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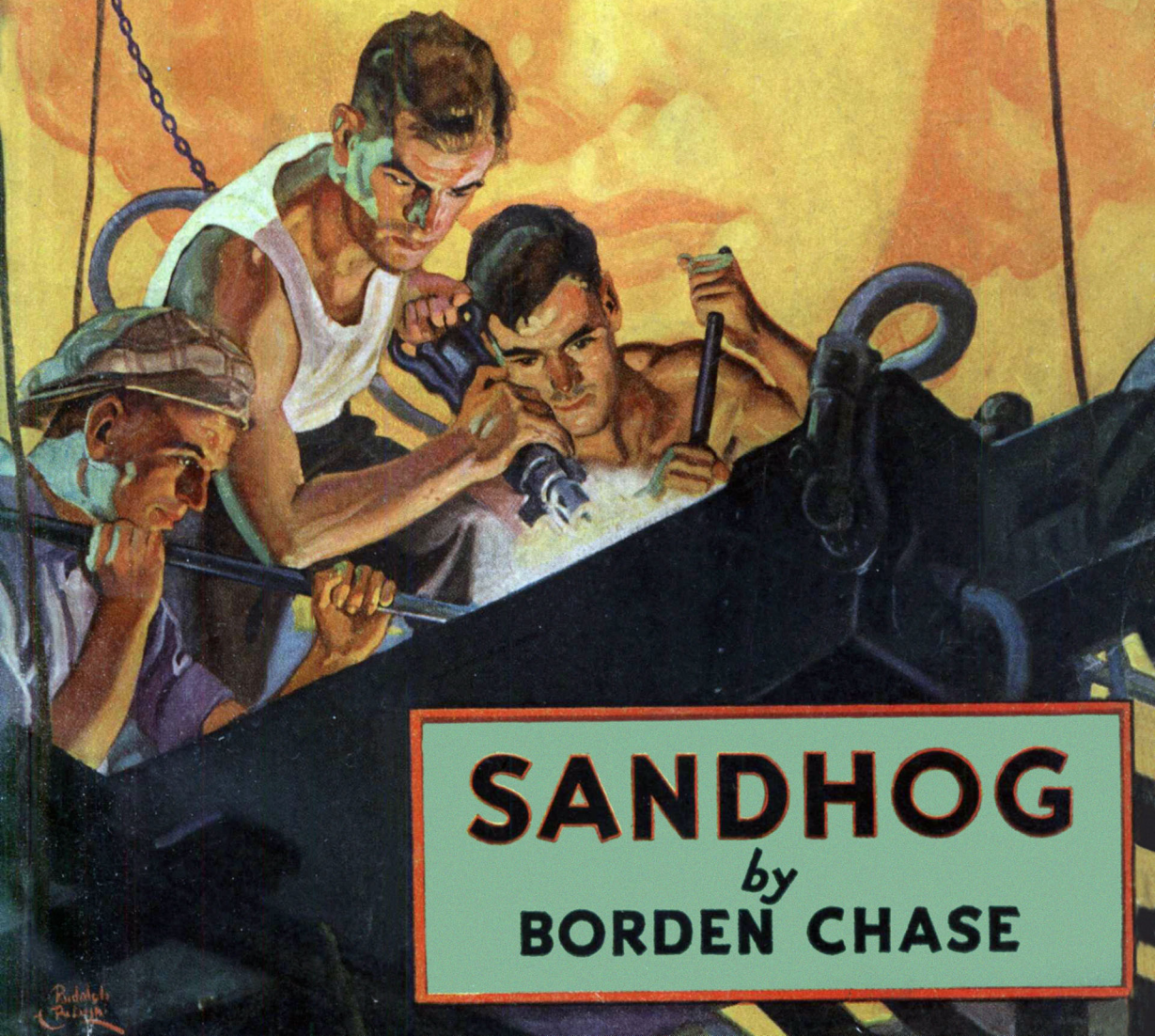
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# ARGOSY

NOV. 13

WEEKLY

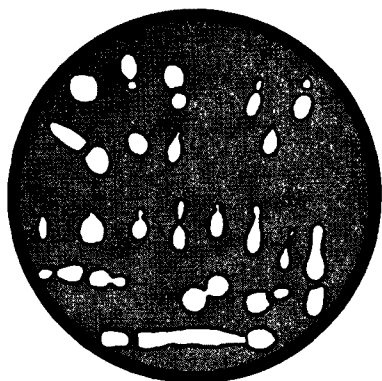


**SANDHOG**  
*by*  
**BORDEN CHASE**

*Rudolph  
Pfeiffer*

# This is the stubborn germ you must kill if you want

## REAL RELIEF FROM DANDRUFF



### *Pityrosporum ovale*

*The germ which causes dandruff, magnified many times. In cases of dandruff it is always present on the scalp and hair and in dandruff scales.*

**I**F you have any evidence of dandruff, don't waste time on untried ointments, salves or solutions that merely strike at symptoms and relieve only temporarily.

Use the new treatment that really gets at the cause . . . the only treatment so far as we know that has proved itself repeatedly in laboratory and clinic . . . the treatment that is getting results for countless people who try it . . . Listerine Antiseptic once or twice a day, accompanied by massage.

Listerine surrounds the hair and scalp and penetrates infected hair follicles, and kills the germ *Pityrosporum ovale*, which, research now shows, causes dandruff.

### See Improvement at Once

After the first few treatments you will notice how Listerine Antiseptic diminishes the number of unsightly crusts and scales. How it allays irritating itch and burning which so often accompany a dandruff condition. How it cleanses and freshens the scalp so that it feels lively and youthful. How it brings new vigor to the hair, itself.

For your own satisfaction, examine Listerine's brilliant results in the most searching clinical study of dandruff undertaken in years.

### Curing Rabbits of Dandruff

Rabbits given dandruff by inocula-



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TO APPLY **LISTERINE** IS BY  
MEDICINE DROPPER APPLIED  
TO THE PART IN THE HAIR

tion of *Pityrosporum ovale* were treated on one side, only, with Listerine Antiseptic once a day. The other side was untreated.

Within four days improvement was noted, and at the end of fourteen days, on the average, a complete cure was effected. No scales, no crusts. The sides not treated with Listerine showed evidence of dandruff nearly a month later.

### Relief in Two Weeks

In a noted midwestern skin clinic, men and women dandruff patients were chosen for the Listerine treatment. A majority were instructed to massage the scalp *once a day* with Listerine Antiseptic. The rest of the group used a non-antiseptic solution. We ask you to carefully note the convincing results again achieved:

A substantial number of the users of Listerine Antiseptic obtained

marked relief in the first two weeks on the average. In many other cases, scalps were found to be clear and free of dandruff in from three to eight weeks—itching stopped, dandruff scales were eliminated, and in some cases falling hair was terminated. *Virtually none of the persons using a non-antiseptic solution showed any improvement.*

### 75% Got Relief

Meanwhile in a New Jersey clinic, other dermatologists were cross-checking the results of the midwestern clinic. Fifty men and women, all with definitely established cases of dandruff, were undergoing treatment twice a day with Listerine Antiseptic. At the end of three weeks, 75% showed either complete disappearance of, or marked improvement in, the symptoms of dandruff, i.e., itching, scaling. Only three failed to respond to the Listerine treatment, possibly due, as a research report suggests, to irregularity in applying the treatment.

### Keep it Up

If you have the slightest evidence of dandruff, start now with Listerine and massage, once a day at least. Twice a day is better. Caution: Don't expect overnight miracles. Remember, dandruff is a germ disease, requiring persistent and systematic treatment, which *should be antiseptic*. Remember, also, that Listerine's results against dandruff are a matter of laboratory and clinical record.

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# ARGOSY

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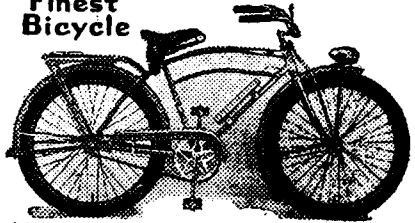
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# Sandhog

By BORDEN CHASE

Author of "Blue-White and Perfect," "Midnight Taxi," etc.

## CHAPTER I

### MEN OF THE RIVER

**F**OUR naked youngsters crouched at the end of a dock that jutted into the East River. They watched the slow-moving water and its cargo of boxes, planks, oil-soaked rags and the waste of factories crowding the Brooklyn river front. Early June sun painted a wavering pattern in the rainbow oil that filmed the surface. It touched the dried planking of the dock. It made pleasant smells. Summer smells.

"Think it's warm?" asked a spindle-legged towhead.

"Yeah—like ice," said a darker boy.

"Aw, it's warm," said another. "Go ahead in, Whitey."

"Nothin' doin'. I ain't first."

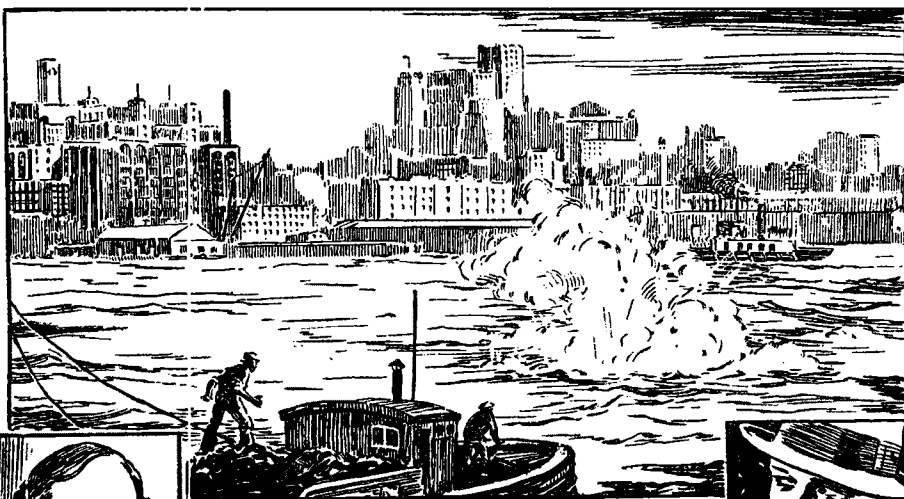
"You said to come swimmin'. It's your turn to go first."

"In a pig's eye!" protested Whitey. "We chose for it."

There was argument. Four voices lifted against the constant noise that is part of the Brooklyn waterfront. Dirty hands waved. The voices became shrill, high. Robert Saxon—general superintendent of the Touchet Construction Company leaned against a heavy iron bitt halfway to the dock-end and grinned. He hooked his thumbs into the waistband of his khaki trousers and walked farther out onto the pier.

For a time his eyes held to a frothing geyser of white water that boiled and bubbled near the middle of the river. Compressed air. Leakage from the tunnel driving toward New York. There was a pressure of forty pounds in the tube building beneath the river. And a gang of sandhogs was working down there. Breathing it. Soaking it into their blood streams. Fighting a river and a wall of slimy mud. Bert Saxon studied the "boil" and gauged its height. Then he glanced at the naked youngsters and saw two pairs of hands had been doubled into fists.

Whitey was through with verbal ar-



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gument. He cocked a right fist at shoulder height and squinted at his pal's chin. His feet scuffed against the wood planking. His left moved forward tentatively as Saxon laughed aloud and pointed to the river.

"Last one in is a rotten egg!" called Bert. "Anyone can fight. It takes a good man to swim."

Whitey's fists came down and he turned a freckled face toward the tunnel superintendent.

"Rory says I'm yeller," he said. "I'm goin' to break his snoot."

"That's what you think," cried Rory. "I'll clout you one on the ear that'll molder you."

"Yeah?" said Whitey. And the fists came up again.

Bert took a half dollar from his pocket and flipped it into the air. Bright sunlight flashed on the silver. He caught it and held it between thumb and

forefinger. When Whitey and his pals moved toward him expectantly, he spun the coin out over the water. There was a thump of bare heels against planking. Four youngsters hit the water as one and wiggled under the surface. A moment later Whitey was swimming toward the dock with the coin between his teeth.

"How's the water?" laughed Bert.

"Warm—like ice!" yelled Whitey between gasps. "Come on in, Bert."

"For two cents I'd do that."

"It's a bet. Remind me and I'll give you two cents after."

"But no owings," Bert laughed.

He reached over his shoulder and hauled at the back of a mud-stained work-shirt. The tail had just come free of the belt when a man hurried across the dock and touched his shoulder.

"They want you at the shaft," he said quickly.

"Not a chance!" Bert pulled the shirt clear of his head. "I finish at four and it's four-thirty now. Besides, I've got to win a bet, Harry."

"This is important, Bert. Dan Hannagan is down with a crushed chest. Young McLane has a broken ankle and some of the others are in bad shape."

"What?"

"They were blasting," said Harry. "Hannagan didn't take his gang far enough up tunnel when the shot was fired and—"

BERT SAXON was running across the dock. His high-laced boots pounded against the planking and his long arms swung. He was a big man. Thick-chested and well muscled across the shoulders. As he ran he drew deep breaths through nostrils that flared slightly. His lips were drawn back as though he could feel in his own chest the sharp bite of broken ribs that were cutting into the lungs of Dan Hannagan.

A good man, Hannagan, but reckless. Bert had warned him less than a week past. The tunnel-head had driven into a nest of boulders—huge round stones that weighed up to ten tons and had to be blasted and broken. At such times the heading boss was supposed to take his gang far up-tunnel. But Hannagan was a hound for work. Speed and more speed. He was never satisfied. And now a jagged piece of rock had caught up with him.

"Has the doctor seen him?" asked Bert. He turned his head but did not slacken his pace.

"He was calling an ambulance when I left."

"Has he got a chance?"

"I think so. About one in a hundred."

One in a hundred! Bert turned into

a narrow street that led from the river. Two blocks distant he could see the tall mast of a derrick as it swung slowly across the shaft. Work was still going on. The tunnel was driving. It always drove. Day and night—twenty-four hours on end the sandhogs fought the river. And if a man was crushed or mangled or killed the derrick-boom kept swinging.

One chance in a hundred. And Dan Hannagan was past forty. There was a wife with blue eyes and wide smile. As he ran, Bert thought of Mary Hannagan's hands. They were red and cracked from hours at the wash tubs. But above the wrists the skin was white and smooth. It freckled when the sun touched it, and Bert remembered how she had laughed when he called them Irish beauty-marks. Yes, there was good sandhog stock in the Hannagans. And Dan's boy at seventeen would soon have the strong back and wide shoulders of his father.

"Was he conscious when you left?"

"Cursing like a trcuper," said Harry. "And spitting blood with every word."

"Ah, the fool! The big, ugly—"

Bert's throat was tight. As he pounded past a row of low, brick tenements near the shaft he caught sight of two young Hannagans standing with a group of youngsters about a spouting fire hydrant. One waved a hand and called him by name. He waved back and increased his speed. One chance in a hundred. And Dan was never a man to save money. No more than Tom Wilson whose kids were playing at the hydrant, too.

"How about Wilson?" cried Bert. "Did he get it?"

"No. He and the miners got clear. Young McLane stuck with Dan and stopped a piece of rock with his leg. The others—"



Bert was close to the gate that led through the high board fence about the shaft. His fist knocked it open and he leaped inside. He wasn't worried about Tom McLane. A nice enough youngster and a good mucker. But there were no children or wife to wait for his pay envelope. A few weeks in the hospital meant little or nothing to a sandhog. The rest would do him good.

A half-dozen mud-grimed men crowded the door of a small emergency-hospital near the shaft. They stepped aside when Bert called. He hurried through the open doorway. White tables and white chairs were set near the wall in a room that had been lined with tin sheeting and painted white. There was a strong smell of disinfectants. To one side the rounded head of the medical-lock showed a single glass bull's-eye and a glittering array of polished valves. It was here sandhogs afflicted with the bends and other compressed air ailments were taken for hours of slow decompression.

Near it was a doorway leading into another white painted office—the operating room. Bert heard Hannagan cursing. The heading boss wanted his pipe. He wanted it in a hurry. He didn't think much of a doctor who would keep a pipe from a man. He rolled his eyes toward Bert.

"Hi, there, Bert," he said. "Tell this ape I want me pipe."

"It sounds as though you've been telling him," said Bert. "How's the chest?"

"'Tis only a scratch. I'll be back down the hole in a day or two."

**B**ERT looked at Doctor Carruthers. The unspoken question in his eyes was answered by a slow shake of the doctor's head. He motioned to Bert and walked away from the table.

"His chest is smashed to pieces," he whispered. "I doubt if he can make it."

"In that case—can it hurt if he has a pipe?"

"Nothing can hurt him very much, now."

Bert fumbled in his pocket and found a stained brier. He filled it and held a flame above the tobacco. When it was drawing well he stepped to the table and put it in Dan Hannagan's mouth.

"Here—smoke a good pipe for a change," he said. "That dudeen of yours smells like a dirty stove."

Blue clouds drifted above the injured sandhog's head. He dragged one hand toward his face. The thumb rested for a moment against his nose and he wagged the fingers at the doctor. Then the pipe slipped from his teeth and his eyes closed. The doctor caught his wrist. Held it a moment, and his teeth worried his lower lip.

"Tough as hell," he said quietly. "He's unconscious but his pulse is good. He may make the grade, Bert."

"He's got to," said the super.

An ambulance-bell sounded in the street and the doctor motioned the men away from the door. Bert turned toward a young, white-faced mucker who sat upright in a nearby chair, one leg propped upon a stool. There were splints and a hasty bandage below the knee. The mucker grinned and drew steadily at a cigarette. Bert rested a hand on his shoulder.

"Your first crackup, isn't it, McLane?" he asked.

"Aw, this is nothing. Doesn't hurt at all."

"That's the stuff. Don't let it worry you."

Bert turned to three other sandhogs who were seated in the room. Each was bandaged and each smoked silently as he watched Dan Hannagan being

carried to the ambulance. When Bert questioned them about their injuries they dismissed them with a wave of the hand. One drew a crushed pipe from his pocket and showed it to Bert.

"Tell Touchet I'm going to sue him," he said lightly. "I just had this broken in good. And it cost two dollars."

"We'll settle that out of court," laughed Bert. "I'll get another and break it in for you."

He bent down and put an arm beneath McLane's knees. His other went around the mucker's shoulders and he lifted gently. A grimace of pain touched McLane's face. But he grinned it away and waved cheerfully to the others as Bert carried him to the street. Hannagan was not yet in the ambulance and Bert waited, cradling the mucker as lightly as though he were a child.

"What hospital are we going to?" asked McLane.

"The Riverside," said Bert. "Pretty soft for you."

"Would you do me a favor?"

"Sure. What is it?"

"Stop in and tell Kay I'm all right. If she hears about this she'll think I'm dead or something."

"Kay?" said Bert. "That your girl?"

"No," said McLane. "You must remember her, Bert. She's my sister. Used to live with us when Dad worked the Detroit job."

"You mean that gangly kid with the long black braids?"

"Yeah. That's her," laughed McLane. "Only, she isn't gangly any more."

"Where did she get to?"

"Oh, Kay went out for herself when Dad got killed on the Holland job. Said she was fed up."

"That's too bad," said Bert. "Let's see—only the two of you, isn't there?"

"Us, and Joe Treadwell, our uncle.

He's working for Gus Blaucher on the Fulton Street job."

The interne was motioning to Bert and he carried McLane to the ambulance. When the young mucker was seated next to Hannagan, Bert took a pencil stub and small piece of paper from the lining of his hat.

"Where will I find her?" he asked.

"I don't remember the number, but it's on East Fifty-first Street near Madison Avenue. She's got a dress shop and lives in the apartment over it. Tell her I'm all right, and not to worry."

"Sure I will, Mac," said Bert. "I'll tell her to send you cigarettes and a fancy nightgown."

"Nix!" called McLane as the door closed.

BERT waved and stepped to the curb to make a note of the address. Kay McLane—he remembered her as a skinny kid with elbows and knees that were large and knobby. Her hair had been dark and Bert recalled she was very proud of it. She had kept it braided and wore wide bows at the end of the braids. As he walked toward the construction office he thought of the morning when he had gone into a heading for the first time. That had been a proud day. The day when the last of the Saxons was given a pay check and sent into the compressed air.

Kay McLane had waved to him as he went down on the cage with the gang. The men had laughed and poked fun at him. And he had decided to speak to Kay—tell her he was no longer a kid and she must stop staring at him with those big eyes. And above all, she must stop telling other kids he was her sweetheart.

There had been a bad five minutes that evening. They walked down to the river front and Bert tried to ex-

plain that sandhogs were men. Even a young mucker who had spent his first day on a shovel could not be expected to share candy with a girl who was still in short dresses. And Kay looked at him. Those big eyes had been steady as they filled with tears. Bert remembered wiping the end of her nose while she stood there and said nothing. Then she turned away and walked back to the tenement where her father and brother lived near the tunnel shaft.

The Holland Tunnel had started not long after and Bert went with his father to New York. The McLanes had come, too. Old Angus McLane had been the first man killed beneath the Hudson River. After that Bert had never seen Kay again. And now her brother had asked him to go to her—tell her he had been hurt in another tunnel.

Bert walked to the tenement that had been converted into a field office for the Touchet Construction Company. The second floor was given over to offices of the shift superintendents, showers and a front office where a broken sign read: *R. Saxon—General Superintendent*. He tossed his battered hat to the top of an iron locker after first putting Kay's address on his desk. Then he stripped and stepped under a steaming shower. He was rubbing a coarse-grained towel across his wide shoulders when the phone on his desk rang. He lifted the receiver.

"Yes? Bert Saxon talking," he said.

"Mr. Touchet wants you to come to the New York office," said the voice of the company operator. "It's rather important and he'd like you here in a half hour."

"Tell him to get a good book and read it," laughed Bert. "I'll be there in an hour. Maybe two hours."

He dropped the receiver onto the

hook and started to dress. When he had pulled on a pair of well-pressed blue serge trousers he glanced into a small mirror near the shower and rubbed a hand across his chin. For a moment he studied the wide-jawed reflection and debated as to whether that chin stubble would hold until morning. When he had shaved he took a fresh blue shirt from a laundry box on his desk, matched it with a blue tie from his locker and finished dressing.

In a sheet-iron garage near the shaft he found his car had been washed and polished by the handy-man who kept the office clean. He settled himself behind the wheel and headed toward New York.

The construction game had treated him well. As the last of a long line of tunnel-builders he had started on a shovel before his high school days were over. First as mucker, then a few years on the iron, next he had crouched in the tunnel heading with the miners and learned a trade as natural to Bert Saxon as the compressed air he breathed. He was in his early twenties when he was given his first gang. After that he had come fast. Now, as general superintendent on a subway-tunnel he was drawing down four hundred dollars a week. And spending all of it.

There was a small suite of rooms in a midtown hotel that served as his home while this tunnel was building. The head waiters of the city's best restaurants knew him and accepted his five-dollar tips. Theater-ticket brokers, night-club managers, the Times Square crowd and the bookmakers at the race-tracks grinned and waved a cheery hello when they saw Bert Saxon.

Yes, he decided, there were a great many other ways to make a living that were less pleasant than that of tunnel superintendent.



## CHAPTER II

## SONATAS AND STEEL

TRAFFIC was heavy in the Grand Central district and Bert drove his car to a parking station on Vanderbilt Avenue. He crossed Forty-second Street and rode an express elevator to the offices of the Touchet Construction Company. They were on the thirty-fifth floor and as Bert crossed the outer office he could see through one of the windows the flat gray surface of the East River winding in an irregular line toward the Upper Bay. He paused for a moment and tried to locate the arm of the tall hoist. But low mists blocked his vision and he turned away. The office force had left for the day and he walked without interruption to a door marked *Private*.

"Lo, Paul," he said as he stepped into a wide, carefully furnished office. "Dig up a bottle of Scotch. I need a drink."

Paul Touchet looked up from a sheet of penciled manuscript paper and smiled. It was a pleasant smile—warm, inviting and cordial. But there was nothing soft about it. In spite of a carefully clipped mustache, slender face and large brown eyes, Paul Touchet had the look of a man who could hold up his end in an argument. Not a fist-fight, perhaps. Paul's strength was more on the order of a man who might parry and thrust with a rapier.

"Help yourself, Bert," he said. "You know your way to the bar."

He bent again over the manuscript and Bert crossed to a small folding bar near the windows. It was bleached mahogany like the desk, tables, chairs and beautifully upholstered lounge. Paul Touchet's office furniture was an indication of the man who had purchased it. Not far from the small bar, and

placed in such a way the player could glance out over the East River, was a grand piano with a bleached mahogany case. Well-worn scores of Grieg, Tschaikowsky, Rimsky-Korsakoff, Debussy and dozens of other composers littered the flat piano-top. Manuscript paper was scattered across a nearby table. And in a bookcase near the door the shelves were lined with histories and textbooks on music—wide volumes and thin that had crowded a score of engineering tomes and construction handbooks to the bottom of the case.

Bert opened the front of the folding bar and selected a bottle of liqueur Scotch. He poured a drink for himself, looked inquiringly at Paul and shrugged when the tunnel contractor shook his head. He carried his drink to the desk and glanced doubtfully at a stainless steel chair.

"Those darn things look better than they feel," he said. "Remind me of the work Jeff Towley did."

"Towley?"

"Yes," laughed Bert. "He was a drunken pipe-fitter used to work for me."

Paul smiled and motioned to the chair. "Sit down," he said. "I've got about five minutes on this chord progression, then I'll be with you. I'm having trouble with the adagio."

"Why don't you fire him and hire an Irishman?"

"Fire who?"

"Adagio."

"Adagio is a movement in this score, you egg," said Paul. "I want Pilsudsky to try it over for me this evening."

"One of us is talking Chinese," said Bert. "I've built a lot of tunnels but I've never seen an adagio. And if Pilsudsky works for us he must be one of the Polacks in the concrete gang. But you're talking Greek."

Paul rested his elbows on the manuscript, cupped his chin in his hands and stared at Bert. For a moment their eyes held. Then Paul reached across the desk, took the half-emptied glass from Bert's hand and drained it.

"It's a good thing I know you, Bert," he said. "If I thought you were dumb as you pretend, I'd find a new construction superintendent to finish that tunnel."

"One who could play a piano?"

"Perhaps."

"Might be a good idea," said Bert. "Then he could sit here with you and write music while the tunnel built itself. That's one of the nice things about tunnels—they don't need much attention."

"That's hardly fair, Bert," said Paul. "I'm the contractor. You can't expect me to go down with a gang and yell for more speed on the shovels."

Paul stood up and walked slowly toward the window. He stood for a moment looking out across the flat reaches of Long Island. At length he turned, crossed to the desk and hooked one leg over the corner.

"Yes, I know what you mean," he said. "I've bid in another tunnel job and made a mess of it. As a contractor, I'm a fairly good pianist. Incidentally—I'm broke. If we finish the job before the end of the month I won't be more than two hundred and fifty thousand dollars to the bad. When I deduct that from my capital there should be something like twelve dollars and fifty cents left. If I spend that for a new copy of the Tschaikowsky Concerto, I'll be even with the world."

Bert went to the bar and brought the bottle to the table. He poured another drink and set the bottle firmly before him.

"Sometimes I feel like socking you

right between the eyes," he said evenly. "And this is one of the times."

"Why? Because I don't know how to build a tunnel?"

"No—because you do!" Bert snapped. "You and everyone else in the construction-trade knows Paul Touchet is miles ahead of his nearest competitor. You're an expert draftsman, a fine engineer, you're a wizard at figures and you know how to handle men. There isn't a contractor in the country who can figure a bid more exactly. But every third tunnel you build wipes out the profits on the first two."

"Thanks for the case history," said Paul. "In return, let me say you're a darn good general superintendent. And when I go broke—as I will in a few weeks—I'll recommend you highly to the trade in general."

"Thanks for nothing," Bert snapped. "If you'd stop fiddling with that piano you wouldn't go broke."

"Sorry—it's too late to worry now. The job is a washout."

BERT helped himself to a cigarette from the silver box on Paul's desk. He lit it and studied the flame of the match. His lips were thin when he looked again at the contractor.

"You should spend more time under the river," he said. "If you did, you'd see a gang of men working like hell to speed up the job. You'd see miners risking their necks, muckers loading sand as though their lives depended upon a moment lost—iron men, concrete-workers, the whole gang of them fighting to save a minute. And to make money for their contractor."

"Don't you think I know, Bert?"

"Do you?"

"Let me answer that with another question," said Paul quietly. "Have I

ever complained about the work? Have I ever asked for more speed?"

"No," Bert said thoughtfully. "You haven't."

"Have I complained about the wage scale? Have I refused a single demand of the sandhogs?"

"Of course not, but—"

Paul stopped Bert with a wave of his hand. "You know what I think of the hogs, Bert. There's never been any quarrel between us." He smiled and crossed to the piano. For a moment his hands rippled the keys in a series of light runs. "Listen—maybe this will tell you. It's part of the score I've just finished. One I'm going to play for Pilsudsky this evening."

His long fingers raced up the keyboard. Sound came from the piano. Soft, pulsing, a monotonous flow like the sweep of compressed air through the long black pipes leading down the shaft at the job. As Bert listened he caught the whine of leaking pressure, the clank of hoisting machinery and the rumble of cages that carried the men to the tunnel mouth. It was as though he had stepped aboard one of these small elevators and was standing crowded and silent with the men of the gang going to work. Unconscious of the music he saw the wet gray walls of the shaft slip past. Deep below the surface of the ground were the blunted ends of long iron cylinders facing him from the tunnel bulkhead. A rushing crescendo told of pressure blasting from the man-lock valves. The gang crouched and walked into the lock, took their places on the rough board seats and waited for the pressure. It came—rippling through the upper registers of the keyboard, growing to a howling blast that made Bert gulp and swallow to clear the air passages in his head.

The tempo changed. Bert's mind told him of a heavy iron door that swung back. He walked with the gang into the tunnel and looked ahead into misty darkness. A string of lights, like a bright necklace on the throat of some African princess, curved in a gentle slope toward the center of the river bed. Muck cars rattled and clanked along a set of narrow-gauge tracks. He heard the shouts of the gang working in the distant heading. The clang of tools and the swish of sand loading into cars. While over and through all other sounds came the dull thunder of compressed air roaring into the tubes.

His hands gripped the desk edge and he leaned forward. His eyes were fixed on the gathering darkness that crept in from the horizon and surrounded the tall office building. But they were sightless eyes. Bert Saxon was seeing with his mind—with his ears. A tall, thin man sat at a piano and told him the story of the tunnel. Crashing chords spoke of a fight waged by giants against a mighty enemy—the river. He saw miners stripped to their waists, sweat running in twisted dirty streams across their shoulders as they dug cunningly into the sand. Near them were their helpers, young, eager-faced workers who stood ready with sledge or shovel. And farther back, under the curving shell of the long tube Bert saw the iron men. Monstrous blacks—Senegalese and Jamaicans with bulging arms and backs that glistened with moisture. They swung rhythmically above long heavy wrenches, tightening the bolts that held the tunnel segments.

As the music swept on, Bert caught the rhythm of the work. A constant, pulsing, breathing rhythm that told of hard men working at a hard trade. A threat hung like a sword in the swirling mists of fog that wrapped the



tunnel and the workers as a shroud. The voice of the river. A distant, muffled voice that warned constantly. "Some day," it said. "Some day I'll come through. *Some day.*" And the laughs of the sandhogs answered.

All this the music told. As he listened, Bert Saxon's hands closed about the desk edge until the knuckles showed white. He saw the river break through and pour like a Niagara into the heading. Miners and muckers fought, screamed at it, cursed and shouted like men gone mad. It caught them up and whirled them into maelstrom. Black mud, slimy, foul-smelling ooze of the river bed crept in and filled the tube. And again Bert was at the shaft-head. Women were there. Sandhogs' wives and sandhogs' children. They stood dry-eyed and silent and watched the men who came from the tunnel. At times a woman turned her head and covered her eyes with a shaking arm. Bert remembered when his father had not come up with the gang—when old Martin Hogan had led him away from the shaft and taken him home to cry alone through a long night.

Others were in the picture. White-faced women and hard-jawed men. Angus McLane and the men of the Talbot family. Then he saw Dan Hannagan calling for his pipe as the blood bubbled from his crushed lips. He saw young McLane grin to keep the tears from his eyes. And as he listened the music changed. It told of a derrick boom that swung and swung. Dribbling loads of river-bed spewed from the tunnel. New men went in. The work kept on. The tunnel drove.

The rhythm held as the last faint notes drifted off into nothingness. Silence came to the office that was lit only by a golden moon that hung over the dark horizon. For a time neither

man moved. A breeze came through the open window and rustled the sheets of manuscript. Paul lifted his head.

"Like it?" he asked quietly.

Bert Saxon kicked back his chair and walked to a light-switch. He touched it and brilliance flooded the office. It routed the moonlight and splashed upon the window sill.

"Cute little thing," said Bert casually. "What do you call it—*Moonlight on the Bathtub?*"

"T'hell with you," laughed Paul and pushed back the piano stool. "I saw your face while I was playing."

"Was I asleep?"

Paul grinned and reached for a cigarette. "Not quite," I'm calling it *River Tunnel*. Like the name?"

Bert nodded but said nothing. He wondered about this tall man who stood before him. Paul Touchet was an artist. A dreamer. Chance had thrown him into the construction line and during the past ten years his record of success and failure had been without equal. Likeable, easy-going yet entirely competent when the whim seized him, he had found a place in the affections of the tunnel builders. The sandhogs liked him. And liking him, they worked for the Touchet Construction Company as though it were their own.

A STRONG friendship had grown between Paul and Bert Saxon. It was Paul who had given Bert his first job as tunnel superintendent. Bert had finished the work ahead of contract and netted a half-million profit for Touchet. There had been other jobs. All of them completed ahead of schedule but not all of them financial successes.

"How long have you been working on that sonata?" Bert asked.

"Aha!" cried Paul. "So my unmusi-

cal tunnel-boss knows a sonata when he hears one."

"Never mind that," persisted Bert. "How long has it taken you to write it?"

"About six months."

"You were working on it when you handed out the contract to Anderson & Company for the steel?"

"Of course."

"And when you made the deal for the cement?"

"Yes. But—"

"And when you sublet the work at the shaft?"

"What the devil are you getting at?" asked Paul.

"Simply this," said Bert slowly. "You bid in this job at a good figure. The men gave you a fair day's work for a fair day's wage. We've had pretty good luck on the job. But—you're broke."

"Are you going to rub it in?"

"Plenty!"

"Why?"

"Because you're a fool," said Bert. "You've been clowning around with sonatas while your subordinates have been handing out contracts that broke you. Anderson & Company were paid double the right price. The concrete deal was plain robbery and the work at the shaft should go down as Touchet's Folly."

"Strangely enough, my hard-headed friend," laughed Paul, "I'm inclined to believe you're right."

"And now," said Bert hotly, "the largest and best East-River job ever proposed is coming up for bids. But because you've been a fool—you can't build it."

Paul laughed. "Don't let it worry you, Bert," he said. "I'll bid on that job and you'll build it for me. I'm taking in a new partner."

"Yeah? Who is he?"

"A man with plenty of money—Gus Blaucher."

"What?" cried Bert.

"Yes. Gus wants to build a tunnel. And he's got both money and credit."

Bert stared at the contractor for a full minute. He stood up, brushed the palms of his hands together as though clearing them of dirt and walked toward the door.

"Count me out," he said. "I don't work for Gus Blaucher. And I didn't think Paul Touchet was the man to hook up with a louse."

"Wait a minute," said Paul quickly. "Do you mean you won't handle the job if I tie up with Gus?"

"Naturally. You know that heel as well as I do. He's not fit to build tunnels—not fit to ride through one. For twenty years he's been bribing, swindling, stealing contracts and rolling up a fortune. There isn't a man in the trade who will talk to him if he can possibly help it. I won't work for him."

"What have you actually got against Gus?" asked Paul.

"Don't start that, Paul," said Bert. "The man is a heel and you know it."

"I know the biggest river-tunnel ever proposed is about to be built. And with Gus Blaucher as partner I can build it."

"There isn't anyone else?"

"No one," said Paul. He crossed to the window and pointed to the river. "Look at it, Bert. The toughest river in the world to tunnel. We've done it twice and we'll do it again. But this time we'll drive a thirty-two foot tube under it. Think of it—five years ago they swore it couldn't be done. But we'll do it!"

"It's a tough one, Paul," agreed Bert. "One mistake and the East River will prove they were right."

"Mistakes?" laughed Paul. "I've got a superintendent who doesn't make mistakes. He drives tunnel, mister."

"Sorry, Paul—it's no deal. Not with Gus Blaucher."

"Oh, don't be an old woman," laughed Paul. He caught Bert's arm and led him to the bar. "Come up to my place tonight and talk it over. You'll hear some good music and meet some swell people. Then a few drinks and we'll talk salary. If you ask more than five hundred dollars a week I'll stuff my latest sonata down your throat."

"Nothing doing," said Bert. "You're not going to get me tangled up with a bunch of long-haired men and short haired-women. I've been ducking those affairs for years."

"Nice-looking girls," said Paul wisely. "You might find one to interest you."

"Thanks, but I'll stick to night clubs," said Bert. "Besides, I've got a job to do."

"What is it?"

Bert helped himself to another drink and stared thoughtfully at the glass. "We had a mean one at the job today," he said. "Dan Hannagan got caught in a blast. Crushed his chest."

"Oh, Lord, that's a shame," said Paul. Thin lines webbed his eyes and he drew at his mustache. "Is he very bad, Bert?"

"There's a chance in a hundred he'll make it. But Dan's a tough one."

"Four youngsters, hasn't he?"

"Five, now."

Paul walked to the desk and drew out a large checkbook. He reached for a pen and wrote quickly. Tearing away the check he folded and tucked it into Bert's coat pocket.

"No need of them knowing where

that came from," he said. "Were there any others?"

"A few. But they didn't get it bad," said Bert. "Young McLane has a broken ankle and I've got to drop in and tell his sister."

"McLane?" said Paul thoughtfully. "Is that Angus McLane's boy?"

"Yes. But I didn't think you'd remember Angus."

"Sure I do," said Paul. "I met him in Detroit when I came out of college. You were working your first job. But I don't recall any girl in the family."

"You wouldn't," laughed Bert. "She was a scrawny kid—about thirteen years old then. We used to hold hands on the end of the dock."

"Have you seen her since?"

"Not since the Holland job."

"Then take my advice and forget you ever held hands," laughed Paul. "I came across an old sweetheart not long ago. She used to be the pride of the campus. Now she's fat, forty, fluffy and foolish."

"Kay is more apt to be tall, thin and thirty," said Bert. "She was the type who would wear horn-rimmed spectacles."

HE finished his drink and crossed to the door. Paul gathered together a few pieces of manuscript paper, took a gray felt hat from the rack, picked up a malacca cane and followed Bert to the elevator.

"Sure you won't join us tonight?" he asked. "There'll be plenty of people there you don't know. Some that I don't know. One of them might be interesting. A blonde, perhaps?"

"No sale," said Bert. "Musicales are out of my line. I'll drop in to see Kay."

They separated at the entrance and Bert walked to the parking station. He

glanced at his watch, decided to see Kay McLane before he ate supper and drove north on Madison Avenue. At Fifty-first he stopped and parked near the corner. There were a few fashionable dress-shops, each striving to outdo its neighbor in conservatism. A small bronze-plate on the door of one told that Madame Sylvia's gowns were exclusive models. Bert wondered if Kay McLane had become Madame Sylvia. He glanced at another marked *Antonette—Paris*. Perhaps Kay had decided to go Parisian. He laughed and walked farther toward Park Avenue.

A wrought-iron gate at the entrance of one shop caught his attention. There was a sign on it—very small and made of polished brass. A single letter *K* was engraved upon it and Bert decided old Angus McLane's daughter had out-swanked the whole crowd. He stepped into the apartment entrance to the right and found a bell above which was Kay's name. He pressed the button and straightened his tie.

In the hall was a small self-service elevator that took him to an entrance on the fourth floor. When he again pressed a button a uniformed maid opened the door and looked at him inquiringly.

"Is Miss McLane at home?" asked Bert.

"Who wishes to see her?"

"Bert Saxon."

"One moment, Mr. Saxon. I'll see if Miss McLane is at home."

"Of course you wouldn't know that now," laughed Bert.

"One moment, if you please."

Bert heard voices in the apartment and he waited patiently. When the maid returned she told him Miss McLane was not at home. Would there be any message he wanted to leave?

"Yes," said Bert sharply. "Tell that

freckled-faced brat her brother was caught in an explosion. And if she's not too high and mighty to admit she's got a sandhog for a brother, tell her he'd like to see her."

He jabbed at the button of the elevator that had returned to the ground floor. There was a flurry of quick footsteps in the hall behind him and a girl caught his arm and swung him about. Her eyes were wide and her lips drawn back in fright. She was tall, gracefully moulded and her black hair was brushed severely away from her forehead to loop in twin braids at the back of her head. As he stared, Bert caught a fleeing resemblance—a ghost of the Kay McLane he had known as a youngster. But those long arms and legs had filled out. The freckles were gone and the mature lines of her face were softly beautiful.

"Bert—what did you say?" she cried. "What's happened to Tom?"

"Oh, hello, Kay," said Bert slowly. "I thought you weren't home."

"Don't stand there talking like a fool," she said quickly. "What have you done to Tom?"

"What have *I* done?" he said.

"Yes—you! You and that damn tunnel!"

"Such language," he laughed. "Is that the way a Madison Avenue dress-maker talks? Sounds more like the tunnel."

Her hands lifted and caught his shoulders. Bert Saxon was a tall man but Kay's eyes were almost on a level with his. They were brown eyes—large and soft. When Kay was not angry, Bert thought, they must be beautiful. Now they were narrowed.

"Is he badly hurt?" she asked.

"Just a broken leg," said Bert. "He's at Riverside Hospital—in the company ward."

"How did it happen?" she asked. And then, hurriedly, "Are you sure that's all? Nothing worse?"

"That, and a bit of lonesomeness for a snobbish sister," said Bert.

The elevator door opened and he turned away. He bowed slightly and started to step into the car. Kay's hand was firm on his arm.

"Please come in," she said. "I—I want to hear about Tom."

"Are you sure you can stand me?" asked Bert. "I may smell a little of the tunnel."

### CHAPTER III

#### GIRL WITH BLACK BRAIDS

SHE didn't answer. Instead, she turned and walked into the apartment. Bert watched her start down the hall. He grinned and followed. The maid closed the door behind him and he glanced about at the antique tables, Renaissance mirrors and soft-toned rugs of the passage leading to a large drawing room. Kay was standing near a Georgian cabinet where a cut-glass decanter and glasses reflected the lights of the wall fixtures.

Bert seated himself in an easy chair and studied the room that was part of Kay McLane's home. It was tastefully furnished with expensive and apparently genuine antiques. The lighting was soft and there was a general air of quiet comfort. Bert fought for a word that would describe it. At length he smiled. Good taste—yes. Class. A peculiar something that set it apart from other homes. Bert had recognized this same feeling of refined luxury in Paul Touchet's apartment on Riverside Drive.

And the girl who stood near the Georgian cabinet was a perfect match for her setting. Rich, mellow and

dressed in perfect taste. Bert realized she was the type of woman a man would like to parade. He could picture himself walking down the aisle at an important first night—a crowded theater—well-dressed men and women turning to stare at this tall dark girl. He knew there would be jealousy in the women's eyes. And during the intermission casual male acquaintances would slap him on the back and angle for an introduction. For Kay was a woman of whom any man could be proud.

"May I pour you a drink?" she asked.

"Scotch, please. Not much water."

There was a clink of crystal and in a moment Kay handed Bert his drink. She set her own on a small end-table and seated herself to face him. When he had touched the glass to his lips Bert grinned and motioned toward the surrounding room.

"Very nice, Miss McLane. I hardly blame you for not wanting a sandhog to drag mud across your rugs."

"We were talking about Tom," she said quietly. "Is he badly hurt?"

"Not for a sandhog," said Bert. "We don't count broken legs as serious business."

"Can I see him tonight?"

"No, I don't think so. But any time after nine in the morning—if you can spare the time."

"Does he need anything? Money or—"

"The company pays for his injuries. And the men chip in a few dollars for extras. I don't suppose you remember that, but it's the custom of the clan."

"Yes," she said. "I remember. They collected almost a thousand dollars when—when Dad was killed. Dan Hannagan gave me part of it and held the rest for Tom."

"Dan will be needing his own collection now," said Bert. "He's in the hospital with your brother."

Kay's hand shook as she put down her glass. She stood up and walked to a tall draped window. For a time she looked out into the night, then she turned and faced Bert.

"Is there anything else to tell me?" she asked stiffly. "If not, I have an appointment."

"Thanks for the hint," said Bert. "Sorry if I've stayed too long. Your whisky is terrible and your manners are worse. If your father were here he'd take great pleasure in fanning you, Miss McLane."

"But he's not here!" cried Kay. "He's gone. And so are Bill and Terry! You and your rotten tunnels have taken every man in the family but one. And now he's hurt. Soon there'll be a strike, or an accident under the river. Then Tom will be gone, too!"

"Yes," said Bert thoughtfully. "You're right, but—"

"There's ain't any 'buts,'" she said more quietly. "It's the same old story. Over and over again. When I was a kid I stood at a tunnel-shaft with my mother and watched them bring out what was left of my oldest brother. Then Terry went on strike in Detroit. There was a fight or a riot or some such thing—and we buried him." Her eyes were bright and she paced back and forth across the room. Bert watched her silently. A flush had come into her cheeks and her fingers opened and closed nervously. "When Dad was killed and mother died—I quit. Quit cold! I ran away from it. Hid from it. And now—"

"I'm sorry to have brought it back to you," said Bert. "If you'll excuse me, I'll be going now."

HE bowed and started toward the hall. But Kay's fingers closed on his coat sleeve and she stopped him.

"Don't you understand, Bert?" she said. "Don't you know what the tunnel has done to me?"

"Perhaps," he answered.

"I wonder if you do." Her arm was linked in his and she walked with him to the window. "I know what you're thinking. You're saying to yourself, 'Kay McLane has grown too big for her boots. She's got money and snobbish friends. She doesn't want any of the old crowd around. Not even the boy with whom she used to hold hands on the river front.' That's what you're thinking, Bert."

"You're not quite right," he said. "I understand how you feel. But I also know there's been a McLane working in every tunnel that has ever been driven under a river. And there's also been a Saxon. I'm proud of that—very proud. And I hope there'll be more Saxons working at the trade when I'm gone."

"Then hurry and get married," she cried. Her arm left his and pounded the window sill. "Find some fool who wants to see her sons brought home with broken legs, twisted backs and eyes torn out of their sockets. Find some idiot who will stand at a tunnel-shaft and wait and wait and wait!"

"Do you really believe it's as bad as all that?" he asked.

"Yes, I do."

"In that case, there isn't much for me to say."

"Oh, Bert—why don't you get out of it? Why don't you find something else to do?"

"Because I like it. It's my trade."

Her shoulders lifted slightly and she smiled. "Silly, aren't we?" she said. "We haven't seen each other for over

ten years, and when we meet we stand and argue."

He grinned, too. "That's something you've learned recently," he said. "The little girl with the long black braids was never much on argument, Miss McLane."

"But you never called her Miss McLane," she said. "I think she was christened Kay for the convenience of her friends."

"Does she still consider me a friend?"

"She does," said Kay simply. "And she remembers how she cried when a young sandhog told her she was no longer his sweetheart."

"He was a fool."

"No," smiled Kay. "Just a little boy grown tall—a little boy sent into a tunnel to do a man's work."

"I did it well."

"Of course you did. You're a Saxon."

She walked with him to a low divan and seated herself. She touched the empty space beside her invitingly and handed him his glass. Bert grinned and sat beside her.

"You're a beautiful woman, Kay," he said at length. "You've come a long way and I suppose you've made a good deal of money. But honestly—I don't think you're nearly so attractive as that lanky-legged kid with the black braids."

"I still wear braids," she said. "But I remember a young raucker with dirt in his ears that was much nicer than a general superintendent who's been building so many tunnels lately."

"How do you know I'm a general super?"

"None of your business."

Bert's hand found her slim fingers and he held them loosely. He leaned toward her and rested an arm across

the back of the divan. For a time neither spoke. He was conscious of the perfume of her hair, the nearness of her lips and the soft large eyes that looked up toward his. The constant hum of traffic in the street sounded a dull monotone that was very far away. His eyes left hers and traveled over the rounded lines of her shoulders, her breasts and thin, straight waist. He leaned closer and his arm closed about her shoulders. He drew her toward him. She lifted her head and her lips found his. Suddenly she stiffened. Her hands beat at his chest and forced him away. She sprang to her feet and walked quickly to the window.

"No!" she said. "We're acting like fools — kids — crazy, empty-headed kids!"

"Sure we are," laughed Bert. "And I think it's great."

