
JUNE
25 CENTS
BLUE BOOK
Stories of adventure for MEN, by MEN
The Street of the Crying Woman
A BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL
by GEOFFREY HOMES
Bataan Landing
A crowded hour for a desperate plane-crew.
by ARCH WHITEHOUSE
Read in the Sand
A pageant of old Peru.
by ACHMED ABDULLAH

Who's Who in this Issue

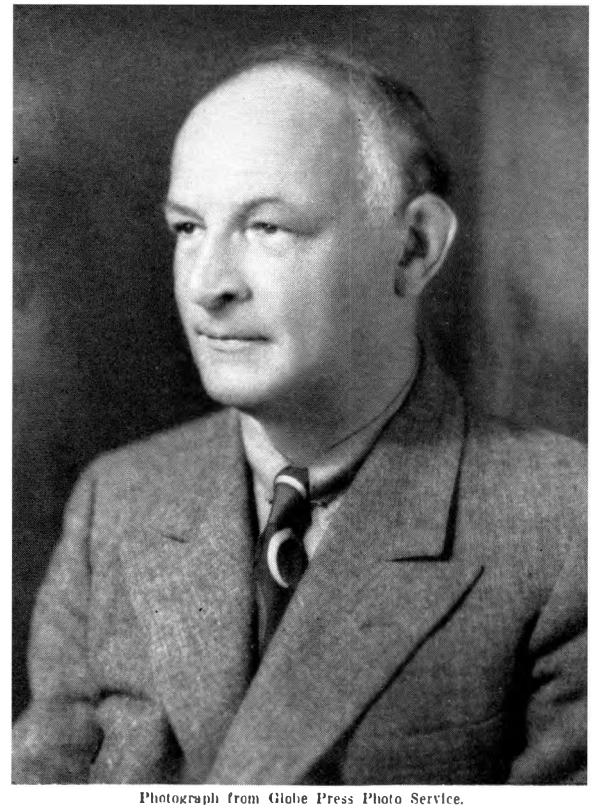
ADMIRAL BYRD



Photograph from Press Association, Inc.

RICHARD EVELYN BYRD first came prominently to public notice when in 1926, with Floyd Bennett, he flew over the North Pole from Spitsbergen. Before that, after graduating from the Naval Academy in 1912, he had advanced to the rank of Lieutenant Commander, then in 1917 had transferred to the Aviation Service, and in 1925 had started his polar explorations as commander of the aviation unit of the Navy-MacMillan Polar Expedition. In 1927, with three companions he made the transatlantic flight to France. And in 1929 he flew over the South Pole in the first of the several important Antarctic expeditions that have made him the foremost authority on that most difficult of all regions. Among his books are "Skyward," "Little America," "Discovery" and "Alone." His article beginning on page 103 of this issue discusses the importance of Antarctica in the present world crisis, and is illuminated by a number of significant personal experiences.

ACHMED ABDULLAH



Photograph from Globe Press Photo Service.

CAPTAIN ACHMED ABDULLAH, born at Yalta, in the Russian Crimea, is the son of a Russian father and an Afghan mother. He was educated at Eton and Oxford, and in France, by the Jesuits and at the University of Paris. Becoming a British subject, he joined the British army, seeing service, for about fifteen years, in India, China, Mesopotamia, Tibet, West and Central Africa, Egypt; interrupted his British army career, in 1912, to fight for the Turks against the Bulgarians, then rejoined the British. He has written short stories, novels, plays and motion pictures. He was crowned by the French Academy for his collection of short stories "The Honorable Gentleman"—an honor of which he is inordinately vain, being the only English writer ever thus singled out. He lives mostly in Maine; and having once been fairly well known as a polo player, he is satisfied now with gardening—which he takes seriously. Among his best-remembered books published in America are "The Blue-eyed Manchu," "The Man on Horseback," "The Mating of the Blades" and "The Swinging Caravan." The first of a remarkable new series to be published in this magazine, "Read in the Sand," begins on page 55.

BLUE BOOK

June, 1942 MAGAZINE Vol. 75, No. 2

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Cover Design Painted by Herbert Morton Stoops

Except for stories of Real Experiences, 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.

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READERS' FORUM

A LARGE BLACK EYE

You may think this is a gag, but BLUE BOOK *was the cause of a large and puffy black eye I suffered the other night. You see, this fellow and I were arguing about which magazine gave you more adventure for the money. Now, you know and I know the answer to that is* BLUE BOOK, *but would you believe it, that fellow wanted to argue about it.*

Well, as they say, the argument waxed hot, and finally there wasn't anything to do but remove our coats and have at it. In the ensuing fracas I acquired that large and puffy black eye, but if you think I've been reading BLUE BOOK *for years without gaining any pointers in the manly art of self-defense, think again. As they say, you ought to see the other guy!*

T. N. Pappas, Jr.
Memphis, Tennessee.

P.S.—The doctor bill was ten dollars.
P.P.S.—That other guy is now reading BLUE BOOK, *too.*

SANCTUARIES

It was with a strange excitement that I read Nelson Bond's fantasy, "The Magic Staircase," in the BLUE BOOK *for February. It took me back to the days when a man read a story to be wafted away from the gnawing cares of the day, rather than to be bored with some erratic social philosophy or bohemian quirk of the author. The human appeal of Nelson Bond's story lay in the fact that it presented a sanctuary, however dangerous, from* Burke's *lonely real-life existence. All of us have our sanctuaries—those retreats to which we flee when the going gets too tough! Mine is to bury myself in the thick of a mid-city crowd—or in a story such as "The Magic Staircase."*

For its unique appeal alone the story would be outstanding. But for its careful analysis, in not too many words, of what might have happened —of what might yet happen in the present conflict—the story becomes little short of a masterpiece of fantastic plotting! As Burke *wandered about in his strange, and sometimes terrifying world above the attic stairs, I envied him the opportunity. And I thought, as I read the story, that many of us would choose that actual, active danger which* Burke *faced, against the wearisome, never-ending, nerve-racking uncertainty of the world we face today!*

B. L. Bennett
Muskegon, Michigan

(Continued on inside back cover)



The Bowman

PURE rot!" said young Blackmoor. "It's the wind; Saxon Castle gets the full brunt of it, with the North Sea on one side and the moors on the other. In a storm, you'd almost swear you heard men running round and calling to each other in a strange language."

"And the bowman?" There was interest on Eli Carson's aristocratic features. This kindly white-haired gentleman and young Blackmoor had ridden up from London together, and from Norton-Fowling they'd had the compartment to themselves.

Blackmoor puffed at his pipe.

"The wind again: doing something to the ivy—snapping it. The queer thing is that it certainly does sound like a bowstring. I happen to know, because I took up archery four or five years ago; rotten at it, and soon gave it up."

"Never saw him, I suppose?"

Carson smiled as he spoke, and Blackmoor smiled back.

"Naturally not. . . . Oh, there's a yarn that during the Danish invasions, and again when the Normans came, he showed up to help some of us out of some tight spot. I wonder"—he had an impish, boyish grin that flashed out unexpectedly—"what he'd do if some Germans turned up in the castle. I should love to see him."

Carson shook his head meditatively.

"My boy, you can hardly realize how odd all this sounds to an American; it's the incongruity of an electrical engineer owning an ancestral ghost. And still living in the spot that gave his family its name more than twelve centuries ago—the Black Moor. No wonder the English think us pretty new and crude."

"Oh, but we don't, sir!"

He spoke earnestly, anxious to be believed. In such a moment, he looked very youthful and innocent for his twenty-seven years, and for his six feet of height. This was because he still lived in textbooks. And all over a rather Galahadish love-affair; he had worshiped his distant cousin Cicely since they were children, but she had somehow got engaged to Wilkins, whom he thought a decent chap; so that was that, and Blackmoor stuck to his lab. . . . Now, he thought that Carson looked a trifle dubious. To prove his point, he touched the letter in his breast pocket.

"Really, you know, no Englishman would have done this for a chance acquaintance."

"Nonsense! Kyle himself told me that he could never find enough suitable young men."

"But you don't quite understand, sir, what it means to me. The research staff of United Electric is an engineer's notion of—heaven."

The last word sounded a shade too fanciful; he colored a little. Carson smiled kindly at him and turning away, sat for a few moments looking absently through the rain-streaked window at the wet and dreary Yorkshire moorland slipping past in the dusk. Then he turned back.

"By the way: in your profession, you may know something of a certain affair in Lancaster last week."

"Oh, I say! They shouldn't have—"

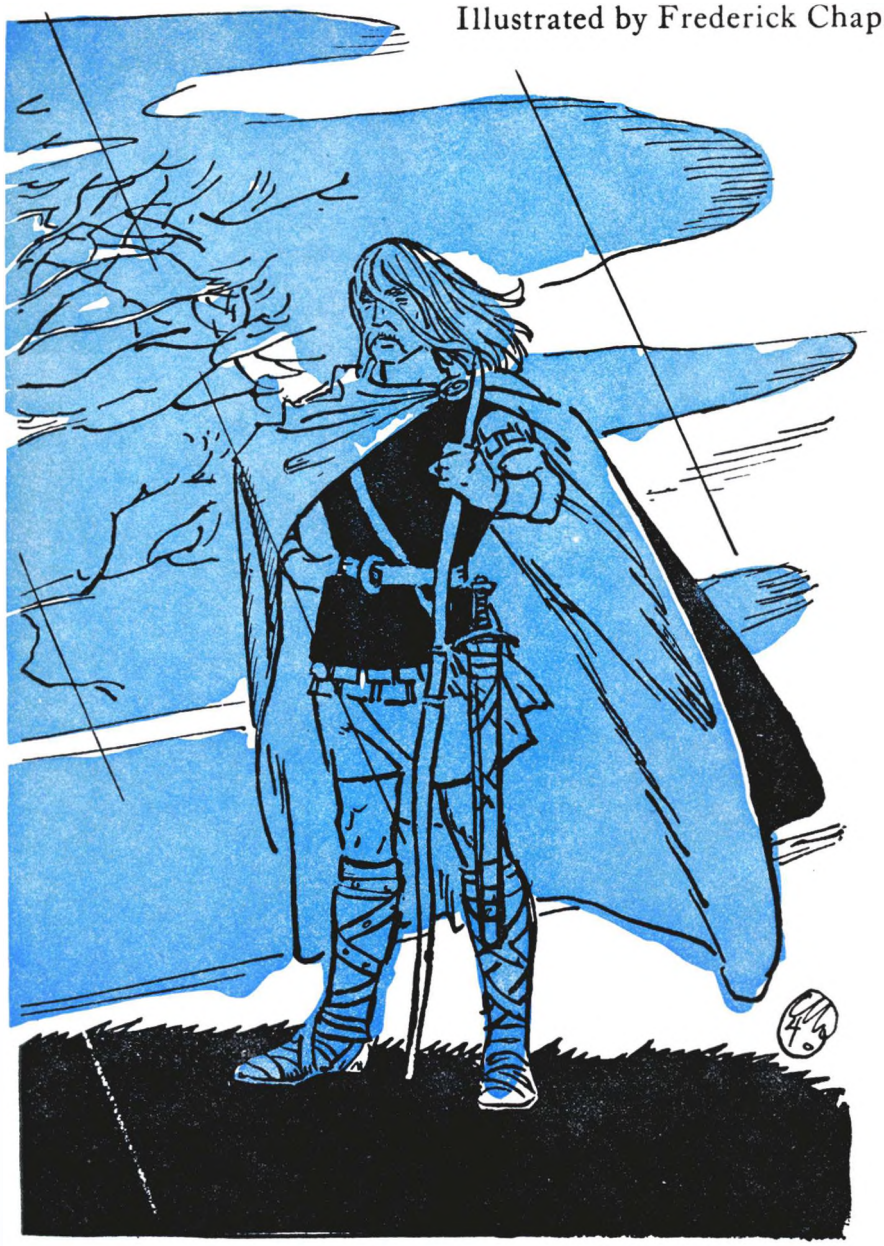
Carson laid a friendly hand on his shoulder.

"Don't worry, my boy; I was there because of a hint from a certain man high in your government." He hesitated. "I see no harm in confiding in you. I'm not exactly a war-correspondent, as I call myself, though I sometimes take charge of a really big thing like that. As you probably know, we have codes that could get through your censors as innocent messages. I'm to see that nothing injurious to England does get through; every word from here that's printed in American papers crosses my desk."

"Oh!" Blackmoor looked at him with respect. "Is it—er—official, sir?"

"No, no! Merely an agreement among ourselves. Of course you know from the papers that I'm—rather well acquainted with the President."

Illustrated by Frederick Chapman



Ancient and very modern collide in this strange wartime drama

by JAY LUCAS

"I quite understand, sir." The respect on Blackmoor's face deepened. He might have guessed it; this elderly, dignified gentleman was just the sort who would be sent on a delicate and confidential mission. "Do you think, sir," he began, "the President will—"

Carson cut him short. His white eyebrows lowered and his eyes bored into the younger man sarcastically.

"I think," he said dryly, "it's time we changed the subject." He saw Blackmoor's embarrassed look—and relented. "What," he asked, "if you turned out to be a German spy? They have some, you know, perfectly capable of passing for Englishmen."

Blackmoor appeared startled for an instant. Then he laughed.

"I suppose one never knows. There's that von Gräfe chap who's loose in the country. Must be clever as the very devil; some say he *is* the devil, helping Hitler. Now, what if I were von Gräfe, after the things you've said?"

Carson's eyes crinkled. He chuckled. "I'm afraid, my boy, you look far too innocent to be the cleverest spy of the whole war. You could make up that castle-and-ghost story, but—" And smilingly Carson shook his head. Blackmoor puffed hard at his pipe; no young fellow likes to be told that he looks innocent. But he was too good-natured to hold the slight dudgeon long.

"That Lancaster thing, sir: I do happen to know a very little about it. How did it impress you?"

"Amazing!" Carson sat up straight. "One after another, the lights snapped onto those six Messerschmitts, and they came down like shot pigeons. Only a single searchlight, and no groping to find them."

Blackmoor puffed at his pipe.

"It was—very encouraging, sir. I happened to be there too, to see the tests. I'm engaged in a very minor detail of production, and that one simple part is all I've been allowed to see. Possibly in your position you know how the whole thing works."

"No—really, I don't. I merely got a hint, and I was hiding close enough to make conjectures. I've a notion that the searchlight is coupled electrically to sound-detectors some distance apart, which focus it automatically before it snaps on; that would give the Jerry no time to begin dodging. And I strongly suspect that a photo-electric cell fires it. That would do away with the personal equation in pressing a trigger, and explain the remarkable accuracy—only one shot to each plane."

Blackmoor pondered it with his engineer's mind.

"That circuit, I think, would be rather difficult."

"Oh, I don't know. A star billions of miles away has been used to set things off experimentally. Certainly the darkening in the focus of the beam, caused by the plane, could serve as well."

The young man seemed to mull over the technical intricacies of it.

"It does sound reasonable. But for such accuracy, one would have to consider the parallax of the beam's center to the gun's bore."

"I was close enough to guess that the puff of smoke came from the middle of the searchlight. Shooting through a hole in it would entirely do away with parallax—but would bring in some knotty optical problems in designing the reflector, and in the light. Of course this is all pure guesswork on my part; I wonder if I came at all near it."

"I should love to know, sir; it's immensely interesting. Oh, I say!" Blackmoor jumped up suddenly. "I almost let myself be carried past my station." He held out his hand diffidently. "I'm awfully glad I met you, and I can't even begin to thank you for that letter."

"Good-by, my boy, and if we don't meet again sooner, I'll see you across the water when the war's over. And let's hope it's not too long until we win." He did not seem to notice the

we, but Blackmoor did, and his eyes lighted gratefully. The guard blew his whistle, and the train slid out into the dripping dusk. . . .

Blackmoor left his valise with the station-master. He went to the inn and ate; and being on a holiday, he spent two or three hours playing darts with Doctor Holmes, and chatting with some other men on leave. Then, the collar of his raincoat turned up and his hat-brim pulled low, he struck out against the driving wind and rain.

It was a wild and stormy night, inky dark. He wondered how he ever found his way across the trackless moor at such times. Could it be that fourteen hundred years or more of ancestors living here had something to do with it? No; the Lamarckian theory, inheritance of acquired characteristics, was out of date. Still, fourteen hundred years was almost an infinity compared to the brief time biologists had had to experiment with the thing.

He found himself veering to the left. Why? Oh, yes; his feet had unconsciously felt an almost imperceptible rise of the ground, and if he'd kept on, he'd have walked into that long barrow. He turned back and stopped, peering through the darkness. Queer, these long barrows, when one thought about it. His Saxon ancestors, and even the ancient Britons painted with woad, were the veriest newcomers compared to the men whose bones lay moldering there. He and his race were still strangers, almost.

"But Blackmoor, you belong here. If not, where?"

His mouth dropped open. He could barely make out a shadowy figure rising up from the barrow; what an odd place to sit on a night like this!

"Eh! I say; how could you—"

The man laughed softly.

"What else would you be thinking of? I see I guessed right."

"I say! You startled me."

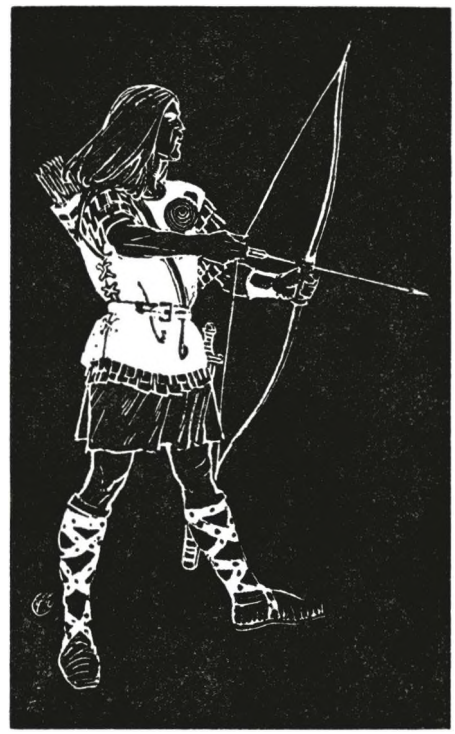
"Sorry. I've been waiting for you."

"But how did you know I was coming up here?"

"Things have pushed on since these were built." He was probably nodding at the long barrow. "There are telephones, you know, and short-wave wireless."

Blackmoor, groping in the mud for his pipe, felt relieved. He was amused with himself; he wondered if any one was entirely free from some last lingering trace of primeval superstition. A ghost with a public-school accent! He found his pipe and straightened up, wiping it with the heel of his wet hand. The sky now was becoming somewhat lighter; there was a nearly full moon behind that scudding wrack of clouds. Peering, he began to see the man a trifle better: he had no raincoat, and his trousers seemed wringing wet and stuck to his legs.

"I came to warn you, Blackmoor."



"Oh, I'm jolly well able to take care of myself!" That did sound youthful for his age.

"Are you? Then why did you permit von Gräfe to find out that you're the inventor of that new searchlight gun?"

"Eh?"

"'Carson,' you know."

"I didn't—"

"He's very adept at reading laces; yours was an open book to him. But you can hardly be blamed; he can be so likable. He's fooled older and more experienced men than you, including some high officials."

"Then why don't you arrest him?" asked Blackmoor blankly. The true enormity of his misadventure was beginning to dawn on him, and he felt pretty weak. Of course this chap belonged to Intelligence, or perhaps to Scotland Yard.

"I think his time is growing short. Meanwhile, I came to warn you that you're—well, as he'd put it, 'on the spot.'"

"My God, what an ass I am!" Blackmoor groaned. Completely taken in!

"You're not; he was too old and clever for you. Now that I've warned you, I hope you can handle the affair without any more assistance from me. There are very good reasons why I wish to go no further in the matter."

Of course. When the identity of one of these Intelligence chaps became known, he was of little use. The man made a restless motion; the moon was racing toward a rift in the clouds and he could soon be plainly seen. He spoke quickly, nervously.

"And gif hwa pe wiostent, ic pe fultumige."

That was how it sounded to Blackmoor. "Eh?" he interjected.

"I said, 'If anyone opposes you, I will come to help you.'"

The voice faded as though the man had turned his head. The moon broke through, and Blackmoor stood staring blankly. Now, where had the chap dodged to? Behind the long barrow? Into that patch of gorse?

And what the devil language had he allowed to slip out in his anxiety to be away? *Hwa*—German ring to that harsh aspirate. *Ic.* Wait! Wasn't that the German *Ich*—I? But it certainly wasn't standard German; one of the many queer, almost unintelligible dialects they had; Wendish, perhaps. Or Yiddish; a Jew? Among those oppressed racial and religious minorities, the Nazi régime had its bitterest and most implacable enemies. It was rumored that some of these, managing to falsify their origins, were England's most useful counter-spies—at least one, it was said, was pretty high in the Gestapo.

"Rum go!" muttered Blackmoor.

He struck out away from there, and circled wide from the direct course; nobody but he could have done it on such a night without becoming hopelessly lost.

A half-hour of walking, and he heard the heavy boom of surf ahead, growing louder. A sheet of sullen lightning split the darkness, and by its flare he could see an ancient, square old pile surmounting the sharp hill ahead. For the first time, it struck him that Saxon Castle *was* a hobgoblinish old place.

Pushing up the hill, the wind tore savagely at him, as though trying to force him back. The ground trembled from the crash of breakers below the cliffs. But he could feel his spirits rise as he approached that strange, half-ruined old place: The spot where he had been born, where he had taken his first toddling steps, through whose converging loopholes he had fired his nail-tipped arrows of straw—a gallant defender of the castle against that rabbit hiding in the heather, who was a fierce, skulking Dane.

Again the lightning flared, showing the small and unpretentious doorway through massive walls feet thick; here was none of the arching grace of the later Norman buildings. There was no coat of arms over the door, for arms were not devised until centuries after Saxon Castle was built. Head down, he fought the wind, and at last reached the shelter of the doorway.

He pressed the bell. An electric bell was queer on a Saxon castle, but very logical for its owner. He remembered Cicely's awe when he showed it to her; he had built it himself—even at that age he'd had an amazing knack for such things. And his father's astonishment that it rang! This bell was the beginning of the family decision to let him follow the profession

of his choice, and not the Navy, the Blackmoor tradition. Those happy days! Cicely sitting patiently, eagerly, with her mouth half open as she waited for some wondrously intricate thing to work, as work it must, since he had built it.

The door opened. By the light of a lamp inside, Blackmoor could see a woman standing there: Cicely's mother, Mrs. Durham. She had kept house for them since his own mother died, which was why Cicely had lived there. She was tall, erect, and dark for an Englishwoman. She had a silent, tragic dignity that still awed him a little. Some said that it was since she had lost her husband and her three sons in the last war; he could not remember her as otherwise. Now, with Cicely gone, doing war work in London, she had grown even more taciturn.

"Wet?" she asked shortly, but there was a shade of concern in her voice.

"Rather."

"There are two men here."

"Eh?"

He looked surprised. Unbidden visitors were rare in this isolated spot.

"They were fishing in the Tern, and got lost on the moor."

Blackmoor thought. It was well to be careful. He went to the telephone and took the receiver off the hook. Another might have shouted into the thing, but he knew instantly that it was completely dead, that the line was broken or cut near the castle. He put the receiver back.

The woman spoke again.

"Shall you want supper?"

"No, thank you, nothing."

"Good night."

She went off with her stately air, down that ancient passageway of stone; she had no reason to suspect that anything might be wrong. Good! Back in the far corner where she slept, she could hardly hear a cannon fired out here, through those massive stone walls —especially not, on a night like this. Blackmoor pushed a door open.

"How d'you do. I'm Blackmoor. You're lost, Mrs. Durham tells me."

The elder of the two stood up; he was of medium height and stocky.

"I'm Hardy; this is Mr. Southworth. Mind closing the door?"

Blackmoor did. He pulled off his wet raincoat and hat and threw them on a chair. He was inspecting the men openly—tweeds, old briar pipes; they certainly looked English enough. Hardy spoke again.

"Nobody listening, I suppose?"

"No."

"We're with Intelligence, y'know."

The younger was tall as Blackmoor himself, darker, handsome. He unfolded his long legs in the chair and took the pipe from his mouth.

"Some," he remarked sadly, "call it "Stupidity.'" (A Cambridge accent!)

"Oh!" Blackmoor felt relieved. "Not fishing, then?"

"Yes." Hardy nodded. "We could keep an eye on the castle from the stream, to see when you arrived. Good excuse for being around; when it got dark, we came up here to wait."

"These might interest you." Southworth looked a shade proud as he held out his creel.

"Whew! Nice trout. What fly?"

"Dusty miller."

He opened his fly-book and lovingly touched the ragged little tuft of feathers. The two rods in their wet cases stood carefully away from the fire, against the wall.

"Anything wrong?" asked Blackmoor.

Both looked grave; Hardy replied: "A great deal. One of Herr Hitler's friendly messages—must have been a five-hundred-pounder. There's only a big hole where the Candy works were."

"Featherstone?" asked Blackmoor anxiously. He liked grumpy "Feathers," the production manager.

"Featherstone—Davids—the lot of them. When we left, they—ugh!—they'd found only poor Featherstone's left hand; they knew the ring on it. You remember it; that black cameo."

BLACKMOOR sighed and shook his head. Such were the fortunes of war according to Hitler. But for once, they had struck a military objective, not a church or orphan asylum.

"Don't you know what it means?" asked Hardy.

"Eh?"

"Your designs—blown to pieces or burned up. And we *must* get on with the thing immediately; first real defence we've found against the Jerries. Your telephone was not working, so they sent us dashing up to get you. Plane—we managed to set it down on the moor near here. Sorry to drag you out a night like this, but they're all in a dither." He glanced at Blackmoor's raincoat and hat on the chair.

Blackmoor slowly took a trout from the creel. He stood examining it minutely; it was wet and glistening, but quite stiff. Presently he spoke.

"You must," he said absently, "give those German blighters credit. Clever! They overlook nothing; it's positively weird."

"Eh?"

He put the trout back, and stood facing them, his hands quietly behind him.

"I'm something of an amateur ichthyologist. This trout is of almost exactly the same subspecies that we find in the Tern—almost. Change to tweeds; have somebody net these; fly over—and all in the three or four hours since von Gräfe sent his short-wave. Of course the point in these trout is to make it seem that you'd been here before he could possibly have sent his message, in case I had suspicions. If I hadn't been warned of you, I should certainly not have noticed the slightly different coloring of the dorsal fins; I should have gone on that little trip to Berlin."

Hardy looked flushed.

"Mr. Blackmoor, I don't think I quite understand you."

"Oh, I think you do, *mein Herr!*" He turned to the younger. "You must be a crack pilot to set a plane down on the moor in a patch of moonlight."

The man shrugged. He raised his voice and called out something in German. The door opened, and Blackmoor nodded politely to this third man entering.

"How d'you do, Carson—von Gräfe. Jolly well pulled my leg, you know. I almost told you how far off you were on your guesses about the new gun; it works on an entirely different principle. By the way, your American accent is splendid. You even have that peculiar *r* with your tongue curled upward in your mouth."

Von Gräfe came forward. He now seemed an entirely different man from the one on the train. He was overbearing, almost swaggering in his manner.

"I'm a graduate of Northwestern—as Herr von Schmerling is of Cambridge, and Herr Oldenburg of Oxford. Unlike you English fools, we enter a war prepared."

"Naturally. We never can believe there'll be another war, until we're forced into it."

Von Gräfe shrugged his contempt of such childish notions.

"Coming with us peacefully?"

"Certainly not. Three to one, you may take me. But I sha'n't give you any information after you've got me there."

Von Gräfe's eyes were hard, ice-cold, his white eyebrows low over them.

"Perhaps you might want to know how we can make you?"

"I should like very much to know," said Blackmoor with courteous mockery. He even smiled.

Von Gräfe took from his pocket a small case, like a cigar-case. He drew something from it and held it up.

"Do you know what this is?"

"Oh, yes. Hypodermic."

"And what does it suggest to you?"

"Well—morphine, I suppose. Excellent way to quiet me for the trip over."

Von Gräfe spoke deliberately, dryly.

"You do not yet understand, my young friend. You will be given the maximum non-lethal dose almost hourly for perhaps three weeks, perhaps slightly longer. Then—no more. Now do you understand?"

Blackmoor's features did not change; he was still smiling. But the smile was fixed and frozen, and his face a dirty ashy gray. What a devilish trick! And they would win. A few days from

now, and he would no longer be the same Blackmoor; he would be a haggard, yellowed drug-addict, his mind wrecked forever, all will-power gone. He would sell his soul for a few drops of that stuff which, as von Gräfe well knew, he now dreaded more than death. Von Gräfe chuckled.

"Hadn't you better give in now, and save yourself all that?"

Blackmoor looked broodingly at the floor.

"Save you a few days, you mean? Make you impregnable to the R. A. F. that much sooner; I understand it's getting the upper hand lately. No, gentlemen; thank you."

Von Gräfe whispered something in German to the others. Blackmoor did not wait. He leaped. His hand struck the hypodermic and sent it flying across the room. He swung hard, and von Gräfe went tumbling backward. Oldenburg ran at Blackmoor clumsily, trying to throw his arms around him. One to the midriff sent him sprawling on his back, knees in the air.

Blackmoor whirled and dashed toward the door; out on the moor, a thousand could not find him on such a night. But all this had given von Schmerling time to get before him. This Junker was as tall as Blackmoor, and evidently he had learned boxing at Cambridge. For a few seconds, it was hard to say who would have won.

But the other two had scrambled painfully to their feet. Von Gräfe motioned silently to Oldenburg, and together they flung themselves on his back. This afforded the opening von Schmerling had been seeking. His fist shot in, caught Blackmoor squarely on the point of the chin. Blackmoor's knees buckled; he went down with a thud.

They worked hurriedly. Blackmoor became dimly aware that they had thrown him into a heavy oak chair, passed his arms through the panels behind, and snapped handcuffs on his wrists. More clearly, he saw Oldenburg come running heavily with the cords from the window curtains, to tie his ankles to the chair legs. Then, his daze almost gone now, he heard von Gräfe's voice.

"He has spilled most of it." He stood looking at the hypodermic in his hand: the needle was broken half off. "Well, hold his arms, and we'll try it. There should be enough to stupefy him at least, and make him easy to handle."

He thrust the jagged, broken needle far more deeply than was necessary. He twisted it, watching Blackmoor's face. Blackmoor met his eye steadily, without a trace of flinching. Hearing a low remark from von Schmerling, Blackmoor turned.

"I happen to know German quite well. No, Englishmen are not cowards. With all due modesty. Surprise to you, isn't it?"

Von Gräfe withdrew the syringe and spoke to his companions.

"We'll wait a few minutes and let it take effect."

The three began a careless search of the room: they expected to find nothing of importance. Von Gräfe grunted with satisfaction as he took a bottle from the sideboard and read the label. Cognac Montchat. He had thought the last of it in Berlin for the delectation of the Nazi élite. The three seated themselves at the table and raised their glasses.

"Der Führer!"

Blackmoor sniffed angrily. A perishing shame to have Hitler's health drunk in such good liquor as that! And, damn it, their injection was beginning to take effect; their voices sounded blurred, and the table, at the other end of the room, seemed twice the distance off.

The din of the storm, violent now, swept in on him—he had not noticed it before, in the tension. It was all around him, until even the three down there seemed of little consequence. It surely did sound like some ancient siege being refought! Very, very real; the stuff they'd shot into his arm accentuated it. The swish of running feet; excited voices calling; the groan of a dying man. And—*twang!*—there went the bowstring—*twang!*—at a window that once had been a loophole.



The bowman's voice rang out: "Niddering!"

"BLACKMOOR, I am here, as I promised."

Blackmoor jerked. The voice was behind him where there was nothing but blank, massive stone walls—the voice he had heard on the moor. Then he understood—the morphine; hallucinations beginning.

"I'm coming round in front. Don't be startled; I shall look strange to you."

Strange! He had put it mildly. Long yellow hair on his shoulders; long yellow mustache hanging down beside his chin. That mustache gave him a grim, fierce appearance, but Blackmoor, looking closely, saw that without it he'd have seemed very much like anybody else; he was of a fairly common English type.

All but his nose. That was remarkably symmetrical; thin, slightly curved, with a peculiar upward flare to the nostrils that gave him a fastidious, haughty air. As far as Blackmoor knew, there was but one other nose in the world exactly like it—Cicely's. The drug was doing queer things; it would not have surprised him if the man changed instantly into Cicely, having begun with her nose.

He seemed only a trifle older than Blackmoor himself. . . . Leather jerkin: good, soft leather, ornamented. Blackmoor's eye fell on the unstrung bow in the man's hand, and the bracer on his left wrist; this was of heavy leather with a large plate of gold where the bowstring struck.

"Oh, you're the ghost!"

"I am Hrothgar."

"How do you do," said Blackmoor. This was rich!

"Afraid?" asked the man.

"No; why should I be? You've never harmed any of us." He added: "By the way, you speak modern English!"

"Yes. If I spoke the old Anglian or Saxon, you couldn't understand it; I speak as you do. I forgot myself on the moor, afraid I should startle you too much if the moon came out."

"What did you say then?"

"And gif hwa pe wiostent, ic pe fultumige."

"Oh, I think I get the drift of it: 'And if who thee withstand, I thee—' That last word must have got lost out of the language. Saxon? I thought they were mainly Angles up here."

"Yes. But we were mixed. My mother," he added, "was a Dane. There was no real difference; we were of the same race and with the same customs, having only slight variations of dialect. Even the Normans when they came. It was strange to hear those Norse-looking men speak bad French."

A voice cut in: "English pig! Stop talking to yourself!"

Blackmoor saw Oldenburg down there, shaking a fist at him; he was red-faced, and appeared apprehensive, nervous. The two others were looking up this way too. Von Gräfe laughed brutishly. The strong brandy was bringing his natural arrogance to the surface.

"Let the fool talk! One more glass."

"If it weren't," said Blackmoor, "that they can't see or hear you, I should think you real."

"What if I am?" Hrothgar smiled grimly, and with a trace of slow humor.

"Wish you were!" said Blackmoor feelingly. "You'd get me out of this hole."

"As I told you, we do not like to interfere in things out of our own sphere. But I have telephoned the village—Doctor Holmes. I told him that some



"Gott!" Von Gräfe ran to the wall, crouched there shuddering.

Germans had you trapped here. He has gathered some men on leave and is on the way."

"The telephone," Blackmoor reminded him dryly, "is out of order."

"That did not matter. Holmes heard my voice coming out of the receiver—or your voice, I should say. Since they will soon be here, I must hurry to tell you the purpose of my appearing tonight: My blood is beginning to run thin in your family and I should like to see it replenished. There is a girl who has it as strongly as you, and marrying her would double it in your children."

Blackmoor looked stubborn.

"You've been jolly decent to me, and if it were anything within reason—"

There was an anxious, eager frown on Hrothgar's forehead.

"She is very attractive, physically and mentally. This cousin of yours is—"

"Cousin!"

"Certainly. How could she have my blood without being your cousin? I mean one whom you know well; Cicely Durham."

THERE was both anger and dejection on Blackmoor's face.

"Old chap," he said, "I think you're a bit of an ass."

Hrothgar flushed quickly, his blue eyes gleaming angrily. And then he understood.

"I am sorry. I didn't know; we don't know everything."

A pause. Both looked slightly embarrassed.

"I suppose," said Blackmoor coldly, "there's no good trying to conceal from you that I—er—rather like Cicely. Charming girl. Perhaps you are not aware that she's engaged to Lieutenant Wilkins, a splendid chap, and a friend of mine."

"And it wouldn't be 'cricket' to interfere?"

"Quite."

Blackmoor's eyes, looking at him, had grown hard. Hrothgar went on:

"And possibly you are not aware that Cicely Durham has been very much in love with you since you were children. And that her engagement was arranged by the family, who thought them meant for each other."

"No, I'm not aware of it," said Blackmoor coolly. "And what would all that have to do with it, even if it were so?"

"Nothing. She's as determined as you to 'do the right thing,' and she would rather die than say a word."

"She would!" Blackmoor could have kicked himself for the note of reverence he had let creep into his voice.

"It might interest you to know that Wilkins was a member of one of those 'suicide squads' landed in France at night, to run through the country on motorcycles and send back messages by short-wave. In uniform, not a spy. He was killed last night by a German patrol."

"Poor Wilkins!" Blackmoor's face twitched in spite of him. He had thought a great deal of Wilkins.

Hrothgar stood looking down at him. Grief for a dead rival—grief, and nothing more. His long yellow hair tossed.

"By Woden's gar, Blackmoor, you are a man! Therefore I call you my friend and equal, you who are my son of many generations. I withdraw my request; you shall do as you please."

A short pause, and Blackmoor spoke stiffly.

"This is scarcely the moment to talk of such things but, as I've said, you've been jolly decent in trying to help me. If it affords you any gratification, I will say that at the proper time—Well, I shall undoubtedly see Cicely when I return to London, and— Well, you understand."

"Quite." Hrothgar nodded with grave satisfaction. He looked around suddenly. "Beware!" he warned.

Following his eyes, Blackmoor saw the Germans pushing the bottle aside. Von Gräfe was preparing to rise, and Oldenburg reluctantly finishing his glass. Hrothgar turned back quickly and spoke.

"Should you be afraid if I vanish for a moment?"

"Not at all, old man!" Blackmoor assured him, with a breeziness he was far from feeling. He held his breath.

Hrothgar wasn't there. . . . And then he reappeared.

Blackmoor let his breath go; after all, it hadn't been so bad.

"The fools!" Hrothgar was flushed with anger. "They got lost on the moor! I should have guided them. But then," he added bitterly, "at sight of me, they would have been too terrified to come. And I as human as they—all that is essentially human; what does the wrapping of clay matter?"

"Quite," agreed Blackmoor absently. His eyes were on the three down there. Von Gräfe stood looking annoyed and impatient while the others still dawdled with their glasses. Blackmoor spoke reluctantly.

"I don't like to drag you into this. But I am in a hole."

"Death—what of it? A far smaller matter than you suspect."

It wasn't that; it was that drug business. He had a vision of a wreck of himself shambling around a plant in Essen, an object of amused contempt, as he saw to it that the details of the searchlight gun were correct. And he could see that single, deadly stab of light into the sky, hear that whipping crack. And down would come perhaps one of his best friends; most of them were in the R. A. F. now.

He looked very dispirited, sitting there bound. And then his eyes began to light up. He smiled, something as near to a crafty smile as one could imagine on Blackmoor's frank face.

"Old chap," he said composedly, "aren't you forgetting something?"

Hrothgar frowned at him, puzzled.

"Cicely, you know. I couldn't very well marry her if I were dead. And she wouldn't marry me if I were a morphine addict, even if I were beast enough to propose to her, which I don't think I should be, drug or no. I should think it would be rather lonesome and miserable for a ghost with no living descendants. Afraid, old chap, you'll have to do it!"

A smile came slowly to Hrothgar's face. It spread, until he tossed back his long hair and laughed—a very hearty laugh for a ghost.

"So you would intimidate me, Blackmoor! You fear neither me nor other thing. Brave was I in my day, and when I received my death-wound, I was standing on a mound of those whom I had slain. Through my veins coursed the fierce, hot courage of a fighting wolf, the symbol of our tribe. Through yours, another courage, flowing by day and night, not needing the din of battle to stir it; it is something which has grown in our people since my time— And greater courage than mine. No, Blackmoor, our blood shall not die with you, nor with the yellow-haired girl who is to be your wife. It comes on! It comes—the war-lust!"

HIS face had grown terrible; it worked; it grew dark. He began to tremble fiercely.

"Strangers, what do ye in my castle?"

The words rang from the walls. There was a deadly, furious rattle in the tone, like the roar of a charging lion. Now he was standing by the doorway. He was stringing his bow. He did it exactly as Blackmoor had been taught, with one end against the hollow of his foot. He took an arrow in his hand, and fitted the nock to the string.

There were grunts of astonishment, and the sound of a chair overturning. Oldenburg sat there, his eyes great, round, but still piggish; he seemed paralyzed. The other two were standing now. Van Gräfe spoke angrily.

"What mummery is this?"

A snapping twang. Von Schmerling stood as he was for a moment, and then fell straight back, stiffly. He lay there without movement. A little stick with feathers protruded from the middle of his chest, blood welling up in a fountain around it and spreading across the stones of the floor.

"Quick!"

This from von Gräfe. He jerked out his automatic; so did Oldenburg. The guns began to bark. Hrothgar

stood there, his bow in his hand, and Blackmoor could see spatting little puffs of stone dust from the wall directly behind him. And presently the two dropped their hands; their guns were empty.

The bowman spoke grimly, slowly: "And you next, fat one."

Slowly the longbow came up, bent. Oldenburg threw up his hands to shield his pasty face. A twang. He pitched out from his chair, across the table; blood began to trickle among the glasses. A broad, V-shaped piece of metal stuck up six inches from his back.

"And now, last, von Gräfe. I have spared you for last that you might feel most fear; to test your courage. Ah, you like it not, von Gräfe! Your cheeks are whiter than the surf below the cliffs. Face me, and die like a man!"

For a moment it seemed that von Gräfe could do that. He stood frozen, pale, but firm. Still the arrow was not sped; he was being taunted, tested. His eyes began to wander. They saw that red stream creeping thickly across the table. They swung jerkily to the figure on the floor. He broke.

"*Gott!*"

He ran to the wall, his eyes wide with horror. He crouched there shuddering; he seemed ready to vomit with fear. The bowman's voice rang out:

"*Niddering!*"

That terrible word of contempt, the fear of hearing which made the Saxon coward braver than the brave in battle; that word whose meaning has been lost! His face twisted with disgust, Hrothgar loosed the arrow. And there lay a bundle, quivering, twitching, growing still.

The bowman tossed back his head, and his wild, long-drawn yell of victory rang through the old castle. It was so fierce and bloodthirsty that it sent a chill down Blackmoor's spine. Gradually Hrothgar's face calmed, until presently he smiled grimly.

"Blackmoor, are you not afraid?"

"Certainly not," stated Blackmoor. "I know it's only that morphine stuff. I shall wake up in Berlin."

Hrothgar came walking over. He unstrung his bow, to preserve its tension.

"Haven't changed, have we?" Again that grim smile. "When we think we know something, we are hard to convince otherwise. But imagine I am real, and do as you would under the circumstances."

Blackmoor considered.

"I say! You might take these beastly things off my wrists."

Hrothgar reached behind the chair and tossed the handcuffs aside; he had not troubled to look for the key. He stooped, and untied Blackmoor's legs at a touch. Blackmoor stood up and stretched his cramped muscles. For the first time, he was getting a puzzled look on his face as he surveyed Hrothgar. He went over to the table and poured himself a glass of brandy; he felt that he needed it.

"This,"—he nodded at the three dead men, "—will be hard to explain. If I tell the truth, I shall probably be clapped into the asylum."

"And I certainly don't want my name mixed in the thing!" Hrothgar thought a moment, and suddenly looked up. "I say! I've got a plan—"

Excited shouts came suddenly from the old passageway, and the sound of running feet.

Hrothgar spoke quickly.

"Good-by, Blackmoor, my son of many generations. No, no—it is better that you do not shake my hand. Good-by!" The word died out like a faint echo.

The door burst open and Doctor Holmes, wet, muddy, and purple from running up the hill, dashed in. He stopped suddenly, the rest halting behind him. He saw three huddled figures, and Blackmoor with a bottle and glass before him.

"What drunken—" he began furiously.

His eyes fell on the arrow sticking up from Von Schmerling's chest, and the words choked in his throat. He stood looking, dazed, from one still figure to the other.

BLACKMOOR and Holmes sat opposite each other, a bottle between them—the last of the Montchat. Holmes was speaking didactically.

"The pathological symptoms produced by the opiates, especially by morphia, vary widely according to the physiological and psychological constitution of the subject; they are also conditioned by mental impressions received immediately preceding the introduction of the drug into the body. Now, you had been discussing that ghost story with Carson—von Gräfe. And, for a moment, you were severely startled when that man spoke to you on the moor. All this served temporarily to break down your inhibition toward ignorant superstition."



Blackmoor was slightly flushed, and his eye a trifle too jocund. Almost a teetotaler, he had allowed Holmes to talk him into one drink too many of that potent stuff. He had a bow in his hand, a modern bow, a cheap, factory-made thing.

"Would morphine," he asked gravely, "explain the speed with which I must have jerked this from the wall, and my accuracy?"

"Possibly. Though that resembles more the effect of *cannabis indica;* hashish. I was the only one at the inquest who knew the first thing about archery. There were two points I did not bring up, but which I was totally at a loss to explain: one, how this rickety old bow could drive an arrow through a man, even in the hands of an expert—which you certainly are not, largely because you bought this rubbish, and not the good bow I advised. The other was, how could this string break, and the arrow still fly true?"

Blackmoor relit his pipe. He blew a puff of smoke into the air and sat smiling up at it. Presently he spoke.

"Very well, old man, if you must have it—you know too much about archery to be deceived. This bow was in my flat in London, and I haven't the faintest notion how it got here; I saw it on the table only after you'd mentioned it. And this string had been broken for years, just as it is now. Go ahead and explain all that scientifically; I'm listening with interest."

Holmes stared at him.

"Dammit!" His hand shook as he poured himself another drink. "I gave my medical report; couldn't bring in a verdict of— Dammit, I'd be locked up!" His face was turning red; he pulled out his handkerchief and mopped it.

Blackmoor laughed. It did him good to get the better of the doctor for once. Holmes glared at him.

"Well, *I'm* no superstitious ass! This is the most ridiculous—"

Queer old place, Saxon Castle. . . . Long after Blackmoor laughed, the echo came back. It had a wild, reckless ring that had not been in the original, but it was fully as merry. Young Blackmoor smiled and raised his glass; he was looking past Holmes' shoulder toward the doorway.

"Here's to my good friend and ancestor, Hrothgar the ghost! May he rest without too much peace; he wouldn't like it."

"Ugh!" said the physician, draining his glass hurriedly.

A LETTER *to* MY SON

Why This Letter Was Written

This is a real letter to a real son. Like every other mother whose life was darkened by the last war, I taught my son to hate war. When this one came, I waited for the harvest of spiritual conflict from the seeds of pacifism I had sown.

Instead, my son said to me: "Mother, I'm a soldier. I still hate war, but here it is. And it's nobody's duty to fight for me or anybody else who isn't willing to pay for their peace and safety with risk and sacrifice, so I've joined up."

He was trained and he was sent away. I do not yet know where. I got the news that he had gone and that his letters would be forwarded. No chance to tell him Godspeed before he went.

What to write at such a time? That was a problem. He had proved himself a man by his ability to make a decision, but he could not dream what he was facing, what tasks he would be called upon to do, what ordeals endure. I had seen, and I knew!

I sat looking at the blank paper, and I prayed for the right thing to say. I began to write, and this letter came. It is published that other mothers, baffled by the fullness of their hearts and inadequacy of their words, may share the help that was given to me.

February 1942

A Letter to My Son

MY dearest Boy:

I don't know where you are, but wherever it is, my heart is with you day and night.

You had a difficult life very young, but now I am glad of it. You do not come at your tender age on a man's job without some preparation for it. All the same, I saw boys in the last war come into full manhood overnight.

I was in Austria and in Poland before all this started, so I've seen reality. Minimizing its horror won't help you in any way. You must be prepared for the worst that can happen. That is the only way I know for facing an ordeal and being equal to it.

For you are going to see the unbelievable and you are going to endure the unbearable. You are going to be called on to do tasks beyond your experience or your strength, and I think you are going to do the impossible, because put to the test you are that kind of boy—or now I should say man.

I don't know if you are still in training or if they have sent you on active service. If not, prepare yourself spiritually before you go. Yours is a job which is a very great one. You will risk your life, the wholeness of your body and perhaps go through a searing experience of pain. Courage in this will help more than yourself; it will help other men. Never a war in all history demanded so much courage, pitting the perishable body against formidable engines of indestructible steel. More indestructible than steel, however, is the immortal soul of man.

Your immortality is your strength. Do not brace yourself into a state of tension trying to build an artificial courage. This way your nerves will snap. Man cannot stand alone and should not try. Connect yourself now with the source of your being and rest secure on the only solid foundation affording foothold now left in this world. Pray at any time about anything. Think continually "God is with me." A Presence will come that will never leave you, because every living creature has only to open himself to take God within. Keep in conscious contact with His Presence. Pushed to the last limit of endurance, it is man's life-belt in a sea of persecution, madness, chaos and pain.

You are human and very young, so there will be many times when you will experience the cold sinking of fear. Do not imagine you are a coward because of this. Fear is a healthy instinct which has contributed to man's survival. It keeps men prepared and on their guard. The bravest men are those who have done things they were afraid to do since time began. The greater the secret reluctance to do the bitter duty resolutely done, the greater the bravery, the unselfishness, the discipline of self.

Lack of physical fear exists with lack of imagination. Such men have won Congressional Medals of Honor. Not that this is a bad thing. No one can know the conflict in a man's heart, nor whether his deeds cost much or little. The ideal of sacrifice and devotion is the thing which is honoured rather than the man.

So don't be afraid of feeling fear, nor hate yourself. You will not be alone in this. You have only to pray for courage and you will get it. I know by experience that is a prayer that is always answered.

Don't be deluded that prayer is a kind of magic. It works. But not in our way—in God's way. Does the teacher indulge the child who asks for his arithmetic lesson to be eliminated because it is too difficult? No. The child needs to cope with the problems of an adult life. But if the child asks the teacher to help him grasp it, the help is at once forthcoming. That's clear, I think.

FOR dark months, man's brutality to man made me wonder if there was a God and if He cared. But when I saw men stripped of possessions, crippled and humiliated, yet burning brilliantly with an inner flame that had but smouldered before, I saw clearly that there is a Divine Scheme, and trial is an inescapable part of it. The blade of a sword is tempered in flame, unaware that the tempering makes it keen and strong. Man should be very well aware of why he is tempered. Look into the lives of the bravest, kindest, most resolute people you know. You will actually see the Divine Scheme at work.

If you doubt a Divine Scheme, take an apple in your hand and wonder why it fits, instead of being too large and heavy for you to hold. Walk under the shade of the trees and wonder why they are not too tall to give you shade. Walk on the grass and wonder why, instead of a jungle which dwarfs you, it makes a carpet for your feet. Could all life be so beautifully interrelated by cosmic accident?

There may be bombs such as never before seen ravaging our cities. Flames in which homes do not burn—they melt. Prepare yourself now not to submit to mass hysteria on the laying waste of the land and the destruction of art, architecture, industrial wealth and family homes. Civilization *cannot* end—not so long as humanity, enlightenment and justice live on in survivors' hearts. Comfort is a drawback and not an essential to the virility of man. Neither can the land from which wealth comes, be destroyed. It can only be devastated. Men—meaning women too—grow rich in spirit and strong in body, building their wealth again. I have seen more poverty of spirit in rich homes than I have seen poverty of body in poor ones. And hot water is only hot water, whether it comes from a pan on a cotter's hearth or out of a chromium-plated tap.

Men get their strength and their delight in building—not in enjoying. So fear the future not at all.

Now this is a personal opinion, but I see no great tragedy in the loss of some old art. People everywhere are

by a Soldier's Mother

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so neurotic and unhappy for lack of the need to create all forms of art except industrial forms, that it is almost a universal disease. The huge quantity already existing makes their work superfluous—even impertinent. Man is creative, and in creation finds happiness. So artists are in the anomalous position of competing for their happiness with those long dead.

I have seen exhibitions of antique treasures valued at millions of dollars and have felt sad that so much money is exchanged for the work of the dead and so little importance attached to the genius of the living.

If the new generation has to build a new world, what then? It may be impoverishment in the material sense of the word, but it will be a spiritual adventure in the greatness of living. I have never wished to give my own children a ready-made world and deprive them of the best life ever offers —the growth that comes of solving their own problems. If this is the future of the children of our whole race, they could not ask for better.

I have enjoyed and experienced all the comforts—and drawbacks—of this scientific age, and cannot share the fear of people who think the impoverishment of the war will remove them from reach for another hundred years. Apart from medical science, which is advanced by the experience of war and not set back, I can take them or leave them.

It is a childish state of mind to be afraid to lose possessions, or to face a "lowered standard of living."

Live for the soul and enrich the mind, and poverty cannot even exist for you. You will be able to eat and cover your body and live in as large a way as your courage and ability enables you. Ignorance is the true cause of suffering through so-called poverty. If I did not speak from experience I would not dare to say these things, but I have tasted the strongest savour of life only since I got down to its basic facts. Now an evening spent in a wealthy home fills me with an abysmal boredom. I feel cut off from virile reality—and I am.

So think yourself fortunate you have no great material possessions to keep you awake at night bothering about bombing or invasion. Riches of mind and soul and self are the treasures of Heaven which cannot be looted.

Neither can your life be taken away from you. It is not this short disturbing minute. God knows how many years it took to develop your soul to this point, and only God knows how many thousands more—if they can be numbered at all—you are going to live.

I have absolute proof which satisfies me that there is no death. It is too long a story to tell you here.

But if you wish to consider a stupendous fact, think of this:

We do not know how long the future extends before us—nor indeed if it ever ends. But we do know that men have existed on this planet for thousands of years in the past, and that the universe itself is millions of years old if it ever had a beginning.

If man has no immortal soul, that means that he exists and is conscious of existence for something less than a minute in comparison with this cosmic procession of time. It means that the only important time to live that fraction of a minute is *now* when he can see, think and feel. What is behind is dead, what is before has not yet come.

Now why should you and I be one of that small handful so favoured that in all eternity we have this moment? Is this some colossal, unthinkable coincidence? Isn't that a more difficult theory to accept than the one that we are conscious *now* because we are immortal and indestructible? We are here because we have lived in one form or another for æons and the killing of this body prematurely is just a shedding of another coat because we, in one form or another, are going on. We are here because we are eternal life, and must go on.

And not without personality. I have heard the dead speak without any possibility of fake, self-delusion or incentive to fake. The soul retains awareness of itself and of its loved ones. I have proof of it. I know that this is true.

It is such an everyday fact to me that I accept it as simply as the bread I eat and the air I breathe. I cannot conceive the darkness in the minds of people who separate themselves in puny arrogance from the self-evident proofs all around them of the Divine origin of life.

SCIENCE is the study of the fringe of life's mysteries. The little men of science theorize that the great laws made themselves because they can take them apart and make them work. But the great men have all admitted that the more deeply they study the universe the more aware they are of God.

So arm yourself against mental suffering at the horrors you will see, by a serene courageous attitude of mind. Don't regard the killed as lost men, nor the crippled as defeated men, nor the bankrupt as afflicted men. These are the fears of puny hearts incapable of looking up at the starlit heavens and reading the signature of God.

You will face destruction of this temporary body, and that is the least of your troubles. Because death is nothing. Not even the loss of the pleasure of living. You will walk through a gate and you will go on. I don't even pray you should be spared this, because I would not feel that I had lost you. A temporary separation, that is all.

But I do pray you will acquire that steady relaxed courage which rests on absolute faith in your immortality and your continual awareness of the reality of the Presence of God.

Don't screw up your courage; nerve-strain, suffering, break-down, lie that way. Relax. Give up mentally, before you start, everything you possess but the integrity of your soul. Look on the brutal sights of war, not with material myopia, but with the vision that sees beyond them. Thus you will be able to bear such pitiful and terrible experiences.

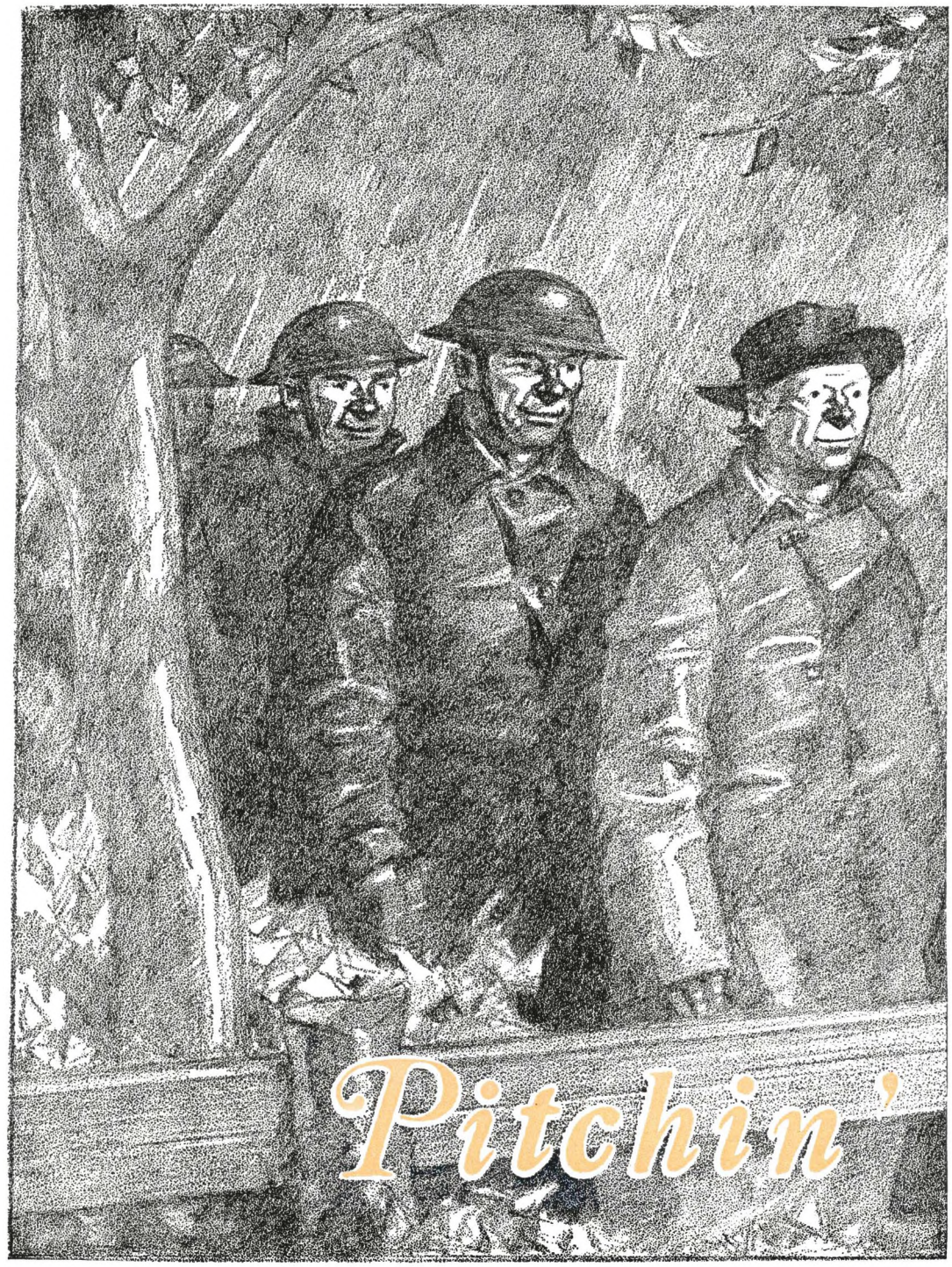
If you must endure pain, pray for relief. I have done this many times. Sometimes I have been relieved as if by a miracle. Other times I have been given supernatural strength.

Hold on to this deep vision when you read the newspapers, otherwise you will lose your sense of proportion. France has been ravaged before. So has Belgium. The soul of the people has survived. England has now been ravaged. Perhaps it is America's turn to be tempered in fire. But you may be sure the soul of her people will also survive, and her children build her again.

Don't be afraid of fear. I repeat it because it is the most important thing I have to say. Remember it is man's deepest instinct and the spur to brave men. Relax and pray. Reach out for the source of all life, all courage, all good, and a Hand will be placed in yours to lead you through the dark. I don't say this to give you any false comfort. It is true—*true.* Manufactured courage will fail you in an ordeal in which only the spiritually strong can stand. Real courage comes through prayer. I know. I have proved it—and I *know.*

And now, dear boy, to whatever destiny your duty leads you—Go with God.

Your Mother



Pitchin'

"Mornin', youngsters!" Captain Joe greeted. "How's the Army?" "All wet, right this minute," the M. P. said.

Illustrated by Raymond Sisley

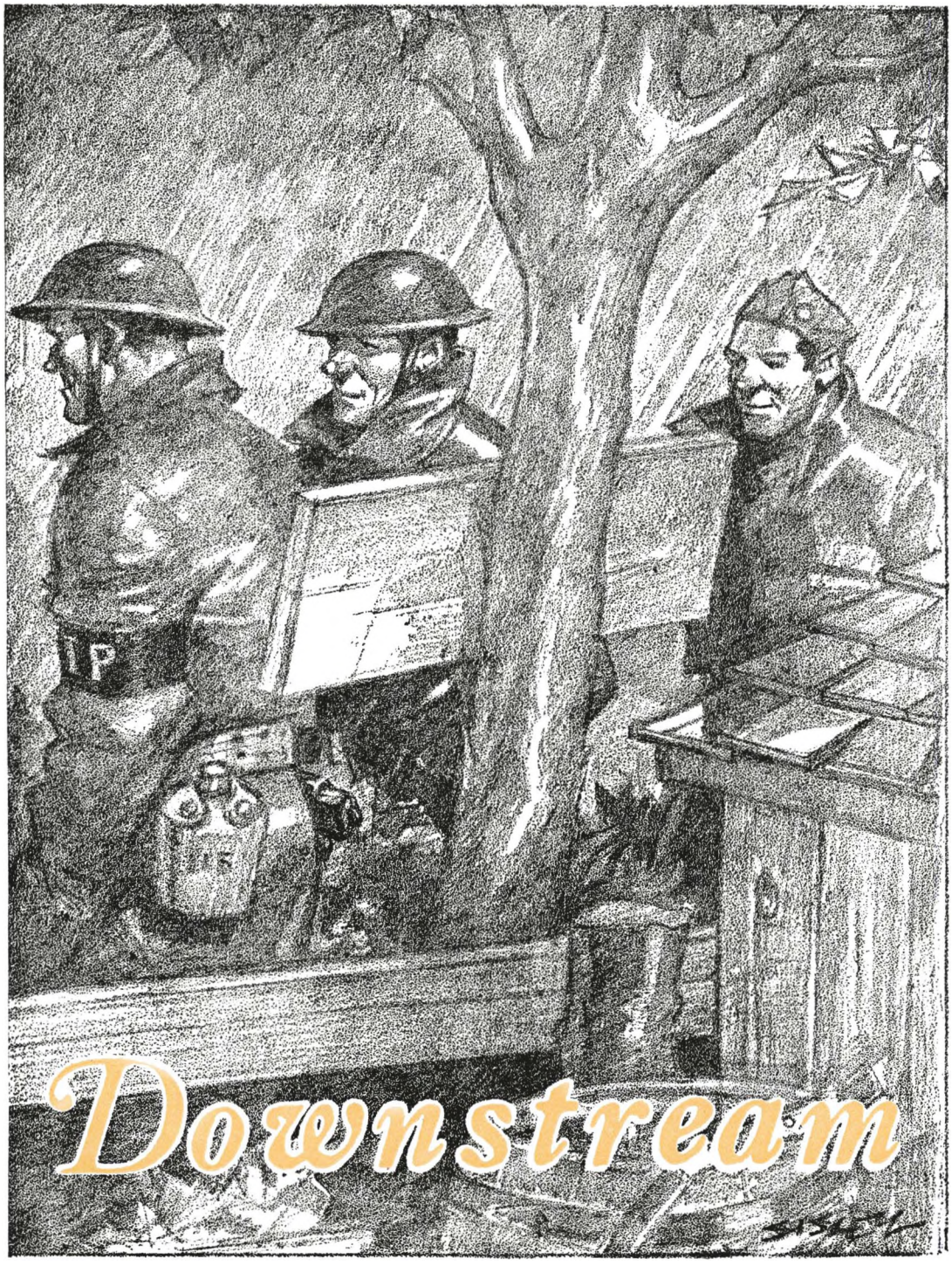
AT daylight while the drifting mists were clearing from the surface of the muddy Mississipp', Captain Joe Porter backed his little steamboat the *Harley Abel,* and his showboat the *Neptune,* away from the Newport levee. He quartered over into the channel currents and began the twenty-mile drift around Big Bend to the show's next pitch, half a mile above Cow Island. In the channel he rang a stopping bell; and then, to Dan Martin, the engineer, "Back her dead slow!" he ordered through the battered speaking-tube. "Got to save what coal we can. Got to drift her while the driftin's good."

"Got to save everything," Captain Joe reflected. "Save everything—now that there's nothing much left to save." He had made the Big Bend run a thousand times under a full head and a fast wheel; but this time —he was drifting the trip. Some of the problems of the moment flashed through his mind: the mortgage on the show, coal, provisions, doctor-bills —and winter waiting just ahead. A rip-snorting high flyer, not so long ago. Now—drifting the drag to the next pitch under a slow bell. Nothing but a drifter. Out of his heavy and impatient heart he spoke a quick prayer to the Big Pilot: "Lord, if it was only me, I wouldn't ask You for nothing. But for the sake of the folks, please do give us a break at the very next pitch—and make that damn' John F. Kinsley extend the damn' mortgage until spring comes. Amen."

"Whut dat you say, Cap'n Joe?" The Negro fireman, Pete Cinder, spoke from the deck below. Pete was tall and gangling, but his voice was low and solid. "Whut you say, Cap'n?"

"Nothing. I said maybe you better get out in the skiff and jug the channel a few miles. Catfish might taste good for a change. The folks are getting tired of side-meat."

"Yassuh, Cap'n Joe! Channel cat taste mighty noble after all dat fat



Downstream

The story of an old-time show-boat and a very modern army camp, by—

HUGH WILEY

hog menu—pertiklar, now dat de hog-meat is all et up. I's on my way!"

Side-meat gone. Credit gone. Courage! "I will lift mine eyes unto the hills—and make seven passes with the other man's dice!" Captain Joe declared. "No man is licked until he admits it!"

Captain Joe thought of the people in his outfit: Seven of them—and his responsibility for their welfare lay heavy upon his mind. Show people, troupers, all of them; and in the years gone by they had all known the smiles of Lady Luck. A scrabbling, hand-to-mouth existence in the perpetual chill of poverty seemed to have replaced the sunlight of the earlier days. Showboat life was pleasant enough if the money rolled in; but it got tough after three or four years of hunger—and plenty tough on the women. Good sports, all of them: cheerful enough in spite of the rough life, rough living quarters on the *Neptune*, rough rations. "I will hypnotize that damn' John F. Kinsley tomorrow or kill him," Captain Joe declared. "After I finish, that banker will think a cyclone has cleaned him!"

The ponderous mate Bill Ward edged out of the rear door of the showboat and lumbered aboard the *Harley Abel*. He looked up at Captain Joe: "Want me to spell you awhile? Bring you some coffee?"

"No, thanks. You might come up and get trimmed at a couple of games of cribbage."

"I'm coming—but you'd better get set to take a slight beating. I feel my strength!"

In the pilot-house, Bill Ward held up the cribbage game long enough to have a look downstream. Pete Cinder was loafing in the stern of his skiff, half a mile away, lazily surveying a flotilla of willow blocks from which hung three-foot lengths of line and baited hooks. "Pete isn't doing much business," the mate observed.

"Nobody is. Even juggin' for cats aint what it used to be. I remember when you could jug fifty pounds of



"As far as the Army is concerned, your show is on the black-list. . . . On your way!"

fish to the mile with twenty floats, any day in the week."

"This Cow Island stop ought to be a rich pitch. Four thousand soldiers in Camp Hickory, and payday tomorrow. Too bad we can't open tonight and cop some easy money."

"Get closed by some deputy sheriff if we do. I've got to straighten it all out with Kinsley at the Chanford bank tomorrow. Kill two birds with one stone: you and Pete paper the town and ballyhoo the Army camp while I wrassle with Kinsley."

The mate considered this for a moment. Then, a lift of hope in his voice: "It'll sure be grand to get back in the big money again! Those Army boys ought to turn the trick for us! Joe, you little sawed-off runt, we're in luck! They have a payday tomorrow, and we'll get our cut! What show do we dish up for Uncle Sam's Army?"

"Kinda tough without a chorus," Captain Joe said. "The Army likes a girl show—and we haven't got a girl under fifty in our assortment of wives."

"'Ten Nights in a Barroom?'"

"They're too thirsty now. No—I figure a slug of 'Hamlet' might get their minds off the war—the way we handle it. 'Hamlet,' or 'Jekyll and Hyde.'"

"You're right! 'Jekyll' she is. Dan hasn't flopped that one yet since he let his hair grow for 'Custer's Last Stand.'"

"Yep, she never fails. The green spotlight gets 'em. I've figured on tryin' something about the opium dens of Chinatown since we got that green spot. Look there at Pete!"

Half a mile downstream, Pete Cinder had leaped for his oars and started for a bobbing float that had suddenly headed across the channel. "He's hooked one!" Bill Ward yelled. "Look the way that float is jumping! Give her the gong!"

In ten seconds the *Harley Abel*, shuddering under a heavy paroxysm of asthmatic exhausts, began to overhaul the drifting skiff. They got to the theater of action in time to see that Pete was hauling a thirty-pound channel cat over the side of the skiff.

"A hell-busting giant!" Bill Ward said. "I'm hungry."

"Eat him right away," Captain Joe declared. "Pleasant change from all that fat pork. . . . Take the wheel while I go down and look at that fish. Maybe our luck has changed."

At this, the big catfish flopped over the stern of Pete Cinder's skiff and swam away. The *Harley Abel* and the *Neptune* drifted into a fog of gloom. Pete Cinder went ashore with his shotgun after a while, heading across Big Bend through the woods, seeking something edible that he and his companions might devour. "Nuthin' kaint flop loose in de woods after dis ol' shotgun tells 'em to lay down. Dat's one thing!"

Pete and his shotgun scored heavily. In the course of his march southward toward Cow Island, the hunter bagged seven rabbits, a vagrant goose, thirty quail, two wild turkeys and a fat young fifty-pound pig. Staggering along through the woods under his hundred-pound burden of provender, he hit the river at eight o'clock that night, half a mile upstream from where the *Harley Abel* and the *Neptune* were moored against the bank. Lindy Cinder, Pete's wife, was the first to greet her husband. "Rally round, white-folks! Look at whut dis mighty hunter done drug in! Famine days is over!"

Captain Joe, Dan Martin, Bill Ward and their respective wives did their bit helping Lindy Cinder prepare the banquet. The starting gun banged at nine o'clock. Pete Cinder, still eating at midnight, won the endurance contest. "Aint never found out just how long could I eat," he grunted, answering Lindy's pointed question. "Hand me another rabbit an' another yard of dem' noble spareribs, woman! . . . Wonder why our white-folks got sleepy so doggone soon."

Some of the white-folks were sleeping, but sleep was slow in coming to Captain Joe. Another problem had been added to the long list that troubled him. Along the bank, upstream and down, where the *Harley Abel* and the *Neptune* were moored, a fleet of skiffs and shanty-boats had clustered like vultures waiting for their defenseless prey. The skiffs belonged to whisky-jacks, and the women on the shanty-boats were of a class whose presence spelled trouble for any Army camp. "I might have figured that the place would be loaded with hooch and hags," Captain Joe reflected. "Probably makes the river out of bounds for the soldier boys."

Thereafter, until an hour before daylight, his mind was host to alternating phantoms of hope and despair. Sleep brought ease, then, to his tortured nerves, and a dream where the pompous John F. Kinsley, president of the Chanford National, insisted that he accept a fifty-pound roast pig, stuffed with crisp bank-notes of large denominations.

AT breakfast Captain Joe related his remembered dream to his associates. "Roasted to a turn—finest pig you ever saw, and fairly bursting with wads of twenty-dollar bills," he declared. "There was a baseball in his mouth, and a gold chain around that pig's neck! I wonder what the real meaning of that dream can be."

"Mebbe means Cap'n Joe done et hisself too much of dat gratifyin' pawk las' night," Pete Cinder suggested to the world at large. "De baseball is what rankles my brain."

"The baseball element of the vision probably signifies that you've got to get in and pitch," Captain Joe's wife suggested.

"The vision of the golden chain must give us pause," Dan Martin declared. He had been a fourth-string *Hamlet* in his time, and Shakespeare still held sway. "Methinks it hath a prison smell."

Captain Joe conceded the point. "Maybe you're right, gosh blast the luck!"

"Lay not the blame on chance," the engineer advised. "'The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings.'"

"There you go again!" Captain Joe snorted. "Save my slice of the immortal bard until I get back from my gladiatorial engagement with John F. Kinsley at the bank. And in the meantime, folks, all hands except Pete Cinder can pitch in and rig the props for 'Jekyll and Hyde.'"

"Yassuh, Cap'n!" The plan seemed to suit Pete. He enjoyed a fleeting vision of a workless day. "Whut does I do?"

"In the first place, you keep twenty pounds of steam showing on the gauge in case we have to make another pitch downstream today," Captain Joe directed. "In the second place, stand by with that skiff in case anyone comes along with four bits and a desire to get himself ferried across the river. And in the third place, go ashore with your shotgun for an hour and blast a charge of buckshot into the next ownerless pig you find—just in case the ravens forget Elijah while he is hiding from the local Ahab constabulary. That's all."

Pete frowned his disappointment. Captain Joe stepped across the narrow gap separating the square bow of the *Harley Abel* and the *Neptune*. He climbed up to the pilot-house and hauled his worn yellow slicker out of the seat locker. A light rain had set in, promising bad business for everybody. In a final word with the engineer and the mate: "Mix up a bucket of paste after you get the 'Jekyll' props rigged, then come into Chanford," Captain Joe directed. "We better paper the town plenty heavy so as to be sure of catching some of the soldier trade. I'm going to have my little séance with Kinsley at the bank, and then I'll meet you about twelve o'clock at the Matchless. Good beer there, and good lunch."

"So I've heard," Dan Martin said. "Rumor hath it so."

"I've heard those glad tidings myself," Bill Ward added.

Captain Joe smiled in the rain. "After I get through with Kinsley, we'll be in shape to confirm the rumor." To himself: "A little moral support would be easy to take right now." He walked down the gangplank and began plodding along on his five-mile journey to Chanford. The sticky black gumbo of the rutted road began to ball up on his broken shoes. It took him a long hour to reach the branch road, three miles ahead, that led over to Camp Hickory. He found an M.P. on duty at the junction. Half a dozen of the Army outfit stood huddled under a tree. Captain Joe stopped to talk to the young soldiers. "Mornin', youngsters!" he greeted. "How's the Army?"

"All wet, right this minute," the M.P. said. "You aint got a pint or so hid under that slicker, have you, Pappy?"

"I wish I had."

"Oh, well, I guess I can wait. Won't be long now."

"What won't be long now?"

"Payday. Pay-call is due to blow this afternoon, an' I'm due to get me a midnight pass. You run a whisky-boat back there?"

"No—but there's lots of 'em there. I've got a showboat—seats two hundred people. We're putting on an all-star show tonight. First-class drama, song-and-dance numbers, first-class vaudeville—a five-dollar show for fifty cents. I'd be mighty glad to have you and a lot of your pals show up."

"We'll be there, Pappy, maybe with bells on. You headin' for Chanford?"

"That's my destination—unless the road washes out."

"Wait around: there'll be a couple of trucks along in an hour or so. Tell us about the show whilst you're waitin'."

"I'd like to, son, but I've got to hit town before your trucks show up. See you at the evening performance, I hope."

Captain Joe resumed his march in the rain. He landed in Chanford at eleven o'clock and headed down Main Street for the Chanford National. The town, as usual, seemed deserted. He noted a few recent changes in the stores along the street—preparations for the impending influx of Army men. "Looks like the home guard is getting all set to pry the boys loose from payday, just like they always do," he observed.

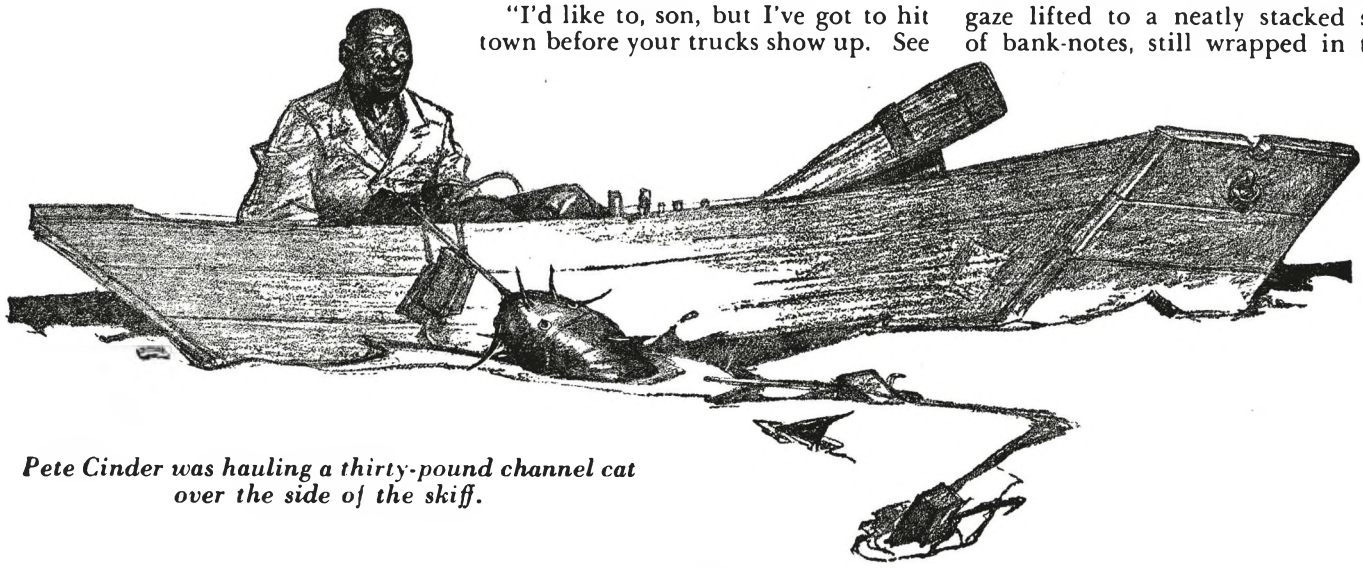
HE walked into the bank and took off his dripping slicker. At the teller's window he shook hands with young Al Newman, the cashier. "How are you, Al?" He smiled at Millie Thayer, the bookkeeper. "How are you, Miss Millie? Snowed under with extra work since the Army landed on you?"

"It's nothing to what it will be," Al Newman said. "Mr. Kinsley is back in his office. He's expecting you."

The cashier, engaged at the moment in stacking and sorting a bale of wrinkled old bank-notes, resumed his work. Captain Joe walked to the rear of the room and entered John F. Kinsley's office. Taking his time about it, the banker swung around from his desk presently, and greeted the visitor. "How are you, Captain Joe? Shut the door. Sit down. It must be pouring, the way your slicker is dripping. How's your wife and the folks on the showboat? Got some money for me?"

"It's raining some," Captain Joe said. "I still haven't been able to lay by any money."

The banker shared his office with the six-foot door of the bank's vault. The vault door was open. Captain Joe saw the maroon backs of a row of ledgers in the vault. He admired the burnished steel of the circular door, and its heavy hinges, the shining bronze and the plate glass that housed the time-lock. His roving gaze lifted to a neatly stacked store of bank-notes, still wrapped in their



Pete Cinder was hauling a thirty-pound channel cat over the side of the skiff.



Colonel Benford managed to regain speech. "Man, what a haul!"

unbroken manila cases. "We haven't taken in hardly any money," he said.

"You know how much you owe me?" The banker's voice was cold. "Three years I've carried that note."

Captain Joe began the distasteful job of remembering. "There was that money I borrowed at first, and the coal-bills that you paid, and some rope and some oakum and some paint. Then there was that steam calliope they sent you the bills for, and the money for the gasoline electric plant for the stage lights—maybe around fourteen hundred dollars, with the interest."

The banker smiled a thin smile. "Fourteen—hundred—dollars," he said slowly. "Fourteen hundred dollars. How much do you think your note alone, with the interest, amounts to?"

"She ought to run around eleven hundred," Captain Joe hazarded. "Or maybe a little over."

Kinsley grunted his contempt for the careless estimate. He glanced at a sheet of paper on his desk. "You can't afford to guess in this business! Twelve hundred and forty-eight dollars and thirty-four cents at noon to-

day. That's what it is. You promised to pay it. You haven't paid a cent on it. How do you think the banking business is run? What would happen if banks broke their promises?" He waved his hand at the stacked bank-notes in the open vault. "That currency's common paper—except that they're notes of this bank, the Chanford National Bank, and they promise to pay. They're as good as gold, because I keep my promises. What do you propose to do?"

Sitting in the big chair, wrapped in his sawed-off brass-buttoned coat, Captain Joe had shrunk three sizes in the course of the banker's tirade. "We might do real good with the show tonight," he said. "All the soldiers here, and everything. We might have quite a run of luck if things break right."

"How many people can you seat in that *Neptune* boat?" (There would follow, after Captain Joe answered, a lot of statistics.) 'What cash do you take in if you have a full house?"

"We can crowd in about two hundred people. If we cut the cheap seats and run a straight four-bit show, that's a hundred dollars."

Kinsley considered this for a moment, and then he delivered the verdict. "You owe this bank twelve hundred and forty-eight, thirty-four—on the note. There is a lot more—bills I paid for you. You get two hundred and forty-eight dollars in here in three days—or the sheriff does his stuff. Three days!"

"That's mighty good news!" Captain Joe said. "That's fine!" He stood up and reached for his dripping slicker. "I could use five dollars for provisions in advance," he announced. "The all-star cast of sterling troupers on the *Neptune* haven't been eating so heavily for the past few—"

"Not a cent!" John F. Kinsley said. "Good-by!"

Captain Joe smiled pleasantly at Al Newman and Millie Thayer on his way out, but he did not feel like saying much to them. He stepped into the rain and started for the Matchless Café, where he was to meet Dan Martin and Bill Ward. He felt better than he had for three months. Three days—a definite reprieve that would give the outfit time enough to play three shows for the soldiers. "By Jupiter and his Pluvius, we'll put on a couple of matinées! And round up that two forty-eight—and plenty on top!" He went into the Matchless. "The world is mine!"

Dan Martin and the mate were standing at the bar. They were drinking beer. They looked at Captain Joe, and guessed from his smile that some sort of good luck had hit him. "Have a beer and tell us the worst," the engineer invited. "Pardon come too late?"

"We have three days' reprieve—and we've got to dig up two fifty—or else. Where'd you get the beer money?"

"Competitors. Movie-house man hired us to stick up some of his paper whilst we were spreading 'Jekyll and Hyde.' Got a dollar from him."

"You get finished?"

"We're about half through. The rain held us up."

"Good thing we're playing the soldier gang tonight and not these town people. Soldiers don't mind coming out in the rain."

Captain Joe picked up his beer. "Here's luck!" he said. He drank the beer. "Well, I'll mosey along now. I want to stop in at that camp on my way back and spread the news about tonight's show. You two might do a little verbal advertising on your way back, if you get done soon enough. See you later. He picked up a half-dollar from the change that lay on the bar. "I'll buy a box of candy for the women," he said.

The rain seemed to be coming down a little heavier as he headed out of Chanford. By the time he got to the branch road that led to the encampment, the road mud was a foot deep in spots, and the ruts were running full of yellow water. The new M.P. on duty had shifted his post to the poor shelter of a scrub oak. Greeting him, "Looks like the rain is getting wetter," Captain Joe said.

The M.P. smiled. "Tough weather for ducks."

"How far is it to your camp?"

"About a mile—on a dry day. Seems like five miles, today."

"Who's the commanding officer?"

"Colonel Benford is in command, but he's away for a week in Memphis. The adjutant is Major Crabb. Anything special?"

"Special to me, son. I'm running a showboat down here on the river, and I'd kinda like to have the word passed around about the show."

"Good luck, old boy!" the M.P. said. "If Major Crabb starts to growl, growl back at him. We're all with you!"

CAPTAIN JOE started for the Army camp headquarters. Half a mile down the road he saw the first skeletons of the barracks that were to be part of the vast projected encampment. Carpenters, plumbers, painters, graders—all too delicate to work in the rain. Half of the contractor's crews were waiting for fair weather, and half of them were out on a strike. "Mebbe we'll have to ask the Germans and Japs to postpone the war during the bad weather." Captain Joe mused. He saw the colors, wet against the flagpole fronting headquarters. "You're kinda droopin' a bit, old flag," he said. "Never mind, winter won't be so hard—and the sun is bound to shine some day." To the sentry: "I want to see Major Crabb," he announced. The sentry nodded toward the entrance of headquarters building, and in a moment Captain Joe was explaining his problems to an orderly on duty three offices outside of Major Crabb's lair. The orderly came back in two minutes. Major Crabb would see Captain Porter.

Major Crabb took one look at Captain Porter. Surprise and chagrin were instantly evident on the Major's face. "Captain Porter!" he exploded. *"Porter!* You're not Captain Porter of the Navy—the commanding officer of the *Tallapoosa!"*

"No sir, I'm not," Captain Joe admitted. "I'm Captain Joe Porter of the showboat *Neptune,* tied up over here near Cow Island, and I'd like mighty well if you'd send out word to all your men to come to our show tonight. She's 'Jekyll and Hyde,' and in between the acts she has a wealth of song and story and classy footwork to enliven, amuse, entertain and—"

"Just a minute! Just-one-minute!" Major Crabb relapsed into a profane and serviceable Army vernacular for the next section of his oration. "Get out!" he concluded. He got to his feet. "Get out and stay out!" The pointed finger, and a snort of rage. "As far as the Army is concerned, your show is on the black-list, along with every whisky-jack and every shanty-boat along the river. On your way!"

"But Major, listen for just one minute while—"

"That's enough! Out!" The Major yelled for an orderly. "Get out of camp—and if one of our men is caught in the vicinity of your outfit, I'll have you beached, high, wide and handsome, with a ball and chain on your leg!"

That was that. . . .

Captain Joe plodded back to the Chanford road through the rain. To the M.P. on duty at the road juntcion: "For the love of law and order, don't let two men named Bill Ward and Dan Martin get past you. Send 'em right along to the showboat. They aimed to advertise the show in your camp—but there aint going to be no show."

"Why not? What's holding it up?"

"Nothing much—except your Major Crabb. He was all set to have my brains manicured by a firing-squad—figured that our show was sinful or something, like those whisky-jacks and shanty-boats. That's your jigadier brindle of a Crabb!"

"The sunburned, chigger-et, flea-bit son of a bishop!" The M.P. spoke with emphasis. "Listen here, Pappy! That guy is all elected for a necktie party—and I mean by a big popular vote. There aint a man in this camp but what—"

"Don't tell me no more, sonny," Captain Joe advised. "A man is bound to meet up with trouble now and then. The Major looks like he's your grief. All of us have something to bother us. So long."

Again, down the road to the river in the rain; the way seemed longer now than it had on the trip in.

Half a mile from the river the full weight of Major Crabb's edict landed square in the middle of Captain Joe's cargo of hope. After a moment, "Looks like we're licked," he mused. "We haven't a chance. Those soldier boys—we might have made a killin' when they rallied round with all their pay money, but now it looks like the final curtain."

For a little while his mind was filled with the black thoughts of what lay immediately ahead. The picture seemed hopeless. At the river, surveying the bleak scene, he dismissed his fear of disaster with a great and deliberate effort. "Got to act happy, for the sake of everybody else. Got to make the folks think that there's sunshine in my soul. Got to fool 'em just a little while longer. Got to keep smilin'—somehow."

He went aboard the *Neptune*. Pete Cinder was busy sawing up a jag of driftwood in the coal-bunkers of the *Harley Abel*. "Us had some big and fust-class business," Pete announced, waving his hand at Captain Joe. "I rowed six folks across de river, an' took in three dollars cash."

"That's mighty fine, Pete. What about your hunting expedition—any more pork chops in the kitchen?"

"Cap'n Joe, I spent two hours in de woods, but dis rain is got everything wid fur, feathers, hide or hair hid complete f'm de eye of man. Varmints is nestin' out of sight!"

Captain Joe smiled at Pete Cinder. "Like as not, they heard what you did to their relatives yesterday." He went into the cabin of the *Neptune*, announcing his entrance with a cheerful hail: "Gangway for Santy Claus! Peanuts, popcorn, chewing-gum and candy! Here's a bite of store candy for you troupers. How you been since I last saw you?"

"Wondering if you'd melted in the rain," his wife said. "Did Bill and Dan come back with you?"

"They'll be in along in an hour or so. Lindy Cinder, how about a cup of coffee to warm me up? That rain is cold."

"Coffee comin' right now, Cap'n Joe. I bet dem poor boys in dat soldier camp is mighty bad off. Like as not sunk to de neck in mud. I gits yo' coffee an' a hot snack."

Captain Joe's wife smiled at him and asked two questions: "How did you come out at the bank? Do we play 'From Rags to Riches,' or 'Over the Hill to the Poorhouse'?"

The questions hit heavy. Captain Joe blinked his eyes and countered with a couple of lies: "Kinsley was kind as he could be," he said. "Everything is all fine and dandy."

Lindy Cinder saved the moment with a cup of coffee.

"Thank you, Lindy," Captain Joe said. "Coffee is always a life-saver on a stormy day like this. I remember one time about three winters ago when—"

Pete Cinder came into the room with a welcome interruption: "Two men outside on de *Harley Abel* whut wants to see you, Cap'n. Wants to git took up de river to Newport—an' all de steam I got is twenty pounds. Told 'em you was de head man."

Captain Joe drained his coffee-cup and set it down. "Hold the deal on that hot snack, Lindy," he said. "Wait until I see what these men want."

HE walked out with Pete Cinder to where two strangers waited in the shelter of the coal-bunkers on the *Harley Abel*. One of them, heavy-set and red-faced, smiled at Captain Joe. "My pardner and I would like to get up to Newport so we can get tonight's train to Kansas City," the stranger said. "We're both boilermakers, and there's some good jobs in K.C. if we can get there before the rush starts."

"Man can knock down eighty bucks a week," the taller man said. He wore a dripping canvas coat and his shoes were shapeless with mud. "Best job in the country if we get there in time."

"You could make it just as fast if you'd ride the Illinois Central to St. Louis," Captain Joe suggested. "Catch the flyer at Slater."

The heavy-set member of the pair hauled a roll of folding-money out of the pocket of his mud-stained overcoat. "We want to go to Newport, Cap'n. How much do you want for the job? Twenty-five be all right?"

Twenty pounds on the gauge of the asthmatic little *Harley Abel*. "I can run you downstream a lot quicker," Captain Joe said. "You can catch the flyer just as easy from Clayton as Newport. Haven't got much steam, right this minute. Twenty-five will be okay for the trip."

"Clayton it is! Here's your ticket-money." The man handed Captain Joe two twenty-dollar bills. "Let's go!"

Captain Joe nodded at Pete Cinder. "Chunk a big jag of that pine driftwood into the firebox, and then let go the lines. Get back in the engine-room and handle her. All gone for Clayton, and steam coming up."

"All gone!" Pete Cinder repeated. "Twenty on de gauge an' steamin' heavy!" The sight of the folding-money had galvanized him into action. "Pitch-pine blazin' hot, an' a fast wheel splashin' de waves whilst Cap'n Joe cuts de bends!"

"I haven't got change for this twenty-dollar bill," Captain Joe said. "You haven't got a five, have you?"

The tall man waved the problem aside. "Keep the forty bucks, Cap'n. It's worth it—to run all the way down to Clayton and have to buck the current all the way back. Keep the change—but get goin'!"

Captain Joe started up the stairway for the pilot-house. "Might as well come up in the pilot-house and keep warm," he invited. "Only warm place on the boat, except inside the firebox or the boilers."

The two passengers retrieved their baggage from the coal-bunkers—two suitcases and a small handbag—and followed Captain Joe. In the pilot-house, "Sit down and be comfortable," he invited, indicating the locker seat against the back wall. He pulled the wheel hard over and whistled down the speaking-tube: "Pete, you all set?"

"All set, Cap'n Joe."

Neglecting the signal-bells, "Back her out into the channel!" Captain Joe ordered. "Back her out, and then come ahead strong as soon as she straightens up."

The little steamboat swung into the channel currents and headed downstream. Down below, Pete Cinder left his engines long enough to heave some more driftwood into the firebox. He covered the blazing wood with a thin layer of coal from the scant store remaining in the bunkers, noting presently that the needle on the gauge had climbed to thirty pounds. The needle touched forty, and the complex structure of the little boat began to protest at the unexpected stresses that resulted. The hog chains clanked in their cast-iron saddles; the fan-tails groaned their reactions to the heaving cylinders; the harsh exhausts coughed up the rusty stack; the wake of the paddle-wheel rolled high with white water. And midway of the trip, in the easy stretch at the head of Pelican Bar, the *Harley Abel* went hard aground in three-foot water after riding the bar for half her length.

Pete Cinder shut his engines off. "Ol' Cap'n Joe must be goin' blind, not knowin' where dat doggone sandbar is!" He got up ahead in time to hear Captain Joe flame into the final chapter of the hottest burst of sulphuric profanity that had ever exploded south of Cairo. "Cap'n Joe aint forgot none of his mammoth cuss-words! Aint left out a thing! Scorchin' de river! Man, listen at dat little giant burn it up!"

Captain Joe tamed down. "We must be drawing a little more water than I figured," he explained to his passengers. "Nothing serious. Won't hold us up very long. Got to siphon out the water that's been leaking into

her, and back her off, that's all. Half an hour will do it—if you men don't mind lending a hand."

The two passengers would lend four hands. "What's the first move, Cap'n? What do we do?"

"Open that hatch down there and get the suction-hose dragged into the hull—back aft to where the water is. I'll get the pump going, and we'll be riding high in no time."

The thirty-foot section of suction-hose, stiffened with the spiral steel reinforcing in its fabric, proved to be a problem. The hatch in the main deck of the *Harley Abel* was three feet square. The inflexible six-inch hose fouled up on the timbers inside the hull and stopped the show. "You two men might get down in there and lug that hose aft while Pete and I feed it down the hatch," Captain Joe suggested. "Drag her back to where the water is."

The two boilermakers climbed down into the hull and began to sweat at their heavy task. The hose inched back into the darkness. "Another two feet," Captain Joe called out. "She reached the water yet?"

"Two feet more will do it," one of the men reported.

Two feet more did it. The tail end of the heavy hose flopped down into the hull. Captain Joe slammed the hatch-cover down and bolted it. At this, Pete Cinder, his eyes wide with surprise, began a question: "Whut—whut does you—"

"Never mind whut I whuts!" Captain Joe commanded. "Get into that engine-room and back her strong while I swing this jail-boat off the bar. I hit a little heavier than I aimed to. Back her strong—and stand by for an upstream run, full ahead, as soon as she's in the clear. Never mind how loud they yell, those jail-birds in the cellar."

"Jailbirds, Cap'n Joe?"

"If they aint, they mighty soon will be. Git to work."

