

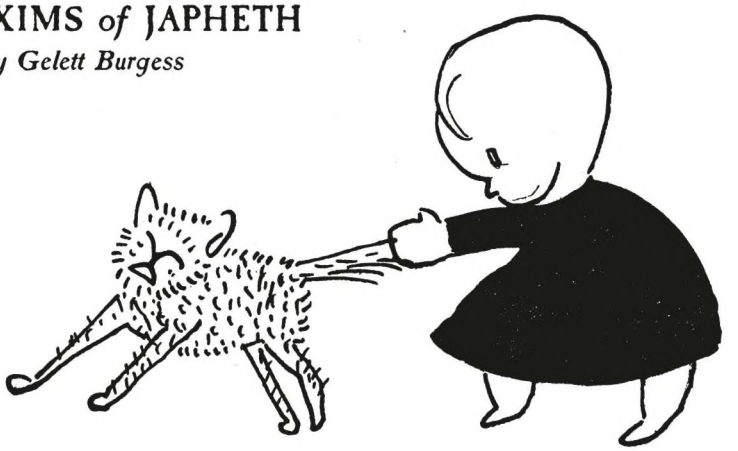
"Got to handcuff you two boys together," Sam Robbins said. "Buz mought turn lively. I like it peaceful."

Sinclair shoved out his wrist sullenly. "I hate cops," he muttered.

"Now, that's better," Sam said, relieved. "I don't mind that. No mor'l s'periority because we too dumb to fit you to the right crime. Hate! You just purely hate us fo' juggin' you for whut you did do. Makes sense, and maybe you'll get over it."

The MAXIMS *of* JAPHETH

by Gelett Burgess



The cat liketh not to be wetted, or its tail pulled; neither doth the teller of a tale rejoice when his hearer saith: Yea, but I heard that story different.

HE WAS AN HONEST GAMBLER, PLAYING THE ODDS WITH CANNY CARE. AND WHEN ACCUSED OF CROOKED WORK, HE— TOOK STEPS TO PROTECT HIS REPUTATION

A Gambler's

THIS was Mardi Gras. This was carnival time in New Orleans, and the laughter and gay spirits of the revelers spun a cocoon of merriment about the city such as it never saw in the other, less fortunate months. Maskers and mummers danced in the street, and a few fantastic floats were stationed along Canal Street, lighted by swinging lanterns, gay in bright colors of red and green and blue.

Colonel Padgett watched from the sidelines. It was not that he was too old for merriment, despite the snowy whiteness of his hair; nor was it that he was not inclined. It was only that business of the moment held him in thrall, and business to a river gambler meant the fattening of a purse.

Yet the Colonel thrilled to the sound and the color and the gay laughter. He was young in heart, and when a group of masked men raced by, toy horns blaring raucously, almost did he step out to join them. Then he smiled to himself and leaned again against the St. Louis House. The time for a cool drink lay an hour away; he could wait.

He rolled a Spanish stogie into smoking softness, lit it with a flaring sulphur. A girl, slim and curved, dark eyes sparkling through the holes of a lace domino, came by, whisking a feather tickler across his chin, then laughing in sheer exuberance of spirits before going on.

Colonel Padgett shook his head. Were he forty years younger, he would chase the girl and mayhap do a bit of moonlight kissing.

He glanced at his pocket watch, impatience touching him. Sneed should have been at the appointed place by now. Still, in all probability, he was finishing his borrowing of money with which to pay the debt he had incurred through bad judgment with cards.

The game had been a good one, draw poker at its tightest. Not too many played this new game of draw poker as yet; it was a fast scientific game, and not many fully understood its ramifications. Sneed had overestimated his ability, and when the cards were laid aside, he had found himself with a loss of some four thousand dollars.

The Colonel smiled. Long hours had he spent in figuring out a table of odds on the game. Without effort, he could recall the odds of filling any hand; and on the basis of his knowledge his playing was far superior to most of the gamblers he knew.

Not that Sneed was a fool. He and his partner, one John Lemoine, had worked the river for thirty years, and together they were as formidable a team of professional gamblers as the Mississippi had ever seen. It was only that they had not changed with the times. Crooked, experts at marking cards and using crimps and holdouts, the partners had fallen upon lean years; and in all probability this last game had wiped them out, cleaning their purses.

That fact did not worry the Colonel. Gamblers took their chances. If they overestimated their abilities, it was only right they should lose. And if they lost to him, despite their crookedness—well, he could use the money as well as the next.

Still, his lips tightened at memory of John Lemoine. A Frenchman, his face scarred by a knife fight in some tavern brawl, he was a whining loser and an implacable enemy. He was a perfect foil for his partner, who was blustering and red-faced.

Now, thinking about the two, Colonel Padgett had his first qualms about being paid. The men had welshed before; they would probably do it again.

He glanced again at his watch. It was long past the appointed time for

Reputation

by WILBUR S. PEACOCK

the meeting; evidently Sneed wasn't coming. He swung about, smiling despite himself at the crowd's hilarity, and entered the St. Louis House.

The cool dimness reached out and enfolded him. Here, talk was subdued, held in check by the sheer opulence of the draped walls and carpeted floors. Farther on, a candle-sprinkled chandelier sparkled in the taproom, and he went that way, breasting up to the bar and idly accepting the drink offered by the Negro bartender.

"Your health," he said to the Negro, and turned with his elbows on the polished bar.

He felt a certain grimness in his heart; anger was beginning to tighten the muscles of his jaw. Not that the money was so important; it was only that he was an honest gambler, and he expected others to be the same.

Others were in the room, some at cloth-covered tables, cards making quick clicking sounds as they were riffled. Some sat and talked, idly nursing long drinks, oblivious of the Mardi Gras gayety outside. The Colonel felt his nerves relaxing a trifle.

He swung about at the tug on his arm, seeing the young boy looking up at him.

"What is it, son?" he asked, conscious that men watched from along the bar.

"I got a message for you," the boy said, and squirmed one toe into the rug. "You ain't gonna like it."

Colonel Padgett smiled. "Maybe I'm a better judge of that," he said. "Who gave you the message?"

"A big man, red-faced."

The Colonel felt a sudden prescience of trouble; nerves crawled along his spine. Unconsciously, he bent forward a bit, hardness coming to his eyes.

"And what was the message?"

"He said to tell you the game was crooked, and that he don't pay off to crooked players."

Shock held the Colonel rigid. Color drained from his face at the accusation. The boy turned and disappeared; the Colonel made no effort to stop him. He was conscious of the silence in the room, a silence which had the coldness of an icy breeze.

Men died these days for less scurrilous accusations than this, men fought duels on misty mornings, and other men died across gaming-tables, still reaching for holdout guns. A man's honor was his greatest asset, and to have it sullied was a crime that must be avenged.

COLONEL PADGETT finished his drink. He turned slowly; eyes averted hastily. Most of these men knew him, all who knew him knew of his honesty. Yet behind averted faces minds caught up the latent doubt held about all river gamblers and found a grain of truth in the accusation.

No man was perfect. Colonel Padgett's reputation was known the length of the Mississippi and the Ohio. He was an honest gambler, playing the odds, juggling them like a street mummer. Men knew that; yet, because this could be true, they sat in judgment on the Colonel, waiting, watching to see what he would do.

Carefully, very carefully, so that none could see the tremor in his hand, the Colonel replaced his glass on the bar. He turned away, going toward the door, shoulders squared against the sibilant whispering which arose behind him like the foamy wake of a sloop in sail.

He came onto the street, eyes blank against the waning sunlight. Within minutes darkness would be fully arrived. Horns blew raucously and dancers queued in the street. Farther along, at Congo Square, Negro men and women danced with earth-shak-

Colonel Padgett watched from the sidelines. Not that he was too old for merriment; it was only that the business of

ing sinuous grace dances born in steamy jungles, their cries rising in a pagan pæan, until the very air trembled.

Colonel Padgett found no enjoyment in the scene now. The city was drab, the scene blurred before his eyes. He was accused, a marked man now, until some remedy was found. And that meant shooting, of course; shooting or swords or even knives.

THE gambler shivered, not in fear, but in distaste. He held no brief for men who settled differences with weapons; to him, such a way was stupid. And yet he could see no other way, unless a public retraction could be gained from Sneed.

He went along the board walk, and he had the feeling that people could see the turmoil in his mind. A three-piece band played at a corner, and he went by, not hearing the music. A girl smiled an invitation, then curled her lips in disdain at the blankness of his stare.

He turned a corner, going toward his home. The house lay in the Vieux Carré, filigree iron at the windows, the street so narrow he could have stepped across it, from balcony to balcony. Men and women jostled him, and the rich satisfying odors of frying shrimp and gumbo lay in the air.

A hand caught at his arm, and he wrenched it free impatiently. Then a voice called out his name, and he looked about, stopping. There was a wary coldness in his eyes now, for this was John Lemoine before him, his face oily with beady perspiration, a smile on his twisted mouth.

"I tried to catch you a block back, Colonel," Lemoine said. "You're a fast walker."

"What's on your mind, Lemoine?" the Colonel asked heavily.

"It's about Sneed."

"What about him?"

"He's drunk and making wild threats. He gets that way at times. I just wanted to stop any trouble before it started."

"It's already started," the Colonel said.

"Oh!" John Lemoine pursed his slack mouth. "Well, look, Colonel," he finished, "Sneed is my partner, and I know him pretty well. I suppose he shot off his mouth. If so, when he sobers up, he'll apologize. Meanwhile, I'll pay the money he lost last night."

"You'll pay—" Colonel Padgett's eyes widened.

"Yes," Lemoine said, "I'll pay it. He gave it to me to be delivered to you. That was when he was drinking." He spread his hands. "I'd

the moment held him in thrall.

take it as a personal favor if you wouldn't do anything about him right now. If he has said things which are offensive, I'll see that you have a public apology the moment I find him."

"Well—" Colonel Padgett felt a surge of relief. "All right. But warn Sneed to stay out of my way from now on."

"Of course." Lemoine mopped at his face with a stained kerchief, then counted a flat packet of bills into the Colonel's hand. "Four thousand," he finished. "That squares the account."

Colonel Padgett fumbled the I.O.U. notes from his pocket, tearing them across and laying the pieces in Lemoine's hand. No friendliness was in his face, no humor in his eyes.

"What I said about Sneed goes for you too, Lemoine," he stated. "You're both too crooked for even my stomach. Tell Sneed to make the apology or stand the consequences."

He swung about, conscious of the naked hate flaming in the gambler's eyes, but giving it no heed. He cared nothing for the man or his partner. With a public apology, his dealings with them would be over. After that there would be no new crossing of their paths.

He was glad the debt had been paid. The money of itself meant nothing to him, but the principle was important. He paid when he lost and he expected payment when he won. He had little doubt but that an apology would be forthcoming by morning.

Some of the tension was gone from him as he entered the doorway of the house in which he had his rooms. He smiled at the girl and boy who stood in the door's shadow, and then he went past and up the steps to the second floor. Unlocking the door, he entered the main room, fumbling for a sulphur match in the dish beside the lamp.

Flame sputtered, then the wick caught yellowly, dying a bit as he pressed the chimney into its frame.

He saw Sneed then, sitting near the window, watching him from cold eyes. The man said nothing, only stared, and the Colonel felt again his earlier surge of anger at the gambler.

"Get out," he said flatly.

Sneed didn't move, a sneer etched about his beefy mouth. His expression didn't change as the Colonel paced across the floor. Obviously he was too drunk to move.

"I said to get out," the Colonel snapped, and reached out to catch the other's shoulder.

He upset the man's balance, and gravity caught Sneed and brought him slowly forward. He toppled, despite Colonel Padgett's grip, and only when he struck the floor was there any sound. Then he lay slackly, head turned, glazed eyes stared at the gleaming lamp.

COLONEL PADGETT gasped, standing rigid, shocked, over the man. He saw the crusting stain in the back of the coat, saw the three slashes where a knife had searched through cloth and flesh for Sneed's life. He saw those things—and swiftly realization came.

Sneed was dead, very dead, and he lay in the Colonel's apartment.

There are times when a man's mind runs madly, gaining nothing, like the frenzied racing of a squirrel in a cage. For the Colonel this was such a time. He stood over the body of a murdered man, and he knew that men had been hanged on less incriminating evidence than this.

He was a gambler, it was hard for him to remember a time when gambling had not been his life. He had the steady hands and the cold nerves demanded by his profession, and his mind was a chilled machine which responded instantly to his every command.

And so because he knew that panic could avail him nothing, he forced quiet into his thinking. He laid the coat aside and then lit a Spanish stogie, rolling it to softness and lighting it at the lamp chimney. Then he sat on the velvet-covered couch and regarded Sneed's body.

He had seen men die, had even slain them in the war of 1812, yet such times had been an impersonal series of events. This was personal, so personal he could feel cold sweat oozing onto his back.

He reviewed the past hour, and he knew that nothing could save him if he were caught with the body. His honor had been impugned, and death followed such a thing as a natural procedure. That was understandable; but a murder like this was not condoned by anybody. This was treacherous, the slaying of a man from behind.

ASHES fell from his stogie and he laid it aside. Then grimacing with distaste, he bent and searched the body. There was a wallet, holding a few dollars in wrinkled bills, two gold-pieces in a side pocket, a watch and a holdout gun fitting snugly into a wrist holder where it could be easily reached. He replaced each item as it was discovered.

The murder-knife was gone, evidently taken by the killer. He moved the chair, searching, then turned slowly, keen eyes looking. He saw the fragment of cloth at the window, saw it and reached out with a suddenly shaking hand, thinking this might be a clue of some kind.

It was, and it wasn't. Straight on two sides, torn so that it was triangular in shape, it was a bit of lace, probably from a mantilla such as the Creole girls wore in the evening.

The Colonel studied it. This meant a woman had been in his room, probably with Sneed. And if she were there, then it was possible that she had slain the man, or at the very least had witnessed the murder.

A horn blew raucously outside, and somewhere a drunk began his bragging in strident tones. Music came in, and down the hall in the house somebody laughed.

The room was strangely hot: the Colonel could feel the perspiration on his face. He knew that he could not leave Sneed here, and yet it might be suicidal to attempt to move him, for there were too many on the streets this night.

And yet because it must be done, he made the effort. He levered the body erect. Drawing one arm over his shoulder, he found he could half-

carry, half-drag the man without too much difficulty.

Passing the table, he blew out the lamp. In the hall he hesitated, then went down the back steps, awkwardly and cautiously, and into the garden. The moon was almost fully risen, and the silver light limned trees and rooftops in ghostly radiance.

The Colonel hesitated, half-born plans fading. This solved nothing but the taking of the body from his room, and even that was a mistake of sorts. Despite the ugliness which had preceded Sneed's death, the Colonel's story would stand more chance of being believed if told now.

CONVINCED of the logic of this, he propped the body on the nearest bench and turned to retrace his steps.

"Your friend drunk, Colonel?" a cheerful voice asked from the small flower arbor.

Colonel Padgett swung about, surprise tightening a fist about his heart. He saw then the woman sitting just within the arch and recognized her.

"You startled me, Mrs. Cochard," he said brusquely.

"I was just resting," the woman said.

The Colonel fumbled for a stogie, conscious of the upright body beside him, wondering if the woman were suspicious. As mistress of the rooming-house, she kept an eagle eye on every roomer; there was little which passed her attention.

He had to speak, to say something. His mind sought for words.

"I thought the night air might help," he said inanely.

"It might," Mrs. Cochard said. "He and his lady friend were both pretty drunk when they went up to your rooms." Her voice became very prim. "I do not approve of such things, Colonel," she finished. "I would prefer that such people do not come to your rooms."

The Colonel smiled wryly. "I too," he agreed. "But you say a woman was with my friend. Could you describe her?"

"No, just a woman. Her face was veiled, and she wore a white mantilla over her hair. That's about all I saw; after all, the hall was dark."

"And when was this?"

"Oh, several hours ago, at least."

"And no one else came in?"

"I wouldn't know; I've been here for some time."

Colonel Padgett lit the stogie, drawing rich smoke deep and letting it seep out. Thoughts whirled in his mind. He could not take Sneed's body from the garden now, not with Mrs. Cochard watching. And yet—

His decision was made. Sneed made it.

His body toppled sidewise, falling from the bench; and even as the Colonel bent to lift it again, Mrs. Cochard came to help. She caught Sneed's arm, levering upward, and then she saw the knife-wounds in the back. For one instant she did not move; then her eyes swung toward the Colonel, and her screams lifted eerily, ear-shatteringly in the night.

"Murder! *Help!* Guard!" she screamed frenziedly; then she fainted, dropping slackly over Sneed's body.

Colonel Padgett straightened. He had played a gamble and lost. Cries broke out in the street, and overhead a window was flung open, a voice calling out in alarm. Already Mrs. Cochard was stirring; within seconds she would be conscious again.

The Colonel ran. He spun about and raced for the side exit of the garden. He had no thoughts for the moment, instinct drove him, and so he ran. He was a shadow within shadows, and at the gate, he hesitated only long enough to see that the next garden was deserted, before slipping into it and bolting the gate behind.

He raced across the second garden and slipped through its gate into the streets. Voices lifted behind, and he could feel the cold sheen of perspiration on his broad face.

He hurried. He was a big man, recognizable anywhere, and so he tried to be as inconspicuous as possible. He needed sanctuary for a time, a place of hiding where he could collect his wits and plan a course of action.

Chinese fireworks lit the night ahead, and crackers exploded with rifle-like reports. A clown danced about a bonfire in the street, and a masked girl kissed a masked boy in the flickering light. Ahead was music and the gayety of the crowd. Behind lay death and the marshaling of forces to bring the Colonel to bay.

THE Colonel sighed and went ahead, swinging left at St. Charles Avenue, hurrying toward the Golden Lass, a gambling-hall owned and managed by Jacques Farquier. Farquier was a Creole, a dandy, his name famous wherever gambling held sway. But more important, he was the Colonel's friend and confidant; he could be trusted to help in any way he could.

A hawker peddled pralines and doughboys and crisp molasses cookies from a sidewalk tray. Close at hand, a member of the Civil Guard stood indifferently, watching the crowd, rifle grounded, barrel in the crook of his arm. The Colonel shivered, conscious of the guard's fleeting gaze.

Then he was at the Golden Lass. He went around the side, pacing through the shadows, and fumbled at the latch of the side door. It came open without sound, and he went through, blinking in the dim light. He could hear the subdued mutter of voices from the twin gambling-rooms, overtoned by the orchestra music.

He was conscious of the tension within himself. He was a hunted man, a body lying at his lodgings. He was trapped as surely as any swamp rat. And at the moment he was not entirely certain of what must be done.

Stairs creaked softly beneath his feet. In the upper hall, a carpet masked his footsteps, and he went hurriedly to the door which marked Jacques Farquier's office. His hand turned the knob, and then he was through, going toward the chair beside the desk, conscious of the Creole's quizzical glance.

"In a hurry, Colonel?" Farquier asked pleasantly, but his gaze sharpened when he caught a full sight of the older man's face.

"Somewhat, Jacques," the Colonel admitted. "You see, I just left Sneed at my place, stabbed three times in the back."

"Sneed—" Jacques Farquier stiffened, thrusting ledgers aside. "My God, Colonel, there was no need to go so far."

Colonel Padgett chewed on an unlit stogie, panic dwindling in the quiet of the room. Slowly, he regained composure, his eyes steady on the dark face of his friend.

"It happened like this," he began, and told the story of the evening's happenings.

When he was through, Jacques Farquier nodded slowly. "I heard of Sneed's accusation," he admitted; "but knowing you, I thought there'd be no trouble." His gaze searched the Colonel's face, probing deep and finding innate honesty there. "All right," he finished, "what do we do? We haven't much time, you understand."

"Find the woman."

Jacques Farquier forced a laugh. "Just like that," he said wryly. "Find a woman whose hair and face were covered with a mantilla. Just a woman who could be any of the hundreds in the city. You're a fool, Colonel."

Colonel Padgett sucked at his cigar, finally bending forward to light it at the lamp. When blue smoke wreathed his face, he settled back, hands spread in defeat.

"What then?" he asked. "Shall I give myself up? Even now the guard must be searching for me. Mrs. Cochard will have talked."

Farquier absently riffled and shuffled a deck of cards on the desk top. His fingers were long and slender, sure of themselves.

"JOHN LEMOINE would be the logical one to know of Sneed's women friends," he said. "Maybe he could give us a lead. At least, it's worth a try." He reached behind and pulled a bell-cord. "I think he's downstairs; if so, we'll have him up."

Colonel Padgett shrugged. "I'm leaving this in your hands, Jacques," he said. "Lemoine hates me—you know that. He's likely as not to go to the guard and inform on where I am."

Farquier nodded. "We'll have to take that chance." He grinned. "He may hate you, but I think he's a bit afraid of me. Anyway, we'll see." He swung to the Negro who had just opened the door. "See if John Lemoine is in the game-rooms," he finished. "If he is, ask him to come up."

"Yes sir," the servant said and shut the door softly.

"We shall see what we shall see," Farquier said, and leaned back in his chair, keen eyes hooded and shadowed for the moment.

John Lemoine was belligerent, his glance ugly when it rested on the Colonel. He was slight, standing before the desk, and the knife scar on his face was purple with anger. A satchel swung in his left hand.

"He killed him," he said, and nodded at the Colonel. "News just came about my partner. I'm going to the guard."

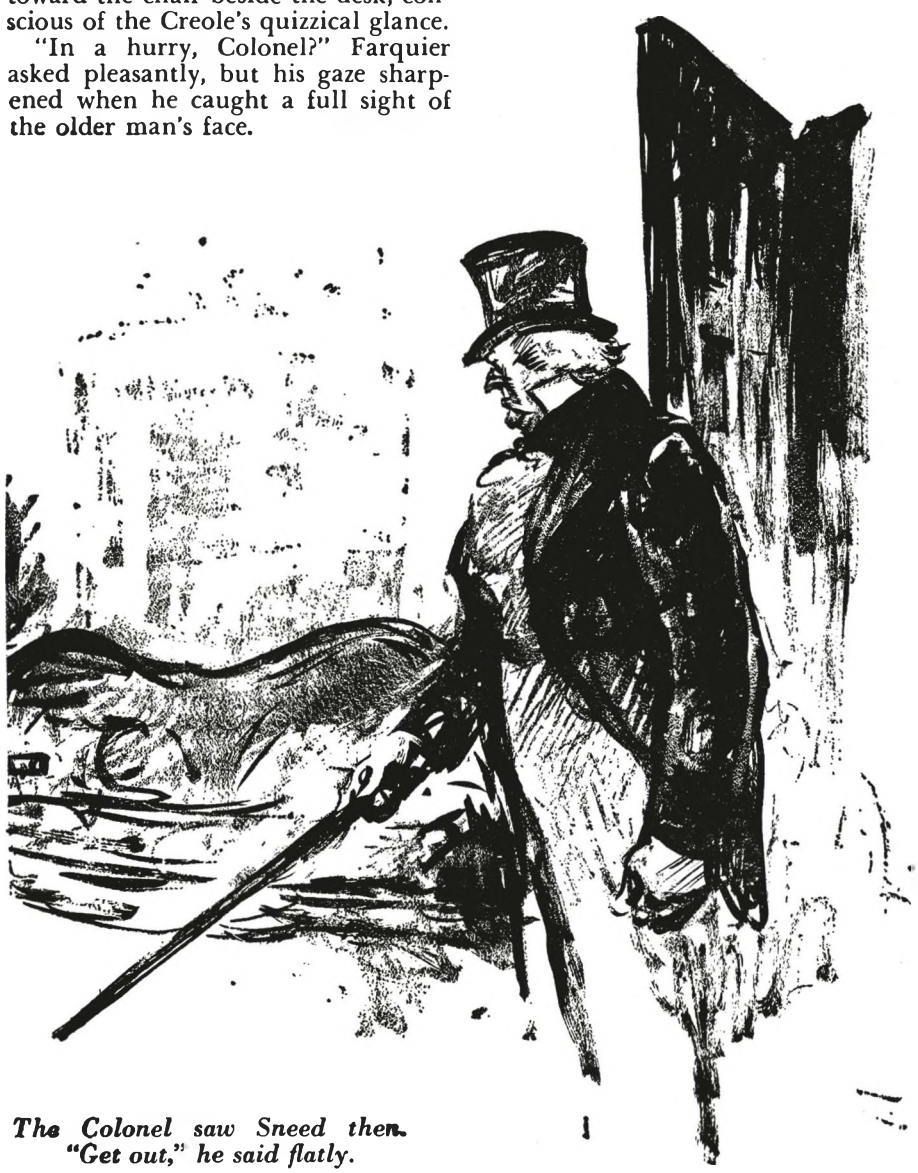
"You know me better than that, Lemoine," the Colonel said sharply.

"I know Sneed is dead, stabbed three times in the back," Lemoine said viciously. "And if you think I'm not going to tell the guard what I know, you're crazy!"

Jacques Farquier laid aside the cards, riffling them once with his thumbs. His tone was deceptively mild, and there was a smile upon his dark features; yet behind his words steel began to show.

"There's talk about you, Lemoine," he said. "It seems that you owe quite a bit about the city; in fact, you signed I.O.U.'s here to the extent of about twenty-five hundred."

"So?" Lemoine's eyes were pools of bitter anger.



The Colonel saw Sneed then. "Get out," he said flatly.

"So maybe you haven't seen the Colonel here."

There was silence, a time in which the little gambler weighed and evaluated the situation in all its aspects. Slowly the anger faded from his eyes, and he smiled with a twisting of his scarred mouth.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"Who was Sneed's woman friend? Where can we find her?"

Lemoine shrugged. "He had plenty," he admitted. "I wouldn't know any special one."

The Colonel was leaning forward. "Where were you, before you met me on the street? Sneed had been dead quite a while; maybe *you* used the knife."

Lemoine whirled, fists clenched in sudden passion. "By God, Colonel," he cried, "don't try to make me the scapegoat in this! Sneed was my partner, my friend; we worked together for thirty years."

Colonel Padgett flipped ashes from his stogie. Slight doubts vanished before the other's vehemence. He didn't trust the man, yet he thought he read honesty in the other's voice.

"All this is getting us nowhere," Jacques Farquier said impatiently. "It's obvious the woman killed Sneed. Now we've got to find her."

John Lemoine swung to the door. "I think you killed Sneed," he said to the Colonel. "I think you got in a fight with him and knifed him. I hope they hang you."

Colonel Padgett stared at the little gambler. In his career as a river gambler he had made few enemies, and even they had not held a grudge as long as this man. Lemoine's memory was long, fed upon remembrance of his exposure as a card cheat years before at the Colonel's hands.

"Get out, Lemoine," he said coldly. "Get out before I take a fist to you."

Then he and Farquier were alone. Farquier sighed.

"Well, we accomplished nothing there," he admitted. "Now what?"

THE Colonel came to his feet, dropping the stogie butt into the enameled cuspidor. He smoothed his coat and vest, a gentle smile on his mouth.

"I am now a house-breaker," he said. "I shall prowl Sneed's quarters and see if I can find a clue to the woman."

Farquier nodded. "All right," he agreed. "Meanwhile, I'll send some of my men out to try the same thing. Maybe something will turn up." He frowned. "Be careful; the guard will be doing a bit of searching, too."

"I'll be cautious," the Colonel agreed and turned the door's knob.

He went along the hall and down the rear stairs, going cautiously, conscious of a tension in his great body. He felt like a man in a hedgerow maze, knowing there was an exit somewhere, but trapped by the innumerable turns and windings, never quite finding the secret path which led to safety.

Outside, the night rolled over him. Moonlight was bright, the shadows inky patches of nothingness. The Mardi Gras was in full swing, laughing groups promenading, flirtations progressing, dark eyes flashing from behind colored dominoes. The pagan singing from Congo Square still held the frenzied breath of African voodoo.

Colonel Padgett shivered. This was his city, his life, and yet it now seemed strangely alien. The guard searched the streets and alleyways for him; he was wanted for vicious murder. There was singing and gayety and laughter in the streets; yet none of it could he share, for to show himself would be disastrous.

He swore suddenly, deeply and feelingly, and turned from the Golden Lass. A prowling cat hunched and hissed in diabolic hate, then fled on silent feet. He followed its trail, going toward the alley, clinging to the shadows.

For minutes he walked. Cold perspiration lay on his broad back, and he found he was breathing heavily. He knew now what an escaped felon felt in his mind, knowing that at any moment the pursuers might come in sight. He went along the alleys, crossing darkened streets on quick feet, coming ever closer to the house in which Sneed had lived.

He saw the guard, saw the men lounging before the house, and he came to a stop in the shadows, watching. Low voices came to him, bored and almost indifferent.

"Why'n't we go on up?" the first guard said irritably. "Lord knows I'm tired of waiting. I was supposed to be relieved two hours ago."

"You want a fine?" the second asked, lighting his pipe. He puffed until it glowed brightly. "Orders are to al-

"But you say a woman was with my friend. Could you describe her?" the Colonel asked.

ways wait for the Captain: he'll do the looking around."

"And where's he? Most likely in some tavern, filling his belly with good whisky. I've a good mind to quit."

"And go to work!" the second said in derision. "Not likely; you've got it too easy here."

"Bah!" the first grunted and subsided moodily.

The Colonel smiled. At least he was not too late to do something. Time was growing short, yet he might find something of value in Sneed's room. The main problem was gaining entrance.

HE solved it by an old army trick. Squatting, he fumbled a large stone from the earth, then heaved it down the street where it clattered in bright sound.

"What's that?" one guard said.

"Let's find out," the second answered.

They raced away, and in the moments in which their backs were turned the Colonel ran lightly forward, going up the few steps and pressing through the doorway. Inside, he held his breath, listening, then went ahead, treading softly up the stairs.

He had been here once before, and despite the dimness, relieved by but one lamp, he had no difficulty in finding Sneed's room. The door swung open at his touch, and he entered, closing the door behind him.

He wasted no time. He searched the obvious places first, hindered by the lack of light, the only brilliance coming from the moonlight through the three windows. His hands found clothing, decks of cards, even a couple of gimmicks used by crooked gamblers for winning at cards. The single closet held one suit, the pockets of which were empty. There were no bags, other than a battered telescope lying under the bed.

The Colonel didn't know for what he searched. He had thought of pictures or books or papers carrying addresses. But further than that his thoughts had not gone.

He stood, finally, in the center of the small room, turning, trying to reason out a hiding-place. He heard the sudden tap of footsteps on the stairs, and panic touched him. Then, without conscious thought, he spun to the nearest window, throwing the shutter open, and slipped onto the slanting roof, closing the shutter again. He lay flat in the shadows, almost directly over the street, and was dully grateful that the upper roof protected him with its shadow.

Light came through the shutter crack, and he could hear the mutter of voices within. Seconds passed, then minutes, and finally the lamplight disappeared and the room was empty.

The Colonel drew a deep breath of relief. A door slammed below, and the Captain's voice drifted upward in a series of orders to the guards. There were muttered replies; then the guards sauntered down the street.

IT was then that, in lifting his head, the Colonel saw the woman. She stood across the street, and began moving forward even as the Colonel watched.

"M'sieur le Capitaine?" she called out as she came, and it was obvious she was very drunk, for the words were slurred and unsteady.

"M'amselle!" the Captain said courteously.

"I have a message for you, m'sieur," the woman said. She wore a white mantilla, and its folds acted as a lacy veil over her features.

"And it is?" the officer prompted.

"That M'sieur Sneed had upon his person four thousand dollars in bills. Ink had been spilled upon them."

The officer's voice was heavy with suspicion. "What do you know of M'sieur Sneed, m'amselle?" he asked. Then certainty came to his tone. "You are the lady who was with him!"

"Yes," the woman said, "I was with him when Colonel Padgett murdered him. At least I left just as they began to fight."

"You must come with me."

They were together. The Colonel could barely see them because of the angle of the room. Startlement lay in his mind at the senseless accusation of the woman, yet he made no move to interrupt.

"I cannot," the woman said drunkenly. "You see, I am married, and my husband—"

She struck out, shoving with both hands, and as the officer toppled backward over the steps, she turned and ran. Before the Captain could re-

gain his feet again, she had disappeared into the night.

The officer swore luridly, coming to his feet and setting out in futile chase. But he had no chance. From his vantage point, Colonel Padgett had seen the woman hide between two houses, past which the Captain ran at breakneck speed.

The Colonel rolled to the edge of the low roof and dropped feet first into space. Heavy muscles caught his fall, and then he was racing toward the back of the house, intending to cut off the woman's retreat.

HE sped across unfenced back yards, going as fast as possible, yet making little sound. He came to the area between the houses where the woman had disappeared and saw her vague shadow near the street. Then she was walking away and he was following.

There was in his mind the thought to stop her, but he knew such a thing could not be done here. Short of kidnaping her, first knocking her senseless, he would have no time for questions, should she scream. It seemed better to follow her for a time, then to ascertain her identity. Questions could wait for a few moments.

For some reason the woman was as cautious as he had been. She chose dark streets and darker alleyways. He lost her at times, slipping ahead until he caught her silhouette again. His mind was confused, trying to fit her into the pattern of events. So far as he knew he had offended no woman. What her stake in this plot to frame him was, he could not fathom.

She came at last to the alleyway behind St. Charles Avenue, and her steps slowed. The Colonel drifted into a shadow, standing motionless, and watching. The woman hesitated, pressing against the side of a building, and the Colonel recognized the building as the Golden Lass. For one long moment the woman stood quietly; then she swung and entered the side door, closing it softly behind. Soft laughter hovered like an echo.

Colonel Padgett smiled. Now she was in a trap, walking into it blindly, thinking herself unseen. Within minutes she would be unmasked, forced to reveal what she knew of Sneed's murder.

And thinking of that, the Colonel whistled softly, conscious of the thick pad of bills in his pocket, ink-stained bills which the guard would claim he had stolen from Sneed.

He drew a soft breath. Rope-evidence lay in his pocket for the first arresting guard to find. He had a sudden hunch that Lemoine would deny paying the money for Sneed; in fact—he caught his breath sharply—Lemoine was probably in league with the woman, intending to frame him.

He went across the empty lot, going for the door through which the veiled woman had disappeared. Only a minute had passed, and suddenly there was no caution in him, only a bursting desire to bring an end to this affair.

He fingered the latch, the door swinging open. Soft lamplight flooded him and he blinked against its radiance. The hall was empty, the far door just clicking shut. He raced forward on catlike feet, wrenching at the knob, but when the door came open, debouching into the first game-room, the woman had disappeared.

Men and women were there, some about the gaming-tables, others at small tables laden with glasses and plates of food. Lemoine was at the bar, a tall glass in his hand, his scarred face hard and ugly in the light. But there was no woman in a green dress, a white mantilla over her head. Obviously, she had already passed into the second gambling-room.

Colonel Padgett hesitated, then he closed the door softly, a narrow hall pressing in about him. He drew the pad of bills from his right pocket and inspected it carefully. Ink was there, staining each bill distinctively. If Lemoine denied having paid him, these bills were his death-warrant.

He saw the satchel then. His gaze had touched it before and passed it by. He ignored it, and then a vagrant memory caught in his mind. His eyes whipped back, and he bent forward, drawing the bag from beneath the overhang of the stairs where it had been carelessly and hastily concealed. It was Lemoine's, of course; he recognized it now, and he wondered why it was the man had hidden it beneath the steps.

He had his answer. The straps came loose in his lithe fingers, and the bag's contents were disclosed in the light. He felt the sharp pulse of cold rage in his mind. Facts were clear now, uncluttered by fear. He had the answer, and it was flat and ugly.

FIRST, there was the dress, and below it the mantilla and a silk veil. Nothing more, but to the Colonel, this was enough.

John Lemoine was the woman, then! He it was who had engineered this entire affair. He it was who had killed Sneed and spoken to the Guard Captain. This was his game, and the deck was stacked, and Colonel Padgett was the greenie being fleeced.

Colonel Padgett went up the stairs to Farquier's office. . . .

Jacques Farquier was silent, fingering the green dress, examining the veil and the torn mantilla. The triangular scrap of lace fitted perfectly. A pulse beat at Farquier's temple, and his eyes were bleak and cold when they lifted to the Colonel's face.

Illustrated by John Fulton

"Burn the money," he said softly. "When this is over, we'll take care of M'sieur Lemoine in our own way. The affair will be ugly, but I do not think anything will be proved against you."

Colonel Padgett spread his hands. "I want this cleared up," he said.

"And I," Farquier agreed. "But we haven't much time. The guard should be here shortly, for they know we are friends. I do not think it wise for you to hide any longer."

Colonel Padgett's face was hard. "Bring Lemoine here, and I think something might be accomplished."

Jacques Farquier shook his head. "I doubt it," he disagreed. "There wouldn't be time." He laid the mantilla aside and picked up a sheet of paper. "My men discovered a few things. Sneed and Lemoine managed to borrow about eight thousand dollars today. Including yours, their debts must have mounted to about fifteen thousand. Most of the men are pressing for payment."

"Eight thousand!" the Colonel said.

"Yes, at least that much. Why?"

"Just a minute, Captain," Farquier said. "I can vouch for Colonel Padgett. Just what is your evidence?"

A thought was in the Colonel's mind. A smile lifted the corners of his mouth, and the mocking irony in his eyes glowed brightly.

"How much time have we?" he asked.

Farquier shrugged. "Minutes at the most."

The Colonel leaned forward. For the first time in hours there was good humor in his features. His eyes twinkled and he spoke with animation. He broached his idea, expanding it, and an echoing smile came to Farquier's dark face. At last the Creole rose and went to an iron safe at one side, swinging open the door.

"It's a gamble, Colonel," he said, "but worth the risk."

THE guard had not yet arrived. Farquier summoned a servant and stationed him outside in the street. When the guard appeared, an alarm could be brought before the guard entered the Golden Lass. The Colonel gave little heed to anything—his attention lay on Lemoine at the bar.

He went that way, ranging himself beside the slight Frenchman, surprised at the hatred in his heart. Ordinarily a mild man, he had not thought himself capable of such an emotion.

"Beer," he said to the bartender and accepted the warm glass, turning it slowly in his hand.

"So you're still free," Lemoine said nastily at his side. "Well, it won't be long before I watch you swing from a rope."

"It may be longer than you think," the Colonel said, and was conscious of the other's eyes on his bland face.

John Lemoine's mouth twisted into a lop-sided grin, but he said nothing for a moment. Then he took a quick swallow of his whisky.

"I'll wait," he said cynically.

The Colonel sipped his beer. "I'm a gambling man, Lemoine," he said. "I'll make you a small bet I'm not the one who hangs."

He saw the instant flare of suspicion, saw the tightening of Lemoine's fingers about the whisky glass. But the Frenchman was a gambler, too, and his stake in this pot was great. He forced calmness into his tone, but there was no relaxing of the rigidity of his shoulders.

"They've arrested somebody else?" he asked.

The Colonel laughed. "Not that I know of," he admitted. "I just have a hunch I'm going free."

John Lemoine relaxed. Amusement lay in his eyes, as though he enjoyed a private jest.

"Hunches don't pay off," he said.

"No?" Colonel Padgett touched his pocket. "I've four thousand dollars that say I'll be free by morning."

"Four th—" John Lemoine choked on his drink, sputtering for breath. "That's a graveyard bet," he said. "I want none of it."

"And you call yourself a gambler!" the Colonel gibed. "I'll make you a straight bet, somebody else to hold the stakes, that I'm not even arrested."

He drew a packet of bills from his side pocket and laid them on the bar, fanning them with the fingers of his right hand. They were bright and clean, rustling crisply.

John Lemoine watched, cupidity in his eyes. There was no caution in him now, only a grasping avarice which was part of his nature. Laughter was in his throat, and his scarred mouth twisted even more as he smiled.

"I'll take the bet," he said "By God, it will be nice to be paid for the privilege of seeing you hanged."

"And your money?" the Colonel asked gently. "I.O.U.'s are no good in this game."

Lemoine fumbled at his pocket and drew forth a roll of bills. He unfolded them, fingers trembling slightly. The Colonel counted quickly, giving back two of the bills and then adding the others to his own pile.

"Boy, an envelope," he said to the bartender, and the man lifted one from the stack on the backbar left there for just such a purpose.

The Colonel patted the bills into a flat heap, then tucked them into the envelope. He accepted a stick of sealing wax and the Golden Lass seal-stamp. The wax melted slowly over a lamp chimney; then he twisted a blob onto the envelope flap and wet and pressed the stamp until the wax was cold.

"There," Colonel Padgett said and placed the envelope in an inside pocket. "I'll keep it until we find a stakeholder."

Lemoine caught his arm, his face suddenly savage and taut. "To hell with that, Colonel," he said. *"I'll* hold it until we find a stakeholder."

"But—" the Colonel began, then shrugged in defeat. "Very well."

He handed the sealed envelope to Lemoine and ruefully watched it being tucked into the other's pocket.

"There," Lemoine said.

"No," the Colonel said sharply. "We'll find a stakeholder."

But there was no time. The guard was coming in now, bright and showy in their uniforms, rifles held negligently, yet ready for instant action. The leader was arrogant, brushing by Jacques Farquier and coming directly to Colonel Padgett. He displayed a paper.

"This is a warrant for your arrest," he said. "Are you coming quietly?"

Colonel Padgett hooked his arms over the bar, studying the man. "On what charge?" he asked.

"The murder of one Clarence Sneed."

"I am not guilty."

The Captain's face hardened. "I am not the judge of that. My duty is to bring you in. Once more, are you coming peaceably?"

"Just a minute, Captain," Farquier said. "I can vouch for Colonel Padgett. Just what is your evidence?"

THE Captain swung his gaze. Impatience lay in his face; but the Creole was a big man in New Orleans, far too important to be arrogant with.

"This is irregular, m'sieur," the Captain said, "but I shall oblige. First, the body of Clarence Sneed was carried from his room into the garden at the rear of his house by Colonel Padgett. The mistress of the house has given that information. Secondly, it is common knowledge that an accusation was made by Clarence Sneed as to Colonel Padgett's honesty, which is the motivation. Thirdly, it is known that the body was robbed of some four thousand dollars by the murderer."

The Colonel spun to John Lemoine. "You paid me that money, Lemoine," he said. "Tell the officer."