"I don't," she said evenly. "And if you're wise, Bert, you'll mark that kiss off to old times. Forget it. There won't be any more."

"I'm afraid we're going to argue about that."

"No. There isn't any argument," she said. "We're not going to see each other again, Bert."

"Why not?"

"Because you and the work you do represent the most miserable years in my life. I'm through with them—and I'm not going to let you remind me of them."

"Frightened?"

"Perhaps."

"Of me—or the tunnels?"

"A little of both."

"You were a fool to admit that," he laughed. "Now you'll never get rid of me."

"Oh, yes I will. You're going right now, Bert."



"Sorry. I'm just getting comfortable."

"In that case, you'll have to provide your own entertainment. I'm going to dinner."

SHE crossed the room to a small closet in the hall and reached for a pair of silver foxes. Then she walked to the door of another room and opened it. For an instant she turned and waved lightly to Bert. Then the door closed behind her.

Bert drew a cigarette-case from his pocket, lit one and blew smoke rings at the ceiling. He refilled his glass, seated himself comfortably in an arm-chair and reached for a magazine. For a time he tried to read but thoughts chased his eyes in unseeing lines across the printed page. At length he contented himself glancing at the pictures and whistling a tune from a musical comedy he had seen the previous night. He had repeated the tune for the tenth time when Kay walked into the room.

She was dressed in an evening gown of black Chantilly lace. Narrow negligée straps formed thin lines across her shoulders. The dress was short, ankle length to meet the current mode. Over her arm were the silver foxes and she stared at Bert in evident surprise.

"Still here?" she said.

"Oh, you didn't take long," he said lightly. "Is that gown a sample of the work you do?"

"Yes. Do you like it?"

"Very much. Sorry I'm not wearing tails this evening but it won't make much difference. Every one will be so busy staring at you they won't notice me."

"Didn't you hear me say I had an appointment this evening?"

"Break it," said Bert. "I'm much more important."

"In your own estimation, perhaps," she laughed. "But I'd rather be with Pulsudsky."

"With which?"

"Ivan Pulsudsky, a friend of mine. He's a concert pianist. But you wouldn't know about that."

"No," said Bert gravely. "I wouldn't know."

"Then suppose we ride down to the street together and and say goodbye?"

"Not a bad idea," said Bert and walked to the door.

He was silent while they waited for the elevator and he caught Kay staring at him strangely. When they reached the street she extended a slim hand which he took and held only for an instant.

"Goodbye, Bert," she said. "And promise me you won't come here again."

"I promise," said Bert. "In fact, I won't speak to you again—unless you speak first."

He saw bewilderment in her eyes as he turned and walked toward his car. Through the mirror he watched her standing at the curb waiting for an approaching taxi. Once she lifted her hand and opened her mouth as though to call to him. But then she turned and Bert grinned as he saw her beckon impatiently to the hackman.

Traffic was light on Madison Avenue and Bert hurried to the midtown hotel where he lived during the construction of the Brooklyn tunnel. The starter took his car and he went to his rooms. An hour later, carefully dressed in a double-breasted dinner-jacket, he taxied to Paul Touchet's apartment on Riverside Drive and was admitted by the butler.

Paul's guests had not yet arrived. Bert walked into a well-lighted room

that overlooked the river and found the contractor seated at the piano. When he caught sight of Bert he laughed and jumped to his feet.

"I knew it!" he cried. "It was only a matter of time before you'd decide to hear some good music. Have a drink—pick a comfortable chair and make yourself at home. Later we'll talk about that contract."

"Nuts!" laughed Bert. "I didn't come here to listen to music. But I want to be sure about the name of your guest of honor."

"Pilsudsky," said Paul. "Ivan Pilsudsky, one of the greatest living pianists."

"And he's not coming alone?"

"Of course not. He'll bring a few friends."

"Do you know any of them?"

"I don't think so. Why?"

"Oh, nothing," laughed Bert. "Nothing at all. But if you don't want me to put a twist in the tail of your tunnel, you'd better be sure I meet them."

"Pilsudsky's friends?"

"Yes. One in particular. She's tall and dark and very beautiful. I'll be on the terrace and I'd like you to bring her out to meet me. Is it a bet?"

"Wait a minute," laughed Paul. "What's going on here?"

"That's my business," said Bert. "I've come to your putrid musical—you be a sport and do as I ask."

"You say she's tall, dark and beautiful?"

"Right."

"Have you seen her recently?"

"A few hours ago."

"Could her name be Kay McLane?"

"That," said Bert, "is something for you to worry about."

"I see," said Paul. "I can't say I blame you."

"You haven't any reason to—yet."

PAUL laughed and walked with Bert to the terrace. They had been there a few moments when the first of the guests arrived. For the next half hour Bert was busy acknowledging introductions to the rarest collection of humans he had ever seen. Some were tall and thin and female. Some were short and stout and male. All were interested in only one theme—music. Bert grinned, murmured polite agreement to anything said and at length found a seat at the end of the terrace where he could be alone.

Soon there was a lively hum of conversation in the next room and Bert judged Pilsudsky had arrived. Lighting a cigarette he leaned over the wide stone balcony-rail and watched lights moving on the Hudson River. Minutes past and at length he heard Paul's voice.

"We'll probably find him hiding," Paul was saying. "He's very shy but easily the most interesting man here this evening."

"Is he a pianist?"

"Oh, no. Something much more important."

"A conductor of one of the large orchestras?"

"Even more important than that," said Paul. He brushed aside one of the palms and pointed to Bert. "Ah—here he is. May I present Mr. Robert Saxon?"

Bert turned and looked at Kay gravely. He bowed over the hand she had extended automatically but said nothing. For a moment there was silence. Paul grinned and turned to look out over the river. Kay's lips twitched slightly and she bit back the smile.

"Bert Saxon!" she said sharply. "Why did you follow me here?"

"Follow you?" said Bert in pretended surprise. "Why, Kay—I

wouldn't think of doing such a thing. I'm here only because my boss insisted upon it."

"Your boss?"

"Yes," said Bert pointing to Paul. "Mr. Touchet — president of the Touchet Construction Company. Didn't you know?"

"Of course not. If I had, you can be sure I'd not—"

"Sorry to interrupt," said Paul. "But I seem to have been the cause of some misunderstanding. Is there anything I can do?"

"Yes," said Kay. "You can tell your superintendent I don't appreciate his humor. Nor yours either, I'm afraid."

She turned and left the terrace. Bert laughed and caught Paul by the arm. Paul shook his head slowly.

"What's gone wrong?" he asked. "What's happened?"

Bert explained. Paul listened quietly, nodding his head slowly while he twisted the tips of his mustache.

Bert's stubborn refusal to see Kay's point of view—his insistence that a man or woman born of a sandhog family must treat the tunnel as a thing to be revered—this, and his utter lack of understanding of fear, puzzled Paul. He looked at his friend's hands—wide fingered and strong, but in spite of the callous and tool scars Paul knew them to be the hands of a dreamer. An idealist. His head was well formed with high forehead and wide set eyes. And in these eyes Paul had often seen the sharp far look of one who thought not as other men. But always there was a veil—an intangible something that drifted out of nowhere to cloud them or bring the lights of laughter dancing into their corners.

And for this reason Bert had been a constant puzzle to his friend. An

intriguing enigma to which Paul one day hoped to find the answer. Tonight, as he listened to Bert's story, he realized the distance of the chasm between them. As though to bridge it with physical motion he stepped closer to his friend and rested a hand upon his shoulder.

"Wait a minute, Bert," he said. "Do you think you're giving Kay an even break?"

"What do you mean?"

"Don't you imagine she's justified in wanting to forget the tunnel and everything connected with it?"

"Of course I don't. She's a McLane."

"That in itself is a good reason. Her brother's gone—her father killed—"

"Now don't start that, Paul," snapped Bert. "I'll admit her family hit a run of hard luck. But so have others. Mine, for instance. There used to be a half dozen Saxons in the trade. Now there's one. But does that mean the trade is bad?"

"Doesn't it?"

"Not at all. It means men have made mistakes and paid for them. It would have been the same in any trade."

"I wonder if that's true," said Paul slowly. He turned to look across the silver river to the tall cliffs of the Jersey shore. "I wonder if anything takes the toll of the dragon."

"Another sonata?" laughed Bert.

PAUL said nothing. He was thinking of a serious-faced youngster that watched while a tunnel had stolen her brothers and father. Perhaps to her also, it was an iron-ribbed monster—a living thing that crawled in the muck and slime of the river beds and reached out claws for an offering of sacrifice. It had often seemed as such

to Paul. Always the dreamer he had stood on a river pier and watched the white froth of the boil. When pressure from the tunnel broke through the water he envisaged a clanking dragon below that crept slowly forward, opening its jaws to breathe. A horrible monster made by men that would turn often and devour them.

Such thoughts had come to Paul at the piano. Sometimes he tried to give them voice—put them into notes. He wondered if Kay McLane would understand. Would she know that he, too, hated the river tunnels? Even though he planned them, built them—still he hated them. But it was a twisted hate. Each time a job was finished Paul swore it would be his last. Then some intricate engineering problem would call him back. A longer tunnel—a larger tunnel—one to be driven through a treacherous river bed. There would come a call from Bert and together the men would spend long nights over a table strewn with figures and charts. Soon the tunnel would become a problem, a game to be played and won if possible. And later Paul's bid would go in. The contract would be awarded and once again Bert would be calling the sandhogs to work.

His thoughts turned to this new job under the East River, the most dangerous tunnel ever to be attempted. Into his mind's eye came a picture of a twisted, jagged river-bed where men would work in blue slime, quicksand, running earth and brittle rock. And as he thought of the work to be done he heard Bert's laugh.

"Dreaming again?"

Paul smiled. "I suppose so," he said, and turned away from the river. "Let's go inside. My guests will think I've deserted them."

"I'll listen from out here," said Bert. "This is close enough. But if you see Kay, be a pal and send her out."

"The devil I will!" laughed Paul. "If you want her, you'll find her right next to the piano. In fact, we may play a duet. I understand she's a very capable pianist."

"Hold it!" said Bert. His hand went out and caught Paul's wrist. "I'm not joking, Paul, Kay is a McLane—she's one of the clan."

Paul's eyes were steady. "That's something out of the past, Bert," he said slowly. "I've heard stories of the clan—know that sandhogs' women find their husbands among men of the trade. But—Kay is different."

"In other words, you want Kay?"

Bert had moved in. His arms half lifted and his fingers doubled and flexed. He was flat-footed, shoulders moving slowly as he swayed from the waist. Paul leaned easily against the terrace wall. There was a tautness about his body hidden by the smooth lines of his evening clothes. He drew a silver case from his pocket and selected a cigarette with steady thumb and forefinger.

"Got a match, Bert?" he asked casually.

"I asked a question. You do want her?"

"Any objections? Or are you afraid of competition?"

"Afraid—?"

Paul laughed and put an arm across Bert's shoulders. He jabbed him lightly in the ribs and stepped away.

"Personally, I think we're taking a lot for granted," he said. "Kay is probably engaged to a Parisian designer. And after him there may be at least fifty on the waiting list. Let's grow up and pretend we're not kids."

"But I still—"

"But you still don't want to hear me play," laughed Paul. "All right, stay here and look at the river. I'll send a drink out to you."

The butler stepped onto the terrace and crossed to Paul.

"Pardon, sir," he said. "Mr. Blaucher and some friends have just arrived. I thought you might like to know."

"Thank you," said Paul and turned to Bert. "I asked Gus to stop in for a few minutes and talk over the deal. Want to join us?"

"No thanks," said Bert. "You know where I stand on that."

"Pig-head," said Paul, and went into the music room.

## CHAPTER IV

### MEET GUS BLAUCHER

WHEN he had gone Bert wondered about that moment when he had questioned Paul. He had never known Paul to spend much time with any of his conquests. He was a bachelor and intended to remain one. As for Bert—he had simply never thought of marriage.

Bert puzzled over his quick resentment when Kay's name had been mentioned. He was trying to align his thoughts when Gus Blaucher and two men stepped onto the terrace. The contractor saw Bert, waved a heavy arm and started toward him. His companions walked to the terrace rail and leaned against it, facing Bert. Gus rested a heavy hand upon Bert's shoulder and smiled expansively.

"Why hello, Bert," he said in a thick guttural voice. "Paul tells me you're going to build us a tunnel. Glad to hear it, pal."

"Paul's kidding you," said Bert shortly.

Gus lifted his other hand and dropped it upon Bert's shoulder. Bert turned his head. The man's breath was sour. His good nature was false as the teeth that lined his jaw. Born a peasant, Gus Blaucher had grown soft through years of easy living and rich food. Layers of loose flesh sagged his custom-made clothes and pulled them from shape. His eyes were weak and watery. Perspiration dampened the palms of his hands and at times beaded upon his loose upper-lip. But in spite of a general appearance of slovenly softness, Bert knew the man was powerful in body as well as in influence. Years of work in his youth had built a web of muscles about his frame that liquor and easy living had not yet torn down. Gus Blaucher was not the man you would want in your home. But he was a personality. Different from the crowd. And people turned to look when he passed.

"How much are you going to make us pay you?" he asked. "Come on—tell me the price and I'll meet it. Five hundred—six—"

Bert shrugged his shoulders to dislodge the moist hands. "How much did the Manhattan Sportsmen's Club ask you to pay as a membership fee?" he said evenly. "I'll take the same amount to work as general super on your job."

A dull flush lifted along Blaucher's jowls. He hunched those heavy shoulders and thrust both hands into his trouser pockets.

"Don't talk to me about the dirty bunch of rats!" he growled. "Those stuffed shirts told me—"

"I know what they told you," laughed Bert. "I'm on the membership committee. I drafted the letter."

"You're the guy said I hadn't enough money?"

"Yes."

"Why, you fool! I'm worth millions!"

"So what?" Bert laughed. "It's still not enough."

He turned and looked into the night. Someone at the grand piano inside was playing the solo from Greig's A Minor Concerto. Bert leaned against the terrace rail and whistled the theme quietly. For a time Gus stared at him. The contractor's face was a pattern of changing emotions. At length he forced a smile. He nudged Bert's ribs.

"Well, I'll be damned," he said. "It took a sandhog to keep Gus Blaucher out of the Sportsmen's Club. That's one for the book!" The comedy of the situation seemed to please him. Soon his arm was across Bert's shoulders again and the tunnel-man felt the hot breath against his neck. He turned and put a hand on Blaucher's chest.

"Don't crowd me, Gus," he said. "I'm not one of your political pals. Save that stuff for the mayor."

"Ah, come on," said Gus jovially. "No hard feelings, Bert. I'm not sore—not a bit. And the offer of a job still goes. Let's call it six hundred a week and the usual bonus for speed."

"Let's call it spinach!" snapped Bert. "And if Paul Touchet hooks up with you, Gus—he does it alone. I won't work for a rat!"

"You can't pull that stuff," Blaucher cried. He lifted a heavy fist and stepped forward. "No lousy ditch-digger can—"

"Put your hands down," said Bert quietly. "This is Paul's party and I don't want to spoil it. But if you don't shut up, you're asking to get hit."

**T**HERE was a light step on the terrace and Bert saw one of the men who had come with Blaucher. He was

thin and slightly stooped, well dressed, and under one arm was a large leather bound book. He wore horn-rimmed spectacles and through them his eyes looked like round black stones. Cold and smooth. The lids were fixed and motionless. In fact, when he spoke there was no perceptible movement of his face muscles.

"Having trouble, boss?" he said.

"Keep out of this, Specks," said Blaucher.

"Well, I was thinking that—"

"Keep out of it!"

Bert laughed and started toward the tall French windows leading in from the terrace. He turned, glanced at Specks and flipped his cigarette toward the rail. The glowing tip left a red trail that arched past the man's chin. Speck's right hand drifted toward the lapels of his dinner-jacket. Gus Blaucher stepped forward and pushed him. There were a few low words and Bert's smile broadened.

"You ought to park those dogs with the doorman when you come to a musical," he said. "One of them might chew a piece out of the piano leg."

He left the terrace and walked across a well-lighted room where a number of guests were seated in silent groups as they listened to the music. Bert saw Paul Touchet near the piano. The contractor was turning the pages of a score but Bert could not see who was playing. He walked toward the instrument and as the last crashing chords of the concerto signaled its end, he saw Kay leaning above the keyboard. Her face was lifted toward Paul and she was smiling. Applause filled the room and there was a polite murmur of approval.

"Not bad at all," said Bert lightly. "Can you play *Tiger Rag*?"

Kay looked up at him and then

glanced at the music. Paul rested a hand lightly on her shoulder and bent above the dark sheen of her hair. He smiled down at her.

"Ignore him, Kay," he said. "You played that beautifully. I've never heard it played better."

"But I still like *Tiger Rag*," said Bert.

Kay's back stiffened and her hands dropped to the keys. There was a short run in the treble and then a few chords. And suddenly she started to play *Tiger Rag*. The music laughed and raced. There were hot licks, a double bass and breaks that set toes tapping as the guests laughed and sang what words they knew. When she had finished she looked gravely at Bert and nonchalantly lifted a thumb to her nose.

"The sandhog's salute," grinned Bert. He bowed and caught the hand in one of his. He lifted it to his lips and kissed it. Then he pushed Paul aside and seated himself beside Kay on the piano bench. "I know lots more tunes. Suppose you try *Memphis Blues* and make Paul's party a success. It's been pretty stuffy so far."

"Quit it," Paul laughed. He turned to Kay. "This fellow is a fraud. He's a sucker for good music but won't admit it."

"He's rather a pest, too," said Kay gravely. "Let's hope he gets drunk quickly and goes to sleep under the piano."

Bert looked down at the shapely legs extended toward the pedals. He nodded and stood up. There was a pillow on a nearby divan and he placed it carefully on the floor beneath the piano.

"With your permission," he said and bent as though to stretch out on the floor.

Paul laughed and grabbed his shoulders. "Get out of that," he said. "You and I are going to have a talk with Gus. We want your advice on some figures."

"Sorry," said Bert. "I'd be happier under the piano."

"Very well," said Paul. He nudged Kay and turned toward one of the guests. "Miss Hawkey—won't you favor us with your latest composition? I've heard some very good reports on it."

An angular creature with thin wrists and heavy fingers stepped away from a buffet where the butler was serving drinks. Bert thought he had never seen so many straight sides and so few curves in a woman before. The sandhog expected to hear her clank as she crossed the room.

"You win," he said quietly to Paul. "I'll find a quiet corner in the library. But no talk with Gus."

"Too bad," said Paul. "Kay is going to join us."

"Oh, no she's not," said Bert. "Kay is going to the library with me. You stick to Gus."

"You're both wrong," said Kay. "I'm going to have a drink—alone! Just me."

She walked across the room and Paul linked an arm through Bert's. Miss Hawkey had already started to play and the two men walked quietly to the adjoining room. It was a small study, comfortably furnished, and when Paul closed the door the music came to them lightly as though from a great distance. He offered Bert a cigarette, took one for himself and stretched out in a chair.

"Let's get organized, Bert," he said. "Gus and I can bid on that job. It's the greatest thing of its kind ever attempted. Talbot, Wilson, Montgomery



—every super that ever drove a tunnel will be anxious to take charge. They all want the job. But we want you. It's yours for the asking and you'll be the envy of every man in the trade. Now—how about it?"

"Not with Blaucher," said Bert. "And if you're wise, you won't take him in as your partner."

"Why not?"

"The hogs don't like him. They wouldn't work right for him."

"But he's never built a tunnel," said Paul. "This will be his first."

"I know it," said Bert. "But he uses a few sandhogs on his construction work here in town. I worked for him once—for two days and quit. I know what I'm talking about."

"Oh, give him a chance, Bert. The man is a success in the construction world. He's built sulways, office buildings, bridges—everything but a tunnel. Now he wants to top off his career with this East River job. And I don't blame him."

"He's not good enough to build a tunnel," said Bert flatly. "He's not clean enough to handle men who are the cream of the construction world—the tops. He doesn't belong! And that settles it as far as I'm concerned, Paul. If you build that tunnel with Gus Blaucher, you build it without me. I'll go to Detroit and do the railroad tunnel for Martin & Ranger."

THERE was silence for a time broken only by the soft music of the distant piano. Paul studied his friend as though trying to determine what heavy prejudice could make him toss away the opportunity of a lifetime. Bert walked to a case and glanced idly at one of the engineering volumes. He was ruffling a calloused thumb across the pages when the butler

stepped into the room, hesitated and started to back out. Paul stopped him. The butler was carrying a portable phone and placed it on a table.

"Someone is calling Mr. Blaucher," he said. "I didn't know this room was occupied, sir."

"That's all right, Thomas," said Paul. "Leave the phone here and call Mr. Blaucher. You'll find him out on the terrace."

The butler plugged in the cord and left the room. He had been gone but a moment when Blaucher walked in and closed the door noisily behind him. He waved to Paul and reached for the instrument.

"Just a moment, Gus," said Paul. "We'll step outside while you make your call."

"Stay where you are," called Gus. "Probably some dame that wants a date."

He laughed and lifted the receiver. When he had shouted his name into the mouthpiece Bert got up and started toward the door. Blaucher's first words stopped him.

"A cave-in?" shouted Gus. "Did it do much damage?"

There was a pause while Gus listened. Bert turned to Paul and there was anxiety in his eyes. Paul, too, was listening. He motioned Bert away from the door.

"Ah, t'hell with that," said Blaucher gruffly. He held the instrument as though it were a club. "I want to know how much it'll cost. . . . You're sure? . . . Then get busy and clean up the mess as soon as they get 'em out. Go on!"

He hung up, pushed the instrument across the table and helped himself to a cigar from a nearby humidor. When he had bit the end and blue smoke was curling about his head he turned

to Paul and waved his hand as though to dismiss the call indifferently as a trivial incident.

"That Fulton Street job," he said. "It's been a pain in the neck ever since I started it. Now the fools have dropped one of the foundation walls. Lost the whole thing. The clumsy mutts aren't worth half what I pay 'em."

"A cave-in?" said Bert quickly.

"Yeah. One that'll cost me a few thousand. Half of Fulton Street slid into the excavation."

"But what about the men?" asked Bert. "If you can stop thinking about money for a minute—what about the men in there?"

"They're still digging them out. Some of your pets are there, too. Sandhogs—that's a laugh. I put 'em to work and they don't even know how to build a retaining wall."

"That's a lie!" cried Bert. "No sandhog ever lost a face in that ground."

"Hold on a moment," said Paul quickly. "Do you mean they haven't got the men out, Gus?"

"Ah, they're still after a few. T'hell with 'em. It's their own fault. They were doing the job. I'm the guy that gets it in the neck—not them."

"Don't pull that stuff, Blaucher," cried Bert. "You've got about six sandhogs working as miners. But half the men on the late shift are green. They're laborers—shovel men. They've never been below ground before. You know that."

"That's my business," said Blaucher.

"And a lousy one!" snapped Bert. "You run a bunch of cheap labor in with a few experienced men. You save a dollar and kill a dozen. We know you, Blaucher! You're the cheapest, slimiest heel that ever—"

"Quit it, Bert!" said Paul evenly.

"Gus Blaucher is my guest tonight remember."

"You're welcome to him," Bert said sharply.

Paul had stepped between the two men. He turned to face Blaucher. "Who is in charge at Fulton Street, Gus?" he asked.

"Jack McGraw. He's boss on the night shift."

"Did he get clear?"

"How do I know?"

"But you should," insisted Paul. "You need a good man in charge of the rescue work. There's just a chance those men are still alive. We've got to get to them fast."

Blaucher puffed cigar smoke toward the ceiling. "Oh, don't bother about it, Paul. I hire superintendents to take care of the work and I pay 'em to handle things like this. If I got excited every time there was an accident on one of my jobs I'd be nuts in a year. I do the brain work—they do the back work. I put out the dough and if they get hurt it's their lookout."

THE door opened and Kay stepped into the room. She looked at the three men uncertainly and then crossed to Paul.

"I don't mean to interrupt," she said. "But Mr. Pilsudsky would like to hear your sonata. We've been looking for you."

"Oh, I'm sorry," said Paul. "I didn't realize I was neglecting my guests. But Mr. Blaucher has just told us some bad news and—"

"Go right ahead, Paul," said Blaucher. "Go out and play for them. Don't let this bother you." He laughed and turned to stare at Kay. "Say—I don't think I've met this young lady. How about an introduction? I like her looks. She's my type."

Paul's lips were tight when he faced Kay. "Allow me to present Mr. Blaucher," he said. He turned slightly toward Gus. "Miss McLane is the young lady who was playing the Grieg Concerto earlier in the evening."

"Oh, I don't know one tune from the other," laughed Gus. He caught Kay's firm hand in his soft one. "But when you play I'll bet they're all great. You'll have to come to one of my parties sometime. I've got a room with three pianos in it—two of 'em for artists only."

"How interesting," said Kay. "I don't believe I could play two pianos at one time."

She turned and started toward the door. Gus laughed and pushed an elbow against Paul's ribs. He winked and lifted an arm as though blocking a blow. Paul pretended not to see the pantomime but walked to the door and held it open.

"Coming, Bert?" he asked, though he knew that Bert was not.

"No thanks," said Bert. "I'm going to Fulton Street and see how many of our men this pig has killed tonight."

"What did you say, Bert?" asked Kay quickly.

"There's been an accident on Blaucher's job downtown. Some of the men are still trapped. Sorry I can't stay to hear you play again, Kay."

"Did you say the Fulton Street job?" said Kay.

"Yes. Why?"

"Joe Treadwell is there. He's been there two weeks."

Bert turned away as Paul caught Kay's arm.

"Somebody you know?" asked Paul.

"Her uncle," said Bert. "But I don't think he's on this shift." He patted Kay's shoulder and started toward the hall. "I'll phone you when I get there. Stay here with Paul."

He found his hat and hurried along the hall to the door leading to the elevators. Paul went with him, pushed the button and waited until the car door had opened.

"I'd come along, Bert," he said. "But I don't suppose I'd be much help."

Bert stepped into the car. "You'd better stay here with your new partner," he said shortly.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

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# A Cargo of Coffins

By L. RON HUBBARD

Author of "Nine Lives," etc.

## *A Complete Short Novel*

### I

THE tattered giant saw Destiny standing against a blindingly white wall. But he did not recognize Paco Corvino as Destiny. Paco Corvino was the last man Lars Marlin had expected to see in Rio de Janeiro.

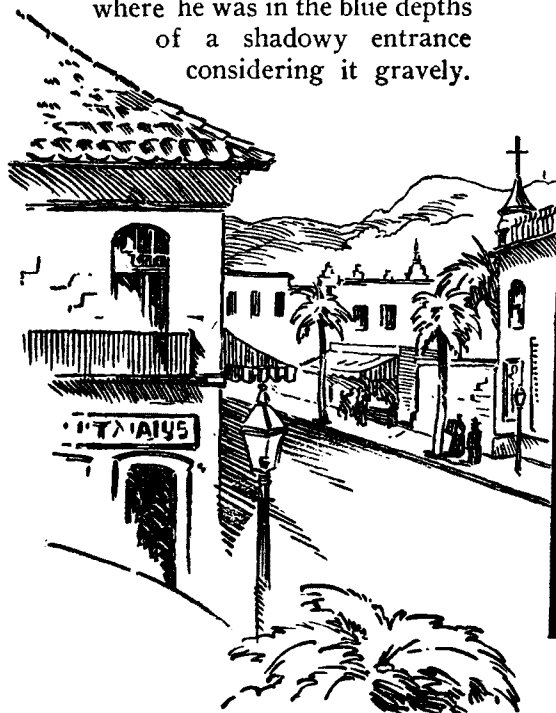
The first reaction was surprise but it quickly gave way to a surge of stolid hate which made Lars Marlin clutch the butt of the .38 inside his sun-bleached, wind-ripped shirt.

Paco Corvino deserved to die, had merited death for years, but now, as always, he stood in too obvious a position to be killed. Thinking of killing Paco was pleasant, and Lars stood where he was in the blue depths of a shadowy entrance considering it gravely.

Across the street a dusky, booted policeman stood vigilantly under an awning. Lars saw him and drew back instinctively. Again the giant's chill gaze, bitter as an Arctic sea, turned to the all unknowing Paco.

The butt of the .38 was sweaty in Marlin's palm. The temptation was great. Did the risk warrant the pleasure of revenge? One well-placed shot at this range of forty feet and Paco would drop off the curb and into the gutter. His confident, insinuating smile would be frozen forever upon his too-handsome face.

Lars drew the .38 up a little, still keeping it out of sight. How he had prayed for his chance! For years without end he had waited patiently to



even up a long-standing score.

But with the mud of the swamps of French Guiana hardly dry upon his bare feet, Lars was running a double risk. Any suspicious move from him would bring investigation from the Rio police, and that investigation would send Lars Marlin back to Devil's Island.

His grip tightened upon the .38 and he drew it closer to the torn front of his shirt.

Paco was elegantly dressed as always. Even in French Guiana he had managed to find excellent clothes but now he surpassed himself. His coat was of the best linen and the best cut. His trousers were pressed until the creases were sharp as bayonet blades. His shoes were so white they hurt the eyes on this brilliant, tropical day. His cap would have been the envy of a British Naval officer, so rakish was its slant, so shiny its braid.

The insignia was strange to Lars.

**Hate Holds the Helm  
and Fate Rides Below  
Decks on the Strangest  
Cruise the Caribbean  
Ever Knew . . .**

But it did not matter. Paco was a steward on a yacht, he supposed. But Lars wasted no thought upon Paco Corvino's present. His past was a

dull throb in Lars Marlin's brain.

There, jaunty and well-fed and reasonably safe, stood Paco, pleased with himself because the law had just tipped its cap courteously to him. If that officer only knew Paco . . .

Murderer, contraband runner, escaped convict. A man with no more conscience than a bullet, cool and deadly, masking a cunning brain with a winning smile.

Oh, yes, Lars Marlin knew all about Paco. It had been Paco who had changed Captain Lars Marlin into Convict 3827645. Paco had done that out of vengeance and now, thought



Lars, the tables were turned. One bullet . . .

Lars looked again at the Law under the awning. His gaze went back to Paco and then beyond him, down the cool avenue to tall green and tan palms. Red roofs and white walls. Rugged, pleasant hillsides rising.

Once more his hand clenched on the .38. This revenge was sweet enough to repay any consequences. Too long he had dreamed of this moment. He pulled the .38 clear of his shirt, pressing back against the cold, harsh wall. Carefully he leveled the gun. He had no compunctions now. Paco knew that some day Lars Marlin would find him.

The finger began to squeeze down on the trigger.

**L**AUGHTER nearby jarred Lars Marlin's nerves. The world was ugly to him and this laughter was too gay. Two American girls and a youth had come into the range, approaching the shadowy place where Lars stood.

As the group passed Paco, the blithe Spaniard saluted the man and swept off his cap in a low bow to the ladies.

"Good afternoon all. Good afternoon, Miss Norton," said the smiling Paco.

Lars looked at Miss Norton. He did not take his eyes away. He could not. It had been long since this homeless American had seen a woman of his own race. And this woman was no usual girl. Her hair was as yellow as

the sun. Straight and clean and beautiful, she gave back to the spellbound Marlin something he had lost in the swelter of heat and the ungodly cruelty of an alien prison-camp.

Almost ashamed, he slid the .38 back into his shirt.

Her voice was low and clear. "We sail at midnight, Paco. Make certain you're with us."

"Yes, Miss Norton."

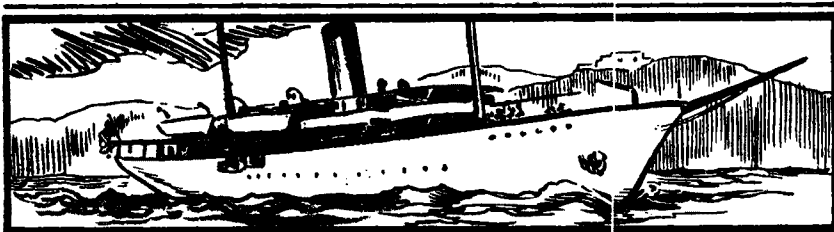
The group passed on. They were almost abreast of Lars now. In a moment they would pass within two feet of him. He sensed the presence of her companions but he had eyes only for Miss Norton. He had not heard laughter for years except for the wild laughter of madness.

Involuntarily he took off his cap as she passed. A supercilious patronizing voice brought him back.

"Here, my man."

Silver clinked in Lars Marlin's cap. Blankly he glanced up at the donor. The youth was back between the girls, walking away. Lars looked at the fellow wonderingly. The man had been drinking; his walk was exaggeratedly straight. Neat and flabby, he had no more character than a dummy outside a clothing store.

Lars Marlin took the *milreis* out of his cap and looked at it. His big, hard mouth curled with contempt. He threw the coin across the walk where an ancient, scabby beggar scooped it up avidly.



Lars looked back at Paco.

Not here. There were other ways. But meanwhile he must not lose the man whom fortune had placed so kindly in his way.

Hesitantly, Lars stepped forward. The hot sun struck his half-bare back and showed the play of muscles through the shredded rag he wore. Beyond him Paco stood looking across the street, jingling coins in his pocket. In profile his face was hawklike and his ivory white teeth flashed like fangs. But, even so, he was pleasant to look upon.

He had been raised on the wharfs of world ports without rummer, foraging with the rats, keeping the society of the drifting flotsam, appearing and disappearing, untraceable. He had developed a smile as armor and it was no deeper than the metal of a *salade*. And though he did not know his real name he had carefully developed the manners of an aristocrat. It was like Paco to stand in plain sight of the Law, smiling, secure and confident.

Lars came to a heavy stop on Paco's right. They were the same height but there the similarity ended. Lars was built strongly, hewed massively from granite. Paco looked down at his feet and saw a blue shadow lying there. He saw the breadth of that shadow, how motionless it was, how broad the shoulders were. He saw the outlined tip of an officer's cap.

Paco knew without turning that Lars Marlin, whom he thought to be two thousand miles away in safe confinement, stood with him in the blazing light of the Brazilian sun.

**I**T WAS not part of Paco's code to show shock. For all he knew the bullet he so well deserved might be on the verge of an eager trigger. Fear

made Paco curl up like burning paper—but only inside. He was sick with nausea and his heart lurched heavily and began to pound in his throat. Across the street stood the Law, beyond call. Paco must stand there and give no sign.

Only slightly congealed, only a little more false than before, Paco's smile was slowly turned to Lars. Their eyes clashed. Dark orbs recoiled before the baleful certainty of Norse blue.

Lars did not move, but Paco sensed that he did. Lars was holding himself enchained and his hands, the thumbs hooked into rawhide belt, were shaking slightly. Shaking, Paco knew, because they could already feel a man's breath dammed up in his contracted throat.

But Paco smiled. He had no ace in his sleeve but he had a knife, strapped to his wrist in a sheath. He had only to jerk his arm and the knife would glitter in his palm, ready to strike.

Paco's voice was easily mocking. "So you came to Rio for me. If you had arrived tomorrow, I would have been gone. You always were lucky, Lars."

"I was lucky until I met you, Paco."

"How did you escape?"

"The same way you did." Lars Marlin's tones were heavy, monotonous, eating into Paco with far more effect than if they had been the ranting harshness of rage.

"Congratulations," said Paco. "You're very clever."

"If you have a few minutes," said Lars, "I'd like to see you alone." Paco knew he meant the Law across the street. It seemed funny to Paco to be standing here, actually under the protection of the police.

"I don't think we have anything to talk over, Lars. If you need money..."

"Silver won't buy your life."

Paco was amused. "In the numerous



times we have met, Lars, you have yet to come out a winner."

"That was yesterday. This is today. Shall we go to some quiet place, Paco?"

Paco shrugged. "I can understand that you might be angry about that Casablanca deal, but after all, Lars, you were the one who turned me over. Wasn't I entitled to take you along to French Guiana with me?"

"If you were, then I have some rights now."

"Rights! Does an escaped convict babble about rights? See here, Lars. If you . . . wait. You're branded now. You can't live inside the law. I've just had an idea."

"I am not interested in your ideas. Will you come or do I have to . . ."

A MAN in brass-buttoned whites stepped between them, facing Paco. Lars was annoyed at himself. At the first flash of gold he had recoiled in fear of police. But this was not police. The man was elderly. His rum-reddened face was flabby, filled with small, broken veins. His hair was white as a bleached bone. He wore a captain's stripes and the insignia upon his cap matched Paco's.

"Sorry I kept you waiting," said the strange captain to Paco. "*They* won't take less than—"

Paco shot a triumphant glance over the old man's shoulder to Lars. "Just a minute, Captain. I wish to present one of my old friends. A man who might be expected to help us." When the officer faced around, Paco, with a mocking wave of his hand, said, "Captain Simpson, this is Captain Lars Marlin."

Simpson's weak eyes showed his distrust. His freckled hand in Marlin's was cold and moist and weak.

Paco swept on. "Marlin is an old friend of mine, Simpson. We were together years ago on the *Moroccan Queen*. You recall the incident?"

Simpson was startled. He looked swiftly from Lars to Paco, and in an incredulous voice, cried, "You mean he's—"

Paco's smile was amused. "Yes. He just managed his escape from Devil's Island."

Simpson gasped and stared at Lars. The tattered giant's glare was hot enough on Paco to wither him. The mighty fists were drawn up in steel mauls.

But Paco's quietly laughing voice surged on. "I see you remember, Captain. It was all very interesting. You recall when the French authorities searched the *Queen* for contraband dope? They found it on me, of course. Marlin here, gave them the first clue which fastened it upon me. And you remember what happened after that. It was discovered that quantities of it were in his cabin. He swore he did not know how they got there, those little tins. Naturally they packed him off with me. Lars here is a very persistent fellow. He tried three times to kill me in the Penal Colony. That scar you can see on his chest was given him by my knife on the third try. And now he is with us again. Good, kind Lars."

Simpson was opening and closing his mouth like a red snapper. He was struggling for air.

"And since," continued Paco, "we have use for such a man, it might be well to include him in the *Valiant's* crew. I shall draw up a paper and leave it in the bank here, to be opened in case of my death and the authorities will know exactly where to find him. Is that agreeable, Simpson?"

"Good grief—*no!*" Simpson cried.

"You're mad! You are telling him a thing no one should know except ourselves!"

"Nonsense," said Paco, grinning easily. "He knows that where he would find me, he would find contraband. He knows that is my weakness. And besides, Simpson, it will keep you from getting a notion to rid yourself of me."

Lars glanced across the street. The Law was still standing there, completely unaware of anything wrong in that quiet group across the pavement. It was all so lazily peaceful in this hot afternoon sunshine. No man—or at least no sane man—would take the siesta hour to plan death.

LARS studied Paco. He knew what to expect from the man. Paco was so plausible, so merciless, so much at his ease that he was safe in any society. He classed murder with picking pockets.

And Lars knew another thing. Paco would find some way to direct the police to him if he failed to follow Paco's course. But in following that course, Lars knew that he could at last even up the mounting score. He could wait. He had learned to wait.

Lars knew that Simpson was a fool. Paco had duped Simpson into playing a criminal rôle, using the man's natural weakness and greed. Lars also knew that Paco no longer needed Simpson. He sensed that because he knew the ways of Paco all too well.

"I . . . I shall have to consult Miss Norton," gasped Simpson. "After all, I am only her captain. Perhaps," he added hopefully with an uneasy glance at Lars, "perhaps she will not consent to another crew member when there are no vacancies."

"She'll consent to anything I propose," smiled Paco.

"Some day she'll discover how wrong she is," said Simpson. "We won't be able to get away with this forever."

"But while we *can* get away with it, we can make our fortunes. What better means of transportation is there than the *Valiant*? Who would dare suspect Teresa Norton of smuggling? You are getting shaky, Simpson."

"What if I am?" said the captain, abruptly belligerent.

Paco shrugged. "Let it pass. Suppose you catch up with Miss Norton—she just went toward the quay—and ask her."

"I don't think I shall," said Simpson. Suddenly he began to whine. "You can't make me do this, Paco. After all, we know this man is an escaped convict."

"So am I," said Paco. "And so will you be some day. Get along and make the request."

"And if I refuse?"

Lars knew how dangerous was the ground on which Simpson stood. A soft, purring note had come into Paco's voice.

Again Paco shrugged that fatalistic Latin shrug. "Refuse then. Come, we grow too serious. Let us go somewhere and have a drink and after that I'll file this paper at the bank." He looked at Lars and the smile was uncertain for an instant. "No. I'll file that paper now, across the street. Wait here."

Lars was helpless to stop this with the Law beneath that awning. Sullenly he watched Paco cross the pavement and enter the bank. He knew now he should not have delayed that bullet. He should have taken his chance when he had it, despite the risk.

Lars and Simpson were uncomfortable together. Simpson considered Lars

far beneath him and Lars considered Simpson a very low form of insect life. Simpson was a man who would betray an employer like the girl Lars had seen. He would sell out a trust for a pittance. He was weak and unintelligent. And though Lars might have warned Simpson, he did not. Simpson would not have taken the warning and the crime merited the punishment.

Paco came back, breezily jingling the coins in his pocket, smiling with good humor, walking elastically. "And now, my uneasy companions," he said. "let us partake of refreshment."

"Sorry," said Lars slowly. "I'm afraid I'm not drinking with either of you."

Paco laughed merrily. "Still the same Lars! At least let us find you a good bed before we leave you. This afternoon I'll bring you news. No. I have a better plan. Too bad you do not possess a strategic mind, Lars. I might have been dead by now if you had. Simpson, meet me in an hour at the Café of the Captains."

Simpson grumbled about it but it was easily seen that he was glad to get away from the company he was in. In mutual disgust and distrust they parted.

PACO and Lars walked up the avenue between the palms and the white building-fronts, proceeding silently for three blocks. As they turned down a side street toward a sailors' hotel, Paco grinned suddenly. "Perhaps I wrong you, Lars."

"Perhaps."

"You seem to be falling into this with suspicious ease."

"Am I?"

"But I know you too well to suppose that you have changed your mind. You saw Miss Norton, didn't you?"

"Certainly."

"You always were a romantic fool, Lars. And there's the difference between us."

"I am not interested," said Lars.

"But I am." Paco smiled as they paced along toward a gaudy sign. "That is the difference. You are a romantic fool and I am merely romantic. You allow scruples to stand in your way and thereby hamper yourself. Undoubtedly you were on the verge of potting me from cover this afternoon. But you didn't. Why? Because it would not have been sportsmanlike to shoot an enemy in the back, no matter one's opinions about that enemy. You probably thought you would go through with it, but you didn't. You never would have, no matter how close you came."

"Now I am different, Lars. I would have fired from cover and made my escape, sparing myself unpleasant entanglements such as those in which you now find yourself. You saw Miss Norton—I saw your face light up when I mentioned her name—and now you know that she is in danger from me. And that is making you walk ahead, wondering if you can help the first decent woman you've seen in years. The temptation to be near her in any capacity is too much to resist. You hope you can somehow kill me for what you think I have done to you and so you are willing to carry on and wait. You can wait, Lars. It is a good trick. One that I never learned. Here we are. We shall go in together. Your name is Lowenskold and you have been shipwrecked from the *S. S. Ta-toosh* which sank off Cape Frio some days ago."

They passed through the lobby and the smiling, plausible Paco engaged a room for them both. There was noth-

ing said about it. The clerk was of the opinion that Paco was a pleasant fellow.

They climbed the rusty staircase and came to a room which overlooked a muddy patio. The place was as bare as a cell, and Lars dwarfed everything in it.

Lars sat down on the bed; Paco threw some bills on the table and grinned at him.

"Go right ahead," said Lars. "But don't be under any delusions about this. I'm with you only so long as I can keep myself under cover. And paper or no paper, I'm telling you now, Paco, that your number is up."

Paco shrugged that Latin shrug of his. "We know each other, Lars. That makes it better. You know that I will kill you as soon as you are no longer useful to me. I know that you wish to kill me. We hate each other with great cordiality. We can work together, Lars."

Paco walked out and closed the door behind him. Lars stretched his tattered length on the bed and stared up at the ceiling, hands clasped under his neck.

A brown lizard, upside down against the plaster, was walking with vacuum-cup tread. The lizard stopped and began to circle an unwary black bug. The tongue flicked and the bug was gone.

## II

LARS MARLIN dozed but it was an uneasy twilight into which he entered. The white room was uncomfortably like a prison cell, though far better than those of French Guiana. The plaster walls were cracked jaggedly, suggesting non-existent rivers of a non-existent world peopled with moths, roaches, and wandering, hungry lizards.

At each approach of footsteps, Lars would start up, realize where he was and then lie back. There was high danger in his being in Rio, but that danger was as nothing compared to the recent perils of flight. Even so, recognition would send him back to the mire of swamps and the living, fevrish death of oblivion.

Lars was too tall for the bed—built for smaller Spaniards. He was lying cornerwise, bare heels on a chair. In repose his face was handsome in its way, more because of the strength it indicated than because of the regularity of features. His mane of yellow hair had grown long and tangled, and his jaw was unshaven. Had it not been for the clear intelligence of his eyes and the hardness of his body, he might have passed for a beachcomber.

Footsteps sounded in the corridor outside and he started up. But the sound died away and he lay back, wondering where Paco was. He doubted that Paco had gone to the Cafe of the Captains. He suspected Paco's errand.

He considered his position without any great concern. He was in a strange place, living under strange circumstances. Six years before, as master on the bridge of the *Moroccan Queen* he would have mocked any soothsayer who had tried to tell him that at the end of these six years he would be lying in a sailor's flophouse in Rio, considering the ways and means of killing a man and dozing intermittently to dream of a girl with a free swing to her walk and a pleasant, slightly imperious smile.

But then his whole life had been a checkerboard of odd occurrence.

His father had died in the Grand Banks fleet, leaving a nine-year-old boy to support his mother and two

sisters. Lars had looked out for them as handsomely as a New England fishing town and the pay of a sailor before the mast would allow.

At the age of fifteen he had begun to pound out a reputation for himself with his sledgehammer fists. He had risen to the mateship of a coasting steamer. He had sent three-quarters of his pay home and had invested the remaining pittance in extension courses. He rose from mere trig to theory of equations. He slugged a course in maritime law until it flattened out into a diploma. He read until his Arctic blue eyes ached, burning the daylight with labor and the darkness with study.

At eighteen, Lars Marlin had his master's papers. At twenty-one he had his first command—a wallowing old tub running on a thin-profit margin with sighing boilers and weary screw. With insight and left hooks he had made that tramp pay, and men began to know that Lars Marlin was carving a place for himself in the watery world.

One determined characteristic carried him through, gave him a name. Once he made a decision he never changed it. Vacillation to Lars was the worst crime on earth. He drove straight ahead making his own destiny, afraid of nothing. He had a retentive mind, an observing eye and knowledge which came from the entire ladder of knowledge—from the wharfs to the universities.

At twenty-four he had been given a Mediterranean command and from the bridge of the *Moroccan Queen* he had dreamed he would graduate to a swift transatlantic liner.

At twenty-five he had taken Paco Corvino on as chief steward; and three months later the officials of Casablanca

had discovered contraband on the *Queen*. Lars had pointed the finger at Paco and Paco, in retaliation, had pointed back to the bridge.

And now at thirty-one, with six years of hell behind him, he found himself in a third-rate hotel wondering about the best and quickest way to commit a murder.

IT WAS dusk when Paco came back. He slid through the half-opened door and closed it as silently as he had opened it. He stood listening for an instant, breathing hard. Then he turned and sat down on the other bed. He grinned at Lars. "Anybody call when I was gone?"

"No."

Paco's smile widened and his white teeth flashed. He got up and walked to the washstand and began to sluice the grime from his hands. The water turned a faint pink color.

"You're sure nobody, not even a chamber boy, called?" he asked without turning.

"I'm sure. What have you been doing?"

"Fixing things up. Simpson was turning yellow. I can read men, Lars. You won't deny that. I had pushed him as far as I could make him go. He was about to go mewling to Miss Norton. You saw it."

"What kind of contraband?" said Lars, lying on his side. He could feel the hard ridges of the .38 under him and his eyes were examining the possible target.

"Heroin," said Paco promptly. "They're death on it in the States. Can't even get it through a doctor. Never take it myself but I hear it's good for the nerves—or bad for them. Prices are rocketing up north. But heroin is small stuff. Listen, Lars,

would it surprise you to know that I have a way of making four million francs all in a lump? Within a month and with hardly any risk."

"I'm not interested in your plans," Lars said.

Paco laughed aloud.

"What's so funny?" Lars demanded.

Paco shrugged. He had evidently forgotten that he had already washed his hands as he again approached the stand and repeated the process.

"This Miss Norton owns the *Valiant*?" said Lars.

"No. Her father does. He's Tom Norton, president of the Equatorial Trading Company. He can sign his name to a ten-million-dollar check and still stay on Easy Street. The *Valiant* is a good little ship. Eighteen hundred tons, Diesel-engined. Pretty swank."

