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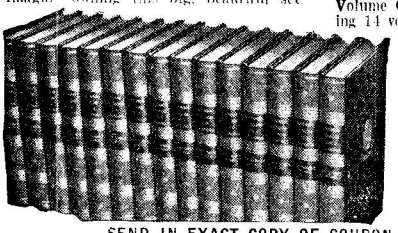

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Volume 304 CONTENTS FOR DECEMBER 14, 1940 Number 2

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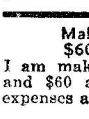

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The Little Doll Died

By THEODORE ROSCOE

Author of "Speak for Yourself, John Quincy," "Remember Tomorrow," etc.

Haiti is a dark place, where you may live for years and know less about it than when you came; where human relationships clash discordantly in the sinister tropic air; where people speak only in whispers of the zombies—those soulless creatures, the un-dead dead. And there a Leatherneck once saw a dead man rise . . .

PROLOG

HE AND I were the only passengers on that little Dutch steamer which tramps around the coast of Haiti. I noticed him when he came aboard at Jacmel. His name was Glennon. His shoulders were rugged, he had the complexion of a cavalry saddle and the look of a man who traveled far and light.

But he had this shoe box with him, the sort of carboard box excursionists pack lunches in. He wouldn't let the steward touch it, and he carried it about with him and kept it at his elbow in the smoke room. People usually expand in the intimacy of a ship's bar; but when we reached Gonaives and my good-evenings drew only nods I began to think him saturnine. Then off St. Maro he unexpectedly opened up.

"Down here in bananas?"

"Newspaper man," I said. "You're a planter?"

"Me?" His eyes were faintly rueful. "Insurance is my business, brother. Life insurance." Then his eye brightened. "But I was down here in the old days with the Marines. Fought against Charlemagne in the Caco War and helped set up the Garde d'Haiti. Know the island, do you?"

"First visit," I admitted. "You must know it like a book."

He nodded. "I've covered about every kilometer, yes. But I doubt if any white man gets to know Haiti very well. When I pulled out after the Marine occupation —we left in '34—I reckoned I didn't know it as well as I thought I did after my first year there in '19." His eyes mused out of the port hole at the mountain-jungle coastline. "I've an idea you never get to know Haiti as well as Haiti gets to know you."

I asked, "When you were stationed here with the Leathernecks did you hear much about voodoo?"

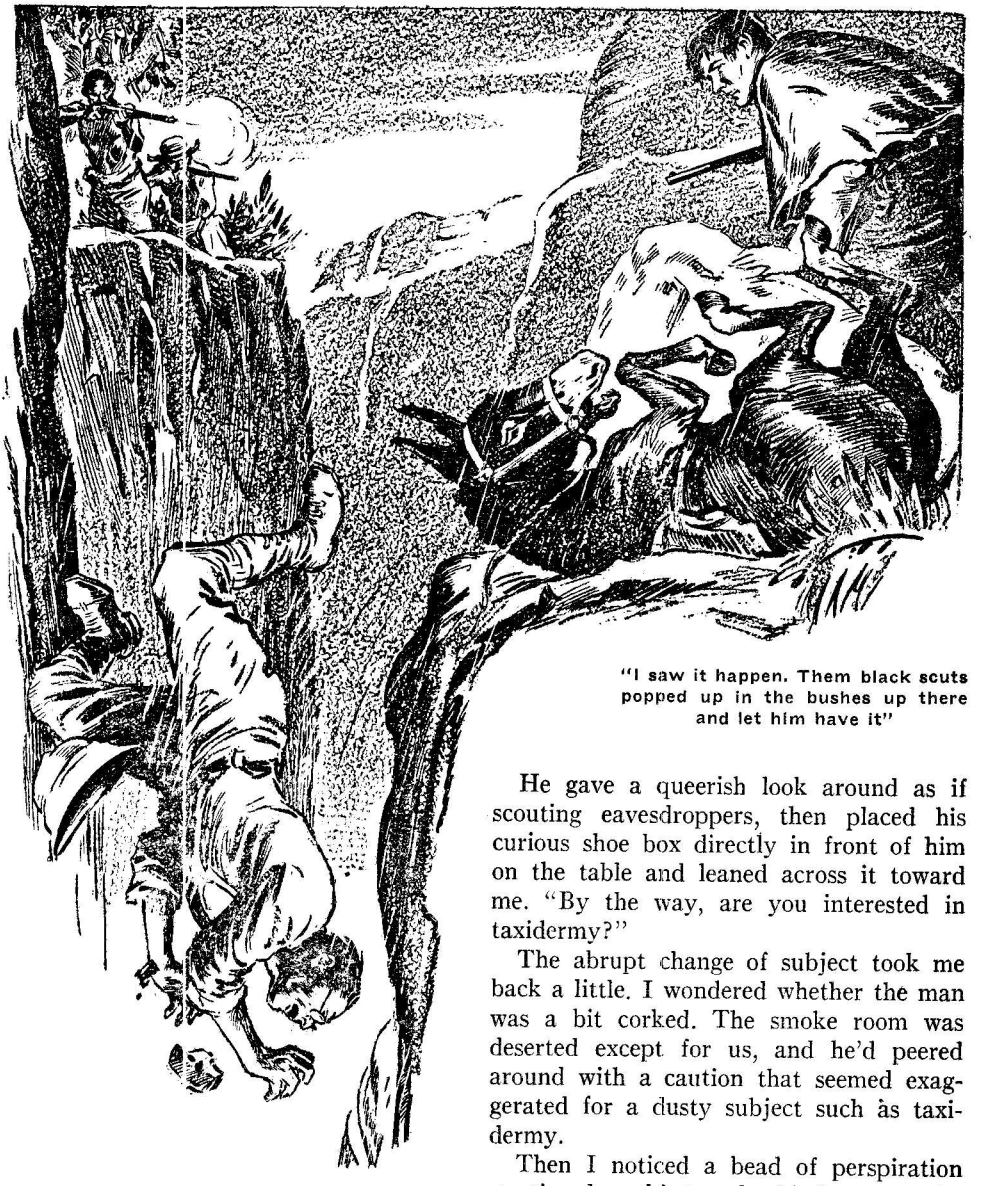
Something in his face stiffened. "What?"

"Well, you know," I explained. "Most Americans are curious about Haitian voodoo. Black magic. The Death Cult. Zombies and all that."

He said slowly, "I suppose it has had a lot of publicity. Movie trash. And of course there is a lot of voodoo down here. But don't mix it up with black magic. Voodoo is an African religion with priests, shrines and a mythology—much like our white man's religion. Black magic, sorcery, that's something else again."

His gaze fixed on the lingering, shadowy coast.

"About black magic: the Negroes aren't the only people who believe in charms. They wear this gadget called an *ouanga*. Put the curse on somebody and have faith enough in your *ouanga* and the curse come's true. Lots of white men believe in faith healing; the Haitians merely put it in reverse, what you might call 'faith killing.' Well, I don't know. Maybe if you have faith enough you can make anything come true."



"I saw it happen. Them black scuts popped up in the bushes up there and let him have it"

"That sounds plausible," I agreed conversationally, "but how about these zombies—these dead brought back to life?"

"Old African folklore. Hocus-pocus practiced by Negro medicine doctors in the so-called Society of the Dead. Outlawed by the Haitian government and scorned by the true voodoo priests. But I did see one dead man brought back to life, at that."

He gave a queerish look around as if scouting eavesdroppers, then placed his curious shoe box directly in front of him on the table and leaned across it toward me. "By the way, are you interested in taxidermy?"

The abrupt change of subject took me back a little. I wondered whether the man was a bit corked. The smoke room was deserted except for us, and he'd peered around with a caution that seemed exaggerated for a dusty subject such as taxidermy.

Then I noticed a bead of perspiration starting down his temple; his fingers on the box-string were quivering. I rather expected something to hop out as he lifted the lid and drew back.

Glennon gripped my arm while I peered down.

"Ever see anything like that before, mister?"

I was surprised. I had seen something like it before— in toy departments and nurseries. Only this looked like a home-

made specimen, a crude, hand-sewn article: the hair obviously horsehair; lumpy, blob-shaped arms and legs; the leather worn and weather-stained and scrubbed from hard usage—a cherished relic that might have been rescued from an ash can. Stitches were open in the stomach, disgorging a spill of sawdust. The face resembled an old tobacco-juice-stained baseball.

"Why," I had to say, "it's only a doll!"

Its owner, aware of the steward's step behind us, closed the box hastily. "Only a doll." He gave me a level stare, requesting discretion as the steward brought us drinks. He said in a low tone after the Dutchman had gone, "Perhaps it looks like one, my friend; but take my word, it's not the kind you'd have old Santa bring your kiddies for Christmas.

"Pull your chair around and I'll tell you about it. It has to do with what we were talking about—Haiti, black magic, zombies. Better fortify yourself with a drink. You're a newspaper man, but I'll lay you two to one you never heard a weirder, more incredible story."

As a graduate from the tabloids I was inclined to take the bet. At the end I conceded I would have lost.

CHAPTER I

MUMMIES AND MARINES

IT BEGAN (Glennon launched his story on a gulp of whisky) up in the mountains behind Cape Haiti—a jungle outpost called Morne Noir—one of those limber-lost Haitian villages where they still have a law that the natives on market day have to wear pants.

You don't find any telephones, tourists or plumbing in that part of the interior. The trails up through the jungle are terrible. The village is a pretty good copy of some pest hole in the heart of Africa: mud streets; no lights at night; a clutter of thatch-roofed huts surrounded by *mornes* with their dark foreheads up in the clouds. And that's where Charlemagne Perrault started his Caco Rebellion against the American Marines sent to Haiti in 1916, to bring peace and quiet to an island that hasn't had any since Columbus waded ashore in 1492.

Now Haiti has had a devil of a history, and three years after the Marines landed to bring order, this Charlemagne was writing another bloody chapter. Maybe you don't remember Charlemagne Perrault, but we Americans who tried to catch him remember him. He was one of those tragic revolutionaries who tried to stave off civilization with a popgun, so to speak, and sometimes make me wonder whether our white man's wisdom is so right after all.

Charlemagne was an educated Haitian—he'd been schooled in France like a lot of the Haitian upper class—and he resented the idea of a white American army in Haiti. We had to be there. The Haitian government was a mess; Germany was making threats to invade. We couldn't allow that, and we had to get there first. But Charlemagne didn't understand that.

He went around urging the Haitians to rebellion, and some M. P. heard him talking in Cape Haiti and arrested him. If we'd let him go he might've petered out, but one of our pompous white officials had to punish him by putting him in a convict's uniform in a street-sweeping squad.

That was a damfool mistake. For a Paris-educated Haitian to be sweeping the streets was on a par with making the President of Harvard clean a stable, and the story swept Haiti like wildfire. Charlemagne escaped in no time, and the rebellion broke like a tropic hurricane.

I can tell you, it was tough. Charlemagne was a brilliant leader, and he knew every trick of guerilla warfare. He organized roving bands of guerillas—Caco bandits—and planted the jungle with snipers. He collected all the voodoo priests and called for a religious war. And *got* it.

All this is in our history books where you can read it; I'm just giving you the background of the story that begins at Morne Noir. I was sent up there with a detachment of Marines to clean the place

up and try to locate Charlemagne. That was a large order, brother, and I'm here to say I didn't succeed. Charlemagne almost got me, and somebody else finally got Charlemagne.

All that's beside the point. The point is that Morne Noir was a hot-box when I got there.

Some of the natives were friendly, but all blacks look the same after dark. You never could tell when you might be ambushed on the trail, back-stabbed in the village or sniped from behind a palm tree. We weren't there a week before one of my scouts was chopped to mince meat in the jungle.

Charlemagne prowled the mountains like a spook; the peasants were drunk on fear and voodoo; human sacrifices were rumored in the neighborhood; the eternal drumming after sundown was a nightmare; and every minute we had to be ready for a Caco attack.

Throw in fever, bad water, heat, insects and other tropical devilments and you have an idea of the white man's burden. I was told that no reinforcements might reach me for days or even months. I built a stockade on the edge of the village; tried to drill some miserable Haitian soldiers; then everything bogged down in the rainy season, and I sat down to wait. It was hell and it was Haiti.

In the middle of that, civilization arrived. Mark that! Civilization in the persons of Mr. and Mrs. Peabody and one Terrence McCoy.

THERE was a triangle for you. I've seen some odd fish in Carribbean waters, but I think this Peabody was the oddest. He should've been in a museum instead of representing one. You know the sort of bird who gets a Ph.D. at the ripe old age of twenty and looks like an astronomer at thirty-five?

Peabody was that type. Brains. A dome-shaped head bulgy with brains and windowed by owlish spectacles and roofed by a thatch of white-yellow hair. A little pipe-stem, insignificant body round-shouldered from too much learning. Near-sighted from midnight study. Weaned on the encyclopedia.

Picture that in a sun helmet with a bird cage in one hand and a notebook in the other, riding into town on a donkey, and you've got my introduction to Wilfred Peabody.

I guess I gawped from my headquarters window open-mouthed. Then I gagged an inch wider. On the heels of this pixie came Mrs. Peabody.

Don't ask me how a girl like Jenny Louise could've married that absent-minded professor. I wondered at that time. She was as opposite as a canary from a big-headed little hoot owl: pink and frilly and fussy blond—you know. Plenty good looking, too. But the kind that likes lace and fudge and romantic novels. Gazes at the world through big, round, starry blue eyes and is apt to sigh over movie fade-outs or get a little cute.

"It's just too thrilling to be here in Haiti," were her first words to me. "Oh, Captain, it's so adventurous." That was the tip-off on pretty Jenny Louise.

I was watching her follow her husband into camp and popeyed at the sight when the last of the party appeared. McCoy the Irishman. You've seen green paint? He was Irish as that. Lots of grinning white teeth and fine Irish black hair. Lots of jaw, lots of chest, lots of twinkling blue eye. He was built like an athlete, and he could look like a horseman on a Haitian donkey and there was a quality to his voice that got things done. I could see from the first that the man in charge of that outfit was McCoy.

Only Peabody called himself the leader of the expedition; he was in my headquarters house and announcing his arrival before I could think to summon a guard to learn how he'd gotten there alive.

Well, he was a naturalist. Also he was an archaeologist, a paleontologist and a lot of other high-sounding names that he reeled off by way of introduction. It seemed that he and his wife and McCoy, backed by some Institute of Something-or-

Other, had come to Haiti to investigate the history, geology, flora and fauna of the island. They had a load of baggage and a big collection of rare animals, butterflies, fossils and that sort of thing.

They'd been in the interior acquiring this stuff when the Caco War broke out. Our scouts had come on them in the mountains; advised them to leave. Peabody didn't want to leave. His work, he said, was too important. He was a scientist in the midst of most valuable research. No picayune native rumpus was going to divert him from his work.

He had a letter from the district *commandant*—I'd like to give you the colonel's name, but I won't speak ill of the dead—wishing him off on my protection. How he wrung permission to remain in Haiti out of the colonel I don't know, but he had it, and he intended to pitch his research camp in Morne Noir until the trouble blew over. He said he could go on with his investigations in the Morne Noir territory, and he assured me he wouldn't be a bother to me or my Marines.

Bother! I glared at Peabody and his wife and the Irishman, too choked to speak. I could see Peabody had no more idea of the danger he was in than a babe in the woods. Mrs. Peabody had about as much sense as a doll.

McCoy stepped forward to say he was sure they could take care of themselves. That was all I needed. A crackpotted scientist and his entourage to look after on the lid of that Haitian volcano. If I'd been able to afford an escort I'd have shipped them P.D.Q. to the coast, but I needed every man I had. Until reinforcements relieved me, they'd have to stay.

"DON'T worry," said Peabody, reading the consternation on my face. "My wife and McCoy and I will have our own camp. You don't need to trouble about us at all. Indubitably this local fiasco will soon be dissipated. Meanwhile we can quietly pursue our research. I am particularly interested in tracing the early civilization of the Arawaks."

I stared at him. "Arawaks!"

"The original inhabitants indigenous to this island," he gave me. "The aborigines. A tribe of the Carib Indians. Today, so far as we know, there remains but a handful of Caribs, remnants of the race that retreated to Honduras and Guatemala. There were thousands of them once, and they lived on this island when Columbus discovered Haiti. . . . But the Arawaks have almost vanished from the earth."

"That's why we're trying to trace them," Mrs. Peabody explained.

"We think there's a few left in Haiti," McCoy put in.