UPSTREAM and downstream from the *Neptune*, as far as Captain Joe could see in the fading light, the river bank was swarming with soldiers. He swung the *Harley Abel* in close to the bank and came ahead dead slow until the little steamboat nudged the *Neptune*. The showboat was thronged with Army men. Dan Martin and Bill Ward were talking to a group of officers. Captain Joe recognized Major Crabb. Without invitation the Major stepped aboard the *Harley Abel* and started up to the pilothouse. He was followed by another Army officer. Dan Martin and Bill Ward trailed along.

In the pilot-house, "Captain Porter, this is Colonel Benford," Major Crabb said, introducing the commanding officer of Camp Hickory. "The Colonel flew down from Memphis the moment he got the news. Did you land those two men at Clayton?"

"What news?" Captain Joe asked. "The first place we landed was the head of Pelican Bend." Captain Joe neglected to specify that Pelican Bar had been his landing-point.

Major Crabb scowled and exploded: "And they got ashore?"

Colonel Benford took the witness.

"The Chanford National Bank was robbed this afternoon," the Colonel explained. "Something over eighty thousand dollars in currency intended for our paymaster. Two men did it. We traced them this far. Where did you set them ashore? We've got to run them down."

"Colonel, excuse me a minute." Captain Joe stepped in back of Colonel Benford and Major Crabb and lifted the lid of the locker seat. He hauled out the two suitcases and the handbag that his fugitive passengers had brought aboard. "I guess the money's in these suitcases—or most of it," he said. "I looked in 'em, and they're full of bank-notes from the Chanford National. There's a pistol in that handbag—and a couple of masks. . . . Did any of your soldiers happen to bring some tear-gas along?"

Colonel Benford, seemingly hypnotized by the sight of the bundled bank-notes, managed presently to regain his speech: "Tear-gas? . . . Jumping old solid gold Christmas gift! Man, what a haul! But tear-gas—what for?"

"Tear-gas," Captain Joe repeated. "Those two birds claimed they were boilermakers, but their hands were too clean and too soft. They were too anxious to travel—the hard way. Too free with their money. Gave me a couple of twenties that were brand-new—with consecutive numbers on 'em. Chanford National bank-notes, brand new. Al Newman, the cashier, never pays out any new money if he can help it. He had a big pile of dirty old cash this morning—so all in all, I took a chance and hit Pelican Bar as easy as I could—and then I lured those two birds into the hold and dropped the hatch-cover on 'em. Tear-gas might come in handy. The way they was cussing and swearing, your boys may have to tame 'em."

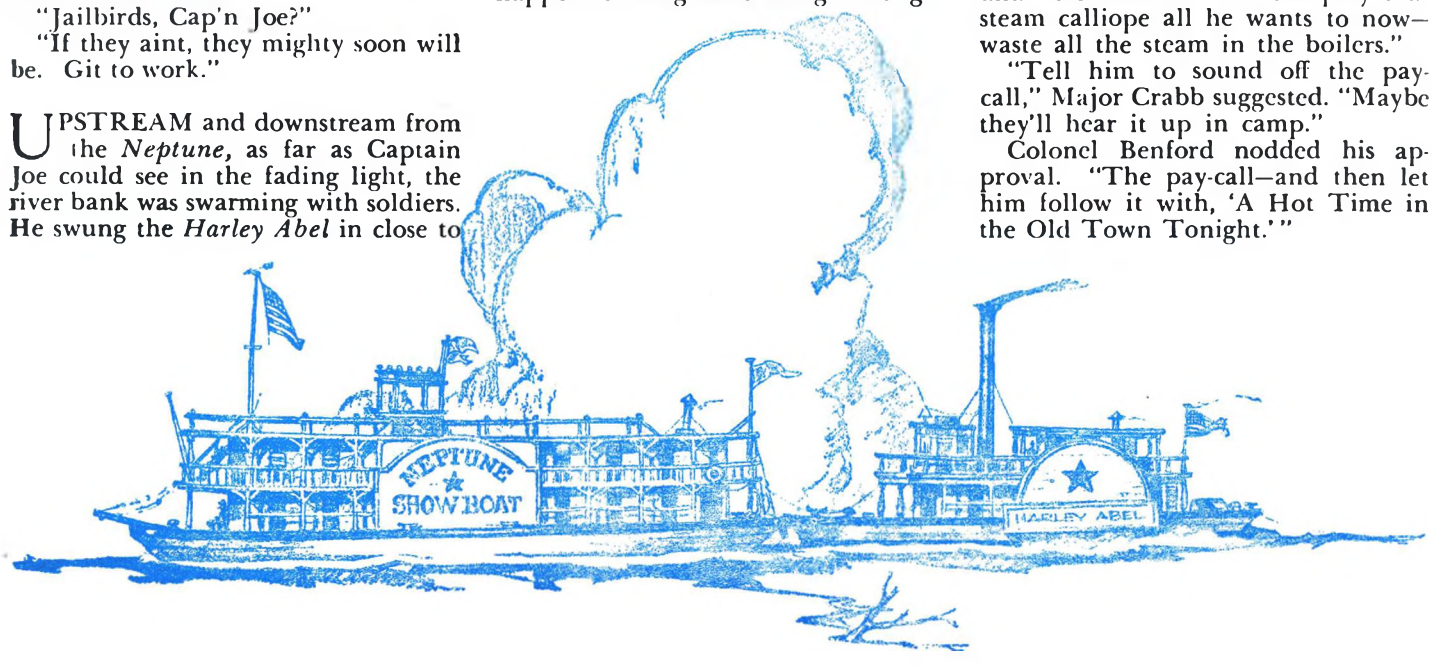
COLONEL BENFORD was an old-time poker-player. "You win," he said. "You played the longest odds I ever heard of. You won a ten-thousand-dollar chip when you dropped that hatch-cover — maybe more. There's two or three rewards out for those two men." He grabbed Captain Joe's hand: "The big winner! My heartiest congratulations!"

"And get set, Captain Porter, for a stampede of cash customers from now on," Major Crabb suggested. "God help us, if we tried to rule your show-boat out of bounds after the men hear the news!"

"Looks like we played 'From Rags to Riches' in one act," Captain Joe admitted. His voice was husky with happiness. "I'd like to go over and tell the women the good news now—and Pete Cinder. Pete can play that steam calliope all he wants to now—waste all the steam in the boilers."

"Tell him to sound off the pay-call," Major Crabb suggested. "Maybe they'll hear it up in camp."

Colonel Benford nodded his approval. "The pay-call—and then let him follow it with, 'A Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight.'"



HORSE POWER

Most guys can't win at a racetrack, but here our sailors have an idea that is something special.

by Richard Howells Watkins



"Come on, Secret Censor!" Wally and Oscar, eyes glued to the track, belted Tiny to a finish; they applauded him down to size.

THIS young sailor, who turned out to be John Maclaren, machinist's mate, second class, approached Lefty Cronk as he was standing on the northeast corner of Flagler and Northeast Second Avenue, thoughtfully masticating a toothpick.

Mr. Cronk's very green slack suit and his featherweight pearl gray felt, worn off the face, made him a prominent object.

"You look as if you knew how to get out to the track," Maclaren said. He was spruce in liberty whites and earnest of mien. "Where do I take what?"

Lefty Cronk's face, the color of yesterday's sporting section left out in a Miami shower, remained skeptical. The creases cutting down his cheeks, which seemed deeper than his slitted mouth, did not relax. His wary eyes, very wise, probed at Jack Maclaren in search of the catch. He looked at the sailor's insigne on his left arm, at his square-toed shoes and at his calloused hands. This young guy was a sailor. Also his eyes were trustful. And hopeful. An unbeatable set-up.

But the sailor's jack would be small change. And right now Lefty Cronk needed, for down payment on a night-club with tables upstairs, one thousand dollars. One grand, they called it in the movies. Tiny Gonzalez, the present owner of this desirable clip-joint, had agreed to accept instead of cash ten suckers good to lose better than a hundred, steered and delivered at the upstairs tables. But Tiny wouldn't accept a sailor.

"Listen," said Cronk. "They got a zoo up in North Miami. They got planes to take you up. You c'n get a fishing-boat—"

"You're holding up national defense," said Jack Maclaren. "I got business at the track."

"Only horses got business at a track," Lefty Cronk said virtuously. "The rest is gamblers."

"Do I have to land a marine on you to get an answer?" This sailor was intent. He was practically anxious!

"At two dollars a race you can lose sixteen bucks," said Cronk. "I hate to see money wasted on a flock of horses."

"This is more'n a matter of a couple o' sawbucks! Listen, do I—"

The disrespectful manner in which he referred to twenty dollars awakened Lefty Cronk to opportunity.

"You asked for it, sailor," he said. "We take a bus. This way. I got somethin' in the fifth. How much you thinking of betting?"

They started walking. "I got a hundred an' twenty bucks an' do I need to click with it!" cried Maclaren.

Lefty Cronk smiled like a dinner plate cracking.

By the time the bus was halfway out to the park Lefty Cronk had Maclaren getting confidential. Cronk, as a man who had tried both, was emphasizing the advantages of a private game over a track where even the horses were worried about taxes.

"I got a system," Maclaren said. He hit Cronk on the back so hard that Cronk thought for a moment the sailor was on to him.

"You got a headache if you had the head, sailor," Cronk said. He looked old with wicked wisdom, an easy matter for Cronk.

"Never mind calling me 'sailor,'" Jack Maclaren patted the insigne on his sleeve. "I'm in the propulsion end. Propulsion, see? That's what makes destroyers move—and horses."

Lefty Cronk sighed heavily. "I make book eight years in Brooklyn. I run a tip sheet. The on'y thing that keeps my digestion from goin' wrong is that it don't never get overworked. But you got a system."

"I'll let you in—if I can locate those two gobs."

"Two gobs?"

"Two gobs," said Maclaren cheerily.

"It gets worse," said Lefty Cronk but it sounded better to him. Maybe Tiny Gonzalez would accept all three sailors, provided he didn't allow the track to go through them first.

"It's like this, Lefty," Maclaren said. "Most guys can't win at a racetrack."

"Are you right!" said Cronk, with relief.

Maclaren grinned broadly. "That'll make it pay off better to me."

"I put out taxes," Lefty Cronk said with bitterness. "And look what they give me as the first line of defense!"

"You'll feel safer when you see my system clicking," Maclaren assured him. "It'll bring home the bacon."

"I been bringing home the bacon out o' horses all my life," said Lefty

ILLUSTRATED BY MAURICE BOWER



Cronk. "Only by the door it always snaps back. Rubber bacon, Jack."

The bus bowled up an avenue lined with enormous coco-palms. The passengers piled out into the promised land, where the pink flamingos were real and opportunity knocked eight times an afternoon, besides a daily double.

Jack Maclaren's self-confidence was marred by the sight of the milling crowds.

"I got to find these two guys," he said. He was worried again. "It's no dice if I don't." Abruptly his spirits rose, and he punched Lefty in the ribs. "If I do, your country's safe."

"You Irish—"

"Irish?" Maclaren interrupted. He was shocked. "Listen, we Hieland Scots were Irish before the Irish were. But we got over it, see?"

"Not you, you didn't," Cronk said with grim conviction. "Try the bar for your friends."

Maclaren shook his head. "Wally Howe don't drink."

Cronk's meager supply of credulity ran out. He turned a bitter look on his new friend.

"He don't," said Maclaren. "You been reading books. An' while Oscar Berg hoists it he can stow it, too."

Thoughtfully Lefty Cronk piloted the machinist's mate to other likely places. Under the grandstand he caught sight of Tiny Gonzalez, looming like fifty bucks in a cigar-store crap game. Cronk parked Jack Maclaren by a pillar and intercepted the clip-joint proprietor.

Gonzalez looked down at Cronk fixedly. He did not speak.

"Listen, I got a sailor just rollin' in jack an' maybe I'll have a coupla

others by tonight," Cronk said. "Oke?"

Gonzalez relaxed. He shook his head. "No sailors," he said. "You got no patriotism, Cronk. Besides"—he gripped Cronk's narrow shoulders as if they were the handlebars of a bicycle—"I want one hundred out o' you on the down payment on my scatter an' I want it here before the eighth. I got plenty o' singers—but out o' you today I want just one note—dough!"

He spun Cronk around and in a friendly way shoved him over to Jack Maclaren. "Introduce," he ordered out of the corner of his massive mouth.

"Big operator—a pal o' mine—" Cronk explained to the sailor. Tiny grabbed Jack's hand, memorized his face, hailed him genially, dropped the hand and departed.

Cronk was depressed. Hard jack!

In the paddock Jack gave a relieved cry: "There they are!" He seized the sleeve of Cronk's suit.

"Look," he said. "The squat little guy—he had to get blisters on his feet to make the height—is Wally Howe, gunner's mate, first class. He's the one. The big squarehead with the pan like a bollard is Oscar Berg, a second-class quartermaster."

"What's so hot?"

"Come on," said Maclaren. "Howya, boys," he hailed them. He indicated Lefty Cronk with a cordial thumb. "Lefty Cronk. Who you got in the first race, Wally?"

The two sailors nodded at Cronk.

"Monel Maid," said Wally. "It's impossible for her to lose."

"Creolin," said Oscar Berg. "I feel it."

"You may be right," said Maclaren. "Come on, Lefty."

They withdrew. Cronk stared over his shoulder at a zipper bathing-suit bag that Wally Howe carried. "So what?" he said. "Monel Maid's the favorite. It ought to take it, payin' around three-sixty for a two-dollar ticket. Creolin couldn't cop if the rest of 'em were in carts."

Maclaren opened his program and crossed off Monel Maid and Creolin. "Them two fellows are the hardest-luck guys in the Navy," he said. "If Wally slung the eye at a girl on Sands Street she'd turn out to be the exec's wife. If Oscar should spit over the side the heavyweight champeen of the fleet would be right under there on side-cleanin' detail."

He swiveled his thumb toward Wally Howe. "He'd ha' been a chief gunner's mate or even a warrant if it wasn't for black luck. The luck don't stop him with the guns, though."

He hit Lefty Cronk on the chest with a stiff finger.

"Let me tell you about the guns."

"I get it," Cronk said. "He can shoot 'em."

"He can hit with 'em—like nobody in the fleet. But horses—" Maclaren's eyes lost their glint. "Wally plays favorites," he said. "He's knocked over as many as sixteen favorites in two straight days—just by puttin' two dollars a nose on 'em. It aint believable, what he does to favorites. But he always figures he's going to ring the bell next time."

"You aint telling me," Lefty Cronk said with a nasty grin. "Next time, huh?"

"Only this time it's got to be this time," said Jack. "That isn't his money he's shovin' around."

Cronk narrowed his eyes. "Hot money? Government cash?"

"Worse," said the machinist's mate sadly. "Wally passes the hat for Tex Hawkins, an old shipmate in ours who's finishin' his last hitch—a good-enough guy who never could put down a bottle long enough to pick up a warrant. It aint allowed, collectin' contributions, and Tex has his retired pay an' all. But the idea is to set Tex up in a pool parlor near the Yard in Brooklyn."

"Clip-joints—I mean night-clubs—is better," said Cronk.

"This is so he can see his service friends onct in a while. The boys in our wagon come through big and then Wally Howe gets the idea o' doublin' or triplin' the jack, playin' favorites in a big way—and sneaks ashore with four hundred dollars."

"What do you know?" Cronk said cheerfully. "Four, hey?"

Jack Maclaren prodded him with his finger.

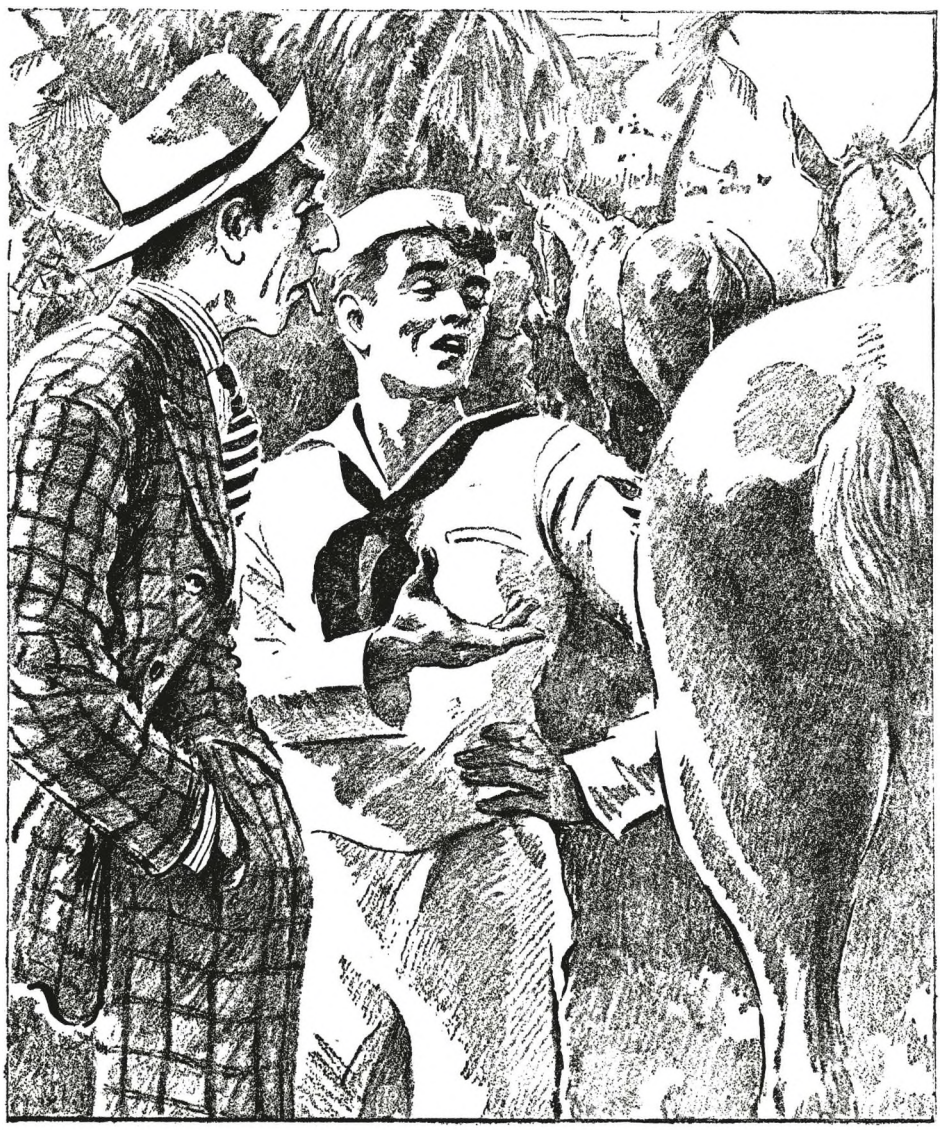
"The Navy'll be too hot for Wally, the way he socks favorites cold. He'll get a dishonorable discharge sure, if not a Navy pen."

"Can't you persuade—"

"Can't you unfire a gun?" Jack said. "So I borrowed what the boys had left in my division an' I'm here to win it back as fast as Wally drops it. The Navy can't afford to lose a gunner like Wally, not with real shootin' ahead."

"An' where's the other come in?"

"His pal Oscar?" Maclaren said. "He come along to help—and to push away his own pay. He plays hunches, Oscar does, an' he never has any except for long-shots. Anything that aint



"I'm an engine-room man, an' it's the end I'm looking at that drives him."

a horse—Oscar's on him with two dollars."

"An' I thought all three of you were just fodder for slot machines," Cronk said softly. "What about your system, sailor?"

Jack Maclaren smiled proudly and shoved the first race under Lefty's eyes. "Count 'em," he said. "Seven horses to you. I know they're only five horses running. Wally's and Oscar's are just sittin' down in the shade somewheres splittin' a bale of hay. That gives me a five-horse race with the favorite out of it. Whatever wins pays off big!"

Cronk knotted up his face in extreme disapproval.

"It aint scientific," he said.

"Neither are horses," Maclaren retorted. "But bein' bet on by Wally or Oscar makes 'em tired by telepathy. So I got the race narrowed down by two horses."

Cronk kept shaking his head. "All right, you got five hayburners to choose from instead of seven," he said. "Don't your system jell beyond that?"

"Come over," said Maclaren with dignity and led Cronk to the railing around the exercise circle. So far only a couple of entries in the first race had been led out.

"Now you take this horse—" said Maclaren.

"This is the front end here, sailor," Cronk said with nasty kindliness.

"I'm an engine-room man, an' it's the end I'm looking at that drives him," Maclaren retorted. "His head's nothin' but the bridge. It's—"

"Now, look, sailor," said Lefty Cronk. "There's a few things a guy like me can—"

"When it comes to propulsion," said the machinist's mate, "that's where I live. Let me show you about horse propulsion. Lean over! Plant your hands on the grass. Go on, can't nobody tell you anything? Le' me tell you, will you?"

"You come here an' start tellin' a man like me—" Lefty Cronk rasped, as he bent down. "I'm no horse!"

"You do good enough for the principle of the thing," Maclaren said. "Go on, get down there."

"You're crazy!" said Lefty, planting his hands on the dirt.

"Now move," said Maclaren. "Go on! Faster! Why I waste time on a lubber that don't know machin—"

"—an' you act like you was born in a box stall," Lefty panted, traveling in a circle and turning his dizzy head sidewise to glare up at the sailor. "It don't make no—"

"There, see!" Maclaren said to the galloping Lefty. "You aint gettin' no real shove out o' your arms; it's your hind legs that're doin' ninety per—"

Spectators cheered, jeered, milled. A dip pushed in and made passes at pockets. A special policeman came on the run.



"What d'you think you are—a hot tip in the third?"

"What goes? What goes?" the cop roared.

"He said he was born in a box stall," an obliging spectator explained.

"What d'you think you are—a hot tip in the third?" the scandalized policeman demanded, and Lefty straightened up as if shot from the southward. The cop figured Cronk was stooging for a mob of dips. "You come—"

Cronk felt sick. If they ever got him to the office some other special or track dick might recognize him. And he didn't want to improve any roads for Dade County or even be escorted to any trains headed north, not at this time of winter.

Jack Maclaren planted himself in front of the reaching cop. He delayed the cop's progress, like a line-buck-ing machine opposing a right tackle. Cronk started walking and sweating.

"My friend aint drunk," Jack said. "It's—"

"I'd feel better in me mind about him if he was drunk," said the policeman. "Hey! Wait, you—I want—"

Heart tomtomming, Cronk kept on walking faster. He ducked behind palms, unpleasantly thin of girth, and behind spectators, who were fatter.

Jack Maclaren hung on to the cop. The cop didn't dare make a pass at him. These days sailors were tops. Jack worried the Pink to a standstill, talked him out of it and pointed him wrong to cool him off.

Lefty Cronk was sore. Till Jack Maclaren had gone to bat for him with the cop, Jack was juicy. Cronk had



kept their relations to a strictly business basis. Jack was his sucker.

"Cripes, I'd like to take a poke at him!" Cronk said. He was disgusted. How could you rope a guy who'd steered a cop for you? Jack and he were just pals together now. Jack wasn't a sucker any more. There was such a thing as right and wrong.

It wasn't the first time a fat sucker had gotten away. He couldn't even make a play on these two gobs with their bathing-suit bag, because they were Jack's pals.

Cronk was in an unreasonable, almost an irritable mood by the time Jack caught up with him in front of the grandstand.

"Now look, sailor," he said, rubbing the dirt off his hands and taking out of his pocket a racing publication. "I may be wasting my time on you but just le' me tell you that horses—"

"You stick to horses' racing form if you want to," Maclaren said. "It's the after end of his form that'll win for me."

Only the pressing matter of keeping Tiny Gonzalez off Jack prevented Cronk from parting coldly from this stubborn theorist.

By that time the bugle had sounded and the horses were already parading on the track. Maclaren did not bet. They joined Wally Howe and Oscar.

"Two bucks, anyhow, I've saved the guy," Lefty Cronk told himself. But his attention was centered on the fact that Tiny Gonzalez in the background, was now eyeing the bathing-suit bag in Wally Howe's muscled hand. Cronk remembered that a dip had once told him that sailors' pockets were few and small. Cronk was ashamed of Tiny. Why was the proprietor of a flourishing clip-joint acting like that?

"What'd I tell you?" Maclaren muttered.

"Huh?" Cronk became aware that the race was over.

"Monel Maid was fourth and Creolin trailed," Jack said dismally. "You can count on those two boys to miss."

"Did Wally shoot the price on that race?"

"Not till he's dropped a few," Maclaren said. Plainly he felt that the Navy's chances of losing the gunner were good. "It makes Wally feel luckier to lose money."

"Huh? Yeah," said Cronk. That's how people were.

Tiny Gonzalez breezed up, all joyful about seeing his old buddy Jack Maclaren again. Jack gave him a knockdown to Wally and Oscar. The two sailors were in a huddle over the bathing-suit bag. Neither was in the least shaken by the failure of system against raw chance. They were surprised over Tiny Gonzalez' ponderous delight in meeting them but somewhat absent-minded.

"LAY off my pals," Cronk muttered in Tiny's ear, which was the size and shape of a conch shell. "Pals, get it? No steerin'."

"Silver Sand for the next," Wally announced to all with placid certainty. "Why would he be such a big favorite if he wasn't going to win?"

"Thanks, pal!" Tiny Gonzalez said, with a leer at Cronk. "I'll get my jack down." The grandstand seemed to shake under his departing feet.

"Leominster," said Oscar. "I feel it."

"Look, Wally," said Jack Maclaren, "how about callin' it a day for Tex—"

"You got no heart," said Wally. "How's Tex to start that ivory parlor if I don't build up this jack? I aint gamblin'; I'm stickin' to favorites. Now lay off me, black-gang, or I'll get sore. An' when I get sore Oscar gets sore."

"Sure," said Oscar. He wasn't quite as big as Tiny but he was solid and willing.

Glumly Maclaren led the reluctant Cronk toward the paddock again.

"Look, sailor, I aint dramatizin' any more nags," Cronk said.

Maclaren was busy dodging about, studying the horses from an unconventional angle. Cronk watched him irritably.

Tiny Gonzalez would feel free to steer the sailors. But he was still a pal of Cronk's. Cronk couldn't sing to them about Tiny. They were all his pals, all.

"Oscar's a hunch-better," Cronk said to himself. "This sailor's a haunch-better!"

Even this *bon mot* did not banish his resentment at the sight of these three sailors pouring away jack that, barring that cop, would have swelled his down payment on Tiny's scatter.

Maclaren worked hard on his propulsion gag. When, at last, the boys mounted and rode out onto the track he had a horse.

"Samovich," he said. "That's one that ought to turn up the revs." He frowned. "I wish I knew how much jack Wally was dunking on Silver Sand so I could copper the bet. He won't tell me figgers."

"Two dollars is plenty," said Lefty Cronk. "If Samovich had a can, he'd be a poor dime's worth of dog-food."

"It's no good my winning maybe sixteen bucks if Wally is dropping fifty o' Tex's," Jack said.

Lefty Cronk's flat visage crinkled perceptibly above the eyebrows. He was wondering whether his sure shot in the fifth, a dog by the name of Candleglow, given to him by no less than Pip Twine, was the answer to this crisis. He kept on thinking while Jack came back from the two-dollar window, the horses got away and the stands went into an economic frenzy.

Samovich won. More, it was certain that he would pay better than eight to one. Cronk studied hard the after end of the horse as he was unsaddled and the jock weighed in.

"Horsepower!" said Maclaren. He patted his machinist's insigne. "That's where I come in. The black-gang knows about horsepower. Get it? Horsepower!"

Lefty Cronk opened his kick and gazed fixedly at three ten-dollar bills

that hadn't become two hundred and forty. He could have clinched Tiny's clip-joint if he had listened to Jack.

He had a ten-spot riding on Jack's pick in the third. The horse came streaking down the stretch like a ray of light. But three other horses had already finished.

"They never warmed him up," Jack explained. "The old zing isn't in a motor till it's hotted. You take semi-Diesels, now. Before—"

"You take semi-Diesels," Cronk said bitterly. "I'd rather have my sawbuck. That jock never asked it."

They rendezvoused with Wally and Oscar.

"They're gettin' closer," the squat gunner said cheerfully. "I had the favorite and the second favorite won."

He dived into his bathing-suit bag for more dope, form sheets, opinions and tips. He worked hard on statistics for five minutes before deciding again that the favorite would win the fourth.

"Sunbeam Sue," said Oscar. "This one I feel."

Tiny Gonzalez was back there, a dozen rows higher in the stand, and making no pass to come nearer.

"It's time to open up with the big guns," Wally said. "I'm gettin' to where I can't miss."

"With guns, yes," said Jack Maclaren. "With horses—"

He went into his patter. Jack was getting pretty desperate, Cronk decided. Well, with twenty left and Tiny wanting a hundred down that afternoon, Cronk had a right to be desperate, too. He needed that clip-joint worse than the Navy needed Wally Howe or this Tex Hawkins needed a pool parlor on Sands Street.

Jack got lyrical about the hind legs of a chestnut mare called Apple Ella.

Cronk shook his head. "That plater is by a thing called Appleby out o' Elegant Queen an' neither o' them ever copped—"

"Leave her ancestors out of it," said Jack. "You're living in a democracy, see?" But his face looked worried about that gunner.

Lefty Cronk took a walk down to the bench under the big date palm back of the grandstand. Pip Twine was sitting there, as he usually was, with his short legs swinging, his thick chest bulging and his eyes, deep-set in his imposing head, gandering 'round.

"Candleglow still good, Pip?" Cronk asked.

Pip nodded. "The price has gone sour—maybe two to one—but it'll take it."

Two to one! Lefty Cronk went back to Jack. When the machinist's mate bought ten dollars worth of Apple Ella to cop Cronk bought the same. He didn't believe it. But he had to have real jack to put on Candleglow's nose at a price like two to one.

Apple Ella came through like a mechanical rabbit. Just like that. Lefty Cronk sank sixty-two dollars in his pants pocket. If Candleglow hit the wire next he could do business with Tiny Gonzalez. He met Tiny on his way to the window and told him that.

"I'll be waiting," said Tiny. "But I'd wait easier if you was on Knight Blaze."

Cronk bought himself a fifty-dollar ticket on Candleglow, which was Number Three. Wally Howe was right on his heels at the fifty-dollar window with Oscar standing by outside the rail.

"Secret Censor," Oscar told Cronk, beaming.

"Why don't you put two on a flamingo?" Cronk asked.

"What'll he pay?" asked Oscar.

"FOUR," Wally Howe said to the man behind the window. Four was the favorite, Knight Blaze.

"Even money is all you'll get on that, if you get it," Cronk warned the small gunpointer.

"I got to get it," said Wally. He shoved the ticket into his bathing-suit bag with a finality that was somewhat like desperation. "These horses—they act like they got a grudge against a friend o' mine named Tex Hawkins. A two-hundred-dollar grudge."

Lefty Cronk headed for the paddock railing. "He's been dropping fifty a race," he reported to Jack Maclaren.

Jack grunted as if poked in the plexus. He took his eyes off the retreating form of Admirable Jane, Number One. "That means I got to set sail, too," he said.

"You'll have the whole Navy so broke it'll be takin' out fishing-parties," Cronk said irritably. "Unless," he added, "you get onto Candleglow. There's a nag with front legs as well as hind ones, an' wise money on its nose. It's a tip like you were reading tomorrow's paper today."

Jack nodded. "Fifty, hey?"

He moved. Glumly Cronk headed for the spot in the lower grandstand where these sailors watched their jack blow away.

Wally and Oscar were already there. They were milling around in the aisle near their seats. They were bending down, bouncing up, peering, poking.

"I had it right between my feet while I was writin' in my program," Wally Howe said, "—my bag."

"It was there while that big Tiny was tellin' you about the horse in the seventh," Oscar said.

They looked at Lefty Cronk.

"What was in it?" Cronk asked.

"All my dope an' figgerin'," said Wally Howe, in despair. "All—an' that fifty-dollar ticket on Knight Blaze, too."

Lefty Cronk scowled. Knight Blaze was the one that Tiny Gonzalez favored. And Tiny had been at the window when Wally bought. Yet Tiny was no dip. He owned one of the classiest clip-joints in town, taking tourists like a man opening oysters.

Tiny could afford to be honest. Sure he could. Also he was Cronk's pal. He wouldn't—shouldn't—make a play against Cronk's pals any more than Lefty Cronk would make a play for his pals against Tiny. Cronk began to get dizzy. Then a thought hit him. It hit hard.

"Wait!" Cronk said to Wally and Oscar. He hustled down the steps. The horses were still in the paddock. He had ten, maybe fifteen minutes.

He headed for the rubbish-can at the foot of the grandstand steps. No dip ever carried a bag or leather far. He found the bag, as he expected, in the can with a newspaper draped around it. Still in it were Wally's precious stack of tipster sheets, cards, newspapers and other dope whereby Wally worked out laboriously that the favorites would win. The fifty-dollar mutuel ticket on Knight Blaze was gone.

Cronk dumped Wally's junk into the can, tucked the bag under his arm and headed out into the paddock. His tongue stuck out between his lips and his creased and yellow face was grimmer than usual. If a special picked him up with that bag—

He made the date palm back of the grandstand. Pip Twine was sitting there, swinging his legs.

"Look, Pip," Cronk said, "has anything gone corny about Tiny's clip-joint?"

Pip opened his deepset eyes. "Don't you never get out o' bed? Tiny was raided last night, with his jack on the tables. What they didn't take they chopped up."

Cronk nodded. "And Tiny's here today pickin' up blow-dough before the dicks handle him."

"Was you still on his string to buy a piece o' that scatter?" Pip asked incredulously.

Lefty Cronk's face was frying. "Me?" He laughed and got away but his face stayed hot. So he was the sucker Tiny was playing that day! Him—and the sailors Lefty Cronk had given him a knockdown to!

"Wrong move," Cronk said.

He knew where Tiny was apt to roost when he had jack on a horse. It was up near the top of the stand off to one end. He stood below and looked carefully. Tiny was there. Tiny stood out like a horse among jocks. He had his glasses on the horses parading in front of the stand.

"All Hands"

By RICHARD HOWELLS WATKINS

Another fine story of sailor-men will appear in an early issue

Lefty Cronk put his fifty-dollar ticket on Candleglow into Wally's bag, skimmed up the stand to the top and edged along past people in the row back of Tiny. He lifted somebody's hat off a seat, sat down and shoved the bathing-suit bag carelessly down under the absorbed Tiny's seat. He looked at his program, ringed a horse, got up in a hurry and raced away like a man with a hunch.

Lower down in the stand Jack Maclaren had joined the glum Wally and Oscar. The horses were around by the chute.

"Look!" said Cronk. "I know who's got your bag."

The sailors got up. They moved together, like cars starting on Biscayne when the light went green. Cronk led them. They saw the bag under Tiny's seat before Tiny saw them.

DOWN on the track the horses broke from the gate. The stand rose with a roar. Wally Howe flung himself past Tiny, to his right side. Oscar stood on his left.

"Come on, Knight Blaze!" Wally bawled and put his keen-pointed elbow into Tiny's ribs.

"Come on, Secret Censor!" Oscar blared. He brought his fist smashing down upon Tiny's back. Tiny yelled, too, but mentioned no horse. Though his voice rose high it was no match for a grandstand full of people with money at stake. And though he was bigger than Oscar it was only as a frankfurter is bigger than a railroad spike. Wally, on the other side, was no less tough than a cut nail, himself.

They thumped Tiny Gonzalez out of the chute with the horses. They pounded him around the first bend.

"Knight Blaze!"

"Secret Censor!"

They hammered him in the backstretch and they smote him all around the long turn into the straight. Tiny Gonzalez had no chance to get the stolen ticket out of his pocket and give up. He was too busy trying to protect himself. On the home-stretch, as jockeys plied their bats, Wally and Oscar, eyes glued to the track, belted Tiny to a finish. They applauded him down to size.

Beside them, Jack Maclaren had picked up the bag and unzipped it. He took out the ticket that was in it, Cronk's ticket on Candleglow, and looked at it with dawning understanding. He drew from his pocket another ticket, also a fifty.

On the track a horse named Upton Tyrone, a bay animal of imposing build, burst into action. He killed off Knight Blaze, moved past Secret Censor and defeated Candleglow's last-minute challenge. He won.

Wally Howe and Oscar sagged. They sagged against Tiny Gonzalez, who had already sagged.

"There's a dog to pay the rent," said Lefty Cronk with dispassionate justice. He took his ticket on Candleglow from Jack and tore it up.

"Yuh!" said Jack. "And you know what give him horsepower." Before the eyes of Wally Howe he withdrew from the bathing-suit bag a fifty-dollar ticket, Number Six, which he had just slipped into it. "Well, I'll be—Wally!" Jack cried. "I thought you'd bet on Knight Blaze. This is for Six—that's Upton Tyrone. You've won! Won on a long-shot!"

"Me?" said Wally. He grabbed the ticket and looked at the number. He was scandalized. "Four, I told that guy at the window—Four! Not Six! He gypped me! Do I look like a guy that would risk an old shipmate's money on a ten-to-one shot? Gypped! An' then robbed! All my dope an' calculations gone!" His indignation mounted. "I'll cash this ticket an' then I'll shove off fast," he said. "They'll be liftin' the anchor off my arm. It's no place for Tex's jack."

He headed down the stand. Oscar followed after one careful look at Tiny Gonzalez, who was spread out in a thin layer over a lot of seats and concrete. Life did not interest him.

Loud enough, Lefty Cronk said: "That guy used to own a clip-joint." Tiny got it. He showed his teeth. Then he closed his eyes.

Jack Maclaren nudged Cronk. "You got that bag back just in time for me to plant the ticket," Jack said. He pulled another ticket out of his pocket. It, too, was a fifty and the number on it was Six. "System, Lefty, system!" he said. "I c'n split with you an' pay off my division, too."

CRONK was stunned. "No split," he said. "I give you a winner like Candleglow was—uh—should ha' been—an' you go one hundred for Upton Tyrone. How come you shoot so big?"

"I just told you," Jack said. "System! Wally an' Oscar take out two horses for me. And then you go for another, havin' told me inside an hour that your bacon never comes home. That leaves three horses. Two o' them had no cruiser sterns. How could I miss?'

He punched Lefty Cronk in the short ribs and pointed down the stand at the retreating figure of Wally Howe, gunner's mate, first class.

"An' speakin' of missing, mate," Jack said, "any time you read in the papers that the Navy's guns are lettin' go in a shootin' war you can figger that one of 'em, anyhow, aint missing. An' because of you."

Lefty Cronk's skeptical countenance shivered, cracked and broke into a silly, kidlike grin.

"Because o' me," he said. "Well, what d'you know?'

A great drama of war in the Pacific skies

By ARCH

CORPORAL PETE COYNE draws his pay regularly as a member of No. 4 Observation Squadron. Most of it used to be squandered in the jitney creeps of Manila for refreshment and visual entertainment. Coyne is one of those dog-wagon warriors, and if No. 4 ever gets out of Corregidor and goes into reserve somewhere in Alaska, the first demand he will make will be: "Gimme a coke an' a hamboiger!"

The war had not made a great deal of difference to Pete Coyne. It had, of course, plummeted him into the unwelcome responsibility of a Blitzkrieg rating; but he had company. The Colonel had been a captain only three weeks before.

Coyne had been massaging the gears of a White half-track when the Japs began dumping five-hundred-pounders into Manila. The boost had provided a little extra pocket lettuce to spend on enlarging his informal education; and the transfer to the gun-turret of one of their few remaining O-47's had provided an opportunity of trying out some of the theories Pete had evolved as the result of a close study of air adventure as it was presented in that classic volume "Aces Wild."

The equipment line-up at Kindley Field was about as impressive as a rube air carnival. What material was left had been dispersed amid the shell-craters and spread out under the *apitong* and abaca palms to prevent the Japs from slugging them.

Corporal Coyne was standing by in the shadow of No. 14's port wing. The heat of the afternoon swept across the jagged chunk of volcanic rock jutting out of the waters of Manila Bay. It came down through the tropical overlay of deep green jungle that quilts Corregidor's gray cliffs, and swirled up the dust of the runway and diffused the metal gleam of the three-place observation planes.

Coyne ignored the discomfort. He squatted on a rigger's tool-chest, his knobby knees locked together, his squirrel eyes devouring the glorious details of a certain Lieutenant Hank Scott's adventure against the Huns somewhere over the Wipers Canal.

"Scott tooled his S.E.5 into position," the author had penned. *"The Fokkers were preparing to slam down on the sluggish Limey crate below. The Harry Tate was cold meat unless Scott got there in time. He rammed the spade-grip forward and stood on*

Bataan Landing

WHITEHOUSE



the rudder-bar as the single-seater dived dead on the gaudy Fokker that led the death-pack below. Scott pressed the button, and his guns yammered—"

"Come on! Come on!" a voice yammered above the crash of *Hank Scott's* guns. "We gotter get ridin'!"

"Sure! Yes sir!" Coyne spluttered, stuffing the book into his back pocket. "Be right there!"

A three-place observation ship can provide more trouble than the eternal triangle. Lieutenant Malcolm Breeze, the pilot, gloried in his post, and his sole idea of winning the war was to shoot at anything and everything. Lieutenant Stacey Sewell, his observer, had been an air-traffic man, and he displayed about as much flexibility of thought and action as one might expect to find in a Pan-Central Air Line timetable. Against these two, fate had stacked Corporal Coyne, a romantic if ever there was one.

"Don't you get enough of this, without gorging on that ancient history?" Breeze snorted.

"It aint so ancient," defended Pete. "That's only the last war. Them guys really did a job!"

"How do you know?"

"It says so, here in the book! Them little scouts sure used to pack it to them Fokkers. That was some war, I guess."

"The way those rags write it up, it sure was! Wait till they get through with this one. You won't recognize it!"

"But this is straight stuff, sir," Corporal Coyne tried to argue.

"Let me tell you something, Coyne," broke in Lieutenant Sewell, lumbering up with his load of operational gear and piling his load under the fuselage stirrup. "There's more phony stuff in that old war dope than you can shake a stick at. I know. I've checked it. None of it checks. You put a slide rule on it, and none of it checks!"

"Slide rule, Lieutenant?" Coyne's face curdled into a dull blotch.

"Those guys diving through Zeppelins!" snorted the observer. "Hitting balloon cables to destroy spotting kites! The one about the gunner who was tossed out of an old D.H.4 and caught again by the pilot before he hit the ground. They can't do it, Coyne! You can't beat facts and figures. No guy ever flew through a dirigible!"

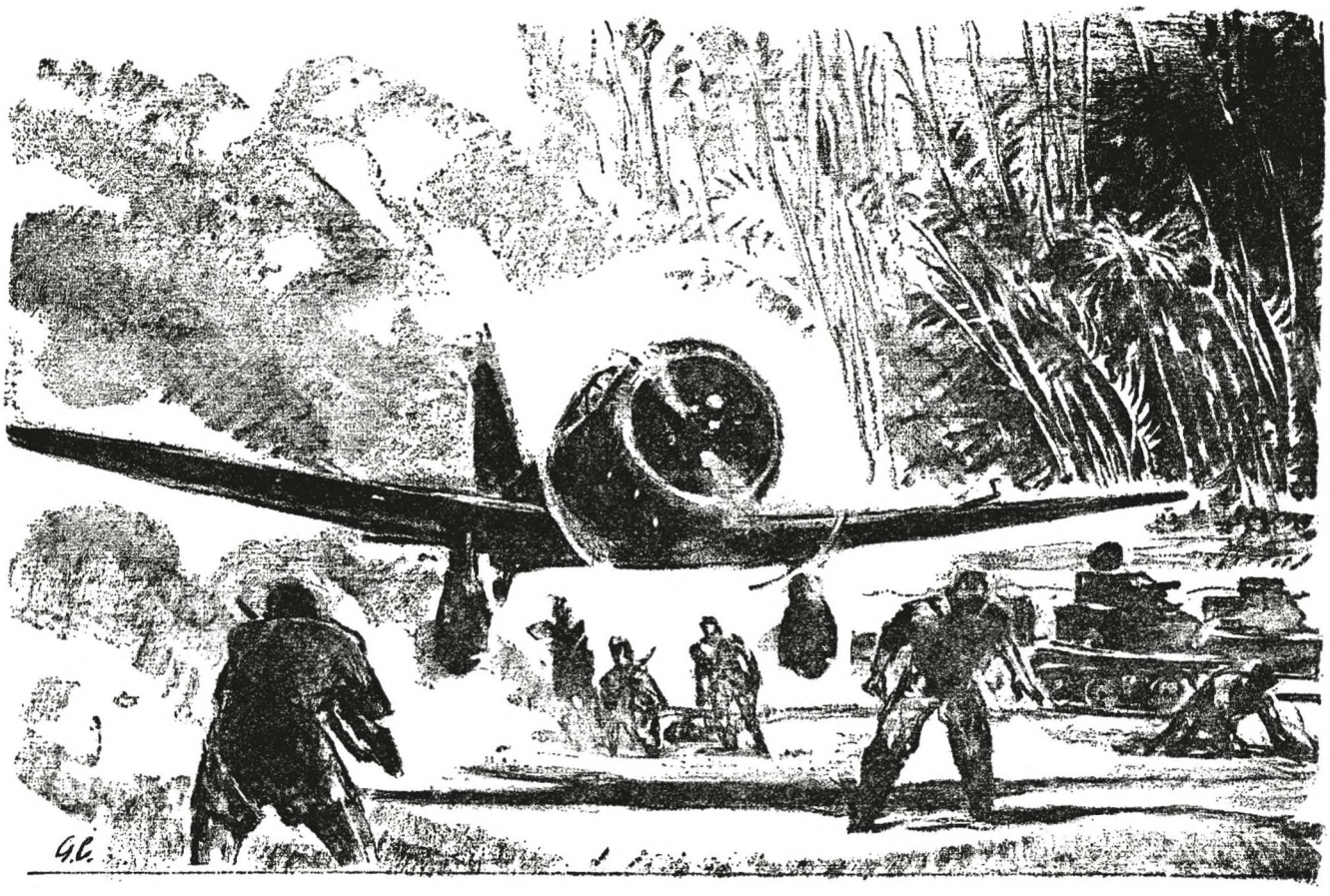
Coyne was in no position to make his superiors appear ignorant. He muffled his protestations with his chinpiece, and snapped the thigh straps of his parachute pack with dull interior rumblings.

"Come on," ranted Breeze. "Let's get on with the war. I got to get me a Mitsubishi. You guys and your arguments!"

"There isn't any argument," proclaimed Sewell. "You can't argue with facts and figures. That's what's wrong with this war. Too many people trying to be heroes, and not enough straight figuring."

"Maybe that's what's wrong with MacArthur," Breeze taunted with a sly grimace.

"The only thing the matter with General MacArthur, is that he's ignorant of certain facts. That's why we're being sent out again. I'm supposed to find out where the Japs have a secret landing-ground. You think of nothing but shooting down planes. Coyne, here, is figuring out how he can become a hero by the standards set in that fool book. I'm the only guy who is acting sane."



"Do the Japs have any dirigibles for us to dive through?" asked Breeze with studied seriousness.

"It isn't the spectacular efforts of the grandstanding few that will win this war," Sewell began with a patronizing air. "Knowledge is power. That's why they train us observers."

"It wouldn't be because you flunked out on primary aerobatics at Randolph, would it?" inquired Breeze.

"Any dope can fly a plane! Even Coyne could be taught that much," growled the observer guy.

"Yeh?" muttered Pete, scrambling up the side of the O-47. "You wait, Mr. Sewell. Lots of swell war pilots began as gunners. There was McCudden, and Bishop—"

NUMBER FOURTEEN creaked as the crew climbed up. Breeze took the forward seat and kicked in the starter. Sewell, all biff and pencils, was accommodated under the D/F ring, where he assumed his air of important business. Coyne had to be content with the ill arrangements aft, where he hoped to provide some measure of defense with a single Browning gun.

The Cyclone engine boomed out and growled at the scream of shells that were coming out of the rifles at Fort Drum and burying their ringed snouts deep in the sands along the Pilar Road.

The Intelligence captain, waving a sheet of paper, came out from the underground quarters, his hairy arms outstretched. Sewell shoved the hatch-cover back and leaned out into the prop-stream while the two-bar guy barked further orders into his earpiece.

"The Colonel thinks maybe you have something on this landing-strip idea. There's a hint of camouflage there. He wants you to get another shot at it from about 2,500 at forty-five degrees."

"Can do!" agreed Sewell with a triumphant gleam.

"We carrying that cockpit camera again?" grumbled Breeze over the radio-panel bulkhead. He gave the Cyclone the octane, and No. 14 rumbled down what was left of Kindley Field. The dust swept up, rolled itself into a huge ball and descended on the .50-caliber Ack-Ack emplacement. Breeze drew her off carefully, swung over into a tight climbing turn that would have netted him twenty gigs at Randolph Field, and brought her out over the garrulous waters of lower Manila Bay.

The 75-mm. guns tucked away in the jungle area of Bataan pumped out a warning bracket on a speck flashing toward Malolos. Pete Coyne studied the signal and began to fidget with the slide-away gun-mounting.

"Take it easy, Von Richthofen!" Sewell sneered. "It's only a Jap Nakajima. She'll stay there as long as those Gyrines keep shooting. I got to get pictures. Never mind you running up a score!"

"Yes sir!" nodded Pete.

"Cut back for the east shore," ordered Sewell over the cockpit communication-set. "We'll work up from there and follow the road across to Olongapo and down again to Bagac."

"What about that guy the Marines are checking up there?"

"Leave him for the fighters. We're getting pictures."

"What fighters?" argued Breeze. "If we dump those guys, the landing-strip won't matter, will it?"

"You been reading a book, too?" snorted Sewell.

The sore thumb of Bataan was blotched with shell-scars. The road along the east shore was barricaded with felled timber. Gashes hacked out of the *apitong* and nipa palm suggested gun positions, and scorched vegetation marked where MacArthur's gunners had fired point blank over open sights into charging waves of Japanese troops as they stormed across the beaches and sought a toe-hold.

Breeze circled south of Pilar and waited until Sewell had caught the strip and semaphore signals, and had charted the new line positions for the squadron map back at Corregidor.

"They're holding on," Sewell muttered. "I don't know how they do it. They were supposed to have been clam-shelled out of there ten days ago."

"Maybe MacArthur aint seen the facts and figures yet," suggested Breeze in a dumb monotone.



"Okay! You have your fun with words, but how about getting some work done?"

"Boy, I wish we were over the Burma Road," Breeze muttered.

He leveled the O-47 off and headed north. He wished Sewell wouldn't be so dramatically patriotic and flaunt his devotion to dumb duty so much. He resented the fact that he should be encumbered with two yard-birds like Sewell and Coyne. Sewell was bad enough, but Coyne was the prize dope of the first pressing. Coyne and his book!

Sewell jerked him out of this train of thought.

"Where you heading? You'll be relieving Singapore unless you snap out of that stupor."

The pilot saw he had passed well beyond Hermosa and was dead over the road that leads northeast to San Fernando. The Jap guns were blasting away again, their dirty-white puff-balls setting up rough Southern Cross insignia four hundred feet below. The thud of concussion blasted all about them, and the sluggish observation plane lurched lackadaisically in the uneven swell and appeared to be stifling a yawn.

"If you shoot straight across, holding a course on the upper end of Subic Bay," suggested Sewell, "I might be able to get a line on that area again."

"All I've seen there is jungle and rocks," Breeze argued. "You couldn't put an open umbrella down in there."

"When you're trained in observation," Sewell taunted, "you learn to put two and two together. You don't have to believe anything until you have proved it to yourself. That's why I'm here."

"You mean to tell me—" Breeze began uncertainly, but Sewell shut him off with further attention to his radio panel.

Breeze started to bridle and then tightened up. "Maybe you're right!" he yelled into his muzzle mike.

Below, he had spotted a gray Karigane two-seater, blotched in against the gaudy verdure of bamboo palm, *guiji* vine and abaca fronds.

The nose of the O-47 went down with a lunge.

Sewell tried to head the pilot off, but he was helpless behind the radio panel. Behind, Coyne began rattling his artillery again, but Sewell slapped him across the shoulders and yelled: "You stay put! Cover our tail. We're being sucked in!"

"This is the way it should be," grinned Coyne. "Just like you read—"

Breeze was high-tailing her down so fast that Pete was unable to punch words out. The slip-stream sabered past the open hatch-cover and sliced his breath away.

The gunner aboard the Karigane saw them in plenty of time. The Jap three-inchers rifled opposition long before Breeze was anywhere within range, and chunks of Kobe shell pelted through the fuselage and cut Wailing Winnies in the skin.

"You damned fool!" Sewell yelled.

Breeze was on his way to glory now, his sight-stick lancing dead at the fish-tailing Karigane, while the Jap gunner poured it back at them.

"Lieutenant Breeze got the right idea." Corporal Coyne reflected.

BREEZE pumped a few short bursts; the tracer streaked across the sky and drew chalky lines between the two war-planes. He held her steady, but there was a damper of air-pressure billowing up from the heated hills, and the O-47 bucked like a stallion. It was like trying to draw a bead from the front seat of a roller-coaster.

The heavy O-47 almost scraped her belly over the Jap's cockpit covers before Breeze sensed he had missed. The Karigane gunner, with visions of an Order of the Rising Sun, Third Class, tossed with his gods and pressed the trigger of his Nambu gun.

The 6.5 slugs stitched a wicked line of perforation along the muck-streaked belly of the O-47. The motor retched and coughed as Breeze drew her out of her headlong plunge. A lifetime of hope and fear was compressed into the next ten seconds.

"What the—" Breeze gurgled, staring about with his mouth open. Sewell finished it for him: "You damned fool! You took all he had—cold! I told you!"

They sat there constricted, and trembled in sympathy with the frantic gasps of the motor. Breeze punched at various adjustments on the Chandler-Groves in a hopeless effort to get her to take it up again. The prop churned over with the sluggish ambition of a dilapidated windmill, and ground up enough loose metal to provide a suitable nerve-shredding accompaniment. Coyne, who had no idea of what had actually happened, reacted normally. Whipping the Browning out again, he blasted off a four-second burst at the Jap two-seater below, and torched her tanks while she was trying to edge around for a front-gun attack.

"That lug was trying to get a burst into us!" Pete bawled, and then realized the adventure was jumping the cogs and getting out of the groove.

In the confined cockpit the three men gripped objects that were most familiar. Coyne blinked and clutched the grips of his Browning. Sewell gripped the ends of his radio panel. His mouth would not form the words he was trying to scream. Breeze clawed at the control column as though he would throttle it for even suggesting there was nothing left.

"We're—going down!" Sewell gasped, the words spurting out of him like chopped steak from a grinder. "We're going down—prisoners!"

Coyne, bewildered and unbalanced, pressed the button of his gun again, and lashed .30-caliber stuff into the jungle below.

"Shut that damn' thing off!"

Pete released the weapon, and it hung disconsolately on the mounting. He sought an answer in the jagged outline of their shadow racing along against the green sea of tropical foliage.

"Stow that thing away!" Sewell yelled. "It'll crack your nut!"

The gunner turned and shoved it away under the fuselage hump. He was turning around, limp and resigned, when she hit.

"Hang on!" Sewell started to yell, and then slammed with a cruel thud against the radio panel. Coyne catapulted forward against the cushion provided by the observer, while the O-47 sliced the tops out of the palms and surged with a scream of metal through her wings and plunged on to smash herself up at the base of a tree.

PETE shook himself free and muttered: "Nice of the Lieutenant to tell me about that gun."

He crawled through the fracture in the hatch and waited for Sewell and Breeze to follow.

"Lieutenant!" he called, his eyes straightening out and sweeping the wreck. "You can't stay there! We gotter get trackin'!"

Coyne tottered about uncertainly and wondered what he was supposed to do next. He sniffed, and caught the tang of gasoline, and an unprecedented sense of duty jetted through him. Sewell's arms came over the edge of the hatch, and Pete caught the painful twists of the hands. The observer's face, a mask of uneven planes and streaked with a fine tracery of scarlet, hooked its chin over the cover slide.

Coyne climbed up again and dragged out a short ax. He cut and slashed with tottering inaccuracy until he had a gash in the side through which he helped Sewell to crawl. The observer got to his feet and stumbled drunkenly to a curved palm trunk and leaned there, his arms at grotesque angles.

"Both arms—when I braced against the panel," he babbled while he slithered down the palm butt and rolled over.

"You stay there, sir," Pete suggested dubiously. "Wait till I get Lieutenant Breeze out."

From the jagged wing-root the gunner hacked until he had gouged out another panel. The pilot was slumped over, his arms swinging somewhere between his splayed knees.

"You sure stopped som'pin, eh, Lieutenant?" Pete wailed.

He dragged Breeze into the clear, scrambling through the *nipa* and fern until he had him on his back beside Sewell. There was a deep grinning gash across the pilot's forehead, and blood drooled across the undulations of his face.

Pete loosened the chin-piece of the helmet and returned for the first-aid kit in the observer's locker. He fumbled and daubed bluntly with the gauze pads that came out of the sealed cans. He bound the wads into place with bandage, then dragged Breeze's earflaps down and strapped them.

He stripped off his coverall and parachute harness, tossed them aimlessly toward the wreck and turned his attention to Sewell. Sympathetic reasoning and latent perspicacity dictated his efforts to help the observer. He placed his lower arms together, the gloved fists cupping the elbows, and bound them with what was left in the first-aid can. Strips of fabric ripped from the rudder completed a bulky but satisfactory support.

"The Lieutenant says you can't do it," he muttered, "but *Lieutenant Scott* did it."



"The Colonel wants you to get another shot at this landing-strip."

Pete stared about. Breeze was snorting unintelligibly and trying to get up.

"Take it easy, Lieutenant. You got nuttin' to worry about."

Breeze struggled to one elbow: "That you—Coyne?" he asked thickly. "Where's Sewell?"

"Right there, alongside you."

Pete watched with tortured eyes while Breeze peered about.

"Where are you, Coyne?"

"Jees! I'm right here! Kneelin' right in front of you."

The bandaged head came up again and stopped, its sponson of gauze trained on the gunner: "But—I can't see you—either of you. I can't see anything!"

"Maybe you got a lot of blood in your eyes."

"It—it aint blood. I'm blind—blind! I can't see a thing! Holy God!"

Sewell drew his legs up and tried to peer into Breeze's face.

"You got a smack across the head, sir," Pete whimpered. "Maybe it's only just for now. Maybe you got such a headache you can't see, eh?"

"Where are we?" Breeze appealed in a half whisper.

Coyne dropped to his knees again and crawled forward. He wondered if Breeze was really blind. He waited, watching intently, then turned slowly toward Sewell. The observer was hunched up, his eyes confirming the fear that was beating a trip-hammer warning in Coyne's chest. Pete saw Sewell nod, and he lurched forward suddenly and snatched Breeze's automatic from the hip holster.

"Where are we, Coyne?" Breeze began again. Then he sensed what was happening. "Damn you, Coyne! Come back with that gun!"

Pete rolled away, hugging the big automatic to his belly.

"Why don't you shut up, Breeze?" Sewell hissed through his puffed lips. "The guy's just trying to make you comfortable."

Breeze lay splayed out on the tangled foliage, staring with sightless eyes at the marquee of palm-fronds that swayed gently in the tropical breeze.

"Thanks. . . . Thanks, Sewell," he sobbed. "Good scout, that guy, Coyne, eh? You all right?"

"Sure! I'm swell!"

Half an hour later Breeze struggled to a sitting position. Sewell had stayed hunched at the butt of the big palm whence he had been watching. "Take it easy," he muttered quietly.

"Where's Coyne?"

"I don't know. He went off scouting around to see where we are. He'll be back. Thinks he knows this area. Says he drove a half-track on maneuvers around here last summer."

"The dopey guy might get away with it yet," Breeze said tonelessly. "God, I wish I could see!"

"Don't worry—you will. You got a smack that gave you an anemic reaction as the result of the loss of blood. It's just temporary, I think," Sewell said slowly and with thought.

"Jees! Old facts and figures again! I hope you're right—for once!"

"They got a lot of that in the other war—temporary blindness," said Sewell.

"You got it figured out now that no one got really blinded, eh?"

"Listen! Here he comes," Sewell warned. "Someone, anyway."

A sweaty figure emerged from the tangle of vines that walled them in. Coyne appeared, panting and beaming: "You wuz right, Lieutenant!" he jetted at Sewell. "They got a strip back there—about a quarter of a mile. Planes and trucks lined up. It's blocked out with curtain camouflage."

"I aint gonner lay here and rot in this jungle," Breeze growled, sitting up.

"We can get there in half an hour," Coyne continued. "It will be almost dark then. We can torch this wreck, and they'll all come to find out where we hit."

"Where the devil did you read that?" demanded Sewell.

"That's the book again, and maybe the guy has something."

Pete helped them to their feet with rough enthusiasm: "We should burn her, anyway, shouldn't we?" he suggested, fingering for a match.

He crossed to the tangle of fuselage, tore open his parachute pack and stuffed the billowing wad of silk inside the pilot's cockpit. He applied the match and stepped back to watch the flames lick up and eat away the fuel-lines that fed the carburetor.

"I don't know why he doesn't have an idea of sticking the wings on again and sling-shotting us off a bamboo tree," Sewell muttered as the flames roared up.

"You wait. I'll bet he's got an idea that has that one beat a mile," Breeze husked, swaying drunkenly.

"You better keep your packs, eh?" Pete suggested, coming up and taking their arms. "They'll be nice for you to sit on, if we get a lift."

HOT glare from the burning observation plane threw a gaudy orange-tinted canopy at the sky as they made their way through the spiny thicket. Coyne hacked a path and helped them along. The observer guy walked wide-legged, stumbling now and then, but he plunged on after the encouraging chatter of Coyne, who was dragging Breeze through the jungle ahead.

"It's only a little way now, Lieutenant," Coyne said, steadying the blind pilot. "Listen! You can hear them scrambling through over there toward the fire. You still got that headache, Lieutenant?"



"I got one that will last for fifty years, I bet," Breeze mumbled, his head bent over.

"Maybe we can git some aspirin."

The route was tortuous and winding, and it seemed an hour before they came into a clearing. Breeze could hear the metallic activity, and Sewell could see what he had long suspected: The landing-strip had been cut through the sparse area of vegetation, and from a series of bamboo poles set along the sides dangled shallow curtains of net and light cloth on which tufts of dry grass, palm leaves and sprays of ferns had been laced.

"Baby! They can keep pounding our guys for twenty-four hours a day, from this hole!" Sewell ground out.

On one side was a collection of trucks, fuel-wagons and light tanks. On the near side, their tails drawn into hacked-out dispersal areas, stood several indistinct planes. Vague figures moved in and out of the flickering lights from small portable tanks.

"What are we waiting for?" whispered Breeze.

"I remember this spot," Coyne added. "We used it for a transport park. Maybe we could swipe a truck."

"That's out," Sewell said from a shadow. "There's no road out of here going south."

"That's what I was going to say, sir. The only way out—"

"Here we go," moaned Sewell.

"What's he got to lose?" demanded Breeze, moving about aimlessly. "I'm willing to go with the guy!"

"Who's going to fly it?" Sewell argued uncertainly. "You—well, you can't see right now, and I got two busted arms. Coyne can't fly!"

"Two busted arms?" Breeze said, sucking in his breath. "You said you were— Then Coyne *has* to—"

"Listen! They're running one up—right down our alley," whispered Pete. "Maybe if we got aboard, Lieutenant Breeze could get it off—blind; an' we could tell him where to head it."

"Sure!" Breeze added. "All we got to do is get it into the air. We can pile it up anywhere on the other side."

The enthusiasm of illogical thinking beat down any sane view of the situation. It was obvious, for one thing, that the blazing observation plane had drawn many of the ground crew from their posts. Sewell followed Breeze and Coyne through the shadows, uncertain, but unwilling to be left behind.

"It's one of their Kariganes, sir," Pete confided in the man he was leading. "We can all get aboard, eh?"

"Be a tight squeeze. Which way is she headed?"

"Across the runway. If we can get those Japs out of the way, it will be easy."

"How many guys around her?"

"I can only see two. One in the cockpit, running her up."

"Okay. You get those guys out of there. We'll stay here."

Coyne took Breeze's automatic out of his shirt and crept away.

THE first Jap was easy. He was bending over the tail, holding her down while the mechanic in the cockpit tested the A.14 motor. A solid smack with the gun-butt brought him to his knees and he rolled over with a grunt.

"An' *stay* there!" Pete growled, dragging him clear.

He moved like a cat to the wing-root and climbed up. The puzzled Jap mechanic stared into Pete's gun-tunnel and started to shut off the motor. "No! . . . No! Let her rumble," ordered Coyne. "You just get out and give *me* a hand."

Exaggerated gestures with the gun interpreted his meaning clearly. The Jap, now a suety gray, climbed down, stumbled off the wing-root in feverish haste, but Coyne collared him and rammed him toward the tail.

"Lift!" he explained with his hands. "You lift while I push—*compree?*"

"Take my arm," whispered Sewell. "Grab me under the arm-pit—easy. That mug is going to get away with this."

"All the facts and figures are against it, aint they?" Breeze said with a smirk in his voice. "If only I could see!"

Coyne had the Karigane out and turned around when Sewell and

Breeze reached the wing-tip. The pilot felt his way along the trailing edge, and was clambering up when another businesslike *thock* thudded somewhere in the darkness.

"An' *stay* there!" Coyne repeated as the Jap mechanic corkscrewed to the ground.

He came up to the fuselage, grinning: "I guess Lieutenant Sewell had better take the back seat. I'll stand between you—somehow. Get in, sir! The throttle's on the left, just like ours. You're headed straight down the runway!"

Breeze fumbled about but his hands instinctively found the control column and the throttle. His feet slid forward and found the rudder pedals and he waggled them experimentally.

"She'll fly like a Mack truck!" he growled.

"Get going, Lieutenant! Get going! Here comes a mob over from them trucks. You're dead-center down the runway!"

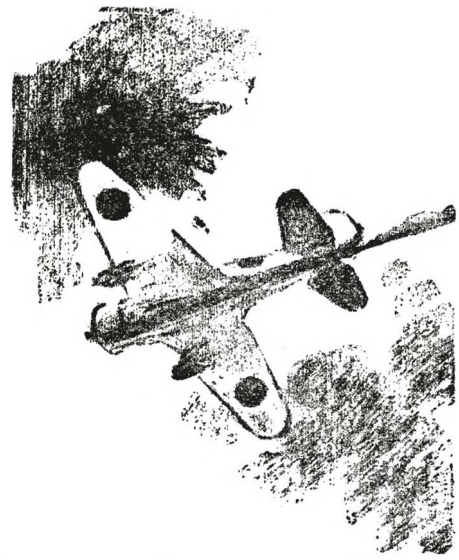
"Hey! Wait a minute!" Sewell yelled, trying to lean forward. "How the hell we going to get this thing down again?"

"You can step out, if you like," Breeze growled.

"Sure! We can, but Coyne—"

The rest was drowned out when Breeze eased the throttle up the gate. The eight-hundred-horsepower radial picked it up smartly, and she began to rumble down the runway.

"Steady, Lieutenant!" instructed Pete. "You're bearing a bit right—and don't take her off too soon, or



you'll hit the curtain camouflage. Left, sir—*left!*"

"Just like a Mack truck!" Breeze growled over his chin-piece.

"*Left,* sir! You're gonner take her wing-tip off!"

Breeze rammed his buttocks down hard and pressed the left rudder. She was trying to clear by herself now. He eased the column forward and felt the wheels thump off the uneven track. Her tail was up, and she answered the rudder reasonably fast.

"Good! Hold her now, sir! Hold her down. We got a few more yards to clear."

"Listen to me, you dopes!" Sewell was yelling behind Coyne's back. "How we going to get down?"

"Take her away, sir! Take her! You're in the clear!"

Pete turned with triumph to yell at Sewell, who was jabbing him with is knee: "We got away! Wid a enemy plane—an' escaped!"

Sewell glared at him with frank disgust: "Sure! We stole an enemy plane. Now figure out how you're gonner get it down again! I get two broken legs now, I suppose!"

Breeze took the Karigane over the palm barrier with amazing ease. A trickle of tracer crept up from the area where the transport had been parked. Ahead over the knobby nose of Santa Rosa crater the Bataan line was jeweled with serried gashes of gunfire and the sparkle of signal rockets.

Coyne squatted behind the bucket seat that encased Breeze's back and peered forward for the outline of Mt. Bataan. A welter of disjointed thoughts doused the first warm blaze of enthusiasm of having effected an escape.

"You're heading straight down the peninsula, sir," he advised Breeze. "We should be getting some of our own fire soon."

Breeze nodded with resignation: "Can't be helped. Keep me well clear of that crater and then turn me right, so that we go past Bataan and out to sea. I'll circle that, and approach Corregidor from the west. That should evade a lot of it—until we get in."

"Sure! Then once you get over the island, you and Lieutenant Sewell can take to the silk. I'll stay and see if I can get her down."

"You're nuts! You'd splatter yourself all over the island!"

"What are we gonner do?" yelled the trussed-up Sewell from the rear.

"You got about fifteen miles to figure it out," barked Breeze. "Two of us have 'chutes, and one guy burned his up. I might be able to set this thing down if Coyne could read the instruments for me."

"Some are in American and some in Japanese," Pete said after a glance over the instrument panel. "Turn sharp right now, sir!"

"Ninety degrees?"

"Sharp right—I don't know how many. . . . There! Now get her straight again. You'll soon be through the two peaks."

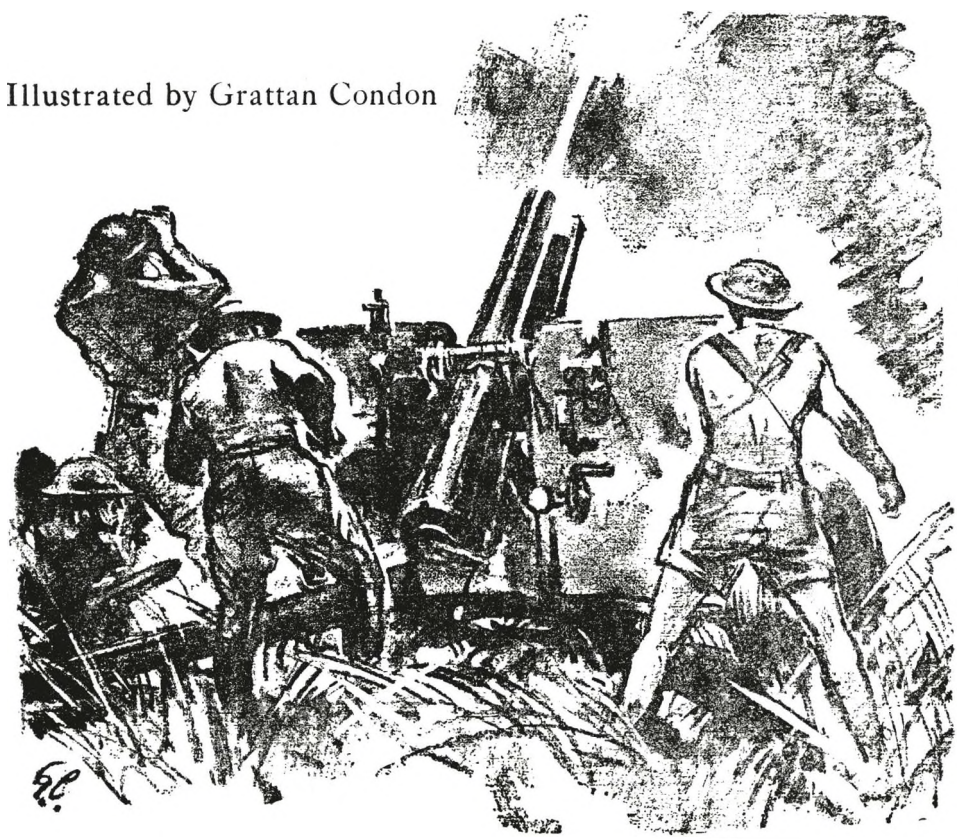
"You're through," Sewell said, breaking in again. "Now turn left—ninety, and you'll be heading south down the beach. The island is just around the bend."

"Where are the flaps, Coyne?" Breeze asked after another five minutes of flight. "We should be somewhere by now."

The gunner leaned over and felt around below the blind pilot's knees: "They's a hand-wheel on this side, sir."

"Oke! I'll give her a twist or two and see what happens."

Illustrated by Grattan Condon



The wheel proved to be the flap-control and the Karigane snubbed into a slower speed on the brake pressure. Breeze drew the throttle back until the engine was only just ticking over.

"You're only about four miles away now, Lieutenant," Pete almost whispered over Breeze's shoulder.

"Oke! Keep me dead on. When we get within a quarter of a mile of the western end, let me know and I'll run across Kindley and we'll see what happens."

The Corregidor searchlights blazed out and fingered into the cumulus.

"What's that?" Breeze said suddenly, sitting upright.

A shell arced up from the island fortress and spoke its wrath fifty feet below their port wing-tip.

"That's our guns, sir. They got the searchlights out too," Pete explained, huddling behind Breeze's shoulder. Sewell edged forward and tried to see around Coyne. He felt himself relax, and sensed that Coyne *was* going to get away with something.

The Karigane slipped into the long glide with sluggish movements of the wing-tips. Another searchlight slapped out from Fort Drum and bathed the Jap plane in swabs of garish silver. The three-inchers from Fort Hughes spanked the course with convulsive gashes in the backdrop of the night.

"I wouldn't waste too much time here," Sewell blatted. "You'd better hit the channel between Corregidor and Caballo. If you make a 120-degree turn to the left there, you'll be heading straight down the long runway. . . . If we make it."

For some reason Breeze didn't answer.

"I got it figured out, Lieutenant!" Coyne rattled. "We're at fourteen hunnerd, over the channel, now. You bring her around, like he said, an' I'll try to help you in!"

"Sure! Any dope can fly a plane. They almost taught Sewell once!" Breeze answered. "When we get around and headed for the runway, you lean over, Pete, and put your hand on mine. I'll fly her by the seat of my pants, and you can ease her off when we look like we're gonner sock the wheels down."

Coyne beamed: "I'll bet you I—we, can get her down!"

"I'll bet you can," muttered Sewell with a numb grin.

"Don't let me slow her up to less than seventy. I don't want to spin her in!"

Breeze sat steady, his head held in the unnatural tension of a blind man, but under his wad of bandage he was smiling: "Are we still dead on, Coyne?"

"Dead on, Lieutenant. Hold her there."

"You put your hand on top of mine. . . . She's yours, Corp."

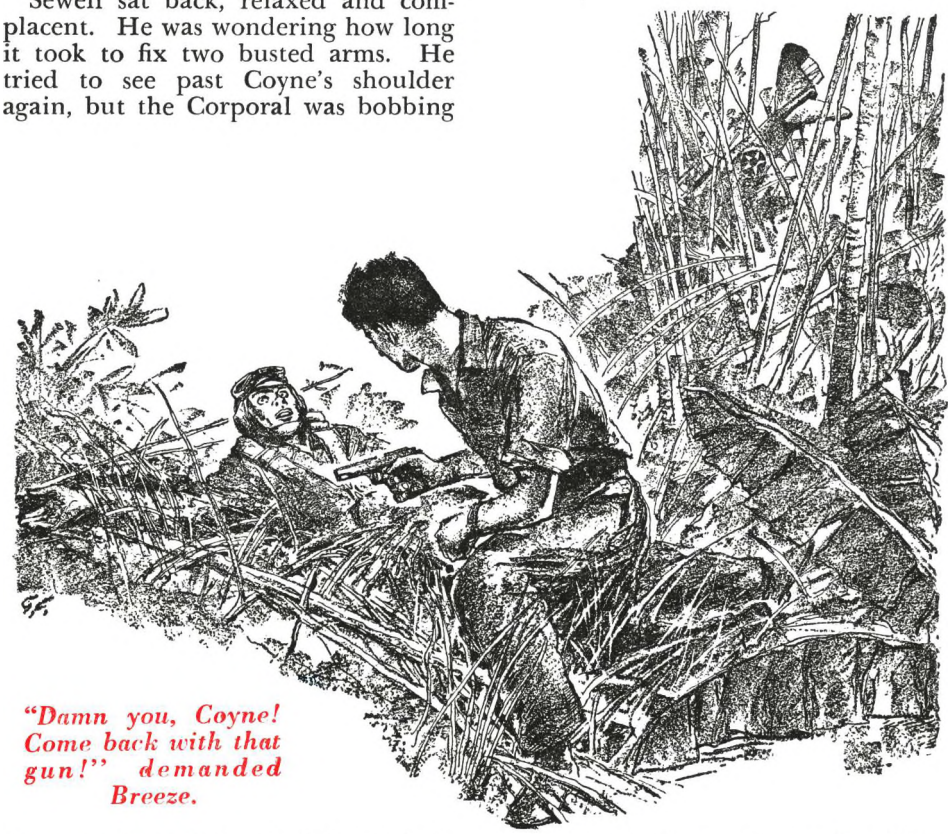
The guns from Corregidor blasted at them with furious ambition while the searchlights crisscrossed and attempted to snip them in two with their great silver blades. Coyne hugged close to the pilot's shoulder and breathed the lateral directions.

"Right, gently. We're dead over the shore-line now, sir. Keep her there, gently. The runway is dead ahead."

"Air-speed, Coyne? What's our air speed?"

"Er—seventy-four. Seventy-four. Left—just a trifle!"

Sewell sat back, relaxed and complacent. He was wondering how long it took to fix two busted arms. He tried to see past Coyne's shoulder again, but the Corporal was bobbing about and peering out of the cockpit windows.



"Damn you, Coyne! Come back with that gun!" demanded Breeze.

"Down to sixty-eight, sir! Sixty-eight and just skipping the main hangar. They aint shooting now. Just looking up at us. Them dumb Gyrines!"

"Right! Take it, Coyne," ordered Breeze quietly. "Keep your hand on mine and ease her back—*ease* her back; when you see the runway racing under the leading edge. . . . Take it, Coyne!"

The Corporal wound his left arm around Breeze's chest, his right hand on top of the pilot's gloved fist, jerked and pump-handled the control, but somehow the pilot steadied him. The Karigane ballooned off the pressure set up between the wing and the runway, and Breeze eased her back.

"Now! . . . *Now*, sir!" gushed Coyne. "We're practically—"

The stick went back gently at the right instant, and her tail wheel touched, levering the front wheels down. The Karigane bounced once, and tried to ground-loop, but Breeze caught her with an aileron and a punch of rudder. She scraped to a stop.

"Nice flying, Coyne!" said Breeze quietly. "I'll try to turn her and get her back to the hangar. You check me!"

It took fully fifteen minutes to explain everything to the ground crew and get Breeze and Sewell off to the hospital bay. The medical officer kept saying: "It's nothing serious. Temporary blindness caused by the loss of blood and shock. Affects the optic nerves. Form of anemia which breaks down the blood-picture. He'll be all right!"

Sewell turned on his cot and glanced at Breeze, who was flat on his back. The M.O. had gone out to do a check on Coyne.

"Nice going, Breeze," Sewell said quietly.

The pilot guy turned over slowly, and winked: "When did you catch on?" he asked.

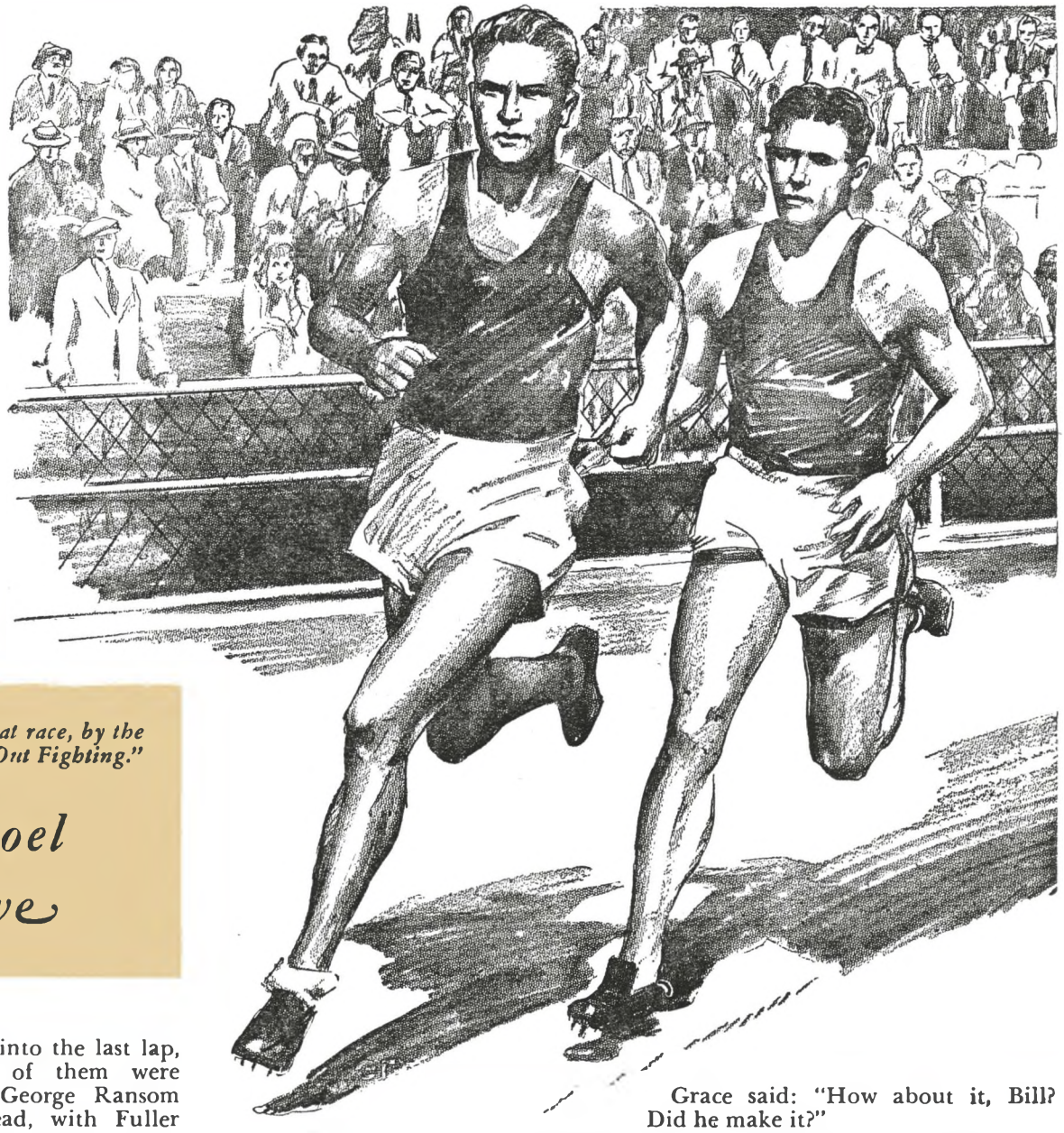
"When you jerked, at that searchlight. I don't think Coyne knows, though. He thinks *he* landed that plane."

"Good. Don't ever tell him, will you? He did me a very good turn, back there."

"When he swiped your gun?"

"Yeh! I was pretty low then. I guess I did a job for him, eh?"

"Guys like Coyne," Sewell observed, "win wars, but they never know it—because of guys like you."



The story of a great race, by the author of "Come Out Fighting."

by Joel Reeve

THEY came into the last lap, and three of them were bunched. George Ransom held his lead, with Fuller right behind him. The Garden crowd was in an uproar. Everyone knew the record was threatened. Grace Murry squeezed my arm until it hurt. Mickey Platt uncorked his kick.

Mickey was wide and short, and his legs were full of bunchy muscles. His feet were too small, and he ran at an angle of almost twenty, instead of fifteen, or even ten like other milers. But he was coming up.

Grace said: "It's fast, Bill. It's very fast."

Her voice was controlled. Only her clutching fingers on my sleeve gave her away.

I said: "It's terrific. Look!"

George Ransom ran like a photographic plate out of a form-book on mile racing. Fuller faded at the turn, and Mickey came around. George never looked back, never deviated from that effortless, space-eating stride which had always been his, before I coached him at Eastern, even.

Mickey's head went down; his knees came higher. Where he got the strength was a miracle. He threw all of his compact body into every step. He hung on, roaring down the stretch.

George would not sprint, because he ran his races exactly right. His pace was perfect, and he would finish with nothing left, because he was a born miler, as everyone and his brother well knew. George could have written the book.

Mickey's face, square, black-browed, was plain to our vision. He bent forward, atrociously, and began sawing with his arms as though he was fighting the air before him. George sped lightly over the boards, but Mickey pounded into them.

They were down at the tape. Mickey broke. He broke forward, in that gigantic unorthodox leap. He hit the tape with his burly chest. He fell down and rolled over and over, picking up splinters.

I snapped the watch as close as I could. People were waiting with bated breath, scenting that record.

Grace said: "How about it, Bill? Did he make it?"

I took a quick look. I had 4:04, and my watch ran on the nose. I said: "Near as I can tell, Grace."

Her face was alight with pleasure. She was better-looking than when she had been a co-ed and first in love with George Ransom. She was dark, and her hair was smoky under the little tilted hat, and her lips were red and full. She said:

"He earned it. He's worked so hard —since that day—at the Relays—"

I said: "He's all right."

George looked up and pointed to Mickey, waving applause at us. We clapped, and Mickey accepted a cloth from an official to wipe the blood from his legs where the splinters had got him.

Grace said: "He's not all right."

I looked at her, and knew she was telling the truth. But there was nothing anyone could do about it; and Mickey was a lot better than he might have been.

Let me go back a bit. . . . In 1934 there was no war, and the world was



Illustrated by
Frederic Anderson

That Mickey!
—and That George

fairly simple at Eastern University. True, they had cut the track-team budget, but I had hopes of building it into something decent so that they would be forced to recognize us and give us a chance to develop some good men. There was a kid from Exeter named George Ransom who was touted as a great miler. I went over to the freshman field and found him.

There was no doubt about George's class. He was a fine-looking youth, on the slim side, a ghost-runner. He was always smiling.

While I was getting acquainted with George, this other boy came up. He was squat and heavy, and he had a way of looking at you, direct, his black eyes wide and unblinking. He planted his feet apart and stood there, sneering.

George said: "Coach, this is Mickey Platt. He's a miler too."

I asked: "Where are you from, Mickey?"

"The same place this big shot is from," said Mickey. He had a harsh, abrupt way of speaking. "Only from the other side of town. Downhill."

I let it go, for I did not understand. I said: "What's your time, Mickey?"

He growled: "It's no good. But it will be. I'm going to be the best before I'm through."

"You're pretty cocky," said I.

"I'm cocky enough and I'm tough enough," Mickey asserted. "You can spoon around with Sissy-britches Ransom now, but before I'm through here, you'll be looking for Mickey Platt to get those points."

He stalked away. I said: "Why, the fresh little tramp! I'll—"

George said earnestly: "He's tough. But he's got something on the ball, at that. Let me tell you about him."

IT seemed they both came from a Pennsylvania town back in the hills. George's father owned the bank, and Mickey sprang from railroad people, They went to high school together, until George's father took him out and sent him to Exeter for senior year. George said:

"I didn't want to go. We had a football team at high school, and I was the scat back. Mickey blocked. When I left, the team didn't go so well. Mickey's mad about it."

I said: "He better keep his mad to himself. I'm out to build up track. I don't want any rebels tearing it down with internecine strife."

George said: "Mickey's all right."

Mickey was not all right. He hated George all during freshman year, through sophomore year, even before Grace Murry entered Eastern. George became the foremost collegiate miler in the country. Mickey never ran a race under 4:12 until he was a senior.

That Mickey ran at all, was a miracle. He was a hard man to shave, that one. I tried everything to make him do the proper things, to point his feet forward, to flex his arms correctly, incline his body at a proper angle, to focus his eyes about ten yards ahead of him on the track. Even these fundamentals he would not accept.

But he got places. And after a year or two of battling with me, he took orders. He made pace for George. He ran inexperienced men into the ground, setting them up for George.

He would say: "No! I won't do it. That panty-waist gets all the breaks. Why should I go out there and stooge for him?"

Then he would do exactly as I told him. George set a flock of records junior year, and was ready to carry a vet-

eran track-squad to heights in his last season. They made him captain, of course. There was only one vote against him.

Then Grace came, and George went for her like a ton of brick, and Mickey went even harder, because that was Mickey's way—all out, for everything. Grace and George were like cream and coffee, sugar and spice. They were a natural team from the gun, and that left Mickey flat.

I remember a dance, in the gym. George and Grace were dancing, graceful as a pair of sprinters. They got around a couple of times, her dark head just under his chin, drifting in slow time. Mickey went past without seeing me in the shadows, and cut in.

On the floor, Mickey reverted to type. As a dancer he was a fine blocking back. He plowed his way. He held Grace as though she were the ball, and took it through there. I was not amazed when they left the floor and walked out on the terrace. I chuckled to myself in the corner. George was stuck with Mary Regal, who was not cute, and nobody would cut in on him. George took it gracefully, but I could see he was concerned, watching Mickey and Grace go out.

Their voices came clearly to me, after a moment. I suppose I should have moved into the light; but when you are coaching, you get so you want to know everything about your men. It's not curiosity; it's real interest, and more than that; it can be valuable when you are in a spot. So I eavesdropped, and you can sue me.

Mickey was savage: "I've got to tell you. You understand that. I've got to."

"I understand you," said Grace softly. "But I wish you wouldn't tell me."

He plunged right on, like a truck running wild downhill. "That's not my way. I love you. I've always loved you. I haven't a dime, nor a prospect when I'm through here. My brother is paying my way. I'm a pauper. But I love you."

She said: "Well—so you've said it."

"You love George!" It was an accusation.

"Yes," said Grace. "It seems that I do."

Mickey said: "He wins my races. He steals my girl."

"That's ridiculous," said Grace. "I was never your girl."

"In my imagination you were," said Mickey. "You know what that means, don't you? That's the thing about it. You're the only one who can understand that."

Grace said: "Yes, Mickey. But you're not so complex. There will be others who understand."

Mickey still sounded hard and angry. "How am I going to run a fast mile? I keep trying it for you, every time out. I clocked myself secretly yesterday. I clipped 4:09. That's faster than I ever believed I could run a mile, Grace."

"If you'd listen to Bill Cannon, if you'd conform—" she said eagerly. "George would be glad to help—"

"George!" He could put it all into just calling that name. "George! You think I want anything from him? You think I'd take anything from him? He's a quitter! He's a front-runner! That's what kills me. You love a man like that!"

Grace's voice got hard and cold. "You can't ever be wrong, can you, Mickey? You've got to be right, and everyone else must be wrong. You'll never be happy that way, my friend. And furthermore—you'll never run a record mile!"

SHE left him, going back to George, in the gym. Mickey reeled around the corner and rammed into me. He stared; his jaw jutted. He said:

"You got your big nose into it, huh? You're all in on it. A bunch of rats."

So I took him behind the gym. Mickey was a slugger and all that, but I boxed him. After it was over and I had mended his cuts, he said:

"I'll fight you again tomorrow. I'll fight you every day. You won't always be able to lick me."

I said: "Look! I'll teach you to box and save time and trouble for us."

Mickey looked at me out of his one good eye. He said: "You'll what?"

I said: "You've got a lot to learn. What difference does it make whether you can lick me? You were sore because Grace told you the truth, so you swung on me. Now that it's over, why don't you use your head?"

He said, "You'd teach me?"

"I want you to run. I want us to win the Relays," I said. "If licking me will make you happy, I'll fix that too."

Mickey said: "We can't win the Relays. The Coast teams always win the Relays."

I said: "Mickey, you're dim. But you've got fight. If our field events come out all right, we have a chance."

I showed him a piece of paper with the possibilities figured on it. Mickey looked at it for a long while. Then he said: "I get it. Say! This would put you in clover, wouldn't it? The Relays!"

"It would be nice for the team, and the school too," I reminded him.

"Yeah," he said, "and for George."

But we were friends after that. He continued to hate George, but he came to me with things, and he even tried to learn a little about running. He was strong, never forget that. He had no form and he spent himself recklessly, but he had the grit and the stamina.

Just before the Relays I sprung it on the whole team. I told them we had a chance, the first time in years that any other than a West Coast team could win. They took it like veterans. I called George into my office and went into it with him.

George's sensitive features lit up like a beacon, and finally he exclaimed:

"It could come down to the mile. They always run the mile off late. It could all come down to Mickey and me!"

I said: "It all probably will. If you win and Mickey is third, it can be done."

"Mickey third!" he said. "In the Relays?"

"It's a fast field," I said, "but Mickey's doing better than 4:10 right now."

George said: "If we run together, I might give him a pull. If he can beat Corbin—I'll beat Fuller, I hope!"

He was so excited his lips were dry. He kept moistening them with the tip of his tongue. He was, of course, a high-strung lad. I patted him on the shoulder and sent him off to keep his date with Grace. He was the finest boy I ever coached.

At the Relays it worked like a mouse. Our field men surprised the shirts off the Westerners. We stuck in points in the sprints and the short runs. When the mile run was due on the card, it was California or Eastern, and the ticket could be written off the finish-line of that race.

Grace had a seat near the runway. George and Mickey were warmed up and waiting, listening to me. I said:

"Mickey, you take Corbin. Just choose him and beat him in there. Winning is up to George. If you can beat Corbin, we're in."

"I can win this race," Mickey blurted. "Why should I run for third? I can take it, I tell you. I feel like a million."

"Sure, I know," I said. "If you can beat Corbin, I will be very happy. George—you'd better go over and talk to Grace and relax. You look tightened up, son!"

George took a deep breath. His hands were clenched. He walked over toward Grace, and his step was a bit unsteady.

I stared, unbelieving, watching him.

Mickey said: "Hey! Your hero's locked up!"

"Shut up!" I said. I followed George. When I came up, Grace was shaking her head and laughing, but I could see the worriment in her.

She said: "You'll be all right in there when the gun goes off. Bill knows you'll be all right."

George saw me and swallowed. Then he said: "Bill, I'm scared. It means so much. I never ran a race with the team and the school and your job and everything depending on it."

He was honest. He was telling me the truth. George Ransom was the gamest kid I ever knew, but that time



Grace stared after them. She said: "That Mickey!"

he was frightened. His delicately adjusted nervous system had gone awry. His teeth chattered. He was about as ready to run that mile as I was.

Grace said: "You'll be fine, George. Just un-lax, chum. You always come through, don't you?"

She tried to make it a joke, but it was pitiful. The two of them stared miserably at one another. I hesitated. I did not know for the moment which course to pursue.

Gentle, high-strung boys like George must be handled just so. You can't over-sympathize with them. On the other hand, you can't suddenly start bawling at them. From me, George was used to gentle treatment. But Grace could give him all of that he needed.

Grace was saying: "You can't let Bill down. You know you'll be all right out there." She was not remonstrating with him. She was giving all of herself to rebuilding his confidence. You could see it pouring out of her, enveloping George, striving to help him. "You can do it, chum! You've run faster miles than Fuller. You've just *got* to do it, chum!"