John Lemoine grinned; he grinned, and the hatred in his eyes was like a naked yellow flame.

"You lie," he said. "I paid you nothing."

"But—"

"Enough of this," the Captain said sharply.

"But I don't think it is enough," Colonel Padgett said grimly. "There was a woman with Sneed when he entered my rooms. Where is she?"

Men and women were crowding close now, all gambling stopped, held in thrall.

"She will be found," the Captain said grimly. "That is not my concern at the moment."

"But it is mine," Jacques Farquier said and brushed to Colonel Padgett's side, Lemoine's satchel in his hand. He opened the straps. "I think these are the clothes worn by the woman."

"Where did these come from?" the Captain snapped.

Colonel Padgett was smiling grimly. "Ask Lemoine," he said. "The satchel is his; he hid it behind the rear stairs a few moments ago."

"It's a lie," Lemoine cried, blood draining from his face.

But a murmur had risen from the crowd of voices, identifying the satchel as his.

Colonel Padgett straightened. "I think a reward would bring forth the boy who gave me a message supposedly from a big and red-faced man," he said. "I choose to think the actual man was small and with a scarred face, or perhaps that man dressed in these clothes."

"You're crazy," Lemoine snarled, and he was edging away, going along the bar inch by imperceptible inch.

Colonel Padgett towered over the Frenchman. "I think you framed me, Lemoine. I think you fought over the money you and Sneed borrowed. I think you wanted it to clear yourself of your debt. I think you killed him in my room with a knife and placed the blame on me."

Sweat glistened on Lemoine's face. His gaze whipped wildly about the room, finding only suspicion and contempt.

"I swear I'm innocent," he cried. "Search Padgett, search him; he killed Sneed and robbed his body. The bills will tell; they were ink-marked, as I can prove by those from whom I got them."

Colonel Padgett shook his head, his slight gesture stopping the move of the Captain.

"Search Lemoine," he said.

And such was his dignity, such was his command, that the Captain took quick steps forward, his hands sliding in and out of pockets in the Frenchman's clothes. Except for the envelope containing the Colonel's wager, there were only a few personal effects.

"I told you," Lemoine cried.

And then his voice broke in terror, for the Captain had ripped the end from the envelope and emptied the contents onto the bar. Bills were there, a packet thick and valuable. And on each bill was an ink stain such as Lemoine had described.

Lemoine made his move. His right arm came up and down, and the hold-out on his arm delivered a gleaming knife to his fingers. He backed, the weapon ready in his hand.

"Damn you, Colonel!" he cried. "Damn you to hell! I should have killed you, too."

He turned to run, turning with fox-like speed, and a rifle-ball caught and rolled him over on the floor. Almost boredly, the guard who had fired tilted his rifle and blew smoke from the barrel. Lemoine screamed at the pain of a shattered leg.

"Nice shooting," the Captain complimented his man, and bent forward to take his prisoner. . . .

Minutes later, the Colonel lifted his glass in silent toast to a smiling Jacques Farquier behind the desk. Farquier as silently toasted, and they drank.

"The guard will get the final truths," the Colonel said at last. "A bit of judicious questioning will bring them out."

"Good," Jacques Farquier said, and moved a white envelope on the desk with the bottom of his glass.

Colonel Padgett looked at the envelope and laughter came to his eyes. He had made his gamble and the pot was his. He had played his cards right and his half-bluff had won the stakes. He lifted the white envelope and ripped it open and returned four thousand dollars to Jacques Farquier.

"Thanks for the loan," he said.

"You're welcome," Farquier said gravely.

They grinned then in understanding. John Lemoine had fallen for the oldest of all gambling tricks, a switch. Only instead of decks of cards the switch had been done with envelopes identical in every way. One envelope, containing the murder money, had been in the Colonel's pocket and had been removed, ostensibly as the one containing wagering money, in the fleeting second before the bar, before the guard had arrived.

IT was ironic and just, and memory of it brought laughter to the Colonel's heart. He had his four thousand dollars, all in good money, he was clear of a murder charge, his reputation still unsullied. And John Lemoine shortly would swing giddily from a rope for his earthly sins.

Colonel Padgett sighed deeply in relaxation and finished his drink. Outside, the sound of the Mardi Gras was inviting and exciting.

"If I were forty years younger," he said, "I'd be out there, searching for a slim partner."

Jacques Farquier finished his drink and rose from behind the desk.

"It is an idea," he admitted.

"What?" the Colonel asked.

"I," Jacques Farquier, *"am* forty years younger."

Colonel Padgett leaned back in his chair and watched his friend depart. After a time, he would leave, too, to share vicariously in the excitement of the night. But right now—

He sighed. It had been a hectic day.

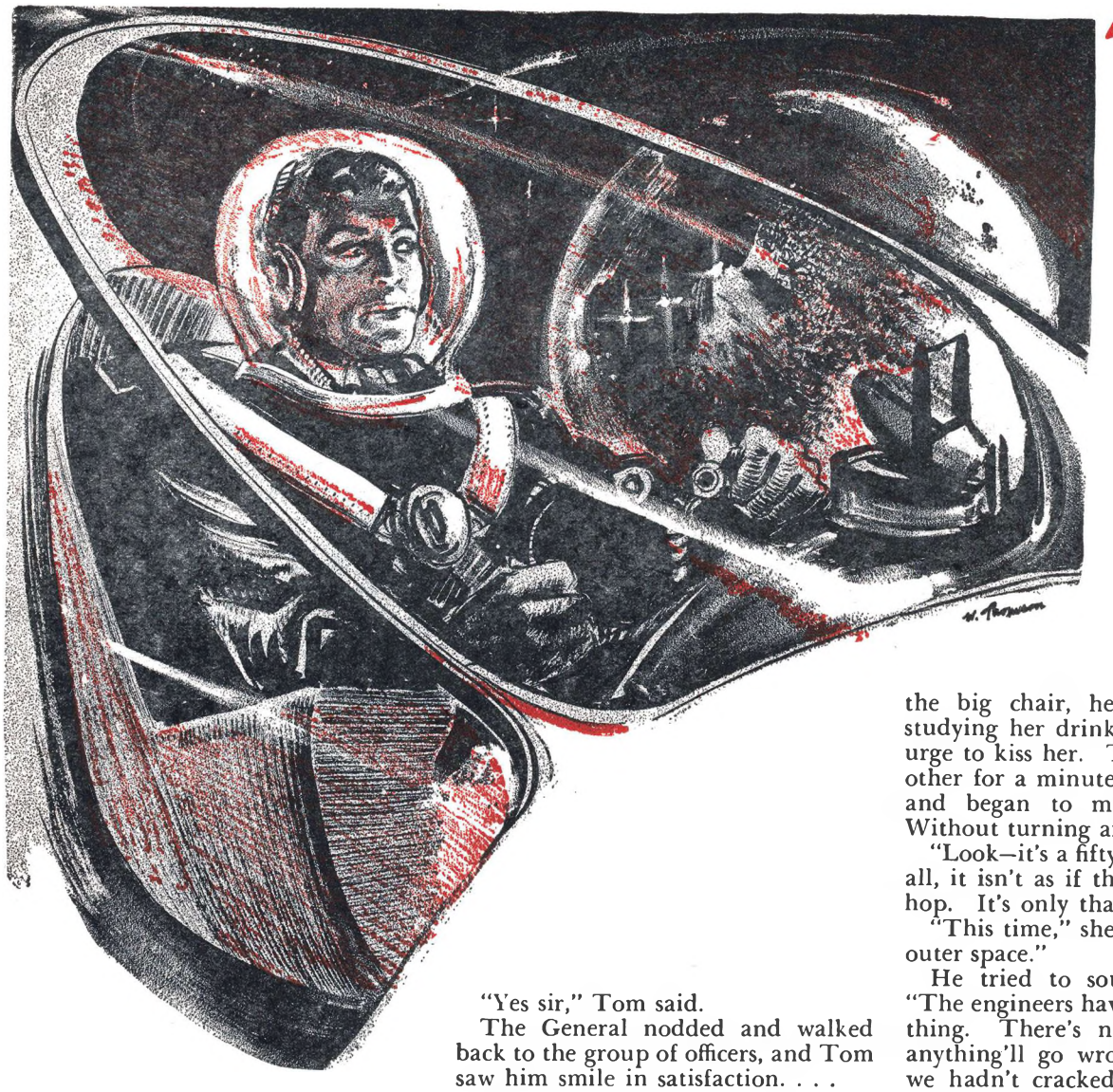
The Miraculous Victory

atchieved by the English Fleete, under the discreet and happy conduct of the right honorable, right prudent and valiant lord, the L. Charles Howard, L. high Admirall of England &c. Upon the Spanish huge **Armada** ... 1588.

A small bit of a large story in Richard Hakluyt's "Principall Navigations of the English Nation," here curiously pictured for the curious by **Peter Wells**....

The Spaniards that day sustained great losse and damage having many of their shippes shot thorow and thorow, and they discharged likewise great store of ordinance against the English; who indeed sustained some hinderance, but not comparable to the Spaniards losse: for they lost not any one shippe, or person of account. For very diligent inquisition being made, the English men all that time wherein the Spanish Navy sayled upon their seas, are not found to have wanted above one hundreth of their people: albeit Sir Francis Drakes shippe was pierced with shot above forty times, and his very cabben was twise shot thorow, and about the conclusion of the fight, the bedde of a certaine gentleman lying weary thereupon, was taken quite from under him with the force of a bullet. Likewise, as the Earle of Northumberland and Sir Charles Blunt were at dinner upon a time, the bullet of a demi-culvering brake thorow the middest of their cabbin, touched their feet, and strooke downe two of the standers by, with many such accidents befalling the English shippes, which it were tedious to rehearse. Whereupon it is most apparant, that God miraculously preserved the English nation. For the L. Admirall wrote unto her Majestie that in all humane reason, and according to the judgement of all men {every circumstance being duly considered} the English men were not of any such force, whereby they might, without a miracle, dare once to approch within sight of the Spanish Fleet: insomuch that they freely ascribed all the honour of their victory unto God, who had confounded the enemy, and had brought his counsels to none effect...

The



Without air, food and water — he sat back resignedly, and gazed awestruck at a sight no human being had ever seen before.

TOM CLARK finished his inspection of the cockpit. Then he opened the small hatch in the side of the XS-102, and before climbing out, looked for a long moment at the cluster of figures at the base of the huge rocket.

As he swung himself over the side and onto the frail ladder that stretched to the ground, one of the figures standing a little apart from the group waved to him.

In the thin desert air he could see Amy's face plainly, and he tried vainly to swallow the lump in his throat as he realized they had only fifteen more hours together.

When he reached the ground, the General was waiting for him.

"How does it look, Tom?" he asked.

"Fine," he replied. "Everything checks."

"Good," said the General. There was nothing in the tone of his voice to indicate that it would be more than a routine test flight. "Weather promises perfect conditions for morning. You'll take off at 0600."

"Yes sir," Tom said.

The General nodded and walked back to the group of officers, and Tom saw him smile in satisfaction. . . .

Heat-waves shimmering off the black-top road made it look wet as he and Amy headed the car back to their quarters. Sitting quietly next to him, she looked small and helpless, and Tom felt his stomach muscles go tight as he realized with a sort of wonder, as he often did, how much he loved her.

Not until after he had had his shower and they were sitting in the living-room with a long cool drink did the talk veer to what was on both their minds. It was Amy who put it into words.

"It's going to be bad, isn't it?" she asked.

He shifted uncomfortably in his chair. "It won't be easy," he admitted finally. In the silence that followed, he studied her closely. Her blonde hair was piled high on her head because of the heat. Her large blue eyes, set wide apart, gave her a seriousness that was offset by her pert nose and a *gamine* expression that sometimes made her look like a little boy.

He was suddenly glad that she had not borne him a child. As she sat in the big chair, her legs under her, studying her drink, he had a sudden urge to kiss her. They clung to each other for a minute. Then he got up and began to mix another drink. Without turning around, he said:

"Look—it's a fifty-fifty chance. After all, it isn't as if this was my first test hop. It's only that this time—"

"This time," she finished, "it's into outer space."

He tried to sound matter-of-fact: "The engineers have thought of everything. There's no reason to think anything'll go wrong. It's not as if we hadn't cracked the sonic barrier. Of the six pilotless jobs that were built, five were recovered."

"But what if something *does* go wrong?" she insisted.

He shrugged. "Remember the P-80 in 1947? I walked away from that one."

She forced a smile. "I know," she said, "I'm being silly." Swiftly she kissed him and said: "Wait'll you see the steak I rounded up for dinner."

IT was cold on the floor of the desert as Tom drove to the XS-102, and the darkness had given way to a faint gray light. He looked at his watch and saw that it was a few minutes past five. In less than an hour he'd take off.

The General was already there, and with him a civilian who looked familiar to Tom. As he climbed out of the car, the General approached. Tom saluted. "Good morning, sir," he said.

"Morning, Tom," said the General. He was smiling as he turned to the civilian. "Even Washington has taken an interest in this one. We have the Secretary of the Air Force with us

Flight of the XS-102

THE NEXT ADVANCE IN AERONAUTICS WAS A PILOTED ROCKET. . . . WHAT HAPPENED WHEN THE CONTROLS FROZE, HOWEVER, WAS—OUT OF THIS WORLD.

by ROSS DE LUE

to watch the take-off. This is Major Clark, Mr. Secretary."

The two men shook hands.

"If you'll excuse me, sir," said Tom, "I'd like to check my gear." They nodded, and he headed for the shack behind the thick concrete safety wall.

Sergeant Clemens had everything laid out. As Tom entered, he looked up. "Everything's ready, sir," he said. "I've tested your space suit, helmet and gloves. They're O.K. for pressure; air-lines are clear and I've gone over every inch of the heating element."

"Swell," said Tom. He knew that Clemens could be depended on to inspect the equipment as thoroughly as if it were for his own use. "Take it on out," he said. "I'll be out in a few minutes."

HE watched as the Sergeant loaded his equipment in the back of a truck. Then he took up the phone and called Amy. He had insisted that she stay home until after the take-off, and had promised her that Sergeant Clemens would pick her up as soon as the flight was under way, so she could be on hand when he returned. She answered at once, and he knew she'd been waiting by the phone.

"Weather was on the ball," he said when he heard her voice. "It's a perfect day." Through the window he could see that the early morning grayness had given way to a deep red that flooded everything on the flat plain with a rosy hue. In another few minutes the morning sun would appear above the mountains that rimmed the distant horizon.

Amy's voice was clear over the wire. "I love you, darling," he heard her say.

"I adore you," he said.

Then, as if prearranged, he heard a click as she replaced the receiver. He hung up and walked out of the shack.

The General, he saw, was standing at one side talking earnestly to the Secretary of the Air Force. He made his way through the groups of technicians and scientists to the General's side. High above him stretched the immense bulk of the XS-102, looking like an enormous steel cigar, stuck on end in the desert sand.

"So you see," the General was saying, "we've gone as far as we can on our research with remote control. We expect to learn a lot with a pilot aboard. And then there's the cost. If we can manage to land this intact, we'll have licked the one big problem remaining. And with the rocket tubes in the nose, Major Clark will be able to decelerate enough on his return to make a fairly safe landing."

"But what about people underneath?" the Secretary asked. "I mean the downward blast of the rockets and heat. Won't it—"

"Not at all," said the General. "Clark, as I've explained, will have the same control as he would with a jet or rocket-powered plane. Naturally, on his landing, he'll aim for a deserted area. He might even land on water, although we're not quite sure what effect water surface would have on the rocket blast, and what would happen when the white-hot tube exhausts contacted the water."

"I see," said the Secretary. "And how long will this first flight last?"

"He has fuel for six to seven hours," said the General; "but he should be up about two hours. We hope to maintain constant radio contact, of course, and we'll track the XS-102's course by radar the entire time. We should reach a maximum speed of ten to twelve thousand miles an hour, and the Major plans to land within a five-mile radius of his take-off point."

The General was interrupted by a deep-throated siren.

"I've got fifteen minutes, sir," said Tom. He shook hands with both men, and as they walked off, climbed into his space-suit with Sergeant Clemens' help. Before starting up the ladder, he called: "Don't forget to pick up my wife."

The Sergeant waved.

Tom looked like a spider to those on the ground as he climbed up to the open hatch. He swung himself aboard, pushed the ladder away and watched it fall to the ground. Clemens tied a rope to one end, tied the other to the truck and drove off.

Inside the cockpit, located at the extreme tip of the XS-102, Tom carefully checked the myriad gauges. Satisfied that all was in order, he carefully strapped himself into his seat, adjusted his throat mike and turned on the radio.

His loneliness was dissipated by the friendly voice of the tower operator, who in reply to his question, said: "It's 0559 exactly, sir." Then came the voice: *"Forty seconds, thirty seconds, twenty, ten, five, four, three, two, one—"*

There was a terrific jar, and Tom could feel the XS-102 sway from side to side. His head snapped back, and he blacked out.

At the same instant, those on the ground saw a huge puff of white smoke billow from under the XS-102. A split second later, tongues of flame shot out. The XS-102 seemed to quiver momentarily, and then, almost lazily, appeared to rise straight upward, moving slowly at first, then gathering speed. In a matter of seconds the huge cylindrical object was out of sight, a trail of white smoke marking it passage.

Those standing behind the concrete wall could hear the speaker connected to the control tower, the operator's voice calling: *"Come in, XS-102, come in, XS-102."* For a long moment there was no reply.

The General, his teeth clenched tightly on an unlit cigar, stared intently at the speaker mounted on the wall. And then, clearly, came Tom's voice: *"Okay, Research Center Tower, this is XS-102."*

AN audible sigh of relief rose from the little group, a sigh which was cut short by Tom's next words.

"Something's haywire," the speaker was saying. *"I can't move the controls. They seem to have jammed on take-off, and I'm maintaining a course at right angles to Earth."*

The General began to look gray and tired.

Then followed a conversation between Tom and two civilian technicians, which ended abruptly as radio contact with the XS-102 was broken.

At the radar scope, the XS-102, showing as a faint white dot, finally disappeared.

The Secretary turned to the General. "Can anything be done?" he asked.

The General shook his head. "The rudder controls must have frozen on the take-off. All we know is that he's headed for outer space."

MEANWHILE, aboard the XS-102, Tom Clark was desperately trying to figure out a solution for the position in which he found himself.

Immediately after radio contact was broken with the Research Experimental Tower, he had tried to find some way to regain control of the rocket.

His air-speed, he saw with horror, had climbed to more than sixteen thousand miles an hour. Outside, he could see very little. It was almost as though the sun had set, and instead of daylight, he found himself rushing through a dark blue void. His first instinct, after recovering from the blackout and discovering the controls were jammed, had been to cut off the power.

He had realized, however, that to do so would mean certain death, for the XS-102 would have crashed back to earth. Tom had seen other rockets which had fallen after their fuel was exhausted. He shuddered as he pictured to himself what would happen if the XS-102 fell with almost full fuel tanks—especially if it fell into some town or city.

He didn't hesitate. Power must be kept on, at least until he went beyond the gravitational pull of earth. He looked at his watch. It was 0633. At this rate, considering all things, he was six or seven thousand miles away from earth. . . .

By now Sergeant Clemens would have called Amy, and she'd know. He was aware that seven thousand miles was a relatively short distance, considering the entire planetary system. But he might just as well be one million miles. There was no turning back. He smiled grimly as he thought of his flight plan—at most a two-hour flight!

At 0700 he noticed that his fuel tanks were still almost full. The engineers had done a good job of calculating fuel-consumption. He still had at least five hours left. His head felt light, and he unbuckled his seat-straps, and found himself almost floating out of the seat. It was an odd sensation to find that he no longer had to cope with gravity. But he determined to be careful and move slowly. He pulled himself back into the seat and refastened the strap across his lap. Then he reached forward and jerked the right rudder-control lever. It didn't budge. He adjusted the tail

It was Amy who put it in words. "It's going to be bad,

periscope and caught his breath at the sight that swam into the view-plate. There was the Earth, bathed in a glowing light, looking just like the schoolroom globes he had seen. The continents were outlined, but there was no indication of life. Man-made structures were so insignificant that they failed to show up at all.

Tom felt an overpowering sense of loneliness sweep over him. Mechanically he reached for a thermos bottle of coffee and had it halfway to his lips when he stopped. What was the use of drinking it? His situation was hopeless—why go on?

He would either spend the rest of time floating in space, once his fuel was gone, or an asteroid or some other interplanetary body would collide with the XS-102, and that would be the end. His hand dropped to his side. The .45 was still strapped to his hip. That would do it quickly, he thought, without suffering. But even as he thought it, he knew that such a course was impossible for him.

TOM finished the last of the stew in the ration can and washed it down with a swig of coffee. The silence was so intense that he deliberately moved in his seat in order to hear the familiar creak of leather. It was now, he noted, 1500, an even nine hours since he had left Earth. For the past two and a half hours the XS-102 had been drifting in space, the great rocket motors, their fuel exhausted, silent and cold.

According to his calculations, all based on his relation to Earth, he was somewhere in space approximately one hundred thousand miles from his starting-point. His speed, he computed, had averaged slightly more

isn't it?" she asked. "This time, it's into outer space."

than sixteen thousand miles an hour, considerably more than the V-type rockets developed by the Germans during the war, which had a maximum of around five thousand miles an hour.

He had not been idle, once the motors had cut out. For some reason, unknown to himself, he had carefully maintained a log of the flight, noted temperatures, fuel and oxygen consumption and the myriad other details required of him as test pilot.

Now it was a matter of waiting until his oxygen supply was exhausted, or until he froze to death. Meanwhile the auxiliary generator was supplying plenty of electricity for heat and light.

He leaned back in his seat and peered out the window. It was pitch dark, and all around him were thousands of stars. Occasionally streaks of light—meteorites, Tom supposed—flashed across the inky blackness. Spectacularly lovely, they fascinated him, and he watched them until they were out of sight. A celestial fireworks display for the benefit of one lone observer!

FINALLY, overcome with weariness, he leaned his head back and closed his eyes. He had no idea how long he dozed, but when he awakened, it was with a start as he stared in disbelief at the sight before him. Framed in the cockpit window was the moon—there was no mistaking it.

It was the same moon that Tom and Amy had spent many evenings looking at—but this time what a difference! The great luminous orb, cold and lifeless, looked as though it hung right outside. Plainly visible were the huge craters, the mountains and valleys and the great plains that marked its surface. Vast stretches looked like a pockmarked battlefield.

Tom switched off the cockpit lights and found he could see plainly by the reflected white light. A wild thought went through his head as he tried to remember the distance of the earth from the moon. All he could recall, however, was that it was somewhere around 230,000 miles—and his earlier calculations had shown he was about one hundred thousand miles away from the earth.

He shook his head. He was less than half the distance; and had no way, even if he wanted, to take the XS-102 the remainder of the distance. Without air, food and water—he sat back resignedly, and gazed awestruck at a sight no human being had ever seen before.

AT first he paid little attention to the three tiny dots of light that seemed to be reflected against something between the XS-102 and the moon. He had just noticed, with alarm, that the oxygen-pressure gauge was dropping. Carefully, he made his way back to the battery of tanks and began to check them. An inspection revealed that the gasket on one of the feeder lines had given way. Shutting off the tank, he removed the line, made the necessary repairs with some rubber cement from the life-raft emergency kit, and returned to his seat.

The three dots of light had grown brighter, but they were still so far away he couldn't tell if the meteorites, if that's what they were, were likely to collide with the XS-102.

He sat quietly looking at the amazing display unfolding before his eyes, and wondering what he would do when his oxygen supply ran out. Again he fingered the .45 and shuddered. At least, Amy would never know. As he thought of her, the grim, tight look on his face softened. It was a satisfaction that they'd had a good even though brief life together. And then, because it was now twenty-four hours since he'd slept, he leaned back and closed his eyes.

The metallic jar didn't awaken him, but he stirred uneasily in his sleep. What finally jolted him back to consciousness was the vibration. For a brief moment, unable to orient himself, he forgot where he was, and instinctively reached for the controls, thinking he had blacked out on the take-off.

A glance ahead brought him back to reality with a jolt. Directly ahead was the moon, but now it was a vastly bigger and closer moon—one toward which he rushed at appalling speed.

Tom was now wide awake and tense. So this was it! Somehow, he had fallen within the moon's gravitational sphere, and was dropping through the rarefied atmosphere at

"Here goes nothing," thought Tom. He climbed down to the ground.

terrific speed. In a matter of minutes the end would come. Idly he noticed the three tiny lights had vanished. And then he became aware again of the vibration which had roused him. It was unlike anything he had ever experienced, and he couldn't account for it.

Forgetting everything else now, he watched the pockmarked surface of the moon rushing up at him, and could see that he was headed directly for the center of a large crater, not unlike the cone of an extinct volcano. It reminded him of an enormous mouth waiting to receive the XS-102, and as he approached nearer, he saw with amazement that it must be at least fifty miles in diameter.

The XS-102 plunged into the dark cone, and he threw his arm across his face as the rocket plunged into the Stygian darkness. In a split second it would all be over. . . . But it wasn't.

Instead of a crash and oblivion, there was a complete cessation of sound. It was as though he were suspended in a vacuum. Even the odd vibration had stopped. He lowered his arm, and the glow of the cockpit lights assured him the XS-102 was still intact—and so was he. He peered out the window, but could see nothing in the inky blackness. Or could he?

THE wall of the vast crater rising around him seemed to reflect light from his cockpit window. As his eyes became accustomed to the darkness, he saw that the wall appeared to be a smooth, highly polished metallic surface. Tom grabbed a flashlight, turned it through the window and gasped. There was a line of rivets running straight up and down the wall!

Almost as if the beam of the flashlight had been a signal, he saw the line move slowly upward, and realized the wall was opening. An instant later a flood of illumination lit the scene with a bright bluish light. The XS-102, in a horizontal position, began to move slowly into a huge chamber behind the door. He could see it had a high vaulted dome, a smooth floor and small square windows set at regular intervals along one wall. It was too fantastic—it could have been built by man, but this was the moon, a lifeless satellite of the earth!

As soon as the entire bulk of the XS-102 was in the chamber, it settled gently to the floor. Tom sat alert and tense, waiting for the next act of the strange drama to unfold.

For perhaps a minute nothing happened. Then a sliding door in the smooth wall opened, and a group of figures, undeniably men and women, entered and approached the XS-102.

Tom looked at them blankly, unable to credit his eyes with what he saw. They wore what he judged to be a uniform: Green shorts and loose white shirts, open at the neck. Men and women were dressed alike. All were blond with fair skin, wide-spaced eyes; and both sexes wore their hair in a fashion he had heard Amy call a page-boy bob. They wore no shoes. He could see their chests rising and falling, and knew they were breathing.

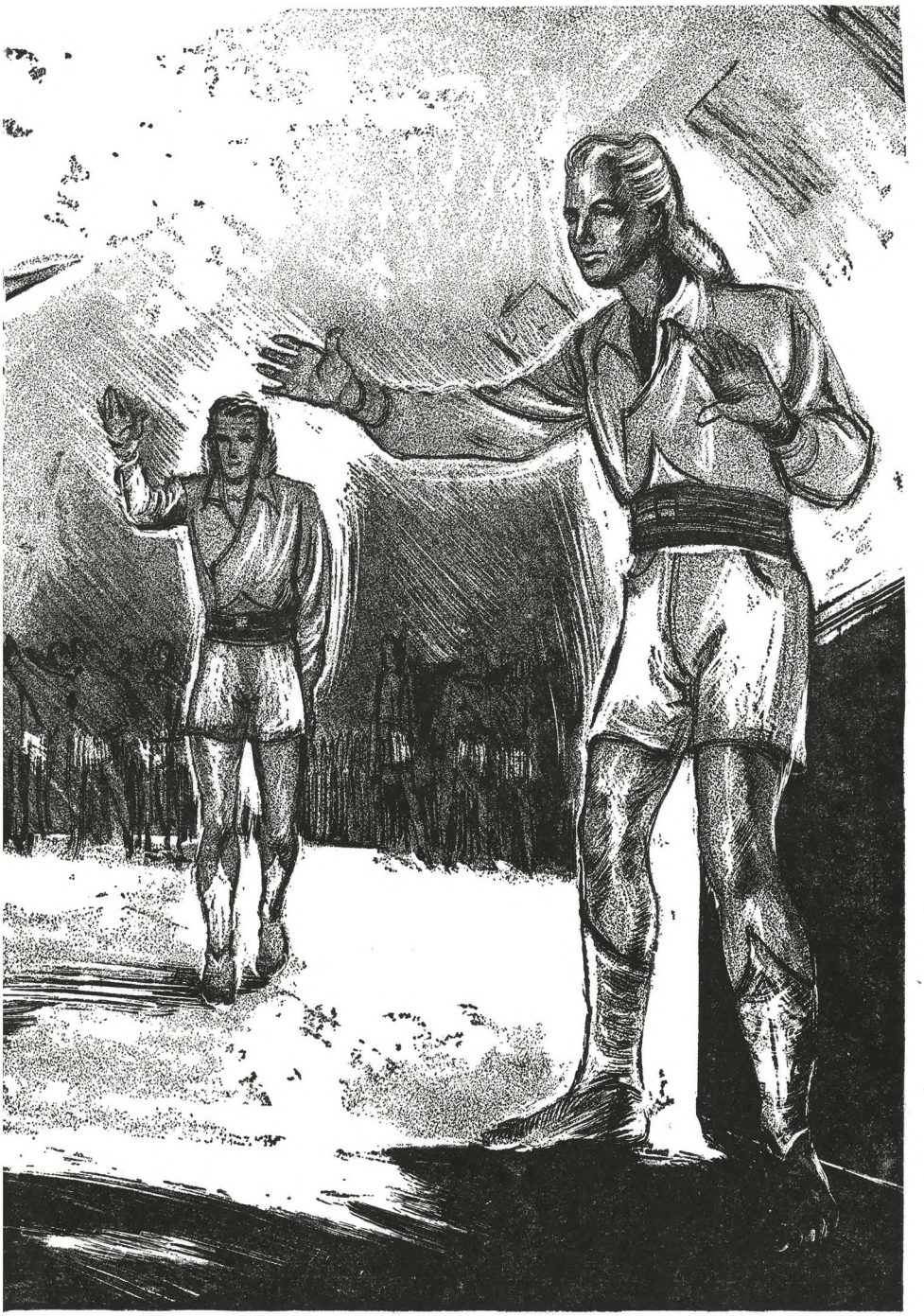
This fact, plus their lack of heavy clothes, amazed him more than anything else. He remembered enough college astronomy to know there was supposed to be no air on the moon, and that the temperature range on the lunar surface rose to one hundred degrees centigrade at lunar noon and dropped to minus two hundred during the long lunar night.

He started to rise from his seat and had to grab the arm to keep from shooting to the top of the tiny cabin. Carefully he made his way to the window and looked out. One of the approaching group stopped, pointed to him, talked excitedly to the others, and then they all hurried forward, motioning to him to come out.

"Here goes nothing," thought Tom.

He adjusted his space helmet, connected a portable oxygen flask, and threw open the hatch. Lowering the light extension ladder, he climbed down to the ground.

He was instantly surrounded by the strangers. They touched his space-



suit, handled the plexiglas fishbowl on his head and peered at his face. He watched them narrowly, but as they continued to smile and obviously had no intention of harming him, he made no move to resist.

He was somewhat surprised when the leader of the group motioned to him to remove his helmet. In turn, he pointed to his oxygen flask and took several deep breaths to indicate he needed it to breathe. The other smiled and persisted, and Tom reluctantly took a deep breath, loosened his helmet and sniffed experimentally.

The air, he found, was fresh and pure. Bewildered, he removed the helmet completely. Now he could hear the voices, low and pleasant, but he couldn't understand a word. The language was entirely foreign, unlike anything he had ever heard before, with an almost musical accent.

The leader took his hand and led him to the same door in the wall from which the strange party had entered the chamber. On the other side, Tom found himself walking down a long corridor. Openings at intervals in the long walls led into large chambers. In each, he caught glimpses of massive machinery, all of it moving. The silence impressed him, for there was no hum of generators, no hiss of steam. He wondered what sort of power was used, and realized that these people, whoever they were, had reached a high degree of civilization.

At the end of the corridor a door slid noiselessly open and he saw a large room, comfortably furnished. The leader motioned him to a chair, went to a desk, poured a pale pink liquid into a cup and handed it to him, motioning at the same time for him to drink. Tom studied his face a moment, hesitated, and then satisfied at what he saw there, drained the cup. He had barely taken it from his lips when he felt himself slipping into unconsciousness; the room swam crazily; the kindly face of the leader blurred, and as he tried to rise, his knees buckled under him.

HE regained his senses slowly. The first thing he saw was the same group who had met him at the XS-102. They were looking at him solemnly now. He was lying on a divan, and sat up. Whatever had caused the fainting spell had left no ill-effects—his head felt remarkably clear. The leader addressed him gently.

"How do you feel?" he asked.

He hadn't spoken English—it was the same tongue he had been using but somehow Tom understood. It was all very perplexing.

"All right—I think," he said, realizing with a start that he had replied in the same tongue.

As he spoke, broad smiles lit up the faces of those watching him. The leader drew a deep breath, turned to another of the group, and said: "The Academy will be most interested."

Then, addressing Tom, he said: "I am called Amah." Indicating the others and pointing each out, he continued: "This is Elu, Maralla, Fosu Marani, and Namara."

Each inclined his head in acknowledgment as his name was called.

"Mine's Clark," said Tom, "Major Tom Clark, United States Air Force."

"United States?" asked Amah.

"Yes," said Tom. Seeing that he was still puzzled, Tom added: "Or Earth, the planet Earth."

Amah smiled. "Of course, 'Earth,' a very good name. We call it Zudan,' he explained. "However," he continued, "since you, who dwell on it have named it Earth, we shall call it the same." He turned to Fosu. "See to it that the Astronomical Board makes the necessary changes on all charts," he said.

"Do you know which of the planets I mean?" asked Tom.

"Certainly," said Amah. "There's only one capable of sustaining life."

"How do you know that?" asked Tom. "We on Earth always thought the Moon—" He stopped.

"Was lifeless?" finished Amah. "But that's natural. The surface *is* practically devoid of life except, of course, for some worthless vegetation. We've been living underground now since the beginning of the Third Atomic War." He paused. "Figured by your time," he continued, "that would be between fifty and sixty thousand years ago."

Tom's jaw dropped. "Fifty or sixty thousand years ago!" he murmured. "The Third Atomic War?"

"Yes," said Amah; "our civilization is much older than yours. In fact, the ability of your scientists to build a rocket such as the one in which we found you, surprises us. After all, on our last expedition to Earth, we found a very low type of civilization. The inhabitants were little better than apes."

"You've been to Earth?" asked Tom. "When?"

"*I* haven't," said Amah, "but a Moon expedition. Several have made the trip—to bring back specimens of the vegetation and animal life to be found there," he explained. "The most recent was about six thousand years ago. It enabled us to gain a better picture of our own early life on the moon, before our atmosphere was destroyed, and we were forced to go underground in order to survive."

"THERE'S one question I wish you'd answer," said Tom.

"If I can, I'll be glad to," said Amah.

"When I climbed out of my rocket and first saw you, I couldn't understand a word of your language. You brought me here, gave me a drink and I fainted. When I came to, I *could* understand, and I find myself speaking your language fluently. What's the answer?"

Amah laughed. "How long do you think you were unconscious?"

"I don't know," said Tom. "I suppose a few minutes."

"Two days," said Amah. "That was long enough for the H-ray to measure your ability to absorb instruction—and tell us a great deal more about you than you'd imagine."

"What is an H-ray?" asked Tom.

"We'll try to answer all your questions later," said Amah. "An apartment has been prepared for you here, and Elu will stay with you to see that you do not want for anything."

Elu, one of the blond young men, stepped forward. "Tomorrow," continued Amah, "I will breakfast with you, and we'll reach a decision about your future. Meanwhile, Elu will be able to answer most of your questions."

Bidding farewell to the others, Tom followed Elu out of the room. Pausing before another of the sliding doors, they waited for it to open, stepped into an elevator and whizzed upward. As they stepped out on another level, he found himself in an attractive room. Like the one he had just left, this too was illuminated by the same strange blue-white light that seemed to emanate from the walls and ceiling. A thick carpet was on the floor; and the furniture, though oddly shaped, was comfortable.

Dinner was brought in by a young man dressed in the same green shorts and loose white shirt worn by the others. The food was strange, but not unpleasant. There was a vegetable, which tasted like asparagus, and a meat course, similar in taste to lamb.

During dinner, and later, Elu told Tom of the Moon people. Tom interrupted the story only to ask an occasional question.

Elu explained how, several hundred thousand years earlier, the scientists living on the moon had discovered the secret of atomic energy, and with the discovery, had come a vast new era in scientific exploration. He described the horrors of the two atomic wars that had wiped out almost three-fourths of the living population, and destroyed much of the fertility of the soil.

He told of the concern of the meteorologists when they discovered that, for some unexplainable reason, the atom bombs had had an amazing effect on atmospheric conditions, and that the insulating layer of atmosphere was being rapidly dissipated, with a consequent change in climate. Surface moisture, he said, began to dry up; weather became more extreme, with terrific hot and cold spells; and vast areas of land became arid.

It was then, he said, that plans were drawn up to leave the surface and go underground.

"But why," asked Tom, "didn't you migrate to another planet—Earth, for instance?"

"That was impossible," replied Elu. "Our space ships couldn't have transported the entire population. Then too, think of the enormous amounts of cargo that would have been required. After all, we were dealing with the problem of an entire world, not just a few thousand people.

"Besides, the moon was honeycombed with vast caves and subterranean areas. The volcanoes were all extinct, and there was more than enough space for everyone. Underground lakes and streams provided us with an abundance of water. All we needed to manufacture was oxygen, air and light—and that was simple.

"Underground areas were cleared, machinery installed and everyone was sworn to secrecy before being assigned to the project. It was a tremendous job, but it had to be accomplished. There was no alternative.

"Today, a few thousand feet under the crust of the surface, we have cities, towns and farms. Disease is unknown; the climate is mild; and as you've seen, we're quite comfortable."

Elu paused, and Tom waited eagerly for him to continue.

"We discovered you," he continued, "when one of our observers, located at the cone of a volcano not far from here, reported a strange object drifting in space, and dispatched three space ships to investigate."

"Then those three lights—"

"Yes," said Elu, "they were remote-controlled robot interceptors. They brought the XS-102 in." He smiled. "You'll have to pardon Amah for drugging you, but since you were the first visitor we've ever had from another world, he felt it was necessary to subject you to the H-ray to determine whether you were dangerous."

"I remember that he mentioned the H-ray," said Tom. "What is it?"

"It's a ray that examines your mental processes," explained Elu. "It not only gives us a good picture of the learning you've already acquired, but your ability to absorb, as well. In addition, while under its influence, your subconscious mind can be given intensive amounts of knowledge in a brief period of time. That's why you are able to speak and understand our language without having studied it."

"I wish they'd had the H-ray on Earth while I was going to school," Tom laughed.

Elu smiled. "From what I hear from our technicians," he said, "it may not be long before you have it. They were greatly impressed with the skill and workmanship that went into your XS-102. They said that even though it was primitive in many respects, it showed great promise."

Tom looked surprised. "Primitive?" he asked.

"I didn't mean it that way," said Elu hurriedly; "it's simply that we're so much older than you on Earth, it's natural we should be more advanced. Thousands of years ago we solved problems in scientific fields that won't become research projects in Earth's laboratories for many, many years."

"I see what you mean," said Tom.

ELU talked for hours, while Tom listened intently. He learned that prior to the Third Atomic War there had been two great nations on the Moon, both intensely nationalistic.

The governments of both realized a third war might prove disastrous, Elu explained; but inexorably the crisis between them grew. Finally the leading scientists of his country, fearful of the result of such a war, met secretly. They succeeded in interesting key manufacturers, industrial leaders and the heads of their own government in their scheme.

Then followed almost ten years of feverish activity, while vast underground shops, power plants and whole uninhabited cities were built.

"The attack, when it came," Elu said, "found us barely ready. In the first two hours of the assault, almost a million of our people died.

"But within ten minutes from the time the first atomic missile fell, a master plan which had been drawn

Illustrated by Wilson Thomson

As they obviously had no intention of harming him, he made no move to resist.

up, was in operation. The entire civilian population had been instructed to report immediately to the entrance of certain tunnels in their neighborhoods in case of emergency. They thought, of course, they were entering atomic-bomb shelters. Instead, they found long ramps leading to the interior. Transportation was provided for the old and the sick. Hundreds of thousands who had worked on the project, and who had been sworn to secrecy, acted as guides; and within three hours the evacuation was completed."

"But weren't you afraid they'd gas you out or seal you off underground when they found out what you'd done?" asked Tom.

Elu shook his head slowly. "Our underground cities would have been worthless," he said, "if there had been any such possibility."

"But how could you prevent it?" asked Tom. "Surely when their airborne troops—"

"The war lasted only three hours," said Elu. "Our generals, you see, had developed a terrifying weapon, one so awful that, for a time, they almost destroyed it. When the last of our people were safely underground, it was set off."

"And?" Tom asked.

"And within three minutes, all life of any kind on the surface of the moon ceased to exist," Elu finished. "It was an atomic weapon that completely disintegrated the atmosphere surrounding our world. It wiped out every vestige of life almost instantly. It was months before we dared make an exploratory trip to the surface."

"It's incredible," said Tom; "but then, everything that has happened is incredible."

"Tomorrow," said Elu, "you shall see for yourself. Amah has arranged a tour, and you are to meet the head of our state. Your arrival here has created great interest among all our people."

Tom wondered what his fate was to be. Would these people help him to return to Earth? Or worse, would they place him on exhibition as some sort of freak from the planet Earth, or perhaps, subject him to scientific study? He tossed about uneasily and finally fell into a deep sleep.

He awoke next morning to find Amah already there. Elu handed him a pair of the green shorts and a white shirt, explaining: "You'll feel less conspicuous and certainly a lot more comfortable."

After a substantial breakfast, which to Tom's surprise included eggs and fruit, the three men left the apartment. They dropped swiftly in the elevator to another level, and as the door opened, Tom stopped short.