"The original Indians who were here when Columbus landed," Peabody chirped excitedly. "A few remaining Arawaks who live in isolation deep in the unexplored interior—in the mountains bordering Santo Domingo, perhaps. Preserving their ancient religion and primeval ways. Think of what it would mean to the historians if we found this lost tribe."

Then Peabody paid off with the remark I was going to remember. Leaning across my soap-box desk at me with his glasses shining like two moons, he said, "I am certain we are close on their trail, Captain. We are trying to trace them by their miniature mummies."

I'd never heard of such things and my face said so.

"Miniature Arawak mummies." Peabody nodded. "The South American Indians know the secret of shrinking human heads. Doubtless you've seen some of their specimens in the museums. But these Arawaks knew how to shrink and cure the whole body. Their midget-sized mummies are the rarest anthropological specimens on earth, and we've had rumors of such specimens in this neighborhood. You won't mind, then, if we remain under your protection and conduct our research in Morne Noir."

Huh! Already the drums were thumping in the sundown, and I was thinking of Charlemagne's raiders and what those voodoo-maddened blacks wouldn't do to get their hands on a white woman.

Trouble? Tell it to the Marines! All I could do was throw up my hands and say, "My Lord!"

CHAPTER II

LOADED FOR TROUBLE

ALL right, that's the set-up. The background and the people. Peabody and Co. pitched camp under the wing of the Stars and Stripes, and besides looking like the last outpost, Morne Noir took on the aspect of a scientific laboratory, a dime museum and a taxidermist's shop. Luckily Charlemagne was raiding down in the south that season or, learning those white folks were in town, he might've hit us instanter.

Playing nursemaid to a scientist's camp is a job I never want again, especially a camp conducted by a bird like Peabody. He was a pip. I said he had a spindly little frame with an oversized head, but I hope I didn't give you the idea he was the scholarly invalid sort. Like fun!

He didn't eat much—too absent-minded; but he was a human dynamo, on the go from morning till night. One minute he was up a palm tree identifying the leaves. Next minute he was in some Haitian hut asking questions about native medicine. I told him the jungles were dangerous as anything and that a Marine had been butchered in the bush; but he paid about as much attention as he might've paid a well-meaning but overanxious traffic cop.

Off by himself he'd go, grubbing after traces of his precious Arawaks, looking for his miniature mummies. Meantime he collected butterflies and animals. No jungle patch was too thorny, no swamp too feverish for Peabody when he thought he spotted some rare specimen. What a guy! Every time he picked up some new bug or bat he'd come hollering into camp as if the Cacos were after him, wildly excited over his latest find. He just didn't realize a war was going on. It was all I could do to get him to carry his gun.

McCoy was more responsible. He was the taxidermist of the outfit; stuffed the specimens that Peabody fetched in. Peabody declared he was a greater taxidermist than Akeley, and I guess Peabody was right.

That Irishman was certainly an artist. He could skin a pig with a penknife. His mounted animals and birds were so lifelike they looked on the point of moving, and he rigged up a tarantula that looked so natural it scared the Haitian camp-boy half out of his wits.

That Irish lad had other accomplishments, too. He'd hunted big game in Africa and he was a whacking good shot with a rifle, the match of any Marine in the outpost. Nights around Peabody's campfire he sang a fine brogue tenor; he could hold his rum without getting too braggy, and I saw he knew how to handle men—and women.

He kept Peabody's black boys jumping, and he knew how to handle Peabody. Treated the absent-minded professor like a father. Got him to eat his meals and wear his rubbers when it rained. Fetched him in out of the jungle after dark, and watched over him generally. He sort of took a humorous, tolerant attitude toward Peabody.

"Sure, we was friends together as small boys," he told me. "I'd never got through school if Wilf hadn't passed me the answers. Ain't he the smart one, though? Took me to Africa with him on his first expedition, an' we've been together ever since. All of us been friends since kids. Mrs. Peabody, too."

He said it casually.

I'd been wondering where Jenny Louise came in. Friends since kids. And she'd admired Wilf, too, for his college degrees. Why else would she have married a spindle-shanged bug hunter like Peabody?

Yes, and through all my official worry over those three, I'd been wondering something else. In a close-bunched little community like an outpost in the jungle, you learn more about people in a week than you would in a city in five years. After a week at Morne Noir under my nose, I

learned something about Peabody and McCoy and Mrs. Peabody. Mrs. Peabody was crazy about McCoy.

SHE wore it on her sleeve. She dreamed it in her eyes. She said it with flowers. Poor Jenny Louise. It was her job to cook the meals and house-clean the tents. She and Peabody shared the big tent, and McCoy had the one next door. It was McCoy's tent that got the house-cleaning. It was McCoy who got the first dish of stew. It was McCoy's boots she'd be shining all afternoon, his shirt she'd be mending so tenderly, his temperature she tried to take all the time.

"Terrance!" The way she'd say it: like a sigh. Not that she didn't look after her husband. But her eyes would be on McCoy when the two returned from the jungle after dark.

Well, I could see how it was. She'd married brains, but she just couldn't help it about brawn. Then the three had traveled around the world together, and without quite realizing it, Jenny Lou's heart had got the better of her good intentions.

McCoy was handsome and smart and the muscles on his arms were like rippling mahogany. He had Irish charm; he could sing like a County Cavin thrush; he was gallant, witty and gay. Her husband was only interested in fauna and midget mummies; but it was her husband's best friend who complimented her on her cooking or Sunday frock. You can see how a Jenny Louise would fall for a Terrence McCoy.

Everybody could see it. It was darn near embarrassing. My boys at Morne Noir spotted it first off—leave it to the Marines—and gossiped behind their hands. The native villagers—a Haitian has X-Ray eyes—saw it and discussed it in Creole. I saw it, all right. And McCoy saw it, too. That's where he was good at handling women.

I've seen some classy woman-handling, but I take off my hat to that Irish taxidermist. He had just the right attitude of large, friendly understanding and now-now-Jenny-Lou-nothing-doing. You know. "I know how you feel, Jen, but we just couldn't do anything to hurt old Wilf."

He was always reminding her what a bang-up scientist Peabody was.

"Wilf's going to be famous when we uncover these Arawaks, Jenny." Or, "Old Wilf's sure makin' a name for himself." Or, "I wish I had Wilf's brains and money—I'd of got somewhere instead of just skinnin' animals."

"But you're a great artist, Terry," Jenny Louise might give back. "You know Wilfred says you're a greater taxidermist than Akeley."

"Aw, what's stuffin' a few cats. I'm just a handy man to Wilf."

Without meaning to, I eavesdropped into a couple of conversations like that. It was a funny little drama to reach Morne Noir, as if a stock company had arrived with *Camille* way up there in the Haitian jungle in the midst of the Caco War.

The war was going on all this time, remember. Some guerillas ambushed a Marine column up near Hinche and cut off a lieutenant's head. A wild bandit named Batraville killed one of our officers close to Port au Prince; dug out and ate his heart. A company of loyal Haitians were massacred at Petianville.

Things like that happened all the while; the war drums kept thumping around the mountains, and I never knew when we were going to catch it at Morne Noir. But with all my worries I couldn't help speculating on that little drama between Mrs. Peabody and friend McCoy. Everyone in the place knew about it. Everyone except Peabody.

AT LEAST, that's how it looked. He was so darned intent on tracing animals and Arawaks his wife could have run off with the Prince of Wales and you'd think he wouldn't have noticed it. I felt kind of sorry for the little fella. When he did come out of the fog and pay attention to Jenny Louise, perhaps bring her a bunch of wild flowers, she was liable to yawn or something. Anybody else would've realized where *her* heart was.

"She's overboard about the Irishman for fair," the topsergeant remarked to me at mess one night. "How long do you think he'll hold out?"

The sergeant meant it was hard to hold out against a romantic woman in the tropics. The boys in my outfit were betting that a morning would come when McCoy and Jenny Louise would leave Peabody flat. I didn't think so. Stealing Jenny Lou from Wilfred Peabody would be like taking candy from a baby, and McCoy was Peabody's best friend.

"You'll see, though," the sergeant told me. "I was married once, myself, and I know. Something's bound to happen."

Of course it was none of my business. My business was to protect Morne Noir against Chalemagne, mayhem and murder. Still, I couldn't help watching, because the thing was right under my nose. I don't like domestic problems, and there were times when Mrs. Peabody irritated me so much I wanted to shake her. I put her down as a silly dame with about as much sense as an Angora cat.

She had no realization of the danger she and her husband were in, either. McCoy had to tell her not to wander away from the camp. Her sighs and heart-flutters were as obvious as something in the films. I mean, soupy. I thought it must be an uncomfortable situation for McCoy, considering. Certainly he looked as if he was trying hard to be loyal to Peabody and ignore Jenny Lou's dish of Valentines.

So that was how things stood at Morne Noir. Bandits lurking in the surrounding *mornes*. Peabody grubbing in the jungle. McCoy stuffing artistic specimens. Jenny Lou making eyes at McCoy. My sergeant was right when he said something was bound to happen; in a mess like that how could it miss? And it was plenty.

CHAPTER III

DANGER—WITH TEARS

ONE morning a sniper splashed some bullets into the village and killed one of my men. That meant Charlemagne was back in the vicinity. I tootled the alarm and sent out scouts to nail the assassin. They nabbed him up the mountain at noon and dragged him back to the village for public execution.

Good work, but all the way through the village the black devil kept screaming that Charlemagne had promised Morne Noir a special vengeance. This is where the zombie angle comes in. That Caco screamed that Charlemagne was going to attack Morne Noir with a company of zombies; the Marines and everyone in the village were going to be wiped out because the Marines couldn't shoot down creatures who were already dead.

What's more, the defenders of the village would themselves be turned into zombies by the Caco witch doctors and be used against the white invader.

That scared the local Haitians galley west. The village was in an uproar. It was no use assuring those ignorant natives there were no such things as dead men brought back to life by black magic and enslaved as soulless stooges by the witch doctors.

No! A zombie may be a drink on Broadway, mister, but in Haiti it's a revived corpse. The witch men are supposed to get hold of a corpse while it's still recognizable and animate it by a lot of abacadabra. Then it's dead, but it isn't dead. It walks and talks, but it hasn't any soul. It's a slave to its evil master.

If it sounds like Boris Karloff to you, the Haitians believe it. Even the educated ones. That's why there's still a law against hanging around graveyards in rural Haiti, and why some Haitians drive a stake down into a coffin after burial. The village was in a panic, and in no time at all half of the natives were out of town. I had a company of loyal Haitians in the outpost, and by three that afternoon two-thirds of them had deserted.

Well, it was a mess. I posted sentries and sent a patrol after the deserters and raced around town servicing machine guns. You may not believe in zombies, but there's a creepy atmosphere in Haiti just

the same; white man or not, a thing like that can twang your nervous G-strings.

In the midst of all this hubbub, dust, and bugle-calls, Mrs. Peabody came flying. Where? Out of her tent where she'd been washing her hair. Into handsome Terrence's arms.

I saw her hugging him under a palm tree where he'd been calmly skinning a bat throughout the furore. You can imagine the scene. Jenny Lou with that "save me, save me" clutch on the Irishman's arm. McCoy patting her head and assuring her everything was going to be all right. I went riding by just as Mrs. Peabody was appealing, "Do be careful, Terry."

"Sure, sure." He was manful. "There's nothin' to worry about. It's the Marines will look out for us. Ask the captain."

She swung around wildly and grabbed my bridle.

"Oh, Captain Glennon, do you believe in these dreadful zombie things?"

"Superstitious rot," I snapped. "But there may be a Caco attack. Stick close to the stockade; and McCoy, keep your rifle handy."

"Sure, an' in case of trouble I'll join the Marines," he promised with a grin. "I wouldn't mind a bit of action at all."

"But the zombies," the woman gasped. "The un-dead dead! An old Norwegian doctor at Jacmel told my husband there might be such creatures."

"Fiddlesticks!" I could see Jenny Lou was going to be a case—that type always goes in for seances and spiritualism—and the last thing I wanted was a hysterical female on my hands. "If the Cacos hit us they'll be only too much alive. Say, where is your husband?"

So it turned up that Peabody wasn't around. In the uproar I'd forgotten him completely; now it seemed Mrs. Peabody and McCoy had forgotten him, too. He'd poked off into the jungle that morning, neglecting to say where he was going.

It was no moment for the absent-minded professor to be meandering around in the brush; I had to send a scout out.

"Oh, but *he'll* be all right," Jenny Lou assured me. "The natives won't harm Wilfred. They're afraid of him. They call him the Great White Doctor."

Can you beat it? Well, by six o'clock the Great White Doctor wasn't found, and I was sure he was a fatality. But Mrs. Peabody knew her husband better than I did. I was in an ugly enough mood to wonder if she wasn't just a wee bit disappointed when, just at sundown, he came back.

YES sir, he came back. And how! Spurring his donkey at top speed. Rushing into camp with glasses blazing, face shining with excitement. That look on his pan, as if he'd just found the Seven Cities of Cibola or Christophe's gold mine. He came bursting into the headquarters hut where I was pacing the floor with McCoy and Jenny Lou.

"I've got it! I've got it!"

What? Listen, he held it up in front of us, capering like a monkey on a stick. Do you know what it was? I thought it was a doll, myself, when I first saw one of the things—a shabby, old leather doll that some Haitian kid had discarded.

"A midget mummy!" Peabody blared at us. "A miniature Arawak mummy! I found it in a cave up in the mountains. Look at the hair! The Indian features! Almost perfect state of preservation, and it may be a thousand years old. Isn't it a beauty!"

He laid out that beastly little relic on my table under the carbide lamp; bent over it, his goggles glowing like electric lights.

"Look! It's only sixteen inches long. Can you realize that figure was once man-size? The headhunters of Borneo shrink a head only half an inch. The Jivoro Indians of Ecuador reduce a head two-thirds. No one knows how the Arawaks accomplished this diminution. See, McCoy. A taxidermist should appreciate this work. Isn't it amazing?"

"That it is." The Irishman stooped to peer. "That it is."

"Cured and shrunk. The *whole* body! And boned, McCoy. Boned!" Peabody exclaimed over the thing as if it were some marvelous kind of codfish filet. "Probably they removed the skeleton first and stuffed the carcass with hot sand. Then they tanned it over a slow fire, patting and reshaping it as it shrunk to preserve its human form. The Egyptians possesssed wonderful secrets of embalming, and achieved high necromantic art, but they never produced a mummy like this."

Word of honor, it made me sick. He went on babbling about embalmers and mummification and the Arawak technique of body-shrinkage, and I couldn't get a word in edgewise. Zombies were bad enough in the atmosphere without that fig-dried, dwarf of a gooble-gobble on the table. I didn't care if it had once been man-size and shrunk like a shirt in the laundry. Man-size or midget, you don't want a mummy around Marine headquarters when you're waiting for a Caco raid.

I blew up when Peabody started a lecture on Arawak history. There was too much modern history going on in Haiti, right then, for me to be interested in the ancient Arawaks. I told Peabody to get himself, is wife and his mummy behind the stoutest wall of the stockade and stay there. I advised him of the impending assault and informed him we'd all be embalmed if Charlemagne's black devils broke through.

"From now on, nobody goes wandering off from Morne Noir," I roared. "All the scientific research around here will be done through the peep-holes in the stockade. If the Cacos get in they'll murder us all."

THAT ought to've thrown cold water on Peabody, but it was his wife who looked scared. She looked scared, and she looked at Terrence McCoy. I caught the frightened glance and the way her hand reached out for the Irishman's. He was sensible enough. He said to Peabody, "I guess it is gettin' dangerous around here, Wilf. We better do as the captain says."

"But I can't stay shut up in the stockade," Peabody blurted at me. "Not when I'm just on the verge of my great discovery. Don't you see what this means? It means there *are* some Arawaks still here in Haiti. The remnants of a lost tribe. They're hiding up there in the mountains somewhere. There wasn't any dust on this mummy when I found it in that cave, which indicates it was placed there recently. Probably for some religious rite."

"You'll be laid out for a religious rite if you go wandering off in those hills again," I warned. "Some Caco sniper will drill your head."

"But I've got to go," he cried. "The Arawaks are up there. I have a feeling I'm right on their trail. Don't worry about the Haitians." He turned to his wife. "They won't harm me." I am a scientist; they call me the Great White Doctor; they know I mean them no harm. I'm not worried about the guerillas. I'm seeking the vanishing Arawaks, and I'm going out to look for them. Tomorrow!"

I've heard of these scientific bugs who get a bee in their bonnet and you can't stop them for hell or high water. Peabody was that kind. All brains and no common sense. Oddly enough, then, the pop-off came from Jenny Lou.