It was not doing any good. George looked as if he was about to weep. He had run into a queer psychological cul-de-sac. I'd seen it before, in lesser men. It was something he might not be able to throw off. I started to speak, but a voice from behind said:

"Look, Coach. I mean it, this time."

It was Mickey. He was speaking to me, but he was looking at Grace. I knew then that he had been watching her, that he had recognized her part in the situation. He could see what she was trying to do; he could see she was failing. He went on:

"All right, George is the champion. I'm going to run him into the ground. This is my last race for Eastern too. I'm not playing guinea pig. I'm telling you now."

He did not yell, nor make faces. He was deadly serious. George turned, his nerves taut. He said: "You'll take orders, damn you!"

"You can't make me," said Mickey in that cold voice. "So far as I'm concerned, you're on your own. And I'm going to show you something, panty-waist. I promise it!"

George almost screamed: "You can't do that! You'll boot it all over the lot! Corbin and Fuller will—"

Mickey said: "What are you shriekin' about? Have you lost your nerve? Or are you afraid I'll beat you?"

George said: "I'll punch you on—"

A voice through the loud-speaker called: "All out for the mile run!"

I grabbed George. I said: "Later. Right now you've got a race to run."

I shoved him toward the starting-line. He left at a dog-trot, arguing with Mickey every step of the way. They lined up still arguing, under their breaths.

Grace said: "That Mickey!"

"Yes," I agreed. "That Mickey! And that George!"

THEN I went over into the enclosure with my glasses, and ran a thousand miles in my head while my pair of temperamentals ran one.

I knew how Fuller and Corbin would run. They were an experienced team. They would protect each other, box off anyone who tried to go around them until the field leveled out. They would stick together, figuring to finish one-two and sew up the meet.

It was a bunched start, with Mansky, from Rutgers, setting the early pace. Fuller and Corbin broke right up in front, running neck and neck, Fuller in the lead.

I watched George. He was back in the ruck. He was pressing, fighting himself, and his stride was not fluent. He was as tight as a drum.

Mickey was at George's heels. He stayed there, and I could see his lips move. He was still talking to George. They did a lap like that, with George straining and getting no place, and Mickey giving out with conversation.

Mansky, Fuller and Corbin picked up the pace. The others began to string out, as they do in the mile. George and Mickey stuck together, and ran ahead of the field, about ten yards behind Corbin. George was still tight.

They passed the halfway mark. Mickey said something final to George and began to flail his arms. I could never break him of that. But he got his stride together and stepped out. He went past George like a shot and set sail for the leaders.

It was a heartening sight, except that Mickey just did not have it in him to win. The crowd went mad as he chunked himself along, eating the

space between him and Corbin. Mickey's feet plowed cinders, and his arms waved. He looked back at George, sneering.

George glared. He started to lengthen out. He took off after Mickey, and some of the strain was gone, I thought. The leaders increased the pace again, but my two were really closing in now. George caught Mickey, flew by him like the wind. Mickey hung on, though, right behind George.

I took a glance at Grace through the glasses. She was standing, leaning forward. One hand was against her cheek; the other beat upon the rail. She quivered in every line of her slim body, silently rooting.

The laps reeled off. They hit the last eighth. Fuller and Corbin were in front, blocking the way. George was running free now, loose as ashes. He passed Mansky, who floundered, his wind gone. Mickey stayed along.

There was no way to get around Corbin and Fuller except to run wide. They had the rail, and they hugged it. Fuller was going all out, and Corbin was gamely trying to stick. He was succeeding, too. It was very bad, but you had to hand it to Corbin for that old team try.

Mickey was as close to George as paper on the wall. I ran over to see them make the turn into the stretch, and Mickey was amazingly in there. It had not been a very fast mile, I knew. Four-ten could win. Mickey was blazing his way, fighting George's elbow.

At the turn, it was fish or cut bait. George swung out. He aimed at a spot ahead of Fuller and cut diagonally across and around. If he could pull up even into the stretch, he would have a chance. The crowd came up, yowling.

George started to make his bid. Mickey, staying inside, bulled straight ahead as if he would run over Corbin and Fuller. George, his maneuver perfectly timed, started in.

George slipped. He stumbled. A shout wailed. I almost fainted.

If George hit those cinders, it would be all over. It was the works, a shambles of all our hopes. I stared until my eyes ached.

Mickey came straight along, swinging his shoulders. Mickey stretched out a powerful arm. George would have taken Mickey out like a football blocker, but Mickey's big hand caught George's elbow. For one moment it was a prop, a line to a sinking ship.

Then George was running again. His blond hair seemed to rise on end. He was sprinting, as he had never sprinted before, every ligament strained and stretched. George, the picture runner, was scrambling like a maniac for that worsted.

Fuller gave it all he had. They raced like a matched team into the last yards. Fuller made a leap. George ran. George slipped past like an eel. His chest broke the yarn.

Corbin's head went back. He staggered a little. Mickey took three last steps, short and snappy. Then he hurtled himself through the air like a broad-jumper. He dived over the line. Corbin was two paces behind.

I ran after them, fifty yards past the finish, where they slowed their overrun. George wheeled and made straight for Mickey. I came close, and George's hands were on Mickey's shoulders, and George was saying:

"I believed you. You made me believe it. But you ran under orders as best you could. You saved it, Mickey!"

Mickey said: "Don't give me that guff. I ran to win."

George said: "Why don't you break down? Why don't you unbutton and be friends? Grace wants you to be friends."

Mickey said: "Ahhh, nuts! What do I want with friends?"

But he was grinning. I gathered them in and lugged them off to their honors, and the grin lingered. I never saw a sadder expression than Mickey's little grimace when Grace grabbed George and kissed him before all those people.

SO there we were again now, and Mickey had finally broken the record. Grace and I extricated ourselves from the crowd and went over to Lindy's. After a while George and Mickey came in.

We were in a booth, looking each other over. Things had changed since the days at Eastern. I had taken up my commission in the Naval Reserve. George and Mickey were bound for Texas and the Air Corps.



Grace said: "Mickey, you're a champion. How does it feel to be a champion?"

"Synthetic," grumbled Mickey, but he was grinning. "Bill pounded it into me, and George pulled me every step. I couldn't do 4:10 without George pulling me."

"That was the idea," said George. "You did it for me, away back there at the Relays. I did it for you tonight."

"You broke Cunningham's record, too," Mickey said truculently. "You could have won if you hadn't pulled me."

I said: "Why don't you two fight?"

They laughed. They were the closest pair of youngsters I ever knew, ever since those Relays. They squabbled like a married pair but they were thicker than thieves.

Grace said: "We've got a surprise for you."

She held out her left hand. I had spent about half my meager savings on the ring. It sparkled very nice under the lights.

George said: "You're really going to marry the big lug?"

George was happy about the whole thing. He pumped my hand. He kissed Grace across the table. He was the same sincere, swell kid he had always been.

Mickey shook hands too, almost tearing my arm out of the socket. He did not kiss Grace. He just stared at her. He said:

"I'm a bad loser. No use to say I'm not. George has always been the better man."

George howled: "You damned hidebound, ignorant Mick! You stupid, thick-headed, stubborn mule—"

Mickey looked at his watch. He said: "Our train leaves in half an hour. Let's go, George."

There was more fuss about leave-taking, this time for God knew how long. George bustled around, paying the check, waving his arms. Mickey stood and stared at Grace, then at me.

He said: "All right. Maybe it's right. Maybe I'm glad. You've both been swell to me." He choked a little. He bent suddenly, fiercely, kissed Grace on the mouth.

They went out. There were tears in Grace's eyes. She said: "I love you, Bill. It's always been you, right from the start, when I was a brat at Eastern. George was fine, but at the Relays it was only you."

I said: "I know, darling."

She said: "But that Mickey!"

"I know, baby," I said. "And that George."

We held hands, because I guess we both loved the pair of them, in a certain way.

The Setting Sun of Japan

A deeply interesting picture of life within the enemy's country, drawn from a visit in 1941

by CARL RANDAU and LEANE ZUGSMITH

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CHAPTER TWO

Fifth Year of War

Shuzo Kagoshima was born forty-three years ago in Tokyo which makes him forty-four, since the Japanese regard a new-born child as one year old and give him a second birthday on the New Year, no matter how soon it follows his birth.

Kagoshima is a spare man with brisk eyes behind his horn-rimmed spectacles; below his brief nose, the lower part of his face bellies out like a sail filled with wind. He is a wig-maker, so prosperous that he owns an eight-room house. Less than two per cent of Japan's families live in a house that size, much less that style. Kagoshima's income amounted to two thousand dollars a year.

On the way out to his house near Tokyo's city limits, traveling first on an elevated train and then on an interurban trolley, he told us:

"My wife is very loose with money. She doesn't know my real income." He looked knowingly at us, and we began to wonder if he had told us his real income. "She never asked, so I never told. Maybe she'd rather not know," he said. . . .

No foreigner had ever before visited Kagoshima's home, built on a fair-sized plot, divided among twenty houses, near a dreamy lake. Each house had a precise, poetic garden at the front and a potato patch behind, enclosed by high walls.

At home, Kagoshima wears a kimono; at business and on the street he wears Western clothes, and everything but his silk tie is *sufu*. Originally, *sufu* was the Japanese contraction of staple fiber. It became the label for all substitute goods, particularly unsatisfactory substitutes. Kagoshima told us—when his wife was out of the room—that a famous Geisha's latest drollery was being repeated around town. "You have a *sufu* mind," she had told a teahouse customer.

"Staple fibers wear very badly," Kagoshima said, after he had stopped laughing. "For instance, my children's staple fiber stockings stand only one day's wear. Every day, their mother has to mend the broken stockings. Those made of cotton used to wear for ten days. The price now is as high as thirty-four cents; cotton stockings used to cost only ten or eleven cents. No pure-wool clothes are available at stores any more."

We knew from other men, less cautious than Kagoshima, that all his *sufu* shirts, socks and garments were raddled with holes after they had been washed. His suit becomes splintery in a short time and permanently loses its shape if it has been in the rain. If his shoes last, they are made of stiff, ironlike whaleskin, and eventually they will be patched and heeled with *sufu* leather. . . .

Like all his neighbors, he had one foreign-style room with comfortable chairs and tables, an upright piano and a radio. But we drank our tea sitting cross-legged on pillows in front of a low table. Mrs. Kagoshima served us and bowed herself out, and did not return until she was summoned . . . . to answer some questions with which he could not deal.

She brought with her the household's rice, sugar and match ration cards. Before we examined them, we offered around cigarettes. Mrs. Kagoshima looked at her husband, who presently nodded permission. "Oh, she smokes now and then," he said grandly.

Mrs. Kagoshima goes out with her husband only when the entire family makes an expedition. They used to go to movies once a month. "Not much now," she said, "because we saw mostly American movies, and now very few American films are imported because of import restrictions."

Before the war, the entire family went to the theater to see Japanese drama once a month. "Due to the higher admission fees—thirty percent amusement tax—and poor comfort, poor heating due to economy of coal, and poor air-conditioning due also to economy," they said, "we avoid going to the theater in cold winter and hot summer."

They make family trips to near-by resorts several times a year. But most of the time, Mrs. Kagoshima is busy at home. . . . Food shortages . . . cause her to spend twice as much time marketing as she once did. The Kagoshimas had one servant, paid five dollars a month. She worked from five A.M. to ten P.M. and was allowed one holiday a month. Her cramped room was near the kitchen, and Mr. Kagoshima volunteered: "She hasn't much time to spend in it."

As a family of seven, the Kagoshimas were allowed an extra large package of matches, one each month. The matchsticks are so frail that they snap if they are struck, instead of brushed, against a rough surface. Their sugar rations amounted to half a pound each month; rice, nearly five pounds a month. Milk was not rationed but, they explained, it could not be bought unless there was an infant of one year or less in the house and a mother unable to feed the child. You had to show a doctor's certificate as evidence.

Fish was not rationed; indeed, one day a week was compulsory fish day. But Mrs. Kagoshima's fish dealer had nothing for her on certain days. The fishermen could get only the controlled price on their catch. No allowance was made for transportation costs, so they often just threw the fish back into the sea. Meat prices were the same in Tokyo as in Kobe, the meat center. Rather than lose money on shipping costs, Kobe farmers stopped slaughtering their pigs and cattle, and the Kagoshima family did without.

The Kagoshimas, like increasing numbers of Japanese who found their rice rations too short, ate bread instead of rice for breakfast. "There are no restrictions, but we're short," said his wife. "The servant has to stand in line for more than an hour before the shop opens, at seven in the morning. Then, sometimes when she goes back to claim her order, she can't get it, after all. If she can, it's only enough for a single meal."

When Kagoshima had told us of his income, we asked what he paid in taxes. He said he would show his receipts; that he never had been able to understand all the regulations applying to him. Now he produced a collection of documents even more bewildering than his wife's ration cards. They showed he had paid a tax of $380, a little under 20 percent of his income. . . .

Meatless days and meat shortages on other days, coffee made either of barley or soybeans or crushed, burnt

HIGH LIGHTS of the NEW BOOKS

sweet-potato skins are not hardships for the average Japanese. But the few who admitted to us that their rice rations were inadequate also confessed that white potatoes, as a substitute, are harder to get than bread. It was almost impossible to get potatoes in Tokyo. The early morning we visited the enormous central market which embraces 2,500 grocery stalls, patronized chiefly by retail storekeepers, we saw no potatoes at all. . . .

In foreign restaurants, there was no lack of bread; but it was not made of wheat. Sometimes, it was made of crushed acorns and sometimes, we suspected, of crushed sofas.

For nearly two years, the authorities have been trying to cram whale meat down Japanese throats. It is just as nourishing as beef or any other edible flesh, they tell them; it has Vitamins A, B and C and nearly as much protein content as beef. The Japanese refuse to buy it. . . .

CHAPTER FIVE

Homemade Fascists

THE Nazis taught Japan some military tricks—not many. . . . But long ago Japan had learned to attack before declaring war and to move daringly in the midst of negotiations. . . .

When Foreign Minister Shigenori Togo said that Germany, Italy and Japan were fortunate in sharing "similar" views, he was as candid as he was truthful. We might as well stop thinking of Japan as Nazi-like because she signed the Tri-partite Pact or because she was first brutally warring on China and now on our world. Japan earned the title of Fascism by the long-term, police-backed despotism her leaders imposed upon the Japanese people. . . .

Japan had not persecuted Jews, although broadcasts from Tokyo, just preceding the war, were anti-Semitic. They were for export. Japan's Jewish population is so minute that she had no need to use this minority people for scapegoats. Japan's pogroms were inflicted upon the Koreans, the Manchukuoans, the Chinese in conquered territories.

Japan's own brand of Fascism is left-over Feudalism trimmed with the least enlightened features of modern big business. Since Japan opened up to the Western world in 1853, she has been industrially progressive. She has not been socially progressive. A small group of wealthy families controlled Japan then. Five families, the Mitsuis, Mitsubishis, Sumitomos, Yasudas and Okuras, now monopolize more than 60 percent of Japan's entire wealth.

The remainder of Japan's riches are slightly less concentrated in the hands of smaller combines that are still giant trusts in American terms. One hundred million subjects of the Japanese Empire work for this handful of men, at wages that keep them alive. You wonder how.

Japan did not need to debase the lives of her working population as Hitler did, for they had never risen far above the bottom. The great employers and their managers are not at all discomfited when they tell you that the average wage of their male hosiery knitters is forty-three cents a day, of their female knitters seventeen cents a day. And if you cannot suppress your astonishment they repeat:

"Life is hard here. We are a very industrious people."

We were unable to visit factories devoted to defense industries because the Japanese were afraid we would peek, not at their workers' pay envelopes, but at the products. However, Katakura & Co., the largest silk millers in the country, were pleased to have us visit one of their sixty-eight filatures.

One of the officials in their modern, eight-story office building in Tokyo promptly made arrangements for us to go to a plant. We met him at an interurban elevated station. He was a tidy, small man, better dressed than anyone else on the crowded train.

"Our filatures are equipped with the most up-to-date reeling machines," he said, as though he had often said it before. . . .

Presently, we were passing farmlands and rice paddies. . . . We were at Omiya, a country village where everyone stared at us, and the little boys with dripping noses could scarcely be yanked away by their mothers. We walked a block, made some negotiations at a produce market, and finally were furnished with a charcoal-burning taxicab.

The burner began to gutter smoke, the driver hopped in and we left the street lined with little shops to enter a driveway that might have led to a country home on the North Shore of Long Island. There was a guard at the gate, strands of barbed wire surmounting the hedge-screened fence and a beautiful formal flower garden fringing the driveway. . . .

"Isn't it wondrous?" said our companion. "The wisteria is out. What a color! Think how our girls enjoy this! They may stroll out here after work at night, even at lunch time. They have a whole half hour."

Then he walked us into a forlorn hall more than a hundred feet long and about forty feet wide, and jammed with long, narrow tables. On the walls were large signs: "Don't waste food. Remember the needs at the front." The plant's 600 employees, most of them girls from sixteen to twenty, eat their meals here; they breakfast in time to begin the day's work at six A.M.

"See! Clean," said our companion, opening one of the wooden drawers set into the walls, showing the bowl, the cup, the chop-sticks inside.

The room and tables were clean, too. You could tell that by the smell of disinfectant, although mixed with it was another odor, thick and brackish and unfamiliar. That smell met us next—and this time it was almost stronger than we were—in the sorting room, where three girls, locked into waist-high benches, were intently examining a continuous flow of fluffy cocoons, big as birds' eggs.

In a series of large rooms, where overhead loudspeakers ground out tunes, more than four hundred girls stood before basins, where one hundred cocoons bobbed in hot water. Our guide paused near one girl. "She must be on the watch to detect broken or depleted threads," he said. . . . Then he marched us through similar rooms. We knew what the smell was now; it came from the boiled grubs.

In the center of each room there was always a cage sheltering small, bright birds or a goldfish tank, finny and sparkly, or a collection of ornamental shrubs. The girls, standing in rows on their short muscular legs, did not look at the central decorations.

They work from six A.M. to five P.M., with fifteen-minute breaks in the forenoon and afternoon and a half-hour halt at noon for lunch. They were paid eighteen cents a day for a season that runs eight or nine months each year.

In the dormitories, where eight to ten girls sleep in each bare, matted room, our companion cried out: "See how fine this is!" He slid aside a panel in the wall. "See! Each girl has a shelf all to herself for her belongings. No wonder they come back to us!"

They were country girls whose peasant parents signed their contracts at the mill for them. If they had not gone into a factory, they would have been sold by their parents to one of the licensed houses of prostitution in a city. Only fathers were now allowed to sell their daughters to brothels, and if they put them in the Tokyo Yoshiwara or the Shinjuku Yoshiwara, also in Tokyo, they might be paid sixty-five dollars or, for a very pretty young girl, ninety dollars—in cash. . . .

CHAPTER SIX

Dangerous Thoughts

JAPANESE Fascists never needed to promote street brawls, for there was no democratic government to be dislodged by organized hoodlums. Two years ago, political parties were abolished because the government feared even the mildest dissension. In their stead, the Imperial Rule Assistance Association was formed as a to-

talitarian party. It has played only a minor role in Japan's life.

There was no real need for a party operating like the Nazis in Germany or the Fascists in Italy to give the outward appearance of mass participation. In Germany and Italy the people had been accustomed to political expression, and it was necessary to manipulate them. In Japan, the people never had a genuine opportunity to take an intimate part in political affairs. So the Imperial Rule Assistance Association has been faltering along as a sort of executive committee of patriots. . . .

The first month we were in Japan we watched with interest and zest for signs of a personal spy, or maybe even one apiece. Of course, the hotel desk seemed always to know whether we were in our room or one of the several restaurants in the Imperial, and we knew that wherever we were in a public place, we were surrounded, as everyone else was, by spies.

We just did not have men specially attached to us, and few of the Americans we knew thought they had, either. There probably were not enough foreigners left in Japan to warrant the expense. Furthermore, there is a legion of volunteer spies: Japanese who want to protect themselves or butter up the police. . . .

We thought it might be an excellent idea to have our passports in order. But we preferred not to make an unsolicited call on the police, so we stopped thinking about our visas until one day, as we walked down the hotel corridor to our room, we saw in the distance a long piece of paper that had been shoved between the door and the doorjamb. It looked as though some Japanese A & P had stuck an advertising special, by mistake, into an Imperial Hotel door. It was our visa extensions.

We became aware almost at once of the paralyzing power exercised by the police over their own people. Our first week in Tokyo, the American-educated Japanese with whom we had eaten dinner told us:

"You probably think, because of all these anti-foreign spy campaigns and the talk in the United States about those little men in gray capes who follow all foreigners, that the police are concentrating on you."

He was a bank teller, assigned to foreign accounts. There were almost no accounts to handle any more, but he was still freer than most Japanese to associate with foreigners.

"That's not it at all," he said. "The real work of the secret police is directed against us. A nonconformist Japanese is considered infinitely more dangerous than one of you foreigners."

He halted at the Ginza corner to plunge his hand in all the pockets of his ill-cut substitute-wool suit. "Oh, got it," he said happily. "Sometimes I forget it." He showed us his bent identification card that served as a pass in his neighborhood.

"We'll see one another again, I hope," he said. "I have to go now, because it takes me exactly forty minutes from here to my home. I mean, if I get home before midnight, I'll avoid being stopped and questioned several times by the police in my neighborhood."

"What would happen if they stopped you, as long as you have your pass?" we asked.

"I don't know," he said calmly. "I haven't, so far, had any serious moments with the police, and don't want any. Sometimes they come to me with a letter they've held up a few days. They've saved me the trouble of slitting it open. They've never found anything objectionable. So long," he said, very American, and darted away.

We admired his composure, remembering that long before the German Nazis abandoned public trials, Japan casually neglected to try civil repression cases in public courts. As early as 1931, two years before Hitler came to power, Japan's rulers had savagely repressed the mild liberalism that bloomed briefly in the 1920's. . . .

We talked to a schoolteacher who had been secretly arrested, but had also been fortunate enough to be released after a few months in prison. Although the police admitted they had no explicit charges, he was still being punished. He was denied the right to teach in any school. . . .

"I really don't know why they picked me up," Ai Nakayama told us. "I knew there were informers among my students, but they must have been overzealous in informing on me, because nothing the police asked had any bearing on my activities. I really had no outside activities, unless you count acting now and then for one of our Little Theaters. Problem plays, nothing political." He pulled a thread from the frayed sleeve of his kimono. "Of course, there is no definite interpretation of our National Policy. Anything the police decide they don't like, that's against the National Policy. . . . Our young people are really bright," he said sadly. "They look dull these days. I see them on the street, and I think their expressions have changed. When I first started teaching, our young people had a little freedom. Now, they're just told to obey orders.

"They study so hard, too. They start competing at five or six to get into kindergarten. By the time they're ten and twelve, they're up late as university students, studying, still competing for the next school. In your country, it's ability that counts, isn't it? Here, it's what school graduated you. You'll find that everyone with a government job has a degree from Imperial University."

"And what do they learn?" we asked, thinking of Japan's high literacy count.

"They learn to wear out their eyes, trying to decipher too many characters," he said crossly. "They learn vague thinking and vague language. I remembered giving out a theme: How to write a composition. One of my boys wrote: 'If your soul is pure, you can write a composition.' I couldn't help writing on the margin: 'True, but how about the grammar?' By the way," he added, "the police had that in their dossier on me."

WE never saw Nakayama again and thought, at first, that he feared being seen in association with foreigners. Then, one day, the news editor of a Tokyo paper told us that over forty young men and women were in jail as Thought prisoners because they were leaders in the Little Theater movement. He printed nothing about it in his paper; no editor could. But he did not mind telling about it. We asked if they were radicals.

"I would doubt it. They were just the most active in a group of about six hundred throughout the country, putting on amateur shows."

"What was objectionable to the authorities?"

"They put on some problem plays," said the news editor. "And when problem plays are presented, there are likely to be ideas and, once you have ideas, they're likely to be subversive."

"What will happen to them?" We wanted to ask if he knew Nakayama and decided against it.

"They'll probably be held for several months while the six hundred are disbanded. A few will get jail sentences and the rest will be turned loose with warnings. It will be hard for them to get jobs—that's one way they keep you in line. It's not easy to get work if you've been suspected of unpatriotic thoughts." . . .

The police are everywhere, in uniform and in plain clothes; either members of the local force or of the army gendarmerie. They sit next to you in the movies and theaters. They were persistent callers at the home of an American couple who lived in Yokohama. They poked around their foreign-language magazines, looked over the book shelves, sometimes sat around and chatted for half an hour before they bowed themselves out.

We went to their home in Yokohama for dinner one evening and, while we were at the table, the maid brought in a card. Our host scribbled on it and handed it back. After the servant left, he explained that the card was from a twenty-one-year-old student who had recently been released from jail.

"Just another Thought prisoner," he said. "Kiichi likes to drop around here, only he doesn't want to run into police, so we've arranged that he doesn't approach the house until he's sure they're not around. He sends in his card from a little shop around the corner. If I don't write on it, he knows the police are here. If I do, he knows they aren't. He'll be along. I want you to meet him."

Kiichi joined us at coffee, real coffee that had been sent to our hostess from a friend in Hongkong and was brought out for company. Kiichi was shy, skinny, and if he was surprised to encounter strangers, he did not reveal it. He wore Western clothes, acknowledged the introductions in precise English and sat silent for a long time . . . until one of us remarked that we were tired of listening to officials who pretended they could not understand why some people in the United States did not like Japan.

"They have to pretend that or they wouldn't have any jobs," he said, his voice bursting out. "They might even be in jail. I was arrested simply because I didn't show enough enthusiasm over the lies our teachers tell us. It is wrong to express any doubts. I was not alone. Eighteen others were arrested in the same school."

He tugged at his loose socks. He might have been any youth anywhere. He seemed suddenly embarrassed to find himself the center of attention.

"Did they beat you in jail?" we asked.

"No. I wasn't treated badly," he said. "They didn't even question me much. I had a smallish cell, got fairly decent food. I would have been almost comfortable, if I could have had something to read. Three months with nothing to read is terrible." He looked thirstily at the books on the shelves around him.

"Every few days one or two officials would talk to me. They lectured me, really, rather than questioned. I guess they thought they could do a better job than my teachers. I agreed with everything they said. I said I was sorry I had been such a poor student and that I knew it was wrong to laugh at the stories of our Peace Preservation Forces in China. Maybe I agreed too easily. Either that, or they thought all the Thought prisoners were reforming too quickly. I think some of them didn't believe half they told me, even. They acted just like stern fathers who tell their children many things they think the children should believe, without believing it themselves."

He rose to stand by the fireplace and our host said playfully: "See, Kiichi, what did I tell you? You are a very indiscreet young man. You've been saying a lot of indiscreet things to people who are strangers to you."

Kiichi looked sharply at our host. Then he grinned. "I want them to know," he said. "And you wouldn't let me come here, without warning me, if they weren't friends of yours."

"Okay," said our host. Then he told us that Kiichi was ordered not to look up any of his old friends after he was released. He was told he could not go back to school. "It's hard for him," said our host.

"They won't let me do anything," Kiichi said. "I can't get a job because I've been under suspicion. They don't even want me in the army. When I was called up, the army doctor certified that I had tuberculosis. My own doctor says I haven't; I am in very good health. I haven't even any relatives who have tuberculosis."

His father is a prosperous business man who has not disowned him, although he says Kiichi has disgraced the family.

"He has my mother thoroughly frightened. She is so worried about me, she scarcely knows how to talk to me," said the youth. "My sister is married and I never see her. My brother has a job in Osaka—and wouldn't want to be seen with me even if he were closer home."

Despite the police, he tried to establish contacts with his old friends, but some of them were afraid to be seen with him and others were still under arrest. "Some of those, particularly ones with poor parents, really suffered," Kiichi said. "One of my friends who was arrested with me is now in the prison hospital with a broken shoulder. I can't see him to find out how it happened, but I know it was one of those police 'accidents.'"

Formerly he was able to obtain American and English magazines and books; since the government prohibited the export of money, he cannot send out money to subscribe for foreign magazines. "American and British books aren't coming in any more. Our book dealers can't send out the money to pay for them. German books come in because there is an exchange arrangement with Berlin. But I can't read German, and I don't want Nazi books, anyway."

He had one cousin, four years older and in a responsible government job, who did not shrink from being seen with him. His cousin had told him that many officials in the government, particularly in the new Control and Planning boards, were outraged at higher officials and covertly pro-labor and anti-Fascist.

"Still, what can they do?" Kiichi said. "There are so few of them among the thousands and thousands who are too scared even to think."

We were a little doubtful about that information. We thought maybe Kiichi's sympathetic cousin was just trying to cheer him. But a week later in Tokyo, we learned from two sources that 435 arrests had just been made in the Planning Board. Most of them were young men who were said to harbor Communistic beliefs because they had favored control of food prices to balance control of wages. They were described as the most capable men in the department, but not by the newspapers. They did not print any stories about the newest Thought prisoners.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

The Setting Sun

WE said good-bye to the flyers we knew and the passengers. Mrs. Troxler, who was returning with her husband and two children from the oil regions of Sumatra, said all over again how glad she was to be in California. While we had been at sea, she had expected the Pacific War to begin any hour. She did not listen to us when we tried to reassure her. She did not listen to the Standard Oil employee, on leave, with his return passage to Palembang booked in advance.

"I'll come back to the job on April 12th," Midgely said. "My boat will get into Sydney on April 8th and I've got a plane reservation out that same day. By next April," he told the Troxlers, "you'll all be wanting to get back to Sumatra."

We thought his confidence was as shaky as Mrs. Troxler's fears. . . .

In the next few days, crossing the continent, we again saw huge, solid production units for the first time since we had left the United States. In Japan, in the East Indies, in Australia, in all the Far East we had seen nothing to compare with these plants. Throughout the Orient, production had reached belt-line proportions only in Japan. And from what we—or any other foreigners—could learn, it was not on our scale. Indeed, it was from the Douglas factory in California that Japan had obtained the plane in which we traveled in Occupied China and the planes she used on many commercial lines radiating from Tokyo to Manchukuo, to China and to Indo-China. The automobiles we rode in and the trucks we passed, in Japan, in Occupied China and later in southern Indo-China, were mostly American-made.

We thought in California, we thought when we crossed the country, and we think now that Japan will never be able to equal our output. The victor in this war will be governed by production; and in that we are supreme.

We had become convinced that there would be war in the Pacific. . . .

We had sympathized with the Dutch in Batavia and the Australians in Sydney when they told us their safety had

been jeopardized by the failure of Britain and the United States to act in July. We agreed with them that Japan's steady penetration of Thailand would make her defeat more difficult. But, with them, we believed that the actual conflict would again be postponed—for a few months.

The first friend we met in Los Angeles asked: "How do the Japs manage to stand up? Everyone says they've bogged down in China. I can't see how they hold together. What's the trick?"

Today his questions can be answered more fully than yesterday. Then we told him that Japan had not bogged down in China. Japan, we said, had been able to take any particular military objective she chose. Her problem was to dominate the occupied country remote from the main railroads and highways.

We told him then that Japan looked pauperized and her people were stripped. But we were convinced that we had been truthfully informed in Tokyo, in April, when we were told that she had two years' stores of oil and iron—thanks to the United States.

Since December 7th, it has become apparent that Japan successfully exploited the universal belief that she was hopelessly enmeshed in China. Everywhere in Japan, you saw the external signs of her poverty. Japan's people were short of food, of clothing, of fuel, of metals. And the world believed that these shortages were due, in large measure, to the war against China. Instead, under the pretense of devouring her strength in China, Japan was storing supplies in preparation for new aggression. . . .

The assault on Pearl Harbor came when Japan decided that the United States and Great Britain were easier than the Soviet Union; and that the softest spot should be assaulted first.

The skillful use of the China War as a cloak for new military preparations may yet rank as one of the most effective deceptions in history. But Japan will have to collect all her benefits from this guile in the early phases of the war. . . .

She seized the initiative and will appear strong only as long as she retains it. She will retain it until the scattered governments aligned against her have finally co-ordinated their efforts.

Japan's future is dependent on Germany's, and it will make little difference in the end whether it was Germany or Japan that first fell. . . .

Japan's concentration of all resources for the war machine made possible initial but not decisive gains. It may require two years, it may take longer, to overcome her consequent headstart. It will certainly take longer than it should have, for we ourselves, year after year, supplied the materials she hoarded for use against us. . . .

Japan still relies on winning the support of the native populations of the countries she invades. But less than a month after she declared war, India upset her program. Once America entered the conflict and Japan threatened the borders of Burma, the All-India Congress moved closer to cooperation with the Allies. India is second only to China in population and, with China already bitterly determined to fight Japan to the end, Japan has the majority of the Asiatic peoples against her.

While Germany had already demonstrated that terrorism does not win conquered peoples, Japan thought she was dealing with a different situation. She was. The Annamites of Indo-China, the Malays of British Malaya and the Indonesians of the Netherlands East Indies are themselves subject races of the French, the British and the Dutch. Japan could promise them more than she could promise the Filipinos, who had already been granted national independence, effective in 1946.

But in Malaya, three weeks after Japan's declaration of war, the British welcomed a council of Malay and Chinese leaders who pledged the support of their peoples. In the East Indies, the Dutch, after years of relying chiefly upon Europeans for their armed forces, last summer opened the ranks to the natives. They had more volunteers than they could use. Conscription is in effect now.

European colonizers in Asia would not have found themselves so vulnerable if they had spent less time suppressing the nationalists and more on their outside enemy, Fascist Japan. Native populations have justifiable complaints against Western Powers. Fortunately for the West, they recognize that Japan does not offer them salvation. . . .

The greatest obstacle for Japan, in wooing native populations, is the hostility of the Chinese. As long as China remains Japan's enemy, there can be no meaning to Japan's program of Asia for the Asiatics. The Chinese have proved that they will have nothing to do with a Japanese-sponsored plan for Asiatic solidarity. And the Chinese are an influence. . . . in all the countries of southeast Asia that Japan wants to command.

Many of the Chinese in these countries have been steady contributors of funds to the Chungking government. In Malaya, nearly half the people are Chinese; Singapore is three-quarters Chinese. The Chinese back home sent a message from Chungking to Manila during its first assaults by Japan:

"The Chinese people everywhere hope the day will soon come when the Japanese at home are given what their militarists have given to others in the way of vicious air attacks."

That is the kind of Asiatic solidarity Japan has found: a bloc of peoples who will defeat her.

The chances of revolt by the Japanese people, who are themselves as enslaved as any colonial peoples of the Orient, are unlikely until Japan has suffered a series of defeats. The Japanese government's persecutions were not confined to Communists but to all democratic-minded men, liberal intellectuals, trade unionists. They may not have been wiped out, but the difficulties under which they might operate have made them temporarily ineffectual. They will probably remain helpless—until military victories can no longer be offered to the people of Japan as a substitute for their own grievances against their rulers.

The Soviet Union and China are certain to play determining roles in the eventual victory over Japan. China is still unfortunately divided, because reactionaries retain considerable power in the Kuomintang. But prolongation of the war may fortify the democratic influences within China; certainly it will strengthen the position of the Communist Armies which for so long were forced to fight reactionary Chinese, at the same time that they battled Japan. The Soviet Union, whether or not she participates at once in the Pacific War, is fighting the entire Fascist front when she attacks the Nazis in the west. The Red Armies' sensational counter-attacks against the Germans in the months when the Allies were feeling Japan's hardest blows in the Pacific may be duplicated in the Far East when the time comes for decisive assault upon Japan's islands and the entrenched Kwantung Army in Manchukuo.

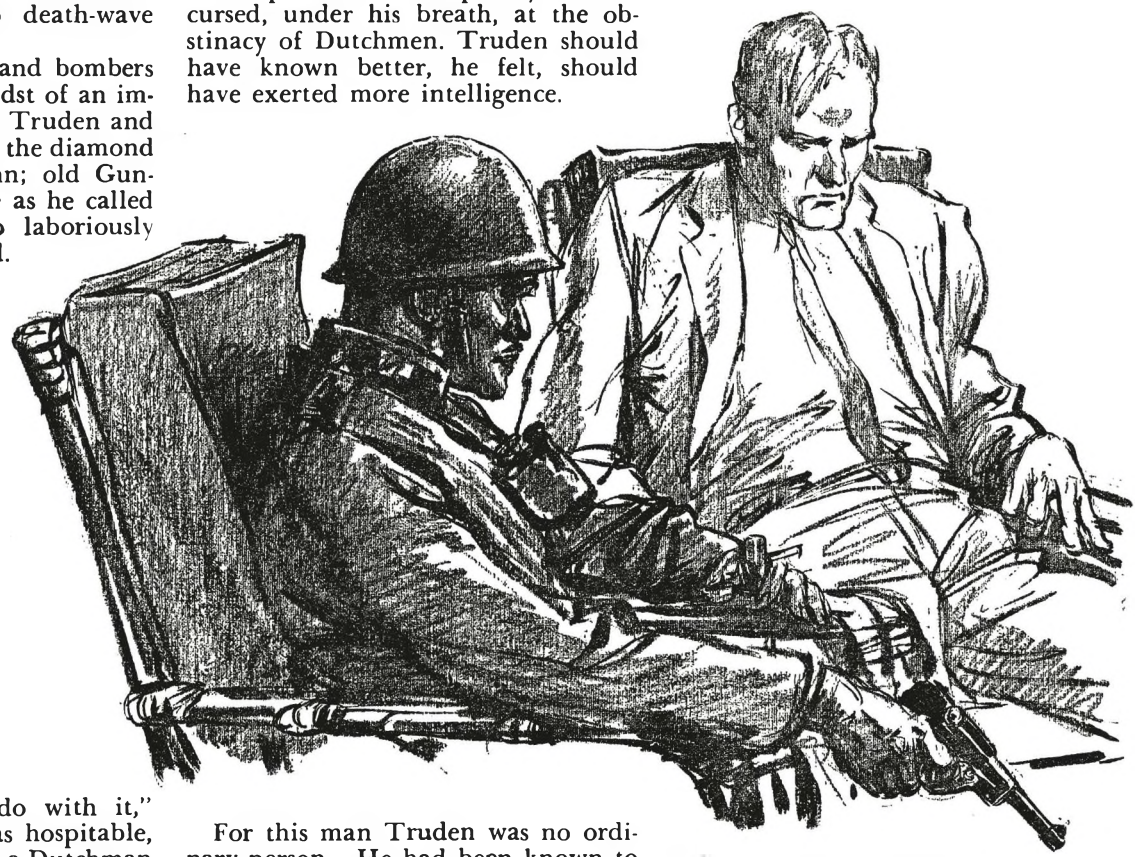
JAPAN's militarists are aware that they are playing for everything or nothing. Japan has been a totalitarian state for a longer period than she has been a world power. In recent times, she has become a modern totalitarian state, and her alignment with the Axis was a logical step in her Fascist progression. Her militarists cannot pause now, any more than Hitler could halt when he had most of Europe. Even if Japan seizes control of all of southeast Asia, she cannot stop there, and we will not permit her to stop.

Like all Fascist countries, Japan is geared only to war. Her rulers and her economy would collapse in peace. So she can never pause to consolidate and exploit her war-won gains. Harassed at the rear, inadequately supplied at home, frontally assaulted, Japan will be incapable of countering the forces mobilized against her. And once this tide turns, her sun will set as abruptly as it rose.

The KING of MACASSAR STRAIT

LIKE many another man, Preble was caught headlong in the midst of his affairs by war and bombs and bloody ruin; yet he pushed desperately on. Despite warnings, he took boat from Macassar out to Angin Island, at the head of the straits, to see Truden, who lived there like a lord in retired splendor. Preble was on the quest of fortune. In the midst, the Jap death-wave caught up with him.

When the paratroops and bombers hit, Preble was in the midst of an impassioned argument with Truden and Truden's daughter about the diamond treasure of Weston Gunn; old Gunner Gunn, or Gimlet-eye as he called himself on the map so laboriously scrawled by a dying hand.



An American traveler, a Dutch sleight-of-hand artist and his strange clairvoyant daughter, a Jap parachute attack—and a novelette memorable indeed.

"I want nothing to do with it," Truden insisted. He was hospitable, pleasant, but firm as only a Dutchman can be firm.

"But I've been working on this for six years!" exclaimed Preble. "Now I'm absolutely certain! I've got Gunn's map and the story he told. I know why he stuffed the diamonds in the Arab's belly and where the Arab was buried. All I want is permission—"

"My father wishes nothing to do with it," said Gertrudis Truden. She looked like her name, thought Preble. Skinny and something of a gimlet eye herself, stiff and uncompromising.

"I have retired," Truden said amiably, stroking his goatee. "I desire that nothing should interfere with the even tenor of my life here; I have much work to complete, before the war spoils the future. I am not interested in your diamonds."

He clapped for a servant, but the natives had all disappeared. So, with a sigh of resignation, he heaved himself out of his squeaky rattan chair and refilled their glasses, while Gertrudis poured her tea primly. Preble cursed, under his breath, at the obstinacy of Dutchmen. Truden should have known better, he felt, should have exerted more intelligence.

For this man Truden was no ordinary person. He had been known to fame all over the world as the Great Vanderdecken, a prestidigitator who had reaped wealth and renown as the greatest illusionist of his time. Many years ago he had retired and had settled down here on Angin Island—Windy Island, to translate its Malay name. There was no hint, however, of his great past in this comfortable house on the little island, whose hill looked over the sparkling waters of Macassar Straits; nor in the man himself—fat, slow-going, his face streaked by gray mustaches and goatee.

Preble made effort to impress his host with urgency.

"This Gunner Gunn was second in command of a pirate craft," he said. "He died somewhere around here about 1747. I've identified this island with the one he called Ragena—"

"Young man, why will you not get into your boat and go back to Macassar and stop talking about diamonds and treasure?" said Truden almost plaintively. "I refuse to have my peace disturbed and my quiet life disarranged. Thunders of heaven! I want peace, not diamonds! I have plenty of money in the chest in the wireless-room."

"You won't have it long. You'll have to skip out in no time," Preble retorted. "Don't you know there's a war going on? The Japs are already attacking the northern islands, I understand; they may show up any time in these parts!"

Truden rumbled out a laugh.

"I have made all arrangements, in such case," he said with some energy. "My servants are my assistants; they

by H. Bedford-Jones

Illustrated by
L. R. Gustavson



"Last and foremost a gunner, I, King of Macassar Straits. I was a large man with a strong hand and an eye for the wenches."

understand perfectly what is to be done. It is impossible for any Japs to cope with people like me. Now will you please depart?"

"No. Give me permission to dig for an hour on your hillside," said Preble.

"I will not. I do not want you here for another hour," retorted Truden, and sighed. "Why will you not comprehend that you are in the way?"

Preble was tempted to hearty oaths of anger and dismay; though, not being a man of wordy violence, he resisted the temptation. There were not half a dozen servants here on the island. There were no weapons of any kind, apparently. This complacent Dutchman, magician or no magician, simply had no conception of what he was talking about, when he said he could take care of any Japs. He and his daughter, alone here with a few natives, were helpless.

"What's your idea—to conquer the Japs with illusions or stage trickery?" Preble demanded bitterly. "A mistake, Mynheer! There's no illusion about them; they're out to kill all whites. Further, they'll be apt to make for here the first thing. At Macassar I heard about your powerful short-wave wireless outfit; the Japs will know of it, too."

"That reminds me; we have not received any news today," said Truden. He nodded and beamed at his daughter. "Gertrudis, my dear, will you be kind enough to tune in Batavia or Singapore, and see how things are going? I must have a word with the servants. You will excuse me, Mynheer Preble? Most of the servants were members of my old troupe; very fine people, these Javanese. I shall return in a few minutes."

So saying, Truden rose and left the sunny veranda where they sat. The angular Gertrudis, with obedient mien, went into the house.

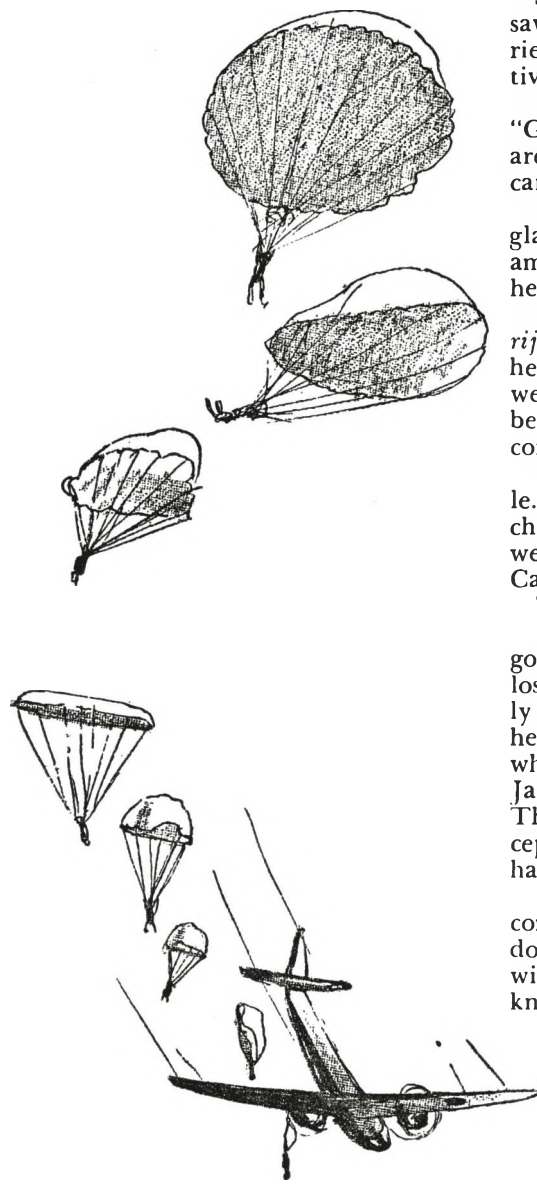
Preble, thus left alone, took a fresh cheroot, bit at it, and scowled at the flowers and garden and the thatched buildings below the house. This was a peaceful, lovely spot. At any other time, the thought that it was occupied by a once famed master of the magic art, with his daughter and many of his former troupe, would have fascinated Preble—but not now.

He was exasperated. He had searched so long and far after the treasure of Gunner Gunn, his success in tracking down every lead had been so great, that to find himself balked at the very point of triumph by a fat, complacent Dutchman, got under his skin.

Except as an eyewitness and a reporter of facts, Preble need not be greatly considered. He had acute intelligence, and when he said a thing had happened, one knew it had happened in exactly the way he reported it. Aside from this important faculty, he was not a man of much charm or even worth, for he had inherited comfortable means and his scholarship was an occupation that killed time. Yet he was persistent, and rebelled at being baffled by Truden.

A QUEER vibrating sound, not unlike the approach of a typhoon, reached him. He rose, puffing at his cheroot, and stepped out into the sunlight, in puzzled wonder. Thus far, at Macassar, he had not made contact with the war—but now it hit him. It was here, it was upon him and upon Angin Island, like a whirlwind.

The roar grew down the sky, and the sky was thick with planes. They were overhead, fifty or more of them, and close down. Things were dropping; the roar now became deafening. The planes were swinging, swooping, heading back for Macassar—



Aghast, Preble realized the truth. The boat which had fetched him, and which lay at the island wharf in the little bay, disappeared in a fountain of water and blood and dark objects. Another and another bomb burst, almost in the same place, flinging the wharf and other boats about with dull thudding explosions. But men were also dropped. Parachutes blossomed, white deathly flowers against the blue sky. Not a great many of them; at most, twenty, thought Preble in excited agitation. They came fluttering down on the hill and the lower slopes and the beach. The great sky-armada swept away and the roar lessened; it had all happened in a very short matter of seconds.

Gertrudis came rushing out of the house, standing staring with face uplifted and eyes wide.

Preble shouted at her.

"Get your father—get the servants, rifles! Parachute troops have landed, understand? Look at them! Not many. We can take care of 'em—"

She gave him a blank look. Then he saw Truden coming hastily, and hurried to meet him. Rifles! These natives would fight, of course.

"Rifles, Truden!" he cried out. "Get your servants, quick! There aren't twenty of those paratroops—we can bag them all!"

Mynheer Truden beamed at him, glanced at his watch and nodded very amiably. He seemed not to comprehend what had happened.

"It is nice that we had a pleasant *rijstaafel* before they disturbed us," he replied. "Two o'clock—hm! Well, we shall have no siesta today, so let us be seated again and accept what comes, in a civilized manner—"

"Good God, man!" burst out Preble. "Can't you realize what those parachutes mean? In a matter of minutes we'll have those Japs at our throats! Call your men! Quick!"

Truden smiled blandly.

"Tut, tut! It is best as it is, my good sir; a pity your boat and men are lost. But we have a boat hidden safely away. Keep your head, keep your head, young man; there is no danger whatever. I foresaw that only a few Japs would be sent, to seize this island. There is nothing here they want, except perhaps the wireless, and the little harbor."

In horrified acquiescence, Preble comprehended that nothing was to be done, no fight made. Yet one man with a submachine-gun could have knocked every invader out of the air,

"Get your father—get rifles! Parachute troops are landing!" shouted Preble.

and he choked out the words. Truden beamed again and took his arm.

"No doubt, young man; and ten times as many would then have come. Trust me! I am wise. Now sit down and tell me more about Gunner Gunn and his diamonds—"

"You be hanged," blurted out Preble, and collapsed in a chair, shaking; not from terror but from sheer anger and dismay. Truden fingered his goatee and chuckled softly.

"Poor young man! Americans are like that, Gertrudis my dear. They are efficient. Well, I have too much meat on my bones to serve the army, and too many years to serve the navy; so I must do my bit in my own way."

He sat down heavily. Gertrudis sat flinty-eyed and chill, a bleak creature. Preble thought of his laughing Malay seamen and the excellent boat he had hired, all alike blown to hell now. Then Gertrudis spoke.

"The Macassar wireless said they were being bombed."

"Obvious, my dear," said her father complacently.

The old stuffed sausage was mad as a March hare, thought Preble miserably. He himself had no weapons. There was nothing to be done.

Suddenly Gertrudis' gaze riveted on the garden just below. A man had appeared there; a short brown man, a uniformed Jap. He held a rifle, watching them vigilantly, and flung a word over his shoulder.

Another voice answered him, vibrant with authority. A second Jap appeared, this time an officer. Japanese voices rang out from here and there in lifting shouts; the officer made reply, evidently giving orders. He stepped forward, automatic pistol in hand.

Mynheer Truden lifted his glass and gulped noisily, and wiped his goatee carefully with his resplendent silk handkerchief.

SINCE Pearl Harbor, Preble had regarded any Jap he met with something of the feeling one bears toward a cockroach that drops on the breakfast-table—as too frequently happens in the Indies. Now his attitude was challenged, and he was abruptly brought back to realities.

The officer who stepped up to the veranda had straight, fine nostrils, sign of aristocratic blood in a Jap, and a keenly alert air. He bowed slightly to Gertrudis and spoke in fluent English.

"You are prisoners; I have occupied Angin Island. How many natives are here?"

"I have half a dozen servants," said Truden, puffing out his cheeks. "I do not know where they are. Hiding, perhaps. Perhaps they have committed suicide; they threatened to do so, if Japanese came."

Without a flicker, the Jap switched to perfect Dutch.

"Very well. What arms have you?"

"None," said Truden. "I am not a soldier."

"No. You are Mynheer Truden, formerly as the Great Vanderdecken, famous as a magician. This lady will be your daughter. This gentleman?" His glittering eyes focused on Preble.

"My guest," said Truden, preening himself. "Mynheer Preble, an American. So you have heard of me, eh?"

"You are well known; so is this island, which occupies a strategic position," came the reply. "But for the present, you need fear nothing. I am Captain Sato Tadanobu."

"An historic name in Japanese history," Truden said blandly. "Will you join us in a drink?"

"I shall be honored. As a child, I saw you perform in London, where my parents were in the diplomatic service." Captain Sato bowed again. "We must take over your house and wireless-station, confiscate any arms, and secure your servants. Otherwise you shall not suffer from us. We observe the *Bushido,* the code of Japanese knighthood."

"Ah! The *Bushido!*" said Truden. "There is no such thing, Captain Sato. It is unknown in your history. It was invented by the army at the beginning of this century. The samurai of Japan had no such code. This was a pure fabrication given to the world as part of your skillful propaganda. Gertrudis, my dear, will you arrange a drink for our guest?"

Gertrudis obliged.

Meanwhile, things happened. A number of Japs appeared, streaming into the house; Preble stood up and was searched, Truden followed suit. Captain Sato put away his pistol and issued orders as more of his men appeared, then he accepted a chair.

"We know all about your place and what is in it," he said. "Except for the presence of Mr. Preble."

Preble glared. But Truden sat up, with interest.

"Ah! Yes, Mynheer Preble thinks there is a treasure hidden here on the island, a treasure in diamonds, from the Eighteenth Century," he exclaimed. Preble gave him an angry look; he could gladly have throttled the fat man. But Truden went on cheerfully. "We were about to investigate the matter when your planes appeared. A pirate presumably left his loot buried here and has indicated the spot and so forth. Most interesting."

A Jap appeared, saluted, and spoke. Captain Sato set down his glass and rose.

"Come with me, Mynheer Truden. You can point out various things to me and save us trouble. We shall return in a few moments; you other two, stay here."

Truden heaved himself erect and accompanied the officer out. The Jap soldier remained, obviously on guard.

Preble, who felt pop-eyed over the whole thing, struggled desperately to adjust himself. This entire experience was unreal. Not a shot fired; no looting. A gentlemanly officer. Truden's amazing complacence. Why, nothing was as he had imagined! These men had dropped out of the sky and grabbed everything in sight, like a matter of routine.

The Jap guard slowly came over to Gertrudis, staring at her with greedy eyes. She glared at him. Preble wondered what was up; certainly this angular daughter of the house—

Wrong again. The Jap grinned, said something, reached out and tore from the neck of Gertrudis a large gold necklace and locket she wore. Quick as a flash, she slapped his face and retrieved it, only to be knocked back into her chair by a buffet in the face. Preble was on his feet and going for the man, when Captain Sato appeared with pistol out.

"Sit down or be shot!" he snapped. Preble turned heatedly on him and began to tell what had happened, but the officer broke in with undisguised contempt: "Quiet! You people must learn that henceforth you belong to an inferior race. The quicker all whites are killed, the better. Those who remain in Asia, will be slaves. You have no rights. Sit down."

Preble complied, fists clenched. Truden waddled in jovially.

"The young man is impulsive. Gertrudis, you are not hurt? Of course not. Captain Sato has confiscated your jewelry."

"I think everything is now running smoothly," said Captain Sato. He sat down and took his drink up again. "Tomorrow or next day, a ship will arrive. Many guns are to be emplaced here; you will all be taken away. My wireless-man is very good—"

Out of the house burst a soldier, babbling something excitedly. Captain Sato listened, questioned him, questioned a second who followed him. The soldiers departed. He turned to Truden.

"Your servants—six, you say? Yes. They have just been found. All in one room. As you thought, dead. Suicide, of course; the gas was turned on. It is nice that you have gas here. Cylinders, no doubt?"

"Exactly," said Truden. "Yes, I feared this would happen; these natives are very odd at times."

"Nonsense!" rasped Preble. "I suppose these devils murdered them!"

IT was almost the first word he had spoken since the planes appeared. Captain Sato gave him a cold look. Truden shook his head, and glanced at his watch.

"The young man is impetuous, Captain Sato. Ah! Barely half-past two! So much has happened in such short time! Are you interested in metaphysics?"

"I took such a course at Oxford," returned the officer.

"Indeed! Then you are acquainted with the oddly relative values of time!" Truden waved a white, plump hand. "How, as one philosopher expressed it, Start and Midway and End, which is only another beginning, are simultaneous and not ad seriatim! That is, there is only a Now. But you'll comprehend these things better in another three and a half hours."

"Eh?" Captain Sato put down his glass and gave Truden a sharp look. "What do you mean by that?"

Truden beamed. "Yes. At six o'clock, like my servants, you will be dead."

Captain Sato bared his teeth in a grimace. "A threat?"

"Of course not, of course not!" exclaimed Truden. "Merely a prophecy, a prediction. I never fail at such

things. Besides being a magician of some note, I dabble in things of the spirit world. My dear daughter Gertrudis, yonder, is also an accomplished medium."

The Jap looked scornful.

"Under the circumstances, I'm in a far better position than you to predict the situation at six o'clock," he said rather acidly. Truden chuckled and shook with amusement.

"No, no! I am quite infallible, Captain Sato. As a man of education and exceptional intelligence, you have no belief whatever in the occult world?"

"None whatever," was the cold reply.



"Let us inspect the useless servants." Truden started off, passing by Preble, followed by Sato.

"But I can prove it to you!" Truden, still rumbling with laughter, sat up. "Look, here is my friend Mynheer Preble, with his story about a diamond treasure buried on this island by Weston Gunn, or Gunn the Gunner, a pirate of the Eighteenth Century! You will grant that one who is able to read the past, can certainly read the future?"

"Possibly," said Captain Sato. "I am not interested in tricks."

"But this is no trick, I assure you!" said Truden, more earnestly. "Suppose we have this pirate speak through my daughter Gertrudis, and tell his story, and then we find those diamonds —eh? Would that convince you?"

Captain Sato eyed the angular, impassive Gertrudis, and a certain interest appeared in his brown features.

"Any trick will get you shot at once," he said. "But I have heard of such things. What is it you call them—a séance? Yes?"

"Precisely!" Truden replied, and beamed at Preble. "What say you, my friend?"

"You're a fool," snapped Preble sourly, and relapsed into silence. Truden chuckled, and Captain Sato smiled slightly; Preble's attitude was all too obvious.

"Where would you like to make this test?" demanded the officer, with an air of curiosity. "In some dark room, I suppose?"

"Certainly not. Right here," Truden replied. "That is, if it would interest you. I fancy that a pirate of two hundred years ago, an English one at that, might have an odd way of speech. You, of course, would be able to speak with him, ask questions and so forth. At the least, it might prove to you that when I say you will be dead by six o'clock, with your men, I have very definite powers."

Captain Sato regarded him coolly for a moment.

"I have even more definite powers," he said at length. "Let me warn you again. If you speak the truth, it would be interesting. If you try any trick, if you try to fool me, you shall be shot immediately."

Truden lay back in his chair, puffing at his cigar.

"Tricks? Absurd! As a magician, I could of course play any number of tricks; that is not my purpose. I have been quite honest with you."

Captain Sato nodded. "Very well. As soon as I get reports on the entire island, then, it is agreed. But I have warned you."

He relaxed in his chair and summoned the guard, who shouted loudly. Men appeared from outside, from within the house. Man after man made evident report. With a look of complete satisfaction, Captain Sato

made his dispositions. Two men were placed in the garden, outside the veranda; others went off as ordered. It was clear that the little island was now completely in Japanese hands, and without opposition.

Preble looked on at all this with unconcealed disgust. That Truden's servants had been found dead in one room was, apparently, more of a shock to him than to Truden. Captain Sato had between fifteen and twenty men here and was in full control of the place. For Truden to attempt anything now was worse than hopeless. No trick would be of any avail.

On principle, he knew, a fat man is always dangerous; but not this one. Truden had boasted of all preparations made against such an emergency. This seemed sheer folly. More likely, Truden's mind was affected. This spirit business was nonsense; if not nonsense, then it was perilous. At best, a shabby trick. This stuffed sausage of a man should have more sense than to jeopardize them all. This Jap officer was no fool; he was exceptionally sharp and intelligent.

All this time Gertrudis had sat silent, moody, absently looking about. And the American was uncomfortable and irritated.

Worry gnawed at him. The bombing, these Japs, were briskly real; so was Gertrudis. Truden was absurd, grotesque, most unreal. Whatever his past ability, he was now a roll of fat, and a fat prestidigitator draws no plaudits. Preble, thus thinking, glanced up, aware that Truden was speaking to him.

"Why so unhappy, Mynheer Preble? Let me give you a remedy," Truden said with cheerful air. "Meditate upon the word personality. You do not know what its derivation is; few do. If you look it up, you will find that it derives from the word *persona,* meaning the mask used in plays of the ancients. So, you see, it is not what you think; quite the contrary, in fact!"

Preble gave him a look, and remained silent. The words, however, worked in his brain. Was it possible that Truden was here giving him some hint? Was this stuffed sausage, so devoid of personality, acting behind a mask?

"Well, well, let us have the test," said Captain Sato with amused toleration. "We are under the eyes of two guards, remember."

Preble scowled. Was the man actually curious? Was the fat man actually going to stage his absurd challenge? It must be nonsense: Truden knew little of Weston Gunn. Preble himself knew little, beyond the notations he had dug up and a fragmentary, ill-written letter he had unearthed in the library at Batavia. In fact, he knew only that Gunn had been second in command aboard a French ship, captained by one Lagmont, out of Le Havre. What he had babbled to Truden about the diamonds was largely conjecture—

Truden turned to the hard-faced Gertrudis.

"Shall we make the experiment, my dear?" he asked. "Come, bring your chair beside mine—it is difficult for me to move so much weight."

She complied, scraping her chair across the floor to his side.

A SÉANCE! Preble found himself scoffing inwardly at the very thought. And yet, deny it as he might, he knew there must be odd depths to such a man as this Truden, the Great Vanderdecken. He was still astonished at the way Truden had shot out the truth about the much-vaunted *Bushido,* which Captain Sato had not tried to deny. Preble himself had always supposed the so-called "code of the samurai" to be a fact; but now he remembered having heard somewhere that the very word *Bushido* was an invention and had no existence in the Japanese language previous to its propaganda use.

Yes, the Great Vanderdecken, for all his fat and complacence, must have at one time been a master of illusion; perhaps he had sort of trickery in view now—yet what good purpose could it serve? Preble was baffled, angry again. Here Truden was sitting quietly, holding with one hand the wrist of his daughter, saying nothing, doing nothing. Gertrudis sat with her eyes closed.

There was no incantation, there was no abracadabra or witch-talk. It was a simple scene, without the least tension. Truden sat looking at the garden, though he had laid his cheroot aside. Everything was quite ordinary, matter-of-fact.

"Gertrudis, my dear," said Truden almost casually, "the only person we want to speak with is this Weston Gunn—what did he call himself, Mynheer Preble?"

"Gunner Gunn," said Preble grudgingly. "Gimlet-eye. King of the Macassar Straits."

Captain Sato lit a cigarette, laughing softly to himself.

Placid, unworried, Truden fingered his goatee with his free hand. A séance? No crystal ball, no preparation, no nothing! It was absurd to think of it as occult. It was just some magician's horseplay.

Suddenly Preble recollected something. On his arrival, Gertrudis had claimed to know not a word of English. Therefore, how could she speak now with the tongue of Gunner Gunn? Only by deep trickery, of course. Like her father, she was a smooth one. If she now spoke English it would prove that she had lied to Preble.

She shivered slightly, relaxed in her chair, shivered anew—and spoke.

"Last and foremost a gunner, I, King of Macassar Straits!" The words came in English, slowly but not awkwardly, and there was no accent. *"My stint was large. I did all the Malay sultan ordered, but the attar of roses always blew at Cap'n Lagmont. He had six shares in the venture, I had four. Ratfaced Lagmont was a frog-eater. Mosee Lagmont; a hard chance it was not his real name!"*

Gertrudis fell silent. Truden looked at Captain Sato and waved his free hand.

"You see? Speak whenever you like," he said. "If you have questions, interrupt as you wish—as though this man Gunn were sitting here. There is no ceremony."

The Japanese was interested, curious. Preble eyed Gertrudis with lowering gaze. She spoke again.

"Timor at dawn, and raining; what a day it was for gun-smoke! I kept my sacks of powder ready, but Lagmont heaved them out to make room for his booty. Then it was cutlass and pike until we broke clear. Ratfaced Lagmont was near to death; he gave half his shares to the crew, to beg off. That was Lagmont at his best."

"Apparently you didn't like him?" said Truden.

"Like him? His mother was a pig!" snapped his daughter. She was without expression, as though asleep; but an oath rapped from her lips—a lusty seaman's oath that made Preble blink and stare at her again. *"Gunn was a gunner, a damned fine gunner! Ratface was a rogue; many have died that were better men. James North, the bosun's mate, blew him apart, and good riddance. I was a large man with a big foot and a strong hand and an eye for the wenches, but ever they laid a course to Lagmont."*

Captain Sato spoke a quiet question.

"Just when was all this, please?"

"Preble knows," said Gertrudis. *"Ask him."*

The Jap turned with an inquiring glance. Preble felt like cursing, but instead forced himself to speak. He resented being dragged into the farce.

"Gunn died around 1747, as nearly as I can learn," he said. "There was a French pirate named Lagmont, or calling himself that. I believe he died at Zanzibar, however."

"Aye," chipped in Gertrudis. *"Zanzibar was ours at the time, and Lagmont bled a stream before we raised the island head! My father was a master wheelwright in England—"*

Captain Sato broke in, very politely:

"Tell me something, please," he said, smiling. "Just how did you fire your cannon, gunner? Did you put powder in the touchhole or vent, and apply fire? Or did you use a lanyard and the later fashion of fire?"

A subtle little trap, as even Preble perceived. The Jap no doubt knew

all about artillery and its use. Gertrudis made response—and Preble actually found it hard to believe that the woman was speaking, and not old Gunn himself.

"Other men did that, but not Gimlet-eye, King of Macassar Straits!" came response. *"I was no hand to follow others, in their silly priming. At a go it might do, but not for the roll of a wooden ship. I rolled a tallowed strip of linen with a powder core, to fit the vent, and touched it off with a slow-match."*

Captain's Sato's face changed slightly; he seemed to nod. Then he queried anew:

"But what sort of guns did you use, friend?"

"No friend of yours," was the reply. *"A master gunner I, and trained the Long Tom we took out of a Bristol ship. A hard old girl to fire! I had a neat pair of swivel guns as well. Red I was in the beard, broad in the beam, —a bloody fine man at the cups, too! Aye, Gunner Gunn can spin a yarn or two, but little is the rum he gets nowadays. Large was my dint, large my stint, and I had my fun with an Arab bint. And when the sultan ordered a thing done, it was Gunn who done it —all sorts of things. Sultan he was, but King of Macassar Straits was Weston Gunn!"*

"A wordy fellow," observed Truden, shaking with a laugh.

PREBLE listened and looked on, astounded by the acute interest of Captain Sato, by the effrontery of Truden's imposture, by the matter-of-fact air that sat upon the entire procedure. Truden took his hand from the wrist of Gertrudis.

"My daughter must rest a little, before we go on," he said placidly. He took a cheroot from the open box on the table, and lighted it. "Our friend seems to cherish honest hatred for his ratfaced captain, eh?"

"It is very interesting," said the Japanese; but Preble leaned forward.

"It's utter nonsense!" he broke out angrily. "Truden, do you ask us to believe that the ghost of a man a hundred years dead is speaking through your daughter?"

"I ask you to believe nothing," said Truden, and waved his cheroot. "You have heard; believe what you like. As a psychic experiment, I find it of value. When we come to the diamonds, then you can check with what you already have learned."

"Poppycock!" snapped the American. "Do the dead talk in this casual fashion?"

Truden chuckled. "Well, how would you expect them to talk? Gertrudis has this gift. Do you want to surround it with pomp and ceremony? Would that help you to believe in it? But I am not seeking to convince you, Mynheer Preble. If I were, then I might help you to talk with your dead father or sister or brother—no, no! I only seek to make Captain Sato realize that my predictions are infallible."

The Japanese shook his head. "You ask much. If some dead hero of Japan could speak through your daughter, that would be different. Hideyori, for example, or Yoshitsune, or Benkei the monk—could you do this?"

"Gertrudis could, assuredly," replied Truden. "It is possible, yes. At present, we are on the track of the diamonds, however. They, no doubt, will be convincing proof to you. It is not likely that I would use real diamonds as part of a magician's act."

"That is true," said Captain Sato. "And our orders are to confiscate all the diamonds that we can find; they are to be sent to Germany for use in war work."

"Then you have not acted independently of Hitler, as some say?" inquired Preble.

The officer smiled.

"Of course not. No harm in telling you, since you are a prisoner; my country acts as part of a great scheme contrived by us and the Nazis. It has only begun. Soon your country will receive another shock like that of Pearl Harbor. You will see."

Preble relapsed into silence, very wisely. To lose his head, to fly into passion, would be rank folly. At least he had corroborated his own theories; those who claimed that the Japs had jumped the gun on Hitler were wrong, and were trying to minimize the peril.

Truden now stirred, laid down his cigar, and once more put his hand on the wrist of his daughter. All this while Gertrudis had not stirred, but sat as though asleep. Now, at his touch, she shivered once more. Truden regarded Captain Sato affably.

"I suppose, in view of the demise of my servants, you can spare a couple of men to dig up the diamonds when the place is found?"

The officer smiled, half mockingly. "Certainly! First let us find them."

"Our friend Gunn will tell us."

Preble sniffed; none the less, his expectation quickened. He knew definitely where Gunn's loot had been buried and how. It was a queer yarn, a fantastic yarn, but he believed it. And he had not told Truden all he knew from those old documents he had discovered. So he kept quiet and waited. Either this stuffed sausage of a man was a simpleton and credited the alleged occult message, or else Truden had some crazy scheme of his own afoot. One was as hopeless as the other.

Gertrudis began to speak again:

"Cowardly as a coward may be, it is never safe to call a coward a coward. No coward was Ratfaced Lagmont; he split that Arab's belly with one stroke of his cutlass. This was at Ragena, the Windy Isle as the Arab seamen called it, in the Macassar. It was the last raid Lagmont made, and the diamonds I looted were larger than the sultan's. My hands were big and there was a double handful in the pouch."

"MYNHEER GUNN," said Truden politely, "where did those diamonds come from?"

"Out of a Portuguese ship from India," came the response. *"It is gainful knowledge to make dead men speak the truth! Dig up the stones from a bed of bones. I got my lame leg that day, from an Arab bullet that smote me. Lagmont had his rat nose on the scent of the diamonds. Keep them from him I would; never call me a master gunner more, if I let his greedy hands find them!"*

Gertrudis fell silent a space.

"Ragena!" said Truden. "That is this island; Angin, the Malays call it, for wind. The Windy Isle, sure enough!"

Preble eyed the man scornfully. He himself had said as much when he came. A lot fat old Truden knew about it!

"Gunner Gunn spins a good yarn," went on Gertrudis. *"A bloody fine gunner he was, though Ratfaced Lagmont stole credit for much that he did. Like to a smoothing-iron was the frog-eater; it will make you sleek and fine but have a care of being burnt!"*

"Please, about the diamonds," said Captain Sato, staring at Gertrudis. His beady black eyes were intent. "Did you bury them?"

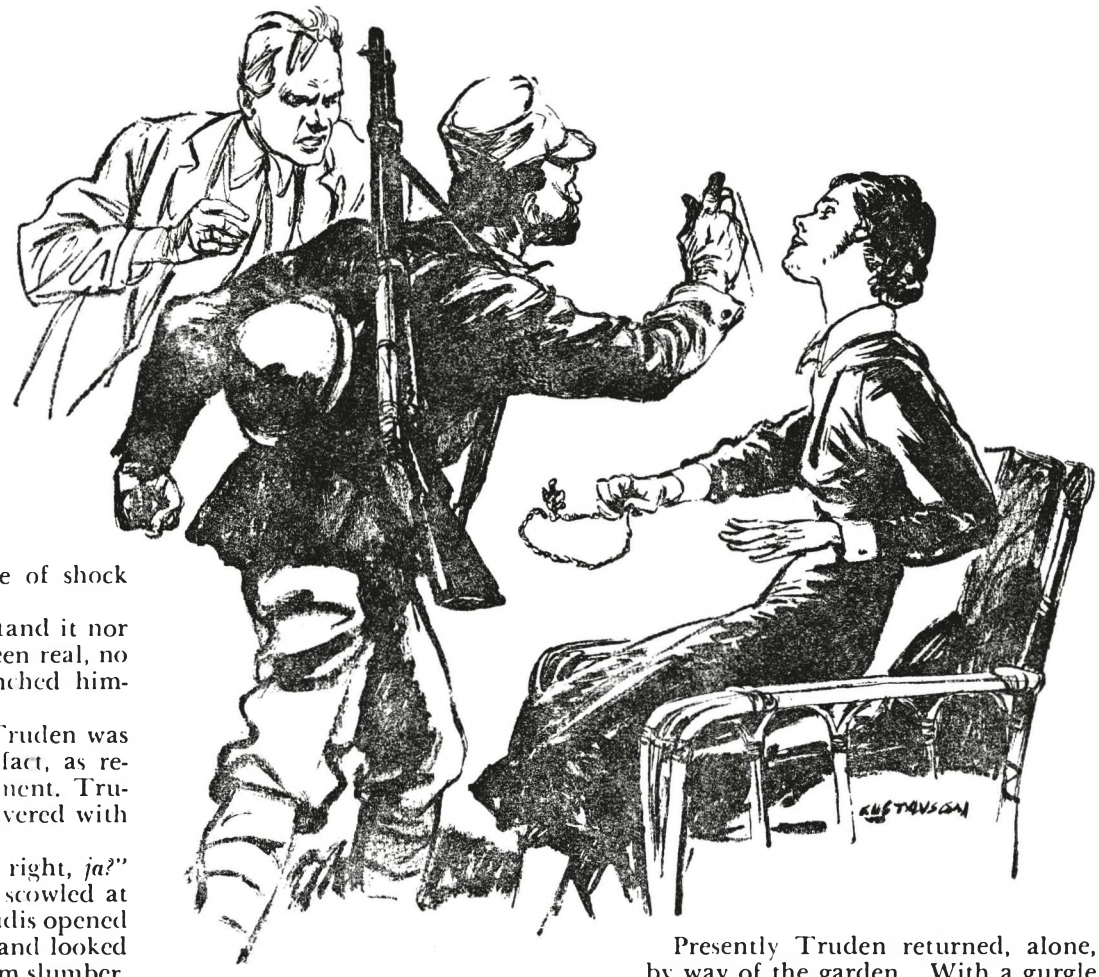
"Aye, in the Arab that Lagmont had cut asunder," was the response. *"Stuffed them into his split belly as I lay there, and be damned to Ratface! And how I laughed when Lagmont came and tended my hurt, and slid his fingers about my pockets for the stones! It was a good laugh. The Arab was buried with the others who fell, halfway up the hill, between two flame-trees. On the east side of the hill by the spring, where they made betel-paste to chew upon like heathen."*

"And you never got them back?" queried Truden. "The stones, I mean."

"Never got myself back alive," Gertrudis replied. *"But now I've been back often to see a fatter man than Gunner Gunn was muscled! Look betwixt the stumps; the pretty things are there in a bed of bones. Farewell."*

Gertrudis fell silent. Captain Sato sat frowning. After a moment Truden took away his hand, reached for his cheroot, and nodded affably.

"There you are, Captain Sato," he said. "I know the place well, the very spot! I cut down those old flame-trees when I first came here."



She slapped his face, only to be knocked back into her chair.

Preble sat with a silence of shock upon him.

He could neither understand it nor credit it. The thing had been real, no illusion, no dream; he pinched himself furtively to be certain.

All he had not yet told Truden was there, in that yarn; every fact, as related in Gunn's old parchment. Truden looked at him and quivered with laughter.

"Mynheer Preble, that is right, *ja?*"

Preble said nothing, but scowled at him and wondered. Gertrudis opened her eyes and rubbed them, and looked about as though waking from slumber. Captain Sato stood up briskly.

"Very well," he said. "Lead two of my men to the spot. Leave them and return here. Let them do the digging. And you will be shot, as I warned, if you step out of line."

"You do not trust an old magician, eh?" Truden laughed and shook his fat. "Very well, very well. Gertrudis, my dear, let us all have another drink. I am thirsty. In the cellar is some of Grimm's good beer from Surabaya; perhaps it will make Mynheer Preble find his tongue."

Gertrudis rose. Captain Sato snapped out orders. One of the guards came and accompanied her. Two other Japs came on the run, and the officer instructed them. They saluted and looked at Truden, who nodded jovially and departed with them.

Captain Sato dropped back into his chair and eyed Preble.

"Well, tell me what you think about it!" he demanded.

"I think it's all nonsense," said Preble. It was both truth and a lie; he just did not know what to make of the scene, but he refused to accept it at face value.

"You, at least, seem honest about it," said Captain Sato. "I think this man possibly has hidden some diamonds and is trying to save his life by giving them up. He thinks I am a fool. Well, you people are in no danger. Tomorrow you will be sent to join the rest of our prisoners at Macassar; the city should be in our hands by then."

It was apparent that the officer was a bit ashamed of his intent interest and was now trying to cover up by this skeptic reasoning. Preble made no comment.

Captain Sato frowned again and turned to him.

"Dead by six o'clock—what did he mean by that?"

"I know no more than you," said Preble curtly.

"There had better be no tricks, I warn you. A dead man speaking? That is absurd. It will be very easy to shoot you all at the least excuse."

HERE Gertrudis returned, bringing glasses and bottles of beer, followed by the watchful guard. Captain Sato snapped an order. The guard took one of the bottles, opened it, poured beer into a glass, and handed it to Preble.

"Drink it," said Captain Sato.

Preble drained it with a sneer. "Afraid of poison?" he said, setting down the glass. "I don't think poison could hurt a Jap."

Captain Sato made no reply, but gestured to the guard, who opened other bottles and filled all the glasses. At an order from the captain, he saluted and went back into the house.

Presently Truden returned, alone, by way of the garden. With a gurgle of delight he seized upon the beer and eased himself into his big chair.

"Well, they are digging," he said. "Do you intend to keep all the diamonds, Captain Sato?"

"Naturally, if there are any," was the reply.

Truden fell into talk with him, got an occasional word from Gertrudis, and appeared quite undisturbed by thought of the future."

To Preble, it just did not make sense. He had been probing for some reason why Truden should want to give the Japs diamonds, or go through all this rigmarole; and there was no reason that he could find. After all, Captain Sato might have made the shrewdest guess, for the Jap had evidently been following the same line of thought. Perhaps Truden was merely trying to placate his captors by giving them what was lost in any event.

This was not logical, it did not chime with his words at the first approach of the Jap planes, but it was the best explanation that Preble could find—unless Truden had gone stark mad. This was possible, too. Truden might have dug out the Gunner Gunn yarn for himself, years ago—

"Confound it, anything's possible and nothing is probable!" thought Preble. "If he's trying to pull some smart trick on these Japs, God help us all! They're not the boys to fall for anything. I was a damned fool to

get carried away by those diamonds, when I knew there was a war on!"

And this was about the only spark of common sense he could get from the matter.

Captain Sato, talking along with Truden, spoke quite freely; from time to time one of his men came with a report, and he apparently had no secrets. The guard who had fetched the beer came with a lengthy speech, and Captain Sato laughed.

"No mistake about your servants being dead, Mynheer Truden! All stiff, I understand, and apparently poisoned. We shall arrange to bury them this evening."

From the talk, Preble gathered that in a day or so a ship would arrive and unload, a ship specially designed for this island, loaded with guns and ammunition and an artillery garrison Angin Island was to be a factor in the Japanese command of Macassar Straits, and all details had been carefully arranged well in advance. The bloodless seizure of the place had obviously been most gratifying to Captain Sato.

Despite himself, Preble watched the time with unobtrusive glances at his wrist-watch. Before six o'clock, Truden had said, Sato and his men would be dead. Well, it was getting on toward five now.

Gertrudis rose to leave. Captain Sato halted her. The living-quarters of the house had been set aside for the occupancy of the three whites; she was at liberty to go to her rooms, which would be placed under guard. With a brief word, she departed.

That there was looting was not concealed. The men had roamed the house, taking what they wanted. Captain Sato seemed amused, and Truden himself treated the matter with jovial good humor. One of them, stuffing his pockets, lugged out a huge silver-framed photograph of the Great Vanderdecken. Truden, bursting into laughter, pointed at it.

"Look at that, Captain Sato!" he exclaimed. "See that melancholy face, that lean and starved figure, those long arms! Who would imagine it was I? Alas, in those days I had to watch my diet; no *rijstaafel,* no beer! That was the price of fame and wealth."

"Speaking of wealth," said the Jap smoothly, "I am informed that you keep a large supply of money here."

"Ah! You fellows know everything, don't you?" said Truden, chuckling.

"We do. I've promised my men that they shall divide this money, for which you have no further use. You will not object to handing it over?"

"Naturally, I will," said Truden. "However, I can't help myself. As soon as we hear from those diamonds, I'll show you where the money is kept. I'd like to take a look at those servants of mine, too." He became graver, almost threatening. "I don't half believe what your men said. I warn you, if those natives have been murdered, I shall resent it sharply!"

Captain Sato smiled. "We shall go and look them over together— Ah! Here come the treasure-seekers!"

A babble of voices was heard. The two diggers, excited and earth-stained, came into the garden trailed by a number of other Japs, all talking shrilly. The noise ceased. The two came to the veranda and saluted, their eyes inflamed with greed and passion. At a command from the officer, they burst into vehement speech, and poured on the table a sparkling little flood of diamonds.

Preble's jaw dropped. He stared at the stones as the two men talked. There were some dozens, large and small; all seemed of ancient cut. As precious stones, probably of no great value until recut, but as diamonds for use in tools and machinery, past all value. Germany had most bitter need of just such stones.

Truden poked at them with his finger, then relaxed. Captain Sato examined them more closely, and partook of his men's excitement.

"This is most remarkable, trick or no trick!" he broke out eagerly. "The men found these five feet down, among



Three men scuffling, Captain Sato dying, and Truden standing ashake with laughter!

bone fragments of which little remained! Mynheer Truden, how did you manage this extraordinary illusion?"

A flush of color crept into the fat jowl of the Dutchman.

"Illusion?" he repeated angrily. "Are those diamonds illusion? Are you such a fool as to think I could have planted them in the ground—that I would willingly have risked my life, my daughter's life, for the sake of playing a game with you? Don't be absurd."

"Your pardon, please," rejoined Sato, staring at him. "But you cannot expect me to believe that what we heard this afternoon was real—that a man so long dead was talking from the body of your daughter?"

"Why not?" snapped Truden almost belligerently. Preble, who had found the officer voicing his own mental puzzlement, spoke up sharply.

"Because such things just don't happen, that's why not! I knew where those stones were buried, according to Gunn's directions; but I didn't tell you. You took the men straight to them. You knew all the time!"

"Oh, did I!" Truden puffed out his cheeks, obviously angered. "And I would have coached my little Gertrudis what to say—English words, when she speaks no English! I would have gone to all this risk and trouble—for what? To let Captain Sato have these diamonds! Such thinking is the height of folly. Much simpler to have given them to him outright, had I so desired. The truth is the simplest thing of all—Gunn told us where to look, and we found them. Why not accept it?"

Captain Sato looked from one to the other, baffled and hesitant. Then he stood up and went to the table. Spreading a handkerchief, he raked the diamonds into it and knotted the corners, and stuffed it into his pocket.

"Simplest of all," he said cheerfully, "is to take the diamonds and not worry about how they came."

"But my purpose was to convince you of my honesty!" exclaimed Truden. "Do you believe in my powers of prediction, my dear sir?"

CAPTAIN SATO's bronze features were flicked by a grin that came and went.

"If you like, yes. Now shall we glance at your servants, then take the money?"

"Oh, the money! Of course," said Truden, heaving up. Once more he became jovial and beaming. "There is a locked chest in the wireless-room. Suppose you have your men bring it here into the courtyard, and when we return from looking at my servants, they can make the division of the money, or you can. Here are the keys."

With a careless gesture he handed two keys on a string to Captain Sato.

"In what room are the servants?" he demanded.

"Useless servants!" The Jap officer grinned. "In the shed at the end of the garden, by the side of the house."

"Good. Let us inspect the useless servants."

Truden started off, passing by Preble to reach the steps. Captain Sato called his guards and barked a string of commands at them, which evoked grins and salutes. That all would assemble to share the loot, was certain.

AS Truden passed Preble, he paused briefly. A look, a wink, a flick of his white finger—that was all. Then he passed on.

Preble followed him, half angry, more than a little dubious, frowning uncertainly. He trailed the waddling stuffed sausage, as he mentally termed Truden at every sight of him, and Captain Sato caught up, crisply authoritative.

"So you are going, too? Very well. Remember that you are unarmed; I should regret having to shoot you because we want many American prisoners in Japan to show our people. You silly Americans, who think all the men of Nippon have spectacles and buck teeth! These Javanese natives, who commit suicide at the first sound of our bombs, are sensible; they save us the trouble of shooting them. Americans should do the same."

Preble said nothing; words were poor weapons. Truden was quite oblivious of any peril or threat. He paused, turned, looked up at the windows of the house, and blew a kiss to the white figure of Gertrudis, at a window above the garden.

"Her flowers here in the *kampong!*" he observed. "She is looking at them for the last time, perhaps; it is sad. Poor Gertrudis! She has worked so hard with these flowers, Captain Sato. You can appreciate that; your people also love flowers."

"It is regrettable that she cannot take her flowers with her," said Captain Sato.

"Yes, indeed." Truden fingered his goatee and resumed his course. He brightened. "Ah! That reminds me of a curious incident. There was an Italian who wrote music; his name was Donizetti. He wrote a sweet ballad about flowers and called it 'Flower Angels.' It was published but remained almost unknown. Later on he put it into one of his operas under the name of 'One Furtive Tear' and nothing about flowers; it became famous!"

"You had better think about where you want those natives buried," said Captain Sato.

"Yes, I suppose so."

They came around the side of the house. The skies were empty and peaceful, with sunset not far distant; it was hard to realize that those skies had so recently been filled with roaring murder.

Just ahead, close to the house, was a small shed almost covered with magnificent bougainvilleas, whose rich scarlet nearly hid it from sight. The door and a window were clear. Truden came to a halt, his eyes rounding at the doorway, and plucked at his lip, like a child pouting.

"Now I realize it," he observed. "They are dead. They were my friends, my assistants! They had been with me for years. Emil was a superb cook; his father was the sultan's chef at Bandor. It is hard to think of them as dead!"

"Reassure yourself," Captain Sato said smiling ironically. "Lead the way, please."

He drew his automatic pistol as he spoke, thumbing the safety-catch aside. He was not taking chances.

Truden pushed forward and shoved the door open. A low wail came from him as he stepped inside. He stood there overcome by the sight—and it was a ghastly one, as Preble saw. He advanced at a sign from Captain Sato, and the Jap followed, standing in the entrance.

The shed held a few tools, with mats on the floor. On the mats lay six natives; Preble recognized two who had served the *rijstaafel,* smiling brown men. Now they were dead, stiff, sprawled in attitudes of agony. Their pockets had obviously been rifled by the Jap soldiers, for many were inside out.

THE sight, to Preble, was absolutely sickening. He had anticipated some trickery, some illusion—anything but this hideous truth. He turned and hastily stepped outside. Captain Sato followed warily, but one glance at Preble's face satisfied him, and he stood holding his weapon, not speaking.

Truden came into the doorway and stopped. Tears were running down his fat cheeks.

"You will not mind?" he said brokenly. "Wait one moment. I must speak to them, say farewell to them. They have been so faithful!"

He closed the door nearly shut, not quite. His voice came to them, as he addressed the natives by name and spoke in Javanese or High Malay—probably the latter, for Preble could make nothing out of it. Very few people speak High Malay.

"Curious, all of it!" said Captain Sato. "Do you think he is quite sane?"

"I'm afraid not," Preble said bitterly.

Up until now he had expected something, he knew not what—some attempt at illusion, some mad effort against Captain Sato. He had dreaded

it, with the clear-cut realization of how futile it must be. He had not quite credited the death of those servants. Now he knew it for drear reality. Nothing was to be expected. He and Truden and everyone else under this wave of barbarian war were reduced to the shabby dead level of human wreckage.

"One of my men reports a large launch camouflaged by trees at one side of the harbor," said the Jap. "The other small craft were destroyed; this was not. What do you know about it?"

"Nothing," said Preble in a dull voice. Then he remembered that Truden had spoken of a hidden boat. It did not matter.

The door squeaked. Truden came out, slowly, dabbing at his eyes with his handkerchief. Then he tucked the handkerchief carefully into his breast pocket.

"Think of it!" he said, with a tragic gesture. "They were friends, old friends. My assistants for many years. They were in my troupe all over the world—"

"Never mind all that," broke in Captain Sato. He became brisk, efficient, business-like. He shoved his pistol into its holster and stepped toward Truden. "I wish to ask you about a launch hidden under trees, down below. It is yours?"

MYNHEER TRUDEN gaped at him, then seemed to waken.

"Oh! The launch! Yes, yes," he replied, and stepped forward. "Yes, it is mine, Captain Sato. A good launch, stout and seaworthy. It must go a long way because we cannot go to Macassar now. We must go elsewhere."

The officer smiled, half pityingly.

"You do not understand," he said. "A ship will be here tomorrow, I hope, or very soon, to occupy the island and fortify it. You will be taken away when it leaves."

"Yes, I understand about the ship." Truden nodded solemnly. "When it comes, I shall not be here, but I hope that it will be fittingly met when it comes."

Captain Sato shook his head slightly; it was quite evident that the fat man's mind was wandering.

"But about this launch," he said. "Why was it hidden?"

"So it would remain safe, of course!" responded Truden with an air of surprise. "You see, it has all the rifles aboard!"

"What rifles?" demanded Captain Sato sharply.

Truden flung out his hand.

"Why, the rifles for my servants, naturally! What did you think?" He turned with a nod and a glance at Preble. "You remember what I said to you earlier today, about the great importance of timing? It is the most important thing in any act of illusion, in any stage effect. . . . Ah, the sun has gone down! Or at least, it is going. It is nearly six o'clock, Captain Sato."

"So it is," agreed the Jap dryly. "I think we'll investigate that launch and those rifles."

"Do not bother," said Truden. He took out his gay handkerchief again and wiped his eyes. "Do not bother; such things will not interest you."

Captain Sato stared at him appraisingly, puzzled by his words.

A flicker of motion at one side caught Preble's eye. He turned slightly—and his mouth flew open. Violent disbelief gripped him; incredulity, horror, swept over him. A figure glided from the still-open door of the shed, then another. He recognized them instantly.

They were the two servants who had served the *rijstaafel* at noon.

Captain Sato, his back to them, perceived nothing. The two servants moved toward him; there was a glitter of bright steel. Preble made a slight choking sound. Captain Sato swung around, saw the two men—but then it was too late. They were already upon him.

Other figures slipped out of the shed doorway and were gone downhill, silent and swift. Those grotesque figures of the dead! But here were three men scuffling on the ground, and Captain Sato dying, and Truden standing all ashake with laughter that rippled his fat frame as he looked on. Preble was frozen, gripped by shock and horror. He saw the Jap relax in death, he saw one of the two brown men take the pistol and hand it to Truden. But Truden handed it back, still rumbling laughter.

"Take it and help the Mejuffrow Gertrudis," he said.

THE two servants were gone. Captain Sato lay in a crumpled, inert heap; he might have been asleep, but for the scarlet pool gathering half under his body. Preble stepped forward, hesitated, and leaned over. He put his finger into the pool and held it up—yes, blood.

"It's real!" he exclaimed. He was dazed, mentally struggling, still bewildered.

"Of course." A chuckle escaped Truden. "Death is real, young man."

Preble lifted incredulous eyes to him. "But those men! They were dead—I saw them myself, the Japs saw them—"

"*Ja*, everyone saw them. It was not death but hypnosis; then I waked them again. *Ja!* I told you all was arranged." Truden glanced at his watch. "Still forty seconds. That was good timing, excellent timing!"

"Good Lord!" Preble woke up at last, under the impact of comprehension. "Then you've killed Sato—"

"Quiet, please!" Truden, no longer laughing, held up a plump white hand. "Gertrudis is at her window, above the garden. She has Mills bombs there, half a dozen of them, hidden under her knitting so no one found them. Some of the men with rifles will finish what is left after she does her part—"

Preble stiffened. "So that's why you gave them the money!"

"Of course. It is not lost at all," said Truden practically. "And we shall go away in the big launch, all of us, after I report by wireless what has happened. And when the ship comes tomorrow, it will be torpedoed by one of our own war-boats. . . . Ah!"

HE was interrupted by a chorus of shrill yells of dismay and fright, drowned almost instantly in crash upon crash of explosions. Preble thought of those Japs gathered in the garden under the windows; he remembered how Truden had blown a kiss to the white figure above, how he had just now mopped his face with his gay handkerchief—signals, assistants, plans made long since—

Rifles spanged out their explosive message. Not many. Then they were silent.

Truden came over to Preble and took his arm.

"It was nice, after all, that you were here," he said kindly. "You helped, because your face was so honest; it showed all you thought. *Ja!* Women, natives, old men, even dogs and children will be killing these Japanese animals in all the islands—that is how Dutchmen fight such barbarians. Even old Truden has not been wasted! The Great Vanderdecken is old and fat, but he is not yet dead—and Captain Sato is!"

Preble pulled himself together. "But see here, Mynheer! About this Gunn story—that was not really a dead man speaking?"

Truden began to shake with laughter anew.

"Ho! Well, what do you think about it?"

"Damned if I know," said Preble honestly. "But one thing's certain—if anyone deserves the title of King of Macassar Straits, it's not Gunner Gunn! It's you."

"That, young man, is a great compliment." Truden pulled at his arm. "Come along. I must get that wireless message sent. And be sure to congratulate Gertrudis; there is nothing she loves so much as a word of approbation. She will be sorry about her flowers—they will not look very pretty now, eh?"

Preble made no response. He was wondering about Gimlet-eye Gunn; and he still is. Every magician, they say, is under oath never to reveal the tricks of his trade.

Read in the Sand

by ACHMED ABDULLAH

"THIEF! Stop, thief!" The shout peaked shrilly—and Pancho Machado, thrusting the merchant's purse into his belt, ran as fast as he could through Lima's crooked streets.

He turned a corner—a second, a third. He doubled on his tracks, and finally, with the man-hunt crying away on the wrong trail, came out on a sunny deserted square that faced the back wall of a great palace; the residence—he knew—of Don Miguel de Urdiales, who commanded the armed forces of the King of Spain's Viceroy of Peru.

He was hot and out of breath. So, as if nothing at all had happened, he squatted cross-legged after his gypsy manner in the shade of a chestnut tree, reached into his voluminous breeches and brought out a small copper tray and a bag filled with sand.

He dumped the sand on the tray and was ready for business: ready, by the same token, to read, in the yellow, shifting grains, the shifting fortunes of man, woman and child. For Pancho Machado, besides being a thief—and occasionally, when the King commanded, or rather, when the King's press-gang caught him, a soldier—was also a sand-reader; and besides a sand-reader, he was also a poet.

Indeed, there have come down to us, through the dusty, melancholy centuries, a number of his verses. Chiefly a quatrain addressed to Vatahuasca, a girl of princely Inca blood, which begins:

Gold is the flame of her amazing eyes.
Gold is her narrow hand that tends the flowers.
Lacking these two, O Maid of Paradise,
What gold at all is ours?