"Is Norton aboard?"

"No. He turned it over to his daughter and her friends and told them to have a good time. He probably wanted to get rid of Miss Norton—Terry, everybody calls her. She's hot-headed and, boy! can she get mad?"

"So you're operating against a girl. That's worthy of you, Paco."

"Of course it is," cried Paco. "What use have I got for these people with money and position? I hate them! And what a fine time I have laughing at them. They think I'm something pretty special because I've got better manners than they have, because I can wear my clothes better than their men can. They wonder about it just as though they were God's chosen children, the only graceful people on earth. They order me around now but one of these days—"

Paco was not smiling. He was bitter and the black jungle-cat in him was plainly visible in his displayed fangs and hot black eyes. But he passed it

over with a shrug and began to smile again. He was rubbing his hands very thoroughly with a towel as though to rid them of something.

FINALLY he perched himself nervously on the edge of the bunk and began to manicure his nails with a little silver set he carried. He was very particular about his hands, more particular than ever on this day. They were the hands of an artist, and Paco, in his way, *was* an artist.

"I suppose the police will be here soon enough," Lars said quietly.

Paco jumped and again the smile was gone. "How did you know?"

"I suppose you thought I'd miss the case of nerves you brought back. I hope they swing you for it."

"For what?" demanded Paco.

"For the murder of Captain Simpson."

Paco was up, shaking with fear and anger, glaring down at Lars who remained casually sprawled on the bed.

"I'm not pleased," Lars said. "Watching you hang would have its points, but I would find it unsatisfactory. You plan very carefully, Paco, but this time you missed a trick."

Paco did not move.

"You went out of here and down the hall to the rear of the building," said Lars. "Nobody saw you leave this hotel. You came back and nobody saw you enter."

"You spied on me!"

"No. I'm guessing. But I know that you intend to use me for a perfect alibi. Perhaps you even wanted to hang this extra millstone on my neck. I don't know about that. You have committed a crime which is perfect from the angle of the police. But you forget that I am badly wanted in French Guiana. If they send me back, I'm taking you with

me. You felt too secure to remember that you are also badly wanted."

"You're a fool," said Paco, sitting down again. "As big a fool as always. We understand each other, Lars. You can't kill me. I would be foolish to kill you—at the moment. You came opportunely. I was tired of masking facts to Simpson. But you . . . You won't even talk out of turn. Soon as you do, blowie, you're on your way back to French Guiana. Simpson is dead. Captains—American captains—are scarce in Rio. You are about to become the captain of the yacht *Valiant*."

Lars smiled slightly. "What will I do for papers?"

Paco was not in the least perturbed. Looking his contempt for Lars, he reached into his spotless coat and pulled out a sheaf of papers.

"You think I would forget a detail like that? You can buy all the forged papers you want in Rio. I could get records making you anything from a French private to a Balkan king. In this case I got papers and records which show you are Lars Lowenskold. You were wrecked on the *Tatoosh*, a lumber steamer, which went down off Cape Frio ten days ago."

"Was there such a wreck?"

"There was. Give me credit, Lars. I'm smart. The *Tatoosh* went down with all hands including three unknown passengers. You are one of those passengers, on your way to take over the command of another vessel. Here are your papers."

"You think Miss Norton would swallow that?"

"She'll swallow anything I tell her." Paco grinned. "I enjoy the absolute trust of Miss Norton."

"And when the police come charging in here—"

"Unless you want to go back to

French Guiana, you'll tell them I've been here all afternoon, sleeping."

Lars raised himself on his elbow. "Get me straight on this, Paco. I only want one thing. A chance to kill you and get away. It's fair to warn you. I'll take this job because I think I can queer your rotten scheme, whatever it is, and do the thing I've waited to do for so long. I don't want to see you swing. Your life is *mine*."

Paco grinned broadly. He got up and lit a cigarette and stood looking down at the muddy patio. At last he turned to Lars. "That's fair enough. If I thought for one minute you had the brains to best me, I'd die of shame. You won't talk. You don't want to rot in the Colony. And you won't kill me as long as you know that my death will cause those papers to be opened. I need you to captain the *Valiant*. You'll captain it and follow my orders."

Lars lay back and looked up at the lizards on the ceiling. "We'll know more about it later on, Paco."

### III

THE yacht *Valiant* plowed diamonds out of the turquoise channel, sweeping swiftly and gracefully past Fort Lage, so low that the waves broke over it in bad weather, into the outer channel.

The flippant little ship, picking up knots, slapped the waves of its wake against the frowning walls of Fort Santa Cruz on one side and Fort Sao Joao on the other. It refused to be dwarfed by the heights to port and starboard, sailing impertinently out to sea with the Sugar Loaf rearing to the west and the Pico soaring all green and tan to the east.

Ahead lay the broad immensities of the South Atlantic, lined with long



green swells and washed by a hot, damp wind. The starboard almost touched the Tropic of Capricorn and then the spinning wheel pointed the clipper bow northeast.

Captain Lars Marlin stood solidly on the bridge, the stirred wind cool against his shaven cheeks. The excellent drill of his white uniform felt like silk as it was pushed against him. Outboard bound, in command of a beautiful vessel, he reverently watched the wide-ranged pattern of clouds and waves. He knew he did not deserve this but, for the moment, the thought was submerged. He felt strong, able to contend with anything.

"Northeast by east," Lars said.

"Northeast by east. Aye-aye, sir."

The helmsman brought the wheel down a spoke and steadied it there. He was a good sailor and he had already given his respect to this tall, strong gentleman who had boarded the *Valiant* under such strange circumstances.

Lars turned and looked back toward Rio. It was all gone now except for the heights of the Carioca Range, growing dim and blue with distance. He could see the Hunchback and high, flat-topped Gavea—named because of its resemblance to a Portuguese square sail—and the outline of the "sleeping giant" as made by the entire range.

Lars smiled and faced away from it, looking again at the limitless horizons. He heard footsteps behind him on the iron ladder. The sound broke into his thoughts and annoyed him. But he did not turn, hoping whoever it was would not come into the wind-swept wing. Lars did not want company.

The footsteps were light and carefree and suddenly all irritation dropped away and became a kind of electric thrill. He did not have to use his eyes to confirm the fact that this

was Teresa Norton. During the past two weeks he had more than once experienced this feeling of unexplainable elation which came over him and blanked out everything sordid whenever he was with her.

When he knew she was within an arm's length of him he pivoted and saluted her. "We're off to a fair breeze, Miss Norton."

She smiled at him and placed her back against the rail. Her yellow hair was blowing about her face and her eyes were as quick and pleasant and changing as the South Atlantic.

"How do you like the *Valiant*?" she said.

"She's a thoroughbred, Miss Norton."

"Of course you're used to bigger ships."

He wished she had not said that. It reminded him of this enforced masquerade. He managed a smile in return. "But not better."

SHE seemed to be studying him and he felt uneasy under her clear scrutiny. He knew she was interested in him but he supposed that it was the same interest a child would show to a piece of driftwood of odd design found upon the shore.

"You seem to be very happy about getting away from Rio," she said.

This jolted him. Could it be that she knew more about him than he suspected? Could Paco . . . No, she was just being polite.

She saved him his answer. "But then I suppose the loss of that promised job and he enforced stay in a dull town wasn't pleasant to a man of action like yourself."

"Thank you, ma'am."

"What for?" she asked in surprise.

He faltered and swiftly recovered.

"Thank you for getting me out of that scrape. It's no joke to be stranded. A seaman who has been wrecked can get transportation to his ship's home port merely by asking the consul, but a captain cannot."

"I am glad I had the luck to find you after . . ." She was remembering Simpson and the short, pointless police investigation which had followed.

"I hope I'm not bringing you bad luck, Miss Norton."

"No. That's silly. Of course you aren't. You didn't know anything about me until after—after it happened. I doubt you knew the *Valiant* existed."

She was looking at the receding blueness of the ranges of Brazil and Lars watched her, glad to be able to do so without having to meet her eyes. It was hard to face that frank appraisal. He hated himself for not being able to tell her about this deceit.

"I have an uneasy feeling," she said at last, "that there was something more than personal enmity or robbery behind—Simpson acted strangely that day. He seemed to know something was coming. Two or three times he started to tell me something and then wouldn't. And now, although we're free of Rio, I can't help but . . . But this is all nonsense. There's no reason to worry you—indeed there isn't any reason anything will happen. This world is too well policed for piracy and we carry nothing valuable. Outside of yourself we have no new members in the ship's company and I have perfect faith in those who have been with me. Still . . ."

She shivered a little as though she was cold. The gesture had a strange effect upon Lars. He wanted to step close to her and put his arms around her and tell her that she needn't worry

an instant about anything. He was there to see that nothing occurred. He was learning about this girl. She ruled those about her but she was kind. She trusted her friends and now she seemed inclined to rely upon Lars. She had a rare virtue in that she could talk to a man and make him feel at ease. Lars wished she weren't so beautiful—so nice to him.

She was worldly but not wise. She spoke of Paris and Moscow and Shanghai as carelessly as most girls talk about a party they have recently attended. Her knowledge of far lands seemed to be limited, however, to a strict upper stratum. There was something engagingly childish about her enthusiasms.

"Nothin's going to happen," said Lars, almost gruffly.

She faced him again. Yes, he was right. She did rely upon him. That simple statement of his had momentarily wiped away her gloomy apprehensions.

LARS was in conflict with himself. He wanted badly to tell her exactly how he knew nothing was going to happen. He wanted to tell her that Paco Corvino would one night be missing from the after deck of the *Valiant*, never to be seen again.

But you can't talk to a beautiful woman about cold-blooded murder, no matter how certainly it concerns her.

He wanted to talk to her more, but he heard voices coming up the ladder. With a twinge of annoyance he watched two young women and the supercilious young man come out of the companionway.

"Aunt Agatha," said the brunette they called Alice, giggling, "refused to make a fourth at bridge after Kenneth redoubled six spades and set her

last night. She says she has a headache. Won't you come down, Terry?"

"If our doughty mariner can run this ship without you," said Kenneth, "you'd save us all from dying of *cunui*."

Terry did not want to leave very much. "Where's Ralph?"

"He's reading a book on big-game hunting," said Alice. "He says he's going to Africa, just as though anybody ever goes to *Africa*. He says he's going to shoot a . . . What was it, Kenneth."

"A wamphohitadile," said Kenneth.

Rosey, the second girl, laughed and looked adoringly at Kenneth. Alice shrieked. Terry suddenly looked sideways at Lars and saw that he was not smiling. He was watching Kenneth with amazement.

A quiet, unobtrusive laugh was heard behind them and Paco edged through.

"How was that one?" demanded Kenneth of Paco.

"A rare animal," said Paco, smiling. "Is it the one which drinks oysters and eats beer?"

Everyone laughed except Lars and the helmsman who concentrated upon his job. Lars noted carefully that Paco's air took all the freshness out of his remark. He was being flattering to Kenneth. Paco shot Lars a triumphant glance which clearly said, "See, they think me most amusing. I can wrap them around my finger without half trying."

Paco touched his cap to Terry. "Miss Norton, I have set up the table and made ready the cards. In Rio I picked up a new kind of sandwich which I would like you to try."

"Did you remember the champagne?" demanded Kenneth. "We must have champagne."

Paco smiled and made an obsequious gesture.

The group moved toward the companionway and Paco carefully and politely aided Terry to descend the steep steps. But he did not follow them below. He came back to Lars, glanced at the helmsman to make certain the man was far enough away and then relaxed into his easy, confident grin.

"We're on our way," said Paco, waving his hand gracefully back toward the Sleeping Giant. "By this time you've probably changed your opinion of me. It's not everybody who could keep the center of the stage around here. They don't brush their teeth without asking me first. Aunt Agatha makes me choose her books for her and Ralph makes me tell him about strange ports where I've never been and . . ."

"I'm not interested," said Lars.

"No?" smiled Paco. "But you will be. Next time you're around Miss Norton, get her started on the subject of titles."

"What titles?"

"Dukes and princes and earls. Alice and Rosey both have peerages in their cabins—or did until yesterday. They've got money but they haven't social position. Get it?"

"Get off the bridge."

"You will soon enough. I'm deep, Lars. You ought to know that by this time. Napoleon was a half-wit compared to me."

"Listen here, Paco," said Lars very quietly. "This is my bridge, no matter how I got here. And stewards walk lightly aboard my ships. Now get below."

Paco rocked on his heels and his grin grew more impertinent. Then he laughed aloud and turned toward the ladder. He stopped at the top and

looked back. He laughed again and clattered down out of sight.

Lars faced the wind again and watched the changing hues of the sea. But the elation was gone from him now. A nagging, bitter wrath, which had been with him these many years, was blown into its full force. . . .

Something was about to happen. Something was happening this very instant. But Lars knew his best chance lay in waiting. As yet he knew nothing except that Paco had a way to make four million francs. He vowed the grinning Spaniard would never live long enough to spend them.

Lars hit the rail with a clenched fist. If he could only think of some way to destroy Paco without destroying himself!

AT eight bells in the evening, Lars was again on duty, relieving First-officer Johnson. Johnson and the other two mates were efficient enough, very average mariners, but it was indicative of their lack of ambition that there was not another master's ticket aboard the *Valiant*. They all had little enough to say to Lars. He was a stranger to them and though they could easily see that his seamanship was good, they reserved judgment.

Lars Marlin's state of mind was not a calm one and his natural silence, added to this, gave him a taciturn air which they mistook for austerity.

Johnson gave over the bridge with a salute and the single statement of the course and left. The quartermaster was relieved by the same man who had been steering on Lars' first trick.

Lars looked into the binnacle, contacted his lookouts and then went into the wing to lean against the rail and look forward into the velvet warmth of the night.

Lars had wanted this trick because the *Valiant* was still close in, crossing the steamer lanes which led to Rio from the north.

He felt the strangeness of his responsibility. He had, in this command, the lives of these people to protect. But more than that he could not be certain just how or where Paco would strike.

He felt very uncertain about Paco in several ways. The amazingly debonair cutthroat had worked himself into the confidence of this entire party. They suspected nothing of his past operations and had no inkling of his present plans, whatever they were.

Paco's luck was wonderful. With the utmost carelessness he had committed a "perfect" crime. He would never be brought to book by the Rio authorities for that murder. The audacity of the crime was quite in keeping with Paco's past operations. He was always swift and smooth.

Simpson had been found in an alley with three inches of steel through his heart. No knife, no clues, no visible reason why Simpson had been killed.

Facing the police, Paco had been wide-eyed and innocent. Miss Norton's solid recommendation about Paco had completely blocked any effort on the part of the police to investigate Paco's past. It was the furthestest thing from anyone's mind that Paco had done the murder. He had grieved realistically, had told Miss Norton gallantly that he would help her.

Lars writhed when he remembered how he had been introduced to Teresa Norton for the first time. Paco had made him buy clothes suitable for the occasion. Paco had presented him with an air, saying he had good reason to know that Lars Lowenskold was an excellent officer. And Terry Norton,

shaking his hand, had said, "Anyone Paco recommends is acceptable to me."

How could they be so blind to this Spaniard's deceit? Were his perfect manners the only things they judged him by?

Plowing through the dark seas and thinking his dark thoughts, Lars got through his watch. Brighton, the third, relieved him at midnight.

LARS had worked himself up to a high pitch of nerves. He knew he could not sleep. He wandered down the deck, past the salon. An automatic phonograph was playing dance tunes and the voices which rose above the music were gay and laughing.

Standing beside a bulkhead, Lars looked through the salon window, the yellow light showing up the hard lines of concern on his sturdy face.

Aunt Agatha, thin and sharp, was knitting, looking up from her place against the opposite window and peering at the card players over the top of her gold-rimmed glasses. Ralph Norton was sunk deep into a soft chair, sitting on his spine, watery eyes devouring the open book he held. He was pale, loosely built. Lars could see the title of the volume even from this distance, the print was so large. Ralph Norton was reading *Tigers I Have Faced* and his shock of yellow hair was standing straight up. He was in Burma while the jungle-depths of Brazil flowed silently by on their port.

Kenneth Michaelson was laughing over his bridge hand. Rosey Laughton's eyes sparkled in inane appreciation.

The heavy hand of worry clutched at Lars again. If he only knew what Paco had in mind! But he did not know. The blow might fall tonight, tomorrow, next month. And what

would Paco do? Would he try to pirate this yacht? Who were his confederates and where were they?

Lars had not misspent his afternoon. Under the blind of wanting to inspect his ship he had cruised through the holds and quarters, probing into bails and cans and tanks. His fruitless investigation satisfied him that Paco's present plans did not include contraband. What devilish undertaking could net a man four million francs? Lars felt in his pocket and the keys he carried jingled faintly.

The trap-outfits, including shotguns, were in his possession, at least. So were three riot-guns and six rifles—standard equipment for a yacht used to cruising in the remotest of the Seven Seas.

He heard Kenneth say, "Kings *will* take tricks," as he snapped one down on the board. "Six. Doubled and redoubled. Rubber."

"Kings," said Rosey with a sigh. "Terry, some day you'll have to fix it so we can meet a king."

"I met one in Paris," cried Alice.

Rosey snickered. "For heaven's sake, Alice—not that one all over again—!"

Alice made a face. "I don't care. He *was* a king although he had never been on a throne. Georgia Austin married a prince, didn't she?"

The conversation took a turn upon the entrance of Paco. The Spaniard, with deep courtesy, entered from another passageway carrying a tray of drinks. Lars looked sharply at Paco. There was something wrong with his face. And then Lars knew. Paco was not smiling.

"Oh, Paco," said Alice, "have you ever met an earl or a king or something?"

Paco set the tray down. He did not answer but he smiled as though he

knew a great deal he was not saying. Then his smile faded away and he went on serving.

"Why, Paco, what's the matter?" said Rosey. "You look so pale!"

Paco did look pale. His cheeks were sunken and there were weary lines about his eyes.

"Aren't you feeling well, Paco?" said Terry.

"A little out of sorts," said Paco, half apologetically. "Sometimes a jungle fever I contracted in Indo-China returns. It is said that one gets it and never wholly recovers from it. After five attacks . . ." He stopped and went on serving the drinks.

"After five attacks," Ralph urged.

"They say one dies," said Paco. "It's just a silly native superstition of course."

"How many does this make?" gasped Rosey, very interested.

Paco did not answer her immediately. He finished serving and then picked up his tray and came toward the door near Lars. He paused with his hand on the knob and gave them all a very tired smile.

"Five," said Paco, and left.

PACO bumped into Lars and was startled. He saw who it was and gave Lars his customary triumphant grin. "Taking in the scenery, eh?"

"Let's get a look at you," said Lars abruptly. He turned Paco's face around to the light and touched a finger to Paco's cheek. Lars snorted. "Cigarette ashes and a lead pencil, huh?"

"Well?" said Paco. "Effective if nothing else."

"That's a cheap way to gain sympathy."

Paco grinned insolently, and went on down the deck to his stateroom.

Lars looked into the window again

and heard Aunt Agatha saying. "Poor boy. He did look tired."

Lars went to his own room. He was puzzled as he took off his cap and jacket. He threw them on the bunk and then sat down in a wicker chair beside the open door and stayed there watching the horizon tip up and down. It was a faint horizon, the sea ceasing only where the brilliant stars began.

He sat there pondering for hours, knowing well enough that he should be getting some sleep. But he could not sleep. Death was hovering over this yacht. He could sense the beat of its black wings.

At four-thirty a sailor came to his door and started to knock. Then he saw Lars sitting just inside.

"Sir, Miss Norton says for you to come quick."

Lars reached for his jacket and cap. "What's the matter?"

"It's Paco, sir. They're in a terrible stew below."

"What's wrong with Paco?"

"Looks like he's going to weigh anchor for the next world, Captain."

Lars snorted. He went down the ladder to the lower deck and saw that the salon was brilliantly illuminated. Terry, in a silken negligée, was waiting for him at the door.

"Come quickly," said Terry. "It's Paco."

She led him down the deck to Paco's room. All the others were there, standing nervously around. Paco was lying listlessly in his bunk, staring straight up at an I-beam above as though unaware of anything that was happening.

"Do something," pleaded Terry.

Lars stepped to Paco's side and took the Spaniard's wrist, feeling the pulse. He received a shock. That pulse was

very slow, almost stopped. Could it be that Paco was actually dying?

Lars felt cheated as he scowled down at the patient. Dying quietly in bed, was he?

Paco turned his head slightly. His eyes were glazed and his blue lips were clenched tightly as though in agony. But he managed a word. "Lars," whispered Paco. He tried again. "I'm glad . . . you came, Lars."

Lars frowned. There was something wrong about all this, slow pulse or not. "What's the matter with you?"

"Don't be so harsh," Terry protested. "He's *dying*."

Paco touched Lars' hand feebly and tried to smile. "Goodbye, shipmate."

"I don't believe it," Lars muttered.

"Miss Norton," whispered Paco.

She came to his side. "Yes, Paco."

"You're so dim," whispered Paco.

"I . . . I can't see."

Terry's eyes were bright with tears.

"Miss Norton," said Paco, "I am a Catholic and there is no priest. Tonight . . . tonight I knew I was going. I wrote my confession and . . . and several letters. I want you to take care of them for me. All . . . all my papers are under my pillow. Take . . . them."

With a trembling hand she sought out the packet and held it. Paco collapsed. His eyes, wide open, staring at the ceiling. Something rattled in his throat.

Ralph, who knew what to do in such cases, pulled the sheet up over Paco's face.

They turned out the light and silently filed from the room.

Lars followed the others into the salon. He looked long at them, marveling at the way they carried on in memory of the little blackguard.

Finally he went up to his cabin.

#### IV

AT eight bells that morning, Lars was again on duty, by choice. He wanted to be busy. He felt angry with the world at large after what he had witnessed in the dawn. But his woes were not yet complete. He had not been on watch a bell before Terry and Aunt Agatha came up on the bridge to see him.

"Captain," said Terry, almost reprovingly. "Why didn't you tell us?"

"Tell you what ma'm?" said Lars.

"About Paco. You were his friend. You must have known who he was. Or did he swear you to secrecy?"

"I don't know what it's all about," said Lars.

"Young man," sniffed Aunt Agatha, "you certainly must have known. Such a dear sensitive boy as Paco . . ." She wept.

"We will have to put in to the nearest port," said Terry.

"What's happened?" demanded Lars. "Can't we bury him at sea?"

"At sea!" said Aunt Agatha in amazement. "Bury a *prince* at sea?"

Lars scowled. "I'm sorry, ma'm. I don't understand."

"It was not right of us, of course," said Terry. "But Ralph and Alice kept insisting and we finally looked at his papers to find out whom he wished to notify. And this is what we found."

She handed Lars a packet and he opened up the first sheet. It was an ornate birth certificate which proclaimed to the world that Enrique Mendoza Jose Jesus Jorge Christof de Mayal, of the House of Habsburg-Bourbon, had been born to the world.

Lars blinked at it. He took another and found that it was not yet opened, but was sealed with the arms of Aragon. Another was addressed to Al-

phonse XIII. Other sealed packets, with directions for despatch followed. They were most imposing.

But the pay-off, to Lars, was the note to Miss Norton which read, in part, "I regret this necessary deception after your great kindness and wish you to have some part of the monies I have hidden in French Guiana. (Signed) Enrique Mendoza Jose Jesus Jorge Christofo de Mayal, Prince of Aragon."

"You see," said Terry, "we must take him to the nearest port so that he can be buried with fitting honors. The poor fellow was driven out of his own country and had to take refuge among us and it is enough that he died unknown without burying him in that fashion. I—"

"Have you looked this up in a peerage?" demanded Lars. "There's some mistake! He's Paco Corvino, a—" He stopped himself in time. To confess Paco's complete identity would be to ruin himself.

Aunt Agatha was wholly hostile on the instant. "The idea!" she sniffed and tottered down the ladder to the main deck.

Lars was left to his amazement. What was this all about? And with Paco dead . . . What could he do to anyone now?

He moodily saw his watch through and at noon he finished his shots and went down to see if there were any further orders. He had already changed the course and speeded up for Pernambuco.

**I**N his commodious cabin, at one, he sat down to eat his luncheon in solitary gloom. His appetite was small, completely taken away by the knowledge that Paco, ex-convict, dope-smugler and multi-murderer would be

buried as he had lived, in complete deceit.

He could not dispel the lowering cloud of apprehension which closed gradually in upon him. Something was wrong with all this. The danger had not ceased. He felt it had just begun. A nameless premonition of disaster hung around him. Paco, certainly, was not through with this ship and Terry Norton. But there was no arguing the slowness of that wavering pulse and the death rattle he had heard in Paco's throat.

Bleakly, he lunched over his laden board and stared unseeing at the shining riot guns and rifles in locked racks on his walnut wall.

Had Paco made some rendezvous with criminals at sea?

Lars reproached himself for not acting in Rio. But how could he have done anything without bringing about his own return to the penal colony? Certainly a man owed himself some protection.

Shock-haired Ralph Norton knocked on the door and Lars bade him enter. Ralph Norton would have been handsome had he thought more about his personal appearance and less about his dreams. He was younger than Terry — Lars judged about eighteen.

"This is a pretty awful thing," said Ralph, lying back in the captain's easy chair and showing his long legs out before him. "I'll bet you're pretty cut up about losing your friend."

Lars thought it better not to answer that.

"The whole ship is in an uproar," said Ralph. "Nobody had the least idea Paco was a real prince. Aunt Agatha will never get over making him wait upon her. Think of it! A real prince all the time. The girls feel pretty silly and



pretty sad over the way they talked about wanting to meet princes when they had one right there."

"Ever think that might be a fake?"

"A fake!" cried Ralph. "Why should it be a fake? Good God, the man wouldn't own up to it until he was dying, would he? And a man on his deathbed wouldn't tell a lie. There'd be no point in it."

"That's what is worrying me," said Lars.

"What?"

"Nothing. I suppose Terry will radio the news this afternoon."

"She can't," said Ralph. "Those documents are a sacred trust. She isn't supposed to let anybody know about it until those letters he wrote have been placed in the right hands. Terry keeps her word. You don't seem very excited about it."

Lars speared a potato with his fork and ate it.

"Wasn't he your best friend?" persisted Ralph. "He said he was."

"Sure," said Lars. "My very best friend."

Ralph missed the irony. "I get it. You're taking it big. Sure you would. A fellow like you who's been all around wouldn't break down or get excited. Say, this ship is sure getting its share of dead men. First Simpson and then Paco. Wonder who'll be next? These things run in threes, you know."

"Do they?" said Lars.

"Sure. Everything I read say they do. Railroad wrecks and drownings and things. Of course there'll be three."

Ralph found it very unsatisfactory to try to talk to this big blond fellow who had come into the Norton employ. For the space of a minute he scrutinized Lars. Here was a man, thought Ralph, who had seen things and been

places. He was toughened and could be expected to put up a mean fight against anything from a lion to a pirate crew. He ended up by respecting Lars' reticence. Ralph got up.

"Gee, I sure wish you'd told us Paco was a prince, Skipper. You'd had saved the ladies a lot of worry about the things they didn't do. Well, see you later."

HE did not get out of the door. Kenneth charged through the opening and collided with him. Kenneth was too excited to launch into any preliminaries. He threw his news into the room as though it were a hand grenade.

"He's alive! A couple sailors just went in to dress him up before we made port and they found his heart was still beating! Now what do you know about that!"

Lars put down his fork and looked at the racked riot-guns. The keys were sharp against his thigh.

"Paco's alive?" cried Ralph excitedly as he came up recovering from the collision.

Kenneth was already on his way out. He was babbling to Ralph: "His pulse was clear stopped last night. I felt it myself! And now he's breathing and he's got some color in his cheeks. Ralph, do you realize we've got a real, live prince aboard the *Valiant*?"

Lars went over to his desk and sat down. He opened a series of drawers until he found the cartridges which fitted his guns. He checked them and then locked them up. He examined his .38 and found it in good order. He slid it into his waistband and smoothed his crisp white jacket over the bulge it made.

He went to the racks and made certain that he had the right keys. He

locked them securely and then placed his keys in the pocket nearest his .38.

He went back to his desk and sat down facing the door, cap pulled down hard, mouth tight with anger.

"Damn him," said Lars venomously. "I might have known. Arabian *benj*! He dared take the risk of dying from it just to slow down his black heart. God knows what he'll do with this new power."

**A**LL day the glass had been falling. The sea calmed until it was a stiffly bending sheet of gray iron. The only wind which stirred was that made by the *Valiant*, and this wind was a sluggish thing as though the ship struggled through a vast area of invisible glue.

From horizon to ominous horizon, no cloud stood alone, but the blue had become discolored until it was no color at all. And millimeter by millimeter, the glass continued its inexorable course down past the false markings of *Storm*.

There was no storm here. Only a vast, crouching space of quiet sea and unmarked sky. But there would be a storm. Lars Marlin could feel it as certainly as he could feel the slow roll of the deck beneath his solidly planted feet.

Johnson, corpulent and common, came at eight bells in the afternoon to relieve Lars. He looked at the chart which lay with stubbornly curled edges upon the charting table and placed a pudgy finger near the cross which Lars had just made.

"South latitude thirteen," said Johnson, as near as he ever came to a joke. "We won't find any luck around here. Lord, I can't even breathe, it's so hot."

"When the first blast hits, I'll be on the bridge. If I'm not, call me."

There was something in Lars' granite-like expression and something in his voice which caused Johnson to salute and say no more.

Lars stepped out of the chartroom and into the bridge wing. He stared out over the immense sameness of wind and water which blended into a sullen murk. His undershirt, beneath his stiffly starched exterior, was pasted hotly to his lean ribs.

He was waiting for something; he seemed to know that the something was coming. Inactivity had worn his nerves paper thin and even his great stolid calm was on the verge of cracking.

He would welcome the coming violence of this blow. But now the sea was dead and the air was too thick to breathe.

He heard footsteps coming up to the bridge, careless, confident steps. He turned and saw Paco rise to the level of the bridge deck.

Paco was grinning. He had changed completely. There was less of furtiveness about him, more of command. He was dressed to his part as Prince of Spain. He wore Kenneth's clothes and looked better in them than Kenneth ever could. Rakish yachting cap, silk shirt, muffler of silk with small figured anchors of blue in it, correct trousers and spotless shoes. The whiteness of his attire set off the swarthinness of his features.

Lars stood solidly and watched Paco approach, face impassive but thoughts all focused on Paco's heart. The blue patch-pocket made an excellent target.

"Well, am I good or am I good?" said Paco. He came to a halt, lit a monogrammed cigarette and flipped the match down into the dead sea. He faced Lars, grin widening. "For two days I've raised hell about them open

ing those letters before they were sure I'd passed to the Great Beyond and now I got them eating out of my hand. Did I tell you I was a genius?"

Lars looked his contempt.

"Don't you believe it even yet?" said Paco in mock surprise. "Why, Lars, that's ungrateful of you. After all I've done! And you know, of course, that I'll see you get entirely free of French officers. Oh, yes, of course, Lars. And haven't I built you up to Terry?"

"It's Terry now, is it?" said Lars.

"Sure," said Paco. "She fell for this Prince gag like a ton of bricks. I'm on easy street. As soon as she carries out my orders—"

"Your orders? Are you ordering this ship now too?"

"Certainly I am!"

"And where are we going?"

Paco grinned. "You'll know soon enough. Terry and the rest are 'thrilled to death' about it. Quite an adventure for them."

"You've still got me on the bridge, Paco."

"Is that a threat?" smiled Paco. "I think you'll go along with me—unless you want to land back in the swamps. It'll be Madame Guillotine next time. And, by the way, Lars, it's not Paco now. After this address me as 'Your Highness.' I think I shall have to require that of you."

Lars clenched his fist and Paco saw it without any change of countenance.

"I wouldn't," said Paco.

"You're taking this yacht to do your dirty business for you?" said Lars.

"Of course. I might add, Lars, that you would be wise to follow orders. Everything and everybody is on my side now. Even you!" He laughed amusedly at this and turned and went down the ladder and out of sight.

LARS looked back at the sea again. The key to the gun-racks were hard and sharp against his thigh. But he knew too well that any move he made would result in his sacrificing his own life.

He stood there for an hour, though he was off watch and would need a short sleep to take his night trick. And at the end of that hour his reverie was cut short by a white swirl of skirt to his right. He had not heard Terry Norton approach.

He whirled about, startled for an instant. He saluted gravely. And then he saw something in her expression which alarmed him a little. She was very cold and formal—and could that be distrust in her beautiful face?

"Yes, ma'm?" said Lars.

"I have orders for you, Captain Lowenskold. Since discovering the real identity of Prince Enrique, we have made a change of plans. As we are a yacht we can enter ports at random."

Lars hesitated. He knew this was far from the right time to tell her anything but he thought that if he could give her some slight warning . . .

"Miss Norton, are you sure about Paco?"

Her tones were ice. "You mean His Highness?"

"I mean Paco Corvino. Miss Norton, I've got a hunch—"

"Are you, by any chance, trying to discredit him after seeing those certificates? Really, Captain Lowenskold, His Highness was right."

"About what?" demanded Lars.

"About you. I think it only right to tell you that he has discovered some things about you which are not very flattering to your character and if he had known them he never would have recommended you as captain after poor Simpson's death. If you are trying to

undermine my faith in His Highness, save your breath. I came to give you orders."

The way she said that cut Lars deeply, gave him clearly to understand the fact that he was presuming when he considered himself higher than a butler aboard the *Valiant*.

"As you can navigate and as you are the only man with a master's license here and as Johnson long ago refused command because he neither wants it nor has a ticket, you shall remain in your present status. However—"

Stiffly, shivering with rage, his face white, Lars said, "You came with orders."

"Yes. You are to proceed to Cayenne."

"Where?"

"Cayenne, French Guiana."

"But, Miss Norton—"

"Are you going to obey my orders?"

Lars saw the futility of trying to interfere and the question blazed like lightning through his brain. What devilish scheme had Paco thought up? Why did Paco, ex-convict, want to place himself in the jaws of the penal colony once more.

"Are you going to obey?"

Lars turned on his heel, jaw set, eyes stubborn. He entered the chartroom.

"Mr. Johnson. We are changing our course for Cayenne. What is our position?"

"Latitude thirteen, sir. You saw it yourself an hour ago."

"Yes," said Lars in a voice as dead as the calm. "I saw it myself."

He picked up the dividers and stood looking at the widely spread chart and then, with a vicious snap of his hand he speared the dot which was Cayenne. The dividers stuck there, quivering.

In all the world he had to go there, the most fateful spot on the globe.

## V

AT CAYENNE, Lars Marlin refused to cross the entrance to the harbor, dropping hook in the deep-water anchorage, six miles from the piers. The shallow entrance would only take fourteen feet but the *Valiant*, with the tide, could have managed that.

Swinging at her chain, bathed in the steaming sunlight of morning, then, the *Valiant* awaited the return of the shore party which had left in a swift speed-boat with the coming of the sun.

Lars nervously paced his cabin. He could not bring himself to spend too long a time upon the bridge. Every scraggly tree in the water seemed to possess eyes and every wave which slapped the *Valiant's* white hull cried out that the shore knew he was there.

He stopped from time to time at the wide port of his big cabin to stare out through the harbor mouth, over the blue surface of the quiet bay and at the white and red town. Sight of Mt. Cépéron filled him with nausea. On it perched Fort St. Michel. They could see the *Valiant* from up there.

He could place the governor's house even at this distance and could see the black rectangle which was the Place d'Armes.

Every landmark of the port shouted death to Lars Marlin. His body cringed as it remembered the raw weight of irons and the oozing slime of the swamps. Past his eyes slouched a line of men in chains. One of them fell, to be dragged along by the rest—until the guards found that he was dead and cut him loose to throw the body into the sluggish, cayman-infested river.

A boat, still far off, was coming toward the *Valiant*, flying the tricolor. It was an official boat. Lars grinned the

sill, watching. A sound made him whirl. It was Ralph, and Lars had a difficult time trying to mask his terror.

"I guess they aren't ever coming back," Ralph complained, scratching his shock of upstanding hair. "They've been gone for hours!"

"You didn't go with them?" said Lars.

"No. They said I was one too many for the speedboat. They just didn't want me, that's all. All my life I've wanted to see the penal colony and they wouldn't let me go."

"Maybe you can make it tomorrow."

"No. We won't be here tomorrow. I wish they hadn't been so mysterious about it. His Highness was going around as if he was wearing gum shoes and a false mustache. He's up to something pretty smart, the prince."

From the first Lars had not been able to believe that Paco would dare set foot again upon this shore. Certainly, it had been years since he had escaped. There had been no chase, even then. They had found a corpse and had named it Paco Corvino and the incident was closed. They would not be expecting a guest of Miss Terry Norton's to be Paco Corvino. He looked different, too, now that he was well dressed and well fed. Still . . .

"What were they going to do?" said Lars.

"That's what makes me mad. The only chance for some excitement and they won't let me in on it. They've got a good plan. His Highness is getting Terry to tell the authorities that she has come to request the removal of the bodies of four Americans who have been buried down here. A national gesture, y'understand. They'll make it pretty touching. And then somehow, His Highness says he is going to put his jewels and money into

those coffins and bring them aboard that way."

"They can't get away with it!"

"Sure they can. These four Americans were flyers on an expedition and they died down here. Paco knows all about it. They weren't convicts. So Terry is going to remove the bodies and take them home in state. It's pretty nifty, isn't it?"

"Sure," said Lars, faintly. "Pretty nifty."

HE TURNED back to watch the approach of the government launch. If only some official would recognize Paco. But then, that was too much to hope for. And if Paco was recognized, would he squeal on Lars? Surely he would. Hadn't he told Miss Norton lies to discredit the captain already?

"Why did she listen to the idea in the first place?" said Lars.

"Why not? It's lots of fun and, besides, isn't he a prince? Say, what'd you say about His Highness to Terry last Thursday that made her so mad?"

"Was she angry?"

"And how!"

"She's foolish to try to go through with this."

Ralph had not missed Lars' tenseness. "What are you so jumpy about?"

"I didn't get much sleep during that blow."

"Oh. About time they were coming back. There's a boat. What is it?"

"You'd better go below, Ralph," said Lars, "and tell the gentleman in it that I'm on the bridge. Would you?"

"Sure," said Ralph. "But what is he?"

"Port captain, that's all. Captain Delal."

"You know him?"

Lars quickly shook his head and

Ralph went out, puzzled. He turned. "How do you know his name?"

"It's in the *Coast Pilot*," said Lars evasively.

Ralph closed the door, and soon after Lars heard the small motorboat putting at the gangway. He went to his mirror and looked at himself. He put on his cap and straightened up his blouse. Nervously he wiped the sweat from the palms of his hands.

Captain Delal came in without knocking. He was a short little Frenchman, proud of his small mustache and his debonair manner. "Captain Lowenskold? I've got a few clearance papers for you to sign. If you weren't a yacht, there'd be plenty of red tape, but Norton's a power down here." He spoke in slangy, Colonial French. He had his black interpreter with him but before he could put the words into Barbados English, Lars, unwittingly, had almost answered in *prison French*!

"*Merci, Captain Delal, je . . .*" Lars stopped himself. Swiftly, he added: "I speak a little French. Served on French boats once. You said some clearance papers?"

But Captain Delal was looking strangely at Lars. "Pardon me, *m'sieu*, but haven't you called at this port before? Your face is familiar somehow."

Lars knew his face had been before Captain Delal in the past. He had been detailed to a harbor-survey once. "You must be mistaken," said Lars.

"But one is not likely to forget a fellow with shoulders so big and hair so very light. Yes, I have seen you somewhere." He puckered his brows, trying to recall.

"I am sure the captain must be mistaken unless he once lived in Marseilles."

"No, never saw the place. Let me see. I swear, Captain Lowenskold, I

even remember your voice. But that's silly, isn't it? My memory is playing me tricks. Here, the papers."

Lars sat down at his desk, after offering the captain a chair. A steward came in with glasses and bottles and set them down, carefully withdrawing. Delal poured himself a drink and sipped it slowly.

"Quite in keeping with Norton's reputation," said Delal. "It isn't every day—Say, are you certain you've never been here before?"

Lars had been speaking in as correct French as he could muster, even injecting an American accent into it. "No. At times the memory is very odd, isn't it. But perhaps some other man looks something like me."

"Yes, that's possible. Yes." He watched Lars for several minutes until Lars had finished with the papers. And then Lars handed the sheets across and got up to show that the interview was over. Delal did not rise.

"I think I know," said Delal with a relieved smile, pleased that he had recalled. "You look something like—pardon me, no offense, you know—a fellow named—let me see . . . Oh yes. Of course! Marlin. Lars Marlin. And that's a coincidence. He had the first name of Lars, too."

LARS could not trust his voice. He saw Delal's gaze wander until it discovered the framed master-mariner's license on the wall. He thought he saw the glance narrow and fasten upon the license with more than a cursory interest.

"Well," smiled Captain Delal, rising, "I shan't clutter up your cabin longer. I have lots of ships to inspect."

He put the papers in his valise and handed it to the interpreter. They stepped out to the deck and the black

raised an umbrella over the captain's head.

Delal's handshake was flabby and his smile insincere. "Hope to see you again sometime, Captain."

"Of course," said Lars. "Glad you came."

The pair went down the ladder and soon Lars heard the motorboat putting as it put off. He watched it cross a space of water to a nearby freighter which was unloading to lighters in the stream.

Exhausted by the nervous strain, Lars sat down in his chair. He knew too well that when Delal got ashore he would mention this strange coincidence. The officials would think it best to check this master-mariner's license on the wall just as a matter of form. Delal had made a mental note of those numbers and signatures, all false.

And shortly the whole French world would know that no such license had even been issued. They would know that the captain of the *Valiant* was Lars Marlin, escaped convict, convicted smuggler of contrabrand.

In a short space of time he had hold of himself again. He took a drink from the tray and followed it with another. He could only hope that the check-up would be made weeks hence, though he knew that radios speeded such things.

At dusk he heard a tug bumping the side of the *Valiant*. He went into a wing and looked down.

The speedboat streaked in a wide white curve to the gangway and the party came aboard, Paco smiling and confident in their raidst.

Lars transferred his attention to the lighter. Johnson was already taking orders for the loading. Four American flags were draped over four coffins.

Paco paused on the main deck and

saw Lars above. Paco grinned and passed on.

Shortly, as the first coffin came swinging up over the rail and down into the hold, Miss Norton came to the bridge.

"Captain," she said coldly, "you will please proceed immediately for Lisbon."

"We did not clear for Lisbon but New York."

"I will fix that. You will please pay attention to your duties only. Lisbon."

Lars saluted stiffly and went into the chartroom. He whistled down the tube to his engineer and gave him his orders.

The last coffin was swinging high into the air, inboard and down. The tug was putting off, black smoke rising in a cloud about the *Valiant*.

THE Canary Islands lay low on the horizon, far to starboard. The bows of the *Valiant* rose regularly to knife back into the easy swell. The throbbing Diesels drove tirelessly. All was well, to all appearances, aboard the yacht.

And yet, day by day, Lars Marlin's tension had grown. He had no slightest inkling of the contents of those mysterious coffins and Paco had volunteered no information to anyone about them. The contents were gold and jewels. The ship believed that. But just because Paco said so, Lars did not.

Lars stayed with his bridge. He was plainly *non persona grata* on the lower deck. Silence fell whenever he went down—and he had soon stopped going.

Only young Ralph, with his dreams of adventure, came to see him. A deep dark past added to Lars Marlin's attractions as far as Ralph was concerned.

Lars was standing a watch, looking

toward the Canary group to check his bearings, when Ralph came up that afternoon.

"Captain," said Ralph complainingly, "there's a sneak-thief on board this ship. How do I go about catching him?"

Lars turned slowly. "A sneak-thief? What's gone?"

"Well, I've had an idea for a long time I was going to go to Africa and shoot me a couple lions and I been collecting guns."

"Guns?" And from Lars the word sounded like an exploding cartridge.

"Sure. I had three good rifles. A twenty-five-twenty. A Soho, a nine-mm. Mannlicher and a couple automatics and some shells. Sis didn't know I'd been buying them here and there so I don't dare tell her about it. You know how women are. Aunt Agatha wouldn't like it either. But I had them hidden away and now they've disappeared."

"How long has it been since you saw them?"

"That's it. Just this morning. And when I went back just now to clean up my Schoenauer, the locker was empty. Every bandolier was gone!"

"I'll take care of this," said Lars. "Do me a favor, Ralph, and don't say a word to anybody about this."

"Sure, but . . ."

"Our lives may depend upon your silence."

This statement sent Ralph back off the bridge, gaping and blinking. It sounded harsh and real, as though something was going to happen very shortly.

But nothing happened for the rest of the watch or during the eight-to-midnight. And then Paco stepped out of his cabin with a swift glance about him.

Far down the moonlit deck, Lars was standing in the shadow of a lifeboat. He had been there for three hours, certain that Paco would come forth sooner or later. And now that Paco had appeared, Lars knew there was something wrong.

Paco walked down the deck, passing from shadow to shadow, away from Lars, continually on the watch.

No one appeared to block Paco's furtive way. Lars waited until Paco had rounded a bulkhead and then started forward with swift stride to overtake him.

When Lars reached the corner, Paco had vanished into the emptiness of the forward well. But a companionway was open. . . .

Lars reached the top and started down, silently and carefully. The blackness of the hold engulfed him. The coffins were down here. The place was not large as it was needed only for ship's-stores. But again Paco had vanished.

Lars slid behind a tall pile of hawser and crouched there, listening. At first he could hear nothing except the ordinary ship sounds but at last he could sort out the pulsating engines and the waves and the familiar creaks and groans of a moving vessel. There was another sound here in this hemp and tar-laden interior. The buzz of whispering voices—

**Q**UICKLY, Lars crept closer. He could see a yellow aura of light as he approached. A lantern was masked by a barricade of bales. An inch at a time, Lars crept up the incline of stacked boxes until he could peer over the upper rim and down.

Four coffins, side by side, were open.

Four bearded men and Paco were crouched about the lantern. The rays



of the uncertain, yellow flame made the faces of those below hollow and wolfish.

Lars studied them intently as he listened.

"You're armed now," said Paco in prison French. "Stop being nervous."

"We're not nervous," said a gaunt devil with hypnotic eyes. "We're restless, that's all."

"Play it right," said Paco, "and we'll have this ship in our control before dawn. You sure Flaubert will meet us off the Straits?"

"Certainly," grunted another.

"He'd better have my francs with him," threatened Paco.

"He'll have them. But why worry about francs when we've got a set-up like this?" growled a third. "I don't see why we can't pull the trick in Lisbon."

"And let her get a chance to find out I'm nobody?" scoffed Paco. "No, my friends. I collect my pay for releasing you and then we go partners on what we can get out of this ship."

"She ought to be worth plenty," said the man with hypnotic eyes. "The Norton woman, I mean."

"I'm not worried about what she'll bring in cash," said Paco. "I was hoping I could find a way to play this thing through with her but she'd get next to me and they'd trace me. I won't run that chance."

"What about Lars?" said a burly, shaggy-haired giant who had not spoken before. "Are you sure of him?"

"You know about him," said Paco.

"Sure," said the thin one, "Too good for the rest of us. I was hoping we wouldn't have to trust him. Flaubert is as good as Lars Marlin with a sextant. Look, Paco. Have we got all the guns aboard?"

"Lars has a rackful. I sweet-talked

Terry into getting them away." Paco laughed as silently as he could. "She thinks he's a pretty desperate character. But he's stuck so close to the bridge we wouldn't chance it before. Johnson is supposed to get the guns and deliver them to Terry as soon as he can. He's got another set of keys."

"Then when do we act?" said the man with the wild stare. "I'm sick of this damned hold."

"I'll give you the signal. We'll be off the Straits soon enough and we can run her somehow until Flaubert boards us."

Lars had drawn his .38. He weighed his chances of getting them all and found his chances very bad. Perhaps he could get one, even two, but by that time the others, guns at their sides, would have fired. If he could get to the bridge before they took his guns and if he could arm the crew . . .

He knew these men. Knew them as the hardest-bitten lot of the Colony. Jacques Patou was the fellow with the strange eyes—a jewel-thief who had amassed a fortune before he was sent down under. Auberville was the wasted one, a man with two French and four Colony murders to his discredit. The big shaggy man was Tallien, a brooding, vicious devil, who could crack a man's spine with his two hands—and had. The last was fat Renoir, a man of small caste in the Colony but of great importance to France. Renoir had been a politician in his time and his records were many. People wanted to be sure that Renoir's records were never opened.

Four million francs had been a small price for the release of these from French Guiana!

Lars knew that his debt was to Terry Norton. In spite of the pleasure drilling Paco would have given him, he

was forced to forego it. Of the whole company, Lars was the only man who stood a chance of blocking these men. To have asked them to hold up their hands would have been requesting that they shoot instantly.