"Wilfred Peabody!"—she glared at him across the lamp—"*Wilfred* Peabody! You say you're not woried about the guerillas. Well, how about worrying about *me!*"

"You?" I wish you could've seen the startled way he looked at her.

She stamped her foot. "Yes, me! Aren't I your wife? *Me*—Jenny Louise! Well, Cacos and zombies and murderers are about to kill us, and all you think about is your miserable mummies and research. Boohoo," she wailed, suddenly raging.

"You never think about me. Just notebooks and Arawaks and—and bugs and animals! You've never remembered our anniversary. What did you buy me for Christmas? A rain-cape, a white rubber rain-cape to wear when it rained. Now maybe I'll be caught by zombies and you talk about Arawaks."

She gave him a tearful, furious glare. *"Boohoo—"*

Another thing I didn't want in Marine headquarters that evening was a domestic scene. Still, I couldn't avoid that one: Jenny Lou in a raging freshet of tears; McCoy standing back, embarrassed; Peabody posed helpless, his eyes goggling unhappily, fumbling fingers through his muss of yellow hair as if he'd been hit over the head.

"Why, Jenny Lou—Jenny Lou!" I'll always remember the voice he said it in. Sort of gentle and plaintive. Baffled. As if suddenly out of a world of archaeology and anthropology he'd been jolted into a plane he couldn't understand.

"Why, Jenny, everything I've done—I've done for you. Hours of study. Hours of hard work. Why, I've spent half a lifetime preparing to trace the Arawaks. I thought when I found them we could settle down afterwards—live in New York. I meant to surprise you. I've saved twenty thousand dollars, Jenny Lou."

He didn't remember McCoy and me in the room. He wrinkled his forehead and took off his glasses and peered at his wife, squinting anxiously.

"I saved it for you, Jenny, yes. And I'm sure you don't need to worry about the zombies or anything. The Marines will look after us all—perfectly safe here, I'm sure. I've never had any trouble with the blacks in the jungle; and if anything by chance ever did happen to me you'd be well provided for. There's my ten thousand dollars insurance—"

You know, I felt sort of sorry for the little man right then. He seemed so well-meaning and plaintive. I was glad Jenny Lou ended the scene at that moment by putting her face in her hands and rushing out. Peabody picked up his mummy and followed her, looking queerly shrunken, himself.

McCoy, gentlemanly pretending he hadn't heard anything, lit a cigarette for nonchalance and sauntered after. I went out to change the guard, and Morne Noir settled down to wait for a night attack.

CHAPTER IV

MEMENTO MORI

I DON'T think any of us slept much that night, I know I didn't. The drums kept up their sinister telegraph, *tumpy-bum-bum, tumpy-bum-bum,* carrying secret messages to the Cacos I knew were hiding out there in the dark.

After sundown Haiti is bad enough at best, and that night it was worse. The moon-striped blackness surrounded us like Hallowe'en. The mountainside whispered and the jungle rustled. Every Haitian in Morne Noir went to bed with his head under a pillow, and I began to see zombies creeping around in the darkness myself.

The Germans think they know something about a war of nerves, but they could have taken lessons from Charlemagne. He didn't attack that night, but he'd made us think he was going to; and in the morning some of us Leathernecks were more like dishrags. I might've known Charlemagne was bluffing, and I might've guessed something else—that in the morning Mr. Peabody would be gone.

Well, when the first gray light came creeping down from the *mornes* the absent-minded professor was absent. Nobody saw him go. It had started to rain about four Ack Emma and in the drizzle he'd sneaked out of camp. With his mummy, his donkey and a knapsack full of food he was gone. Mrs. Peabody took her head out from under a blanket to discover her husband's cot was empty, and McCoy came charging into headquarters to report him missing.

"He's gone after them Arawaks," the Irishman swore. "On me beads, there was no stoppin' the little man. The Cacos will kill him sure."

Jenny Lou wailed in with her hair down. "You've got to bring him back! Terry, Terry! You've got to go after him and bring him back. It would be terrible if those witch doctors would catch him!"

"I'll bring him back," the Irishman promised. "Wilf's me best friend, an' I'll

save th' lad, sure, if it costs me my life. Keep an eye on Mrs. Peabody while I'm gone, won't you, Captain?"

He had his pumpgun under his arm, and he was all for rushing off by himself in hot pursuit; the typical wild, gallant Irishman offering to sacrifice himself at the drop of a hat for a friend. I had to grab him to hold him back. His eyes were blazing, his black hair flying, rarin' to go. It was all very brave and story-book, but he'd have run into an ambush first crack—and then there'd be two of them gone.

"You don't know the trail," I snapped. "Those snipers would ambush you in no time. Peabody can't have more than two hours' start and this rain will slow him up. We'll take horses. I'll have to go with you."

Don't think that was galantry on my part. I was sore as a boil. But I blamed myself for not having put a guard over that screwball scientist; I knew if anything happened to him I'd be held responsible. The Cacos never attacked in the daytime; I could leave Morne Noir capably officered by my top-kicks; I knew the terrain; and in emergency the only way to get something done is to do it yourself.

Well, it was just like something in a ham drama: McCoy swearing vengenace on all Haiti if anything happened to his little pal—the bugle tootling—the rain slamming down—soldiers running up with horses—Mrs. Peabody weeping and carrying on in the other women always get into when men start running and shouting.

Just before we rode out of camp she raced up to throw her white rain-cape over McCoy's shoulders—she was mending his waterproof for him, it appeared—and she begged him to be careful and keep dry.

"Oh, Terry, it's so brave of you to go! I always knew you were like this, Terry!"

There should have been a movie camera. Hearts and flowers and the band playing *The Stars And Stripes Forever*. Episode Three in *The Perils of Pauline*.

WELL, there were perils up there in the Haitian jungle, all right, but not the phoney Hollywood kind, bound to come out all right in the end with everyone living happily ever after. We galloped out of camp, McCoy and I, into a rainstorm like Noah's Flood. Lord, how it rained!

The trail was a stinker. At first, where it was mud, we didn't have any trouble following Peabody's donkey-tracks; but on the mountainside the path was a brown river, there weren't any tracks, and the downpour was almost blinding.

That wasn't the worst part. The worst part of it was that Peabody was heading straight into the Caco country, right up there into the unknown wilderness of the Santo-Domingan border. That was Charlemagne's home territory, and Peabody was going for the heart of it, and going like the wind.

I told you that spindly little crank had the energy of a dynamo and a bee in his bonnet. He must've generated some of that single-track ambition into his donkey. How he got a burro to move at such a pace I don't know, but he held the lead on McCoy and me for all our horses. By noon we were twenty kilometers out of Morne Noir, heading into the worst kind of mountain limbo, and I was worried.

"It's a miracle he's gotten this far," I told McCoy. "Where the devil does he think he's going? Has the fool gone mad?"

"It's that mountain ahead." McCoy pointed to a rain-swept peak looming high above distant escarpments. "He thinks the Arawaks are somewhere up in there. That's where he found the mummy."

"He'll find something worse if he bumps into Charlemagne's batch. They'd like nothing better than to get their knives into a white man."

"I'll kill the dirty sons," McCoy swore. "They butcher little Wilf, and I'll murder every black scut of them. Mrs. Peabody once in Africa nursed me through appendicitis, an' if she wants Wilf back I'll get him if I have to go to hell for it. Don't forget my name's McCoy."

His face was white and he had a bleak

glint to his eye that convinced me he'd be plenty good with his rifle. He was one tough Irishman. I'd have turned back a couple of times that afternoon if it hadn't been for McCoy.

That was the devil of a trail. In the muck our horses slipped, floundered, fell. The downpour battered us; the jungle clawed us, and the nerve-strain was brutal. Every turn of the path I expected to run into a fusillade of Caco bullets. Only there was no stopping Terrance McCoy.

Wrapped in the white rain-cape Peabody's wife had lent him, hunched in saddle over his gun, his eyes snapping from side to side, he foraged ahead refusing to let me go in the lead. "Sure I tracked gorillas in Tanganyika; it's a poor gossoon I'd be if I couldn't trail little Peabody." He was a good tracker, too, and he picked up the trail where it was like a needle in a haystack.

He taunted the snipers to nail him by galloping up on some exposed ridge for a look-see where I wouldn't have dared to show my head. He gave an exhibition of nerve and recklessness second only to Peabody's; and the wonder is that all three of us—Peabody, McCoy and I—weren't murdered that afternoon.

BECAUSE murder was loose in that Haitian wilderness, mister. I'm here to tell you it was. We came to a wild valley where the path forked in two detours around the valley rim, and at that path-fork McCoy dismounted with a frightened yell.

I couldn't see anything. The valley was blurred with fog and rain, and the steaming, green jungle below looked like a vast bowl of cooking spinach. But McCoy's sharp eye saw something.

"Look!" He pointed. "See how that mud's churned up? Looks like a herd of donkies stampeded here." He stooped and picked something out of the weeds. "Peabody's notebook! Holy Saint Patrick! He was here not half an hour ago. And he's been ambushed!"

McCoy fired a scared stare across the valley, and my hair bristled. No sound save the water bucketing down. The rain made a gray twilight that was like the dimness at the bottom of a pond; I could imagine Cacos lurking in the jungle like sharks in a cover of seaweed.

"Maybe he escaped 'em. Maybe he's out there alone." McCoy swung up into saddle with an oath. "Come on, Captain. I'll take th' north side an' you take the south. We'll meet at the other end of th' valley."

Splitting forces was a dangerous maneuver in that place, but McCoy was off in a shower of mud and water before I could halt him. It was a foolhardy business, but there wasn't any chance to argue. I set my teeth and started along the southern circuit, cursing McCoy and Peabody and the colonel who had wished them off on me as if there weren't enough trouble for the Marines.

Somebody was going to get killed in all this nonsense, and I didn't like the possibility that it might be me. All right. I hadn't gone half a mile down that southern valley-rim before I heard the deadly crackle of gunfire.

I counted three shots, then a slew of them strung together in a volley. You couldn't tell where they were coming from —cliff walls bounced the echoes around— and in the rain I couldn't see the other side of the valley. I did a Paul Revere back to the path-fork, expecting anything.

BROTHER, I got it! The trail McCoy had barged off on led along the edge of a cliff where a goat wouldn't have wanted to walk. Whew! that was a nasty road. The edge sheared down into a chasm that dropped a mile; I glimpsed a dark lake far below, and there weren't any guard rails at the sharp turns.

At the third turn I had my hat shot off —clean as a whistle, and I never even saw where the bullet came from. At the fourth turn I crept around the shoulder of a big gray boulder, figuring I might as well die then as later, and saw McCoy.

His horse had been shot, and the poor brute was lying dead across the trail like a barricade, and McCoy was down behind the horse in a welter of blood, mud and rain. He'd been shot through the left hand and there was a bullet in the calf of his left leg, but most of the blood was from the horse although at first glance I thought the Irishman had been riddled.

He was writhing in pain, though, and full of plenty of fight. Sprawled down behind the horse, his back toward me, he was aiming his rifle at the jungle above the path, snapping shots at the rain-fogged undergrowth.

"Come down an' get me, ya black scuts! Murderers! Hellions! Kill my best friend, will ya? Come out in the open and fight!"

His oaths came faint through the gun explosions; I legged it around the boulder and dropped flat beside him. He sobbed, "They won't come out an' fight the McCoy. They've gone. There was a couple of them. They got Peabody."

About fifty yards ahead the trail made a hairpin bend around another jutting boulder. Peabody's little donkey was dead there in the path, one hind leg sticking out over the cliff-edge. There was no sign of Peabody. It made me sick.

McCoy stopped snap-shooting and doubled up over his bleeding hand. No shots came back. We waited about twenty minutes, then crawled up to Peabody's donkey and looked over.

The cliff sloped down there like the side of a steep roof before it dropped off sheer. Peabody's sun helmet, knapsack, compass and other gear were strewn down through the bushes to the overhang. Then there was a thousand-foot drop through rain and mist to the lake at valley-bottom.

McCoy sobbed, 'He's gone. I saw it happen. I was just overtakin' him and he turned in his saddle to wave at me. Them black scuts popped up in the bushes up there and let him have it. Then they fired at me. Poor little Wilf!" He put his face in his blood-smeared hands. "It was awful, seein' him go over!"

Just as we were leaving the scene I picked up that Arawak mummy out of the mud. That miserable thing, too, had been riddled. I counted three bullet holes through its lousy little chest, and there was blood all over it as if it had still had life instead of sawdust in its veins. I took it along with me, grimly thinking it might make a nice memento for Mrs. Peabody.

If I'd suspected how this Peabody affair was going to end, maybe, I wouldn't have been so smart.

CHAPTER V

THE CORPSE DOESN'T BITE

DID you think that shooting in the mountains was going to be the end of it? Then you don't know Haiti. And you don't know Mrs. Peabody.

I put McCoy to bed with his hand bandaged, his leg tied up and a shot of anti-tetanus in his arm; then I went around and gave Jenny Lou her husband's sun helmet, knapsack, compass, spectacles and other belongings including the miniature mummy. She took them, stunned.

"I'm sorry," I said. As decently as possible I described what had happened, playing up McCoy's reckless heroism to make her feel a little better. She stared at me with pale eyes like empty holes.

"You—you didn't bring back Wilfred's body?"

I described the treacherous mountain path with the slope and the jumping-off place and the lake a thousand feet below. "McCoy saw him fall from the donkey," I said. "When we looked over—he wasn't there."

She shivered. She said queerly, "I suppose that mountain lake was awfully cold."

Shock showed starchy on her face and I backed out as hastily as I could, leaving her there in her tent with her husband's belongings and empty cot. McCoy was a sick man and needed tending—he'd bled pretty badly on the return trip to Morne Noir—and I'd rather expected Jenny Lou to look after him; but I couldn't ask her when she didn't offer to.

So I had other things to worry about besides a widow. Charlemagne was still a menace; the drums had begun to thump at sundown; I had a Marine post to run, and I spent another sleepless night.

McCoy had just about recovered from the bleeding and anti-tetanus by morning, and I was glad to have the Irishman out of sick bay. He asked for Jenny Louise—"Th' poor widow!"—so I went around to fetch her and found her sitting with Peabody's left-overs in her lap as when I'd last seen her the night before. She looked at me as if I'd interrupted a trance.

"It's cold," she said.

It wasn't. The rain had quit before dawn and the sun was coming up with a red bang, one of those steaming, hot tropical mornings when you want to lie down from fatigue the minute you get up. Only something in the blond woman's face sent a coolness over my skin.

"Mrs. Peabody." I touched her arm.

"It's cold," she said. "The water in that mountain lake must be very cold. Captain Glennon"—her voice was flat and toneless as her eyes looked up at me—"do you suppose it's cold enough to preserve my husband's body?"

"Come, Mrs. Peabody," I urged. "You must put those things away and have some breakfast. Terrence McCoy's been asking to see you."

I tried to take the things out of her lap, but she hung on to them, especially that foul little mummy with three bullet holes through it and its shrunken hide stained by her husband's blood.

"I'll keep them," she said in that flatted monotone. "I'll put them away, and then I'll come with you. I want to see Terrence McCoy and thank him for trying to save Wilfred. It's my fault Wilfred died, and I'll never forgive myself. If I hadn't talked to him the way I did—if I'd been a better wife—he'd never have gone off alone to find the Arawaks."

You can't say anything at a time like that—especially when something may be partially true—so I didn't say anything. Women are funny, all right. Aside from the shock which any normal person gets from news of sudden death, I hadn't imagined Mrs. Peabody cared a toot about her husband. Now it seemed she thought a lot of him, after all, and she'd got it into her head she was responsible for his demise.

She had something else in her head, too. Something which brings us back to what we were discussing at the start of this story.

"I'll keep all Wilfred's things for him," she told me in that white-lipped monotone. And then my temperature on that tropic, Haitian morning dropped to zero. "I'll keep all Wilfred's things for him, and I'll wait for him. He may come back. The Haitians may find his body there in the lake. If they roused him from death—turned him into a soulless slave—I'd be the only one who could save him. If Wilfred were to come back as a zombie—"

SWEET Christopher! Wasn't that a thought! That dome-headed little professor coming back as a zombie! The woman meant it, too. She had a look on her face that made my stomach feel full of mint jelly.

I set right out to erase such thoughts from her mind, and I talked to her all morning. Then I told McCoy about it, and he talked to her all afternoon. Do you think we could talk the Widow Peabody out of it? From what I'd tabbed as a silly, wishy-minded, frivolous blonde, she'd turned overnight into a woman of gray rock.