He seemed to be in an enormous brightly lighted cavern that stretched in all directions as far as the eyes could see. High above, perhaps two thousand or more feet up, was the ceiling. A straight, smooth, metallic-appearing network of roads criss-crossed symmetrical cultivated green fields, in a few of which he could see men working.

Overhead hundreds of weird-looking tiny aircraft, without wings and without noise, hurried back and forth, following invisible traffic patterns.

Amah, noticing the expression on his face, spoke up. "I should have explained that this is an outpost station. We are approximately forty miles from the capital. We can take a local airway, or we can drive, whichever you prefer."

Tom, anxious to see the countryside, suggested they drive and they climbed into a small enclosed car, Elu at the controls. As they glided silently away, Amah explained that all motive power on the moon was atomic. "It

has the advantage," he explained, "of being inexhaustible and cheap."

When Tom commented on the bluish-white light, the same he had seen everywhere, he was informed that it too was a form of atomic energy, and was, in fact, a refinement of the light cast by the sun on Earth.

Every inch of land, he discovered, was under intensive cultivation, with all farming done according to formula. A precise amount of fertilizer, light and water was provided for the particular growing plant; and a similar situation existed in connection with the raising of livestock.

Tom shook his head slowly.

"Is there something wrong?" asked Amah.

"No," he replied, "it's all so remarkable I keep wondering if this isn't a dream. I feel I'm going to wake up and find myself floating in space on the XS-102."

"It's not a dream," said Amah seriously, "although I think I know how you feel."

"There's so much I don't understand," Tom said, "—the H-ray, your atmosphere, the light—everything."

"Of course you don't," Amah said. He thought for a minute. "Let me put it this way," he continued finally. "You mentioned the H-ray. To explain its operation and the electronic theory that was used in its design to the most brilliant scientist among your people, would be the same as trying to explain radar to one of your four-year-old children."

ELU interrupted the conversation by pointing straight ahead. Rising out of the flat plain, Tom saw in the distance a large city, many of the towers rising almost to the vaulted ceiling two thousand feet overhead. The buildings seemed to be interconnected with ramps and roadways, and as they drew nearer, he saw large numbers of vehicles, like the one in which he was riding, gliding along the ramps.

"Take the 98th level," Amah said to Elu. "I think you'll find less traffic."

Elu nodded, and pressed a button on the steering column. The car began to rise effortlessly, and a short time later they were rolling down a boulevard in the heart of the city.

The building before which they came to a stop was plain and functional in design, similar to modern structures Tom had seen on Earth. As they stepped from their car, it glided into a recess in the wall, and Elu burst out laughing at the amazed look on Tom's face.

"This way," said Amah, and motioned Tom through the doorway. They crossed a small lobby, entered another elevator, ascended rapidly and stepped out into a large room on top of the floor of the building. Tom judged it to be a laboratory of some sort. The sole occupant was a middle-aged man who looked up and hurried forward to greet them.

"Amah, I'm glad to see you," he said. Turning to Tom, he added, "And you, of course, are the visitor I've heard so much about."

"This is the Supervisor; he occupies the same position as your President," said Amah to Tom.

The Supervisor motioned them to chairs, and when they all were seated, gazed at Tom. "I've been most anxious to meet you," he said, "especially after studying the H-ray report. It was most revealing. We had no idea your planet had advanced so far."

"Thank you," said Tom. "I assure you that we on Earth had no idea there was any life at all on the Moon. As a matter of fact, our scientists question that intelligent life exists anywhere else in the universe."

The Supervisor chuckled. "That's very fortunate for us," he said, "for then they won't be inclined to believe you if you tell them about us on your return."

"You mean I may get back to Earth some day?" Tom asked.

"Of course," said the Supervisor. He looked at Tom narrowly. "You want to go back, don't you?"

"Certainly, only I—I—"

"We ask only one thing of you in return," the Supervisor interrupted, "and I assure you it will cause you no ill effects."

"I have no choice," Tom said, "but I'll agree to anything if there's any way I can get back."

"Good," said the Supervisor. "It's really quite simple. We have recently developed a new device, an outgrowth of the H-ray, with which you are already familiar. You will be placed in an unconscious state, and while asleep, this machine will record everything you have ever seen, or been taught.

"The image will be recorded photographically, and will give us a permanent record of that portion of Earth with which you have been familiar. When that has been completed, arrangements will be made to escort your XS-102 to a point approximately twenty thousand miles from Earth. We have already manufactured enough fuel of the type you use to get you safely back, and had it placed aboard.

"Our space ships will pull you out to the proper place and cast loose, returning here. Is that agreeable?"

Tom assured him that it was.

"When would you like to depart?"

With a picture of Amy's worried face in his mind, Tom replied: "As soon as possible."

"Very well," said the Supervisor. "Amah will make all the necessary arrangements, both for the ray-recording and for your departure."

As they turned to go, the Supervisor placed his hand gently on Tom's arm. "One more thing," he said.

Tom stopped.

"You might make it clear," said the Supervisor, "to your fellow-inhabitants of the Earth, that we on the moon are a happy and contented people—that is, in case anyone has the intelligence to believe that we exist, and that you are not suffering from hallucinations when you describe what you have seen here.

"Based on studies of our own history, I doubt that your scientists will have anything to offer us of value, that we do not already know, for at least ten thousand years. We are not anxious to have a flood of visitors.

"Within a comparatively short space of time, you will have discovered how to build space ships capable of traveling in outer space. Tell them not to plan expeditions to the moon. We have sufficient means to insure they will never land on the surface."

NOW the Supervisor's face grew serious. "It's not that we are inhospitable," he continued, "but the people on earth have yet to learn many things. Until they have acquired that knowledge, we prefer to be left alone." He nodded briefly, and the trio returned to the street.

On the return trip, Amah explained that the recording of his impressions would take about four days, and that he would awaken from the drugged sleep wholly refreshed. His take-off could be arranged any time after that.

Elu suggested they drive around the city to give Tom a chance to see it. They spent several hours cruising along the different levels, visiting huge department stores and laboratories and sightseeing. Everywhere he was impressed with the lack of noise and dirt, the alertness of the people, and the comfort that existed everywhere.

His appearance with Amah and Elu caused a certain stir, but little comment. The inhabitants apparently knew all about him and where he was from, for several times he heard the word *Earth,* as they passed.

When they finally returned to Elu's apartment, Tom was already beginning to feel excited at the prospect of his return to Earth. Arrangements were made to start the ray-recording that same day. After a light lunch, Elu and Tom made their way to the room where he had first been taken, Amah handed him a cup and he drained the contents.

The now familiar feeling swept over him; but this time, instead of trying to stand up, he calmly lay back and felt himself slip into unconsciousness. . . .

As he opened his eyes he thought at first he was alone. He stirred

slightly, and in an instant Elu was standing beside the couch.

"How do you feel?" he asked.

"Fine," Tom answered. "How long have I been out?"

Elu grinned. "Five days," he said. "It took longer than we thought. It was fascinating. I hope, some day, to be permitted to visit Earth." At Tom's questioning look, he explained; "I watched part of it being recorded."

Tom sat up. "Where's Amah?"

"Checking the XS-102. He wanted to be sure that everything was in order. He said he'd be right back."

In a short time Amah came back, and the two men accompanied Tom to the airlock where the XS-102's huge bulk was resting. Two smaller space ships of an unusual design were on either side.

"We are sending piloted craft with you," Amah explained, "to insure safe passage." He beckoned to two men standing to one side. "Arvas and Ulu will conduct you to a position in outer space where you can reach Earth easily. They will give you the proper heading and cut you adrift. As soon as they are clear, start your motors. At a distance of approximately three hundred miles from the earth's surface, reduce your speed to less than two thousand miles an hour, descend to between ten to fifteen miles above the surface, and you should be all right. We have taken the liberty of repairing your damaged controls, and you'll find they now work perfectly."

Tom thanked him. Elu helped him into his space-suit, and he climbed to the cockpit. His fuel and oxygen gauges registered full and the controls moved easily in his hands. Leaning out the window he waved to the two men standing beneath him.

"Good-by," he called.

They waved back. Then they both turned and left the chamber. Tom closed the hatch, and a moment later the metal door that lined the entrance began to move silently upward. The lights remained on, and Tom knew that behind the windows, set in the wall, his two friends were watching.

He felt, rather than saw, the first movement as the XS-102, held by the two space ships, rose a few feet from the floor and moved slowly toward the entrance and into the blackness of the long-extinct volcano. Then the nose tilted sharply, he felt the blood rush to his feet as Arvas and Ulu turned on their power, and in a few seconds the moon began to drop away rapidly.

HIS trip through outer space was relatively short. In less than three hours they had reached the appointed spot. He let the XS-102 slow down; the vibration ceased, and the two accompanying ships cast loose. Both turned slowly in front of his cockpit window, dipped in farewell, and with a sudden burst of power soared off into space. Directly ahead of him, like an enormous orange, lay the Earth.

For a long minute Tom sat quietly in the cabin staring straight ahead, his mind whirling with the events that had taken place. He had lost all track of time, but estimated he had been away from the earth for more than two weeks.

Almost mechanically he leaned forward and pressed the rocket motor starter-switch. There was a roar, and he felt the XS-102 surge forward. This time it responded to the controls.

His first indication that he was once again passing into the earth's atmosphere came when he noticed the hull temperature gauge rising dangerously from the friction of the air. Hastily, he cut his rear engines, and threw on the ones in the nose.

They responded immediately, and as his air-speed dropped, he felt a thrill of pride as he realized the rocket ship was performing as the designers had predicted. Earth had something on the ball, after all, he thought to himself.

He threw the XS-102 into a near stall, plotted his course, and headed for the tiny dot in New Mexico representing the Research experimental field from which he had taken off. . . .

Sergeant Clemens, who had put in for a transfer the day following the loss of the XS-102, was griped. Even though the General was sympathetic and had promised to do what he could to help matters along, the Sergeant had been in the Army long enough to realize it might be another month before anything came through.

What's more, he was bored. He decided to while away a few hours with his friend Sergeant Mullins. As he climbed the long steel steps to the control tower, he wondered for the hundredth time what had ever possessed Mullins to volunteer for the midnight-to-eight trick on a permanent deal. He found Sergeant Mullins, his feet on a desk, engrossed in a comic book. Sergeant Clemens slumped wearily into a folding chair.

"Hi," said Sergeant Mullins.

"Hi," replied Sergeant Clemens.

"Hear anything yet?"

"Nope."

"Too bad," said Sergeant Mullins. Then, trying to sound cheerful: "Maybe there'll be something in tomorrow."

"Yeah, maybe," said Sergeant Clemens.

"You want to read this?" said Sergeant Mullins, indicating the comic book.

"Naw, I guess I'm not in the mood," said Sergeant Clemens, "They're just for kids, anyway."

"They help pass the time," said Sergeant Mullins defensively. "Besides, this is a good one. This guy, 'Big-muscles,' makes a trip to Venus, and the joint is inhabited by a bunch of beautiful babes—"

He was interrupted by Sergeant Clemens, who merely said, "Nuts!"

Sergeant Mullins fell into a hurt silence.

It was broken by a crackle in the loud-speaker at his side as a carrier wave was turned on. There was a faint mumbling, and then, clearly, they heard a voice:

"This is Army XS-102 calling Research Tower. Army XS-102 calling Research Tower. Come in, please."

Sergeant Mullins, a look of horror on his face, sat frozen, staring at Sergeant Clemens. The call was repeated.

"Can you hear me, Research Tower? This is Army XS-102."

"Some guy has a lousy sense of humor," Sergeant Mullins finally managed to croak. "I'll report—"

"It can't be—but it sounds like—" breathed Clemens softly. He leaped from his chair and grabbed the mike.

"This is Research Tower, XS-102," he shouted. *"Go ahead."*

The loud-speaker crackled. *"This is XS-102 calling Research Tower. Can you hear me?"*

"Yes, yes," shouted Sergeant Clemens. *"This is Research Tower. Come in, XS-102."* And then, casting routine to the winds, he continued: *"For Pete's sake, Major Clark, if that's you, this is Sergeant Clemens. Come in."*

"Good to hear your voice, Sergeant," said the loud-speaker. *"Have them clear the rocket area, I'm going to try to come in for a landing. I'm now 225 miles northeast of the field, altitude seventy thousand feet. Hope this thing behaves."*

"Roger," shouted the Sergeant.

THE GENERAL and his wife looked at each other, and he shrugged his shoulders helplessly. Turning to Amy, he said quietly: "My dear, please believe me. We know how you feel, and you've been very brave. You know we've done everything humanly possible. Tom, God rest his soul, wouldn't want you to grieve, and it's probably best that he never knew you were going to have a child. I want you to know—"

He was interrupted by the ringing of the phone. "Yes?" he said brusquely. "Who is this? . . . Yes—yes! *What—where—when?* . . . Are you sure—yes—yes—there's no doubt, then, it's the XS-102? I'll be right there." He slammed the receiver down.

A frightened Amy sat bolt upright, looking at him. "They've found the wreckage?" she asked.

"Wreckage, hell! Grab your coat," shouted the General. "Tom's just landed safely."

All Star Lucky

ANDREW—"LUCKY"—YOUNG, JR., touched the discharge papers in the pocket of his neat gray suit and sighed. He had been lucky again: The war was nearly over; he was out of the Navy; his knee was whole again—and he had an invitation in his pocket to join the All Star football squad at Midburgh, in Midstate, where they were getting ready to meet the champion Mastodons of the National Pro Association in the great August classic.

It had been a long war. This was 1945, and he had not seen Alice Hale since 1943. Lucky—whose nickname in prewar years had been "Babe"—had been a very busy boy during the interim. He had been in the Pacific, he had been in China, he had been many places with the fighting Navy. But he was still in one piece, and the scars of his chest wound did not even itch any more.

The U. S. forces were still working over the Nips, but the end was in sight. There was some kind of fearful bomb being readied for use—it was a top-drawer secret, but wind of it was out. They didn't need Lucky Young any longer. They had given him some medals and the discharge and turned him loose. He was, he thought again, a very lucky guy.

The plane lost altitude, coming into the airport at Midburgh. He was not such a kid, at that, thought Lucky, swallowing hard as his ears closed. He was twenty-four. He was going to play in the All Star game mainly because he had never signed that professional contract with the Mastodons. He was twenty-four and he needed a job.

He was, he knew, fitted for nothing but athletics. He held a B. A. from Midstate College, but the war had claimed him ere he could even think of a profession other than football or baseball. He scowled, his pleasant square face contracting, his gray eyes narrowing. Football or baseball—take it or leave it. And if he was not still an athlete, he was a bum.

He saw the familiar scene slide into view through the port. The plane taxied in a circle and his heart leaped. This was homecoming; this meant Mary, his mother—Andy, Sr., his father—Harry, the brother who had grown up. He dared not expect anyone else. . . .

He waited in the aisle, striving for control. He had grown into a man while away, but it did not seem so to him now. His throat held a lump.

He clattered down the steps; he raced for the barrier, seeing nothing, no one, except his graying, beautiful mother.

It was like a dream—Harry tall and slim and confident, still in his Air Corps uniform; Andy, Sr., also graying, but tanned and lean and fit. Lucky hugged them and let himself yield to the emotion he had suppressed for so many hard months.

Then someone was touching him and he came out of it, again aware of his surroundings, his eyes shining. He said joyfully: "Alice—Alice! You did come to meet me!"

The slender girl with auburn hair was as lovely as a cool flower. She said, "Did you think I'd marry a soldier?" She was smiling happily.

He did not hug her close, but held her loosely, gazing into her eyes. They had not changed. They were steady as ever, looking back at him. He sighed and said, "I can't kiss you here. Not now."

She said, "Not the first one. I know, Lucky, I know!"

Emotion expended, they bustled now, talking too rapidly and too loudly, getting to the old jalopy which would have to do until a new car would become available. They explained all this to Lucky, and about the rationing and how tough the war had been on civilians, laughing to show they did not mean it. Others might say it and mean it, but not his family, who had provided two sons—and received them back.

Alice said, "You're going to play in the All Star game? There have been two men inquiring at the school for you. Potsy Carewe, of the football Mastodons. And a Gene Meisel, who works for the baseball Birds."

"Football or baseball," said Lucky Young. "Which shall it be?"

She said, "Both, angel, both," and laughed. She was less serious than before the war, he thought. There was an audacity about her now which quickened his breathing, a sparkle which made her vivacious and beautiful. His Alice had grown up.

He said, "How's the old school? How's John Fort?"

A cloud passed over her, almost without his noticing. "Midstate College had the best V-12 record in the section. School's good and Father is fine. John's going to help coach the All Stars; then he goes to the Wolverines."

Lucky said, "You mean I've got to play another game under Fort?"

"*And* Pop Gorman, of Kings," she laughed. "He goes to the pro Chieftains. But Hy Pedley is head coach of the All Stars. . . . You shook hands with John, remember? You shouldn't hold old grudges, darling."

Lucky said, "You've been dating him again."

"He has always been my friend," she said in a low voice. She would never say that she was sorry for Fort. There was something in her which fought for Midstate's dour coach who had been Lucky's enemy from the start.

Lucky said heavily, "Sure, I know. Your pal!"

THEY were squeezed into the back of the old car, going out to the Young house in the modest suburb of the capital of Midstate. They drove past farms and came into the factory district, passed through it and came to the grounds of the ancient and honorable institution known as Kings College. They ran alongside University Field, the Kings practise gridiron. A football plunked from a foot and soared.

Lucky cried, "Hey! They're working out!"

"They've been at it for a few days," said Andy, Sr.

Lucky said, "Hey! Do you all mind? Would it be too awful—" His hand was on the door-latch. "I'll come home in an hour. You wouldn't be sore if I just sort of checked in?"

His mother said, "You won't be happy if you don't. You'll be restless as a hen on a hot griddle. . . . Go ahead, son."

He said, "Alice, you'll wait at the house? I'll make it snappy."

"I have to catch a train," said the girl. "Father's expecting me. I'll see you soon, Lucky. Good-by, now."

He stood, already out of the car, staring at her. He said, "You've got to go?"

"Father's short of help. The war, remember? Make it good, Lucky. I

A Babe Young story

by JOEL REEVE

Illustrated by John McDermott

know your pro contract depends on this." She smiled, nodding. There was nothing of reproach in her countenance. The car drew away. He stood looking after it. The kiss—he had never got the kiss, not even one before them all.

IN a week, Lucky Young had the kinks out. His placement kicks were booming from the thirty-five-yard line and almost splitting the uprights; he was running and passing and cutting almost as of yore—almost.

The All Stars were veterans; they were youngsters; they were terrific. They were from Eastern and Midwest and Southern and Texas and Utah and Vale in New England. They were big and strong and confident of beating the rather attenuated—but smart and tough—New York Mastodons.

The coaching staff was another matter. Pedley of Tech was a great man, fit to lead this galaxy of young stars. Pop Gorman of Kings was foxy, but a rascal. John Fort was—John Fort.

There were other Midstate College men besides Lucky on the squad. There was his oldest pal, Legs Carter; there was big Swede Sorgerson, the center; there was John Hare, grown heavier but not so plump and Jay Jackson, the stocky guard. They had a get-together—and John Fort walked in on them in the Kings clubhouse after a hard practise and there was silence.

Fort was stony-faced as ever. His darkness was somber, his big frame straight and unbowed. He said, "I see you got with the boys, Young." As always there was frost in his speech when he addressed Lucky.

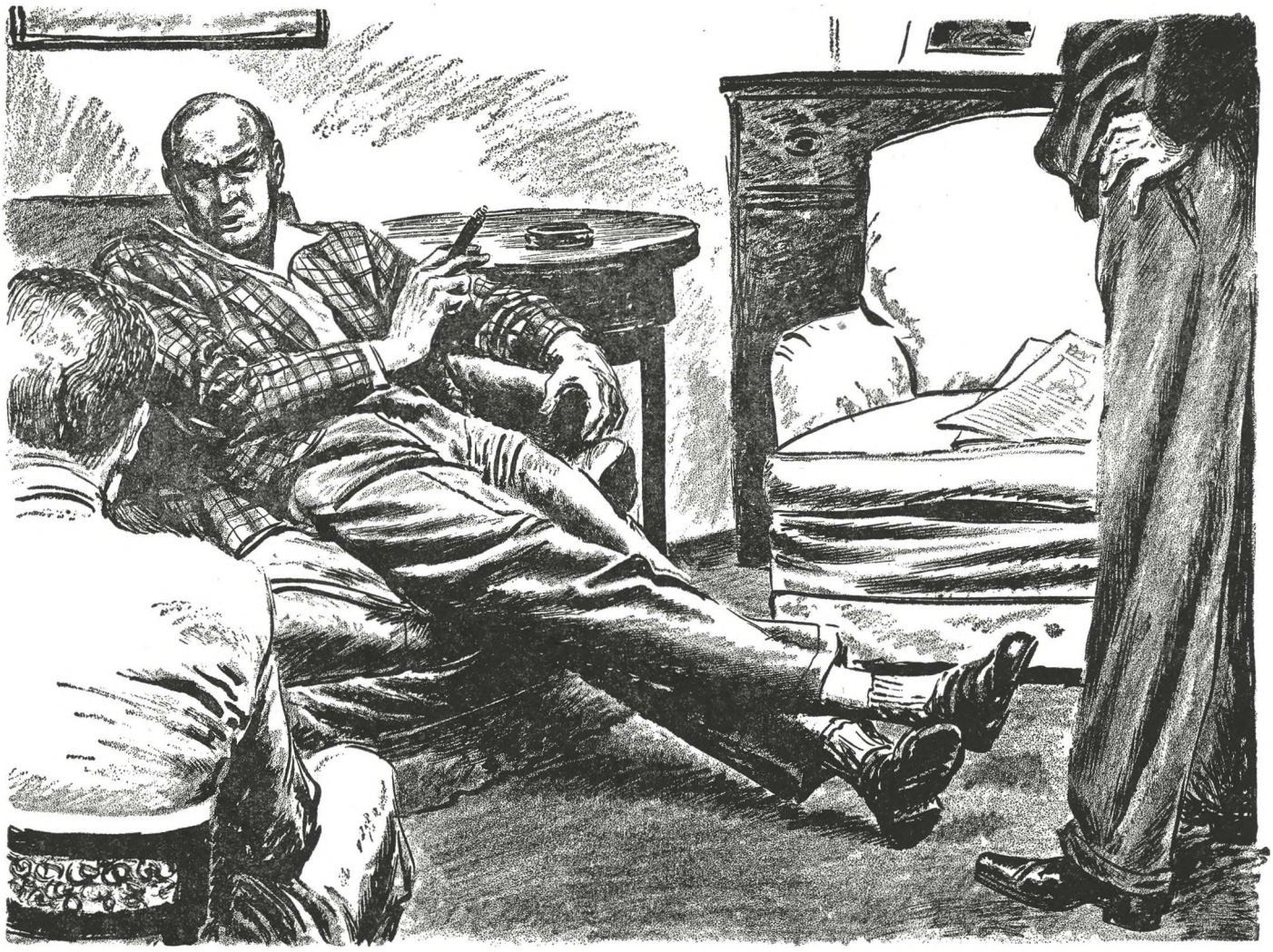
"Yeah. It's good to see them again." The enmity had never died. It was strong as ever, leaping up when the gray eyes met the black ones.

"I'm trying to get you fellows in as starters," said Fort. "But Ace Bell of Mines is certain. And Gorman is pushing for the Ober twins. Tillou of Eastern has it on Jackson at guard —but I'm trying."

The door opened and Tipper Gregg hustled in. Tipper had been the best end Midstate ever boasted.

Fort said triumphantly, "But Gregg will start, for sure." He threw back his head in characteristic fashion and looked at them down his nose.

Lucky said, "You wouldn't cross us, would you, Coach?"



Pedley said, "Pop seems to think Fort is betting against us. He was seen with a questionable character."

Tipper said maliciously, "Hey, you guys comin' to have a beer?"

"Beer?" Fort almost burst with indignation. "Beer? Now? With the game only a week away?"

Gregg said innocently, "I once drank beer—in Paris. We had come in with the first bunch and we were thirsty. There was a dead German and we stepped over him and the Frog who had stabbed him gave us beer."

Lucky said, "Pedley advised me to knock over a few brews. Said I needed a little heft."

They all stared at John Fort. He swallowed hard, but his haughty demeanor never altered. He said harshly, "The rest of you scrimmage with the second team tomorrow. You too, Young." He wheeled and strode from the room.

"In the big war, he was a physical-training Major," said Gregg. "A real big hot rock. He even got to England. It did not improve him."

They went down to the hotel bar for beer. They lounged in the grill, cutting up old touches, replaying old games, refighting old battles. They had been part of a gallant crew of perennial underdogs at Midstate, and each was a real footballer.

Tipper Gregg said, "I guess we'll all go pro. . . . What about baseball, Lucky?"

"This game may tell the story," grinned Lucky. "Maybe I stink. Then again, can I hit curve-ball pitchin'? Who remembers a prewar All America?"

"The sports reporters do," said Legs Carter. "They're giving us all more build-up than we deserve."

"It'll all come out in the wash of the All Star game," shrugged Lucky. "Face it, kids. One game, after all this time, and you win or lose."

"I'm not interested," said Legs. "Tipper was wrong. I'm too light—and my leg is still bad."

John Fort had let him play when he should have stayed on the bench; they all knew that.

They drained their beers.

John Fort walked into the hotel lobby. They could see him from the grill. He went to the desk phones and called upstairs. They watched him, none of them loving him; he had been their coach, but they had no cause to love him. . . .

Lucky said, "The Mastodons know how. But they got old men in the line—Pop Day at center, for instance. He's forty if he's a day. We might get a chance to star."

Legs said softly, "Imagine being out there at forty! It must be tough."

Lucky did not answer. The problem was too much with him. He had not come to a conclusion, he could not. He was waiting to see what would happen and the waiting was not good. Tomorrow would be his first scrimmage since the autumn of 1941, and he had been in a fighting war, without football service games to get experience and stay sharp.

He stared through the door of the grill. An elevator door clanged and John Fort was moving toward it. A tall slim girl with lovely legs came out and put her hand on Fort's arm. Lucky sucked in his breath.

It was Alice Hale, all right; she walked across the lobby and out into the street, her hand still on Fort's arm. Lucky had not even known she would be in town. He mumbled, "Let's have another round."

THEY had lined up for scrimmage. Pedley had a high wooden tower on wheels from which he watched like an eagle over the field. Pop Gorman walked up and down. On the other

side of the field John Fort stood like a statue.

The first team was solid, with one of Kings College's Ober twins—it was Pike—at quarter, Ace Bell at half, the other Ober at running back. Owen Clancy was at full—a giant from Washington. The line was studded with stars from the colleges.

The second team was good enough. Jay was on it, and John Hare of Midstate and Legs was, surprisingly, elected quarterback by Pedley. Lucky was at left half, his old spot. He waited for the kick-off and he was trembling. It had been a long, long time. . . .

Reb Mule, the Southern tackle, kicked off, a beauty, down to the goal. Legs could have had it, but Lucky always covered the kicks for the frail Carter. He came around behind and stabbed it from the air in full stride. He raced up, following Legs, to the fifteen. They were coming at him on the eighteen.

He could see the big ends, Gregg and Wade Ide of Vale, eager to clinch their starting berths, closing fast. Legs took Gregg, who knew Lucky too well.

John Hare slid up and banged Ide with a full block he had learned with the Third Air Force service team. Lucky ran over the twenty. He got a break as the guards held the funnel, and slammed past Con Tillou of Eastern with a stabbing straight arm.

He was at the thirty and Pedley was staring down from the tower. He criss-crossed away from a tackler and spun to the sideline. Layman of N.D. picked him up and began shouldering off overanxious tacklers. Lucky watched and called softly to the big rangy, somewhat light, end, "Get Ober and I'll light a shuck out o' here."

It was Mike Ober—the twins were so alike that Lucky could tell them apart only by their style. Mike had a low-slung tackling technique; Lucky had seen it in the old days of the Midstate-Kings rivalry. Mike came in with power. Layman banged him and Lucky slung away.

He was not the fastest man on the field, but his long legs ate up yardage and his stride was deceptive. Pike Ober dived and Lucky shook him a hip and got away. Tipper Gregg, recovering and chasing, was on the angle. Lucky evaded Pugh, the Texas tackle. Gregg slid in and launched his greyhound form. Lucky went down. He took a peek and saw the ten-yard marker off to his right. He had come a good way.

He got up and it was all back, just as if he had never been away. The second team was rallying; Legs was already snapping a signal. It was football, the autumn game, on this hot August evening, and Lucky was back in it, where he belonged.

On the sideline, Pedley's bald head swung, his megaphone barked, "Fort!"

The ex-Midstate Coach had to cross the field. Pedley called down to him: "I thought you said Young had a bad knee. I thought he was rusty."

Fort said stiffly, "He seems to have recovered. He was wounded too, you know."

"Shoot some more of these sons!" roared the great head coach. "Get that boy on the first team tomorrow!"

On the seven-yard line, third down, Legs was saying, "Okay, the old spinner, pal."

The line gave him a break. He hit into a hole and there were the Ober twins, tough and smart and as mean as snakes. He bashed them with everything he had. He split them and went over for a score.

He came up from under the heap, laughing and gibing, "Which is the first team here? What's the matter with this bunch of schoolboys?"

Tipper laughed. Reb Mule said, "Guess we need some of y'all to he'p us cream the Mastodons, Lucky. That's powe'ful fine runnin', son!"

There was good feeling throughout. Pedley had welded them together with his sharp but humorous tongue. Gorman and Fort were suspect to them, but each of the lesser coaches knew the game. The squad lined up, and Lucky did not miss the conversion.

The practise stopped, for criticism, then went on. Lucky went on the defensive, backing up the line. He saw immediately that Ace Bell was his equal as a runner. He wore himself to a nubbin stopping the big man from the Mines School. The Obers were, as ever, rough and tough and plenty good. Owen Clancy of Northern was a fine fullback. They rushed the ball downfield with straight football and scored through Sorgerson's center job, with Lucky hanging onto Clancy over the goal line.

It was hard, fine work. But Pedley stopped them early. The old tanned, bald-headed man was happy. The All Stars had a football club to match the mighty Mastodons; maybe not to beat them, but to equal them.

MARY YOUNG said, "Darling, Alice called last night. You got in so late, no one told you."

Wearily, Lucky dropped into his old comfortable chair. He said, "I saw her. With John Fort."

"She called you, dear," his mother said gently.

"She had a date with that jerk. He must have known she was coming. I didn't."

"Have you called her? Or written her?"

Lucky said, "I've been so busy, Ma, with the team—" He did not finish. He shook his head. "Fort has some hold on her. I feel it."

"She's a fine girl," said his mother. "She loves you, son."

"I don't know—" he said. He suddenly did not want to talk about it. Instead, he said: "Pedley promoted me. I've got to study the formations. Pedley's got plays like crazy for this game. He knows a pick-up squad can't master them all, so he's trying them out to see what combination can do what. He's a flat genius. Fort's a slob compared to him. So is Gorman, that old crook."

Mary said, "Gorman is a crook. We know that. I'm a little worried about the set-up, son." Mary knew more football than many a high-school coach. The Youngs were a football and baseball family.

"It'll be all right," said Lucky. We've got a great team. It'll be fine, don't you worry." He had trouble keeping his mind on the plays. The thought of Alice in town, going out with Fort, without his even knowing she was coming, was getting him down. Resolutely he dug into the formations Pedley had outlined on paper.

A FEW minutes later the telephone rang. Pedley's voice came through: "Lucky? I'd like for you to come down to the hotel. Gorman and I have something we want to discuss with you—alone."

Lucky said thoughtfully, "Gorman? I don't know, Coach. Gorman and I are as far apart as the poles. Is it football?"

"It's damned important," said Pedley.

Lucky said, "I'll be down." He wiped the sweat from his face. It was ridiculous weather for football, but none of the players thought about that, so heavy was the excitement of the All Star contest. He borrowed the jalopy and drove to the hotel.

He had parked and was entering the lobby when he saw John Fort. The cold-faced man was walking away from the hotel, talking to a man who leaned close to him, gesturing. Lucky stopped, staring. He knew that dapper figure, knew the ingratiating gestures of Natty Boodle. Fort's companion was a confidence-man, gambler and small-time racketeer. He was a sure-thing man, and he had been connected with sports scandals in the past, before the war. It seemed impossible that the straight-laced Fort should be consorting with such a low character as Natty Boodle.

Lucky went out to the elevators, with his head swimming. The call from Pedley—and Gorman, Fort's old enemy—and then this sight of Fort with a crook was a coincidence in which he could not quite believe.

In Pedley's suite it was Gorman who paced the floor, his prognathous jaw set, his eyes rolling in righteousness. Pedley, lounging, had eyes like gimlets—an elderly man and as smart as a whip, Lucky knew.

Gorman roared, "Young, you were badly treated by Fort for years; you know the man. We have reason to believe—"

Pedley said smoothly, "Take it easy now, Pop. We don't know anything, for sure. As this is Lucky's home town, I thought we might gain some real information from him."

"Fort rode this boy during his entire college career," stormed Gorman. "He's that kind—he plays favorites. He's a rat at heart. I never expected to see him mixed up in anything like this, but—"

Pedley said, "Pop seems to think Fort is betting against us. There was a sum bet on the Mastodons. . . . Fort has been seen with a questionable character named Boodle."

Pop Gorman's prominent china-blue eyes were upon Lucky. His jaw stuck out like the prow of a ship.

The youth said slowly, "I wouldn't know anything about it. I've been away four years, almost."

"But Fort treated you like a dog," said Gorman. "You could find out."

"I always did find out things, didn't I, Pop?" Lucky laughed shortly. "Natty Boodle, now—wasn't he an acquaintance of yours?"

"Bah! Never really knew the man!" said Gorman. "Threw him out of my office once. He's a crook."

"Yeah, he sure is," said Lucky. "We had trouble with him, remember?"

"Fort has been behind your troubles."

Lucky said, "Pop, I once said I wouldn't play for you under any conditions. Now I find I must. But I'm really playing under Mr. Pedley. . . . I don't want any part of this conference. I don't believe Fort is a crook. I think he may be wrong about a lot of things, but he wouldn't double-cross a team he was coaching: That's all I have to say."

Gorman yelled, "He tried to keep you off the starting team."

"That's his business," said Lucky stubbornly. "I was hurt during my last year at Midstate—and you know it. Maybe Fort thought I was still unfit."

Pedley's voice was low, but it cut across the room. "Then you refuse to help us dig into this thing?"

"I most certainly refuse," said Lucky flatly. "It's none of my business."

"But if Fort is undermining us in some way, if he is wagering on the pros?" Pedley persisted.

"Hire detectives," suggested Lucky.

Gorman said, "We can't do that and admit we are suspicious."

Pedley said, "Well, Lucky, just forget it."

"That's what I mean to do," said Lucky. "Look, I've got a contract pending with the Mastodons—you both know that. This game means more to me than any I ever played in. If I thought Fort was trying anything, I'd be at his throat."

It was almost eleven when Fort appeared, hesitated, then went in.

Pedley said, "Okay, Lucky. You're quite a character, aren't you?" His brown eyes were amused. "You stick by your beliefs."

Lucky said "I'm just another football-player on a hell of a good big squad. I've got troubles of my own. Ace Bell is younger than I am and just as good, maybe better. I need a lot of work, a lot of practise, a lot of sleep."

Gorman said harshly, "Yes, and either Ober twin is your master out there too, Young. If I had my way—"

Pedley said, "But I'm head coach of this outfit. Go on home and study those plays, Lucky. I'll bet we took you away from them."

Lucky said, "Yeah—you guessed it. They're good plays, Mr. Pedley. I think the single wing set-up will go better than the T, when the Obers and Carter and I are in there. We all used it more often."

Pedley said, "I hear you, son. Go ahead, I'll handle this thing some other way. Gorman said you were a formidable catalyst, that people did things for you, that you had a way of learning things and landing on top. So we had you down— Just forget it."

Lucky looked at Gorman. He said, "Maybe I'm wrong about you, at that. Thanks for the plug."

"Aw, go to—sleep!" said Gorman. "You've been a thorn in my side for years and now the Mastodons get you. And me—I'll be goin' with the Chieftains!" . . .

Pedley decided on his first-string backfield, with Pike Ober at quarter, Ace Bell at running-back, Mike Ober at blocking-back and Owen Clancy at fullback.

Lucky grinned at the news. Legs Carter kept saying, "But Ace can't kick like you. And he's not as smart."

"He can run like blazes," said Lucky. "He didn't make All America because he was from the little School of Mines. He's great."

Legs said, "You'll be in there. Then watch us move." The first reserves comprised Legs, John Hare, Lucky and their old nemesis from Kings College—Willy Devon, a giant fullback. "We'll do the scoring."

"We'll be all right," said Lucky. It had been a hard final scrimmage. He was weary, but he had work to do. He went home and changed and got out the jalopy and cruised.

He went down around Dey and Strickland Streets, on the Neck. He sat outside a bar for awhile. Then he went over past the gym which was owned by Pat Hafey, and parked across from a flashy night-club. It was almost eleven when John Fort appeared. There was no mistaking the erect, stalwart figure, the jerky, commanding stride.

The team was to leave for New York the next day. Fort must have come here directly from the coaches' last conference. The tall, hard-faced man hesitated a second, then went into the night-club where a neon sign blinked the letters "The Scarlet Scarab." It was like a cheap mystery thriller at the neighborhood moving-picture house.

LUCKY sat still, wrinkling his brow. This was the third night he had perceived Fort going into this particular club. The question in Lucky's mind persisted: should he go in and learn whom Fort was meeting?

He had told Pedley he would stay out of it. His instant decision had stemmed from two things: his dislike of intrigue, and the fact that Alice Hale was dating Fort and evidently thought highly of the coach.

He had not communicated with Alice. She had called him twice, but each occasion had found him elsewhere. He had mailed her two tickets to a lower box on the fifty-yard line, with a brief note saying that he was well, the team was fine and he would see her—sometime. There had been no reply at all, not even a thank-you note. . . .

Yet he could not move against his rival. Fort was certainly consorting with low company. But it was not Lucky's business, he assured himself time and again. What could Fort do?

Potsy Carewe would stand for no nonsense from the Mastodon side. None of the men on the collegiate side were suspect. Fort could do nothing except possibly bet on the other team—which was a matter between Fort, his conscience and the All Star Game Committee. Gorman and Pedley could overrule him on any subversive suggestion he might make during the game. To Lucky the whole thing seemed faintly silly.

Yet perhaps Fort and certain evil spirits like Natty Boodle had figured out something which had not occurred to Lucky. What then? He sat in the old car and debated long and earnestly with himself.

IN the end it was his natural curiosity that sent him from the car and across the street. There was an alley next to the night-club and in the alley was an ash-can. Lucky picked it up and set it top-down beneath a high, narrow window which was opened for ventilation. Carefully he stepped up on the galvanized can.

He could see into the club. He could see the tables, the crowded dance-hall. He stood a moment, his eyes growing accustomed to the dimness within.

In that mob, John Fort stood out like a bandaged pinky finger. The window commanded a perfect view of his table. There was no sign of Natty Boodle.

But a flashy girl sat across from John Fort. The two were leaning forward, talking earnestly. Lucky recognized the stiff, jerky gestures which Fort used when arguing.

The girl was dark. She had an aquiline nose and hard features, but she was strikingly good-looking. She was tall, Lucky judged, and her slim legs were shapely. She looked somehow familiar, but he was sure he had never seen her before.

He got down from the ash-can quickly, hating his rôle of spy. He tiptoed to the car. He got in and drove home and went to bed. He lay there, thinking of Alice Hale.

It was very bad. There was nothing he could think to do. Alice had evidently got through with Lucky. She was twenty-one now, and her own mistress. Lucky would cut out his tongue before he would run to her with the story that he had seen Fort in a bar with another girl . . . and what of it, he added.

It was very bad. He did not sleep well that night. But he went off, finally, determined to mind his own business, as Andy, Sr., had taught him to do. . . .

At the hotel in New York there was a note to call Bert Meisel. Lucky got the number. A pleasant voice said, "Sorry to see you in the game tomorrow, Lucky, but I know you've got to play. This is Meisel of the Birds. I wanted to have a talk with you."

Lucky said, "I'm open to talk."

Meisel said, "You hit for .550 your last year in college. You think you could hit like that with big-league pitching?"

"No," said Lucky. "Not even Double-B pitching."

Meisel chuckled. "Then I can talk to you—in round numbers. Will you promise not to sign with anyone else until I do?"

Lucky said, "You don't want to talk until after the game, do you, Mr. Meisel?"

"Well, I wouldn't want to interfere—"

Lucky said dryly, "That's okay. . . . But you're not really unhappy that I'm going to play football—in this game. I can't promise you anything. I'm sorry."

Meisel said, "Don't get me wrong, Young!"

"It's business," agreed Lucky. "I'll see you after the game."

He had three other calls from baseball clubs. He told them all the same thing. He had been thinking hard about this when he was not thinking about Alice Hale and John Fort and football. He had made up his mind, without advice from anyone. He was on his own now—too much on his own since Alice's dereliction, he added sorrowfully. He did not want to burden his father—and he was old enough to make his own decisions. He was not without guile. . . .

The ball park seemed a tremendous place when empty. It would hold a lot of people, but these boys had played to crowds before. They went confidently through simple formations, testing the draughts of the park, the turf, the light condition. They would play at night, of course, to avoid the sun. The Southern boys had a slight advantage there, being accustomed to night play.

Strangely, John Fort was not present at the practice. Back at the hotel a rumor went around—Fort was not even in New York. No one had seen him leave Midburgh.

Pop Gorman looked grim, but satisfied. Fort's job with the Wolverines was not clinched, but it was understood. The Wolverines paid a lot more money than the Chieftains and Gorman had been considered for the job before Fort had entered the lists. The Obers, a swashbuckling pair, and Devon and the other Kings College grads talked confidently of Gorman's going up with them to the Wolverines, where it seemed they all wanted to play.

Lucky Young and the Midstate men kept to themselves, wondering. Lucky was extremely puzzled by now. He started up to Pedley's room twice, thinking that he should tell what he knew. Each time he stopped, sticking to his determination to mind his own business. He wished his father were here now, but the family had decided they could not afford to make the trip. Andy, Sr., was not doing too well in the inflationary days which came with war, and money was tight in the little household. Lucky had spent the money he'd saved while in service to lift a mortgage on the home.