Quite a skilled coining of words. Nor was he less skilled as a thief or sand-reader; a triple vocation which was reasonable enough—at least, according to himself.

For (he was wont to explain to his boon-companions at the Bodega De Los Tres Reyes) he had to be a thief, since even a poet must eat and drink. And while sand-reading was not very remunerative, yet, in the course of pre-



A colorful and picaresque tale of wild events when Peru was a Spanish colony. . . . By the gifted author of "The Swinging Caravan" and "The Man on Horseback."

dicting his customer's future, he would ask subtle questions about the victim's past and present, thereby gathering information as to his wealth and a mass of other details invaluable to Pancho in his capacity as a thief.

So, pleasantly enough, he drifted on life's tide; satisfied that he was young and not bad-looking, with his strong body, his arrogant beak of a nose and thick black hair; satisfied, too, that the Lord had given him agile fingers with which to lift purses or twist off precious gems; satisfied, furthermore, that he had a beguiling voice to attract people to his sand-tray when he gave his oracular trade-cry, as he did today, sitting comfortably in the shade:

"I read the future, nobles and commoners! Cross my palm with silver! I read the future!"

But nobody came to consult him about business prospects, or passion of love or passion of hate, it being past the noon hour, with shops shuttered, and people, after their midday meal, settled down for the siesta—the which reminded him that he had fasted since early morning.

Should he spend on food the money he had taken from the merchant's pocket? He shook his head. It was against what he was pleased to call his principles.

So he looked about for edibles as a sparrow might, or a squirrel. And suddenly a savory smell was wafted to his nostrils; his eyes followed the direction where his nose had sniffed; and there, on the broad railing of the palace balcony, where a cook must have put them to cool a little, he saw three porcelain bowls heaped with steaming food.

But he noticed that the balcony was high, the wall with no foothold of any sort. To get up there, he needed wings; and—he laughed—"I am not a bird, and may the blessed Saints grant it be many years before I become an angel!"

Then, as he saw a riderless donkey cross the square, a notion came to him.

He whistled softly. The donkey stopped, cocked a furry ear, thought—greedily and mistakenly—of carrots, trotted up; quickly Pancho grasped the bridle. He tied it to the tree; jumped on the animal's back, stood erect for a second—was able, with a leap, to catch hold of the iron bracket that supported the balcony and swing himself up; while the donkey, outraged in its feelings, brayed lustily.

So lustily it brayed that, inside the palace, somebody demanded: "What's the matter with that devil's devising of a beast?" And just as Pancho was stuffing his mouth with large, well-spiced handfuls, lumbering foosteps approached; and before he could climb back over the railing, he saw a woman come out—an Indian woman, enormously fat, and evidently the cook, judging from the great ladle which she carried like a scepter.

Pancho was alarmed, but only for a second. He walked up to her, took her left ear between thumb and second finger, and tweaked it painfully.

"Our Lord Don Miguel was right!" he announced sternly.

"R-r-right?"

"In not trusting you! In having me taste his repast before it should slide down his honorable gullet! Ah,"—and he helped himself to roast mutton,—"it is wretched—slops for a hog, not for a grandee of Spain! By Our Lady,"—here he helped himself to stuffed vine-leaves,—"not enough rice—not enough raisins or saffron! Begone—and cook another mess!"

"I,"—stammered the woman,—"I implore forgiveness."

"Freely granted—where I am concerned. But will Don Miguel grant you his?" Pancho coughed, winked. "Of course, I might whisper a word in his ear—"

"Let the word be silver—like these coins, caballero!" she begged, dropping a purse into the gypsy's hand.

SHE left; he was about to return the way he had come. But by this time the midday siesta-time had passed. Shops were opening. People were beginning to cross the square. Some—fruit-sellers and lemonade-sellers—were pitching their stands directly beneath the balcony; and again Pancho was alarmed.

Where, he wondered, could he turn? Where hide?

Finally he shrugged.

"If the front door be locked—so my grandmother has always told me," he reflected, "then try the back door. . . . This one!"—opening one at random and finding himself in a large, dim hall.

It was empty. So was the suite of rooms through which he stepped warily. But he knew, by the silken draperies and the scent of perfume, that he was in the women's quarter of the palace. Knew it, too, by the profusion of small precious things here and there—and his palms itched.

"If my breeches," he thought, "were only large enough to hold the lot!" He looked about. "What'll I take first?"

He had already purloined a golden winecup studded with emeralds, when he gave a start, and listened tensely—heard, from somewhere near by, the minor cadences of a lute and a high, melting voice.

"Help me, Manco Capac!" chanted the voice. "Help me, Great Reverence! Help me, O Soul of my People!"

Pancho frowned. He knew the words, the prayer. It was the traditional appeal of high-born Indian captives to the spirit of Manco Capac, greatest of Inca rulers.

He crossed himself.

"A heathen," he thought. "Cursed be they all! Still, even a heathen can be pretty. And if she needs help, here is a sturdy Christian who'll turn the trick, though she be ten times a heathen. May the Saints intercede in my behalf!"

He followed the sound of the voice until he came to a staircase that swept down to an oblong room; and leaning over the baluster, he saw there a girl stretched out on a couch.

A moment or two earlier, the music and chanting had stopped. Her eyes were closed. She seemed tight asleep. Yet he was sure that she had been the singer. The lute was still hanging from her arm by a colored ribbon.

"Must have dozed off very suddenly," he reflected, tiptoeing down the stairs—not knowing that she was merely feigning slumber, for reasons of her own. . . .

Her name was Vatahuasca, and she was of princely Inca blood. Seven months ago she had been made a prisoner when Don Miguel de Urdiales, acting under the Viceroy's orders, had led his army beyond the Andes, to carry the might and faith of Christian Spain to the last Inca stronghold.

She remembered how the stronghold had been taken by storm. Remembered how the steel-clad Spanish horsemen had galloped to the attack. Remembered their shrill war-cry: *"For Castile and Leon!"* Remembered the answering, guttural war-cry of her own people: *"The fire is on the hills!"* Remembered the bitterness of defeat. Remembered her father's death, her mother's suicide, and how, as she had been about to plunge the dagger into her own breast, its point had been caught by the chain links of a bracelet.

First she had seen the bracelet, of silver, set with a large moonstone; then the brawny wrist about which it was clasped; then the man to whom the wrist belonged: a Spanish soldier, with the heavy iron visor of his helmet drawn so that she had seen nothing of his features except black eyes twinkling through the narrow slit.

She had heard his voice:

"Death comes soon enough, little sister. Why seek it voluntarily?"

He had tossed her dagger aside; had plucked her from amidst the horses' trampling feet, the clash and thud of shimmering weapons; had stared at her—seeing her very lovely, with her short, softly curved nose, her lips red as a hibiscus flower, and eyes a deep bronze flecked with gold. Decidedly, a jewel among women—and: "Captive to my sword!" he had exclaimed.

Then rough accents had announced:

"Not to *your* sword, he-goat!"

Pancho—for it was he—had wheeled. A sergeant of cavalry had stood there, tall, wide-shouldered, red-faced.

"He-goat yourself!" the gypsy had shouted. "It was I who—"

"Who saved this charming morsel for our lord Don Miguel." The other had pointed at the gold-and-pearl ornament about the girl's neck. "An Inca princess. Therefore, by law—"

"Yes," Pancho had mumbled.

He had turned to the girl.

"Captive to Don Miguel indeed," he had whispered. "And yet—to have you and hold you, I would throw a noose around the far stars."

"Poet, are you?" she had mocked. "Or soldier?"

"Soldier only when Don Miguel commands. Otherwise—yes, a poet. Also a sand-reader. Also a thief. And since the thief in me cannot steal you, let the poet in me tell you that you are like the moon shining over a dark patio—that I can never forget you, though never, never you can be mine."

And he had walked away, while in Vatahuasca's heart, overshadowing her grief, had risen a sudden sweet, queer longing for this man with the iron-masked face. . . .

Seven months had passed. Maybe—she wondered—he had forgotten her? She did not know. But she knew that always it was the thought of him which made her say, "No!" when Don Miguel came to her and told her he loved her. Told her frequently. Told her humbly, pleadingly, asking her to be his wife. For—perhaps it was his terrible, self-hurting Castilian pride—Don Miguel, who, for the sake of Spain's glory, would carry fire and sword from Panama to Cuzco, could not find it in his soul to force his love on a woman, though she be his lawful slave.

He would bow before her, offering her his friendship, his tenderness, his all.

"Everything I will give you, best beloved!"

"Give me freedom!"

"Everything—except freedom. How could I live, with you not near?" And with something like a break in his harsh voice: "Could you not love me—a little?"

"No, no!"

The same thing, almost daily. And today, hearing Pancho's footsteps, she had imagined it was Don Miguel coming to plead with her again; and quickly she had closed her eyes, knowing he would go away if he found her asleep.

THE gypsy went up to her couch. He looked down, recognized her. And there came back to him—deep in his soul it had never left—the passion that had surged over him on the battlefield near Cuzco; and it was to him as if, suddenly, they were alone, he and she, alone in the palace, alone in Lima, alone in all the world.

He bent. He kissed her. But at once he straightened up as, from not very far off, he heard people approach-



Illustrated by Raymond Sisley

"Thief! Stop, thief!" The shout peaked shrilly, and Pancho, thrusting the merchant's purse into his belt, ran through Lima's crooked streets.



As he turned to run away, the girl saw on his wrist a silver bracelet. That bracelet—she knew it!

ing. Momentarily he stood there motionless, like a pointer at bay, just as the girl, startled by the touch of his lips on hers, opened her eyes. Then as he turned to run away, she saw on his wrist a silver bracelet set with a large, off-color moonstone . . . and instinctively her fingers reached out, took hold—one of the thin chains broke, and the bracelet dropped at her side. . . .

That bracelet, she told herself, she knew it! She had seen it, the day of the battle, on the arm of the Spanish soldier masked by the iron visor, who had taken the dagger away from her, had spoken to her of love amidst the clashing of swords and the thumping of drums; who—yes, yes!—had told her he was a poet, a thief, a sand-reader, and had vowed that he would never forget her.

Why—he hadn't forgotten her! He had come back to her; had, surely, risked the many dangers to find her again!

Her feelings might have been different had she known it was not love but hunger, not longing for her but for the bowls heaped with steaming food, which had sent him into the palace.

She did not know—and a cry of joy trembled on her lips. But already Pancho had disappeared. He sped through rooms luckily still empty; came out on a roof and crossed it; crossed a second roof, a third; slipped through a trapdoor; and found himself in the shadowy nave of the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament that faced the streets of Lima with its magnificent gateway raised on a flight of broad steps.

He heard the priest at the altar intone the words:

"Benedicat vos omnipotens Deus, Pater et Filius et Spiritus Sanctus!"

He saw the worshipers on their knees. He joined them; prayed, fervently, sincerely, with the best of them; and presently, the service over, left sedately with the rest.

Fifteen minutes later, he entered the little house which—his parents were dead—he shared with Esperanza, his wizened old grandmother.

She greeted him with shrill cries:

"And what did your clever, clever hands find today? Jewels? Money?"

"Both," he replied, spreading the loot before her.

"Elegant!" she exclaimed. "You're a better purse-snatcher than your late father—may he enjoy Paradise! And he was the lad who could filch from between your lips, without your teeth being any the wiser!"

"Yet, clever thief as I am, I had one thing stolen from me."

"Shame on you! What is it?"

"My heart, little grandmother." And he told her everything that had happened, and added: "She can never be mine. She belongs to Don Miguel."

"What of it?" Esperanza sniffed contemptuously. "A Spanish grandee, I grant you. Yet we—are we not gypsies of the Granada line? Some day, there is no doubt at all, you'll take her away from him. *Hai-hai*"—triumphantly—"from under the very nose—such an ugly nose—of this haughty grandee!"

He shrugged. He knew better than to argue with his grandmother. He waited for a chance to return to the palace and do—what? Saints above, what *could* he do?

VATAHUASCA waited too.

But as the days passed, then the weeks, and there was never sign of him,—she wondered what his name might be,—her elation vanished. She became grief-stricken, was often in tears; and then one morning Don Miguel found her in the garden, crying as if her heart would break. A great pity came to him—pity for her and, a little, for himself. For he thought he knew what was the matter with her.

"I cannot conquer your love with the greatness of mine," he said. "Go back to your own people. I give you freedom."

And there was never a more astonished grandee in all Peru than Don Miguel, when he heard her reply:

"I do not wish freedom."

What, she asked herself, did she want with freedom? How, if she left Lima, would the poet, the thief, the sand-reader, ever find her? Quickly, seeing Don Miguel's surprise, she continued:

"What would I do back home? My parents are dead."

"But you look pale, ailing. A change of climate will do you good. Tomorrow you shall go to the mountains, to my summer place. It's too hot here."

"I like the heat. Let me stay here."

"But—"

"Please let me stay!"

She became excited, fainted; and it was long minutes before she regained consciousness.

That night high fever set in. Day after day it grew worse, and Don Miguel sent for the best physicians in Lima, in all Peru; sent as far north as the City of Mexico—where, recently, His Most Catholic Majesty had founded a great university.

They came with their drugs and pills. They examined, diagnosed, prescribed. Yet not one of these wise doctors was wise enough to know that their patient wanted no better, or worse, medicine than the warm lips of a poet, a thief, a sand-reader.

IT was not his fault that he did not come. For weeks he haunted the palace, trying to gain entrance. But by this time the cook must have discovered how she had been fooled. The emerald-studded cup, moreover, had been missed, and therefore the house was more carefully guarded than ever. Though he offered bribes and essayed ruse and force and cajolery, Pancho found himself barred out.

Finally the red-bearded, rotund captain of the palace guards—an Irish mercenary in the Spanish service—gave him summary warning:

"This is not a healthy spot for thieves."

"A thief? I? How—how dare you?"

"I can see it in your eyes, rogue. Merry eyes, shrewd eyes. But not honest eyes. And thus—be pleased to consider the fate of the donkey."

"What donkey, swag-bellied ruffian?"

"The reckless donkey who traveled abroad looking for horns—and lost his ears!"

Shortly afterward, with street gossip exaggerating the tale, Pancho heard that Vatahuasca was on the point of death; and that night, weak and feverish, he took to his bed. No longer was he able to squat comfortably in the shade of a tree and tell people's fortunes, nor to roam the streets and ply his purse-snatching trade. All he could do was to write poems—to tell the truth, rather sickeningly sentimental poems; and what profit was there in that?

No wonder his grandmother was worried. For no money was coming in, and presently all they owned, including the purloined winecup, was sold for food. And she was worried yet more about Pancho—quite as worried as Don Miguel, who day by day saw Vatahuasca wasting away, until he was ready to try anything at all, even—he was careful not to mention it to his father-confessor—sorcerers, heathen Indian medicine-men.

It was the old Indian cook who suggested one of the latter; and one evening he came.

He was alone with the girl. She looked at him. His wrinkled face seemed kindly. He was, moreover, of her own Inca race. She decided to confide in him.

"I," she began, "am a better physician than you are."

"Then why not cure yourself?"

"I would—if I could find the medicine."

Then she whispered at length, imploringly. She slipped a ruby ring into his hand. He gave it back to her.

"No bribe is necessary," he said. "Are we not of the same blood, you and I? Besides, once my heart was young—as young as yours, child, and as clamorous with passion."

He went to speak to Don Miguel.

"The girl," he announced, "can be made well. The gods gave me sign."

The Spaniard frowned. He was a good Christian. He should not, he knew, have called in the sorcerer. So he felt guilty—and angry.

"Heathen gods!" he exclaimed, and went on threateningly: "Do not forget that there is the Inquisition—"

"Which," the Indian interrupted calmly, "cannot cure this girl. My gods can. They told me there lives, in this town, a certain sand-reader whose touch will heal her."

"Who is he?"

"The gods did not reveal his name."

"Then how can you find him?"

The sorcerer smiled as he recalled how Vatahuasca had told him that she had seen the poet, the thief, the sand-reader only twice: once with his features hidden by the visor of his helmet, the other time catching no more than a glimpse of his back as he leaped over the threshold. His smile broadened as he reflected that love, as people insisted, may be blind; yet it could look through brick walls.

"The gods," he went on blandly, "assured me they will show her the way—if she be allowed to seek through the streets of Lima, with me, and me alone, by her side."

Don Miguel stared at him.

"If you succeed," he said, "I shall reward you handsomely. If you fail,"—in a cold, hard voice,—"there is *still* the Inquisition—still the stake and iron chains and fire and the smell of roasting infidel flesh, which is pleasant to the nostrils of Christians!"

"I shall not fail," replied the other.

But, careful man, he lost no time in arranging for a relay of swift horses to take him out of town and beyond the Andes—just in case.

NOW it seemed the very thought of this sand-reader, whose touch would miraculously cure her, was already of benefit to Vatahuasca. For the next day she rose from her couch

and left the palace, accompanied by the Indian medicine-man. And neither knew that, at a distance in back of them, stalked a tall, lean man, hugging the shadows, his face blurred by a floppy Basque bonnet pulled well over his forehead.

She was elated, and yet nervous.

How, she asked herself, would she recognize the man among the many of his craft in Lima? And suppose she did, how would she be able to tell him what she *meant* to tell him, here, on the street-corners where the gypsy fortune-tellers plied their trade, with people hovering near, listening and watching? Should she say to him:

"I know nothing about you—nothing, except that, since you did not come back to me, I had to come to you, because—oh—"

She interrupted her thoughts. She would know what to say, she decided, when she saw him. All that mattered was to find him. And she wondered how she should go about it, until, finally, her woman's wit came to her rescue. Though in the end, as it happened, she did not need her woman's wit at all—needed no more than the secret whisper in her soul.

Still, in the beginning, her shrewdness counted; at least, if not in finding, then in eliminating. For—and it confirmed the ugly suspicion in the mind of the man who dogged her footsteps, hugging the shadows—she paid no attention to the old and middle-aged sand-readers, and she wasted never a glance on the younger ones who were either too fat or too thin, too short or too tall; nor on those who had crooked noses, twisted ears or ragged beards.

EVEN with the few who passed this indirect examination, her behavior was odd. First she would ask:

"Are you a thief?"

Nearly always the shocked, nor necessarily truthful, reply would be: "No—the Saints protect me!" And she would walk away. But if the answer was, "Yes—the Saints forgive me!" she would continue: "Are you a poet?" And if once more the answer was in the affirmative, she would say:

"Good! Read my future."

Then, when the man asked her to trace her initials in the sand, she would stretch out a bare arm encircled by a silver bracelet set with a large off-color moonstone. She would shake this bracelet so that it jingled and glistened; would hesitate as if waiting for the man to speak; would suddenly, when he remained silent, exclaim:

"Pah—you're not the one who knows my fate!"

And she would turn on her heel and be off down the street.

Naturally, by evening, the telling of this strange thing was all over Lima, until it drifted to the mean, furtive alley where Pancho lived with his



"I have lost my purse," said Vatahuasca to the medicine-

grandmother. She was sitting by his bedside, putting moist rags on his fevered, aching forehead. She looked about the room. Everything had been sold for food except the two cots with their sheets and pillows, and the copper tray which formerly Pancho had used to read in the sand the fortunes of man, woman and child.

He pointed at it.

"Today," he said, "you must sell it, Grandmother."

"Never! It belonged to your father—and your grandfather—and your great-grandfather's great-great-grandfather, who brought it out of Egypt!"

"Even so—what else is there to sell? I'm too weak to—"

"What about me? It's years since I've lifted a purse. But perhaps my fingers are still agile enough to—"

Just then a neighbor burst into the room, an old widow quite as poor as Esperanza; excitedly she was babbling about a girl—rich, judging from her attire—who wanted to consult a sand-reader.

"She has been all over town. And nobody, it seems, pleased her. Now she's in our alley. Do you think Pancho is too ill to—"

"No, no!" cried Esperanza. "Fetch her—quick!"

The woman hurried away, and Esperanza bustled about. She filled the tray with sand. She straightened



man. "Find it, please! And you, old woman, go with him."

her grandson's bed-clothes. She pulled down the window blinds to shut out the rays of the sinking sun and hide the poverty and disorder of the room. And when, a few moments later, Vatahuasca entered, accompanied by the Indian medicine-man, she greeted her in noisy, extravagant gypsy fashion:

"Welcome! Welcome, laugh-of-the-moon! Welcome, mirror-of-beauty! Is it the future you wish to know? *Ai-yai* —there is no sand-reader in all Peru like my grandson, though he is sick and cannot rise and bow before you!"

There was a silence.

The light was very dim; yet somehow Vatahuasca knew that this figure on the bed was the man whom she was seeking. Knew it without asking him if he was poet and thief, without stretching out her arm to see if he recognized the bracelet. Knew it by something in her heart.

Oh, yes, she knew. And so did he.

And through the dusk of the coiling shadows, her brown, gold-flecked eyes stared into his black eyes. Wordlessly a question was asked. Wordlessly answered.

And she turned to Esperanza.

"How much the price of the sand-reading?" she asked.

"Whatever you wish to give, small queen!"

Vatahuasca put a hand into her waist-shawl; drew it out again.

"I have lost my purse," she said to the medicine-man. "Remember the alley where I gave alms to the blind beggar? I must have dropped it there. Find it, please! And you, old woman, go with him. Four eyes see more than two."

So it was that presently, Vatahuasca and Pancho were alone.

HE got up from his cot and took her in his arms. He did not tell her he loved her. There was no need for that. He said:

"I was thinking of you when I lay dying, and when I should have been thinking of my soul's salvation—may the Saints intercede in my behalf!"

"And I was thinking of you when the black spirits of death were snarling at my heels like dogs. But how could I have died without knowing the touch of your lips, best beloved?"

He kissed her; and he wondered what made her mouth so soft and sweet and vibrant; and he said:

"We must go away from here, to a land where there will be nothing but happiness—always your lips on mine and your arms about me generously."

"Far away," she whispered. "And you must be quick, before Don Miguel—"

"Yes!" a harsh voice broke in. "Before Don Miguel—"

They turned, startled, frightened; and they saw, dimly on the threshold of the dark room, a tall, lean man with a Basque bonnet pulled well over his forehead. He went to the window, jerked up the blind. And they saw who he was, and they clung together in fear, and he smiled morosely.

"I've fought for the King of Spain," he said, "here and there and everywhere. I've conquered the world for him, from Mexico to Lima, and from Lima to Cuzco. Whatever I desired I conquered—except the heart of a small golden-eyed girl. Ah,"—with stiff Castilian pride,—"an unimportant girl!"

"Unimportant not to me," Pancho exclaimed boldly, "though I be no more than a gypsy thief, a poet, a sand-reader."

"Only a poet," replied Don Miguel. "For there is no need in my palace of thieves nor of sand-readers. . . . As to thieves," — contemptuously, — "I have my chamberlains and servants. As to sand-readers, I care not to know my future. The present is bitter enough. But"—slowly—"there's room in my palace for a poet—and his golden-eyed wife."

So they lived happily—even Don Miguel. For not long afterward he fell in love with a slim black-haired Spanish girl and married her; and Vatahuasca was annoyed.

"Pah!" she said to her husband. "Are not men the fickle things!"

And she grew angry when Pancho laughed.

SHADOWS

Our Intelligence officer Jason Wyatt risks a desperate gamble in Europe.

by Frederick Painton



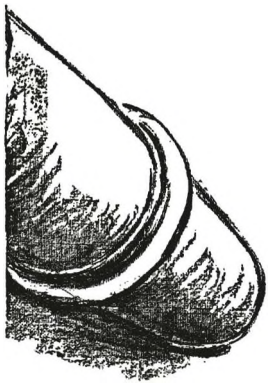
in the DAWN

At least once a month Jason Wyatt would say gloomily: "Marse Jim, is there ever going to be a time when we'll know why the Diplomatic Secret Service undertakes an operation? And will we ever know the result of our actions? I'm never sure that we do *anything* that's important."

Major Jim Tellegan usually smiled at this boyish curiosity and changed the conversation. But on the day they were in New York to put Tellegan on the Lisbon Clipper (Wyatt and Sunburn Sanderson were to follow a week later), Wyatt repeated his questions with more than usual insistence.

"Asia, Africa, Mexico, Europe—" murmured Wyatt. "I feel like the bird in a world badminton game—and just as dumb."

Tellegan, tall, spare, weary even before he started, looked grave, worried. He did not smile this time at the youth he loved so much.



"If diplomatic *coups* were so obvious," he said curtly, "they wouldn't be—well, diplomatic." Then, seeing Wyatt's hurt expression, his own softened. "Quite possibly," he said gently, "the present job will let you see the third-act complex." He paused. Then: "Unless you hear from me, go straight to Switzerland. —And Sunburn, keep Jason's romanticism under strict control."

Big Sunburn grinned. "I'd rather catch quicksilver on a downhill grade —but I'll try."

Tellegan left for Europe. A week later, the huge silver Clipper circled the Tagus in Portugal and dropped off Wyatt and Sunburn. And there at the Cordoba Hotel they found Tellegan's amazing code telegram.

Wyatt had been cursing Portuguese taxicab drivers, and Sunburn had been swearing at the close tail kept on them by the Nazi Gestapo agents who had picked them up at the customs office. But they fell silent as the "dictionary" code revealed its secret.

"The old boy is in Vichy," marveled Sunburn. "For Pete's sake, why?"

Wyatt did not reply. He had out the dictionary, an exact duplicate of one carried by Tellegan, and tackled the following maze of figures:

"4991286297821115472160711 9X623
1290217502124127213101431524117 11
8620118401125488121656111481112 43
1214142624229252871128722220325 88
3295212617611150818381177862215 03
1129518828227379247042116531132 02
22446621149912274220 Tellegan."

By consulting page-numbers, and the page column indicated and counting down the words from the top of the page, Wyatt produced the following translation:

MESSAGE BEGINS SWISS OPERATION POSTPHONED X PURCHASE MICROCINEMA FILM FLASH BULBS X PROCEED IMMEDIATELY MARSEILLES REGISTER MAJESTIC HOTEL X MEET JEAN 142624229252 WHO WILL EXPLAIN X YOU MUST TAKE MIDNIGHT EXPRESS TWENTIETH HERE SEE RED CROSS LISBON MESSAGE ENDS TELLEGAN.

Peering over his shoulder, Sunburn said: "What's that one-four-two-six business?"

"Just a reversion of the alphabet to fit in a proper name, I think," said Wyatt. "Let's see what we get." A reverse alphabetical numbering gave him *Macerby*.

Sunburn suddenly whistled softly.

"The twentieth. Gosh, Handsome, that's only tomorrow night! Why the rush?"

Wyatt shrugged, and walked to the cold fireplace, and set fire to the telegram and the transliteration.

"Some day one of the diplomatic big brains will burst and bare all. Meanwhile, let's see this Red Cross angle."

They walked to the Avenue de la Libertad—stopping off *en route* to engage seats on the Marseilles plane—and found a fattish, jolly man who immediately winked knowingly.

"Wyatt? Sanderson? Yes, gentlemen, here are your credentials as Red Cross inspectors. You will look over our food distribution organization in Marseilles and submit a report."

Outside once more, Wyatt grinned. "Trust Marse Jim to arrange perfect cover. And speaking of cover, there's



our Gestapo friend pretending to look at nothing."

"I'd like to lay a right hook on the Gestapo," asserted Sunburn feelngly. "I'm getting so I blush when I take a bath."

A surprise awaited them at the hotel.

AS Wyatt entered their room, he saw a thin man with a large egg-shaped head, bending over the fireplace. The man wore the uniform of a hotel bellboy, but he had two pieces of glass, and had managed to place the unbroken ash of the telegram and uncoding between them. At Wyatt's sudden entrance he whirled, still holding the glass carefully.

Sunburn leveled his automatic pistol. Covered by it, Wyatt advanced on the man, said: "Well, *amigo,* do you care to explain?"

The man forced a smile, a wide, twisted grin that moved his ears back out of the way and showed buck teeth. His ears had no lobes.

"Senhores," he shrugged, "what can one say except the truth? This ash, carefully held between glass, and photographed by ultra-violet rays, would inform me what had been written there. A code expert could reveal the true meaning. I would be well paid; the Gestapo is most generous in such matters."

"Such frankness," grinned Wyatt, "such industry, should have better results. However—" He grabbed the glass and smashed it against the andirons of the fireplace. Then he kicked and scrubbed the ash until it was a fine dust of a thousand particles.

The man slouched out.

For a moment Wyatt stood staring at the mess in the fireplace. Then he stooped and recovered a fairly large chunk of glass, wrapped it in a handkerchief and put it in his pocket. Sunburn stared.

Wyatt grinned. "That, my fran', was no piece-work spy. I'll bet you a dinner at Sardi's—if we ever get to Sardi's again—that he's a real big shot."

"Done," chuckled big Sunburn; and they began to pack.

But as they boarded the Air France plane at noon, all of Wyatt's natural good humor had fled. He looked so depressed that Sunburn asked: "What's eating you, Handsome?"

Wyatt shrugged. "Sunburn, I spent a lot of happy gay hours in a beautiful France before the Germans came. I hate to see it as it now must be. I had hoped I never would have to. It's—it's like having to gaze on the body of a dear friend whom you'd much rather remember as splendid and vigorous with life."

Sunburn clapped Wyatt gently on the back. "Okay, big-heart! . . . Time to shove off."

By the time of the brief stop at Madrid, Wyatt had shaken off his depression. But it recurred again when the plane circled the golden dome of that most noble of cathedrals, Notre Dame de la Garde. And it was not lessened as their cab traversed the once-famous and colorful Cannebière.

After they had unpacked in the Majestic, Sunburn said: "Listen, Handsome; what you need is a pair of highballs."

"Maybe three," said Wyatt, perking up; "but first let's wipe down the baggage and that chest of drawers. I think we'll have visitors while we're out."

Sunburn helped him wipe the luggage and chiffonier clean of fingerprints.

"Do they tail all guys like this, or do we get special attention?" asked Sunburn.

"I think we'll get the answer to that sooner than you think," rejoined Wyatt. "Let's get that drink, eat and visit the *cinema parlant.* I'd like our visitors to have plenty of time."

The dinner chilled their cocktail glow swiftly enough.

"Horsemeat," said Sunburn, "tough enough to wear your teeth down."

Wyatt said nothing. But he couldn't drink the sedimented chicory that went for coffee; the tiny fish smelled too old, and he finally made most of his meal on the nuts and cheese.

Sunburn pushed back his chair, his face gloomy.

"They ought to issue rations to us like they do soldiers," he muttered. "I won't cast a shadow after a while." He pulled his two hundred pounds out of the chair. "Okay, movies it is."

The picture, *"Le Blé,"* all about a man who finds his happiness tilling the good earth, soon had Sunburn drooling at the mouth. The scene of the banquet made of all things grown on the farm was too much even for Wyatt. He knew then for the first time that odd continuous feeling of hunger that was to be his so often. He understood now what an Austrian refugee meant when he said: "Most of my life, *mein Herr,* I have always been hungry."

"I hear the Swiss chow well," Sunburn said, as they strolled up the ill-lighted Cannebière. "I'll be glad to get there to find out. Shall we see if we got a mouse or a lion?"

The Majestic's *concièrge* said there was no message, so they went hastily to their room. It looked as they had left it, but Sunburn got the powder and blower and tried the luggage first.

"Oh-oh!" he said. "We got somebody. A regular smear of prints."

"Good," said Wyatt, feeling better. "Try 'em against this." He took out the piece of glass and carefully uncovered it. They compared the prints on the glass.

Sunburn whistled. "The very same whorls—look at that delta. I'll be a monkey's uncle, Handsome, it's the same guy!" He straightened, puzzled. "But why did he tail us here—and how? He wasn't in the plane."

"Let us hope Jean Macerby has a few answers," said Wyatt.

But an hour—two hours passed. The telephone was silent. No bellboy came with a note. Eleven o'clock!

Wyatt fretted audibly. If the job was to be done in twenty-four hours, they must have contact tonight. Macerby must know they were coming. At twelve-thirty he wanted to go out to buy a bottle of whisky. But even this was denied.

"The curfew, monsieur," said the *concièrge;* "the National police have put it on for twenty-four hours. No one to be out after dark as of midnight. The *salopards!"*

Wyatt returned upstairs. And he had barely closed the door when there was a rapping. He turned, startled, for he had seen no one in the corridor. He nodded to Sunburn, who drew his gun, and then opened the door.

THE man who stood there was hideous. Scar-tissue, white and waxy, covered most of his face, so that his nose was a parrot's beak, his eyes black and deep and glittering, without brows, without lashes. Even the lids had been injured, for the stare was steady, and when his eyes did blink, it was a heavy slow motion like a toad's. His hands were all burn scars, and the muscles had been injured so that the fingers were perpetually bent as if clawing. Wyatt turned his gaze away, aware his eyes must reveal his horror.

"I am Count de Noailles," said the man in a hoarse voice. "You need not turn your head. I am accustomed to creating disgust." He came into the room, tall, shambling. "My tank was set afire by enemy shells at the Somme crossing last year. One cannot always get out of an overturned tank quickly enough."

Somehow Wyatt forced himself to say: "You come from Jean Macerby?"

"Oui, monsieur! The curfew—so many Gestapo agents in Marseilles—he thought it well you come to him. I will direct you."

A silence came, and through it Sunburn and Wyatt got their hats and topcoats. What good that green and red Croix de Guerre ribbon on one's chest, thought Wyatt, when such ugliness left a man alone in the world?

"Okay." Sunburn spoke gruffly. "We're ready."

The Count de Noailles said: "Messieurs, I undertook this mission for Macerby for a purpose. I am not one of his. My son"—his voice softened—"is ill. A fever from cold. Because he has not enough to eat."

He looked down at his hands. "A year ago I had estates in Alsace, and an income of three hundred thousand francs a year. Now my day's work on



Sunburn jerked the door wide. "Ah!" said Wyatt.

the docks does not earn enough to buy my son an apple. So, if you have food —and sulfadiazine— My son is the last of my line."

Wyatt said gently: "We have nothing—here—tonight. But tomorrow, I promise you shall have what you need."

The man's thin figure drooped.

"This way, messieurs." He led the way down a corridor, and by a series of twists and turns brought them out through the cellar ash-hoist to a rear alley. The wind, cold and penetrating, whipped at his thin clothes.

Impulsively Wyatt said: "Why—couldn't skin-grafting, plastic surgery help—"

Count de Noailles stopped abruptly. "That is much money, monsieur, and what I have and can get is for my son." A wave of emotion shook him. "The De Noailles were ennobled by Charlemagne. Through the centuries a De Noailles has been registered among the noblesse of France. The blood must go on. My son must live —go on—to that end, I will endure anything—do anything."

He suddenly began walking again.

The way led through the Joliette basin, the haunt of the criminals. But tonight the *bistros* were closed, and there was no music, and the streets were full only of darkness and chill. Once they heard gendarmes and De Noailles swiftly gave them cards.

"Permissions to be out after curfew," he said. "Macerby has friends in high places."

At length they entered a cul-de-sac at the waterfront, and here De Noailles led them up three flights of stairs smelling of human sweat and sour soap, old cooking and decay.

At the door on the top he knocked. A chain rattled, then against the pale yellow light of a kerosene lamp a short thick man was revealed.

"Ah, messieurs les Americains," he said. *"Entrez!* You are welcome."

WYATT and Sunburn entered. De Noailles did not. Instead he said: "Twenty francs, M'sieur Macerby, that was the price."

The thick man swore, threw a coin. *"Ça va!* Be off with you."

He slammed the door, locked it and turned.

"Zigzag in the head, messieurs, that one. A captain once—of the noblesse —and he is cracked on his son. The disfigured get that way."

He crossed the dirty bare room to a little anteroom that was a kitchen, and returned with a bottle. Now Wyatt could see that the man had once been plump, but the fat had melted and left his skin loose and folded like an oversize union suit. He filled three glasses.

"To General de Gaulle and a living France!" he toasted ceremoniously.

They drank.

"Now," he said briskly, "your people force me into a great peril for their proof." His lips sneered. "Why cannot they take our evidence?"

Wyatt tried not to look blank. Sunburn shuffled his feet uneasily.

"The *Timgad* sails at dawn Thursday," said Macerby, "—which means we must get you aboard before midnight. You have the camera?"

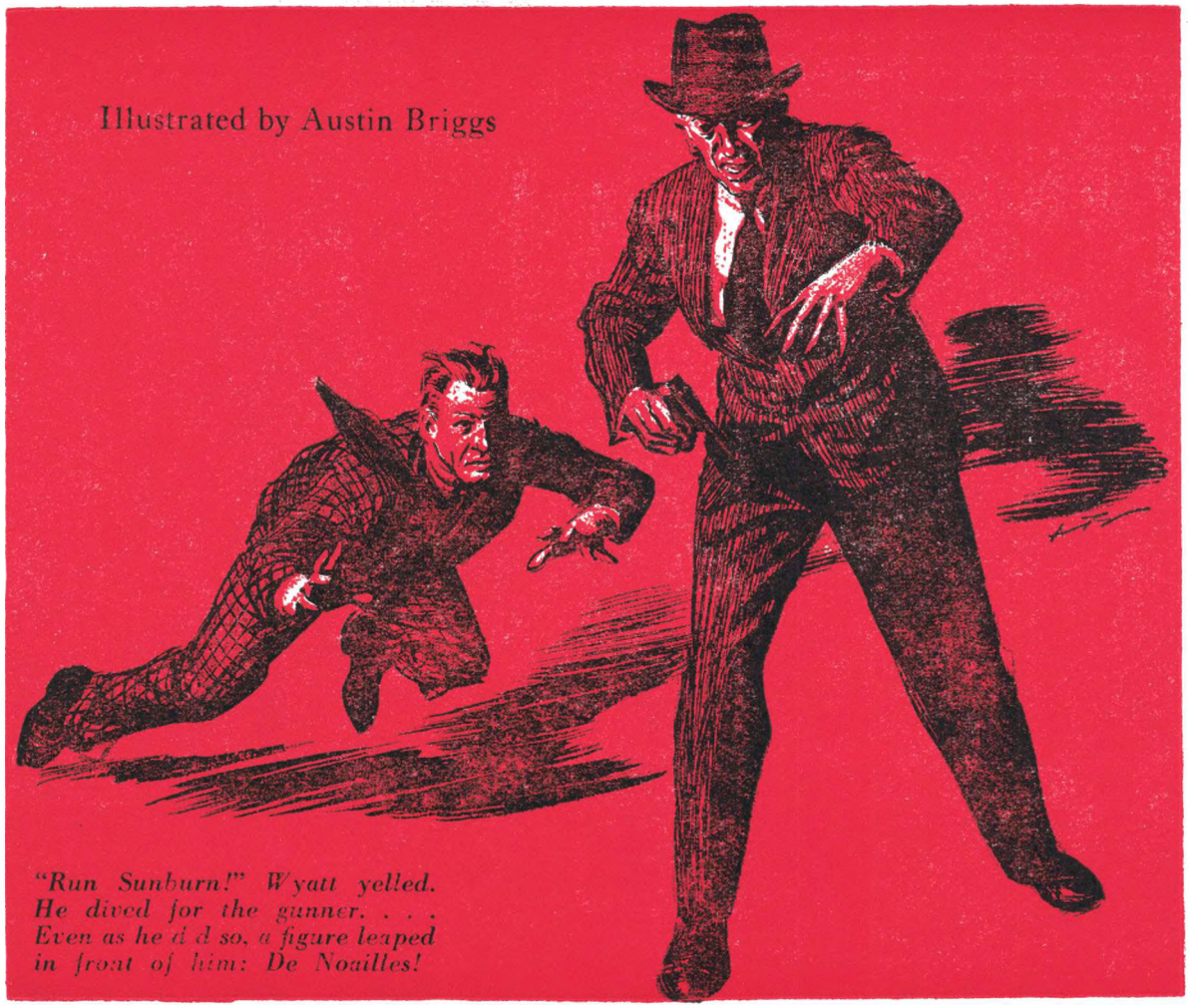
"The stores were closed when we arrived," said Wyatt. "I'll get it in the morning."

Macerby nodded. "Get a good one." Again his lips curled. "Your Monsieur Tellegan insists on detail."

He sat down heavily, suddenly drove his fist against his knee. "Name of God, we send proof of Vichy's treachery, and your people refuse to accept. Do they think for an instant that we would manufacture evidence to throw America to De Gaulle?"

Wyatt took a chance and said: "In diplomacy such is possible."

The man laughed harshly. "No doubt." He leaned forward intently.



"Run Sunburn!" Wyatt yelled. He dived for the gunner. . . . Even as he d d so, a figure leaped in front of him: De Noailles!

"But you perceive the danger, messieurs: the city is flooded with Gestapo. Oh, I know this is unoccupied France, but they come in swarms just the same. And they work hand in glove with the traitorous swine in our National police who hope to benefit themselves through *les boches.*"

He leaned back, fished out a dirty crumpled cigarette and lit it.

"Messieurs, if one hint of our purpose leaks out, we are dead men. And getting aboard the *Timgad* will be a very risky affair. De Noailles works there and showed me a way. So it is possible despite the many guards."

Wyatt nodded as if he understood.

"But I tell you," went on Macerby, "if the fate of France did not hang on going aboard, I would not try it for a half-million francs."

"Do they always put on the curfew and flood the city with Gestapo?"

"Always when these secret ships sail." Macerby jumped up. "Now you must catch the midnight Vichy express. So De Noailles will bring you here at twenty-one hours—that is, nine o'clock. Have weapons, and a watertight container for your film in case we must leap overboard and swim."

He shook hands, said, *"Lorraine forever!"* and let them out.

In the hallway below, the Count de Noailles waited.

"I will guide you back; but first, will you look at my son? I am worried."

The room he showed them into was bare save for two piles of rags and old blankets. On one lay a pitifully thin child of ten, his drawn face flushed now with fever; he coughed rattlingly.

"Le médécin said it was influenza, and he is afraid of pneumonia," offered De Noailles. "But I think the boy needs food—fruit. Much of it—and I have no money, and I cannot take him to a land of plenty."

"Papa, papa, il fait très chaud—so hot," the boy murmured.

"Come quickly," said De Noailles fiercely. "I must earn my twenty francs and get back to him."

HE strode through the darkness with unnatural speed.

"Messieurs," he said harshly, when they reached the Cannebière, "once I was shocked that man should kill man. But now, to get my son well and strong, I would do even murder!"

On the lower floor of the hotel he bowed and said: *"Bon nuit, messieurs."*

Wyatt thrust two crumpled one-hundred-franc notes into De Noailles' hand.

"For food," he said gently. "Tomorrow night, when you come, there will be medicine for the boy."

De Noailles vanished without thanks, and Wyatt and Sunburn went silently to their room and as silently undressed. As he reached over to turn out the light, Sunburn said: "I didn't understand what you meant at the Lisbon airport, Handsome. But I do now. This is nightmarish."

"Yes," said Wyatt. "Desperate men groping in a horrible, unending blackness, with no dawn ahead."

Next morning Wyatt bought not one camera but two. The first was a Zeiss with an extra-fast lens. The second was a tiny trick affair, costing ten thousand francs, that fitted behind an artificial gardenia in the buttonhole.

Sunburn laughed. "What's that, a parlor joke for home?"

Wyatt shook his head grimly.

"I've got a hunch on trouble here—."

He went on to buy another German gadget—a fountain pen with a flashlight in one end. He did not tell Sunburn why he bought it, and the big red-head did not ask. After that they went up the huge elevator to the beautiful Notre Dame de la Garde, and sat for a while in its cloistered silence.

Another man also entered, and left when they did, which was why they had gone there.

"Gestapo," Wyatt said. "But why? They can't possibly suspect why we're here—or can they?"

"Maybe just precaution," said Sunburn; "but I'd sure like to know what's on this *Timgad* that Tellegan wants pictures of and the Gestapo wants kept secret."

Wyatt shrugged without answering.

THEY put in a boring day. At seven o'clock, when the bells tolled the curfew, the streets emptied, and the lights dimmed like a blackout. And at twenty minutes to nine De Noailles knocked on their door.

Wyatt had got the sulfadiazine tablets from the Red Cross. He gave them to the man as they walked through the darkness.

"Merci," said De Noailles. "They will do much." Then abruptly: "Today I paid eighty frances for two oranges. That will cleanse his blood of fever."

It was so tragic that Wyatt did not answer. They walked the circuitous route with no speech.

On the second floor of the moldering house De Noailles left them.

"You know the way, messieurs. I return to my son. And—and a gentleman of France thanks you."

Wyatt and Sunburn walked up one flight. On the way Sunburn said: "By God, won't I be glad to get to Switzerland!"

Wyatt rapped on Macerby's door. There was no response, no movement within. Wyatt swore, rapped again, then tried the doorknob. To his surprise, it opened easily at his touch. Behind him Sunburn, looking in, muttered: "My God!"

Wyatt himself was frozen with surprise. The room was a mess. The cheap carpets were torn up, the bed ripped to pieces. Even the single table had been jerked apart. The kerosene lamp had been turned too high; the chimney was black, and the room was filled with the smell of soot.

There was no sign of Macerby. Only, on the floor, Wyatt saw four or five little slanting marks. Bloodstains, now blackened. They looked like exclamation-marks.

"They got him," muttered Sunburn. "But how?"

"He wasn't taken out," Wyatt said. "The slant of those blood-drops looks as if he had been carried across the room. That way."

He pointed to the door of the closet. At that juncture, through the thick grim silence struck a tiny noise, almost as if something had brushed the woodwork. With a quick stride Sunburn reached the door, jerked it wide.

"Ah!" said Wyatt.

On heavy spikes driven in the wall, Macerby hung. His wrists bound to the spikes held him upright, his feet barely touching the floor. His head was held back by a thin cord. And he was tightly gagged until his eyes seemed to pop.

But the most horrible facts were the slashed wrists.

Sunburn muttered an oath and with his knife slashed the ropes. He carried the De Gaullist to the torn bed. Wyatt ran to the kitchen for the bottle of cognac. Fortunately, it was still half-full. He dumped several mouthfuls into the waxen mouth.

It was the wrong thing to do. The heart began to pound like a racing pump in a dry well. Yet Macerby's eyes opened. They even had an awareness. The pallid lips began to move—a thin whisper riding the gasping breath: "Gestapo! Someone betrayed me. But I did not tell. Remember, the *Timgad!* Dock Twelve. Messageries. You need to use—"

He stopped there, and began repeating word for word as if in his torment he had thought and concentrated on them until they were burned in his brain.

"Quick, man!" Wyatt said. "How do we get aboard? What are we to find?"

The eyes were glazing. "De Noailles! De Noailles! The *Timgad!*"

Now the repetition was weaker. Wyatt put his hand to the man's chest, and suddenly had a sensation he was never to forget as long as he lived. He felt Macerby die. The heart had been pounding madly with the alcohol. Now, suddenly, it was beating so swiftly it was a single sound. A wild racing that as suddenly became two or three erratic impulses. A hesitation—another. Suddenly beneath his hand the chest was silent; a sigh came from the lips, Macerby's jaw fell, and the life had gone out of him.

For a moment there was silence. Then Sunburn swore. "The Gestapo got him, Handsome. This is a trap—and we're in it."

He took the cognac bottle into the kitchen. The water ran briefly. Wyatt continued to stare at the dead man. A trap? Probably. The Gestapo had suspected the De Gaullists were making contact with American agents, and this was the result. Did it mean he must abandon the mysterious evidence on the *Timgad*—the evidence that Tellegan thought vital? The evidence that Macerby himself had said would decide France's fate?

"Not a pleasant sight," said a voice behind him, "but then, he was a De Gaullist swine—and deserved what he got."

Wyatt whirled. In the doorway stood a slim bent man with a huge egg-shaped head. His ears had no lobes. There was no mistaking—this was the Portuguese bellhop of Lisbon.

"That's one bet I wish I'd lost," muttered Wyatt. "You followed from Lisbon."

"Yes," said the man. He spoke almost liplessly, his eyes inscrutable. "The name is Victor Bargeton. I am of the Gestapo—and you have much to explain, monsieur."

Now for the first time Wyatt saw the man's gun, a long-barreled Luger pistol. It was held near his hip, but it covered him alertly. Bargeton was a man who would shoot quickly and unflustered. He advanced slowly into the room.

Wyatt took a big breath.

"There is nothing to explain. This man asked for food at the Red Cross. As inspectors, we must investigate all such claims—"

"Cease lying," came the flat voice. "I followed you to Marseilles because we have been expecting this *coup.* You are American agents. Macerby told you matters I desire to know."

"I know nothing," said Wyatt.

"We shall have ways to make you talk."

Sunburn appeared, silent as a cat, in the kitchen doorway. Wyatt forced his gaze back to the Gestapo man.

"Not tonight," he said gently.

And then Sunburn gave a single bound, and his hairy freckled arms closed around Bargeton. He was like lightning. He seized the pistol, wrenched it from the Gestapo agent's hand, then drove a terrific right at Bargeton's jaw. The crack was sickening. The man shot backward against the wall, fell with a crash and lay senseless.

Sunburn looked down, grinning joyously.

"Boy, that felt good all the way up my arm."

"He has other men," said Wyatt grimly.

"But he'll be in drydock. I'll tie him up, and you figure where we go from here."

EXPERTLY, with pieces of blanket, Sunburn tied and gagged Bargeton. Then he turned to Wyatt.

Jason had been thinking hard. He couldn't let Tellegan down, trap or no. But how to get to the *Timgad* and climb aboard? He suddenly remembered. Of course! De Noailles! He knew the docks. And dying, Macerby had mentioned his name. Obviously for Wyatt to use him.

Quickly, now, Wyatt explained to Sunburn.

"There's a chance we won't make it," he concluded, "but we've got to try."

"Then what are we waiting for?"

They closed and locked the door from the outside, and went down to the next landing. De Noailles answered Wyatt's knock.

"Something has happened to Macerby," Wyatt said abruptly. "I will give you a thousand francs to guide us to the *Timgad,* and get us secretly aboard."

The man turned and went to the pallet and bent over the boy. He

stared so, for a moment. Wyatt saw fruit on a tin pan; there was the smell of broiled meat in the air. Now De Noailles took his ragged hat.

"I will guide you," he said. "We must be very careful. Many police and guards are around here."

It was warmer tonight; but as they went out, a driving chill rain assailed them. They bent into it and began a tortuous walk along Marseilles' waterfront. Alleys so narrow that Sunburn's shoulders touched. Black side-streets. Only once did they see lights, and this was when they passed a ship in the inside basin, loading. On the deck lights gleamed, and Wyatt could hear the pound of the crane as the cargo-nets were swung up; the whistle of the mate giving orders, the rumble as the load dropped into the hold. Then they veered into a darksome alley.

Finally, debouching from a cobbled smelly street, De Noailles pointed and said in a low voice: "The *Timgad,* messieurs; but we must approach on the other side."

THE *Timgad* was an eight-thousand-ton passenger and cargo vessel of the Messagéries Maritimes line. Lights gleamed along the dock-side, and by them Wyatt saw guards patrolling. The loading-lights still burned forward and aft on the ship's deck, and he saw other men here. The watch!

Noiselessly, now, they followed De Noailles around to the starboard flank of the liner. And as they came up under the lee of the huge vessel, Wyatt noted many things. There were no guards on this side at all; yet the ship's side was scarcely four yards from the concrete breakwater. A rope was twisted carelessly around a hawser, and by hanging to this, one could inch out on the mooring-rope and reach a small half-opened hatch through which a shaft of light struck.

Sunburn chuckled softly and said: "Convenient, aint it, Handsome?"

Wyatt did not answer. To De Noailles he said: "Have you ever been aboard this ship before?"

De Noailles said: "Yes, several times. I—I took my honeymoon trip on her to Bizerte and Tunis. She is an old ship, but we chose her because of the chef. The food was—was something to remember, now that it is no more."

"Then an extra thousand francs to guide us into her hold."

De Noailles nodded his gargoyle face, took the rope and, deftly hanging, one hand to the hawser, let himself out out to the hatch. It was a simple matter to swing aboard. Wyatt took a big breath, hoped he was right and nodded to Sunburn. "Let's go," he said. A gush of warm air filled with the myriad smells of an old ship greeted him. They stole silently along the thwartship companionway. Here, going aft, they passed through the third-class quarters, cabins with tiered bunks made of canvas laced to steel braces. The doors were open, and looking inside, Wyatt saw that in each were several gray sacks, like army packs. Cabin after cabin—all with the same baggage.

His eyes suddenly snapped wide. "By the Lord!" he muttered, and darted inside. The strings of the bags were loosely knotted. He untied one, jerked open the mouth and plunged his hand within. Everything was neatly folded and packed with an eye to space economy. On top was a grayish military blouse with red trimmings at the collar. He unfolded it.

Stenciled inside he read: *"Markaus, Karl, Fliegerfeldwebel, 230986."*

The *Timgad's* cargo was no longer a mystery. Ground forces for the German Luftwaffe. Mechanics, riggers—he saw their ratings on their clothing. He turned to Sunburn in the door.

"Here's proof German reinforcements are going to Marshal Rommel in French ships landing at French African ports. I don't know why Tellegan wants proof—but break out the flashlight bulbs and close the door."

He shot three bulbs, laying out a *Timgad* cork life-jacket for his background, and having Sunburn hold up uniforms and equipment.

"How many passengers will this ship carry?" he asked De Noailles.

"Six to eight hundred, crowded. Twelve hundred troops."

Wyatt whistled softly. Figuring four men to a machine, that meant air reinforcements of three hundred planes. Perhaps more. In any case, enough, possibly, to give Germany control of the Libyan skies. Excited now, thinking only of the necessity of giving Tellegan this proof of French duplicity, he went out into the companionway.

"Show us the holds," he said curtly to De Noailles; "there'll be more there."

There was. In the Number Three hold was the final evidence:

Thousand-horsepower Mercedes airplane motors in greased tarps! Boldly stenciled boxes of spare parts. Complete wing-sections. Tail-assemblies. Spare landing-wheels and ailerons. Mauser and Spandau ammunition by the thousands. Boxes of tracer bullets. Spare parts for Spandaus, and light Maxim machine-guns, and fifty-caliber shells. Twenty-five-millimeter explosive shells for nose cannon. And finally a complete radio AA detector, boxed. Wyatt sighed; he'd like to photograph that in detail.

As it was, he took pictures as fast as Sunburn supplied the flash bulbs, recording sufficient supplies to keep hundreds of planes in the air for weeks. He worked across the hold, was lost to Sunburn's sight for minutes. So the big man turned to De Noailles.

De Noailles was dogging the bulkhead door. Now he turned. To Sunburn's amazement, he had a big Luger automatic in his clawlike hand.

"Stand where you are, monsieur," the man said unemotionally. "I do not wish to shoot, but I shall if you threaten." He raised his voice: "M'sieur Wyatt, please to come here."

Wyatt emerged from the pile of boxes, re-fixing his fountain-pen flashlight. He was stunned to see Sunburn with his hands up, De Noailles covering with the big pistol.

"What does this mean?" growled Wyatt.

"M'sieur Bargeton is delayed," said De Noailles simply. "I detain you for him."

Sunburn moved slightly and the Frenchman's finger tightened on the trigger. "Have a care, m'sieur. I have killed several men in battle. I know how to shoot."

Sunburn relaxed and cursed.

Wyatt, recovering from his astonishment, cried: "But you are a Frenchman. You have been an officer, you are of noble blood. How can you work for a dirty Gestapo killer?"

"M'sieur Bargeton promised me that I might live in the gatehouse of my estate in Alsace. He promised food and work, and care there for my son. It is much to give—and I do what he asks."

Sick inside, Wyatt said: "Then you betrayed Macerby to his death?"

"Oui, m'sieur." The man was calm. "It was agreed I should then lead you here. Why, M'sieur Bargeton did not say."

"A dirty traitor to France!" blazed Sunburn. "How could any decent man—"

"What has France done for me?" blazed De Noailles, his calm utterly vanishing. "My face—I am a horror. My money—vanished. My son—sickly; and above all, he must grow and marry and have sons to carry on. So it *must* be."

AT that instant a metallic rapping filled the hold.

"Ah, M'sieur Bargeton and his men, no doubt."

De Noailles walked backward, never taking his eyes from his prisoners.

Wyatt burst out: "And I was thinking of a plan to get you and your son to America, where he'd be free and strong and you could get a new face. Bah!"

De Noailles seemed to trip. But by now he had undogged the bulkhead door, and into the hold came Bargeton and two men who carried submachine guns. Bargeton's egg-shaped head was slightly off-balance. His jaw

was swollen. His little eyes glittered with hatred.

To resist, was madness. Those machine-guns would blast them before they had taken three steps. Wyatt relaxed and leaned against the bulkhead.

"You certainly stay in a man's hair, Bargeton."

"Yes," assented Bargeton quietly. "It was better to let you come here and be sure of you, than let you roam loose and perhaps try other measures. I'll take your camera, please, monsieur."

WYATT had no recourse but to yield it up. He watched in silence while Bargeton opened the rear flap, jerked out the roll of film and spilled it out until it hung in a streamer in the air.

Then the Gestapo man hurled the camera against the bulkhead. It fell in ruins.

"But for your friend's surprise attack," he said, "you would have taken no pictures at all."

There was still the little trick camera. If a way out could be found—

De Noailles said: "Monsieur Bargeton, you have the film. Is it necessary to kill? They are Americans, and France is neutral."

Astonished, Bargeton cried: "What do you care what happens to them? You said you would do anything for your son. You'll get your reward—now get out. I'm done with you."

Wyatt smiled very deliberately, and fixed his stare on De Noailles' eyes.

"He's tricking you, De Noailles. Instead of saving your son, you've destroyed him."

Instanly Bargeton stepped forward and slapped Wyatt's mouth. "Silence! And let the maniac go."

The Gestapo man stepped back, barked an order. Wyatt and Sunburn were searched. During this, De Noailles left the hold. Suddenly Bargeton exclaimed and jumped at Wyatt. His hand tore out the artificial gardenia—the tiny camera from Wyatt's buttonhole.

"*Zum Teufel!*" he said. "I had not given you brains enough for that trick."

Sunburn groaned audibly. The last vestige of evidence had gone with that tiny roll of exposed film.

"Yes," laughed Bargeton; "without this evidence, the pressure of your diplomats at Vichy will slacken. We shall have Vichy before the summer is out."

Wyatt said nothing, and Bargeton gestured to his men. They got behind Wyatt and Sunburn, the gun-muzzles against their backs.

"Now," Bargeton smiled, "you may go. Get off the ship at once."

Wyatt exchanged a quick look with Sunburn. They understood. An accident at the hatch. Some shooting, and two dead bodies floating in the water. The gun-muzzles poked them.



De Noailles undogged the door, and into the hold came Bargeton.

"Move," growled the Gestapo man.

They left the hold and went into the narrow companionway, Sunburn leading. They were walking slowly, but it seemed incredibly fast. They swung into the thwartships alleyway. The hatch was ahead, still partly opened. When they reached it, the guns would fire briefly, and they would pitch into the water. Very convenient for Bargeton. No trouble to bury his dead.

Wyatt tensed himself. He had no mind to die tamely. Besides, if he made a sortie, his body would stop the slugs, and in the confusion Sunburn might escape. There was something he wanted to give Sunburn, but he had no chance. Now they reached the starboard companionway. The hatch was five feet in front. It was now or never. He seemed to crouch a little; then he turned.

"Run, Sunburn," he yelled.

He dived straight for the leading gunner.

Even as he did so, a figure shot out of the starboard companionway. It leaped in front of Wyatt. De Noailles! He had a gun, and it roared. But the machine-gun stuttered in echo.

Wyatt could not stay his dive. He shot into a mass of bodies that were De Noailles and the machine-gunners.

Behind stood Bargeton, frantically tugging a pistol from his pocket. Wyatt reached him before it was drawn, and Wyatt's fists made blurs of light as they pounded the Gestapo man. Then Wyatt had the pistol and smashed it twice, thrice against the German's skull. Now Wyatt leaped up, whirled.

He was not needed. For Sunburn had not jumped into the water. He

too had turned as Wyatt had. And as the gunners went down, tangled with De Noailles' body, he had seized one of the guns. He was lifting it, smashing it down like a man with an ax cutting cordwood.

It was over. Wyatt tugged at Sunburn.

"They're dead."

Sunburn got up, panting. "Just as I was going good, too!"

Wyatt had turned to De Noailles. One glance told him the man was dying. There were four ragged little holes in his coat over his abdomen. A trickle of blood came through his hands pressed inside. But he was perfectly conscious.

Something akin to a smile contorted the gargoyle face.

"I shall not need the plastic surgery, monsieur. But I shall hold you—word to a dying man—that you will take my son to America and guard him as your own."

Wyatt knew then that in sublime confidence in another, a man will risk even life.

"You have my word, De Noailles," he said. "He shall want for nothing."

"Bon!" the dying man sighed. "Soon these shadows in the dawn will fade; but he, a De Noailles, will be there to see the sun. It is well."

He stirred slightly.

"These shots, messieurs, they will have been heard. Do not delay. Go to my son—take him and flee."

Wyatt hated to leave the man to die alone. But there was his mission.

He said: "Yours is part of the final accounting with the Nazis, M. De Noailles."

"Allez!" said the man.

TWO men and a sleeping boy caught the midnight *rapide* for Vichy and settled in the first-class compartment. After the train was rolling swiftly, Sunburn growled: "This is one time Tellegan won't be glad to see us—even if we had one foot inside the Pearly Gates. We've had our first failure, Handsome."

"Now," said Wyatt, smiling for the first time, "just wait a minute."

He opened his coat and took out his fountain pen. He did not unscrew the part holding the nib and flowline, but merely pointed at it.

"Inside, the micro-roll," he chuckled. "Airtight, and completely dark. When I heard De Noailles pull a gun on you, I took out the exposed roll."

"You mean that film Bargeton destroyed had nothing on it?"

"A brand-new one. Put in—just in case."

Sunburn grinned. "Boy, now if I only had six pounds of thick steak, I could begin to feel better!"

It was the next afternoon in Vichy that Wyatt learned that the French Messageries Maritimes liner *Timgad* had been torpedoed south of Marseilles. The French ministries were in an uproar, and the statement was issued that a vigorous protest would be lodged at London.

Tellegan smiled grimly as he put on his hat. "You have often said, Jason," he declared in his grave kindly voice, "that you wanted to see the results of your mission. You shall—for once. Come along, both of you."

AND they rode together to the *Ministry des Affaires Estrangères.*

"Excellent photographs, Jason," said Tellegan. "Splendid, in fact, for they enlarged to two feet square without much fuzzing or loss of detail."

He said no more until a short, stout man in the gold-braided magnificence of a French admiral of the fleet came out of a private office and stood facing them. His eyes were cold and his face hostile.

"Well, Monsieur Tellegan?" he said. "You requested an appointment? I have given it. For what purpose?"

"I should, Monsieur l'Admiral," said Tellegan courteously, "have asked also to have the Chief of State present. But perhaps that will not be necessary."

Wyatt stared; had a flicker of unease crossed the Admiral's face?

Tellegan opened the big flat package and took out the photographs.

"Monsieur l'Admiral," he said, and now his voice was icy, "my country has asked frequently for proper explanations of the charges made by the British Foreign Office that supplies and reinforcements were reaching Marshal Rommel's Afri-corps through French ports and on French ships. This has been denied in a personal note from your Chief of State to my government."

"And it is the truth," said the Admiral. "We have no official knowledge of any such facts."

"Then let me enlighten you—officially," said Tellegan quietly. "Here are photographs taken aboard the French liner *Timgad.* You will note that full equipment and baggage are aboard for thirty German air squadrons. The pictures speak for themselves if you will look. They explain why England sank the *Timgad.* I personally warned their naval attaché."

The huge photographs were complete in detail. The Admiral was pale, biting his lips.

"Vichy has no official knowledge, I swear to you," he said.

Tellegan's lips curled. Wyatt knew that the Admiral had taken great care to be ignorant "officially," and to keep the Marshal, the Chief of State, in complete ignorance.

"We are prepared to accept the French Government's explanation," said Tellegan, "presuming that no further protests are made about the—er—sinking of the *Timgad.* And also"—he raised a hand as the Admiral was about to speak—"and also if we can receive from the Chief of State today, through the American ambassador, full and pledged assurances that no part of the French fleet will be yielded to the Germans in violation of French neutrality. Otherwise, we shall have to tell the world the facts and let other nations revise their French relations."

Wyatt's eyes snapped wide. So! That was it. This was not to be public accusation. No, the pictures would be held over the Admiral's head to make certain he did not try to force his own Chief of State into the Nazi camp as a full ally. So this was a diplomatic *coup.*

The Admiral had drawn himself up.

"Monsieur Tellegan," he said coldly, "the Marshal has said not once but many times that he will yield to Germany nothing that the terms of the armistice do not demand. That promise he will keep."

"Excellent," said Tellegan. "That being so, we shall just tear up these photographs, and I will keep the negatives as a—shall I say a souvenir of a wise and splendid decision upon the part of the great French people?"

The Admiral bit his lip again. But he bowed, realizing, as Wyatt knew, that Tellegan was keeping the negatives as a threat to the Admiral.

"As you will, monsieur," he said, and glanced ostentatiously at his strap watch. "And now, if that is all, monsieur—"

"It is," said Tellegan; "and do me the honor to pay my highest respects to the Marshal, in whom, I may say, the United States has great faith."

With that parting dig Tellegan turned and went out, followed by Wyatt and Sunburn.

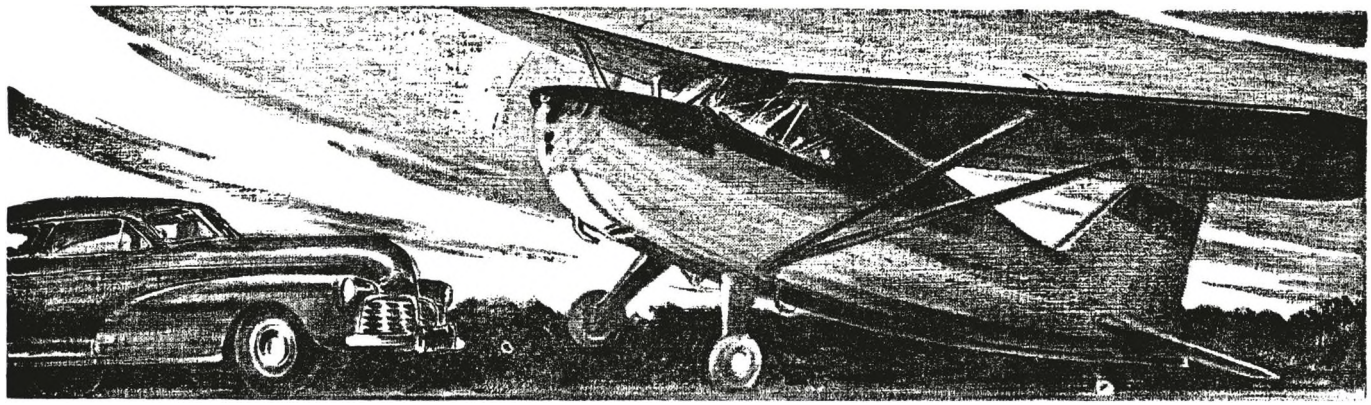
IN the car, returning to the hotel, Wyatt took a big breath. "So that is the gent who is selling the French people down the river! Getting vastly rich, and wanting more power all the time. It was in his face."

Tellegan had leaned back, his eyes closed, his face haggard and tired. He stirred now.

"Yes," he said; "but as your very gallant friend De Noailles said, Jason, he is merely a shadow in the dawn. And when the sun of victory rises, he will vanish, and there will be none to know where he ever stood blocking the gorgeous light of liberty."

Wyatt made a mental note to write the sentence down. When young Henri Paul Jean, Vicomte De Noailles, grew up a free citizen of a restored France, it would be something of his father that he could cherish all his life.

Another story of Jason Wyatt and Major Tellegan will appear in an early issue.



STOLEN DYNAMITE

East does meet West in this story of Tiny David and the State Police.

by Robert R. Mill

THIS was on the Sunday—"a date which will live in infamy"—when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. Millions of Americans sat before their radios, stunned, almost unable to credit the words they were hearing. But even before their bewilderment gave way to the righteous anger which was to dissipate internal differences and to make this a truly united nation, officialdom had already swung into action.

From the barracks of the Black Horse Troop, New York State Police, where Captain Charles Field, the commanding officer, grimly barked out pre-prepared orders, patrols were roaring out, hastening to various strategic points in Northern New York.

Lieutenant Edward David sat behind the wheel of one of those cars. His huge body, which had earned him his nickname "Tiny," shifted slightly as he indicated the radio.

"Can you put the hex on that tin box?" he demanded.

Lieutenant James Crosby, his companion, leaned forward, tuned out the routine official orders that were pouring forth, and, in direct violation of regulations, proceeded to make mysterious adjustments which made it possible to receive routine commercial broadcasts. His task completed, Mr. Crosby shook his head doubtfully.

"Suppose the Skipper should try to raise us?" he demanded.

Mr. David blocked the question with another:

"What for? We belong in Mattina." His voice changed into what he fondly believed was an impersonation of Captain Field: " 'The Mattina plant of the Aluminum Company is the most vital defense industry in this territory. Haven't you heard that before?"

"Hundreds of times," Mr. Crosby admitted. "I even know the second verse: 'Production is America's greatest weapon, and the ever-growing importance of aluminum in production makes Mattina the heart of the American defense effort. The danger-spot is the dam across the St. Lawrence, which furnishes the necessary power, and which will be the logical target for an enemy alien seeking to commit sabotage.' "

The speaker shrugged his shoulders. "That was where he always put the script away and began to *ad lib,* giving us bright little offerings such as having assigned to this job two guys, each with half an intellect, hoping in that way to obtain the services of one normal mind. But suppose somebody else should want us for something else."



Mr. David put aside that possibility in favor of the radio, which gave forth the information that the Dodgers had kicked the goal after a touchdown, adding to the chagrin of the Giants.

"Brush off those kids playing games," he ordered, "and get some news."

Mr. Crosby, after some tinkering, found a program with plenty of news—all bad. They listened in silence, and soon the giant smokestacks of the Mattina plant appeared on the distant skyline. With reluctance, Mr. Crosby readjusted the radio to receive police calls.

"I'd like to go out and get myself a Jap," he declared, "and I wouldn't bother to have the head mounted."

Tiny David, peering ahead, saw a figure sprinting down the road toward them, closely followed by a crowd of angry, shouting boys.

"Looks like somebody has put your thoughts into action," declared Mr. David, bringing the car to a halt. He slipped from behind the wheel, and with speed that belied both his size and his lazy manner, stepped from the car. Crosby leaped out, and took a stand beside him.

The figure running toward them was now discernible as an Oriental boy, who redoubled his efforts when he sighted the men in uniform.

Tiny David took a step forward.

"I am Chinese—and good American!" gasped the youngster. "I am Boy Scout! . . . You save me from—"

The boy reached the trooper's side. Tiny David calmly stepped in front of him.

"What's it all about?" the big trooper demanded. "The kid says he is Chinese."

"Yeah!" came the cry from the excited boys. "That's what he *says!*"

The boys shuffled from foot to foot, and a short man, with heavy eyebrows, who had followed close on their heels, pushed forward to act as spokesman.

"Them damn' Japs attacked Honolulu. We aint aiming to give them no chance to put the plant here on the bum. The kid says he is a Chink, but he looks like a Jap to me! We'll play safe by putting him somewhere so he can't do no prowling around."

Tiny David turned from the speaker to the crowd of boys, some of whom carried guns, while others clutched clubs in their hands.

"Even if he is a Jap, do you need all that equipment for one kid? Maybe we better call out the tanks."

One of the older boys volunteered a somewhat shamefaced explanation:

"We were shooting at a target when somebody got the news on a portable radio. Then this kid came along and Grebheit"—he indicated the man who had acted as spokesman—"said that if we were real American kids we would put this Jap kid where he'd be safe."

Tiny David looked down at the Chinese boy, who was about ten, and whose eyes, behind thick glasses, were red from crying.

"What's your name?" the trooper asked.

"Ken Lee, sir."

CROSBY took a hand in the questioning:

"Where do your folks live?"

The boy swallowed, then replied:

"My father is dead one year. He ran a restaurant, but he died two months after we came to Mattina."

"Where did you live before you came here?"

"San Francisco. I was born there, sir."

"Where was your father born?"

"That I do not know, sir, but he came to this country from the Canton Province of China."

"Says you!" The cry came from the man called Grebheit. "All them Chinks and Japs look alike. How do we—"

"Pipe down!" ordered Tiny David. His voice was kind as he asked: "And your mother, Ken?"

"She is dead many years, sir. I now live with Mr. Howard Taylor. I help him with the chores, and he permits me to go to school. At first the boys and girls do not believe my mother and father were Chinese. They think I am a Jap. Then I show them I am a very good Ameri—"

"That's right." The statement came from one of a group of men, who, attracted by the crowd, had gathered about in time to hear the exchange.



"My boy is in the same class with him at school. He says the Chinese kid is a caution at reciting the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and that sort of thing. Makes the other kids feel ashamed of themselves."

"Yeah!" Mr. Grebheit was in action again. "All that is good come-on for Fifth Column stuff."

Tiny David raised his voice:

"The Fifth Column likes 'em a bit older. We're all excited over the news right now, but tomorrow you boys will be laughing at yourselves for ganging up on one kid, no matter where he came from. I know the men in the crowd now wouldn't have had any part of this, so it's time for all hands to go home. We'll take care of this. If any of you should crave immediate action, and if you are old enough, there are recruiting-offices in Mattina."

"Right!" The cry came from the crowd, which prepared to disperse, and one man called out: "You're in big business, Grebheit, trying to get a bunch of kids into trouble!"

But Grebheit stuck to his guns:

"What's going to happen to that kid?" he demanded.

"Happen to him?" Tiny David repeated the question. "How would **I** know? I'm not a fortune-teller."

Grebheit flushed with anger.

"He's an alien. He belongs locked up. If you aint going to do it, why—"

"Come along, Grebheit!" The impatient cry came from the men in the crowd. "The cops will take care of the kid."

"That," said Mr. David, "is good advice."

Mr. Crosby addressed Mr. Grebheit:

"How's your health?"

Mr. Grebheit, sensing a trap, was properly resentful.

"Me, I'm feeling fine. I aint had a sick day since I was operated on for appendicitis two years ago, come next April. I'm aiming to keep well. And there aint no cop is going to harm my health, because I'm doing my duty as an American citizen."

Mr. Crosby took what he wanted from the offering:

"So you were operated on for appendicitis! I thought so. The doctors threw away the wrong part."

A roar went up. Mr. David glanced reproachfully at his companion, and then addressed the crowd:

"All right. That bum crack ends the show. Break it up. Time to go home." He beckoned to the man whose son was a classmate of the boy.

"What do you know about this man Grebheit?" he asked, lowering his voice, and motioning for Crosby to disperse the crowd.

"Not much," was the answer. "He runs a cheap hotel a little way out of town. Only been here a year or two. That was why the fellows, when they saw what he had been trying to do, was sore at him. We don't need any Johnny-come-lately to get our kids into trouble."

The Chinese boy spoke with quiet conviction:

"Mr. Grebheit is not a good man."

Tiny David grinned.

"I don't blame you for thinking that, Ken. Go sit in the car for a minute, will you?" He waited until the boy was out of earshot. "What do you know about Taylor, the man he lives with?"

His informant was very positive:

"There isn't a better citizen in Mattina than Howard Taylor."

"Good," said Tiny David. "Thanks a lot." He turned to Crosby, who had completed his task. "Now that you have broken up the Boston tea-party, let's get rolling. Strange as it may seem, we have a few odd jobs of work to do."

THEY drove off with Ken seated between them. The lips of the boy were trembling, but the car had gone a good mile before he asked:

"What are you going to do with me, sir?"

Tiny David chuckled.

"We are going to take you home to Mr. Taylor. You mustn't let this get your goat, Ken. To American kids, Chinese and Japanese boys look a lot alike, just as American and English boys do to Chinese boys. If China was at war with England, but friendly to the United States, an American boy in China might have a lot of trouble until the Chinese boys were sure he wasn't English. Isn't that true?"

"Yes sir."

"Sure it is. And the smart thing to do is to be such a good American that the kids who doubted you will be ashamed of themselves."

"Yes sir, I will be very glad to do that."

The car drove on toward the town. A shift of Tiny David's body caused his sheepskin-lined topcoat to bulge, revealing a bit of ribbon on his tunic.

"Were you in the last war, sir?" Ken asked, and Tiny David nodded.

"Were you a flyer?"

"No. I was in the Marines. Why? Do you want to be a flyer?"

The boy's eyes were serious.

"Yes sir. I am studying to accomplish that purpose. Do you think, sir, now that war has started, that they will lower the age-limit for flying cadets?"

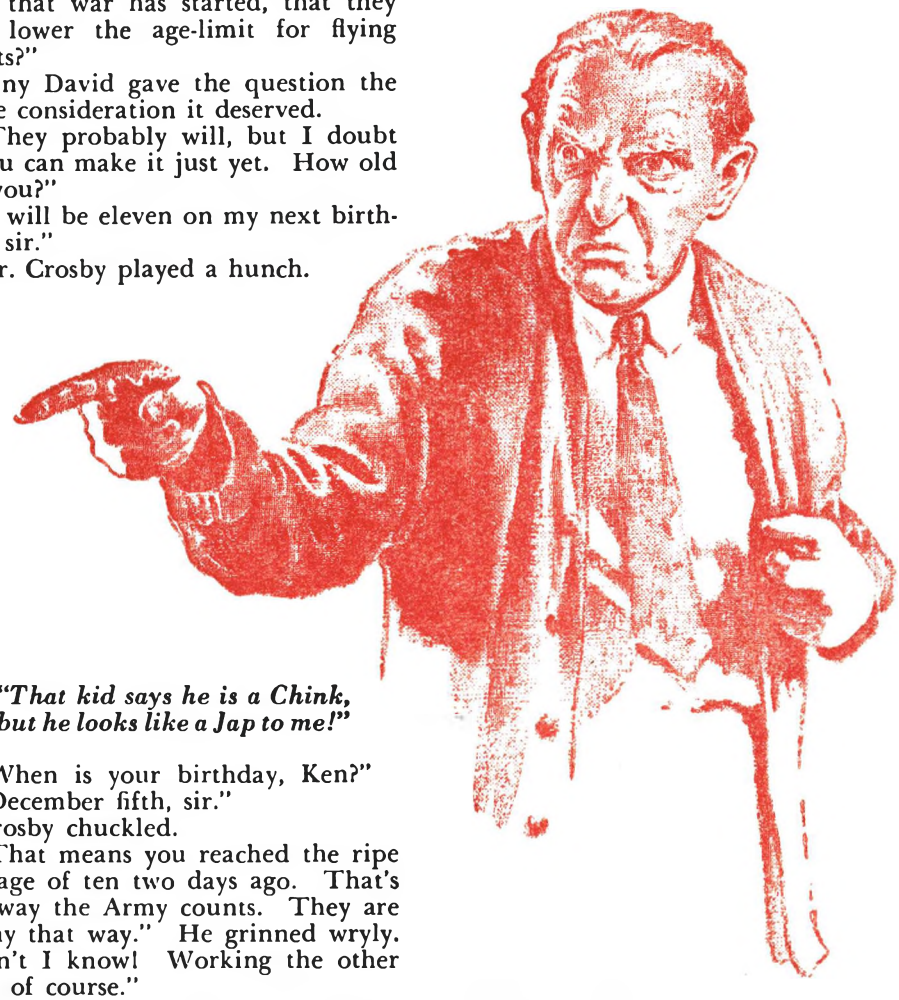
Tiny David gave the question the grave consideration it deserved.

"They probably will, but I doubt if you can make it just yet. How old are you?"

"I will be eleven on my next birthday, sir."

Mr. Crosby played a hunch.

Illustrated by Charles Chickering



"That kid says he is a Chink, but he looks like a Jap to me!"

"When is your birthday, Ken?"

"December fifth, sir."

Crosby chuckled.

"That means you reached the ripe old age of ten two days ago. That's the way the Army counts. They are funny that way." He grinned wryly. "Don't I know! Working the other way, of course."

They came to a field, bordered with lights, and obviously used for flying.

"We might as well clean up the routine stuff as we go along," declared Tiny David. He drove across the field and came to a halt before a hangar, in which a man was working on the engine of a small airplane. The trooper alighted and entered the hangar. The pilot looked up.

"I have been expecting you," said the airman. "Here you are." He produced his license, which Tiny David pocketed.

"Sorry," said the trooper. "You'll probably get it back in a day or two, but right now it won't help anybody to have unidentified planes flying around."

"That's okay with me," said the pilot. "And if they want the ship, or me, that's okay, too." He looked out and saw the Chinese boy seated in the police car. "Say, what's the idea of picking up Ken? That kid's all-American."

"We took him away from some of your super-patriotic citizens, who got their countries mixed. He strikes me as a swell kid."

"Right," said the pilot, "and smart as a mechanical compass, too! Hangs around here in his spare time, giving me a lift when I am working on the motor. I take him upstairs sometimes. Never let him try it, but it's my guess that he could solo right now." He led the way from the hangar, and closed and locked the door. "It stays that way until I get word from you. . . . Hello, Ken."

"Hello, Mr. Drum."

Tiny David started the car.

"See you later," he called. They drove on toward the aluminum plant. "That pilot tells me you know your way around upstairs," David told the boy.

Ken beamed with pride, but his answer was the simple assertion: "I study very hard, sir."

At the plant, they found the manager, and checked over the plans already agreed upon for maintaining an intensive guard against all possibilities.

The company policemen would be reinforced by troopers, who even now were hurrying to Mattina. Both ends of the vital dam would be guarded. A

boat would patrol the river just below the dam, and another would be stationed above it. At night, floodlights would illuminate the scene.

"The original plan still looks good," Tiny David declared. "I can't see that we have overlooked anything." He turned to his companion. "Suppose you stay here and station the fellows as fast as they show up. I'll take Ken home, get something to eat, and be back to relieve you. One of us better be here all the time."

"Fair enough," said Mr. Crosby.

"By the way," said the plant manager. "I almost forgot, we've been so upset here. They want you to call the barracks. Two German aviators escaped from a prison-camp on the Canadian side this afternoon. The barracks will give you all the information."

"They picked a nice day for it," was Mr. David's verdict. "You call the barracks," he told Crosby. "And ask the Skipper whether we are to guard the aluminum plant or hunt German airmen. With my subnormal intellect, I can't see how we are going to do a thorough job on both."

"I'll call him," Mr. Crosby promised, "and I'll listen to all he has to say, which will be plenty—but I'll ask him nothing. In his present frame of mind, the only question that would draw a civil answer from him is, 'How would you like to have me put you in Honolulu right now?' I don't know how that could be done. If I did, I'd use the knowledge to put Mrs. Crosby's boy where he would feel useful."

"Yea, brother!" murmured Tiny David, as he returned to the car, where Ken was waiting. The boy gave directions, and they drove to the Taylor home. When the car halted before the house, Mr. Taylor hurried down the walk, a worried frown on his face.

"I hope there has been no trouble," he began.

"Nothing serious," Tiny David assured him. "People are a bit worked up, and some boys mistook Ken for a Japanese."

Mr. Taylor shook his head sadly.

"Ken has had to contend with that from the start. His father and mother both were Chinese, and he is a good boy and a loyal American. Every spare penny he gets hold of goes for Defense stamps."

ANOTHER crowd of boys had gathered across the street, and excited cries carried to the two men and Ken:

"See that, the troopers have got him!" . . . "Well, I always did say he was a Jap! . . . "Will they lock him up?" . . . "Get the dirty Jap!"

One boy picked up a stone.

Ken's fists were clenched. Tears filled his eyes.



"What do you keep in the cave?" asked Tiny David. "Dynamite," was the laconic reply.

"Pipe down, you fellows!" Tiny David ordered. "Ken's father and mother were Chinese, and he is just as good an American as any of you. Now beat it!"

He watched the boys disperse.

"Nobody believes me," said Ken bitterly. There was an ominous note in his voice as he added: "I know what I'll do."

"Go in the house, Ken." The quiet order came from Mr. Taylor.

When the two men were alone, Tiny David asked:

"What did he mean by that?"

"I don't know," Mr. Taylor admitted, "but I'm sure he won't do anything foolish. Anyway, I'll see that he stays in the house until things have quieted down."

"That's fine," said Tiny David. "If there should be any trouble, call me at the aluminum plant." He gave the man his name and the telephone number, then drove away. His next stop was a restaurant.

"Soup," he told the girl. "Steak, potatoes, and anything else that is loose in the kitchen."

"Are you rounding up Japs?" the girl asked.

"I am trying to round up some food," was the rather pointed answer; and the girl took the hint. . . .

Mr. David had approved the quality, but not the size, of the steak, when a local policeman entered, and made his way to the table.

"I called the plant," he explained, "and Crosby said he couldn't leave, but that I would find you in some restaurant. Had a bit of luck. This is only the second I've tried."

Mr. David worked rapidly on the steak, and with a full mouth, asked:

"What is it? If you've spotted those two Nazi pilots, tell 'em they'll have to wait to be arrested until I finish this steak."

The policeman's manner was a combination of mystery and importance.

"Worse than that. Come along with me, and I'll show you."

Mr. David sighed.

"I don't like surprises," he protested.

"It isn't far," the policeman insisted, "and I want you to see for yourself."

They entered David's car, and drove along a road where construction work was in progress. The policeman in-



dicated a side road, little more than a trail, and when they had gone along it some distance, told the trooper to stop. In response to a blast on the horn, a man, obviously a watchman, appeared.

"He'll show us," the policeman said.

The man led the way to the side of a hill where a door opened into a cave. He pointed to a smashed lock.

"I found that when I showed up this evening. The gang aint been working, on account of it being Sunday, but I came out to get the flares lit before it's dark."

"What do you keep in the cave?" asked Tiny David, afraid he knew the answer.

"Dynamite," was the laconic reply.

"Any missing?"

"Every bit of it."

"How much was there?"

The watchman pondered.

"I wouldn't know, exactly, but the new road goes through solid rock, and we always have enough to keep us going for two or three weeks. Offhand, I'd say there was enough to blow up the plant, the dam, and a good part of the town."

Tiny David turned to the policeman.

"You were out here before. Find any clues?"

"Nope."

"When you called Crosby, did you tell him what had happened?"

"Nope; didn't think it was anything to air over the telephone."

Tiny David made a gesture of impatience.

"All right. We can't do anything here. Let's get out to the plant before something happens."

Going through town, he dropped the policeman, who had to report to the station-house, and hurried to the aluminum plant.

Crosby, who had stationed his men, and had just completed an inspection trip, was seated in the office of the manager, where there was a portable radio. He looked up as his partner entered.

"Did you park Chiang Kai-shek, Junior? . . . They say we got a Jap airplane-carrier, and ditto on some Jap bombers. Outside of that, everything is bad."

"Business is picking up here," Tiny David asserted. "Some guy has pinched himself enough dynamite to make this place look as if a blitz had struck it."

Crosby leaped to his feet.

"The hell you say!"

David ignored the outburst, and addressed the plant manager:

"When does the next shift report for work?"

"Twelve o'clock, midnight."

"Good. That gives us a bit of time to get organized. It's a fairly safe bet none of that dynamite is in the plant now, or we'd have had trouble before this. We aren't going to let any of it in, if we can help it. We'll frisk every workman before he's allowed in the plant. We'll also search every incoming vehicle." David turned to Crosby. "Meanwhile, we'll take a run over the entire works to see that everybody's on the job, and to tell them what they are up against. The right people would find that dynamite useful outside the plant, particularly near that dam. We aren't going to let them get that close."

IT was more than an hour later when they returned to the office. Every guard was on his toes. The floodlights were in operation, lighting up the approaches to the vital dam. Arrangements had been made to search the incoming workers.

"I'll hold down the fort," Tiny David volunteered. "Why don't you sneak downtown, and tie on the feedbag?"

"That," declared Mr. Crosby, "is your bright thought for the day. I was beginning to feel that my mouth and my stomach had severed diplomatic relations." He paused in the doorway. "I hope it doesn't come under the heading of hoarding, but I am going to bring back some sandwiches. This is going to be a long night."

It *was* a long night. The arrival of the new shift at midnight caused a brief flurry of excitement. Some of the workers resented being searched, but for the most part the men realized the need for caution, and the manner of the troopers did much to avoid trouble.

"I don't care if you are Cordell Hull," Tiny David told one irate machinist. "You get a frisk. So would Mr. Hull. You both are okay, but either one of you could have some dynamite planted on you, or in your lunch-pails, by some guy who *isn't* okay, and who would collect the dynamite before you knew it was there. Think that over."

The protests ceased, but the search was fruitless.

"I thought our men were all right," the manager asserted. "They have been checked and double-checked. We even had the F.B.I. in here to help us check them over."

David and Crosby worked out a routine for the night. They alternated, one man moving from post to post and checking the guards, while the other remained in the office to receive telephone-calls, and to be ready to rush to any point where he was needed.

Shortly after three, when David was in the office, the manager, who had remained at his post, handed him the telephone.

"It's for you, Lieutenant."

The trooper took the instrument.

"Lieutenant David speaking."

"This is Howard Taylor, Lieutenant. I can't find Ken, and I am worried."

"What do you mean, Mr. Taylor?"

"I had a long talk with Ken before he went to bed. He was very bitter. He said that he has always been a loyal American, but that because his father and mother were Orientals nobody will believe that he is not a Japanese. I tried to explain things to him, but he threatened to do all sorts of desperate things, as a boy will when he is excited, so I ordered him to go to bed. When I looked in his room a short time ago, he wasn't there, and he isn't in the house."

Tiny David remained silent.

"I am not so much afraid that he will do anything he shouldn't," Taylor continued, "as I am he will come to some harm. However, I did think it my duty to notify you."

"I am glad you did," Tiny David assured him. "I'll check with you later, and if he hasn't shown up, we'll have our patrols look out for him. He and lots of other good Chinese-Americans are in a tough spot today, but it is particularly tough on a kid."

"Thank you, Lieutenant. You have been so understanding that confiding in you has relieved my anxiety. My wife and I have grown very fond of Ken."

"We'll do what we can," the trooper promised.

Soon Crosby returned, and David began a round of inspection. The first telltale streaks of dawn were appearing in the sky when he paused at one of the approaches to the great dam, where Sergeant Henry Linton, very much on the alert, was stationed.

Mr. Linton, as usual, had a bill of complaints:

"This should go down in history as the Battle of Mattina. We have enough men here to force a landing and establish a bridgehead in Formosa. Having nothing else to do, we might as well start shooting at each other. If a few of us get bumped off, the survivors will have more room and will be able to work more efficiently. The only items we are short on are tanks and antiaircraft equipment, and I am counting on the Skipper to have them along by daylight."

Tiny David stood staring at the cold, wintry sky, in which darkness still predominated.

Mr. Linton continued gloomily:

"Suppose those Jap bombers finish off Pearl Harbor and move on to Mattina, what have we got to fight them with? This .45 is all right as far as it goes, but the Japs may not be sports enough to keep within that range. And suppose Hitler brings up his tanks, what have we got to meet them? As some of our country's leading isolationists might say, 'Are our brave boys to die because the misguided men at the head of our affairs have stripped this country of arms we need right at home?' I wish you and the Skipper would think that over. If I get hurt on this job, just because you haven't given me a tank and an antiaircraft gun, I hope my heirs—and creditors—sue you."

Amid the banter, a clue to a dire possibility had been carried to Tiny David, whose thoughts were racing: Stolen dynamite. . . . Two escaped Nazi airmen. . . . An airplane in an unguarded hangar. . . . A Chinese boy, loyal at heart, but bitter because of the treatment he had received, who had made serious threats, and then stolen away from home in the middle of the night.

Alone, none of these elements was particularly alarming, but if through some freak of chance they should become united, there was every possibility of disaster ahead.

Mr. Linton babbled on:

"Of the two, I would prefer a tank because—"

"Send word to Crosby to take over," Mr. David interrupted him. "Tell Jim I'll be back soon." He sprinted for the main gate of the plant.

Mr. Linton gazed at his retreating form. "Take it easy," he called. "Remember your arteries."

Tiny David drove rapidly along the road leading to the airport. Now the first promise of dawn had materialized into a half-light, weird and unnatural. He was a short distance from the field when he heard a sound that caused icy fingers to clutch at his heart—the irregular roar of an airplane engine being warmed up.

THE trooper swung his car into the entrance. The headlights and the early morning light revealed the hangar at the far end of the field, and the door of the building was wide open. Beside the hangar, with one wing extending over a clump of nearby bushes, was the airplane, poised for a dash down the runway and a takeoff.

Bitter realization came to Tiny David in a split-second. He knew who was in that plane; he knew its cargo; he knew its destination. He realized, all too late, that his own blunder in failing to see that the plane was effectively put out of commission was responsible for what was certain to take place. And with that bitter realization, came action born of desperation:

Tiny David sent his car racing at top speed along the runway, heading straight for the plane at the far end. The pilot saw him coming, and the engine of the plane, now warming to the task, reached a new crescendo. The trooper's heavy foot bore down upon the gas as he drove his car toward the whirling propeller-blades. The pilot released the brakes of the plane, and gave the motor the gun. The ship lunged toward the speeding automobile like an angry bird of prey swooping down upon its quarry.

At the wheel of the car, Tiny David gritted his teeth. Ahead was sure death—but that mattered less than the necessity that the plane must not leave the ground.

After the first lurch forward, the plane picked up steadily increasing speed. The car was making a good seventy miles an hour. Collision seemed inevitable.

Then the plane swerved, settled on one side, and went into a wide groundloop. The pilot fought with the controls, but he was powerless. The ship plunged blindly ahead, and crashed head-on into a concrete beacon. There was a blinding flash, and then a terrific roar. The plane and its occupants became fragments that littered the air. The concussion caught the troop-car, seemed to hold it motionless for the fraction of a second, and then tossed it over on its side, partially stunning the driver. . . .

A tearful, youthful voice aroused Tiny David.

"Please, Mr. Trooper, don't die—and please move!" A hand explored the interior of the overturned car. "I must turn off the ignition switch, so there is no fire."

Tiny David looked up.

"Ken!"

"Yes sir. You are not dead?"

The trooper stretched experimentally, then climbed out of the overturned car, and looked around. Only fragments of charred wreckage remained of the plane. He turned to the boy.

"What are you doing here, Ken?"

"I followed them here, sir. But I was almost too late."

Tiny David's knees were weak. He leaned against the overturned car, threw an arm over the shoulders of the boy, and drew him close.

"Start at the beginning, Ken. Why did you sneak out of your home?"

"I was very angry, sir. My ancestors were Chinese, not Japanese, and I am a good American. But nobody believed me. I made up my mind to prove it to them. Grebheit is not a

good man. I have known that for a long time, but you only laughed when I told you that yesterday afternoon. I had to prove what I said, and show that I was a good American. I left my house and went to Grebheit's hotel and kept watch. I have done that many times when I was playing G-man; and several times there were bad people there."