The hold could not be blocked against exit.

Lars slid back down the incline of boxes. He had to keep his riot-guns and after that. . . .

Quickly he made his way out of the hold and up the ladder. He strode across to the bridge and mounted swiftly.

Johnson, on watch, gave him a guilty glance as he passed. Lars, with sinking heart, swung into his cabin.

The racks were blank!

**H**E WHIRLED and entered the bridge again. Johnson was crouched back defensively but Lars wasted no talk on him. He went, instead, to the charting table and snatched up a pencil. With a hard, violent hand he flung a black line straight east of their course. He read the compass.

Back on the bridge, he grabbed the wheel from the startled helmsman. Then, in contrast to his stormy mood, he gently passed the spokes through his capable fingers. So gently did the *Valiant* swing that only a slight change in the motion of the waves under her gave a clue to the fact that she had been shifted on her course.

Lars stepped back and shoved the helmsman to his post. "Hold on sixty-one until further orders."

He turned. Johnson, seeing Lars did not blast him, had gained something of courage. "Look here, Captain. I've got orders—"

"*You've* got orders," said Lars. "Look here, mister, as long as I can walk I'm master of this vessel. See that he holds that course or you'll answer

for it at the first port we touch. Have you got that?"

"Y—y—yes."

Lars turned on his heel and clattered down the ladder to the main deck. As he had supposed, Aunt Agatha and Terry, Rosey and Alice, Kenneth and Ralph were all in the salon.

Lars entered and slammed the door behind him.

Startled by the noise and by his truculent manner, Terry stared at him.

"Miss Norton," said Lars. "You have had the guns removed from my cabin. You will please tell me immediately where I can find them. I know now why Paco—"

"Captain Lowenskold," said Terry. "It would seem that your tone is rather harsh for a man in such precarious circumstances."

"I am not interested in my circumstances. I am only concerned about yours. Miss Norton, unless I have full command of this situation, you will regret it."

"I do not like your tone," said Terry, standing. "If I saw fit to remove those weapons from your reach, that is what my judgment demanded."

"You mean that is what Paco demanded," said Lars bitterly. "Here and now, Miss Norton, I've got to tell you something which I haven't told you before. I have been thinking of my own—"

"I am afraid I already know what you have to tell me, Captain. His Highness has apologized many times for recommending you but of course he could not have known that your past is not all it is supposed to be. His Highness received a letter which he did not open until we were at sea and then it was too late. He told me over a week ago—"

"He's lying!" cried Lars. "You're

being made a fool of! Paco Corvino is no more His Highness than I am the Prince of Wales! He's a murdering devil! He killed—"

"Go on," purred Paco, behind Lars. "Make a fool of yourself Lars."

Lars whirled to meet Paco's contemptuous smile—and the gun in Paco's hand.

"I told you," said Paco to Terry, "that Lars is sometimes unmanageable. I am sorry that this outbreak had to occur, ladies. It grieves me that it was my word which subjected you to this. If Johnson is at all competent to sail the *Valiant* on into Lisbon, I think we would be safer if we placed poor Lars in a locked cabin and stood a guard over him."

The others were on their feet, staring blankly at this sudden tableau. "Paco," said Lars, carefully. "Tell them what you brought aboard in those coffins."

Paco smiled. "My money, naturally. If Miss Norton would like, I could show her the contents either now or in the morning. I did not think it important."

"Don't be foolish," said Terry. "We trust you, Your Highness."

"Of course," said Aunt Agatha with an indignant sniff.

"Tell them you've got Auberville and Patou and Renoir and Taillien down there. Tell them you're about to seize this ship. Tell them you received four million francs for this deal."

Paco laughed amusedly. He gave Terry a broad, humorous wink. "Of course, Lars. That is just what I have planned. Come now, old fellow, quiet yourself while we place you in safe keeping. This madness will pass, Miss Norton. I am desolated. If I had known—"

Lars made a lunge for Paco's gun

but Paco had read the intention in Lars' eyes. Paco leaped agilely back and fired.

Lightning seared through Lars' shoulder. He was turned by the bullet. Falling, he crashed into the bulkhead.

Paco stood with curling smoke about him, still smiling, apologizing to the ladies. Sailors were coming from the deck. Four men took Lars in custody.

Lars tried vainly to fight them off but their hands gripped him tight. Bright pain flared from his shoulder, and his heart went suddenly cold.

"Miss Norton!" shouted Lars. "You've got to believe me! Paco is going to attack before dawn! In pity's name, arm the crew!"

"Terry," said Paco, as they hustled Lars away, "if I had known this . . ." Paco was very sad.

## VI

THE brig was dimly lit by the blue bulb outside the bars in the corridor. Lars, sitting hunched on the bunk, was still too big for the place, dwarfing it to the size of a hat box.

Ralph was nervously giving Lars' arm medical attention. Ralph had read a great deal about first aid, but even so it was fortunate for Lars that the bullet had passed through the flesh of his muscular shoulder. And Lars was watching impassively while Ralph sweated and felt green when he touched the sticky blood.

"You've got to do it," said Lars.

"I—I can't," whispered Ralph, plastering down the adhesive tape. "Sis would murder me!"

"Paco is going to murder all of us. I've told you where you could find your rifles and ammunition and pistols. Why do you think Paco wants those? You're a sensible fellow, Ralph.

You know that I couldn't do anything to this whole ship all by myself."

"I don't dare," said Ralph.

"You call that a trial?"

"No, but—"

"All right. It's Paco's word against mine. And it's your life unless you get this straight here and now. I tell you they're going to attack. You won't need any more proof than that."

"No, but—"

"All right. The minute they strike, you be ready. You get those keys and sneak the riot-guns up to the bridge. You take my revolver out of Terry's keeping. And then, when they strike, you hot-foot it down here."

"But how'll we get to the bridge?"

"We go forward on this deck to the engine room. We go up through the fiddly. You leave that to me. They won't try to hit at the bridge because they don't think anybody there is armed. And another thing. Keep watch by Miss Norton's door. At dawn, tell her that I'm dying. Tell her anything. But get her down here so she'll be on her way when Paco and the rest crack down. Understand?"

"Sure, but—"

"It's your life and Miss Norton's I'm thinking about Ralph. You need do nothing if Paco fails to take over the ship."

Ralph got up. His eyes were feverishly bright as he began to understand that there might be excitement in the offing.

"Maybe—maybe I'll do it."

Lars watched him out, heard the door lock. And then, wearily, he lay back upon his bunk.

In spite of the tension within him he knew he must have slept. A far-off shout came to him. He sat up and swung his legs down.

A shot sounded somewhere forward

and Lars was on his feet, hands gripping the bars of the door. He shook them. His every thought was concentrated upon Ralph. If the boy succeeded in getting Terry down here, if he succeeded in bringing the keys, if he had placed the riot-guns on the bridge . . .

Lars knew too well what he himself was doing. How easy it would have been to swing in with Paco. But there were other elements involved besides revenge which had chosen his course for him. Terry Norton's safety was now paramount. Since his play last night he had known that he had been fighting to choose between two paths—his own safety and that of Terry Norton. The girl had won. For Lars, now, there would only be French Guiana or Madame Guillotine, even if he won against Paco. He saw that clearly. Until midnight when he had swung that wheel, he had tried to preserve his hard-won freedom. But all question of doing that was gone.

**H**URRIED footsteps were sounding in the passageway. By the blue light, Lars saw Ralph coming. And with him Ralph dragged Terry. She was protesting, glancing back, anxious about the violent sounds which came from the main deck, the repeated shots.

Ralph inserted the keys in the lock, opened the door and slapped a .45 into Lars' big hand.

"What madness is this?" cried Terry. "I thought you said . . . It's a trick! Ralph, you're crazy! Can't you . . .?"

"Shut up," said Lars roughly. "Paco is taking over the *Valiant*. We can get to the bridge from the engine room."

Terry stared at him. Shots were more frequent now on deck.

"Are you coming?" demanded Lars.

She did not move and he scooped her up in his arms and bore her swiftly up the passageway. Ralph, panting excitedly, strove to keep up with Lars' long, anxious strides. Terry's negligée floated behind Lars like a ship's wake. The back of the .45 was hard and bruising in Terry's side but, staring at Lars' face in wonder, she did not even feel it.

They reached the engine room, skirting the big Diesels and the shining rails, brushing past an astounded engineer, mounting the iron ladders which led upward.

At the top of the last stage, Lars set Terry down. "You'll have to climb. I'll go first."

Lars mounted the precarious rungs up the sheer side. In a moment reached the open fiddly. He stopped there, looking toward the bridge on the same level. Dawn faintly lit the world.

Johnson was leaning over the bridge rail, shouting down at the forward deck. A bullet snapped beside his head and he drew back almost somersaulting in his rush.

Heavy feet thundered on the bridge ladder. Lars slid out of cover and stepped quickly to a position commanding the forward part of the bridge.

Tallien, shaggy hair streaming like black smoke behind him, charged into sight. The light was faint but the range was short. He saw Lars and threw the Mannlicher rifle to his shoulder.

Lars shot from the hip.

Tallien's great bulk stood immobile. He took an uncertain step back. Abruptly the rifle clattered to the deck and Tallien shot out of sight, backward down the bridge ladder.

Lars raced to the rifle and scooped it up, darting back in time to dodge a

random shot from below. Ralph came up on all fours and Terry stood shivering, pressed against the door to the radio room. It opened against her and the sleepy operator stuck out his head.

"What the hell's the shooting. . . ? Oh, beg pardon, Miss Norton, how—"

Lars was at his side. "Get a radio to Casablanca, French Morocco. Tell them Renior and Patou are attacking the *Valiant*. Tell them to get a cruiser or anything out here instantly."

"Where are we?"

"About fifty miles straight west of Casablanca." Lars turned to the bridge. "I'll give you the position exactly in a minute."

Terry was swept along by Lars. He thrust her into the protection of the chartroom. "Get down out of sight!"

Ralph was digging the riot-guns from beneath a transom. A bullet shattered the glass over his head and he ducked. Lars crouched and fired forward at the fo'c'sle head.

"This is going to be hot," said Lars. He looked up as Johnson came in on hands and knees and grabbed a riot-gun from Ralph, shoving it into Johnson's hands. "If you want to live, don't be afraid to use this."

Lars had no time to explain further, going swiftly in a crouch he got to the wheel. The helmsman was lying on his stomach, afraid to reach up as high as the lowest spoke. Lars took a quick glance at the binnacle. A bullet greeted his rising, shrieking as it struck an inch from his face. But he had what he wanted. The compass still read sixty-one.

Johnson was lying beside him.

"You didn't change the course?"

"I—I was scared to. I thought I better put into Casablanca because you threw us off and with all these islands—"

"Good! Ralph! Take this to sparks!"

Lars scribbled their position, as swiftly as he could figure it, and gave it to Ralph who scuttled away.

Above the short cracks of pistol and rifle below, the whine of a dynamo began to rise. The message was on its way.

The sniper on the fo'c'sle head was getting close, firing at random through the dodger. Splinters plowed up beside Ralph's hand and he quickly stuck his fingers in his mouth to suck the blood from the cuts.

"Won't they attack from the boat deck?" said Johnson.

"I'm going to cover that. You keep these two forward ladders clear."

AS LARS crawled past the chart room he saw Terry shivering against the legs of the table. But, no matter how much he wanted to speak to her before the French came, he could not stop. Lugging a riot-gun, he crept toward the boat deck. He heard Terry's scream:

"Look out!"

He spun about. Patou's wild eyes were staring down the sights of a heavy rifle. Lars fired while still in motion. The two shots roared together. Glass showered down upon Lars.

Clumsy Jacques Patou fell forward.

Lars was motionless for an instant. He had hoped it was Paco. But Paco would hardly take part in such an attack unless it was from the fo'c'sle.

Shots were coming from that direction now with greater regularity. Lars glanced up at a searchlight platform over the bridge.

Then, using Patou for a shield, he sent five shots from the riot-gun toward the fo'c'sle head. He saw Paco bob back and knew that all five had missed.

But his object was accomplished. Quickly, Lars swarmed up the ladder to the searchlight stage. He threw himself down behind the narrow base. Three swift shots bit steel around him.

Something changed about the ship and then Lars knew. The engines had stopped. Paco, in the protection of the steel bulkheads forward, also knew it.

Paco's voice was thin but jeering. "Now what are you going to do? We'll starve you out! We'll make you surrender."

"Ever hear of a radio?" shouted Lars.

An incredulous silence followed this. For a space of minutes no shots were fired, no voice was raised. And then a wail came from forward. "You wouldn't! You haven't got the nerve to send that radio!"

"A gunboat's on its way from Casablanca!" shouted Lars.

"Curse you!" screamed Paco. "It's that woman! You fool, let us have the bridge and we'll get out of here before they come! They'll get you too!"

"Sure they will!" cried Lars, jubilant. "Sure they will but it's worth the price. You and I started out from Casablanca. It's fitting that we've come back. But it's not the Penal Colony now. It's the guillotine! The guillotine for the lot of us! If it's the station ship, it'll be Captain Renard. There's no greasing out of this. He knows us. Both of us!"

A bullet shrieked away from the searchlight stanchion. Paco and Renoir and Auberville were firing wildly now. But they knew what had happened to Tallien and Patou and they did not have the courage for another charge.

For two sweating, grimy hours they nailed the bridge-defenders and then, in the east, a smoke plume could be seen. The battle was over.

THE station ship stood off a few yards from the *Valiant* and both vessels rolled gently upon the quiet sea. A boatload of French marines led by Captain Renard approached the yacht.

But they need not have felt concern. Paco and Auberville and Renoir could no longer fight. The marines came up a Jacob's ladder to the deck and stood there in two stiff rows.

Captain Renard was small and efficient and dapper. But in spite of his size his voice could carry a good sea-mile. In loud French he bawled, "Do you come out or do we come in?"

Paco came out, head down, shuffling. He looked deflated. Auberville and Renoir were fatalistic about it.

Captain Renard saw Paco but he did not immediately recognize him. Instead he turned his attention on the bridge. Terry Norton was coming down the ladder.

"*M'selle!*" said Captain Renard, doffing his hat and bowing. "You are Miss Norton. Oh, yes, once I have seen you in Paris! So sorry you have trouble with these convicts. But, no matter, *I* have arrived. These, of course, *are* the men."

"Yes," said Terry. "This is Paco Corvino."

Members of the ship's company straggled out of the hold and the companionways.

Lars came slowly down from the searchlight platform. His face was bleeding where chips of steel had cut him. He stopped on the bridge to look down.

Terry and Captain Renard were still talking. She was trying to tell him what she knew about it.

"You say Paco Corvino?" said Captain Renard. "Wait. I know that name somehow. Ah . . ." He faced Paco, roughly squared him around, looking

at him as though he inspected some particularly slimy type of spider. "Of course! Paco! But I thought. . . There was a record of your death when you tried to escape. . . Ah, certainly. You had to lie even about your dying. Miss Norton, I am so sorree, this fellow is the worst blackguard who ever befouled French soil. He is too low to be considered for an instant—except perhaps by the executioner who considers all things for a certain price. I could not express how badly I feel that you have had this trouble from such a worthless, lying miscreant, Miss Norton. I once put it away in the penal colony for contraband but it persists in living. Bah, we should squash such things beneath our heel."

He gave Paco a contemptuous thrust and sent him reeling back into the ranks of marines. Then he carefully took out a handkerchief and as carefully wiped his fingers.

Lars watched the Frenchman and Terry come up toward the bridge. He braced himself. He had seen how Renard had treated Paco and it had pleased him. But Lars knew his own turn was coming down.

"If it had not been for a captain we were fortunate enough to procure in Rio," Terry was saying as they came up the ladder, Paco might have succeeded. But as it was Captain Lowenskold acted so bravely that he kept them at bay. I was very foolish. I would not listen—"

"I should like to meet this brave captain."

"He was very anxious to meet you," said Terry. "He sent that radio as fast as sparks could throw in a switch."

"So?" said Renard. "Then he knew we French were always on the *alerte!*"

Lars was waiting beside the wheel when they reached the top of the lad-

der. He was watching Renard. Renard could not help but recognize Lars Marlin, the man he had sent up with Paco now that Paco had been called to Renard's mind. And besides, by this time, all French vessels knew that Lars Marlin, escaped convict, was captaining the *Valiant*. Delal would have traced it by now.

"Captain Renard," said Terry, "may I present Captain Lowenskold?"

Renard's smile suddenly froze on his face. His half-extended hand stayed motionless. Lars read recognition in those eyes. Renard knew him. Lars wished fervently that it did not have to come before Terry.

Renard scowled a little and withdrew his hand. "You say, Miss Norton, that this man defended you against Paco Corvino?"

"Of course!"

Renard looked at Lars with a studious eye. "Captain *Lowenskold*?" He saw the wounded shoulder and the cut face.

"Yes," said Terry. "It was only his quick thinking which spared us. I doubt if any of us would have thought to send for you until it was too late."

"*You sent for me?*" said Renard carefully.

Lars neither spoke nor moved.

Terry could feel the tension but she could not understand it.

Renard was trying to think.

A sergeant of marines came to the top of the ladder. "Captain, sir, that jackal Paco Corvino says Lars Marlin is up there and you better bring him down with the others."

"Lars Marlin," said Renard, nodding. He looked around at the shambles of the bridge and looked back at Lars' wounded arm and cut face. Again he looked around him. He could see

the dead Tallien's left foot sticking through one ladder. He could see Jean Patou crumpled up in the companionway, blond hair matted with blood.

"Is anything wrong?" said Terry.

Renard shrugged. "Wrong? Wrong? No, it is I who have been wrong. Before when . . . before I thought there might be a doubt, but now I am sure."

"I don't understand," said Terry.

"Sir," said the sergeant, "Paco Corvino keeps telling me that Lars Marlin is up there. I remember he was sent up with Paco."

"Your memory does you credit, Sergeant," said Renard. "Go back and tell that ugly louse Paco Corvino to be still. Miss Norton, I am so sorry I have troubled you about this, so glad to have been of help."

He suddenly extended his hand to Lars. "I am so glad to have met such a brave man, Captain . . . *Lowenskold*."

Lars took the hand, too stunned to say a word.

"But what is this about another one being up here?" said Terry.

Captain Renard smiled and shrugged. "He is talking about another convict named Marlin. And anybody with half an eye"—and here he turned dead Jean Patou over with his foot—"could see that there lies *Marlin*, dead as an anchovy."

Captain Renard, very pleased with himself and the world, trotted jauntily down the bridge ladder. He stopped and roared commands at his men and the sergeant, kicking Paco along before him, cursed Paco all the way down into the motorboat.

Lars Lowenskold leaned weakly against the binnacle, listening to the departing engine.

Quickly and solicitously, Terry put her small hand on his arm.

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# Mule Heaven

By **CHARLES T. JACKSON**

Author of "Wildcat Talk,"  
"The Pup Comes Home," etc.

**M**UD was in the dreams of Mase McKay; and when he woke a little, mud was in his hair, his ears, his teeth—thin oozy mud past which he finally got his eyes open. He was just where he had been when he lost consciousness, hanging with a death grip to the hurricane-skinned tops of mangroves slanted in a fierce tide.

Mase gripped tighter. The Florida blow was lessening fast but the hurricane water was now outpouring to the Mexican Gulf and everything loose would go with it. Something brushed his shoulder and he shoved back from it.

"Oh, man!" he choked. "Ain't no dream—it's a mule! Here's his ears,

then up comes his tail. Dead mule tryin' to push me outa his way and go on. Have it, mule. Least I'm tryin' to better myself and you ain't."

But the wet hairy belly of the mule came up under him. Mase let go to grab a fresh hold on the brush. A hoof came up, then another; maybe a dead mule couldn't kick but it looked that way. Mase dodged, his eyes clearing better to a wild scuddy dawn and a brown flood pounding through the mangroves of the key.

"Here comes another mule. There's two mules." Mase tried to grin with swollen, salt-cracked lips. Lucky to live! Thankful for anything this morning. He wondered what had become of the Key West sponger after a sea had swept him from her deck. The Greek skipper and the four black boys seemed in bad shape the last Mase saw. The

sponger was on her beam and if she struck in among the Ten Thousand Isles or drifting on past Cape Sable her chance was about the same—pretty bad when a hundred-mile wind held for ten hours.

Mase was no sponger; he had been hitch-hiking with Captain Stefan from Key West to Tampa when this thing hit. The weather men had pointed the storm up the East Coast but it was contrary—just like a mule. Mase saw another one, belly up, headed seaward.

"Where they come from? No mules up Shark River; none back on these mangrove keys. Mules just boilin' out on the tide from a jungle don't make sense."

The hurricane tide was running swiftly from the lower glades. The water fell so fast that presently Mase's bruised body was lying out on the slatted, skinned mangroves, and their ghastly roots showed below. When a pale sun straggled above the beaten jungle Mase saw one defiant cabbage palm beyond, its top gouged off and hanging low. Mase was swamp-born and hurricane-wise. That palm meant higher land, a hammock though the impenetrable mangroves hemmed its hidden shores. He beat his numb legs and arms and began to crawl. Soon he could have touched the muddy bottom if he could have put a foot down through the mangrove roots. That palm top meant something to a swamp cracker. The heart of it was food, a salad big as a bushel, and a hurricane castaway must get food. And water. He would die very soon in the mangroves.

Mase crawled slowly, having to push broken limbs and débris from his head. He thought he knew pretty well where he was. Somewhere among the Ten Thousand Isles, up one of the twisting

chartless channels among the mangrove keys each one looking exactly like another. No fresh water, nothing to eat; you had to find a hammock where you might put foot to the earth. You couldn't travel mangrove, wading, walking, swimming; you crawled over root-tangle, and a man wouldn't crawl very long. Mase was weak when he made a hundred feet to what looked like a lighter spot in the crushed green stuff. So he rested, closed his eyes and waited for the sun to clear the storm rack. Mase had a piece of a shirt, one shoe, and no hat or pants. Hanging to a bamboo crate after he went off the sponger, the seas had neatly husked him in that all-night drift over the flooded jungle. He slept again and started up with the horrors.

**M**ULES again! Mules in the dark. Ears laid back, teeth bared and grinning, eyes popped out wickedly as they charged him! Mase fought delirium. He heard a long dismal "hee-haw," and shock his head. Even at twenty-two there are limits to a man's strength and reason. Mase started crawling again, and halted.

The long shuddery wail broke out again. It joined with another and the melancholy blast became a dirge. Not just ordinary hee-haws with which mules protest living, but croaks of doom.

Mase tottered up. "Dead mules don't sing. Unless I'm gone clean fitified in the head I hear mules."

He crawled again. the sun was warming his skinned legs and back. His throat swollen with thirst, he butted on through frothy twigs and leaves toward that more open spot. He rested again and when he opened his eyes a mule was looking at him. A mule that seemed way up in the air

above him. A sure-enough wet mule, shining like an angel in the sun but a bit thin in the ribs.

Mase moved his head to peer through the mangroves. It didn't make sense, a mule up there. Then he saw a dark bulk below, and presently it became the end of a scow, shoved up high on the ancient shellbank of a hammock. The mule was surveying the scene calmly, moving his tail against the deerflies. Then Mase saw mules' heads sticking above the barge side among broken pine stalls, and one dead mule was overside hanging by a twisted halter. The mules were quiet until the big brown one on the barge end must have signaled and then they all broke out in a terrific wail, hee-haws mingled with sobs of woe and evil.

Mase got to his feet and tottered under the overhang of the scow. "How come you here, mules? Don't make sense. Glad to meet yeh but you're in a hell of a fix up Shark River. You can't shake a hoof anywhere in forty miles 'less it's on the hammock."

Seven mule heads were over the barge side looking at him. Then, at the down end of the scow Mase saw a round moon face. A black boy so black that after looking at him the sun hurt your eyes. Midnight was fireworks compared to this boy. He got up on the barge and gazed at the mules. Mase yelled:

"Hey, there! How'd them mules get in here?"

The boy's face showed complete fright. He seemed to shrink up in his muddy denim dungarees, and he couldn't answer. But he came closer, making signs for silence. His eyes stuck out in panic and finally his lips moved. Just a low mutter.

"Man, yo' hesh! Won't do talkin' 'yah!"

"What you mean, no talkin'?"

The boy came along the narrow barge deck and squatted down where he could peer over at the storm victim and muttered:

"Misteh, you' better git. Yo' an' yo' mewls."

"Ain't my mules," said Mase, watching the boy's scared eyes.

"Man, yo' ouden yo' brains. Yo' an' dem mewls come togeddeh last night on de bawge."

"No, we didn't. I just found 'em." Mase started to climb up the barge end and the boy whispered with panic. "Yo' stay down. Man, yo' know whe' yo's at?"

"Somewhere off Shark River in the mangrove. Hey, what's the matter, boy?" Mase looked at the line of mule heads and the mules looked at him wearily but with new hope in their eyes. "What you mean? I been hurricane-drifted, and you ain't goin' to help me?"

"Nosseh! Yo' know whe' yo' landed? Dis hammock is Jim Slade's hideout!"

Young Mason McKay stuttered hoarsely. The hurricane faded in his mind—just another blow. But Jim Slade was something else. Slade, the killing outlaw of the Glades, the last of the gang that the sheriffs of four West-Florida counties had tracked in vain; Slade who'd slain deputies and cattlemen in fence wars, and then vanished completely eight months ago! People said he must have died in the swamps to which he had been driven below Tamiami Trail. Jim Slade!

MASE looked up dumbly. "Guess I get you, boy. Slade's killed every one who got near him. He covers his tracks that way."

"Yassuh. He sho' shoot yo' on sight efn yo' come to camp."

"Then what I goin' to do? Half-dead anyhow. Like them mules."

"Dem mewls kilt Misteh Slade a'most half daid hissef. Come a rarin' an' chawgin' into camp on top de stawm tide. Wes' on highest land and dem mewls wanted it. Mewls run oveh us in de dark an' Misteh Slade cussin' an' shootin'. Den one mewl step on his foot. He hung to de cook-pot post twell de sea run down. Mewls all daid except whut's hyah."

Mase looked at the mules saved by their headstalls on the swamped scow. Standing to their bellies in water but alive—seven wet mules with harness galls, and bridle marks on their muzzles, bruised and hungry but listening hopefully to this human talk. Mase was the discouraged one now. He grunted.

"Where was you when all that fightin' was on?"

"I'se up a tree an' climbin' higher. Come daylight Misteh Slade finds his shotgun and meks me come down. Sets me to wuk cleanin' up camp. She sho' is a mess."

"You work for Slade, hey? Boy, what's yore name?"

"I was hot dice boy up to a turpentine camp when Misteh Slade come through a shootin'. Nigga Gin, dey calls me, but jes' Gin fo' short." Nigga Gin smiled at last. "Hot dice boy—"

Mase was thinking. "Say, Gin, you ain't goin' to let a man die in this mangrove are you? No grub, no fresh water—"

"Mebbe I git yo' some grits and sow-belly till yo' gits goin'. Man, de hurricane done got yo' pants."

"Yeh. Land here in a gunman's jungle with one shoe and piece of shirt-tail. If that ain't hell—just like the feller in the book. That there Robertson Crusoe, but he made himself some pants out of goatskins."

"Ain't no goats on dis hammock. Mebbe you' can mek yo' some mewl pants. Plenty daid mewls in de bresh. Efn Misteh Slade could walk he'd shoot 'em all. He say de coast guarders fly oveh dis hamnock an' spot mewls. An' a relief boat come in, an' den we-all blowed up. But no boat git hyah except on a stawm tide. Man, dis is 'way in back. Dese mewls neve' git away fum dis hammock. Noossuh! Dey can pick a livin' off bresh an' doan' have to wuk no mo'. Jest lak mule heaven."

"Yeh, until Slade guns 'em down."

"He can't walk on his foot when de mewl tromp it. Me, I got to do all de wuk."

"Gin," said Mase and he grinned from his swollen lips. "If Slade can't get around anyway soon, I can build me a shack up the hammock. If I had an axe and a coon trap and a skeeter bar I can lick the world. Don't say no to a swamp cat like me."

"Misteh Slade kill yo' jest lak wild-cat. Man, I seen him kill men an' bury 'em. He kill me quick efn I doan' wuk fo' him."

One soaked shoe is no good to a man so Mase took it off. He wrapped his shirt tail around his waist and looked up at the rales. "Gin, you help me and I'll help you git away too."

"I'se skeered to git away. Sheriff done grab me so . . . betteh stick to Misteh Slade. Once a month I go out in de dugout down to the fish-camp trade boat and gits coffee and sugar. And cawnmeal fo' Misteh Slade to mek hisself some shine. I trades his shine down deh, an' dey think I'se got a still in back. Doan know I'm hot dice boy whut Misteh Slade run off to de glades. Hot dice gits me in little cuttin' fight up home."

"But yeh work like a slave. All right,

all right! I got to eat and got to git me some pants. What you aim to do about these mules? Let 'em starve tied up in this scow?"

"Nosseh. Goin' to cut 'em loose. Dey find brack water back on de ridge an' a hongry mewl'll eat whut he find. Dese mewls sho' lucky. Land hyah jes' lak dey died an' gone to heaven."

"Yeh, and look at me. Boy, you git me some grub, hear?"

GIN was cautiously working the swollen halters from a near mule. Some straps he cut and some he saved and all the time he talked soothingly, lovingly, and the gaunt, wet, red-eyed mules listened. Their drooped ears came up. One reached to nibble a storm drift of young cane when Gin urged him over the lower barge end. Gin stroked the others and tried to get them onto the muddy bark without making noise.

"Mewl, ain't seen nobody lak yo' since I come past de Trail. Ol' sugar land mewl—yassuh! Harness marks on yo' back and galls on yo' neck. Yas-suh, yo' land in mewl heaven, nothin' to do but eat."

Mase picked up a soaked halter. It had a mark that he'd seen up in the glades plantations. Likely this barge load of old work mules had been shipped from Fort Myers or some West Coast landing where a ship couldn't embark them. Cuba-bound, maybe, to work on other sugar lands, and now they'd just died, as far as the world knew, and gone to Heaven.

"Hey," said Mase, "tell you what let's do, Gin. Run them mules into the deep jungle where Slade can't find 'em. You git me some grub and clothes and I'll take care of yore mules."

Gin got all steamed up again with fright. He got the last mule freed and

one by one they stole into the seagrape tangle which began where the mangrove ended. But a black boy can love a mule even if he has to wuk alongside, and Gin didn't. No wuk for a mule on this lost swamp island. Gin looked the castaway over uncertainly and muttered as he went away.

"Misteh, yo' stay back in the hammock. Efn any fish left in de box I fetch you' some. Misteh Slade knowed I hid you out on his key he buckshot me daid."

"Keeps you workin' under the gun and when he's through with you that's what he'll do. Gin, me and the mules are the only friends you got—hear me?"

Gin faded under the hurricane-tangle where the big red mangroves gave way to the hammock growth. A good swamper could find food even if the storm had ruined much of it. There'd be seagrapes and wild guavas, grass nuts and swamp cabbage. And at low tide a man would find coon oysters on the mangrove roots. Not first-class chow but Mase wouldn't expect it. Lucky to live!

The castaway went back to a broken spot in the mangrove where he could reach open water and washed his shoe and shirt-tail free of mud, hung them on the brush and stretched in the sun. He even found one pool of brackish water half fit to drink.

"Mule heaven," Mase thought as he dozed. "Pretty soft for mules but I got to get some pants afore the deer-flies and skeeters start workin' again. Skin a dead mule, hey? No, thanks."

Slade was a bad man with a gun, but Mase figured that he was smarter than Slade in the deep swamp. He could cut circles around a man from the pinelands up state. Slade had to get a sprained ankle well before he

could go hunting the castaway. Gin had said that their dugout was lost and there was no way to the coast except by the maddening channels of the Ten Thousand Isles. The glades inland were full of water. Slade sure had a good hideout. Mase fell into uneasy slumber till mid-afternoon.

A SOFT voice awoke him. Nigga Gin was standing at the open space of the seagrape jungle, talking to a little gray mule.

A little sorry old mule looking too weak to forage after the others. Skinned and battered; and gazing at the black boy as if maybe this was St. Peter opening the gates for mules. Gin rubbed down her legs and gave her a hunk of tender palm heart.

"Enjoy you' self, mewl. Keep yo' pants too. Dat white man ain' goin' tek any hide off'n go' fo' pants. Nosuh!"

"Hey," Mase called, "gimme some of that palm cabbage too, Yore mule can wait, can't she? I wouldn't skin pants off a lady mule."

"Yo' hesh," said Gin, "Misteh Slade is techy on de gun. He had me wukkin' all day to build up his still. Start de mash fo' his shine befo' wese builds de camp. So techy fo' likker."

Mase grabbed the old demijohn of brackish water and drank swiftly. Gin had three little fried grunts and some cold corn grits, and Mase went at that with sore teeth and lips. But it's wonderful what grits and grunts do for a swamp man. All the time Gin soothed the little gray mule Mase was getting strength. He got half the palm heart cabbage away from the mule also.

"Boy," he grinned, "I ain't goin' to forget you."

"Yo' better fo'get you' eve' see me, man. Yo' gits off dis key quick befo'

you' an' Misteh Slade has a run-in."

"How am I goin' to get off this key?"

"Dunno. How dat Misteh Crusoe, whut wore goat pants, git off?"

"Pants?" Mase grinned. "How many pants has this gun-feller, Slade got? Why can't you sneak me his pants outa camp?"

"Man," whispered Gin, "Yo' done got mental insanity in de haid! Nobody steal pants off'n Misteh Jim Slade!"

"Then we gotta skin a damn mule. Gonna be bad for skeeters after the blow. I got to bed down somewhere and figure a way out. You help me and I help you. Gin, if we got these mules outa this you'd make some money on 'em."

The hot dice boy shook his head. Fear of the law and of Jim Slade would keep him here under Slade's gun. Mase gave up the idea of winning Gin from the outlaw's side. Gin said he might find an old axe and a blanket and a frying pan, and the castaway could soon put up a palm-thatch shelter deep in the hammock. But Gin feared even that. When Slade's foot was better he'd scout the mile-long hammock on a mule hunt.

"Boy," said Mase, "you goin' to let that feller kill them pore dumb critters? Ain't they had trouble enough gittin' here?"

Gin looked troubled. But shook his head again. More mules browsed out of the jungle. Poor old work stock that had been destined in the end for a glue factory likely. Mase was all sympathy as he watched Gin and the little gray mule. He tried to scratch one mule's thin neck but this one was on no petting-party. An old slab-sided black runt, and he laid his ears back and bared his teeth and Mase backed away.

"Boy, here's a mean one. Got a rebel eye, and what I mean he ain't goin' to stand foolin'. Watch him now."

The rebel swung to bite a brother on the flank. The victim squealed feebly and all the mules broke into croaks of lamentation. Mase grinned. This fightin' mule was boss mule in heaven.

"You see, boy? Ycu gotta have a partner in this business to get anywhere. When this old rebel gets his strength back he's gonna make war. Knock him in the head with the axe and I'll get me some pants mebbe. Them dead mules is gettin' too strong to handle."

Gin went up and rubbed the old rebel's nose. "Baby," he soothed, "doan listen to dis white man talkin' about axes. Nosseh!"

"All right," said Mase, "you stake me to some grits an a hunk o' sowbelly and I'll stay up in my end o' the hammock. Swipe a coon trap for me, too."

"Yasseh. An' den yo' stay out o' sight—yo' an' de mewls. Me, I got to wuk. Got to find Misteh Slade's copper coil an' set up his still. Got to mek a canoe so's to git outside fo' cawnmeal. Misteh Slade got it easy, an' yo' got it easy. De mewls doan do nothin' but rest an' eat. I'm de wukkines' man on de island."

"Go 'long," said Mase. "Don't pester me. I got troubles."

**G**IN slipped out in the narrow open glade along the hammock ridge and presently Mase heard a faint shout somewhere in the jungle. The seven mules answered Jim Slade's wrath with a long shuddery wail, like prophets of evil. Mase went deep in the seagrape thickets. Beyond them were some storm-slanted sago palms, and even

one or two cocoanuts, and Mase went to searching the drifts for something more to eat. Then he saw that outlaw mule with the rebel eye, peering at him suspiciously under the brush. Mase hurled an empty cocoanut at him.

"Lemme alone, damn you. Foller me around and you'll turn up in pants. Sho' will, mule. Now git!"

Mase sat down and brushed mosquitoes off his legs when they came out of the swamp at sundown. Dusk brought the small creeping life of the glades out all about him. A ring-tailed coon paddled in the mud for crawfish. Plovers waded in the pools and a wildcat sneaked along under the cocoaplums stalking unseen prey.

It was nearly dark when Nigga Gin came back noiselessly. He had an old rusty axe, a damp torn mosquito bar and a worn blanket along with the meal, bacon and frying pan.

"Misteh, I had a time gittin' dis. But camp stuff is scattered so dat Misteh Slade thought I was pickin' up fo' him. He's rarin' an' ragin' about dem mewls. Man, I hope he's got a broke laig."

"I'm goin' to break a damn mule's head if he don't let me alone. That ol' black jughead I mean. Yore little gray's all right, and the two browns are peaceable, and the rest of 'em just shys away and minds their business. But that jughead means war."

Gin crawled out of the seagrape tangle and went to the big black. "Baby," he said. "Doan you min' dis white man. Yo lissen to pappa an' nobody's goin' to ha'm yo'."

Mase was bedding himself down in the dusk. He had the mosquito net hung and a couple of palmetto tops tied over it for a roof and a hole gouged in the shells for a fireplace in no time. A good swamper can get a cosy home

in ten minutes, and have sowbelly in the pan. And all the time Mase heard a soft voice out there talking mule talk, and when Gin went away seven mules broke out in grief and lonesomeness. Then he heard Jim Slade roaring curses from the other side of the hammock. Mules were getting upon Slade's nerves and he promised evil to them soon as he could hobble about and had some shine cooked up.

Mase crawled under his bar, feeling fit as a fiddle. He could fool Jim Slade anywhere in this jungle and maybe wrap the axe around his ears when Jim ventured out. Mase woke at first dawn and made a can of coffee. The coffee, like the grub, had been soaked in salt water but you got used to that. Let a hurricane slap you around for a couple of days, and heigh-ho! What do you care for anything else except being alive?

**A** BEAUTIFUL dawn. Egrets, white as snow, ibis and gulls sailed and glittered over the mangroves standing on their snaky roots in calm swamp water. The hammock would dry out today. Mase ducked out from his seagrape screen and went along the low ridge watching carefully, but the mules had browsed past Slade's camp in the night for up to the north end of the hammock. Mase saw the little clearing under some moss-plumed oaks facing the narrow run of water through the mangroves on the far side. He crept up, Indian still, from tree to tree and bush to bush until he could spy out Jim Slade's establishment. It sure wasn't much.

Gin had rebuilt the thatched lean-to of poles and palm fronds and under the mosquito bar Mase saw a bearded man flat on his back and snoring. The black boy slept behind him upon some

gunny sacks on the shell dirt floor. Some bales and boxes, a mass of rusty traps and cook pots were heaped about, but right along Slade's pole bunk, under the netting was a good pump-gun.

"If," grunted Mase, "that feller'd get good soused some night I might jump him. But that skeeter bar'd fool me. No time Slade'd roll up with the buckshot flyin'. Sleeps like a cat, Gin said. I ain't so crazy as all that."

He worked around the oak clump, sizing up the land. You couldn't come to the lean-to under cover. Slade had seen to that. Slade's thin wolfish face was plain to Mase in the growing light, his grizzled beard working up and down as he snored. It was a temptation but Mase couldn't think what to do about it. Then somewhere behind him he heard a solitary hee-haw. The jughead mule was leading his army down the hammock past Slade's camp.

Mase got up and sneaked away. A chorus of mule voices now would be too bad for him. He was swinging around a cocoaplum tangle when something stared him right in the face. Right on the bushes were some damp blankets, sacks and socks. But right in Mase's path hung some pants. Big checked, black-and-gray pants. Faded and torn, but pants. Pants with the other stuff hung out to dry.

"Well, in all my born days," chuckled the castaway, "if them ain't Slade's pants. Wait for me, mules, I'm comin'!"

He loped along the ridge waving Jim Slade's pants and when he passed the little gray mule he whacked it gleefully over the rump but went on. The jughead gave him a bad eye but Mase was back under his seagrape refuge when the mule procession arrived. The sun was over the mangroves now, a warm calm morning, peaceful as could



be. But Mase was going through Slade's pockets.

Not a thing in the outlaw's pants except sand and hurricane grime. They were heavy and damp but Mase put them on. Mighty big but Mase slewed them around his waist and crawled out.

"Mules," he chuckled, "thanks for the pants. I wouldn't seen 'em if you hadn't scared me right into that there washin'. Why didn't I take Slade's socks too? But I only got one shoe anyhow."

He made breakfast with a small smoke and doused the fire. Then he crawled out again to where the mules switched their tails in the open. Belly-full and happy, not a lick of work for anybody. Nigga Gin had to wuk; Mase heard his axe ringing across the hammock beyond the camp. Gin had to make a dugout before his boss ran out of cornmeal and couldn't cook any more shine. Mase walked around rubbing his red scratched ribs hoping that Gin would show up early. But all morning that axe rang and the mules slept in the shade. It was high white noon when the black boy came along the ragged trail with some cold corn flapjacks and a rusty coon trap that he'd found in the hurricane wash among the trees. Gin's idea was to set this white man up in business so that he'd keep out of Slade's notice. The boy stopped among the mules and crooned to them all so that he didn't see Mase until Mase ambled out in the clearing. The white man swaggered like an admiral.

Gin saw him then. His eyes went white and he couldn't talk. He writhed around in horror before he got speech.

"Misteh Slade's pants!"

"Ain't it the trewth?"

"Stole dem pants! Hung Misteh Slade's clothes on er bush an' you git 'em his mawnin'!"

"Doggone right. Ain't he found out yet?"

Gin moaned slightly. "He doan git out his bunk vit on account his foot. Man, you wait! Whut I tell him now?"

"Tell him the mules done it. He can't start no war anyhow. Boy, I certainly am pleased this mornin'. Got some pants an' grub. Say, you hackin' out a dugout ain't you? Where's it at?"

"Misteh, Ol' Lady Trouble's hangin' oveh yo' haid. Yo' is gittin' all organized fo' grief. All I want is fo' you to git."

"All I want is gittin'. Boy, you done turn pale."

"Yasseh. I feels pale. Ef Misteh Slade eveh see yo' in dem pants—" Gin moaned slightly and leaned on the gray mule. Seven mules switching tails, happy and peaceful; and he had to wuk and worry. Seven mules died and gone to Heaven, and this white man turned up like the devil himself among them to grin and jeer and offer torment.

GIN went back to his job among the cypress across the hammock, and Mase heard the axe all the sultry afternoon. Before sunset the mules headed off on the trails they had made through the jungle to find what feed they could and Mase was alone. He hoped they'd stay away but they wouldn't.

"Makin' a regular stompin' ground right in front of my shack," Mase thought. "And when Slade can hobble he'll head right here after 'em. I don't aim to be lingerin' when that gun-shooter starts. Hide full o' buckshot won't do me no more good then it will a damn mule. That Crusoe feller in the book didn't have a bunch of ol' plantation mules tailin' him about when

he was tryin' to figger a way to git home."

His folks up near Glades City must have given him up. Just another hurricane victim who'd never be found. Mase cooked his supper and sat in Jim Slade's pants and with the blanket over his back waiting for the mosquito hour. The pests came in from the pools about sunset. But it was dusk, and Jim was about ready to crawl under his netting when he heard a shot. Then another; a pump-gun was pouring lead out of Slade's camp. Then the voice of the boss roaring above a chorus of mules. Presently Mase heard the clatter of hoofs and seven mules came thundering down into his clearing before the seagrape jungle. They halted and slapped their rails about and gazed at the castaway.

"That's right, damn you," said Mase, "Slade throws some slugs and you run to me for help. Git out of here!"

The old jughead flattened his ears and bared his teeth when Mase waved the axe. Mase got back to his palm lean-to. Then he heard some one loping in the brush and Gin showed up panting.

"Any o' dem mewls wounded?"

"Naw. But you keep 'em away, boy. That boss mule's gittin' too sassy. He's thinkin' of runnin' over my camp."

"Mewls doan listen to advice. Misteh Slade hobbles up an' shoots 'em away. He says dey done gittin' on his nerves. He says I got to make him a crutch an' he'll go crack 'em down. Man, I doan like dat. But no use arguin' wid a buckshot man. He wild. Tomorry he'll want to put on his clo'es. Yo' betteh gimme back Misteh Slade's pants."

"Yeh, I would. A feller gits pants down here he better hang to 'em. Go 'way, boy, and let me sleep. I'm nervous too."

"So'm I. Mewls done gittin' worried, all dis shootin' an' cussin'. I ask ask yo' agin, tomorry, gimme Misteh Slade's pants."

Mase crawled under his netting and wouldn't discuss pants. Nigga Gin went away grumbling. The mules milled about in the brush and Mase couldn't sleep. He kicked around on his blanket until the light of a late distorted moon began to thin the jungle shadows. Crickets and night birds shrilled and called and peace should have reigned on this lost hammock of the Florida coast, but it didn't. Mase got up, scratched his mosquito-bitten legs, put on Jim Slade's pants and sneaked out around the mules bunched in his front yard. Mase had begun to clamp down on an idea that had been in his head ever since he'd heard Gin's axe yesterday.

"Hate to git that boy into any more trouble but I wonder how far he's got with that cypress dugout he was workin' on? Goin' to look it over, an' see where he keeps it."

He reached the hammock ridge and went along silently. Jim Slade's camp was a half-mile down and across the island, so Mase had no trouble passing it unseen and unheard. Then he heard a sound behind him. The seven mules were coming in the soft earth. When Mase stopped to scan Slade's clearing they stopped. When he went on, they went on. Mase was full of choked wrath. He didn't dare bawl them out or run them back. So when he reached the cypress clump at the edge of the black water his escort stopped and watched him. The bulbous moon shone down on the chips and chunks where Gin had worked with axe and adze to hollow a split log. He'd cut and burned out the middle fairly well but to make a good swamp

canoe takes time and careful measuring when you get to the finishing touches.

"Boy," Mase grinned to himself. "I give you two more days on the job. Meantime I'll hack me out a paddle at camp and git some grub together; and then goodby, ol' jughead."

Old Jughead showed his teeth in the moonlight, but Mase felt so good about that dugout that he just grinned back. When he started up the jungle path the cavalcade came on. Mase got cautious again when he had to pass the dark camp on the opposite shore of the key. You could see open water there, just a glimpse through the mangrove clearing. Gin had cut brush all about, save where Slade's thatched hut was hidden under the storm-scarred oaks. Mase scouted out the lay of the land. He would have to get the canoe before Gin completely finished it and paddled it out from the cypress point and around to Slade's landing. It would be beached not ten yards from the shack after that.

MASE forgot everything except his getaway. A good swamper would find a channel out of these lost mangrove islets. He would watch the tide run, turn by turn, and figure a route to the open Gulf. Might take him days to do it but he'd make it. The blind waterways and intricate sloughs of the Ten Thousand Isles were a maze that even a guide had to guess at, but a swamp man took his time and watched the way the slow water moved. Mase turned back to the trail and met the mules all bunched up as usual watching him. Maybe they were lonesome and Mase felt so peaceful that he grinned again at the jughead.

The little old gray mule was nearest and Mase scratched her neck. She loved

it and rubbed her mangy shoulder against the white man. Mase scratched her back and tickled her ears.

"Yo're all actin' so doggone decent tonight, how about a ride, ol' gal? If it's all right with you we can shuffle along to camp and mebbe find you a chunk of swamp cabbage. Easy, now."

He leaned over the little gray and got a leg over. She was no easy rider but what would you expect from an old field mule that should have retired years before? Mase kicked his bare heel into her bones and the old gray ambled on, ears going flip-flap, and little hoofs hitting the soft sand. In a way Mase felt she was proud and all swelled up to be heading up the hammock with a rider softly talking baby talk to her. This white man couldn't be as soothing as Nigga Gin, but white folks just don't know how with mules.

"Lift yore feet, baby," chuckled Mase. "You and me ought to got friendly before. Now you know where to come when you want yore back scratched. Just keep that jughead boy friend o' yours away, that's all. Gotta bad eye an' no manners. Before I say goodbye him and me are goin' to mix if he sticks his nose into my beddin' again. But you—baby—"

The little gray mule stopped. Her ears pointed straight towards Slade's dark camp. The other mules all stopped and pointed. The jughead was sniffing, his nose out and teeth bare.

"Hey, you," whispered Mase, "git goin'. I mean you, you damn fool—git goin'."