Somehow he got through to game time. Somehow he got into the spangled uniform and onto the brilliantly lighted field with the others in time for the panoply of the great occasion.

It was a banner turn-out for the big charity game. The impressive pre-game ceremonies were long, but endurable. He found himself stepping out under the blazing spotlight, turning his blond head a little to get the glare out of his eyes, hearing his name, rank in the service and college shouted through the loud-speaker system. He bowed at the applause, which was not thunderous by the time they got through the alphabet to the Ys, and retreated to the bench.

Fort had not appeared. Pedley came from the runway tucking a yellow telegraph-blank into his pocket. Gorman was striding up and down, bustling, making his bull-throated voice heard in the stands as he exhorted, gave orders and generally drew attention to himself. Lucky had always hated the sly coach from Kings College—now he was ashamed of him, as well.

He could feel no pleasure at the absence of John Fort. The old Midstate mentor had been his enemy, but he was accustomed to having Fort in back of the team, he found. Fort had always been a good man in the clutches—decisive, cool; Lucky actually missed the cold, hard coach.

THEN the Mastodons were afield and Lucky blinked at their size, their deft expertness in ball handling, their assured manner, their laughing glances at the All Star bench. They wore special white jerseys which added to the impression of tremendous size and power. Kid Arden, Hy Stelle, Dick Farese, Don Marble, the aged but great Pop Day—they were all there. The line was a collection of giants, from Tot Ames to Mike Bonanzi on the tackles; the ends were bigger than most college tackles—Pidge Goring and Fiddle Cohn, pass snatchers and deadly tacklers. These were the Mastodons, these were Potsy Carewe's wreckers, these were the men he might play with—if he was exceedingly good that night.

Pedley sent his first string out. Sorgerson of Midstate was at center and good old Tipper Gregg on the left end. Kings had the most men in there, which was strange, because Midstate had beaten Kings before the war. But it was no time to think of the past rivalries. The band stopped playing, the captains raised their hands, Reb Mule kicked off for the All Stars, and the game was on.

Dick Farese caught the kick-off and started back. The Mastodons blocked viciously, almost carelessly. Farese came up to the twenty-five. The Mastodons went into the formidable T-formation and began ripping at the collegiate line.

LUCKY sat very still on the bench, watching closely every move on the field. Pedley did not stir; Gorman walked up and down, gritting his teeth. Gorman wanted to be seen by all. . . .

There was a Mastodon line play and Hy Stelle came out of it, running with the ball, angling for the sideline. There was a man ahead of him, coolly shoving collegiates out of his path. Ace Bell broke through and ran Stelle out of bounds on the All Star twenty-five-yard line.

Pedley said, "Young—go in there for Mike Ober."

Gorman said, "Mike's a blocker! You mean for Pike Ober."

Pedley said, "I mean for *Mike.*" The thin mouth flattened.

Lucky went on the field. Mike Ober stared hard, then shrugged and walked off. Lucky took his place on the left wing. Ace Bell, a red-headed Westerner with the body of a steelworker and the legs of a ballet-dancer, looked curiously at him and then nodded.

Again the Mastodons worked their little faker. It was a very nice play, and Stelle came out of the melee like the great runner he was, at top speed. He shot past the scrimmage line.

Bell came in. From the other side, Lucky threw himself full length. The two hit Stelle after he had gained one yard, and knocked him back four. Still on the seat of his pants, Stelle stared at their numbers, then said, "Hey, I thought you muggs were runnin' backs."

Ace winked at Lucky. They resumed their positions. The next play was from the same formation, but Lucky backed up like a trick bicyclist, pedaling for the flat. Stelle was feathering the ball to Fiddle Cohn.

Lucky had spotted it. He went into the air. His hand tipped the ball. It came down and he tucked it under his arm. Ace Bell rapped Cohn at the knees and folded him double. Lucky ran a bit.

He seemed to be ambling without direction. But Pike Ober had come from the safety position and was blocking. Lucky used Ober, crossed the field. He picked up Tipper and Reb Mule. These two treated learned and tough pros as though they were college frosh. Lucky went past midfield.

Don Marble, the fleet quarterback, was angling for him. Lucky turned on some steam. He had lost his early speed somewhat during the years, but he could still move fast for a man shading two hundred pounds. He saw that Marble was faster and he let the Mastodon safety come in.

Then he was stabbing a straight arm and criss-crossing to the sideline. The pros were hurling themselves at a hastily formed collegiate blocking brigade. Lucky kept running. Marble, sprawling, wheeled and came back, doggedly, still trying to head him off.

The white lines evaporated underfoot. The crowd was yelling like a Comanche uprising. Lucky faked, then ran straight at Marble. The sticky-armed quarterback hugged him. They went two, three, five yards like that. Then they were over the goal line and Marble was saying, "You big stiff, I hope we do get you! I'll run you ragged for this!"

Lucky said, "I was blocked in, pal."

He was going toward the sidelines. Ace was staying in, but Pedley was taking him out, and he got a hand that almost tore off the roof as the spotlight found him.

He stopped short at the bench. John Fort was there. The coach's pale face told of strain, as he said in a low voice, "Alice is in her seat. She said to tell you. She was in time to see that run."

"Thanks," said Lucky coldly. He did not look at the box. He knew its location, all right; he could have found it if they turned out the lights. But he would not look that way.

Gorman was saying, "A lot of help you've been, you—"

"That's enough." Pedley's easy voice could cut like a whip. "Lacey, Grayson, Wilde—go in and try to stop that T-formation when they get the ball."

Reb Mule converted and the All Stars kicked off. This time Stelle brought it up to the thirty and the hammering began again. The pros had the power from close up and were using it. They worked down over midfield despite Pedley's numerous substitutions.

Fort said diffidently, "Pedley, if you'll give the Midstate boys a chance as a unit—"

Pedley said, "Young, you go in."

Mike Ober came out again. Lucky took the field. Ace Bell was resting while John Hare took over. Clancy was in, and the starting line again. Kid Arden, the Mastodon fullback, called time out. Don Marble stared at Lucky and listened to the experienced Kid.

They came straight, no deception. Lucky felt it and went in as fast as he could. Sorgerson went with him. The big Swede plugged the hole and Lucky backed him up. John Hare was underneath. There was no gain.

The pros tried it with a spinner. And again Sorgerson and Young were in.

They essayed a reverse, using all their power ahead of the ball. Tipper submarined and spoiled the blocking. Arden got five yards, but Lucky hamstrung him and held him pinned down and it was fourth and five.

Tot Ames, the giant tackle, went back and Stelle doffed his helmet to hold the ball for a placement. The collegiate line surged, but Ames booted it straight through for three points. The strategy was plain—hold the college boys and play for a touchdown to take the lead when the pros took over the ball.

Lucky went off the field. He sat down wondering why Pedley didn't leave him in when the All Stars had the ball. He wondered if it had anything to do with Fort's mysterious tardiness and the fact that Lucky had refused to do detective work on Fort back in Midburgh. If Pedley thought Lucky was a crook— He shrugged off such an idea with huge impatience.

IT was the last quarter. The pros had their touchdown. It was 10 to 7 for the Mastodons and the All Stars had settled down to taking a steady pounding and playing for a break. It had been heady, slashing football all the way. Lucky had been off and on the field so often he was half dizzy. He had been off when the pros scored on a long pass, at any rate. . . .

The Mastodons were shoving it to the line. They had a second down on their forty, and were coming strong. Jay Jackson went in at guard, fresh and unsung, his uniform spanking new and shiny. Tipper went in at end. Pedley was standing, picking his men. The Mastodons tried an inside reverse through the new man, but stocky Jackson went underneath and spilled white jerseys like chrysanthemums shedding petals in the August heat, and there was no gain.

The Mastodons would not kick until fourth down, being pros and disdaining the insurance punt. Pedley waited. Fort came close to Lucky and said incisively, "I'm going to try to get Hare, Carter and you in there together. Try that old play, our play."

Lucky said, "You mean 74 in Pedley's arrangement?"

"That's our play," said Fort stiffly. "You know it. I had Pedley put it in there."

Lucky said, "Is this for the newspapers? Or between you and me?"

Fort flushed deep crimson. "That's for you to decide, Young."

Lucky said, "You wouldn't cross us, would you, Coach?"

Fort stood his ground. "You may decide that, too."

Lucky said, "I saw you in the Scarlet Scarab, you know, with that woman. And I saw you with Boodle."

Fort said, "That is my misfortune. . . . Use that play, if I can get our men in there, with Jackson and Gregg up front."

Lucky said, "I'll decide about that, too. Carter and I, we'll decide."

Fort walked away, his back stiff, chin tucked in, eyes straight ahead. He spoke low and earnestly to Pedley, who shook his bald brown head.

The Mastodons kicked suddenly, from close up. The ball went over Pike Ober's head. Goring downed it on the Collegiate twenty. The Mastodons began to stomp a little, laughing among themselves. They had only to hold the attack now, and the game was won.

Pedley ordered, almost reluctantly, "Carter, Young, Hare, Clancy . . . Gregg and Sorgerson—" Jackson saw them coming and grinned with joy. Ace Bell looked weary, going off.

Legs called a plunge. Clancy hit in behind Jackson. Lucky took out a slashing tackle—it was Tot Ames, but he was past respecting these big, tough pros now. Clancy got through and rode Pop Day for a seven-yard gain.

Legs called for the reverse. Lucky was blocking for Hare on this one. They had played that way in college, Hare alternating with Lucky in the running-back spot. Lucky hit the end and Hare tore inside and made a first down on the thirty-five. The stands again began yelling.

A flashy girl sat across from Fort. They were talking earnestly.

THE Mastodons dug in, scowling. They stopped Clancy for a one-yard gain. Legs was calling them easy, watching the Mastodon line for a hole. Finding none, he coolly named the 74 play.

Hare and Lucky exchanged spots. It was from the short punt, and Lucky actually faked a quick kick. Then he was racing behind Hare. The old Midstate back had put on muscle and speed since '41. He slung Cohn almost off the field with a shoulder hook and managed to keep his feet and get Day.

Lucky reversed. He shot past Arden. Marble came in and put the clamp on him, but he was at the midfield stripe.

"Seventy-four, with cheese," said Lucky. Carter nodded. They came out of the huddle. Lucky, in the slot, took the perfect pass from Sorgy. It was like old times, with Tipper sliding into the flat all alone, elusive as a ghost. Lucky pegged a lightning pass, heavy as lead. Tipper caught it and went stumbling through tacklers to the Mastodon thirty.

It gets tough down there, against the pros. Clancy failed to gain. Jay opened a little hole and Lucky bucked for five through guard. The All Stars took time out and the linesmen offered suggestions and Clancy had an idea, but Legs just let them talk; he winked at Lucky.

They lined up. The clock was running very low. The timekeeper had his eyes glued to his stop-watch. Two more plays, maybe, Lucky thought. Legs said, "Seventy-four and bar the door."

Lucky made the most elaborate preparations to pass. He even hollered, "Tipper! Here you are, Tipper!"

Gregg was out there, but two alert Mastodon backs were on him. John Hare, doubled over, checked. Legs yelled, "I got it!" and leaped in the flat.

Lucky started to run left. Hare waited. Jay Jackson got off the ground and put down his head and butted like a goat. Sorgy, alongside him, knocked Pop Day for a loop. Lucky slung the ball at Jay, went in and stymied a guard as he cut through the line. Hare followed.

Kid Arden recovered and charged. Lucky put him away with a cross block, got up. Hare was on the five-yard line, with Marble again stopping a score.

Legs was chuckling. "Kid stuff, but they fell for it!" The truth was,

they expected no such trickery from a pick-up collegiate team. It takes timing, Lucky knew, and many months of practise, to work a 74 series.

On the sidelines, Gorman seemed strangely glum. He had seen 74 work—against Kings.

Legs was saying, "It's all out now and rowdy-dow—60, chums."

It was Clancy, right through center. He got nothing.

Legs said, "Okay, one more play." The clock was at the end of its swing. It had run longer than Lucky had figured. It was borrowed time, he thought. "Seventy-four, with lace galore," chanted Legs, serene as a cherub.

The ball went apparently to Tipper on the end around. Mastodons flung themselves in his path. Then it seemed to go to Hare. Then, at the last moment, the slim, brilliant, almost fragile Legs was skirting the end and Lucky was running with him. Mastodons loomed. Legs said, "Give, pal!" and handed-off to Lucky.

THE Mastodons hit Legs. Lucky cut hard; he saw Marble's alert face in the way. He shoved his hand against Marble and dived with every bit of strength he had.

A gun barked. There was silence. The pile-up was terrific and someone tried to steal the ball. Lucky snuggled beneath a pair of cleats and smiled. He could feel lime in his nostrils. He sneezed as they got off him. The referee leaped high, throwing out his arms.

Don Marble said, "I'll run you ragged—scorin' for us!"

Lucky said, "Thanks, pal, and I hope it works that way."

Then he was running off the field and the crowd was doing him the honor of a standing, unorganized, roaring cheer. Legs and Jay and Sorgy and Tipper were running with him, arms around each other. The Midstate crowd had come through. Pedley met them at the sideline, trying to hug them all at once. The All Stars had won the game. . . .

John Fort strode stiffly into the crowd and disappeared. Pop Gorman made loud noises, trying to be certain much credit redounded to him, but Fort was gone when they looked for him.

"It was his 74 series," Lucky told Pedley.

"I know," said the famed head coach. "He sold it to me, before I sent you in. Strange thing—he sent me a wire saying he had to stay in Midburgh on a matter of life and death. . . . I don't understand it, Lucky."

"He's a strange character, but it was his play we used," Lucky said. He went in to dress, wondering what was next. . . .

He came out alone, not wanting to join the celebration at once. He wanted to be alone, to think. A girl stepped from the shadows and he stopped, staring down at her. He said, "Alice!"

"You've got to come—at once."

He said, at the urgency in her voice: "Of course. But where?"

She had a cab waiting. They got in; the driver seemed to know where to go. Alice said, "You wouldn't even look at me. . . . You played a wonderful game, Lucky. You were everywhere. Pedley was smart, using you on defense, then sending you in to score the winning touchdown."

Lucky said stiffly, "That was John Fort's idea—to use the Midstate bunch together on the 74-series plays."

She fell silent, watching him in the changing light of the street-lamps. The cab stopped outside a huge building. Lucky threw the driver a bill and Alice led him up steps and into a hall which smelled familiar.

"A hospital!" Lucky said. "Who's sick?"

They went into a room. It was all white and there was a screen before them. Alice looked behind the screen, then motioned to Lucky.

There was a bed and in it a woman. Lucky looked at her. He recognized the sharp nose, but the rest of the face was pinched and wan. John Fort stood holding the woman's hand.

"She won't last long. I failed," he said to Alice. His voice was deep in his throat, choking.

Alice said, "She'll live; she's strong." She leaned close and said in the girl's ear: "We won the game—John's plays won it. Here's Lucky to tell you it was John's ideas that won it."

The heavy-lidded dark eyes opened. Lucky felt himself shoved close. The depths of the eyes held nothing, only emptiness. He heard himself say: "I'm one of John's guys. We pulled it out, using his stuff, all right. We were losing, and he spoke to Pedley—and our bunch went in and won."

The woman moistened her dry lips. She said, "You're very handsome, youngster. . . . I'm John's sister, you know. We were always—very proud of John." Something came alive in her eyes. "As long as I had John, I was all right—all right—" The light began fading.

FORT flung himself across the bed. Lucky stood transfixed, unbelieving. The cold, stiffly formal coach was now a grief-stricken man who cried: "Sylvia! I was wrong, all the way. What difference did it make who you married, what you did? I should have helped when you asked. I was wrong. Please, Syl, you're all I have—please forgive me!"

The weak voice said, "Wrong, John? Who cares about wrong or right? If you're just on my team, John—"

Alice was hauling him into the hall. Lucky said, "So his sister was in a jam, and it had something to do with Natty Boodle, and she took something?"

"John had lectured her, in his way," said Alice. "She needed understanding. . . . I came down to Midburgh that time to talk with her. She was on the wrong track and didn't care. The rumors about John, started by Gorman, got to her and she was bitter enough to believe them. She took poison, and we flew her up here to a specialist Father knows—"

Lucky said, "Whew! Am I glad I stayed out of that one!"

"Stayed out of it? Why, you were what she needed, just now! She needed to be assured that John was all right—"

Lucky said, "Look, they're having a big celebration—dancing, everything. We've got to hurry."

"You didn't even glance at my box—"

Lucky said, "Look—" They were on the street. With one arm he flagged down a passing taxi. With the other he pulled her close and kissed her very hard on the mouth. "That's for the time I missed out! And don't argue with me—it always gets me into trouble."

Another cab drew from the curb. A man leaned out. He called, "I'm Bert Meisel, Lucky Young. I've got a contract here—"

Lucky said, "You should have talked when last we spoke, palsy. Now you can read tomorrow's headlines and rewrite that contract. So long, palsy!"

He shoved Alice into the cab, never relinquishing his grasp. He could do a more thorough job on the kissing while riding to the celebration.

SPORT SPURTS

by Harold Helfer

FRANK SYZMANSKI, the Detroit Lion's center, attained the highest marks in mathematics in the history of Notre Dame.

° ° °

In the same year that Babe Didrikson won three Olympic track titles, she also won a prize at the Texas State Fair for designing the best box-pleated dress.

° ° °

Johnny and Louie Buchholz, Defiance, Ohio, the twins who looked so much alike that one had to leave his head bare while the other wore a cap so that softball-league fans could tell them apart, wound up in fourth place in batting, each with a .365 average. Each had been at bat 78 times, scored 27 runs and knocked out thirty hits.

Four Things He'd Do

HE PLANNED TO EAT THE BIGGEST STEAK IN TOWN, GO ON THE BIGGEST DRUNK, FIGHT THE BIGGEST MAN AND KISS THE PRETTIEST GIRL.

by PHILIP KETCHUM

HE rode into Goddard City late in the afternoon with a crowd of men from the diggings in Spanish Cañon, and when he was opposite the Silver Grill restaurant, he reined up short. "Food!" he bellowed. "A steak bigger than any steak that was ever cooked. Here is the first stop for Tim Shane." And though most of the men who had come in with him tried to argue him out of it, he pulled in to the tie-rail in front of the Silver Grill and dismounted.

"Come on down to the saloon, Tim," Frank Price insisted. "A drink first. We've always got to have a drink first. Maybe a dozen drinks first."

Tim Shane laughed and shook his head. He was a big man, big and broad-shouldered, and with long arms. He had long red hair and a red rust-streaked beard. Freckles were splashed across his nose, and his eyes had the clear blue color of a summer sky. "A steak," he said again, "smothered in onions and swimming in gravy. Potatoes piled so high that you can't see over them! Bread, made by the fair hands of a woman, and a gallon of coffee, hot and black, to wash it all down! I'll see you later."

He pushed open the door of the restaurant and stepped inside and marched back to a table. He pulled out a chair and sat down. There was no one else in the restaurant, no one back of the counter. Sounds could be heard in the kitchen, but no one came through the kitchen door.

Tim Shane banged his fist on the table. "Service!" he yelled. "Do you let your customers die of starvation when they come here? Food and drink, before I perish!"

The kitchen door opened, and Ellen O'Roarke came into the room, tying on an apron. Her face was still flushed from the heat of the stove. She was a tall girl, a little thin. There was a proud tilt to her chin. Her hair was dark, and her lips tightened into a straight line as she stared at Tim Shane. Those who knew her would have recognized the storm-warning in her eyes.

"Take off your hat, Tim Shane," she said quietly.

Shane blinked. "You know me?"

"Thank heaven, I don't," answered Ellen O'Roarke. "But I have heard of the uncouth and unmannered Irishman up in Spanish Cañon who bellows rather than talks. What do you want?"

A scowl came upon Shane's face. "Food, woman, and less of your sharp and bitter tongue. A steak, the biggest that was ever cooked, tender and juicy and thick as my wrist."

Ellen put her hands on her hips. "So it wasn't a story we heard. So you really meant it."

"Meant what?" Shane demanded.

"We have heard for a long time of the wild red-headed Irishman in Spanish Cañon, and of the four things he meant to do when he came to Goddard City. I thought no man could be so big a fool."

"And what did you hear?" Shane barked.

"We heard that when Tim Shane came to town he meant to do four things: eat the biggest steak he could buy, whip the biggest man he could find, kiss the prettiest girl in town and go on the longest drunk in history."

"And what's wrong with that, woman?"

Ellen shrugged. "The biggest steak you can buy is one we would serve to any man for a dollar. The biggest man in town is Joe Blackwell, who is as straight as they come, and who is fighting an uphill battle on his own against a crooked crowd of gamblers. The prettiest girl is Marie Howard, and her kisses are free as the air. And you're already years too late ever to catch up with the town drunk."

THE scowl on Tim Shane's face grew deeper, and then suddenly it was gone. He came to his feet, and his laugh boomed out across the room. "You are wrong, woman. Wrong!" he declared. "I will still buy a bigger steak than the one you serve for a dollar. I will have my fight; and the prettiest girl, to me, may not be this Marie Howard. And until you've seen Timothy Michael Patrick McDougal O'Shane on a drunk, you don't know the meaning of the word."

"O'Shane?" said the girl. "Where did you get the *'O'?*"

"I put it in," said Tim Shane, "to add music to the sound of the name."

"Then take it out," said Ellen. "My name is O'Roarke, and 'tis proud I am of the *'O'*—too proud to let a red-headed, roistering bully claim it."

Tim Shane grinned. "Will you cook me the steak, O'Roarke? The big one?"

"I will cook you a regular steak for a dollar."

Tim Shane walked to the door. When he reached it, he looked around. "Save yourself any trouble, O'Roarke," he said bluntly. "Go hunt me up a steak, or sew a dozen of your regular steaks together. I will be back in an hour."

Out on the street, the scowl came back into Tim Shane's face, and after a moment he turned up the walk to the store. Two men were standing in front of it, talking.

"Is there a fellow here in town named Blackwell?" Shane demanded, interrupting them.

"Yep, he's the sheriff," said one of the men. "His office is across the street. That's him standing in the door."

Shane stared across the street. He saw a narrow building with the words, SHERIFF'S OFFICE, lettered on the window. A man was standing in the doorway, a man who almost filled it, a tall man, broad-shouldered, long of arm, heavy, a man who looked big enough to be the biggest man in town. Shane straightened up. He crossed the street and confronted the man in the doorway.

"YOUR name Blackwell?" he demanded. "Joe Blackwell?"

"That's right," said the Sheriff.

He had a gruff voice, a square, stubborn jaw and a scowl to match the one Shane was wearing. His eyes were dark, hard.

"Maybe you know me?" Shane suggested.

"I'd guess your name was Tim Shane," Blackwell said slowly. "I've heard that there was a crazy red-headed Irishman up in Spanish Cañon. A man who ran off at the mouth. You seem to fit the description."

"Did you hear what I was going to do when I came here?" Shane demanded.

"Among other things," Blackwell nodded. "I heard that you were going to try to whip the biggest man in town."

"Where will I find him?"

"You've found him," said Blackwell. "What are you going to do about it?"

"Whip him. But it's a shame, Blackwell, not to mix business with pleasure."

"What do you mean?"

"I understand," said Tim Shane, "that there's a pretty tough crowd here in town who have been causing you trouble."

"Maybe."

"Where do they hang out?"

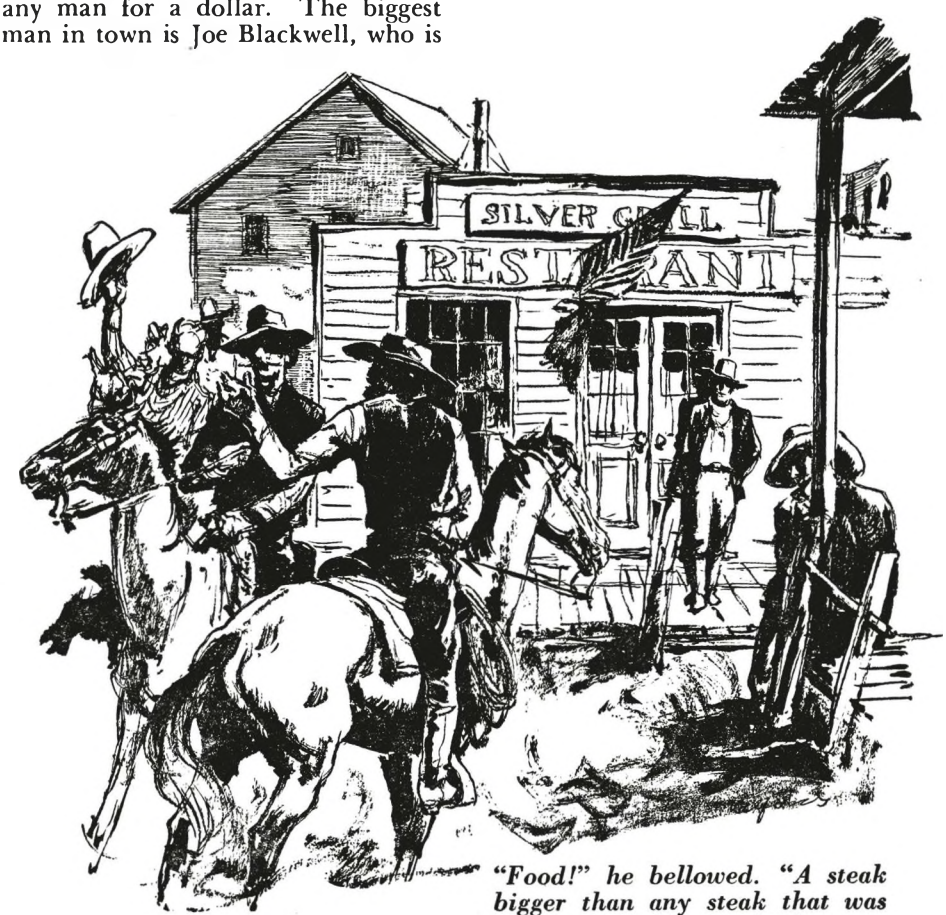
Blackwell's eyes narrowed. "At the Double Seven saloon, most of them."

"That might be a good place for the fight."

Joe Blackwell grinned; then he sighed and shook his head. "As sheriff, I couldn't permit a thing like that."

"Does this crowd own the saloon?"

"Yep—lock, stock an' barrel."



"Food!" he bellowed. "A steak bigger than any steak that was ever cooked. Here is the first stop for Tim Shane."

"And right now most of them would be there?"

"I reckon they would."

"Too bad, Sheriff. You look as though you could put up a fair fight. A lot of things could happen to the saloon an' the men who might want to stop it if a fight got started."

Blackwell nodded. "Yep. Too bad."

"We could have a drink, though," said Tim Shane. "A drink before we settle things."

"Yep, we could have a drink," said the Sheriff gravely.

He turned and pulled the door shut and locked it and then walked up the street with Tim Shane. When they came to the door of the Double Seven saloon they pushed it open and stepped inside.

There was a good crowd in the Double Seven. Men lined the bar and filled most of the places at the gambling-tables. Tim Shane and the Sheriff elbowed room along the bar and hung their elbows on it.

"This used to be a nice saloon," muttered the Sheriff. "Then one day Gregg bought it. He's the big man with the red face at the end of the bar. He brought in a couple of bouncers, the two toughs we passed just inside the door. He hired house men, the pale-faced gamblers running the big games in the back. This ain't been a good place since. Some day I've got to get rid of this crowd, or they'll be running Goddard City."

"Why not today?" Tim Shane asked.

"A sheriff's got to do things legal," Joe Blackwell scowled. "They've been too clever for me."

"You're afraid of 'em," Shane growled.

"I'm afraid of no one," snapped the Sheriff.

"Quit crowding me," said Tim Shane.

"I'm not crowding you."

SHANE turned half toward the Sheriff. He put his huge hand on Blackwell's shoulder and pushed. He pushed hard enough to jar Blackwell against the man on the other side of him. "Give me room, will you?" Shane bellowed. "Give me room."

Blackwell's arm swung out and caught Shane across the chest. It twisted him away from the bar. "Give me room yourself," Blackwell shouted. "Keep out of my way."

Shane lunged suddenly straight at the man. His fist smashed up and jarred against Blackwell's chin, and he slammed another blow at the Sheriff and took one from Blackwell that grazed the point of his jaw.

"That does it," he roared. "Get out of here, or I'll tear you in pieces."

"Try it, Shane," Blackwell threw back. "Go ahead and try it."

"Food and drink, before I perish!"

Some men were hurrying for the door, but out of the corner of his eye Shane saw the two bouncers closing in. He stabbed a blow at Blackwell and took one in return which sent him reeling away, almost into the arms of one of the bouncers. The man grabbed him around the shoulders; and reaching for the fellow's wrists, Shane held them tight and stooping suddenly forward, pitched the man over his head.

The other bouncer had stepped back and grabbed a chair. He swung it high into the air, but before he could bring it down, Joe Blackwell lunged straight at him and sent him staggering against one of the tables. The table crashed to the floor, and the man went down with it.

"Too bad," said Shane at Blackwell's shoulder. "A sheriff hadn't ought to break up the furniture that way."

Joe Blackwell jerked around and stabbed a fist at Shane's face. "Don't tell me what to do," he shouted. "An' don't breathe down my neck."

Tim Shane rode the blow. He lowered his head and charged forward, smashing out with one fist and then another. The Sheriff backed away. He tripped over a chair and went down. They were among the gambling-tables now, but most of the men who had been using them had crowded to the wall.

Shane picked up one of the tables and banged it against another. "Get these fool things out of the way," he bellowed. "Give us room!"

The two bouncers were up on their feet now, and were closing in again. They looked grimly determined. Shane dropped the table he had just broken and grabbed a second by the legs. He hurled it toward the two men and then reached for another. He sent it after the first. Blackwell got to his feet and charged the two bouncers. He hit one of them squarely in the face and dropped him, and then turned on the other. "You fellows keep out of this," he said grimly. "I'll handle this affair myself."

"Handle *this*, Blackwell!" Shane bellowed.

He hurled a chair across the room, hurled it high. The chair passed over the Sheriff's head, bounced on the top of the bar and smashed against the bottles and glasses, beautifully stacked on the back-bar.

"Missed, didn't I?" Shane called. He lifted another chair and threw it and again it was high. It hit the back-bar mirror, splintering it.

Gregg, the red-faced saloon owner, rushed forward, a gun in his hand, but another chair took care of Gregg. He dropped to the floor, lost his gun, got to his knees and started crawling away. Shane moved forward and picked him up and heaved his body to the top of the bar, then pushed him off behind it. The second bouncer had backed up to the bar under a driving attack from Joe Blackwell.

"You treat 'em like this," said Shane.

He clipped the man under the chin, caught him as he fell, lifted him to the top of the bar as he had Gregg and then rolled him off.

"Try that with me," Blackwell grated.

"I will," said Tim Shane.

HE stabbed a blow at the Sheriff's face, then another, but Blackwell was moving away from him and the blows had little effect. Shane closed in, then backed away himself as the Sheriff bulled forward. They circled the room, first one leading the attack, then the other. Shane bumped against a chair. He picked it up and hurled it at the front window.

"Didn't I say get these things out of the way?" he shouted. "How do you expect a man to fight if he's always falling over chairs?"

"Get this one out of the way too," Blackwell yelled.

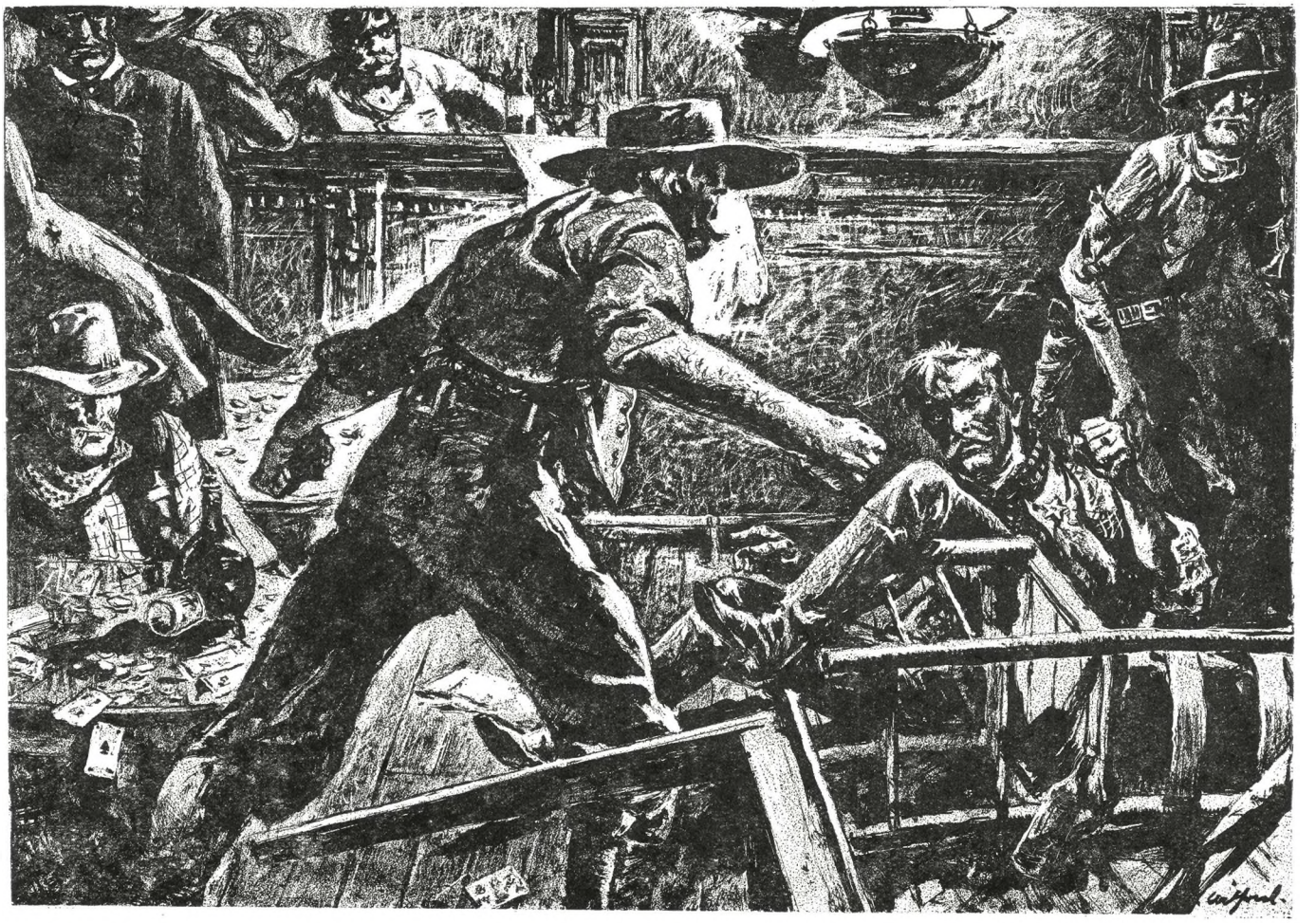
He picked up another chair as he said that, and pitched it at the side window.

Tim Shane looked around the room. The Double Seven saloon, he decided, was beautifully wrecked. Chairs and tables were smashed. The back-bar looked as though it had run into a cyclone. The windows were splintered. A good many of the men who had been here when they entered, had left. A few were standing against the walls, ready to duck if necessary.

"Where's the man who owns this place?" Tim Shane demanded.

The Sheriff wiped a hand over his swelling jaw. "You ought to know. You pitched him over the bar."

"That man!" said Shane. "Why he ought to be arrested for permitting a roughhouse and for trying to inter-



Shane charged. The Sheriff backed, tripped over a chair and went down. Shane bellowed, "Give us room!"

fere with the Sheriff who was attempting to stop it."

"I'll arrest him," said Joe Blackwell. "An' I'll arrest a couple others who interfered, but I'll do that after I've taken care of you."

"Come ahead, then," Tim Shane roared.

The Sheriff lunged forward and Tim Shane moved out to meet him.

THEY sat in the Sheriff's office and in the lamplight it would have been hard to tell which face was the more battered. They sat there and took alternating drinks from a bottle which had been salvaged from the wreckage of the Double Seven saloon.

"Well, that's one thing done," said Shane finally. "Three more to go."

"That's not one thing done," Blackwell growled. "You didn't lick the biggest man in town. You got licked yourself."

"Who went down first?" Shane demanded.

"Who couldn't get up without help?"

"I was just lazy."

The Sheriff chuckled, and after a moment Shane joined in.

"It cleans up that crowd I was after, too," said the Sheriff. "Gregg pulled a gun on us. There were plenty of men who saw it. The judge, here, don't go for things like that. He'll throw the book at Gregg. Of course you've got to get out of town or I might have to arrest you too, for creating a disturbance."

"I've got to do three more things before I get out," Shane insisted.

"Why?"

"Because I said that I would, and Timothy Michael Patrick McDougal O'Shane always keeps his word."

"What are the three things?"

"Eat the biggest steak ever cooked, kiss the prettiest girl around here and go on the longest drunk in history."

"You can't eat a steak—your jaw's too sore. Your lips are in no shape to kiss anyone; and if you go on a drunk, I'll have to arrest you."

"I have to do those things, Sheriff."

"But why? For Pete's sake why?"

"I said I would."

"But why did you ever make such a crazy boast?"

"Why does a man ever do crazy things? A bunch of us were talking around the fire one night about what we would do when we struck it rich. I named those four things and why shouldn't I? What man doesn't love a fight, the kiss of a pretty girl, the taste of a tender steak or the heady wine of a long drunk?"

"You are a fool, Tim Shane."

"Maybe. Who's the prettiest girl in town?"

"Ellen O'Roarke."

"O'Roarke! That woman at the restaurant—the one with the sharp tongue?"

"A sharp tongue she may have, but she's still the prettiest girl in town."

"Impossible."

"Where are your eyes, Tim Shane?"

Shane scowled. He said: "What about Marie Howard?"

The Sheriff fingered his jaw slowly. "Where did you hear of Marie Howard?"

"From O'Roarke, who also said that Marie Howard's kisses were free as the air. I don't like that, but if she is the prettiest girl in town, I will add another to her collection."

"And that will satisfy you?" asked Joe Blackwell.

"The steak I will collect from O'Roarke. The drunk comes last."

The Sheriff got to his feet. "Go collect your steak, Tim Shane. I will get Marie Howard and bring her to the restaurant."

Tim Shane crossed the street to the restaurant. It was early in the evening and the place was crowded. There was no room at the counter. There was no room at any of the

tables. Several men from the diggings in Spanish Canon called out a greeting and others who had seen the fight in the Double Seven or who had heard of it, stared at him curiously. Tim Shane scowled. He was very conscious of his battered face.

Ellen O'Roarke came in from the kitchen, with a tray of food. There was a good color in her face and a twinkle came into her eyes as she stared at Tim Shane. Her lips curved in a wide smile. Tim Shane's scowl grew deeper. This Ellen O'Roarke, he realized abruptly, wasn't at all hard to look at. She had a neat, strong figure and for the right man, the look in her eyes would be soft and warm.

SHE delivered the food to one of the tables, and then came to where he was standing, and merriment danced in her eyes. "I have it almost cooked, Tim Shane," she declared. "Not the dollar steak, but the biggest steak ever broiled. It's much too big to bring out here. You'll have to come back to the kitchen."

"Joe Blackwell is coming," Tim Shane said almost defiantly. "He is bringing Marie Howard with him."

Ellen laughed. "And why not. Didn't I tell you her kisses were free? Come on back to the kitchen. I will watch for them."

Tim Shane followed her to the kitchen. A table was already set back there, and he took his place at it and tried to draw some real satisfaction from the knowledge that Ellen had prepared a special steak for him. It didn't work. He felt nervous, ill at ease.

"The steak isn't quite ready," Ellen told him as she poured him some coffee. "It's not ready, but it won't be long, Tim O'Shane."

"Where do I get the *'O'* in O'Shane?" he growled.

"I put it in because you earned it," said Ellen O'Roarke. "It was a fine thing you did this afternoon, Tim O'Shane. Joe Blackwell is a fine man, but he needed the push you gave him."

Shane touched his swollen face. "Blackwell did a little pushing himself," he admitted.

"But together you smashed that crowd at the Double Seven. Why are you scowling?"

"I'm not scowling," said Shane, and to prove it he scowled even deeper.

"You *are* scowling," said Ellen O'Roarke. "But why? You had your fight. Your steak is on the fire and you're going to get your kiss. After that you'll probably be fool enough to get drunk. Why are you scowling?"

Tim Shane drew in a long, slow breath. He stared up at the girl. "I'm scowling, because I sent Joe Blackwell after Marie Howard."

"And why not? She's the prettiest girl in town, and that's who you wanted."

"She's not the prettiest girl," Shane declared.

"But she is."

"She is not," Shane said again. "The prettiest girl in town has an *'O'* in her name. I'm looking straight at her."

A deep flush of color came into Ellen's face, and her eyes laughed. She said: "Thank you for that, Tim O'Shane, but you're wrong. Just how wrong you'll see when the Sheriff gets here."

"I'll not kiss the girl he brings," Shane growled.

"But you will."

"O'Roarke, I will not!"

"I will make you a wager, Tim O'Shane. I will wager a steak even bigger than the one I'm cooking against the drunk you plan to go on, that when you see Marie Howard, you will kiss her."

"Done," bellowed Tim Shane. "Start hunting for that steak now."

The door from the restaurant opened and Joe Blackwell came in. He was grinning. He held a girl in his arms, a girl about six years old. She had golden curls and pink, dimpled cheeks. Her eyes were a wide, wonderful blue. Tim Shane stared at her. He stared at her and then at Ellen, who was laughing.

"Tim O'Shane," said Ellen, "meet Marie Howard, the prettiest girl in town."

Tim Shane got to his feet. Ellen was still laughing, the Sheriff was laughing, and even Marie was laughing; and suddenly Marie held her chubby arms out toward him, and Tim Shane took her and grinned as he kissed her.

"Red," said Marie, tugging at Shane's beard. "Red!"