Tiny David suppressed a natural question, but the boy supplied the answer:

"I said nothing, because people do not like to have a Chinese—a boy like me spy around. They think he is fresh. But last night I was very lucky. Two men came, and when I heard them talking I knew they were Nazis. Grebheit took them in his office. It is on the first floor, at the back, and I could stand outside the door and hear what they said.

"Those two men were Nazi flyers, and they had escaped from a camp in Canada. They talked a long time. Grebheit told them what Japan had done to us in Hawaii, and they were very glad. He said he had lots of dynamite, and one of the Nazis, who spoke English, said that if they had a plane they could make good use of the dynamite. Then Grebheit told them about Mr. Drum's plane. They talked a lot more, and some of it was in German, but I knew that they were going to try to drop dynamite on the dam at the aluminum plant.

"I wanted to tell Mr. Drum, but he lives a long way from here, and I didn't know where I could find a telephone that late. Grebheit's hotel is near here, so I decided to get to the plane first, and fix it so they couldn't fly it. Mr. Drum gave me a key to the hangar long ago, so I could work when he wasn't here."

"What happened then, Ken?"

"I was not in time, sir. I was at the door of the hangar when they arrived. I just managed to drop into those bushes near the hangar. Grebheit helped them break down the door, but then he left. They wheeled out the plane, and warmed it up right near where I was hiding. I didn't know what to do. I was more afraid when I saw the white car, and knew it was a troop-car. I thought they'd kill you."

FOR the first time, the boy broke down, and sobbed convulsively.

"Take it easy, Ken," Tiny David soothed him. "Everything is all right. What happened next?"

"I crawled out from the bushes, and was near one wheel of the plane. They were so busy watching you they didn't see me on the ground. I had my Boy Scout knife. I was not brave enough to puncture the tire, because I knew if I did they would know it and find me. I cut the casing so they would have a blowout if they tried to take off. It happened just in time. I was afraid they were going to run into you, and kill you. I got here as quick as I could, but when the dynamite went off, it threw me down."

Now there was terror in his voice:

"Those men are dead, sir. They were Nazis—but I am not a soldier. Will anything be done to me?"

Tiny David's chuckle was reassuring.

"They'll make a hero out of you for saving the aluminum plant. You also saved my life, but that isn't so important to anybody but me." His face became grave. "You did a grand job. Grebheit is still to be taken care of, but that will be easy." His finger indicated cars, racing across the field toward them. "Look, Ken. Your troubles will soon be over."

Men poured from the cars, and excited cries went up:

"Where was it?" . . . "What blew up?" . . . "Look, he's grabbed that Jap kid that claimed he was a Chink!" . . . "Let's string up the yellow so-and-so!"

Tiny David's voice carried above the babel:

"There's nothing yellow about this kid. He has good Chinese blood in his veins—the kind of blood that has made poorly equipped Chinese fight the Japs for years—and the kid is the best American in Mattina. He proved it by saving the aluminum plant. I bungled the job, but he came clean."

The deep voice of the trooper boomed on as he told the entire story.

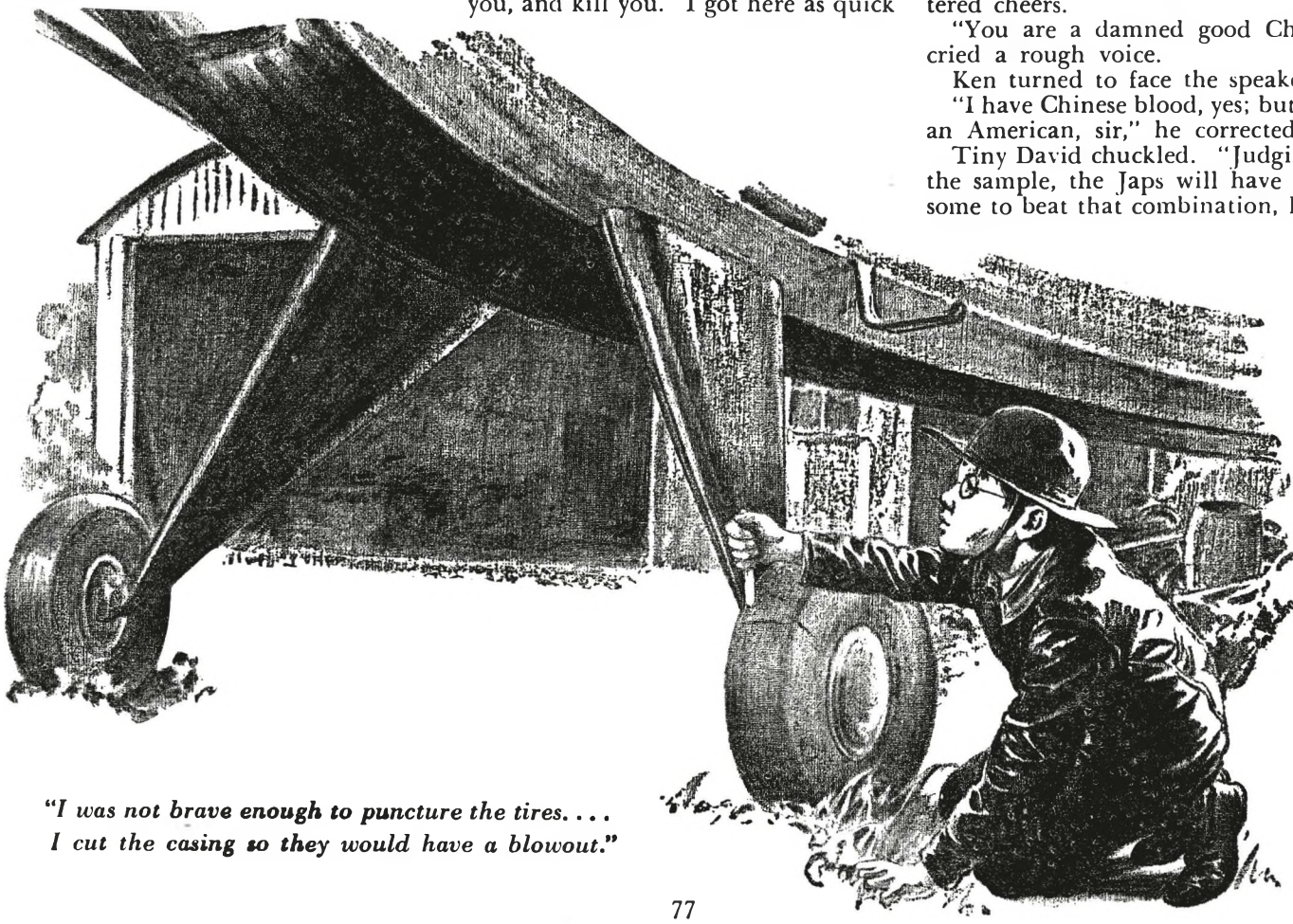
The temper of the crowd changed. There were cries of approval and scattered cheers.

"You are a damned good Chink!" cried a rough voice.

Ken turned to face the speaker.

"I have Chinese blood, yes; but I am an American, sir," he corrected.

Tiny David chuckled. "Judging by the sample, the Japs will have to go some to beat that combination, Ken!"



"I was not brave enough to puncture the tires. . . . I cut the casing so they would have a blowout."

The Conquerors

A drama of World War I that has significant echoes in Europe today . . . A Twice-Told Tale from Blue Book (September 1918).

by F. Britten Austin

"PARIS! Paris is taken!" The crowd of citizens lining the pavement of the main street of the little German town turned with a buzz of excited voices to the bareheaded shopkeeper who had just dashed out with the news. A babel of questions arose, conflicting ejaculations, women's tones shrill above the masculine bass.

"*Wie?* Is it official?" "Are the papers in?" "*Ach, kolossal—kolossal!*" "Six weeks! Russia, England, Belgium and France defeated! Brussels taken, and now Paris!" "Where did you hear it?"

"The Justizrat Kramer's servant has just told me!" answered the shopkeeper, full of importance as he looked round the ring of eager faces which surrounded him. "He should know, for his son is with the Kronprinz's army—doubtless he has had a letter." The shopkeeper was a member of the town council and phrased his thoughts with some pretensions as a public speaker. "These doctors find many ways of sending back news. *Ach, Gott sei Dank* that I persuaded them to keep the flags out!"

"The Justizrat Kramer! There he is, *doch!* With Herr Hartmann and Fräulein Minna. Ask him if the news is true, someone!"

The group turned their heads to where, just behind the rank of people lining the curb, a tall, intellectual-looking old man in a tight-fitting frock coat and silk hat stood in conversation with a well-dressed and handsome young woman. There was an aloofness, an austerity in his manner—an obvious disdain for the crowd—that held in respect those eagerly curious citizens who now stood contemplating him. The Justizrat Kramer was more than the chief local lawyer; he was the oracle, the intellectual aristocrat of the town. His dry tone, his contemptuously critical eye, were terrors the average citizen stood in awe of.

"Better not!" said one, who for an instant had betrayed an irresolution by which his companions had endeavored to profit. "Not now. The Herr Justizrat is telling the events to his son's betrothed. It would not be polite to interrupt him. Besides, the morning paper will be in presently."

"Paris taken!" cried another. "Then perhaps the Reserve Battalion will not march off after all, this morning! The war is over!"

"*Doch nicht!*" replied the man at his elbow sententiously. "We have still to capture London!"

"How long? Two months! The end of the year? 1915, perhaps!"

"*Ach, nein!* So long as 1915 can it not last!" said a woman. "Our husbands and sons will all be killed!"

"The losses are frightful," agreed another. "So they say. Twenty at least of the town will never come back. *Nein,* so long can it not last!"

"Look!" cried a voice. "Here come the *Polizei!* The battalion is starting."

From both sides of the street, which, clear of traffic, stretched under its decoration of flags and evergreens from the squat, antiquated fort on the elevation at one end of it to the tall, smokeless chimneys of the Hartmanns-Fabrik which closed the view at the other, long lines of eager faces craned out to watch the group of mounted policemen trotting down toward the railway station.

"The prisoners will be coming through, at any rate!" said a man, shading his eyes from the mid-September sun as he peered down the thoroughfare after the clattering patrol. "Cursed Frenchmen! The faces they'll make when we shout the news at them!"

"*Jawohl!* The camp is all ready for them—plenty of barbed wire, but not much else!" said another with a laugh. "Their train must be almost due—yes, look, there is the Herr Major von Toplitz, the new Commandant of the fort who will be in charge of them! Talking to the Herr Justizrat there! He is evidently going down to the station to meet the prisoners."

The crowd turned once more in the direction of the Justizrat. The little group had now been joined by an elderly officer, spruce in a new field-gray uniform, sword dangling. He was screwing his monocle into his eye and smiling under his white mustache while he exchanged a remark with the rotund proprietor of the factory at the end of the street, and the latter's handsome daughter.

From somewhere in the direction of the squat brown fort came the faint notes of a distant military band. A stir ran through the people, who were now repeating to each other all along the street: "Paris taken! Paris is taken!" as they closed up more densely to the curb to get a better view.

A narrow-browed, full-faced, corpulent little tradesman, apron about his waist, spectacles on his nose, stepped out into the empty street and gazed myopically at the vista of flags which transformed its familiar drab dullness into an avenue of triumph.

"*'S ist doch schön!*" he repeated to himself. In his tone was the naïve awe of a *Sancho Panza* contemplating in his secret moments his incredible splendor. "*Ach,* we Germans!"

He dodged back with a cry of alarm as a mounted policeman, disdaining to swerve his horse, nearly rode him down.

A little farther down the street Major von Toplitz was still in conversation with the little group. He was discussing strategy with the Justizrat, and the deep blue eyes of the girl were fixed attentively on the two men, color high on the cheeks under her massed fair hair.

"*Ja, Herr Kramer!* So we made war in Seventy with the Archduke Charles; so now—time-table!" He spoke in a clipped military fashion which accorded well with the fragmentary nature of his mental processes. "Today—hurl ourselves across the frontier; tomorrow—take Brussels; day after—Verdun; day after that—Paris! Date for Paris secret—can't tell you—in time-table—punctually to the hour—march down Champs Elysées. Tell you this, *lieber Herr:* our Kaiser has left Berlin—triumphal entry!"

AT that moment the rotund little factory-proprietor caught the rumor being passed from mouth to mouth among the crowd. He questioned the nearest man, shouted an inarticulate cry.

"Paris!" he yelled, waving his hat. "Paris is taken!"

"*So,*" observed the Major, drawing himself up with dignity. "What did I tell you, Herr Justizrat? *Ach,* those cursed Social Democrats! See, there is some use in our German army, after all—*nicht wahr,* Herr Hartmann? No more trouble in your factory! Brussels—Paris! Moment of time-table!" He twisted his white mustache with a fatuous complacency, his bleary old

eyes looking as fierce as he could make them, self-consciously personifying the victorious German army.

"It may well be so," said the Justizrat. "I had a letter from Otto this morning. He expected to be in Paris in two days. What a victory! What a victory!" His keen old face was lighted up as by a personal triumph. "My friends, this is the moment for which I have longed all my life, the moment for which I have worked—'the great time,' the time when our German *Kultur* triumphantly reveals its superiority in the capitals of the effete civilization we shall replace! Brussels! Paris! London next!"

"You must write to Otto, Minna," said the factory-proprietor pompously to his daughter, "and tell him how proud you are of him."

"Proud?" said the girl, a sudden, not-to-be-repressed bitterness in her tone. She flushed at its escape. *"He* is not fighting! He is just a doctor—he does not thrill with glory at our victories. He thinks only of new scientific ways to bind up wounds. His letters are full of it." She hesitated, her bosom heaving; then in a flash of vicious contempt, she added: "I have written to ask him how many Frenchmen he has killed!"

THE three men stared at her, startled by this outburst.

"Minna!" cried her father, glancing nervously at the Justizrat. Otto Kramer was a good match—one who would help the frequently perilous fortunes of the Hartmanns-Fabrik. "But you love Otto! You know it well—you know it well!" The eyes in the little rotund face were wide with anxiety. "Did you not cry all night when he went away?" Nothing was sacred to Herr Hartmann when his material interests were at stake.

The girl flushed up again at a snicker in the crowd behind her.

"It is because—because Otto is to be my husband that I feel ashamed, bitterly ashamed, he is not a soldier. My—my husband— Oh," she broke off, "when I used to listen to you talking of the coming war, Father-in-law, I used to think of Otto—I used to see him with a shining sword, conquering the enemies of our Fatherland—winning the victory—alone, almost—coming back decorated, a hero, famous. And now, in this great time, when all the world is winning glory, when everyone is talking of the bravery of their sons and husbands, he—he—" She stopped, very near tears. Then drawing herself up with a deep breath, her eyes flashing through their moisture, she cried: "Oh, if only I were a man!" Her hand seemed to clutch a weapon.

The Justizrat sprang forward; his ascetic old face lighted up, and he laid his bony hand upon her shoulder.

"Ah, there speaks the true German woman!" he cried. "The woman of Tacitus—of the Niebelungenlied! The wife and mother of heroes! You are right, Minna, our *Kultur* can grow only from seed sown among the ruins. The duty of a German today is to inflict wounds—not to heal them! *Ach!* Hartmann,"—he turned to the vulgar little manufacturer,—"what a grandson I shall have!"

Hartmann grinned relievedly. . . .

At that moment an irruption of little boys, bundles of newspapers in their arms, shouting inarticulately at the top of their voices, dashed along the pavement behind the backs of the crowd. Where they passed, a sudden turmoil arose, papers waved on high, fresh cries. The Major snatched a copy from an urchin who continued to yell with all his lungs while he waited for the nickel.

"Sieg!" cried the Major, glancing at the fat Gothic headlines. "Yet another victory! *Sieg! Sieg!"*

"Where is it?" shouted the Justizrat, above the clamor of voices which arose all around them. "France? Paris?" He grabbed at a paper for himself. "Ah—Russia!" He scanned the thickened type of the communiqué. "Not a word about France—the communiqué is late, is dated the 9th of September—today is the 11th. They are waiting to be able to announce the final victory."

The yelling newspaper-boys pushed their ways through the throng. In the midst of the uproar came the blare and thud of a military band approaching from the direction of the fort. The crashing rhythm of a lively tune mingled with the excited shouts of the crowd.

"The battalion!" cried the Major. "Must go—railway-station—see them off—prisoners arriving too. Wounded—don't know what I shall do with them—no doctors. Come to supper at the fort tonight—bring your wives. You'll come, Herr Kramer? You, Herr

And . . . . behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.



Albrecht Dürer's classic "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse."

Hartmann? Bring the Fräulein too —celebrate the victory, ha! Good-by—*auf Wiederseh'n!*" He saluted the young woman with a click of heels and strode off through the crowd, which made way for him respectfully.

The blare of the band increased. They could distinguish the tune—*"Püppchen, du bist mein Augenschatz! Püppchen, du bist—"* A roar of cheers drowned it. The spectators crowded up to the edge of the pavement, craned their necks to see into the still empty street. They could hear the voices of the soldiers singing as they marched toward them.

The band ceased for a moment; then as its leading ranks passed with a tap of drum, a dazzle of brass instruments in the sunshine, it burst out into the stirring strains which all Germany had been shouting for the past six weeks:

Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles
—über Alles in der Welt!
Wenn es stets zu Schutz, und Trutze
brüderlich zusammenhält.
Von der Maas bis an die Memel, von
der Etsch bis an den Belt
Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles
—über Alles in der Welt!

They passed, rank after rank in their field-gray uniforms, flowers in the muzzles of their rifles at the slope, flowers wreathed about their spiked helmets, flowers flung into the air about them falling like rain. They passed, sturdy German figures, pack high on the back, singing as with an antique religious fervor exactly in time and tune, their faces red with pride and pleasure, faces of plowmen, of factory-hands, of clerks, of petty tradesmen, of all the drudging occupations that had ceased, their paltry civilization forgotten, their eyes bright in a triumph of primitive instincts sanctified by the clamor of the crowd. They passed, yesterday the drab workers of a narrow horizon, today the panoplied foemen—spectacles from the unremembered desk still on the eyes that would so soon gaze at Death in a strange landscape.

They passed, imposing in their ordered strength, and with them passed the wild romance of war, the romance of lives at plenitude that have no sure continuance. They passed endlessly, rank after rank of faces that lost their individuality in one common flushed brutishness where thought was quelled, flower-crowned, purposeful, like the exodus of Gothic warriors setting out amid tribal cries to the sack of a doomed epoch.

The splendid choral, rhythmic to the tramp, roared up from the dense ranks streaming under the festooned flags that seemed to flutter in the waves of sound. *"Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles—über Alles in der Welt!"* The crowd caught it up, roared it back at them: *"Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles!"* mingled with shouts of uncontrollable enthusiasm, the certainty of victory, shrill female voices high above the rest.

"Hoch! hoch! Hurra! Sieg! Sieg! Paris! Paris genommen! Noch ein Sieg! Hurra!" And then again the dominating melody of the intoxicating chant, swallowing up all other sounds.

The girl stood gazing at the steadily flowing ranks, at the endlessly passing soldier-faces, so masculine, so indescribably thrilling under their spiked helmets. Voicelessly she followed the lilt and beat, the uplifting surge of the battle-song of her race; voicelessly, but with parted lips, she echoed the farewell cries, the shouts of triumph, the roar of cheers on cheers with which her countrymen sped their heroes on to certain conquest. She stood fixed, oddly chilled, tears springing to her eyes in the intensity of an emotion that was suddenly poignant. She saw the heroes passing, rifle on the shoulder—passing, passing to some grand unimaginable climax of effort, to a transcendent apotheosis far away—and then she saw Otto, Otto in his white surgeon's dress, in a hushed hospital ward, his calm, keen face bent over a bed. She had often seen him so.

"VICTORY! Victory!" shouted the crowd. All that was not part, active combatant part, in this mighty conflict where Germany—her Germany —wrestled against a world in arms, seemed despicably mean, unworthy of a man's strength. A burning resentment filled her, mingled with the warrior impulse of remote ancestors buried with their helm and spear. The volcanic hysteria which underlies the surface phlegm of the Teutonic temperament surged uppermost. She uttered a wild, inarticulate cry.

The Justizrat turned to her, thinking she was ill. She clutched his arm.

"Oh, if only I were a man!" she said, her eyes meeting the flame in his. "If only I could do something splendid—heroic—for the Fatherland! Something that would be Otto's part and mine together! *Ach!*" She broke into sobs against the old man's breast.

"You will, *Schätzchen,* you will," said the old lawyer, soothing her. "You will be the mother of heroes who will conquer Asia in the next generation, as those gallant lads are conquering Europe in this. Our German *Kultur* is born of such women as you—for you incarnate the irresistible will to power, the recognition of the moral majesty of war, which is our *Kultur* itself. Ah, *Schätzchen,"* he murmured, "promise me—promise me that you will marry Otto! My grandsons will be of the race of world-conquerors!"

"Conquerors!" she cried. "Oh, if I were a man, I could be a conqueror —but," she smiled, with a shake of the head, "I am only a woman, *Schwiegervater."*

The last of the troops had gone. Her father turned to her, still excited.

"Come, Minna," he cried, "let us see them off at the railway station!"

He stepped out with an absurd little strutting imitation of a martial step. His daughter and the Justizrat followed him. They had not gone far through the swirling eddies of the dispersing crowd when there was again a clamor far ahead in the mass of people, a shout that was no longer the pæan of enthusiasm which had roared up from the route of the marching soldiers, but a shout that checks the heart, the ugly shout of a mob perceiving its prey. A quick commotion among the multitude followed, a rush to line the curb once more. The word was passed along: "The prisoners! They are coming!"

Borne off their feet in the scurry of eager sightseers, Minna and her two companions found themselves pushed out into the street, into the front row of spectators that now squeezed back before the menace of the sidling, backstepping horses of the police.

"The prisoners!" The cry was repeated, dominant, an explanation, over the confused, vaguely vengeful murmur of the mob that had lost its individual sensibilities in the primitive instinct of the pack. It massed itself in a blind, collective hostility. The cynical authorities who, far away, had arranged—with the sureness of long practice in playing upon the passions of the multitude—that the two columns should pass in dramatic contrast, would have been pleased with the success of their stage-management.

Minna was jostled by a big red-faced peasant who elbowed his way to the front and stood, with snarled upper-lip over discolored teeth, gazing fiercely toward the railway station whence the prisoners were coming.

"Cursed Frenchmen!" he cried in the uncouth, elided syllables of his dialect. "Only wait—I'll tear the heart out of you!" He gripped with his bony hand in the air before his eyes. Then turning to his neighbor he asked in a tone of naïve simplicity: "Are they white, these Frenchmen?"

The girl shrank from the ignorant brutality of this old savage who was of her race, speaking a language that was, though deformed, her own. She felt bewildered, buffeted, stunned by the surge of malevolent passion that welled, hot-breathed, from the crowd. Meek shopkeepers, docile workpeople, women whose familiar talk was only of children and clothes—they were all transformed, magicked into sinister beings, where the soul of humanity was absent from its image. This crowd-mind that had no thought and but one single impulse, appalled her with

its reckless ferocity. She glanced about her for an avenue of escape. Her father was laughing excitedly, senselessly. The Justizrat stood pale and grim, his lips tight, his eyes flaming.

The clamor close at hand leaped to the howl of hatred that swept along the street toward her. They were coming! She forgot all in an impulse of curiosity. The bulk of a prancing horse, hindquarters close, dangerous, obtruded itself for an instant. Then she saw the prim figure of the old Major von Toplitz, monocle in his eye, mouth stern under the white mustache, marching with stiff, precise step down the center of the roadway, as indifferent to the shouts of the crowd as though he were solitary on a parade-ground. Behind him came a squad of *Landsturm*—old men with rugged faces under the shakoes of a bygone day, in old blue uniforms with red epaulettes, antique rifles at the slope, fixed bayonets glittering in the sun. The veterans marched with conscious pride, in level ranks and heavy step. There was the sketch of a cheer as they passed—and then, immediately, the howl of execration burst forth in full intensity.

Minna stared, expecting she knew not what of repulsive, of hate-compelling. Behind the squad of *Landsturm* soldiers marched a solitary figure in tight-fitting black tunic and red breeches. As one looks, fascinated, to the face of a condemned, the girl gazed eagerly at the countenance of this lonely man whose passage evoked such a storm of vituperation. It was white but calm. A soft brown beard lent a maturity to the quiet dignity of the poise of the head. The forehead was swathed in a bandage, but a kepi with a red velvet band was in exact military position.

"A doctor," she heard the Justizrat remark.

The prisoner turned his head indifferently toward her as he passed. For one moment she met his eyes full. They swept over her.

He passed out of sight, was succeeded without pause by a column of haggard men in an ill-kept formation of fours who stumbled and blundered along at a pace that was evidently too fast for them. The girl shrank at their aspect. Not a man but was bandaged somewhere, but the bandages were stained, clotted and dirty. Their uniforms were torn, caked with mud or gray with dust. Their eyes looked white out of faces that were grimed with filth and drawn with suffering. They passed, hobbling with sticks, supporting each other, swaying like drunken men with hands pawing the air in front of them blindly as they lurched, gasping with open mouths in the dust of the street. A long-strung file of *Landsturm* soldiers marched on each side of them, shouted harsh injunctions to keep place in the column, shepherded this mob of broken men with the butts of their rifles as a shepherd pushes his blind flock with the crook. And on either side of the street the crowd of civilians, hardly kept back by the mounted police, raved at them, shook their fists, screamed like demons. A hail of small objects, bits of vegetables, garbage, small stones, fell upon the miserable hurrying column.

"Paris kaput! Paris kaput! Paris kaput!" shrieked the crowd in monotonous repetition. *"Paris kaput!"* It was as though they expected the captives to be annihilated with this announcement of the final disaster. Few, only, in the hurrying stream turned their heads. The crowd screamed the louder, like red Indians insulting the prisoners borne to the stake, raging to find some word that would pierce to the heart. Failing, they surged, in ugly rushes, in a rain of blows from sticks and umbrellas, onto the column feebly protected by the cursing, overwhelmed *Landsturm* veterans. A howl that was the howl for blood of a pack in cry resounded down the street.

"Useless mouths, useless mouths," Minna heard the Justizrat repeating as he was pushed toward her in an eddy of the crowd. His old face was like stone.

A string of wagons followed the column on foot. She saw that they were laden with men who could not move. Gray faces, bandage-masked, looked listlessly over their sides. There was another rush of the mob. She saw men and women trying to clamber onto the wagons, trying to find a foothold on the spokes of the slowly revolving wheels, slashing with sticks at the helpless passengers within. A policeman plunged his horse vainly among the crowd, amid a frightful outburst of cries.

She turned, sick, dizzy—reeled fainting into the arms of the Justizrat—felt herself lifted out of the throng.

THEY were a merry company seated round the supper-table in the Commandant's quarters at the fort. The Major, cheeks flushed above the white mustache, had almost ceased his attempts to replace the monocle, less and less permanent in its position with each succeeding glass. He sat now with the muscles of his eye screwed up to hold it, unconscious that it dangled on his breast, and smiled stupidly at Minna, who was seated modestly at the extremity of her side of the table. The Justizrat was attentive to her—but with a sedulous, impersonal care she obscurely resented. She felt she was being watched over, not for herself but for her potentialities—like a stud-animal! Her mother, at the other side of the Justizrat, turned her strongly featured harsh face toward the lawyer and endeavored to force his attention to herself by continual appeals to his judgment on matters of general interest. Frau Hartmann was a woman of much force of character and powerful though limited intelligence. She was the real head of the Hartmann factory. Scarcely concealing her contempt for her insignificant husband, she habitually talked with the old lawyer as though in him alone she had found her peer. The Justizrat irritated her by obstinately retaining his air of cool superiority and reserving his admiration for his own wife. Frau Kramer sat opposite, next to the bibulously excited factory-proprietor. A meek, unsoured little woman, she smiled to see her idolized husband paying attentions to the future daughter-in-law she so cordially loved. The Major, a widower since many years, made gallant remarks to her at intervals. She smiled sweetly, only half comprehending them, in the happiness of this unclouded moment. Was not her boy safe—the war as good as won?

"Fill up, Kramer! Fill up, Hartmann! —Frau Kramer, you permit? —Frau Hartmann?" cried the Major, brandishing the champagne-bottle. "Paris! Don't take Paris every day! *Ach,* what a war! What a war!"

"Jawohl!" cried the manufacturer. "It's a good war—a good war! At first I was frightened, I will confess, Herr Major. The seas closed to us—all our foreign trade gone—so it looked. But it was a good thing. I shut down the factory at once,—that was my wife's idea, was it not, *Schatz?*—for we had been overproducing heavily. Now our stocks are nearly all worked off at good prices, and we shall start again with the world's markets clamoring for our goods. *Gott sei Dank,* the French and Belgian competition have been killed for years. Most-favored-nation terms everywhere and ruinous indemnities on our rivals, *nicht wahr,* Herr Kramer? *Ach,* it is a good war—a good, quick war!"

The Justizrat looked up.

"It is the end of the first phase only, my friend," he said. "We are supreme on the Continent—a homogeneous Central Empire that will force its way to the Mediterranean with the terms of peace, a Central Empire that will dominate Russia in the east and Asia Minor in the south; but we have yet to win world-power. *Ach,"*—he filled his glass,—"we shall win it. With all these resources at our command, we shall fling ourselves on England and crush her! Her colonies will fall away at the first disaster. She has no army; the war will be over before the half-million men Kitchener has called for are in uniform. She has a strong fleet, yes—but we shall hurl ourselves

across the North Sea despite all opposition, and capture London as we have captured Paris. The British Empire will pass to us. That will be the end of this war—the end for a generation, perhaps. Then, with new, with overwhelming strength, we shall conquer America; they will never wake up from the blind dollar-worship until we are at their throats," he added contemptuously. "They are utterly defenseless. America, Asia, the world!" He raised his glass. "To German *Kultur!* The *Kultur* of conquerors! *Prosit!*"

"*Prosit!*" echoed the others, only half understanding this exposition of their creed, but wholly approving its tendency. Frau Kramer alone commented.

"So long as Otto comes back to us!" she said with a sigh.

MINNA remained silent, thoughtful. She was proud, very proud, of the Fatherland. The shock of war had stirred her emotional nature to its depths, had awakened the full power of the unquestioning patriotism native to the German temperament and sedulously fostered by every influence, scholastic, literary and religious, that had affected her young life. She thrilled with a vivid sense of the victorious might of the race to which she belonged. Then the thought of Otto came to her, linked with a regret at his slight share in the military glory with which the country was intoxicated, but less poignant then her bitter outburst of the morning. She had wept, solitary in her room that afternoon, ashamed of herself, realizing how deeply she loved her doctor-lover, trying to find a justification for him as a noncombatant. Then she thought of the other doctor, the lonely prisoner marching at the head of that melancholy procession, saw his eyes turn toward her—sweep over her. She banished the thought. It returned, metamorphosed, in a vague vision of the wretched prisoners, cowering, faint with their wounds, behind the barbed wire. She shuddered at the recollection of prolonged, hopeless groans which had emanated from a tent behind the barrier when she was passing the prisoners' camp on her way to the fort. In a sudden revulsion she came back to the light, the optimism, of this little feast to celebrate her country's victory.

"*Ja*—Paris—first stage only!" said the Major. "London next! Paris! *Ach! 'S ist doch prächtig!*" Then suddenly remembering: "Haven't seen the communiqué yet! Be in tonight—certain." He turned to the soldier-servant who stood like a statue behind his chair. "Joseph! Papers in yet?"

"*Ja, Herr Major—glaube wohl.*"

"Fetch one!"

The servant went out.

"Fill up, *meine Herren!*" cried the Major. "Full glasses—finest communiqué of the war—drink to it, eh?" The wine foamed up in the glasses.

The servant returned, laid a folded newspaper before his master. The Major opened it, scanned it with puzzled brows, felt for the monocle that had once more slipped from his eye—scrutinized it anew.

The Justizrat tapped impatiently on the table.

"The news, Herr Major—the news! Let us have it!"

The Major shook his head with a bewildered expression and threw the newspaper across to the lawyer. "*Mein Gott!*" was all he could utter.

The Justizrat snatched at the sheet—stared at it, startled, as he read the emphatically thickened type of the communiqué.

"Read it, Kramer!" cried Hartmann from the other side of the table. "What the devil—"

The Justizrat drew a deep breath. "'*Communiqué of the 10th September,*'" he read. "'*The portions of the army which had pressed in the pursuit as far as and across the Marne east of Paris have been attacked from Paris and between Meaux and Montmirail by superior forces. They resisted the enemy throughout two days of heavy combats, when the approach of new strong enemy columns was announced, and their right wing was withdrawn.*'

"*Mein Gott!* It is defeat!"

The hush which fell upon the company at this startling news—this incredible confession of defeat, the first in the war—lasted through minute after minute while none could find a word to say. It was broken by a knocking at the door.

Joseph went to open it. He returned with an envelope in his hand.

"A telegram, Herr Major—for Herr Kramer."

The Justizrat tore open the envelope—uttered a wild cry.

"Otto! Otto is missing!"

His wife shrieked and collapsed in a faint. Minna rose to her feet, stretched out her hand for the telegram.

"Missing? What—what does that mean?" she asked unsteadily. "Not—not—"

"Prisoner," said the Major with impatient decision, his mind preoccupied with the communiqué into which he was trying to read another meaning. "Kramer, this isn't so terrible, after all!" His tone was plaintive, appealing, his pose of clipped speech forgotten. "They do not say defeat!"

"Prisoner," echoed Minna. "Then there is hope—hope still?"

"Hope still! Of course there's hope!" exclaimed the Major. "They don't say a word about the left wing of the center. It's only the right wing that is withdrawn. Withdrawn! Withdrawn—not retreat!" He reassumed his habitual manner. "Battle proceeding. See! Made prisoners too, and guns! Only a setback—a check. Go forward again. Never fear, Fräulein—Paris is ours! Tomorrow's communiqué—"

"Oh," cried Minna, "but I want to know about Otto! Does it mean he has been left behind—a prisoner—perhaps wounded, Father-in-law?"

The Justizrat had gone round to his wife, was bending over her. He looked up.

"It may be so, Minna," he said.

Frau Hartmann was bustling round the stricken woman.

"Be quiet, Minna!" she snapped. "Heinrich, go and fetch my smelling-salts."

Her husband obeyed meekly. Minna sank down in her seat, hid her head upon an arm flung on the table and burst into tears.

The Major strode up and down the room, newspaper in hand, making a disjointed but more and more hopeful commentary upon the communiqué. He was quite blind to the human distress of his friends in his absorption in the gigantic event of which these few lines of black type were the first intelligence.

"*Natürlich!* Not a word about center—left wing. That's the battle—real battle—east of Paris—fighting to cut French from eastern frontier—still proceeding. Break through—Paris ripe plum! *Ja, da ist's!* Withdraw right wing—good strategy—occupy French—strike elsewhere." He stopped for a moment. "Not defeat! No! Impossible! Impossible! Ridiculous—ridiculous, Herr Kramer!" He strode fiercely up to the Justizrat, who had revived his wife and was now supporting her, soothingly, with his arm. The poor woman, conscious anew of the calamity, was sobbing, "Otto! Otto!" in tones of heartrending despair. Her husband was endeavoring to persuade her that it was still possible that they would receive good news.

"Good news!" cried the Major. "Of course we shall get good news!"

AT that moment Herr Hartmann returned with his wife's smelling-salts. "Herr Major," he said, "the French doctor is outside and wants to speak to you."

"*What?*" almost screamed the Major. "French doctor? What is he doing here? How—how the devil did he escape? How?"

"He is with an *Unteroffizier,*" explained the manufacturer, shrinking back from the wrath of the commandant. "I don't know anything more."

"He can't see me!" cried the Major. "Won't see him!"

"Pardon, Herr Major," said a strange voice quietly in a good German accent, "but I must see you!"

The Major turned to see the French doctor standing in the room; behind him the gaunt figure of a *Landsturm* soldier filled the doorway. Everyone in the room looked up, at this intrusion, stared at the stranger. He stood calm and dignified, the mouth under the short brown beard firmly set, the eyes under the bandaged forehead looking unabashed at his jailer.

"Out!" cried the Major, choked with rage at this audacious invasion of his private quarters. "Out! At once!—Gunther," he shouted to the *Landsturm* soldier, "take him away! You are under arrest yourself for bringing him! Throw him out!"

"Pardon, Herr Major, I come to inform you that typhus has broken out among your prisoners. I have just come from a dying man. Perhaps it would be inadvisable for anyone to touch me?" The Frenchman smiled, sure of safety from molestation. The *Landsturm* soldier and the servant shrank horrified from his neighborhood.

"Typhus!" screamed the Major. "Out! Out! Go out at once! Don't bring your horrible diseases here."

"I MIGHT point out," said the Frenchman calmly, "that the disease is due to the shockingly insanitary conditions in which the German government has seen fit to transport its prisoners. Those men were picked up a week ago on the battlefield; they have been traveling for days in filthy cattle-trucks—they have had no attention but what I could divide among five hundred of them—they have been starved. Until their arrival here, they had not eaten for four days. You have provided them with a little thin soup, I will admit. In these circumstances, I must refuse to go until my demands have been complied with." He took a step toward the Commandant.

The Major dodged back in terror.

"What do you want? What do you want?" he cried.

"I want a proper isolation hospital for the infected cases, medical stores,—for there are none in the camp,—proper food for the sick men, beds for the wounded who are now lying on the ground, and medical assistance."

"I cannot!" snapped the Major. "The prisoners' quarters are arranged for by high authority. You are their medical attendant—no other!"

"I am aware," replied the Frenchman, "that in defiance of the Geneva Convention I am detained as a prisoner, and I desire nothing better than to care for my unfortunate countrymen. But it is necessary that while I am attending to the typhus cases some other doctor should visit the wounded who are not yet infected. I wish also," he said with a glance at the women in the room, "to appeal to the women of the town to assist in nursing the wounded. Nurses are essential—at once!" He ended with a tone of authority.

"*Verboten!*" snapped the Major. "Absolutely forbidden for civilians to come in contact with the prisoners.—Gunther!" He turned to the *Landsturm* soldier. "Double the guards round the camp. Shoot any prisoner who approaches the barbed wire. Forbid any man to enter the camp. The prisoners' rations are to be put down inside the gateway and left."

"Do you condemn these men to death?" cried the Frenchman, anger mastering him.

"Cursed Frenchmen!" said the Major. "*Sie mögen krepieren!* Go away!"

"*Væ victis!*" murmured the Justizrat, his face grim and pitiless. "We may have a long war—so many useless mouths the less. You are right, Herr Major," he added in a louder tone. "The German population must run no risk of infection. Our *Kultur* must not be endangered as a result of sentimentality!"

Herr Hartmann had retreated to the farthest corner of the room, whence he stared, in the fascination of terror, at this man who carried death in his clothes. The sweat pearled upon his forehead. Frau Hartmann and the wife of the Justizrat clasped each other, frightened and trembling, stood speechless.

At a little distance, Minna contemplated this fearless captive, who held his ground, head high, eyes flashing contempt. She could not take her gaze from his face.

"Herr Major," said the Frenchman, "I cannot be dismissed thus. These cursed Frenchmen, as you call them, are men—men even as your sons, the sons and husbands of your friends here, sons and husbands who may be lying even now, wounded and prisoners, in French hands. Would you wish that they should be inhumanly condemned to death—as you condemn these soldiers now? They have fought for their country as yours are fighting for theirs! I appeal to you. Think of one dear to you—of whose fate at this moment you are ignorant—before you commit this inhumanity, this crime for which you will have to answer before the tribunal of the nations!"

The eloquence of his tone was more powerful even than his words. The eyes above the brown beard were a flame that none could meet.

"Johann!" cried Frau Kramer, looking at her husband.

The face of the Justizrat went a shade harder.

"The German conscience is its own tribunal!" he said.

The girl shuddered. A vision, the vision of Otto "*missing*" with all that it implied, rose before her. An obscure combat raged somewhere deep within her, filled her breast.

Suddenly she sprang forward.

"Herr Frenchman," she cried, "I will help! I can nurse—I passed my examination."

"*Minna!*" The cry was one simultaneous chorus of horror, its gesture a simultaneous movement to restrain. The Major clutched vainly at her as she passed him. She ranged herself by the side of the Frenchman, seized his hand.

"Now!" she cried. "Touch me who dare! These men shall not die without at least one to care for them!"

"Minna!" screamed her mother. "Come away this instant! Drag her away, Heinrich! *Ach,* she has dishonored us!"

Her father, paralyzed at the mere idea of contact with the infection, did not move.

"Minna," said the Justizrat sternly, "come away! Think of Otto!"

The girl stood firm.

"I stay with this man—in the camp," she said. "You cannot, dare not, touch me. I stay with him because Otto, in his place, would do as he does!"

"*Unerhört!*" cried the Major. "She cannot stay! The camp is isolated. I have given the order."

"Will you dare to remove me?" flashed the girl at him. "You will provide the necessities this doctor demands, Herr Major, or there will be such a scandal at my death in your neglected camp that you will be disgraced!"

The Major swore in his most vehement parade-ground manner.

"Some straw is essential at once," said the Frenchman with a quiet smile.

The Major swore again. "Get it, Gunther!" he barked. "Straw! At once!"

The *Landsturmer* saluted, went out. The Justizrat groaned.

The girl turned to the French doctor who reminded her so much of Otto.

"You will have me help you, Herr Frenchman?" she asked.

THE Frenchman's eyes looked into hers. They communed in a flash that transcended the cloaks of nationality and sex, approved each other.

"Willingly, Fräulein," he answered. "Let us go, for there is much to do."

They moved toward the door. The Justizrat sprang at them, muttering to himself: "My grandsons—my grandsons!" He barred the way.

"You shall not go!" he cried.

The girl held up a warning hand, while with the other she retained the Frenchman's grasp.

"Stand back, Herr Kramer!" she said. "You must run no risks. I am possibly infected." She smiled. "There are perhaps other conquerors than yours. I go with this one. Were Otto here, he would go too!"

They passed out.



The strange Jekyll-Hyde story of Jimmy Smith who suddenly found that he was another man, in another town, and accused of murder.

by John T. McIntyre

Who wrote "Drums in the Dawn" and "Steps Going Down."

The Man Who Forgot

The story thus far:

YESTERDAY had been a day in the late winter of 1936, and he had been Jimmy Smith, in St. Louis; today, he discovered, was September 12, 1939, and he was Wallace Redge, in Los Angeles. And he didn't know the answer!

Moreover, in St. Louis he had been a wealthy young man about town, whose hobby was raising thoroughbred horses, and who was engaged to lovely Joan Birnett. Here in Los Angeles, it became apparent, he had been traveling with a swift and shady crowd; his business—"*Wallace Redge, Investments,*" whatever that might mean—was close to the edge of bankruptcy; according to a frantically reproachful letter he found in his pocket he had mishandled badly the affairs of someone named Mary Arbethnot; he was being pressed for the payment of various debts, including the price of a race-horse he had purchased; and two of his creditors, Louis Oppert and Joe Stort, made disturbing references to another creditor, Richard Conningsby, who had been found shot to death by the roadside after a quarrel with Redge.

Jimmy put in a long-distance call for Joan and told her his story—that he had no recollection of how or why he had left St. Louis, or of how he had come to be Wally Redge of Los Angeles. . . . She seemed cool and skeptical, but—she was taking a plane for Los Angeles.

Meanwhile, Jimmy determined for the moment to keep up his identity as Wallace Redge and try to straighten out his tangled affairs—indeed, just then it seemed to him there was nothing else he could do. He had a talk with his secretary Doddy at his office, and learned something of the tangled skein of his affairs. He had a guarded interview with a handsome girl named Vivian, who seemed somehow concerned with his business, and another with Sylvia Stort. He talked with a crippled ex-jockey called Danny Quirt and with a very decent fellow Sherry Noles, who seemed to be a friend of his. He discovered besides that he maintained a fine apartment in charge of an English valet named Winten; and from Winten he learned more of the quarrel with Conningsby in this very apartment the night before the murdered man's body was found.

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"I'll withdraw Saxophone today," said Jimmy. "It's plain he's in no condition to run." After a momentarily blank look, Binder said: "You can't do that! Oppert expects him to run."

Three Years

Joan arrived in Los Angeles and listened to Jimmy's story; she seemed half-convinced but still cool and aloof, though she was inclined to help him. And he needed help if ever a man did; for that night, back in his apartment, he found in his table-drawer a .38-caliber automatic from which two shots had been fired. Conningsby had been killed by two .38-caliber bullets. *(The story continues in detail:)*

WHEN Joan Birnett reached Sally Falconby's place, some miles along a pleasant way and up into the bright hills, she found it quite old and romantic. It was wide and low, in the Spanish style, with lovely gardens and waving palm trees. A most gorgeous shelter for a gorgeous single lady!

"I knew when I finished my first year in pictures that I'd be in Hollywood for a long time," said Sally. "So I bought this place and remodeled it. I have a cook and a maid—and an odd-jobs man who comes in the morning and disappears in the afternoon."

There was a pool in the garden, and singing birds in cages in a shady patio where Joan smoked a cigarette after luncheon and talked with Sally.

"It's beautiful!" said Joan. "I'd no idea."

"I'd been accustomed to that small Massachusetts town before I went to college," Sally told her. "Where they had long winters, and everything was snug. There is nothing snug here, but it has its points."

Sally, as she sat deeply in her long cane chair, examined Joan quietly. This St. Louis girl had been very lovely at twenty; but now, at twenty-five, her beauty had a depth that hadn't been there before; some of her old sparkle had gone, but the gain in other ways more than equalized that.

"Something has happened," was Sally Falconby's thought. "Something more than the mere passage of five years. I wouldn't be surprised if it were a man."

They talked of their college days; of Sally's experiences in picture-making; of people they'd met. And then, after a little pause, Joan asked Sally if she knew Wallace Redge.



Was he Jimmy Smith —or Wally Redge?

"Oh, yes," said Miss Falconby. She said it brightly; she rubbed the fire from the end of her cigarette; but there was a sharp little shock in her breast as her heart missed a beat. "Quite well." She expected Joan to say something more; but as she did not, Sally added: "I'm surprised that you know him. I've always thought Wally belonged to Hollywood only."

"I came out here to see him," said Joan quietly.

Sally rested easily back in her long chair and looked as casual as she could. But she was more and more startled.

"I have always been able to read your thoughts, Sally," said Joan. "And I see you don't like Wally."

"I'm sorry," said Sally. "But he's not one of my favorites." There was a moment or two of silence, and then she added: "How long have you known him?"

"It might be four years," said Joan. "We've been engaged for three."

Engaged! Sally felt limp. The thing was incredible.

"Where did you meet him?" she asked.

"In St. Louis."

Sally studied the beautiful face before her.

"He's been hereabouts as long as that," she said. "You couldn't have seen him very often, Joan, in that time."

"I didn't see him once in that time," said Joan. "And I never heard from him. I didn't know where he was until yesterday, when he telephoned me."

"Joan!" Sally Falconby was a little pale. "You're scaring me. Am I to understand that you are actually engaged to a man who has been away—where, you did not know—and had not written you in three years?"

"Yes," said Joan.

"And," said Sally, "you have hurried from St. Louis to see him, immediately on getting word from him?"

"Yes," again said Joan. "But maybe, Sally, it's not as shocking as it seems."

"And it may be more so," said Sally. "For, and I think this should be said plainly, Wally Redge is common talk out here. He's thought to be a person of little value, and has lately got himself into a lot of trouble.

"It seems,"—and Sally said this bitterly,—"that he forgot you as long as he was playing around profitably; but when his affairs began to break and things got dangerous, you came back to his mind. And he called to you for help."

"I'm not sure of what's happened," said Joan. "For it's all strange, and terribly unreal. I can't make up my mind. I don't know what to believe."

"You've seen him today? You've spoken to him?"

"Yes."

"And he's told you some sort of story?"

"A very surprising one."

Sally was silent for a few moments; and her look was one of deep concern as she said:

"Joan, your willingness to come all this distance at the first call of a man who has neglected you for so long has thrown me into a panic." She looked steadily at Joan. "I find myself hoping you are only engaged to him—that you haven't married him."

"I haven't," Joan said.

Sally drew in a long breath.

"Well, at least that's something. For I'd hate to think of a girl like you as the wife of a pup like Wally Redge."

There was another silence between them, and then Joan spoke.

"Don't think me a fool, Sally. Or that I've actually gone odd in the head. But in spite of what I've already told you, I'm not only not married to Wallace Redge, but I've never been engaged to him. The man I promised to marry three years or so ago was Jimmy Smith."

Sally looked at her with astonished eyes.

"Why, of course. You were engaged to— She paused, and then: "I remember that terrible thing—how he disappeared, how you searched for him, and—" She hesitated and stopped. Finally, in a different tone, she said: "Joan, there's something you want to tell me?"

"I wrote you I loved him," said Joan, "and how wonderful I thought him. Those three years, Sally, have been years of heartbreak for me."

She'd had news one day that there'd been an accident at Jimmy's place, Harrow Farm. He had been riding that bad-tempered young mare Stepsister, and she'd thrown him. Joan had driven out to the farm at once, but Doctor Wolcott assured her that the matter wasn't serious. A little shock, but no real damage. And Jimmy, smiling, told her the same. In a few days he was about, again active and fit.

"But he wasn't, really," said Sally. "I can see that coming."

"He did all the things he was accustomed to do," said Joan. "He rode and played tennis and danced; his business affairs went on without any stop. But little by little, I noticed a change in him. I had a feeling of strangeness. It would come and go like a flash. I'd be sitting with him, and suddenly it would seem that it wasn't Jimmy I was talking to; it was some other person.

"He seemed gentler," Joan went on. "Much more so than I'd ever seen him before. Jimmy had always been nice, but there was a good deal of stubbornness in him. I'd liked that. For after all, life is a battle, and the man has to fight most of it; and it does not do for him to be too mild. Also," said Joan, "Jimmy seemed to have lost his brisk method, and he took suggestions more readily. He laughed a good deal. He began to be rather sweet."

HOWEVER, Joan told her friend, when Jimmy disappeared, she forgot all this for a time; only the shocking reality of his absence was in her mind. But when the first great distress began to die down, the changes that she'd seemed to see in Jimmy came back once more. She'd heard of amnesia, and she hunted out its meaning.

"I'll never forget," she said to Sally, "how I sat looking at the letters that formed it."

They seemed filled with strangeness; they were compact with mystery. They made a thing that told of the slackening of the brain's structure, leaving it active and sensitive to immediate things, but sweeping it clean of all memory of things past.

"I suppose," said Sally, "you spoke to the police of this?"

Joan had. But they'd listened to her absently, and seemed to have little understanding of anything but their own routine. When a man disappeared, as Jimmy Smith had done, it was usually, they said, because of money difficulties. If, after examination, money was shown not to be the root of the matter, they looked for a woman. They searched into Jimmy's life with stolid patience; but they found there had been no money trouble, and no woman.

And then, gradually, they dropped the case and turned to others that seemed more possible of solution.

Joan, however, could not and would not give it up. She employed private police, but they had no more success than the regulars. The newspapers kept it alive for some time. Now and then Jimmy was reported to have been seen, usually in some distant place; but a second look always showed that it had been someone else. Finally this ceased to have value as news; the whole matter died out; and Jimmy's name ceased to be mentioned.

"I NEVER believed he was dead," said Joan. "I couldn't believe it."

"But—three years!" said Sally.

"I waited," said Joan. "I waited for him to come back. It may be I didn't really believe he would, for yesterday when the call came to the telephone, I was shocked and frightened. I was not overjoyed; I was not glad. When he said it was Jimmy speaking to me, I couldn't believe it. And when I was convinced that it actually was he, even then I was cold and suspicious. There was something almost imploring in his voice. I have wondered since then that I didn't break down, accept his assurances, tell him that I loved him, and wanted him to come to me."

"And what *did* you say?"

"I told him I was coming here on the next plane; and as you see, I did. I met him at the Chanford," said Joan, "and I listened to what he had to say. He said that he had no memory of anything that had taken place between the last time he'd seen me and somewhere about noon yesterday. At that time things began to happen that he said he couldn't account for; he found nearly three years had passed, and that during that time he had been in Los Angeles and Hollywood. That he was known as Wallace Redge. That he appeared to be in sharp financial distress, that a business in which he'd been engaged was about to collapse."

"Did he ask you for money?" said Sally.

"My dear," said Joan, "Jimmy Smith wouldn't need to do that. He has much more money than he'll ever need."

"You're quite sure of that?"

"Quite."

"I'm keeping it in my mind," said Sally, "that you never heard from him until he'd got into trouble; and then you heard at once. That *could* mean something, you know."

"I know. But it doesn't in this case."

"When you saw him—the very moment you put your eyes on him—you knew he was Jimmy Smith?"

"Yes. I was sure it was Jimmy."

"Was there no return of the impulse you'd felt when he first called you—to forget everything? To put your arms around him? To not wait for an explanation? To just love him and forget everything else?"

"That never left my mind," said Joan. "There wasn't an instant while I was with him that I didn't want to do just that. But the last three years have changed me, I'm afraid. I was afraid he was not telling me the truth, and that I'd at some time find it out."

Sally began to discuss the various people who had figured in Jimmy's story.

"Vivian introduced Wally to Hollywood," she said. "I remember that very well. Where she found him, I don't know. But a few months after he appeared, they were partners in a going business. Vivian has been in real estate; she's had a chain of beauty parlors, and interests in small productions. I only know her slightly, but Sylvia I know quite well. And to think," said Sally, "of her being the first person to see him yesterday morning after he'd—well, after he said—he'd turned around again. And speaking to him from a car, and calling him Wally; and he, according to claims made, not knowing he was Wally. If it's a lie," Sally said, "it's an awfully interesting one!

"Joe Stort," Sally went on, "is Sylvia's husband; a good-humored person who fools a great many people by being hearty and telling rather good stories. This other man, Oppert, is not known so well; he's from Chicago, I think; and Wally—or Jimmy—when he spoke of him had what I think is the usual idea. Oppert is said to be a bad one. The other man, Conningsby, adds a creeping note to the situation."

"Murdered!" said Joan. "That frightened me. And Jimmy seemed to be greatly disturbed when he spoke of it. He seemed quite nervous."

"I don't wonder," said Sally. "I can't help feeling Conningsby's death is going to figure in the thing in a way no one will like."

In the late afternoon, Joan Birnett sat beside Sally Falconby in a gleaming long-bodied car which rolled smoothly over a wide way among the hills.

"You'd better see Sylvia, now that there's a chance," Sally was saying. "Even a glimpse of her might be of advantage to you."

The Storts had an astonishing place, Sally said. One of the earliest of the Hollywood palaces, and built by a famous director of the silent days. How the Storts came into possession of the place, Sally didn't know; but they were clever, managing people, and nothing they did surprised her.

"Sylvia is slight and blonde," Sally said, "with gentle manners, and a delicious voice. When I first knew her, she was a sort of solicitor for a gownmaker."

Joe had been a musician in a swing orchestra. Being bulky and jolly and a good performer, he came forward rapidly. He'd tried for pictures, Sally said, but his voice wasn't right. Later he was a talent scout; also he was an agent handling things having to do with the picture business generally. He'd met Sylvia while trying to chisel in on the profits she'd made handling the costumes of a screen musical show.

"They've grown a good deal since then," Sally said. "These afternoons of theirs have what's known as a heavy draw; and often they are very unusual."

WHEN they reached the place, Joan found it much like an amusement park; there was an orchestra; the waiters wore white jackets; throngs moved to and fro; groups sat about the many tables. Everyone knew Sally, and Joan found herself in the midst of successive groups of smiling people. But finally Sherry Noles found them a table, and ordered something for them, all the while talking about horses.

"This is Sherry Noles," said Sally to Joan, as soon as she had the opportunity. "His horses are all wonderful. Joan Birnett, Sherry."

"Pleased, Miss Birnett," he said. "From the East?"

"About midway," she said. "St. Louis."

"Oh, yes," said Sherry. "A nice old place."

"He doesn't really favor it," said Sally. "Your jumping stock hasn't the necessary class."

"What's wrong with Sally now," said Sherry to Joan, "is that she's taken up jumping, and doesn't want to provide herself with a proper mount. A woman of her distinction," he said, "should have the best, if she has any at all. I'm recommending a tall Irish hunter to her notice. A horse that goes over bars, water or walls, with power and grace. Four years old, and sound as a bell. More than that; he's not only a horse, but a boon companion. He'll win your heart," said he to Sally. "He's that kind of a fellow."

Joan recalled what Jimmy Smith had said about Sherry. An honest, good-natured and really nice person. Sherry spoke about a horse he'd sold Sylvia Stort. And then he talked of Sylvia and Joe.

"Awfully clever people," Sherry said. "Excellent at a trade. They always manage, somehow, to get one all tangled up."

"Have you ever heard," said Sally, "that they've had a good deal to do with Wally Redge's troubles?"

"That *is* whispered," admitted Sherry, "but who can say what truth's in it? However, poor old Wally's in a devil of a fix. I'm terribly sorry."

"You've always been fond of him, haven't you?"

"A nice chap," said Sherry. "Easy, to be sure; but not half the idiot people say he is."

"Isn't he bad-tempered sometimes?"

"Wally! Bless you, no!"

"Well, he seemed to me to be very quarrelsome at the Barranca the other night. I'm quite sure he'd have struck that man if you hadn't interfered."

Sherry seemed disturbed by this. He fidgeted with his hat and stick.

"Oh, yes," he said. "Were you there? To be sure, Wally was firing rather heavily just then. But," gesturing and trying to make light of the matter, "you know Conningsby was always a difficult person to talk to."

"Conningsby!" said Sally, a sharp lift to her voice. "Is that who it was?"

Sherry mopped his face with his handkerchief, and looked unhappy.

"Yes, it was Conningsby," he said. "I thought you knew. That was a terrible thing that happened to him, wasn't it?"

"Quite awful," said Sally.

"The police are up to their necks in it; and the newspapers too. It was fortunate I got Wally away when I did, and saw him safely started for home. Because, you see, people have a way of associating things. Terribly silly at most times; but very often awkward."

Sherry remained talking for a while; when he left them, Sally said:

"He's not very easy in his mind, is he?"

"He was frightened," Joan answered. Her face was pale, and her lips trembled.

"Well," said Sally, looking at her with concern, "as you know how it looks, don't you get that way too."

"Everything seems to be getting dark. I'm afraid," said Joan, "Jimmy is in real danger. You must tell me all you know about these people, Sally. I may wish to do something, and a knowledge of them, even if ever so little, may be useful."

Sally repeated what she'd said about Sylvia and Joe Stort; but what she knew was merely gossip. It was the same with Conningsby and Oppert; but of Vivian, there was something more.

One morning Sally had gone to the office of Wallace Redge, Investments, upon a matter of business. Vivian had just left; and Doddy, the office girl, a very outspoken young person in Sally's opinion, was in quite a temper. She didn't get on with Vivian, and said so candidly. She also said Wally was being made a fool of by all of them. Sally, anxious about her invested funds, tried to draw the girl out; but seeing she'd gone rather far as it was, Doddy refused to reveal anything more.

"I'm convinced," said Sally, "she knows more about Vivian than anyone else. And maybe about Wally too."

Sally was deep in matters like this when she suddenly stopped and said:

"There's Wallace Redge, now!"

THE young man was seated under a huge striped umbrella, with a glass of something at his elbow, and smoking a cigarette. And he looked none too cheerful. He got up as Joan paused beside him.

"Well," he said gratefully, "this is a little bit of good luck, anyhow."

He placed a chair for her, called a waiter and ordered more things to drink.

"I came here with Sally Falconby, who knows the Storts," said Joan. "She saw you."

"She knows Wally, then?"

"She's acquainted with him," Joan said. "But as she's said, he's not a favorite."

"No, of course, he wouldn't be. I'm beginning to understand that I wouldn't have liked him very well myself."

"You've come to see Sylvia?"

"Yes."

"And have you seen Vivian?"

"Yes—awhile ago."

"What is she like?"

"Beautiful, but somewhat emphatic in the statement of it. And she's a girl who likes to manage things. Since seeing her, I know definitely that there *was* a person named Wallace Redge. Up to that interview, I'd heard him spoken of, but he seemed an idea only. . . . Wally," said Jimmy, "wasn't much. A sort of stooge, I'd say."

"I'm sorry," said Joan.

"This morning you mentioned how you'd noticed changes right after my accident. The things you noticed then, were the qualities that must have developed into the person I'm speaking of. Wally was a stooge; maybe of a higher scale than usual, but still a stooge. He liked posing, and spending; and the women Vivian brought to him provided the money that carried him along."

"You *haven't* much admiration for your other self, have you?"

"I can't make myself think he was really any part of me," said Jimmy. "Whatever it was that happened, *I* must have disappeared altogether. That was the first feeling I had in the matter; and when I went to his apartment yesterday, I felt sure of it."

HE told her of the talk he'd had with Winten in the lobby, and how the man had spoken of the three visitors Wally'd had two nights before. Jimmy told who they were; and at the mention of the name of Conningsby, he saw her shiver.

"I see you've been reading the newspapers," he said.

He then told her of what Winten had said about the talk and the actions of the three. Especially those of Conningsby.

"He struck you!" said Joan, alarmed.

"He struck Wally. He slapped him across the face with an open hand!" Jimmy's eyes blazed. "And Wally did nothing in return. That," he said, "is one of the things that makes me think he was a stooge."

He related the conversation he'd had with Oppert and Joe Stort. And as he proceeded, Joan felt more and more a gradual clarifying of her spirit. She was no longer aloof, as she'd been in the morning; the coldness seemed to have gone, also a good deal of the watchfulness. There had appeared in her mind a feeling that was surprisingly like belief.

"There seems something odd about the letter these men said Conningsby wrote Wallace Redge. It's a pity you weren't able to find it," Joan said to him.

"I searched everywhere. And Winten with me. He said Conningsby had never telephoned, but had occasionally written. This letter, however, Winten couldn't recall." He looked at her, and she saw trouble in his eyes. "There's something I thought I'd not tell you," he said. "It's something I learned from Winten. After Conningsby had gone on the night he struck Wally—Wally followed him."

Joan felt she was growing white; and she knew she was beginning to shake. But she said nothing, and Jimmy went on:

"And there's something else. While I was rummaging through the writing-table drawer looking for the letter, Oppert and Joe Stort were watching me. There was a .38 automatic pistol in the drawer, and I took it out and laid it on the table. It was Wally's gun, and I was told that the police laboratory had found that Conningsby had been shot twice, by just such a weapon."

"No!" said Joan, in almost a whisper.

"I don't want to frighten you," said Jimmy, "but I think it's best that you know just how things look. And here's more of it: After Oppert and Joe Stort left me today, I



"You're cute, Wally," she said. "But don't put on that front with me."

examined the pistol. It had lately been fired, and there were two cartridges missing from the load."

Joan felt that her heart stood still. She recalled Sherry saying that Wally had gone home after the quarrel with Conningsby. But she'd often heard of meek, often cowardly, persons doing desperate and unexpected things. Suppose Wallace Redge *had* gone back to his apartment? Perhaps to get the pistol Jimmy had found in the table drawer? Suppose he knew where Conningsby lived, and waited for him in the darkness. . . . And killed him!

Joan had believed, and Jimmy had said he believed, it was the shock received when he fell from the horse that had blanked out his memory. And Jimmy's idea, as expressed to her that morning, was that a second shock—one of financial disaster—had restored it. But suppose he was wrong in this? Suppose the restoration had not been brought about by the collapse of the business of Wallace Redge? Suppose the real cause of the second shock had been the death of Richard Conningsby—at the hands of this same Wallace Redge! Joan shivered. . . .

Some half-hour or so later, Jimmy Smith found Sylvia in a little balcony overlooking the gardens. She held out her hand to him and smiled; her dainty blonde beauty was even more attractive than it had been the day before.

"I knew you'd not disappoint me," she said. Her voice held the delicious quality of their first meeting, and her blue eyes shone with the same appealing confidence. He sat down beside her on a broad settee covered with gorgeous Indian blankets. "And it's so nice to have you," she told him gratefully.

"I've been going around a little," said Jimmy. "Your party seems to be well liked."

Sylvia's red lips made a little "O" of protest.

"Joe tries to please everyone," she said. "And everyone seems to come. I'd rather be a little more select. But you know, Joe is still at heart a horn-player in a band. One of my many difficulties is that he's on such friendly terms with so many people." She looked at Jimmy, her blue eyes full of questioning. "Just this afternoon he told me of what happened the other night. I mean the way Dick Conningsby acted toward you. I think it was shameful!"

"It was a little rough," said Jimmy quietly.

"You are so easy and forgiving," said Sylvia. Her eyes were still upon him; her mouth was tightened in what seemed a sort of childish resentment. He offered her a cigarette and held a lighter for her; then he lighted one himself. "Some men wouldn't have tolerated such a thing," she told him. "I had come to dislike Conningsby. I'd had confidence in him for a long time, thinking he had ability. But he hadn't; he was a bungler. We'd have made much better progress if I'd managed the thing myself."

Jimmy said nothing, and she went on inquiringly:

"I don't know if Joe or Oppert ever mentioned anything to you?"

"They didn't," said Jimmy.

"Of course they couldn't say much, because they didn't really know anything. They were told to do this or do that, and they did it. But they didn't know why."

"I think," said Jimmy, "I've noticed something like that in their methods."

"The idea of the thing was mine in the first place. And I thought I'd tell Joe about it, and have him do the talking. But I was afraid of him; for when once he begins, he tells too much."

Jimmy nodded understandingly, and quietly smoked his cigarette.

"Dick Conningsby had always been my thought of a man to carry out a thing of this kind. So I went to him. I thought I'd have some trouble interesting him, but I didn't; he agreed right away."

"And afterwards you weren't satisfied with him?"

"No. He did things in a way I couldn't understand. Sometimes it seemed to me he was holding out, that he had purposes that shouldn't be in the thing at all."

"That could be," said Jimmy.

There was a silence; then Sylvia said, with a smile:

"I think it's perfect, Wally, the way you've assumed to Joe and Oppert that you don't know what they're talking about."

"What else can I do?" said Jimmy. "With Joe sidestepping and Oppert shoving? If they don't know what's going on, as you've just said, how can I do any business with them? Also, if I don't get a few plain statements from you, how are we to get on together?"

"You're cute, Wally," she said, still smiling. "But please don't put on that same front with me. I don't mind what you say to those two," she said, "for they really don't matter—and never will, unless you want them to. Our principal trouble was Conningsby." She put her hand on Jimmy's arm. "And he'll not trouble us any more, will he?" Jimmy felt a sudden stab of meaning in this, and there was a cold shudder in his blood. "I know Oppert has an ugly disposition, and he might be dangerous. But," she said, "people like that are seldom cautious. And as a wise person can see, what happened to Conningsby might very easily happen to *him*."

An ugly, corroding thought ate slowly into Jimmy's mind. This woman believed he'd killed Conningsby; more than that, she was suggesting that if anything like a reason arose, he might once more lift his hand. This time against Oppert!

"Joe bothers me," Sylvia added, "for I'd always thought he'd be of help to me. I married him because of that. He was very talented in the usual kind of thing, but in more important ones he hasn't been much."

She went on from there, smoothly and sweetly. But in all the things she said to Jimmy as they sat there, she never approached, by even the breadth of a hair, the thing that he thought must be the actual substance of the matter between them. There were great sums of money, she hinted more than once; and these sums could be swiftly and easily gained, if clever methods and good sense were used.

A DOZEN times during the conversation, Jimmy approached, carefully, this hidden side of the matter; but each time she moved away from it with equal care. Once, indeed, he bluntly asked what the thing was that was desired of him; but Sylvia laughed and shook a finger at him.

"Wally," she said, "you cannot pretend with me as you have with Joe. Don't overlook that in the end you'll forget him. You'll forget Oppert. You'll forget there ever was such a person as Conningsby. There will be only you and me."

An hour or so later Jimmy Smith sat at the writing-table in Wally Redge's apartment; he drew a design with a sharp-pointed pen upon a pad of paper; each point he'd gathered in the course of the day appeared in the pattern as a mysterious symbol, each of which had its own meaning:

First: Sylvia had an idea.

Second: Distrusting Joe, she put the matter in the hands of Conningsby.

Third: A foil of some sort was needed to carry the plan out; Wally Redge was selected. As it seemed to be necessary that the victim be rendered financially helpless, they set about ruining him.

Fourth: Wally, being too hard-pressed by Conningsby, probably killed him.

Fifth: Sylvia knows Wally committed the crime. And she approves of it. Not only that, she thinks, if it be necessary, Oppert should be served the same way.

Sixth: Joe, whose methods Sylvia thinks of small value, would, quite likely, be dropped along the route to the object desired.

Seventh: Sylvia and Wally would then join hands, free to carry on matters as they thought best.

Jimmy put down the pen, tore the sheet from the pad, crumpled it and threw it into the wastebasket. Then he leaned back in his chair and lighted a cigarette.

"Grouped together," he thought, "the whole thing has an absolutely nutty look. But taken apart, it might be dangerous. That Conningsby section, especially, could turn out to be something ugly."

He sat and smoked, pondering the matter, when Winten came into the room.

"Mr. Quirt is downstairs," said the valet. "He says he'd like to speak to you."

"Tell him to come up," said Jimmy.

In a few moments the ex-jockey appeared, dragging his crippled leg.

"How are you?" said he. "I thought I'd try if you were in. I've been wanting a few words with you."

Jimmy asked him to sit down. Quirt was silent for a time, and then he said:

"The news on the Conningsby inquest is out. He died of bullet-wounds. But I guess you've heard that."

"Yes," said Jimmy.

"Two bullets. In the chest. The police have started to work."

"It seems like an interesting case."

"The papers haven't got all the facts yet. I heard about it through a friend who works for Oppert. Over the telephone! He was giving me the details, but Oppert came in while he was talking, and he had to shut down. Oppert don't like me."

"When you rode for Conningsby," said Jimmy, "was Oppert with him?"

"Not at first; he came along a little later. But it couldn't have been a rottener crowd if he had been in it. They finished me!"—bitterly. "I wouldn't say a word if everything had been right, because race-riding is a dangerous business, and a jockey must take his chances. But that horse was doped. And the people who fixed him are responsible for smashing me up."

"Nasty business," Jimmy commented.

"When I heard Dick Conningsby had been knocked off," said Quirt, "I didn't start crying or anything. For if I'd had the insides, I'd've shot those slugs into him myself. And I'd've done it long ago."

"Don't say that too often," advised Jimmy Smith.

"And it wasn't only Conningsby," said the ex-jockey. "His trainer was in the thing that spoiled me. When I heard, at the time you bought Saxophone, that they'd handed you that same trainer, I wanted to tell you what a crook you were signing up. But I thought I'd better not."

Jimmy made no reply to this. The man eased his crippled leg and went on:

"I stopped here, hoping I'd see you," he said. "This party I was talking with on the telephone—the one in Oppert's office—dropped a little something in my ear that started me thinking. He said Conningsby took a sock at you the other night. He heard Oppert talking about it. And there was something else," said Quirt, his eyes on Jimmy in steady interrogation. "Something that he said was going around. That you'd had an argument with Conningsby at the Barranca on the night he was blasted, and that you threatened to get him."

JIMMY said nothing; Quirt continued to study him with fixed attention.

"Listen," said the ex-jockey: "the police being at work, will soon hear about all the little things. And you'll be up for a talking-to. Now, you're a friend of Sherry Noles, and because of that I want to do you any favor I can. So I'll call your attention right now to the money you've got on your horse Saxophone."

"What about it?" asked Jimmy.

"You've got twenty thousand dollars on that horse in Oppert's book. Put that with what you've bet with other people, it might come to ten more. Thirty grand is a bundle of money; especially when the horse carrying it is going to lose."

"How do you know it's going to lose?"

"A party inside who has never fooled me yet told me so. It's a job, and has been from the first. Maybe you can't afford to take a loss like that—especially now, when it looks like you might have the district attorney looking at you. You'll have to fight that, and that sort of fighting runs into money."

Jimmy Smith was silent for some time; then he said:

"I think I'll take a look at Saxophone in the morning. What do you say if you run out there with me?"

Quirt smiled thinly.

"All right," he said. "Name the hour, and I'll be here."

THE next morning Sally Falconby telephoned Sherry Noles at his place that she was driving out with Joan Birnett to see the horse he'd mentioned.

Sherry's place was wide and splendidly equipped for its purpose. There were huge barns; there were fences and walls, hedges and water-jumps. The green fields that encompassed them seemed endless. It was mid-morning when Sally's shining car moved noiselessly in from the road, ran along the green-bordered lane and stopped before the building where Sherry had his headquarters. He had seen them, and greeted them warmly.

"I had a feeling you'd be here sooner or later," he said to Sally. "For this horse, Brian O, is not an animal to be neglected. If you'd lost him, you'd never forgive yourself —or me."

Sally Falconby laughed.

"Sherry," she said, "you talk like a horse gyp."

The girls remained in the car, and in a few moments a groom led out a finely-built chestnut horse with three white stockings, and a perfectly shaped blaze in the middle of his forehead.

"Brian O," said Sherry. "A prize jumper, any place you take him. Up you get, George!"—to one of the riders. "Let him show what he can do."

The boy got into the saddle, and the horse moved away, striking into a long, easy lope.

"He'll be limbered up in a few minutes," said Sherry. "Then prepare to have your eyes opened."

When Brian O was finally ready to face the jumps, Sally got out of the car and went to the rails to watch him.

Sherry Noles was about to follow her when Joan spoke to him.

"I was alarmed yesterday, Mr. Noles, at your conversation about Wally Redge."

Sherry looked worried. He took off his hard hat and mopped his forehead.

"That episode at the Barranca is really distressing; I hope you'll not mention it to anyone. I feel uncomfortable about Wally. In spite of everything, he's a good sort, and I wouldn't care to see anything happen to him."

Encouraged by Joan, Sherry spoke further. Wally, he told her, hadn't a great deal of business in him, but he was an intelligent young man and should have been able to take care of himself. But when one gets mixed up with the wrong people, they're often likely to do for one if care isn't taken. And lack of care was one of Wally's weaknesses.

"I spoke to him a number of times," proceeded Sherry, "but he laughed in that good-natured way he has, and called me an old fossil. I belonged, so he'd say, back in the gay '90's. If anyone was at all friendly in their manner toward him, he trusted them; and that, my experience has shown me, is a dangerous way to be."

While they talked, Brian O was limbered up; and he was finally headed at the fences. He was ease itself on his feet, and his movements were like those of a great cat; each leap was made with all the indications of courage and power. Sally Falconby's eyes shone as she watched him.

"Sherry!" she called. "He's really gorgeous, isn't he?"

"What you're seeing now," said Sherry, "is the merest trifle. That horse is at his best only when he is in actual competition and has a stiff field opposing him. Give him such conditions, and he hardly touches the ground. He's like a comet, or a soaring eagle, or something of that kind."

As Sally turned once more to view the fascinating performance of the Irish hunter, Joan said to Sherry:

"I think Wally's quarrel with Conningsby was terribly unfortunate."

"It was, for it has perilous implications. I'm afraid Wally's in a jam, though he doesn't say much. I mean to have a talk with him today. He telephoned me awhile ago to meet him this afternoon at San Carlos where his horse is training."

Brian O had ended his performance, and Sally was standing beside him, rubbing his velvet nose, when they turned to her.

"He's a very nice horse," she told them. "His manners are perfect, and I find he almost speaks."

"A grand fellow, really," Sherry told her. "And as I think I've already said to you, anyone who buys him not only buys a horse, but also a friend."

"I think he'll do splendidly. But in a few days," said Sally, "I'll come down again. And I'll ride him myself. Afterward you can tell me what frightful sum you are asking for him."

SAN CARLOS was in a green valley between two hills; there was a half-mile track and a number of barns, also a house with a veranda. It was early in the afternoon when Jimmy Smith, with Quirt at his side, drove up to the place; the young man swung out, and Quirt laboriously followed.

A groom who was chewing a straw and idling in a doorway, said in a surly sort of way:

"No parking."

"Just for a moment or two," said Jimmy good-naturedly.

"Listen," said the man, and he took the straw from his mouth, "I had this out with you the last time you were here. And it's still no parking."

Jimmy considered this quietly.

"What did I do then?" he asked.

"You didn't park," said the man.

"Well, this time it's going to be different," Jimmy said. He turned away, and then paused. "And while the car's standing there," he added, "get a polishing-cloth and go over it lightly."

He didn't wait for a reply, but walked toward the veranda. Quirt followed, grinning and dragging his leg.

"They don't seem to be easy on the owner, do they?" said he.

"I'd say," said Jimmy, "they were in the habit of being tough with him."

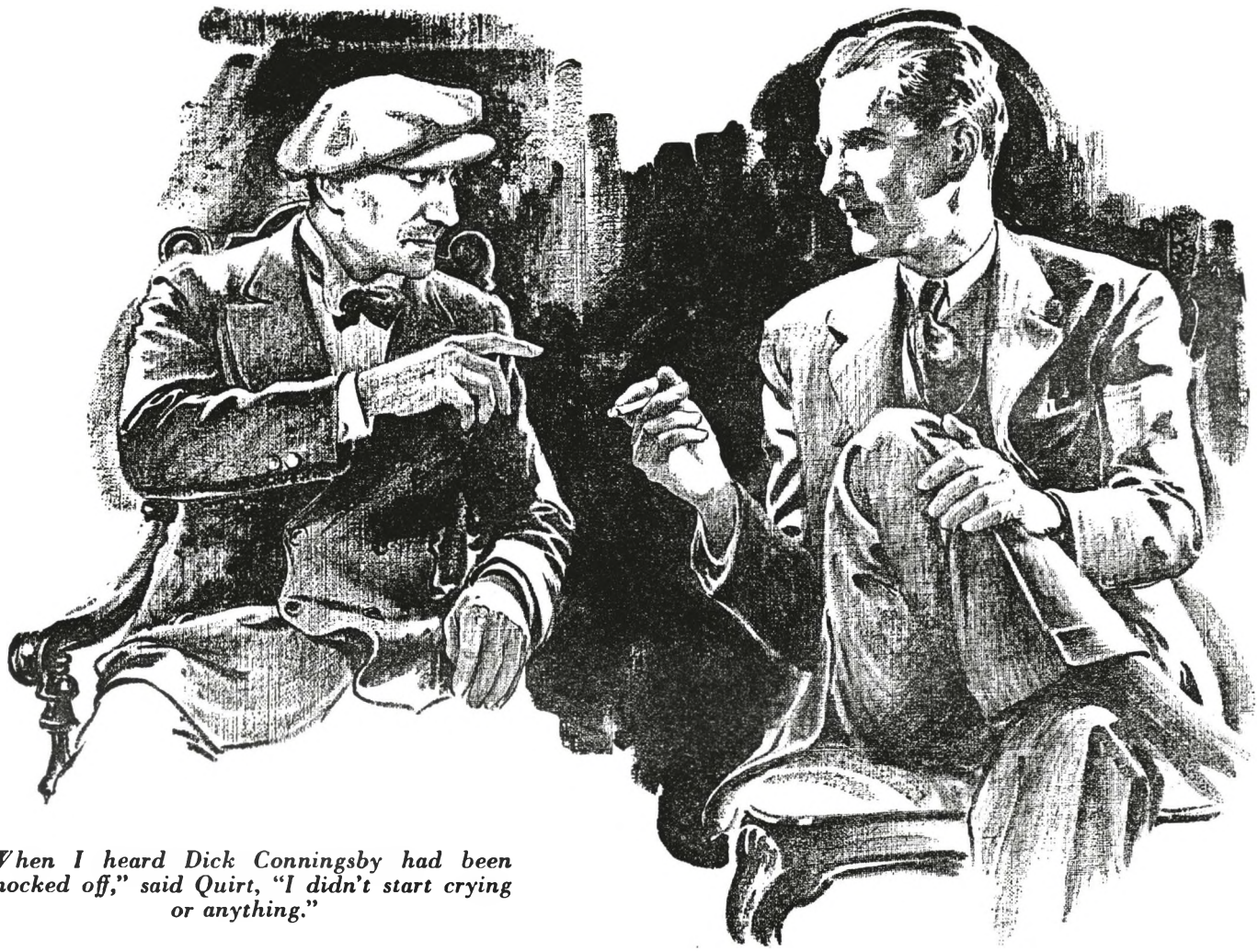
There was no one on the veranda, and after a glance around, Quirt said:

"There's Binder, the trainer, over there by the barn."

There were a number of men gathered under an awning at the place indicated; and one of them, a burly man of perhaps forty-five, was looking in the direction of the visitors. He had a heavy jaw and a coldly hostile eye, and when he'd called to know what was wanted, the two moved toward him.

"More and more," said Jimmy to Quirt as they went, "am I assured that Saxophone's owner doesn't occupy much of a spot here." But he nodded to Binder when they halted in the shade of the awning, and smiled agreeably. "How are you?" he said quietly. "I thought I'd run down today and have a look at my horse."

"You're too late for that," said Binder. "He's tucked away just now."



"When I heard Dick Conningsby had been knocked off," said Quirt, "I didn't start crying or anything."

Jimmy, looking around, saw derisive grins on the faces of the grooms and work-out boys; but his manner was still agreeable as he said:

"Put to bed, eh? Well, a little look'll do him no harm. So let's have him out." He saw an increased ugliness in Binder's face, and added: "I don't want to put in too much time here."

"If you wait until I get a horse out that's training with me, so you can fool around with it," Binder said, "you'll stand there until you're bowlegged."

Jimmy was still very tolerant.

"Don't I tell you it'll only be for a moment? I want to get Quirt's opinion of his condition."

Binder looked sneeringly at the crippled ex-jockey.

"So you've come down to give an expert opinion, eh? I hear you're in that line of business now."

"I remember," said Quirt, "that you never liked anything I did when I rode for Conningsby."

"The only thing I remember you doing while you were with Conningsby was kill a good horse for him."

"There's always two ways of looking at a thing," said Quirt. "My side is if certain people had kept their hands off Cloven Foot, he'd been all right today. And so would I."

Binder gave him a threatening look.

"You said something like that once before," he said. "And I warned you not to repeat it."

"Yeah, you and Conningsby came to me while I was in the hospital. When you thought maybe I was going to pass out, and you didn't want me to make any kind of a statement."

"You dirty little whelp!" said Binder. He took a step toward Quirt, but just then a car rolled quietly along the drive. Sally Falconby was at the wheel, and with her were Joan Birnett and Sherry Noles.

Sherry waved a hand to Jimmy, and the young man approached the halted car.

"A surprise," said Sherry. "I'm not only here as promised, but have in company two beautiful ladies."

"Sally Falconby," said Joan to Jimmy. "But, of course you already know each other."

Jimmy nodded and smiled at Sally; but he noted that her return smile had ice in it.

"I got the idea yesterday that I'd better run down and look at Saxophone," he said to Joan. "The trainer is just about to bring him out for me."

He looked at Binder; the others also looked at him. The man stood glowering for a moment; then he signaled to two of the grooms, who went toward the barn.

"He looks very much out of humor," said Joan in a low voice.

"I seem to have disturbed his routine," Jimmy told her. "And he doesn't like it."

"He's usually nasty about things," said Sherry. "I never cared for these surly chaps around a stable."

WATCHING, Joan saw a brown thoroughbred led out; a fine horse, but her quick eye at once told her that it was not an animal in good training.

"That," she said to Sherry Noles, "would not be the horse."

"Yes," Sherry told her. "It's Saxophone. And looking very rummy, if you ask me."

"There's no spring in him," said Jimmy Smith to Binder. "He's lumpy, and I'd say short of breath. What kind of handling have you been giving him?"

"I know my work," said the trainer, his cold, heavy face turned to the young man. "Nobody has to tell me what to do with a horse."

"All right," said Jimmy, "here's a chance to prove it. Get someone up on him and let's see how he moves around."

"Now, wait," said Binder. "I brought him out for a look. He's had his work and has been cooled and put away. No horse of mine is ever taken out of his routine."

"Nice enough," said Jimmy. "But this is an occasion. The owner, who hasn't been paying much attention, has come down for a special view of his entry. So let's break a rule or two, and say nothing about it."

But for all the temperate quality of the young man's manner, Joan, who was watching him, saw a stubborn tilt to his chin which she knew very well. And she looked at Binder. The man's heavy face was swollen and purple with anger as he watched the horse being saddled. When the rider mounted, Saxophone moved sluggishly. He rounded the track a few times with effort and reluctance.

"No more wind than a fat man climbing a hill," said Jimmy.

Binder looked at him with a bitter sneer.

"Since you've got going with the talent, you've got to be quite a judge, haven't you?" he said.

"Forget me," Jimmy said. "Put the horse at it. What I want is to see him perform."

Saxophone, at the word of his rider, faced the half-mile, showing much dislike for what he knew was ahead of him. He was off around the small circle. As he passed them the first time around, he was thundering laboriously.

"'Pon my soul!" said Sherry Noles, astonished. "He's like a cart-horse. The man's fairly begging him to run."

"You keep out of this, Noles," said Binder bitterly. "I know what I'm doing. Some horses don't stand being trained too fine; and this is one of them."

Joan noticed that Binder's eyes, no matter where they turned, always went immediately back to Jimmy. There was a peculiar expression on his heavy face; under the fury stamped plainly upon it was something like puzzled surprise.

"I've had my contract up with you once before," said Binder to Jimmy Smith, "and I told you then what I thought about interference."

JIMMY didn't take his eyes from Saxophone, then completing the first quarter of his second circling of the track. But he replied to the trainer.

"What did you say?" he asked.

"I pointed out that it states I'm to have full control of the horse while it's being made ready for a race. And I told you that I never stand for interference. Not from anyone. Also,"—and the man pointed a menacing finger at Jimmy,—"I told you to keep away from here, and not be bothering."

Jimmy did not reply; he watched the horse until it had completed the mile. And as the rider got down, and the horse stood snorting and shaking its head, the young man said:

"I'll withdraw Saxophone today. It's very plain he's in no condition to run."

There was a momentary look of blankness on Binder's face, and then he said:

"You can't do that! Oppert expects him to run."

"Maybe," said Jimmy, "Oppert has his reasons for that."

Joan heard this; and she saw the burly trainer lurch at Jimmy as the words were spoken. His fists were uplifted; brutal rage was in his face.

"Oh, he's going to strike him!" gasped Sally Falconby.

Joan saw Sherry Noles hurrying toward the pair; but any effort that Sherry might have made toward checking hostilities was too late. For Binder struck viciously at Jimmy; the young man, with a good deal of readiness, stepped inside the blow and then thrust his right hand upward, throwing the trainer off balance. In an instant Jimmy had shifted his ground; he seized Binder by the wrist with both hands, jerked the arm outward, and threw his weight behind the wrench he gave it. Binder turned a mottled gray with the sudden agony of the thing; his knees seemed buckling. He would very likely have fallen if two of the grooms had not caught him around the body and held him up.

"Get him away somewhere where he's not likely to get into trouble," Jimmy ordered. He then turned and spoke to the man who held Saxophone by the bridle; and while he was speaking to him, Sally Falconby said to Joan in a low, excited voice:

"Joan! I'm sure now that when he told you that story yesterday he was telling the truth! He's Jimmy Smith—he must be! Wally Redge could never have carried anything through like that!"

IT was mid-afternoon; Sally had driven Joan into Los Angeles, and put her down at the office building.

"When shall I expect you?" asked Sally as she sat, her hands on the wheel.

"I'll be there for dinner."

"Shall I send the car for you?"

"Don't bother. I'll taxi back."

On the twenty-second floor, Joan opened the door of *Wallace Redge, Investments,* and went in. Doddy was sitting at her desk, her knees crossed, her beautiful stockings well displayed; she was holding up a small mirror and tracing out a striking formation with a lipstick.

"Could I do anything?" she asked, turning her head and seeming just a little annoyed.

"I'm a friend of Mr. Redge's," said Joan.

"Sorry," said Doddy. "He's not in."

"I know," said Joan. "And that makes it just right. It's you I want to speak to."

Doddy looked at her attentively. She had not seen her before; she was sure of that.

"The affairs of the firm can only be discussed by members of the firm," she told Joan. "I wouldn't undertake to give any information outside the usual routine."

Joan Birnett drew up a chair facing Doddy, and sat down.

"I don't want to discuss the affairs of the firm," she said. "I want to ask about Mr. Redge."

Doddy sat up very straight at this; and the eyes she put upon the other girl were more intent than ever. However, Wally as a person was a subject around which there were no bars; indeed, discussing him was one of her chiefest joys. So she said:

"What do you want to say?"

"Just now," Joan told her, "he has me worrying about him."

"He's one of the kind who always have a woman or two doing that."

Joan felt a desire to discuss this, but she put it aside.

"I've been told," she said, "that you have been employed by Wally from the beginning of this business."

"I've been employed by the firm," stated Doddy firmly.

"Oh, yes; that would include Vivian also," said Joan.

"It would. And, to keep the record straight, Vivian is a person who insists upon being included in everything," said Doddy.

"I can see," said Joan, "you don't care for her. . . . I don't, either."

At this, Doddy seemed somewhat less firm—so far as to give Joan what might be considered a favoring look.

"She's never treated Wally right," said Doddy. "As I guess you know, he's a softy where women are concerned."

"I've seen traces of it," admitted Joan.

"He keeps getting worse," Doddy told her. "And I blame Vivian for most of it. She established this business as a kind of trap—to catch women who had money. And she put Wally into it to attract them. Every day in the week she sold him to some prospect or another. When I first came here," said Doddy, "I fell for him myself. He could have twisted me around his finger. Only," some-

what regretfully, "he didn't. Afterward, I saw what Vivian was up to, and I thought it was disgusting."

"It was," agreed Joan. "Absolutely." She regarded Doddy for a moment. "I suppose," she said, "you've often noticed Conningsby, who came here to see Wally?"

"I've never seen Conningsby," stated Doddy. "And he never came here. But I *do* know who he is. Or, I should say, now he's passed out, I know who he was. He did know Wally; but he was also an old friend of Vivian's."

"I hadn't known that," said Joan, a tingle of interest in her blood.

"Yes, he was," Doddy told her. "Though they haven't been on what you'd call good terms, for a long while. I remember when Conningsby first got acquainted with Wally. Vivian was in an awful temper about it."

Doddy said Vivian had told Wally he was a fool; but he had only laughed. Vivian's idea was that Conningsby was up to something, that he never showed interest in any one unless he saw profit in it. A couple of times Vivian had found letters, written by Conningsby, on Wally's desk, and took them away with her. She told Doddy, when the first one was taken, not to say anything about it.

"But," said Doddy, "I said if I was asked about it, I'd tell. And I did. After that, Conningsby didn't send his letters here any more," Doddy said. "I think he must have sent them to Wally's apartment. Vivian always hated me after I told that on her."

Joan was much interested in this matter of the letters, for it brought to her mind the one Joe Stort and Oppert had so desired to see, and which Jimmy had told them Conningsby had sent to Wally's apartment. But she proceeded with her questions cautiously. She found that the office girl did not know Oppert. And she knew next to nothing about any matters between Vivian and Conningsby.

"What passed between them," said Doddy, "took place before I knew her. And Vivian's shrewd. She knows how to hide things. I can't give any details about the business, but there'll be a lot of things happening soon; and I don't want Vivian to miss anything that's coming to her."

Doddy went on to tell Joan that four days before, when things had developed in such a ghastly way and it was seen there was no hope of the firm ever getting straight again, Wally had collapsed. He said he was done, and meant to leave town. For good! Vivian had been with him in the office earlier in the afternoon, with the door shut. But there were high words, and Doddy said she caught a little of what they were saying. It was about Conningsby.

"Wally," continued Doddy, "left here broken-hearted. He looked so depressed I could have cried. I didn't say good-by to him, and he didn't say it to me. And when I got thinking about it that night, I couldn't stand it. So I went to his hotel and asked for him. It was late, but the people there know who I am, and they telephoned up to his rooms. There was a wait; no one answered. Then I saw Vivian. She had come down the stairs; and she went out the front door in that way people always have when they don't want anyone to see them. I waited for an answer from the apartment, but there wasn't any. The clerk said he thought no one was at home. But I felt sure there was."

"And you didn't see Wally?" questioned Joan.

"Yes, I did. In about fifteen minutes he came in: he looked to be awfully excited. I didn't go near him, because when he's that way he can be nasty. He went up in the elevator; and I was standing there, not knowing what to do, when Winten, Wally's valet, came in. I got into the elevator with him; he was a good bit disturbed and didn't recognize me until we got out at Wally's floor and I spoke to him. He said Wally was out. When I said I'd seen him come in, Winten seemed to feel better, but still looked anxious. I went into the apartment with him. The whole place looked terrible; it had been ransacked from one end to the other. And Wally wasn't there."

"Not there!"

"No. I couldn't understand it at first, but then I thought he must have seen me as he came in, and not wanting to talk with me, he'd gone out again by another way."

"Did it occur to you that it might have been he who ransacked the place?" suggested Joan.

Doddy sat looking at her for a moment; then she said: "Why should he do that?"

"He may have wanted something and didn't know where it was. And Winten not being in, he began searching."

"He wouldn't have had time to do such a complete job," said Doddy. She continued to look at Joan. "My idea is that it was Vivian who did it. She was alone in the apartment—maybe for some time. I think there was something there *she* wanted. Vivian's a person who is always prying and searching, and asking questions."

JOAN'S mind was sparking excitedly. Conningsby's letter to Wally continued to hold a forward place in her thoughts. She took a cab to Wally's building; and there, she got his apartment on the house phone.

"Mr. Redge is not at home," came a voice which she felt must be Winten's.

"I know he's not. But I'm a personal friend of his; and I want to speak to you." Winten indicated that he was listening, but she said she must see him. He asked her to come up, and a few minutes later she was in the apartment.

"I saw Mr. Redge a few hours ago at San Carlos," she said. "I suppose you know he'd gone there to look at his race-horse."

"Yes, miss," said Winten.

"Winten, Mr. Redge is in serious trouble," said Joan. "I might say he's in actual peril and not be far from the truth. I know he has every confidence in you, and I've ventured to come here without his knowing I meant to do so, feeling you'd give me any information you can that would be of help to him."

"And you are—" said Winten, in his severe way.

"I am Miss Birnett."

"I thank you, miss. Mr. Redge said you'd possibly call. I was to keep your name in mind."

"I am greatly troubled about some of the things that have happened," said Joan after a pause. "And I'd like to speak to you first about the night recently on which Mr. Redge had the three visitors."

"Yes, miss," said Winten.

Joan looked into the craggy, expressionless face.

"You are sure," she said, "that after Mr. Conningsby left, Mr. Redge followed him?"

"Mr. Redge went out directly afterwards. That he meant to follow Mr. Conningsby, I do not know."

"Winten," Joan said, "I came here to get the facts. I know you want to be of every service to Mr. Redge; but I assure you it will be a mistake to withhold anything from me. I'm trying to help him too; and to do so intelligently, I must have the full truth, as you know it." There was a pause, and then she resumed: "When Mr. Redge went out directly after Mr. Conningsby had gone, you didn't like it. You were nervous. And you followed *him*."