She had two ideas, and you couldn't budge her. First, that she was to blame for her husband's death. Second, that the Haitian witch doctors might find his corpse and send him back as a dead-souled bugaboo.

Now you take a woman like Jenny Louise, all coyness and giddy romance; put her up against real tragedy and she can change into granite. I learned about women from her. Granite? Her rigidity was iron. Her lips set. Her mind fixed on something and stayed that way.

Not that she was crazy. About everything else she was reasonable and calm. She wasn't hysterical, either. Mostly she answered our arguments with an unbending silence. Somewhere up on the New England coast I once saw the statue of a fisherman's wife posed as a woman calmly awaiting her husband's return from the sea. The features were expressionlessly implacable. The statue was called, "He Is Not Dead." Jenny Louise was like that.

Only that zombie business was a worse angle, and the statue of a fisherman's widow around Morne Noir didn't relax anybody's nerves. After a week of it, plus the suspense of waiting for Charlemagne, I was ready to be retired to the hospital for mentally disabled Marines.

"We've got to get her out of here," I told McCoy. "I'll risk an escort and you can take Mrs. Peabody to Port au Prince."

McCoy gloomed over his bandaged hand. "Sure, an' I'd like to get her out of here, Captain, an' myself, too. But she won't go."

"Won't go?"

Wasn't he right! If Jenny Lou wouldn't budge from her ideas, neither would she budge from Morne Noir. Her determination to remain was founded on the granite of her certainty. Go to Port au Prince, when her husband might return to Morne Noir? Nothing doing.

That was the day I got firm about it. I pointed out to Jenny Lou that this zombie nonsense was a superstition brought over by the Negro slaves who came to Haiti from Africa. No amount of black magic could rouse a corpse from the grave. The thing was a lot of terrorism by which unscrupulous Haitian witch doctors frightened the peasants out of pennies, and Charlemagne was using it as *Schreklekeit* to stir up the natives. Dead men, I declared, could not come back to life.

"Yes," Jenny Lou agreed, "dead men do not come back to life. But the Haitian witch doctors revive them to a half-life, a soulless animation. They are dead, yet they are not dead. The un-dead dead. The Norwegian doctor at Jacmel said it was a possibility."

I wished I had that Norwegian doctor on hand to wring his neck. Some drunken old exile, I suppose, who'd discussed the subject of body-resurrection with Peabody.

Well, there was no use telling Jenny Louise I didn't believe in body-resurrection or Peabody-resurrection. She had it fixed in her mind that her husband had fallen into that mountain lake, that the water would be cold enough to keep him in a suitable state of preservation, that these Haitian wizards might find him and give him the zombie business. As long as there was a possibility, she was going to stay.

McCOY worked on her. He tried argument, cajolery, persuasion. That Irishman tried all the blarney out of Erin, but he couldn't convince pale Jenny her husband wasn't going to show up as a walking dead-head.

"I've heard the drums, Terry," she'd say. "I've heard the Negroes talking. Why do they bury their dead at a crossroads and keep a relative close by three days with a rifle? Why do they drive stakes into their graves? There are mysteries in Haiti unknown to the white men, Terry. No, until I've seen him have a Christian burial I can't go and leave Wilfred."

Until she'd seen him have a Christian burial!

"There's only one thing to do about it," McCoy declared to me. "Lord knows I hate the job, but we won't move th' widow till it's done. I've got to go up there in the mountains an' bring back her husband's body."

All right. What with worry and desertions and the Caco situation like smoldering dynamite, all this spooky zombie talk was driving me bughouse. I rigged up an expedition to go up there to that lake with pike poles and grappling hooks and fish out Wilfred Peabody. The last minute I decided to leave my old sergeant in charge of Morne Noir and lead the fishing party myself, so as to see the job was done right.

I had a couple of reasons for consenting to such a risky jaunt. I was as anxious to have Wilfred Peabody buried as his widow was. Jenny Lou's talk had gotten around Morne Noir, you can bet, and those telephone-eared Haitians were twice as excited as they'd previously been. If the Great White Doctor's wife believed in zombies, who were they to question the un-dead dead? It added a lot of weight to Charlemagne's threat.

WELL, off we trekked to that mountain lake—a squad of Marines, McCoy and I—on as sour an angling expedition as I ever hope to make. We found the place easily enough, and we chopped a path down to the valley-bottom and put out in a couple of Haitian canoes we'd dragged along.

This time we had a beautiful day. The jungles were green, the surrounding mountain peaks were blue, the sky was azure and that lake was clear as crystal. For a mile across the water was sheer glass and everywhere you could see bottom. I think it must've been a crater lake, for the bottom was smooth and polished as a floor of obsidian and there weren't any weeds. Water in a reservoir couldn't have been cleaner or clearer.

I didn't enjoy the fishing, though. Not because there weren't any fish—that water was too weedless and cold, and I didn't see as much as a minnow. But I don't like trolling for dead men. The rest of the party didn't fancy it, either. I noticed McCoy's complexion in the next canoe, and his face was a clammy oyster-color.

We didn't have a good catch. We located the fishing ground under the steep cliff where the slope at the top made an overhang, and we threw in our lines. We trolled up and down for an hour. We didn't get a bite.

It wasn't exactly sport, what with expecting any minute a rifle-crack to sink your canoe or a charge of Cacos to come rushing from the jungle. But nothing happened as we moved on around the lake, casting and still-fishing and probing the crystal water with sharp eyes. We didn't see a fish or anything that resembled a fish. We didn't get a touch, much less a strike.

At sunset we reeled in. We'd dragged and explored the whole lake. No doubt about it, the fishing was rotten. Peabody's body, rolling off that overhang where his donkey still lay with one leg over the path-edge, must have plunged down the cliff-wall where it came down sheer into the lake. But Peabody's body wasn't there.

Veins bulged on McCoy's forehead as he desperately tried to explain to Mrs. Peabody. She was waiting at the stockade gate when we got back. Like that statue of the sailor's widow. I wish you could've seen her eyes when they saw us riding in empty-handed.

"Don't be thinkin' things now, Jenny Lou!" McCoy appealed. "It's just that we couldn't find him. It's a big, deep lake, y'see, and it wouldn't be likely he'd stay right at th' spot where he fell in. I didn't know the exact spot, either, for I only saw him roll off th' path where the slope went down, an' there was a lot of bushes an' I didn't see where he musta went off the edge. It's likely he floated a while, too, an' drifted a bit. Or maybe some big wild animal—well—swum out after him."

Mrs. Peabody's stare took on that empty look. "There aren't any big wild animals in Haiti," she reminded softly. "If anything swam out after him it would have been the Haitians who shot him."

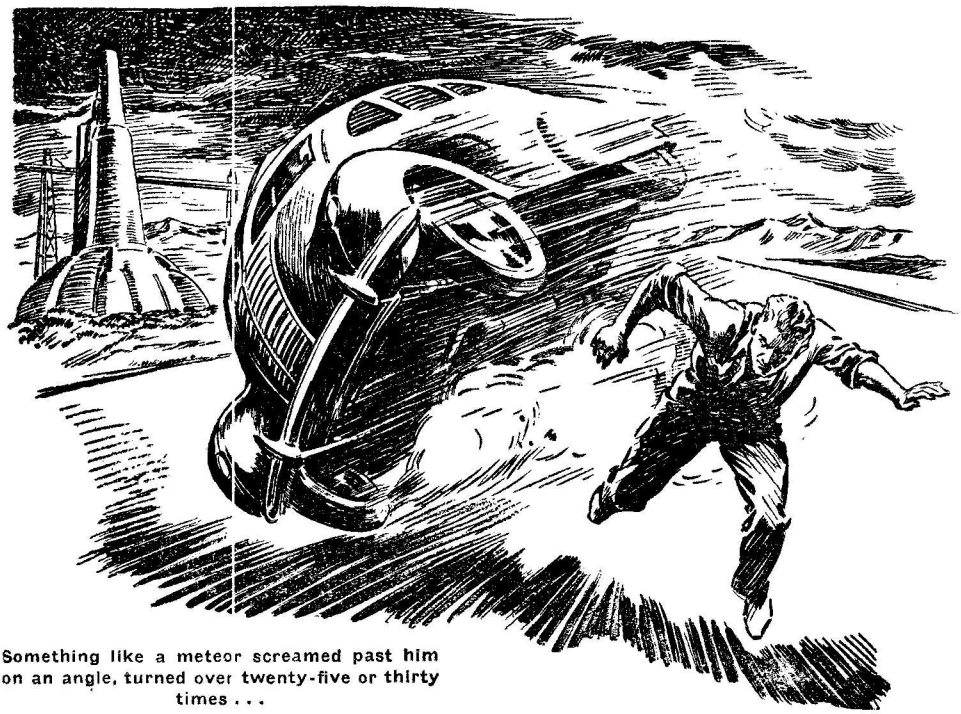
McCoy groaned. "Please, Jenny Lou!"

She said softly, "So the Cacos did get his body. You know they did. They've got him to turn him into a zombie."

"You can't go on like this," McCoy told her thickly. "Wilfred's dead, an' I saw him killed, an' whether they got his body or not they can't work no resurrection. Now please be sensible, as Wilf would've wanted, and let me take you away from this—out of Haiti."

When she answered her voice was quiet. "I'm going to stay."

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK



Something like a meteor screamed past him on an angle, turned over twenty-five or thirty times . . .

He Didn't Want Soup

By PAUL ERNST

Author of "The Great Green Serpent," "The Man Next Door," etc.

Your food's on that conveyor belt, fella. You don't pay, but you eat it and like it. And if you don't have ulcers, you go to jail, where the doors are always open . . .

BROD VARNEY'S first surprise was caused by the fact that he was standing up. He had been sure that when he came to he would be lying on the sidewalk with a curious crowd around him.

His next surprise was his surroundings.

He had fainted, or anyhow things had gone all black, outside in front of Greer's store. He had evidently been hauled indoors somewhere, but not into Greer's store or any other building near Greer's store, for there were no buildings like this anywhere in that neighborhood. He knew because he had been hauling beer in that vicinity for six years.

This building he was in seemed kind of like a church, for the ceiling was maybe fifty feet up and the walls were gray stone and there were columns like oak trees scattered around.

But the stuff in it didn't look like stuff you'd find in a church. It looked like what you'd find in a big school or maybe one of them technical colleges. On the mechanical side, only you could just get a hunch it was machinery without being able to see what the machinery really was.

Like the big thing beside him. It was a great big greenish metal box inside which wheels whirred softly but with no way to look in and see what the wheels did.

Brod shook his head a little. He had lost consciousness on the sidewalk of a suburban neighborhood in front of Greer's store and he came to in this joint that looked like a cathedral, beside a big box that whirred, and with nobody around or paying the slightest attention to him. Which was better than having a crowd of folks gawking at him, at that.

He was kind of ashamed of his fainting spell. He was thirty-one, five-eleven, pretty husky, and he'd never done a thing like that in his life before.

He had a sort of explanation for it. He had been standing at the tailgate of his truck, feeling good, and he had stretched widely and drawn an extra-deep breath—and then fallen into a black feather-bed. A guy had told him once that when you did that you took in an extra amount of oxygen, inflating lung cells clear down that weren't often fully inflated, and that it acted like a knockout drop and keeled you over for a minute. It didn't mean that you were weak or anything.

Nevertheless he felt ashamed of it and he stared around with his jaw out and his wide shoulders squared to show whoever had carried him in here that he was not at all weak.

He still didn't see any one, but he heard a voice so near that it made him jump, and then an answering voice.

"I still don't think there is any answer to such an equation."

"Well, we can try, can't we?"

BROD thought maybe the voices came from the head-high box, but on stepping around it he saw two men. He hadn't heard them before because they had been silent, figuring on a big block of paper at which both were still staring.

There was a young man and an older one, but the only way you could tell that one was older was by his graying hair. His face was as unlined and youthful as that of the young fellow. The two were dressed alike, in dark blue that might have been serge, which had very narrow pants-legs that were tight at the ankles as if held by bicycle clips.

The younger man heard Brod, and turned. He looked at Brod with a lot more surprise than Brod thought was warranted. His eyes went up and down Brod's frame as if he had never seen dungarees with a brewer's name on the back before.

"Hello," he said. "Who are *you?*"

"I'm Brod Varney," said Brod. "Thanks for picking me up in front of Greer's."

"Greer's?" said the older man, looking even more puzzled than the younger one.

"Sure. Greer's store. Allentown Road."

It didn't seem to make sense to either man so Brod said, "Well, maybe somebody else brought me here for you two to treat, but I don't need a doc. I feel all right now."

"Do you?" said the older man politely.

The younger one was pinching thoughtfully at his jaw.

"I don't think I've seen a costume quite like that before," he said. "Where did you say you came from?"

Brod felt irritated. He couldn't be very far from where he had fallen, and Allentown Road was an important enough thoroughfare for any one near it to be familiar with it.

"I'm from Harrisburg," he retorted, naming the city on the outskirts of which was Greer's store.

"Harrisburg?" repeated the older man, still looking puzzled.

The younger one was smiling a little.

"I think I understand," he said. "The fellow must be from Section 3. Some of the hill country, you know. Quite isolated. Jon Terry went through there several years ago and he said one wouldn't believe how quaint the people are and how they cling to old beliefs."

The older man nodded. He turned half back to his work.

"Please leave," he said to Brod, pleasant but firm.

Brod ran stubby fingers through his

thick yellow hair and fe t like taking a poke at the guy, but he didn't because the sudden idea came to him that maybe he was in some kind of mental institution.

Not far from the big greenish case was a door, open to the summer warmth. He went toward it, while the two men at the high bench bent over the paper. He heard the younger man say something about XY over infinity, and X equalling Time while Y would be the unknown quantity; and the older man said something about not taking chances with the formula machine; and then Brod stepped through the doorway into the sunlit morning.

He got his third surprise then.

The churchlike room was in a building that looked about a mile high, and all around the building, instead of Harrisburg streets, there was nothing at all. Just open, flat country with this one building sticking up like a sore finger.

"Maybe *I'm* the one that's nuts," muttered Brod. "Where the hell's Greer's store and Allentown Road? And where the hell's my truck?"

He walked farther away from the building across the sidewalk, if you wanted to apply that word to a stretch of cement at least five acres in extent. This business began to look sort of serious.

EVIDENTLY he had not fainted, after all, at the tailgate of his truck. His mind had clicked off, somehow, but his body had kept on working. What'd they call that? Amnesia. He had gone wandering around without any memory of who he was or what he had set out to do.

Then, back at that sanitarium, he had snapped out of it. But where on the map was this sanitarium, and the tremendous building that housed it? Had he bummed a ride or ridden the rods to parts unknown?

He had never heard of any big building like this in the open country in Pennsylvania. Though of course he knew that every once in a while somebody built an institution or an observatory or a scientific laboratory out in the wilds.

A man came out of one of innumerable doors to the building. He had on a blue suit with narrow pantlegs and tight ankles and wore a derby that was as round in the crown as a black bowl. Brod walked toward him.

"Pardon me," he said, "where am I?"

The man's eyebrows went up a little in his rather blank, pink face, but he was pleasant about it.

"Tower twelve," he said. And he turned and walked into another of the doorways.

Brod realized that his approach had been bad. If any one had come up to him and abruptly asked where he was, he would have thought the guy crazy. He would be more gradual with the next man; maybe it would be best not even to ask where he was, but to inquire the way to a restaurant or some other place where by a little detective work he could locate himself.

A restaurant would be best, he thought. In a restaurant there are often road maps and local advertisements placing the vicinity. Besides, it was about noon and he was getting hungry anyhow.

It was lonely waiting on the wide concrete expanse next to the somehow lifeless-looking building. Brod was getting jittery and didn't mind admitting it to himself. Also he was getting nervous about his truck and his job.

It was about noon now. It had been almost noon when he got to Greer's store. He couldn't have traveled this far from Harrisburg in just a minute or two. It must be the next day. . . .

Gee! It could be two or three days—or a month! They'd have him chalked up as dead, back at the boarding house. Maybe they'd already wired his folks.

A MAN came out of a door. At first Brod thought he was the same one he had seen a moment ago, but then he saw that this one was bigger, though he had the same pink and unlined face, and wore a blue suit and derby hat.

"Excuse me," said Brod. "Can you tell me where the nearest restaurant is?"

It seemed to be Brod's luck to keep on meeting dim-brains.

"Restaurant?" said the man, shifting his derby back on his forehead.