The jughead raised his muzzle and roared. All the other mules joined in, and amidst the ghastly clamor Mase heard a man's voice. He saw Jim Slade hobbling to lean against a post of his shack, and Jim was waving his shotgun and shouting vengeance. Some

damn mule had crippled him up and he would wipe them all out.

Mase ducked low on the little gray. He watched that shotgun, wondering if Slade could see him in the moonlight. It was no place to be. He had got his left leg over the gray's spine and he felt her belly quiver with emotion as she joined the jughead's defiance.

Then that shotgun went off—*Wham! Wham! Wham!*

Mase ducked lower when he heard lead passing. He tried to slide off but a big mule crowded his leg and he couldn't. His mule was in a gallop and so was the other. Mules on both sides of him and the jughead leading. Mase hung to the gray's mane and yelled. Secrecy and guile were no good now; the mule army was charging Jim Slade's camp and a shotgun at that distance just raked their hides and aroused their tempers.

"Hey," grunted Mase, "let me git off. It ain't my battle—"

But he couldn't get off without being run over. His gray mule was right behind the jughead when they hit camp. The shotgun roared twice again, and then Jim Slade turned hopping for an oak tree. He didn't make it. One mule rode over his palm thatch and it came down on Nigga Gin sleeping at the far end. Another mule swept between Jim Slade and his tree, so Jim turned and went hop-legging for the water. He didn't reach that either. Old Jughead was not a yard behind when Slade went down and he no more than got one glimpse of a rider passing him when some other mule knocked his brains crooked.

**M**ASE slid off the gray at last and turned back. The thatch lean-to was down, and Nigga Gin was yelling

in a mess of poles, bedding and boxes. Gin kept on yelling and made for a tree. He was half up when Mase found Slade's pump-gun. Mase came back in the rear of the mule cavalry hunting for Slade. They had all passed now, circling back to the hammock with a last dismal hoot at Jim Slade and his vengeance.

"Git down, boy," said Mase. "Mebbe he peppered 'em: some, but I got nothin' against you. Only I got the gun, understand."

Gin was pop-eyed with terror. He got down and moaned.

"Yessseh! I hears yo'. How dem mewls git organized lak dis?"

"Now, don't ask me what a mule's thinkin' about. Slade heard 'em passin' and starts war. That jughead, mebbe, he'd heard plenty a' loud talk. Anyhow he climbs yore camp, an' just look at it now?"

"Whe' Misteh Slade?" said Gin, eyeing the shotgun in Mase's hands.

"Down there by the shore and his brains knocked sideways. He ain't dead and I'm goin' to tie him up. Git busy, boy—find me some rope. Slade's goin' out o' here in that dugout, and yore goin' to be paddle boy. Understand?"

The black boy went to look down at his boss. Old Slade's whiskers were moving but his eyes were closed. Mase rolled him over and made a pass about his arms with the fish cord Gin brought. Gin moved about dumbly like a black phantom, and when Mase had done the job he went to sit on the fish-box with the white man grinning at him.

"Cheer up, boy. When we git out and old John Law hears how we're landin' Jim Slade where he's wanted, nobody's goin' to worry you about hot dice nor knife cuttin', I reckon. There's

been reward money out for this feller and you an' me split it. You git all set to travel tomorrow til we hit big salt water."

Nigga Gin was listering in the moonlight. The outlaw's key was quiet again. A ringtailed coon paddled a fishhead in a pool, and a loon called from the open water. Even the mosquitoes seemed subdued in their singing, and the black boy grinned at last. Anxiously, but hopeful he looked at Slade's shotgun resting across Slade's pants. Slade's pants on Mase McKay and not on Jim Slade.

"Whut all dem mewls do now?"

"They ain't gonna do nothin'. Can't be got off here any way you figure it. Git fat an' enjoy life, no work to do or nothin'."

The black boy looked a bit more anxious:

"Misteh, I'se skeered somebody find 'em."

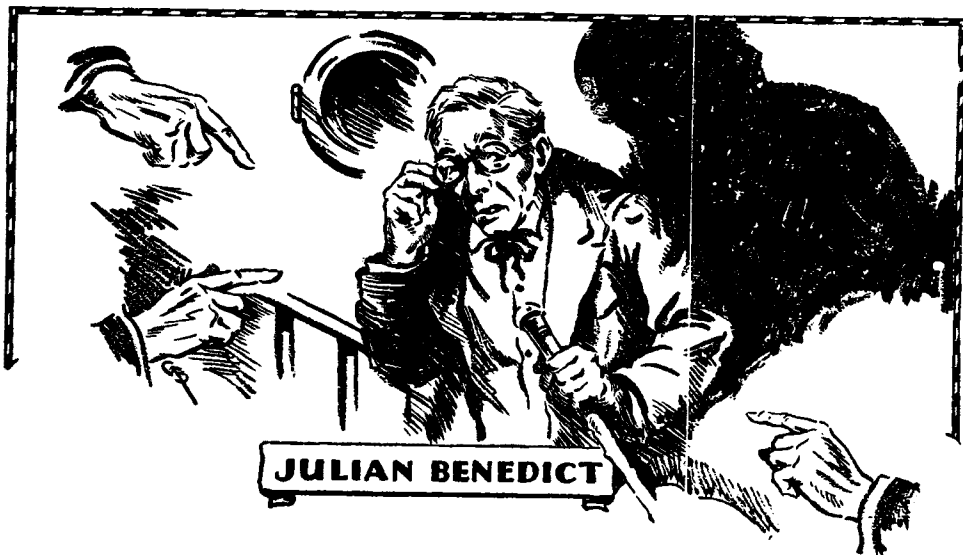
"Nobody goin' to find 'em. If they did they couldn't get 'em outa here. Couldn't get a scow in except on a big storm tide. Boy, they're lucky; you an' me got to git home and git to work. But them mules, nobody ever see 'em again. They just died and gone to heaven."

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## *Hollywood Comes to School*

AS 20-Century streamlined education encases itself in sere monoliths and colossal stadia, McGuffey's readers and hickory sticks moulder in little red schoolhouses. A few months ago, during an epidemic of infantile paralysis, Chicago children—incarcerated in their homes—were instructed successfully by their teachers over the radio. And now, an inevitable step in the march of education, comes news from Hollywood. The pedagogues of celluloid are planning to invade the classroom. The Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America are planning a series of educational films. They have not as yet made plans for the teaching of the three R's, but ready for release are instructive films bearing such titles as "Aesthetic Appreciation" and "Human Relations." Movie moguls envision a cinema curriculum in all our schools and colleges. For instance, the grade-school pupil may be instructed in geometry *visually*, and it's a cinch that the proper film and a 16-mm projector would save a teacher a lot of trouble with French—or Greek. The entrepreneurs of this new educational medium particularly stress the advantage of cinema-teaching in the smaller colleges. Students at isolated, under-endowed Nonesuch College may, for instance, see and hear Einstein lecture on Astro-physics. But, when the day of the cinema-school *has* arrived, one wonders what the movie-satiated pupils will do for relaxation. Will they go to the movies?

—Peter Kelly



**JULIAN BENEDICT**

# Pacific Passage

By ALLAN VAUGHAN ELSTON

**O**TIS POPE, handsome, internationally known mining engineer, boarded the liner *Monterey* at Honolulu, bound for Pago Pago. When Pope entered his suite with his Chinese secretary, Dr. Mingo, he found that mail, forwarded to him at the ship, was missing. As the ship steamed out toward sea the room steward for Pope's suite was found murdered. Under his body was one of Pope's missing letters. Police came aboard in a launch and Sergeant Honuapo, Hawaiian detective, is detailed to remain and find the murderer as the *Monterey* continues toward Pago Pago.

Clues to the crime are scarce. About the only thing that seems to be established is that the murderer wanted to learn the contents of Pope's mail. That evening, during the moving picture show in the ship's lounge, a ship's officer requests that any passenger who may have information concerning Pope's mail to report to Mr. Pope and Sergeant Honuapo in the library.

**A**MONG the passengers is Miss Gilman, a spinsterish Mid-Westerner. She is seated in the movie next to her shipboard

friend, an English girl, June Darrow. She remembers that while standing on deck she saw a hand reach from a port hole and throw torn letters into the sea. She tells Miss Darrow and her escort, Ladislav, an actor, of this. Then she goes to her cabin to change her clothes, preparatory to going to the library and telling Pope of what she has seen. But she never does. She is murdered as she sits at her dressing table. And, later that night while Pope is strolling on the sun deck with June Darrow, someone takes a shot at him.

As news of the murderer-at-large seeps among the passengers, near panic reins aboard the *Monterey*. . . .

## CHAPTER VI

### A FRIEND OF MINGO'S

**D**R. MINGO came along with a handful of radiograms. Otis Pope read them carefully.

"One is from Hellman in Chile," he told Mingo. "Says he wired me the grade of ore on Bench C is turning out better than ex-

pected; asks if I recommend concentrating steam shovels on B or C. Send him a radiogram, Dr. Mingo, and suggest that he concentrate on Bench C."

"It is done," Mingo said, and made a notation.

"The other messages say nothing important was sent me in care of the *Monterey* at Honolulu. Have you heard from Suva, Dr. Mingo?"

"No, Mr. Pope."

As Mingo in his long black robe moved off down the deck, Pope saw that June looked after him with a suggestion of disapproval in her expression.

"You don't like my secretary, Miss Darrow?" he asked.

"Something about him," she admitted, "disturbs me. His eyes . . ."

"All eyes of the East are mysterious," Pope conceded. "Hello, here comes Honuapo."

Sergeant Honuapo came along with Archie Shaw, the boy who had been on duty in the elevator before six o'clock the day before.

"We search for the green sport dress," Honuapo said. "We find many like that already, but Archie looks at them and says no, they are not the one."

"Might try the tennis courts," Pope suggested. "I'll look you up later," he added as Honuapo moved away.

June was gazing thoughtfully at two large birds, an albatross and a frigate bird, as they wheeled over the sea.

"You're thinking," Pope guessed, "about passing the *Mariposa*. Each turn of its screw brings us nearer to it now, and so you'll be glad when it's past us."

"No," she surprised him by answering, "I'll be glad when you get another secretary." Pope saw that she was looking through half closed eyes at the strip of adhesive on his temple.

He laughed. "Come now. You wouldn't suspect Dr. Mingo, would you, just because he's mysterious."

"I don't like mysterious men. I like them

**Begin now this thrilling  
mystery novel of the South  
Seas**

open, frank, without any secret motives."

"And I," Pope rejoined, "like girls who cry on my

shoulder."

They both laughed then, and in a moment Honuapo and Archie came back to report that the tennis courts had yielded nothing in the way of a green sport dress.

"Can Archie amplify his description any?" Pope asked.

The boy answered for himself. "Yes sir, Mr. Pope. I remember that the back of this green dress has crossed straps, kinda like a halter. And this woman was very dark, and her back's sunburned a deep brown."

June spoke up quickly: "Why, that sounds like Mrs. Rossmore."

"You know her, please?"

"I've talked with her once or twice. Her back isn't sunburned, though. It's just naturally that color. She's half Hawaiian and half Chinese. Quite modern and awfully good looking. She was educated in California, I think. She got on at San Francisco and her husband came aboard yesterday at Honolulu."

"Shall we find her, please?" Honuapo said.

Otis Pope arose and went along with him. With no difficulty at all they located Mrs. Rossmore, who was at the B-deck rail with her husband. In that stance her back was conveniently exposed to the inspection of Archie Shaw.

**M**RS. ROSSMORE had the amber skin of an Oriental. She wore a green sports dress, was stockingless, and her back was quite bare except for crossed halter straps.

"That's her," Archie announced positively.

Honuapo went to her and bowed courteously. "I am officer of Honolulu police," he said. "You are Mrs Rossmore, please?"

"What's this?" It was Mr. Rossmore who spoke and his face showed annoyance. "Yes, I'm George Rossmore, and this is my wife."

Honuapo said: "The lady is knocking at door of gentleman's cabin near five o'clock yesterday, at about which hour there is mail disappearing from inside. Can the lady explain this, please?"

"Of course she wasn't," Rossmore snapped with indignation. "She doesn't know anything about it. You don't, do you, Karen?"

"I know nothing. I was not there. It is all a mistake," the woman said.

Pope stood by, watching her. She seemed frightened, he thought, and more frightened of her husband than of Honuapo. Rossmore was a square-cut, pugnacious man with sandy hair and a bulldog jaw. He stuck the jaw out toward Honuapo.

"You see?"

But the elevator boy was positive in his identification. And Archie could hardly be wrong, Pope thought. Mrs. Rossmore was distinctly half-caste, quite unlike any other woman on the ship. Pope felt sure that she *had* been at his door, and that she was now lying unskillfully.

Honuapo spread his hands in a depreciating gesture. "It is too bad you say you are not there. It means now we must go tell the captain, so that he shall ask why you are there."

This threat of taking the matter to the captain made Rossmore lose his temper completely. "That's pure insolence!" he raged. "I won't stand for it. I'll sue the line for slandering my wife's character. How dare you say she was trying to crash into a man's cabin?"

First Officer Corliss at that moment approached with something in the palm of his hand. "I found the gun," he announced, and exposed a white cloth on which lay a .32 caliber pistol.

"If the fellow used a silencer, there isn't one on it now," Corliss said. "Found it in a life boat on the upper deck."

Karen Rossmore stood staring uneasily at the gun. Honuapo took advantage of her agitation to renew his attack. "In this there is a murder, lady. Two murders. You prefer talk to Captain Jansenn, or to myself?"

She appealed to her husband. "Don't let them bully me, please."

Otis Pope stepped up and said in a kind voice: "No one will bully you, Mrs. Rossmore. We don't want to offend you, but the elevator boy says he saw you at my door. Why not tell us why you were there?"

She looked up at Pope's strong face and seemed to recognize his expression as one of sympathy and reassurance. For a moment his brown eyes held hers. Otis Pope could generally enlist the confidence of women.

This one dropped her eyes and said: "Yes, I was there. No one answered my knock and I went away."

Pope doubted her. According to Archie her hand had been on the doorknob as she stood in a pose of listening.

"Why," Pope prompted, "did you call there?"

"Because you are a celebrity, Mr. Pope," she said. "I keep a book of autographs, and I wanted you to sign it."

HONUAPO looked at Pope and gave a slight shake of his head. Nor could Pope himself credit the motive just offered. Archie hadn't seen her with a book in her hand. The autograph book might have been held in front of her, out of Archie's vision, but all in all the thing seemed implausible.

Yet there was no way to disprove it. Karen Rossmore's long-lashed eyes looked up with a hint of coquetry at Pope. When his own did not respond, her carmine lips drooped stubbornly. Her manner said: "That's my story and I stick to it."

"Thank you," Pope said gravely, "for being so frank."

They were at the B-deck rail. At a shuttered window not five yards away the sloping eyes of Dr Mingo were gazing out upon the group. Mingo was in his own room, number 127, and was puffing at a Chinese cigarette.

The telephone rang back of him. He crossed to answer it and heard a voice on the other end of the line say, "Dr. Mingo?"

"It is I," Mingo said.



The voice continued: "Please come quietly to cabin three two five. This is Julian Benedict speaking."

As Dr. Mingo had never heard of Julian Benedict, the call mystified him completely. And yet he felt immediately inclined to obey the summons.

Consulting a chart of the *Monterey* he discovered that 325 was one of the small, one-bed, inside cabins forward on D deck. Mingo, gliding softly down two flights of stairs in his felt slippers, proceeded there without delay.

He knocked at 325.

A voice called, "Come in."

Dr. Mingo entered.

"Close the door, please, Dr. Mingo."

Mingo obeyed. The host he confronted was apparently quite elderly and feeble. There was a hump between his shoulders that gave him a grotesque, if not a sinister, aspect as he sat there on the bed. He was bent far forward, his hands and chin supported on the head of a cane. The man's cheeks were shrunken, his chin shriveled and the parted lips exposed only one tooth. His hair was quite gray. Dark glasses obscured his eyes.

"Do you know me, Dr. Mingo?" The inquiry came in a colorless monotone. Nor did the speaker elevate his chin and folded hands from the cane.

"I do not know you," Mingo replied with complete sincerity.

"It is well. Because if you do not know me, then no one else will."

The hunchback gave a shriveled smile. Then for a moment he sat up straighter, removing his glasses to stare fixedly at Mingo. After staring, he put the glasses back on and resumed a posture with chin resting on cane.

Dr. Mingo came of a race which rarely gives external evidence of shock. Mingo's face, however, was anything but impassive as he exclaimed, "You?"

"Yes, it is I."

"But why do you call me here? Our business is finished—"

"On the contrary our business has just begun, Dr. Mingo."

Mingo's face was again impassive. In his voice, though, was disdain. "I wash my hands of you, Mr.—"

"Call me Julian Benedict. And speak softly, please. There may be people in the next cabin."

MINGO remained standing. The black robe, fitted tightly about his slight figure, made him look paper thin. "Our business is finished," he repeated coldly. "I wish never to see you again."

"Huge profits are in sight, if we carry it on. We *must* carry it on, Dr. Mingo."

"I desire no profit, Mr.—Julian Benedict."

"Granted. You are out for no personal profit. What you did in Indo-China you did only for your people. You are a Chinese patriot, Dr. Mingo. A Nationalist who for a long time has bitterly resented the exploitation of Chinese resources by the white races."

"That much is true," Mingo admitted.

"You have seen the white men take much out of China, and bring in little. From your viewpoint the whites have squeezed China like a sponge, enriching themselves without giving adequate return. So, in one instance at least, you dreamed of reversing that process. It would be equitable, you reasoned, and serve as some slight reparation for past exploitation, if, in one instance at least, wealth of the West should pour into China and remain stranded there, like a wrecked ship."

"That is also true," Mingo said.

"And it was I," Benedict continued, "who showed you the way. You are a native of Indo-China, particularly interested in the welfare of the lower classes there. You are also secretary to the great Otis Pope. Vast interests of capital in New York were awaiting a report from Mr. Pope. If unfavorable, a stupendous mining project would be abandoned at its outset. But if favorable, the report would unleash millions, tens of millions, for the building of a gigantic plant, a railroad—"

"Expended mainly for the hire of Coolie laborers," Mingo finished for him. "A sub-

sidy from the West to the East. When the West finds its mistake, it will be too late. Millions will already have been spent for rice to feed workers of China."

"I explained all that to you," Benedict said. "Explained that you need only side-track Mr. Pope's unfavorable report, which he would dictate to you as his confidential secretary. You did that, forwarding to New York instead a forged report with all the assay figures tripled, and enthusiastically recommending an immediate exploitation, on a huge scale, of the project."

"The exploitation is assured, Mr. Benedict."

"It hangs by a thread," contradicted Benedict. "Any exchange of remarks between Mr. Pope and his New York principals will expose the deception. So his mail must be watched. Fortunately it will be a year before he returns to America. He goes now to Tasmanian tin mines, thence to the gold country of South Africa. After that to Rhodesia for relaxation, in the hunting of big game. Long before that I will have cashed in on the stock."

"You bought stock?"

"At its lowest ebb. Then, when the board of directors of Indo-China S. and L. Company read and acted upon Mr. Pope's highly favorable report, recommending development and expansion, each board member naturally rushed out to buy more of the stock for himself. That created a demand, and the stock skyrocketed. I can already sell out for a pleasing profit, Dr. Mingo."

"In that case," Mingo said coldly, "why do you not do so and be done? Why do you say our business is not ended?"

"Because what I have done once, Dr. Mingo, I must do twice more. I must repeat the process with the Tasmanian Tin report, which goes to an anxiously waiting board in London, and with a third report which Mr. Pope will make on the gold property in South Africa. You must forge those reports also, Dr. Mingo."

"I will not do so," Mingo said. Rebellion glinted like black coals in his eyes. "I am not concerned with the welfare of Tasmania or South Africa. I will not—"

"You will do as I say, Dr. Mingo!"

"I decline," Mingo said stubbornly.

"You will obey me," Benedict insisted. All the while he spoke in a low monotone, and yet with the confidence of one who holds an upper hand. "Reflect, Dr. Mingo. My stake in the Indo-China deception is already gained. Yours is not. Money and credit now being placed in the banks of China has not yet been spent. If this bubble is burst, it will never be spent. It will be recalled. Tens of millions will not flow from the West to buy rice for the workers of China."

DR. MINGO considered this stoically. Benedict was right. A single anonymous word to Otis Pope would expose the deception. Instantly the air would ring with messages. Riches of the West, now crossing the Pacific to hire Chinese coolies, would be recalled.

"You will be left holding the bag, Dr. Mingo. It is you who forged the report. My name will not be even remotely connected. I will have profited, while your own maneuver will have been futile."

"But it is you" Mingo pointed out, "who have committed murder. They will catch you and you will be hanged."

"No," corrected the other, "if they suspect anyone, it will be Julian Benedict. But I am not Benedict. When they reach out for Benedict, Benedict will not exist." Mingo gave a slight inclination of his head. He was just beginning to plumb the depths of this man who, for the moment, called himself Julian Benedict.

"At Los Angeles," the man said, "I bought a ticket for Australia. I came aboard with my baggage, and with a proper passport. I was taken to my stateroom. It is not this one, Dr. Mingo. Then I went ashore again. I became Julian Benedict and as such bought a ticket for Pago Pago. Pago Pago being an American colony, Benedict did not need a passport. He was ushered with an entirely different set of baggage to this stateroom. He will never arrive at Pago Pago. His work done by then, Julian Benedict will vanish."

"But you have flesh," Mingo insisted. "You cannot be two men."

"Can't I? Consider how simple! Julian Benedict eats breakfast, but never lunch. I myself eat lunch, but skip breakfast. Benedict, a shabby and unsociable hunchback, is first in the dining room at dinner time. He is relegated to a small corner table because he wears no dinner suit. He eats quickly, leaves the dining room, and in a little while I enter myself. I wear proper clothes, am much younger than Benedict, and am seated at quite a different table.

"You are a fool," Mingo said. "They will solve your masquerade."

"Given time, yes. But they will not be given time. Soon there will be no Benedict. And who will be shrewd enough to observe that when I am in public, Benedict is not? Or that when Benedict is visible in the flesh, I myself am never to be seen?"

Mingo saw the genius of it. With seven hundred passengers aboard, it would be impossible to line them all up in one group. Among that great number, no one would ever notice that a certain two were never in evidence at once.

"And what purpose," Mingo asked, "does Benedict serve? He is stupid to intercept mail of Mr. Pope."

"Because you yourself can do that?"

Mingo gave a slight nod of assent.

"Usually you can," admitted Benedict. "But in this case I had to be sure. There might be suspicions in New York resulting in specific inquiries addressed to Pope at Honolulu. If so, I couldn't risk his walking in on them. He might pick up a letter marked personal without giving you a chance at it. Also, if things had blown up, I wanted to know it before we left port."

"There was no letter of suspicion, none warning Mr. Pope?"

"None."

"You are awkward and stupid," Mingo said. His gaze fixed upon the globular head of Benedict's cane, as though wondering if this were the bludgeon which had struck down Steward Wilkins.

"Awkward?" the other challenged.

"To create Benedict merely to steal mail."

"Benedict is not created for that purpose, Dr. Mingo. He is here to make you toe the mark. To instruct you, and to warn you of penalties."

The hunchback's hand reached for a pillow on the bed and drew it aside. The movement exposed a .45 Colt's revolver which lay there. Mingo stared at it, but before he could speak the other continued:

"Since I came aboard, Dr. Mingo, another hazard has arisen. It gives another role to Benedict—that of saving Otis Pope's life."

"You speak in riddles, Mr. Benedict."

Benedict's mouth twisted in a smile. "It is strange," he admitted, "that Mr. Pope's most dangerous enemy should conspire to save his life. Yet that is true. For me, Otis Pope is more than an expert on gold mines. He is a gold mine himself. Or we might call him a goose which has already laid one golden egg, and who must be preserved to produce two others."

Mingo stared at him. "It was not you who shot at him, last night, on deck?"

"Of course not," Benedict assured him. "If Mr. Pope is killed on the *Monterey*, he cannot be exploited further. If he does not reach Tasmania alive, how can he send in recommendations on a mine there? So he must be protected. I shall protect him, Dr. Mingo."

## CHAPTER VII

### A GAME OF STUD

PUFFING at his pipe, Otis Pope stood in the sitting room of his suite. Jansenn, Honuapo and Corliss confronted him.

"What," Pope inquired between puffs, "have we got so far?"

"A thorough search of cabin 250, where the steward was killed," Corliss said, "gave us only the Dow-Spragg wedding invitation from Melbourne. Cabin 340, where Miss Gilman was throttled, gave us nothing but this." He indicated a yellow silk bathrobe cord held by Honuapo.

Honuapo said: "Search of sun deck brings this gun. That is all." He offered in evidence a .32 caliber revolver.

"Except," Pope amended, "the Ross-more woman's reason for trying to get in here. And that's not believable."

"I have all room stewards looking for yellow bathrobe," Honuapo said. "Most always cord matches robe."

Pope smiled. "You disappoint me, sergeant. Why should a man clever enough to avoid fingerprints, leave the cord of his own bathrobe around a victim's throat?"

"It is not likely," Honuapo conceded. "But perhaps he is rushed for time."

"Every cabin should be searched," Pope advised, "and every passenger."

"And start a panic?" protested Jansenn. "We've almost got one now. They're getting the jitters. Look at 'em out there!"

Through a window the captain scowled at the company on B-deck promenade. Passengers were out there in groups, whispering, some of them excited, all of them more or less agitated over a crime wave which was sweeping the *Monterey*.

"Every time I even ask anyone a question," Jansenn grumbled, "he gets insulted. Wants to sue the line for defamation. We can search cabins, of course. It's being done now. But to frisk seven hundred passengers, all of them innocent but one, is a tough job. And what would we look for, anyway?"

"Frisking people won't get us anywhere," Corliss agreed. "Anything incriminating is tossed overboard by this time."

"We don't know," Pope objected, "that all incriminating evidence has been tossed overboard."

"What, for instance?"

"For one thing, a passkey taken from Wilkins. The murderer didn't take that key *before* stealing the mail, but afterwards. Because one of the letters was found under the body."

"How," Corliss ventured puzzledly, "did the man get in here without a key?"

"Don't start me guessing," Pope said. "But suppose he saw the room steward enter with towels, followed unobserved,

then hid in the bathroom till the steward went out. Maybe the steward saw him getting away with the mail and trailed him down to C deck. My point is that since the murderer took the pass key *after* hitting Wilkins, and *after* getting the mail, he probably wants to keep it for future use. In that case he hasn't thrown it overboard."

"You want to treat seven hundred respectable passengers," decried Jansenn, "just like a gallery of rogues?"

"Not necessarily," Pope said. "But passengers take baths. Why not let bath stewards search pockets, while their patrons are taking baths?"

"Who will search bath stewards?" asked Honuapo. "Criminal might be member of crew."

Jansenn retorted acidly: "Mr. Corliss will take care of the crew." He added more tolerantly: "And I like Mr. Pope's suggestion. Mr. Corliss, instruct the bath stewards. You, Mr. Honuapo, had better continue lining up alibis."

"Time he gets seven hundred alibis," Corliss grinned, "he'll be an old man."

Jansenn, Corliss and Honuapo went out.

**A**LONE, Otis Pope knocked out his pipe. A passenger list on the table caught his eye. He picked it up uncertainly. Last evening he had gone through the list, but only in search of someone with a motive for stealing his mail.

This time he went through it with other motives in mind. Was anyone aboard with a personal grudge against himself, Otis Pope?

He read studiously through the A's, B's, C's, D's. Then his eye fell upon the name of Maurice Engle. Pope took a pencil and made a question mark after Engle's name.

He laid the list down, then, and called for Dr. Mingo. There was no response. Pope looked into the next room, but Mingo was not there.

Mingo was still in room 325 with Julian Benedict and was, at that moment, saying: "Have you destroyed stolen letters?"

Benedict shrugged his hunched shoulders. "I wouldn't post them on the bulletin board, would I?"

"How do you know someone desires to kill Mr. Pope?"

"He was shot at last night, wasn't he?"

"And not by Julian Benedict?"

"Don't be stupid, Dr. Mingo. Can't you understand that if Pope is killed it will cost me a fortune? Pope must survive to report from his next two jobs."

"And if I do not forge those reports?"

"You will lose your own objective in Indo-China. Also I will be forced to use this on you, Dr. Mingo." Benedict motioned toward the .45 Colt's which still lay exposed on the bed. "I will not be stopped," Benedict added with a hard stare through his dark glasses. "What I start, I finish."

"They will search your cabin," Mingo predicted, "and find revolver."

"I shall hide it safely," Benedict said.

"It will be found," Mingo insisted.

"Not where it can incriminate me. I hope I do not have to use it, Dr. Mingo."

"Why did you kill two people?"

"I do not admit those crimes," Benedict said.

"Will you also kill person who fired shot at Mr. Pope?"

"I shall protect Pope's life, by one means or another."

"Why do you not inform on this person, so that he will be held in custody by captain?"

"I do not yet know who he is," Benedict said. "And even when I do know, I cannot prove his murderous intent to the captain's satisfaction."

"So you must deal with him yourself?"

"Yes. And I will deal with you, too, Dr. Mingo, if you do not toe the line." The stare Benedict gave Mingo was deadly.

Mingo met it for a moment, then turned toward the door, but, before he reached it, Benedict rose and, gaining the door first, opened it a bare crack. He peered each way along the corridor and saw that it was deserted.

"You may go now," he said.

Dr. Mingo withdrew silently.

IN a little while Julian Benedict picked up the gun and put it under his coat. With it he left the cabin. The gun must be concealed, and for that purpose Benedict went tapping with his cane along the D-deck corridor toward the elevator. He proceeded as a feeble man of years, his infirmity drawing sympathy from all who saw him.

He ascended one deck in the left. Then, again tapping with his cane, he moved along the port side C-deck hallway. Arriving before cabin 250 he looked carefully to make sure no one was in sight.

The coast being clear, Julian Benedict unscrewed the spherical head of his cane and produced a pass key. With this he let himself into 250. This was the scene of Wilkin's death. Therefore he was sure the cabin had already been searched. Such being the case, there should be no reason for authorities to search here again.

Benedict now concealed his Colt's .45 under the mattress of bed A. It should be safe here, since the cabin was unoccupied. Nor could there logically be an occupant until the next port, Pago Pago. And even if found, the evidence would not point toward himself.

If he wanted it, he could come and reclaim the gun at will.

Withdrawing from cabin 250, Benedict locked it and went tapping back to 325. As he entered there, the sound of chimes announced the first call for lunch. This reminded him that for the next several hours, Julian Benedict must cease to exist.

Dr. Mingo entered the dining room half an hour later. He went to his assigned place, which was a large round table presided over by the chief purser.

From here the Chinese secretary of Otis Pope could see all over the salon. He saw Pope himself, seated at a small side table with June Darrow. Mingo's eyes moved from table to table. Passengers entered, one by one and in pairs. Mingo saw the Rossmore couple take seats nearby. The man, he thought, had been scolding his wife.

He saw Boris Getman, pale and thin, at a table with Asa Ashurst and Mrs. Royer. The actor, Ladislav, came in, threw a look of annoyance toward Otis Pope and Miss Darrow, then moved on to his own place.

Kimberton Lennox was seated opposite Madam Garaud, the singer. Beyond them, Mingo could see the shining bald head of Maurice Engle. But no one resembling Benedict was in the room.

For dessert Otis Pope ordered pie.

June said quickly to the waiter, "The gentleman's American and he means 'tart'."

Pope stood corrected. To a Britisher, he knew, "pie" is something with meat between crusts. If it contains fruit, it's a tart.

"Which reminds me," June added thoughtfully, "that your murderer simply must be an American."

Pope glanced keenly over the menu. "Why?"

"Because he asked for your 'mail' at General Delivery. An Englishman, an Australian, a New Zealander—and Britisher—would have said 'post.'"

Pope conceded the distinction. "I'll mention it to Honuapo," he promised. "Rather shrewd of you to think of it."

"I majored," the girl said with faint irony, "in *foreign* languages."

Pope's eyes were following Maurice Engle as he left the dining room. His nod directed June's attention toward the exit. "Do you see that bald man just getting into the elevator?"

"You mean 'lift,'" she corrected severely.

"His name's Engle. He's an American, and therefore still uneliminated."

"What else?"

"He's a disappointed inventor. Mining machinery, principally, and processes of chemical treatment. Engle had a clash once with my attorneys in New York."

"How does he feel about it now?"

"Under the circumstances, I really should find out," Pope said. "So if you'll excuse me—?"

He arose and followed Engle. Engle was in the midship A-deck foyer looking somberly at the bulletin board when Pope caught up with him. The noon-to-noon mileage had just been posted there.

Pope touched the man's arm and said amiably: "You're M. J. Engle of Cripple Creek, aren't you?"

"That's my name." Engle did not return the smile.

"I'm Otis Pope of New York."

Pope extended a hand but Engle did not accept it. Instead he said bitterly: "I know you're Pope. I know someone took a shot at you last night. What's more, I'm sorry he missed."

Pope's smile faded. "You haven't," he said, "any idea who it was?"

"I haven't," Engle snapped. "It happens that at the moment I was playing poker in the smoking room."

Openly hostile, the man turned away. Just then a deck steward came by and said, "Oh, here you are, Mr. Engle." He handed Engle ten silver dollars. "You drew the lucky number, Mr. Engle, on the day's run."

Something of a gambler, Pope reflected. A patron of poker games as well as the daily lottery on the ship's run.

The elevator gate clanged and Karen Rossmore disembarked in the foyer. In her hands she held a large black book which might have been a photo album.

The woman came to Pope with an ingratiating smile, handing him both the book and a fountain pen.

"I really do want your autograph, Mr. Pope," she said. "You'll sign your name, please?"

It was a book containing nothing but signatures. Pope looked shrewdly at the woman and concluded that, having made a bluff, she was now determined to make it good.

However, as he autographed his name, Otis Pope saw that Mrs. Rossmore really had been collecting signatures. Quite a number of the *Monterey's* passengers had signed here. Two signatures above his own, Pope noted the name of Madam Garaud.

"Thank you so much, Mr. Pope." With a smile that could only be described as seductive Karen Rossmore took her book and moved away.

Pope went into the smoking room and again encountered Maurice Engle. This time the man was seated alone with a deck of cards, dealing himself solitaire.

"You mentioned a poker game last night, Engle," Pope said. "How long did it last?"

"From ten to eleven." The answer was prompt.

"And from nine to ten you were—?"

"In the lounge with a man named Ashurst," Engle said.

"Thank you." Pope went down to his suite and found Honuapo waiting there with Corliss.

Honuapo was regarding with bland interest a passenger list on which Pope had marked an interrogation point after Engle's name.

"Who, please, is Mr. Engle?" the Hawiian inquired.

"A gambler and a poor loser," Pope said. "He filed suit against me one time, and lost."

"Is the matter personal, please?"

"No. Strictly business. He claimed my patent on what is known as the Pope Dechlorination Process for treating copper ore, infringes on one of his own. The court adjudged otherwise and Engle, so my attorneys say, has been bitter about it ever since."

Corliss asked quickly, "Where was he at ten minutes to eleven last night?"

"Says he was playing poker. Might be a good idea to check with the other players," Pope suggested.

"We do so without delay," Honuapo said. He left the room with Corliss.

A boy from the ship's wireless came in. "More messages for you, Mr. Pope."

He handed over three radiograms. Pope read two of them, finding them to be from clients who reported that no mail had been sent to Honolulu. Pope was reading the third message when Dr. Mingo came in from lunch.

"It's from Suva, Dr. Mingo."

"It has importance?" Mingo asked.

"Rather. You'd better get hold of Honuapo at once."

## CHAPTER VIII

### A SON AT SUVA

IN THE smoking room, Honuapo and Corliss stood by a large round table. Honuapo held a list of seven names and was checking them off one by one as men appeared and took seats about the table. Maurice Engle was already seated.

Kimberton Lennox hurried in from the direction of the lounge with a puzzled expression. The puzzlement changed to a degree of nervousness when he saw Honuapo.

"What's up? You sent for me?"

Corliss took the reins with the deference of a ship's officer bound above all else not to offend passengers.

"Yes, gentlemen," he explained considerably, "we had seven of you paged. You're the last one, Mr. Lennox. Won't you sit down?"

Lennox took the seventh seat at the table. The other chairs were occupied by Maurice Engle, George Rossmore, Raymond Ladislaw, Asa Ashurst and two Worldwide News cameramen by the names of Smullet and Piper.

"This is simply a routine check-up on alibis," Corliss announced. "We're doing the same all over the ship, so do not take offense. You seven men occupied these same seven seats in a poker game last night?"

Rossmore flared angrily. "Yes, we were here. What about it? If you're accusing me, I can—"

"I'm not accusing anyone. When did the game begin?"

"At ten o'clock," Lennox offered quickly, "and didn't break up until eleven."

The two cameramen nodded affirmation.

"What broke it up?"

The oldest man at the table answered precisely and courteously: "An excitement in the pavilion. Then, when Mrs. Royer came by and said that Mr. Pope had been shot, we quit playing and joined the crowd

there." Ashurst, the speaker, looked toward Ladislav for support.

"All seven of you?" asked Corliss.

Ladislav said: "All of us were here. I'm sure of that."

This man, Corliss knew, was a professional actor. He was the tallest man of the group. The others, with the exception of Piper, who was quite short, were men of average height.

Only Rossmore took offense at the inquisition. "Look here," he protested with rising indignation. "Maybe you can bully my wife but you can't bully me. Somebody had the nerve to search my cabin during lunch. It's got to stop, I tell you!"

Ashurst put a placating hand on his arm. "I wouldn't take it that way, Rossmore. There have been two murders, I understand. So of course they have to search cabins."

"What we wish to know," Corliss said, "is this: A shot was fired at ten minutes to eleven. Were you all here at that time?"

He asked the question individually of each, and in each case received an affirmative response.

Honuapo was politely disappointed. "It is proof," he admitted, "that none of you fired shot at Mr. Pope."

Rossmore glared truculently.

"If you want further proof," one of the cameramen suggested, "you might ask Mrs. Royer and a man named Getman. They were standing back of my chair, looking on."

Corliss said: "That is right. I've already questioned them. They said they watched a poker game in here until ten-forty, then they went in the pavilion to dance. They were dancing together when the shot was fired. They went to see what the disturbance was about, then Mrs. Royer came here to tell the poker players. She found them all seated just as she had left them."

"Then why call us on the carpet?" demanded Rossmore.

Corliss pointed out that Mrs. Royer's testimony had only covered the game until ten-forty.

Honuapo was making notes.

"NOW, while you're all here," Corliss suggested, "let's move back to eight o'clock. From eight to nine there was a picture show in the lounge. Between nine and ten Miss Gilman was murdered in her cabin. The killer probably sat by or near her, or perhaps in the row back of her, at the picture."

"I didn't see the picture," Lennox said.

With a challenging outthrust of his jaw Rossmore said: "I did. I sat with my wife in the back row."

"Just back of Miss Gilman?"

Rossmore flushed to the roots of his sandy hair. "How would I know? Didn't even know anyone by that name."

Ashurst's quiet, cultured voice broke in: "Mr. Rossmore only joined us at Honolulu. To me it seems quite reasonable that he hadn't met Miss Gilman."

"Did you know her?"

"Yes," Ashurst admitted readily. "She was on my left at the rail, about five in the afternoon when Mr. Pope came aboard. Mrs. Royer was on my right."

He made the statement so precisely that Corliss exchanged glances with Honuapo. Clearly its purpose might be to establish an alibi against a theft of mail and an assault upon a steward.

Of the others, only Engle admitted being at the picture show.

"I sat in the third row," Engle did not flinch under Honuapo's stare. "When lights came on, I saw Ashurst enter from the writing room at the rear. He asked me if I felt like poker. Six of us had been playing stud each evening since Los Angeles."

"Rossmore," Lennox inserted, "last night made it seven-handed."

Corliss concentrated on Engle. "Ashurst asked if you felt like poker. You said 'yes'?"

"I said I didn't mind. We parted, he to hunt up Lennox and Ladislav, I to hunt up Smullet and Piper. I found Smullet and Piper at the bar. They agreed to play. Rossmore was drinking with them and said he'd take a hand himself. So we arranged to meet here at ten o'clock."



"You left them?"

"Yes, to join Ashurst in the lounge. I waited maybe twenty minutes and Ashurst came in. He said he'd found Lennox on deck but couldn't find Ladislav."

"As you know," Ladislav explained, "I was in the library with Mr. Pope and Miss Darrow. They sent me to the pavilion to see if Miss Gilman was dancing. She wasn't. When I returned to the library, Pope and Miss Darrow had gone down to her room. I hung around a little while, then joined the poker game here."

Dr. Mingo came up and touched Honuapo's arm. "Mr. Pope has received radiogram from Suva," he announced. "He asks please will you speak with him?"

HONUAPPO paused only long enough to gaze at a startled expression which appeared on Ashurst's face. Then he followed Mingo to Pope's suite on B deck.

He found the mining engineer with a radiogram in his hands.

"Mr. Engle has not taken shot at you," Honuapo said. "He is proprietor of six alibis. The same alibi gives whitewash to six other men."

Pope looked up from the radiogram. "Do the six include a cocoa-bean buyer named Ashurst?"

The question started Honuapo. "Yes, Mr. Pope. You have something new?"

Pope nodded. "I'm on my way from Indo-China to Tasmania," he explained, "with a brief conference set for Suva during the eight hours our ship stops there. Otherwise I could have hopped from Singapore to Brisbane, and missed Honolulu altogether."

"The Suva conference? Does it connect us with motive?"

"No. I'm simply to make the third man on an arbitration committee to decide one way or another about a land grant dispute. Not a mineral matter. The Governor of Fiji simply appointed me because he thinks I'm fair, and he wants one American to sit in with a Britisher and a Fiji chief."

"But if this has no connection, please, why is it important?"

"When my mail was stolen yesterday," Pope said, "I told Mingo to wire all current clients. The Governor of Fiji was included because we're going toward Fiji, with this arbitration the first thing on the card. We merely asked him if he'd written me at Honolulu."

"He wrote you?"

"He had not written me. But it says here," Pope motioned with the radiogram, "that his chief of police did write me at Honolulu on another and urgent matter. And this matter connects us with a motive."

"Motive is much needed," Honuapo said.

His dark eyes reflected the activity of his mind.

"Last time I was at Suva," Pope went on, "I was held up on a dark street at night. My taxicab driver was killed. I had a good look at the crook, who escaped. No one but me can identify him. The police there have now picked up a man and are holding him on suspicion of the crime. Hearing from the governor that I was due through on the *Monterey*, they wrote me at Honolulu asking me to come directly to the police station, when I reach Suva, to make this identification."

Honuapo's broad brown face lighted up. "Solution stares at us," he said. "You reach Suva alive, they hang this man. You fail to reach there, they let suspect go for lack of evidence."

"And the suspect's name," Pope told him, "is Jack Ashurst."

Honuapo jumped to his feet. "I have just talked with man by name Ashurst!" he exclaimed.

"It is not a common name," Pope agreed. "The Asa Ashurst aboard with us now is a cocoa-bean buyer who travels a lot in these seas. I met him once on a P. and O. boat out of Java. A harmless old chap, I always thought, and quite respectable. But I heard once that he has a ne'er-do-well son in the South Seas."

Honuapo said to Dr. Mingo: "Will you please ask Mr. Ashurst to come in? And Mr. Corliss?"

MINGO went out and presently returned with Ashurst and the first officer. Ashurst, gray at the temples and with rather a chubby face, indeed seemed quite harmless. He faced Otis Pope quite unabashed, asking, "Anything I can do to help along?"

"You can tell me," Pope said bluntly, "if you have a son in Suva." He handed the Suva radiogram to Corliss.

Ashurst's face fell and a wince of pain came to his eyes. But he answered readily: "You mean Jack? Yes, I have a son down that way. Right now he's in a bit of trouble, and I'm on my way to see if I can help him out."

Corliss had read the radiogram and now turned sternly upon Ashurst. "Did you fire at Mr. Pope last night? Are you riding this ship to make sure Mr. Pope does not reach Suva?"

Ashurst threw a hurt look at him. "Make sure Mr. Pope doesn't reach Suva? That's ridiculous! I didn't even know that Mr. Pope had anything to do with it."

"You don't know that he's the one and only witness?"

"No. Is he?" Ashurst seemed genuinely surprised and shocked.

"Frankness is a virtue," advised Honuapo, "so let us not beat the bush. You do not know this son of yours is held for murder?"

"I know he isn't guilty," protested Ashurst. "He wrote me, though, that he's been accused, and that he's innocent. As his father, naturally I immediately raised funds for his defense and am on my way to do what I can."

Pope watched him shrewdly. If Ashurst was not sincere he was very clever.

Corliss handed the radiogram to Ashurst, who read it. The message gave all known facts about the murder of a taxicab driver three years ago, in Suva, and stated that Jack Ashurst had been picked up and was being held for identification by Otis Pope.

"He *can't* be guilty." Tears formed in Ashurst's eyes. "Jack's always been a little wild—but he wouldn't do a thing like that!"

"I hope, for your sake, that he didn't," Pope said considerably.

Ashurst gave him a grateful look. Then he pulled himself together and faced Corliss with a brave, pathetic smile. "I'm sure he's innocent. But if not, of course he must meet justice."

Corliss drew Pope aside. "What I can't make up my mind about," he said, "is whether or not we're justified in locking Ashurst up. He's got a motive, all right—his son's neck. But he's also got an alibi against that shot at ten to eleven."

Pope puffed his pipe thoughtfully. "You can't fairly lock him up without more evidence than a motive. Engle also has a motive—although it's only a grudge. There may be others."

Ashurst, catching a word or two, protested desperately: "Of course you can't lock me up. Lock up a poor old man like me, while a murderer runs loose on the ship! That would be stupid, wouldn't it, Mr. Pope?"

The room, now in the heat of mid-day, was sweltering. Beads of sweat stood out on Ashurst's forehead. Pope crossed to open a window and permit a breeze from the sea.

"I rather agree," he said. "We have four crimes—a theft, two murders and an attempted murder. Ashurst has no known motive for anything but the last."

"Why hasn't he?" Corliss objected. "The murders might be cover-ups for the mail theft, and—"

"But Ashurst," Pope argued, "has no obvious motive for the mail theft. True one of the stolen letters asked me to identify his son. But intercepting the letter wouldn't keep me from going to Suva. Arriving, I would still be met by police and asked to identify a suspect."

"For that matter," Ashurst pleaded, "I can prove by Mrs. Royer that I was at the rail when Mr. Pope came aboard."

"I will discuss with Mrs. Royer," Honuapo said.

Again tears came to Ashurst's eyes. "This is a great shock to me, Mr. Pope. Please believe me, I'm a man of peace. I'm just an old man with a son in trouble, and I'm

on my way to stand by him just as you would stand by yours."

In spite of himself Pope couldn't help feeling sympathetic.

Corliss said stiffly: "You may go now, Mr. Ashurst. But under the circumstances we'll have to keep an eye on you from here to Suva."

## CHAPTER IX

### THE OCTOPUS

LATER on Pope left his suite and descended two flights. The novelty shop was in the forward foyer of D deck. It carried an extensive line of cosmetics, tobaccos and sportswear, as well as books and magazines. Pope was out of tobacco.

The attendant finished waiting on a fussily dressed lady, who couldn't decide between a string of coral beads and a flower-enamel pin and ended by taking neither. He turned to Pope, grinning.

"A tin of Virginia Blend," Pope said to the attendant. As his eye caught the rack of periodicals he added, "And a *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*."

Bringing forth the tin of tobacco, the attendant made a gesture of apology. "Sorry, Mr. Pope. But I don't have any *Honolulu* papers."

Pope was surprised. "You didn't pick up any in port yesterday?"

"Oh, yes. We always take on about thirty copies, and we did yesterday. But—"

"You sold out?"

"No, we didn't sell out, Mr. Pope. We only sold one copy. The other copies simply disappeared."

"Disappeared? When?"

"Just after the ship left the dock. I remember distinctly selling one copy, to a passenger, just before we left. It was several hours before anyone called for another *Star-Bulletin*. I reached to get one—I'd put them right here under the counter—but the whole pile of them was gone."

Pope scowled.

"Have you reported this?"

"Not yet. After all the loss only amounts to about a dollar and a half."

"Do you remember who bought the one paper?"

"Why yes. It was a Mr. Getman."

"Getman didn't go in back of the counter?"

"Not when he bought the paper."

"Did he buy anything else?"

"Yes. A package of cigarettes, but I handed it over the counter."

"Was anyone back of the counter later," Pope persisted. "I mean in the next couple of hours?"

"Oh, yes. I had quite a brisk trade about that time. The foyer was crowded, you know. Always is around sailing time. Half a dozen ladies were back here looking at sun suits and bathing caps. Some people were at the magazine and book rack. I had my hands full. Couldn't watch everyone, of course."