"Tim Shane," she said hotly, "you'll be sorry for that!"

Ellen turned to the stove and took up the steak she had been cooking. It was a steak made up of half a dozen small steaks, sewn together. She put it in a large, oblong cookie pan and set it on the table.

"Your steak, Tim O'Shane," she said quietly. "The largest ever cooked in Goddard City."

Tim Shane put Marie Howard back in the Sheriff's arms. He walked over to where Ellen was standing, put his hands on her shoulders and turned her around. "It was nice," he said slowly. "Awfully nice, but she's still not the prettiest girl in town." And pulling Ellen forward, he kissed her, and held her tight in spite of her struggling and kissed her again.

ELLEN'S face was scarlet as he released her and let her step back. Her breath was coming fast.

"Tim Shane," she said hotly, "you'll be sorry for that! You'll be sorry as long as you live."

"There's an *'O'* in the name," Shane answered. "Remember."

"When you act like that, there's no 'O'."

"But I'll always act like that. It's the beginning of the fourth thing I said I'd do. I've had my fight, I've kissed my girl, my steak is waiting. All that remains is the longest drunk in history. You thought you tricked me out of it by a wager—but I'm going on a drunk which will last for life, and the wine I'll use has an *'O'* in it. O'Roarke."

"You'll shave your beard then," said Ellen O'Roarke. "It scratches."

Tim Shane grinned. "I'll shave my beard. And you'll shed this restaurant, O'Roarke. I'll have my woman cooking steaks for no other men."

"There'll be no more fighting," Ellen declared.

"Excepting between you and me."

"No more kisses."

"Except yours."

"And no drunks."

"None but the one we go on together."

"It's a good bargain, Tim O'Shane," Ellen declared. "And it's one you'll live up to if I have to break your head open every month."

The Sheriff tried to get in a word or two but neither Ellen O'Roarke or Tim Shane seemed to hear him and finally he gave up. "Maybe we'd better get out of here, Marie," he said to the girl he was holding.

"Why?" Marie asked.

"Maybe we're in the way. I wonder how those people up front are ever going to get fed."

"They can feed themselves," said Marie practically.

"It looks as if they'd have to," admitted the Sheriff. He opened the door, stepped back into the restaurant and closed it behind him.

He did see a pretty girl promenading with an older woman, but she didn't seem to have an eye for a sailor man.

To

FROM the very first, when the ocean-going square-rigger *Mollie Hendrix* was a-building on the ways there in the backwoods town of Pittsburgh, folks came to grin and wink and tap their heads at each other—nor were they always careful to do it behind Vench McClain's back. Building a full-rigged ship on the Allegheny to sail down to the Gulf? Who'd ever heard the like!

Well, pretty soon folks all the way to Louisville and on down to the Spanish rathole of New Orleans were going to hear of it, Vench reckoned—including Miss Mollie Hendrix herself. For the matter of that, he would have built a ship at the front gate of hell—still more at the head of the Ohio—and sailed it right on in if that was what it took to redeem himself with her. And if that was being crazy, why Vench was willing to admit that he was as crazy as a bessy bug.

The ship was already floated and fitted, even to the two-pound swivel guns fore and aft for river pirates, and the home-made anchors. Everything was on her but the figurehead which Vench was now carrying down the

Remember Me By

by Everett and Olga Webber

(Foreword: Pittsburgh became the scene of shipbuilding before the days of the steamboat, when seamen got the idea of floating down the river to the Gulf. Captains with Pittsburgh clearance papers sometimes got into trouble in foreign ports when meeting customs officials who knew that Pittsburgh was clear over the mountains from the Atlantic. But this early start in sea commerce was never lost by Pittsburgh; and in 1940 she ranked, in point of tonnage, as our fourth largest port.)

Illustrated by Robert Ball

muddy street toward the river. The walnut it was made of must have lain choctawing in a filled-in slough for maybe a hundred years, and it had taken a polish like brown ebony.

The man who had carved it for him had never seen Mollie, since she lived down toward the Louisville country, but he had a streak of understanding and a clever hand, and Vench's miniature of her to go by. The figure was a remarkable likeness, Vench thought. Good brow, with the hair flowing back. Strong nose and mouth and chin and plenty of bosom. A good armful, Mollie was. That is, just offhand, from the brief moment he'd had hold of her that time eleven months ago, he'd say so. A girl who would be nice to keep a man's heart warm—not to mention his back when the cold came seeping through the heaviest of blankets in January.

VENCH'S blood flowed the faster, thinking of Mollie, and he hoped afresh that what he was doing would redeem him for having acted so brash with her. He'd always heard there wasn't any wrong way to go about asking a girl to marry you—but the very first and only one ever he'd asked, he'd found out there wasn't anything to that. Sounded like something old Dr. Franklin over at Philadelphia must have thought up in a rakish mood to go in his almanac.

Worse than kissing Mollie, though, was the way he blundered around and gave her the idea he thought her father was pixilated. A body'd naturally think that of anyone who drew off charts from the Book of Revelation to show that the world was coming to an end on the twenty-second of No-

His ship was already floated and fitted, but for the figurehead which Vench was now carrying toward the river.

vember—just next week, it was—but a polite man, of course, wouldn't intentionally show it. And Vench had certainly never meant to.

He had often reflected since, that anyone who had seen as much of the world as he had, should've had the gumption to make a better showing. A man grown now—full twenty-one years, lacking but six or eight months—he had been around, Vench had, being foot-loose and fancy-free, up until the time he met Mollie, and able to go whither he listed, as he had a knack at cards. And he was a living denial of the precept that he who is good at turning up—for instance—a queen in the deck when it is most needful isn't likely to be so lucky at finding a live one.

For the girls, they pestered him mightily, they did (all but Mollie), as he wandered up and down seeing the fine sights of Philadelphia and Boston Town and New York. And truth to tell, he liked being made over, and he wasn't down on the gentler sex even after two of them did him dirt handrunning.

The first, she got his purse, and the second—this was at Charleston—she was giving him a kiss in the hallway of the inn while her father drew an ale for a customer, when someone took him above the left ear with a sock-toe full of shot. He came to on what turned out to be a Spanish brig, Montevideo bound. He was a tol'able jack-tar by the time, some months later, they put into New Orleans, where he jumped ship. He had made up his mind to save his money, soon as he got hold of some, and head back to the Portland country where he had been raised. He'd go into the shipyards and build fishing smacks, and gradually work into the shipbuilding business and settle down.

And a settled-down man, first thing he needed was a wife to keep him settled and cook his vittles and have his young-uns and to keep the other women from shining up to him every time he sort of absent-mindedly gave one of them the once-over. Vench guessed he had a pretty good head on him for figuring out things, and that he didn't have his name for nothing. It was really short for Invention, his papa having married a girl named Necessity Bowers. When Vench got himself borned, his papa said, "Necessity is the mother of Invention." And so she was.

Well, he had him a look at the Creole girls at New Orleans, but they weren't exactly to his taste, and besides, he didn't figure they would weather very well up on the Maine coast. He did see a pretty girl promenading the levee, with an older woman with a skin like old ivory, but she didn't seem to have an eye for a sailor man. He learned from some upriver flatboaters that she was an octoroon whom her mother was parading, hoping to attract the attention of some wealthy gentleman who would set her up in a house on Rampart Street where the Creoles kept their mistresses. It saddened Vench, thinking about that, when she was as white as any of the fine ladies he had seen in their carriages, but there was nothing he could do about it, so he went on.

Nor did he take to the French and Spanish and Creole lassies at Natchez, either, nor yet to the Scotch and Irish ones in the backwoods town of Nashville where he won four hundred and sixty dollars in a game of cards called Ringamaloo which some men undertook to teach him. So he took part of the money and bought a horse and a pistol with four barrels from a red-headed young lawyer named Andrew Jackson who had a fighting rooster in a cage, and headed on up toward the Louisville country. He knew he had a kinsman named Hendrix up there somewhere—kind of a third or fourth cousin. Third cousin, now that Vench thought on it. His third cousin John, and the only folks he had in the whole wide world.

THAT pistol came in mighty handy some days later. He was trying to find the way in the drizzly December dusk to the Hendrix house, that a big burly man with a seafaring cant to his tongue had told him how to reach—a man who called himself Trotter Henline and who spotted Vench at once for a sailor and called him matey and made him sit down and share his early supper. Because, said he, as he finished saying grace, Hendrixes would've done eat by the time Vench got there.

So Vench swallowed a few bites for politeness and lit out again on his horse and after a time somebody spoke from the black brush behind him: "Get off'n that hoss, mister, and don't look back. And don't try no tricks or you'll be to bury—"

Vench had his pistol in his hand under his greatcoat ready for just such, only not expecting it either, and he was so startled that he fooled around and pulled all four triggers, and at least three of the barrels went off, as he judged from the noise and the powder that burned his hand and from the hole he later found in his coat. His horse bolted, and as he threw a wild look back, he saw a gun leveled at him by a man who wore a

cloth over his face—but the gun only flared up in the pan. Then Vench was gone, fending the wet branches off as they whipped him. . . .

That was the first time that ever anybody had tried to kill him and he was still shaken by it as he told his gaunt, bearded Third Cousin John about it, there in the front room of the semi-public house John kept on a bluff above the river. He was still telling it when he discovered his coat was smoldering around the pistol-shot hole, and by the time he got that put out he had spilled his deck of cards everywhere—a Mexican deck with the queens riding horseback, which he kept for luck.

Hearing the commotion, a black-haired girl came downstairs. Vench couldn't help seeing that she was pretty, and as she knelt to help pick the cards up he could no more help seeing that if a man got her he would be getting all girl instead of just some girl and a lot of stuffing, because she didn't have any stuffing, nor need it.

Blood running, he knelt to help her, and his Third Cousin John finally found his voice—a horror-stricken voice. He cried: "Them's cards, Mollie!"

She dropped the one she held as if it had burned her, and still kneeling, she whirled half around to look up at her father and lost her balance and tumbled right into Vench's arms and he—well, he up and kissed her right smack on the mouth.

Then when it came to him what he had done, he was about as flustered as she was, only not quite so much, because she was so flabbergasted that all she could do was totter to her feet when Third Cousin John caught her hand and pulled. But Vench got up by himself, and he said, "Is she my fourth cousin Mollie?"

Grimly the man said, "She is, but that don't give you no right."

"Cousins allus kiss where I come from," Vench said. "Uh—she promised off?"

Mollie had her dander up now as high as she did her chin—and her color—and she cried, "I wouldn't be promised to you if I was never promised—"

"You won't be—not to a card-playin' McClain," her daddy said, "even if I was aiming to let anybody have you." And, sternly to Vench, "you burn them things or get out of my house—"

SO he burned them and they had a season of prayer, with Vench and Mollie and her brothers and sisters kneeling around the room with the father—a prayer that had a lot in it about Vench and the cards and about how the world was going to come to the end in just about eleven more months. That considerably puzzled Vench till it was explained to him afterward from a big chart John had drawn with the seven virgins and the seven candlesticks and a lot of animals and birds with the heads and bodies mixed up, and a lot of numbers that ciphered out to November twenty-second of next year.

Vench thought the animals were amusing until he saw that John was really serious. He straightened his face up then, but he couldn't rightly get the run of the figures for thinking of Mollie. Finally, soon as John quit talking for a minute, Vench spoke up and said he'd never throw another card if he could have her—that in fact he hadn't played any for quite a while now.

Mollie's eyes were green in the light of the tallow dip her daddy had lighted to show off the chart, and she said it didn't make a particle what he promised, even if it wasn't for the way he kept grinning at the chart. And John said, in a weary voice, "Well, I'm used to being made fun of—"

Vench had tried to apologize, but John said: "Besides, I wouldn't b'lieve you'd reformed less'n you never touched a card for a year, Vench—and here 'tis, jist 'leven months and four days to the end, when us faithful'll be caught up into the clouds and the rest of you burnt up in the wrath to come. Be better, if'n I was givin' her to anybody, to make it somebody like our neighbor Trotter Henline, because he's seen the light and will be caught up with the rest of us. Only in heaven, they ain't no marriage nor giving in

Her daddy said to Vench, "You burn them things or get out of my house."

marriage, so it'd be a shame to give her to anybody for jist these few months, now that her foot is on the right path. She might get her mind on Trotter an' off'n the Lord—or onto Trotter's money, or some of the other vanities of the earth. Trotter, he's well off. Slick trader—an' he loves her, too—"

Mollie got out of the room, and just as Vench was mentioning that the Book says nobody knows the day nor the hour, Trotter Henline came in. He explained for Third Cousin John that that meant nobody back in those days knew it. Only after that came Revelation so that now anyone who had eyes to see could figure it out—and John had 'em. Then Trotter called for another season of prayer.

Well, Vench had about as stiff a neck as anybody, so next morning he took out up the river, paying Mollie no mind. Her little brother, Cicero, went a piece to set him on the track, and soon as they were out of sight he offered Cicero twenty gold dollars if he would go back and get him a picture of Mollie. Lots of gifted sign-painters went through the country, seeking out whom they might portray, and most of the results didn't look a terrible sight like the subject.

So Vench was mightily surprised when Cicero brought him a miniature that was delicately done and the spit and image of Mollie. Cicero declared that it was his to give and he looked like a truthful lad—as anyone of McClain blood, no matter how far back, was likely to be—so Vench took it. And when his money was refused, he laid the gold-pieces on a stump by Cicero and jumped on his horse and lit out.

Only, time he got to Pittsburgh, he decided there was a heap more sense in building a ship where timber was handy and free for the cutting instead of going on to Portland. And by building a vessel here, he could take it right on down the river to show Third Cousin John that he had settled down and quit gambling.

AT least, he told himself now, eleven months later as he lugged the figurehead down the street, he was going to quit, now that he didn't have to raise more money to build his ship. Six thousand dollars she had run him. But even after he got Mollie's dad pacified, there'd still be Mollie. Seemed like females were flighty, unpredictable critters that you couldn't get along either with or without. They—

Coming to where he could see his ship moored there in the river, Vench halted for a rest and a long, admiring look at the vessel. Her masts—stubby now with the top, t'gallant, and royal sections not yet raised—would be high and raking when they hit the broad waters of the Gulf.

The saws and axes and calking hammers were all but stilled now, their work practically finished. His two men who had been to sea were raising the mainyard, and Vench could see the shipwright talking to the man who was preparing the stemhead for the figure Vench was bringing down.

Drifting fog shut out the sight, and Vench picked up the figurehead again and moved on down the muddy boardwalk, ignoring the staring market-keepers and drovers and bullskinners with their broad-wheeled Conestogas pulling freight from the east down to the new-made flatboats on the rising water.

NO one had taken passage on the *Mollie Hendrix*, nor was anyone freighting anything because everybody said she would founder on the falls at Louisville. But he reckoned he could get a cargo quick enough when he got to where folks had a little sense—if he *didn't* founder on the falls. In his secret heart, he was beginning to wonder if the water would be as smooth there as he convinced himself last winter, even with a twenty- or thirty-foot rise. The falls were really rapids, where the riverbed fell twenty-six feet in two miles.

It took only a few minutes to bolt the metal base of the figure to the stemhead, and she looked mighty good rising up there to watch the river. Breaking wine on the ship as she slid down the tallowed ways was all right, but Vench felt better now.

"Cap'n McClain—"

Vench whirled, peering shoreward. A merchant by the name of Sellers was sitting on the first of four wagons of crates, and he said, "Got a leetle stuff to go down with you—an' couple fellers was talkin' to me about gettin' passage on that ship o' your'n. I told 'em I thought 'twas safe enough, so I reckon they'll be down."

Vench stilled the sudden unsteadiness of his hands. He guessed maybe he'd've had some luck long ago if only he had got his figurehead on. That was what made a ship's luck, anyway. He said casually, "All right. Reckon I can 'commodate 'em."

Sellers said, "This here stuff jist goes down to the falls, but the same fellers wants to send a lot of hides an' taller an' sich to Newer-leans if you ain't done took on too much ballast."

"Reckon I can manage," Vench said. He reckoned he could. Why, he could dump his ballast, if necessary.

All night the wagons came with barrels of potash and bales of hides and monstrous pipes of Monongahela whisky, and the big boom creaked and groaned swinging the stuff aboard and down through the hatches as the mules moved under the skinners' whips.

Before bedtime, nine or ten men—Vench lost count—drifted down and engaged passage, promising to be on hand early to leave out. For Vench was leaving at daylight. He wanted to be at Mollie's by the twenty-second because, for all he knew, his Third

Cousin John was right about when the world would end. Maybe folks had laughed at him—but they had laughed at Vench, too, over his ship.

The big crates, consigned to a store at the falls, were left on deck until the last and lowered down by the light of the lanterns just as the east began graying. The passengers had come aboard with their grub boxes and plunder and guns for standing off river pirates and had paid their money into Vench's hand. And now Sellers called: "Here's the gent'man shippin' the stuff, that wants to go too."

He came aboard—a big, wide man in a damp, smelly bearskin coat. Vench wasn't too tired to be business-like and authoritative, and he said, "Mornin', sir," and turned to Riggs, his first mate. "Cast off and fill away." Guernsey, his second—the other man.

Vench jumped back, fighting for balance; then he swung his pistol against Trotter's jaw.

out of his crew of eight, who had been to sea—knew river water and he was to take the wheel.

And not until the stranger said, "Howdy, Cap'n," as he stepped down from the trestle at the gangway head, did Vench recognize him. He drawled: "Howdy, Trotter."

Trotter said: "Right clever-lookin' craft, this here is, Cap'n."

Vench's dander was rising at the coolness of the man and his trickery in getting his goods aboard. He said: "You're uncommon busy for a man that's looking for Judgment Day just next week."

"Yep—jist work an' pray," Trotter agreed piously, "that's all a man can do, an' be faithful unto the end. Hope you stored them big crates careful. Got my weddin' suit in one, along'th my new furniture—jist in case ol' John *did* make a mistake. . . . Yes, sir, quite a ship you've built yourself. Good thing you hadn't honest-to-gran'ma quit gamblin' like you told Mollie an' her daddy—"

Vench's first impulse was to order the man off the vessel. Yet, if he was going to tell Mollie about the cards,

that wouldn't keep him from doing it sooner or later, and plenty of keels were running that might even get downriver ahead of the ship. . . .

New and stiff, the vessel worked herself free before noon, and praise of her was extravagant. Vench decided to run his tops up to carry more sail, and by night he was feeling like an old salt. But he didn't have to remember not to swagger. He was too depressed thinking about what Mollie would think of his gambling, to swagger. His fo'c'sle hands were lubbers and a lubber is fit for little on shipdeck but for getting in the way. Trotter Henline, having been at sea for three years as a boy, had plenty of remarks to make to the other passengers about the efforts of the sailors—remarks that were galling to Vench because they sounded lenient and sympathetic but were really sarcastic. He didn't offer to lend a hand—perhaps, Vench thought, because he knew it would be refused.

ON the third day as they sailed now between rough hills and now between flooded farm or timberland, the crew began catching on and working together, though slow and clumsy. And Vench flattered himself that he was learning how to read the river—what marked a sawyer or snag or bar or flooded island.

Long were the arguments of those who knew the river as to how the falls should be taken and whether to go to right or left of the island George Rogers Clark had fortified. It turned out that there were five seamen besides Trotter among the passengers and they agreed that the long sweeps he had made to put out behind as rudders should keep the ship headed downstream, and that you could float through like riding a feather bed—if you kept in a channel.

They passed Cincinnati on a taut bowline early on the morning of the twenty-first, and the few people who saw them ran wildly to vantage-point to stare at what Vench reckoned they thought must have dropped from the moon. All day, in spite of the drizzles and an occasional spit of snow, Vench pushed the ship, hoping to try the falls before dark—or at least to send a boat down to take soundings and drop a line of buoys. One seaman was sick, and the rest were divided into watches of three and four. The larboard watch of three was on deck now "watching it rain" since nothing else could be done, hunkering in the lee of a tarpaulin they had rigged.

Guernsey stood on the fo'c'sle, conning the water through the foggy drizzle and calling back pointings to Vench who shivered in tarred coat and hat at the wheel. He was hoping they were as near Louisville as he thought, when hail came beating unmercifully down and of a sudden a head gale was upon the ship, taking her hard aback. Had the topgallants and royals been up, the cracking masts would have come out of her, not being for'ard braced.

Bawling for all hands, Guernsey was into the fore-rigging with his watch, and as the ship staggered, Trotter and the seamen among the passengers came tumbling out of the companionway.

Above the drumming of the hail that cracked unmercifully on man and ship and sail, Trotter screamed, "Lay aloft, you ——!"

All but one—a fellow named Nelson—ran for the shrouds; but Nelson spun on Trotter, and fending the hail from his bare head with an arm he cried angrily: "I'll captain a ship for no man as calls me that—or gives orders on my deck!"

Trotter caught a pike from a rack by the mizzen—placed there in case of boarding—and with a blow he felled the dodging man. Blood ran across the wet deck from his head.

Vench was so broached-to by the turn of events, and by the implication in Nelson's words, that he almost let the ship turn athwart the current. One thing was clear: Trotter had sent these men aboard. They were to take the ship and drop the honest men into the water, slit from chin to crotch so they would sink and stay sunk. But when? Well, the fat was in the fire, so it would have to be now or never.

If Nelson's fellows or the crewmen in the foretop knew what had happened—as seemed doubtful—they didn't show it. Trotter stared at his victim a moment, and then, shooting a look at Vench, he came up the ladder to the poop. The hail changed abruptly to flooding rain, and through it, in a wheezing voice, he said, "That's how a ship cap'n's got to be with insubordination, Vench. Not that I was meaning to butt into your job—but I thought the boys down there had jist as good he'p out—an' then he sassed me. Here—let me show you how to handle her 'fore you wreck us—"

He raised a hairy hand to smear water from his eyes and in that moment, as his face was half covered and his arm up like that, Vench saw that here was the man who would have robbed him and who had tried to shoot him in the back that other rainy day when first he met Mollie.

He said harshly, "Keep your hands off this wheel, Trotter, or I'll kill you for a common pirate!"

Trotter's sandy brows went up and after a moment he said, "So that's how it is?"

He stepped up, whirled Vench by the shoulder, and as his left knee started up Vench stamped down on the man's right instep with his heel. With a startled grunt, Trotter swung the pike, and Vench jumped back, fighting for his balance on the hailstones as he clawed out his pistol. The rain wet the priming instantly and with the weapon in the palm of his hand he swung it against Trotter's jaw. The man went into the crazily spinning wheel and a spoke caught him in the belly. He tumbled down to the deck below, got to his hands and knees, and crawled aimlessly toward the waist of the ship. As Vench fought the wheel, the man tottered upright.

One of his men slid down to him. Half stooping and holding his belly, Trotter said something, and catching up a marlinspike from a coil of rope the fellow ran to the fo'c'sle hatch and stuck it through the hasp. The men below had evidently not heard the "All hands!" and now they were locked down. The two after-sticks were bare and the men coming down, while Guernsey and his three lubbers fought their topsail that had got loose and was slatting as the ship yawed. All at once, as Vench tried to get his headway again, Trotter and his men seemed to abandon their idea of holding the deck—if they'd had such an idea—and broke aft and down the companionway.

GOING for their guns, Vench didn't doubt. Unless the ship grounded, and careened, she was in little danger—and that was about the least dangerous thing that could occur right now. Vench jumped to the deck and ran forward. Opening the fo'c'sle hatch, against which the men were pounding, he yelled into their surprised, irritated faces: "Bring up some priming powder, Henly!" And to his first, who had gone to see about the sick sailor: "Get up here, Mr. Riggs, you and Squiers. Burkhart, bring a pan of fire—double-quick all, or we'll some of us be dead—"

Riggs and Squiers tented a coat over Vench and the lock of the foreswivel as he slashed the tarred canvas free from the weapon with his knife. It was loaded with two two-pound canisters of grape. Vench was trying to blow out the priming from the touch-hole, lest it be damp. Burkhart, looking wildly about for the river pirates he expected to see, got there with the pan of fire hissing and steaming in the rain just then—for Vench allowed the men to have heat for'ard—and as he waited for powder Vench saw a movement in the dark hole of the after companionway. He swung the swivel a bit, angling it from his superior height, and turned the fire down over the touch-hole. Through the choking woodsmoke, he saw Trotter Henline raise a rifle.

He never knew if Trotter fired it, for the swivel let go with a crashing roar and as the black-powder cloud

rolled along the deck he perceived that the shot had been dead center.

From the foretop, Guernsey called out: "The falls! I think—"

There was no time to think, nor to get to shore, nor to put out the sweeps astern. Vench had a brief glimpse of lights ashore in the murk, and he heard the wild soughing of beaten water. But they still had their headwind, and he cried, "Get the mizzen and mizzentop on 'er to hold her stern upstream!"

He ran aft with the men and fought the banging wheel, and as the mizzen canvas spread, the nose came obediently around. Guernsey came to help him with the wheel, and now they were rolling and rushing along as if the devil were behind them. White water spouted here and there, and somewhere below there were great rocks ready to cut the bottom out of the ship and beat her apart.

Vench didn't start shaking until he brought the ship to in the slack water before the lower hamlet at the foot of the rapids. Then Guernsey, there on the poop by him, called out: "They must have dropped out the stern window—three—four of them—"

Sure enough, a couple of hundred yards behind, four sodden figures were crawling out of the cold brown water to disappear into the dusk. But none of them was Trotter Henline. Vench knew without looking that the ones below would be dead.

He called to a man ashore on a mule:

"Got any kind of a sheriff here?"

HE walked on down the river to Mollie's. It was coming nine o'clock as he approached by the back trail in the pale moonlight. His ship was sold for eighty-eight hundred dollars to a couple of banker-merchants at the hamlet, and he had a draft on Pittsburgh for the money in his wallet. Also he had some sort of title to the goods aboard, not to mention an order for another ship.

But he felt no great triumph. Only a heaviness of heart and an anxious dread of meeting Mollie and yet a desire for it that was greater. Passing a shed, he could hear the sound of many voices in prayer and through a window up at the house he saw a room full of people kneeling in the candle light.

"Vench?"

Startled, he whirled. Mollie was coming from the shed with a bucket, and in there he could hear a cow scrunching and a calf sucking. Mollie halted. Apologetically she said, "The—the cow is fresh. She was suffering to be milked—and anyway, the twenty-second doesn't start till midnight—"

Vench took the foam-rounded bucket, and Mollie added, "I've been expecting you all day. I mean—out of respect to Papa I thought you'd come—even if you didn't believe—"

Vench said sharply, "How do I know he ain't right? Maybe it's a dream, but who's got a right to laugh at it? I've had dreams—and some of 'em turned out—"

NOW he saw the figurehead for his ship was more like her than he remembered, and abruptly he heard himself say, "I never meant to make you mad that time. What—what's the right way to ask a girl to marry you?"

Slowly, Mollie said: "Why—I guess there isn't any wrong way, long as you don't go asking her daddy about it in public even before you've talked it over with her." Then she added: "Sending her little brother for a picture is a good way."

"He told you?"

"Why—he nearly had to. I was wearing it around my neck." She smiled. "We better get in. You're all wet and shivery—"

She caught the bail and with the bucket between them they walked up the path to wait for tomorrow.

From the Editor's Scrapbook

Earth's Second Moon

by MORRISON COLLADAY

DID the earth at some time in the distant past have two moons revolving around it, as Mars has today?

As moons and planets go, it wouldn't be an unreasonable number. Uranus has four moons, Saturn ten in addition to her rings, Jupiter eleven. There may be in the solar system still more moons that we don't yet know about. Numbers ten and eleven of Jupiter were discovered only a short time ago.

Whatever it had in the past, the earth possesses only one moon now. What reason is there to suppose there ever was a second moon?

The chief reason is that there exists evidence of an ice age along the line of the equator. This is very puzzling. Scientists haven't much difficulty in explaining, to their own satisfaction at least, the four periods in the earth's history when the temperate zones were covered by gradually advancing glaciers which eventually, and just as gradually, retreated to the Arctic regions. The explanation is that there is probably a rhythm in temperature changes corresponding to that from summer to winter to summer again, but with periods of millions of years instead of twelve months.

It will require observations extending over a long time to establish this theory as a fact, but it does explain recurring ice ages. However, it doesn't account for the existing evidence that great glaciers once covered India, Australia, Africa and South America along the line of the equator.

It has been suggested that sometime in the earth's early history its axis, which now swings in a circle over a period of thousands of years, turned far enough so that the poles and the equator exchanged positions relatively to the sun. This seems highly improbable, but no acceptable alternative theory was advanced until Dr. Roland L. Ives suggested in an article in the *Journal of the Franklin Institute* that long ago the earth had a second moon.

Dr. Ives calls this second moon "Ephemeron" and believes it was smaller than the present moon and revolved in an orbit nearer the earth. Over a period of millions of years Ephemeron gradually approached closer and closer to the earth, as it is probable our present moon is doing.

It has been calculated by mathematicians that when any object revolving around the earth comes within eleven thousand miles of its surface, the combined gravitational forces of the two bodies will destroy the smaller. This is what happened to Ephemeron. The dust and fragments which had composed that moon formed a ring around the earth over the equator like the rings of Saturn, which are also probably the vestiges of destroyed moons.

EVENTUALLY this ring disappeared, but until it did, it prevented much of the heat of the sun from reaching the tropical zone which it covered. Dr. Ives suggests that the ring lasted thirty million years, during what is known in geology as the Permian period, which ended 190,000,000 years ago.

"According to a number of theories," he says, "notably those of Jeffreys and Darwin, our present moon will ultimately be drawn toward earth by tidal forces, and upon reaching the 'Roche limit' will be broken up, the fragments forming a ring of small satellites about earth. This ring will probably produce such changes on earth that life in forms resembling the present will be impossible. Calculations suggest that this cataclysm will take place in about eight billion years."

Road

A youngster has a hard row to hoe in a tough lumber-camp—and when the big sleds come down the ice-rutted road, his job can be vital.

He asked in an anxious voice: "How's chances for a job here?"

A THIN, ragged boy came up the trail to Camp Five, carrying slung over his shoulder a bundle rolled in an old quilt from which the wadding leaked in various places.

He encountered Bob Snyder, the push, and asked in an anxious voice: "How's chances for a job here?"

"Used to handlin' an ax?" countered Bob.

The boy smiled wanly. "Sence I was about six years old."

"What's your name?"

"Mark Hull."

"Well, Mark," said the push in a not unkindly tone, "I guess maybe I'll try you out. You go give your name to the clerk in the office over there, and then find yourself a bunk."

Mark went out on the road gang. Though he had yet to get his weight and strength, he knew how to put the "hook" on his ax that makes the cleanest, deepest cut with the least expenditure of effort, and the straw boss found him a good worker.

"You're doin' fine, Kid," he said.

The boy had little to say for himself, though he smiled pleasantly when spoken to. At other times his rather homely face wore a serious and preoccupied expression.

On his first Saturday night in camp he got the usual tossing in a blanket, was blindfolded and tripped backward into a tub of icy water, and given the hot seat afterward to warm him up. He endured all these things in stoical silence, and was accordingly pronounced a duly initiated tough gut.

He had picked for himself an upper bunk not far from one of the hanging oil lamps that illuminated the bunkhouse, and in it he had spread a big armful of hay and his ragged quilt. He slept in most of his clothes to keep warm.

In the evenings, while the lumberjacks played cards or sat on the deacon seat telling interminable and circumstantial lies, he remained in his bunk laboriously mending his tattered old clothing.

For material he used pieces of cloth cut with his jackknife from garments discarded by his camp mates, so that presently he came to resemble a walking patchwork quilt.

Dud Dimock, the camp wit, said to him one day: "You're goin' right ahead, ain't you, Kid? You come into the world without a rag on you, and now you're all rags."

Mark only smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

Camp fare was rough but plentiful; and the boy ate as if he had never before had a square meal in his life.

"Your legs must be holler clear to the ankle," commented Dud. "How do you get that way, Kid?"

"I'm always hungry," confessed Mark.

"Well, it's beginnin' to show on you," said Dud. "When you first blew in here, you was that skinny you didn't even throw a shadder, but the way you're swellin' up they'll have to keep you in a corral by spring."

Monkey

by JOHN BEAMES

Illustrated by Charles Hargens

Mark endured these things in stoical silence . . . a duly initiated tough gut.

By the end of January all the branch roads had been cut. Hauling had been going on for a month on Main Number One, and now Main Two was completed. This ran up through a deep ravine from Elk Lake into a fine pocket of timber.

Bob Snyder said to Mark one morning: "I want you to go with Jimmy Tucker today. He'll show you what to do."

He pointed to a small man in his forties, who had been on the road gang with Mark, and whose unflattering nickname was the Wart. He had a small narrow face and mournful eyes of a muddy brown. His thin pink ears grew out of the sides of his head on stalks like some peculiar variety of flower, and his nose turned sharply to the left. He had spindly legs and large shuffling feet. Out-of-doors, he was almost hidden in a heavy sheepskin jacket and a big fur cap.

MARK had never been with him before, but when the pair set out up the road together he suddenly burst into speech:

"You're goin' to help me on Main Two," he said in a twittering voice. "Bob, he picked me to keep that there road in shape—he knows I'm the man what can do it. Yes, sir, what I don't know about road-monkeyin' nobody can't tell me. They let on road monkeys ain't so much, but they're just jealous—that's what. Some ways, the road monkey is the most important man in the woods. Without they get the logs out, they might just as well leave 'em stand in the bush, and I'm the man what gets 'em out."

He giggled, showing a few discolored teeth.

"You listen to me, Kid, and I'll learn you a lot of things you never knowed. You're lucky you got me to work with. You never been in the bush before, and I'm the man can tell **you** what you need to know."

They came to Main Two, parallel iced ruts eight feet apart, and turned up it away from the lake, coming soon to a pile of hay.

"Now we'll lay some of this here down," said the Wart. "Not too much—a little here and a little there, to slow the loads down, see." Mark did as directed, the Wart giving him minute instructions.

Farther up the ravine they came to a sharp bend, heavily banked with logs on the outer side.

"You want to keep the ruts on this here good and deep," said the Wart. "If you let 'em fill up with snow, the loads comin' down the hill fast is liable to cut right off and go to hell down below. I call this here bend the Hook."

A hundred feet or so farther on there was a short, steep pitch. "This Pitch," said the Wart impressively, "is the dangerousest place on the whole road. Hay ain't no good here a-tall: what you need is lots of sand. Now you take your ax and go to cuttin' wood while I make a fire."

Where the bank had been cut away to make the fill, he lit a fire and piled it high with the wood the boy had cut. "This here will thaw out the sand," he explained. "After a while we'll have a nice little hole in the bank where we'll be out of the wind. If a feller knows his business, he can make

himself pretty comfortable on a job like this, and I'm the lad what knows how."

Above the Pitch the grade was easy, and a little hay laid down here and there would be sufficient to keep the big sleighs from picking up too much speed. They put the hay down and returned to the fire.

The Wart showed some nervousness. "She's just been iced," he said, "and she'll be pretty fast. We'll need plenty sand. Dig her out and lay her ready."

MARK dug out several shovelfuls from under the fire and piled it beside the road.

"First one down will likely be Brindle-whiskers Slade," said the Wart, "and he's mean-natured as hell. I don't want to have nothin' go wrong with him."

He stood in a listening attitude, looking up to where the road wound out of sight behind a wooded knoll. There came a brassy-voiced yell: "Ai-ai-ai! Yi-yi-yi-yiiii!"

"He's a-comin'," screamed the Wart. "Hustle with that there sand. Lay her down thick."

Mark began to shovel sand into the ruts.

"No, no, no," howled the Wart. "Not that much—you'll stick her. Get it out quick."

Mark shoveled it out.

The load came creaking and grinding down the hill, fourteen feet wide and eight or nine feet high. The driver stood on the roller just behind the huge bay horses, leaning back against the butts of the logs, the lines gripped in both fists.

The horses stepped cautiously, their haunches well under them, their mouths open, their front legs stiff.

The Wart ran up to meet them, tossing sand in their path. The load checked and slowed down. The Wart leaped aside.

It was now Mark's turn. But he had shoveled the ruts clean and the load picked up speed. "Sand!" bellowed the driver.

Mark emptied his shovel, whirled and scooped up more, and raced to get ahead of the team, now being forced into a gallop.

He managed to head them. Then his foot slipped on the ice, and he fell on his knees. Even as he did so, however, he twisted his body, and flung the sand down into the near rut.

There was a sound between a whistle and a scream; fire gushed out in a crimson spout behind the runners, and the load came almost to a halt.

Mark looked up into a furious face framed in a fan-shaped beard of red streaked with black, and heard a bellow:

"Damn you, I'll fix you for that!"

Then the load slid past, and went at an even pace around the Hook and out of sight.

The Wart came running down the hill. "My Gawd!" he wailed. "That was Brindle-whiskers, and now he's mad. He'll raise the devil about this."

"We got him down all right," said the boy. "I don't know what he has to beef about."

"You'd ought to had more sand on the Pitch," said the Wart. "She was too fast there. I didn't want this to happen with the very first load. It looks bad."

He fussed about, putting sand in the ruts, deciding there was too much, and taking it out again, until there came another warning cry from up above.

"You go on up," directed the Wart, "and give him plenty sand. I'll stay here."

Mark hurried to meet the descending load, a shovelful of sand under each arm, and gave it both of them. The sleighs came to a halt.

The driver was Dan Macey, a short, broad man with twinkling eyes. He shook his head and grinned. "Too damn' generous, Kid," he said. "Shovel in a little snow, and le'me see can I get her started again."

Mark shoveled strenuously. Dan put his fine gray team into the collar, racked the front bob to right and left, and then clucked to them. The load got under way again.

When he was gone, the Wart sat down by the fire and panted. "This here's a awful worry," he said. "Now do you see why it takes a good man on a hill like this? But for me, both them loads would likely be smashed to hell and gone by now. It's a big responsibility I got."

"A mean guy like that gets catched up with, in the end."

Brindle-whiskers came round the Hook on his return trip with the empty sleighs. As his horses toiled slowly up the hill, he turned loose a blistering flood of invective. When he got opposite the fire, he halted the team and jumped off. He stood towering over the road monkeys, calling them every name in his extensive vocabulary of foul language.

He was upward of six feet in height, wide-shouldered and loosely jointed, and above his flaming beard appeared a bottle-shaped nose, and small, malicious eyes of a pale green.

NERVOUSLY the Wart stood silent, rubbing his hands, but Mark replied spiritedly: "We got you down all right. I don't see you got any kick comin'."

Brindle-whiskers shot out a hand, gripped him by the collar, twisted his face up and gave him a heavy cuff. Blood welled from the boy's cut lip and trickled down his chin, but he struck back.

Brindle-whiskers flung him into the snow and kicked him viciously. Mark scrambled up and leaped out of reach.

"Maybe that'll learn you," snarled Brindle-whiskers. "You tend to your business and don't give me no lip, or I'll fix you right."

He climbed back on his sleighs and whistled to his team.

Mark stood with tears of rage and humiliation running down his cheeks. "I'll kill that swine," he cried. "If they didn't need my money so bad back home, I'd jump this job right now."

"Just don't say nothin' to make him mad," advised the Wart. "He's a bad actor."

"He's just a dirty bully," raged Mark. "If I was only a little bigger, I'd take him down and beat his face in. I'll get even with him yet."

He was interrupted by a high, thin: "Yip, yip, yip, yippeee!"

"That'll be Jericho Wilts," said the Wart in a tone of relief. "Come along, and let's get him down. Be careful this time—just give him one shovel, and hold the other to see does he need it."

Jericho Wilts, the ancient and one-eyed bullpuncher from Michigan, came down the hill singing in a high falsetto of old Saginaw and a girl with googoo eyes. His round red face was framed in a frill of snowy whiskers, and he winked his one good eye at Mark as he slid past.

Each teamster drew three loads a day, and Brindle-whiskers brought his second down just before dinner. He had his pockets filled with lumps of ice, and with these he pelted Mark as he went by, grinning maliciously.

"I will have to kill him yet," cried the boy, nursing a bruised cheek. "A man as mean as that ain't got no right to live."

"Come and set down and eat," coaxed the Wart. "You'll feel better with some hot tea into you."

The cook had provided them with a lunch, a billy and tea. Sitting close against the bank out of the savage north wind, they were warm and comfortable by the fire.

The Wart began to ask questions. "How old are you?"

"Seventeen last fall."

"What you doin' in the bush? You're pretty young."

"They had to have some money at home. I got two young sisters and a kid brother and my ma on the homestead."

"What about your dad?"

"He was killed hayin' last summer—horses run away."

"Can't the neighbors help?" asked the Wart.

"They're pretty much up against it too. They done what they could, but they got no money, and we wouldn't want to take it if they had. So I come to the bush for the winter."

The Wart shook his head. "So that's why you're so ragged, eh?"

"Yes. I can't go buyin' clothes out of the wanigan, and I can't jump the job, neither. If it wasn't for that, I'd bat that brindle-whiskered bum over the head with a shovel and walk out."

"Well, boy, if you'll take it from me," said the Wart in a judicial tone; "the best thing you can do is keep your mouth shut. Don't say nothin' to make Brindle-whiskers mad, and maybe he'll lay off on you after a while."

Mark's eyes filled with angry tears again. "He'll think I'm scared of him, and he'll give me more dirt. I don't know how I can bear it."

"You're doin' it for your ma and the kids," the Wart reminded him. "Look at it that way."

"I don't know what good you're doin' here. Road monkeys ain't no help to nobody," Brindle-whiskers sneered.

THEY settled down to the routine of the road. The work was not heavy but required plenty of running uphill and downhill. The Wart was not fast on his feet, so it fell mostly on Mark to see that the ruts were swept clean, and the hay at top and bottom of the hill kept fresh and free from snow and ice.

The Wart confined his activities chiefly to keeping the fire up and seeing the loads down the Pitch. He felt the cold keenly, and when the temperature fell to fifty below, as it did a couple of times, could not be coaxed from the warm hole in the bank. In such cold weather, however, the loads pulled hard, and little sand was required.

The danger came when the temperature rose. Then the runners slid easily and the ruts had to be kept well sanded. Worst of all was when snow fell. Then both men were kept busy sweeping and sanding all day long.