"Yeah. You eat, you pay," growled Brod.

"Pay?" said the man. "Pay! What a curious old word!"

He stared at Brod as the two in the churchlike place had done, looking him over from head to foot with amusement and perplexity in his eyes.

"I guess you're from Section 3," he said. "They're thinking of making a government reserve out of that, and well they should. No other spot is so rich in Americana. Do you still pay for things in Section 3?"

"Listen, I never got anything in my life I didn't pay for," snapped Brod. "If you do, it's no good. I pay my way and I do what I like. See? Now, where's a restaurant?"

"Restaurant. You eat, you pay." The man nodded. "What you mean is, you want to go to a food-belt. But there is no payment necessary. Save perhaps in your own small back-country section, no one pays for anything any more."

"You mean—not for anything at all?"

"Not for anything at all," said the man patiently.

"Clothes, or cigarettes, or houses?"

"Nothing," said the man. "Nothing at all."

"There must be a catch in it," said Brod suspiciously.

"Don't you even read of these things in Section 3? But, no matter. I'll guide you to a food-belt. You might have trouble finding it if you're such an utter stranger."

Brod followed the man into one of the doors.

"Whup!" he exclaimed, clutching at the man's shoulder to keep from falling.

The floor he had stepped on was moving. Then he saw that there was more moving floor ahead of him, strip after strip of it, with each strip moving faster than the one before. Five men, in blue suits and bowler-type derbies, suddenly whizzed past on the end strip so fast that he could barely make out their features.

"I sure feel like a hick," said Brod humbly. "I didn't know there were gadgets like this around anywhere in the country."

"Beg pardon?" said the man.

"Nothing," mumbled Brod.

He followed him over strip by strip till the last and fastest was reached. They dipped down, sped along. The man went back over the moving walks to the slow one, and stopped off on a stationary strip in front of a vaultlike door.

"Just go in there and say you want food," he said to Brod. Then he tipped his derby and walked onto the moving paths.

Some women passed Brod. They had pink, pretty, unlined faces and wore a kind of sailor hat, and light blue dresses that were long and straight like tubes. He wondered if they were sisters, all wearing the same thing like that. They were about of a size, too.

Women, and men, passed from view. He went into the vaultlike door.

IT WAS the queerest restaurant Brod had ever seen. It didn't look like a restaurant at all. In fact it didn't look like anything except a long, long line of doors set in one side of a ten-foot corridor, with the left-hand wall blank.

At the near end of the corridor was a raised desk with a man seated at it. The man wore dark blue serge, and on a hook behind and to his right was hanging a derby hat. As Brod got nearer, he could see that part of the desk-top in front of the man was of frosted glass, and that there were moving figures on it. The man was staring at it and now and then marking something down on an endlessly unrolling tape beside it.

"12:18, 39A," he said as Brod stopped in front of the desk. That was all.

It wasn't enough for Brod.

"Is this where I get something to eat?" he asked.

The man looked up from the frosted glass, then, with surprise on his pinkish, healthy, unlined face. As he stared at Brod, he frowned a little.

"Well!" he said. "I don't know where you came from, but I'm not sure that you can come in here dressed like that."

"Why not?" said Brod, frowning himself.

"No one has ever come in here dressed in such clothes."

"What's the matter with my clothes?" snapped Brod. "Didn't you ever see dungarees before, or do you drive a truck in white tie and tails?"

The man didn't reply, and from his face it was obvious that the reason he didn't reply was that he had no notion what Brod was talking about.

"I don't know whether it is against the rules or not," he said doubtfully. "I should think it would be. Such nonconformity . . . I'll see."

He reached under the desk and took out a large book. He began flipping through this, while Brod stood first on one foot and then the other in front of the tall platform. He didn't like it and was about to say so with untrammeled emphasis when the man sighed and closed the book.

"I don't see anything in here about costumes," he said. "I should think there would be a rule. But there isn't. 12:18, 39A."

"If you'd just talk sense," Brod began. But a group of men in blue serge and bowler derbies was filing toward the desk from the door and the man behind the desk was no longer looking at him. Brod decided to watch the newcomers and do whatever they did.

The man at the desk droned a number to each, in a phonographic tone. They filed down the corridor and took up their stations in front of various doors. Brod saw then that each door had a number on it; and a short walk brought him to one numbered 39A. The 12:18 must mean time, but time for what he didn't know.

He tried the doorknob and it wasn't locked so he opened the door. A man looked up at him from a small metal table with complete amazement on his face. Such was his expression that Brod, without in the least knowing why, felt as if he had walked unannounced into a woman's boudoir.

"Sorry," he said awkwardly, backing out.

He saw that the other men were waiting patiently, each at a door; and then, after four or five minutes, the doors all opened. It was 12:18.

The man from 39A walked past Brod with a look of unutterable reproach on his pinkish, smooth face, and Brod walked in.

IT STILL wasn't like any restaurant Brod had ever seen. There was a six-by-eight cubicle with a metal table and chair, with the door at one end and a wide opening like a window at the other. From the window came a constant hum.

He went to the window and looked out into what seemed another corridor, only the floor of this was of some polished dark stuff and was up within a few inches of the window sill. It moved steadily under the sill like a slow dark river, or four-foot ribbon, and its movement was the thing that seemed to give forth the humming sound.

Brod scratched at his thick yellow hair and found the thing it reminded him of most. It was like an assembly belt in a factory, only there were no metal parts on it to be bolted together as they moved along. Instead of nuts and bolts, there was food.

The belt was lined off at regular intervals, and the spaces were numbered. Some were empty and on others were metal dishes with always the same sequence: a bowl of stuff that must be soup because it was liquid and steaming, a small dish of greenish stuff that might be vegetables, and a larger dish with a square of meat and a mound of white that could or could not be potatoes.

As Brod stared, hands came out from the space to his left and took up the three dishes in a space on the belt numbered 38A, so then he got the idea. The man in each cubicle took the food on the space with the same number.

He found the whole idea sort of unappetizing, and he was very disappointed because if there was one thing he could be sure of it was that never in *this* eating joint would he find a clue to his whereabouts. There was no calendar with Reading, Pa.

Planing Mills on it, or window card advertising the Wilmington Strand Theatre; nobody calling from one table to another that Jake had just had a flat down the road from Chester—nothing like that to hint at location.

A wave of nostalgia swept over him for a homey, dust-flecked, raucous, smelly diner with hungry guys on each side of him along a row of stools. And then he saw 39A lettered on the moving belt and reached out to take the food.

There was just about time to remove the three dishes and turn with them to the metal table; but he took only two: the greenish stuff and the meat and—with luck—potatoes. The soup he left. The dark liquid didn't look very tasty, and at best he didn't go much for soup. The dish wafted slowly to the right on the humming, sleek belt, and he tasted the whitish mound beside the meat.

It was not potatoes. What it was, he couldn't guess, but it tasted flat and hot and gooey. It all came of getting stuff for nothing, he decided gloomily. When you didn't pay for things, you took what they gave you and liked it. All these fellas running around in blue suits and derbies didn't seem to mind, but Brod did. He liked a choice of things.

He ate morosely.

He was aware of a growing murmur of voices to his right as he ate some of the greenish stuff and the whitish stuff and the meat which was not meat but something made of ground-up roots. The sounds came in his window like the twittering of a flock of birds that were frightened by a hawk and didn't know what to do about it.

Brod's social ear didn't read any meaning into the twittering, excited voices, but his mechanical ear read volumes a moment later.

First the soft humming of the food belt stopped, then there was a tight second of silence, and after that there was a grinding, screeching bedlam as if a couple of auto accidents were all happening at once. Followed another silence. The belt had jammed.

BROD stuck his tow-head out the window and looked down the line. Every other window had a head in it, all staring the same way. Outside 39A the belt had come to rest at the space numbered 17C, on which were a plate of dark, steaming liquid, a dish with greenish stuff in it, and a plate bearing a square of what appeared to be meat and a whitish mound that might have been potatoes.

The head next to Brod's turned and presented him with a pinkish, reproachful face.

"What did you want to do that for?" said the man.

"Me?" said Brod. "Do what?"

"Leave your soup on the belt."

"I hardly ever eat soup," said Brod, feeling on the defensive and not yet quite knowing why.

"You should have taken it," said the man sternly.

"But I don't like soup," said Brod.

"That makes no difference."

"You mean you have to take soup even if you don't like it?"

"Of course. It contained today's vitamins, B, G, R and O."

"Go on," said Brod. "There ain't that many. They've never got beyond I."

The man ignored this. He only got more reproachful.

"Where are you from, anyhow, that you don't consume what you're supposed to? I never heard of such lack of coöperation. It's definitely antisocial. You see the result."

"Look here," said Brod. "You mean to say my soup stopped the belt?"

"Certainly. What could you expect?"

"You knew it would stop the belt when it sailed past your window?"

"Yes. This is one of the new type food-belts without the rake-off bar at the end. It was assumed that every one would act coöperatively, and that the bar was a vestigial relic no longer needed. You let a metal soup dish get into the gears—"

"If you knew all this, why didn't you reach out and take the dish off?" demanded Brod.

The man looked almost frightened.

"My goodness, I couldn't do that! It wasn't on my number. One never takes food from any but one's own number."

"Well, if one hasn't any more sense than that," said Brod waspishly, "then one will have to expect trouble."

THE door of his cell opened and two men came in. Each had a bright blue hat-band around his derby, instead of the conventional black, and Brod sensed authority.

"Are you ill?" asked the first one, with bright concern on his smooth, pink face.

"Me?" said Brod. "No. Never felt better."

The bright concern faded into petulance.

"We assumed naturally that you were ill and unable to take the soup from the belt."

In the face of a growing host of things that Brod was finding it impossible to explain by any standards known to him, he managed to keep his temper.

"I just don't like soup," he explained.

"What has that got to do with it?" demanded the man, mouth open in surprise.

The second man was looking Brod over with his brows wrinkled. Brod was beginning to be self-conscious about his clothes. He felt more and more like a freak, without the blue serge and derby worn by every other man; and the feeling increased the sense of loneliness that had been deepening within him.

"Subversive," murmured the second man.

"You mean," said the first man patiently, incredulously, "that you didn't take the soup merely because you don't like soup?"

"That's right," Brod nodded.

"Definitely subversive," murmured the second man.

"I'm afraid you'll have to come along with us," said the first.

"So I'm pinched," said Brod bitterly, "just because I don't like soup."

"Pinched?" The man gave it up with a shrug.

The two turned and went out, taking it for granted that Brod would follow. He did so. Wherever he was, and whatever funny kind of cops these were, it would probably go harder on him if he resisted than if he went without argument.

The two walked down the corridor away from the vault-like main entrance and eventually went through an arch on the opposite side from the myriad food doors. They herded Brod into an elevator, rose quite a distance, and preceded him into a churchlike room much like the one in which he had found himself after recovering from his unconsciousness, or whatever it was that had hit him at Greer's store.

The men with the blue hat-bands led him over to a corner where there were two bareheaded men. There was one young fellow, and an older one; though the faces of the two were pink and lineless and identical, and the only way you could tell one was older than the other was that he had graying hair.

At first Brod thought they were the two he had seen behind the big metal box called a formula machine. Then he realized that

this young one was smaller and slimmer than the other young one.

ONE of the men with the blue hat-bands said to the older of the two bareheaded men, "Mental case. He didn't take soup. It jammed the food-belt quite badly."

"Didn't take soup?" said the older bareheaded man. "Nonsense. Every one takes soup. How else could the proper vitamins be assimilated?"

"He didn't take it," shrugged Blue Hatband. "That's why we came here with him. Better put him under the I Q 'scope."

The older man nodded.

"Where is he from, in those curious garments?" he asked. "The back country of Section 3?"

"I don't know. Keep him in detention pending further orders, after you have examined him."

The men with the hat-bands went away. The younger of the bare-headed men wheeled a machine like an upended coffin over to Brod.

"First we'll have a look at the ulcers," he said, in the pleasant, indulgent tone used by all doctors everywhere. "If they're misbehaving too badly, they could be the cause."

"The cause of what?" demanded Brod. "I ain't got any ulcers."

"Just step inside," said the little man. "This won't hurt a bit, if that's what you're worrying about."

Brod got reluctantly into the coffin. A flat plate was pulled down over his front and a switch was turned. From a crack in the plate a little blue-green light escaped.

The little man gasped, looked long and hard at the plate.

"The fellow's right, Turner," he said finally. "He *hasn't* got ulcers."

The older man stared, then said peevishly, "Don't jest, Hulkins. Everybody has ulcers."

"He hasn't."

The older man stepped hastily to the plate and looked into it for at least four minutes. He stepped back, shaking his head.

"This is serious, Hulkins," he said. "This is something to study exhaustively. You, my man," he said to Brod, "go into the next room and stay till you're called."

Brod got his fists unclenched before they had done any damage, and went to the next room.

It was huge, two-storied, with twenty-foot windows swung high to the pleasant summer air and wide doors opened back to the sun. There were a lot of guys in the room, in blue serge and derbies, with pinkish, blank faces. They were all talking together and the hum of their voices filled the chamber.

Brod felt a panic intensification of the lonesomeness that had oppressed him since finding himself in this strange part of the country; and this was funny when you came to think about it, because with a lot of people around he should have felt less like the last person alive in a world of fog and ice.

ONE of the men in the room stepped up to him with a fine wide smile on his healthy face.

"Good afternoon, friend," he said, tipping his derby, "I am the prison host and it is my duty to make every one feel welcome here. I trust that your stay with us will be pleasant if not long."

"Wait a minute," protested Brod. "Prison? You mean this is a prison?" He looked at the wide-open doors and windows.

"Yes," smiled the host. "But you'll find we're a nice bunch of chaps here. All in for small misdemeanors—at most a murder or so; no antisocial acts or anything serious like that."

I've got to get out of this joint, Brod thought. He pointed to the nearest open door.

"What's beyond that?"

"Beyond the door?" said the host, puzzled. "Nothing."

"You mean, no guards or anything?" said Brod.

"Why would one have guards at a prison?" laughed the host. "By very defini-

tion of the word, such a thing is unnecessary. A prison is a place from which one is not allowed to go until permitted by a higher authority."

"Oh?" said Brod.

He walked to the door, with the host chatting comfortably beside him. But the host's smiling pink face expressed stark horror when Brod stepped over the threshold onto sun-warmed cement.

"Here! Where are you going?" he bleated. "You can't do that. You mustn't leave. This is *prison.* Don't you understand?"

"You're going to stop me?" said Brod, squaring his shoulders.

"Me? Naturally not. I'm the host. I don't know whose duty it would be to stop you. No one has ever left, in my time. You *can't* leave a p—"

Brod went along the wide area of concrete before the two-story stone mushroom in which he had been. The cornerstone of the building was not in his mind at all, and he was scarcely conscious of even glancing at it; but then he stopped as if some one had brought him up on a string, and then he really looked at the numbers and stuff chiseled there, and then he felt almost as he had at the tailgate of his truck when blackness was reeling up to engulf him.

"It ain't there," he said slowly, while his eyes dwelled on the stone.

"The stone-cutter that did that was drunk," he said, after another moment.

The first alternative appealed the most. The numbers simply weren't there; he was having eye trouble along with the rest of his cockeyed afflictions.

HE LEFT the cornerstone with its mad implications, and turned right, away from the building. There was a half-mile of lawn ahead, and he stepped onto that, feet sinking gratefully into soft turf. It was about the only familiar sensation he had experienced since stretching his arms wide and drawing in an unusually deep breath in front of Greer's store.

Far ahead, to the west, a line of low mountains or high hills made a wavy line against the sky that seemed vaguely familiar. But he told himself determinedly that it was *not* familiar, because there were crazy implications in that, too. Implications he simply refused to face.

Panicky, he gave it up, shoving the whole business from his mind.

Behind him the commotion caused by his unorthodox departure from prison was dying in distance. Ahead was more concrete, and he wandered lonesomely toward it. This, he saw as he got nearer, was a road. But it was a monster of a road, a road to end all roads.

It was, he judged, a quarter of a mile wide—perhaps more than that; as smooth as glass, and with no seams in it as far as he could see. He was almost frightened by the size of the thing. It made him feel like a very small ant on a very large tabletop.

"Nuts," he said aloud, to exorcise fear. He started to cross it just because he felt that way. There was no other reason; he had no cause to think that the other side would be any closer to Harrisburg than this side.

Far off on the horizon there was an expanding dot. He gauged it, and kept on going. He was used to fast-moving cars. Give this one sixty miles an hour—no, give it eighty—and he still had plenty of time to get across in front of it.