"Of course not."

"Seemed like the whole ship was in here at once," the attendant went on.

"Can you name any particular passenger," Pope urged, "who were back of the counter about that time?"

The attendant thought studiously. "Well, a Mr. Ladislav bought a fountain pen. I know that because he signed a chit for it. Took him quite a while, and he might have been back of the counter. And a Mr. Rossmore, who just came on at Honolulu, wanted to buy a gift for his wife. He looked over a line of perfumes and beads and things, while I waited on someone else."

Pope frowned. It was clear that anyone of a large number could have picked up that pile of *Star-Bulletins* and strolled away with it. If it had been a man, he might have slipped the papers under his coat. Or anyone might have covered the pile with wrapping paper, and moved off with it without arousing suspicion.

Pope noticed the attendant's hands. They were red and flabby looking and something about them made the term: furtive pop into Pope's mind.

"What in the paper was important?" the attendant asked.

"That's exactly the question," Pope answered.

He went to a typed list posted in the foyer, which gave the names of passengers in alphabetical order. From this he found the number of Boris Getman's cabin.

Otis Pope went directly there and knocked on the door.

"Come in," a voice said.

**B**ORIS GETMAN was shaving. He was a lean man of something over average height. His sparse hair was reddish and parted far down on one side. About forty years old, Pope judged. Baggage and suitings in evidence indicated a fastidious taste.

"Well?" he asked as Pope entered.

"Sorry to intrude," Pope said. "But I'm looking for yesterday's *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*. They're sold out at the shop. They mentioned that you bought one, and I wondered if you're through with it."

"Yes, I read it," Getman said. "Probably threw it in the waste basket and the steward took it out. But no, wait a minute. It's a wonder I haven't thrown it away, but here it is."

He picked up from a corner of the room a crumpled newspaper and handed it to Pope. Then, turning his back, he resumed shaving.

Pope began rearranging the paper to make sure it was all there. It was.

Somehow this surprised him. Had he really expected Getman to hold out on him?

"May I borrow it?"

"Take it and keep it," Getman said.

"Thank you."

Otis Pope took the paper up to his deck chair. He sat down there beside June Darrow.

"Feel like doing a bit of research?" he asked.

"Research?" The girl looked at him curiously as he handed her half the paper.

Pope smiled. Somehow all the weariness and tautness seemed to have ebbed out of him.

"Profound research," Pope said. "I've an odd hunch the answer to our mystery is in this paper—in black and white. If we read every word, carefully, and miss no bets, we should learn the truth."

Her eyes widened. "Do you mean it? Why?"

"Because someone took pains to take away the entire supply of these papers from the store—except this one copy, which had already been purchased. There must be a reason, don't you think?"

"Really?" she asked. "When did it happen?"

"About the time my mail—I mean *post*—was taken. But suppose you read those sheets while I read these."

Pope's portion of the paper contained the page which listed the names of important arrivals and departures of the *Monterey*.

Special items were given to passengers of note. In Otis Pope's case there was half a column. Pope read it, finding nothing which wasn't generally known. The account stated correctly that he had flown via the *China Clipper* from Indo-China, where he had been making a professional survey, and that the *Monterey* would be held for him to make connection.

Two full columns were devoted to the opera singer, Madam Garaud, who was en route to Sydney on the *Monterey*, and who had been accorded a reception by music lovers during her day in Honolulu. There was also a picture of Madam Garaud.

A briefer note mentioned that Mr. George Rossmore was boarding the boat to join his wife, Karen. The Rossmores were going to Auckland.

Raymond Ladislav was spoken of as a stage and vaudeville actor of some note, now on his way to fulfill an Australian engagement. Another paragraph mentioned a Bernard Dixon as one of those disembarking at Honolulu after a business trip to the mainland.

There was no reference to Boris Getman, to Maurice Engle, or to Asa Ashurst.

Otis Pope read the sheet thoroughly, then turned to the next. Patiently he devoured paragraph after paragraph of inconsequential news.

He waded through the sports page and stock-market reports, as well as all about shipping and trading in the South Seas.

But there was nothing—nothing at all to shed even the briefest and sketchiest light on the problem at hand.

"It might be worse," June said lazily. "I drew the society page. But of course I don't know anyone there. Just what should I look for?"

"Something," Pope suggested, "which might connect with my stolen letters. Something a person might want to suppress from my knowledge."

"You think the reason for stealing letters was the same as the reason for stealing newspapers?"

"I do now. At first I thought someone stole the letters and cablegrams to gain knowledge for himself. Now I suspect he took them to suppress information from me. Something he already knew, but didn't want me to know. Information that's in this daily paper, if we could only find it."

Her puzzlement augmented. "But you read the papers every day, don't you?"

He shook his head.

"Not in the last several months. I've been isolated, working hard in the interior of Indo-China. When I finished, I went for a much needed rest at the estate of a Mandarin there, a kinsman of Dr. Mingo's."

"There you go—Dr. Mingo again!" exclaimed June. "He's at the bottom of it, I'm sure."

"So it's been months," Pope went on, "since I've seen a paper written in English. They furnished me with none on the *Clipper*, of course. And I made such a close connection there was no time to buy one in Honolulu."

He continued to read, and so did June.

Neither of them spoke for a long time.

"I can't find a thing," she admitted finally.

"Neither can I. Let's trade."

They exchanged sections of the paper and each perused carefully what the other had already seen.

"Nothing extraordinary which concerns you," June said, "but here's something not without interest. I already knew it. of

course," she added with a nervous laugh.

Her hands had tightened on the paper. It crackled in her fingers.

"You mean the item which says that Ellery Crotchet, of the Crotchet South Seas Trading Company, is coming north on the *Mariposa*?"

"Yes." June Darrow settled in her deck chair and smiled comfortably. "I hope he keeps on going all the way to the north pole—and never comes back!"

MORE than a thousand miles southward at that moment, the *Mariposa*, sister ship to the *Monterey*, was steaming north at a twenty-one knot clip. Captain Franks of the *Mariposa* had just finished afternoon tea in his quarters when a deck officer announced that one of the passengers wanted to see him.

"What about?"

The deck officer didn't know.

"Can't you take care of it, Davis?"

"He wants to see you personally, Captain."

"Who is he?"

"Mr. Ellery Crotchet."

Captain Franks delivered himself of a brief but entirely heartfelt sigh.

That made a difference. Ellery Crotchet was no ordinary passenger. He was an important shipper of trade goods, and an individual of tremendous influence in the Antipodes.

"Why didn't you say so?" Franks snapped. "Send him up."

In a few minutes Crotchet came in, a big, ruddy man, sure of himself now as always. Except for a hawk nose and eyes which were as cold as blue beach pebbles, Ellery Crotchet could have been called handsome. A smug arrogant egotism stared from those eyes. His career in the South Seas had been meteoric, Franks knew. Starting as a copra buyer with one small boat, the man had built up that vast chain often spoken of, all the way from the Tongas to the Solomons, as "The Octopus of the Pacific." Crotchet was overbearing, a grasper who took what he wanted. He admitted it. He took pride in his reputa-

tion as an exploiter. Vanity was in his eyes and ruthlessness in the hard line of his mouth.

Franks, knowing him as a white man who had ridden roughshod to many conquests in the islands, had never liked him. Yet the head of Crotchet (S.S.) Trading Company, Ltd., could hardly be treated with anything but deference.

"What may I do for you, Mr. Crotchet?"

Franks did not entirely succeed in keeping a certain coldness out of his voice.

Crotchet lighted a cigar. It was like him not to offer one to Franks.

"I should have gotten off at Pago Pago," Crotchet said.

"We passed Pago yesterday."

"Right. And the next port's Honolulu."

Crotchet blew rings of smoke toward a map on the wall.

"You're booked to Frisco, I believe," Franks said.

"Yes. I'm on my way to New York to consult with a mining engineer named Otis Pope. About a mineral concession I picked up down New Guinea way."

"Well?"

"And now," Crotchet said, "I learn that Pope's on the *Monterey*. We're due to pass him at sea tomorrow night."

"How," Franks asked, "do you know Pope's on the *Monterey*?"

"It was in your ship's news-bulletin this morning. A mention that the *Monterey* was held at Honolulu to let Otis Pope make a connection."

"Yes, I believe it was," the captain admitted. "Well, it's too bad you're going to miss Pope."

"But I'm not."

Crotchet grinned a crooked grin and his hawk's eyes turned harder and colder than ever.

"If he's on the *Monterey*, you're bound to miss him."

Raising his large, stubby-fingered hand in an impatient gesture, Crotchet barked:

"Not if you stop this ship and transfer me to the *Monterey* as we pass."

The proposition astounded Franks. "Impossible, Mr. Crotchet."

"Not impossible. Just unusual. You can contact your owners by wireless. Receiving permission, you can contact the *Monterey*. Both ships can slow to a stop as we pass," Crotchet argued, "and I can be taken over to the *Monterey* in a small boat."

Franks drummed his fingers on the table. The thing was possible but unprecedented. Certainly it was impractical from the standpoint of economy. "It would cost," he protested, "perhaps five thousand dollars in loss of fuel and time, to stop two ships of this size in mid-ocean."

Crotchet answered by whipping out a check book. He wrote a check for a thousand guineas, on his bank at Sydney, and handed it with a gesture of command to Captain Franks.

Franks stared at the check. He knew it was perfectly good.

He also knew that Crotchet was a man of grand gestures.

"Revenue is revenue," challenged Crotchet, "That's what your line's in business for isn't it?"

Franks had never known that a human being could be quite so doggedly disagreeable as this one was being.

"I'll put it up to the owners," the captain said.

He went directly to the radio room and asked for a contact with San Francisco headquarters.

Later he looked up Crotchet and reported: "Very well, if the sea is reasonably calm when we pass the *Monterey* tomorrow night, we'll take you over there."

Crotchet grinned. He sat thumping a black, lustrous stone into the air, catching it as it fell. It was an opal of value, but Crotchet liked to play with it as with a marble. "Thought you would, Captain. Always get what I want, you know, and damn the price. Have you contacted the other ship?"

"The owners," Franks said, "are instructing her about the exchange."

"Then everything's cricket." Ellery Crotchet thumped the black opal high, caught it in his palm, then went out to send a message of his own to the *Monterey*.

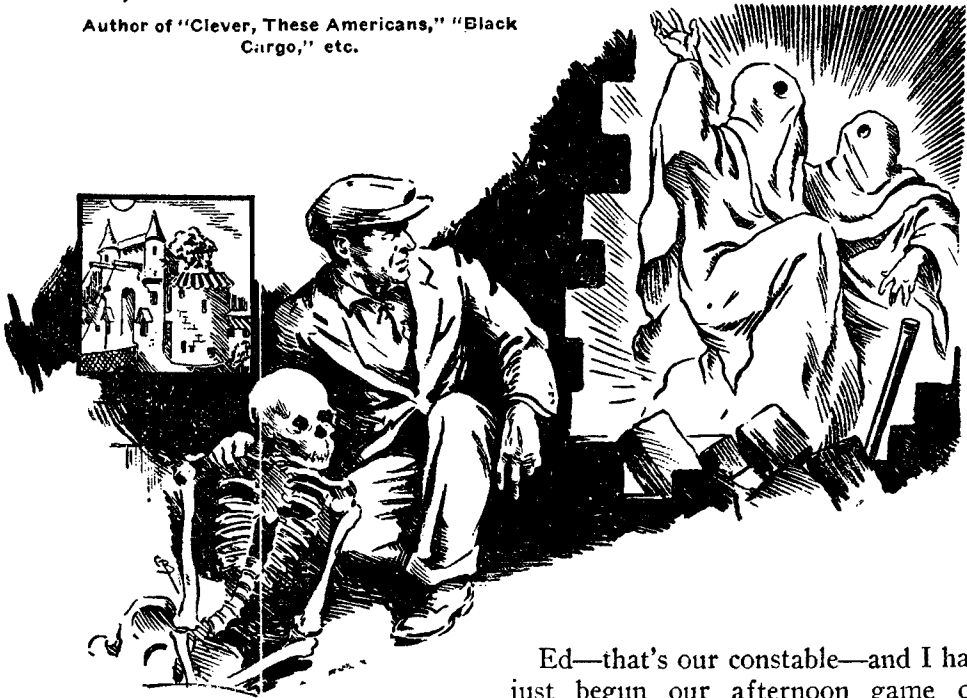
TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

6 A-13

# Oft in the Silly Night

By CORNELL WOOLRICH

Author of "Clever, These Americans," "Black Cargo," etc.



I HAVE been on the local constabulary here in our fair city—well, all right, village—quite a spell. In that time I calculate I have made twenty-two and a half arrests, all told. The half-arrest was a midget belonging to a side-show, who threw a brick through the window of Donovan's saloon, because he couldn't get a drink inside, because the top of his head didn't show above the bar and Donovan couldn't tell where the order was coming from.

The point I wish to make is that each of those twenty-two and a half times the arrest was made against the person's will, they didn't come walking in and ask for it. Not until the day this Mortimer J. Griggs came walking in the stationhouse.

Ed—that's our constable—and I had just begun our afternoon game of checkers, Blackie the station-house cat was curled up dozing in the corner, and Buster, our one patrolman, was over at Main and Elm keeping an eye on the brand-new cement sidewalk, our city's first, that had just been laid down. Complaints had come in that folks were gouging their initials into it. Everything was as peaceful as you could ask for, when a sort of shaking like an earthquake started in. Then a sound like artillery practice, mixed with grunting and squealing like a herd of pigs. Right after that the Griggs' Oldsmobile chugs to a stop outside the door—brass carriage lamps shining in the sun, with Griggs himself at the wheel in his goggles and duster, and Mrs. Griggs sitting way up high on the back seat, also in goggles and duster and motoring veil. The Griggses have

the only motor-buggy in town, in the whole county, matter of fact. They also have the only authentic, imported French castle, which they had taken apart, brought over stone by stone, and set up again out toward Meadowbrook. But more about that later. Griggs made his money by thinking up a toothpaste that lay down flat on the brush instead of curling up and rolling off. Mrs. Griggs used to be the Mary Thompson who worked down Pop's Lunchroom on the Square.

Anyway, in he comes raring, bangs his fist down on Ed's desk, and says in a voice like a man who has been goaded beyond endurance: "I want to be arrested! I want to be locked up, do you hear me?"

We just stare at him open-mouthed. "You what?" says Ed finally.

"You heard me," he says in a voice shaking with righteous indignation. "I want to be put where I can get some peace and quiet, where I can get one good night's sleep at least! I'm ready to crack wide open! I can't stand another night of it, I tell you?"

Ed says judiciously, "What seems to be bothering you?"

"*They* are!" he flares.

"Who's they?"

"Ghosts!" he sputters.

We just sit back and look at him. Then we look at each other. Now this is the year 1908, here in the United States of America, with Teddy Roosevelt, President, and a wonderful invention like an automobile standing right outside the door big as life, and he expects us to believe there is such a thing as ghosts.

"I don't blame you," he snaps, "I didn't believe in them either. I went ahead and bought it, even after they told me on the other side it was haunted; Mary thought it'd be kinda stylish. But now I've seen 'em with my

own eyes, drat it! Candles going up and downstairs all night long by themselves. Doors swinging open without anybody behind them. We've been without servants since yesterday morning. They left in a body when blood ran from all the water-faucets!"

GRIGGS takes a deep breath, pulls his coat together in front to show how much slack there is. "I've lost twenty pounds in the last three weeks, just from doing without my right amount of sleep! I work hard at my office out at the toothpaste plant all day, and when I come home and try to get a night's rest, what do I get—spooks!" He acts about ready to break down and cry from aggravation.

Ed is beginning to act a little doubtful, I mean about there not being spooks. After all Griggs is one of our most influential citizens, and a man like him wouldn't get so excited about nothing. He must have seen *something*. "You sure it ain't somebody just trying to play a practical joke on you, trying to drive you out of the place?"

"I thought of that; that was the first thing come to me," Griggs says. "I'm a hard-headed business man and I don't frighten easy—only when the Market dips. Now who is there in these parts, would you say, who would have a reason to try to scare us out of the place?"

"Only people in the county, outside of yourselves, with enough money to live in a castle like that would be the Joneses. I understand they tried to buy it at the same time you did, over there in France, but you beat 'em to it."

"Exactly! So what'd we do? We invited the Joneses to spend the week-end with us as our guests. Now if the spooks was somebody they hired to try to get rid of us, wouldn't they lay off them themselves?"

"Didn't they?"



He says, "Did Rutherford Jones tell you how he got that busted foot he's been laid up in the hospital with these past two weeks? Jumping into the moat from his bedroom window to get away from them! And she's had fainting spells ever since! They wouldn't buy the place now if I paid 'em to take it off my hands!"

Ed is stroking his jaw, I can see that he's inclined to agree with Griggs now that there *are* ghosts, only thing he's trying to decide is what to do about it. "Looks like you need protection," he says slowly.

Griggs waves his arms helplessly all around. "Don't gimme that! I thought of that too, long before I ever came in here today! I went in to New York and hired me one of these private detectives for a bodyguard Monday last."

"Where is he now?" asks Ed.

"At a sanitarium in the Poconos!" snaps Griggs. "They don't think he'll ever be the same again, he's gotta have a trained nurse night and day."

"Huh!" says Ed, with professional scorn.

"Huh nothing! He was a former Spanish-War man, that's what he was, one of Teddy's Rough Riders from San Juan Hill and a dead-shot. He brought two big Colts with him, didn't go to bed at all that night, stayed up laying for them with all the lights out."

"And did he see them?"

"Did he see them!" Griggs laughs bitterly, takes out a handkerchief and mops his face. "He emptied his gun at one at point-blank range, at point-blank range I tell you, and the bullets went right through it without hurting it! That left him pretty badly shaken, but he's a former Rough Rider, remember, they don't give in easy. He followed another along the hall and cornered it. It must have been hungry or something, he says it was eating cobwebs as

it went along. And what happened this time was what gave him the finishing touch."

"What happened?" Ed and I both say together, hanging on his words.

"**W**HEN he emptied the second gun at this one, again at point-blank range, it scooped the bullets up and swallowed them right before his eyes. And then it rubbed the place where its stomach was supposed to be, like they tasted good! The bullets, of course, were too heavy on account of being lead, and they dropped right through it in a little heap on the floor. We found him down there in the morning, the Missus and I, hiding under the table, talking away to himself just like a little kid, poor fella."

Ed blows out his breath. Then he pulls himself together, straightens up, all constabulary dignity. "Well, now, Mr. Griggs," he says, "there's protection, *and* protection. I don't care if he was a Rough Rider, you should have come to us in the first place. We're your fellow townsmen. We'll give you the kind of protection this matter requires. Won't we, Mac?" he says to me.

"You bet we will!" I say heartily, and I step over to the door to see if there is any sign of our patrolman yet.

"You've come to us for protection and by golly we're going to see that you get it!" he goes on. "That's what we're here for!"

"That what we're here for," I agree stoutly, and I am just about to step out and go after Buster, the patrolman, when suddenly I hear the most awful sounds behind me that the English language ever made.

"Mac here," I hear Ed remarking calmly, "is going back with you to that castle, and he's going to stay there on special duty until this business has been

cleared up once for all. You have absolutely nothing further to worry about. Ready, Mac?"

I am ready all right—just about ready to drop in my tracks. But Ed goes on, "He's a good man, let me tell you," and after he's said that, I haven't much choice in the matter.

I ask Griggs half-heartedly if he's sure he wants to stay in the castle tonight, maybe if there was no one around to frighten for a couple nights they'd get discouraged, go somewhere else.

"I doubt it," he says hopelessly. "They've probably been in it hundreds of years. And it's my home. You know how it is, a man's castle is his home. I paid good money for that place."

"Well, they've met their Waterloo," I let him know, and I notch my suspenders higher. It's a sign I mean business whenever I do that.

"Plaindale," beams Ed proudly, "needs more men like you. Better take a gun. There used to be one for shooting squirrels around here some—"

"After what I told you about the private detective," mourns Griggs, "what good would a gun be?"

We can't find one, anyway, there isn't much call for firearms in a law-abiding community like ours, so I take a grip on Ed's hand, and follow Griggs to the door. Then I come back and take another grip on Ed's hand, just for luck.

"You did that before," he lets me know suspiciously, "You ain't feeling blue by any chance, are you?"

"I'm seein' red. I'm in the pink of condition, and I'm going to do this job up brown," I contradict. And I think of that old Roman guy that said he'd either come back on top of his shield or underneath it.

We go out to the Oldsmobile and Griggs apologizes because there isn't

any equipment for me to wear on the drive—like goggles and a duster and gauntlets. "We law-enforcement agents are used to roughing it," I let him know with Spartan endurance.

He goes up ahead, cranks, and races the engine to the front seat. On the seventh try he beats it to the wheel before it dies. A couple of little boys help us start off with a push from behind, and we're on our way. As though there can be ghosts in an age of such scientific marvels!

WE can't talk much on account of the vibration, which makes it dangerous to use your tongue. It gets dark about halfway to the castle and Griggs switches on the brass headlamps, but they only make the trees and bushes look more scary than ever. A jackrabbit hops across the road in front of us and Griggs squeezes the rubber bulb attached to the horn when I am not expecting it. It goes "Oink-Goom!" and I nearly jump out of my skin. "Don't do that again unless it's absolutely necessary," I suggest when I have gotten my wind back. Which was some time later.

In about half-an-hour more the castle shows up, very eerie against the night sky. It isn't exactly a homey-looking place, and to make it worse a big cartwheel moon has come up directly behind it and splashes it full of shadows. It has four towers, one on each corner, and a wide ditch all around it, and for a doorstep they have a drawbridge.

Mrs. Griggs leans over from the back seat and touches him on the shoulder, and we nearly go off the road, with the jump he gives. "Did—did you leave a light burning in the northeast tower, Mort?" she chatters, pointing. There's a tiny pin-head gleam twinkling through one of the slits that

they called windows in the old days, and used to shoot arrows through.

"Of course not," he shivers, "the sun was still up when we started out, and you know I never go up into them things anyway, on account of all the cobwebs and bats and things."

"Then it's *them*," she whispers. "They're starting in early tonight . . ."

Right while we're staring fearfully up at it, *whiff* the light goes out. The chugging of the engine must have carried up there on the still air.

He and Mrs. Griggs are both looking at me sort of expectantly. "If you could get up there quick," he hints, "maybe you could sort of catch them red-handed."

I can't think of any excuse for backing out, much as I would like to, so we trot across the drawbridge on foot and he unlocks a little door down in the left-hand corner of a great big one the size of a barn, which they used to walk their horses through when they came back from war.

"Take those stairs over there," he says. "Have you got one of these new-fangled pocket batteries? I never got around to wiring the towers of the castle for electricity." Which is a fine time to be told that! All I have with me is a pocketful of big sulphur-matches, which I helped myself to from the general store last time I was in. I can't turn around and come down again, because Mrs. Griggs has tiptoed in after us and is watching me, half-scared and half-admiring. So I go jogging up, sort of surprised at my own feet for playing a dirty trick like this on me.

"Go with him, Mort," she urges, "two heads are better than one. Sometimes," she adds dubiously.

"Right away," he agrees, going in the other direction, "just as soon as I get the car put away in the barn out of the dew."

ABOVE the second floor, where the turret part begins, the lights quit and the stairs begin spiraling around worse than a corkscrew. I start lighting matches one by one to see my way. Between standing still and thinking about what is up ahead, and going up and finding out, I am just as scared one way as the other, so I may as well go on up. Every time I stop, anyway, there is a big wavering shadow of myself up ahead, and another one down below, so I keep going in self-defense.

The top of the stairs opens into a little round room, with slits all around it letting the moon in, and spiderwebs in the corners, and a mouse making a run for its hole. It was here that we saw the light coming from, but there's no sign now that anyone was ever in here, and I certainly didn't pass anyone on the stairs coming up, not even a ghost or a draft of air. There's an ancient iron ladder flat against the wall, leading up to a trap opening onto the tower roof, and I go up that to investigate. I dislodge the trap with one shoulder after a little trouble and stick my head through, and hold up my hand with a match in it. There's nothing up there, just a flat roof with a slotted circular parapet running around it, that they shot their crossbows through. A long row of things that look like black socks dangling around on the inside of it start coming to life and squeaking—bats!—so I back down in a hurry and close the trap after me.

As I pull my head down I have a disturbing optical illusion that a whole zig-zag row of the big stones in the wall, in the room below, are just slipping back into place, and I nearly let go and fall off the ladder backwards for a minute, but I buck up by telling myself it was probably just the wavering light of the match that made me imagine it.

I go over and start tapping the different slabs of stone with my knuckles, to see if any of them sound hollow. I am down to my last match by now, and Griggs is certainly taking his time about putting his car away and coming up to join me. Then suddenly I see something that I could have sworn wasn't there when I came up just now. A big hefty chunk of candle leaning out from an old sconce stuck in the wall. I examine it closely, but I can tell this wasn't what made the light we saw down below, because the wick hasn't been used and there is no sign of drippings down the sides. It is so old it has turned color, is a dark brown instead of white, but at least it's a light. I just have time to touch my last match to the wick, before it goes out.

The wick is so dry with age that it just sputters and sparks, doesn't even give as much light as the match did, but it is all I have. I leave it there and go back to the business of wall rapping.

At the third rap I get something. In fact I get more than I bargained for. There's a hiss, like I've stirred up a dozen copperheads, and the whole tower-room turns a ghostly green around me, like a photographer's studio. I've fiddled around until I've finally raised them, and by the way my shadow falls on the wall in front of me, there must be an awfully bright one standing right behind me.

I'm more dead than alive, but I manage to do my collapsing in a circle instead of straight up and down, and face around the other way. Instead of a long, lanky, wispy thing like I expected it to be, it has taken the form of a round ball of green fire, and is floating slow and dreamy up to the ceiling, right above where the candle in the wall is.

There's another viperish hiss, a "Whoosh!", and its mate has joined it,

in the shape of a red ball of fire. This one must be the male, it is more active. It hits the roof, bounces down to the floor, spreads out into a long snaky shape, and comes wriggling at me across the floor.

**F**LESH and blood can stand no more, at least not without a little elbow room. I give a sort of disembodied howl, jump over it toward the door, touch about every tenth step on the stairs and skin my elbows going down. Behind me the hissing keeps up as more and more of them show up and one or two even chase me part of the way down. Then they sort of spit disgustedly after me and give up.

I make the landing where the electricity begins in something under thirty seconds flat, which no old-timer ever did, especially in those iron pants they used to wear. Then I slow up and think things over, as it would be bad for the Griggs' morale to see me coming down in such a hurry, they might think I was frightened or something. A swig of very high grade liquor standing there in a decanter helps my reasoning powers along too, and when I have quit—er—vibrating with rage so much, I go the rest of the way down with a very knowing look on my face. They can't put anything over on T. J. MacComber—well, not for long, anyway.

Griggs is just coming in from putting his car away, which is what you call convenient timing. He and his wife cannot help but admire my perfect self-control. "What happened? Did—did you see them?" they ask.

"They knew better than to let me see them," I growl. "Tried to frighten me by setting off a roman candle. I just stepped aside and waited till it got through going off. I only came down because I ran out of matches."

She quickly grabs me by the sleeve,

although I have not budged in the slightest. "You are not going up there again," she says firmly, "until you have a bite of supper first. The laws of hospitality come first in my house—er—chat-oo."

I am too well-brought-up to contradict a lady, so we sit down at the table, which is in the main banquet hall of the chat-oo. I take a long deep breath, which I hope they will understand is one of regret because I am being kept from my duty. Griggs remarks that in the old days they used to eat in here on rushes.

"What was their hurry?" I ask.

He then goes on to tell me the history of the chat-oo, which I have not asked for and would be a lot happier without knowing. It seems it was built by some old baron, who had spent most of his life robbing folks and had collected quite a bit of treasure. He hid the treasure somewhere in the walls, and then went and had all the tongues cut off the laborers who had worked on the place, so they wouldn't be able to tell anyone. Ever since that time the castle was supposed to be haunted.

"Well it sure is haunted," I admit, "but that story about the treasure must be a fake, because you had it taken apart stone by stone when you brought it over and you didn't find anything, did you?"

"Not a red cent," Griggs admits.

At this point all the lights go out all over the castle at one time. "Hello," he says in the dark.

"This is no time to exchange greetings," his wife answers, "do something about it. Get candles."

Before I let him light them I take a nick in each one, because the supper table is no place for fireworks, but this time they are pure tallow, the real article.

We take one apiece and go down-

stairs to the power-house to see if we can find out what is wrong. The chat-oo generates its own current, on account of being quite a spell out of town, and Griggs has converted what used to be the torture chamber into a power-plant. Besides all the coils and dynamos and things he has installed, there are cozy little pieces of bric-a-brac like thumbscrews and a rack left over, so it is no place in which to digest a meal properly.

"Fuse musta blown out," he says, poking around. Then he turns around and asks, "What was that funny choked sound you just made?"

I have been incautious enough to open up an iron lady that used to hug people to death, and there is a skeleton stil inside which has sort of leaned out and bowed to me. I am now sitting down backward on the floor. "A crumb got caught in my throat," I explain, "that is probably what you heard."

**W**E neither of us have any great knack for electricity, so we have to give up. "I'll phone in for an electrical repairman," he says, "it's a job for an expert."

Mrs. Griggs overhears this where she is waiting for us and says, "The phone's been cut too, I just tried it."

"I'll have to drive in myself, then," he says, "Mac can stay here with you till I get back." He puts on his hat and he opens the little door inside the big one. He sticks out his leg, then just pulls it back in time and hangs onto the side of the door. "Who hauled the drawbridge up?" he asks in a scared voice. "I left it down when I came in."

"Some ghosts, that can do a thing like that!" I remark grimly.

He starts cranking the handle just inside the door that lowers it. He cranks till he gets red in the face, and

nothing happens, the thing sticks up flat against the chat-oo wall. "Must be jammed," he says, and keeps on cranking till he just flops against the wall. Then I try my hand at it, until my arm nearly comes off. It doesn't, but the crank handle itself finally does. Also a great big loose chain tumbles down from above and goes into the moat with a splash, just missing my head by inches.

"Well," says Griggs, kind of pale, "looks like we stay here—for tonight anyway. I can't swim—can you?—and that thing out there is too wide to jump across."

"Maybe you can find a plank wide enough to stretch across," his wife says.

At that, we both say the same thing at the same time: "Nothing doing, we'd find it had been sawed through when we got halfway over!" And he closes the door again and bolts it.

"Oh I wish we hadn't come back here tonight!" Mrs. Griggs whimpers. "I don't like this at all, being cut off in this horrible place. I wish I'd never asked you to buy it, Mort."

"I kinda do too," he admits.

For that matter, so do I.

They decide to go up to their room and lock themselves in until morning. "Of course, you'll probably want to stay up and lay for them," he tells me. Which doesn't leave me a very wide choice of answers.

"Bet your bottom dollar!" I gulp, with a look over my shoulder, to see if just the three of us are present.

"Have you any plan of campaign?" Mrs. Griggs asks me nervously.

I just nod wisely. As a matter of fact I do have one; it is to make myself as inconspicuous as possible—even at the risk of being overlooked by them—and live and let live.

Griggs shakes hands with me at the

foot of the stairs, as if he never expected to see me alive again. "Well, good luck and here's hoping. If you need any help, don't hesitate to call me." Then he adds, "But I'm a very heavy sleeper, you might have to keep calling and calling." Something tells me I may as well not bother, I can count him out right here and now—at least until the morning sun comes up.

They lock themselves in upstairs, shove heavy pieces of furniture up against their door, and that is the end of the Griggses for the night. Which leaves me holding the fort single-handed. There is practically no one I would not change places with just then, but I don't notice any offers, so it looks like I am elected.

The first thing I decide to do is make sure I am not caught without plenty of light, like I was up in that tower. Mrs. Griggs has shown me where their supply of candles is kept, so I go down there to bring up as many as I can carry. It is in a little room halfway down to the dungeons, which they now call the storeroom but which used to be the place where the gaol keeper slept, according to what Griggs has told me—although I was surprised to hear they played football in those days, and indoors at that.

JUST as I am reaching out for an armful of candles to take upstairs with me, I hear faint slithering footsteps going by somewhere close to me. Like someone walking in carpet-slippers. I rush out to the stairs I just came down myself, and the lighted candle I hold up is shaking like a lightning-bug, but the stairs are empty, there isn't a sign of anything on them, up or down. And the muffled footsteps sound fainter out here. They sound as though they are coming from the other

direction, through the wall of the storeroom. I go back and put my ear up close to it, and I can hear them plainer for a minute. Then they stop, as though they got to wherever they were going, and there's a smothered clink, as though somebody dropped something. I can't figure how anyone can walk around inside solid stone walls, even ghosts, unless there is a secret passage or something back there that even the Griggses don't know about. But I am not in very good shape for figuring out anything much just then; it is raining all down my face, and my knee-joints keep wanting to get together in a huddle, and the soles of my feet are craving to carry me at high speed up the stairs away from here.

Meanwhile something else has started in, where the footsteps left off. A blurred kind of rapping against stonework, with something hard like a chisel or mallet. I can hear it coming faintly through the wall. *Bop-bop-bop*, like that. And then a sort of whispering sound, like one ghost saying to another, "How's it coming, Whitey?"

I decide I have hung around down here long enough. There's such a thing as looking for trouble. If I would stay up above where I belong, in the main banquet-hall, I probably wouldn't be able to hear all these footfalls and tappings. And I always say, what you don't know, won't hurt you. So I grab blindly for an armful of candles and get ready to leave with more haste than dignity.

But in my hurry I reach for the wrong bin or something, and what I get is fly-paper. A sheet of it sticks to my cuff and I have a heck of a time prying it off. I look and there is a whole drawerful of the stuff. What they need it for I don't know, unless that moat outside breeds flies and gnats

in the summertime, or maybe some ambitious drummer once caught Mrs. Griggs off guard and beat down her sales resistance to practically zero. Why, there is enough of it laid away to paper the side of a—

And with that, I get the idea of a lifetime, practically an inspiration, you might say. I know this one must be good, too, because I don't get them very often, so I better use it while I have it, no telling when I'll get another. What it amounts to is simply this: fly-paper is good for catching light-weight winged things like flies and mosquitoes. Well, what is more light-weight than a ghost? If fly-paper will catch mosquitoes and flies, why don't it catch ghosts too? All I have to do is spread it around in the right place, and they will probably float right onto it and get stuck. They certainly have feet, as those slithering footsteps I just heard prove.

I get so excited that I even forget to be scared of the tapping any more. I grab up the whole stack, bin and all, and cart it up above to the banquet-hall. Then I go back and bring up plenty of candles. The rapping, meanwhile, is keeping up for dear life, faster and faster, like they were getting excited about something too. It is down below there where the dungeons are, you can't hear it up above.

The more I think over my inspiration, the more it appeals to me. In fact it seems to be the only possible way. A gun is no good, that private detective proved that; and a lasso wouldn't work, because they can probably make themselves very skinny and slip right through the knot, and anyway I can't throw one. And even if they got sense enough to steer clear of fly-paper, which I doubt, because it is a modern invention after their time, at least I can spread it around in a sort of dead-line, make them stay away.

**I**T is a cinch they can't be in two places at once, ghosts or no ghosts, and as long as they seem to be busy down below in the dungeons right now, the safest place to begin seems to be the other extreme of the chat-oo, that tower where we saw the light when we came home.

So I take a good stiff hitch in my suspenders to get up my courage, and up I go. There are no lights anywhere in the chat-oo now, so it is no worse up here than down below, and this is the one place I am sure they are *not* at, at the moment, so in fact it is a whole lot better. I park lighted candles all around me on the floor so I can see what I am doing, and then I go down again and bring up a jug of maple syrup for paste, and a paint brush to apply it with, because of course the paper has to go stick right side up if it's going to work at all.

Just as I am ready to start in, on my hands and knees, I feel a slight coolness, you might say a draft, on the back of my neck. Now it isn't coming from the trap-door in the ceiling, because that is closed, and it isn't coming from those slits in the wall, because they are way over my head when I am crouched down like this.

I don't turn my head and look behind me, because you never can tell what you might see in a place like this, and I don't want any surprises. I just sort of stiffen a little, and slowly swing my arm around behind me and feel around vaguely in the air. If it runs into anything cool or clammy standing there, I would rather just leave without looking.

I swing my arm like a dog wagging its tail, and there is nothing there but air, so I turn my head, and all I see is the stones of the wall. But the draft keeps up, I can feel it on my face now—especially as my face is quite wet

with perspiration from—er—annoyance. Well, I never heard of a draft coming through solid stone before, and I wet my thumb and stick it out against the wall, and, sure enough, a regular breeze is coming through from somewhere. I play the candlelight up and down it, and then I see that certain of the stones have no mortar between them, just a solid black line.

I remember what I thought I saw coming down the ladder that time, a whole zig-zag row of stone blocks slipping back in to place. So I run down to the second floor, remove a great big flat-headed lance from a suit of armor they have standing there, bring it up and start prying along that black line where the draft is coming from. Before I know it, out swings a whole zig-zag row of the wall stones in one piece, hinged together. Only they're not real stone at all, just wood carved and colored to look like stones. And the opening is just wide enough to pass a person through sideways.

On the other side there are stairs going down into the blackness, and way below some place I can hear that tapping still going on. Well, it takes a lot of courage and a lot of time, and a lot of swallows out of that decanter I have brought up from below, but finally I am easing down those stairs with a candle held in front of me.

They open out into a little room, that is in very untidy condition. There are chop bones and crusts of bread lying scattered around on the floor, and a pair of cots that haven't been made up, and unionsuits of black underwear and unionsuits of white underwear, and empty cans of red paint, and a lot of other things that I can't explain what ghosts would want with. Beyond this little room there are more stairs going still further down, and the tapping and whispering is very clear



up here, it must be just at the bottom.

Well, I have found out about all I need to know, and it is surprising how self-confident I have become. But then whoever heard of meat-eating ghosts, or ghosts that wear woollen union-suits to keep from catching cold? I get busy then and there, and in about half an hour I have that whole inner flight of stairs from the little room on up to the tower papered with fly-paper, stuck on with maple syrup; not only the steps but the sides of the stair walls too. I keep working my way backward, so as not to cut myself off, and when I am through there isn't enough fly-paper left over for a gnat to sit down on. Then I carefully close the secret door again, and I go down the outer stairs.

Now all that remains to be figured out is how to drive them up those stairs in a hurry, without stopping to look where they are going. Nearly everyone is afraid of ghosts, I say to myself, but what the heck are ghosts afraid of? Then I snap my fingers and I have it. Why, other ghosts, of course!

I go down to the power-house torture-chamber and take out that skeleton that is inside the iron lady I told you about. It is not a real one of course, Griggs has explained to me. There was a real one in it when they bought the chat-oo, but the government over there wouldn't let it be taken out of the country, so in order to keep everything just the way it was, Griggs had an imitation one made.

**T**HE next thing to do is try to locate about where the ghosts are, from this side. The tapping and the whispering guides me some, but what chiefly helps is that in one of the dungeons I notice wisps of dust coming out between the stones, so they must be hacking away right on the other side of that

wall. I bring down my skeleton and I wait for them to break through.

But they don't seem to keep at any one block of stone very long. The puffs of dust keep coming out here, and there, and all over the place. Which is no way to excavate. I say to myself, they'll never get anywhere doing that. Then suddenly something crunches, or caves in, on their side that doesn't sound like stone at all, it sounds like rotten wood or plaster or something. This seems to get them all stirred up; they start jabbering away a mile a minute, I never heard such garrulous ghosts. I also hear a lot of clinking sounds, like they were playing poker with iron washers for chips. Then before I know what has happened, chinks of light start showing through from their side. I have left it dark on mine, of course. One of the big blocks in the wall, which are about four by eight, starts sliding in under the rest, which means they are pulling it out from where they are. It moves very easily, though, with a splintering sound, so I guess that is the fake one that caved in just now. I hear iron clinkers falling all over the floor on their side and rolling around, and foreign words.

I wait just long enough to get a squint through, when the block has dropped out of the way and left a big oblong window, and in the lantern light on the other side I can make out a pair of fluttery figures jumping up and down. They are the Chat-oo Griggs ghosts all right, because they are in long white things like sheets, with pillowcases for hoods and round holes where their eyes are. They look a lot like Klansmen. One is tall and skinny, the other short and fat.

I take my bony lady-friend by the back of the neck and shove her skull through. By moving the wires from in back I can make her lower jaw work

up and down, like them guys with puppets. Then I stick one bony arm through, holding it at the elbow-joint, and stroke the short fat one playfully down the back with it. I pull that falsetto voice that always sends the fellows around the cracker barrel into stitches, and squeak: "Hello, boys! Anyone got a chaw of terbacky?"

They both give a sort of lift off the floor at the same time, as if they were going to fly right up through the ceiling, but instead they come right down again where they were before, with a couple of pretty heavy clumps for ghosts to make. *Bop-bop-bop!* like that. Then they tear loose with a couple of the most ear-splitting screeches you ever heard in your life. A noon factory-whistle is silent by comparison. They both get in each other's way trying to get over to the stairs on their side at one time. The tall skinny one makes it first, but the other one isn't far behind. *Whisht!* and they are gone, elbowing each other aside all the way up.

All the way up you can hear scuffling and squeaks of "Le baron! Le baron!"

THEY might stop to get their breaths back, and get over being frightened, in that little room midway up, with the cots and all the garbage, so just to keep up the good work, I climb through, haul the skeleton with me, and start up after them. The skeleton's celluloid feet trail along the stone steps with a sort of rattling sound, and I guess they don't stop to take any naps on their little cots, because the next thing I hear is a sort of slapping, ripping sound, and they don't seem to be making much headway any more. So when I come to their little nest, I put the skeleton down, and pick up a fairly heavy brass candlestick instead and hold it upside-down, and go up the

rest of the way, with a lighted candle in my other hand.

When I come to where the fly-paper ought to begin, there isn't any. It has been swept clean off the steps and stair walls, just leaving sticky syrup smears. But farther on, near the tower, I come upon plenty of it, in fact all there is. It has peeled off the walls and steps in one long chain, and rolled itself all up together in two big mounds, and both are heaving and fluttering and flapping weakly.

So I just hold the candle up, gauge about where the heads are under all that goo, and give each one a good substantial knock with the brass candlestick—not too hard, but just hard enough—and all motion stops for the time being. Then I open the secret door in the tower, cup my hands, and holler down: "Oh. Mr. Griggs!"

He is, as he warned me, a very heavy sleeper—or else maybe my voice don't give him much confidence, in the middle of the night like that. Anyway, by the time he does come out, the birds have been singing for an hour in the trees outside and the sun is up. He comes down the stairs in his bathrobe and asks, "Did you call me?"

"Yeah," I yawn, "about one or two this morning."

"Tsk, tsks," he says, "don't time fly, though!" Then he asks, "Who's this gentleman sitting next to you on the bottom of the stairs in towels?"

"This is no gentleman," I correct, "this is one of your ghosts. And I am having a very hard time understanding him. This elementary French reader that was all I could find in your library, has nothing but people losing their aunts' cousin's umbrellas in it. He is in Turkish towels because he is very raw and tender all over."

Mrs. Griggs bends down close and takes a good look at him. "Why, I

have seen him before!" she exclaims. "He was the original caretaker when the chat-oo was still over in France!"

"Yes," I say, "I found that out, but not without a lot of lost-umbrella trouble. And you will find his wife, who was the other ghost, upstairs soaking fly-paper off in a hot bath. You might go up and give her a hand, as it is a very arduous proceeding."

"Then it was really them two *live* people did all that?" Griggs asks. "But what about them self-opening doors and floating candles and all that?"

"I've got it all written down here. They simply tied black thread to the doorknobs, stood back out of sight, and swung them slowly open. Then jerked and snapped the thread off short when you came out to look. About the floating candles: they just dressed up in black unionsuits and pulled stockings over their heads, and carried them up and down stairs; you couldn't see them themselves in the dark. About that poor Rough Rider that shot at them: they took good care to empty his two guns and put blanks in when he wasn't looking, don't worry. And about the faucets running blood, they just emptied some cans of red paint into the water-tank, that was all."

"But why'd they want to go to all that trouble for? Why'd they want to scare us out of here?" he says.

"Oh, I nearly forgot!" I say, snapping my fingers. "You'll find a heap of mouldy green washers, and tarnished bracelets and rings and things, lying down there just on the other side of the second dungeon from the right; they came out of one of the fake stones in the wall that was all hollow inside; a chest, really, covered with moss and plaster. That was what they was after, and why they went through all this ghost rigamarole, so

they could do their prospecting undisturbed. They finally located it just last night, as I caught up with 'em."

"But how'd they get *in*?" he wails. "I had it all taken apart, and every stone numbered and brought over!"

"The place was chockful of secret stairs and pasageways, and your construction-engineers carried out your orders to the letter. They put 'em all back in again on this side. Trouble is, I guess you didn't bother going over the blueprints very closely, or you would have known about them. These two followed you over here, when you interrupted their treasure hunting by buying the place and taking it apart around them. They sneaked behind your back as soon as it was up again and went back to work. Probably not caretakers at all, but a pair of high-class crooks posing as caretakers. They musta had great confidence that the treasure was still inside one of the building-blocks intact. Well, they were right."

He says, "Mac my boy," putting his hand on my shoulder, "part of it is going to you. If it wasn't for you, they woulda gotten away with it right under my nose, right in my own chat-oo."

"Heck," I said modestly, scuffing my heel, "if you feel that way about it, guess there's nothing I can do but take it. 'Bout a third'll be enough."

Later, driving me back to town in the Oldsmobile to turn my two prisoners over to Ed, he says to me kind of sheepish: "I knew all along those weren't real ghosts, but—but I wanted an expert's opinion about it."

"Shucks," I answer, "I knew it too! Y'don't suppose they had *me* fooled, do you?"

Then each one of us says to himself, "Wonder if he believes me, the big whopping liar?"



# MEN of

## First Citizen of the Far North

CHARLEY D. BOWER, POOH-BAH OF POINT BARROW, IS ABDICATING. IT'S BEEN NEARLY HALF A CENTURY SINCE HE HIED TO THE LAND OF THE AURORA BOREALIS TO BECOME THE LEADING CITIZEN OF AMERICA'S NORTHERN—MOST SETTLEMENT. "CIVILIZATION HAS CROWDED ME OUT," HE SAYS, "AND THERE'S NO REFUGE LEFT FARTHER NORTH."

BORN IN NEW YORK DURING THE CIVIL WAR, CHARLEY ACQUIRED THE ROVING INSTINCT AT FOUR WHEN HIS FAMILY MOVED FROM THE CITY TO THE COMPARATIVE WILDNESS OF A SUBURBAN HAMLET. FROM THAT TIME ON HIS LIFE HAS BEEN A QUEST FOR THE FREEDOM OF LONELY PLACES. AT 13 HE SHIPPED ABOARD A BOAT BOUND FOR SOUTH AMERICA. ON THE RETURN TRIP THE SHIP WAS RUN DOWN BY ANOTHER SHIP AND CUT IN HALF. HE WAS ONE OF THE TWO SURVIVORS.

UNDAUNTED, BOWER SIGNED ON ANOTHER SHIP. IT WAS HIS AMBITION TO GET TO SOUTH AMERICA AND EXPLORE THE INTERIOR. ROUNDING CAPE HORN FIRE BROKE OUT IN THE HOLD. FOR 52 DAYS THE CREW FOUGHT THE BLAZE, AND WHEN THE SHIP FINALLY REACHED SAN FRANCISCO THE FIRE WAS STILL BURNING. THEN AN EXPLOSION BLEW OUT THE SHIP'S SIDE AND SHE HAD TO BE SCUTTLED.

A True Story in Pictures Every Week

# DARING

by STOOKIE ALLEN



AFTER THAT, BOWER ABANDONED SAILORING. THAT WAS IN 1884 AND A CHANCE TO TAKE A MINING JOB IN ALASKA CAME ALONG. THE JOB DID NOT MATERIALIZE, SO CHARLEY HITCHED UP A DOG TEAM AND MUSHED 300 MILES NORTH TO POINT BARROW.



AT THAT TIME ONLY ESKIMOS LIVED AT THE BLEAK POINT. BOWER WENT "PIRATING" HUNTING AND TRADING FOR FUR AND WHALEBONE. WHEN THE WHALING TRADE FELL

OFF HE SET UP A FUR TRADING POST. A TRADING COMPANY MADE HIM RESIDENT MANAGER, AND SOON HE RAN THE GENERAL STORE IN BARROW AND SIX OTHER SCATTERED TRADING POSTS BESIDES.