Winten hesitated. Then he said: "Yes; I did."

"Thank you," said Joan. "If you'll remember, Winten, you followed him to a place called the Barranca. You saw him there with Conningsby. They quarreled. A friend of Mr. Redge's interfered and induced him to go home. Then you returned here and found he'd arrived but had gone out once more."

"Yes, Miss Birnett," said the man, looking at her with a sort of astonished credulity. "What you say is quite true."

"When you followed Mr. Redge that night, Winten, you had something in your mind," said Joan. "You were afraid of what might happen."

"I was startled, miss. Perhaps unnecessarily so."

"You knew Mr. Redge owned a pistol. Did he have it with him when you followed him?"

"I don't know."

"You say you were startled—I suppose by the things that had happened: was it in your mind he might do something rash? Did you look to see if the pistol was in its regular place when you returned?"

"I did. And it was not there."

Joan felt her heart stop; she fought for self-control.

"You didn't— You couldn't have thought—"

She stopped; and then Winten said:

"I'll admit that a rather dreadful supposition came into my mind when I saw the weapon was missing. But immediately I thought of something else—something that seemed quite possible."

"Yes!" Joan waited, intent, eager.

"While Mr. Redge was away, and while I was away, another person had been in the apartment."

"Vivian!" cried Joan.

Winten's face was like a mask, but his eyes were keen and alive as they fixed themselves on the girl's face.

"I've been wondering," he said, "where you got your information. But now I know. You've been talking with the girl at Mr. Redge's office."

"I have," said Joan. "She told me how she saw Vivian leaving the building; how she afterward spoke to you; and how you both found the rooms ransacked when you came in."

"I don't know how she got the information about the quarrel between Mr. Redge and Conningsby, if it was she who told you that," said Winston. "But it is true. There *was* a quarrel. And afterward Mr. Redge was persuaded to go home. He agreed to this so readily that I began to be afraid of what it might mean. And I followed him back as quickly as I could."

Winten said he met Doddy in the lobby, and she told him about seeing Vivian. When they found the apartment in disorder, he knew Vivian had let herself in: she'd done that more than once before. The discovery that the pistol was missing at first seemed to confirm his fear about Wally. But at the same time, the ransacking of the place seemed to shift the responsibility to Vivian; she might have taken the weapon, tossing things about in her search for it.

"However," Winten admitted, "why this last should be, puzzled me; because the automatic was never hidden. It was always kept in the writing-table drawer."

"And she knew that?" asked Joan.

"She did. Once, perhaps a month ago, she became much excited during some discussion with Mr. Redge; she got the weapon out and said she'd shoot him."

"What happened?" asked Joan, startled.

"Mr. Redge laughed; he took the thing from her, and put it away again."

There was a pause, and Joan said:

"It is possible it was she who took the weapon; but why should she?"

"That I could not imagine," said Winten. "Not at the time. But when I read the account of Conningsby's death in the papers next morning, I found my thoughts—in spite of the blow, in spite of the threat—did not follow Mr. Redge. More and still more I believed it was his partner who had taken the pistol."

Joan, suddenly weak, sat down. She looked at the man with wide-opened eyes.

"Miss Vivian," said Winten, "knew Conningsby long before Mr. Redge knew him. And when the two men became acquainted about a year ago, she resented it. She said so—plainly. She did not trust Conningsby. She'd telephone me at times when she knew Mr. Redge was not at home, and question me—always in the hope that I knew something that I'd tell her. She believed something was going on: little by little I learned she thought Conningsby was fleecing the investment company, in which she was a partner."

The man paused for a moment. From the time Joan had first come into the room, he had stood straight-backed,



"The Inspector took me by the throat—he has the most astonishing strength!"

expressionless, the very epitome of the trained servant. And he maintained this posture as he went on:

"There were times," he said, "when she seemed to have lost control of herself. She'd storm, and she'd threaten. More than once, in these telephone communications, she broke down, weeping, and was unable to continue. She blamed me greatly for not giving her information about things of which I knew nothing."

Everything the man said seemed to draw Vivian more and more into the shadows; and while he talked, lights seemed to be turned on along the way of Joan Birnett's thoughts. The littered condition of the room might not be the result of a search for the pistol. The disorder could very well have been the result of a search for something else.

Conningsby's letter!

WHAT if Vivian *had* known of the letter? Suppose she had found it—and the result had been that she, in a fit of rage such as Winten mentioned, had taken the automatic with her when she left? Suppose it was really she who had ended Conningsby's life?

"There has been a subject come up of late that has interested me," said the girl to Winten. "A letter sent to Mr. Redge by Conningsby. And addressed here."

"Mr. Redge spoke of a letter yesterday," said Winten. "We both searched for it, but couldn't find it."

Joan got up, moved about, through the rooms.

"There may have been some things about the ransacking," she said, "that might indicate what the searcher was after. Did you notice anything of the sort, Winten?"

"I think not," said the man. "The place was much upset. The drawers of cabinets and tables were all pulled out; some of them thrown upon the floor. The mattress and sheets and other things in Mr. Redge's bed were pulled apart."

"Did it occur to you at the time, Winten," said the girl, "that any of this might have been done merely to add to the appearance of the thing?"

"The person seemed very determined," said Winten, "but some of the places searched did seem queer, I will say." He opened the door of the nearest closet; a row of neatly kept suits were to be seen, hanging in orderly array. "Some of these suits were lying on the floor. And some of the coats had the breast pockets pulled out."

"You don't recall which of the coats had this done to them, I suppose?"

"As a matter of fact, I do," said Winten, his voice lifting a trifle. "It was the coats of the light-colored suits."

"Only the light-colored ones?"

"Just those."

"Were there any coats in the second closet searched?"

"Only one. And," said Winten, "that was a light-colored one also."

"I see," said Joan. She walked into the sitting-room, Winten following her. She asked:

"Could you say what suit Mr. Redge had been wearing that day?"

"In just a moment," said the man. He took out a small note-book and turned the pages. "I keep the run of such things here. On that day he wore a gray serge," he added, glancing up from the book. "The one with the coat cut a trifle long."

"I think we might make up our minds that the person who entered the apartment while you were out was searching for a paper. And it was very likely found in the pocket of the only coat in the second closet that was searched. Could you say if Mr. Redge was in the habit of putting letters in his breast pocket?"

"I have seen him do so," said the man. "Possibly when they were of some immediate interest."

A LITTLE later Joan got out of an elevator at one of the upper floors of Vivian's apartment-building. She went down the corridor until she came to the number Winten had given her. As she was about to press the button, she noticed the door was not firmly closed. Acting on an impulse, she pushed it open and went in.

Jimmy Smith had mentioned the little private hall, also the perfume that came from deep in the apartment. Joan closed the door behind her, and then called:

"Is anyone there?"

There was a laugh, an unpleasant one. And a man's voice said:

"Yes; but it's all right. Come right in. I've been expecting you."

For an instant, Joan's hand went to the doorknob; she wanted to whisk out of the place and flee. But her next thought was more enterprising: with confident steps she moved through the miniature hall and into the room beyond. A man stood in the center of the floor, a person with dense black hair and hard eyes. He looked at her intently.

"Don't tell me this aint the right thing to do," he said to her. "But, Vivian, you wouldn't listen to me in the many times I've rung your telephone, so this time I thought I'd drop around without saying anything."

Joan drew a long breath; and in as firm a tone as she could assume, she asked:

"Who are you?"

"If you'd listened to me when I called you, you'd know that I'm Dick Conningsby's partner, Louis Oppert."

It was plain that the man had mistaken her for Vivian. Realizing this, Joan's mind was instantly made up. She began taking off her gloves leisurely.

"What do you want?" she asked.

"Now, listen," he said, "don't let's waste any time sparring. You know what I want. I've kept after you about it for the last three days, but you never gave me any encouragement."

"Can you think of any reason why I should have?" she said. She opened a drawer in a stand, threw her gloves into it, closed it and stood looking at him.

"I can think of a couple of them," he told her. "And all good. The first is, there's no sense in transferring any troubles you've had with Conningsby to me. His private affairs were his own; I'm another party altogether. Why can't you make another start—out in the clear—with me?"

Joan was now removing her hat in front of a mirror; then she smoothed her hair. Her back was turned to him, but his reflection was before her in the glass.

"Because you had something against Conningsby is no reason why you should be down on me," Oppert went on. "He never told me why you didn't like him; but I heard a little here and there, and when I put them together I had most of the story. You'd dropped him, and got yourself another boy friend; and by and by Dick took the boy friend over, gave him a rather fancy trimming, and you didn't like *that*. Is that right or not?"

"Anyway," said Joan, "it's interesting. Tell me more."

"You know all that part of it," Oppert said. "So I'll tell you some things maybe you don't know. Conningsby was smart. But sometimes he went too far. Take your case: he made you sore. He turned sap for a minute or two, and told you things he shouldn't have told anybody."

"He told me nothing," said Joan.

"Don't try to kid me!" said Oppert. He smiled at her unpleasantly. "I suppose he didn't mention a letter to you? A letter written to Wally Redge?"

"He never did," said Joan.

There was an ugly look in the man's face.

"If he didn't tell you about it, how come you know what was in it?"

There was a pause. Then Joan said quietly:

"Wally could have told me, couldn't he?"

"Wally didn't tell you," said Oppert. "If he had, why did you go to his place when you knew no one was there, and search it from one end to the other?"

"Do you know I did that?"

"I know."

Joan stood looking at the man; as she did not speak, he went on:

"I'm told you are a clever business girl," he said. "If you are, you'll be careful, from now on, just where you're stepping. If you make a mistake, you're going to get into trouble."

She continued her silence; and he proceeded:

"This investment business of Wally's and yours is wrecked; how deep you're in it, in a money way, I can't say. But I'll say this: you're in the know about this other thing; and through that, you've got a chance to get back all you've lost, and maybe more. What I mean is, you have if you work along with me."

"What about Sylvia and Joe?" asked Joan.

"Why worry about them? Sylvia's poison to you; and you're the same to her. And Joe's only a noise. Besides that, neither of them have any good wishes for me. You and I could get away with this and leave them out of it."

"Maybe you're right," said Joan after a space, in which she seemed to be considering. "I'll have to think it over."

Oppert seemed easier.

"Only, don't stall," he said. "Wally's a staller, and it only wastes time and makes bad feelings. There are one of two things you can do: work with me, or work with Sylvia. But if you make up your mind to go along with her, I promise you you'll not go far."

"There's no need to threaten me," said Joan. "That makes bad feelings too. Give me a day—no, give me two days; then I'll have an answer for you."

"You give me your word on that?" said Oppert.

"I do."

"All right." The man buttoned the front of his square coat, and he took up his hat. "That's the way I like to see business done." He went out into the little hall. "Sorry I had to move in on you like this," he said. "But it was the only way I could see to get a chance to talk with you." He opened the door leading to the corridor. "In two days," he said. "Here. And I'll telephone I'm coming."

He shut the door, and Joan was left alone in the apartment. She looked around the sitting-room. It was filled with all sorts of articles of furniture and decoration, and she regarded them with a feeling of something like helplessness. There were so many places in a room like this where a thing might be placed! Especially a thing like a letter. She opened several drawers; she looked into a curtained cabinetlike piece at one side, which turned out to be a bookcase. A book was a likely place to put a letter, if one had a desire to hide it. And Joan felt Vivian would want to hide this one. She had gone through a half-dozen volumes when there was a sound from the hall—at the door! A key had been put in the lock.

Joan placed the book she was holding on a table, snatched up her hat and stepped quickly into an adjoining room. It was a bedroom, very pink and white, exceedingly fluffy and much decorated. She heard the hall door open, but it did not close. There were small sounds, like the rustle of skirts and the click of heels.

There was a curtained doorway opening upon the private hall; Joan, pushing the draperies slightly aside, saw a girl standing and holding the entrance door of the apartment partly open, and peering into the corridor as though watching someone. She remained this way for some moments, then closed the door and stood panting and frightened with her back to it. When she had recovered, she hurried into the sitting-room. Almost at once Joan heard an exclamation. She went softly to the door by which she had entered the bedroom, and she saw the girl standing aghast before the open bookcase, with the evidence of Joan's operations before her.

As she watched, Joan realized the nature of the situation. The girl was Vivian. She had seen Oppert in the corridor and had recognized him. She'd been frightened by his presence, and watched him from the doorway, possibly until he had disappeared. And the evidence of a search now before her, she plainly ascribed to him.

Joan saw Vivian turn with haste from the bookcase to the center table. Here there was a framed photograph, with the signature *"Wallace Redge,"* written upon it. She removed the back from this, and with an exclamation of relief, she took out a letter. She looked at it as though to assure herself it was what she supposed it to be, then put it into a hand-bag which she placed upon the table. She looked at herself in a mirror, smoothed her hair and readjusted her hat. Then she took the purse and hurried out of the apartment, snapping the door behind her.

Joan took her gloves out of the stand drawer; she put on her hat—did both things without haste; she was listening for the sound of the elevator. When she heard it, she left the apartment swiftly. Luckily, there was another car at once, and she reached the lobby in time to see Vivian disappearing through the front doorway. Also, she saw Oppert at the far side of the lobby. A page stood beside him and was pointing at Vivian, his expression and gestures plainly indicating that he was explaining who she was. Oppert, amazement and anger in his face, hurried through the doorway.

Joan followed. She saw a cab drawn up at the curb. Vivian was speaking to the driver. She got in; the door was closed; the motor began to hum and the cab started. By that time Oppert had arrived; he pulled open the door and sprang in. The cab was swallowed up in the street's traffic, with Joan staring after it in astonished dismay.

IT was early evening of the same day, and Jimmy Smith sat at Wally Redge's writing-table, smoking a cigarette and thinking of the automatic pistol in the drawer. It would be an easy thing to dispose of it. But he did not know how Wally had come by it; he'd asked Winten, and Winten didn't know. And further than that, Jimmy felt he couldn't inquire without attracting attention.

If Wally had bought the weapon in the regular way, the fact was sure to be registered in one of the police departments. If the police called on him, they were sure to ask about it. If it was not produced, they'd want to know what he'd done with it. If he lied, they trip him somewhere.

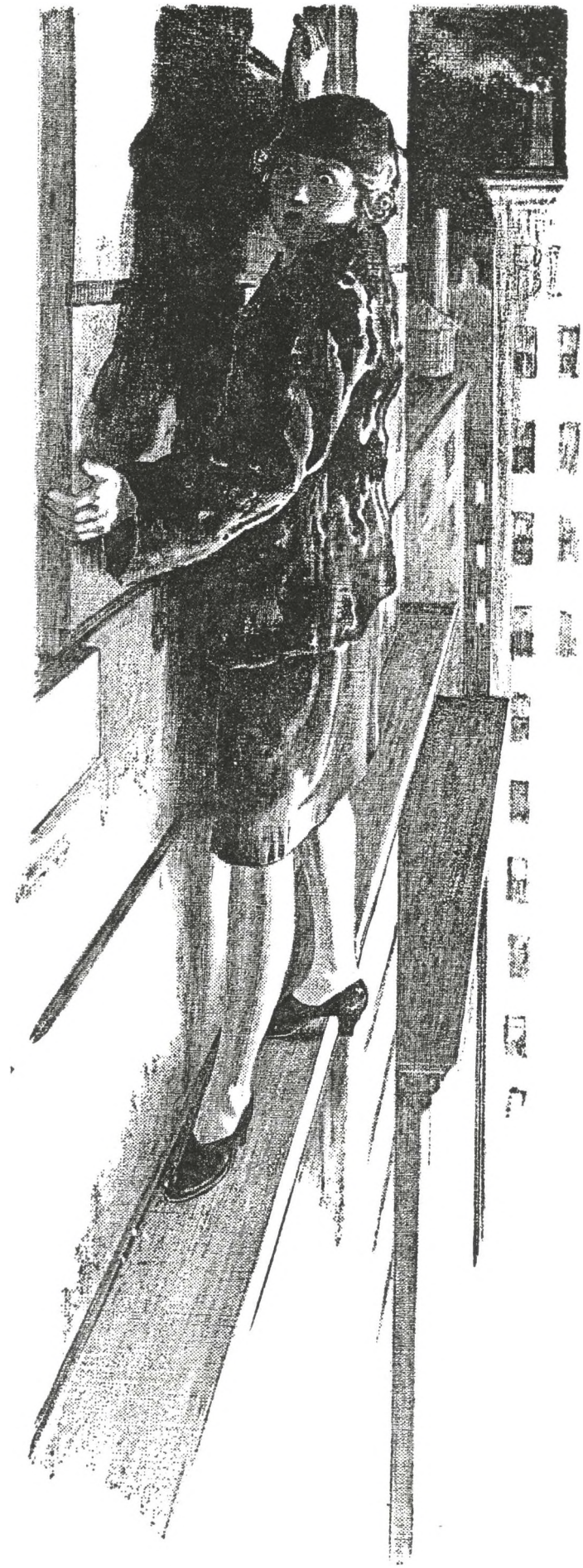
The telephone in the hall rang, and Jimmy could hear Winten's voice as he replied. In a few moments the man came into the room.

"Miss Gloria Gale, sir. Of the Hollywood Daily *Magnet.*"

"What does she want?"

"She writes a sort of scandal column, Mr. Redge, and columnists of that kind are always searching for material."

Jimmy considered a moment. "Let her come through," he said finally.



Joan did not dare look down. . . . Inch by inch she crept along. . . . At last she reached the window.

The voice of Gloria Gale, professionally musical and soothing, drifted to the young man's ear.

"Good evening, Mr. Redge. So sorry if I'm interrupting you in anything."

"It's all right," said Jimmy.

"The Daily *Magnet* has just heard you've withdrawn your horse Saxophone from the Handicap."

"Yes," said Jimmy. "Today."

"Would you mind saying why?"

"He isn't in condition."

"Isn't that rather curious?"

"Not too much so. Horses are that way sometimes."

"But this one has always been such a good horse. So dependable."

"Are you doing sports for the paper now?" asked Jimmy.

"Dear Mr. Redge!" said Gloria Gale. "I do everything for the paper. You'd never believe what a slave I am." And there was a sweet, wily note in her voice as she said: "How long have you had Saxophone?"

"I couldn't say. Not long."

"I think it's awfully interesting that you, who are not a horseman, should have suddenly gone in for racing."

"Everything has a beginning," said Jimmy.

"You bought Saxophone from Richard Conningsby?"

"This," was Jimmy's thought, "is the pay-off. The thing she's been working up to." Aloud, he said:

"Yes. Conningsby had him for some time."

"Isn't that thrilling!" enthused Miss Gale. "It gives a color to the whole thing, doesn't it? And, Mr. Redge, Conningsby was an old friend of yours, wasn't he?"

"If he was," said Jimmy, disgusted with the woman's childlike trickery, "I never heard of it."

"At any rate, you must have been dreadfully shocked at his death."

"It was pretty sudden," said Jimmy.

"Who," demanded Miss Gale, an amazed conjecture in her voice, "could have done such a dreadful thing?"

"I think," said Jimmy, "that's what the police are turning over in their minds."

"If I were at work on the case," Miss Gale said, her voice now hushed and containing a creepy quality, "I should try to find out what enemies he had. What places he frequented. Where he'd been on the night he was killed."

"That will be the police routine, I suppose," Jimmy said.

"Conningsby liked music," said the columnist. "He'd often go to the Barranca to hear the music. Had you ever gone there with him?"

"I've never been strong for good music," said Jimmy.

"I've heard he was there the night he was shot."

"I saw him there."

"You weren't speaking to him?"

"Yes."

A few seconds pause seemed to indicate that this brief assent had caused her to fall somewhat short in her intent.

"I wonder," she said, "if all the reports going around about your business troubles are true?"

"Every business has its troubles."

"You don't coöperate very well, do you, Mr. Redge?" laughed Miss Gale.

"Is that the term they have for it in the *Magnet* office?"

"We were all interested in the report we've had of your fight today with Binder, the man who was training Saxophone." Jimmy, exasperated by the naïve guile of the woman, said nothing. "There was a fight, wasn't there?" she asked.

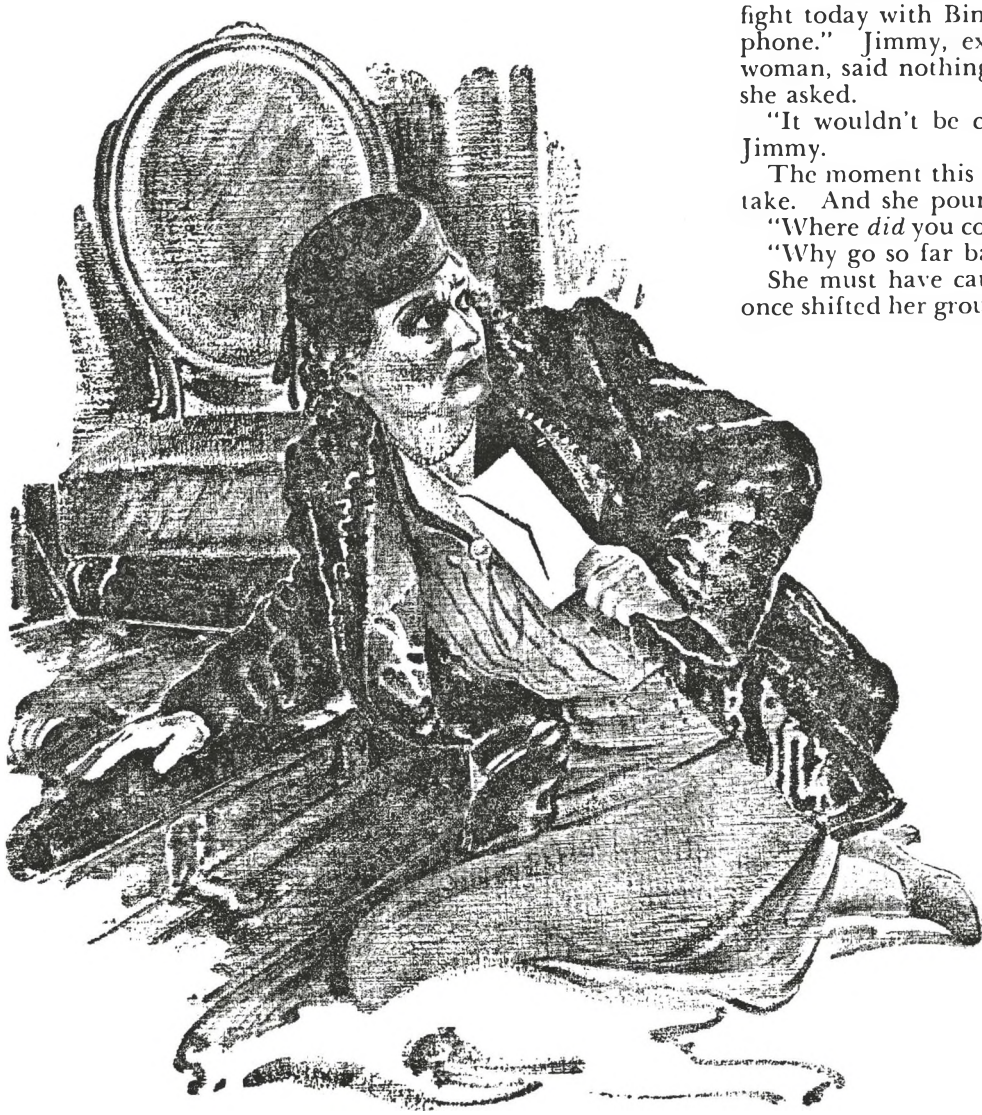
"It wouldn't be called that where I come from," said Jimmy.

The moment this was said, he realized he'd made a mistake. And she pounced upon it with renewed eagerness.

"Where *did* you come from, Mr. Redge?"

"Why go so far back as that?" asked he.

She must have caught the sting in his voice, for she at once shifted her ground.



Joan snatched up the envelope. It was addressed to Wallace Redge; and on the back was the name of Richard Conningsby!

"You weren't satisfied with Binder's handling of Saxophone, were you?"

"Not altogether."

"Of course, *you* have never had any words with Conningsby?"

"None that I remember."

"I suppose you'll miss him a good deal."

"All hurts heal after a time," said Jimmy.

"Well," said Gloria Gale, "I'm awfully obliged to you, Mr. Redge, for what, after all, is a most interesting interview. I'd like to ask you a routine question. You couldn't hint—even remotely—why Conningsby was shot, I suppose?"

"I can't conceive, no matter how remotely, why anyone should be shot," answered Jimmy.

WITH the telephone silent, Jimmy considered the situation. The police had the matter in hand, and Gloria Gale had shown definitely what he had to expect from them and from the newspapers. He rang for Winten, and when the man appeared, said:

"I'm not in, Winten, if any other newspaper people call or ring. In fact, I'm in to no one—except, perhaps, the police."

"Quite so, sir."

"As I'm beginning to see it," said Jimmy, "it's quite possible I'm going to get a going-over from them."

"That," said Winten, "would be in the Conningsby matter, sir?"

"Yes. There's a good deal of shadow thrown hereabouts by that thing. And most of it, Winten, seems to be falling on me."

"I've been waiting for a chance, Mr. Redge," said Winten, "to mention something that happened this afternoon." Jimmy looked at him, and the man continued: "Miss Birnett has been here."

"Yes?" said Jimmy. He kept his voice down, but there was quite a stirring in his breast.

Winten related how Joan had visited the apartment. He told of the questions she had asked, and how she had shown a surprising knowledge of recent happenings.

"She had questioned the girl at your office before coming here," said Winten.

"I see," said Jimmy.

"You have never mentioned the matter of the rooms being searched that night," said Winten. "And I gathered from that, sir, that you didn't want it brought to your attention." As Jimmy made no reply, the valet added: "You must have seen the condition of the place that night when you came in."

But Jimmy evaded this. "What else did Miss Birnett say, and do, while she was here?" he asked.

Winten told of her interest in the automatic pistol, in the letter, in the ransacking of the apartment, in the visit of Vivian while the rooms were unoccupied.

"Have you ever spoken to me before, of that visit?"

"Never, sir. As you ignored the searching of the rooms, I thought you did not wish that mentioned, either."

"And you think it possible that Vivian took the automatic while she was here?"

"She could have done so, sir."

"And that her search was for the Conningsby letter?"

"That seemed quite likely to Miss Birnett, sir."

"And Miss Birnett also thought it likely the letter was found in the pocket of one of the coats?"

"Yes sir. Very clever of her, too."

Jimmy did not say so, but he thought the same. Also, he felt a sense of exultation. The aloofness Joan had shown had been assumed! He got up and walked the floor, filled with a new excitement and trying to hold it in check.

"The idea about the pistol must be wrong," he said to Winten. "Suppose Vivian did take it? Suppose she went out and blasted Conningsby with it? If she did that, she must have done something more. She must have brought the weapon back."

"She could have got into the rooms, sir, at another time," said Winten.

"That's not what I'm thinking of," said Jimmy. "Suppose we believe Vivian took the pistol from the table drawer to kill Conningsby? Suppose we believe she did so? Believing those two things, we are forced to believe another. And that is, after doing the murder, she stole back here, secretly, and replaced the weapon in the drawer, where it would be found later. And where it would fix the murder on Wallace Redge."

There was a moment's silence, and before either could speak, the telephone sounded. Winten answered it.

"Yes?" he said. He listened, and with his face somewhat white, he looked at Jimmy, the receiver muffled by one hand. "It's Inspector Plum, sir. From Headquarters."

"Ask him to come up," directed Jimmy.

Inspector Plum appeared after a space. He was a man of only average height, but quite heavy. His girth was just short of being enormous; his jowls hung in mottled purple folds; his eyes were like black buttons embedded in creases of flesh. He was very short of breath as he sat down; and he gasped a greeting to Jimmy.

"Take your time," said Jimmy, looking at him with concern. "There's no hurry. We've got the rest of the evening for anything that might be happening."

Inspector Plum held up a fat hand, and gestured that all would be well in a moment or two.

"I walked up the last three flights," he wheezed. "It's a habit I have. To meet my party, who might be going down as I came up."

"I see," said Jimmy. "And quite an idea, too."

"Sorry to disturb you," said Plum after he'd regained his breath. "Just a trifling routine visit. I'm on a little tour among the friends of Richard Conningsby."

"Oh, yes," said Jimmy. "Rather shocking about him, isn't it?"

"These things," said Inspector Plum, seeming very downcast, "are happening all the time. The Department is often at its wit's end."

"It seems to bother the newspapers, also."

The Inspector heaved up, indignantly. The rounds of fat about his face and neck became inflamed.

"The newspapers are busybodies," he told Jimmy. "They are always interfering." He stared for a moment in sodden resentment. "What did they ask you?" he said.

"About Conningsby. About when I'd seen him last. About the horse I'd bought from him. Also about what they termed a fight I'd had with the horse's trainer."

PLUM again subsided in his chair; he shook his head reproachfully. "They shouldn't do it," he said. "They should *not* do it. It makes trouble. It creates false impressions. They muddle things and excite resentment—which makes it bad for the Department."

He joined the tips of his fat fingers and seemed in deep thought.

"About a half-hour ago," he said, finally, "I saw Mr. Oppert." Jimmy nodded in recognition of the name. "A very nice gentleman."

"I only know him slightly," Jimmy informed him.

"A friend of Conningsby's. I might say a very close friend. Also with business relations. He's in a poor state of mind about what has happened. I felt sorry for him. He would give anything, he said, if the perpetrator of the murder was brought to justice."

"Was he able to tell you anything?"

"Very little. That is one of the things we are constantly meeting in the police business. Some of those thought to have information either have nothing, or will tell nothing."

"There is inability, or resistance, in everything," said Jimmy.

"I talked to two other friends of Conningsby of whom I expected a good deal," said Inspector Plum. "Mr. and Mrs. Joe Stort. But they disappointed me. They could give no

information that led in any profitable direction. We do not desire gossip," said Plum. "Our effort is to find bits of fact that will build up into evidence good enough to take into court. Who shot Conningsby? To uncover that, was the principal object of all the interviewing," he told Jimmy. "Also, who'd be likely to have a reason for killing him? There was no robbery. The motive was something else. But what?"

AS Jimmy shook his head, the Inspector seemed downcast. "I thought I'd come in for a little talk with you," he said. "Business people like yourself often know things—what might be called indirect things. They often know of disagreements, of quarrels. It was in my mind you might know of some immediate transaction—a transaction that might lead to violence."

"I don't know of any," said Jimmy Smith.

"Did he owe money? Was there anyone owed money to him?"

Jimmy shook his head. "I wouldn't know," he said.

"Was there a woman anywhere? Have you ever heard of an old grudge of any sort?"

"Not a thing," said Jimmy.

"I had expected to get a few small leads from you," said Plum. "But that's the way it goes. I knew you've had some dealings with Conningsby, and naturally thought you might know of some others—with other people."

"I wouldn't," said Jimmy. "I don't recall Conningsby ever mentioning any of his affairs."

Plum shook his head, depressed.

"You bought a race-horse from him, didn't you?" He looked at Jimmy almost pleadingly. "Named Saxophone?"

"Yes," said Jimmy.

"He hasn't done so well in his races lately, I hear."

"I've heard that too," said Jimmy.

"Is it a fact," asked Plum apologetically, "that you haven't paid for him?"

"I believe not."

"Some of the people I've talked to mentioned that. They seemed to think it was interesting." Plum looked at Jimmy intently. "Would it be going too far into a personal matter if I asked you if you've lost money on Saxophone?"

"I haven't looked over the records," Jimmy replied. "But it's been suggested that I have."

"A party named Binder has been your trainer, I understand. Used to work for Conningsby."

"He was taken over with the horse."

"How did you get along with him?"

"Not too badly," said Jimmy.

"You had a little ruckus with him today, didn't you?" Plum was quite apologetic. "Not much of a one, of course. Maybe only a few words."

"The newspaper reporter who called me awhile ago mentioned that. Things do certainly get around!"

"Yes, they do," said Plum. "Sometimes things that haven't much foundation, too. The way the talk went that I heard, you struck Binder."

"It was a trifling scuffle, a kind of misunderstanding," said Jimmy. "Binder seems to be a little hasty."

"Another thing I'd like to mention is about a pistol," said Plum. "Another routine requirement. Have you ever had one?"

"*I* have never had one."

Winten had come into the room a few moments before. He now asked:

"Would there be anything, sir?"

"Not now," said Jimmy.

"Yes sir," said the man.

"There is a record in the Department," said Plum apologetically, "that you purchased a .38 automatic about two years ago. Of course, there must be some kind of a mistake. Now and then errors creep into the record. It seems to be a thing that can't be avoided."

He got up.

"I'm sorry to have taken up your time," he said. "However, the Department's business is my business, and I must go through with it. So don't feel put out by anything I've said." Jimmy, watching him, saw him with his eyes on a mirror which hung in front of him; evidently he'd noticed that his tie was slightly askew, for he began fumbling at the knot with his thick fingers. "It may be," he said, "I'll be back. It all depends. We never can tell at Headquarters what will turn up. You may have some information that neither of us think is of value just now. In an hour it might be very valuable.

He was now ready to go, and nodded to Winten. "Maybe you'd show me out," he said.

Winten looked at Jimmy, and the young man nodded. The valet opened the door and held it while Plum said:

"Good-by, Mr. Redge. And many thanks. I'd say my visit has not been without its values."

"Glad to hear it," said Jimmy. "Good evening, Inspector."

The door closed behind the man. Jimmy snapped on a lighter and touched it to a cigarette. He was feeling the first tang of the smoke in his throat when it seemed to him there was a somewhat unusual sound in the other corridor—the scraping of feet, voices, a subdued but fierce instant of violence. He got quickly up, passed into the foyer and threw open the door. He saw Winten, leaning against the wall, breathing hard and looking suddenly disheveled.

"What's wrong?" asked Jimmy.

Winten pointed along the corridor. There was no one in view, but just then there came the sound of a starting elevator. Jimmy was about to speak once more, but Winten said:

"If you don't mind, sir, we'll go inside."

With the door shut, and his back against it, Winten drew in a long breath.

"It was the Inspector, sir," he said.

"Plum!"

"Yes, Mr. Redge. If you'll pardon me, sir, I thought it best awhile ago for me to hear what he said while speaking with you; and I kept just outside the sitting-room door. When the automatic was mentioned, I understood from the way he spoke that he suspected or knew something. When he arose and stood with his back turned to me, I opened the table drawer, took out the pistol and put it in my pocket."

"Yes," said Jimmy. "And then what?"

"As I looked toward him, I saw him arranging his tie in the mirror. He must have seen my reflection, sir, as I took the weapon. For the moment we got outside in the corridor, he asked for it. I denied having it. And then, without another word, he took me by the throat and forced me to give it up. He has the most astonishing strength, Mr. Redge! And a kind of ferocity. I wouldn't have believed it if anyone had told me."

JOAN BIRNETT telephoned Sally Falconby from a booth at the Etruria. "I'm sorry, but I'll not be able to get there for dinner," she said. "There is still something I must do."

Sally's voice carried a note of concern as she said:

"Joan, what is it? What has happened?"

"I'll tell you when I see you," said Joan.

She later called an afternoon newspaper, asked for the sports department and spoke to a young man who did the racing news.

"Oppert?" he said. "Oh, yes; he has an office in the Integrity Building."

"Can you tell me where he's stopping? I'm afraid the office would be closed at this hour."

"Just a moment," said the race-news man. After a silence, he said: "Hello! About Oppert: He's at the Palmfield Plaza."

"Thank you so much," said Joan, and put the telephone down thoughtfully.

Darkness had settled when she stepped from a cab at the Palmfield Plaza and moved along the turkey-red path under the marquee toward the entrance. At the telephone-desk she said:

"Mr. Oppert, please."

"Who is calling?" asked the girl.

"Miss Hershey, of the Evening *Globe*."

The girl slipped the plugs deftly into place.

"Miss Hershey is calling. Of the Evening *Globe*." She listened for a moment, and then said to Joan: "He wants to know your business." She connected a desk phone, and Joan spoke to Oppert.

"This is Jane Hershey, special writer for the *Globe*. I'm doing a race article and would like to have some of the kind of information you'd have to give."

"Come up," said the man.

Joan got out of the elevator at the seventeenth floor. There was a wide corridor, brilliantly lighted, with a line of doors upon each side. Joan, following the run of the numbers, turned an angle in the corridor; she passed the open door of a linen-room and saw a white-capped maid inside. The next door was the one she wanted. She pressed the bell, and Oppert opened the door.

THERE was a crooked smile upon his face as he looked at her. "I recognized the voice," he said. "And I had an idea I'd see you again. Come in."

Joan did so. The man regarded her fixedly as she stood before him; then he said:

"I've been trying to place you. *Are* you with the *Globe*? And *is* your name Hershey?"

"I don't think either of those things are important," said Joan. "It seems to me there are others we could talk about with more profit."

The crooked smile returned to the man's face.

"You don't mind if I wonder what you're up to, do you?"

"Maybe it's curiosity. If you'll remember, I called to see Vivian. She wasn't in. But you were. You thought I was she, and then began saying things—things that attracted my attention. So," said Joan, "I afterwards made up my mind it would be best if I heard something more."

The smile on Oppert's face grew more pronounced.

"Haven't you thought that in doing what you've done, maybe you'd get into trouble?" he asked.

"Yes," said Joan, "I have. And so has a friend of mine whom I've mentioned the matter to. But a little trouble doesn't bother me if I'm interested."

"You've mentioned me to someone?"

"Oh, yes. I always do that. Because then, if anything happens, the someone can take the matter up afterwards. It's a little safeguard, you see. I always think it best to have something of the kind."

The man said nothing; he stood with his eyes fixed upon her face. Then he turned to a table where there was a bottle and glasses.

"Have a drink?" he asked.

But Joan said she wouldn't. The man, not once taking his eyes from her, poured a quantity of liquor into a glass and swallowed it. He put down the glass, and said:

"What do you want?"

"I'm interested in knowing what sort of arrangement, if any, you made with Vivian this afternoon." He did not reply, and she added: "I mean, after you got into the cab with her."

"You look around a good bit when you're out, don't you?" said Oppert. "Are you representing someone, or are you here on your own?"

"I'm a friend of Wally's," said Joan. "And now that I think of it, perhaps I'm representing *him*."

"Why did you go to Vivian's place this afternoon?"

Joan smiled at this. "I may as well tell you now that I didn't come here to answer questions. But," she said, "if given a chance, I'll ask a few."

"Go ahead," said Oppert.

"I'll repeat the one I just now asked about Vivian. What arrangement did you make with her?"

Oppert's crooked grin reappeared.

"Vivian's not a hard person to do business with," he said. "She's one of the kind that takes things for granted. After I got a chance to talk with her, I hadn't much trouble."

"She's supposed to be quite a business person, too."

"Business or no, most women talk if you can get them started."

"She talked about Sylvia, I suppose. Or perhaps Conningsby?"

Oppert's hard eyes flickered with unrest.

"*Are* you a friend of Wally's?" he asked.

"Don't you remember? I just said I was."

He was silent for some time. When he spoke, he said:

"If you're a friend of Wally's, or even if you're a hired operator, your object in coming here must be to get something for him out of what's going on. Is that right?"

"Oh, yes," said Joan. "Definitely."

"Well, why look at things from the trouble side? If Wally wants something, why doesn't he get himself a chair and sit in like I've wanted him to do? This aint a game for dollar bills; it'll be well worth his while."

"Now," said Joan, "we seem to be coming to something. But as I look at it, there seem to be a number of people, and a number of what are known as angles."

"The more you work with a prospect," said Oppert, "the more you know about it. When I stepped into this thing, I only saw Conningsby. Then I found out there was a Joe Stort. And afterward that there was a Sylvia. A couple of steps further, Vivian showed. And now, here you are."

"Conningsby having passed out of it leaves one less, anyhow," said Joan.

"Yes," said Oppert, "that made one less. But also it left us in a jam. If it hadn't been for that letter—" The man stopped, at that; then he said: "I haven't been able to make much headway with Wallace Redge. He'll not take advice, and in talking with him, I've always been handicapped. How,"—and Oppert looked at her steadily,—"would you like to talk to him? What I mean is, how'd you like to take the job of telling him he's wasting his time by dodging and ducking the way he's been doing? It'll be worth your while if you can make him look at things in the right way. As I just said, this is not a small-money thing; it'll pay everybody."

"Wally," said Joan, "is anxious. He wants everything to turn out well. But you see, he was accustomed to dealing with Conningsby. He's nervous when it comes to anyone else. You were rough with him. He didn't know how to take you."

Oppert gestured.

"Maybe," he said, "it was my fault. Maybe I did put the pressure on too hard. I'm not used to people who can't take it; and maybe Wally is one of that kind. But listen! See him, talk with him, try to get him in the right frame of mind. Show him just how the thing stands. Point out the dough that'll be in it. He's broke; he needs money badly. If you've got any influence with him at all, he'll listen to you."

WHEN Joan Birnett closed Oppert's door, she started down the corridor toward the angle she'd have to turn to reach the elevator. She moved slowly, for she was reluctant to go; she felt that somewhere in the room she'd just left, was hidden the letter which everyone seemed so to desire. She turned the angle, but almost instantly stopped. There were two things that seemed suddenly illuminated in her mind. When Oppert opened the door at her summons, she'd had the impression he was on the point of going out—a cane, a hat, and a pair of gloves lay on a small table near the door as if he'd put them down when the telephone rang.

The second thing was the linen-room where she'd seen the maid before going to Oppert's door. The door had then been open wide; as she'd passed it just now, it was still open but not nearly so much as it had been the first time. She turned back, opened the door and looked in. The maid was no longer there. So she entered, closed the door after her and turned the latch. There was a single light burning; she turned it off.

She listened intently. What must have been a minute, passed—five minutes. Perhaps she had been— Then a door opened quite near at hand, and on the side where Oppert was located. Then it closed, rather sharply; she heard a hand upon the knob, trying to turn it. Oppert was making sure the door was fast. Then she heard footsteps going down the corridor; they grew fainter as they turned the angle. After a little there was the jar made by the closing gates of an elevator.

Joan breathed more easily, and was now able to weigh the possibilities of what she had in mind. There was a pale light filtering through the one window of the room; she went to this. It was partly open, and she was about to raise it higher, but a sound caught her attention; she paused and listened. . . . There it was again! A faint sound, slow, careful, with small intervals of silence. It was not in the linen-room, but outside. Then suddenly she put her hand to her mouth to keep back a scream, for in the pallid light she saw the form of a man at the window.

There were some racks about the room in which folded linen was stacked; Joan shrank behind one of these; and as she watched, she saw the man lift the sash and step into the room. He was tall; his hat was pulled down; he stood motionless for a space as though trying to penetrate the dimness. Now she saw a slim pencil of light shooting here and there: he'd taken out a pocket-torch and was examining the room and its contents. Then the light was shut off, and she heard the man muttering as though disappointed as he stepped through the window once more. . . . Holding to whatever there was in the conformation of the wall that helped him keep his balance, he slowly moved on, out of sight.

There was a coping, as Joan had hoped, just below the window; this gave the man his footing. He was probably a thief on the prowl, Joan thought; and rather an enterprising one. After a few moments the sounds of his progress ceased. She listened; he was lifting a sash. Filled with a sudden surmise, she stole to the window of the linen-room and looked out. Yes; it was as she'd thought! It was Oppert's room he'd been looking for; and as she looked, he disappeared.

THOUGHT of Conningsby's letter to Wally Redge flashed into Joan's mind. That was what the man desired! He was not the usual thief, but someone concerned in this matter of Conningsby's death; he was some one who saw value in the letter just as Oppert and Vivian and the Storts saw value in it. He knew Oppert had it. He'd been waiting below, had seen Oppert go out. He had his plan laid and immediately began putting it into operation. He was in the room where the letter was! Watching, she saw a faint glow of light show from Oppert's window and then disappear. It was the pocket-torch once more; the man was already at work.

At this moment Joan heard a sound behind her; there was a complaining voice at the door of the linen-room.

"I didn't shut it tight. I left it open just a little, knowing I'd have to come back," the voice said. "I'd know better than to shut it, because I have no key."

"You'll have to go down to Mrs. Dacy, then, and ask for one. And she'll give you fits for wasting time. I'll wait here."

There was a mumbling as the first woman moved away. Joan considered her situation. She could not get out of the room without being seen; and if she remained, the maids would discover her. She'd perhaps be held for questioning by the management. Perhaps the police would be brought into the matter.

In a moment her mind was made up. Drawing a long breath, she stepped out of the window as she'd seen the prowler do a few minutes before. She did not dare look down; the descent must be a sheer and terrible one! She found the protruding places and depressions in the wall which had enabled the man to hold firmly, and she gripped them. The distance to Oppert's window could not be far; however, she did not look. But inch by inch, she crept along the coping, changing her hand-grip with each movement. At last she reached the window, and with a smothered gasp took hold of the frame and climbed in.

IF possible, she wanted to be safely inside before the prowler saw her. The room was dim; she heard the sound of running water. There was what she took to be a bathroom at her left, and through the narrowly opened doorway came a trickle of light. A trunk at one side, something she'd noticed before, while in the room, stood open. Not only was it open, but the broken lock showed it had been forced.

The prowler was not in sight; she went softly to the trunk, and then was startled by the sight of a splotch of blood beside it. The man was muttering to himself in the bathroom, and the water was still running. She now noticed a strip of white linen on the floor, like a part of a torn handkerchief, and at once knew what had happened. The intruder had cut his hand in forcing open the trunk; he had torn up his handkerchief for a bandage, and was now washing the wound before wrapping it up.

There had been nothing disturbed in the room, as far as she could see, but the trunk. He'd known where to look for what he desired. And that it *was* the letter, as she'd thought, was shown her in the next instant, for there it lay on a chair near the trunk—an envelope with a bloody finger-print upon it. She snatched it up. It was addressed to Wallace Redge; and on the back of it was the name of Richard Conningsby!

She slipped it into her jacket pocket and stole toward the door. Quietly she opened it, then uttered a startled scream. For there stood Oppert, in the act of taking a key from his pocket. The girl tried to dart past him; but he caught her.

"What the devil's this?" he demanded. "How did you get into my room?"

She struggled desperately, managed to tear herself loose from his grasp and ran breathlessly down the corridor. She knew the man was directly behind her, for she could hear his racing footsteps. Seeing a door with the word "*Stairway*" painted upon it, she threw it open and ran down the flight of twisting stairs she found there. There was a crash at the doorway she'd just passed through, and she prayed Oppert had stumbled and fallen. She did not pause to look, but went on down, down, floor after floor, fright gripping her mind, and expecting at any moment to hear the sound of pursuing steps behind her.

But there was none; and at length, pale and faint, she reached the ground floor where the stairs opened, wide and spacious, to the lobby. Almost instantly she heard a voice at her side; turning with a gasp, she saw Jimmy Smith standing there, smiling at her.

"You'd got such a start on me on the stairs, and were heading down so fast, I didn't think I could overtake you," he said. "So I took the elevator."

"Jimmy, darling!" she said fervently. "How did you get here?"

"Let's not go into that now," he said. "The first thing I want is to get this finger bandaged. It's bleeding again, I notice," he said, looking at it. "I had it stopped; but I guess when I hit that fellow Oppert at the stairway door, it started again."

This story continues in the next—the July—issue.

The Antarctic Angle

Now more than ever is our exploration of the south polar regions important.

By RICHARD E. BYRD

Rear Admiral, U. S. N., Retired

THE airplane's motors throb with the power of a thousand horses. You find yourself humming a song while staring at the horizon through binoculars.

Then the binoculars fasten upon a dark speck where the gray sky and purple-white ice barrier meet. The chart shows nothing to identify this speck in unknown territory. Human eyes have never seen it before. It is another beckoning finger in the Antarctic's mystery.

At a cruising speed of 140 miles per hour your guess is quickly confirmed and you feel the matchless thrill of discovery. It is a mountain peak all right, then another and another—a big range hoisting its snow-patched head above the crushing weight of the half-mile-deep glacier around it.

The pilot swings the plane again. The aerial photographer is recording the newly discovered land on celluloid. Through a trapdoor you drop a little tube; it plummets downward. In it is an American flag and a note telling the time, latitude and longitude, and claiming the new land in the name of the President of the United States.

Then the atmosphere thickens and you waste no time racing homeward to your base, with only your instruments between you and an unhappy landing in the crevasses and pressure ridges of the ice-barrier below.

Later, a dog-team expedition explores the new land more thoroughly and builds there a cairn of rock on top of which an American flag is left to wave in solitary vigil.

Such is one way of "conquering" territory. There are other methods. But America happens to prefer the mechanized scientific expedition exploring virgin territory to the mechanized division of troops invading another people's inhabited land.

Thanks to modern engineering, which has given us the airplane, radio and aerial mapping camera, our method can be very effective even though it is comparatively new.

I recall a night in May, 1926. Floyd Bennett and I had just returned to our Spitsbergen base after flying over the North Pole. We dined with Captain Roald Amundsen and Lincoln Ellsworth, who were poised for a dirigible flight over that pole.

After dinner we chatted. "Well, Byrd," Amundsen asked, "what next?"

"The South Pole," I replied.

Amundsen, as unselfish as he was intrepid, said eagerly: "A big job—but it can be done. You have the right idea. The old order is changing. Aircraft is the new vehicle for exploration. It is the only machine that can conquer the Antarctic." And then he began giving me valuable advice drawn from his own experience.

Two years later this brave man was dead, having sacrificed himself in an Arctic flight to save the lives of fellow-pioneers. His plane did not bring him back. But that was no black eye to aviation. It merely showed again that the polar regions resist conquest. And man, being human, accepts the challenge. The frozen mystery of the Antarctic is being melted away. . . .

When I was a schoolboy, I had to learn the names of six continents into which land on the globe was usually divided. To those six—North America, South America, Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia—the schoolboy today has to add a seventh, Antarctica, the tremendous, only partially charted mass of land around the South Pole.

Not that the ordinary, red-blooded boy minds this much. Youth always likes to study geography and to daydream of far-off lands. The reluctance to admit that a seventh continent exists is on the part of adults.

Unable to deny now that Antarctica exists, they ask disparagingly, "What is the use of it? Is it practical?"

Well, as a wise man once said, nobody can answer a sneer.

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But I am glad to answer to the best of my ability those who ask the perfectly fair question: "Why these polar expeditions?"

The easiest answer is by pointing out the "practical" benefits. But personally I have little sympathy for narrow-minded practicality; it is too much like prison. And if it is reduced entirely to a matter of quickly acquiring mere dollars and cents, it is not only unpleasant but can even be impractical. Practicality plus vision—that is something entirely different.

Are these polar expeditions practical? That is a challenge I am very willing to meet. They are—and I will show why. But I must point out first, in all honesty, that my primary interest in the Antarctic has been a scientific one.

Science is a matter of chains, with one discovery linking to another: The caveman who first fashioned a wheel was the father of our machine age.

So even if we would ignore the other things and look only at the more purely scientific results of polar expeditions, we would have to conclude that they are practical, because all science is practical. The proof is self-evident. Science has made us what we are and given us what we have.

Of what use are polar expeditions? If we ask ourselves that question then let us also ask: Of what use is astronomy? . . . history? . . . or any knowledge? Astronomy showed that the earth was round and revolved around the sun. It led to Columbus' discovery of the Western Hemisphere. Unfortunately for him, Spain didn't understand the scientific implications of his explorations; it was too disappointed over his bringing back a few American Indians instead of gold. Now I don't pretend to be another Columbus when I say that my expeditions brought back from Antarctica data useful in over twenty fields of science, along with some of my comical strutting friends, the penguins—instead of gold. One thing I couldn't bring back, the real riches of a new land—its promise and future.

Of what use was Columbus' discovery? We all know it led to a new life

for millions, a place where a new civilization is now taking over the destiny of the human race while Europe and Asia batter themselves to pieces.

What then of the Antarctic? Is it just a scientists' and explorers' hobby? Well, few will accuse the Nazi Germans of being starry-eyed idealists. Late in 1938 when Germany was bending every effort in preparation for the war that was coming, it sent an aircraft carrier expedition to the Antarctic. You may be sure that this expedition's claim to new land in the name of Germany had plenty to do with the practical strategy of planning for vital fleet bases.

Yes, we must have realistic vision. If money can be found for a five-million-dollar telescope lens with which to explore the stellar spaces, then certainly we can afford a fraction of that amount with which to settle a semi-permanent colony in Antarctica, for the purpose of learning more about this world in which we have to live and which is only what we make it.

We cannot ignore the fact that this is the Twentieth Century. It is a century of challenge. We want to know more about ourselves and our world so as to control our destiny. Otherwise, we might as well go back to caveman days. I know that there are some who say we know too much already, that the present "total war" is the result of science gone wild. I don't believe it. Dictators are simply ancient tyrants in modern guise. With or without the great power of modern science they would still be waging wars. No—science cannot be held responsible.

And so, aside from their immediate practicality, polar expeditions must and will go on, because we have simply got to know more. Doubting Thomases can't stop them, no more than can the question of whether they will bring in an immediate six percent dividend.

Nor will they be hindered by popular misconceptions, of which there have been many. One was the idea that "south" is a synonym for "warm" and that Antarctica must be hot indeed because it is near the South Pole —when, in fact, that region is the coldest on earth.

And I recall the delightful little girl in a city of the Western United States who came up to me after one of my lectures on the Antarctic and explained something I had always believed due to my being born and raised in Virginia.

"Now I know where you got your Southern accent," she said triumphantly. "You got it at the South Pole."

Misconceptions extended to grown-ups too. I remember a certain high official who was not sure of the wisdom of a polar flight.

"Suppose you do reach the Pole?" he said. "How will you know how to come back—what direction to take?"

Thanks to modern navigation instruments, such as the bubble sextant and sun compass developed as one result of our expeditions, that happens to be no problem at all. It is not how to get back, but—*can* one come back? I could have understood his pessimism had he doubted the reliability of my plane.

I am glad to say that President Roosevelt has no such misconceptions and is thoroughly alive to the value of Antarctic exploration. When I returned to the United States last summer after leading the U. S. Antarctic Service expedition to the "bottom of the world," I made a personal report to the nation's Chief Executive. I expressed fears that the expedition might be abandoned because of the war situation. But the President replied firmly that the Antarctic work must go on.

Of course, there are also personal reasons why polar expeditions take place. Financial profit is not one of them. My advice on how not to get rich is: Lead a polar expedition. There is too much grief finding financial backers for such a project. And after the expedition comes an aftermath of years of drudgery and expense caused by the need to study and organize a mass of scientific data and such chores as keeping as well as disposing of equipment.

No, there are other reasons. One of them with me is something I cannot describe in words. It is the thrill of seeing a new mountain range loom up —one never seen before by any human being. At such a time I do not stop to think what use a new mountain or plateau or bay will have; not any more than does a proud parent spend time thinking of what use a new-born babe will be. Nor am I alone in thrilling to discovery and adventure, to placing something new on a map for all time to come. Fifteen thousand persons begged and pleaded to come along on my first Antarctic expedition.

IT has been my personal good fortune to have flown over both the North and South Poles—this means a boyhood dream has come true. Wondrous strange things happen. At the top of the world, no matter which way you face, it is always south. Similarly, at the bottom of the world, every wind comes from the north. Your watch ticks busily but you do not know what time it is because all time meridians meet at the Pole; you are on New York time and Shanghai time at the same time.

But it is what you can not actually see that is most wondrous: The Pole itself does not look any different than a spot twenty miles away. You are almost shocked by the lack of anything spectacular. You fly in a circle and your instruments insist again: This is the Pole. Then your book learning becomes thrillingly real. You realize that the earth is an egg rotating below. You imagine that you are seeing the world as a visitor from Mars might. In the frozen solitude you wonder if you are the lone doomed survivor of an ice age or the first in a grand, new winged age of promise.

As between the two Poles, I have been more interested in the South Pole because it holds more promise. The North Pole is a frozen "X marks the spot" in a sea surrounded by continents. The South Pole is on a high plateau surrounded by oceans. It is land—the coldest land on earth. Antarctica is a land without natives, absolutely virgin territory for the human explorer. The Arctic has Eskimos, but the Antarctic has none. It is still in a great ice age, reminiscent of what our northern United States was like fifty thousand years ago—certainly not a long time in terms of man's history.

The main thing is: it is land. And that is where its practicality comes in, whether in the eyes of science or of a government seeking bases with which to control the oceans. In other words, a polar expedition is something much more than merely dropping another flag at the Pole.

Not only is Antarctica land, but it is a gigantic land. It is bigger than the United States and Mexico combined. What is true about one part may not be true about another. Little America, where my three expeditions have been based, is upon a waterborne ice sheet at the edge of open sea. This floating *terra firma* is anchored to submerged mountain tops north of the Queen Maud Range which lies between Little America and the Pole. Our plane had to climb above ten thousand feet to get over the pass of Axel Heiberg Glacier. It is an experience I can hardly forget, with Ashley McKinley, the pilot, yelling and gesticulating a message through the roar of the engines. Two hundred pounds had to go overboard, so that the plane might rise higher.

We could dump out gasoline, but that would mean turning back without reaching the goal. Or we could throw out some of the precious food, of which there was enough to last us four men for three months in case something happened. It was not a pleasant choice, and there was not much time in which to make it—with those cliffs closing in on both sides of the narrow pass up which the plane was struggling.

Overboard went one 125-pound bag of food, then another—enough to last us a month. But the plane rose and we cleared the pass with five hundred feet to spare.

From there to the Pole stretched a high plateau, with an altitude of around 9,700 feet. We were about 1,300 feet above the Pole itself when I dropped the flag, weighted with a stone from Floyd Bennett's grave. The altimeters at that point gave our altitude as eleven thousand feet.

ALL of Antarctica, up on the plateau or down at sea level, is a thing of the ice age. That is what makes it one of the most fertile fields left for science. In fact, more than a score of branches of science are benefited by Antarctic study.

Its use to geography is obvious because it reveals a new continent. Of Antarctica's estimated five million square miles, over a fourth has now been "discovered." That much has been brought within the realm of man's knowledge in the form of charts and maps, most of it by Americans. And maps are very valuable things, as any motorist who has taken the wrong turn at a detour knows.

Nor does this exploration merely give the United States just so many more square miles of frozen waste. Geography and hydrography can prove most valuable when one least expects it. For instance, one of our scientific tasks was to map the unknown coast line of Antarctica. This is of value to scientists in enabling them to figure out the ratio of our planet's water surface to its land area.

Impractical? Well, here's the practical side of the same thing. Those maps and charts of Antarctica can be of the utmost strategical value to our navy. Of course, I am not speaking officially here for either the Navy or State Department. As we all know, the Panama Canal may be under attack some day—it might even be destroyed by a hostile power or by saboteurs.

The Navy has to think of such a possible eventuality. It is the job of our armed forces, in time of peace, to plan for the worst that might happen in time of war. Our fate would be tragic if we waited until the day hostilities began before we started building warships and bases for them.

That is why Antarctica looms in strategic value, and why our government has been deeply interested in the maps and charts. They show where bases and harbors can be had. And some South American country of most concern to us at the moment might be too solicitous of its own immediate safety to give us fleet bases.

That is where Antarctica would come in as the pivot from which we could guard and control both the South Atlantic and South Pacific. Most valuable, probably, would be the part called Palmer Land, which at some places is only a few hundred nautical miles from South America's southern tip. It is a veritable reservoir of bays and harbors, many ice-free several months of the year.

This is one reason why our country has begun to pay attention to the bottom of the world. My first two Antarctic expeditions were private affairs. But the third was governmental, operated by the U. S. Antarctic Service. In 1939 the State Department asked if I would head such an expedition. Congress was equally alert. Despite the rigid economy policy, it authorized the venture and found $350,000 with which to make it possible.

We weren't being premature either. Early that same year the German Antarctic Expedition, using planes operated from an aircraft carrier, dropped German flags over 231,000 square miles of territory in another part of Antarctica, claiming it in the name of the Third Reich. As a matter of fact, this same section—known as Crown Princess Maerta Land—had previously been claimed by Norway. But perhaps the Nazis had already planned Norway's fate and were moving in "to take over."

Many sciences are involved in this matter of securing fleet mobility. In addition to having bases, it is necessary to know what the weather will be like. The fleet that has meteorological data on which to predict the weather is far ahead of its enemy. The same is true of armies. It is no accident that the Nazis had "Hitler weather" in their drives through Poland and France. They timed their campaigns with the kind of weather they needed.

But the usefulness of meteorology in the Antarctic is not confined to military strategy. The South Polar region is a gigantic weather factory. What happens there affects the weather of the southern hemisphere and indirectly of the entire world. A study of its conditions is necessary before we can reach the first important goal of making long-range weather predictions—that farmers may know whether to expect a severe or mild winter. Crops, industries, shipping, our fast-increasing and vast air traffic—all are directly affected by the weather.

The Antarctic is the windiest place in the world. In a region studied by Sir Douglas Mawson, he found an average wind-velocity of fifty miles an hour for two years. That is a gale. One of his men went insane because of the wind.

The wind in the Antarctic is perhaps the worst feature as far as physical discomfort is concerned. When the air is calm, a properly dressed person can endure seventy degrees below zero without too much suffering. But let even a light breeze start up—and the cold becomes diabolical.

Not that the low temperatures themselves are anything to be laughed at. At my Advance Base weather station the temperature reached eighty below zero; sixty below happened frequently; fifty below was commonplace. The South Pole averages around forty degrees colder than the North Pole, and the entire southern region is proportionately colder than the northern one.

The Antarctic is a vast refrigerator whose air and water currents affect the climate of the rest of the world. That is why we studied its weather conditions. Our four weather stations at the edge of the ice barrier were backed up by one in the interior. This was the inland observatory buried in the ice at 80° 08′ South which became known as Advance Base.

More and more all the time, we must think in terms of our country's defense. Protecting the Western Hemisphere is a big job and would require fighting under all sorts of conditions. For example, the Army is now training ski-troops for use in northern winter fighting. The Antarctic is a grand laboratory because it represents winter at its worst.

Harsh reality there forces one to find ways in which to conquer the climate, if one is to survive. You learn quickly just what you can depend on, and you learn that the fine tools of our modern age have their limits. At eighty below zero I could hear the moisture in my breath freezing. My phonograph would not work; the oil in it had frozen. At fifty-five below my kerosene lantern went dark; the kerosene had frozen. At fifty below my flashlight became useless; its batteries had frozen.

THAT is the way it goes—the machine simply freezes on you—and you learn ways of fighting back. I remember how often the oil in the airplane motors hardened into a leathery mass. To combat this required elaborate precautions. We would drain the oil while it was still warm. Before starting up again, we would heat the oil over a pressure gasoline stove and heat the engine itself with blow-torches—this being done under a tent so as to confine the heat.

Not that I am ungrateful to the machine age. Admiral Peary, using dog-teams, was out of contact with civilization for 429 days in his memorable dash to the North Pole. When Floyd Bennett and I flew from Spitsbergen to the same Pole and back, we were gone nine minutes under 16 hours.

It is just that polar regions are hard on machines—which makes them that much better as a testing-ground. Radio is fine but as a result of the radio generator in my Advance Base shack leaking carbon monoxide fumes, for five days I was near death. An airplane will run out of gasoline or break a tail skid in landing. A tractor will

break down or fall into a crevasse, and it must carry so much fuel that there is little room left for anything else. All in all, the dog team is still Old Faithful and I was thankful for every one of the hundred and fifty huskies I had at Little America.

It is easy to see also that the Antarctic is a valuable proving-ground for winter clothing. Our government can learn much from the explorers' use of the reindeer parka for warmth and of outer windproof garments. And troops will become frozen cripples, no matter how many pairs of socks are worn, unless they use something like the senna grass we used in our shoes to absorb moisture.

Then there is the matter of food: how to cut down its weight by using it in dehydrated form, how to avoid the dreaded scurvy, caused by a lack of vitamin C.

Each of these is a little "trick of the trade." Put together, they make the difference between surviving or perishing in the kind of hard winter some of our troops may have to endure.

I have mentioned only a few of the sciences served by Antarctic expeditions—geography, hydrography, meteorology, medicine—each with its practical aspect. I have only touched on them briefly. For instance, there is much that would interest a doctor.

One of my men had been a sufferer from asthma. This ailment not only left him after he had spent some time at Little America but he gained forty pounds. At no time in all that frigidness did I catch what is known as a "common cold"—not even when the carbon monoxide hit me and left me thoroughly emaciated, my weight having dropped from 170 to 125 pounds. That certainly indicates that the common cold is produced by a germ.

MANY other sciences are served. Geology is one—to learn the past history of the world it will be valuable to know if Antarctica's mountains have ever been linked with South America's Andes. The same science has its modern uses too. Almost within sight of the South Pole we already know of enough bituminous coal, not covered by glaciers, to supply our country for years. Yes, coal as well as cold. There are traces of copper, silver and such strategic minerals as molybdenum, necessary for steel alloys. Further investigation will undoubtedly reveal more.

This coal proves that an ice age now covers a land with a tropical or semi-tropical past. We have found fossilized tree trunks and leaves even though today there is no blade of grass within two thousand miles of the Pol· With this in mind, it is reasonable to assume that Antarctica has oil.

The fact is that this continent is not barren but simply that it is refrigerated. We left some whale meat behind on one expedition and were able to eat it four years later when we returned. Just as in the Arctic a now extinct mammoth was found on Wrangel Island. Although it had died many thousands of years ago, dogs and men found it edible.

Our biologists were fascinated to find apparently lifeless microörganisms in the ice of a frozen Antarctic lake. They melted the ice, and the organisms came to life. How long had they been thus "unconscious"? Can the lives of human beings some day be extended in the same way?

Questions and answers: That is science. Our zoölogists were dredging the sea and finding it teeming with life. Our physicists were studying fluctuations of the Earth's magnetic lines of force for the purpose, among other things, of adding to our knowledge of the errors of the mariner's compass. Our surveyors and hydrographers were mapping coastlines and the bottoms of unknown seas, and finding mountains buried in them. Our geologists were collecting interesting rocks which would later be studied for months by petrographers who would write long reports on their structural and chemical character.

One thing leads to another in science and nobody can predict all that will be discovered. But one thing I predict —that our State Department will go on to establish a semi-permanent colony in Antarctica. It would be folly to disregard the potentialities of this newest continent. Its "real estate" value alone is considerable. Already, we can claim about a million square miles of territory there which we could swap for other land.

We must not be nearsighted. When Thomas Jefferson bought the Louisiana Territory he was derided by more timid Americans. That territory has become most of our mid-West. When Abraham Lincoln's Secretary of State William Seward bought Alaska from Russia in 1867 for $7,200,000, nearsighted Americans dubbed it "'Seward's Folly." Not only has Alaska become our guardian in the Northwest, but it has exported over $1,250,000,000 worth of commodities and its riches have barely been touched.

As the result of Admiral Peary's explorations, we had a chance to claim much of Greenland. We did not take advantage of that chance. We are now alarmed over the fact that Greenland, midway between us and Germany, is full of potential sea and air bases.

And now we have our opportunity to do much with Antarctica merely for the cost of exploration. This new continent represents a challenge: to adventure, to science and to far-seeing statesmenship. We will be sorry indeed if we let Antarctica go by default.

Nightmare

Shark nets man!

YES, most tuna-clipper men like myself will tell you that sharks are mighty ferocious beasts when there is any blood in the water. We get a pretty awful picture of their killer instincts when we are hauling in blue-fin and yellow-fin tuna in southern waters. But we're inclined to discount most of the stories about man-eaters quartering the waters of a bay and helping themselves to human swimmers.

Are there any of us who haven't heard the oft-repeated yarn about the human arm found in the shark's stomach? If all the arms supposedly found in sharks' innards were laid end to end—well, they'd be positively ridiculous! For many years I have fished the Pacific waters off the coast of Costa Rica, Central America and Mexico. I have yet to witness an actual shark attack. And in spots like the Galápagos Islands, the sharks really swarm.

Incidentally, there, just west of Ecuador, I once went below for a half-hour equipped with nothing other than a diving helmet and a machete to cut a bale of kelp that had become entangled in our rudder and propeller. I had several of those big gray devils slide around me the whole time I worked. Sure, they made me sweat bullets, but the air-bubbles foaming out of my helmet baffled them enough to keep them away.

Another time, off Magdalena Bay in Baja California, I swam below with nothing more than water-goggles to examine a damage our hull had suffered from an uncharted reef. This time I followed the suggestion of an old Filipino pearl-diver, and had tattered white rags tied to my wrists and ankles. Each time a dorsal fin knifed in my direction, I thrashed my legs and arms—and believe me, please—Mr. Shark detoured for other parts.

In fact, it's ironic that my only experience of a tough nature with a shark had to happen right here in the colder waters off the shore of Southern California.

I was signed as baitman on the *Triunfo,* plying out of San Pedro. Tuna was bringing about one hundred dollars a ton at the time, and we wanted to get back into southern waters before the market dropped. But there seemed to be no live bait to be had. All incoming boats reported that anchovies and sardines were scarcer than dodo birds. Radio reports from reliable sources, too, made it clear that bait was on the lam.

Below

by Joseph Lomas

As a last resort we pushed into Santa Monica Bay for bait. The best bet appeared to be the water just off of Redondo Beach south of the Palos Verdes Hills. Knowing that that area is particularly hazardous on account of submerged rocks, sandbars and old pier-pilings, we had to be overly-cautious. Sure enough, schools riffled the surface in more than one spot. We immediately got our small power boat, dory and skiff over the side in order to seine them.

During that day we took in some sizable hauls. At the fag-end of the afternoon we had pretty close to the twenty-five hundred scoops which we needed. However, with the light rapidly failing, we made one more try for a haul right near what is commonly called "Ghost Pier"—a long row of submerged pilings running out from shore for some two hundred yards. In many places these old abandoned pier-pilings jutted up within ten feet of the surface.

As luck had it, the bait *would* have to be breaking water right in that vicinity. In any event, we chanced it. As the school moved slowly just south of the pilings, we powered in between, and I signaled the men to pay out the net. We circled as rapidly as possible and, by all indications, did trap our quarry. Bringing the ends together, the netmen started heaving while the mate sweated with throwing the shiny plunger down to keep the bait from stampeding under the boat.

"Jeeze! Whatsa that?" the mate suddenly shouted.

I looked over the side, saw nothing. "Keep on throwin'!" I yelled. Too often in past years I had seen precious bait race out through that one opening. Also, we were still too close to the pilings for comfort.

I had dismissed all thought about what the mate might have seen pass under us, when the corks at the far side of the net disappeared from sight. This was followed immediately by a heavy drag that hauled the net into the piling area.

Desperately we tried to get it back. But too late! Our strong-armed crew couldn't quite retrieve that yanking, jerking length of net. The purse end of it had gone crazy. Naturally, with our heaving and hauling, we were soon right over the pilings where things were caught fast.

The *Triunfo,* seeing our misery, had come in fairly close. Captain Silva was on the bridge giving us hell in Portuguese and English. Two-thirds of the net was aboard by now, but the other third was firmly caught.

The whole blame was sure right in my lap because I was really the only one who knew the Santa Monica waters well. I could have sold out for a dime. We couldn't afford to cut away what was still below; after all, the whole purse was down there. I was going daffy trying to figure out how any fish could have fouled the net and dragged it with such power.

The sun was rapidly sliding out of the sky. I had to work fast. While I stripped in the dory, one of the netmen hustled back to the *Triunfo* and got the diving helmet and the hand pump. There was no way out other than to go below and have a try at getting the net loose.

In fifteen minutes I had the helmet over my head, and two men manning the pump. The skipper looked as if he was dying by inches as he watched me go over the side with the heavy cutters. I could hardly blame him at that. Part of his expensive equipment was still overboard. I went down into that rapidly darkening water, reasonably certain that our gear was hopelessly snared there.

THE mess they let me down into was something to see. I was lowered into a maze of pilings draped with nets of unknown vintage. It was small consolation to know that other fishermen before us had been whipped there. I reached bottom in approximately thirty feet of surgy water. The chamber of visibility was about ten square feet at that point.

Choo-chooing along the sandy bottom wasn't easy because my hose and life line had to be kept free of the pilings and matted nets. Upon investigation it was soon evident that the clusters of mussels and protruding spikes on the pilings were now sole owners of one new expensive net. A magician wouldn't have attempted to disengage it.

However, I was desperate and did the only thing left to do. I began cutting away one of the end portions that still ran free to the dory up above. Some stout cutting and hacking soon had it loose. They hauled it up. I started for the other end, the October water chilling me to the marrow, and my light getting worse.

Even though I skirted the more snarled mazes, I couldn't help winding into some of it. I figured that as long as air was coming through to me, I could, at least, always cut my way out.

As I neared the purse there was a sudden wild boiling of water. The brine roiled madly as though there had been an explosion. The rush of water made me teeter. I wondered if the purse might possibly still have a load of bait in it.

Then with a rending and tearing, the whole net seemed to come alive. It swept crazily across the jagged pilings, enveloped my air hose and life line. I was dragged along the ocean floor like a mud hook. The connections broke from my helmet with a dull *thunk!* I wound up on my knees, scared and a little daft. I got a flashing glimpse of two enormous sharks fighting and churning their way along in that maze of nets. They weren't interested in me nor in each other. All they wanted was escape. That's all I wanted, too!

Instinctively I had grabbed at the broken air-connection on my helmet to save what oxygen remained there. The sight of all those snarled nets still hemming me in froze my blood with terror. Water was spilling into my helmet. The cutters were gone, the lifeline out of sight.

I was like a bird in a collapsed cage. My only chance was to scramble up through the tangle. I slipped out of the heavy helmet, the pressure started me for the top. I clawed madly at the lengths of net between me and the surface. The further up I fought, the more enmeshed I became. Suddenly the whole tangle became taut and started moving resistlessly out to sea.

A gagging gulp of that brine was more than I could handle. Dimly I saw a silvery, glassy bulge up above that represented the surface. Another gulp choked me out like a candle. Everything drifted into blackness.

I came to, later, on the deck of the *Triunfo.* Warm blankets shrouded me, and the resuscitator was working overtime. It had been a narrow squeak. The crew stood around me with anxious faces and droning voices.

I managed to babble: "H-h-how—how'dja get me outta the soup?"

Captain Silva's face was all blurred and distant to my vision, but I saw him wag his shaggy head and say: "You can thank the sharks for draggin' both you and the net alongside this old tub." Then he turned and waddled aft to inspect what was left of the purse.

Well sir, within the hour I learned something that, to this day, remains a miracle in my mind. Those thrashing, flailing sharks in their berserk efforts to get free of the net, dragged the whole tattered mess to the surface and were hauling it along the port side of the *Triunfo.* Captain Silva, the cook, and the radioman, all saw the passing snarl. Quick on the trigger, they threw a grappling-hook into it, then with the aid of gaffs, managed to hold on while the mate got aboard and used the 30-30 rifle to advantage.

However, their big surprise—naturally—was at finding me trapped in the purse! It's the one time that I hitch-hiked a ride with sharks. However, I don't mean to go on record as recommending this mode of travel.

Hara-Kiri

ACCORDING to Japanese standards, it was a magnificent party. Eighteen geisha, and three girl musicians were present exclusively for the entertainment of the two of us, my Japanese host Oshay, and myself. Oshay was his nickname at the school where we had been students in America years previously. His real name was a collection of Japanese monosyllables preceded by the title of "Baron." Oshay himself was a queer collection of divergent impulses, being almost totally American in speech and much of his thinking, with the Japanese heritage breaking through in unexpected places. I'd scarcely been in Tokyo long enough to change into fresh uniform and new boots and arrive at the Embassy to make my report when he leaped out of a yellow Renault Japanese army staff car and grabbed me. It took me a moment to recognize him, in his uniform of a major on the Japanese General Staff.

"Big doings . . . big dinner—prettiest girls in Tokyo. . . . Duck the brass hats—I'll wait for you."

I temporized a moment: "I'll have to see what orders I have inside. . . . I'll be out as soon as I report," I said.

Making my formal report to the Ambassador did not take long. But my detailed report to the military attaché consumed a good half hour, for I had just come from the American Expeditionary Forces in Siberia—then, in 1918, holding down various sectors extending to Khabarovsk. Having been liaison officer to the Japanese General Staff, I had considerable to report.

"You think, then, that the Japanese will jump on our necks if the fighting on the Western Front goes against the Allies?" asked the military attaché.

"You darned tooting they will!" I said. "Custer's last stand would be a piker show compared to what the Japs will pull on us if they see a chance to leap on us!"

He was thoughtful. Then, coming out of his revery, he invited me to dinner. I told him of the Japanese schoolmate of mine waiting outside.

"By all means go along," agreed the military attaché. "It isn't often an American intelligence officer can meet a Japanese staff officer out of office hours. There are rumors, you know, that they have some cockeyed scheme for conquering the world. Maybe you can pick up some real dope!"

"Maybe that's what *he's* after," I said. "It certainly didn't take him long to find out I was in Tokyo!"

Outside once more, in Oshay's car, I kidded him about the Japanese army intelligence service, and the speed with which he had discovered my presence in Tokyo.

"Oh," he said airily, "we know everything in the Army. I knew when you left Manila to go to Vladivostok and everything you did in Siberia."

"Everything?" I asked, assuming extreme confusion.

"Everything, including the blondes," he insisted.

"*That's* where your intelligence service slipped up," I countered triumphantly. "They were all brunettes!"

"Terrible failure of Japanese intelligence officers," he groaned, "Tea and *hara-kiri* knives ordered for all hands!"

"Is it true, Oshay," I asked curiously, "that a Japanese officer is forced to commit hara-kiri if he falls down on the job?"

"Sure he does; he gets an invitation right off the bat if he pulls any kind of a boner," said Oshay cheerfully. "It saves lots of trouble and red tape . . . Then, you see, he doesn't pull the same boner again."

"Obviously," I murmured, meaning to inquire further, but now Oshay's attention was riveted on my boots, worn for the first time.

"Boy, oh boy, but those are beauts!" he punned, comparing the smooth trimness of the English perfection in bootmaking to his own sloppy Japanese imitations. "How much did they cost?" And he whistled when I told him, but took down the name and address in his notebook.

"Where we're going, you'll have to take them off," he warned; and then I remembered the Japanese custom of wearing stockinged feet on the finely woven mats. The new boots, not yet broken in, were beginning to pinch in spots, so I talked him into going to the club where I was putting up, while I changed into a more comfortable pair.

We paused at the bar, for suitable refreshment and a toast to our reunion. This caused much amazement to the bar-boys and the Britishers present, unaccustomed to the sight of Japanese and American officers fraternizing in this fashion. This solemn duty performed, we drove on to the geisha house, on the outskirts of Tokyo. Oshay warned me of the mistake sometimes made by foreigners about the status of geisha, as the best are highly paid entertainers, and respectable—as though I did not already know it.

The banquet-hall was in tones of silver gray, with its only decoration a spray of plum-blossoms in a cloisonné vase, a subdued background for the soft-colored silks and multi-colored fans of the geisha.

They greeted us on their knees, bowing low, with sibilant indrawn breath as we entered, thereafter fluttering around us as we seated ourselves cross-legged at the low tables. As the dinner was served, they sang gracefully around us, smiling and talking demurely.

My efforts with the chopsticks amused them greatly, and the upshot was that I was fed every mouthful by an ivory-skinned girl seated beside me. She was pretty, in an exotic sort of way, but I thought that the girl who hovered solicitously over Oshay was more intelligent-looking.

Oshay paid not the slightest attention to her, except to fling an occasional curt remark in Japanese. Our conversation was in English. None of the geisha spoke more than the few words of pidgin English known to all geisha, or so I thought. Once or twice I was puzzled by what seemed a gleam of laughter in the eyes of Oshay's girl at some of our quips, but put it down to amusement at our amusement, rather than understanding of our jokes.

We drank nothing but the conventional Japanese rice wine, *sake,* served tepid. It was innocuous enough, in all truth. Despite this, it made Oshay garrulous as we sipped and toasted our almost forgotten classmates. He became flushed and talked a blue streak, paying little attention to the dancers, who by now had excused themselves to dress for their first number, leaving behind the two girls who served us with *sake* and food.

THE first geisha number was some variation of the *No* dance. It was a stately, ceremonious affair, with every gesture and movement prescribed by centuries of ritual. There seemed to my Western eyes little variation in the succeeding dances except that with each dance the costumes changed and became more brightly hued.

Knowing that Oshay as a cadet, had fallen in love with an American girl, the sister of one of our fellow-cadets, and had been rejected because of the difference in race, I asked him if he had married a Japanese girl.

"Yes; they had one of those damn' little dolls picked for me when I came home," he answered brusquely, and changed to the subject to ask about our new Browning machine-guns, of which he knew a great deal more than I did at the time, as it happened. From this our talk turned to other professional matters, comparisons of our two army systems, and matters of promotion, training and discipline. He sipped steadily at the little bowls of *sake,* which were refilled by the beautiful Japanese girl kneeling beside him. Once or twice I caught the girl's eye and subconsciously noted that she seemed intent upon what we

by Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson

An American Intelligence man tells of another Japanese who could not survive failure.

were saying beyond and above the fixed mechanical attentiveness of the professional entertainer. But the turn that Oshay's conversation was taking absorbed my interest.

"Nick," said Oshay suddenly, "the Japanese army is good. It is so good that some day it will conquer the world."

"I don't think its artillery is so hot," I demurred.

"It will be, it will be—it has to be." He took another drink of *sake*. The silent girl refilled the small bowl. "If you knew the plans we have—" He gazed dreamily at the swaying line of geisha which had just entered with another change of costume. Suddenly he laughed and pointed at them. I could see nothing especially funny.

"Don't you see, it's a comic dance!" Oshay was laughing again.

As a good guest I forced a polite smile.

"What makes it comic?" I asked.

"Don't you see, they carry red fans!" and Oshay burst into almost uncontrollable mirth, knocking over the bowl of *sake* in his exuberance. It was beyond me, but his mirth was infectious, and I laughed in turn. The geisha smiled back and seemed less ceremonious.

"Yes, Nick," continued Oshay, wiping his eyes, "the world will some day wake up to find that it has underrated Japanese fighting ability."

"Who are they going to fight, and why?" I asked.

"It is all planned, Nick," said Oshay, with a slight hiccup. "The plan was originated by the great Japanese warrior Hideyoshi, who conquered Korea centuries ago. The first step in modern days was to reconquer Korea—which we have done. The second step was to conquer Manchuria, which we did against Russia, only to lose the fruits of our conquest. But the Japanese never give up. They will retake Manchuria, sometime, soon. That will be the second step . . . Talking about stepping, remember those girls at the Winter Garden in New York? Boy, how they could step!" His eyes shone with the recollection. "But sometime, Nick, within your lifetime, there are going to be Japanese officers sitting in New York theaters watching the girls step at command of the conquerors!"

Making my face as expressionless as possible, I said: "It seems to me that you have to take some pretty long steps before that happens."

"You said it, boy! Some pretty long steps. . . . What d'you say we teach these babies the Virginia reel—sort of pep 'em up. . . . Come on, guy—"

He staggered to his feet. The girl seated beside him watched with expressionless eyes.

Somehow I succeeded in talking him out of the idea. Then he insisted on playing a game of paper-wraps rock, scissors-cut-paper with the geisha, a game bringing much clapping of hands and much laughter, until he tired of this suddenly and returned to his subject.

"Yesh sir." He wagged his head solemnly. "Gonna be pretty bad for everybody. . . . Chinese—we're gonna take China. French—we're gonna take Indo-China. British, we're gonna take Singapore, Hongkong. Dutch—we're gonna take Java, Sumatra. . . . Australians—pouf, they'll go out like a light! And poor old America—Philippines, Alaska, Washington, Oregon, California—one after another. Panama Canal—"

The girl at his right, she who had been pouring the *sake,* suddenly emitted a smothered cry—Oshay's cigarette-tip had burned her hand. She rose and went out of the banquet-room. Oshay's head nodded, and he grew drowsy. The geisha sat around watching me expectantly. It was up to me to carry on until my host had finished his nap. Somehow I managed to piece together my few words of Japanese; they giggled and named things for me, ending up by leading me into their quarters, where they showed me the bridal trousseaux that every geisha assembles during her term of service.

My face had settled into permanent lines, a fixed smile of admiration for all this beauty, when Oshay finally woke up, sleepy and a little red-eyed.

He immediately ordered more *sake* and another girl, appearing from somewhere, finally brought the wine.

It surprised me a little that the beautiful girl detailed to look after him for the evening was not there. Somehow, while I had been out with the geisha in their quarters, Oshay's guardian had slipped away. And then, as suddenly and as quietly as she had left, she was back again. Her eyes were unfathomable, as I caught them and stared at her, puzzled. Suddenly she was at my elbow.

"I think it is much better that you take your friend home now!" she said low-voiced in English, with scarcely a trace of accent.

The urgency in the girl's voice and manner suddenly made me of the same opinion.

But getting Oshay to depart was no easy matter. The gayety and the laughter had departed from the place. The girls looked frightened. My overwrought ears brought imagined sounds of the opening and closing of doors and soft footsteps padding surreptitiously. I was glad when we were once more in our car.

Oshay insisted upon coming into my club for a nightcap. The bar was closed, but I woke up a sleeping bar-boy and ordered drinks brought to my room.

As I opened the door and flashed on the lights, I saw something amiss.

My beautiful new Peale boots, which I had left trimly upright in their form-fitting wooden trees, were askew somehow. Closer examination showed that they had been removed and replaced by some hand unskilled at fitting together the three segments of the ivory-labeled boot trees. Japanese spies can be very dumb at times. Closer examination showed that my beautiful new boots had been cut from sole to heel, their soles neatly removed with a sharp knife.

I surveyed this wreckage angrily, forgetting Oshay. Suddenly I heard him breathing hard, and turned to find him standing rigid, a stricken look in his eyes.

"I do not understand," he said in a curiously flat voice.

"It was the girl sitting beside you—she spoke perfect English," I said somewhat brutally, sore about the wreckage of my new boots.

"I talked too much and unwisely?" he asked me, again in that curiously flat voice.

"You talked much, how unwisely I have no means of telling," I said.

The sleepy bar-boy proffered us our drinks. Oshay waved them away, his eyes riveted on my wrecked boots.

"Rest assured that the value of the boots will be repaid," he said at last in a strangely formal voice, and with a strangely formal bow.

With that he turned on his heel and was gone, without another word.

IT was the last time I saw him. The next day was crowded with this and that, and I was sailing that evening.

A couple of people from the Embassy drove down to Yokohama and saw me off on shipboard. One of these drew me aside.

"Queer thing," he said: "your friend Major Baron So-and-So was found dead this afternoon. He was dressed in full ceremonial robes with the hara-kiri knives beside him. Never can tell what queer things these Japs will do!"

"No," I agreed dully, "you never can tell!"

Not until the ship pulled out did the purser hand me the envelope. Inside was a draft drawn on the Yokohama Specie Bank for nineteen pounds, ten shillings and sixpence, the exact cost of my wrecked boots.

Oshay had repaid his obligations in full.



Drawn by Frederic Anderson

"Mitchell!" said Penny's voice. "Oh, Mitchell!" I opened my eyes; I remembered what had happened. "Come on, Mister," Paul Brent said. "We've got to get out of here."

The STREET *of the* CRYING WOMAN

In old Mexico a New Englander finds strange adventure. . . . A complete book-length novel,

by Geoffrey Homes

Who wrote "Finders Keepers" and "Forty Whacks"



OME day I'll go back to Mexico again. I'll take the long straight road south from Laredo, down through the jungle to Tamazunchale, then up and up over the hills to the broad valley where the maguey plants march across the plain in gray-green rows. Off to the left I'll see the White Woman sleeping in the mist, and beyond, the white cone of the Smoking Mountain. There will be organ cactus sheltering the little huts. There will be men and women and children trudging along the roads carrying their incredible loads. There will be dust and sun and wind and in a field a herd of white goats grazing.

Oh, I know it well—for I was born there. I know the feel of it and the smell of it and the warmth of it. I know its many voices.

Some day I'll walk along the narrow pitted pavements of Mexico City again, past the Alameda, past the House of the Blue Tiles, across the Zocalo and around the palace to the crowded markets. Kids will pull at my coat and ask softly for just one little penny. Old women will thrust lottery tickets in front of me, their dark eyes begging me to buy. I'll see a squat, serape-wrapped man knitting a sock as he shuffles along. And out toward San Angel I'll come upon a man and a fat pig he is taking to market sleeping in the shade of a pepper tree.

I'll take the road across the range and from the cliffs back of Tepozitlan I'll watch the thunderstorms sweep up the narrow valley. And I'll follow the winding road south, see the red tile roofs of Taxco, hear the ringing of the hammers of the silversmiths, then south through the cane fields and melon fields, down through the canons and up a little hill and once again I'll see the blue crescent that is the bay of Acapulco.

Yes, I'll go back again. Not for a while, not until some of the wounds are healed, not until time puts its dream-like quality on the past, not until I have forgotten—if that is possible—those days of terror and confusion and sudden death. . . .

It all started with a letter, though at the time I had no inkling of what was coming. I found it on my desk one morning early in October and I knew from the handwriting that it was from my brother.

It was written on the stationery of the Mexican Bureau of Anthropology in Guadalajara.

Dear Mitch:

Today I handed my resignation to Don Alfonso. No, I didn't tell him off, though I wanted to. What good would it have done—he's too stupid to realize what a mess he has made of this office. Anyway, I think he intended to sack me and put one of his innumerable relatives in my place. That's what he has been doing ever since Dr. Guttierez backed the wrong political horse and found Don Alfonso in his chair. Ruiz, Ramirez, Orozco and Amaro—the guys I lived with so long—and all the other good men have had the can tied to them. My name should have been next on the list.

But don't worry about me. There is something in the wind, something so big I can say nothing about it. You know how it is when you talk too much about a thing, dream too much about it. It doesn't pan out. All I can tell you is this—if things go well we'll be rich and you can quit that silly job and go traipsing off with me. We'll go south to Chile and across the Andes and down to Rio, maybe. We'll do all the things we've wanted to do so long. Unless, of course, the world goes thoroughly to pot, which it seems to be doing with remarkable speed.

I'm all packed and waiting for the train which won't be more than three hours late. Yes, the train service is just the same as it always was. Until you hear from me again my address will be care of John Aldrich, Av. Madero 86, Mexico, D. F. I plan to lease a house and there will be a room for you if you want to forget that precious sense of honor and consider me paid off. Maybe next summer, huh?

Take care of yourself and keep out of the clutches of your young charges. By the way, the job you did on Zapata was a good one. It made me proud my name was Drake. Or did I tell you that before? —*Arthur.*

I READ the letter again, then sat there with the October sun warming my back and thought about Arthur and all that he had done for me since that day in 1927 when Mother and Father were drowned in a storm on the bay of Acapulco.

I was sixteen then; though Arthur was only five years older, he had swallowed his grief, pitched in, straightened out Father's tangled affairs and made it possible for us to go on eating and studying. And it was Arthur who, in 1933, got the money together so I could go to Columbia University, and who kept on sending me money until I

landed a position teaching English literature, American history, and Spanish at the Westchester Academy of Fine Arts. What little I had and what little I had done, I owed to my brother.

It was in December, around Christmas, that I started worrying about Arthur. I hadn't heard from him, though I had answered his letter, but there was nothing extraordinary about that. Sometimes he wrote once a month—sometimes six or eight months passed before one of his letters turned up. For that matter, his October missive had been his first in almost a year. And anyway, I had a problem on my hands. My star student, Penny Gage, who the term before had haunted my office, suddenly lost all interest in her studies, and nothing I could do or say could rekindle that interest. If it had been anyone but Miss Gage I would have given the matter no thought at all. But she had shown real promise and the extraordinary change in her attitude toward her work hurt me a good deal. I was trying to figure out a new approach to that problem when a brief note from John Aldrich, who had been father's attorney, gave me the first hint that all wasn't well with Arthur. Aldrich said he was holding a letter with my return address on it for my brother and wanted to know what to do with it.

I wrote to him at once to try to find Arthur for me. A few days later I thought of an old friend of ours, a newspaperman named Joe Briggs, who had brought us the news of the death of our parents, so I wrote to him too.

Then, on the 17th of January, things began to happen.

LOOKING back now, I can see with extraordinary clarity how neatly everything fitted, how events that at the time seemed remarkable coincidences weren't that at all, how cleverly I was drawn into a dark whirlpool of horror and cruelty and death, how the innocent were unscrupulously used and how one of them paid with his life for an act of kindness. I didn't see then, yet I don't wonder at my blindness. It was all planned so beautifully, timed with such delicate precision, that even the man who solved the affair said it was like trying to put Humpty Dumpty together after the fall from the wall.

Consider these apparently unrelated incidents:

On January 17th I received this note from Joe Briggs:

Dear Mitch:

Have they fattened you up any in Westchester and have you learned to comb your hair?

I was in Acapulco doing a bit of fishing and contemplating, as always, the beautiful simplicity of the Mexican electoral system, when your letter arrived. Thus the delay.

I saw Arthur for a few moments when he got back here last October. Now he is not to be found. He hasn't been seen since November 8th, and I'm worried as hell. Not by his absence, but because someone else is looking for him and I don't mean John Aldrich.

The guy on Arthur's trail is a dapper, undersized detective who calls himself José Manuel Madero. That is not his name—he's an Indian, a Zapotec, from the hills back of Oaxaca, so you can guess what he was christened. An odd little guy, who, when he gets up against a particularly difficult case, goes home, puts on some of those white pajamas the peons wear, and a pair of huaraches and sits on his haunches in the sun knitting. So far he has knitted a whole sock trying to figure out where in God's name Arthur went. What he wants with your brother he won't say.

I don't like it, Mitchell. There is something very wrong about the whole business. Madero only handles important cases—cases in which the boys upstairs at the palace are interested. I ran into him first a couple of years ago on a murder case. You may remember—the one where the American girl was murdered in the palace. An important and entirely innocent Cardenas man would have been hanged for it if Madero hadn't stepped in. Since then he's had the run of the country.

All I know for certain is this. Arthur leased a house on Av. Santa Maria—the one they call the Street of the Crying Woman—late in October, stayed a week or so and disappeared.

Do you know anything that would make this make sense? Meanwhile I'll keep looking and I'll do my best to break down Señor José's inexplicable reticence. As ever, Joe.

TWO days after Briggs' letter arrived I had a visitor. He was waiting in the hall outside my study when I came back from lunch, a tall, dark man with a nose that angled to the left a little. His eyes were big and sad.

"Dr. Drake?" he asked as I took out my key and put it in the lock. I nodded.

"My name is Magnin," the man said. There was something odd about his face—a twist to the lower jaw that pulled the corner of his mouth down a bit. The jaw and the nose made the thin face even more striking. At first glance, he seemed to be middle-aged, for his black hair was peppered with gray. A closer inspection told me he was around thirty.

I waved him inside to the chair in the corner, went behind my desk. "What can I do for you?" I asked.

He smiled. The smile took some of the asceticism from his face. "I understand you're something of an authority on Mexico."