The dot grew like a falling star, and Brod cried out hoarsely and leaped ahead. Something like a meteor screamed past him on an angle, turned over twenty-five or thirty times, righted itself drunkenly with its snout pointing in a direction opposite to that in which it had been going, and wobbled back on a flat tire till locked brakes could stop it.

The car, so shaped that it looked vaguely like a whale on wheels, had run off the concrete by now and settled in a ripped-up patch of turf. Brod ran back to it, shaking a little from his own escape and from a conviction that all inside the thing were dead.

His fear was unfounded, he saw, as he neared the car. A man, a woman and a

little boy got dazedly out. The man took off his derby hat and fanned his pinkish face with it. The woman twitched at her tubular blue dress and straightened her sailor lid. The little boy began to cry.

"Why, Albert!" exclaimed the woman, looking at him in wonder. The little boy shut up, with a scared expression. And then Brod got there.

Relieved that he hadn't been the cause of a couple of deaths, Brod found himself getting sore.

"You!" he said to the man. "What's the idea, running down pedestrians like that? Where do you think you're going?"

The man stopped fanning with his hat and put it back on his head, still looking pretty unsteady from the shaking up he had received.

"I was going to tower twenty-two," he said. His tone was so courteous that it made Brod madder than ever.

"How fast were you going, anyhow?"

"Why, I'm sure I don't know. Two fifty or seventy-five, I guess."

The woman sighed audibly and stared at Brod out of round, incurious eyes.

"We'll be late getting home," she murmured. "But I suppose it's all for the best."

"Hey, what kind of a car you got there?" said Brod, forgetting to be angry. "You mean two-fifty an hour? And how is it you're not cat's meat after such a crash?"

The man didn't answer. He was looking at his automobile with an anguished expression. Brod walked to it.

THE car was immense, longer by far than his truck. It had a few scratches on it from the recent rough treatment, but no dents. He peered through a window that was incredibly unbroken and saw deep cushions with straps over them like the straps over airplane seats.

"My tire!" said the man who owned the car, getting his anguish into words at last. "Look! It's flat! It's ruined. And it has less than a hundred thousand miles on it."

Brod felt grudgingly in his pocket. The tires on this super-super job were large and fancy looking. He didn't know whether a week's pay, drawn by check yesterday afternoon and cashed this morning, would buy a new one or not.

"I'll pay for it," he said gruffly. "After all, you wouldn't be in this fix if you hadn't slewed out and missed me."

"Pay?" said the man, staring as hard as had the man from whom Brod had asked the way to a restaurant. "I'm not quite sure I know . . . I can get a new tire without delay at tower twenty-two, but how in the world am I to get there on this flat one?"

It was Brod's turn to look dumb. The boy whimpered just once, looked frightened at his own sound, and sucked his thumb. The woman didn't look any way at all. "I'm sure it's all for the best," she said.

"You don't have to run on a flat, do you?" said Brod. "Haven't you a spare?"

"A spare tire?" echoed the man. "Yes, I suppose I have. I've never looked."

"You've never changed a tire?" said Brod.

"No. Why should I? They run about two hundred thousand and then before they get badly worn you trade them for new ones. I don't believe I know any one who has ever changed a tire."

"They must blow out in accidents, sometimes. Like yours."

"It has been over two years since I've even read of an accident." The man looked severely at Brod. "The only thing that would cause an accident would be if some one wandered absent-mindedly onto a road. And no one ever walks on a road."

"How do they get across, then?"

"They use the underpasses. There's one every mile. . . . This tire! What shall I do?"

"If you have a spare, you must have tools to change it," argued Brod. "Where would they be?"

The man doubtfully swung out a trapdoor in the side of his whale. There was a tire, and there were tools. It took even Brod, mechanical-minded as he was, quite a time to figure out how to use the things. They were so simple they baffled him. But he managed, and changed tires, with the man, woman and boy staring with eyes that came near to bulging.

"You did it!" breathed the man, when Brod let the car down again. "I'd never have believed it."

"Do it again," pleaded the little boy, awe in his eyes.

"Now, Albert," said the woman comfortably.

"Can I give you a lift down the road?" asked the man.

Brod considered, then shook his head.

"I'm not going that way," he said.

"Which way are you going?"

"I—I don't know," admitted Brod. Then he cleared his throat aggressively to get the thin, scared tone out of it.

"I could get you there awfully fast," said the man brightly.

"I'm sure it would be for the best," added his wife.

Brod shook his head again, hands in pockets, shoulders slouched and uncertain.

The man in the blue suit settled his derby more firmly on his head and got in the car. His wife followed, trim in tubular dress and sailor hat. The little boy took one more look at the genius who could change a tire, and got in too. The door slammed.

The car rolled ever more swiftly down the tremendous road.

Brod turned back toward the prison building, since he couldn't think of any place else to go. He had never felt so lonely in his life, and he hadn't a notion on earth what to do about it.

But in a moment that feeling began to subside.

HE STARED at the cornerstone of the prison building as he walked back toward it. He couldn't see the insane numbers chiseled in it from here, but he knew now that they were there, that he hadn't been having spots before the eyes when he saw them. And he knew they must be true figures.

A.D. 2429. And the building looked to be twenty to thirty years old.

The slanting sun high-lighted that line of hills, which he was now prepared to admit that he had seen many times from west of Harrisburg. He was not in some foreign land.

His shoulders began squaring. Twenty-four hundred and something A.D., instead of 1940!

Somehow, he had been jumped ahead about five hundred years into a funny state where nobody dast do anything without orders from higher up, and where you loomed like a large man in a world of pigmies. All right, admit it, accept it as a fact. Impossible, but true. So what?

Brod was almost smiling now. It was occurring to him that an out-sized guy who was regarded as a miracle worker just because he could change a tire, might go a long way in this goofy setup. Maybe clear to the top, if he wanted to get tough about it.

He began wondering comfortably what the President, or whatever they called the head man now, would be able to get to eat. Something, he'd bet, besides that thin, rummy-looking soup.

All of them were staring through the yellow smoke at the extraordinary passage of the babu

Crisis in Calcutta

By L. G. BLOCHMAN

Author of "The Magnificent Babu Dutt," "The Dak Bungalow," etc.

I

THE great transport plane swooped down from the leaden Bengal skies and rolled across the glistening runway, still wet from the recent hot rain. Lieutenant Tom Kellogg, R. N., on special detail, was the first to step from the cabin.

He wore a white suit of mufti but his erect, military bearing hinted at his calling as he walked briskly toward the offices of the Dum Dum airdrome. Under one arm he clutched a bulky leather briefcase with deadly seriousness—a seriousness that was not reflected in his youthful face or his eager blue eyes.

Desirous of expert operatives for aiding secret investigations? Consult Babu Gundranesh Dutt. Same is specialist in counter-espionage, celebrated for daring and beautiful employment of smoke-screens

A moment later he stood in a telephone booth, the briefcase still under his arm, fanning himself furiously with his sun helmet. The perspiration streamed down his cheeks as he waited for his number and silently cursed the Oriental lethargy of Calcutta telephone operators. He knew of course that time meant nothing in India, with fifty centuries of history behind and all infinity ahead, but—

"Hello, Nancy!" He smiled suddenly into the instrument. "Yes, I'm in Calcutta. . . . Hold on, now. Don't be *too* happy, because I'm not to be stationed here after all. I've got to go on to Singapore tonight. . . . I can't tell you about it now, but I've five full hours before my plane leaves again. Of course we will. Every minute of it. Look, there's a quiet, secluded verandah at the Harabagh Gymkhana Club. We'll have a dish of tea and— Don't you dare say *perhaps* a kiss! . . . That's better. Right away, darling."

Lieutenant Kellogg replaced the instru-

ment gently, almost tenderly, and left the booth. Instantly he stiffened, and his elbow contracted against the briefcase which he had nearly forgotten.

A man was bending down in front of him, picking up the contents of a wallet which had spilled on the floor. He was a sturdy, square-framed man, built on the lines of a steel filing cabinet, a man with too much jaw and almost no lips, with tiny pig-like eyes beneath black bushy brows. For the past two days Tom Kellogg had seen the man constantly wherever he went, and he knew it was not by coincidence. Stepping quickly behind him, he stalked out the front of the building and got into an automobile.

The man with the black eyebrows lost no time in picking up the rest of the papers from his wallet. Kellogg's car had scarcely pulled away from the airdrome when the man with the eyebrows climbed into a taxi. To the bearded, red-turbaned Sikh at the wheel, he said: "I'll give you ten rupees *bakshish* if you can follow that motor ahead."

The chauffeur followed easily until they crossed Circular Canal into Calcutta proper. Then the taxi was swallowed up in a tangle of native traffic. Bullock carts, horse-drawn *gharris,* buffaloes clogged Sham Bazaar Street, and they moved only a few feet at a time. Before they had reached Chitpur Road, Lieutenant Kellogg's car was far ahead, with a hopeless confusion of yelling cart drivers and honking chauffeurs in between.

It looked almost hopeless.

The man with the eyebrows turned around—and knew instantly he was lost. In a car right behind him was a stern-faced, red-haired man who had haunted him in Delhi and been a passenger in his plane. He was not really surprised to see him, but he chuckled grimly.

"The fox chases the dog," he said aloud.

The bearded Sikh turned around. "What was that, *sahib?*"

"Never mind the car ahead," said the man with the eyebrows. "Turn off into the first side street and take me to the Hooghly Palace Hotel."

A FEW doors down Chowringhee from the Hooghly Palace, facing the fresh green expanse of the Maidan, was a large, well-appointed shop which bore the sign:

HUGO BRENNER
Expert Swiss Watchmaker
CLOCKS, CAMERAS, OPTICAL SUPPLIES

Ten minutes after he had registered at the hotel, the man with the eyebrows entered the shop.

"What are you doing here, Minson?" demanded Hugo Brenner coldly. He was a tall, cadaverous, pale-eyed, white-haired man. The muscles of one eye were contracted slightly as though from years of holding a watchmaker's magnifying glass, giving him a strange, sardonic expression.

"I had to see you, Mr. Brenner," said Minson, the man with the eyebrows, placing his watch on the counter. "I had to tell you it's hopeless."

"Why is it hopeless? Have you lost your man?"

"No, he's in Calcutta. I know where he is."

"Does he still have the code books?"

"Yes, he—"

"Then it is not hopeless. Why are you here?"

"Because it's impossible for me to do any more. I'm followed. There's been someone from Intelligence on my trail since Delhi."

Hugo Brenner expelled breath sharply between his bloodless lips. "And you dare come here?" he muttered, glancing nervously at the street door. "After all the care I've taken to make myself above suspicion? After all the years—"

"They won't connect you with me," Minson hastened to explain. "I dropped my watch in front of the reception clerk at the hotel. The clerk told me to come here. It's quite plausible."

Hugo Brenner nodded toward a door behind him. "Then come inside," he said.

The hot twilight of the back room was a clutter of clocks, dismantled cameras, a work bench seemingly littered with bits of metal and machine parts. Yet there was

undoubtedly order in the apparent confusion, since the rest of the room was arranged with systematic neatness: Filing cabinets, trim tool racks, shelves with bottles in well-labeled rows.

"And now, Minson," said Hugo Brenner, "how do you propose to explain your failure to Berlin?"

The man with the eyebrows paled. "I did my best."

"Not enough!" snapped Brenner. "If all of us had done only our best we should not have taken Scandinavia. 'My best' would not have conquered the Low Countries and France. We must do the impossible. The Fuehrer demands it."

Minson made a gesture of helplessness.

"Where is this young lieutenant now?" Brenner pursued.

"He is meeting a woman named Nancy for tea at the Harabagh Gymkhana Club."

"Does he still carry the same briefcase? I must congratulate you, by the way, on your accurate and detailed description of the case from Karachi. It is the only useful thing you have done."

"The same briefcase," said Minson. "He sleeps with it."

"Ah." Brenner turned and bent down to open a small safe. "It is lucky I am here," he continued, as he spun the combination, "not only to think for you, but to anticipate your stupidity. Does this seem familiar?"

He brought out a leather case that was a close replica of the one Tom Kellogg clutched so tightly under his arm. Minson's tiny eyes grew round.

"Identical," said Minson.

BRENNER undid the straps, removed a steel box which he unlocked. Inside the box, packed in a nest of spikes and jagged metal fragments, were six sticks of dynamite, dry cells, an induction coil, a web of wires, and a clock.

"What time does the lieutenant's plane leave for Singapore?" he asked.

"Seven o'clock."

"Good. Then at eight o'clock it will be over the Bay of Bengal." With a pair of tweezers Brenner adjusted metal contacts on the dial of the clock. "Even you, Minson, must realize that if the British know this code is stolen, they will change it again—and we will have worked for nothing. On the other hand, if the plane should fall into the sea, the code would be thought merely destroyed and another copy sent out. Meanwhile I should have ample time to photograph the pages on microfilm. Do you follow me, Minson?"

"Yes, Herr Brenner. The brief cases must be interchanged, so that Lieutenant Kellogg's plane is destroyed at eight o'clock."

Brenner locked the metal box, replaced it in the briefcase. "Can you do it, Minson?"

"I've already told you, Herr Brenner, that—" Minson shrugged.

"Very well." The strange, squinting eye of Hugo Brenner seemed to leer. In the other eye there was a cold, hard glitter. "You understand of course that I cannot undertake this action personally, Minson?"

"Yes, Herr Brenner."

Brenner crossed the room, opened a drawer, brought out a copy of the Bengalee *Indian Mirror*. He tore off a corner of the newspaper, handed it to Minson. It was an advertisement which read:

Bargain Prices for Hot Weather
GRAND INTERNATIONAL
DETECTIVE BUREAU
Chief Operative
GUNDRANESH DUTT, P. I.
Special Low Rates for Secret
Investigations During Monsoons
No. 216¼-B, Dharmtolla Street, Calcutta

"Memorize that address, Minson," Brenner said. "There is a fat clown of a Bengali *babu* there who fancies himself a private detective. I am going to hire him to change the briefcases for me. He has just brains enough to do the job perfectly and not enough to know what it is all about. Can you remember the name and address?"

"Gundranesh Dutt, 216¼-B, Dharmtolla Street."

"Then destroy the paper. If you do not hear from me by six o'clock, you had better try to make contact with me through the

babu—discreetly. Refer to me as Mr. Y. *Heil* Hitler."

"*Heil* Hitler," said the man with the eyebrows.

II

BABU GUNDRANESH DUTT was in the depths of despond—which was very deep indeed, inasmuch as the *babu,* sunk in spirits, represented some three hundred pounds of brown Bengali dejection.

Things were not going well with the Grand International Detective Bureau. The garish all-seeing eye which marked the dingy quarters of Grand International in Dharmtolla Street was badly in need of repainting, the monsoon rains having wreaked such havoc with its reds and blues and greens that it now resembled a sunset over Howrah more than an eye.

For weeks nobody had climbed the three flights of dark, rickety stairs to the detective bureau except the *babu* himself, the landlord demanding his rent, and the sweeper in quest of eight annas back pay. Reflecting upon this fact, Gundranesh Dutt sat at his desk, sadly rubbed his three chins, and wondered how much longer he would be able to postpone going back to work as an English-speaking Hindu clerk at sixty-five rupees a month.

When he heard footsteps in the stairway, therefore, the *babu's* heart beat rapidly within his monumental chest. And when the door opened, revealing a scrawny little Hindu wearing a blue turban, steel-rimmed spectacles, stringy mustache, and a voluminous white *dhoti* which ballooned down to his ankles like divided skirts, the *babu* maneuvred to his feet with an exclamation of pleasure.

"Cousin Danilal!" he cried. "What joyous surprise! Why are you deserting Barrackpore for pitfalls of metropolis?"

Cousin Danilal Dutt did not reply at once. He dutifully shook both the *babu's* plump hands, casually slipped an elastic band around his furled black umbrella, took off his congress gaiters, and tucked his bare toes under him as he sat down in one of the two chairs. He had been chewing *pan* and his lips were very red.

"You are perhaps not remembering, Cousin Gundranesh," he said at last, "that am principal financial shareholder in Grand International Detective Bureau. When dreams are not bearing dividends, sleeping partners should rouse to wakefulness. Is detecting enterprise not amassing profits as anticipated?"

"Quite contrariwise, am regretful to state," the *babu* replied. "Have observed great lull in criminal wrong-doing during monsoon season. Rogues doubtless have not yet returned from hill stations. Perhaps we should open branch bureau at Darjeeling for summer-time detection."