LATER HE BECAME UNITED STATES COMMISSIONER FOR THE REGION. HE HAS PROVEN HIMSELF A SOLOMON IN UNTANGLING SOME OF THE INVOLVED NATIVE PROBLEMS. ONE OF HIS AVOCATIONS HAS BEEN PLAYING THE GOOD SAMARITAN: NO FEWER THAN 365 WRECKED OR STRANDED TRAVELERS ARE INDEBTED TO HIM FOR AID.

Coming: Count de Prorok—Seeker of Lost Worlds

# Trail's End

By  
FRANK  
RICHARDSON  
PIERCE

Author of "Bill o' Sale," "Desert Saga," etc.

**T**IM SKINNER'S bloodshot eyes, rimmed by alkali dust, kept grimly on the hoofprints in the road ahead. He was hardly conscious of his own exhaustion, nor of the pounding of his lathered horse's heart against its ribs. He kept watching the trail and telling himself he was gaining on Rand and that seven years' quest was nearly at an end.

He pulled his hatbrim down against the blinding glare and looked ahead, hoping to see the telltale dust cloud that would mark Rand's flight. His horse staggered, almost caught itself, then fell. Tim Skinner went sprawling, but he was on his feet before the horse had lifted its head from the deep dust.

"Easy boy!" he said thickly. "Easy! Must've been a squirrel hole." Then he remembered he hadn't seen a squirrel in hours. "Hell," he said softly, "I didn't know I'd been ridin' you that hard."

He got the horse to its feet and remounted. To the west he could see the windows of a ranch house shimmering in the sunlight. There were cottonwoods around part of the

house, an unpainted barn and a windmill that stood motionless in the still air. "Dent's place," he said to the horse. "Didn't think we'd come that far. Think you can last out?"

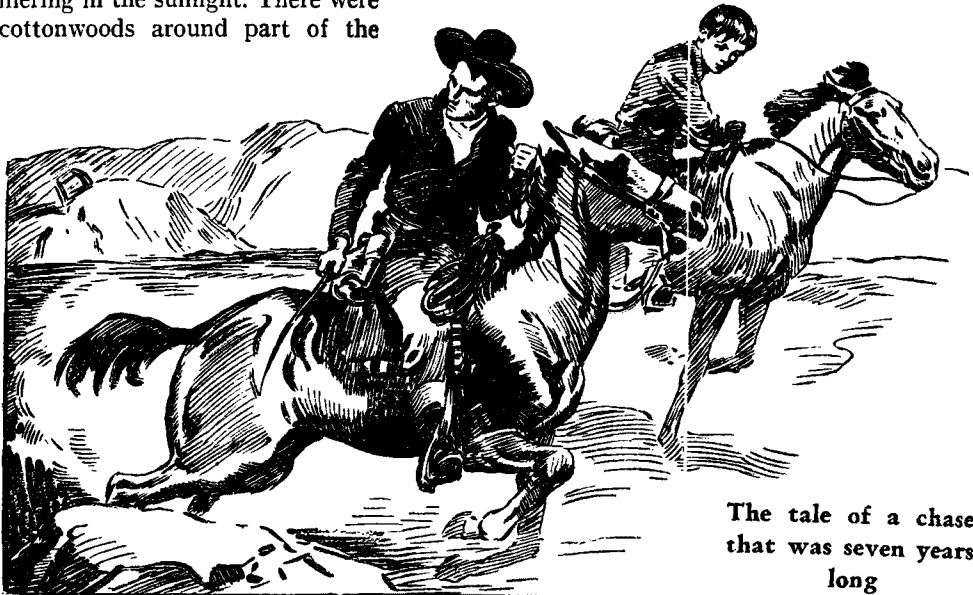
The horse lapsed to the fence, then dropped in the shade of a scraggly tree. Tim Skinner removed saddle and bridle, gave the horse the last of his canteen water, then started toward the ranch.

Rand, better mounted perhaps, would increase the distance between them again. He swore, but he didn't blame the horse.

Dent, rawboned and with skin the color of old saddle leather, walked down to meet him. "Howdy," he said. "Looks like your horse was tuckered out."

"You don't remember me," Tim answered, "I'm Skinner."

"I figgered you was Tim Skinner," Dent said. "I saw Rand ride by two hours ago."



The tale of a chase  
that was seven years  
long

He sure was burnin' up horseflesh and I says to my wife, 'Tim Skinner ain't far behind.' "

"Will you lend me a horse?" Tim asked.

"I ain't never refused the loan of a horse yet to a man that needed one," Dent answered. "But this time— You figger to kill Rand, don't you?"

"I've had it in mind for seven years, and I've come close to it several times, but he's always got away," Tim Skinner answered. He thought a moment. "Yes, I'll kill him."

"I don't know what started the feud," Dent said thoughtfully, "and it ain't none of my business. . . ."

"He stole somethin' from me years ago," Tim interrupted.

"And accordin' to the rumor," Dent suggested, "you stole somethin' from him. His girl!"

"It was a fair deal," Skinner argued. "I didn't knife him in the back. There were things I could've told her about him, but I didn't. In the end she chose me and he's hated me ever since. So he got even by stealin' from me."

"Where's she now while you're tryin' to pay off an old grudge?" Dent asked.

"Been dead six years," Tim answered.

"Oh," Dent said uneasily, "I . . . I didn't know. Anyway, Rand's got his little boy with him. I'd think a long time before I'd kill a little boy's pa. I ain't sayin' Rand ain't a low-down skunk. I ain't sayin' but he's prob'ly dry-gulched a man or two in his time. But I am sayin' and I say it in a loud tone of voice, I'd think one hell of a long time before I killed a little boy's pa. Now, do you still want the horse?"

"Yes, if you'll lend me one," Tim Skinner answered. "I didn't know about the little boy bein' along. I thought he was just leadin' an extra horse to change off. I could tell by the hoofprints there wasn't much extra weight, if any, on the horse Rand was leadin'."

Dent led the way to the barn and brought out a tough little mustang. "My wife named her Toots," Dent said, "and she's tougher'n the hubs of Hades. Would you like a bite to eat before you go?"

"Are you tryin' to delay me so Rand can get away?" Tim asked sharply.

"I told you I wasn't takin' sides one way or another," Dent retorted. "I'm offerin' food to a feller human bein' who looks as if he'd missed a lot of it the past few days."

"I'm sorry," Tim said quickly. "I'm pretty well keyed-up."

**H**E FOLLOWED Dent into the house. The shades were down and it was dark and cool. There was a wooden sink with running water and Tim washed off the dust, then combed his hair. The last time Dent had seen that hair it had been black and glossy. Now it was shot with gray. There was tragedy in the depths of Skinner's blue eyes; there were lines on his face. The skin at the corners of his eyes was tightly puckered, as if he had gazed ahead days and weeks on end in brilliant light.

Dent spread out a man-sized meal and at first Tim Skinner was too tense to eat. He nibbled at this and that. Slowly he relaxed and began to enjoy the meal.

"How old are you, Skinner?" Dent asked, thinking of the gray hair.

"Thirty," Tim answered, "I was just twenty-one when I got married. The wife . . ." He hesitated and his tone was soft and gentle. "The wife . . . was eighteen. That would make Rand thirty-five now."

Thirty-five is young for a father to die, Dent thought, but he didn't say so. A father's needed most when his son's between the ages of six or seven and twenty. . . .

Tim Skinner got up slowly from his chair. "Thanks, Dent," he said, "I didn't realize how much I needed food and rest until I sat down. I'll never forget this. And when it's all over I'll come back and tell you the rest of the story."

He put the saddle on Toots, adjusted the cinch and left his exhausted horse in Dent's charge. The hoofprints of Rand's horses were covered with dust that had drifted across. Tim was conscious of the familiar stab of fear—the sudden thought that again Rand had eluded him. As soon

as Toots was warmed up he began to crowd her.

Toward evening he picked up the hoof-prints again. They were clear and they were fresh—an hour or two old.

That night he dismounted and approached a thicket. There was a water-hole fringed by tules, clumps of mesquite and the smell of wood-smoke. Tim crawled slowly toward the spot, gun in hand, ready to take lead to give it. But the camp was deserted. Someone had eaten a meal very recently and hastily departed.

Tim studied the water-hole for sign. Suddenly he saw the imprint of a small boy's hand in the damp earth near the water. The boy had thrown himself down on his stomach and taken a long drink. It was evident to Tim that the boy was breaking under the hard pace. Either Rand must travel slower, or abandon the boy.

"And he won't leave the boy, Toots," he said to the horse. "If Rand don't kill me, he'll train the boy to pick up the job where he leaves off. We've got to travel some more tonight."

**T**OOTS gave out the following night and Tim Skinner rode two miles off the road to get a fresh horse. "I'll be back in a few days," he promised. "If I'm not, here's enough money to pay you for your horse and the trouble of riding Toots back to Dent's ranch."

Twenty-four hours later Tim Skinner's latest horse was weakening. Rand had doubled back during the day and thrown him off the trail. This doubling back only served to increase Tim's eagerness. He was getting hotter—closer.

"If this nag will just last out," Tim said nervously, "I'll spot him, and then . . . it'll be trail's end for one of us—finally it'll be the end."

Suddenly the hoofprints turned onto stony ground and in the twilight it was hard to follow them. Tim dismounted, led the horse, and quartered the area like a setter dog quartering an alfalfa patch during the bird season. A single set of hoof-prints led towards the southwest. Tim con-

tinued his careful searching until he found the prints of the second horse. They led due west.

He sat down on a rock to consider. There was something queer about the situation. Either Rand had sent the boy in one direction and taken the other himself, or else the two were riding one horse. It looked that way.

Tim studied both sets of tracks at the point where they left the stony area and headed through the lightly crusted range land. One horse was without a load. This horse had headed straight west leaving a clear trail.

Tim's first impulse was to follow the burdened animal, then he remembered the resourcefulness Rand had used in eluding him on other occasions. Rand was the cleverest man he had ever tracked.

Suddenly he climbed into the saddle and headed west. The hoofprints were light the first half mile, then presently the impression deepened. The horse was now carrying a heavy load. Tim Skinner grinned sardonically in the twilight. Rand must have lashed heavy rocks to one horse's saddle to give it the impression of carrying two, then started it southwest. The boy had ridden the remaining horse west and Rand had followed, walking parallel with the horse, but some distance to the right or left. By this ruse the man had hoped Tim would put in a night following a horse loaded with rock. Rand was counting on that because he was tired and needed rest.

He rode slowly now, confident Rand's camp could not be far ahead. And two miles beyond, Tim caught the odor of smoke. No fire was visible. But a man of Rand's elusiveness would build his fire in a cave or tangle of boulders where the flames wouldn't be visible.

**T**IM SKINNER dismounted, tied his horse to a mesquite, and advanced cautiously in the direction from which the odor had come. The smoke grew stronger and at last he caught the odor of frying bacon. A frog croaked to his left and somewhere ahead. There was probably a water-



hole in that direction. Tim edged towards it and lifted his head. Water, fringed by reeds, shimmered in the faint light of a half-moon.

Tim crawled closer. As long as the frog croaked he was safe enough. Rand would be listening for wild creatures' warning of danger, such as a frog's abrupt silence.

Tim lifted his head for a better view. There was a wash to the left, and water drained from the back country and stored in its sands undoubtedly fed the water-hole. He couldn't see the fire, but a dull glare on rock, and distorted shadows, were visible.

There was a good three hundred yards between the fire and the water-hole. Tim crawled toward the spot, crouched and waited for fortune to take a hand in the game. Ten minutes, each an eternity, passed without incident.

Rand's voice suddenly broke the silence. "Take the water bags, Bill, and go down to the hole and fill 'em."

"Gee, Pa, I'd rather not," a youthful voice protested.

"Why?" There was a rasp in Rand's voice. Tim Skinner's tenseness increased. He hoped Rand would send the boy away. He didn't want him to witness what happened between the men for various reasons. Boys sometimes have long memories for faces, and besides no eight-year-old should witness one man kill another.

"What're you 'fraid of?" Rand's voice demanded.

"The Buzzard might be down there waitin' to get me," the boy protested. "It's dark down there."

"The Buzzard's follerin' old Steve about now," Rand argued. "That's why I loaded his saddle with rock. Now go on, do as I tell you."

So Rand had told the boy his pursuer's name was the Buzzard, Tim reflected. He could understand the reason for that, too. On the other hand, if the boy had never heard that a man named Tim Skinner was following them, then he could not very well inform the authorities such a man had killed his father.

He couldn't hear what Rand was saying, only the boy's protest. Suddenly the man's temper flared up. Tim could see the shadow of a hand lift and fall on the shadow of a head that was outlined on a rock. The head shadow fell and got up again. An arm shadow lifted, as though shielding a face.

"Now get out of here and do as I tell you," Rand roared, "or I'll larrup hell out of you."

Tim grew tense, waiting. He could never stand to see anyone hit a child.

A sturdy little figure presently appeared, carrying two water bags over slim, straight shoulders. His steps began to falter beyond the friendly blaze and slowed down almost to a stop opposite Tim. Tim noticed the boy was staring at the shadows about the water-hole and seeing the goblins the youthful imagination conjures when the night is eerie and the destination dark and strange.

Bill listened intently, and seemed reassured by the croaking frog. An owl passed over the water-hole, dropped, then went on with empty talons. Somewhere a coyote howled.

The boy's shoulders straightened with sudden resolution and he went on toward the water.

**T**IM SKINNER got to his feet and walked swiftly toward the campfire. At the sound of his steps Rand looked up, startled. Tim's hand rested lightly on the butt of his holstered six-gun and his gaze fixed itself on Rand's bearded face and narrowing eyes. At last he was face to face with the man and his eyes studied him, relishing the sight of the quarry he had hunted for so long and hated so intensely.

"It's been a long trail, Rand," Tim said evenly. "But you knew I'd catch you in time."

"Let's talk it over," Rand suggested. He spoke thickly, as if his tongue was dry and covered with cotton. "There ain't no sense in havin' a killin'."

"You knew there would be a killing the

night you raided my ranch when I was away," Tim answered. "You said you'd get even when Elsie turned you down and agreed to marry me."

"You knocked me," Rand snarled. "You lied about me."

"You lie and you know it," Tim retorted. "I knew you'd rustled cattle, but I told you I'd keep my mouth shut on that score providing you went straight if she married you. And I did keep my mouth shut. You said you'd kill us both. You told her that and then you told me. And you did kill her . . . with worry. You killed her as surely as if you'd shot her."

Tim watched Rand narrowly. Even now he couldn't shoot the fellow down in cold blood, and it didn't look as if Rand would go for the gun resting lightly in its holster.

"We can make some kind of a dicker, Skinner," Rand said. "Now if you'll—"

He broke off and lifted his voice. "It's the Buzzard, Bill!" His gaze shifted to a point beyond Tim Skinner. "Hit him with a rock. He's goin' to kill your old Pa. Hit him, Bill!"

Tim's head shifted and at that instant Rand went for his gun. His hand moved faster than even Tim's eye could follow. Tim saw only the gun leap, then he felt his own weapon explode in his hand. It was the fastest draw he had ever made—faster than anything he had done in practice. And behind it was seven years of patient repetition in drawing and firing at targets.

He didn't wonder if Rand was hit. He knew! Rand pitched forward and the gun slipped from his nerveless fingers. A shudder ran through his heavy frame, then he was still.

After seven years it was that simple—he drew his gun and fired, and the man who had ruined his life was erased from the earth. Tim felt no compunction as he stared down at the lifeless Rand.

Tim Skinner turned and ran up the west side of the gulch. He could hear the steady clatter of rocks that his feet loosened and tumbled below. He gained the top, ran along the rim a hundred yards, then softly

crossed the gulch to the east side. He made his way to his horse and then listened. The night was silent—the absolute silence that comes when stark fear is abroad—when even the animals and the birds sense death.

Tim ran his hand over his face. It was smooth and clean. He had shaved each morning since leaving Dent's ranch. It wasn't a face to frighten a boy, nor to suggest a buzzard. It was a rugged, weary face, kindly and patient.

He arranged his clothing and then quietly mounted. He rode quietly a short distance away, turned and approached the water-hole at a gallop. He pulled up his horse and shouted: "What's the trouble here? Is anyone hurt? What's the trouble?"

No range-wise man would ever have approached trouble in that manner. It was one fairly certain way of being shot, but it was the one way to calm the fear of the frightened boy who lurked near the water hole.

"Hello," Tim called again. There was no answer, only the tremendous silence. He let the horse drink while his eyes roved the reeds. There was a break where a body had flattened them down. Tim looked at the break a long time. The boy was playing possum somewhere.

He got out a cigarette and lighted it—again something no range-wise man would have done under dangerous conditions—and he took plenty of time, puffing hard, causing the match to flare and light up his cleanly shaved face.

"It's funny," he said in a loud voice, "but I swore I heard a couple of shots, but I can't see or hear a thing. I'd sure like to help somebody if they need it. It seems like all my life I've been helping folks in trouble. I'm getting kind of used to it by now."

THE reeds stirred again. "Mister," a frightened voice called. "Mister, better get down out of sight. The Buzzard's somewheres around. I'm afraid . . . afraid he's killed . . . Pa."

"Whereabouts is your camp?" Tim asked.

"Up the gulch," the boy faltered. "Be careful, the Buzzard's a killer. He's chased us all over the country. And tonight he caught up with us."

"I'll be careful son," Tim said. "You stay right where you are. I'll take a look around."

Tim pretended fine caution as he moved about the gulch. The boy's startled eyes were on him, he knew, until he disappeared in the shadows. Tim sat down awhile and thought things over. He thought of the years of pursuit and what had preceded them. He got up then and walked over and looked at the dead man.

"If you hadn't killed me," he said, "or I'd killed you a little less sudden, then you'd have set the boy after me. That's what you were training him for. You wanted him to get me."

Then Tim Skinner thought about the future. This was wild country. Men rarely asked questions and seldom answered them. He would tell Dent what had happened, just in case a witness might be needed at some future time. Dent would inform any curious sheriff's deputies that Rand had stolen something from Tim Skinner, then had threatened Skinner's life when he tried to get it back and Skinner had shot in self-defense.

Tim looked around the gulch and located a depression that would serve as a grave. All he had to do was to start the gravel bank above moving and the depression would fill. He would take care of that job later on.

He went back down the gulch to the boy.

"I guess the Buzzard skipped the country," he said. "By the way, what's your name?"

"Bill," the boy answered. "Bill . . . Rand." He stepped out of the reeds, his eyes wide and questioning. "Is . . . is he . . . dead?" he managed to ask. "Did the Buzzard get Pa?"

"I'm afraid he is . . . Bill," Tim answered.

"Oh," Bill said. "And now—" He caught his breath sharply. "And now . . . I'm alone! There was just me and Pa and now there's only . . . me." Sobs shook him. "What'll I do? I ain't got anybody. Where'll I go? Where *will* I go?"

"I was thinkin', Bill," Tim said slowly, "maybe you would like to go with me. There isn't any little boy on my ranch. It's a big one, and there's a saddle string that'd just fit a boy about your size. There'll be a chance to go to school and other boys to play with. I'm telling you this now, so you'll know there is a place to go, so you won't feel afraid when you think of the future. And now, if you don't mind, I'll go back to camp and do a job that's got to be done. And when I come back, I'll bring your things."

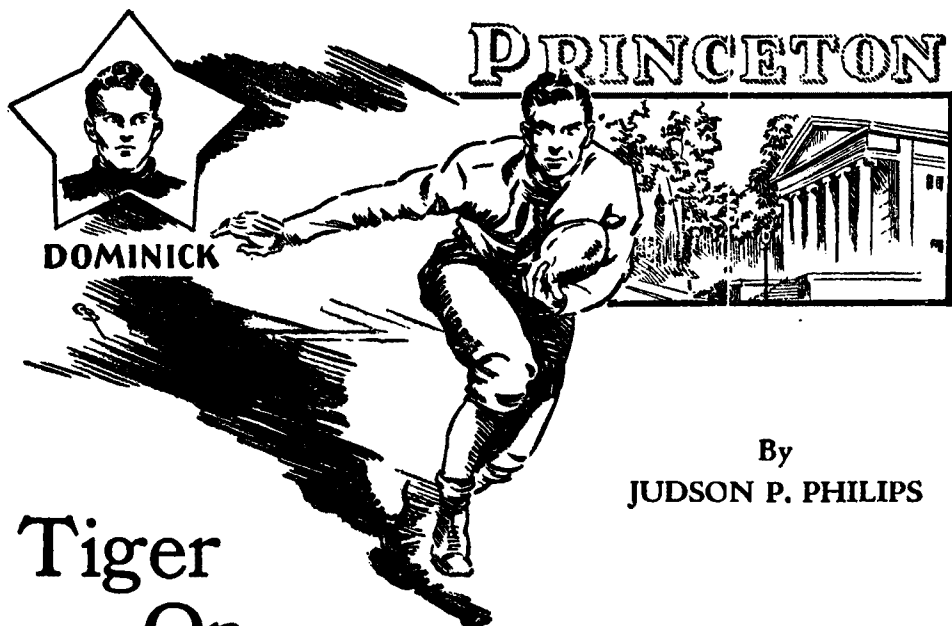
"But . . . the Buzzard?"

"The Buzzard's gone, son," Tim answered gently. "He was hunting the man . . . the man he found. Not you. He's gone now and he'll never come back. One thing to do, at a time like this when you've got a lot on your mind, is to keep yourself occupied. Suppose you build a fire."

He stood there a moment and watched the boy gather dry wood, cut a pile of shavings and light the fire. The shavings blazed and the wood crackled cheerfully. The blaze lighted the boy's features and Tim really saw them for the first time. He found the boy's gaze was deadly serious as he, in turn, studied the man. Some of the terror left his eyes and his face glowed lightly with mounting hope. Tragedy was too close to expect even a faint smile. But there was faith and that was all Tim Skinner expected for the present. He was satisfied to wait.

"Keep her burning, son," he said. "I'll be back soon."

Tim walked slowly up the gulch. "He's fine and Elsie would have been proud of him. He's got her eyes and quiet courage. And he has my frame and features. Some day when he's older, I'll tell him about Rand and the night he stole him from his crib."



By  
JUDSON P. PHILIPS

# Tiger On Parade

**B**ARRY TREVOR, Sophomore at Princeton, is an industrial aristocrat. Jack Dominick is not. Jack has worked in the mills of Barry's father until, at twenty-five, he has saved enough money to pay his tuition at Princeton. Dominick has always had a worm's-eye view of the life led by Barry and Barry's fiancée, Hope Loring, but when Dominick enters Princeton he is bitterly disappointed in that life. Only Hope Loring, with whom Dominick has long been secretly and hopelessly in love, rings true.

**O**N THE Freshman squad Dominick burned up the gridiron until Barry Trevor told head coach Tyson that Dominick had played professional baseball in the summers at Winsett. This disqualified Dominick for athletics at Princeton and it ruined his dream of someday moving in the same world that Hope Loring did. Then, drunk and ready to quit, he met Hope Loring. With kindness and common sense, treating him as an equal, she convinced him that he couldn't quit Princeton. She made him see that he had to fight.

**H**OPE and Dominick, from the stands, saw Barry lose the Penn game by a grandstand play. Barry fought with Tyson after the game and threatened to have Tyson discharged as head coach. It was Hope and Dominick who brought the spoiled boy to his senses. Now Barry hates Dominick; he hates him with such intensity that he swallows humble pie to get back on the Varsity just so that in the scrimmages with the Omelettes—a team made up of happy-go-lucky ineligible—he can smash into Dominick. Gradually Barry wins back the grudging admiration of Tyson. He volunteers for the long scrimmage against the Omelettes (and especially Dominick) that is to prepare the Varsity for the important Navy game. . . .

## CHAPTER XIII

### BALM FOR BARRY

**A**SK the average coach what single factor resulted in his team's "jelling" in any single season and he'll most likely attribute it to luck. An injury bringing forward an unexpected star; a chance combination discovered in practice when some boy was unable to report; unexpected success of some player in an early game

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which gave that particular boy confidence. But if Lew Tyson was ever asked what made his 1937 team "jell" it's certain the idea of luck would never have entered his head. Tyson had played his cards carefully; had played them with all the cunning of a master poker player. As he watched the practice that afternoon he knew that if he could play his final card properly his team would go places.

For the first time in nearly two months Tyson, Blondell, and the rest of the coaches saw their Varsity start to click that afternoon. It was a bedraggled lot of players that lined up to receive the Omelette's kick off. They were still bruised and sore from the Cornell game. They were surprised at having contact work so early in the week, surprised and a trifle loath to have to face the hard, fast play of Moxie Farrell's gang. They couldn't know that Tyson was staking everything on success that afternoon . . . success that would lift their spirits and turn their minds toward the coming Navy game with confidence and optimism.

Tyson had eyes for only one player as Tom Rothrock's kick-off sailed down to Brewer on the goal line, and that player was Barry Trevor. As Jack Dominick came down under that kick, running like an armored tank gone berserk, Tyson watched Barry. Barry had turned on a head of steam of his own. Somewhere near the thirty yard line the two met, head on. The impact was terrific and both of them were floored. Brewer, running hard, raced straight up the center alley that Dominick was supposed to cover and got almost to the forty yard line before Jay Clark nailed him.

Barry's ears were ringing and his body felt as if a steam roller had gone over him as he struggled to his feet and went back into the huddle. But he felt a fierce exhilaration. He had taken Dominick out of that play! Brewer was calling for an off-tackle smash, Neville carrying. Barry hopped up into position, his teeth gritted together. He caught a glimpse of Dominick, ranging behind the Omelette's

line . . . grinning! Barry swore he'd wipe that grin off!

The ball was snapped. Seligman pulled out of his guard position and he, Barry, and Chris formed ahead of Neville. In came Chuck Collins, the Omelette end, throwing a sweeping block at the three of them. Barry sidestepped it and then drove hard at the hole through which Neville was to travel. And there was Dominick! Barry gave everything he had to that charge, driving his shoulders against Dominick's knees as if he meant to break the Freshman's legs. Down they went again, and Neville's cleats bit into Barry's shoulder as he ran over them for a six yard gain.

Brewer swept around end on the next play and Barry, seeing Dominick sifting over to that side, also saw that he wasn't going to be able to evade Bob McGraw, the defensive end. He didn't try to evade him. He ran him down with as savage a shoulder block as Palmer Stadium had seen that year and went stumbling on to hurl himself at Dominick's legs. He didn't quite upset the big center but he threw him off stride, and Brewer cut in beautifully and went on past mid-field for a fifteen yard advance.

ON THE sidelines Muscles Blondell gave Tyson a terrific crack between the shoulders. "Boy!" was all he said. The Varsity was getting blocking!

Brewer, scenting blood, called for a pass as he saw the Omelette secondaries moving in to put a stop to the running attack. Brewer faded back to pass. Through the center of the line came a charging Dominick, in full cry. Barry had stayed back to guard the passer. Once more these two met head on—met and went down. Brewer's pass nestled in Tippy Lawson's arms and the Varsity end scampered to the five yard line before Larry Wells threw him with a diving tackle around the ankles.

But Tyson, Blondell, and Tommy Fitzgerald, the trainer, were running out on the field. Barry was stretched out on the turf. Dominick was trying to help him up.

"Wind!" said Dominick, as he wiped sweat and dirt from his face with the sleeve of his jersey.

Fitzgerald pumped Barry's legs back and forth till that purple look left his face. Suddenly Barry struggled to his feet.

"Better rest for a few minutes," Tyson said. "Huntzinger!" he called to the bench.

Barry grabbed his arm. "I'm okay!" he said desperately. "We're about to knock these guys over. Don't take me out!"

Tyson gave him a shrewd look. "All right!" he said, and he waved Huntzinger back to the bench.

Chris Flohr carried the ball on that play from the five yard line. It was a delayed cross-buck, with all the interferers but Barry going to the right. Barry took the ball from center, pivoted to hand it to Flohr, and then preceded him through left guard. He went through the hole that Amos and Seligman momentarily opened like a projectile shot out of a cannon. Dominick was there to meet him, but Barry's charge was so hard that Dominick went down under it—went down and felt the skin ripped from his face by Barry's cleats. Chris Flohr followed in the wake of that destructive thrust and scored standing up.

The Varsity was jubilant. For five weeks they had hammered futilely at the Omelettes, and now, suddenly, they had clicked and scored in four plays from the kickoff. They were laughing, pounding each other. It was Big Bob Amos who threw his arm around Barry's shoulder.

"Great going, kid!" he said.

In the excitement of the moment both of them forgot that they hadn't spoken to each other before since that day four weeks ago after the Penn game.

**B**UT the Omelettes were too tough an outfit to be blown off the field, even by the suddenly rejuvenated Varsity. The unexpected fury of that opening attack had caught them unprepared. As they got their own attack going after that score they began to move, using Navy plays. Jay

Clark, Rothrock, and Wells, ripped off steady gains. But the Varsity gave ground grudgingly, fighting with a new-found spirit. When Clark threw a pass after they'd crossed the mid-field stripe it was Barry who leaped a good four feet off the ground to bat it down and catch it before it hit the turf. He couldn't take a step with it before Dominick smeared him with a terrific tackle. Somehow he held the ball. But that Dominick could hit! Harder than anything Barry had ever dreamed of—painfully, brutally.

Barry was partly dazed as he went back into the huddle, but he was thinking, "I'll give that one back to him with interest!"

Once more the Varsity attack began to click. There were no long runs this time, because Tom Rothrock, realizing that the Varsity blocking was aimed at keeping Dominick out of the play, began to do some backing up of his own. But for all that, Barry, acting as spearhead of the interference, was driving so hard and fast that the combined efforts of Dominick and Rothrock were not enough to close up the holes in time. Brewer, Neville, and Flohr kept coming through three and four yards at a clip—enough to keep the attack rolling down the field.

Barry had lost track of time and score. He was fighting back a fog that made it hard for him to concentrate on signals.

And when play was finally called he didn't realize that the scrimmage was over. It seemed to him they'd been playing for hours. As they left the field half a dozen of the Varsity crowded around him, congratulating him, slapping him on his bruised and weary shoulders. He was too tired to realize that Tom Fitzgerald had hustled him into a shower and then on to the rubbing table ahead of anyone else. He just lay there while the trainer's fingers worked on his aching muscles. Finally he struggled into his street clothes, too tired to think about anything but his bed in Blair, too tired for supper, too tired to talk to anyone. He was just heading for the Field House door when Muscles Blondell came up to him.

"Tyson wants to see you in his office!" he said, gruffly.

Barry took a deep breath. Couldn't Tyson wait till tomorrow to criticize his play? Slowly he made his way to the head coach's sanctum and went in. Tyson was sitting at his desk, pipe clamped between his teeth, an inscrutable look in his cold gray eyes.

"Sit down, Trevor," he said.

Barry dropped into a chair opposite the coach, his eyes averted. He was too tired even to feel his customary resentment toward Tyson. There was a long silence while Tyson held a match to the bowl of his pipe and got it going properly.

"Trevor," said the coach, finally, "I'm going to let you in on a secret."

Barry looked up, puzzled. "A secret, sir?"

There was a twinkle of amusement deep in Tyson's eyes. "Yes," he said. "I've known it for quite a while. I think it's time you knew it. It's this, Trevor. You're a football player! A damn good football player!"

**B**ARRY stared at him in utter astonishment. He had expected almost anything else in the world but this. "I . . . I don't think I understand, sir!" he stammered.

"I don't think you do either," drawled Tyson, "which is why I've sent for you. You've been playing some of the hardest football in our scrimmages that I've ever seen on any football field. You haven't been as good in our games as you have in practice. Do you know why?"

"No, sir."

"You *do* know," said Tyson, "but it just hasn't occurred to you. You have a personal grudge you're trying to settle. You've been trying for four weeks to get Dominick, the Omelette center. You've been a ball of fire every time he's been in the line-up against you. You don't play quite as hard against any other opposition."

Color flooded up into Barry's cheeks. "I guess you're right about that, sir."

"What you don't realize, Trevor, is that during these weeks Dominick has been too tough for you. You've tried everything you know to equalize that fight, and in the process you've learned to play football."

Barry stared at him dumbly.

"For several weeks," Tyson continued, "I've known you were the solution to my problem. I knew you could fill Dixon's place. But I couldn't put you in there. You came to us with a reputation as a great running back. If I'd put you to blocking you'd have thought it was just another indication of my antagonism for you."

Barry looked down at his knuckles, uncomfortably.

"I had to wait," said Tyson, "till I could get you to volunteer to fill that post. Well, you did that this afternoon, and the result is that our attack clicked for the first time this season. Well, Trevor, I can't let you go on kidding yourself any longer."

"Kidding myself, sir?"

"Precisely. Feuds are all right. This feud has taught you to play football. But you've got to realize it, now—realize it and put what you've learned to some use. If you can play the same brand of football against Navy that you showed against the Omelettes this afternoon, we'll take 'em."

Barry felt his blood suddenly pleasantly warm in his veins.

"You think so, sir?"

"I know it," said Tyson, crisply. "But you've got to start using your head now. You made that team this afternoon. You can make it for the rest of the season. You may not get in many headlines as a blocker, Trevor—though I've got to admit these dumb sportswriters are beginning to wake up to the importance of blocking—but you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you're the sparkplug of a good Princeton team."

"Gee, sir. I don't know what to say!"

"All you can say," said Tyson, "is to yourself. You got off to a bad start. If you can adjust yourself to your new role, and play as well, using your head, as you have with the emotional urge to snow under one man, you will be a star."

"I guess I can do that, sir."

"One more thing," said Tyson, his eyes on the glowing bowl of his pipe. "I don't know what lies behind your feud with Dominick. But I'd like to point out to you that on his part he has played clean, hard football. In a sense you owe him a debt of gratitude, because he's made you into a real football player."

As Barry walked home to his room in Blair, a little dizzy from what Tyson had told him, Jack Dominick was in his room at Mother McGrady's. He was gently bathing a deep cut in his cheek that had been inflicted by Barry's cleats. Hugh Stoddard sat on the edge of the table, watching him. Finally Dominick limped over to his bed and stretched himself out with a little groan. But he was smiling.

"And it all comes under the head of fun!" said Stoddard, with a wondering shake of his head. "What the deuce do you get out of it, Jack?"

Dominick laughed. "Fun," he said. "First-rate fun. And a good deal of satisfaction. You see, Hugh, I set out to pay a debt. Unless I'm off my base that debt'll be paid after the Navy game on Saturday."

"You're talking in riddles," said Stoddard.

"It's too long a story to tell you," said Dominick. "But I'll give you this much. I think Princeton is going to put a first-rate team on the field on Saturday. If she does I'll—well, I'll get a great kick out of it."

"If you're not too badly beaten up to walk out to the stadium to see it!" said Stoddard.

Dominick smiled dryly. "That's a possibility," he said. "I understand we're to have two more days of scrimmage."

## CHAPTER XIV

### JUST A KISS IN THE DARK

**P**RINCETON turned into a madhouse that Saturday night. A sell-out crowd had come to see the battle with the Midshipmen, because any game with the service teams is highly colorful. The Midshipmen

had drilled on the green of Palmer Stadium before the game and then rushed to their places in the stands in a rollicking mood. This was to be a Navy day. Everybody said so. Even Princeton's supporters said so. They applauded the Middies, but they had rather tight smiles on their faces, as they waited for the inevitable trouncing.

Which explains why Princeton went goofy that night. For Princeton did not lose. Tyson's team ripped off a smashing 20—7 victory over the Sailors. All during the second half the Princeton stands were delirious with joy as the Tiger came from behind a 7—6 deficit to roll up two more scores and clinch the encounter.

Club Street was a riot of lights and sounds. Old Grads with their girls or their wives flocked to their clubs to chant Tyson's praise in voices that were hoarse and rasping from hysterical cheering. Renwick's was crowded to the door with diners. Peacock Alley bulged with customers—gay, laughing girls and their escorts. White-haired Old Grads pounded each other on the back and drank an alarming number of toasts to Tyson and the team and the individual players. Upper classmen gathered in the sacrosanct drinking rooms at The Nass, drinking rooms which no woman had ever entered. They took their beer mugs from the bar and rang the welkin with cheering and singing. Freshmen crowded into the Beer Garden and the Annex to drink their brew and congratulate themselves that they were a part of Princeton.

The victory over Navy was tremendous, but it was not that victory alone the Princeton men were celebrating. For weeks they had felt that Tyson's sub-par team would have no chance against Yale in the annual game only three weeks away. The Eli was undefeated so far, riding the crest with a powerful team. Princeton's chances had seemed nil. But now it was different. Today they had seen a Tiger team that would give an account of itself against any opponent. Princeton men were already talking the Yale game! The bright prospects for that contest made the chief cause for jubilation.



Jack Dominick, along with the rest of the Omelettes, had sat on the bench during the game. The first half had been heart breaking. Navy, after two false starts, had finally staged an irresistible attack which led to a score and the extra point was successfully negotiated. The Tiger came ripping and tearing back, with Barry Trevor leading the way. Navy's great center, King, found himself smeared all over the field in a highly unbecoming fashion. Navy ends, attempting to smash Princeton interference, found themselves run over as if by a herd of stampeding buffalo. The Tiger was not to be stopped, and Barry drove a jagged hole in the Navy line through which Chris Flohr burst for Princeton's score. Then the great King smashed through to block Brewer's try for the extra point. It was the one time in the game when Barry was neatly blocked out of the play.

The half ended with that score, and Tiger supporters were glum. That Tiger attack had been inspired, but they felt that Navy's power would tell in the second half. They were wrong. Princeton rushed the Middies all over the field in that second half. Dominick watched Barry with something like amazement. He was playing like a lunatic. Time and again after a savage bit of blocking he had to be helped to his feet, but somehow he kept going. Dominick glanced down the bench at Tyson two or three times. Surely the head coach must relieve Barry—give him a rest. But Tyson didn't dare take him out as long as he could go. He was the sparkplug, the inspiring force of that team, and Tyson didn't want them to cool off—didn't dare to let them.

They swept down the field in one sustained attack, only to be thrown back by a stalwart Middle line in the shadow of the goal line. Back they came, Barry heading the charge with a fury that wasn't to be denied. This time they scored and Brewer kicked the extra point.

With about five minutes to go in the last quarter and the Tiger still battling on Navy's side of mid-field, Brewer pulled

one out of his hat. Barry hadn't carried the ball once that afternoon. Now Brewer called for that short side reverse on which Barry carried the ball—the play on which he had scored against Penn and Williams. Navy was completely sucked in and Barry went racing down the left sideline. It was a dramatic run. As Barry reached the fifteen yard line he began to stagger like a drunken man. The Navy safety man had no chance to reach him, but exhaustion had caught up with him. Dominick held his breath as Barry staggered, stumbled, recovered himself with some sort of heroic effort, and then pitched headlong over the line.

He didn't move after that. Fitzgerald and Tyson himself helped him off the field while the Princeton cheering section made hoarse, croaking sounds, their eyes popping out of their heads. The game was on ice.

Sportswriters in the press coop were writing "Trevor" over and over again in their running accounts of the game. Princeton's team had clicked, and Tyson had unearthed a new star.

**M**OXIE FARRELL had delivered a message to Dominick before the game.

"Hope is here," Moxie told Dominick. "She and her father and Barry's old man are at the Peacock. She told me to tell you to be sure to come there after the game."

So it was to the Peacock that Dominick elbowed his way after the final whistle. Strangers shouted gleefully at each other in that excited and happy crowd while undergraduates shouted "Fire!" from the windows of the dorms as the throng milled by.

Dominick found Hope in the jammed lobby of the Peacock. She was with her father and George Trevor. There was a look in her eyes that made Dominick's heart beat a little faster against his ribs. She was radiant. . . beautiful! George Trevor shook hands cordially. The Judge was vague, evidently a little distressed at Hope's obvious liking for this older boy.

Hope completed her father's discomfort by slipping her arm through Dominick's.

"There are things I want to say to you, Mr. Dominick," she said in a gay voice. "I can't say them in this babel. Let's go out on the terrace."

There were French doors at the end of the lobby which led out onto a stone terrace. It was quite deserted when they reached it, because everyone else was trying to crowd into the bar. Dominick closed the doors and the noise seemed far removed as he looked down at Hope.

"Well," she said, very gently, "you did it."

"Did what?"

"No fencing with me, Mr. Dominick!" she laughed. "Moxie's kept me in touch with things here. Barry hit the top this afternoon and he had no one to thank but you. He probably *won't* thank you, so I'm doing it for him. If you could have seen his father's face during that game this afternoon you'd know what you'd done for him—for all of us."

"Let's get this sraight," said Dominick. "I've done nothing. It happens that in his dislike for me Barry whipped himself into a pitch of play that made him an important member of the team. It might have been anyone. It happened to be Barry. So there's nothing coming to me."

"You're wrong," she said, smiling. "There is something coming to you. I know perfectly well that you made Barry hate you—that you did it because I asked you to."

Dominick's control deserted him for an instant. "You know," he said in a low voice, "that I would cut off my right arm if you asked me to."

She was standing very close to him. "I think I know that," she said, gently. "And so, if you don't mind, Mr. Dominick, I'm going to kiss you."

Before he realized what was coming, she was standing on tiptoe, her hands on his shoulders, her lips against his. She had meant it to be a light, gay kiss, but suddenly Dominick's arms were around her, holding her fiercely to him. She didn't re-

sist. And in the middle of that moment the French doors behind them slammed savagely. Dominick turned, but he was too late to see who had been there.

He released her and stepped back. He was shaking strangely. He saw a surprised, almost frightened, look in Hope's eyes.

"I'm sorry," he said, hurriedly. "I . . . I must have lost my head. I . . . I've got to be on my way. Thanks for your sweetness and your friendship. And the best of luck to you and Barry." He turned and went quickly through the French door.

"Jack!" the girl called after him. "Jack!"

But he did not hear her.

THERE was no celebrating for Dominick that night. He stayed in his room at Mother McGrady's, pacing back and forth like a caged animal. The sounds of music and laughter drifted through his window, but he did not hear. He knew that moment on the terrace had knocked his life into a cocked hat. He knew he must never see Hope again—never! She belonged to Barry. Yet he felt in himself some sort of primitive urge to remove Barry from his path, to take her for himself.

"But she loves Barry, you heel!" he kept saying to himself.

Time had no meaning for him. He didn't know how long he had been in his room when a sharp, imperative knock came on the door. He crossed and opened it, and found, to his astonishment, that his caller was Gilbert Shanahan. Shanahan looked a little disheveled, and there was unmistakably the evidence of a first-rate shiner under his left eye. His face had an almost ludicrous expression of alarm on it.

"I've got to talk to you, Dominick!" he said, earnestly.

"Come in!" Dominick closed the door.

"Listen," said Mr. Shanahan. "I'm not an expert at dealing with screwy situations. The only reason I've come to you is because you've created a situation that's going to raise almighty hell with Barry—and with Princeton."

"I *what*?"

"Barry caught you necking his girl on the terrace at the Peacock," said Mr. Shanahan, dolefully.

Dominick's eyes narrowed and for an instant his fists were clenched. So that was the explanation of the slamming door!

"He's gone completely haywire!" said Shanahan. "He drank about a half a quart of Scotch at one swallow and set out, hell-bent, for Roark's in Trenton. I tried to stop him, without success." He touched his swollen eye gingerly.

"So what?" said Dominick.

"I said he went to Roark's!"

"I don't get it," said Dominick.

"Roark's, my friend, is *verboden*!" said Mr. Shanahan grimly. "It is the one place I know that the authorities frown on one hundred percent. It means the gate for any Princeton man to be discovered there. Barry'll be fired, which means phooey to Barry's career, and phooey to the Yale game."

"What am I to do?" Dominick asked. He was suddenly angry. Barry, the fool! Why hadn't he confronted them? Why hadn't he tried to find out what that kiss meant? Nothing! Nothing to Hope!

"You are going to help me get him out of there before the proctors nab him," said Mr. Shanahan.

"The proctors won't be in Trenton tonight," said Dominick.

"Your ignorance," said Mr. Shanahan, impatiently, "is colossal. Roark's is a dive. The authorities here would have moved to close it long ago but for one fact. Whenever a Princeton man is so careless as to grace Mr. Roark's with his presence, Mr. Roark promptly telephones the proctors. It is because he lives up to that agreement to the letter that he is allowed to continue in business unmolested. The minute Barry sticks his nose in there and Roark spots him, the proctors will be notified."

Dominick reached for his hat. "Let's get going," he said.

When they reached the street Mr. Shanahan pointed out a fresh difficulty. "Unless we can get a car we're sunk. The proctors are probably on their way by bus now!"

"I know where we can get a car," said Dominick. "Come on to the Peacock."

THEY ran all the way to the Inn. Dominick spotted Hope and George Trevor and the Judge in the bar. As he came in, Hope got up from the table and came quickly toward him. She must have read trouble in his face.

"Something's happened to Barry!" she said. "We've been waiting hours for him. No one seems to be able to find him. His father is worried sick!"

"I know where he is," said Dominick grimly. "Give me the keys to your car and I'll get him."

"You can't take the car!" she protested. "You're not allowed to drive here at Princeton! You'll get in trouble. I'll drive for you!"

"You'll stay here!" Dominick rapped. "Give me the keys!"

"I won't let you get in trouble, Jack. I—"

"Listen," he said, almost angrily. "Barry saw us together on the terrace. He misunderstood, and he's gone off the deep end. If I don't get to him in a hurry he'll be in a real jam. Now please, Hope, give me the keys. I know what I'm doing."

She opened her mouth to protest, and then reconsidered. From her purse she took the keys. "It's parked at the back," she said, in a flat colorless voice.

Without a word Dominick took them and rushed out to rejoin Shanahan. Shanahan didn't draw another happy breath for quite a while. Dominick drove Hope's roadster at a crazy speed, weaving in and out of traffic. As they finally drew into Trenton and he was forced to slow down, Shanahan heaved a great sigh.

As they reached the center of town they were halted by a light. A bus was drawn up disgorging passengers. Shanahan groaned. "Ben and Gus!" he said. "They're on the job. They'll be there almost as soon as we are. First turn to the right!"

About three minutes later Dominick pulled up in front of Roark's place with a screeching of brakes. He leaped out.

"Drive down the block and wait," he ordered Shanahan. "And if you see Ben and Gus coming in before I bring him out, sound off on that fancy horn."

Roark's place *was* a dive. It was thick with smoke. There was a crowd around the bar. A lot of cheap-looking girls in evening gowns, apparently "hostesses," mingled with them. Along the walls were little curtained booths. A honky-tonk piano player was blatting out tunes on a little upright in the corner.

Barry was not at the bar. Speedily Dominick walked along the row of booths, pulling back the sleazy green curtains and looking in. A series of inelegant and profane remarks greeted his intrusion. Then he found Barry. He was in one of the booths with a scarlet-lipped blonde. He was very drunk, and he was working hard at improving his condition.

"Get out!" Dominick rasped at him. "Ben and Gus are coming!"

Barry got slowly to his feet. "Look here, Dominick," he said thickly. "You chiseled in on one girl of mine tonight. That's enough!" He reached out and his fingers closed over the neck of a whiskey bottle.

"Don't start anything, mister!" the blonde said shrilly.

"Keep your shirt on, Trevor!" Dominick said urgently. "Don't you know you'll be canned if Ben and Gus find you here?"

"It's none of your business!" Barry growled. His fingers tightened on the bottle neck. At the same instant Dominick heard the insistent blaring on the horn on Hope's car.

Dominick didn't hesitate. For the second time in his life his fist crashed against Barry's jaw. Barry sank down on the bench. The blonde opened her mouth to scream, but Dominick said, "Shut up, you!" so sharply that the sound died in her throat. Dominick turned and pulled the curtains tightly across the mouth of the booth. Then, without ceremony, he pushed Barry's unconscious form down under the table. A jerk of the tablecloth hid him entirely from view.

Dominick sat down on the seat beside

the blonde. He reached for Barry's high-ball glass. His right arm slipped around the girl's waist.

"Listen, sister," he said, grimly, "you play ball now, or I'll wring your pretty white neck!"

## CHAPTER XV

### SACRIFICIAL GOAT

"SLUG" Roark knew that Princeton boys were poison in his place. He *might* have refused to serve them, and been a decent fellow about it. But secretly Slug hated the Princeton authorities who were always on his neck, and he hated Princeton boys who were allegedly "too nice" to patronize his place. Thus he took a delight in telephoning the proctors when he discovered a Princetonian at his bar. He liked to make the proctors trouble. He liked to make the students trouble. And he liked to cause the authorities pain—for he knew that it was painful to them to have to expel a boy from school. All in all, the present situation was one which caused Slug Roark no end of delight.

As Ben and Gus, the two proctors, came in the door of his place, Slug approached them, rubbing his hands together, unctuously.

"Good evening, gents!" he said, with a broad grin.

Gus scowled at him. If Gus had had his way he'd have gone to town on Roark long ago. He hated finding boys here. He felt that it was a great pity indeed to afford Slug Roark the pleasure of being unpleasant.

"Where is he?" Gus growled.