There was no trouble with Dan and Jericho, who usually had an appreciative word for a hard-working and conscientious boy. And Mark had made friends with a pair of gray Canada jays. The whiskyjacks would come fluttering down around the fire-pit, squawking raucously, and were presently bold enough to take food from his fingers.

The boy would have been completely happy but for Brindle-whiskers. The big skinner was as cunning as he was mean. In camp and when others were by, he ignored the road monkeys completely, but when the three were alone on the hill, he invariably had some snarl or sneer for them, and was always trying to catch Mark off guard and hit him with a lump of ice.

The Wart would stand with one shoulder turned from him, looking down and saying nothing, but the boy stared him straight in the face, his lips pressed tight together to keep back angry words. This silent defiance aroused all that was most savage and cruel in Brindle-whiskers.

"Don't sass him back," the Wart continually advised the boy. "Season's gettin' on, and if he got you bounced you wouldn't likely get another job now."

"Damn him," said Mark; "he's just ridin' us. Comin' down, he wants the whole hill sanded so his horses can just walk down. Comin' back up, he wants all the sand out. He can't have it both ways."

"He wants you to sass him, so he can have you bounced," the Wart pointed out. "Don't pay no 'tention to him—just remember your ma back on the homestead and all the money you'll be takin' home to her."

"And then he keeps peggin' them chunks of ice at me," said the boy.

"Gi' me sand, kid, gimme sand," he yelled, in a tone of abject supplication.

"Every time he does that, I just want to step back and let him and his damn' load go to hell down the hill."

"Don't do that," begged the Wart. "Just watch him and dodge. A mean guy like that always gets catched up with in the end. Just be like me—let him go by and don't worry."

"I wouldn't, neither, only he knows what'll get me goin'," replied Mark. "He can call me lazy, but I know I ain't. He can bawl that there ain't no sand, but I know I give him plenty. But when he calls me a raggy bum—Damn his dirty hide, I can't go shootin' money in on a new outfit. Nobody hates bein' all raggy worse'n I do, but what can I do?"

"Just remember you're doin' it for your ma."

"That's all right to say," returned the boy sullenly, "but the way he's goin', one of these here days I'll just throw the sand in the snow and let him smash."

"Don't be foolish," pleaded the Wart. "Be like me—he calls me Wart, but what do I care?"

HOWEVER, a remark of Brindle-whiskers did finally penetrate the Wart's protective armor. The skinner pulled up before the fire one day, wearing his most malicious grin.

"Road monkeys is the lowest thing there is in the woods," he sneered. "And you two is pretty low even for road monkeys. I don't know why Bob bothers to keep you at all—this here road would be just as safe if you wasn't around. You're drawin' your money for nothin', the both of you."

The Wart winced under the gibe and began to tremble all over. Brindle-whiskers laughed mockingly and pulled on up the hill.

"Listen at him," the Wart burst out with startling vehemence. "Don't need no road monkeys on this here hill! Why, if it wasn't for us, he'd never get down to the bottom safe—he'd been killed his very first trip."

Mark looked at him in surprise. "Why, that ain't no worse than the things he's sayin' all the time."

"No, sir," said the Wart stubbornly, "when he's just castin' slurs at us personal, it don't mean a thing; but him sayin' road monkeys is the lowest thing in the woods, that's different.

Road monkeys is just as important as skinners—*they* get more money maybe and has swelled heads; but without road monkeys, they couldn't get no place. Damn all skinners!" There came a spark of hatred into his muddy eyes. "Good road monkeys could get them loads down the hill if there wasn't no skinners, but skinners—aw, to hell with 'em all!"

He fell into a brooding silence most unusual in him, and would not raise his head when Brindle-whiskers passed up or down the hill.

This seemed to please the skinner, and henceforward his sole topic of conversation was the generally contemptible and inferior nature of road monkeys, and the absolute lack of need for this particular pair on Main Two.

"He's the meanest man I ever see in my life," cried the Wart. "I don't know how anybody can be so mean and live."

"Well, if I had my way, he wouldn't live much longer," said Mark.

THEY went out one March morning with a blizzard blowing. During such a storm hauling would normally be suspended until the snowplow and rutter had been over the road. But there was still a lot of timber on Main Two, and the season was getting short. Bob Snyder decided to try and carry on by closing Main One, where hauling was nearly complete, and bringing the road monkeys over to Main Two.

One of them he posted at the top of the hill to sweep the ruts clean and throw fresh hay down for every load, and the other man down by the lake to do the same there.

He said to Mark: "I want you to keep this here Pitch well sanded. Don't bother with nothin' else."

"You take the Hook," he said to the Wart. "Keep them ruts deep. Take sand down for each load, and stick 'em if you have to, but don't let 'em cut off."

"I'd ought to be here at the pit, seein' as I'm head man," said the Wart in an aggrieved tone.

"You can't run as fast as what the boy can," answered Bob. "You'll be more use to me at the Hook. All right, away you go!"

The Wart went off muttering, and Mark made up the fire, dug plenty of sand loose, and then took to his heavy broom to keep the ruts open.

The blizzard was just beginning, and the first two loads went down with little trouble. Brindle-whiskers came up the hill on his return trip.

He encountered the Wart at the Hook and said: "I don't know what good you're doin' here, you rat's hind end! All you road monkeys is just the same; you ain't no help to nobody."

A shiver passed over the Wart, and he turned his back in silence.

Brindle-whiskers went on up the hill, and saw Mark standing by the fire-pit looking down at him with a set expression. The big skinner suddenly seemed to realize that he stood in peril from the boy. He checked the gibe he was about to throw, and instead said soberly:

"Say, let's cut out the foolin' today, eh? We can kid along when things is goin' good, but this ain't the time for it." He added in a wheedling tone: "You give me lots of sand next trip, eh?"

Mark's expression did not change, and he turned his back.

Jericho Wilts brought his load down. His red face was a shade paler, and he called anxiously: "Le' me have plenty sand, Kid; I'm dependin' on you."

Mark grinned and let him have two heaping shovelfuls, and he shouted gratefully: "Good boy!"

The wind had been blowing hard enough, but now it rose to gale force, blowing straight up from the lake and funneling an almost solid mass of snow into the ravine. The ruts filled to the brim in a few minutes. The light became a pearly gray, and objects fifty feet away lost all outline.

Brindle-whiskers would be along soon, and the boy stood alone on the hill, holding the fate of his enemy in his hand. If he chose to throw the sand into the snow instead of into the ruts, the load would rush downhill out of control, and crash to inevitable disaster at the Hook. No one would ever be able to prove that it was not an accident.

He began to sweep the ruts, a perplexed frown on his forehead. He moved slowly and reluctantly in a manner most unlike his usually industrious and careful ways.

Then he heard the trumpet voice of Brindle-whiskers, sounding muffled against the wind, but with a shrill note of anxiety in it. He dropped the broom and went slowly up the hill, a shovelfull of sand under each arm. He laid one down by the roadside and went a few yards farther with the other.

Then he halted, an expression of sullen anger on his face.

A formless mass appeared above him, seeming to hang in midair. It took shape as it advanced; first of all the heads of the horses, their bodies and legs hidden by the swirling snow. They were down on their haunches, being literally pushed along by the ponderous weight behind.

Now Brindle-whiskers' strained face grew clear, his beard matted with snow, peering anxiously.

"Gi'me sand, kid, gimme sand," he yelled, in a tone of abject supplication.

Mark stood stiffly, the shovel poised in his hands.

"Kid, for God's sake, gimme sand!" screamed the skinner.

With a look of distaste, the boy swung his shovel, laying the sand down in a long ribbon in the rut. He ran a few yards down the hill, picked up the other shovel and flung its contents also fairly into the rut. The load slowed, and the horses were able to regain their feet.

Then he bent forward and called to his enemy: "I did that for the horses, not for you, you yaller dog!"

The load slid by, and he stood watching it dim to shapelessness. It picked up speed rapidly, and he saw the blurred mass whip sharply out of sight around the Hook. Then the wind brought him a muffled yell and a dull rumbling.

He stood frozen for a moment, and then bounded forward. He rounded the bend. Here were the horses, flung on their sides one on top of the other. They had made the turn, but the sleighs had cut off and turned over, wrenching out the tongue. The load was piled in a jackstrawed heap in the bed of the ravine.

Mark could not see either the Wart or Brindle-whiskers. He rushed to the aid of the horses. He got the nearer by the head and hauled. With a snort and a plunge it got to its feet. Then he was able to drag the other one up. They stood with their sides heaving. One of them had a long calk gash on the off hindleg, but otherwise they seemed none the worse.

MARK let go of them and looked around for the men. The Wart lay huddled in the snow where a flying log had struck him down. The boy rolled the log away. The Wart's eyes opened but he did not move. The boy bent over him. "You bad hurt?" he asked.

"Bad hurt," the Wart echoed faintly.

"Where's Brindle-whiskers?"

"Down there, down under the load," the Wart answered in a trembling voice. "The load cut off. I didn't go to do it."

"Why, didn't you sand the ruts?"

"He said they didn't need no road monkeys on this here hill," mumbled the Wart. "He kep' sayin' that. Somebody needed to show him. I never meant to kill him."

"So you didn't sand the ruts?"

The Wart did not reply for a moment. Then he gave Mark a cunning look out of the corners of his eyes.

"Nobody won't never know whether I sanded them ruts or not; but them big-feelin' skinners will maybe have a little more respec' for road monkeys from now on. . . . Can't move," he added feebly, and shuddered—and was still.

Right

WALLY had been in the prime of life for nearly fifty years. He stood over eleven feet tall, weighed six and a half tons, and the only thing about him which was not entirely majestic was his tail. Even a cow would have refused this appendage both on ornamental and practical grounds.

It is not known whether Wally ever forgot anything or not; but he certainly remembered a good deal, and he had been the undisputed ruler of his herd for longer than many younger elephants cared to remember. His sight had never been good, but this was made up for by an acuteness of hearing and still more of smell, which would have shamed the best sporting dog. This perhaps is not surprising; for his nose, if you can call it a nose, was over eight feet long, and a single one of his ears would have covered a table which could dine four people.

It was, however, for entirely other reasons that the average hard-up human was interested in Wally. He had two gleaming white curved tusks. These tusks had never been removed from Wally and weighed; but anyone who knew anything about the market could tell at a glance that each of the tusks weighed over a hundred pounds. And as the price of ivory has averaged between twelve-and-six and nineteen shillings a pound for the last fifty years, it can be realized at once that Wally was an object of enduring interest to *homo sapiens,* quite apart from the fact that elephant steak made an excellent meal for those not possessed of too sensitive a palate.

A moment later it happened. The whole herd came straight at them.

# of Way

African elephants are strong-minded as well as strong-bodied, and they didn't like the idea of an airport on their private stamping-grounds.

by LAURENCE KIRK

One of the earliest humans to take an interest in Wally was Angus Andrew McNought. Angus came of a good family, which paid him a small annual remittance to remain out of England—or rather Scotland; and as he was a good shot and liked an open-air life, he became an elephant hunter. That was in the good old days, when Africa was free to all, and nobody got a rake-off except the Sultan of Zanzibar who took a modest five percent. But as elsewhere, life became more difficult as time and progress went on; and the honest human had to cope with various taxes, rates and duties, not to mention fees for a game license, which seriously increased the overhead charges. On the other hand Wally's tusks, which had weighed a mere sixty pounds each when Angus first knew him, kept growing in weight and value; so the net profit of removing them from Wally remained about the same.

Angus was about twenty years younger than Wally. When they first met, Wally was the first elephant Angus had encountered; but Angus was not the first human that Wally had known, by any manner of means. Angus trod on a dry twig in his efforts to get close enough for a good shot, and he had just time to dive behind an anthill before Wally and his herd thundered past like a pack of Gadarene trams. From then on it became a point of honor with Angus to get his own back; and though he covered the whole of Central Africa and killed hundreds of lesser elephants, he always returned to Mukongo on the Albert Nile, which was Wally's home, to square accounts. On two occasions, once in 1925 and again in 1929, he was just getting that small area between Wally's eye and ear on his sights; but each time something happened to startle the wary beast, and the whole herd melted silently into impenetrable bush before he could get a shot.

In 1930 there was another difficulty. Mukongo was declared a game reserve, which meant that there was no shooting there. Angus thought that was the end. But soon his African spies reported that Wally and his herd were sometimes still to be seen outside the boundaries; apparently there was some succulent bush which Wally liked for dessert but which did not grow inside the reserve. So Angus continued to pay a yearly visit to Mukongo when these bushes were in flower. But Wally seemed to have read the regulations and to know the boundaries of the reserve. For the next six years he and Angus played a game of hide-and-seek, not unlike the little man and little woman in the wooden house who are supposed to foretell the weather. Wally came out when Angus was in, and Angus came out when Wally was in; but they never both came out together.

THEN one hot afternoon in 1936, Angus suddenly had the illusion that Wally was there in front of him, eighty yards away, half a mile from the reserve, with his trunk lovingly caressing one of those succulent bushes. A moment later he realized it was no illusion. It was Wally, unwary for once.

Angus lifted his gun. His hand shook a little at first. That was not surprising when it is remembered that he had waited thirty years and walked thousands of miles for this moment. But a second later he was as steady as a rock. The sights were on the exact spot beside the ear, his chin on the stock, his finger on the trigger—then suddenly his eyes went misty and something warm and wet dropped on the hot stock of his gun. Angrily he wiped his eye with a dirty finger and tried again. But it was no good. He knew then that he could not shoot Wally, despite all that ivory. They had known each other too long.

That afternoon Angus sat a long time hunched up on an anthill, after Wally had disappeared into the bush. The next morning Angus got up before dawn and started for Government headquarters. There he applied for the vacant post of game warden in the Mukongo district, and after some demur they accepted him. Regardless of his age, he was as wiry as ever and knew more about game than any other man in the country.

So, after spending thirty years of his life trying to shoot Wally, Angus set out to devote the remainder of it to seeing that nobody else did.

The first thing Angus did as game warden was to plant an adequate supply of the succulent species of bush inside the reserve. He knew there was no law to protect Wally outside the reserve, and he was determined to do all that he could to protect, not only Wally, but the whole herd, which now numbered sixty and was the best in the country. Unlike some others, he understood Wally's weakness for the succulent bush; he'd had the same trouble himself at times when he got near a bottle of whisky.

Anyway, Wally took the hint and stayed inside the reserve, and in the next few years the herd was increased by five little elephants which ambled unsteadily along beside their mothers. Everything seemed set for a peaceful life for both Angus and the herd. . . .

But in 1939 Hitler did what everybody knows he did. Angus tried to join up, as he had in 1914; but this time he was refused. So he drank a whole bottle of whisky, felt much the better for it, and went on being a game warden. For nearly a year life at Mukongo remained as peaceful as before; then in June of 1940 Mussolini decided that war would be more lucrative than neutrality; and unknown to Angus during the next three months various G.O.C.'s, A.O.C.'s and V.I.P.'s began to get out maps of Abyssinia and argue as to how they were to push the Eyeties out of it.

ANGUS did not take the Fascists as seriously as he did the Nazis. Moreover, he had done a lot of poaching in Abyssinia; he considered it an inhospitable country with nothing but unwholesome water to drink, and thought much the best thing was to leave the Eyeties there. This, however, was not the opinion of the V.I.P. with whom the final decision rested. He was a man of action. After listening to all the arguments, he decided that it was a perfectly simple matter to site the required airfields. All that was wanted was water and some dry level ground. He took out a map and drew five rings on it, all at about the same distance from Abyssinia; and one of them fell right on that part of the reserve where Angus had planted the succulent bushes.

After that there was a lull for some months. As soon as the great man had made his decision a number of objecting voices were raised. The Governor, who was a lawyer by training, pointed out that there were two international conventions prohibiting the entry of Europeans into the Mukongo

Illustrated by Charles Chickering

"I'm not as young as I was," Angus said. "But I think I could still do it."

district as well as three others about the protection of game; while the Chief Medical Officer wrote a long memorandum regarding the incidence of malaria, trypanosomiasis, bilharziasis and other tropical diseases in the area. Angus himself protested that the ground became waterlogged in the rains. This was quite untrue, incidentally; but he could not think of anything better to protect his precious herd from interference. However, it did not matter much whether it was true or not. The great man had the same answer to all these objections: "There is a war on—get on with it." So they got on with it. First came a sanitary squad to deal with the diseases; then huts were built; then men of various colors came to fill the huts; then the clearing began; and finally bulldozers and other yellow monsters appeared to prepare the runway.

There was unrest amongst the workers even before the bulldozers appeared. In spite of all the precautions a number of men went down with disease; and apart from the question of disease there were often big gray forms on the edge of the forest, apparently shadowing them. The men did not like the way these gray forms appeared and disappeared without even the crackling of a twig. Still less did they like the way the biggest form of all stepped out of the forest sometimes and looked at them with his long gleaming tusks pointing in their direction.

When the bulldozers arrived there was more trouble. Wally apparently had decided that this gross yellow monster had come to dispute the leadership of the herd with him. In any case, when dawn came the next day, the best bulldozer was found lying on its side, and considerably the worse for wear—just as if it had been having a fight and got the worst of it.

Then the workers tried firing shots in the air whenever the gray shadows appeared. But that was no good. Wally seemed to know that he was protected by three international conventions; neither he nor his herd paid any attention to rifle-shots fired inside the reserve. And just to show that he still had right of way over the area, he led his whole herd very early one morning down the soft, newly laid runway; when the cement began to dry in the hot sun the next day, it dried with a number of huge holes in it like a slice of Gruyère cheese.

Angus then persuaded the contractor to light big fires all around the clearing at night. Wally had long recognized this as a signal to keep away, and he kept away. The Group Captain, on the other hand, got to hear of it and he arrived in a light aircraft. He was in a furious temper even before the light aircraft broke its undercarriage in one of Wally's footmarks, flung him forward in the cockpit, and removed most of the skin off his nose.

AS soon as he had had a piece of plaster placed on the wound, he summoned Angus to the Station Commander's office, a flimsy building with men still working on the open roof. He would have told these Africans to get to hell out of it if he had known the language; but he was not prepared to show his ignorance and started to give Angus a dressing-down in front of them.

"What the hell do you mean by lighting these fires?" he began angrily.

Angus sat down without being invited.

"To keep the elephants away, of course," he replied.

"Oh!" said the Group Captain darkly. "They think differently at Headquarters. They think it was to give information to the enemy about this airstrip."

"Is that so?" said Angus without much interest.

"Yes, it is so," the Group Captain retorted. "And it's a capital offense in wartime! Don't you realize that the work on all these airstrips is top secret?"

Angus looked up calmly at one of the men on the roof.

"Massindi!"

"Yes, Bwana."

"You speak English?"

"Yes, Bwana."

"Do you know if they are clearing ground with the yellow monsters anywhere else besides this?"

"Why, yes, Bwana. They are doing it at Winga's village and at Mupende, at Nzoa by the hill and Bagali over the marsh."

"How do you know all this, Massindi?"

"Why everyone knows it, Bwana. In my case, it was my daughter's husband who came over the border from Abyssinia and told me what is being done."

Angus turned to the Group Captain without comment, and the latter bristled.

"You'd better tell all these damned natives to get off this blasted roof."

Angus did so; and when the last of the Africans had reluctantly left the roof, the Group Captain tried a different tone.

"I'm sure you've been doing your best, Mr. McNought. But we can't have these fires at night. We can't have elephants about either—and the only thing to do is to shoot the whole damned herd."

"Oh, I canna do that." Angus shook his head flatly. "It'll be a twa-hundred-pound fine for each beast."

"But, good heavens, man, there's a war on!"

"Aye, there's a war on," Angus replied slowly. "And it's ag'in' the Germans, like the last one. I'm no risking twa hundred pound for any Eyetie."

THE Group Captain looked at him sourly; then he tried another approach.

"Perhaps you're getting past your work, Mr. McNought—feel too old to be shooting elephant any more!"

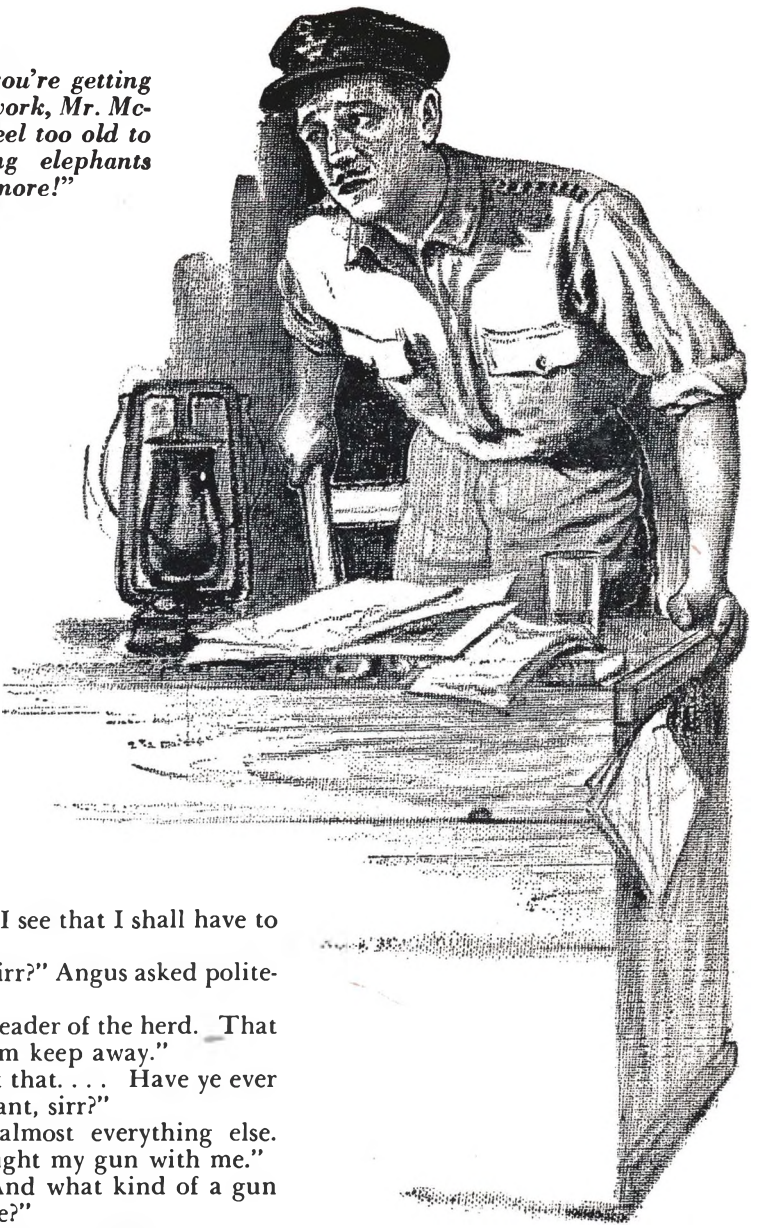
"I'm no as young as I was," Angus replied pleasantly. "But I think I could still do it—if it wasna for the twa-hundred-pound fine."

"And supposing I gave you an order, Mr. McNought?"

"I tak' my orders from the Governor, sirr, and nobody else."

There was a long pause. Finally the Group Captain rose and drew himself up to his full height.

"Perhaps you're getting past your work, Mr. McNought—feel too old to be shooting elephants any more!"



"Very well, I see that I shall have to do it myself."

"Do what, sirr?" Angus asked politely.

"Shoot the leader of the herd. That will make them keep away."

"It might at that. . . . Have ye ever shot an elephant, sirr?"

"I've shot almost everything else. And I've brought my gun with me."

"Indeed. And what kind of a gun would that be?"

"A double-barreled .450!"

Angus paused a moment.

"That's a fine gun," he said at last, "if ye can jist handle it right." (He was really wondering whether they could run to full military honors for the Group Captain's funeral.) Then he ended: "Weel, weel, it's only a twa-hundred-pound fine, and ye'll no have to go very far for it."

Angus was very helpful in fitting the Group Captain out for his sortie. He provided bearers and guides and told him that he would know exactly when to shoot—for all the Africans would leave him and climb high trees at the critical moment. After he had done all that he could, he sat down on the doorstep of the Station Commander's office and waited, smoking his pipe. He knew that Wally and his herd was only a mile away, and he did not expect to wait very long. It was an hour and a quarter, to be exact. First he heard two shots in rather rapid succession. Then almost immediately there was a heavy rumbling in the forest, and a tornado seemed to cut a lane in the tops of the trees. Angus remained where he was, smoking, thinking of the anthill which had saved his life thirty years before. He was wishing that he had told the Group Captain about the usefulness of anthills; but just then a figure in khaki shorts came out of the forest at the double. It paused and looked back for a moment, started to run again; then seeing the game warden's eye upon it, slowed down to a quick walk.

Angus tactfully got up and went away to his own quarters—where he drank Wally's health in neat whisky.

RELATIONS were strained during the next week. The Group Captain could not get away, owing to the damage to the undercarriage and he was always meeting Angus around a corner amidst the half-finished aerodrome buildings. When this happened, having no shop-window to distract his attention, he would pause

Angus had just time to dive behind an anthill before Wally and his herd thundered past.

and examine the empty window-frame of the nearest hut.

Wally and his herd fortunately behaved themselves during this trying time, but there was another thing which was beginning to exercise the mind of Angus McNought. Two days after the Group Captain's fiasco with Wally, a detachment of R.A.F. Regiment arrived by road to guard the airstrip from enemy attack. This detachment had four machine-guns which they proceeded to clean and mount at strategic points; and the Group Captain, when not inspecting empty window-frames, was often to be seen in close conversation with the commanding officer around one of the machine-guns.

Angus could put two and two together, whether it was machine-guns or anything else; he decided that something had better be done and done quickly if he was to avoid a second Massacre of Glencoe. He accordingly collected a few reliable Africans, armed them with native drums; and proceeded to drive Wally and his herd into a corner of the reserve twenty miles from the airstrip. He found a comfortable spot there beside a stream to pitch his tent, and spent a peaceful three weeks keeping an eye on Wally and studying the flora and fauna of the district.

THE same period was not so peaceful at the airstrip. Now that Wally had stopped interfering, there was a sudden outburst of interference from higher authority, and most important cipher messages kept the wireless busy day and night. The trouble was that the Abyssinian campaign was going far too well—so well that there was grave danger of its all being over before the airstrip was used or even completed. This put the great man who had ordered the airstrip into a quandary. How could he justify the expenditure of all this time and money on an airstrip which was never used?

If the time and money had been his own, he would no doubt have cut his losses and ordered all work to cease forthwith. But neither the time nor the money was his, and he decided that the safest way to justify his decision was to get the darned airstrip completed in time at all costs. To keep everyone up to the mark, he named a date on which he would fly over in person to declare the airstrip open for operations. As all promotions were in his hands, this had the desired effect—and the work at Mukongo went on ceaselessly day and night.

The first Angus knew of all this was an urgent message, brought by runner, ordering him to return to the airstrip at once. Both official interpreters had fallen sick, and they needed someone who could speak the local language to translate the congratulatory remarks

which, it was hoped, the great man would bestow on the diligent workers. Angus obeyed the order and came back; Wally, smelling something of interest in the air, slipped silently through the cordon which he had left behind, and came too, followed noiselessly by the whole of his well-trained herd.

It was less than an hour before the great man's estimated time of arrival when Angus got back to the airstrip, and everything was already prepared for the reception. Flags were flying on the more or less completed buildings, a guard of honor was waiting, and the four machine-guns had been mounted at strategic points. The Group Captain, too, who had worked like a black and hoped for a pat on the back from the great man, if not a medal on his chest, was in good humor and ready to forget his previous disagreement with Angus. He spent the spare time at his disposal in trying to instill some idea of ceremonial behavior into the latter's hard Scotch head.

WHEN he had quite finished, two things happened at the same time. First, a speck appeared above the skyline in the northeast; second, Wally led the whole herd slowly out onto the middle of the only runway.

The Group Captain was so shaken at the sight that he called everyone to attention and sounded the "Alert." That had no effect on Wally, who remained planted with his wives, children and grandchildren exactly where the great man intended to land. The Group Captain then proceeded to abuse Angus. Meanwhile the aircraft had approached and was already circling the airstrip. Presently the wireless began to get busy between the aircraft and the airfield controller, and the following brief conversation took place.

"What the hell have you got there on the runway?"

"Elephant," replied the controller truthfully.

A pause followed this. The next message came from the great man himself.

"Remove elephant at once!" he ordered. "We're running out of gas!"

Not being in a position to obey this order, the controller passed it on to the Group Captain; and he, having no one higher to pass it on to, wiped his neck and ordered the nearest machine-gun to get ready to fire.

"For heaven's sake, man!" Angus warned him. "If ye shoot them there, it will tak' ye a day to remove the carcasses."

The Group Captain saw the force of this argument and countermanded his order. But he was now beyond doing anything constructive; when a further plaintive message from the aircraft was reported to him, he turned with all the dignity he could muster to Angus.

"I shall hold you entirely responsible," he announced, "for any accident that may now occur."

"There's no need for any accident," Angus replied calmly. "Jist tell the pilot to dive doun on the herd and they'll a' gang awa'."

A slight ray of hope appeared on the Group Captain's face as he passed these instructions on to the pilot; and they watched the aircraft climb away for the dive. But then there was another interruption. An orderly ran up with a message just received by wireless. It began *Priority Immediate Top Secret;* and then the rest of it was in cipher. Since the cipher-clerk was sick, the Group Captain had to get out the book and try to decipher it himself, as well as keep a watchful anxious eye on the runway.

He was already struggling with the second group of figures when Angus touched him on the shoulder and called out in a voice no longer calm.

"Lawks ha' mercy! Surely the fool's no going to dive at them this way!"

But it was only too obvious that he was. The aircraft was roaring down right toward them on the far side of the herd; it was already tolerably clear, even to the Group Captain, what was going to happen next. A moment later it did happen. Wally trumpeted the retreat; the whole herd, with trunks raised, came straight toward them at a hand gallop. The thunder of those gigantic feet was an impressive sound; Angus and the Group Captain both dived headfirst into the nearest open drain, while the crashing of timber and brickwork went on around them.

Neither a tornado nor a heavy dive-bombing attack could have done more damage. When Angus looked up and rubbed the dust out of his eyes he saw nothing but the remains of wrecked buildings. Then as visibility improved and silence followed the thunder of feet, he saw the aircraft bouncing to a standstill while the guard of honor emerged, in various states of dishabille, from drains and other hiding-places. Finally he noticed the Group Captain beside him—in a dead faint, with the deciphered message clutched in his right hand.

Angus was able to read the message as he poured the contents of his water-bottle down the Group Captain's neck. It ran:

ABYSSINIAN CAMPAIGN SUCCESSFULLY CONCLUDED STOP SUSPEND ALL OPERATIONS

Angus took no part in the acrimonious discussions which extended far into the night in the cracked and roofless office of the Station Commander. He was dreaming in alcoholic slumber of a day when the forest would have swallowed its own again, and Wally's trunk would be caressing one of those succulent bushes which had been the cause of so much trouble.

WHICH ONE?

A Quiz by Stanley Grayovski

NATURE is a fascinating study, filled with many interesting facts. Too, Nature bestows a special distinction upon some of its wild-life and plants. Listed below are ten statements relative to Nature. Can you pick the correct answer? Eight right is an average score.

(1) The only animal that faces toward a storm rather than away from it is:
Buffalo—elk—deer

(2) The only hawk that can move the outer claw of each foot to pair with the one in the back is:
Cooper—goshawk—osprey

(3) The only fox that can climb low trees is:
Red—gray—white

(4) The only animal of the Far North that changes color in extreme cold weather is:
Weasel—beaver—wolf

(5) The only bird with feathered nostrils to keep out powdered frost is:
Woodcock—pheasant—ptarmigan

(6) One of the following can look two ways at the same time—to the front with one eye and to the rear with the other:
Turtle—chameleon—snake

(7) The only bird that can keep its bill in the water all the time it is drinking is:
Grouse—quail—dove

(8) The only animal that actually feasts on porcupines is:
Marten—lynx—fisher

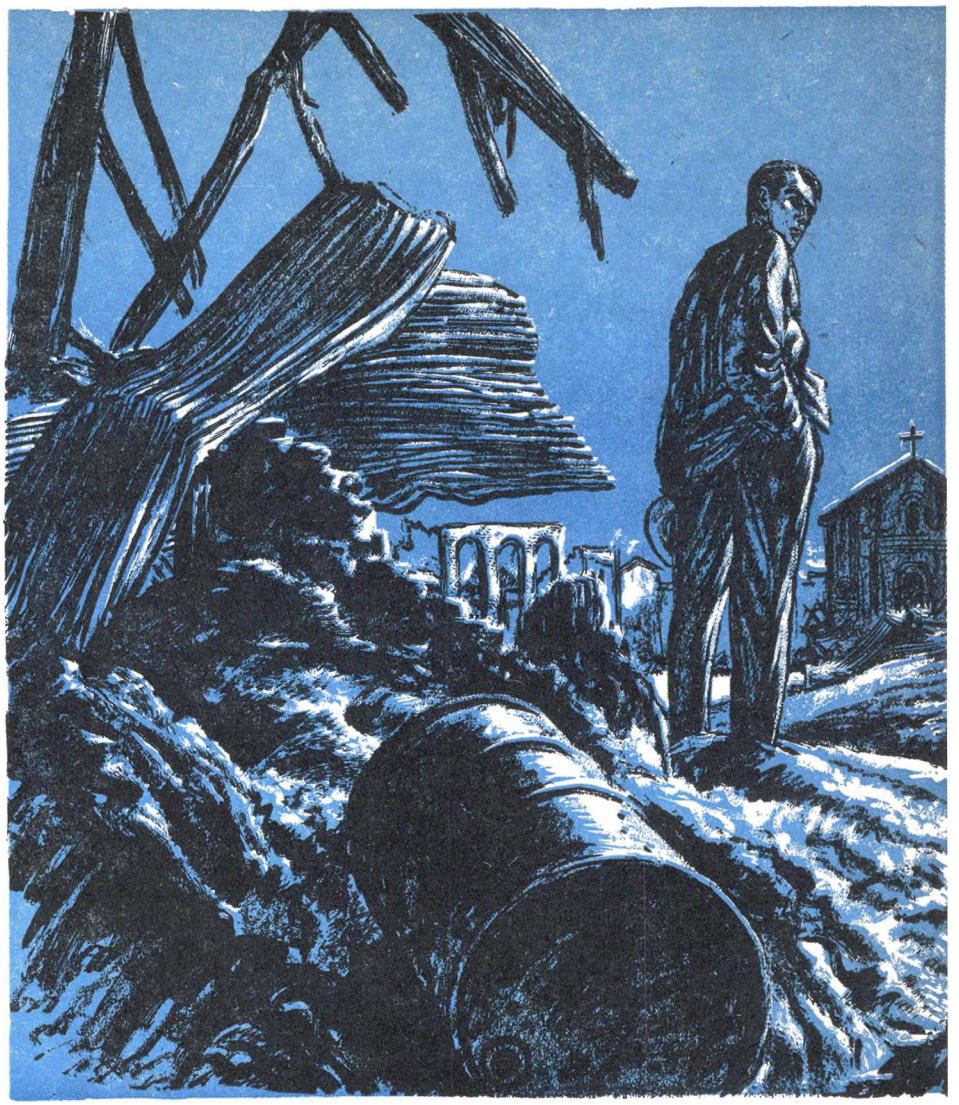
(9) The most valuable root that has no medicinal value in America is:
Golden seal—ginseng—lady slipper

(10) One of the following is found only in America:
Skunk—mink—opossum

Answers:

1. Buffalo
2. Osprey
3. Gray fox
4. Weasel
5. Ptarmigan
6. Chameleon
7. Dove
8. Fisher
9. Ginseng
10. Opossum

THE AUTHOR OF "ANOTHER MAN'S FACE" AND "THE QUEEN'S GAMBIT" HERE GIVES US A FASCINATING SHORT NOVEL OF POSTWAR MANILA AND THE STRANGE COLORFUL FOREIGN FLOTSAM WITH WHICH THE AMERICAN WAR CRIMES INVESTIGATION HAD TO DEAL.



The Man Who

I WENT first to the Englishman's house in San Juan. The same pregnant woman answered the door, and told me Shuric Andrevsky was drunk.

"I'll see him anyway," I said.

She said, "You won't wake him," and shrugged, and let me come in.

The place was full of Russians. I recognized the toothless old couple, the aristocrats, the Dirigoleffs, and the dressmaker with the eyeglasses, and the Potemko children: and there were several new people I didn't know. There was a rather pretty girl sitting by a window brushing her hair.

The house was dark and cool, shaded on three sides by long screened verandas and flowering trees, filled with the purple twilight quiet that any Englishman seems to instill as a matter of course into any house he builds in the tropics.

Andrevsky was asleep in a small room off the kitchen. He was curled on the floor like a shaggy brown dog. I shook him and pulled him up to a sitting position and let him fall down again. He was as limp as a fur rug. The air stank with the smell of Manila whisky. I opened a window and propped Andrevsky against the leg of a fan-back chair. His skin was slick with sweat.

He rolled his head from side to side and muttered, *"Tishe . . . . tie dura."*

I said, "I've just found out about Orlov."

Andrevsky put his hands over his eyes. He shook as if from a spasm, drew a deep ragged breath and said, "Don't talk to me."

"I said I've found out what happened to Orlov," I repeated.

He took his hands away from his face and opened his bloodshot eyes.

I said, "Better keep your eyes shut or you'll bleed to death."

He grinned weakly. "Hello, Mr. Cardigan," he said. "I'm pretty sick."

"You look it."

"I don't feel good. I got to have a drink."

He searched about the dusty floor and found a bottle with an overturned glass beside it. His clumsy hands sent the glass rolling. He brought up the bottle and drank the spoonful or so of whisky in it. He held up the empty bottle, laughed and said gustily, *"Za vashe zdorovie!"* He drained the last drop and threw the bottle clattering into the corner of the room.

"Orlov," he said then. He drew the back of his hand across his mouth and rolled up his eyes and looked at me. "What do you say?"

"The War Crimes people called me this morning. They've found some Jap photographs. I went down there and saw them."

"Pictures of him?"

"Yes."

"Dead?"

"Yes."

Andrevsky said, "Tell me."

"He was mutilated and beheaded. There are photographs of the actual execution. I was able to identify him beyond any doubt."

His chin rested slack against his collarbone and rose and fell to his breathing. The tip of his tongue appeared in his half-opened mouth and ran around his lips. His face broke into lines, and tears swam in his bloodshot eyes. He said presently, as if in explanation, "To know, that's sad business."

I said, "They'll want you to come down and see the photographs and corroborate the identification. You and Orlov's wife, when she comes back. They haven't found the grave yet, but they'll probably locate it sometime and then you'll be able to give final identification."

"They wouldn't ask her to look at those things. That would kill her. Will they?"

"I don't know."

Andrevsky put his hands flat on the floor and thrust himself forward and bent his knees. "She is here now. She came back from Iloilo yesterday. Let me call her. I'll tell her while you are here."

I Was Afraid

by William Brandon

I said, "No, I'll go on. I've got a lot to do."

"You are afraid of our Russian emotions," Andrevsky said, still crouched in the act of getting to his feet.

"Well, I'm sorry to be the one who brings the news, Shuric, if it comes to that," I said, "but good Lord, no one could have much hope left by this time. Sober up, and I'll see you again this evening."

"No, wait at least and meet her. But they can't ask her to look at those things." He waited for me to answer him.

"I don't know. I don't see why she should have to."

He seemed to be satisfied with that. He pulled himself to his feet, walked unsteadily to the door; he slammed it open and shouted, *"Ilyena! Idi suda!"* He made his way back to the chair, sat down in it and bent his head and scoured his face with the heels of his hands. I sat on the windowsill.

The young woman I had seen in the outer room came in. She was fine-boned and slender and not very tall. She walked with unusual grace. She wore a long red corduroy robe fastened with a white belt. She still carried her comb and hairbrush in her hand. Her shining yellow hair fell about her shoulders.

Andrevsky said, "Mr. Cardigan is with the Manila *Dispatch*. He was one of Nicholas' good friends before the war, and he also owns stock in the company. Mr. Cardigan, this is Helen Orlov."

I got up and shook hands with her. She remained standing by the door, looking at me without any particular curiosity. Andrevsky said something in rapid Russian I could not catch and she said briefly, *"Tishe . . . . Gospodin Cardigan mozet biet govorit po Russki."*

I said, *"Nie mnogo,"* and her eyes widened a little and she nearly smiled. Her eyes were dark, her skin fair. She was quite young.

"Don't play the child with Mr. Cardigan," Andrevsky said.

I said, "I'll be going. I was on my way to see Manuel when I stopped in."

Andrevsky said to me, "Good-by, my friend, and thank you," but he was watching Helen Orlov. His face was like gray rock. I thought he was dreading what he had to tell her. He directed the girl, "Say your good-by," and she said obediently, *"Do svidania,"* and moved aside from the door to let me out.

In the front rooms the aged Dirigoleffs were padding about with brooms and dust-rags; they greeted me in the exquisite French that was their one possession still retained from a dead past. The Potemko children were playing on the veranda steps. The bedraggled pregnant woman was at the gate of the compound, enjoying a bitter argument with the old Chinese caretaker.

GETTING in my car, I drove down Santa Mesa to the Rotonda and crossed over on Azcarraga to what was left of our *Dispatch* building, near Rizal. Our plant had been destroyed and the building partially burned, but we had set up some of our offices in it while reconstruction went on. Our paper was being put out next door, on the presses of the *Observacion,* where they had luckily come through with a usable plant. We were lucky for our part in that we owned a shipment of newsprint, the rarest stuff in town. Newspapering in Manila had become a barter business—you traded what you had for what you needed to get out your paper. We stayed in production but we weren't selling much more than our front page.

I cleaned up some work at my desk, and when I thought Manuel Arlequi would be in from his siesta I walked down to Escolta and back to his office in the shattered depths of the Orlov building.