"I used to live there. I've written a couple of books. I'm not—"

He cut the sentence in two. "I've read your Zapata biography. That was a fine job." His tone, more than his words, expressed his admiration.

"Thanks," I said. I liked praise.

"I've done some writing," Magnin said.

Then I knew who he was: Jacques Magnin. "'Bloody Harvest!'" I exclaimed, and stared across the room at him. It couldn't be. This slim, gentle man with the low, soft voice couldn't be Magnin—Magnin the revolutionary, the organizer, the *saboteur*. How could that frail body have withstood months of torture at the hands of the Nazis? But there was a fire in him, burning behind his eyes, and there was power in him. I could see it now. And the crooked nose and jaw—he hadn't been born with them. They were mementos of his work in Germany and France and America.

"You've read it?" He looked pleased.

I said I had. "I should have realized who you were."

"Why?" He smiled again. "How could you know?"

"Your picture."

"Mine? You've never seen a picture of me. I don't allow them. Not from modesty, though. Fear, Dr. Drake. I'm scared to death." He spoke lightly, good-humoredly. He didn't seem afraid certainly. "You understand why?"

I nodded. After all, I had read the book and he gave a good many people plenty of reasons for killing him in that book. I thought of Trotsky. I thought of what had finally happened to Trotsky.

"I was told I could trust you," Magnin said.

"Who?"

"Miss Gage."

I thought he referred to Penny's aunt and guardian, Miss Molly Gage. He didn't, I found out a few days later. He meant Penny. "I'm glad she thinks so."

"I'm going to Mexico City," Magnin went on. "I wondered if you could help me."

"How?"

"You know how it is to go to a strange city."

I nodded. It occurred to me that Magnin had been to a great many strange cities in his life. However, I got his point. In those days he had people to look up. He didn't now.

"Miss Gage says you have relatives in Mexico."

"I have a brother," I said, forgetting for a minute that I had been in a turmoil for two days because of him.

"Could you give me a letter to him?" It was difficult to say no to that smile. I sensed a sort of helplessness in him. Yet I knew he wasn't helpless.

"Do you know anyone else well enough to give me a letter?" He spoke diffidently, as though embarrassed. "An introduction. I don't speak Spanish. I want to rent a little place out of the city somewhere—a quiet place where I can work." He smiled. "Undisturbed," he added. He said the word good-naturedly, yet it had an ominous ring.

"I know a couple of men fairly well," I replied, thinking of John Aldrich and Joe Briggs. "I can send you to them. But you won't need anyone, really. One doesn't need Spanish in Mexico these days. English gets you by nine times out of ten."

"I'd appreciate it, though."

"All right," I said. I picked up a pen and scribbled two short notes. And I did it, not only for Penny's aunt, who was a member of the board of regents of the Westchester Academy of Fine Arts, and who had been very good to me, but for the gentle sad-eyed fellow sitting in front of my desk. I didn't try to analyze my feeling for him. Perhaps I pitied him—for what he had gone through and what he had lost. Faith; I knew from his book that he had lost that. And I think that the loss of something to hold on to, something to believe in, is worthy of pity.

Magnin thanked me, tried to crush my hand, smiled again and departed. I thought—a little regretfully—that would be the last I'd see of him. I was wrong.

I had hoped for good news from John Aldrich. But none came. Not until February 15 was there a letter from him, and in the interim things occurred, seemingly unimportant then but grimly significant when the whole thing was pieced together. . . .

One night toward the end of January—I think it was the 28th—I went to a faculty dinner. It was late, almost midnight, when I went up the steps of the house in the village where I boarded, let myself in and went softly to my room. My landlady, Mrs. Huntting, was rather strict about her guests,—as she called them,—frowning on anyone who disturbed the peace and quiet of the place. So I slipped into bed quietly, curbing my temper when my feet pushed out at the end of the bed as they always did—the bed was a bit short for a man who stands six feet two—and went to sleep without even turning on the light.

At breakfast Mrs. Huntting looked down her nose at me.

"You went out rather late, didn't you, Professor?"

"It was a bit late," I said. "Faculty meeting." Then I frowned at her. "Went out?"

"Yes. I heard you come in around nine-thirty. Half an hour later you went out again."

"I did nothing of the kind," I said sharply.

The look she gave me said I was lying. I hurried through breakfast and didn't even try to hide my annoyance. I was on the way out when it occurred to me there was something odd about the whole thing. I found out there was. Someone had gone very thoroughly and very carefully through everything I owned. Nothing was missing. Only Arthur's last letter, which I know I had returned to its envelope, wasn't in that envelope now. It was placed neatly on top of the pile of letters in the left-hand bureau drawer, and its envelope was under it.

On the day in the second week in February that I gave my classes their mid-term tests, I met, purely by accident—or so it seemed—a man who was to become tangled in the web of my affairs. We used the honor system at Westchester, which was just as well, for it helped many a débutante to graduate from the Academy with high honors. At two o'clock I put the members of the class in Spanish in the care of their consciences and went outdoors.

IT was a fine bright day, bracingly cold, and I walked briskly across the snow-shrouded campus, feeling that sense of freedom which always comes at the end of the term. There was a familiar red Packard convertible nosed against the curb in the space where the girls parked their cars; and seeing it made me warm inside, for it was Penny Gage's car. I stood there looking at it and remembering the day she had driven me to Boston—a fine day, one of those bright days in a man's life. Then I realized I wasn't alone. A man in a blue camel's-hair overcoat and a blue hat with a snap brim was leaning against a tree-trunk a few feet away, watching me—a man with the face of an angel.

"Colorful, isn't it?" the man said.

I nodded, and felt embarrassed. I wondered if he knew Penny and guessed what my interest in the car was.

"Wouldn't mind owning it," the man said.

"Nor I," I replied, gave him another nod and crossed to the road that led to Eastredge. My destination was a taproom in the village—an eminently respectable one.

EMIL WALLER, the pink-cheeked barman, was alone in the pine-paneled room.

"Hello, Doc," Emil said. "Playing hooky?"

"Examinations," I explained.

"Don't you watch them wenches?" Emil asked.

"I put them on their honor."

"They didn't do that where I went to school. If they had, I would be a bachelor of something or other."

"My students wouldn't think of cheating."

"I'll bet. Do you take their books away from them?"

"And let them feel I don't trust them?"

"Do you?" Emil asked.

"No," I said. "How about a beer?"

"It's too cold for beer," Emil said. "This is whisky-punch weather. I make a very fine whisky punch. I also make a fine whisky sour with rum floated on top of it."

"I have a reputation for sobriety to uphold."

"That's a shame. The whisky sour is wonderful."

"Make me one, then."

He grinned and went to work. I put my elbows on the bar and relaxed. There was a mirror in front of me, and I looked at myself in it and realized that perhaps the dean was right; perhaps I should get my hair cut oftener. It was straw-colored and gave me a scarecrowish look. Then the young man with the angel face came through the doorway and put his lean body on a stool to my right. He took off his hat and ran his fingers through his black curly hair.

Emil turned and nodded. "Hello, Angel."

"The name is Paul," the man said.

"That guy last night called you Angel," Emil said.

"To hell with him!" the man said. "Give me a whisky straight." He named his brand. There was an ash-tray and a box of safety matches on the bar. He took six matches out of the box, began juggling them.

"No, you don't," Emil said as he put my whisky sour in front of me. I tasted it. "Good?" Emil wanted to know.

"Wonderful," I said.

"Just one game for a drink." The man who called himself Paul held out three matches.

"I'm a sucker, Doc," Emil said. "I always was." He took the matches. "Watch this, Doc."

"If you're a doctor, what's good for a hangover?" Paul asked. He put his hands behind him. Emil did the same.

"He isn't that kind of a doctor," Emil said. "He teaches the dames at the Academy. I wish I had me a degree so I could take his job." He whistled, put a closed fist on the bar. "You challenged."

Paul put his closed fist beside Emil's. "Three," Paul said.

"Four." Emil opened his fist. There were two matches on his palm.

"A horse on you," Paul said, and showed Emil one match.

"That's an odd game." I moved nearer.

"They call it the match game," Paul said.

"I think he makes his living at it." Emil put his hands behind him again. So did Paul. This time Emil guessed three.

"None," Paul said, and he was right. There were no matches in either palm.

"What did I tell you?" Emil asked. "I should know better after last night. Last night he took me for seven drinks and four bucks."

"One more?" Paul asked.

"Not me," Emil said. "Maybe the Doc will play with you."

"Thanks," I declined.

"Some other time, then," Paul said.

"Some other time," I agreed, paid for the sour and headed back for the Academy. And as I walked through the pale sunshine, a thought kept pushing itself at me that the man called Paul had followed me to the tavern. But why?

When I reached my office, I found a note saying Molly Gage had called and wanted me to call back. I picked up the phone and gave the operator her number.

"Will you come to dinner tonight?" Miss Gage asked.

I said that would be fine. Over the wire her voice was warm.

"Shall I send the car?"

"I can walk."

"And get even thinner?" I heard her low laugh. "No."

"All right, then."

"Seven," Molly Gage said, and hung up.

I sat there looking at the phone and thinking of Penny's aunt, and how good she had been to me. One of the nice people in the world, one of the men—or women rather—of good will. And I was still thinking about her when someone knocked on my door.

"Come in," I said. The door swung open. I took off my glasses and stood up because Penny Gage came in.

Until that moment I never realized why it was Penny always made me think of the line from "A Midsummer Night's Dream" which goes, *"I know a bank where the wild thyme grows."* I knew now. She belonged in an enchanted forest. There was something wild and free about her—a slim, golden-haired girl with flecks of gold in her eyes. She had the grace of the barefooted Indian girls you see walking along the mountain trails near Tepozitlan. It was that grace, I think, that made Bernal Diaz speak of them so rapturously four centuries ago. Penny carried herself in that same proud way. Only, her face wasn't flat and her skin wasn't brown.

"Good afternoon," Penny said. "May I sit down?" She seemed nervous.

"Do, Penny," I said.

She sat in the chair in the corner and tucked her feet under her. We looked at each other. I realized I was wiping my glasses with my fingers, so I put them on again and fumbled with the paper-knife.

"How did the examination go?"

"I don't know," Penny said.

"I tried not to make it too hard."

"It's my fault," Penny said, and found her hands interesting. "I haven't been working very hard." Then she looked up at me. "I've something to ask you."

I jabbed the paper-cutter into the blotter. "Yes?"

"Aunt Molly is asking you to dinner tonight."

"She called a short while ago."

"It's about me," Penny said. "She's worried about my state of mind. She's worried because I haven't been working very hard."

"I'll assure her—"

"No," Penny said. "You don't need to. I want to go away. I want to go somewhere, and she's going to talk to you about it."

"Why?"

"I'd like to go to Mexico City," Penny said. "I want her to take me there. I don't want to come back here next term."

It didn't make sense. I sat there jabbing the paper-cutter into the blotter.

"She thinks Mexico might be dangerous," Penny went on. "She also thinks I should finish college. But I don't want to now. Would you tell her I ought to go away, that Mexico would be a good place for me, that I could practise my Spanish and see all the places I've been studying about? Would you do that?"

"I suppose it would do you no harm," I said.

She smiled. It was like a light going on. "Oh, thank you."

"Perhaps I should give it a little thought."

"No, please. Please tell her it would be a good idea."

I shrugged. Why not? "All right."

She slid out of the chair and came across to the desk, reached over and patted my hand. "Thank you so very much. I'm to pick you up tonight. I'll be there at seven."

I stood up. I wanted to take her hand and squeeze it but it didn't seem the right thing to do. I felt young and a little foolish.

"One more thing." She stood there looking up at me. "If she says anything about Mr. Magnin, don't tell her you met him."

Then I began to understand. But it was a little late. By the time I had collected my wits, Penny Gage was gone.

Chapter Two



HERE was a piece of moon low in the east that night, and a wind blowing. The stars had been thoroughly polished and were bright and cold. Penny was a few minutes late so I sat on the rickety bench on the porch watching the night come down, seeing the lights in the houses along the quiet street turn the windows yellow. I should have been thinking about Arthur. I should have been trying to figure out why Magnin came to see me. All I could think of was Penny and how I would miss seeing her every day.

Presently a car came along the street, pulled up in front. It was Penny's Packard. She opened the door for me, watched me trying to fit my long legs under the dash.

"Shall I push the seat back?"

"I'm all right."

"It's a wonderful night," she said a little breathlessly. You could tell she was excited and happy.

"Maybe you should finish school, Penny," I said, not looking at her.

She took her foot off the starter. "You wouldn't—"

"No," I said. "I wouldn't. Forget it."

She squeezed my arm, put the car in gear and swung out into the street. Lights flashed behind us but they didn't pass. In the rear view mirror I could see that there was a car back of us a couple of hundred feet. It kept that distance.

To get to the Gage estate, one went straight out the street on which my boarding-house fronted, but Penny didn't go that way. Suddenly she swung right, drove very fast for two blocks, swung left again, circled a block, took a side street for half a mile and shot back into the main road. I gave her a questioning look.

"A game," Penny said.

I took a look in the rear-view mirror. The car wasn't behind us any more.

I don't blame myself for my inability to grasp the significance of those lights behind us, of Magnin's visit, of the angel-faced man named Paul, of the other items which when put together later made sense. Then, no matter what you did with them, they didn't fit into any sort of a pattern. They were a meaningless jumble.

What I learned from Molly Gage in the library after dinner made one thing certain—why Penny wanted so very much to go away.

As a girl, Penny's aunt must have been startlingly beautiful. She was still lovely, a tall, Junoesque woman with very little gray in her hair, though she must have been fifty. The only wrinkles she had were around her eyes and laughter had put them there. Every time I saw her, I wondered why she hadn't married. The only reason I could think of was that she enjoyed her freedom. She had the merriest eyes I had ever seen—brown eyes, gold-flecked.

We were sitting near the fireplace with the chessboard between us. She played well, though she had an odd attitude toward the game—an attitude that reflected her personality, I suppose. It hurt her, she said, that all the pieces, including the queen, should spend their lives defending the lazy king. It would be more fitting if the queen and the king changed places. I asked her once if that meant she thought women should be sheltered. "God forbid!" was her reply.

The game was Miss Gage's idea. Penny, at her aunt's suggestion, had taken an armful of books back to the rental library in Eastredge. She hadn't gone willingly. As she went out, she glanced back at me, and I knew she was putting herself completely in my hands.

Miss Gage moved her bishop. "Guard the wench."

I put a knight in front of my queen.

She seemed to be studying the board. But her next remark revealed that her mind wasn't altogether on the game. "I'm sorry she changed," she said. I didn't reply.

"A hero-worshiper," Miss Gage went on. "First it was you. I had you for breakfast and dinner for a year." She moved a pawn, left her queen unguarded.

"I'll take it," I said.

"So you will." She put the pawn back.

"She's very young." It was the only thing I could think of to say.

"Now it's Jacques Magnin," Miss Gage said. "Do you know who he is?"

"Yes." I kept my gaze on the ivory men.

"I don't approve." She castled, then pushed her hair back with a soft white hand and smiled at me. "It's none of my business, really. I've led my life. I shouldn't meddle with Penny's. She met him in Maine last summer. He was living in a shack over the hill. He let her read the manuscript of 'Bloody Harvest.' That's how it started. Then the book was published, and he came to New York and called her up, and she hasn't thought of anything else since."

I started to say that I didn't blame Penny, that I considered Magnin a charming man, but I remembered in time. I said: "I knew something had happened. You might go to the Department of Justice and see about having him deported. I doubt if he's a citizen and his passport may be forged."

"Mitch," she said reprovingly, "that's not at all like you." She chuckled. "Anyway, I thought of that first. There's no need now. Two weeks ago he stopped seeing her."

"Then there's nothing to worry about."

"There's Penny. She's desperate, or says she is. I could tell her one gets over such things, but that wouldn't help. It never does. And I don't blame her, really. Magnin is fascinating. He has courage and—I suppose you might say he has integrity. He's a droll fellow. Plenty of humor in him. But his past—I don't like that."

"He tossed that overboard."

"But it hasn't tossed him," said Miss Gage. "Don't you defend him. I don't want him for an in-law." She cocked her head and eyed me with good-humored gravity. "Now you—I never objected to you."

"Anyway, I have no past."

"Perhaps you should have."

"Is she in love with him?" I tried to be casual.

"She thinks she is." Her hand hovered over the board, dropped down and rested on a castle. "She thought she was in love with you once. I'm sorry she changed her mind. Don't blush, Mitch."

I tried to hide my embarrassment. "She got over that. She'll get over Magnin."

"Yes. That's why I'm taking her away. I'm taking her to Mexico. Don't you think it's the right thing to do?"

"Yes," I agreed.

"Would you like to go with us, Mitch? I can get a leave of absence for you. . . . And you're in check."

I interposed my knight. "I don't think I can go."

"It would do you good." Her gaze swept my face. "Somehow you appeal to me as an unhappy young man. I don't blame you. You aren't a teacher, not really."

"I know it," I said. "But one must eat."

"There'll be plenty of room in the car for you."

"Thanks. I'll think it over. It's nice of you to want me."

"I need someone to play chess with. Think it over hard. And you're going to lose your queen, so think about that too."

It was after ten when I went home. Penny had returned just before nine and had sat watching us, not saying anything because she played chess too and knew better than to comment on moves. She drove me home and not until we reached my gate did she speak. She took my hand and held it.

"You're a dear."

"Thanks."

"You think I'm being bad?"

"No."

"I'll miss you," Penny said.

"I'll miss you too," I said and stood at the gate watching her drive away. Then I turned and went up the icy walk feeling lonely and lost, and let myself quietly into the house. Under my door there was an envelope. It had John Aldrich's return address on it. I tore it open, stood in the middle of the dingy room reading it. Then I stopped thinking about Penny. For Aldrich said I must come to Mexico City at once. He said he was certain something had happened to Arthur. He said if I needed money to wire him and he would send it.

Two days later I was on a plane, and the plane was bound for the airport which stands on the dry bed of the lake the Aztecs called Texcoco.

Chapter Three



ON the Avenida Cinco de Febrero, there was a traffic jam. Men sat at the wheels of their cars, put their hands on the horns and let them stay there. It didn't untangle the jam but it made a lot of noise and that seemed to satisfy the horn-blowers.

It was a fine clear day with not much wind and where the sun spilled on the pavement it was warm. I came out of the Hotel Ontasco and stood in the sun feeling strange and a little lost. The city was changed. I knew it when I awakened that first morning. For one thing, there were no bells. In the old days that's the thing you noticed most in the morning, bells ringing everywhere. And there were too many cars and there were too many neon signs and there were too many traffic signals and too many radio stores, with the radios standing out in front turned on full blast.

I pushed my way along the narrow crowded street, hearing the many voices and the laughter, getting the feel of the people again and after a little while I knew I was home. A small dirty hand pulled at my trousers. A thin voice told me of the wealth that would be mine if I purchased one tiny piece of paper. I gave the girl fifty centavos and putting the ticket in my pocket, I walked on westward. Two men came toward me carrying a bed on their heads. A turkey sat on a window sill eating corn, one leg tethered to a nail in the sill. I went on to the corner where an old woman was cooking *tacos* over a charcoal brazier and turned north. When I came to Avenida Mexico I went west again and presently I was at Number 86. Joe Briggs was waiting for me in the entrance of the old building.

"Just as thin as ever," Joe said. "Thinner, if that's possible."

"Hello, Joe," I said. He hadn't changed much. There was no gray in his sandy hair and he was as lithe as a boy

of twenty. He was past fifty, I knew, for the first time I saw him was in 1925 and I thought of him as old then. I don't remember asking him how long he had been in Mexico. But I knew he'd interviewed Villa once when Pershing was chasing him, and he was in the city when Villa and Zapata rode in side by side, and he was in Vera Cruz when the marines landed.

"Good to see you, Mitch. Sorry I was out last night."

"I should have wired. Any news?"

He shrugged. "Nope."

I told him about Aldrich's letter. "That's why I hurried down."

"You seen him yet?"

"No. Talked to him on the phone last night."

"What's he in such an uproar about?" Joe asked. "I saw him last week and he wasn't excited."

"He didn't say. Suppose we find out." I led the way down the hall to the ancient elevator. There was a door to the right of the shaft. It was open. A woman sat at a desk sewing on a red glove. She smiled at us.

"Three," I told the operator. Joe squeezed my arm.

"A hell of a long time," Joe said. "Six—seven years."

"Eight. How was Arthur when you saw him?"

"Swell. Getting fat."

"Do you think anything's happened to him, Joe?"

"I don't see what. Let's not worry, kid."

WE got out of the elevator, went down the hall and opened a door with John Aldrich's name on it. It was the same office the attorney had occupied when I was small, a high-ceilinged room with immense windows and a withered little man at a desk by the windows. The man smiled, said good morning and waved us toward the inner office.

John Aldrich stood back of his desk, beaming, a big, ruddy man with a thin mustache that was peppered with gray. He had always reminded me of the English majors in the Kipling stories—a roast-beef and Yorkshire-pudding sort of fellow. Yet he wasn't English, and he didn't like to be called English. As usual, he looked well-fed, prosperous and heading for early apoplexy. "Mitch!" he boomed. "By God, Mitchell! Look just like your father. A string bean—a scarecrow! But then you always did. Older. Been around a bit. Remember playing all over this office?"

"I remember. You look well."

"Always am well. Always have been well. It's the food. Mostly bad. Then you don't eat so much. Right, Joe?"

"Right," Joe said. He sat down and lit a cigarette. I straddled a chair and leaned on the back of it and tried not to seem upset when Aldrich rambled on about Father and Mother and about the good old days of Don Porfirio Diaz.

It was Joe who stopped him. "What's happened about Arthur?" Joe wedged the question in when Aldrich paused to light his pipe.

"Of course," Aldrich said. "Sorry, Mitch. You must be worried. It's a woman."

"Woman?" Joe repeated.

Aldrich nodded. "A dancer at the El Toro. She was Arthur's girl."

"Which one?" Joe asked.

"The American," Aldrich said. "The blonde—Dorothy Allen."

"I've seen her," Joe said.

"What about her?" I got up and leaned on Aldrich's desk.

"She and Arthur were going to be married," Aldrich said gravely. "They were going to be married February 5. I just found it out. And the way she is carrying on, I'm damned sure something is seriously wrong."

"Has she seen him?"

"Not since November."

"How did you find out about this?" Joe asked. He was sitting on the edge of the couch, scowling at Aldrich.

"She came to me."

"When?"

"The day I wrote Mitch. Friday, I guess it was."

"Why so long?" Joe said. "Why didn't she come before?"

Aldrich's eyes were thoughtful, worried. "She said when Arthur didn't show up to marry her, she didn't know who to go to. Then she suddenly remembered Arthur speaking about me, so she came up. Said she got a letter from him in December, so that's why she didn't worry before."

"A letter?" I said.

"From Vera Cruz." Aldrich opened a drawer, took out a piece of blue notepaper, put it in my hand. It was from Arthur. There was no doubt of that. I knew his scrawl too well to doubt its authenticity. It ran:

Dec. 28.

Dot Darling:

I wanted to be with you Christmas but there was nothing I could do about it so I had to try to make up for it by sending the very unworthy gift. Next year it will be something bigger and finer—you understand, I know.

If it helps any, I'm not having fun. I never liked Vera Cruz—never will like it. But I have to stay a while longer. With luck, I'll be back by the middle of January. But don't be upset if I fail to show up until just before our day—the biggest day in our lives. I've put a red ring around the date. And from now on we can join the Mexicans in celebrating El Cinco de Febrero.

I've told no one about us yet—not even Mitch. You see how I keep promises, darling. It has been a great temptation but you know best.

Do you know how very much I love you? And how very much I miss you? Days pass quickly. Soon you'll be in my arms and then you'll never leave them.

Your Arthur.

I gave the letter to Joe. He read it, got up then and stood staring at a big photograph of the pyramid at Cholula. He said, without turning: "Maybe that explains his absence. Maybe he ran out on the dame."

"Not Arthur," I said. "He wouldn't do that. If he had decided to back out, he would have come back and told her so."

"I suppose so," Joe agreed.

"The day after I wrote you I flew to Vera Cruz," Aldrich put in. "I couldn't find a trace of him. He must have stayed with friends or in some little dump of an inn, because he hadn't been at any of the hotels."

"Did you go to the police?" I asked.

"They came to me. Not there. Here."

"Madero?" Joe wanted to know.

Aldrich nodded. "He's been here twice."

"Did you show him the letter?" Joe turned, faced us.

"Of course not. Should I?"

"No," Joe said. "Not until we find out what they want with Arthur. Any idea, Johnny?"

"Not the vaguest—unless—"

"Unless what?" I asked.

"Unless he's done something to displease the boys in the palace. What do you think, Joe?"

"It's something serious or Madero would tell me," Joe replied. "He trusts me—always has. But I can't pry one hint out of him about this. It isn't murder, because no one who means anything has been knocked off recently. I looked into that. And it has nothing to do with the Bureau of Anthropology. Even the new chief at Guadalajara has nothing but praise for him."

I took Arthur's last letter from my pocket and tossed it to Joe. "Maybe the answer is there."

He read it, gave it to Aldrich. "See what you make of it, Johnny."

Presently Aldrich looked up. "What makes you think the answer is here, Mitch?"

I told him about the night my room was searched. "Whoever did it, read the letter."

"It doesn't make sense to me." Aldrich knocked his pipe on the edge of the wastebasket, stuffed more tobacco in the bowl.

"He was on the trail of something," Joe said. "I suppose the thing to do is find out what."

"That's a big order." Aldrich sighed. I thought he looked tired, suddenly.

Joe stood up, tossed his half-finished cigarette out the window. "This is getting us nowhere. I've work to do, anyway. Have to see Comacho. I'll nose around this afternoon. Call you around six, Mitch. We'll have dinner." He grinned and I felt better. It meant a great deal to have someone like Joe at your elbow when you needed him. He was so capable and dependable and he didn't let things stampede him. I knew if there was any way to get to the bottom of Arthur's disappearance, Joe would find it.

"Think I should see Madero?" I asked.

"You'll see him soon enough. He's probably on your tail right now." Joe smiled again and was gone.

"There goes a fine fellow," Aldrich said.

"A swell one," I said. "Where shall I start, John?"

"You might talk to Ruiz. He's at the Regis. It won't do any good because I talked to him and Joe talked to him. But he's Arthur's friend and it might cheer you up. And you can go out to the house Arthur leased. You know where it is?"

"The Street of the Crying Woman," I said.

He nodded. "His things are there and you'd better go through them. I haven't done that. Didn't feel I should. Sort of intruding."

"Intruding, hell!" I said. "Thanks, John."

"I haven't done anything."

"Well, you tried. That's a lot." We shook hands.

"You better look up the girl," he added. "You'll find her at the El Toro."

"I'll do that," I said, and left him.

I went downstairs feeling fairly cheerful. Everything was going to be all right, I was sure of that. Seeing Joe and John Aldrich gave me a fine hopeful sense. But when I reached the street I didn't feel hopeful any more. A man was coming along, carrying a coffin on his shoulder. That made me think of death.

Chapter Four



JUAN RUIZ told me nothing of value. But it was good seeing someone who had been close to Arthur, someone who had lived with him for a long time, who could tell me little things about him. That brought my brother very close.

Ruiz was a slim, small man with tiny feet and white skin. His black mustache was like a pencil mark under his pointed nose. His smile was all teeth, and he spoke English with no trace of an accent.

We sat in his room on the seventh floor of the Regis and talked about Arthur for a while. The room looked out on Juarez, and even with the window closed you could hear the steady clamor of automobile horns. Ruiz seemed not to notice the noise. Whether he was used to it, or whether he had something more important to worry over, I couldn't tell. It occurred to me he was jumpy and distraught.

I showed him Arthur's last letter, but he could shed no light on what it was Arthur hoped would bring him a fortune. His explanation was a shrug. "You know your brother," he said. "Full of plans—schemes." He smiled faintly. "Like all of us, I suppose. I don't think this"—he indicated the letter—"is of any consequence."

I spoke of the dancer, Dorothy Allen. He frowned. "I've met her."

"Did you know they were to be married?"

He shook his head, and there was a hurt surprise in his eyes. "Arthur didn't tell me."

"He didn't tell me, either," I said, and got up to go.

"Anything I can do—" Ruiz shook my hand. "Anything! You see, I'm very fond of your brother."

"Thanks," I said.

I caught a bus outside the hotel. It was jammed, and I had to stand and try to keep my feet as the driver sent the vehicle roaring along the street as though his job depended on breaking all records for the run. A woman in front of me had a pig in her lap, and the pig was asleep. I was the only one on the bus who seemed at all nervous as we swooped around corners and did our best to remove fenders from other machines. I was glad to get off at Puente de Alvarado, and I walked the remaining two blocks.

Santa Maria was a familiar street. I had always loved the legend that made people forget its real name and call it the Street of the Crying Woman. The ghost of Doña Marina—La Malinche—Cortez' mistress, roaming the narrow way, weeping, always weeping—come back from the other world to do penance because she had betrayed her people. La Calle de La Llorana. A lovely name.

The house was typical of the Mexican middle class, a wall facing the street, a door opening into a passageway that led to the patio. It was floridly furnished, and there were two awful pictures of cherubs in the living-room, and a plaster saint in a niche in the corner. A man and woman, more Spanish than Indian, let me in; and when they found out who I was, they started chattering like blackbirds, fluttering around me, offering me *pan dulce* and aguardiente, calling me the poor little one, which was, on the face of it, ridiculous, for I towered over them both. The woman was called Dolores. Her husband said he was Pablo Guzman, a man of great talent on the trumpet.

After half an hour with them I formed the opinion that Arthur's judgment of servants was bad. I didn't like them; I didn't trust them. It seemed to me—even when I was alone in his bedroom—that they were close by, watching and spying. Yet I couldn't blame them for that. After all, they were in charge of the place.

My search of the house told me absolutely nothing. His clothes were there; his books were there; his papers were there—but there was no clue to his whereabouts. On the dresser top were three pictures. One was of Father and Mother sitting in a carriage and smiling. It was the last picture taken of them, I remembered. Another was a snapshot of myself, taken at Columbia. The third, in a silver frame, was of a girl in a languorous pose with her pale hair cascading back and a froth of chiffon across her breast. *"For my darling, from Dorothy,"* she had written across one corner. So that was Dorothy! There was no denying her beauty. If she was anything like her photograph, one couldn't blame Arthur for loving her. Fear tugged at my heart. Where was he? What had happened to him? My worry drove me from the room and from the house.

I walked east on Puente de Alvarado, feeling helpless and useless. There must be something I could do to find him. Somewhere in this sprawling city there must be someone who could give me a clue. For all the good I was doing, I might as well have stayed at the Academy. At least, I was earning money there.

I reached the Zocalo, and crossing it, remembered that when I was little there were trees growing in the square, but there weren't any now. I crossed to the palace, went past a knot of soldiers and into a court. There were stairs in front of me, so I climbed them and leaned on the rail looking at the Rivera mural.

A soft voice intruded: "Perhaps I could explain the mural?"

At my elbow was a dapper little man with eager brown eyes. He had the high cheek-bones and the brown skin of the Indian. His straight black hair was plastered neatly back. In his hand was a pearl gray hat. His suit was of

green gabardine; his tie was green; and out of his breast pocket peeked a green handkerchief. You could see your face in his tan shoes.

"I understand it perfectly," I said irritably.

"Perhaps you mistook me for a guide?"

"Aren't you?"

"A government employee, yes. A guide, no. We must watch the mural closely. Vandals." He pointed to a spot low down to the left where the figure of a priest was blurred. "Acid. A fanatic tried to destroy Mr. Rivera's work."

"So they deprive you of the siesta," I said.

"There is no siesta for us who work for the Government now." He smiled. "The new order." His shrug was expressive. "So you understand this?" He embraced the picture with a gesture.

"It is history."

"Not all of it." The little man nodded toward the top of the left panel. "Mr. Rivera theorized a bit there. Are you, by chance, a student?"

"Something like that," I said.

"You live here?"

"At the moment. A fine country."

"It will be greater, some day. At the moment we are a little confused, I think. We move forward, then back a bit. You have read much about us?"

"A good deal."

"We have had noble men—Hidalgo, Juarez." He hesitated; then he added another name—"Zapata—Emiliano Zapata."

The mention of that name let down the bars. I smiled at him, and in a moment we were deep in a discussion of Mexican politics, and now we used his language. At first I was rusty, for the Spanish I had taught at the Academy was more Castilian than Mexican. Presently he put on his hat and said he must go.

"You trust me with the mural, then?"

"Oh, yes."

"I hope to see you again," I said.

"Oh, you will." He beamed at me. "You most certainly will. Good day, sir." And with that he went rapidly down the stairs and disappeared. It occurred to me then that I had forgotten to ask his name. . . .

From the hotel I called Joe, but he was out. Then I called Aldrich. He had nothing to report. So I lay down on the long, low bed, and then I realized how tired I was. The altitude always did that to me the first few days. I closed my eyes.

The telephone-bell awakened me. I glanced at my watch, saw it was five. Joe was on the other end of the wire.

"Meet me at my place in an hour or so," Joe said.

"Anything new?"

"I don't know yet. I'm going to see someone; then I'll know."

"All right," I said, trying to keep excitement down. "In an hour."

I lay back, feeling hopeful. I wondered who Joe was going to see, and why. Maybe the woman Dorothy.

Presently I took a shower and changed my clothes. It was after six when I reach Joe's apartment-house, a new one back of the Fronton. He lived one flight up. I climbed the stairs, put my finger on the button, and heard the bell ringing inside. But no one answered it. So I tried the door. It was open.

I turned the knob and stepped inside.

Then I knew why Joe hadn't answered the bell. He couldn't. He was dead. He was lying face down on the couch near the window that looked out on the street, and there was a knife in his back.

A wave of grief and horror engulfed me; and Joe's death wasn't the only reason for it. The hilt of that knife was a magnet that drew me closer and closer to the couch where the body lay.

There was no mistaking that knife, for the handle was covered with silver pesos, crudely hammered out and fitted together. I had made the knife for my brother fifteen years before, and it was the sort of a weapon only a boy who had reveled in H. Rider Haggard, whose great hero was *Allan Quatermain,* would have conceived. The blade was a thin piece of obsidian I had found near the Temple of Quetzalcoatl—a bit of stone which Arthur had said had been a sacrificial knife centuries ago. I had made the hilt of silver dollars, and had fitted it on the stone shaft. If you twisted it a certain way, the blade and the hilt parted, and in the hole inside I had carefully engraved Arthur's name. At the time that had seemed highly appealing to me—like a secret passageway or a secret drawer in an old desk. . . .

"It can't be," I found my mind saying. "It can't be. It can't be."

But it was. I knew it only too well when I heard a footstep behind me. I swung around.

Facing me was the little man in green.

"I told you I would see you again," he said. "You see, I am José Manuel Madero."

Chapter Five



HERE was José Manuel Madero leaning against the door looking at me, his brown face expressionless, and there on the couch was Joe's body, and there was the knife I had made from a handful of pesos and a needle-sharp piece of stone. Night was coming down slowly and softly and now and then a few drops of rain fell.

"I didn't kill him," I said.

"Of course not," José Manuel Madero said. "Of course you didn't kill him."

I had to talk to keep from thinking. I had to find words and put them together into sentences, though I knew what I was saying was stupid.

"The door was unlocked and I walked in," I said. "He asked me to have dinner with him—so I came and rang the bell and then I came in and found him."

The little detective moved away from the door, crossed the room and stood looking down at the body. "Curious. The knife. A curious weapon."

I could have told him I had made the knife. I didn't.

"So crude," Madero said.

"Yes," I said.

I remembered standing at the work-bench hammering away at the silver disks, trying to fit them together. I remembered finding the sliver of stone in a pile of rubble in the shadow of the pyramid at Teotihuacán. I remembered Arthur's pleased smile when I gave him the knife.

"Almost the work of a child," Madero said. He touched Joe's cheek with the fingers of his right hand and the gesture was so gentle it was almost a caress. Then he took a gold cigarette-case from his pocket and held it out. I took a cigarette and lit it, trying to hold my hand steady.

"Sit down, please," Madero said.

I sat. But the chair faced the couch and I didn't want to look at the couch. I moved the chair around.

"Why was he murdered?" Madero asked.

I shook my head. "I don't know."

"Death needs a reason, Dr. Drake."

"I don't know," I repeated.

"Where is your brother, Dr. Drake?"

"That's why I'm here," I said. "I'm looking for him."

"And he was helping you?" He indicated Joe's body.

"Yes."

Madero wasn't looking at me. He was staring at the window. It was dark outside now and you couldn't see the Monument to the Revolution any more. "Mr. Briggs called me shortly after five and asked me to come here. He said he thought he knew where your brother was."

I pulled smoke into my lungs. Behind me was Joe's body and the knife I had given Arthur was in Joe's back. I didn't say anything.

"You know of course I am deeply interested in finding your brother."

"Joe said—" The name choked me; I had to pull the rest of the sentence out: "—you were. He said he didn't know why."

"He didn't," Madero said.

"Why do you want Arthur?"

He ignored the question. "Do you think your brother murdered Mr. Briggs?"

"No," I cried. "No. I don't think that."

"The knife—have you seen it before?"

"No."

"I wondered," he said softly. "When I entered this room you were staring at the knife."

"I was staring at Joe," I said. "I was trying to make myself believe it hadn't happened."

"Tell me everything you know, Dr. Drake."

The cigarette was burning my fingers. I got up and went over to the table and put the butt in an ash-tray. Standing by the table I couldn't see the couch and I couldn't see Madero. I said: "I haven't heard from my brother since last October. Then John Aldrich wrote me and wanted to know where he was. I wrote to Aldrich and to Joe to try and find Arthur. They couldn't. There was some research I wanted to do here and I was worried about Arthur, so I came down. That's all I know."

"That isn't much."

"No. It isn't much."

"You talked to Mr. Briggs tonight?"

"At five. He called and said to meet him here."

"Is that all he said?"

"He said he was going to see someone."

"He didn't say who?"

"Perhaps he meant you."

"He didn't mean me," Madero said.

"Who, then?"

"Your brother, perhaps."

I swung around. "Arthur didn't kill him. Arthur and I felt the same way about Joe. No. Arthur wasn't here."

"How do you know?"

"I don't *know*." My voice was loud, strident. It didn't seem to come from my throat at all. I stared across the room at the little man in green, at the mask of impassivity that was his face and then I remembered what Joe had said about him, how he dressed like a peon and sat against a wall knitting. "What has Arthur done?" I asked. "You can tell me that."

"No," Madero said. "Not now."

"But he didn't do this. I tell you he didn't do this."

"You may go," Madero said. "You are upset now. Tomorrow morning we will talk again."

"All right," I said. "I'm at the Ontasco Hotel."

"Yes," Madero said. "Good night."

"Good night," I said and went out. Two blocks away there was a store and a sign on the store said there were telephones inside. I went in and called Aldrich's office but there was no one in. Then I looked through the book and found his name and called his apartment.

"Joe's dead," I told him when he came to the phone. I felt numb and cold. "Joe's been murdered."

"Oh, my God!" Aldrich said.

"Madero's there now. He thinks Arthur is mixed up in it."

"That's ridiculous."

"Joe was killed with Arthur's knife," I said.

"No, no." Aldrich seemed to be trying to convince himself it wasn't true.

"Yes."

"Does Madero know it was Arthur's knife?"

"No. I didn't tell him. I told him as little as possible."

"How little was that?"

I repeated the story I had given Madero. I could hear the attorney take a deep breath. "Don't say anything more than you have to," he counseled. "If Arthur is in it, we've got to help him."

"I know it."

"You don't think—"

"No, I don't think," I said. "I don't care what Arthur has done."

"Neither do I," Aldrich said. "Do as little talking as possible. Keep out of Madero's way if you can. He'll be in to see me, probably. I'll tell him just what you did. Now you get something to eat and go to bed."

"I'm going to see the girl first," I said.

"All right. But be careful. They'll have men watching you."

"I'll be careful," I said.

I couldn't eat. I went into Henry's and looked at the bill-of-fare but the thought of food made me ill. So I had a cocktail and went outside. There was a man looking at lottery tickets in a window a few doors away and when I started toward Juarez he followed. I turned east and a couple of blocks away I saw a taxi stalling along beside me so I got in and told the driver to take me to the hotel. It was still raining a little but it was a warm rain.

I told the clerk to call me at seven-thirty, got my key and took the old elevator upstairs. But I didn't stay in my room. I turned on the light, went out again and walked down. In the lobby the man who had followed me was sitting on the couch reading a paper. I went back past the elevator and through a door into a passageway and down the passageway to another door that let me into an alley. Then I walked rapidly south for two blocks, took a west bound bus and got off at San Juan de Letran. Half a block up I stopped and bought some cigarettes and made sure I had lost my shadow. Then I cut over to Aranda and went along it until I found the El Toro. There was a neon sign over the entrance showing a bull chasing a matador.

The orchestra members had on Charro costumes and were playing the "Indian Love Call," giving it a Mexican flavor. It wasn't good. A waiter who looked like Carranza wanted to give me a table in the middle of the small, crowded room, but I ignored him, found an empty booth in the corner and sat down.

"Wheesky?" the waiter asked. "I used to work in Detroit for Meester Ford. How do you like Mexico City, huh? You want a girl?"

"No," I said. "Beer."

"Okeh," the waiter said. "Beer. Okeh." He bounced away.

The place was nearly filled, and most of the people were tourists and you could see they were trying desperately to have fun. It reminded me of all the pseudo-Mexican places in New York. I took a piece of paper from my pocket and wrote a note to Dorothy Allen and when the waiter came with the beer I put the note in his hand and put a fifty-centavo piece on top of it.

"Give this to Miss Allen," I told him in Spanish. He went away. A little later I saw him beckoning from the door that led into the back, so I got up and crossed the room and went through the door and down a hall that smelled of cheap perfume and onions.

"In there." The waiter pointed to another door. "She says to go in."

IT was a tiny room with a couch, a chair and a dressing-table in it. She was standing by the dressing-table, tall and slim and lovely. She wasn't wearing much. Both her hands went out to me; as I took them I tried not to look at her too hard because I didn't want to embarrass her. Then I remembered that dancers were supposed to show their bodies, so I tried to be matter-of-fact about it.

"So you're Mitchell." Her voice was low and pleasantly husky. I saw that her eyes were topaz and very large.

"Yes," I said.

"You don't look like Art at all. Yes, you do. The mouth is the same when you smile." She sat down and put a little frown between her eyes. "I'm scared stiff, Mitchell."

"So am I," I said.

"I love him very much," Dorothy Allen said. "What's happened to him, Mitchell?"

"I don't know."

"We've got to find him. I can't stand it much longer. I'm glad you're here. It makes me feel better that you're here. I didn't know what the hell to do, really I didn't."

"I suppose not," I said and tried to smile.

"But it's better now you're here." She smiled back. I saw how long her lashes were.

"No, it's not," I said. "It's much worse."

The smile went away. "Something's happened to him?"

"Not to him. To Joe Briggs."

"Who?"

"A friend of Arthur's and mine. A newspaper-man."

She put her hand over her mouth.

"He was murdered tonight," I said.

Her hand stifled a cry.

"And I'm afraid the police think Arthur had something to do with it."

"He couldn't! Oh, he couldn't!"

"I know he couldn't. But that's what they think."

"Oh, my God!" Dorothy Allen said. She put her blonde head on her arms and began to cry.

"Don't, please." I got up and stood by her awkwardly —not knowing what to do. "Please, Miss Allen. Don't."

"All right." She sat up and took a deep breath. "Sorry. Tell me about it."

I told her. Only I didn't tell her about the knife. I knew Madero would find her eventually and I didn't want her to know that the knife was the one I had made for my brother. I knew he would pry it out of her.

"You think the murder has something to do with Arthur?"

I nodded. "It seems so."

"Would it help if I talked to them?"

"You wait," I said. "They don't know about you yet. Only Aldrich and Ruiz know about you."

She pushed her hair back. It made me think of the piles of corn you see at the edge of the *mitlas* in the autumn. "It's my fault. I should have married him last summer. I was a fool. An awful fool."

"No," I said.

"But I was. I said to wait. He wanted to get married then. He didn't have much money and I had this job and I have to send money home, so I wouldn't. They don't want married women here. And I wouldn't let him tell anyone about us."

"He didn't even tell me."

"I know he didn't. He promised not to tell anyone. He always keeps his promises. What are we going to do, Mitchell?"

I wished I knew the answer to that question. I didn't. I was floundering around without the slightest idea what to do or where to go. I didn't know even why I was in Dorothy Allen's dressing room. Only, seeing the girl Arthur loved made me feel a little closer to him. "Why did he go to Vera Cruz?"

"He said on business."

"Did he say what business?"

She shook her head.

"After he quit the bureau did you know what he planned to do?"

Again she shook her head. "He was—well, mysterious."

"Did he say anything about making a lot of money?"

"Yes."

"But he didn't say how he was going to make it?"

"No."

"I've got to have something to work on," I said. "Some place to begin. I've got to find out where he is and who killed Joe. And I don't know how to go about it."

She made a gesture of helplessness, turned and sat looking in the mirror for a moment, then mechanically began putting on makeup. Her back was fine and straight and very white and her shoulders sloped a little. There was a tiny mole on her right shoulder blade. I liked the way her hair lay on her neck. She frowned at her image.

"There was something about a book," she said. "An old book."

I waited, watching her. It seemed to me as though she was part of my family, as though I was sitting in the same room with Arthur's wife.

"It was in Guadalajara," Dorothy Allen said. "That's where I met him. In the spring I met him and he told me about an old book. I was dancing in a club there and he used to come in at night and I would sit at his table when I wasn't working. I didn't know him very well then and I asked what he was doing and he said he was hunting for an old book."

"What book?"

"He didn't say. I thought it was a joke. Later he said he found the book and that it was going to be very valuable."

"Try and remember more," I said. It was nice sitting there watching her put on her makeup, watching the tiny movements of the muscles in her shoulders. The perfume she used made me think of my mother's garden. There was a bed of pinks in the garden and in the spring the air was heavy with the spicy smell of them.

"Once he said something about a map," Dorothy Allen said, half turning. There was mascara on her eyelashes now and they looked longer than ever. "Did he ever write you anything about a book or a map?"

"No," I said. "He wrote me about making a lot of money out of something, but that's all."

"Maybe it was the book. Sometimes old books are worth a lot, aren't they?"

"Sometimes. It depends on what they are."

"I should have asked him. Only you don't ask Arthur things. You wait for him to tell you."

That was true enough, I knew. Arthur had always been reticent about his work and his plans. When he got ready to tell you, he lost his reticence. It did no good to ask him. I wondered if the book had any significance. It seemed improbable. In the first place, Arthur knew little about books, modern or ancient. In the second, the sort of old books one found in Mexico were, as a rule, valuable only to scholars. And maps? How could one make a fortune from a map? Probably she had misunderstood the enthusiasm of an archeologist. Values to them were relative. An old rock with carvings on it might seem priceless. . . .

A knock interrupted my musing. A voice told Miss Allen they were ready for her. I stood up.

"Good night," I said.

"Don't go, Mitchell."

"But you have to work."

"You get a table. I'll come and sit with you when I finish my number."

I SAID that would be fine, and went back into the café. The waiter smiled widely. The fact that I knew Miss Allen seemed to impress him. I ordered another beer and drank it slowly, thankful she had asked me to stay. I didn't want to go back to the room, for I knew that I wouldn't sleep. There were too many things to think about. Mostly there was Joe Briggs and I kept seeing him lying on the couch with the knife I had made in his back and I felt very much to blame for his death. If I hadn't written to him—but there was no use going back. I had written and he had been drawn into this case and now he was dead. I knew Arthur hadn't killed him. I knew also that his death and Arthur's disappearance were rooted in the same mysterious mire.

Dorothy Allen came out on the floor in front of the orchestra and the music started. There was nothing ex-

traordinary about her dancing, but she was graceful and full of rhythm. Her feet tapped the polished floor as though it was a big drum and the soles of her little shoes were the sticks. I was watching her so closely that I didn't see Jacques Magnin until he was standing by my table. There was another man with him, a squat, fat-faced Mexican who smelled of perfume.

"I didn't expect to find you here," Magnin said with his curiously sweet smile.

"I didn't expect to find myself here." I motioned to a chair. "Sit down, won't you?"

"Thanks," Magnin accepted. "This is Raul Amaro, Dr. Drake."

The fat-faced Mexican bowed. "So pleased," he said. "Drake. You are the biographer, no?" He handled English easily though a little oddly. The words seemed to roll out of his mouth. I nodded and he flashed his teeth at me. "Your brother. He worked with me at Guadalajara."

"He mentioned you," I said.

My hand was pumped vigorously. Amaro sat down and kept on smiling. "Where is Arturo?"

"That's why I'm here," I said. "I don't know."

"No?"

"I'm trying to find him," I said.

"Strange." The smile went away. "Very strange. Ah, but he will appear."

The waiter's shadow fell on the table. We ordered drinks and he went away. "How small the world," Amaro said.

"I was thinking that," Magnin agreed. "Dr. Drake gives me letters. Then I meet him here. By the way, it wasn't necessary to use the letters. Mr. Amaro"—he gave his friend a warm smile—"I had met before in Lisbon. He has been very kind."

"It is nothing." Amaro dismissed the matter with a wave of his pudgy hand.

I thought of the book "Bloody Harvest" and wondered if Amaro had worked with Magnin in Lisbon. Then I wondered how Magnin would react to the news of the murder. I said, "You might as well tear up that note to Joe Briggs. Someone murdered him tonight."

Magnin pulled his eyebrows down and stared across the table at me.

"The journalist?" Amaro asked and there was real concern in his voice.

"Yes."

"Oh, no. A fine man. A fine honorable man. Murdered! It is impossible!"

"It isn't," I said. "It happened. It happened tonight." As I told them about it, I regretted speaking. Relating what had occurred made me feel much worse.

"Incredible," Amaro said when I fell silent. Magnin took a lump of sugar from the bowl and crumbled it in his long fingers, still not saying anything.

"But they will find his murderer." Amaro put a lot of certainty into his tone. "Madero will find him. A very clever man, Madero."

"So I've heard," I said. I didn't want to talk about it any more. I wanted to get up and go out and walk very fast in the rain but there was the waiter with another beer for me and the drinks for my companions and right behind him was Dorothy Allen. We stood up.

"I liked the dance," I said.

She smiled.

"Please sit down," I said.

"You know each other too?" Amaro gurgled. "But of course—Arturo. Of course! Good evening, Miss Allen."

She took the chair beside me. I told the waiter to bring her a drink and then introduced Magnin. I didn't like the way he looked at her body. His eyes seemed to have hunger in them. I thought of Penny Gage and wished I had told her aunt that Magnin was in Mexico. "I suppose you know that Miss Gage will be here in a few days," I said.

"What?" Magnin stopped staring at the dancer.

"They're driving down." I watched him and wondered how long he could hold his breath.

"When?"

"In a few days."

"They haven't started, then?"

"I don't think so."

His sigh had relief in it or so it seemed to me. He took his gaze from my face and studied his knuckles. Suddenly I found myself disliking the man intensely. I wanted to reach across the table and push his nose a bit farther to the left. I knew it didn't make sense. I should be grateful that he didn't want Penny following him, that he was through with her.

"I think they plan to leave in a couple of days," I said.

"It will be nice seeing them." Magnin gave his attention back to Miss Allen. But not for long. He finished his brandy, looked at his watch and got up. "I must be going, if you don't mind."

I stood up and Amaro stood up. "Good night," I said.

Magnin bowed. "Good night."

"I must go too," Amaro said. He picked up Miss Allen's hand and kissed it. I decided I didn't like him much either. I watched them go out and when I couldn't see them any more I felt relieved.

Miss Allen glanced at me oddly. "You upset him."

"Yes."

"Who is Miss Gage?"

I told her. I tried not to sound enthusiastic. I tried to make my interest purely academic. I wasn't successful.

"Are you in love with her?"

"Of course not," I said.

"Of course you aren't." She smiled impishly. "I've got to go back to work now. Will I see you tomorrow?"

"Yes."

"Where can I reach you?"

I told her. She patted my hand. "I'm glad you're here, Mitchell."

"I am too," I said. That wasn't true. I remembered that Joe Briggs was dead and I was sure he would still be alive if I had stayed away. "Good night, Miss Allen."

"Dorothy."

"Good night, Dorothy."

"Good night, Mitchell. Things may be better tomorrow."

"They can't be much worse." I watched her cross the room and thought again how lovely her body was. Then I paid the check and went outside. It had stopped raining and above the dark street I could see stars.

It was two when I reached the hotel. The lobby was deserted. I nodded to the night clerk and he nodded back and came around and followed me into the elevator and ran it up for me. It creaked dismally.

I was glad I had left the light burning, for the room didn't seem quite so lonely. I went in and shut the door and wished I was back in Mrs. Huntting's boarding-house. And I realized the reason I wanted to be back was Penny Gage. Well, she would be here soon. In a few days I would see her. I tried to take comfort from the thought. I remembered Magnin and how upset he had been and how he had hurried from the café. There had been something he wanted to do right away and I was pretty sure I knew what it was. I was sure he had hurried out to send a wire to Penny, a wire telling her to stay away from Mexico. Would it stop her? I doubted it. I sat on the bed and considered the matter for a while and realized I didn't want to stop Penny. Dorothy Allen's question rang in my ears—was I in love with her? Of course not, I had said. That wasn't the right answer. I tried to push her out of my thoughts. There was a murder to solve, a murder for which I was, in a measure, responsible. And there was Arthur. Yet here I sat worrying over a girl and my emotions regarding that girl. I saw Magnin's thin, sensitive face again. I remembered I had given him a letter to Joe Briggs. Was that significant? I put my head in my hands,

closed my eyes and tried to think clearly but clarity wouldn't come. There was only a whirling, roaring confusion. So I got up presently and opened my bag to get my pajamas. Then I knew someone had been in my room. Someone had gone through my things again—someone who hadn't been too careful about it.

Chapter Six

A BELLBOY who had spent two years driving a laundry truck around Brooklyn brought me a telegram at seven o'clock next morning:

CHANGED PLANS. FLYING DOWN. ARRIVE FIVE TOMORROW AFTERNOON.

So the wire read. It was signed *Molly Gage* and it had been sent the night before.

I told the boy to bring me the papers and some coffee, took a shower and shaved and wondered how Magnin would react to the sudden appearance of the Gage ménage. I didn't think he would like it. After a while the boy came back with the papers and a tray with two pots on it and I sat and drank my *café con leche* and read the accounts of Joe's murder. They told me little. He had been stabbed at about five-thirty; that's all the reporters seemed to know. My name wasn't mentioned. Neither was Arthur's. Madero had found the body, the papers said. They didn't say why the detective had gone to Joe's apartment. They just said he had discovered the body and was working on the case. There were some long stories about Joe's life and I was reading them when the phone bell interrupted. Aldrich's booming voice came over the wire. He wanted to know if I was all right. He wanted to know if anything new had happened.

"Madero came by last night," he said. "I told him damned little. A shrewd devil, that. Probably three jumps ahead of us already. . . . Did you see Miss Allen?"

I said I had. I repeated what she had said about the old book. I asked him if he could make anything out of it. The wire was silent for a time; then Aldrich said: "Old books, maps? Oh, no. Couldn't be."

"What?"

"Fairy-tales. Lost mines. Montezuma's treasure. No, no."

"Definitely no, no," I said.

"Worth a thought anyway. Next time you go through his things keep old books in mind, Mitchell. Come on over and have breakfast with me."

I said I couldn't—I was waiting to hear from Madero.

"Drop by later," Aldrich suggested. "And keep your chin up, boy."

"I will."

I finished my coffee and smoked a cigarette and thanked God I had John Aldrich to lean on. It was eight-thirty when the phone rang again and the boy at the desk said there was a gentleman to see me. I didn't ask who the gentleman was. I guessed it was José Manuel Madero and the guess was right. I heard the elevator creaking as it rose slowly skyward, heard the door clang shut, heard footsteps outside and a light rap. I told him to come in.

He closed the door and smiled. He wasn't in green today. His suit was blue and his tie was blue and his shirt was blue. He said, "Good morning!" in a voice as bright as his costume.

"Nice of you to come to me," I said. "I expected a trip to the police station."

"There is no need to visit the police station yet." His "yet" sounded ominous. He sat, carefully pulled up his trousers, opened his cigarette-case, flipped a cigarette out with his thumbnail and caught it in his mouth. He lit it and smiled at me. Then he started asking questions.

There may be more thorough detectives than Madero. I doubt it. His method was to start at the beginning and go on from there. There were questions about Father and Mother, about Arthur, about Joe Briggs and John Aldrich. He wanted Arthur's history and my history. But I held a few things back during that two-hour inquisition. There was a good reason—Arthur.

If I hadn't been so upset, I might have enjoyed my session with Madero. He was gentle and sympathetic. Every now and then he apologized for taking up so much of my time. I kept thinking that here was a man I could trust. Then I reminded myself that he represented the law and that for some unknown reason the law was deeply concerned with my brother. If Joe hadn't been murdered, I might have taken a chance, might have told him everything. Perhaps not. For there were a good many little things I would have overlooked because I didn't realize their importance.

Presently he shifted from the past to the present. Arthur's friends—who were they?

I shrugged. "John Aldrich," I said; "and the men he worked with at Guadalajara."

"I know them. Look, Dr. Drake. Come clean!" He sounded like a New York policeman.

"I've come clean," I said.

"Your brother—you are certain you haven't seen him?"

"I'm certain—all too certain."

"And you haven't heard from him since October?"

"No."

"You can't tell me why Mr. Briggs was killed?"

"I wish I could. You know that as well as I. I liked Joe Briggs. I feel partly responsible for his death. I asked him to help me find my brother—and he was murdered."

"Perhaps your brother does not wish to be found."

"That's ridiculous."

"Who knows!"

I leaned back against the bedstead, feeling futile and helpless and for the first time a little angry with him. I said: "While you're here, you might as well finish looking through my things."

"What do you mean, finish?" His eyes were almost large.

"Maybe your man overlooked something last night."

"So you went out last night?"

"You know I went out."

"Where?"

"Walking," I said. "I couldn't stand the room, so I walked."

"Of course."

"Go ahead." I pointed to my bags.

"There's no need, Dr. Drake. Thank you."

"For nothing," I said. "Now may I ask some questions?"

"Shoot!" He made the word sound like a train whistle. It was incongruous, that word, coming from him.

I asked questions until I felt like a quiz expert. Certainly I had an expert on my hands, an expert at giving evasive answers when he wanted to. He wouldn't tell me why he wanted Arthur. He wouldn't tell me if he had anything definite on Joe's murder. All he would say was Joe had been stabbed at five-thirty, that whoever had done it had worn gloves, that no one had seen the murderer enter the apartment house. He was good enough to explain his theory of how it happened: "Someone was waiting for Mr. Briggs in the apartment," Madero said. "Standing so that when the door opened and admitted Mr. Briggs, the murderer was concealed. Then he stepped out and stabbed Mr. Briggs in the back, and placed him on the couch."

"He?" I asked.

"Or she," Madero said. "A woman might have done it. I don't think Mr. Briggs knew who killed him."

"Any clues?"

He elevated his left shoulder. "When one wishes a murder kept secret, one leaves no trace."

"Except the knife," I said. "Have you traced that?" It was a question I had wanted to ask for a long time—but that I feared asking. If you knew the trick it was easy to

establish the ownership of that weapon—a half-twist to the left, a quarter-twist back; then the blade slid out of the handle.

"Not yet."

"It shouldn't be hard," I said.

"Perhaps not."

"Do you think the knife's owner killed Joe?" I didn't look at him.

"What do you think?"

"I don't know."

"Nor I." He stood up. He wasn't smiling now. His eyes had a far-away look in them, and I wondered if he was going home to his knitting. "You have been very kind," he said in Spanish. "Thank you."

"For nothing," I said. Not until he was gone, did it occur to me that he had seemed surprised when I mentioned the search of my things. Was it his man who had been in my room last night? If not—who, then? And why?

Chapter Seven

IF Arthur had been a tourist, I would have known where to look for him. I would have haunted the café in the House of the Blue Tiles, and the Wells Fargo office, a block east on Madero. That's where most visiting Americans got their mail. But Arthur wasn't a tourist. And he didn't get his mail care of Wells Fargo. I did. That's why I met the man with the angel face again.

After Madero's departure I went downstairs and caught a westbound bus to the Monument to the Revolution, then walked over to the Street of the Crying Woman. There was someone following me, but it didn't matter. Madero knew Arthur's address, and I guessed he had been through the house. I spent a couple of hours going over Arthur's belongings again, with no success. I even looked for old books. There were two or three around, but the only one I thought might be worth more than a dollar was one of the Elsie Dinsmore series that had belonged to Mother when she was a small child. I questioned Dolores and Pablo Guzman for half an hour, but that helped not at all. The Señor had hired them. The Señor had showed them about the house and had given them instructions to watch the place. Then he had gone away. When had he employed them? November seventh, Pablo thought it was. Then they had not lived in the house with Señor Drake? No. The day they entered his employ he had departed.

I gave up. I told them to report to me if anyone wished to enter the house, then headed back for the hotel. On the way I stopped in at the Wells Fargo office for my mail.

As usual, there was a line in front of the mail window. It took me ten minutes to reach the cage, and I discovered I could have saved the time. No one had written. I was on my way out when I almost collided with the angel-faced young man who called himself Paul.

"My God," Paul said. "Where did you drop from?"

"The same place you did."

"When I've had words with the fellow yonder, I'll buy you a drink," Paul said. "Hang on."

He came back with a couple of letters in his hand, but he didn't read them. He put them in his pocket, took my arm and propelled me into the sunshine. "This is a hell of a place," he observed. "How long you been here?"

"Since yesterday. And you?"

"Three or four days. Too long. Let's take a cab."

"Where?"

"The Nuevo Mundo, Mister." I was to learn that was one of his favorite expressions, that "*Mister.*"

"Not on this street, then. It runs the wrong way."

"They all run the wrong way for me," Paul grumbled.

We went north a block, and I hailed a cab and bargained, in Spanish, with the driver. Paul looked impressed when the driver said it would cost us seventy-five centavos.

"The thieves!" he complained. "They've been sticking me a peso fifty and up. What are you doing down here, Mister? Why aren't you riding herd on those dames?"

"Research."

"I know a lot better places for research. That school, for one."

"Not my type of research. And you?"

"I'm on a sort of diplomatic mission." He offered no explanation, and I didn't ask for one. I was beginning to suspect that my two meetings with him might not be due entirely to coincidence. We reached the Nuevo Mundo, Paul paid the driver and we crossed the sidewalk, entered the hotel and went to the taproom, where it was cool and dark, found a table and ordered beer.

"I don't know your name," I said.

"Brent. Paul Brent."

"Odd we should meet down here, isn't it?"

"That's life," Paul said. "What do you do in this town if you don't like night-clubs or hand-ball or movies or churches?"

"On Sundays there are bull-fights."

He made a face. "I saw one once in Tia Juana. That was enough." He drank half his beer. "What sort of research are you up to, Mister?"

I didn't look at him. I held my glass in both hands and stared at the amber liquid. No coincidence, I thought. Well, there was only one thing to do and that was find out what he wanted from me. I said: "I'm down here looking for my brother."

His gaze was on my face. I looked up and saw how cold his eyes were—almost the color of obsidian.

"What's happened to him?"

"I don't know. He's disappeared. I'm trying to find him."

"When did he come down?"

"He lives here." I told him a little about Arthur, and now I was watching his face. But all I could see in his expression was friendly concern.

"Damned funny, isn't it. How about the cops? Have you asked them to help?"

"No. There's no need. They're already looking for him."

"Oh," Paul said. "There's your answer. I wouldn't worry too much. If the cops were looking for me, I wouldn't be found, either. Even by my brother, Mister. Maybe he hates cops."

"I've another reason to worry," I said, still watching him closely. "I'm mixed up in a murder."

Paul whistled. "Here?"

"Yes. A friend was helping me. I went to see him last night. Someone had killed him."

"That one." Paul sat very straight. "I read about it this morning." He flicked his glass with his forefinger. "But they didn't mention you."

"No."

"Then get out of this town. That's what I'd do."

"No use."

"Want 'em to pin it on you?"

"They know I was there," I said. "There are little men following me around."

A startled look crossed his face. He glanced over his shoulder at the door.

"Outside, probably," I said. "Waiting."

He signaled to the waiter. "A double whisky. You better have one."

"I'll stick to beer."

"You look like such a shy guy, too," Paul said.

"You may have company now," I said.

"Me?"

"Yes. My little man will pass the word on that you were with me, and then they'll start following you around."

"That will be fine. It will keep me from getting lonesome." I thought he was lying. From the look in his eyes, I thought he minded very much.

"I hope it doesn't interfere with your diplomatic work," I said.

"I hope so too. Let's not worry about me. I haven't any brother, and I didn't walk in on a guy with a shiv in his back. Any women mixed up in this? And who knocked off your friend? Give me the works, Mister."

"I have."

"I wear long pants," Paul said. "I'm dry behind the ears. You tell me your brother stops writing to you, and you come down to look for him. So you get a newspaper guy to help you, and he is knocked off. I ask you! That isn't all. Who else is in on it?"

Who else? That was a question I couldn't answer. Dorothy Allen, John Aldrich, Ruiz, Amaro, Magnin? They might fit into the picture, but I didn't see how. I said: "I don't know."

He swallowed his drink, said: "Nuts."

"I really don't."

"And you don't know what your brother was up to?"

"No."

"Those aren't little men following you around," Paul said. "They are birds. They are waiting to cover you with leaves. Either that, or you're a liar."

"Maybe we're both liars," I said.

He laughed. "Where you staying?"

"The Ontasco."

"I'm here," Paul said. "If you need me."

We went upstairs and through the lobby. "So long," Paul said. "I'll look you up before I leave town."

"Do that," I said, and left him. . . .

That afternoon, while I waited for the plane, I tried very hard to find a place for Paul Brent in the murder picture. It couldn't be done. For that matter, there wasn't any picture. Just a blurred flat surface. At least, that's what I thought as I stood in the late afternoon sunshine and looked, now and then, toward the north. There was little wind, but what there was was dust-laden, for it came across the lake bed. I remembered when the lake had amounted to something, but that was a long time ago. Now it was nearly dry, and in time would be dryer. It seemed almost unbelievable that five centuries ago the water had been deep where I was now standing, and that on its surface the boats of the Aztecs moved from Texcoco to Tenochtitlan, on whose ruins the capital had risen.

Things began to happen around the airport. Men came out wheeling carts, and groups of people swarmed up to the fence. I saw the plane coming in, and felt breathless and young. It circled once, then slid down and taxied across, sun flashing from its silver wings and its whirling propellers. Then it stopped, and men pushed a platform up to the door and opened the door, and a moment later I saw Penny. Her aunt was right behind.

They came toward me. Penny was looking around as though searching for someone, and then the good feeling went away. I had forgotten Magnin. . . . Well, he wasn't here; I was certain of that. She'd have to wait to see him.

Molly Gage smiled, held out her hand. She greeted me as though she hadn't seen me for years. That's how distance affects you. It makes you forget time.

"Hello, Mitchell," she said gayly.

I tried to be cheerful, "I haven't changed," I said. "You two haven't changed, either."

"Good of you to meet us, Dr. Drake," Penny said. As we shook hands, she kept looking past me; and then her gaze met mine, and I knew she wanted to know about him.

I wanted sympathy. I wanted to pour my troubles out to Molly Gage, but I didn't. I said nothing about Joe or about Arthur on the drive into the city. I pointed out churches. I told them the history of the streets along which we passed. Penny's eyes were bright with excitement, and I tried to tell myself she was excited at seeing new places and new people. I knew better.

Not until they were settled in their suite at the hotel, however, did Penny have an opportunity to speak to me alone. I had left them there, promising to meet them at eight for dinner, and was waiting for the elevator when Penny came out of her room and hurried after me. She got into the elevator, and I could see she wanted to ask questions, and I could see also that she hated to ask them.

"I'm going to walk," Penny said. "Would you like to walk with me?"

"I'd be glad to."

It was dusk, and the lights were coming on. A cool wind had risen, and we walked fast along the street, not speaking at first, and I tried not to think of Magnin or Joe or my brother, tried only to take pleasure from the moment, from her presence at my side.

"It's nice, having you here," I said after a while.

"It's nice being here," Penny said. . . . "I want to telephone. Will you take me where there's a telephone?"

"There are phones in the hotel."

"I know it. I didn't want to call from there."

Across the boulevard there was a café. I led her through the stream of traffic to the other side, and we went in. A plump woman with a rose behind her ear pointed to a hallway when I asked where the telephone was, and Penny went down the hall. I could hear her giving Central the number in halting Spanish. When she came back a moment later, she seemed ready to cry.

"He's moved," she said. "They don't know where he moved to."

"That's too bad."

"I wired him last night we were coming," Penny said. "This morning he moved."

"Perhaps he didn't get the wire," I said. "Sometimes the service is bad."

"I've got to find him."

"We'll find him," I said. "Don't worry about it." I could have told her about Magnin's reaction the night before, but I didn't. I could have told her that his sudden departure from the place he was living was the result of her wire, but I didn't. I knew that would hurt her, and I didn't want to hurt her.

"You'd better go back to your aunt. She'll worry about you."

"Have you seen him?"

"No," I said.

We walked back to the hotel in silence. In the lobby as we waited for an elevator I saw Paul Brent lounging near the desk. He saluted, and I could see he was examining Penny with interest. I didn't blame him.

"Eight o'clock," I said, when the elevator doors opened. "And don't worry too much. I might be able to find him for you."

"Really?" Her face brightened. "Where?"

"A couple of places."

"Would you take me?"

"We'll see," I said. The doors closed, and she was gone.

Brent spoke as I passed him. "Fast work, Mister."

I realized what he meant. He thought Penny was someone I had picked up. "She's an old friend," I said coldly.

Brent grinned.

Chapter Eight



I WAS a fool; I know it now. Yet in the end it was my stupidity and blundering that made possible the solution of the case Madero called the "Affair of the Street of the Crying Woman." As I see it now, I was one of the pieces on José Manuel Madero's chessboard. "A pawn," I told him the night we saw it to its bloody end.

"Pawns are important," Madero said. "But I'd say you were a knight. Your jumps were cockeyed."

I blinked at the word. "One ahead—two to the right or left," Madero said.

Well, knight or pawn, the moves I made were stupid enough. I suppose it was because I had spent much of my life ignoring the present. I knew about violence—one who studies history can't escape it; but I knew about it second-hand.

I wasn't the only stupid one. Magnin, Aldrich, Joe Briggs, Juan Ruiz, Raul Amaro, Penny Gage—all of them did stupid things. Certainly, Molly Gage wasn't brilliant when, after dinner, she put Penny into my keeping and told us not to be too late. Penny had arranged it before I put in my appearance in the hotel dining-room.

"Sorry I can't go with you," Molly Gage said. "Do they often have fiestas at night?"

"Not very often."

"This is a special one," Penny put in. "They only have it the night Juan Diego saw the Virgin of Guadalupe."

"That's a lovely myth, isn't it?" Molly Gage said.

"I've always liked it." I gave Penny what I hoped was a reproving look.

"I'm sorry," she said when dinner was over and her aunt was safe in the elevator. "It was the only thing I could think of."

"When did Juan Diego see the Virgin?"

"In January," Penny said. "In 1531."

"This is February. And it wasn't at night."

"Stop being a professor."

I forgot for the moment Penny's reason for tampering with miracles. She wasn't one of my students. She was a lovely young woman full of warmth and laughter. She brought me back to earth with a question. "Do you really think you can find him?"

"I can't promise. I can try."

"You saw him. You said you didn't, but I think you did." There were tiny smile wrinkles at the corners of her eyes.

"No."

"You're blushing. You shouldn't lie. You can't do it properly. Why don't you want me to see him?"

"I don't—well, I don't approve of him."

"Neither does Aunt Molly."

"You're young," I said.

"So is he."

"All right," I said. "He's young and he's fascinating and he has suffered. Suppose we let it go at that."

"Why don't you like him? Is it because—" She didn't finish the sentence; her glance had mischief in it. "I think it is," she added.

"What?"

"Never mind. Come on." She linked arms and we went through the lobby. I left Penny in a big chair and ferreted out a telephone. I found Amaro's name in the book and called him, but he wasn't in. I called Ruiz on the chance he might have seen Amaro, but he was out too. I decided they might be at El Toro. If not, it didn't matter. . . .

It was ten o'clock when we left the hotel. I said it was too early to start searching. It wasn't true; I wanted to be alone with her awhile longer. We found a cab and I told the driver to take us out the Boulevard and through Chapultepec park. I glanced back two or three times. No one seemed to be following us, but it was hard to tell because of the traffic. I wondered if Madero had decided to take me off the list.

The night was warm and clear; I told the driver to wait, and we got out and walked along a path through the trees, and above us we could see the half-moon riding on its back.

"Some night we'll go to Xochomilco," I said. "Some night when the moon is full."

Penny looked up at me. "That will be fine." There was a curious note in her voice.

"I haven't been there for years," I said. "A long time ago I used to go out there at night and get a boat and lie back looking at the moon."

"Alone?"

"Not always."

She tilted her head and smiled. The moonlight put a shadow of a branch across her lips, and it seemed to me there was the reflection of stars in her eyes. "It's odd, isn't it," she went on, "how you feel about people. How you take them and make them part of your lives. Did you know I made you part of my life?"

"Along with Magnin."

"No, no. I didn't know it either, until there was no more school and you had gone."

I laughed. "You'll be telling me next you came down here to see me."

"Don't make fun of me."

"I won't, child."

"I'm not a child."

"Come on," I said, and led the way back to the cab.

MAGNIN wasn't at the El Toro. Nor was Ruiz nor Amaro. Dorothy Allen was dancing; when she finished, she came over to our table. "Hello, Mitchell." She sat down beside me and put her hand on my shoulder. I introduced them. Penny looked at Dorothy, and then she looked at me.

"Mitchell's my new brother," Dorothy said. The imp was back in her eyes.

"That's nice," Penny said.

I realized I hadn't told Penny about Dorothy and Arthur, but this didn't seem a propitious time. I wondered if Penny would understand the dancer's possessive attitude. I did. Arthur was my brother, and she loved Arthur, and it was quite natural for her to think of me as part of her family. Nevertheless I felt a little uncomfortable, so I asked if Magnin or Amaro had been in.

"The men who were here last night?"

Penny flashed a look at me. She nodded, but she didn't speak.

"Yes," I said.

"No. Are you going to buy me a drink?" Dorothy asked. I beckoned to the waiter.

"Brandy," Dorothy ordered.

"I'll have a brandy too," Penny said.

I thought about Penny's aunt, and I wanted to say I thought one brandy in an evening was enough, but decided not to. "Three," I told the waiter.

When the brandy came, we drank it and talked about Mexico, and then Dorothy left us to change her costume. "She has a lovely figure," Penny observed. "Don't you think so?"

"Yes."

"She thinks so too."

"She's a dancer."

"I forgot you were her new brother."

"I'm not. Not yet."

"Shall I write home and tell the class about your new sister?"

I was glad the waiter came up at that moment. "Another brandy," Penny said.

"You've had enough."

"I'm twenty-one. I drink brandy at home."

"Not three in a row." I frowned at her. "Now look here. Your aunt—"

"Thinks Dr. Drake is perfect," Penny said. "Shall I tell Aunt Molly about your new sister?"

"I don't care what you tell her."

"I'm teasing." She was smiling now. "Because you lied to me. Why did you lie to me?"

"I didn't intend to."

"How was he?"

"All right. I saw him only for a moment. Just to nod."

"I don't believe that either," Penny said. "I'll be good. But I like to see you blush. You don't seem old at all when you blush. I really think it's nice you have a new sister."

I gave the waiter a five-peso note. "Nothing more." I stood up. "It's time we were home."

"Aren't you going to tell her good-by?"

"I'll see her later."

"I'm not surprised."

"Let's go," I said. I must have spoken angrily, because Penny stopped smiling and followed me out. The street was deserted; I took her arm and we walked toward Juarez, and we were half a block away from El Toro when she spoke. "I'm sorry. Don't be angry."

"I'm not," I said. I wasn't. I was suddenly depressed. For a little while I had pushed my troubles aside, had forgotten about Arthur and Joe. That's what her upturned face with the moonlight on it had done to me. That's what the touch of her hand had done to me.

"Let's walk." Penny's fingers curled themselves around my arm. We turned west on Juarez. Over Chapultepec heights the moon was riding. The wind was dry and cool.

It was early yet, not midnight; but the city was quiet. Changed, I thought. In the old days at this time it was noisy and lively, and it wasn't unusual to hear someone blazing away with a pistol. Even the Etruria hotel, where once the politicians spent their nights figuring out ways to loot the country, was quiet. I wondered if Ruiz was in bed. I wondered if Ruiz had any part in what had happened. No use wondering. I said; "Tomorrow I'll do it."

"What?" Her fingers were warm on my arm.

"Find him for you."

"Oh," Penny said.

"Amaro will know where he is."

"Yes," Penny said.

Again we were silent, walking close together along the almost deserted street. Perhaps it was the night, so peaceful it robbed one's senses of the feel of danger; perhaps it was the presence of Penny Gage; perhaps it was the burden of trouble on my mind. Anyway, I had no foreboding of what happened then. . . . They were on us suddenly. One moment we were alone, passing the statue of Charles IV, which the Mexican affectionately calls the Horse. The next, three men were on us.

"Run, Penny!" I yelled, and started lashing out with both fists. One man went down, and his hands grasped my leg. I kicked him and was free. Something hit my cheek, and I reeled away, then straightened and grappled with a stocky man. My fingers closed around his throat, and I shook him and tried to force him down. Something crashed against my skull. I heard a woman scream; I heard a shot, and then there was darkness all around me.

Chapter Nine

A VOICE said in Spanish: "He is not dead." I struggled up through the roaring darkness toward the voice, and for a minute I was a little boy again. Arthur and I were riding a burro along a rocky trail, and the burro shied at a bit of paper and I fell off. I said thickly: "I'm all right, Art."

"Mitchell!" said Penny's voice. "Oh, Mitchell!"

I remembered what had happened. I opened my eyes, and there was Penny bending over me, and beside her was Paul Brent. Near him half a dozen Mexicans smoked cigarettes unexcitedly.

"Come on, Mister," Paul said. "We've got to get out of here."

Penny was stroking my forehead, and I didn't want to get up. But Brent's voice was sharp: "Get up. We've got to beat it before the cops come."

They helped me to my feet, and I shook my head, and then I could see clearly. I could see the Horse, and a few faint stars and the moon.

"I thought you were killed," Penny said. She was holding my left arm with both hands.

"I thought so too," I said. "What happened?"

"They ran." Paul said dryly. "Come on, now."

There was a cab parked by the curb, and we climbed in and one of the Mexicans threw away his cigarette and got under the wheel. "Hotel Nuevo Mundo," Paul told him.

"Does it hurt awfully?" Penny asked.

"Not much," I said; but I let her hold my hand.

"It was a good thing I was following you," Paul observed. "Those boys seemed bent on mischief. But they didn't like firearms."

"I thought I heard a shot."

"That was me. I missed."

"What were you following us for?" Penny turned and stared at Brent.

"Dough," Paul said succinctly. "Here we are. How do you tell one of these babies to forget something?" He gave the driver five pesos. I spoke to the man in Spanish; he nodded, grinned and drove away.

"We'll have a drink." Paul led the way to the taproom. "You look like you need one, Professor."

I needed one all right. My head ached horribly, and I was still a bit confused. I sat down and put my hand over my eyes.

"Are you sure you're all right?" Penny's voice was like a cool cloth on my aching forehead.

"I'm fine."

"One of 'em laid a blackjack across your skull," Brent explained. "Don't you know any better? You get yourself mixed up in a murder and then you go wandering around the streets at midnight."

"Murder?" Penny's blue eyes were big. "You didn't—"

"No, I didn't," I said. "I saw no need to worry you."

"Who?"

"A friend. A newspaper-man." I explained about Arthur and about coming down to search for Arthur and about Joe being killed.

"Oh, Mitchell!" Again she used my first name. "I was so selfish. I bothered you with my own little worries." There was fear in her tone. "Those men—were they trying to kill you too?"

"They were trying to do something," Paul said. "They weren't playing."

She frowned at him. "Were you following Mitchell?"

"No. You." The drinks had come, and he paid for them and waved the waiter away. "I've been following you for quite a while."

"Oh! Then it was you—in Eastredge—" She left the sentence unfinished.

"It was me. I was hired to keep an eye on you."

Concern became anger. Her eyes flashed and she bit her underlip. Then she started to get up.

"Now look, my girl," Paul said. "You're not supposed to know about this. I told you because you would have guessed anyway. I couldn't be Johnny on the spot for no reason, could I? So don't go running to your aunt. That would get me fired—and you packed back home."

So he was a private detective. Remembering my awkward attempt to draw him out, I felt foolish. I should have known. Molly Gage was no one's fool; she had seen through the Mexican trip.

"You gave me a time tonight," Paul went on. "I almost lost you in the park. Your friend"—he nodded at me—"did. And he lost me too. He was tailing us when we hit the park and then we shook him. Which was too bad, in a way. We could have used him back there."

The angry look left Penny's face. She was puzzled now, puzzled and a little afraid. She stared at Brent and then she stared at me. I said: "It's all right. There's nothing to worry about."

"Not a thing," Paul said ironically. "What have you got that they want?"

I shrugged. "I'm completely in the dark."

"Maybe you are," Paul said. "I didn't believe you this afternoon but now I'm beginning to. Maybe I better start watching you too."

"Madero will take care of that."

"He didn't do such a good job of it tonight. Look, Mister. I'm supposed to be a detective. Give me the works."

I hesitated. Paul took a cardcase from his pocket, removed a card, put it in front of me. In the left-hand corner was his name. In the center, in heavy letters, was printed: "ARGOSY DETECTIVE AGENCY."

"Miss Gage," Paul went on, "asked the agency to put someone on the child's tail. I'm it."

"Did she say why?" Penny asked. She was blushing, confused.

"Brent nodded. "A guy. Now don't get sore. You can't blame her for wanting to keep an eye on you."

I looked at Penny and agreed with Paul Brent. I wanted to keep an eye on her too, only it seemed I wasn't the right person. Because of me, she had been in grave danger. And thinking of the midnight attack and the murder, I began to wonder if everyone who associated with me was destined for trouble.

"The works," Brent insisted. "Spill it, Mister."

SO I told him. I left nothing out; I went into my mind and found whatever seemed to have some bearing on the case—the letters from my brother and from Aldrich and from Joe and from Ruiz—Magnin's visit—Dorothy Allen—and the knife I had made, the knife that had robbed Joe Briggs of his life. Paul Brent sat there warming his glass in his hands and frowning at the table. Penny never took her eyes off my face and in them was a look of compassion that was warming and comforting.

She interrupted me once. She said: "You don't think that Jacques—" and then she stopped.

"I don't know," I said. "I don't know anything."

"Jacques?" Paul asked.

"Magnin."

"He's the guy that got me hired," Paul said. "The writer."

I nodded. Penny stopped looking at me. She was examining her folded hands.

"Where's he now?" Paul asked.

I said I didn't know. I said we had gone to the El Toro looking for him.

"He's a good guy to stay away from," Brent said. Then he smiled at Penny. "Sorry, Miss Gage."

Penny made no reply.

"What do you think of it?" I asked.

"It doesn't add up." Brent was thoughtful. "At least I can't add it. How about this Aldrich?"

"I've known him since I was a boy. He was my father's lawyer."

"Do you trust him?"

"Yes. I see no reason not to."

"Were he and your brother mixed up in any sort of a deal?"

"I don't know."

"Ruiz—who's he?"

"He worked with Arthur at Guadalajara. They lived in the same house. I don't know much about him. Arthur liked him. He was fired from the Bureau of Anthropology when the new man took over."

"What's Ruiz do now?"

"I don't know that."

"And Amaro—how about him?"

"I know even less about Amaro. Arthur mentioned his name. That's all. I met him night before last with Magnin."

"Magnin and Amaro were together?"

I nodded. "They had met before—in Lisbon, some years back. I don't know what they were doing in Lisbon. I can guess what Magnin was doing."

"Raising hell," Paul said dryly. "And the Allen dame?"

"You have all I know about her."

Brent sent smoke-rings toward me. "Looks like your brother got himself mixed up with a bunch of trouble-makers," he said thoughtfully. "That's how it seems to me. That would explain why the law was after him."

"Then the law would be after the others too," I said.

"Perhaps it is. Maybe Madero has his eye on them. But they stick around. Your brother doesn't. He scrams."

"And Joe?" I asked.

"Suppose Joe got wind of what they were up to?"

"No," I said. "Joe was murdered after I came to town. My being here has a great deal to do with it."

"It looks like it."

"What next?"

He shrugged.

"Should I tell Madero everything?"

"Depends on how much you think of your brother, Mister."

"Arthur had nothing to do with Joe's murder," I said.

"Maybe he couldn't help himself, Mister."

Penny spoke and though she made a flat statement her tone put a question in it. "Jacques had nothing to do with this. I'm sure."

"What's he hiding out for?" Paul asked.

"He isn't hiding out."

"He moved, didn't he?"

Penny studied the table-top. She spoke without looking up: "He's afraid—afraid someone is going to kill him. That's why he didn't want me to come to Mexico."

"Kill him?" Brent sounded incredulous. "What for?"

"His book," Penny explained. "The things he told about in his book."

"I haven't read it," Paul said.

"He was a communist," I explained. "An organizer first. Then a *saboteur*. He had a change of heart, and went to confessional. Put it all on paper."

"Who'd kill him?"

"His boys. Or the ones he kicked around when he was on top."

"You really think so?"

"It has happened before. They have long memories." I looked at my watch. It was half-past one. "The fiesta's over. You should be in bed." I smiled at Penny.

She didn't return the smile. She was tearing her paper napkin into little bits. Magnin, I thought. Worrying about him. And he wasn't worth it, that was the trouble. But there was nothing I could do—nothing anyone could do. She was young and her eyes put a romantic aura around the ex-revolutionary. There was no doubting his heroic stature—if all he had written could be believed.

"See you both tomorrow," Paul said when we reached the lobby. "Take a cab home, Mister."

I said I would.

"And if you want to see that guy, maybe I can help you find him," Paul told Penny. "I'm pretty good at finding people when I know where to look."

She gave him a faint smile, squeezed my arm and stepped into the elevator. The door closed and she was gone.

"There's a woman for you," Brent said. "Doesn't know what she wants."

"She knows," I said.

"No." Brent said. He stood on the porch watching me until I got into the cab, then he waved goodnight and went back into the hotel.

REPEATEDLY on my way to the Ontasco I kept looking back and wondering if my three assailants were still on my trail. Apparently they weren't. I got out of the cab and went inside and up to my room and there was no one waiting for me in the room. But there was a note shoved under my door.

It was signed José Manuel Madero and it was so beautifully written it might have been engraved.

Dr. Drake: Tomorrow morning, at ten, if you have recovered sufficiently from your injuries, would you call at my home. The address is Av. 916 Alva Ixtlixochitl.

Chapter Ten



ENORA MADERO was not an Indian. And to judge from the pictures in the living-room, she was very religious. The memory of Carlotta lay heavily on the furnishings. Seeing the room and the plump, white-skinned Spanish woman surrounded by her treasures, I realized that the astute and taciturn detective was, before anything else, a husband.

At first, when she opened the door for me and ushered me along a hall into the blue and plush and gilt of the high-ceilinged room, I thought Madero's wife was a mute. She wasn't; but she spoke no English and took it for granted that being a North American, Spanish was unintelligible to me. Her eyes were magnificent—with eyes as large and as brown as those, one didn't need linguistic ability. And when Madero came into the room, she oozed pride.

If I had expected pajamas and *huaraches,* I was disappointed. Madero was dapper as usual, in brown gabardine this time, with a yellow tie, a very yellow tie. He gave me a stiff little bow and said good day.

The discovery that I spoke her language seemed to delight Señora Madero. She beamed, and was suddenly voluble. Madero let her talk; you could see he believed in the emancipation of womanhood. Later I was to discover that every time he saw a woman plodding through the hills with a load on her back, it depressed him horribly. Presently she remembered I was a guest, and offered me brandy, which I refused. Then she offered coffee.

"Thank you," I said.

"In the garden," Madero said. She bustled off, and he led me down a hall and through a door into the sun-filled patio. There were flowers banked against the old walls, and a pool with a green bronze frog sitting in the center of it. We sat at an iron table, and when Señora Madero brought a tray, we drank *café con leche* and ate *pan dulce* and talked about the expropriation of the haciendas. Then Madero motioned to his wife. She smiled and withdrew.

"She calls me William Powell," Madero said fondly. "She is a movie fan." A smile covered his brown face. "An odd language, isn't it? A fan is something to cool you. Then it is an enthusiast." He spoke English now that his wife was gone. "How is the head?"

"Fine." It wasn't. It ached a little, and there was a lump at the base of the skull.

"You should eschew street brawls."

"Ordinarily I do."

"So far we have been unable to locate the men."

"I didn't see you around," I said. "I didn't see any of your men around."

"No. They were careless last night."

"How did you know, then?"

"There was a report of a shooting at the Horse. A witness told of a thin American with glasses, and a pretty girl and another American, a man with the face of an angel. Simple. You were seen with the angel-faced one yesterday. You met the girl at the airport."

"If you want the reason for the attack, I don't know it."

"This is why I asked you to call." He put his hand inside his jacket and brought out a package, and there was no need for him to unwrap it. I knew what was inside. I knew without watching him put the slim parcel on the table and pull the paper off. It was the knife I had made for my brother.

"A child might have made it," Madero said softly. "Crude, but effective." He put his thumb against the needle-sharp piece of stone. "So many lives it has taken! Sacrifices, every one. Even Mr. Briggs, I think." He lit a cigarette, looked at me with half-closed eyes. "You recognize it?"

I made no reply.

"It was your brother's."—A statement, not a question.

"How do you know?"

"Dr. Guttierez," Madero said. "The former head of the bureau which employed your brother. I showed it to him yesterday. A child did make the knife. You were the child."

"Yes," I said. "But my brother didn't kill Joe."

He raised his shoulders.

"You are a scholar," Madero went on. "You have followed the bloody road that is the history of Mexico. You are, I think"—he used a Spanish word—"*sympatico.* Your biography of Zapata." He flicked a bit of lint off his sleeve. "The work of a lover of freedom, that book. But your brother—" He let the sentence trail off with the smoke of his cigarette.

"A lover of freedom too," I said.

"Did you ever hear of the 'Sons of Cortez'?"

I shook my head.

"I won't call it Fascist or Nazi," Madero explained. "Rather, it is what its name implies. The Spaniards took the land from us. We have taken it back. Now a group of men would take it from us again. The old order—the whip and the gun and the sword—the order against which Zapata and Hidalgo and Juarez fought. The Indian again under the heel. It is a rapidly growing organization, Dr. Drake. Not strong yet. But it can well be. We are seeking its leader; that is why we are seeking your brother."

"No," I said hotly. I stood up. "No. Not Arthur!"

Madero's voice was gently monotonous. "In the basement of the house next to the one in which your brother lived in Guadalajara, we found a printing-press. It was on that press that the literature of the organization was printed. The press was purchased by Arthur Drake."

"Are you certain?"

"It was shipped from Chicago to your brother at Guadalajara. It was paid for with an American Express money order secured here by a man who said his name was Arthur Drake."

"Someone could have used his name."

"Possible, yes."

"And there were others living with him in Guadalajara. Ruiz and Amaro lived there."

"And another, Groz. He lived there too. They are all being investigated, Dr. Drake."

"What do they say?"

"Nothing," Madero said. "They have not been questioned. You see, the time is not yet to question them. We are waiting. The press remains in its hiding-place." He crushed out his cigarette. "Your brother may be innocent. The press may have been purchased by another, as you say. But we must find him and question him. Is that not logical?"

"Yes," I agreed.

"We are waiting to find the leader," Madero said. "Then we move."

I was fearful now, but I tried to be calm. I asked: "When was the printing-press bought?"

"In December a year ago. Your brother was away from Guadalajara at the time."

"Was he in Guadalajara when the press was delivered?"

"We are not sure. He made several field trips during the next two months."

I wanted to call Madero a fool. He didn't know Arthur, couldn't know him as I did. To link him with an organization whose purpose was to grind down the peons again was puerile. Had Madero not mentioned the "Sons of Cortez," I might have told him everything I knew, for I was beginning to trust him. Now, full of anger, I was determined to make him fight for every crumb of information. I said: "It seems to me you are jumping at conclusions."

"Let us be the judge of that, Dr. Drake."

"My brother had nothing to do with the Sons of Cortez," I insisted. "You can be sure of that. He had nothing to do with Joe Briggs' murder. So soon as I find him, I'll prove it."

"I hope so," Madero said. "You see, I admire his brother very much. That is why I've told his brother so much that should not have been told."

"Thanks."

"And no one else must know it. No one, Dr. Drake."

"I think my attorney should know it. I think John Aldrich should know it."

"No one, Dr. Drake. Because you write the life of Emiliano Zapata, I trust you. That was a work of love. I feel that your beliefs and mine are one. Are they?"

"Yes," I said.

"You love Mexico?"

I nodded. "Almost as much as my own country. In a way, it too is my country."

"Then say nothing."

"I won't," I said, and stood up.

"The knife," Madero said. "Do you want it?"

"No," I said. I picked it up. "Did you take it apart?"

"Apart?"

"Like this." I twisted the blade and slid it out of the handle. "See. Inside. Cut in the silver is his name."

Then I stopped talking. There was something inside the handle that shouldn't be there. A paper cylinder. He saw it too, took the silver-crusted hilt from me. With the point of his gold pencil he slid the paper out and spread it on the table, and both of us stared down at it.

It was old and yellow, that bit of paper, and it had evidently been torn from the page of a manuscript. The faded, almost illegible writing, was in archaic Spanish.

"*Where the tunnel turns west by north,*" someone had written,—how long ago I could only guess,—"*there is a large flat stone set high in the wall, and above it smaller stones form a crude cross. From that point we followed the tunnel for 152 paces. There at the height of my shoulder was the deep recess we had made. In it we placed the chest, with great effort because of its weight. Then we replaced the stones and filled the crevices with mortar until there was again an unbroken stretch of wall.*"

An old book, Dorothy Allen had said. Arthur had been searching for an old, old book. I thought of his letter. "*There is something in the wind, something so big I can say nothing about it. If things go well, we'll be rich,*" he had written. And now this bit of paper, rolled into a cylinder and hidden in the handle of the knife I had made long ago.

Madero was watching me, and only his small dark eyes gave indication of the agile mind behind the expressionless face. He touched the paper. "What meaning?"

"I don't know."

"You never saw it before?"

"No."

"And your brother said nothing to you about it?"

"Nothing."