Cousin Danilal thoughtfully fingered his Gandhi-like mustache. "And did fresh advertisements in Bengalee *Indian Mirror* lure no clients?" he asked.

The *babu* wagged his huge head. "Only case of Eurasian lady from Kidderpore, seeking lost canine," the *babu* replied. "Am fearing was perhaps displeased, since lady is refusing payments."

"Refusing? *Badnemi!*" exclaimed Cousin Danilal. "Perhaps you were unsuccessful in recovering animal?"

"Was quite successful. However, lady was somewhat finicky about accepting return of Russian wolf-dog recovered while roaming Dalhousie Square. Was insisting on return of Maltese poodle instead."

"Have heard Eurasian ladies are often capricious," said Cousin Danilal. "What—"

He broke off. Someone was knocking at the door.

Gundranesh Dutt was panic-stricken. "Greatly fear it is landlord demanding backward rent," he whispered. "What to do, Cousin Danilal?"

Danilal held up a thin finger for silence. From beneath his *dhoti* he produced a package.

"Was just now bringing additional detective equipment from Barrackpore," he said, unwrapping a luxuriant set of jet-black false whiskers. "Now is moment for experimental demonstration. Stand at back-

side of door, Cousin Gundranesh. Will inform landlord you have departed to Benares on important case."

The knock was repeated. Cousin Danilal tucked the ends of the false beard under his blue turban, went to open the door.

A TALL, cadaverous man with a peculiar squint in one pale-blue eye stood at the threshold. He was distinguished-looking almost to the point of arrogance in his elegant pongee suit and spotless white topee.

"I should like to see Mr. Gundranesh Dutt," said Hugo Brenner.

"Greatly fear Gundranesh Dutt is not visible at present time," said Cousin Danilal, holding the door partly closed. "What, please, is nature of transaction?"

"Extremely private," said Hugo Brenner, keeping his hands behind him.

"Perhaps, in such case—"

Cousin Danilal did not finish. Hugo Brenner's right hand appeared, making a quick flourish with a Malacca stick, thrusting the point of the stick against the door like a fencer delivering a vital stroke. The door swung back, neatly whisked off Cousin Danilal's false beard, came to a resounding stop against the mountainous stomach of Gundranesh Dutt. Air wheezed from the *babu* as from a punctured tire.

Brenner strode into the room, placed a paper-wrapped bundle on the desk, returned to lock the door. He pointed his cane at the amazed *babu*.

"Are you the Hindu detective I've heard so much about?" he demanded.

The *babu* beamed "The same," he said.

"Have you ever seen me before?"

"Regretfully confess contrariwise," said the *babu*. "Am not familiar with name."

"You may call me Mr. Y," said Brenner. "I cannot reveal myself further for reasons you will presently understand. I am considering entrusting you with an extremely delicate and confidential mission—if I decide you are trustworthy."

"Grand International Detective Bureau is notorious as safe depository for most intimate secrets," the *babu* assured him.

"I said confidential."

"Ah. Please meet Cousin Danilal Dutt of Barrackpore, Mr. Y. He is faithful alter ego of detective bureau. You may bare utmost secrets before bosom of same."

"I want to be sure of your patriotism," said Brenner. "Are you a *swarajist?*"

"*Swarajist?* What nonsense! British *raj* always displays kindest disposition toward self. Am constantly reciprocating."

"What is your attitude toward the war?"

"Am somewhat of wrong shape for personal military activity," sighed the *babu*. "However, Cousin Rama Mookerji is *sepoy* in Punjabi Rifles. Family is thus showing desire for defeat of German despots."

"Good," said Hugo Brenner, taking a chair. "I am going to ask you, too, to help the cause. As you no doubt know, the enemy has many spies in India. One of them, posing as a British naval lieutenant, has managed to steal some important code books.

"We know where he is, and could arrest him immediately. However, we are anxious to give him full liberty for the moment, so that he may lead us to his superiors. We want to destroy the enemy organization at the top. On the other hand, we are anxious to recover the code books—now.

"To meet both requirements, I have devised a plan in which I want the co-operation of your talents. The codes are being carried in a leather briefcase. In this package here I have a replica of that briefcase. Your job would be to interchange the two cases without the lieutenant—or rather the enemy agent who is posing as a lieutenant—being aware of the change. Are you capable of a task of this sort?"

"Quite," said the *babu* promptly. "Have you negative opinion, Cousin Danilal?"

"Am foreseeing no drawbacks. Removing briefcase seems childish play after previous exploit of removing safe from Yezdah Mihr Bank."

"We accept," the *babu* declared. "What is honorarium, please?"

"ONE moment," Brenner said. "Before I retain you, I want to be sure you realize the seriousness of your task. These

are war times and human life is cheap. You may be killed, if you do not succeed. If you are not skillful in your work, the enemy will kill you. If you breathe a word of this to anyone, or if you are not absolutely faithful to your duty—if you allow the codes to fall into any other hands—I shall be forced to kill you myself. Is that clear?"

"Hindu people have somewhat nonchalant regard for killing," said the *babu.*

"According to our Vedas, death is merely way-station on road to next incarnation," added Cousin Danilal.

"Well enough. Is either of you familiar with the Harabagh Gymkhana Club?"

"Quite," the *babu* replied. "Was once acquainted with *mali* who tended gardens of same."

"Good. Then you will have access to the servants' quarters, which I think is essential to our project. First of all, let me show you a photograph of your man." Brenner produced a snapshot of Lieutenant Tom Kellogg getting out of a plane at Karachi. "Study it well, so you will recognize him."

"Has quite handsome face for secret agent," the *babu* commented.

"Further identification, of course, will be the briefcase, which never leaves his side. He will be having tea at the club with a lady named Nancy—on the verandah, probably. At least I hope it is the verandah, because your task will be simpler then. There is a tall hedge that grows along the verandah, which will be excellent for observation and perhaps one of you may work from behind it, if your man is seated close enough.

"Now, my suggestion is that the other of you create a disturbance inside the club house, not too far from the verandah. Perhaps it will be a fire in the kitchen. Perhaps a drunken brawl in the billiard room. Does either of you drink?"

"Only occasional dram of ginger beer," said Cousin Danilal.

"Good. It will be better if you only act the drunk. But remember, the disturbance must be violent enough and close enough to distract the people on the verandah, so that the briefcases may be changed. Perhaps you had better pick a fight with the *khidmatgar* serving on the verandah. Upset a table or two. Accuse him of being too friendly with your wife, perhaps."

"Mrs. Dutt has negative fondness for *khidmatgars,*" the *babu* objected.

"Choose any drunken pretext you wish," Brenner said. "And remember this: Time is important. Our man is leaving Calcutta at seven o'clock this evening. He will probably leave the club before six. So give yourselves plenty of leeway. And remember that once you have the other briefcase, you are marked men—marked for death by the enemy. You must take all precautions in getting the case to me, and to no one but me. Keep it concealed. Be sure you are not followed. Take—"

"Have no fears, Mr. Y," the *babu* interrupted. "Grand International Detective Bureau is quite expert at deceptive strategems."

"Then I'll leave the briefcase with you. Don't unwrap it until you have reached your destination. I'll be waiting for you here in this office at six o'clock. And remember that failure may mean death. Until six, then."

Hugo Brenner started for the door.

"Mr. Y. Question, please."

Brenner turned. The *babu* coughed apologetically.

"Grand International is most patriotic of detective bureaus," said Cousin Danilal. "Notwithstanding, cannot completely neglect pecuniary—"

"Of course. You must excuse me." Brenner took some bills from his wallet. "Here are two hundred rupees. If you succeed, there will be five hundred more. Satisfactory?"

The *babu's* eyes bulged. "Quite," he said.

II

WHEN Brenner had gone, Gundranesh Dutt stared at the hundred-rupee notes with joyous disbelief. Then, still clutching

one bill in each hand he caught Cousin Danilal in a fervent, bear-like embrace, squeezed the little man until something cracked.

"Bas!" gasped Danilal, struggling to free himself. "You are fracturing scapular bones, Cousin Gundranesh!"

"Humble apologies. Was delirious at good fortune."

Cousin Danilal backed away, examining the thick nickeled watch that he wore around his neck on a loop of string. Luckily the crystal had survived the crushing affection of the *babu*. He held the watch to his ear. The ticking was as resonant as ever.

"What to do first, now that we are secret agents, Cousin Danilal?" the *babu* asked.

"First am suggesting brief meditation on ways and means," said Danilal. "Am of opinion that British Intelligence Service is somewhat lacking in intelligence."

"In what manner, lacking? Mr. Y appeared to self as quite mental person."

"Was suggesting methods not in accordance with modern warfare. Therefore am proposing ignoring same in favor of up-to-moment devices."

"Please quote instances," said the *babu*.

"Smoke screens," said Cousin Danilal. "Was recently reading London newspaper abandoned in gentlemen's room of Barrackpore cantonment. Observed that mechanical troops of Germans crossed French rivers while hiding selves in own smoke clouds."

"Am still in darkness, Cousin Danilal."

"You are remembering fireworks shop of Babu Asutosh Bannerji, who fabricates squids, petards, and Bengal firepots for Diwali festival?"

"Quite."

"Babu Bannerji also fabricates small smoke-bomb for eight annas per item. Bombs are somewhat deficient in noise, but generate profuse smoke in handsome yellow colors. Now, Cousin Gundranesh, instead of making disturbances by clumsy drunken trickery, as Mr. Y is suggesting, why not—"

"Shabash, Cousin Danilal! Am in agreement. What brain power you are developing! What genius!"

"Come," said Danilal, smiling modestly. "Pick up alternate briefcase. We must start work."

The staff of the Grand International Detective Bureau consumed a full hour in leisurely preparation of its first excursion into the thorny fields of international intrigue. Looking very much like a fat hen and a skinny bantam rooster, the *babu* and his cousin strolled down Dharmtolla Street, discussing the matter of transportation.

In view of Mr. Y's emphasis on secrecy, Cousin Danilal argued that it might be a breach of trust if they took even a chauffeur or a *syce* into their confidence. Therefore they rented for the rest of the day a *bund gharri*—a closed, box-like carriage with shuttered windows, drawn by a dejected, half-starved white horse. Danilal himself would handle the reins from the *syce's* seat.

As he climbed up, Danilal examined the stock of loose hay which lay under the seat in accordance with the well-established habit that Hindu *gharri*-horses have of eating between meals.

"Am just now contriving secret means of concealment for pseudo-briefcase," he called down to the *babu*. "Kindly propel same upwards."

He extended his hands. Gundranesh Dutt tossed the wrapped case with blithe carelessness, happily oblivious of the fact that it contained sufficient dynamite to redistribute the two Dutts, the carriage and the horse over an abruptly devastated half-acre.

Cousin Danilal caught the package by an awkward corner, juggled it, caught it again just as it was about to slip from his grip.

"Somewhat heavy," he commented. "Climb aboard, Cousin Gundranesh. Let us proceed to outwit enemy."

THEY made another stop at Booghban Paul's Bazaar, where Babu Bannerji had his fireworks shop. It took some time

to make a proper selection—at the proper prices—from among the Bannerji line of smoke bombs and other daylight fireworks.

The manufacturer was particularly anxious to sell them a novelty number he had devised for the coming Diwali festival—a bomb that not only gave off beautiful red smoke, but also whistled shrilly in the process.

"Whistling bombs quite in accordance with principles of modern warfare," said Cousin Danilal. "However, am of opinion that perhaps red color is somewhat ostentatious. Please quote judgment, Cousin Gundranesh."

"Suggest asking cost of same," said the *babu*.

The red-smoke bombs, it seemed, were ten annas apiece.

"Greatly exorbitant," the *babu* declared. "Am convinced yellow-color smoke will be proving sufficiently deceptive, even if deprived of whistles."

So they bought three non-whistling bombs—earthenware globes the size and shape of large pomegranates.

They also roamed the bazaar to buy a bamboo cage containing three live chickens, which was to be the *babu's* excuse for entering the kitchen of the clubhouse. And while they were about it, they bought some sweet *halwa* to munch while journeying to their destination.

The Harabagh Gymkhana Club was one of the regulation escapist temples which the British have erected in the outskirts of their cities in India for the worship of that distant ideal of all homesick expatriates: home. Here they could play British games, indulge in British small-talk, look at British vegetation, and for a few hours every day forget they were consigned to the far, tropical outposts of the Empire.

There were *talipot* palms growing on the golf course, and a huge banyan tree shading the tribunes beside the tennis courts, but from the immediate vicinity of the clubhouse, India was rigidly excluded. Not a palm nor a *peepul* nor a mango tree was allowed here.

Only trees and shrubs and flowers of the temperate zone—those which could be made to grow in the hot, humid climate of Bengal—met the gaze of the *sahibs* and *memsahibs* who strolled across the green lawns or sat upon the verandah of the Harabagh Gymkhana Club.

It was late afternoon by the time the *babu* and his cousin jogged through the service entrance of the club grounds with their closed *gharri*, the chickens, the smoke-bombs, and the dynamite-laden briefcase. Meeting no opposition, they executed a half-circle until they came near the hedge which hid the verandah. Cousin Danilal reined his horse to a stop.

"Am proposing brief reconnaissance," he said.

The *babu* obediently got out, waddled up to the hedge, peered through the branches at the ladies and gentlemen having tea and *chota-pegs* and light nourishment.

"Have located presence of enemy spy," he said. "Is seated conveniently near frontier of verandah. Is squeezing briefcase between ankles below table. Above table is squeezing hands of young lady with curly brown hair and laughing brown eyes. Lady seems quite beautiful owing to pink cheeks and surplus sex appeal."

"No doubt female spy," commented Cousin Danilal. "Have heard same are chosen for seductive qualities."

"Greatly fear, Cousin Danilal, that aperture between hedge branches not quite suitable for passage of own circumference. You are not averse to executing snatch of secret code books in place of self?"

"Quite agreeable. You will then assume command of laying down smoke-screen from inside."

DANILAL drove the *gharri* around the corner of the clubhouse and stopped. He fumbled in the hay under the driver's seat for the wrapped briefcase.

Gundranesh Dutt inserted the smoke-bombs under the top of his *dhoti*, giving his enormous girth a strange, lumpy contour. He picked up the cage of chickens.

"Good cheer, Cousin Danilal," he said.

"Luck, *beshakk!* And much smoke."

The *babu* entered the clubhouse kitchen and sought out the cook. It was a little confusing because there were numerous cooks, all very busy.

"Bawarchi!" he said, putting down the cage of chickens. *"Murgh lata hai."*

Nobody seemed to pay him the slightest attention. One cook was occupied in decorating a cake with pink and white icing. Another was basting a roaster full of golden-brown fowl. A third was cutting bread for sandwiches.

Waiters in long white tunics and red turbans came and went, carrying trays. The sight of so much food made the *babu's* eyes bulge. He was not a connoisseur of European delicacies, but the merest fragrance of cooking made him ravenously hungry. He was almost forgetting what he had come for, when someone shoved a tray loaded with canapes into his hands and pushed him toward the swinging pantry doors.

The *babu* sauntered through the pantry, entered the dining room. The dining room was deserted, but through the wide doors to the verandah he heard laughter and the clink of glasses, saw white napery and gay clothing. With reluctance he set down the tray, took one of the smoke-bombs, placed it in a potted plant, struck a match.

There was a faint sputter, then a great cloud of thick, yellow vapor belched from the earthenware sphere. The *babu* was delighted. He quickly put the second sphere in another potted plant, ignited the fuse. He was lighting the last one when some flaw in manufacture caused the second clay pomegranate to detonate with a sharp explosion and an enormous eruption of sulphurous fumes.

Startled by the report, the *babu* dropped the third bomb. Spitting and fizzing, it caught in the loose folds of his *dhoti,* promptly began spewing saffron-colored fog.

The *babu* jumped, shook himself, jumped again. The smoke-bomb remained caught in the *dhoti.* The *babu* bounded toward the verandah, moving with unbelievable agility for one of his weight.

"Arson!" he yelled. "Fire! *Ag!* Help! Incendiary conflagration now in progress! Help!"

THE *babu* stopped yelling to cough. The Bannerji yellow-smoke bombs emitted vapors which were not only poisonous in color but also in smell. In fact, the *babu* could almost taste the smell, and his lungs and bronchial tubes were protesting violently.

The dense, acrid fog not only filled the dining room but was billowing beautifully onto the verandah. Moreover it was billowing upward from the smoke-pot caught in the *babu's dhoti,* to caress his nether quarters with a terrifying warmth.