The front of the building had been smashed and much of the structure had later collapsed; steel girders thrust this way and that, festooned with great driblets of torn concrete; homeless

Filipinos had stuck together numerous corrugated iron shacks here in the dust and the shadows, and bare-bottomed kids ran playing in what had been Orlov's marble lobby; but one corner of the building still contained rooms and here Manuel, Orlov's Filipino partner, had gathered what company records and files he could find, and here he sat through the heat of the long afternoons, reading Tagalog poetry. Manuel, a solid businessman, was also a frustrated poet, and in these months of waiting since the war's end the poet had risen and possessed him. Doubtless it found fertile soil in the long lethargic hours as well as in Manuel's troubled soul.

I FOUND him, neatly dressed in spotless whites, with his feet on his desk and a copy of somebody's "Songs of *Ang Puso*" in his hands. His polite smile never left his face while I told him what I had learned of Nick Orlov's death. When I had finished he got some tissues from a drawer and fastidiously blew his nose. He had thought a great deal of Orlov, but he faced me with his gleaming smile unchanged and said, "Take a cigar, please. These are the kind that Nick smoked, remember? Havana leaf and Manila filler." He struck a silver lighter.

"So now we are given proof at last that Nick is dead, and what comes into our minds is that now maybe we can straighten out the business. Dead, like all the rest." Manuel laughed as if in apology and waved his cigar at the book of poems on his desk. He said, "This line says in Tagalog, *'Pakitulungan ninyo ako, ako ay naligaw,'* and I think it is a nice line, like in a psalm. It says, 'Please help me, I am lost'." Manuel chuckled shamefacedly and drew on his cigar. "So, I feel something like that, with old Nick gone. Do you know Nick's wife?"

"I met her today. I've been out to see Andrevsky."

"Oh? He was drunk? He has gone to pieces, Andrevsky; I don't understand what is the matter with him. He's no good to anyone. I know Nick's wife a little bit. I understand she has been in Panay, with the Villanuevas at their plantation. Do you know Villanueva? He's a very good man. Judge in the People's Court. . . . We need Andrevsky. He knows everything; he was like part of Nick's own brain."

We talked for a time of the affairs of the Benguet mine. I had bought into it in 1940 and while I didn't have as much of a stake in it as the other remaining partners—the Englishman Harrington, Andrevsky, Orlov's young widow, and Manuel—still, I had invested my whole bundle. I had had a lot of confidence in Orlov. The mine was still a good proposition—the Japs

"There have been so many robberies. . . . I suppose he's trying to catch someone."

hadn't done anything with it except flood it; but there was a lot of delay. It was hard to get machinery, hard to get transportation, hard to get anything. And Orlov was gone.

Orlov, before the war, had been a mining operator with wide interests in China and the Philippines, a man known and respected throughout the Orient. With Manuel Arlequi as his Manila partner, Orlov had formed a company to work the Benguet goldmine he acquired in the late Thirties. Colonel Harrington, head of a British Trade office and an old-time Manila resident, had invested heavily with profits and experience taken from Guinea gold. And Shuric Andrevsky, Orlov's lieutenant in all his operations, had come in for his customary share. Those had been fine expansive days—long ago, in another world, in what was now the dream-wrapped other world of before-the-Jap time.

During the occupation Nick Orlov had been arrested by the Japanese. No reason had ever been given, and nothing had been heard of him since until the War Crimes Commission had called me that morning to show me photographs of his execution, at an unknown place, at an unknown time, at the hands of the Japs.

Colonel Harrington had spent the war in a series of prison camps. He was an elderly man and he had had a rough time of it, and after the liberation of Manila he had gone home to England to recuperate. His house in San Juan had escaped damage and he had offered its use to Andrevsky during his absence; thereupon it had become a haven for the remnants of Manila's White Russian colony.

These Russians, as stateless neutrals, had been left theoretically undisturbed in the Jap time, although various individuals had suffered, as Nick Orlov had been tortured and killed, but in the final battle for Manila the Russian settlement had taken a severe beating. The Japs, falling back for the Intramuros, had gone on an orgy of burning, dynamiting, and killing. This had been followed by the American shelling from Santa Mesa, which had tracked across the area off Taft Avenue toward Paco where the Russians were huddled by hundreds among their ruined homes and churches, penned in by Jap tank traps sunk in the streets.

The Dirigoleffs, the Potemko children, were typical of the survivors. The Dirigoleffs had been reasonably prosperous, but with most of their wealth tied up in the fine home that had been built for them by Juan Merchan, the gifted Manila architect. There was nothing left of it now but a bleak section of the magnificent curving balustrade standing in the rubble. The three Potemko children had seen their parents burned to death by the Japanese, but they were small, and forgot quickly. They were being taken care of, more or less, by the dressmaker, a woman called Helen Nitchevo, which means Helen Nothing, and seemed an improbable name. She might have been the legendary Czar's daughter, for all I knew. She seldom spoke. I think she was generally regarded as somewhat simple. She had lost nothing in the liberation; she had had nothing to lose. The pregnant woman had been found by advancing American troops scrabbling in the ashes about what had been her family's home, searching for her father's body, but others explained that her father had been blown to bits. She had been hospitalized for some time and had eventually married some Russian I did not know, but who was said to be an aged whisky-head presently concerned with the black market.

ALWAYS clannish, these people now were one family. Whatever one had belonged to all. Each time I went out to see Andrevsky it appeared that another handful of Russians had moved in on Andrevsky's—and Harrington's—hospitality. But the San Juan house was a big place.

I hadn't known the girl Orlov had married in the Jap time and who now, of course, was the new owner of his half of the Benguet property, along with the rest of his holdings elsewhere. I had been out of Manila during the occupation, most of the time in the Visayan hills with people who regarded Tomas Confesor as their *presidente*. But she could be no more than nineteen or twenty now, young enough to have been Orlov's daughter. An-

drevsky had once mentioned that Orlov had been an old friend of her father's.

Orlov had never talked much of the past, but I had gathered that his family had been mine owners in Czarist Russia, and that Orlov had been educated as a mining engineer. He had been a young man at the time of the revolution. Evidently he had managed to get out with some money, and he had also brought along Andrevsky, a boy then of possibly fourteen or fifteen—a peasant, a servant. Through the years Andrevsky had become his executive vice president and general factotum, Orlov's right hand. I remembered Orlov as a slight, quiet, white-haired man with a scholarly manner, I would have judged him too much a man of the world to give way to a fancy for child brides. For years he had maintained, in a luxurious villa on the edge of Passy, a Chinese mestiza named Remy Gisonn, who had been famous as one of the beauties of Manila. She had been killed by the Japs, Andrevsky had told me, rather early in the occupation.

I thought of these things (while Manuel talked on—his mind also, no doubt, on other matters) and I thought that Manila had changed in many ways beyond the mere destruction of her brick and plaster. As the empty abattoir, that once had been the Walled City, swarmed with ghosts, so would the *jai alai* games, when they began once more, and the after-midnight dancing at the Manila Hotel. Nick Orlov would be only one. He was gone and he had left a stranger, in his young widow, to speak for him; and if the truth were known neither Manuel nor I were struck so much with his death as with his loss to our own future.

THERE had been too much tragedy. We were saturated with it, numb from it. It would be a matter of time until feeling would return.

Manuel said, "Mr. Harrington had the best idea, to go home to England and rest a while. I wish I could do that myself, but I feel sick, to stay home all day."

When I left, the shadows were long in the streets, and the people selling sidewalk junk were gone to their rice suppers, and the *carretela* drivers were pulling out the sheaves of grass tied under their hacks and feeding their horses. A girl in a yellow dress stepped out of a doorway and spoke to me. It was Helen Orlov.

She said in English, "I've been waiting here for you, Mr. Cardigan. Will you come and talk to me?"

I had some things to do and I didn't particularly want to play the buddy to her bereavement. I pictured an embarrassing scene of lachrymose theatrics. Russians have a weakness for self-dramatization. Come what may, they take it big. I said, "I can't tell you any more than I told Andrevsky."

"Oh, no, I wanted your advice. But it isn't important, and you're busy now. I'm sorry." She gave me a brief smile and turned around and walked away. Some passing GIs turned to look at her and hiss in the approved Manila manner. She had a wonderful figure.

I caught up with her and said, "No, I'm sorry—I was rude. We can go down here to Wang's." I took her arm and she came with me.

WANG'S was a gloomy, low-ceilinged restaurant cluttered with rattan screens, beaded curtains, hanging lanterns, and fantastic Chinese murals. It was one of the three good restaurants left in Manila, among the ten thousand honky-tonks. They made you know it; you paid fifteen pesos for a T-bone steak.

We ordered coffee and cakes. Helen Orlov put her white purse on the table and stripped off her long white gloves and placed them beside it. Her arms were brown against the white of the gloves and the light-colored linen of her dress.

She said, "I don't know just why I should have come to you. I suppose I must have liked your looks." She smiled. She had the composure of a woman, but her smile was quick, engaging, eager, almost childlike. "But I really don't know anyone else well, either."

"Where did you learn to speak English, Mrs. Orlov?"

"In Shanghai, from some Americans, when I was little."

"You speak it like an American."

"Thank you." A lanky Chinese youth brought our coffee. Helen Orlov folded her hands in her lap and bowed her head. Her hair shone from its brushing and a white flower was braided into it above her ear. She looked up and said, "I thought I'd ask you—" She hesitated. "I'm awfully sorry—what is your first name?"

"Barney."

"You don't mind, do you? I hate 'Mr.' and 'Mrs.' "

"Lord, no."

"Don't laugh at me; did I say something wrong?"

"No, you're doing fine."

"I never know when Americans are going to laugh at my manners. . . . It's about the Benguet mine, Barney. Shuric wants to sell out to me or he wants me to sell out to him. I don't know which to do." She added, "I know I'm presumptuous to come to you; but you, well, you're a stockholder, and I don't know anyone else at all to talk to."

I thought it over and I said, "I think the mine's a good deal, if that's what you mean."

"Oh, I'm sure it is. No, what I really mean—"

"In a case like that it usually depends on the price—that is, his buying price against his selling price. Then the cat can jump either way, which ever figures the best percentage."

"There wouldn't be any trouble about price. It isn't that. What I'm really getting at is that I'd much rather keep it than sell out."

"Then keep it."

"But I was thinking of the rest of you. Wouldn't you rather have Shuric in the company? He's so valuable because of what he knows and I'd—never be anything more than just a name on a paper."

I said, "I see what you mean."

"I don't think it would be fair for me to buy him out until I knew what the others thought."

I repeated Manuel: "Andrevsky's no good to anyone these days. Anyway, I reckon he could be hired, whether he owned a piece or not."

She shook her head. "He won't have anything to do with it at all as long as I—I mean, he'd want to be entirely out."

"Why don't you want to sell?"

She pushed her spoon here and there on the tablecloth with an extended forefinger. She said, "I guess out of sentiment." She aligned her spoon beside her cup and folded her hands on the edge of the table. "But it isn't strong enough to make me keep it if the rest of you would rather have Shuric than me."

I said, "It's nice of you to consider us. I don't know much about the working end of it, so I don't know what to tell you. Why don't you give me a few days to talk it over with Manuel? Of course, we won't be able to get Harrington's reaction. But Manuel and I will make a majority opinion anyway."

"Which would you rather I'd do, Barney?"

"I don't know enough to say. But I shouldn't think Andrevsky's indispensable. And in the shape he's in, he's likely to develop into more of a liability than an asset in any event."

"You honestly don't care, then?"

"Well, I'd like to talk to Manuel about it. Eat some cakes, Helen. They'll fatten you up."

SHE tucked down her chin and straightened a gold chain that hung inside the square neckline of her dress. She posed with her hand bent above the chain in a comic gesture from an Oriental dance. She said, "Do I need fattening?"

I said, "What I like about you is that you didn't leave any lipstick on your coffee-cup. You're one girl in a million."

She laughed and said, "All because my lipstick won't come off? Are you

married, Barney?" I shook my head. She said, "I would have thought you were. But maybe you're not as old as you look."

"Twenty-nine."

She said in a teasing voice, "Ah, no, *govori pravdu.*"

"Cross my heart."

"Then, my goodness, you're not! You look forty. Is it impolite of me to say so?"

"I feel forty."

"Your hair's all right, you're not bald or anything, and you're not too fat or saggy, so I guess it must be your face. You've got so many lines. But I think you're nice-looking—I mean nice and honest-looking. Do you have any cigarettes?"

I passed her my pack. I said, "I have a beautiful soul." I gave her a light. I said, "It's none of my business particularly, but I'd like to know something. When I met you this afternoon, when you came in the room, Andrevsky said something to you in Russian, and you said, 'Quiet, Mr. Cardigan may speak Russian,' and I said, 'Only a little'. Remember?"

She slanted her eyes in thought. "I don't think—"

"You said, '*Tishe.... Gospodin Cardigan mozet biet—*'"

"Oh, yes! But I didn't know then why you were there, and—you didn't hear what Shuric said? He introduced you and then he said in Russian, 'Here's the devil from hell with news,' or something almost like that, and I knew he was drunk and I thought he might just be trying to insult you because he was drunk. I didn't know anything about why you were there, and I was afraid you'd be offended if you understood Russian."

She tapped ash from her cigarette. We were silent for a while.

I said, "I wondered what it was about."

"It must have sounded odd."

I glanced at her and said, "I shouldn't have brought it up."

"Oh, I'm not going to cry," she said, and then ducked her head and hid her face from me and fumbled in her purse for a handkerchief. She dried her eyes and said, "I'll go home now."

"I'll get my car and drive you out."

"No, it's late now."

"That's all right. I don't do much work until evening."

"Well, it will save me riding a jitney —if you really want to."

IT was dark when we went out. We made our way through the crowds on Rizal to my car. I switched on the myopic headlights and the engine groaned and grumbled and we swung out into the heavy traffic. Military trucks and jeeps, a sprinkling of civilian cars, droves of junky little overcrowded jitney busses, all were intent on killing their quota of the pedestrians who wandered aimlessly back and forth across the streets.

I said, "I didn't know you before, Helen. Where were you?"

She laughed and said, "I was seventeen on that last New Year's Eve—when everyone went wild. Remember?"

I remembered. With the Jap only a day away, on that grand opening of 1942, the Pearl of the Orient had given itself one last high roll.

Helen said, "I wrote a poem about it, like everyone else, later—all about singing in the street to shut out the knocking at the gate."

"A gaudy old dame feeling death in her bones, and sending out for gin."

"M-m-m, and references to a Beaudelaire cadaver. Will our minds always stay this ugly?"

"Nothing stays, they say."

"You know, what I remember most about that last New Year's was all the weddings. *Everyone.* I remember thinking it was so tragic and romantic, but that it was like something happening in Graustark—I was reading about Graustark then. Will it ever come back again? I mean the gangs of chauffeurs driving cars round and round the streets because there wasn't any place to park, and plenty to eat, and all the new white buildings, and people doing their work in the evenings and having dinner at nine o'clock and dancing till three. I don't suppose it will ever come back again, will it?"

"Nothing ever comes back, they say."

"But people keep trying. The Dirigoleffs told me they saw 'The Merry Widow' last week. They enjoyed it so much. And the symphony is doing Bartok tonight."

A host of flying insects swept toward us, caught in the current of the headlight beams. Out here the streets were quiet and the air was cooler. I stopped at Harrington's gate.

"I've got a couple of tickets," I said. "I wasn't going to use them. Would you like to go?"

"I'm sorry, I'm supposed to be going with some other people. I didn't really want to go either. I just didn't have anything else to do." She played with the gold chain at her throat, turning it link by link in her fingers. It shot back thin splinters of light from the panel glow. She said, "If you'll take me dancing some place instead, Barney, I'll break it."

I said, "Will you go dancing with me some place, Helen?"

She laughed and reaching over impulsively, squeezed my hand on the wheel. "I'd love to, Barney. What time?"

"About eight-thirty."

"I'll be here at the gate. Don't come in. Till then."

She opened the car door and jumped out and was gone.

I went back to Escolta to talk to Manuel, but he was not in. I couldn't decide what the girl was up to. I thought it was obvious she was playing me for something. Apparently there was a quarrel between her and Andrevsky and I was curious about that, but if she didn't want to say what it was I didn't want to ask. I kept remembering the pictures of Orlov's murder. The snapshots had been gray and finger-smeared and ugly and, in common with all bald photographs of brutality, somehow obscene. It was difficult to see this girl as Nick Orlov's wife. I drove to my own office. Her perfume still lingered in the car. I sat at my desk and looked at nothing until Tony Cruz, our assistant news editor, asked me if I was drunk. I told him no, I had a date. Tony asked me if she was exciting. To Tony, every woman was exciting. I told him I would let him know. I had an uneasy feeling that I was sticking my neck out, but I didn't know why I should fear her.

AT a quarter to nine I picked her up and we went to a place called the Silver Galleon, where we ran across a tableful of people, young Spanish people she knew. Later, at a night-club called Pintoro's, we found another bunch of people she knew, who were with a couple of American correspondents I had met, so we didn't exactly have the evening to ourselves.

I drank a little whisky and I had a wonderful time, because while Helen was clearly very popular with these friends of hers—among whom I felt like the old man of the mountain—she stuck strictly to the rôle of my girl. I was flattered. After a drink or two I began to believe I must be a hell of a charming fellow. She had maneuvered me into a date merely because she wanted to go out with me—was that impossible? She was gay, she taught me how to dance this step or that, she laughed at my witticisms, which grow notoriously corny in direct proportion to progressive alcoholic content. She waltzed with me while the lights were low, close in my arms, but her lips were sweetly, shyly smiling and her eyes were lowered and would not meet mine. She became more desirable than anything else in the world. I could not keep from touching her. I stroked her hair with the back of my hand when we were dancing, and I linked her fingers in mine beneath the table while we sat and talked or listened to the others. About two o'clock I took her home.

At her gate I'd switched off the ignition and got my flashlight to show her to the door, when she said, "Let's just sit here a while. May I have a cigarette?"

I got out cigarettes and she lifted her hand and pushed them aside. I

put my arm around her and she touched my mouth with her fingertips and said, "I want to ask you a question, Barney, and I don't want you to kiss me first." She moved away from me and sat back in the far corner of the seat and lifted the gold chain from her breast and twined it about her fingers. She said, "There, now sit there: Now I want to ask you."

I said, "All right."

She said, "Barney, if you wanted to kill someone here in Manila, how would you do it?"

It was evident that she was entirely serious. She spoke with a desperate earnestness. My mind was shocked and wouldn't work. I felt an intolerable embarrassment. She faced me steadily and waited.

I said, "I'd send him out to San Fernando or Tarlac and shoot him from a ditch—and blame it on the Hukbalahap."

The gold chain slid between her fingers and twined again. She said, "How would you have killed someone here in the Jap time?"

"What the hell are you talking about?"

"Please, Barney, tell me what you think."

"I'd have framed him with the Japs and let them kill him for me. Now I want to know what you're getting at."

"I don't know," she said simply. "I'll go in now, Barney. Don't come with me."

She turned the door handle and I caught her wrists.

I said, "I'm troubled by sprained vanity, that's all. What am I being used for?"

She wouldn't look at me. She said, "Maybe you're just the one I want to use."

"You're very good, Helen, the evening performance was excellent, and you've got me tied up in knots; but don't overdo it."

She said in a hidden voice, "I can't help what you think. Let me go."

I released her. She didn't move. She said, "You don't want to kiss me good night now, do you?"

I took her chin in my hand and turned her face up to mine and kissed her on the mouth. Her arms clung to me. Her lips were warm and seeking and they trembled against mine.

She thrust me away and then drew me into her arms again and put my head in the hollow of her shoulder and spoke against my ear. She spoke in Russian. I said, "*Niet* savvy," and she laughed and said in English, "I wouldn't lie to you—not all the time." I didn't answer; I toyed with the gold chain at her throat. There was a little round locket hung on it.

ILLUSTRATED by JOHN McDERMOTT

I ran through the gate and stopped. Something threshed on the ground.

She whispered, "Now good night."

I opened the door for her and got out after her.

She said, "No, don't come in."

I said, "This is a rough town. Jokers hide behind trees and jump at little girls."

"Silly, it's my own front yard."

I had forgotten the flashlight. We moved through the black shadow of trees and shrubs toward the black hulk of the house. Helen stopped suddenly, her hand on my arm, and said on a breath, "Oh!" then laughed softly. There was something on the ground, at the foot of a bushy frangipanni tree, that might have been a man crouching there. I struck my cigarette lighter and we saw Andrevsky sprawled against the tree, a rifle across his legs. I bent over him and played the flame of the lighter in his face. He was sound asleep. His hair had fallen in a ragged shock over his eyes. There was a sour smell of whisky.

Helen said in a whisper, "There have been so many robberies in this neighborhood. I suppose he's trying to catch someone."

I said, "We'd better wake him up."

"No, don't try. You can't wake him when he's that drunk." She stooped and drew the rifle from him. "But I'll take this in. Someone might get hurt."

I went home and went to bed, but I couldn't sleep and after a while I got up and poured a drink and put something on the record-player to drown the silence of the house. The memories and the sensations of Helen Orlov were so recent that I could recreate the timbre of her voice. *If you wanted to kill someone now, and if you had wanted to kill someone during the Jap time. . . .* Shuric Andrevsky had been her husband's friend and faithful servant, and now he hid from life behind a veil of whisky—but Andrevsky and Helen Orlov would not remain together in the company, or so Helen said, and she wouldn't lie to me, not all the time.

She had wanted my opinion on the business of murder, and I told myself that perhaps, for some reason, she was afraid for her own life. But nothing made sense except the one clear fact that she wanted me in it with her, whatever it was. . . . And then I thought that too could be my imagination, in fact, everything could be my imagination except the tone of her voice when she'd asked about murder.

EVENTUALLY I slept, and dreamed that I saw Nick's headless body writhing on the ground. I could see him plainly, dressed in the ragged white pants and T-shirt as he had been in the photographs, but now his head was gone and his body twisted and turned this way and that, and Helen Orlov plucked at my sleeve and drew me away; she said someone might get hurt, and smiled quickly, brightly, in all innocence, like a little girl. I woke up in a cold sweat and lay awake for some time, concerned with small fears that grew large in the night.

In the morning I telephoned her. One of the children answered, and then old Mr. Dirigoleff, who was deaf, and then the Chinese houseman, and finally Helen. I didn't tell her what I had called to tell her. The nearest I got to it was to say that I had promised myself I wouldn't see very much of her. I told her I was afraid she'd get to be a habit and might not be good for me. She laughed and asked me why and I said she ought to know, but that seemed to mean nothing to her. I told her I wouldn't try to cure myself all at once but would taper off—and that I would see her again that evening at nine o'clock. I hadn't intended to say that at all, but her voice and the daylight were real and the dreams of the night were gone, and the back of my mind even found time to be astonished at the things I had suspected. She said all right, but then she would sleep all day. I said I would try to see Manuel and that we might be out in the afternoon to discuss Andrevsky's stock sale, but that in any case I would see her at nine. We spoke for a while of what we would do with the evening, and wound up talking nonsense; then I hung up and let her go back to bed.

After lunch I talked to Manuel and again I didn't speak of any of the things I had thought the night before I would want to ask him about. I only told him there was some trouble between Andrevsky and Helen Orlov and that they wouldn't stay together in the company.

Manuel was curious; he said he'd once had an idea Andrevsky might marry her, with Nick gone. They had been the two people closest to Nick, and it was strange there should be ill feeling.

"But no one understands these Russians," Manuel said, with his brilliant smile.

He explained that Mrs. Orlov's share in the company was much larger than Andrevsky's, and he doubted that Andrevsky could buy her out if she wanted to sell. He wanted to get together some data on the exact amount each held, he said, and the current value of the stock, to help them in arriving at a just price, and then we might come out and talk to them together. He said he would give me a call in another day or two. He agreed with me that Andrevsky was useless to the company in his present condition.

He spoke of the photographs of Orlov's execution. He had gone to War Crimes to look at them. He was worried about Nick's dismembered body lying in an unmarked grave and said he would not rest until he saw Nick buried in consecrated ground.

I thought I would be able to tell Helen that evening that Manuel was for her, as against Andrevsky, in the partnership, but instead, when I saw her, I didn't speak of it. She was lighthearted and she talked of a thousand small things. I was happy to be with her; I didn't bring up any of the things that had been in my mind.

WE were together again the next night, and on Saturday we drove out to Lake Taal and took snapshots with her camera. Sunday was a beautiful day and she decided it would be nice to drive to the mountains at San Marcelino, where her father had at one time owned some land, and where she had once gone with him to hunt deer and wild boar under the guidance of the Negritos. She said that when she was a little girl she had wished she could be a Negrito, because they seemed to have so much fun and they never grew up. She insisted they could scent game like a pack of hounds. We started for Subic, but stopped in San Fernando to look up some old friends of hers—a doctor who had known her father—and she spent a great deal of time making inquiries here and there. By the time we left San Fernando it was too late for the long trip to San Marcelino, so we went back to Manila.

We ate a late supper at Wang's. It was nearly midnight when we left the restaurant. I was tired but I didn't want the evening to end. We drove idly along Dewey Boulevard, killing time, looking at the colored lights of shipping in the bay, and Helen said suddenly, "There's the street. Go in there."

I pulled across the parkway and we bounced into a dusty side-street.

"Here," Helen said. "Stop here. Isn't this a lovely spot, this place?"

There was a large lot behind the ruins of a plaster wall. Overgrown banana thickets and a few great mango trees, scarred by shellfire, brooded over mounds of weedy rubble that had once been a house. In one corner of the lot some destitute Filipino family had thrown together one of the inevitable corrugated-iron shacks. A round yellow moon looked with a fat eye upon this desolation and a hawk-sized fruit bat sailed melodramatically across its face.

She said, "Do you know Juan Merchan, the architect? He's going to build a house for me here. It's still so hard to get materials, but Mr. Merchan says shipping is opening up and cargoes are really beginning to come in, and so before long it should be possible to build. The Dirigoleffs and the Potemko kids and Helen Nitchevo are going to live here with me. Maybe in another six months or a year. And I should be able to get a

new car delivered by then." She gave me a proud little smile. "Then I'll be a lady, Mr. Cardigan."

I said, "Where am I in those plans?"

"Oh, you'll still be courting me, if you haven't found a new girl."

"I must be a persistent cuss."

"But when you come to see me here, I'll receive you in state. A footman will announce you and then you'll come into the great hall and I'll be there all in gold lace—or no, I'll be wearing a *pima chamisa* and smoking a cigar, like—"

"Helen, do you know who used to live here?"

"Well, it was the nicest property Nick owned in town, but I don't think he ever lived here himself."

"Did you ever hear of Remy Gisonn?"

"Oh!" She drew her lower lip thoughtfully between her teeth. "Oh, yes. Yes, I have."

"She lived here."

"I didn't know that. But, Barney, that doesn't mean I'd feel any— I mean, the way a wife should feel about a place where— I did love Nick, but not that way; I loved him more because I admired him so and I knew how good and generous he was. I—I worshiped him, Barney, but our marriage—"

There was a silence. I said, "Well, it's pretty late. I'll take you home."

"DON'T go yet," Helen said. "I want to talk. I'd like to tell you about Nick, Barney."

"All right," I said. "If you want to."

"I do." But she was quiet again for a time. She said at last, "You see, Nick and my father were old friends. Nick was my godfather when I was born.

"My father knew the Japs would want him—he was an engineer and he'd been working with the Chinese Government for years—but we were caught here in Manila when the war broke out and he couldn't get away; and the Japs, when they came—my father left me with Nick the day the Japs entered Manila and I suppose he went some place to try to hide, but of course that didn't help.

"So a month later some soldiers came for me—I was living at Nick's house, where my father had left me—and a Jap was with them who had been in the consular office here before, so Nick said, and he said they had arrested my father, and they were going to take me away too. But Nick talked to them and they finally settled for putting me under house-arrest, and left me with Nick. I imagine he bought them off."

"What did they want with you?"

"Nick was afraid they thought I knew something about some money my father was supposed to have had,

She said, "Barney, if you wanted to kill someone, how would you do it?"

or perhaps something useful to them about Chinese industry. Either idea was just foolish, but that didn't make any difference.

"They were back several times in the next year or so, sometimes Jap civilians who must have been special investigators, and sometimes officers with soldiers. Nick got more and more worried about what night happen to me if some particularly eager Jap officer should get interested, and he thought it might add some measure of protection if I should become his wife.

"Nick stayed to himself during the Jap time, but he was always an influential man. I think the Japs were sort of in awe of him. We talked it over, I think reasonably, and when I was eighteen I married him. The Japs did leave me alone after that.

"He was terribly broken up when she—when Remy Gisonn was killed. It happened in the first week of the occupation, and I guess it was one of those—you know—one of those regrettable accidents. I never saw her, but he said she was very beautiful."

"She was."

Helen said, "Are you religious, Barney?"

"I don't know. I guess not."

"Death can be so many things! A peaceful death to someone who has lived a long life, and the church turning it all into lovely colors. But when it's an ugly, violent death—then he is so much *more* dead, dead as an animal is dead; and then all our civilization keeps its distance and it's only like—like mockery—then it's cruel to say beautiful words; 'Now the silver cord is loosed and the golden bowl is broken,' over a body that has had life torn from it—isn't it?"

I said, "You're preoccupied with death."

She said, "I'm frightened, Barney." She crept into my arms like a child. She was trembling.

I said, "I want to help you, honey." I was afraid of what I had to say. Sweat broke out on my hands. I wanted to tell her how good the last few days had been and I wanted to tell her I had been dreading the return of this thing dwelling in her mind, this preoccupation with death. Now it had returned, and it stood between us; and I had to root it out and see it. I said, "Helen, tell me what it is."

She lifted her head and held my face in her hands and kissed me, murmuring, "Darling, please don't worry."

"I *am* worrying. I thought it was imagination, but it isn't. I thought I could forget it, but I can't. It's always there. I can tell when you take it out and unwrap it and look it over because when you do that it holds you like a drug, it hypnotizes you. I've got to know."

She said in a composed voice, "But know what?"

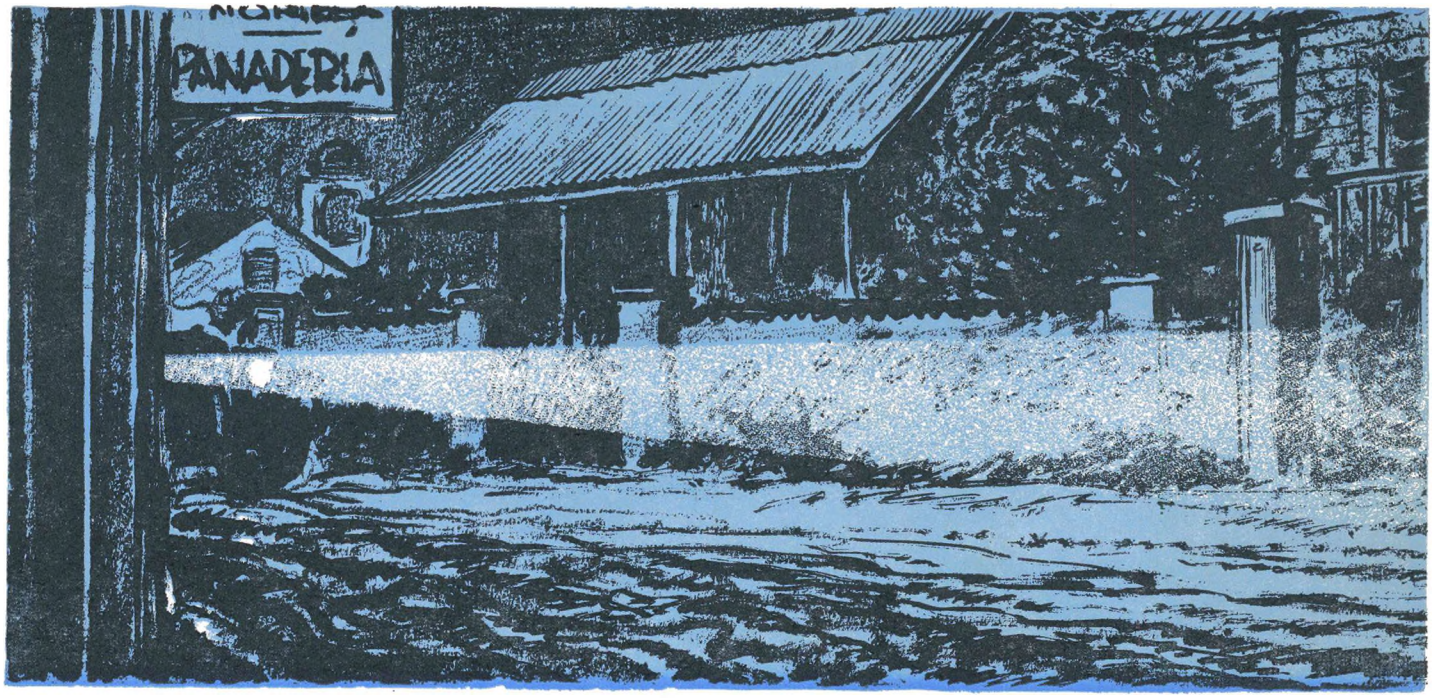
I was enraged and said, "Damn it, if you—" and she laughed and put her arms around my neck. "Barney, do you think you're in love with me?"

I held her close to me. I said, "I'd do anything for you."

"Then don't say any more. Let's go home now."

She sat up and raised her hands and smoothed her hair. I started the car and backed out of the side street and drove down the empty boulevard. She lit a cigarette and gave it to me and lit another for herself. After we had crossed the Ayala Bridge she spoke again of death, of Orlov's death; in a matter-of-fact way, while she smoked, she described the night the Japs had come for him.

THEY had entered the house by smashing in the front door. One of them slugged the aging Chinese houseman with a gun butt and he lay bleeding on the floor for the hour or so they were in the house. Some of them were armed with submachine-guns and the leader, a colonel, carried a machine-pistol. The colonel at first ordered Orlov and Helen to stand against a wall in the room where they were found, and apparently intended to have them machine-gunned on the spot. Orlov tried to talk to him but the colonel refused to speak anything but Japanese, of which Helen had only a little. From the first the colonel stormed at them, seemingly in a great rage. When Orlov's answers did not suit him he had them herded into another room and had them kneel on the floor by a table and ordered his men



He was fifty yards away and running like a deer straight

again to raise their weapons, but again Orlov drew him into discussion and they were reprieved. At one point Orlov told her in Russian that the Japs had discovered his work with the guerrillas, that they knew all about it and had no chance of escape, and that he was trying to convince them Helen knew nothing of it.

I said, "Was he connected with the guerrillas?"

"Yes. Hardly anyone suspected it. He was very careful. He worked with money. The underground was always needing money."

She spoke of the colonel's incessantly shouting, *"Honto no koto o iye! Honto no koto o iye!"* which meant "tell the truth," the one thing the stubborn white-haired man kneeling before him certainly would not tell.

In the end there had been the command—a scream, Helen said—*"Issho ni koi!"* and two of the soldiers had jerked Orlov to his feet and thrust him out of the house with them, and Helen had been left alone.

He had thought he died for others, she said, and did that mean anything or was it another illusion?

MANUEL called the next day. He said he had been out of town on family business or he would have gotten to it sooner, and suggested that we go out to San Juan and talk to Helen and Andrevsky. I called Helen to tell her we were on our way out and she said she thought Andrevsky had been having the DTs. She said Mr. Dirigoleff had broken a broomstick over his head. It takes a wallop to break a bamboo broomstick.

Helen met us on the veranda of the Harrington house. Manuel said he had got some figures together that she could use as a basis in arranging a price for Andrevsky's holding. Helen said with a wry smile that now Andrevsky had made up his mind to go to Baguio and talk to Mr. Alcantara, the company's superintendent there, before deciding on a price, and he wanted us to go with him.

"But that is out of the question," Manuel said. "Have you been to Baguio since the war? It is ruined; you would not know it. Do you know the Montoyas? Very fine people. Now they are living in a hole in the ground, where their house was. They say the Igorots now wear the pants, and the Christian Filipinos the breech-cloth. It would be hard to find a place to stay. Transportation is impossible."

"I know," Helen said, "it is a nuisance. But Barney has his car and we could stop overnight some place in the provinces. I have friends we could stay with in San Fernando or Tarlac."

I said, "Wait a minute. I've got a job. I can't take off like that."

Helen said, "But you could if you wanted to, couldn't you?"

"Well, I don't know."

"They would let you go, if it was important."

"Why is it important? Andrevsky is stewed and he gets some stew's idea—so it's important?"

"But if it was really necessary—"

Manuel smiled and said, "You are unfair, Mrs. Orlov. How could anyone refuse when you insist?"

"We don't need to decide on it today," Helen said lightly. "We can talk it over again. But I think we ought to pretend to Shuric that we are ready to go. It's simply impossible to argue with him."

Manuel said, by all means, he would be as tactful as possible with what he had to say. We went in the house and found Andrevsky in the same room off the kitchen. He was sitting erect in the only chair, his hands clutching its split bamboo arms. His eyes glowed brightly and his face was haggard. He looked ten years older.

I saw that Manuel was shocked at his appearance. He stopped at the door for a moment, then greeted Andrevsky with his civil smile and looked about for another chair; then he spread his handkerchief on the windowsill and sat on it.

ANDREVSKY watched him. His eyes glittered, and he laughed. I was certain he had cracked his stack and was completely insane. Helen and I sat down on the bed and Andrevsky turned his attention to Helen. He gazed at her with a peculiar piercing look and I felt her hand tighten over my fingers. He lowered his head until it appeared that only the red-rimmed whites of his eyes were gazing at her.

Manuel said, "Andrevsky!"

"The old man—with a club he hit me," Andrevsky said in his heavy voice. "I made noise, I guess." He finally looked away from Helen and moving his head sought to focus his eyes on Manuel. His lips spread in an ingratiating grin. His teeth looked yellow.

Manuel said, "We've all talked it over and we're ready to go up to Baguio and get this business straightened out."

Andrevsky said, "Yes, yes." His eyes had gone vacant. His hand flapped at

down the street, unmindful of the glare of the lights on him.

the wrist and he began to slap the arm of his chair. He laughed and said, "Poetry's a pretty song."

"No," Manuel said, "you didn't understand me."

"Ya vam spoiu," Andrevsky said in a loud voice. He slapped a rhythm on the arm of his chair and his eyes rolled to Helen and his lips hung loose in a lewd and comic way. *"Vie evo lubitie, niet, nenavizhu. Vie evo lubite, niet, nenavizhu. Babochka, letai, letai, niet, nenavizhu."* He threw back his head in a booming laugh that rang in the small room.

Manuel looked questioningly, distressed and frowning, at Helen.

Andrevsky's laugh gave way to a series of gasps.

Helen said, "It's only gibberish: 'Do you love him—no, I hate him—butterfly, fly, fly, and so on. It doesn't mean anything."

Andrevsky said in his throat, "Butterfly, fly, fly," and exploded in another great laugh. He leaned back in his chair and rubbed tears from his eyes with the knuckles of his shaking hands.

When Manuel could be heard again, he said, "Andrevsky, listen to me. I want you to understand why we are here. We came to talk about going to Baguio."

Andrevsky stopped laughing on a long gulp of breath. For a moment something like cunning came into his face. He said, "There should be ore on the dump. Alcantara has had some men working." Suddenly he shouted, "Tell me now! Tell me—I ain't afraid!"

Manuel was startled. He stood up. He said, "Tell you what?"

Andrevsky covered his face with his hands and swayed from side to side in his chair. I couldn't tell if he was laughing or crying. Manuel shook out his handkerchief and put it in his pocket. He looked doubtfully at Helen. He took Andrevsky by the shoulder and tried to get his attention. Andrevsky half rose from the chair, looked wildly about, shouted a few words, but whether Russian or English I couldn't tell; then he grabbed Manuel's arm and clung to it. Manuel, with an expression of acute distaste, tried to free himself. He was genuinely annoyed. Andrevsky was wrinkling his sleeve.

WITH an effort, Andrevsky found his tongue. He said, "Look—look, you know me!" His voice ran away from him again. His words were only animal sounds. His face was distorted. The sleeve of Manuel's white jacket gave way with a rip. I pulled Andrevsky away and held him down.

"He needs a doctor," Manuel said furiously, glaring at his torn sleeve.

"No, he's only getting sober," Helen said. "He'll be all right this evening. He hasn't had a drink since yesterday."

"A saint couldn't talk to him now," Manuel said.

Andrevsky sank deep in his chair. His bright eyes shot from one to the other of us. I released him and he didn't move. He seemed to shrink physically. The muscles of his face sagged. He looked feeble, like an old man. There was no expression but the blank and glittering light in his eyes. It was uncanny, the change he underwent while we watched him.

Manuel murmured, *"Siya ay—"* in a horrified voice, shrugged, and walked out swiftly. Helen and I followed him. I drew the door shut behind me.

Manuel spun around and demanded of Helen, "What in God's name is the matter with him?"

The pregnant woman appeared beside us, her hands on her hips, and said, "He's afraid."

"Afraid of what?"

"Someone stole his rifle. But he's got another one; he's got it hidden far outside the house."

Manuel spread his hands and said, "Is he insane?"

"Tah," the pregnant woman said; "he's been like this before. He's worst when he's getting sober."

Manuel shook his head. "I don't understand what's taken him."

"He's afraid," the pregnant woman repeated shortly.

"Indudablemente—but of what?"

"Who knows what another man is afraid of?" She put her face close to Manuel's. Her hair fell in black strings beside her lean jaws. She tapped her head. Mr. Dirigoleff called from another room, but she paid no attention. She said, "A lot of eggs are spoiled these days."

"But you say he isn't insane."

"Not yet."

Mr. Dirigoleff called again, and stamped on the floor with his foot or a cane. Helen said, *"Delai chto tiebe govoriat,"* and the pregnant woman gave her a sour glance and shuffled away.

I stayed with Helen a moment after Manuel went out to the car. I held her hands in mine and she swung back on my hands and studied me with a cool speculation. She said, "Can you get off work tonight to take me to the Roces' party?"

I said, "Helen, for God's sake –"

"Can you?"

"Maybe it would be better if I didn't see you any more."

"Can you?"

"I'll be here at six. I told you yesterday."

"But I wanted to make sure you wouldn't have to work."

"Cut it out."

She laughed. She was beautiful. She might not have had a care in the world. She said, "Till then, Irish." She stood on her toes and kissed me.