"Tunnels," said Madero. "There are many of them. There is one under the so-called secret convent of Santa Monica in Puebla that leads to the old fort. There is one from the palace to Chapultepec. I've heard of several in Guadalajara—from one church to another. The clergy liked underground passageways. The Indians dug them."

Twice someone had gone through my things, I remembered. Last night three men had attacked me in the shadow of the Horse. Was this, then, what they sought? I said: "This could have nothing to do with my brother's disappearance and the death of Joe Briggs."

"Of course not," Madero said.

"May I take it?"

He glanced at it again, and it seemed to me his eyes were photographing it. "Certainly."

I put it in my wallet.

"How long has it been there?" He indicated the hilt.

"I don't know. I made the knife fourteen years ago. Gave it to my brother then. I've never removed the blade since."

"Who knew the trick?"

"I knew it. He did."

Madero fitted the blade into the hilt, couldn't make the two stay together. I took it from him, showed him how it worked.

"Perhaps this was meant for you," Madero observed.

The thought had occurred to me. I tried to keep my expression as blank as his own. "He would have given me some hint."

"And he didn't?"

"No."

"Bit by bit," said Madero with a little smile, "we are adding to the confusion. This is really a peculiar business. A damned peculiar business."

"I'll be getting along," I said.

"You must be careful, Dr. Drake. That bit of paper—someone might want it."

"Nonsense," I said.

"So far, I haven't searched your room," he said pointedly. "But someone else—"

"I'll be careful."

"You are reticent with me," Madero chided. "Be as reticent with others. You can trust them less."

"I'm not reticent with you." I tried to look truthful. His smile was bland, and I knew he didn't believe me. I said good-by and went out into the street. I considered showing John Aldrich the bit of old paper. Then Madero's words rang in my ears—"Be as reticent with others." Perhaps he was right. I would go to Aldrich and ask him to help me get Arthur's servants out of the way, but I wouldn't tell him why I wanted the house on the Street of the Crying Woman to myself.

On the way to Aldrich's office I stopped at the Wells Fargo office and rented a lock-box and I put the paper in the box, feeling foolish and theatrical. I wouldn't need it, anyway. I knew its contents by rote, and it occurred to me that so also did Madero, by now probably brooding in the sun with a half-knitted sock in his hands.

Chapter Eleven



WALKING east on Avenida Madero that day, I found myself taking the words the unknown one had written so long ago and giving them a crude rhythm. "*Where the tunnel turns west, there is a large flat stone—set high in the wall is a large flat stone,*" the thing went, and I couldn't rid myself of it. It was buzzing about me like a mosquito when I told the wizened old Mexican I would like to confer with Mr. Aldrich.

Aldrich heard my voice and called to me to come in. He was holding the telephone in both hands, and his face was redder than usual, and his eyebrows fairly bristled.

"Trouble?" I asked.

"The usual," he growled. "How are you, boy? Who hit you?"

"Three guys," I said; and as I told my story, his expression grew grim.

"I don't like it, Mitchell."

"I don't, either."

"What were they up to?"

"Someone seems to want something; I can't figure it out."

"The girl—this what's-her-name—"

"Penny Gage?" I shook my head. "No reason."

"Her aunt has a detective following her around."

"Her aunt doesn't like Magnin."

"Good thing for you she doesn't," Aldrich grunted. "Dammit, boy, be more careful. Anything else on your mind?"

"Yes," I said. "I want to get rid of Arthur's servants."

He tugged his ear. "That won't be easy."

"Why?"

He made an angry gesture. "Ever try to fire a servant? Unions—red tape, six months' notice. Something like that.

That's why I haven't done it. Figured Arthur would turn up. Let's wait a bit."

"No," I said. "I don't like that pair."

"Nor I."

"Get rid of them, then. Pay them six months' wages, if necessary. I want to close the house."

His eyes probed my face. "Why, Mitchell?"

"I don't like them. That's all."

"All right. If you say so."

"The knife that killed Joe came from that house," I said. "It must have. It just occurred to me."

"You think—" He began biting his mustache.

"That they may know something? Yes."

"Then we shouldn't let them go. We should keep them on tap."

"Let Madero take care of that," I said. "We'll phone him and tell him we're letting them go. He'll keep an eye on them."

He stared moodily at the blotter, nodded finally. "All right. I guess it can be arranged. If you wait a few minutes, I'll take you to lunch. Grab a book and sit tight. I've a couple of things to do."

BOOKCASES along the walls were filled with lawbooks. I picked one out at random and sat on the couch with the book open in my lap, but I didn't read it. I started in at the beginning and moved forward step by step, and mixed up in my thoughts was the beating rhythm of that sentence—*Where the tunnel turns west, there is a large flat stone.* Aldrich's voice pushed through the wall of my thoughts.

"It's Miss Allen," he said. "She's been trying to get hold of you." He had the telephone in his hands and covered the mouthpiece with his palm.

"Why?"

"Wants to know if there's anything new. Suppose I ask her to have lunch with us."

"All right," I agreed.

He spoke into the phone, hung up and rose. "I'm ready," he said.

We walked, threading our way through the crowds. The restaurant hadn't changed. There in the corner was the table Arthur and I had always taken when we had a little money and could afford the place, though it wasn't expensive. The waiter who had served us flashed a smile in my direction and bobbed his head. Dorothy Allen was waiting for us at a big table against the wall.

"Right after you left last night, your friends came in," Dorothy said. "Amaro and Ruiz. I told them you were looking for them."

Aldrich shot a glance at me, raised his eyebrows.

"You been fighting?" Dorothy asked.

"I tripped," I said. We sat down, and the old waiter came over and shook hands and asked about Arthur. I told him Arthur was out of town.

Dorothy was watching me, a curious smile playing around her mouth. "Ran into her friend—was that it?"

"No," I said.

"She's very pretty," Dorothy said. "I think you're in love with her." I must have blushed, because she giggled and put her hand on mine. "Thanks for asking me to lunch. I was lonely. That's why I called the hotel."

I glanced at her and thought again how pretty she was. She took her hand away and began tearing off little pieces of French bread and rolling them into balls. Her eyes were very bright. I knew she was thinking about Arthur. I reached across and took the bread away and then caught her hand and held it. When I looked up, I saw Penny Gage and her aunt coming toward our table. I released Dorothy's hand, stood up.

"Hello, Mitchell," Molly Gage said. "Sit down." She was looking at Dorothy appraisingly; and the dancer, seeming to sense she was on display, sent a sweet smile toward the older woman.

"Hello, Miss Gage," Dorothy said to Penny.

"Good to see you again," Penny said. There was an odd look in her eyes as she flicked a glance at me.

I took care of the introductions. Then they said they were meeting friends, and went to a table farther back.

"A jealous wench," Dorothy said.

I told her not to be ridiculous.

"You don't know women," Dorothy said. "They don't want anything until they think someone else wants it."

"Are you that way?"

"I'm practical. I take what I can get. When you've been in show business as long as I have, you find it's the only way. You get hard."

"You're not hard."

She laughed. "You don't know me. I'll show you that side sometime. I don't let people push me around."

Aldrich looked up from the menu. "Someone pushing you around?"

"Not yet." She laughed, and it seemed to me there was bitterness behind the laughter.

The waiter came back and we gave him our order. Then we talked about Arthur, and I tried to make Dorothy remember more about the old book, but it was no use. She said she had told me everything she could remember.

Aldrich peered at me from under his shaggy eyebrows. "You think it might be important now?"

I was on the point of telling them about the paper. I wanted to tell them. Here was father's attorney, a man I had known for years; here was my brother's fiancé. If anyone could be trusted, they could. Yet I held back. I remembered Madero's warning and held back. "I don't want to overlook anything," I said. And there we let the matter rest.

Before we went out, I stopped by Penny's table and said if they were going to be at the hotel later in the day, I'd drop by. I stood there and looked down at Penny, and I couldn't seem to find any place to put my hands. Penny didn't speak. She didn't even look at me.

"We'll be there," Molly Gage said. Her smile said she liked me, and that helped a little, but not much. I wanted Penny's smile. I said good-by and followed Aldrich and Dorothy out of the place.

A BLOCK from the café, Aldrich left us. "I'll take care of the servant business at once," he said. "They'll be out in a couple of hours."

I thanked him. "For nothing," he said. "Good-by, Miss Allen. If they start shoving you about, let me know."

"I can take care of myself," Dorothy said.

I watched him go, his shoulders straight, his cane swinging jauntily, oblivious that this was Mexico and the little people around him owned the land. The old order, I thought. There was a symbol of it. Poor John! The world had changed, and he wouldn't change with it. A vague suspicion entered my mind. The printing-press! Bought with an American Express money-order secured here in the capital. I pushed the thought away.

"You're a strange one, Mitchell," Dorothy said. She wasn't looking at me. She was following Aldrich with her glance. "I'm beginning to like you very much."

I thanked her. To cover my confusion, I moved to a doorway where the sheets announcing the winners of the last lottery were suspended. I tried to find my numbers, but they weren't there.

"I've never won anything," I said.

"Nor I. I'm not lucky." Her face was grave and her eyes had bitterness in them.

"Things will turn out all right." I tried to put assurance into my tone, assurance I didn't feel.

"Why should they?"

"Reward for virtue," I said.

"Oh, sure," Dorothy said. "Some day I'll tell you about my virtue." She plucked at my sleeve and stood there staring up at me, and for a moment I thought she had some-

thing she wanted very much to tell me. She gave a little shrug, wrinkled her nose, said: "Let's go."

There were some clouds playing tag with the sun, and the wind had a bite to it. It came from the east, from the snowfields on the shoulders of Popo' and Ixtacihuatl. Most of the shops had their steel shutters down, for this was siesta-time.

At the doorway of her apartment-house, Dorothy fumbled in her purse and took out an envelope. Amaro's name and address was scrawled on the back of it. "He gave me this last night," Dorothy explained. "He asked if you'd mind stopping by a moment. He said it was important. That's what I called about this morning. I wanted to tell you."

I put the envelope in my pocket. She was standing on the steps of the apartment-house, and her face was level with my own.

"Good-by," I said.

"Good-by, Mitchell. Be a good boy." Suddenly she put her hands on my shoulders, pulled me toward her and kissed me. "That's for your faith and your sweetness and your blindness," Dorothy said, and laughed and was gone.

A bit bewildered, I stood looking at the closed door. Faith and blindness—more confusion! I shook my head, noted the address on the envelope and asked myself what Amaro wanted. I was tempted to ignore his request. I kept thinking of the yellowed scrap of paper, and of Arthur's house on the Street of the Crying Woman, and I was impatient to start my search. But I must wait until the servants were gone, so I caught a cab and gave the driver Amaro's street-number.

I CLIMBED a short flight of stairs and saw his name on one of the twelve mail-boxes in the entrance-way, and pushed the bell. The annunciator buzzed. I spoke into the tube, told Amaro who I was. He said to come right up.

He wasn't alone in the small, overly furnished room. Ruiz was there, and Jacques Magnin was there, and they were drinking *aguardiente*.

"Drink?" Amaro asked. He looked sullen and unfriendly. I said no and sat down, facing the windows.

"Miss Allen said you wanted to see me."

Amaro threw a glance at Magnin. The writer's eyes were bloodshot, and he needed a shave badly. He held his glass in both hands as if to keep them from shaking. Ruiz was slumped in the corner of the overstuffed couch, smoking a cigarette.

"I did," Magnin said. "Do you want me to die?"

If I had been truthful, I would have said I didn't care much one way or the other. But I wasn't truthful. I said: "No—of course not."

"Then for God's sake don't go around looking for me." Magnin spoke passionately, a little desperately. I had thought of him as courageous. He wasn't now; he was frightened. "I don't want to be found—understand that."

"All right." I started to get up.

"Wait," Magnin said gently. "Sorry, Dr. Drake. I know you were trying to help Miss Gage. I'm upset, and there's a reason. I came down here to save my skin." He began pacing the narrow room. "Do you realize what I'm up against?"

"I can guess."

"It's bad. They almost got me in the States. So I ran." He waved his left hand. "Oh, I know what you're thinking. I was a fool. I told Miss Gage. But I had to. She is a fine young woman, and I didn't want to hurt her. I'm—" He stopped talking.

"You think highly of Miss Gage," I said.

He nodded. "But I think more highly of my life, at the moment. I did a very foolish thing, yes. But I expected her to understand. I forgot how young she is, and how willful."

"You think they'll trace you through Miss Gage?"

"I know they will." His tone admitted of no doubt.

"Are they here?"

"I'm not sure. How can I be, until someone steps up and lets me have it? I don't know who they are. That's why I'm frightened." He mopped his forehead with his handkerchief. "Believe me, Dr. Drake, I'm not a coward. But I don't like uncertainty. I don't like what I can't fight."

Imagination, perhaps, I thought. The man had the jitters. I asked: "What do you want me to do?"

"Ask Miss Gage to go away."

"I'll do that." I would be more than glad to do that.

Magnin sighed, and there was relief in the sigh. "Would you give her this, please?" He held out an envelope. "I could send it, but her aunt might see it. Or someone else might see it."

I put the envelope in my pocket. "I wouldn't worry too much," I said. "Get out of town. Go to one of the little towns off the paved roads. They won't think of looking for you there."

Ruiz spoke. "That was my suggestion."

"It's the thing to do," Magnin agreed. "And please tell Miss Gage this: There's someone following her, I think."

"I don't think," I said. "I know. There's a private detective following her. Her aunt hired him."

"You sure?"

"Yes." Then I knew I wasn't sure—Paul Brent had said he was a private detective. I looked at the man standing in front of me. Perhaps he had reason to be terrified. Perhaps the angel-faced Brent was the reason. And then I thought, what of it? I had my own problems, my own worries, and these two men in the room might have some connection with those problems.

"Try and make her understand," Magnin said.

"I'll try. But don't stick around. She may decide to stay."

"I have friends," Ruiz said. "I'll send him to them. Anything new about your brother?"

"It was his knife they found in Joe Briggs' back." I watched his expression.

He sat up, looked startled. "Arthur's knife?"

"Yes. The one with the handle made of pesos."

"Do they think he—" He left the rest to my imagination.

"I don't know what they think."

"Impossible," Amaro put in. "Arturo and Briggs—they were friends. Arturo wouldn't kill anyone."

"I know it," I said. "But someone wanted to link Arthur with the murder. Someone has been trying to link Arthur with other things."

"So?" Amaro was frowning. "Other things?"

"Yes." I didn't explain. I stood up. "I'm beginning to understand a little of it. There is an old book mixed in it somewhere." I looked at the three faces, tried to read what was going on behind those three faces. "An old, old book, and an American Express money-order," I added. Then I left them, and as I walked down the dark stairs, I tried to find significance in the glance that had passed between Amaro and Ruiz.

THE servants were gone when I reached the Street of the Crying Woman. Aldrich's aged clerk Ramon de Silva was standing in the doorway pulling at his wispy mustache and looking doleful.

"Any trouble?" I asked.

"They were paid." He shrugged. "What trouble could there be?"

I thanked him and called a cab and saw him on his way. Then I went inside and bolted the door.

Being alone in the house gave me an odd feeling of uneasiness. It was suddenly horribly empty. And though the others had been gone only a little while, it seemed to have been untenanted for a long time. I went from room to room, and the longer I stayed the more I wanted to be out of it. But there were things to do.

I examined the cupboards, rapped on the walls, pulled at the shelves and slid my hand along the paneling. One by one I inspected the rooms from floor to ceiling, feeling moment by moment more foolish, more like a child playing a foolish game. Secret passageways, trapdoors—like the convent of Santa Monica, where you pulled a shelf away and pushed a button, and the whole wall gave. But I didn't stop looking. Arthur had leased the house for a reason, and I was certain the reason was the paper cylinder hidden in the haft of the knife.

The house was airless, damp. I opened the door into the patio, went out and stood in the pale sunshine, looking at the patch of sky, getting the taste of the place out of my mouth. The patio had been badly neglected. There was a tangle of shrubbery along the walls, and the trees were like unkempt old men. In the center was an iron pump, rusty and apparently unused. I went to it and pushed the handle up and down. No water came from the spout, which didn't surprise me. Then I realized that the flagstones around the base of the pump seemed cleaner than the others. I lifted one. There was fresh earth under it. Someone had filled the well in, and done it fairly recently.

I was excited now. I circled the patio, looking carefully at the stones, and near the rear wall I found what I sought. There the flagstones were large, and I began tapping them with a piece of iron. One gave back a hollow sound. I put my fingers under the edge of it and lifted. It came away easily, and I stared into a round hole about three feet across. A few feet down was the top of a ladder.

In the top drawer of the dresser in Arthur's room there was a large flashlight. I got it, and flashed its beam into the pit. It wasn't deep, not more than twelve feet, and it angled a little toward the west. "Here goes," I thought. My feet found the ladder, and I climbed down, and then I was kneeling on the damp earth, flashing the light into another passageway leading west. Cold air came out to me, and I knew I was close to the tunnel. I crawled ahead.

It wasn't far. I had crawled not more than fifteen feet before the passageway ended, and I was in another—one faced with stones. I could stand upright in it, and still there was more than a foot of space above my head.

The light cut a wide path in the darkness. I played it on the walls around me. A big stone with a cross above it, then 152 paces west by north. But where was the stone?

I moved ahead very slowly, and perhaps a dozen spaces beyond the opening that had been cut into the tunnel, I tripped over a loose stone. I pointed the pencil of light down, then dropped on my knees and pulled at the protruding bit of rock. It came away, and I could see that it had been taken out not very long ago. The circle of light showed me that others near it had been lifted out too.

I knew then. I didn't need to pull the rocks away and dig into the damp earth. I didn't need to claw down into that evil-smelling ground to know what was lying under it. But I tore at the stones and at the earth. And after a little while I pushed the dirt back and replaced the blocks of granite and sat with my back against the wall. I seemed unable to think, wrapped in the damp gloom of the centuries-old tunnel. After a while I put my head on my arms, and for the first time in years I wept. For I had found my brother. . . . He was buried a few feet away.

Chapter Twelve

IT was cold in the tunnel, there under the street where superstitious natives said the ghost of Doña Marina wandered wailing through the darkness, cold and damp and quiet. Off somewhere, water dripped faintly, the drops falling with clocklike rhythm, but there was no other sound. I sat against the wall in the darkness, so numbed with grief and horror that time meant nothing, until after a while hot anger kindled itself and spread through my body, and I knew what madness was. I got up and plunged toward the opening that led up to Arthur's house, stumbling in the dark, with but one thought in mind, murder. Then as I bent down to crawl toward the light, sanity returned. I could not kill blindly and unknowing. I had found Arthur's body, but I was no nearer the truth than I had ever been.

I stood up and touched the switch, and light flashed around me. The paper in the knife! Arthur had hidden it, and the man who killed Arthur had killed Joe Briggs without knowing that what he had taken two men's lives for was in his hand. I was certain the murderer still sought the secret of this tunnel; but I must make sure.

A stone with a rude cross above it, then 152 paces west by north. Again the light scraped the slimy walls, and I moved forward, avoiding the spot where my brother lay, trying to keep my mind clear, examining first one side and then the other. Finally I found it. On my left, at the height of my shoulder, a square rock three feet across had been fitted into the wall, and above it smaller stones made a rough cross pattern. Now there were other ghosts around me, ghosts of the Indians who long ago had labored here, who had fitted these stones together; ghosts of the ones who had come later, straining under a heavy burden, and who had counted off 152 paces from this starting-place. My legs were long, much longer than those of a man of ordinary stature. I shortened my stride and began counting.

Once, anger and grief roared up into my mind and made me lose count; then I returned to the rock and the cross, and began again. One hundred—one hundred and thirty—one hundred and fifty. I splashed light on the wall to my right, and took two more steps. The wall was no different here than it had been—untouched in centuries. Nowhere within a space of thirty yards had it been disturbed. The secret was still a secret. Behind those stones was that which Arthur had sought, that which he had hoped would give us freedom to wander to the far places of the earth, that which had brought him death.

I didn't want it. For all of me, it could stay there for eternity. But it had brought Arthur death, and now it would bring death to the one who had killed him. Until this place, where unknown men had hidden their treasure, was no longer a secret, the murderer would be close at hand. I unclenched my fists and moved my fingers—long fingers, long and unnaturally strong. There would be no waiting for the firing-squad! I turned and hurried back, stopping only for a moment beside my brother's shallow grave. Then I was in the sunlight again. . . .

Penny was in the lobby of the Nuevo Mundo, sitting in a chair by the elevator with a magazine in her lap. She had on a pale green linen dress, and linen shoes with holes in the toes that looked anything but sensible. She was watching the door, and when I came in, she stood up and came to meet me.

She threw words at me. "You saw him? Was he all right? Does he really want me to go away?"

I had to think a moment. I had forgotten Magnin. I had forgotten about the letter I had left in the clerk's care on my way to the house of Santa Maria.

"Yes," I said finally.

Her eyes searched my face. "Mitchell, what's the matter?"

"Nothing," I said. "He's all right."

"Your face," Penny said. "So white! And there's dirt on your coat."

"He wants you to go home," I said. "As soon as it's safe, he'll write to you."

"But you?"

"Is your aunt in?"

She nodded. I got into the elevator, and she followed me, and she was still looking at me. The expression on her face was that of a puzzled child. There was an ache at the base of my throat that made me inarticulate. We went along the hall, our feet making no sound in the thick car-

pets, and then we were in the sitting-room and I found myself sitting on the couch staring at the window, and there was a glass of brandy in my hand. Penny and her aunt were standing in front of me, fear in their eyes.

"What is it, Mitchell?" Penny's aunt kept saying. "What is it, son?"

Then she seemed to know, for she sat beside me and put her arm around me, and my head was on her shoulder. "Poor, poor boy!" Penny's aunt said, and her cool fingers touched my hair. "Poor dear boy!"

I didn't feel so alone now. After a while I sat up and drained my glass, and then I could speak calmly.

"Arthur's dead," I said. "I found his body." And I told them about the pit in the yard, and the tunnel, and the loose stone that had tripped me. Molly Gage sat on one side of me with her arm tight around my shoulders, and Penny was on the other, and it wasn't for quite a while that I realized she had my right hand tight between her two small ones.

MOLLY GAGE refilled my glass, and this time she poured out two more brandies and gave one to Penny. "Who did it, Mitchell?" she asked. She sat in an armchair in front of me now.

"That's one thing I don't know."

"Start at the beginning," Penny's aunt said. "Tell me everything. Perhaps I can make sense of it."

I told her. Once, when I told about the attack by the Horse, she started to speak; then she waved her hand and I went on. "That's all," I said. "Everything."

She poured out more brandy, stood looking down at me with the decanter in her hand. "Three things are obvious."

I waited. Such a lovely face, I thought, watching her—kind and wise and beautiful. An older Penny, a wiser Penny. Would the child be like that years hence?

"The dancer—Dorothy—knows," Penny's aunt said. "She knows your brother is dead, I'm sure of that."

"But he wrote her in December from Vera Cruz," I said. "That's one thing I'm certain of."

She moved her hand as though pushing the existence of the letter away. "Two: Joe Briggs was killed because he came to that conclusion about the Allen girl. Only, he had proof."

"And the third?"

"I never hired anyone to watch Penny," Molly Gage asserted. "There's one thing to do," she went on. She didn't wait for a question. She went to the desk, found the telephone book and riffled through the pages. "What's the first name of this Madero?"

"José Manuel," I said. "And that's the wrong book. He's in the Ericksen directory."

She took out the other. "You call him, Mitchell. All I do is confuse the operators."

Penny took her hands away. I crossed to the phone.

"Tell him to come here," Penny's aunt said. "This is something that should have been done the day you arrived."

I obeyed. I didn't question, because there was a quality in her voice that made me sure it was the right thing to do, the only thing to do. Madero wasn't home. I told his wife where I was, and to try and find him. Then I called the palace and left word. I sat at the desk and looked at the instrument, and wondered where the little man was.

"We'll wait," Penny's aunt said. She went into the bedroom and came back with her chess set, and put it on the coffee-table by the couch.

She moved a pawn to king's four. I brought my king's knight out.

"Alekhine's defense," she said. She drew one eyebrow down. "Do you realize that everything you've done in this case has been right, Mitchell? Like this defense. You've allowed yourself to be pushed around the board, and now a weakness has developed. A very vital weakness."

"It was unconscious," I said. "Besides, everything I've done hasn't been right. I've been blundering around tripping over things." Pain stabbed at me, and I shut my eyes.

"Your move," Penny's aunt said.

I had moved fourteen times when the phone rang. Penny answered it. "Send him right up," Penny said.

Molly Gage took my queen. "Check."

I studied the board. I was still studying it when Madero's knuckles tapped on the door. We stood up, and Molly Gage told him to come in.

He bobbed his head at us, closed the door behind him, crossed to the table and looked down at the board. "Black should take the queen with the king," he said. "Not with the rook. Right?"

"Right," Molly Gage said. "Sit down, Mr. Madero. Brandy?"

"Thank you," Madero said. He sipped the brandy, shook his head. "Soon no more of this, eh? Soon only Mexican brandy. One of the crosses we must bear when a democracy falls. You wished to see me?"

Molly Gage nodded. "Tell him, Mitchell."

Again I told my story. There was much he knew already. There was much he didn't know. He sat hunched over, nursing his glass, staring at the chessboard as though the unfinished game was of much more importance than what I had to say.

"I should call you foolish," Madero said gently. "But no. I understand, Dr. Drake. I would have held back too, I think. No matter. There is time. There is time as long as the wall is untouched, as long as the stones keep their secret. Have you the letter to the girl?"

I took it from my wallet. He glanced at it, nodded, gave it back. "The girl gave you this?"

"She gave it to John Aldrich."

"You're sure your brother wrote it?"

"Quite sure."

"How long have Aldrich and the Allen girl known each other?"

"She came to him with the letter a short time ago. He wrote me at once to come to Mexico. Or so he says."

"How about Ruiz? And Amaro? How well does Miss Allen know them?"

"That I can't say. They often go to El Toro."

HE kept hammering at me with questions that dug into the far past and the immediate past and the present—questions about Magnin, and Paul Brent. Finally the questions stopped, and the room was silent.

"It is clearer," he said then. "But not clear enough. Still confusion." He emptied his glass. "That is excellent brandy."

Molly Gage refilled the glass. She put a trace of a smile on her lips. "Is it true you knit?"

He nodded vigorously. "Why not? One needn't think when one is knitting—think about what one is doing with one's hands, I mean." He touched the chess-board. "This—it takes the whole mind. I knit, and play checkers with my daughters, and then I can think. My grandfather—I learned the trick from him."

"You know the murderer?" Penny spoke for the first time.

He regarded her gravely. "Two things bother me: There should have been no fighting by the Horse; I can't connect that with the murder. And who searched Dr. Drake's room in Eastredge?" He made an airy gesture. "No point. Unless—"

The telephone rang. Molly Gage answered it. "For you." She spoke to Madero.

Carefully he put his glass on the table. Then he picked it up quickly and wiped the bottom of it with his handkerchief, rose and went to the phone. *"Bueno,"* he said.

Three pairs of eyes watched him. His frown deepened. He shoved his right hand into his pocket, took out his

cigarette-case and with that quick gesture which always startled me, flipped a cigarette into his mouth. Then he put the receiver back.

"A shooting," he said. "Another thing to worry me. Your friend Mr. Magnin has been shot."

Penny sat down and put her head in her hands. "I've killed him," she cried. "Oh, I've killed him!"

Chapter Thirteen

EVEN if Penny had led to Mexico the men who wanted Magnin out of the way, she hadn't killed him. He wasn't dead, though it was only because of the deity that watches over rogues, drunkards and fools that he had escaped. Two bullets had plowed through his body, and the breeze from both of them must have fanned his heart as they went by.

"Right through the chest," said Madero as he turned from the phone. "The doctor is quite excited about it. He is a pistol enthusiast. Says he never saw such beautiful marksmanship."

"Stop," Penny said. "Please stop!"

"I beg your pardon," Madero said. "I must go. Perhaps you would like to go with me?" I knew from his tone he wanted me to go.

"Yes," I said. I patted Penny's shoulder, and we went out into the hall. "Who?" I asked.

He shrugged. "No one seems to know." He cocked his head on one side. "Perhaps you can offer a suggestion."

"Perhaps," I said. But I offered none.

There was a crowd in front of Amaro's apartment-house, but no one was particularly excited. An old woman had brought up her charcoal brazier and griddle and was cooking *tacos*.

We pushed our way through the throng to the steps where two police sat looking at a little pool of blood. They got up and touched their caps respectively.

"Who saw it?" Madero asked.

One of the policemen jerked his thumb toward the door. "A gentleman who calls himself Amaro. He is with my superior. And that one." He pointed to a scrawny boy with greasy black hair and a smudge on his nose, squatting on his shine kit. The boy leaped up.

"I saw it. Right there I was standing." He pointed a few yards west. "They sang by me like bees, the bullets. I would have given not a *tostan* for my life at the moment."

"Tell me," Madero said. He squatted on his heels, gave the boy a cigarette and lit one for himself.

"Shine?" said the boy.

"Thank you, no. Not at the moment."

"The shoes are soiled," said the boy. They were. They bore the traces of his walk. So did mine.

"No," Madero said.

"I was there," the boy said. "In the sun sitting. Two gentlemen came through the door and stood at the top of the steps. *Bang-bang!* One gentleman rolled down the stairs like a beer-barrel."

"And you?"

"I was lying in the sunlight," the boy said.

"Did you see the assassin?"

"A glimpse. A man, it was. He—" The boy snapped his fingers. "Gone like that."

"You're a great help," Madero said. "The Government should honor you."

"It was nothing. Like bees they were, those bullets."

"Where was the man standing—he with the gun?"

"Yonder." The boy pointed across the street and east. "In the shadow of the doorway."

"The bullets then went in circles to buzz past your ears?"

The boy grinned. "The gentleman does not believe?"

"He believes," Madero said.

"I was wearing the medal," the boy said. "The medal bearing the image of the patron saint of shine boys." His grin grew broader.

"Go on with you!" Madero said. He rose, and I followed him upstairs.

Ruiz was gone. Amaro and an officer were in the apartment; and when Amaro saw me, he glowered and muttered something under his breath. The officer saluted Madero.

"Good afternoon," the officer said.

"I am José Manuel Madero," Madero told Amaro.

"Yes." You could tell Amaro knew that already.

"Your friend—why was he shot?"

Amaro shrugged. "I know not."

"You saw the man?"

"A glimpse. He was far away—across the street and east."

"A beautiful shot," the officer said. "A remarkable shot. Sixty yards, at least. With a pistol. Right by the heart. You could put a peso over the holes."

"Would you know the man, should you see him again?"

"No," Amaro said. "We were talking, Magnin and I. Two shots. He rolled down the stairs. I saw a man running."

"Which way?"

"East."

"A young man?"

"How can one know?"

Madero's gesture was the habitual one of the Indian. How could one know, indeed!

"What now?" the officer said.

"We have taken enough of Mr. Amaro's time. We will leave him." Madero bowed. "Thank you."

In the hall, Madero screwed up his face. "This does not belong, either," he said. "More to confuse me when I should not be confused." He spoke to the officer. "Watch him."

"Of course," the officer said. We went downstairs and now the crowd had thinned.

"I shall talk to Mr. Magnin," Madero said. "That will take some time, I'm afraid. An hour—two. Then a few odds and ends. Your brother's servants—I shall talk to them too."

"I don't think they killed my brother," I said.

"Nor I. Come on. I'll drop you at the hotel."

"Thanks," I said.

"And if you see Miss Allen, don't mention finding your brother's body."

"I won't."

I was desperately tired. I wanted to feel hot water spurting over me and to stretch out on the bed and sleep, though I knew I wouldn't sleep. I got my key and stood in the elevator with my eyes shut. I fitted the key in the lock, opened the door and stepped into the dark room. My fingers found the light-switch and flicked it on. Then I pushed myself back against the door.

Stretched out on my bed was the man with the angel face, and there was a revolver in his hand. He was smiling.

"Hello, Mitchell," he said. "You have company."

"You were out, and the bathroom window was open," he said, laying the revolver beside him on the bed, and sitting up and stretching. "How do you stand these inside rooms?"

"They're cheap," I said. "The police are looking for you."

"They'll watch the railroad stations and the roads and the airports," Paul said. "They won't think of looking in your room."

I sat on the corner of the bed. The gun was within easy reach, and he had his hands behind his head.

"I did you a favor, Mister. You should thank me."

"Your shots were a little to the right," I said. "He isn't dead. And I don't think he's going to die."

He said: "Damn."

"You might as well tell me who you really are," I said.

"Paul Brent," he said.

"With a detective agency," I said.

"Nope. I had the cards printed, just in case. A man who follows people around needs an excuse now and then."

"How do you fit into my brother's death?" The gun was lying butt toward me. I had only to reach out and take it.

"Death?"

"I found his body today."

A shadow crossed his face. His eyes grew somber. "I'm sorry, Mister."

"Where do you come in?"

"I don't."

He expected me to believe him. Could I? I stared into his eyes. I said: "Yes, I know. That's why I haven't picked up your gun."

He laughed hollowly, without humor. "I like you, Mister. I don't like many people. That's one reason I'm here. I dropped in to say good-by. I dropped in to see if there were any little jobs I could do before I beat it."

"Three items puzzle Madero," I said: "My room was searched in Eastredge. He doesn't understand that. He doesn't understand what happened by the Horse. And he doesn't understand the Magnin shooting. He said these things confuse him. He says they don't fit."

"*I* searched your room," Paul said. "I'd got wind you knew Magnin. He had departed from Eastredge, so I had a look at your belongings. Wanted to see if he had written to you. The only letter I could find was your brother's. Sorry about that."

"It's all right."

"And I'm sorry about your head. I hired those three guys to muss you up a little, so I could step in and rescue you—gain confidence. It worked. You know about the Magnin shooting."

"Not everything," I said. "Did they hire you to do it?"

He spoke matter-of-factly; my accusation didn't anger him. "I don't kill for dough. You should be able to figure that out. When I kill, it's for a reason."

"And?"

"It goes back a ways." Paul found bitterness, spread it on his words. "Quite a ways. You read Magnin's book?"

"Yes."

"Remember his story about the longshoremen's strike in New York? Six guys were killed in that mess. Another got his back broken. Four went to the pen. I was one of the guys who went to the pen. . . . I'll take a smoke now." I gave him one, held a match for him. "Thanks. Five years, Mister. And the guy whose back was broken was my old man. Did you ever see a man with a broken back? He isn't dead, but he'd be much better off dead. My old lady takes care of him—my old lady and the neighbors. When I was in jail, she had to work so they could eat."

I DIDN'T say anything. I sprawled across the foot of the bed and watched him through the smoke. He didn't look angelic now. He looked tired and bitter.

"We weren't reds," Paul said. "Not one of us. They were pushing us around on the docks, and a guy that went by the name of Joe Stein came along, and pretty soon he had us raising hell. My old man tried to stop him. He had it figured out, had Stein pegged for what he was." He shrugged. "It happened. When I got out, I started looking for Stein. So did a lot of others. Then Magnin wrote a book, and we knew he was Stein." He was silent for a moment, his head pressed against the wall, his eyes on the ceiling. "We talked it over," he went on. "The boys who had done time, and the relatives of the dead ones, and the boys who went through it all. I said I'd knock him off." He took the gun and balanced it on his palm. "We traced him to Eastredge. We found out he had followed that girl to Eastredge. Then we lost him. You know the rest."

"Who told you Magnin came to Mexico?"

"No one," Paul explained. "The Gage girl rented a box at the Eastredge post office. I got into the box one night, and there was a letter from Magnin from Mexico City. So down I came. But I couldn't find him. Then you showed and she showed and it was a cinch. You told me who his friends were. This afternoon I hung around Amaro's apartment and pretty soon out they came and I let him have it. You sure he'll live?"

"The doctor said so."

"It must have been the angle," Paul said. "I shouldn't have missed at that distance."

"And now?"

"I've got a job to finish, Mister."

"You haven't a chance," I said. "Madero is on your trail. I told Madero about you and what you looked like. I didn't know."

"I should have explained," Paul said. "Don't fret about it. You've got enough to worry over. Where did you find your brother?"

"In a tunnel under his house," I said.

"The one on Santa Maria?" He saw amazement in my glance. "I followed you out there. I told you I thought you and Magnin were buddies."

"That's the house," I said.

"Tunnel?"

"An old one. Runs from a monastery to a church."

"Let's have it all," Paul said.

STRETCHING my legs, I sat up. It was hot and airless in the room. I thought of Molly Gage's remark about the Alekhine defense. It wasn't true, really. Blundering, rather. But so far it had worked. So I told him. About the old book and the bit of paper in the handle of the knife. I didn't tell him the directions on that paper. But I told him about the treasure, and about the pit in the garden, and the protruding stone in the tunnel floor.

"So it's still there," Paul said.

"Yes."

"And he'll go looking for it again?"

"I think so."

"So do I," Paul said. "The thing to do is wait—wait and watch. It's a cinch, Mister."

"I know how you felt about Magnin," I said. "You wanted to do it yourself. That's the way I feel."

"Don't mess it up, though," Paul said. "Don't do what I did."

"I won't." I looked at my watch, saw that it was past six, picked up the phone. I gave the operator Dorothy's number, and then her voice came over the wire. I said: "This is Mitchell Drake."

"Hello, Mitch darling."

"I'm coming by at seven," I said. "I've something to tell you."

"What? About Arthur?" Her voice was faint.

"Indirectly," I said. "I think I have a piece of that book."

I could hear her excited gasp. "Wait there for me," I said, and hung up.

Paul was standing by the bed. "I'm going," he said.

"Where?"

"I have a place to hide. A fine place." He smiled.

"Leave town," I said. "Have you any money?"

"Plenty. Have you?"

"Sure," I said.

"Don't be a sucker," Paul said. "About the girl, I mean—Miss Gage."

"I won't. And don't try to get Magnin. You haven't a chance."

He shrugged. "Maybe not. But I can try."

"You'll have a time getting out of Mexico."

"There are boats when I need them," Paul said. "You forget I was a longshoreman. Vera Cruz isn't far." He put his gun in his pocket, held out his hand. "Luck,

Mister." There was affection in his voice. I felt suddenly close to him. I felt that I had found a friend.

"Thanks, Paul."

"Don't let things get you down." He squeezed my hand and was gone.

Chapter Fourteen

DOROTHY ALLEN was waiting for me in the doorway of her apartment. She put her finger to her lips. I looked past her and saw Madero sitting on the couch.

"Days go by, and I see no no one," Dorothy said brightly. She held on to my arm. "Then two gentlemen call at almost the same time." She closed the door.

It was an old place, with high windows looking out on the street, and there was only one room. A curtain in the corner was awry, and you could see a gas-plate and some pots and pans. On a stand between the two windows was Arthur's picture, and there was a tiny vase with one flower in it, in front of the picture.

"I'll only be a moment," Madero said. "Do you mind, Dr. Drake? I've a few questions to ask." Dorothy put herself on the arm of the battered Morris chair in which I sat. I felt the pressure of her fingers on my shoulder.

"Go ahead," I said. "I came to take Miss Allen to dinner."

"There has been a shooting," Madero said. "A very peculiar shooting. You know Mr. Amaro, Miss Allen?"

She was frowning at the little man. Her fingers dug into my shoulder. "Slightly."

"Today Mr. Amaro was with a Mr. Magnin. When Mr. Amaro and Mr. Magnin left the apartment-house, someone shot Mr. Magnin. You know him too?"

"I've met him."

"Perhaps you can help me."

"No." Her voice was very low.

"They were patrons of El Toro?"

"I saw them there on one or two occasions."

"And Mr. Ruiz? You saw him there too?"

She nodded. I knew she was looking down at me. I stared at my hands.

"Often?"

"Quite often. I think Mr. Ruiz has an interest in El Toro."

"So?" He hesitated as though wondering what to say next. He added: "You were a friend of Mr. Drake's brother?"

"He"—there seemed to be fear in her voice—"you've found him?"

"No, Miss Allen. We have not found him."

"You think he—he is mixed up in this shooting?"

"There was a murder." Madero's voice was as expressionless as his face. "Today there was a shooting. Mr. Drake's brother chooses to evade us. What is one to think, Miss Allen?"

She cried out: "No, he didn't."

"Perhaps not. When did you see him last?"

"Late in October."

"Has he communicated with you?"

Her fingers signaled to me. I said: "Tell him, Dorothy."

"Yes," Dorothy said. "In December. He wrote to me in December."

"The letter," Madero said. "You have it?"

"I have it," I said, and I wondered what he was up to. I took it from my wallet, crossed the room and gave it to him, then returned to the chair. Dorothy's hand sought my shoulder again.

"This was written last year?"

"In December of last year."

"It says December 28, but not the year," Magnin said. "I received it January 1 of this year."

He studied the letter. "Vera Cruz. He wrote it from there?"

"Yes."

"What was he doing in Vera Cruz?"

"I don't know."

"For all you know, he may still be there?"

"I don't know where he is." She was close to tears now, and her voice was barely audible.

"Strange," said Madero. "Very strange."

"Find him," Dorothy cried out. "Please do find him! Mitchell told me you were looking for him, but I know he has done nothing wrong."

"We shall see." Madero stood up. "Thank you, Miss Allen. I shall keep this letter for a day or so. Yes?"

She slumped back. "Yes."

"I shall return it. Good evening." He bobbed his head, threw a smile at us and was gone.

"Oh, Mitchell," Dorothy said, and put her face against my shoulder. "What does it mean?"

"Don't cry," I said. "Please don't cry. We'll find him."

"I know we won't," Dorothy said. "I know he's dead."

"Don't," I said.

She sat up. "Thank God you're here." I saw grief in her face, and wondered. I saw tears on her cheeks, and I thought Madero might be wrong, Molly Gage might be wrong. And the plan I had evolved was a betrayal. Arthur had loved this girl, had planned to marry her. But he was dead. His body lay in the cold darkness, and the one who had murdered him was close by, waiting to strike again. I thought of Joe and knew I must go through with it. I said: "Dorothy, I found something strange today. I don't know what to make of it."

She didn't speak. She looked at me, put her hand up and brushed the tears away.

I said: "Hidden in the box with Arthur's shirt-studs there was a key—a key to a lock-box at the Wells Fargo office. I had the box opened today. There was a piece of paper in the box. That was all."

She got off the arm of the chair and stood in front of me. She was staring at me, her lips parted a little.

I took from my pocket the yellowed bit of paper I had retrieved from the box in the Wells Fargo office half an hour before and put it in her hand. She read it; then her gaze questioned me.

"I don't know," I said. "It means something important. You mentioned an old book. I think this is the key. I think this is the part of a page from that old book." I took the paper from her, and returned it to my wallet.

"Something is hidden somewhere," I said. "Without the book, there's no way of knowing. And without this bit of paper, the book would be valueless. We've got to find the book, Dorothy."

"But where?"

"If Arthur is alive, he has it. If he isn't, the one who killed him and who killed Joe Briggs has it."

"Yes," she said softly. She put her face in her hands, and there was silence in the room. In the street, a child laughed shrilly.

"Does he know—Madero—about the paper?"

"No," I said.

"Should we tell him?"

"I don't know."

"Perhaps we should wait a little," Dorothy said. "Do you think we should wait, Mitchell?"

"I guess so."

"If he's dead, who could have killed him?"

"Someone who knew him well."

"Oh, no." Her voice was plaintive. "No, Mitchell. He had done nothing. Why? Why?"

"Money," I said. "That's usually the reason for murder. Money or hatred or jealousy. But who would have hated him or been jealous of him?"

Her head rested against my arm, and a sob shook her body. I put my arm around her.

"I still have you," Dorothy said. "Don't go away, darling. You'll help me, won't you?"

"Yes," I said. I kissed her hair and then stood up. In the apartment across the street they had turned the radio on, and you could see a couple dancing.

"Please stay," she said. She stood up and held both my arms.

"I can't. I promised to have dinner with Miss Gage and her aunt."

"You love her?"

"Yes," I said.

"I'm glad." Her eyes had darkness in them. "Don't let her go away, Mitchell. If you love someone, don't lose them."

Pain swept through me. Betrayal, I thought. This grief of hers wasn't feigned. She loved Arthur.

"I've found out what love is," Dorothy said.

"I know."

"No," Dorothy said, and put an odd smile around her lips. "No, Mitchell. But you will. Kiss me."

Her lips were warm and soft. Her arms were tight around my neck. Then she pushed me away.

"Now go," she said in a strangled voice. "Quickly, Mitchell." And she pushed me toward the door. . . .

I stood outside for a moment. "You don't know," she had said. "But you will." What had she meant? I wanted to go back and ask her. But I didn't. I sighed and went downstairs.

I tried to think clearly. I tried to convince myself that in setting this trap I was in no way unfaithful to the memory of my brother. If she was guiltless, there would be no trap. If not—

Then a voice intruded, a voice I knew. I was passing the tobacco-shop a block from Dorothy's apartment. Leaning against the counter, playing dominoes with the shriveled old woman in charge of the place, was Madero.

"I waited," he said; "I thought you might be lonely."

Chapter Fifteen

WE walked north on Bolivar. It was raining a little, and the few people on the streets hurried along and covered their faces. He nodded toward a man with his serape hiding his mouth. "I feel the urge to pull my serape close around me too," Madero said. "Superstition. Witch doctors. But I no longer wear a serape. I no longer cover my face against the damp. There is the law."

"I don't understand."

"One allows the law to mete out punishment."

"Of course," I said.

"It is the safer way," Madero said. "The civilized way. You are an American."

"I was born in Mexico," I said. "In a sense, I'm a Mexican."

"Only in a sense. What plan have you made?"

"None."

He laughed mirthlessly.

"The case is in your hands," I said. "I've blundered enough."

"Good," Madero said. From his pocket he took the knife I had made long ago. "This you should keep."

"Thanks." I put it in my belt. The blade was cold against my thigh.

"Some chess at my club?"

"No," I said. "Not tonight. I have to see someone. I'll be at the Nuevo Mundo."

He stopped under a street lamp and smiled up at me. "The older one is very wise."

"Yes."

"The young one is foolish now, but not for long."

"Good-by," I said. "I'll see you tomorrow."

He raised his hand and turned away. I watched him hurrying along the wet street, and it seemed to me he was bending his head and pulling his jacket up to cover his mouth. I may have been mistaken. A cab drew alongside.

"Mister," the driver said softly. "A hot joint, Mister? I take you to a real hot joint."

I got in. "The Nuevo Mundo," I said. "I am no tourist."

"Pardon me, sir," he replied.

Penny and her aunt were not in their rooms. I thought about Magnin, and wondered if Penny had gone to see him, and darkness closed down on me. I went into the café, and some of the gloom vanished because they were at a table near the windows.

The room was crowded, and most of the diners were Americans. The orchestra was playing something I didn't recognize. It was loud, but it was better than "South of the Border."

Penny didn't look up when I reached the table. Molly Gage took my hand and patted it, and told me to sit down.

"I can only stay a moment," I said.

Then Penny's eyes were on my face. "Where are you going?"

"Out," I said.

"With Madero?" Molly Gage asked.

"Alone," I said.

"Have they"—Penny's eyes had a strange light—"arrested anyone?"

I shook my head. "Not yet."

"Who called me, Mitchell?"

"Called you?" I asked. "When?"

"A little after six," Penny said. "A man."

"What did he want?"

"To talk," Penny said. "Is it true?"

"What?"

"Someone called about Magnin," Molly Gage interrupted. "Tell him, Penny."

The girl's voice was faint. "He said awful things. He said Jacques was a—a rat."

"Well," said Molly Gage. The word was expressive.

I knew who had called her, and the knowledge gave me warmth. I thought of him sitting on my bed, smiling. A strange man, Paul Brent! Shooting a man down coldly, pausing in his flight to do a favor for one he scarcely knew. I said: "That was the man who tried to kill Jacques Magnin."

"Then he wasn't telling the truth?"

"You've read the book," Molly Gage said angrily. "Are you blind, Penny? Of course he was telling the truth."

"The man with the angel face called you," I said. "He was in my room waiting for me this afternoon. He told me his reason for wanting to kill Magnin."

"He could be lying," Penny said.

"He could be." The waiter was at my elbow. I ordered brandy and coffee.

"He wasn't," Molly Gage declared. "Did Magnin kill your brother, Mitchell?"

"No."

"Who did?"

"I don't know."

"The girl's mixed up in it, isn't she?"

"I don't know that. Madero thinks so—I'm sure he does. I've just come from her place, and I don't know what to think."

"She cried," Molly Gage said. "Didn't she cry?"

"Yes. She loved Arthur."

Anger flickered in Penny's eyes. "You believe her," she said. "Because she's pretty, you believe her."

"You have to believe someone," I said.

Molly Gage looked at me, and then she looked at Penny. She said: "I hope you didn't talk too much tonight."

"I didn't. I set a trap," I said. "Good-night," I added, and left them.

A block away from the house, I got out and paid the driver. Then I walked along the dark street, keeping close to the wall. The Street of the Crying Woman was deserted. I stopped in a doorway and looked all around. But there was no one following. Then I went quietly to the door, unlocked it and slipped inside.

I began to know what fear was. The house seemed to reek of death; and as I moved forward, I felt the terror of the unknown, the same terror a child has when he runs along a road and hears the clatter of his feet on the stones, and mistakes them for the footsteps of another. I patted my hip and tried to find comfort in the feel of the knife, but it made me think of Joe and how Joe had died. It made me think of Arthur. Perhaps Arthur's blood was on the blade too. I wanted to throw it from me.

I moved out into the patio, and now there was a rent in the clouds and moonlight filtered through to put a ghostly pallor on the matted vines and the uneven flagstones. I found the flash where I had left it on a bench by the kitchen door, and put it in my jacket pocket, crossed the garden and lifted the stone that covered the pit.

A week before, I would not have put my foot on the ladder, would not have forced myself down into that well of darkness. Fear would have driven me back into the world of light and people. But now terror was not enough to stop me. What had happened was a wind fanning the flames of my anger. Again I patted the knife, and now the feel of it was good. Obsidian as sharp as steel. This time, no sacrifice. Justice instead! Slowly I climbed down, and when I was below the level of the earth, I pulled the flagstone over the entrance, blotting out the patch of sky, wrapping myself in awful darkness.

I felt my way down, found earth with my feet. Cold air pushed by me as I crawled ahead. Then my hands touched stones, damp with the slime of centuries, and I was near the spot where Arthur lay. I knelt there for a moment. . . . Lonely here. So very lonely. No flowers for him, no prayers. I recalled the past, and found a little one we used to say, and my mind told it to him. Then I stood up and moved along the tunnel, touching the wall to my left, searching for the big stone with the cross above it.

Even in the dark, it wasn't hard to find. Then I started walking, counting my paces; and all around me there were little sounds, like ghostly footsteps. I told myself it was water dripping from the ceiling. . . .

One hundred. What was that behind me? I stopped, and pressed myself against the wall. Only the whisper of the water as it crept through the crevices above me—or a rat racing away. . . . One hundred and ten . . . one hundred and twenty. Again the faint scuffling on the stones. No, nothing. My chest hurt from the beating of my heart, and the fingers of terror closed my throat so I could hardly breathe. . . . One hundred and fifty. This was it: The trap—and I, the bait! My hand found the knife-hilt.

But I didn't draw it. Steel dug into my chest, and light blinded me. I blinked and looked down. A hand with a gun in it was there, and it was the nose of the gun that was cold against my body.

Fool, I thought. I shouldn't have stopped at the hotel. I should have come here at once. But I knew why I had stopped. I knew that I had expected something like this, and that I had wanted to see Penny once more.

I wasn't afraid now. This was reality. No ghosts. No shadows following. The gun was steel; and under the glove that hand that held the gun was flesh, and there was an arm and a body, and the body belonged to the man who had murdered my brother and my friend. I swung both arms and hurled him back, and the gun stabbed at me with a blade of flame.

The shot roared around me, went echoing down the tunnel. I felt blood warm on my shoulder. Then I knew that bravery would net me nothing, so I ran.

Light pursued me, tried to find me. I rounded the bend, started dodging back and forth across the tunnel, and the light was after me. I glanced back. Then something hit my shins, and I went down. The blast of a shot was right above me. I rolled away, and the tunnel swelled with the sound of shots. Then the light went out.

I lay against the wall, waiting for death. The echoes faded. Someone groaned once. Someone was close to me, lying on the stones. I reached toward the sound, and my hand touched hair, slid down across a forehead.

"Hello, Mister," a voice whispered. "Leave it there, Mister—your hand. It's cool, your hand."

I said: "Paul!"

"Yes, Mister."

I moved close to him. "Don't take your hand away," Paul said. "Did he get you, Mister?" he asked huskily.

"I'm all right."

"I can taste death," Paul said. "I think I know why."

"Quiet," I whispered.

"He's gone," Paul replied. Then he was silent for a while. I could feel the pulse in his forehead. I pushed his hair back. Somewhere water was dripping steadily.

"I was in the garden," he said after a while.

"Why, Paul?"

"Hiding out." There were gaps between the words, as though he had to grope for them. "I told you I had a safe place to hide. You gave me the idea, Mister. There was a pit, if people came. I had a job to finish, so I came out here to wait until I could finish it. Then you showed up."

"So you followed me," I said. "Why, Paul?"

"To help the birds cover you with leaves if you got lost," he said, and tried to laugh. "You're a babe in the woods, Mister. I figured you might need help."

"Don't talk, Paul," I said.

"Who was he?"

"I don't know."

"I hurt like hell. And I can taste death. Did you ever taste death?"

"No," I said. "Where's your gun? He may come back."

"Here by my right leg."

I groped for it, found it. There was something like a hot iron digging into my left shoulder.

"I'm going to die, Mister," Paul said. . . . "My old woman may need help. The address is in my pocket."

"Don't worry about her."

"I won't, now."

"I'll go get help," I said.

"No. Don't go. I hate darkness."

"You need a doctor. I won't be long."

"It's no use," Paul said. "Please stay."

"All right," I said. I moved close to him, and lifted his head and held it in my lap. Then I touched my fingers to his lips. There was someone moving close at hand. I bent and put my lips against his ear and whispered, "Quiet!" But there was no need. He was dead.

Chapter Sixteen

My left arm was stiff, and when I put the flashlight into my left hand, the pain was so bad I had to bite my lips to keep from yelling. Someone was moving behind me and to the right. I turned and pointed the revolver toward the sound, and waited. I thought of the pit, and knew someone had climbed into the pit and was crawling into the tunnel. Then I flicked on the light. Madero's head protruded from the hole in the tunnel wall.

"I'm here," I said. Light stabbed at me.

"You live, then?" Madero's monotone echoed around me.

"Yes."

The light swept over Paul's body. "And this one?"

"No."

"Ah. He of the angel face."

"He was waiting to finish his job," I said. "Hiding in my brother's house. He saw me, and followed."

"Fool!" Madero hurled the word at me.

I realized then what was in his mind. "I didn't kill him," I said. But in my heart I knew I had. It was my fault he was dead. Another blunder. A trap that had caught not the murderer but the man lying close to me.

"I set a trap," I said. "I came down here to find the man who killed my brother. He was waiting for me in the dark. He shot me, and I ran. He shot again, and Paul Brent got between me and the bullet."

Madero flashed his light on my shoulder. "A bad one?"

"No."

He pulled my coat aside and ripped the shirt. Then he took the handkerchief from his breast pocket and made a pad of it and tied it over the wound with strips of the shirt. "The other one: Did he get away?"

"I think so."

"I'll have a look." He started walking away, and suddenly my mind was clear.

I called out: "Wait, come back."

He turned and pointed the light at me.

"I set a trap," I said. "I used Dorothy Allen to bait it for me."

He understood. He caught my right hand and helped me to my feet, then scurried to the hole in the wall and plunged into it. I followed, and the pain sent a wave of nausea through me. At the top he waited and pulled me up, and I saw the sky again. The clouds were gone now.

"Your shoulder?" Madero asked.

"It's good enough," I said. "Come on."

His bantam car was against the curb in front of the house. I had to jackknife my body to get into it, and then my head touched the top. He put it in gear and set it at top speed toward the heart of the city, rushing up to intersections with the horn going, driving as though there were no other cars anywhere.

"Do I frighten you?" he asked as he hesitated for a stop sign, then plunged across.

"I was brought up in Mexico."

"We're all alike," Madero said. "We can't get used to machines. You've seen a charro riding into town. He walks his horse to the edge of the place, then digs his spurs in and charges up to the Zocalo. We drive that way. You mentioned a trap. How did you set it?"

"I showed her the paper," I said. "I knew that if she were involved, she would pass on the information."

"I should have known that you would do that! Then I could have had men watching the monastery and the church."

"What made you come?"

"Miss Gage sent me," Madero said.

So Penny's aunt had worried about me, I thought. It was a good warm thought. "She called you?"

"Yes. If she had found me sooner, it would have been a different story, I think. But I was not available for a while. I guessed wrong. I thought you had another plan. I thought you knew who the murderer was and had gone to his home." We missed a cab by inches, slid around a corner into San Juan de Letran and raced south.

"Do you?" I asked.

He evaded the question. He said: "I was confused. I do not blame myself too much. There were two puzzles, and the pieces were jumbled. Now they are separate."

I waited for an explanation, but it wasn't forthcoming. He turned the car east, and stopped it so suddenly near the house where Dorothy Allen lived that I nearly went through the windshield. He was around the car and helping me out while I was getting my legs untangled. We hurried up the steps.

There was a man standing in the entrance hall—John Aldrich.

"Mitchell!" He faced us, and there was a look of bewilderment on his face. Then his gaze riveted itself on my shoulder, and he took a step toward me. "You're hurt, boy. What is it, boy?"

He seemed surprised; he seemed genuinely concerned at the blood on my coat. Was he? I didn't explain. I said: "Miss Allen—have you seen her?"

"No. I've been ringing her bell. She doesn't answer."

"She may be at El Toro."

"No. She should be here. She called me and said she would be here."

"Called you? When?" Madero asked.

"Around seven or seven-thirty."

"Yes?"

"She said she had just seen Mitchell," Aldrich said. "Said he had part of a page from an old book, and she thought she knew who had the book. Said to stop by between nine and ten. That she might know something of importance then. I came up a minute ago. But she doesn't answer her bell, and the entrance door is locked."

Madero had a bunch of keys out and was poking at the lock.

"An odd thing," Aldrich said. "Just as I drove up, someone came out. I thought I recognized him."

"Who?" Madero shoved a key in, turned it.

"I'm not sure. I may be mistaken. I've only seen him a couple of times. But it looked like Ruiz. He ran down the stairs and went west."

THE door came open. Madero entered, and we were on his heels hurrying up and along the hall. His knuckles hit the door of her apartment, but he didn't wait. He thrust the key in and turned it, and pushed the door open. We looked at darkness. There was a low, steady humming in the room.

His hand fumbled along the jamb, and then light filled the place. Dorothy Allen was at home. Her body lay face down on the worn rug near the couch, and the back of her head was crushed in. . . .

The lights seemed to grow dim. I stared at the body, and it was as though the room was filled with smoke and I was peering through the smoke at the crumpled form on the floor. There was a chair near me. I dropped into it, and then the room was full of light again. I heard the low humming and realized the electric fan was on. I looked at John Aldrich. He was pulling at a fold of skin under his jaw. His face was gray. I looked down at his shoes, and then let my gaze move slowly up to his shoulders. He wore a brown tweed coat and gray flannel trousers and black shoes. The shoes were dry. I glanced at my own. They were wet, stained with mud and slime.

Madero lit a cigarette. The French telephone lay near her body and there was blood on the receiver. He touched it with his toe, pivoted slowly, and when he faced the table by the open windows, let his gaze rest there. On the table, near my brother's picture, was a bottle of ink, and there was a pen and a box of stationery beside it. A straight chair lay on its back near the table. He put his hands in his pockets and went over to the table and stood there letting smoke trickle out his nose.

It was cold in the room. The fan kept turning toward me and pushing a blast of air around me. On the couch there was a blanket bunched in the corner. I shivered.

"Oh, my God!" Aldrich said.

Madero looked at him. "You think you saw Ruiz leaving the place?"

"I'm not sure. I could be mistaken. It was a man who resembled Ruiz."

"She called you between seven and seven-thirty?" His glance moved to Aldrich's feet.

"Yes."

"Where were you?"

"At my—" Aldrich was fumbling in his pocket. He didn't finish the sentence until he had put a cigarette between his lips—"office. I had some work to do. I stayed there and finished it. Then I called Mitchell at the hotel,

but he was out. I tried to get Miss Allen on the phone, but the line was busy. So I came here. I thought you would be here, boy."

"You're certain you stayed at the office?"

Aldrich gulped. He took a couple of steps toward the detective. "You don't think—"

Madero cut his speech in two. "That you killed her? No, Mr. Aldrich. I don't think that. I know you didn't kill her."

His sigh was audible above the hum of the fan. He ran his hand across his eyes.

Madero was moving around the room now, peering into drawers, poking into cupboards. In the corner where the gas-plate was, he pulled the curtain aside and stood looking at it. Then he went back to the body and knelt beside it and stared at her white face.

What Aldrich had told us churned in my mind and wrapped fear all around me. She had called him and mentioned the book, and the bit of page torn from the book. That might mean she was trying to help. Had she called Ruiz too? Another murder on my head, then? I found myself looking at the fan, and I wondered why it was on. It wasn't hot in the room.

"Do something," Aldrich said. "For God's sake, do something, Madero."

Madero straightened. "There's no hurry, Mr. Aldrich."

"But if it was Ruiz—"

"We'll find him," Madero said. "Now I must telephone. You wait here, gentlemen. I won't be long." With that, he was gone.

We waited. After a little while the light began to fade again. I saw Aldrich standing in front of me.

"You look like death, Mitchell."

"I feel like it," I said. "Shut the fan off, please."

He crossed the room, and the humming stopped. "Lie down a bit, Mitch."

I let him lead me to the couch, and somehow it didn't matter that Dorothy Allen's body was so close. I stretched out, and he covered me with the blanket and sat on the arm of the couch. Something was digging into my leg. I pulled it out. He stared at the knife in my hand.

"That killed Joe Briggs," I said. "Madero gave it to me. I found the paper in the handle."

HE took it; his hand closed over the hilt. I shut my eyes. "You twist the blade half right and then a quarter back," I said. "The thing comes apart."

"Feel any better?"

"I'm fine," I said. "I was cold. I'm not any more."

"Who shot you, Mitch?"

"It was dark. I couldn't see."

I felt his hand on my forehead. I opened my eyes. He was standing over me, and the knife was in his left hand. There was a curious look on his face, and there came into my mind a sudden, awful fear. I wanted to get up and wrest the knife from him. I wanted to be out of the room.

He smiled. "Sleep a bit, boy." And he moved to the window. I pushed my fear of him away and closed my eyes again.

I must have dozed. There were voices at the door. I sat up and was sorry for it, for my shoulder was on fire. Madero came into the room, and there was a man in white with a black bag in his hand right behind Madero. Behind the doctor were two policemen, and Ruiz was between them, looking frightened. When Ruiz saw Dorothy's body, he stopped and put his hand over his eyes and moaned a little.

"The shoulder," Madero said in Spanish and nodded at me. "Over here," the doctor said. He was a young man with a doleful mouth and very black eyes. I sat in the chair he indicated, and he opened my shirt and pulled the crude bandage away.

"A scratch," the doctor said, and he seemed unhappy about it. "But it is nothing."

"You should have it," I said. Two other men came in then, and they were carrying a basket. I was glad that the doctor was probing the wound, because the pain kept me from thinking too much. Then it was over, and the men with the basket were gone, and the doctor was gone. Another Mexican had come in, and he was hunting fingerprints, but Madero paid him no heed. Madero was looking at Ruiz, who was sitting very straight in the chair by the door. Aldrich was still standing by the window, but the knife lay on the table near Arthur's picture.

"Is this the one?" Madero asked.

Aldrich hesitated. "I'm not sure."

Madero spoke to Ruiz. "When Mr. Aldrich drove up a little while ago, he saw a man walking down the steps. He thinks that man was you."

Ruiz was nervous, yet he made no attempt to deny that he was the man Aldrich had seen. He said: "It was."

"You were here then?"

"In this room? No."

"Explain, Mr. Ruiz."

"I rang her bell," Ruiz said. The hand that held his half-burned cigarette was shaking. "There was no answer. I rang several times. Then I went away."

"You did not come upstairs?"

"No. Only to the entrance hall. The door was locked."

"And why did you come here?"

"To see Miss Allen, naturally."

Another detective would have been impatient. Not Madero. "But why?"

"To ask her why she was not at El Toro."

"And your interest, Mr. Ruiz?"

"I own El Toro," Ruiz said. "Miss Allen works for me. I tried to call her, but the phone remained busy. So I came."

"You own El Toro, yet you came rather than send another employee?"

Ruiz took a deep breath. "The others were busy, señor. Tonight El Toro is crowded."

"When you went away, did you see Mr. Aldrich?"

"I saw no one."

"Did you notice a car drive up?"

"I noticed nothing. There may have been one."

"That's all. Thank you," Madero said. He motioned to the policeman. "Take him away. To my office at the palace." Then he followed them out of the room. He was gone but a moment, and when he came back he was smiling blandly. The fingerprint man straightened and dusted his hands. "Finished," he said in Spanish.

"Go then," Madero said. "You too, Mr. Aldrich. That is all."

"Do you believe him?" Aldrich demanded sourly.

"The case against him is closed," Madero said gently. "Thank you for waiting for me."

"He killed her, then?"

Madero shrugged. "He says not."

"Come, John," I said. "You can take me to the hotel."

"But no." Madero took the knife from the table and put it in his breast pocket. "You will come with me, Dr. Drake. The Mexican law is peculiar. You were a witness to the murder of Mr. Brent. There is a matter of a statement."

"Murder!" Horror was in Aldrich's voice. "Another!"

"Yes, another," Madero said. "Come, Dr. Drake."

"All right," I said wearily, and we left the room where Dorothy Allen had died, where my brother's picture still stood on the table with a faded flower in front of it.

When we reached the street, Aldrich asked again about the murder, but Madero waved him away. So he squeezed my good arm and said to call him if I needed anything. Then he got into his car and drove away. Madero stood at the curb watching the tail-light disappear. Then he got under the wheel.

"Were you frightened?" he asked as we started off.

"Frightened? Of what?"

"Of remaining in the room with a murderer."

Chapter Seventeen

WE didn't go to the police station, but drove across town to the Horse; and I thought of Paul Brent and of the men he had hired to attack me. We went past the Horse and out the boulevard and turned right in front of the Nuevo Mundo hotel and parked the car. I didn't ask questions. I knew that if Madero wanted to explain, he would; that no amount of questioning could make him talk until he was ready.

"You are a strange young man," Madero said as he helped me from the car. "A very strange young man. Foolish and brave, impetuous yet patient. And so blind! The training, perhaps. Equipped to deal with the past, but not the present. Why do you not ask the reason for our presence here?"

I spoke in his tongue. "One waits for an explanation."

"There is one who worries about you," Madero said. "That is why we are here. That is one reason."

I was grateful for Molly Gage's interest. But it was small recompense. I had seen too much of horror and death in too short a time. Mechanically I asked: "The other reason?"

"I did not wish you to go with Mr. Aldrich."

We went up the stairs, and the doorman gave us a look of distaste. I didn't blame him. Madero might have found me in the gutter. We got into the elevator, and the boy cocked an eye at me and grinned; I think he believed I was drunk. I felt drunk. We went along the hall, and Madero rapped lightly on the door. It opened, and Molly Gage was standing there, concern in her eyes, and Penny was right behind her.

"Mitchell!" Molly Gage said. "We were so very worried about you, Mitchell." She took my good hand and held it.

"I need a drink," I said, and it was hard to get the words out. "I need one badly."

Penny's face was white, and her eyes seemed at the moment much too big. She said faintly: "Are you hurt badly?" I shook my head.

"A scratch," Madero said casually. "His God took care of him."

There was a brandy-bottle on the low table by the couch, and beside the bottle was the chessboard where Molly Gage had been working problems. I stood looking down at it until Penny's aunt put a glass in my hand. I emptied it.

"Sit down, for God's sake," Molly Gage said. I sat. Penny stood by the table, and she seemed to be hunting for words. I wondered if she had seen Magnin. I wondered if she had discovered that Paul had told her the truth.

"You are full of questions," Madero said, holding his glass to the light. "Do you wish the answers now?"

We didn't speak. We waited. I put the glass on the table and leaned back. I wanted sleep. I wanted sleep and darkness.

Madero opened his cigarette-case, put his thumbnail under a cigarette, flipped it, caught it in his mouth and looked pleased with himself. "In Tucson, I learned it," he said. "I have a brother who runs a cinema. There was a magician working in the theater. He taught me the trick." He sat down and sipped his brandy. The look in Molly Gage's eyes told me she was seething with impatience. "We wait for a telephone call," Madero added.

"Please," Molly Gage said, "stop being *Charley Chan*."

Penny's hands were in her lap, and there was a knotted handkerchief in her fingers.

The little detective threw a smile at me. I knew he wanted an indication of curiosity. I said: "The patience wears thin. Why did you let John Aldrich go, if he is a murderer?"

"Aldrich!" Molly Gage repeated, and horror made her voice thin.

"The treasury gets empty, my dear doctor," Madero said.

"Stop being cryptic," Molly Gage snapped.

"At the beginning, I start," Madero said. He wouldn't be hurried, I could see that. The situation pleased him. "There is much I do not know," he went on. "There was a book, an old book. It told of something hidden in a tunnel. What? We do not know yet. Soon we will." The mystery of it intrigued him. He lapsed into smiling silence.

"Please," Molly Gage said impatiently.

He glanced at her. An American, he was thinking. No patience. No ability to relish the fine flavor of expectancy. He said: "Dr. Drake's brother found the book sometime ago. Perhaps a year, perhaps longer. He tore from it part of a page, and secreted that bit of paper in the handle of a knife."

I was impatient now, but I remained silent. I looked at Penny sitting a few feet from me, head bent a little, absorbed apparently in the knotted ball that had been a handkerchief.

"I have not seen the book," Madero went on. "I may not see it. I can only guess. It was written, I suppose, some centuries ago. Mr. Drake pried from it the secret. He rented a house and dug an entrance to the tunnel. Then Mr. Aldrich discovered the secret too, and killed him and buried him in the tunnel."

Again there was that irritating pause, the little detective sitting there smiling down at the chessboard. "I said there were two problems," he continued. "I was confused because I did not know that at first. There was the organization known as the Sons of Cortez. The existence of that organization, whose membership is growing far too rapidly for the comfort of my government, came to light last summer. I was assigned to uncover the leaders.

"You think that is a simple task?" He waved his hand. "You underestimate, then, the strength of the conservative in this country that gradually fights its way toward the light. Literature attacking the Government was flooding Mexico. It was printed, I discovered, in the basement of a house in Guadalajara. An empty house. Next door lived some gentlemen employed by the Bureau of Anthropology, among them Mr. Drake. The press had been made in Chicago. I investigated. I found that the press had been purchased with an American Express money-order bearing the signature of Mr. Drake. What was I to think? Mr. Drake must be questioned. But he had vanished. I started looking for him. You, Doctor, started looking for him. So, ostensibly, did Aldrich. So did the late Mr. Briggs. Then Mr. Briggs was murdered. Do you blame me for being confused? I hardly blame myself."

His cigarette was out. He put it in an ash-tray, put his glass on the table, then hurriedly retrieved it and carefully wiped the base with his handkerchief. "The home training," he observed. "You see, I am a family man."

"Yes," said Molly Gage. Penny had turned her head and our eyes met. A trace of a smile touched her lips.

"I started with a false premise," Madero said. "I worked on the theory that Mr. Briggs had been murdered because of something he had learned in connection with the Sons of Cortez. I was"—he glanced at the table—"playing two chess-games on the same board. Until that bit of paper turned up in the knife-handle, I believed that Mr. Drake, Aldrich, Miss Allen, Amaro, Ruiz and Magnin were all involved in a reactionary revolution."

AT the mention of Magnin's name, I saw Penny flush. Youth with its disillusions! I thought. But Madero's voice went on: "Once I separated the pieces, it was simple. I'll dispose of the Sons of Cortez. The headquarters in the capital is El Toro. Do you wonder that the blacks and the whites were mixed up? Ruiz is the leader, Amaro his chief strategist. Magnin is a new recruit. That he is connected with the organization is due to Amaro. They had met before. Magnin came here and crossed Amaro's path again. He was introduced to Ruiz, who saw in him a valuable ally—a man with no scruples, and a vast

knowledge of revolutionary tactics, and a fear of death. So Magnin agreed to trade his knowledge for safety. Fair enough, yes?"

"We've had enough of Magnin," Molly Gage said, and I was grateful to her.

"Quite," said Madero. "But bear with me a moment. You see, I am apologizing to myself for being inept. So closely were the two matters bound up! Only today I learned that it was Ruiz who used Mr. Drake's name in purchasing that printing-press over a year ago, when Mr. Drake was in Vera Cruz doing field work for his bureau." He gave me a little smile. "There, Dr. Drake, was the clue to the murder.

"You came here, Dr. Drake, knowing only that your brother was missing. You came because Aldrich sent for you to give you information that was important. That information? A girl had appeared—Miss Allen. A girl who produced a letter showing she was to have married your brother in February, a letter written from Vera Cruz. You assumed, naturally, that the letter—bearing the month, but not the year—was written last December. You assumed that it was this February that your brother and Miss Allen planned to be married."

"Yes," I said.

"But Mr. Briggs did not. No. He wasn't taken in. With reason! Now, this is only conjecture: Apparently, Mr. Briggs knew something of your brother's affairs. Perhaps he saw your brother and Miss Allen together. Perhaps your brother confided in him. He read the letter. He knew Mr. Drake had been in Vera Cruz, not last December, but a year ago in December. He knew the Drake-Allen affair was closed. And knowing, he suspected foul play." He said the words with relish. "Foul play!" he repeated. "So he questioned Miss Allen. She passed her knowledge of Mr. Briggs' suspicions on to Aldrich. And Aldrich removed Mr. Briggs from the scene."

I saw him lying on the couch again. I saw him in the darkening room again, and I wanted to cry out. I moved my left shoulder, and physical pain was a relief.

"Not conclusive, though," Madero observed. "No proof. One needs proof. Mr. Briggs was dead, but the servants weren't. Mr. Drake's servants, that he didn't hire."

I sighed. I should have known enough to question.

"Mr. Drake rented a house on the Street of the Crying Woman," Madero explained. "Rented it for one reason—because it stood above a tunnel, and he wanted to enter that tunnel unobserved. He did not know, apparently, where the entrances of that tunnel were. He knew only that it ran beneath a certain house. So he leased the house and dug a pit. Now it occurred to me that a man engaged in digging a pit would have no servants around. I visited the bureau of labor, which has admirable records. I discovered that the servants were employed by a man who answered, not Mr. Drake's description, but the description of Mr. Aldrich, a man who gave his name, however, as Arthur Drake. I questioned the servants. Yes, they had seen Mr. Drake. A man of middle age, with a mustache and a red face. A fine gentleman."

"Why?" I asked. "Why, in God's name? Look at the chance he took."

"No chance," said Madero. "Did you describe your brother to them? Of course not. You asked when he had gone, and they told you. They were truthful. A man who said he was Arthur Drake put them in the house, said for them to remain until he came back. Did Aldrich go to the house with you? No."

"And when I suggested firing them, he took care of the matter," I said.

"You see," said Madero, "Mr. Aldrich had investigated the tunnel. He had found a simpler way to enter. So he hired the servants and put them in the house. Then no one could disturb him. And he went about his search. But he didn't know where to look. There was the tunnel—half a mile long. He had made a mistake. He had killed Mr. Drake before he learned the whole secret. So he sent for you."

"And searched my room at the Ontasco," I said.

"How could he know your brother had confided in no one but the knife?" Madero asked. "He brought you here in the hope you might, unwittingly, have possession of the key. Tonight you gave it to him. Tonight, through Miss Allen, you told him where to go. And he was suspicious. He waited in the dark, and you came. He tried to kill you, but fate—" He spread out his hands.

"Not fate," I said.

"The angel-faced one, then," Madero said.

Penny was staring at him.

"A brave one," Madero said softly. "A very brave one. He took a bullet meant for another."

Penny moaned, and put her face in her hands.

"A candle burns for him," Madero said. "My wife—" His gesture was expressive. "Life! Who knows why? So Aldrich knew he had been betrayed. And he hurried to Miss Allen's apartment."

"You said he didn't kill her," I put in.

"He didn't," Madero agreed. "She killed herself. She was dead when he arrived. Gas. The fan, Dr. Drake. The blanket on the couch. The open windows."

He seemed to hear the unspoken question. He shrugged. "Why? The mind—who knows what goes on in the mind?"

"But why would a man make a suicide into a murder?" I asked.

"Mr. Aldrich took the answer," Madero said. "The pen and ink, Dr. Drake. A letter was written. From that letter he learned there was no betrayal, perhaps. Or he learned that you were still in ignorance. Remember what Ruiz said? No car he saw. But Aldrich saw Ruiz, heard the bell when it rang. Saw him from the window. So! Time, he needed. A little more time. He knew—from the letter, which I'm sure she wrote—that you were still in the dark. Murder, then. Throw us off the track. Set us on Ruiz. So I oblige. I arrest Ruiz—which had to be done anyway. I let Aldrich go."

"Because the treasury is empty?" Molly Gage said. "Or because you still need proof?"

"I have proof enough." His tone was light as the smoke from his cigarette. "In his car under the seat there was a gray flannel coat. There was slime on the coat. When I left you in the apartment I looked. And a pair of rubbers, still wet. You saw the dry shoes, Dr. Drake. But they were black shoes. One does not wear black shoes and a brown coat."

For the first time Penny spoke. She didn't look up. She said: "One does if one is Dr. Drake." Her voice was so low I could barely hear it. I looked down at my clothes, and I saw Madero looking at them, and I thought I saw disapproval in his eyes. But he said nothing. He emptied his glass, moved to the table and started arranging the chess-men. Penny's aunt and the little detective were deep in the game when the phone rang. I was sitting there doing a great deal of thinking; I was wondering what was going on in Penny's mind.

Chapter Eighteen



He lay on the floor of the tunnel, 152 paces from the stone with the rude cross above it. There were stones strewn about him, and there was a chisel and a hammer close at hand. Above, at the height of a man's shoulder, there was a hole.

Four men squatted against the wall smoking cigarettes and blinking in the light of Madero's flashlight. One of them had a machine-gun in his lap.

"You are efficient," Madero said. "I knew you would be, Jesús."

The man called Jesús said: "It was nothing, my chief."

"Tell me," said Madero.

"We waited," Jesús said. "We saw him go into the monastery to the altar, and push the altar aside. Joaquin and I went to the pit. We left Eulalio and Ruben to guard the altar."

"It was bad in the pit," another said. I guessed he was Joaquin. "Very bad," he added. "A dead man not ten feet away."

"And then?" Madero asked.

"He came," Jesús said. "We heard him. Light flashed in the hole. But we were pressed against the wall, and he could not see us. We heard him walk away. We heard the pounding of his hammer. Then we crawled into the tunnel. And we crawled along the tunnel."

"I had the flash-light," Joaquin said. "The big one. I turned it on."

Joaquin made a sound like a machine-gun. "Finished."

"I am pleased," Madero said. I knew he was thinking of the empty exchequer. I knew he was thinking that there would be no foolish expense for trials and executions. He wasn't being brutal. He was being sensible. He was being an Indian. "Did you examine the hole?"

"Ah, yes," said Joaquin. "But he had not completed the work."

"Complete it, then," Madero said. He bent down and ran his hands through Aldrich's pockets. When he straightened, he had a letter. He held it in the light of his flash. "For you." He put it in my hand.

I found a comparatively dry place near the wall, sat down and held my flash-light between my knees and put the letter in the beam. Across the tunnel Joaquin was banging away at the chisel, loosening the mortar between the stones. And as I read what Dorothy Allen had written before she died, I wondered if what lay behind that wall was worth the price it had cost.

"My dear, my very dear Mitchell," Dorothy had written. *"I told you I had found out what love is, and you said you knew; but you didn't know. I told you when you love someone, not to lose them. I won't lose you. I take the memory of you with me, the memory of your dear thin face, your wild hair and your eyes—so bright your eyes, and so blind. Such a strange ending! But there can be no other. And it is an unhappy one only because of what I have to tell you. Could I say only Mitchell, I adore you, then it would be fine and very sweet. But there is more than that to say.*

"I said I was hard. Take that as an explanation, Mitchell. I came up the hard way, the bitter way. And two years ago I met Arthur, and I was still hard.

"I never loved him. He thought he loved me. Then he found out things about me and was through. We were to have been married last year, but in Vera Cruz he met a man, and the man talked out of turn. Was it true, he asked me. And I said yes, and that was the end.

"I didn't care. I didn't have it in me to care about anything then. There were other men. And there was John Aldrich. He's been mixed in my life for years. It was through him I met Arthur. We're alike, John and I. No scruples. Nor morals. I won't go into that.

"I lied to you about the book, as I've lied about many things. (Only one lie I'm sorry for—the flower in front of his picture. That was a cheap lie, Mitchell darling.) I saw that book. Arthur found it a year and a half ago in a ruin near Guadalajara. It was written by a monk—Brother Hipólito—in the fifteen-hundreds. You'll never see it. John destroyed it after he murdered Arthur.

"It was, Brother Hipólito said, his confession. The story of his life. Most of it had nothing to do with the treasure, so I'll skip it. It's the treasure that is important—or we thought it was. I know better now. Anyway, Brother Hipólito told of supervising the building of a tunnel from his monastery to a church, and of uncovering a number of gold ingots. Two other monks were with him, and they swore each other to secrecy, put the treasure in a chest and put the chest in a hole they made in the tunnel wall. Then Brother Hipólito sinned. He called it a most grievous sin, I remember. He killed his brother monks. But he was punished for it, he said. By God, he said. He went blind. So he wrote his story, and Arthur found it. Found it hidden in a rusty old box under the altar of a church he was reconstructing.

"Brother Hipólito wasn't entirely honest in his confession. He didn't say where the tunnel was. Just said it was between a monastery and a church somewhere. Arthur started looking for it.

"How he traced Brother Hipólito to Mexico City I don't know exactly. He said once he had a hunch it was Mexico City. He said that in the flight of the Spaniards from the Aztecs there was a good deal of treasure dropped in the canals of Tenochtitlan.

"We broke up, and I started seeing John again; and one night when I was tight, I told John about the book. He started on Arthur's trail, and from then on I stayed out of the picture. It wouldn't have done to let Arthur know John and I were thick again. Arthur was wise. He held his tongue. But when he leased that house, he made a mistake. He had John draw up the lease, and John guessed what he was up to. He did some spying, saw Arthur digging, and waited.

"John didn't intend to kill Arthur, I know that. With all his faults, he was fond of Arthur. But he wanted money—needed it badly. Most of his property had been expropriated, and he was bitter about it, bitter against the Mexican Government and against the world in general. One night when he thought Arthur was away, he sneaked into the tunnel. Arthur wasn't away. Arthur caught him, and they fought in the dark, and he killed Arthur. He didn't tell me about it. I guessed, finally, and asked him. Then he said it was an accident. That Arthur had fallen and hit his head.

"John searched that tunnel from one end to the other, but it was no use. The page that said where it was hidden was torn from the book. Then he decided you might have the page, so he sent for you. You came, and John had to have an excuse, so he showed you the letter Arthur had written when we were engaged, and you accepted it. But Joe Briggs didn't. He saw me that afternoon and asked for the truth. I called John, and John went to his apartment and waited, and when he came in, he killed him...

"I would have gone on with it. If you hadn't been you, I would have gone on with it. But I knew tonight I was through with living. Blind boy—so apparent in your scheming. I knew, darling, I knew so well what you were up to. So I played your game for you, knowing you and Madero would be waiting in the tunnel when John came.

"He must be dead now. I feel no guilt at the betrayal. If it had profited him to let me down, he would not have hesitated.

"Oh, my dear, my very dear. Be happy, darling. Be very happy. And sometimes remember

Your Dorothy."

I folded the letter and put it in my pocket. This was the end, then. Centuries ago Brother Hipólito had come this dark way to leave a heritage of death. I looked across the tunnel. They were pulling the stones out and dropping them. They reached into the hole with eager hands; and close by Madero was standing, an unlit cigarette between his lips, and his hands in his pockets.

There was the scrape of metal against stone. Joaquin shouted, and his shout echoed through the passageway. Six pairs of hands reached up and lifted it down, and as I looked at the rusty iron chest, I shuddered. Seven! The blood of seven on it.

Jesús tugged at the lid. It didn't give. He hit it with the hammer, pounding it loose and the rust flaked off and fell on the slimy stones. Then it was open.

I moved close and peered inside. Brother Hipólito's treasure was a pile of stones. . . . Someone had been before us. Someone had learned the monk's secret long ago.

Chapter Nineteen



WE ate dinner in the patio a few nights later. My brother lay in the cemetery with Mother and Father. The pit was filled in, and the tunnel was left to its ghosts. It was a farewell dinner, for Molly Gage and Penny and I were going home next day.

There was chicken with a rich brown sauce, and *tacos* and peppers in a golden crust. And there was a strange dessert made of avocados—or *aguacates,* as Madero called them. There were candles on the table, and after a while the full moon peered over the wall.

Madero's two fat little daughters, Dolores and Juanita, sat at the table. The Señora had protested, but Madero was firm.

"We are *Moderns,*" he said.

It was a warm night, full of silver and magic. Penny was there across from me, and Molly Gage was beside me. We didn't talk of murder. It wasn't easy not to. But we closed that chapter of our lives as best we could.

Madero did much of the talking. He told us about his childhood in the mountains. He had been a muleteer for a while, and every now and then he longed for the old life. Then he had worked in the silver mines at Pachuca, and later had been a coffin-maker's helper in San Angél. That was when he was going to school. A good life, he said, a full life. Now he was content as man could be. No man was entirely content, ever.

He was dressed for the occasion in one of his innumerable gabardine suits, and his hair was almost as polished as his shoes. But he didn't seem comfortable. With all his talk about the new Mexico, I sensed a yearning in him for the old life—for serapes and *huaraches,* for the charcoal-makers' fires on the hillsides, for the hill roads.

We had brandy there under the night sky. It was Mexican brandy, with a sharp bite to it. I liked it. I had always liked it. It too was Mexico. Then Madero glanced up at the moon. He said: "There will be many in the gardens tonight." He spoke to his wife in Spanish. He said: "Remember. The music and the moon and the singing."

"And the beer," Señora Madero said. "Always the beer."

"One cannot make love without beer," Madero said. He fished in his pocket and brought out a card. "My brother," he said in English, "operates several boats at Xochomilco. Some day you may go, eh?"

"Thanks," I said, and took the card.

"For nothing," Madero said. "What do you do when you return to the United States?"

"Teach," I said. "And write."

"A good life too," Madero said. "And you, Miss Gage?"

"I don't know," Penny said.

The children were nodding. The Señora bustled off with them, made them stop in the doorway and call goodnight to us. And when she came back, we got up to go.

"You will come again?" the Señora asked.

Molly Gage smiled and squeezed her hand. Without knowing Spanish, she understood. One didn't need a translator when Señora Madero smiled.

"Mitchell," Penny's aunt said, "tell her to visit us. Tell her they will always be welcome." I told her. Then we were outside, and Madero was in the doorway bobbing his head.

"My brother," he said. "Watch him. He is a sharp one. Don't pay more than four pesos an hour. He will ask twelve, without the card. With the card, he will ask eight. But pay only four." The door closed. That was the last I ever saw of José Manuel Madero. And now the door between us was shut and our lives were separate again, I knew how much I liked and respected the little man.

"I'm tired," Molly Gage sighed.

"I'll take you home," I said.

"The moon is full," Penny said. "Remember? You said some day when the moon was full we would go to Xochomilco. It's full tonight."

We got a taxi. Penny sat in the middle, and when her aunt got out at the Nuevo Mundo, Penny didn't move. We crossed town and turned south, and then we were in open country; and up on the hills we could see the little fires of the charcoal-makers. We turned east, and ahead were the two great mountains sleeping in the night.

We sat close together, but we didn't speak for a long time. There was a great deal to say, but where was one to begin? I didn't know. So I sat there and watched the moon-drenched fields slip by, and then we were at the canal, and a horde of Mexicans surrounded us. I produced the card. A man even shorter than Madero pushed up to me and beamed. Friends of his brother? A great man, his brother. A valuable man to Mexico. Had I heard how he solved the mysteries of the Street of the Crying Woman? Such detective work! A boat? Eight pesos, señor.

"Four," I said.

"Six," Madero's brother said. There was a union. Did I not believe in unions?

"Four," I said.

He shrugged. "Four, then." But the Señor wished music, certainly.

"Certainly," I said.

That would be four pesos more. Cheap—a ridiculous price, really.

"All right," I said.

"Because you are my brother's friend, I do this," he said. "And because the Señorita is lovely."

The moon climbed above the poplars, and the canals were strips of silver. We lay in the back of the boat and looked up through the walls of trees. A family party drifted past, and there was the smell of food, and there was much singing and laughter.

"What did he say?" Penny asked. "He spoke so fast."

"He said you were lovely," I said.

"What else?"

"He said your eyes were like the cornflowers in his garden," I said.

Our musicians moved up. There were four of them, three guitars and a home-made marimba. They began to play very softly and to sing. They sang "La Paloma," but I didn't mind. I decided it wasn't such a bad song, really.

"Mitchell," Penny said, "I've been a fool. But I think I've grown up, Mitchell."

"Don't grow up," I said.

"I won't grow up too much," Penny said. "I'll still put people on pedestals."

"Only the right people."

"Only you," Penny said. "He didn't say that, did he? The man at the landing. About the cornflowers—*you* said it, Mitchell." Her face shut out the moon.

SOME day I'll go back to Mexico again. I'll take the long straight road south from Laredo, through the jungle to Tamazunchale, then up over the hills to the broad valley where the maguey plants march across the plain in gray-green rows. Off to the left I'll see the White Woman sleeping in the mist, and beyond, the white cone of the Smoking Mountain. There will be organ cactus sheltering the little huts. There will be men and women and children trudging along the roads carrying their incredible loads. There will be dust and sun and wind, and in a field, a herd of white goats grazing.

THE END

Readers' Forum*

(Continued from page 1)

FROM "THIS LITTLE BIT OF ENGLAND"

I am a British flying-cadet, lately come over from England, and things over here are still rather strange. It takes time to learn your ways, but now I am beginning to understand things a little better.

To come to the point of criticism of your magazine. Frankly, I can find very little. The stories are solid and practicable, and make excellent reading.

In England, illustrations form a large part of a magazine, and the artists try to be very accurate in their drawings. My one and only criticism, therefore, is the "Beaufighter" of your March issue. Being in the R. A. F., this drawing was of particular interest to myself and my friends; and although it could be identified easily as a Beaufighter, it caused a tremendous argument. So be careful on R. A. F. subjects, won't you, for we broke a chair, last time.

The BLUE BOOK *is the best American magazine I have come across; so from "this little bit of England" let me extend my regards for the success of a magazine that could, perhaps, be British. And that means something to us.*

A United Kingdom Aviation Cadet
Attd. U.S. Air Corps

HEW TO THE PLOT

I have a little request to make of the BLUE BOOK *make-up man. It's a matter of margin, or rather the lack of it. Couldn't you give us a little more margin between the brads and the reading, so I won't have to nearly tear the magazine apart to read it.*

The stories in BLUE BOOK *hit me just about right and I would hate to see you change your editorial policy any at all. I enjoy the good illustrations; they are half the story to me. Keep on giving us the widest possible range of locale and topic, historic sketches, nature stories, humor and adventure that is historically and geographically correct.*

I personally prefer short stories, but see no sense in condensing or padding a yarn to make it fit some preconceived length standard. To paraphrase an old saying, hew to the plot and let the length fall where it may.

E. M. Gleason, Jr.
Fort Payne, Alabama

*The Editors of BLUE BOOK are glad to receive letters of constructive criticism and suggestion; for the ones we publish each month we will pay the writers ten dollars each.

Letters should not be longer than two hundred words; no letters can be returned, and all will become property of McCall Corporation. They should be addressed: Editor of Letters, Blue Book Magazine, 230 Park Ave., New York.

A NOVEL OF THE PRE-WAR INVASION

"MINDANAO MIRAGE"

By CHARLES L. CLIFFORD

Who wrote "Far Call the Bugles" and "Parade Ground"

IT was nearing sunset when we came to where I knew that at any minute I would have my first sight of the hacienda. The trail here was plain, almost a road, beside the narrowing, steeply falling river.

I had a strange, unsure feeling. It came to me that I was frightened. The same feeling I remembered, years back, when the great guns of Japanese warships tore into us at point-blank range at Shanghai. I was just a boy then, and I remember that I moved closer to my father, and he touched my hand. That was in the great Nineteenth Route Army—China's first proof to the world that peace and trade was not all she understood.

And now I was back in the Philippines, and in a few minutes I would see, talk to Gabrielle Clough. It wouldn't be pleasant; nothing in my life had been pleasant. My main mission here, in the land where I was born, was unpleasant. The Marshal himself had directed it, and for proper reasons I had been selected as the most useful emissary. But there was a private mission; and that was for my father. For me a distasteful mission, since I had seen that picture in the window of a Manila photographer's—a picture of Gabrielle Clough. Startled by it, and at last getting up courage and asking who it was. The shock of that knowledge, with the attack on her father already under way!

My pony reached a high point in the trail and I looked back at my party. There were Lipas, the *capitaz*; the half dozen Moro *cargadores*; Sergeant Doan and the man riding silently in front of him.

I had an urge to call back, to have the man Mitras come forward, to ask him openly just what he remembered of what he was to do. I didn't trust Mitras.

But I knew that wouldn't do. Like the captain of a ship of war, the general in command of an army, I had at last come to that point where responsibility lay alone with me. I kicked the tough, round-bodied stallion, though his ears were up at last, his own steps hastening. He took a few stiff trotting steps, went up, down into a small hollow, and threw me forward as he came to the next rise; and there was the hacienda.

I stared at it, filling myself with it. With the broad plains, with the clusters of cattle, with the golden crop of cinchona trees. I held my breath unconsciously as I saw the white façade of the house.

It was all beautiful. The house itself was a shock to me. I remembered none of it.

Behind me I heard the *capitaz* shout.

I looked back then: at this entourage made necessary because of the jungle-ridden path I had followed. I was reminded of tales of the robber knights, their armed followers at their backs, and they ahead, encased in armor, their great shields emblazoned, their lances restless on their arms . . . Knights-errant.

Hell, I thought, and laughed. A knight in armor. A *Sancho Panza* on a mangy Filipino pony and a lousy job ahead. . . . (Lt. Colonel Clifford goes on from there).

With many other fine stories by such writers as Francis Cockrell, Frederick Painton, Achmed Abdullah, John McIntyre and H. Bedford-Jones, this remarkable and timely novel by a former officer of the Philippine Scouts will appear in the forthcoming July issue of—

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