"Right this way, gents," said Slug, beaming. He led the way to the booth at the end of the room and suddenly opened the green curtain with a dramatic gesture. An expression of sheer astonishment came over his ugly face as he saw Dominick. It just happened that he had been arguing with a customer over a tab at the moment when Dominick had entered the booth, and he hadn't seen him. He was about to speak when Gus said in a regretful voice:

"So it's you, Dominick!"

Dominick stood up. He wanted to get out quickly, before Barry, under the table, groaned or moved. He wanted to get out before Slug Roark said something that would indicate that Barry was there. In the brief moment he had been alone with the blonde he had struck a deal with her at the cost of a ten dollar bill.

"The proctors will take me out," he had told her. "After we're gone get this guy out of here. A friend of his is waiting on the corner in a little blue roadster."

Slug Roark wasn't satisfied, however, "Listen," he said "there's somethin' screwy here. This guy ain't—"

"There's something screwy all right, Roark," Dominick cut in, sharply. "The screwy something is that they let a dirty stool pigeon like you live. There are a lot of Princeton men wh'd like to take a poke at you, and I've decided to take care of the matter for them."

Before Ben and Gus could interfere Dominick took a quick step toward Roark and let him have a terrific uppercut that actually lifted him off the floor and sent him crashing back against one of the tables.

Immediately there was a warning shout from behind the bar.

"Fight! Fight!"

Waiters came running. A huge, cauliflower-eared bouncer hauled himself up from a chair in the corner and came lumbering over. Suddenly Dominick felt a sort of fierce joy sweep over him. Here was an out for the pent-up emotions that had been tearing at his insides for hours. This was the kind of fight he knew inside out—the kind of fight he'd learned about back in the mill.

As the bouncer came forward, tugging a leather-bound blackjack out of his hip pocket Dominick picked up a chair and swung it in a sweeping arc to bring it shattering down over the bouncer's closely shaven skull. One of the waiters took a pass at Gus at that moment, and suddenly Dominick had two grim allies in the proctors.

IT WAS beautiful while it lasted. Ben and Gus also knew a thing or two about a first-grade row. A waiter, swinging a bottle at Ben suddenly felt a toe drive against his shin, and as he doubled up a stony fist caught him in the mouth and sent teeth and blood spattering on the floor. Ben swung a chair at the overhead light and broke it to bits, casting the room into comparative darkness. In the midst of this, Mr. Roark picked himself up from the floor and Dominick, who had just disposed of a waiter by the simple expedient of hurling him bodily into one of the booths, saw the proprietor tugging at a gun in his hip pocket. Dominick sprang at him. Roark had the gun out, but before he could get a proper grip on it, Dominick had him by the wrist and a second later his right arm snapped over Dominick's knees as he might have snapped a stick of kindling. Roark began to scream in agony.

"Time to go!" panted Gus, in Dominick's ear. "The bartender's called the cops."

They beat a slow, backward retreat toward the door. With both Roark and the bouncer out of commission the waiters were disinclined to carry on the fight. Somebody by the bar let fly with a bottle that Ben just managed to duck, but that was the last of it. When they reached the street Gus grabbed Dominick by the arm.

"We'd better run for it," he said.

They did. About five minutes later they pulled up at the center of town, panting for breath. Gus hailed a taxi.

"This is gonna be on me," said Gus.

Once in the cab they leaned back in the cushions, silent for a moment as they straightened neckties, and examined bruised knuckles. Finally Gus looked at Dominick admiringly.

"I shouldn't be admitting it," he said, "but I've been wantin' a shot at those mugs for a long time. Boy, you certainly know your onions in a scrap."

"Didja see him snap Roark's arm?" Ben demanded. "That was the quickest work I ever saw. The louse drew a gun!"

"I guess we won't have to worry much

about cops," said Gus. "Roark won't want us testifyin' to that in court. Dollars to doughnuts he tells the cops he don't know who started the fight."

Dominick was silent. He was wondering if Shanahan would get Barry away without trouble. The police might complicate things by arresting everyone in the place. He hoped desperately that Shanahan and the blonde between them would manage things, else the whole expedition would have been a failure.

The car moved along through the fresh keen coldness of the autumn night.

They rode for some miles before Gus spoke again in a regretful voice. "The whole thing's a pity, Dominick!" he said. "I know you'll be thinkin' maybe we can forget this night. But the hell of it is we can't. We're gonna have to make a report, boy—and I'd give my right arm not to, after what you done to Roark."

"It's your job. There'll be no hard feelings," said Dominick.

His lips went tight and there was a hard lump in his throat he couldn't manage to swallow.

"What you had to be doin' in a dive like that is beyond me!" said Ben, gloomily. "With a thousand pretty girls around the campus you've got to go to Roark's and pick up a blonde floosey!"

"Every man to his own taste," said Dominick, dryly.

They rode the rest of the way to Princeton in silence. When they reached the campus Gus paid off the taxi and they stood on the curb together as it drove off. Finally Gus kicked his toe against the curb angrily.

"There's no hoosegow, Dominick. You just go back to your room and don't create no more disturbance. I'm sorry, but you'll be hearin' from the Dean on Monday morning."

**D**OMINICK tiptoed to his room when he got back to Mother McGrady's. He didn't want to talk to Stoddard tonight. He didn't want to talk to anyone. He stretched out on the bed and lay there,

staring up at the ceiling. Well, his Princeton career was ended. For one blazing minute he resented it fiercely. Why should he chuck all his chances for a little rat like Barry. And then that moment on the terrace with Hope came back to him with all its sweet poignancy. It was better this way. Barry was her man; they had to keep his record clean.

About two in the morning someone knocked at his door. Dominick, who hadn't closed his eyes, got up and opened it. Shanahan stood there. He came into the room and sat down in an arm chair with a weary sigh.

"Well, he's home," said Shanahan, "and safely tucked in bed."

"And no trouble?"

"And no trouble," said Shanahan.

Dominick heaved a sigh of relief. "Well, that's that."

Everything was spinning around—not swiftly, excitingly, the way they did when Hope was near—but drearily, hopelessly.

"You're wrong there, my friend," said Shanahan, with unwonted seriousness. "That is *not* that. You and I have got to find out where we stand on this. On Monday you are going to be bounced unceremoniously out of this man's college on your ear. That is you are unless you tell the truth—or unless *I* tell the truth." He looked keenly at Dominick. "Barry is my pal, Dominick. He's an important man to Princeton football. It would break his father's heart if he were kicked out of here. But do you know what I'd do in your place?"

"What?"

"I'd let him take the rap!" said Shanahan, flatly. "There's no reason why you should give up your college career just so there can be another little tin god in the Trevor family. From what I've heard, you earned the right to come here the hard way. There's no reason why you should forfeit that right for any man—not even the hottest shot on the campus. And Barry isn't that!"

Dominick drew a deep breath. "Look here, Shanahan, I went into this with my

eyes open. This is the way I want it. And if you stick your nose into it I'll give you the going over of a lifetime."

"God forbid!" said Mr. Shanahan, in an awed voice. "I saw Roark's after you left it tonight!"

Dominick grinned. "We did a good job."

"Tops!" said Shanahan. He lit a cigarette, flicked the match into an ash tray on Dominick's desk. Then he looked at Dominick. "What is it, the girl?" he asked.

"Maybe!" said Dominick, slowly.

"Noble factory worker sacrifices all for dream girl!" said Shanahan dryly.

Dominick's voice had a dangerously sharp edge to it. "Take it easy, Shanahan. I don't feel in a kidding mood about this."

"And you're determined to take the rap?"

"I am," said Dominick, his lips drawn tight.

Shanahan shrugged and crushed out his cigarette. He rose.

"All I can say, Dominick, is that you're a fool!" he said.

## CHAPTER XVI

### FAREWELL TO NASSAU

THE summons from the Dean was in Dominick's mail box on Monday morning. Dominick had slept a good part of Sunday when sheer exhaustion overtook him in the early hours of the morning. He had said nothing to Stoddard or Mother McGrady about what lay ahead. But he had spent some time gathering his things together, preparing for the inevitable.

That was the trouble—there was no hope at all.

He was at the Dean's office at ten o'clock. Mr. Radcliffe received him at once. He waved Dominick to a chair and took up a typewritten sheet that lay before him on his desk. Finally he put it down, and swung his chair around so that he was facing the window. His finger tips were pressed together.

"Dominick," he said, "I detest rules. I detest any regulation in college that ham-

pers the freedom of students—that puts them on any other basis but free men, able to live their lives by their own standards. But unfortunately there *have* to be some rules in a big institution like this."

"I understand, sir," said Dominick. He wished Radcliffe would get it over with quickly, but apparently the Dean had no such intention.

"I have taken a personal interest in you since the moment you came to Princeton, Dominick," he said. "Perhaps I have been more interested in you than any other member of the Freshman class. Your problems were different. We had something different to offer you. I've followed your career here this semester with greater interest than you perhaps realized. I know that you went out for Freshman football and created a sensation. I know that you were declared ineligible. I know you didn't let that keep you down. That you went out for the Omelettes, made new friends, and that you have personally been an important contributor to the success of our Varsity football squad. I had worried about you, Dominick, but in the last week or so I had come to the conclusion that Princeton's life, the thing that is Princeton, had opened itself to you and that you were on your way to a highly successful college career." He swung his chair around and his eyes studied Dominick keenly.

"You've been happy here, haven't you, Dominick?"

"Yes, sir."

His voice was low-pitched.

Mr. Radcliffe turned away, tugging at his little pointed beard. "I have come to believe that I am something of an expert at character analysis, Mr. Dominick. You get to know and understand boys when you deal with thousands of them over a period of years. I confess you've got me stumped—so stumped that I'm searching for a reason for the actions which have resulted in the proctors bringing this charge against you. I am frankly hoping that there *is* a reason, such a good reason that I may be able to see a way out of enforcing an iron-clad rule."

"There is no reason, sir," said Dominick, in a low voice. "I—I guess I just lost my head."

There was that hard, unswallowable ache in his throat again, only now it throbbed and pulsed within him.

Mr. Radcliffe made a clicking noise with his teeth. "You're not the type to lose your head, Dominick." He turned his chair toward the boy, and Dominick lowered his eyes. "I'm going to be frank with you. Mr. Farrell, the Omelette's coach, came to me yesterday when he heard this charge had been brought against you. He expressed the opinion that you had gone to Roark's for the express purpose of getting some other boy out of there. Is that true, Dominick?"

Dominick kept his eyes averted. "No, sir."

"Is it worth it to you to toss away your college career, your future, to shield some other boy?"

"There is no other boy, sir," said Dominick, doggedly.

Mr. Radcliffe sighed. "You're making it very hard for me, Dominick." He rocked back and forth in his swivel chair for an instant. Then he said, almost wearily: "When you went to Roark's did you know there was a strict rule, with expulsion as the penalty for breaking it, against students going there?"

"Yes, sir. I knew that," Dominick admitted.

"In that case, Dominick," said the Dean reluctantly, "I am forced to tell you that because of infraction of college regulations you are hereby expelled from Princeton University." He moistened his lips. "You can demand a hearing, if you like."

"I want no hearing, sir."

Mr. Radcliffe stood up. "Then there's nothing more to say, Dominick." At which point Mr. Radcliffe did a surprising thing. He held out his hand and shook Dominick's warmly. "Good luck to you, my boy."

**S**AYING goodbye was the worst thing of all. Dominick ducked everyone he knew on campus, but he couldn't dodge

Mother McGrady and Hugh Stoddard. The old woman seemed genuinely distressed at his departure.

"Sure, and I don't know why you done what you done," she said, "but you must of had a reason."

"I guess I'm just not cut out for this sort of life, Mother," Dominick said, gently.

"Well, if you ever get it straightened out—if you ever come back—there'll be a place for you here, Jack Dominick! And ye can stay now," she added defiantly, "if you can find a job of work around Princeton."

Dominick didn't answer her for a moment. He couldn't speak—didn't even dare to try. Then at last:

"You're sweet," he said, "but I'm going home—where I belong!"

Stoddard looked like a man in a condemned cell. His gloom was almost comic. The truth was this boy was losing the one good friend he had ever had in college.

"I can't understand why you did it!" he kept saying, over and over.

"Just another bender," Dominick told him, "only this time I got caught."

"But everything was going so swell for you!" Stoddard said, desperately. "I can't see why. . . ."

"Listen, Hugh, it's a mistake for anyone my age to try to go through this rigamarole," said Dominick. "I'm used to a different kind of life—mill town life. I'm used to places like Roark's. It's no use trying to be something that I'm not. This phoney thing that is college life is just not for anyone who's actually done some living."

But there was a bitter smile on Dominick's lips as he carried his bag to catch the train for the Junction. "This phoney thing that is college life" had got him by the throat. He didn't dare look back at the campus; at Nassau Hall, at the chapel, at Dickinson and McCosh, the classroom buildings, at the stadium and the field house. He had grown to love them all and they had become part of him. Well, he was done with them!

**TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK**





# Women Are Lousy Loggers

By DONALD BOWMAN

—But they often turn out  
to be expert tiger-tamers

**I** NEVER could keep Irish Dana out of trouble. But then nobody could. Even so, he's one of these guys that makes you keep trying to hold him down. That's why I tried to talk him out of taking that job up at Fenwick's camp. Well, at least *part* of it was on his account. Some of it was for Mary Porter.

Mary is black-haired and blue-eyed and the first time I seen her my resistance to women went down like an old snag. Only I couldn't let her know it because Irish moved into her old man's living-room and used up all the chair-space in Mary's corner. I'm no chiseler. At least, not on Irish.

So when Mary told me that old Gus Fenwick was dead and that Ardelle Fenwick was going to try to run the camp and

that Irish was going up to work for her I knew what to do.

"Take it easy," I told her, "I'll go along and put sand in his gear-box."

"But I don't want you to," said Mary. "This is a chance to get Irish settled down."

"Settled down with her, you mean."

"What of it?"

I tried to look at her hard, so she'd know she had a pal in me, but I was afraid if I looked at her she'd weep, so I looked down at the mill pond instead.

"I haven't hung around that guy all these years without seeing the effect he has on women."

"But—"

I walked out on her. Irish was cramming a couple of size eighteen shirts into an old suitcase. I remembered that suitcase. I'd seen him throw it halfway across the depot at Everett at an old camp supe of his.

"Where you going?" I asks.

"Up to Fenwick's," he says, not looking at me.

"What for?"

"That's a fine question," he growls. "To get out logs."

"I mean, why Fenwick's? You got a job here."

He straightened up and I seen his hands sort of twitching at his sides. That's always a good sign to leave him alone, when his hands are twitching that way. I've seen guys that didn't, and pretty soon they'd be in a state of utter collapse.

"So there won't be so many people around that think they have to check up on me," he snaps.

**I** FIGURED I had the idea. He and Mary had their mainline snarled somewhere. He had to go somewhere else and work it off or bust.

"Okay. I'll be with you as soon as I get my time."

"I don't need help."

I didn't say nothing. I reached for my bag and started slapping stuff into it. First thing I knew Irish slammed his foot against it and it skidded out the door.

"Stay here, damn you!" he yells.

I brought the bag back in. "Take it easy, will you? Your foot went clear through it."

He grabbed my city pants and threw them out the door where the bag had gone. That guy is sure trying on your patience sometimes. If he was anybody but Irish Dana you wouldn't take it from him.

"Say," I squawked. "I just had those things pressed the last time I was in town. I might need 'em."

"Mary'll press 'em for you," he says.

"Mary ain't no man's pants-presser but yours," I slaps back at him.

"Shut up! And sit down! You ain't going nowhere!"

"If you don't like this place any more, neither do I."

"There isn't room for both of us at Fenwick's."

"Listen, Irish," I says, getting persuasive. "You remember the time on the skidroad in Seattle when you busted into that street fight?"

I saw a light come into his eyes.

"Do I? A couple of those guys were pulling knives when I got to 'em."

"Yeah, and I bailed you out the next day," I reminded him. "Maybe you remember down in Eloquiam when you cracked those two cops' heads together and jumped out of the dooley wagon?"

"Those cops were a couple of lemon custards. They was trying to get dough out of that poor old woman right there on the street."

"Well, it took plenty dough to get you out again. And the time you raised hob with the North Bay camp. You cut down their spar tree so it took out a couple of hundred feet of track and then you went and plastered the supe and the foreman and the logging engineer all over the camp."

"They made us use that rotten mainline and it busted and killed the little whistle-punk. Poor devil!"

"Well, when I bought you out that time we had to go down into Oregon for a while and yard hay until things cooled off. I ain't got any more bail money."

"What of it?"

"Listen, you big sap. If you make the cooler again King George himself hasn't enough dough or pull to get you out. You'll stay there until your bark is full of beetles. One left-handed pass from you and they'll send the National Guard out after you. You got to lay off, see? And I'm going along to Fenwick's to nurse you."

"I ain't going to Fenwick's just to get tough."

"Maybe not, but you haven't brains enough to keep from getting tough after you get there! Gus Fenwick told somebody once that if you ever showed in this camp

he'd let his daughter run you out again, and you haven't forgotten it."

"I'm not picking fights with any women."

"No?" I asks, very sarcastically.

He knew I'd guessed what had happened and got red as a peeled cedar.

"Shut up, and get going."

**Y**OU see, Irish never started anywhere meaning any harm but he has shoulders like a butt log and arms like bridge piling so when he gets aggravated, like he always does when he starts feeling sorry for some poor stiff, he always makes quite an impression before he calms down again. He simply has to have somebody around to control his sympathies.

I took time to tell Mary again that I'd bring him out of there in good shape, and without handcuffs on him.

"Why do you always have to go along to soften things up for him?" she asks.

"He's a good guy, Mary."

"He would be if somebody'd knock his ears down."

"Ha! Ha! I'm laughing!"

"I mean it. Every time you help him you make him that much worse. He feels sorry for himself because he thinks people ought to understand and forgive him his temper. He isn't man enough to try to control it."

"He'd steady down for you, Mary."

"But I don't want him." She said it slow, leaning on every word, so as to make it sink in. "You stay here."

"I'll be back, as soon as I make sure that Fenwick gal isn't going to throw a Siwash around him and drag him to a preacher."

"Sam, sometimes I think you grew on a farm."

"Why?"

"Because you've got a brain like a grapefruit." And she slams the door on me.

I wished it was. I wished it had squirted out and hit Irish in the eye before he ever saw Mary.

Mary said once that Ardelle Fenwick

was quite a gal. She was. She wasn't much taller than a deep breath and she had a pair of eyes that were always doing the wrong thing. They were brown, and they'd snap so you could almost hear them crackle when she was being nice to you and when she was giving you blue-blazes they'd grow big and soft like a chair in a hotel lobby.

When I first saw her she was wearing a man's white shirt, with the top button open and the sleeves cut off to a suggestion. She wore a pair of pants of the stuff that forest rangers use only no forest ranger ever did for them what she did. They snuggled down into the fanciest pair of boots you ever saw, boots with leather fringes dangling all over them, and a pair of black-and-white wool socks showing a slight roll at the top. She looked like a girl on a hike.

I didn't have any real plan at first. I thought maybe if I could stop Irish before he got started, or maybe she would do the starting, that might be all that was necessary. So I went in to see her right away, figuring she wouldn't know me from any other rigging-slinger.

"Miss Fenwick," I says, "there's something I think you ought to know."

"What is it?"

"This new man you've hired is Irish Dana."

"What of it?"

"I sort of guessed you wouldn't know him, but I thought you might want to know what your father said about him."

"What did he say?"

"Dana caused a lot of trouble in some of the camps. He gets mad and wrecks things. He's been in jail for it several times. I'd sort of hate to see a little girl like you have any trouble with him, because he's bad."

Her eyes were snappish, like I told you that way they had, and I thought at first she was getting sore. Then I saw she was holding back on a smile.

"What did my father say?" she repeated.

"Why, he said if Irish Dana ever came into this camp he'd wrap a choker around

him and have the locomotive drag him out again."

"Thank you. I'll remember what you told me. But I think I can handle him."

I had to hand it to her, she didn't seem at all scared or worried. She had nerve all right. I didn't know any men that thought they could handle Irish. Since then I've sort of thought maybe she sort of took it as a dare, like a lot of women do men like Irish, and just wanted to try handling him.

**I** WENT back to Irish with the idea that I'd plant him, too. That is, get him all ready not to like her. "What did you hire out to do here, Irish?"

"Foreman."

I took a deep breath. That was something I hadn't figured. It made my end a little tougher. And it meant he'd already seen her and talked to her.

"Boy, you got something ahead," I said.

"How's that?"

"Well, you know what women know about logging. Did you ever see one that could run a camp? No one else has either. But this Fenwick woman is tough on having her own way. She'll run you till that tongue of yours won't blat. She'll have you trying to hang the bull-block on the oil-drum of the yarder." I thought I ought to give some authority to that. "She's that way. Mary told me so," I lied.

"I told her I'm running the camp," he comes back.

"No woman's going to believe she can't run you."

Luck broke with me. In the first place, old man Fenwick had always kept a lousy camp. The bunkhouses sat on wood blocks and were swaybacked and bloated and never had any paint nearer to them than the closest farmhouse. I'd seen Irish look inside at the three-deck bunks with hay instead of springs, and heard him come out swearing. But that was nothing to when he looked at the equipment.

He just went from one piece to another, swearing louder all the time, till at last he was just gritting his teeth. You couldn't

blame him. It was a terrible mess. The boiler on the yarder sizzled and leaked steam. The blocks were all rusty and ready to jam or break, you couldn't tell which. The wire rope was spliced all the way along at old breaks and wasn't strong enough to pull your hand out of your pocket. The guy-wires on the spar-tree sagged like hammocks. Man, how he burned.

"Well, keep your hands in your pockets," I says. "Here she comes."

I stood clear but still not too far from them to hear what was said. Irish was purple from not being able to swear.

"Good morning, Mr. Dana," she said. "I wanted to talk to you."

"Yeah, only you're not going to do the talking."

"What do you mean?" she asks, a little startled.

"I mean I'm going to tell you a few things about your camp. It's the worst pile of junk I ever seen draped around a spar-tree. It's rusty, it's haywire, it's rotten. There isn't even a falling wedge around here that's fit to use. You could get more logs out using second-hand shoe-strings."

Her eyes got big and she said:

"It's what my father used, and he managed to get logs out with it."

"And your father sent a man to the hospital with every log. He should have gone to jail."

"I've heard you were a dangerous man, Mr. Dana, but I thought you'd at least be a gentleman when you're talking to a woman."

"Miss Fenwick, if I talked to you the way you deserve I'd singe the roots of your hair. You have no right to ask men to work for you with this kind of equipment."

"If my father were here, he'd whip you all the way back to town."

"If your father was here he'd get the beating he had coming to him. You either buy new rigging or I'll leave this camp wrecked so bad nobody'll know what you've been using it for."

Then they stood there and glared at each other, and she gave him eye for eye. She looked like a fox terrier barking at an ox.

I thought it was going to be all over right there. I was wondering how I'd get Irish out of there without his doing what he threatened. But all of a sudden her eyes quit getting big and began to snap. Just that quick.

"That was what I came out here to tell you, Mr. Dana. I thought the camp needed new equipment and I wanted you to go over everything and order what we needed."

**T**HAT caught Irish with his mouth wide open but he didn't leave it that way long enough for any bark slivers to fly in. He couldn't cool off that quick.

"If you want to be any real help around here, Miss Fenwick," he says, sarcastically, "You might build us some bunkhouses. Maybe you know something about beds and stoves."

She flushed and walked away without saying anything.

Well, I stood where I was for quite a few minutes trying to get straight what had happened. At first I figured the gal was soft. No logging operator I'd ever known would have taken that kind of talk from a foreman. What's more, up until that minute she hadn't acted as if she would. But she had.

That meant something. She was out to get him, one way or another. And if she wanted him she wouldn't let him walk out on her as Mary had. He'd marry her, or the cops would have him.

I still couldn't find my place in the picture. When I went back to Irish, he says: "Who's going to run the camp now?"

"She is."

"After I get through, maybe," he snorts.

"If you get through, you'll be *all* through."

We didn't lift a hand until the new equipment came up a couple of days later. That gave me time to think. I needed it. The way it stood was like this:

I'd promised Mary to get Irish back to her. I'd decided the Fenwick gal was on the hunt. That left two things open to me. I could encourage Irish to raise the roof and get him put in the jug, a swell thing for a pal to do.

Or I could let Ardelle Fenwick have him. That would have suited me better because it would have left Mary for me. That is, maybe it would. I didn't quite like the idea of Mary's expression, when I would have to tell her I hadn't been able to do anything. And either way I was letting Irish down. So finally I decided Irish in jail was easier delivered than Irish married to Ardelle Fenwick.

The next thing was how. I got the angle from her finally. She actually brought some carpenters out and they started on some new bunkhouses. And one day she stopped me.

"Mr. Dana is such a violent sort of a man I hesitate to ask him too much about this part of the work. It really doesn't have anything to do with his job anyway. I thought perhaps you'd coach me on how these places should be fixed up."

"Sure," I says. "I'll tell you everything you ought to have."

That was when it started. I don't mind admitting now I got quite a laugh out of it for a while, and even if I did feel like a snake in the grass some of the time, I knew, too, I was making things pretty nice for the boys.

I told her to put the houses on wheels, of course, on account of possible fire and a lot of other reasons. But then I told her to paint them some nice, homelike color. She did them in cream, with green trimmings. Some colors for a logging camp!

After I got her past the essentials, single-deck bunks, eight to a bunkroom, shower baths, wash tubs, and stuff like that, I really began to get in my fancy work. Never having been a family man, it called for some imagination on my part but she filled in the gaps.

And she'd find some excuse to talk to me every day to find out how the boys liked each little thing.

"Fine," I'd tell her. "It went over big."

"Can you think of anything else they'd like?" she'd ask.

I got to expecting her and usually I had something cockeyed thought up. If I didn't, she'd make a suggestion or two. Nothing was too outrageous for her to agree to.

**F**IRST it was window boxes. Before the flowers was planted in them the boys thought they was something new in spittoons. After that came ruffled curtains in the windows. Then curtains around each bunk for privacy.

Of course the boys didn't know I had anything to do with it. I'd sit quiet every night after work and listen to what they said. I wanted to hear what Irish said most. But it took quite a while before he began to growl. The others were getting such a kick out of all of it that he didn't dare squawk at first. But I knew it'd get to him sooner or later.

It was the pictures that finally did it. Irish always went in for fancy pictures. Movie stars, I mean, and prizefighters. He'd been collecting for years and he was proud of his collection.

One picture in particular he liked. It was taken during the first round of the Dempsey-Firpo fight and had Dempsey's autograph on it. He had that and several others fastened on the wall over his bunk.

Well, one night he came in and they were all gone, burned. Hanging up there instead was one framed picture of a bunch of sheep under a big maple tree. I bust out laughing when I saw those sheep.

"What's so funny?" he asks, glaring at me.

"Sheep!"

"Meaning you think I'm one of 'em?"

"Meaning you'd better be."

He started after me but I got behind the curtain of my bunk and yelled "King's ex!" That brought a laugh and he laid off.

The next day I had another idea. When Miss Fenwick came around I sprung it cautious, not wanting her to get my angle.

"How'd the boys like the new pictures?"

"Well, I guess most of 'em was well enough satisfied. Naturally, there was jealousy, some thinking others had better pictures. I don't think Irish liked his."

"Which one was his?"

"I don't just recall, now," I lied. "Coming to think of it, though, it wasn't the picture he was complaining about. He said he can't sleep well and he thinks it's those curtains around his bed."

"What's the matter with them?"

"Well, I guess he must be kind of sensitive to colors. He says when he was a kid his mother always kept lace curtains around his bed. He says it always rested his eyes more."

She looked very thoughtful at that and then walked away. I tell you, though, a man can get the vague idea on a thing like that but it takes a woman to make it click. I seen at a glance that night she was way ahead of me.

All the rest of the bunks had their old curtains still hanging. But Irish's bunk had swooning pink organdie curtains looping down around like the side drapes you see in pictures of some king's canopied bed. It was the darnedest arrangement any logger ever laid an eye on. The others was bad enough but that bunk stood out now like it was blushing coyly while the rest was put in the background. To make it worse there on the floor beside it was a cloth-rug with some girlish design on it for him to park his bare feet on when he went to bed and got up.

Every guy that came in that bunkroom took one long, startled look and then started rolling on the floor in hysterics. Irish was the last to show. We all held our breath while his glance caught it. Then he roared like a log jam breaking up, tore all that stuff loose at one yank, and started for the office with it.

I followed him, yelling: "Hey, Irish, you can't do that!"

He didn't bother to hear me. He went up the line with that thing flying behind like a bride's train in a high wind. He met her in front of her office. I moved up as

close as I dared, ready to holler, "Police!" if he got too rough.

"What's the idea of this stuff!" he bel-lowed.

"What about it?" Miss Fenwick asks.

"Who put this stuff around my bunk?"

"Why, Mr. Dana. I thought you'd like it. I had it put there especially for you."

"You had it put there especially to make a sap out of me!"

"That doesn't require any special effort!"

"No woman can do this to me!" He tore at it again and flung it at her feet. Her eyes widened like somebody had spilled two spots of molasses on her face.

"If all these men around are afraid to teach you some respect, I'm not, Mr. Dana!" she says.

Then she steps up to him and lets him have it. *Sock! Sock!* Without waiting for him to say anything after that she picked up that stuff and went into her office.

Every guy in camp saw it. Irish tearing up the walk with what looked like a long shirt-tail flying behind him. It had brought them pouring out of their bunkrooms. Man, you should have seen them pour back in again now. That is, all except the ones in our bunkroom. They decided to take a short walk.

**I** TOOK my life in my hands and went in with Irish. I didn't talk—just sat down on my bunk and waited for something to happen. I still don't know why it didn't. This was the first time he'd ever had to take it. He lay on his bunk shaking with rage, his face to the wall. Finally I stretched out, too. Before I knew it the whistle was blowing for work in the morning.

I found Irish out on the job. He looked tough.

"Nice work, Irish. I never thought you could hold it. Now, how about us quitting this camp and going back to Mary?"

There was a bad glint in his eye when he looked around.

"Mary can take a flying jump! I'll stay here till I get even with *this* dame if I have

to wait till the moss is an inch deep on her back."

"Easy, boy. If you do what you're thinking now you'll burn for it!"

When Miss Fenwick came around looking for ideas that day I didn't have any. She said she was so anxious to make the men like it here and she wanted to make them comfortable, a kind of home for them. Especially poor Mr. Dana, who she didn't think could ever have had much of a home. She made me uneasy. She either didn't realize how hard she was driving Irish or maybe she thought she could tame him in spite of his temper. I guess a woman's natural vanity makes her believe that her charms will tame a wild man when all others have failed.

If I'd known what she had in mind I'd have at least tried to stop her. I hadn't seen Irish so mad as he was now since the time he nearly killed a couple of guys in a speakeasy in Chehalis for getting a ten-year-old kid drunk. Everything or anything she'd do now he'd take as a shot at him. But it never would have occurred to me the kind of a thing she had in mind.

She pulled it a couple of nights later. It took time to arrange one like that.

We went in to dinner and the first thing we noticed was that the old long tables with benches were all gone. Instead there were small tables with four chairs at each. Candles was all we had for lighting, a couple of tall ones on each table. Irish's table was just a little bigger than the rest and had a big vase of flowers in the middle of it. He couldn't get away from sitting there because the flunky told him with a smirk that the flowers had been put there especially for him.

Some guys might have taken it for a peace-offering. It could easily have been meant for that, as well as a treat for all the boys. But not Irish. His face started turning purple and he was trying like a drowning paper-hanger to hang on.

Then the flunkies came in with little glasses with a swallow of fruit juice apiece for us, except Irish. He got a fancier glass with maybe two swallows in it. Most of

the guys couldn't figure what it was all about. They thought maybe Irish had spent so much dough on equipment there wasn't enough left to buy grub with. I told them this was class. This was the way they laid it out in the swell hotels.

When they'd scooped out the glasses the flunkies rallied around and laid down some decorated crockery. The stuff in it tasted a little bit like soup. As a matter of fact, that may have been what it was, but nobody knew for sure. Anyway, it was drunk before the flunkies got away from the table. Irish's, too, and he got a bigger dish again than the rest of us. The way he looked, though, you'd thought it had scalded his neck.

I got to watching Irish closer and doing a bit of thinking. It seemed as if the girl was trying to make up with him, only he was too sore to see it that way. It was the only time I ever saw him sore at getting more food than anybody else, but he was steaming. To him she was simply pulling one more gag to make him look foolish.

When the flunkies came in this time they had a small flat dish with a piece of fish fitted onto part of it. Again Irish got a little bigger dish and more fish than the rest. I saw his eyes jumping around to make sure. He saw too much. He saw that everybody else was noticing his larger dishes. That's when he gave way.

**H**E SHOT the fish back in the flunky's face. The dish crashed against the door into the kitchen. He kicked the table over, while the other guys ran for cover, and started breaking up chairs and tables and slamming the pieces through windows or out doors or any old direction.

"Calm down, you sap!" I says, trying to make my voice soothing. "The gal's only trying to be nice to you."

"Who's a sap?"

"You are, if you let a little thing like this drive you off your nut."

For answer he grabbed a table by one leg and chased me with it.

"You crazy fool, she'll have you locked up for this!"

The table connected just as I made the door and I sailed down the steps and crashed against the bunkhouse on the far side of the walk. There was a table-leg lying on the walk near one of the cook-shack windows. I picked it up and turned to go in again when Ardelle Fenwick showed up.

"What's the matter?" she asks, half listening to tables being ripped apart. The crew was well out of range by now so I answered her question.

"Something about the meal gave Irish indigestion, I guess," I told her.

"What are you going to do with that table leg?"

"Try to cure him with it," I says.

"Let me talk to him." She turned toward the steps.

"Hey! No! That's no place for you." I grabbed her by the arm. The seat and back of a chair shattered right where she would have met them at the top of the steps.

"Let go!" she insisted. "I'm going in there."

"Listen, Miss Fenwick," I says, still holding on to her arm while she pulled. "Let him wear it off that way for a while. You see, he's used to being able to tangle with men when he's sore. You being a woman, it's different. He can't bounce 'em off of your chin. He has to take it out on the furniture."

"But you were going to stop him."

"I was just going to act as bait to lead him outside where he can't do so much damage."

She gave me the old level eye.

"You're not fooling me. You're afraid I'll call the sheriff. You don't want the police to get their hands on him again."

"But—"

"Let me go! I *will* call the sheriff if you don't!"

She got away with a quick jerk and ran up the steps. I dived for her ankle but she was too fast. I was in after her as fast as I could make it. That wasn't quite fast enough.

She was holding her hand to her face



where a flying chair rung had run into it.  
 "Irish!" I yelled. "Quit being a fool and act your age."

It was almost dark in there. All the candles were out and a little light came in from the string of small globes over the walk outside. That was all. That was why Irish didn't see her.

She lit a flashlight. Irish turned with a bellow and started for it.

"Irish!" I screamed. "It's her! It's Miss Fenwick!"

It didn't stop him. I guess he didn't believe it, or maybe he didn't understand. He didn't move fast, but almost cautiously, like he was stalking something. Later I heard he thought we were ganging up on him.

**I** HAD to do something. She was so small he'd break her to pieces before he found what he had hold of. So I jumped at him, and swung that table leg with everything I had. Maybe it's just as well I didn't hit where I aimed. I was as excited as he was mad and he might not have got up again.

Anyway, my foot tripped over some broken furniture. The table leg cracked him on the shoulder as I fell.

He was as quick as a flash after that. Too quick. I just barely remember being tossed over his head in one long sweep. I remember the shriek Ardelle Fenwick let out. It wasn't much of a one, just a thin pipe that was trying hard but couldn't get going. Then I remember my neck nearly snapping off with the jerk as he threw me sideward at her. That's all.

I had a queer sensation when I came to. I couldn't see. I could feel something with my eyes but I couldn't see. So I reached up and pulled something off of them. Then I quit being scared. I wasn't blind. I was just all bandaged up.

"Gravy!" I said. "Am I killed?"

That brought me some attention. I heard somebody run across the floor and there was, of all people, Mary bending over me.

"Sam!" she says. "What's the matter?"

"How should I know?" I says.

She laughed. That made me sore. After all, I was hurt.

"Then get up. You look ridiculous with all those things on your head."

"Well, I didn't put 'em there. What are they there for if I'm not hurt?"

"Ardelle put them there. She wanted to scare Irish with them."

"Scare him? What for?"

Mary got indignant. "Because he needed scaring. The big infant. Letting his temper get away from him that way. He won't do it again."

I got to feeling sort of low, hearing her talk about Irish the way she used to.

"I suppose you two've made it all up again now. Anyway, you can't say I didn't save him for you."

Three times she started to say something, then didn't get it out. Finally she folded her arms and just looked at me, sort of laughing.

"Oh, I suppose I wouldn't like you so well if you weren't so dumb," she says at last. "I got Irish this job up here because I thought he'd be just the man for Ardelle, if she could straighten him out."

"Wh-what made you think that?"

"Because she needed a man to run this camp for her. And I've always been sure that some day Irish would do something he'd be sorry for the rest of his life and it'd make a man out of him. Ardelle saw him and decided she wanted him to do it to her. She was crazy about him right away. That's why she egged him on until he got so mad he couldn't hold it. He'll spend all his life trying to make up for it now."

"But I was doing that to keep them apart."

"You." She laughed. "Maybe you'll know enough to stay put next time you see a woman out to get her man."

"Supposing it's me she's after?"

"Do you think I'd be wasting all this talk if it wasn't you I'm after?"

I've decided women don't have to know anything about logging.

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# Argonotes

## The Readers' Viewpoint



LIFE is real (Longfellow). Life is earnest (Longfellow). Life can also be pretty doggoned grim. (That last was us.) At the moment this room is filled with several people—seems more like several thousand, though—all nicely fitted out with colds and equipped with a series of nasal noisemakers that make a foggy night on the East River sound like a cosmic hush. And it isn't even as if this were the season for colds. Or is it?

Frankly, this department thinks it's pretty silly to go around getting oneself in that unfortunate and unlovely condition. There are a few simple rules for not getting colds—aren't there?—like (1) not getting your feet wet, (2) not sitting in draughts, (3) staying as far away as you can from people who are apt to sneeze at you.

What could be simpler, really? Even up in the ancestral wilds of suburban Connecticut, this department finds little difficulty in refraining from wading ankle-deep in puddles of chill, autumnal rainwater. So it certainly shouldn't be hard in a great big city like New York. (I do wish someone would close that window. Now.) Suppose sitting in a draught were not unhealthy. Would anyone in his right mind be content to sit somewhere where there was a great current of raw and unfriendly air whistling around the back of his neck? (We, for one, would not; and we wish someone would do something about that window.) And finally, apart from questions of contagion, the amount of pleasure that can be derived from the company of friends and acquaintances who, though at other times charming and even likable people, are momentarily rendered *hors de social combat* by

the common cold, is practically nil. Holding converse amid a steady barrage of explosive and apparently unpremeditated outbursts, racking coughs, dynamitic sneezes and the like, is trying at best and scarcely a source of pleasure. (If that window isn't closed in one minute, we're going to move. No foolin'.)

So you see by simply acting as a more or less intelligent human being—that couldn't have been this department sneezing just then, could it?—it is ridiculously simple *not* to have a cold. If people would just show the slightest amount of—*ker-snaff!*—common sense and—and—*wheesh!*—consideration for their fellow men, they wouldn't go around accumulating systemic disorders and making life a—*blooowhoosh!*—a raging inferno for the rest of us.

(Has anyone an extra handkerchief?) With that little matter off our chests, let's have a look—*sna-choo!*—pardon us—at the—*aaa-whooshie!*—excuse it, please—so silly, really—mail. KER-PLOOSH! !

B. W. McNABB

In reference to a letter from Robert Jaffie regarding radio reception during hurricanes, may I remark that during two Florida blows we had perfect reception? One was the Fort Walton Hurricane of July 31, 1936, the other was some time prior to that.

We have an ordinary commercial set, operated on batteries, and during the very worst of the blow when we saw one of our boats sink, a sailboat tip over, as she rode at anchor, the seine reel, dock, and hundreds of feet of fence go down before the hurricane tide, when we saw trees snap and uproot and the air filled with flying branches, still the reports came in from Pensacola and New Orleans, and there were intervals of dance music from northern stations, and no interference. As the storm center drew away from St. Andrews Bay and

continued down the coast toward Alabama, static began.

But during the heaviest part of both these hurricanes our radio reception was perfect and any number of people in our section will agree with this statement.

Panama City, Florida

**T**HANKS, Mr. McNabb for your spirited defense of what seemed to us to be a dramatically effective sequence and, we hoped, at least a plausible one. Apparently the Jaffie complaint also attracted the attention of the author himself who now comes riding out in self-defense on his plumed white charger. Ladeez and gennulmen, we give you—in person:

#### EUSTACE L. ADAMS

Hey, hey! What's this about not being able to hear the radio during a hurricane? And if so, what have I been listening to between storm bulletins on many and many a September and October night when the hatches were battened down and the devil himself was screaming around the house?

Yeah, there's static, all right. The newest method of finding the center of a "tropical disturbance"—hurricane, to you—is by triangulating a directional radio set upon the point of greatest static. And I should have mentioned it, of course. But reception from local South Florida stations—within 75 to 100 miles—isn't bad at all, and in my yarn, *The Big Wind Blows*, I told of the Miami announcer cutting in at frequent intervals to give the latest bulletin. And the barge was located in Florida Bay, approximately 70 miles south-south-west of Miami.

Just two things stop radio reception from a local station during a hurricane. The station's power goes off and/or your own power goes off. Usually both. But in this case the Miami station to which the gang was listening was off the center of the storm and kept its power—and on the barge they had a generating set which would not go off until the barge sank or water got into the engine room.

And dance music from New York City? Not strange at all, Mr. Jaffie. I specified in my story that the storm center was well south of Miami. It is fair to assume that winds of hurricane force had not yet reached Miami and that the wires carrying chain programs were still up.

To justify this: the catastrophic hurricane which killed hundreds of veterans at Matecombe Key, left Miami, only 70 miles or so to the north, relatively unharmed. And the island in my story, as stated, was not far from doomed Matecombe. I don't know whether Miami was on that entire night; I listened to WIOD part

of the evening but then, being 300 miles to the northwestward, I lost it on account of—yes, static!

Come down and see me sometime between Sept. 1st and the first full moon in October which, according to seasoned Floridians *usually* marks the end of the danger time. When was it we had the last one? November 4, or something like that. Anyway, we'll listen to the static, so you can remind me that I should have put it in my story, and to the swing music between storm bulletins, so I can remind you that it isn't fantastic, or even strange.

Clearwater, Fla.

**F**OR NO particular reason, this point seems to be a good one to mention the fact that George Challis' popular ARGOSY serial *The Golden Knight* has found its way between the jackets of a book—The Greystone Press, publisher. Watch for it on best-seller lists.

**E**VEN though the writer of the following letter discovered the ARGOSY in a spot that might, if we were in more sensitive mood this morning, cause us a sharp twinge of embarrassment, we are happy to welcome him to these columns.

#### W. REYNOLDS

Here comes a razor-back that has been running out on range for twenty-three years, and covering a wide range. I've been eating acorns till I got tired of them, they all taste just alike, and the same goes for corn patches, grass and grain fields. I have never been satisfied with just the same old thing, so just today I rooted into a pile of rubbish and I found what my heart has desired all my life, an ARGOSY.

I have thumbed through the book stands and picked out detective, love, war, air stories, but looked at the ARGOSY magazine and said "Bah" or something similar, although I never looked on the inside until today. I've been marooned out here in the hills without anything to read, and I found a June issue of ARGOSY, and as a result I'm so excited and nervous that I can hardly write my thanks for such wonderful stories and magazine.

I've just realized what I've missed all these years, but from here on as long as I can possibly scrape up a dime, I'm going to own me an ARGOSY magazine.

Mineral, Arkansas.

—O—  
We hope the ARGOSY continues to be just what your and all Argonauts' hearts have desired, Mr. Reynolds.

# Looking Ahead!



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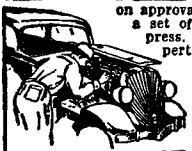
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Statement of the ownership, management, etc., of ARGOSY, published weekly at New York, N. Y., for October 1, 1937. Required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, and March 3, 1933.

State of NEW YORK }  
County of NEW YORK } s.s.:

Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and County aforesaid, personally appeared WILLIAM T. DEWART, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the President of the Frank A. Munsey Company, publisher of ARGOSY, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, as amended by the Act of March 3, 1933, embodied in Section 537, Postal Laws and Regulations. To wit:

That the names and addresses of the Publisher, Editor, Managing Editor, and Business Manager are:

Publisher—The Frank A. Munsey Company, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

Editor—Chandler H. Whipple, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

Managing Editor—John F. R. Byrne, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

Business Manager—Harry B. Ward, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

That the Owners are: (If a corporation give its name and the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of the total amount of stock.)

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WILLIAM T. DEWART, President.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 1st day of October, 1937.

GEORGE H. BOLLWINKEL, Notary Public.  
Nassau County No. 133. Term expires March 30, 1939. Certificate filed in New York County No. 487. New York Register's No. 9-B-360.

SEAL

# Death Waited While He Hovered in the Sky!



**Crowd Waits  
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"I never did like jumping from balloons," writes G. W. de Grange, professional daredevil of Martinsburg, West Virginia, "and this time there was a mean wind to make matters worse.

"We finally got the hot air bag filled, and I took off in the dark from the fair grounds at Emmitsburg, Md., intending to make a parachute jump into the town square.

"But the balloon was soggy. She wouldn't give me altitude. I passed about 300 feet over the treetops of the town square, and didn't dare to jump... and then the big bag began to slowly settle.

"I ripped my 'Eveready' flashlight from its straps on my 'chute harness and snapped it on to see what was below me. To my horror, the balloon

was going to set me none too gently down in a nest of hot, high-tension wires!

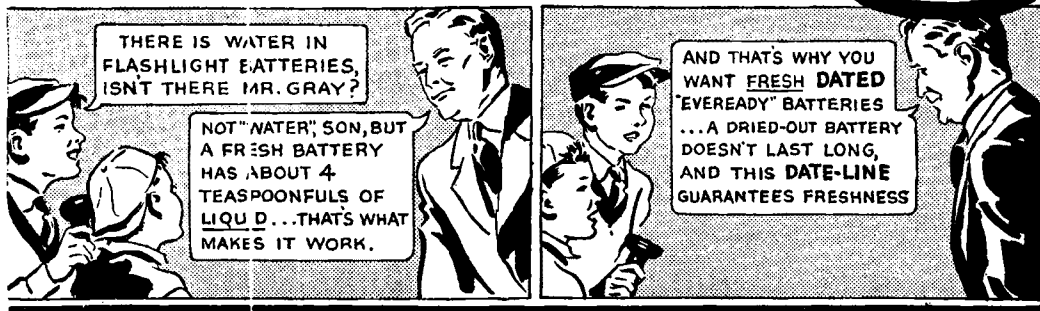
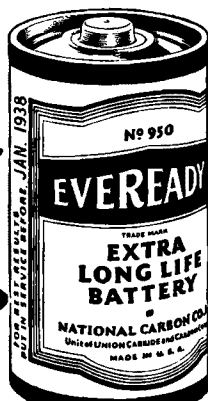
"I've sidslipped by these death-dealing wires with a 'chute many a time... but just imagine steering a lollopy big dying balloon by pulling on the shrouds. But I pulled with everything I had while the crowd waited for an aerial execution... and because those faithful, fresh DATED 'Eveready' batteries were on the job, and showed me the wires in time, I slid by certain death by inches! Without light the instant I needed it, that crowd would have got more than its money's worth. (Signed)

*George W. de Grange*

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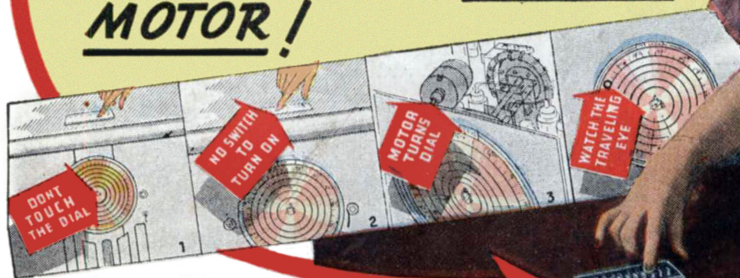




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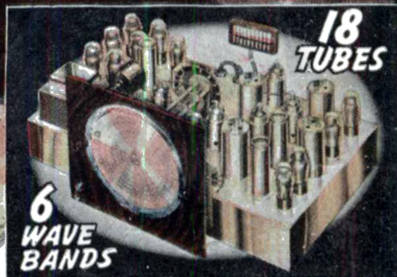
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