AT six o'clock I was waiting in my car at Harrington's gate. The Potemko kids ran to and fro from the house to the gate and peeked at me around the gate post, giggling. Presently Helen came out, in a wide-brimmed hat and a flowing flowered skirt. The Roces affair was supposed to be a sort of evening garden party but it would probably contrive to last until early morning, in the Manila custom.

I said, "How's Andrevsky by now?"

"Much better. He's been gone some place all afternoon."

I started the car. I said, "Helen, I've got to know what's going on."

"Not now, darling. We're going to a party."

"You can't expect me to keep this up any longer. You're trying to do something and I want to know what it is. You're scared and Andrevsky's losing his mind. If I mean anything to you—"

"Please." She settled herself in the seat and took off the big hat and tilted her head to push back her hair.

I swore at myself for a coward, but I didn't have the courage for the showdown I had thought I had to have. Again I told myself that I had been looking over the edge of nothing and dreaming of a ghost, and that if I trusted her I could wait and see.

Helen said, "If Colonel Rodriguez is there, *don't* argue about politics."

It was a relief to grab at Colonel Rodriguez. I said, "Colonel Rodriguez is what's wrong with the Philippines."

"At least don't call him a Fascist. It's getting to be such an out-of-style word. So many questionable people have been using it."

"How about *makapile?*"

Helen said, "Oh, horrors, he'd shoot you. He's very sensitive about charges of collaboration. Collaborators usually are." She fell silent and plucked at the brim of the hat in her lap, her eyes downcast, and then she moved over beside me and leaned her head on my shoulder. A passing truckload of American soldiers, the young boys who were the new peacetime Army, yelled and hissed and whistled.

The Roces' garden party grew into an impromptu dinner for some thirty guests, more or less unrehearsed, followed by dancing at El Nido and a noisy supper; in general, the kind of an evening only Sara Roces could dish up, enormously exhilarating and entertaining for reasons that were never clear later, probably because you were subtly encouraged to talk so much. She had genius for inciting bull sessions, a bull session being a conversation in which adults talk with the fervent foolishness of adolescents.

Roces was a dry little man, an industrialist. He had been a guerrilla during the Jap time, that is to say, he had been an honest-to-God guerrilla, he had been a guerrilla when being a guerrilla was not so popular. (Nowadays, everyone admits to having been a guerrilla. It is remarkable. Hundreds of ex-guerrillas have sprung to loud life where one stalked the hills in the Jap time! Those, like Roces, who were so dull as actually to fight like guerrillas even before the Americans returned, and who never attended a testimonial banquet to a Jap general in their lives, have been all but lost in the shuffle.) Roces had held the rank of captain and his wife, who had made herself an authority on the care and training of machine-guns, the guerrilla rank of major. Of their three sons, one had been killed on Bataan and the other two, captured in the Mountain Province during the occupation, executed by the Japs at the memorable Baguio festival.

If Colonel Rodriguez was what was wrong with the Philippines, people like the Roces were, for my money, the hope of what might be right for the islands I called home. Thousands like them, rich and poor, had put up a magnificent fight for a better world that still seemed a long time coming. But they were a dogged bunch, and if too many of them did not now starve in the current famine (if poor), or lose their heads in civil disorders that always now seemed imminent (if rich), or if the two extremes of revolution and military dictatorship could be avoided—in short, if they could get the kind of break history is reluctant to bestow, a reign of reason —these people, the soul of the Philippines, might yet live to see their land grow bright.

Or so all these matters seemed to me in the grip of a Roces bull session.

IT was late when we went home. Clouds obscured the moon. It was the season for the southeast monsoon and the freshening wind nudged insistently against the car.

I stopped at Helen's gate. She said sleepily, "I feel so good. I don't want to go in."

The door opened on my side. Andrevsky stuck his head and shoulders in the car. He held a U. S. Army carbine in his left hand. He held it like a pistol, with his finger on the trigger. He planted his right hand against my chest and pinned me to the back of the seat. In an automatic reflex action I batted his arm and fought for a moment against his hand, and he moved the carbine and I stopped it.

He stood like that for a few seconds, leaning in the car, half across my body, his eyes on Helen, the muzzle of the carbine scraping the steering-post. The three of us might have been playing a game of statues. The wind banged the open car door.

Andrevsky spoke to Helen in Russian and I turned my head to look at her and said, "Do whatever he says," and I saw that her eyes were closed and she had not heard us. Her hands were at the gold chain about her throat.

Andrevsky said to me, in a normal voice, only sounding a little stumbling and excited, "Give me her hat."

I moved my hand over slowly and got Helen's hat and handed it to him. He took his hand off my chest and snatched the hat and backed out of the car and kicked the door shut.

I sat still. My heart began to beat again. I opened the door and Helen said in a quick cry, "No, don't!"

ONE foot on the running-board, I hesitated. I looked over my shoulder at her and then at the black shadow of Harrington's gate. The moon came out and a blue light glowed on the wall, the gate, the trees beyond. A shadow moved, just inside the compound. Shadows moved all about me as the radiance of the moon rose and fell to rags of scudding cloud. The trees bowed and rustled in the wind.

I got out of the car. My stomach ached with fear. I started walking toward the gate. Someone fired a pistol inside the walled yard. It slammed once, then there was a half-beat rest, and it fired again, twice, rapidly, and the crack of the carbine answered in a frantic string of shots, as fast as they could be triggered off. I ran through the gate and stopped. There was no sound but the sigh of the wind in the trees.

Something threshed on the ground not far away. The moonlight was now white and brilliant. I went forward and came on Andrevsky. He was on his face, Helen's floppy hat jammed on his head. The carbine was under him. His legs stirred a little. I stood up and looked around then, knelt by him again and struck my cigarette-lighter. His eyes were not quite closed. There was a little blood at the corner of his mouth. He was entirely still now and I could not detect any pulse or breathing. I examined him as well as I could with

the tiny flickering light. I saw that he had been hit once in the belly and once in the chest. My lighter went out.

Helen's voice called, "Barney!"

I pulled her hat from Andrevsky's head and ran to the gate and said, "Call a doctor. I think he's dying." She gathered up her skirt in one hand and ran past me toward the house. In the house, someone had put on a light, and now opened a window and called in a quavering voice, *"Eto kto?"* and I heard Helen answering.

I started back into the yard. I thought I heard a sound in the street and I stepped out to the sidewalk to look. Someone was running away from the wall, hunched over, quartering into the street. He was fifty yards away and running like a deer.

I jumped into my car and snapped on the light. He continued to run straight down the middle of the street, unmindful of the glare of the lights on him. He was bent over so far now that he might have been running on all fours.

As usual, the damned car didn't want to start. I threw Helen's hat down on the seat beside me and played desperately with the choke and the throttle, and the engine coughed, caught. I threw it in gear and the tires screamed on the pavement and the car bucked wildly and took off. The man running, now far ahead, staggered and fell, sprawling, and didn't move again. I drove on, the transmission whining in first, and skidded the car to a stop a few feet behind him.

He was dead. The amazing thing was that he had been able to run at all. He had been hit in the throat, possibly more than once, and the bullets had ripped him like a knife. He still clutched the pistol in his hand, a .45 automatic. It was not empty; the slide was closed and the hammer cocked.

He was a young Filipino with a dark, buck-toothed face and a thatch of coarse black hair. He was wearing pink slacks and pointed shoes and a shirt of green parachute silk. His clothes were drenched with blood. It was a messy business going through his pockets.

I took out a sizable wad of pesos and a few pieces of jewelry—rings and a bracelet—and piled all this on the street beside him, out of the smear of blood around him. I found his wallet, got up and went to my car and stuck it under the seat-cushion.

THE first car to come along was an MP jeep. An American soldier and a Filipino soldier, both wearing white sun helmets, got out. The American, a youth of about eighteen, said in a Deep South accent, "You hit him, huh?"

She yelled in Spanish over the baby's squalling, "Go to Quiapo. Ask for Faustin."

I said, "No, he's been shot. He was caught robbing a house. I think he killed the man who shot him."

"Robbin', killin', wreckin', killin'!" the American boy said wearily, and went to his radio to call in. . . .

It was daylight when I got home. I poured a water-glass full of whisky and drank it and went to bed. Manuel came into the house at two in the afternoon and woke me.

He said, "Do you know Major Gaddis at War Crimes?"

I said, "I don't know. Do I?"

"He's just been talking to me on the telephone. He says you were the one who first identified Nick in the Jap photographs. Are you awake?"

"Yes," I said. "I remember him."

"He wants to talk to someone who was associated with Andrevsky. Do you want to go see him?"

"Yes," I said. "I'll go."

"Mrs. Orlov just called to say she couldn't get you on the telephone."

"I disconnected it."

"She wants you to come out and see her."

I put my feet out of bed and sat up. Manuel said, "Do you want a drink?" I told him it would be all right and he said, "I thought it would be." I told him where the whisky was and he poured a shot for me and took a little himself.

"That is a tragedy, that Andrevsky," Manuel said. "I didn't even know of it until that War Crimes man called a while ago. He had just seen it in the afternoon papers. Such a pity, to die from a burglar. Mrs. Orlov said you and she were there when it happened. It must have been a shock to her."

"Yes," I said.

MANUEL smiled and said, "You look beat yourself, my friend."

"I was up all night."

"Is there anything I can do?"

I said nothing. Manuel saw Helen's hat on a chair near the bed; he blinked and turned his back with Latin delicacy to look out of the window.

"Fate is like a cart to a carabao," he said. "We turn it right or left but we don't understand why. And if we run, it bumps our rear. Well, they said he was afraid. Do you think he felt he was going to die?"

I finished the whisky and got up and poured some more.

I said, "Once a man was attacked by a wild bull elephant in the main street of my home town in Indiana. The elephant mauled him some and then threw him half a block and he landed in Thalman and Levi's plate-glass window. Someone rushed up to him and asked him if he was hurt and he said, 'I don't think so, but I sure am scared. I thought at first that was an elephant.' "

Manuel smiled politely. He said, "But you don't have elephants there, eh?"

"Only in the circus winter quarter twenty miles away."

"Oh, I see," Manuel said. "Then he had imagined it? Very good." He laughed, *ha-ha-ha,* without any conviction.

"No," I said irritably, "he hadn't imagined it."

Manuel stood up and said, "Please let me know if there is anything I can do."

I said, "There is, if you've got time. Find out if the police returned that stolen money and jewelry to Mrs. Orlov or the Dirigoleffs or whoever it was stolen from. The police still had it when I left this morning."

"I shall be delighted," Manuel said. "That is something I can handle."

He went away and I had a shower and shaved and dressed. I ate some bread and coffee. I put Helen's hat away in a closet.

I didn't call her. I didn't want to see her. . . .

The mind is a stage-maker. It creates its own scenes and sides and surroundings, it ceaselessly varnishes reality to its own changing taste. No two people live in quite the same world or walk on quite the same street, and music is a different score

for every ear. To a degree, we see what we want to see, and accept what our experience and the current state of our digestion renders reasonable, and if a mind wishes to go to the extreme of painting out an elephant it blandly paints out an elephant. With incomparable ease it masks the dramatis personæ of the tragicomedy performing in every passing head, and evil here is virtue there, or gossip truth, or nature vice, or murder a necessity.

But master director though it is, its discipline is limited. The elephant will eventually reappear, willy-nilly, outside the script or no, and throw the theater in an uproar. The mind will now rewrite the show or, if it still persists in its obstinacy, the theater may be declared insane and condemned as a firetrap. . . .

I had known for days that I was in love with her. Her sweetly formed mouth and the violet color of her eyes, the grace of her body, were intimate parts of my life, and her memories and fears and sorrows and delights, all these had become mine.

How would I have killed someone in the Jap time? Frame him with the Japs and let them do it? . . . . And now? Take him out to the provinces and shoot him from ambush and blame it on political thugs—but if there were difficulties in the way of getting out to San Fernando or Tarlac, what about a faked robbery? There were many robberies in Manila, and there were men for hire to cut throats on a cash basis.

Orlov had died at the hands of the Japs. Had she informed on him? Orlov had been a wealthy man, and had married a homeless young girl as an act of kindness. His widow would be a wealthy woman, who could sit in a mansion and wear gold lace. Unloved husbands had died for less than Nicholas Orlov had left behind him.

But Andrevsky would have known. Andrevsky knew everything. So he had come to see in time that he too was marked, not because he represented a real peril to her—complicity in Orlov's murder would be next to impossible to prove—but merely because he knew. He too had had his suspicions and doubts and fears, but even in the wildest stampede of his runaway panic he had never spoken against her. Andrevsky, too, might even have loved her.

SOMEHOW he must have learned, last night, that the scene was set; and at the final moment this man who had been psychopathically afraid had rushed his fear head-on to fight it and to die, at least, with boldness. Somehow he must have known the murderer was waiting at the house, and so in Helen's hat he might safely approach. The murderer would see him by skylighting him in silhouette, could hope to see no more than the head and shoulders . . . and in the outline of that unmistakably feminine hat he would see only the young woman who had hired him, and might even give himself away.

In things that Helen had said my mind had found suspicions and doubts it hadn't wished to see, and it had driven them one by one into the darkness of the wings. They had waited there, clamoring for an entrance. My passion had heard them and declared itself, so it had seemed to me, strong enough to face them and still live. Love wasn't concerned with purity, and the laws of men and of love could heal and embrace, I had thought, the ugliest scars of the soul. It's a pretty motion-picture notion that love is limited to nice people.

But the suspicions had rushed onstage in a hideous chorus, led by the reality of Andrevsky's murder—and all I felt had fled before them.

I knew now that the finest torture is doubt of someone you love, doubt that you cannot dismiss, doubt half in the costume of certainty. I had to know—I had to be sure, at any cost.

I drove to the War Crimes Investigation Section, off Taft near the City Hall. A lieutenant who was so gentlemanly he was almost ladylike informed me that Major Gaddis had just left for a golf date at Wack Wack. Yes, he knew the Major wanted to see me, but he couldn't say what it was about. Would it be possible for me to come back in the morning?

I went down to my car in the City Hall parking-lot and got the blood-stained wallet out from under the seat cushion and went through it.

Undoubtedly the police knew more by now about the dead Filipino *pistolero* than I would be likely to find out, but I couldn't let the police know I was particularly interested in him. It was written off now as a housebreaking and shooting. That was the way I had telephoned it in to my own paper at two o'clock that morning. That was the way it had to stay.

In the wallet there was an old Nichols Field pass, a PX pass, and an American Army permit to operate motor vehicles. The PX pass was in the name of an Army unit and carried no address and only a blank space for the name. The other cards bore the name of Alex Juan Mangahas, over two different addresses, one in Paco and one in San Nicolas.

On Calle Santo Sepulcro in Paco I found an alley and in the alley a row of little houses, part crumbling masonry and part corrugated iron, and in one of the houses I found a family named Mangahas. This took something over two hours. The sun sank low in the sky and the steady wind of the monsoon was stifling hot. Dust rode on it in lazy sweeping clouds, and the people in the streets walked with handkerchiefs over their faces.

The alley off Santo Sepulcro was just wide enough to drive through. The shanties lining it crawled all over each other, all around each other, some peering out on stilts, some squatting in crudely roofed cellar holes, all threatening to spill over into the alley at the first deep breath. A stream of little kids in dirty undershirts and nothing else followed me as I left my car and inquired from door to door through the maze. They begged for cigarettes and chewing-gum and ran ahead of me screaming *"Mangahas!"* when they heard me ask the name.

WHEN I found the place I was greeted by a barefooted woman who looked to be sixty but who was carrying a baby and was about to have another. She was chewing betelnut or snuff. She shifted it here and there behind her lip as she talked.

She couldn't understand my English. I tried Spanish. I asked about Alex Juan Mangahas. She said, *"Juanito? Es en Manila."*

Her hut was one room and a leanto, part nipa, part lumber, part corrugated iron, and she stood back in the darkness of it, jiggling the baby in her arms, and wouldn't come near the door. I couldn't tell which of the kids pressed around me, listening, were hers. Possibly all of them.

I asked in Tagalog when he would be back. It developed that she was an Ilocano, so I switched back to Spanish. She said she didn't know when he would be back. I asked her when she had seen him last and she said she paid no attention to Juanito, she couldn't be bothered with knowing about him; did I have something for Juanito, some money or some beer? She had a voice like a parrot. As she talked she interlarded more and more Ilocano into the half-forgotten Spanish. It was difficult for me to follow her.

I took out a handful of pesos. I said I was very anxious to find a good friend of Juanito's. She came forward, rather stealthily, until she could reach the money, and took it and counted it and handed it back. She pointed to my hat and said she would rather have that. It was a new hat. I took it off and gave it to her. She put it over the baby's head; it came down to the baby's shoulders and the child screamed and hauled at the brim with both hands, pulling the hat out of shape. The old woman leaned back and laughed, her mouth wide open, and jiggling the baby furiously.

She came bravely now to the door. She was wearing a strip of muslin flung loosely around her shoulders,

"I want to see some money, to start." Faustin slapped my arm in his friendly way. "You ain't buying hairpins."

and her withered breasts were bare. She yelled in Spanish over the baby's squalling, "Go to Quiapo. Ask for Faustin. Everyone knows Faustin." She ducked her head to spit. She cried, "Talk to Faustin!"

I thanked the old woman but no one heard me. I went back to my car and chased a dozen kids out of it. I got in and one kid stuck his half-starved, grinning face in after me. He held up the plastic knob off my gear-shift lever, and my flashlight, taken from the glove compartment. He said, "I watched your car, Joe! Peso, Joe?" I gave him a peso and redeemed the stuff. A line of three or four women and kids bearing stacks of junk lumber on their heads was stalled behind my car. There wasn't room for them to get around. I drove ahead, very slowly, over the enormous ruts and holes of the alley. Chickens pecked at leisure in my path, the car was covered with children hanging on, and the train of lumber-bearers stalked sedately along in the rear. I yelled at the children a few times but they stayed with me until we passed an old man squatting in the evening shade, who picked up a bamboo stick and went to flailing it at them. The kids jumped down and scattered, and I made my way out of the alley and drove downtown to Quiapo.

A marketplace is huddled against the walls of the imposing Quiapo cathedral, and in the plaza roundabout, the *carretelas* and the jitney busses mass in a traffic jam that would drive a New York cop to benzedrine. In the market rows the country people squat under vast coolie hats at stands of vegetables and fruit, while the city operators sell dusky market K-rations or PX supplies. After dark the booths are lit with flares and lanterns, and children sleep pillowed on the refuse heaps. The sellers call out their wares in a weary singsong, the *carretela* drivers chat and shout back and forth as the traffic inches along, the jitney guards hang on the back steps of their rickety clunkers and cry aloud their destinations: *"San Juan—Mandaluyong!" . . . . Pasig, Pasig!" . . . . "Caloocan!" . . . . "Bataan!" . . . .* in a bedlam of noise, flaring colors, and terrific smells.

I asked about Faustin at half a dozen stands. No one seemed to know him. I bought an apple from a fine-eyed old lady who was smoking a black cigar. I got it for fifty centavos. The skyrocket prices were evidently falling. Six months ago it would have been a peso. I stopped by a good-looking young girl who squatted with her skirt drawn up between her thighs, reading a movie magazine by the dancing light of a lantern and singing from time to time, *"Sibuyas saging! . . . . Sibuyas saging!"* I priced the onions. I asked her in English if she knew someone named Faustin. She gave me a warm look. She said, "You sell?" I took out a couple of pesos and dropped them in her hand. She smiled. She put the money in a little box and cried, *"Sibuyas saging! Sibuyas saging!"*

I said, "Where can I find him?" She gave me no answer. She wouldn't meet my eyes.

I moved on.

Presently I went to a little restaurant off the plaza, and ate. I was hungry and tired. I went back to the market and stood around for a while, and then sat on the balustrade above the cathedral steps and watched the people moving in and out of the night, through the pools of flickering light. My nerves were jumping and I didn't want to sit alone and think, but I was very tired. There was still the San Nicolas address. Presently I would try it.

A dark-skinned little man with a flat nose came up the cathedral steps and stopped at my shoulder.

He said, "I'm Faustin Cabanata, buddy. You want to see me?"

I turned around on the railing to look at him and said, "Yes, I do."

"You selling something?"

I said, "No, I'm looking for a friend of mine: Juanito Mangahas."

Faustin smiled broadly. His lower lip thrust out and his minuscule chin disappeared in his neck. He plucked a gold-tipped cigarette out of the breast pocket of his silk shirt. The pocket had pleats on it, and a flamboyant gold monogram worked on the pleats. He said, "The hell you are!"

"All right," I said, "the hell I am."

"Just kidding, buddy. What you want with Juanito?"

I said, "It's confidential."

FAUSTIN looked as if he were going to grin. Instead he said, "You mean it's worth something to you."

"That's what I mean."

"It must be very confidential."

"It is."

He laughed, took my arm in tiny, highly manicured fingers, and gave it a comradely squeeze. When Faustin Cabanata smiled he showed a lot of gold teeth, and pockmarks were sprinkled on his face. He said, "I'd like to help you, buddy." He left his hand on my arm and turned to gaze into the plaza, as if turning the matter over in his mind. He continued to chuckle and squeeze my arm at intervals. He wore extremely long sideburns, cut on a barbed slant. He said, "What do you want?" He looked at me again. "You want Juanito to do something for you?"

"I'll talk that over with Juanito."

Faustin gave my arm a final pat and dropped his hand. He said, "You don't talk things over with Juanito, buddy, you talk things over with Juanito's friends. Now look. You really know that kid?"

I said, "I haven't got all night either, buddy. If you can take me to him I'll pay you for it. Do you know where he is? Is he in San Nicolas?"

"Now don't get your bowels in an uproar," Faustin said. "You know people in San Nicolas, do you?"

"If I did I wouldn't be here."

"You know what Juanito did in San Nicolas? He hung around a mah-jongg joint and swept the floor. Juanito didn't know which way was up. He ain't the guy you want to see in San Nicolas. You leave it to me, buddy, I'm going to fix it for you; but I got to know a little bit. Now you don't want to see Juanito just because he's an old buddy, buddy; that's for the birds—you got something for Juanito to do."

"All right, I've got something for Juanito to do."

Faustin laughed and said, "I got to know a little bit. Now I'd like to see some money, to start."

I got up and stood in the shadow of the cathedral wall and took a hundred-peso note out of my wallet and gave it to him.

Faustin folded it in a small square and held it in his palm. He said, "Now we all know that won't get it, buddy."

"How much do you want?"

"I want to see some money, to start." Faustin slapped my arm in his friendly way. "You ain't just buying hairpins."

"How much do you want?"

"Oh, many, many pesos—five hundred."

"You think I'm crazy?"

"I'm the cheapest part, buddy. Don't kid yourself."

He put the hundred-peso note in his pocket. He said, "You want to forget the whole thing?"

"I haven't got that kind of money with me."

Faustin shrugged and dropped his cigarette and stepped on it with a dainty movement of his hips.

I said, "Where can I find you tomorrow?"

"Right on the sidewalk over there, in front of the Cine Quezon. It's my office. I'm in all day. The door's always open."

"I'll be there at noon." I thought it over and said, "I don't want to stand around and talk in the daylight: I'll be driving a car. I'll come up to the curb. You get in."

"Roger-dodger," Faustin said. He slapped my arm gently and his Adam's apple swallowed his chin and his gold teeth gleamed in another chummy smile. He said, "I'll see you, buddy," and walked away.

I got my car and went to the office and asked Tony Cruz to turn in a report to the police that my house had been robbed. Then I pulled a couple of desks together and lay down on them and went to sleep.

In the morning I borrowed Tony's electric razor (Tony maintained supplies in his desk to keep himself sharply groomed at all times; he never knew when an exciting woman was going to walk in) and cleaned up without going home. I felt unsteady and I couldn't think straight. I went over to Rizal and bought a shot of rotgut whisky and went back and got my car and drove to City Hall and parked and went up to see Major Gaddis. He was an Iowa boy with horn-rimmed glasses and a weighty manner. I had realized the first time I met him that here was a considerable presence. He was plastered with the President's commission.

He talked in circles for a half hour, about Andrevsky's visits to their office to identify the Jap photographs of Orlov's execution and to assist in the examination of material bearing on the Orlov case, and about a Nisei staff sergeant named Katsuki who had worked for them as a translator, and had just been transferred to Okinawa, and about their file system, and the care they exerted to protect classified material.

It finally came out that they had lost what he called "the Orlov file"—Japanese papers, letters, documents, diaries, and photographs pertaining to the Orlov case. He had an idea Andrevsky might have had something to do with the file's disappearance.

He explained that Andrevsky knew the Japanese language, and that he had been helping Sergeant Katsuki screen the untransmitted matter of the Orlov file. On the night Andrevsky was killed, Sergeant Katsuki had stayed late in the office, cleaning up his work in preparation for an early morning take-off for Okinawa. A janitor reported that he had seen Andrevsky in the office with Sergeant Katsuki at about midnight. On the next morning Sergeant Katsuki had left for Okinawa, Andrevsky was dead, and the Orlov file was not to be found in the office. Major Gaddis asked me if I thought there could be any connection between the missing file and Andrevsky's death.

I told him that seemed unlikely. I suggested that Sergeant Katsuki might have mislaid the file in the confusion of his departure.

"I sent a signal to Okinawa yesterday, of course, questioning him," Major Gaddis said, "but as I have pointed out, I believe our file system is foolproof. It has been my personal baby and I have reorganized it and reorganized it until I have implicit faith in it, and I am positive the Orlov file cannot have been merely misplaced."

I told him I was equally positive that Andrevsky's death had nothing to do with it, that I had witnessed the shooting and that it had a foursquare burglary motive. I agreed that the situation appeared to present a significant coincidence. We discussed fantastic possibilities for a while; he spoke of the great embarrassment this matter was to him, and I assured him that if I came across any information that might be helpful I would let him know.

I went away, afraid of Major Gaddis. Andrevsky had learned something that last night, perhaps from the Orlov file. Given time, Major Gaddis might learn the same thing.

NEXT I tried Manuel's office, but it was still morning and he was not in. I went out to his house and found him by the pool in his garden. He was reading to his children.

"This is a wonderful book," he said. "The older I get, the more wonderful it gets." It was "A Child's Garden of Verses." He quoted, "The world is so full of a number of things, I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings." Then he said, "Sit down. You don't look very well."

I said, "I'm in a hurry. I want you to give me a little help."

Manuel looked at me curiously. "Have you seen Mrs. Orlov? She's worried about you. She called me twice last evening. The stolen property was returned, by the way. The jewelry was hers. The money must have been Andrevsky's. No one else in the house had lost anything."

I said, "Fine, that's fine. Can you do me a favor?"

"Certainly," Manuel said.

"I want you to meet me downtown at noon sharp. In front of the Cine Quezon. I'll be in my car."

Manuel said, "Yes, of course," but his face was concerned. He said, "Look here, Barney, come in and rest a while. Have some coffee with us. It's too hot today to be active."

I told him again I didn't have time. I made sure he understood where and when I wanted him to meet me. I passed the time of day with his kids, so many identical pairs of wide brown eyes. I walked back to my car with Manuel looking doubtfully after me, the book closed over his fingers.

AT my house, I took four one-hundred-peso notes from my wall safe and wrote my name in ink across the face of each and put them in an envelope. I took off my watch—my initials were engraved on the back of the case—and dropped it in the envelope. I got a short-barreled .38 revolver from my gun locker, loaded it, and stuck it in my pocket. It was eleven o'clock. I went to Wang's and had a plate of chicken and noodles.

At exactly twelve noon I pulled in to the curb at the Quezon Theater and waited in the car with the engine running.

The sidewalk was crowded and I didn't see Faustin until he opened the door and got in beside me. He said, "You're right on, buddy!" He was in good spirits. His gold teeth were sparkling. He was wearing another silk shirt, this time with scarlet pleats. I tossed the envelope over to him. I was watching for Manuel and when I saw him I called him and opened a rear door of the car and he climbed in and pulled the door shut.

Faustin had inserted a thumb and finger in the envelope. He jerked around to look at Manuel and then at me with a glassy, startled glance, and I took the pistol out of my pocket and held it in my hand.

I said to Manuel, "My house was robbed last night. I've caught this guy with my money and my watch. You're a witness to that."

Manuel, frowning anxiously, looked from me to Faustin. I said, "Take that envelope."

Faustin sat still, fascinated by the gun, and let Manuel take the envelope out of his hands.

Manuel examined the money and the watch.

"The money's marked," I said. You can identify the watch as mine, can't you? You've seen it before, and it's got my initials on it."

"Yes," Manuel said.

"This guy is the head man of a burglary ring," I said. "I'm going to turn him over to the police and see that he's convicted. You've just seen me capture him with my property on him. Is that correct?"

"Yes," Manuel said again. He handed the envelope to me and I put it in my pocket. I put the gun away and wheeled the car out into traffic. Faustin made a grab for the door to open it and jump, and I jammed on the brakes and caught him by the shirt and hauled him in again and then backhanded him across the face. The blow cut his mouth. He crouched in the seat, badly frightened, his tongue flicking out to taste the blood on his lips. I said, "If I have to shoot him, you will see that it's because he tried to escape."

Manuel said, "Yes," again, and then drew in a breath and began, "Barney, this is all—" He hesitated a moment, sighed, and didn't go on.

I said, "I'd like to use your office for a while. Is that okay?"

Faustin said in a shrill voice, "Listen, buddy—" and I hit him again. This time I cut my knuckles on his gold teeth.

I DROVE across town to Manuel's office and double-parked outside the ruined Orlov building. I told Manuel to take the car and come back in an hour. I got out with my hand in Faustin's silken collar. He was stiff with fear. His face was smeared with blood. A passer-by or two stopped to watch us. I got the key from Manuel and walked Faustin back to Manuel's office and went in and shut the door.

I said, "Wipe your face. Don't dirty this place up."

He wiped his face clumsily with his sleeve. His eyes were terrified. He backed up and sat down in Manuel's chair.

I said, "I want some information from you. If I get it, I'll let you go. If I don't get it, I'll see that you rot in Bilidad."

Faustin licked his lips. He said, "Can I say something?"

"Go ahead."

"I don't want any trouble."

"We'll see."

"I'll tell you all about Juanito. He's dead. He got killed."

"I want to know who hired him to kill a man on the night he was shot."

"I'll tell you everything I know. Honest to God, I didn't have nothing to do with that! It was a man called Talo. He's a Chinese. He runs that mah-jongg place in San Nicolas. Juanito didn't do much for me, most of the time he worked for Talo. That Talo, he's a bad fellow. When Mr. Lee Han Kee was kidnaped, that Talo, he was the one that worked it, I know that for sure; I can tell you about that if you want to know."

"All right," I said, "who hired Talo to hire Juanito to kill a man?"

"I don't know. *De veras,* I'd tell you if I knew." His voice begged me to believe him. "All I know, it wasn't a man, it was a woman Juanito was supposed to knock off. I don't know who hired it. Juanito never seen him either. All I know, Talo gave Juanito some jewelry of hers and told him where to wait for her, she would be a young woman with a big round hat. Juanito told me this, see—he gets stuff from me, see—it's dope for his nerves. He told me this when he got the stuff that night. I don't know any more. I swear I don't."

"You're lying. We'll go see Talo."

Faustin's mouth fell again and he said, "Why, he'd kill me!"

MANUEL'S voice called at the door and I unlocked it. He said, "I saw her down the street, Barney, and she made me tell her where you were."

Helen came past him. She looked into my face, a questioning, childlike look, and then her arms were around me and her face was hidden against my shoulder.

Manuel spoke to Faustin in Tagalog, in a voice like a whip. Faustin got up and edged around him. Manuel might have been a cobra. Faustin reached the door and darted out and ran. Manuel went out after him and closed the door.

Helen was crying. She said, "Oh, you fool, you monstrous fool, don't you know that I've been frantic?" She was laughing and crying together and holding me so tightly her arms were shaking. She said, "I couldn't tell you before, I couldn't!"

We talked for a while without making much sense, and presently I took her home. I flagged down a dream and we floated out to San Juan on it, and we sat in the cool shade of the veranda. The elephant took the show apart and put it together again.

I said, "You knew Andrevsky was responsible for Orlov's death."

"He was the only one enough in Nick's confidence to have told the Japs what they knew. And then in time he practically admitted it to me, without realizing it—I mean, he wanted me to know he had done it to take me away from Nick. So he would say things that would give him away. And it was always terrifying to him too, what he had done to someone like Nick, and he couldn't keep from talking around it, because it was always on his mind."

"He was afraid of you because you suspected him."

"No, he was really afraid only of himself. I suppose you would say, his conscience. But of course he wouldn't ever have let himself believe that.

"You see, I couldn't find any proof. There simply isn't any way to prove guilt for that kind of murder. Judge Villenueva told me how hard it was to convict informers and collaborators, even when everyone knew they were guilty; and in Shuric's case, no one would ever dream he could have murdered Nick—no one except me, because I was the only one who would know why.

"I made up the story about Shuric wanting to sell out because I had to have your help, and because you had to have some reason to play your part the way I wanted you to—you and Manuel."

I said, "I don't understand what you were trying to do."

"I thought I could frighten him into a confession," she said simply. "I let him find a note I was apparently sending to you on Manuel. It spoke of arranging to take Shuric to Baguio to be seen by someone who could identify the man who had informed on Nick.

"He went wild with fear when he read it and realized that I definitely suspected him and that I was trying to convince others of his guilt. I knew he would never let himself be taken to Baguio. I was sure he would break down after I got you and Manuel to come out and talk about going up there."

"He broke down enough to try to kill you."

"I'd been thinking of that. You remember when I asked you about murder? I was wondering what he might do if he actually should—but I didn't think he would ever really bring himself to—but then when we found him waiting outside asleep that time, with that rifle, I was honestly afraid. I hid the rifle, but of course he bought another one some place. I thought I needed someone for protection as much as to help me, and then after I got you—after I knew you—then I wanted to stop it all. But I couldn't, because I owed it to Nick. I owe everything to Nick. If I risked my life it was only because I owe my life to Nick."

"You should have told me."

"I could only manage it alone. And I didn't think anyone would believe me. You wouldn't have, at first. Then I had decided to tell you—that night when Shuric was killed."

She stopped talking. She kissed the edge of my ear.

After a time I said, "He was down at War Crimes that evening." I snapped my fingers and got up and went into the house to the telephone. I called Major Gaddis.

"About Andrevsky and that Orlov file," I said. "Have you thought there might have been information in there incriminating him as an informer in Orlov's execution?"

"Indeed!" Major Gaddis said, on a jovial note. "I'm happy to say the whole affair is settled, Cardigan. It was that exactly! It appears that when Andrevsky went up to the office that last evening, he came across a Jap diary naming him as the informer against Orlov. He tried to make away with the diary, and when Sergeant Katsuki caught him at it he tried to bribe Katsuki and put up quite a row in general, I gather. I don't wonder he was desperate. Sufficient evidence in that diary to hang the fellow sky-high!"

"Then you've found the file."

"Oh, definitely. Sergeant Katsuki clarified the whole thing in his answer to my message. He had covered the Orlov file with a note recounting Andrevsky's behavior, and left it in the suspense file before he took off. That is, in the operational suspense file. That's a new baby of mine in our file system for just such—but that's neither here nor there. The point is, that's the one place Lieutenant Fiedelmaus didn't look for the Orlov file. Inexcusable on his part."

I HUNG up. Helen was standing at my side.

"War Crimes had his guilt on paper," I said. "He knew it. It meant he'd lost everything and apparently he had enough decency left to try to save you. Naturally you weren't a threat any more, and it made a final gesture."

"But I can't see, if he'd hired a gunman, and then he changed his mind, why he couldn't have simply called him off."

"The guy was already waiting out here in the compound, probably doped up and dangerous to anyone who might disturb him, for one thing, and he'd never seen Andrevsky—anyhow, I think Andrevsky wanted it the way it was. He'd been sobering up all day; he must have been waking up to some red-hot regrets. So he got the carbine from wherever he had cached it and he took your hat to mark him for the kill—he wanted suicide, that was the inevitable finish for him, and he wanted to silence that guy he'd hired, so that at least that part wouldn't have to be known. And in a way maybe it had its noble angle to him. He was giving himself for you because he probably still loved you."

Helen shivered and I put my arms around her. The pregnant woman shuffled in, gave us a grim look and settled herself in a chair to watch.

COUNTRY-SIZE STATES

A Quiz by Kennie MacDowd

AGAIN and again visitors from abroad have commented upon the vastness of our country—as well they might, since there are any number of States as large, or larger, than many important countries throughout the world. When a globe-trotter got back home, supposing he wanted to describe the approximate size of the States he had visited by comparing them with countries with which his listeners might be familiar, which of the countries mentioned below each State would he name to describe its relative dimensions?

(1) MONTANA
(a) England (b) Japan (c) Czechoslovakia

(2) MARYLAND
(a) Ethiopia (b) Netherlands (c) Greece

(3) CALIFORNIA
(a) Italy (b) Siam (c) Morocco

(4) VIRGINIA
(a) Iceland (b) Belgium (c) Eire

(5) ARIZONA
(a) Bulgaria (b) Philippines (c) Norway

(6) INDIANA
(a) Hungary (b) Cuba (c) France

(7) COLORADO
(a) Switzerland (b) New Zealand (c) Nepal

(8) SOUTH CAROLINA
(a) Scotland (b) Bulgaria (c) Spain

(9) VERMONT
(a) Portugal (b) Belgium (c) Palestine

(10) TEXAS
(a) Sweden (b) Egypt (c) Burma

(11) RHODE ISLAND
(a) Denmark (b) Yugoslavia (c) Luxembourg

(12) NEW MEXICO
(a) Finland (b) Poland (c) Germany

Answers:

1—Japan
2—Netherlands
3—Morocco
4—Iceland
5—Philippines
6—Hungary
7—New Zealand
8—Scotland
9—Palestine
10—Burma
11—Luxembourg
12—Poland

Who's Who *in this* Issue

Colonel Rupert D. Graves

BORN (you can't start much earlier) in Peabody, Mass., in 1901. Attended the public schools, suffered the usual childhood diseases and was appointed to the U. S. Military Academy, graduating in 1924. First station was Fort Sam Houston, Texas, where in addition to a reputation for not being overly assiduous, also garnered one wife whose nickname was and still is "Chief." Service in the Philippines with the 31st Infantry also brought a trip to Shanghai, China, in 1932. Whether we succeeded in filling with awe the fourteen Jap divisions there, I don't know, but it was a nice trip.

After a tour with the tanks and then in Hawaii returned to duty with the 1st Armored Division at Fort Knox and then with the 10th Armored at Fort Benning. After maneuvers in Louisiana, Tennessee and North Carolina, grew allergic to same and transferred to Airborne and was sent to take the course in mass mayhem at the Parachute School. Being now at the ripe old age of forty, well advanced senility for a paratrooper, astounded my friends not to mention myself, by qualifying easily, that is to say all in one piece. Then commanded the 551st Parachute Battalion and later was assigned the job of conducting the 517th Regimental Combat Team (Parachute) on its journey overseas. This I believe is where I came in.

"Combat Team" is supposed to be a simple story of the adventures of a separate Regimental Combat Team, Parachute. It was thought at first it might be appropriate to name the article, "You *Would* Be a Separate Regiment!" Brigadier General Ralph Eaton, chief of staff of the 18th Airborne Corps, when we arrived in Soissons in December, 1944, after moving up from southern France, asked how we liked being a separate regiment. I replied that we sort of liked it, although it had some disadvantages. Seeing us later on near Malmedy, Belgium, after we had been pretty well beaten down in the Battle of the Bulge, he remarked: "You *would* be a separate regiment!"

Philip Ketchum

Colonel Rupert D. Graves

Philip Ketchum

I WAS born in Colorado in 1902 and attended various elementary schools all over the State, finishing up at Denver University, which I attended for four years without graduating. I married a Denver girl twenty years ago and am still married to her. We have an eighteen-year-old son who is six inches taller than I am, and who wishes I would write *literature*. We have a daughter of thirteen who is beautifully freckled, and who wishes I would write dog stories. My wife doesn't care what I write, so long as I enjoy writing it.

Half a dozen years ago when I gave up a rather good job for the precarious but free life of a writer, we were living in the Midwest. We flipped a coin to decide whether to move to Florida or California. Actually, of course, California lost. We like it here. We like the sunshine and the rain and the people. We like the lazy tempo of the life we have built. If I could write one page of *literature* for my son, and a really good dog story for my daughter, life would be almost perfect.

I have a passion for the truth. I must confess that I look nothing like my picture. I did pose for it, however, so it is the photographer who is the liar. As a matter of fact, I'm bald, haggard, Indian brown and need a shave.

Joseph W. Hotchkiss

I WAS born in New Haven, Connecticut, on a Saturday afternoon of November, 1919. Although I considered my arrival an event of some moment, it caused only a minor flurry of interest compared with the contest being played that afternoon between the Yales and the Harvards. Since that time my attitude toward all organized athletics has been cool. After graduating from Trinity College in Hartford in 1942, I went into the Navy, and on being commissioned, was assigned to LST duty in the Amphibious force.

In June 1944 I took command of an LST at Salerno, Italy. If ever a ship had a conjure, she did. She tried everything in the book from fouling her stern anchor cable in her screw to nudging the LCI flagship and rolling the Flotilla Commander out of his sack, but I rode her, and finally we became friends. She then apologized for her previous didos by behaving like a thoroughbred in the invasion of Southern France, and during many subsequent months of tramping around the Mediterranean at the whim of anyone who had a radio transmitter handy. I have not arrived at the stage of senility where I think of those days as "good old," but some of them had their points. I am married and have one boy who arrived the day I sold my first story to BLUE BOOK. I hope he won't feel about that the way I do about the Yales and the Harvards. I bet nobody could tell you who won that game, anyway.

Joseph W. Hotchkiss

BLUE BOOK

MAGAZINE for DECEMBER, 1947

TWELVE SHORT STORIES, INCLUDING:

AN OFFICER SEES HIS DUTY
by PETER B. KYNE

THE GOLDEN CUP
by H. BEDFORD-JONES

GRANDPA AND THE WEREWOLF
by GEORGES SURDEZ

A GAMBLER'S REPUTATION
by WILBUR S. PEACOCK

ALL STAR LUCKY
by JOEL REEVE

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