Gundranesh Dutt shook himself again—like a mastiff emerging from a bath. He still could not rid himself of the fuming clay pomegranate. Then, suddenly remembering that he was after all a secret agent performing a mission, he streaked for the verandah. Trailing a heavy swirl of smoke behind him, he might have been a cross between Halley's comet and an active volcano on the loose.

He did not see Cousin Danilal on the verandah. He could see no one, in fact—only shadows, moving in a dirty yellow fog. Women were screaming, men were shouting, and the shadows were shifting with the confusion of a nightmare.

The *babu* collided with the silhouette of a *khidmatgar* and sat down abruptly in a clatter of broken dishes. With a feeling of great relief he saw the burr-like smoke-bomb bounce from his *dhoti* and roll away.

At the same moment—and his feeling of relief turned to a cold lump at the pit of his huge stomach—he saw a briefcase under the same table. It was an exact replica of the briefcase which Mr. Y had entrusted to Grand International Detective Bureau.

By the four heads of Brahma, the *babu* muttered to himself, Cousin Danilal has failed. He has outwitted himself. The ruse of the smoke screen has succeeded so well, that Cousin Danilal has been unable to locate his quarry. Luckily the *babu* discovered the failure in time.

He reached between a pair of masculine legs, grabbed the briefcase, crawled away a few yards, then lumbered to his feet and retreated into the dining room.

He paused just long enough to scoop up the tray of hors-d'oeuvres which had been erroneously confided to him a few moments before. Then, still coughing, he plunged through the pantry and kitchen and emerged panting in the open air.

He was a little surprised to see Cousin Danilal sitting calmly on the *syce's* seat, contentedly munching a sandwich.

"En route, Cousin Danilal," gasped the *babu,* opening the *gharri* door and scrambling in. "En route, with great haste!"

IV

LIEUTENANT TOM KELLOGG was still holding Nancy's hands when Babu Gundranesh Dutt's one-man riot and display of daylight pyrotechnics burst upon the Harabagh Gymkhana Club. He was damning the war and discussing plans for their twice-postponed marriage.

"It can't fail this time, Nancy darling," he was saying. "The C. O.'s already given his permission, and I'm due for ten days' leave after I wash up this business in Singapore. Then I'll cable you and you can meet me half way. We'll spend our honeymoon in the Penang Hills."

"I don't see why I shouldn't come with you to Singapore," said Nancy, crinkling the corners of her brown eyes. "It would be so much nicer—and it would save time."

"Impossible," Tom said.

"I don't see why?"

"Because we're at war, darling. And because I'm still a member of His Majesty's armed forces. In war time, we must be prepared for the unexpected to happen."

At that moment the unexpected did happen—and neither Tom Kellogg nor his fiancee was prepared. Tom watched with unseeing eyes as the first clouds of yellow smoke billowed out upon the verandah. It was not until the shrill voice of the *babu* shouted "Arson!" that Tom realized something unusual was going on.

When men began to cough and women to shriek, Tom reached down to make sure that the briefcase was still between his feet. Then he stood up and started looking after Nancy.

"Something's gone wrong in the kitchen probably," he said "Damned nuisance. Does it bother you?"

Nancy tried to say that she was all right, but she choked on the words. She dabbed at her streaming eyes with a wisp of lace handkerchief.

The smoke was growing denser. Chairs scraped on the floor, voices were raised. Frantic figures moved in the yellow fog.

"Look, darling." Tom Kellogg poured soda water on a napkin. "Put this over your face. Breathe through it."

He came around the table to tie the napkin over the girl's mouth. Someone jostled him. He heard the crash of breaking dishes, was vaguely aware that men were sprawled at his feet.

"Let's—get—out—of here!" Nancy gasped.

"Of course, my love." Tom bent down, groped under the table. When he arose he was white to the lips. He gripped Nancy's arm with hard, tense fingers. "It's gone!" he whispered.

"What's gone?"

"The briefcase. My career!"

"Nonsense. It can't be."

"It is. Wait here, darling. No, come with me."

He jumped from the edge of the verandah, lifted the girl down, parted the branches of the hedge while she stepped through. They both breathed deeply. The setting sun cast an incongruously peaceful light across the lawns of the clubhouse grounds.

At the front of the clubhouse a drowsy watchman stood guard over the parked cars of the members.

"Has anyone left in the last ten minutes, *chokidar?*" Tom demanded.

"Nobody, *sahib.*"

"Then let no one leave until I give the word."

"But, *sahib*—"

"That's an order. *Malum?*"

"Yes, *sahib.*"

Tom posted Nancy at the verandah steps, went to the back of the clubhouse. He saw nothing out of the ordinary, inasmuch as the *gharri* bearing the *babu* and his Cousin Danilal had disappeared behind the banyan trees at the side of the tennis courts just an instant before.

For the next twenty minutes he made a quick survey of the clubhouse. The yellow fog was dissipating, but when Tom returned to the veranda, he was a grim, sick-looking young man.

Nancy, on the other hand, was smiling cheerfully.

"Chin up, Lieutenant," she said. "I'm sure it's just a hoax."

"Hoax!" Tom laughed bitterly. "Call it a hoax that our marriage is off? That I'll be court-martialed for neglect of duty and probably cashiered from the service?"

"It can't be that bad."

"It'll probably be worse. If they accuse me of treason, having traffic with the enemy—"

"It must be a hoax, pumpkin. Look." Nancy held out her hand. "See what I found under our table."

She gave him half a dozen florid-looking business cards, as large as playing cards. Printed in highly-ornamental type was the information that Gundranesh Dutt, Chief Operative of the Grand International Detective Bureau, conducted secret and intimate investigations from 216¼-B, Dharmtolla Street.

"It's all just a publicity stunt for this detective, darling," she said. "Let's go and find out."

She put her arm tenderly around Tom Kellogg's sagging shoulders. They straightened up immediately.

WHEN the closed *gharri* had rolled beyond the confines of the Harabagh Gymkhana Club and the bony horse was jogging leisurely through streets of mud-and-bamboo huts in the slums of Calcutta, Gundranesh Dutt rapped on the shutters, opened the door, and poked his head out.

"Now that breath is being retrieved, Cousin Danilal," he said. "Am proposing pause for refreshment and mutual consultation."

Danilal headed the carriage into an alley, stopped, and got down from his driver's seat. "You are enjoying activities of secret agent, Cousin Gundranesh?" he asked.

"Somewhat," the *babu* replied. "Although am at present time experiencing discomfortable smoked-herring sensations in lower anatomies. Strategic smoke screen became quite personally attached to self."

"Smoke was great success," said Danilal.

"How, success? You failed to snatch enemy briefcase, Cousin Dani."

"What nonsense, failed! Snatched same with greatest ease." Danilal reached up and removed a leather case from the hay under the driver's seat. "Witness."

The *babu* blinked. "Quite puzzling," he said. "Had distinct impression you were outflanked by enemy. Therefore also snatched leather case. Likewise witness."

He brought out the other briefcase. Danilal took them both, held them up, compared them. They were almost identical.

Cousin Danilal laughed heartily. "What joke!" he crowed. "You seized false substitute." He slapped the *babu* on his bulging bottom and Gundranesh Dutt joined in the laughter.

They both stopped abruptly and simultaneously looked at each other as though struck by the same sobering thought.

"Am wondering," mused the *babu* gravely, "if Mr. Y will be pleased with double results."

Danilal shook his head. "Difficult prediction," he said.

"Fail to see ground for complaint in two-hundred percent efficiency."

"Have slight misgiving that Mr. Y will not derive double pleasure from double success in pilfering briefcases," remarked Cousin Danilal. "Am debating with self whether double danger now lurks in offing."

The *babu* began to perspire. "Mr. Y was declaring possession of single briefcase con-

stitutes mark of death," he said in quavering voice. "You are anticipating double mark?"

"Multiple deaths hardly feasible in single incarnation."

"True, Cousin Danilal. Only cowards perish repeatedly previous to ultimate decease, according to English bard was studying during last unsuccessful examinations at Calcutta University."

"Am of opinion notwithstanding that matter requires further meditation," said Danilal, holding the two briefcases at armlength, and looking at them carefully. "You are remembering which case is which, Cousin Gundranesh?"

The *babu* gave his big head a worried shake. "Am entirely nonplussed at this stage," he said. "Appear identical."

"Am therefore suggesting enveloping same in identical packing, should future events require slight misrepresentation to Mr. Y. After which carriage ride will perhaps clear brains for cogitation on proper course."

"Wisely spoken," the *babu* agreed.

HE KEPT watch while Danilal went off in search of wrapping paper and twine. He continued on guard while Danilal knelt on the floor of the closed carriage, bending over the briefcases in the laborious task of making the packages.

When they started off again on the carriage ride which was to bring them inspiration—and to delay their meeting with Mr. Y—the *babu* produced the napkin into which he had scooped the hors-d'oeuvres from the Harabagh Gymkhana Club.

"Have collected curious eatables from recent feast," he said. "You are familiar with European viands of this type, Cousin Dani?"

Danilal's eyes blinked with pleasure behind his steel-rimmed spectacles. "Pasties and savories," he declared, helping himself. "Quite delicious."

"Quite," agreed the *babu,* biting into a chicken-liver pasty. He chewed contentedly for a moment, then stopped in alarm in the midst of a bite. "You are certain, Cousin Dani, that miniature pies are not violation of Hindu dietary laws?" he asked with his mouth full. "You are sure same are not containing beef meat?"

Danilal took the uneaten half, examined it, popped it into his mouth. "Seems completely legal," he said. "Same appears stuffed with private internal organs of fowls."

Satisfied, the *babu* continued eating.

Danilal drove up and down Lower Circular Road twice, and made the complete circuit of the Maidan three times. Each time they approached the Curzon Gardens, where Dharmtolla Street joined a corner of the park, Danilal slowed the horse to a walk, but did not turn out. They were passing the Victoria Memorial for the fourth time when he finally said:

"Perhaps hour has come to approach rendezvous with Mr. Y."

The *babu* sighed. He had no wish to return to his office because he was very much afraid that Mr. Y was going to be displeased with the manner in which Grand International had carried off its first venture into counter-espionage. If only he had resisted that impulse to grab the second briefcase!

However, there seemed no excuse for further delay. It was growing late—how late he did not know and preferred not to ask. But it was certainly well past six o'clock, the hour at which they were to meet Mr. Y. It was getting very dark, and lights were gleaming in the mansions of Chowringhee Road. Suddenly the *babu* had an inspiration.

"Cousin Danilal, you are remembering what day this is?" he exclaimed.

"Tuesday, perhaps?"

"Tuesday, *beshtkk!* Today is fifth day of Sawan, anniversary on which our lord Krishna slaughtered serpent Kali."

"Correct. Was forgetting festival of Nag Panchami."

"Under circumstances, Cousin Danilal, had we not better proceed to Kalighat Temple to sacrifice goat in interests of averting snake bites for coming year?"

"Am not greatly molested by snake

bites," said Danilal. "Moreover have ominous foreboding that Mr. Y is perhaps trifle impatient this evening-time. Shall we forego sacrifice of goats in favor of five hundred rupees, Cousin Gundranesh?"

The *babu* squirmed uneasily. "Let us forego same," he sighed.

V

A LITTLE before six o'clock Hugo Brenner climbed the rickety stairway of No. 216¼-B Dharmtolla Street. The door of the Grand International Detective Bureau was locked, but Brenner had a ring loaded with pass keys. He let himself in, sat down to wait. Every few minutes he looked at his watch.

At six-thirty there was a knock at the door. Brenner opened. He was surprised to see a girl standing outside, a very pretty girl with curly brown hair and brown eyes.

"Could I see Mr. Dutt?" she asked. She was out of breath and seemed nervous.

Hugo Brenner's lips smiled pleasantly, but there was a cold, suspicious glint in his eyes. The girl was vaguely familiar. Yes, he remembered she had been in his shop: A wristwatch to be repaired, he thought. He wondered if she recognized him.

"Mr. Dutt has gone out on an errand," he said. "He may not be back until late. Would you like to come in and wait?"

"No, thank you."

"Mr. Dutt is conducting a minor investigation for me," said Brenner. It would be a good idea to explain his presence here in case the girl did remember him. "There's been some petty thievery among my native clerks, and I—" The girl had started down the stairs. "May I take a message?"

"No, thank you."

"Would you leave your name?"

"I'll come back later," the girl said from the first landing.

Brenner closed the door. He frowned. This was bad. He wondered if something had gone wrong at the Gymkhana Club, and whether this was Kellogg's girl friend Nancy? No, nothing had gone wrong, or the office would already be besieged by the Intelligence and the C.I.D. Still . . .

He waited until the girl had had plenty of time to disappear. Then he left the office, locking the door behind him. It would be better not to be found in the office, just in case. He would watch the entrance from across the way.

Brenner sauntered up and down Dharmtolla Street, distastefully clearing a path for himself through the crowds of Moslems bound to and from the mosque at the corner. With his cane he fended off the whining Hindu beggars and the hump-backed sacred bulls bedecked with jasmine wreaths for the festival of Nag Panchami. What a filthy country, he thought, that allowed lepers and animals to share the sidewalks with humans. All that would be changed when the New Order of the Master Race had been established.

At seven o'clock he began to wonder what had happened to the *babu*. He had not expected promptness, of course, but seven o'clock!

At seven-fifteen he saw a square-built European with bushy black eyebrows get out of a taxi in front of No. 216¼-B. He crossed the street, darted into the stairway after him.

"Minson!" he called.

Minson flattened himself against the wall. "I'm glad I found you, Herr Brenner, to warn you not to return to the shop with the— The shop is watched."

"Watched? By whom?"

"The Intelligence, I think. The redhead who followed me from Delhi is standing outside. He must have seen me go in this afternoon."

"*Dummkopf!*" Brenner spat. "It is past seven. Has the plane left?"

"I just phoned the airdrome. The Singaport plane has been delayed. Rain squalls over the Ganges delta, they said. Is anything wrong?"

"I think not. I followed the *babu* and his partner to the Gymkhana Club. They hired a *bund-gharri* and drove it themselves. I know they managed the exchange of briefcases, because I watched from a distance

through field glasses. I saw the little fellow make the change through a hedge. I saw them drive off. Then I came back here to wait."

"You mean they haven't brought back the code books yet?"

"Orientals have no conception of time," Brenner said. "They will be here soon. And yet—"

"We had better try to escape while we can, Herr Brenner," said Minson. "I think we have failed."

"No," said Brenner. "No, we have not failed. The Fuehrer does not permit failure." He tapped his cane nervously against the stairs. "Moreover, we cannot hope to leave the country while this *babu* is alive to tell his story. Even if we do not find the codes, we must find the *babu*."

"Where, Herr Brenner?"

"This is your car here?"

"Yes, Herr Brenner."

"Then come. There are only half a dozen ways of returning from Harabagh. We will search them all."

DANILAL was driving north from the Victoria Memorial when the rain began. He stopped the carriage, fumbled in the straw under the seat for the two wrapped briefcases.

"You had best withdraw secret objects from shelter of elements," he said. "Enter inside *gharri*, Cousin Gundranesh."

"Shall do same, Cousin Dani."

The *babu* clambered down from beside the driver and did as told. The rain drummed on the top of the carriage as the horse sloshed along Red Road, passed Sir James Outram's statue, and swung into Chowringhee.

A motor car flashed by, slowed down, stopped with a shriek of brakes, and skidded completely around. The car crawled back, closed in on the *gharri*, cut in front of it. A man with lots of jaw and eyebrows stuck his head out and commanded: "Go back the way you just came."

"Greatly regret," replied Cousin Danilal, "but am—"

"I have a message from Mr. Y," said the man. "It's important. Go back into the Maidan."

"Am suggesting office will be somewhat less moist—"

"Go back!"

"Instantly, *sahib*."

The *gharri* again headed into the park. The motor car passed, the rain pelting through the headlight beams like gleaming steel darts. Pulling to the side of the road, the car stopped. The lights went out. Danilal reined in his horse.

The *babu* opened the shuttered door to see what was going on. He saw a tall, thin man who seemed to be Mr. Y get out of the car, walk toward the *gharri*, followed by a shorter, stocky man.

The *babu* fumbled in the darkness for the briefcases, found one, held it out toward Mr. Y as a peace token.

"Please greet returning conquerors, Mr. Y!" he cried. "Secret mission was overwhelming success, as please observe. Any unavoidable delay was by-product of eluding counter-agents. Am—"

"Unavoidable delay!" sneered Hugo Brenner. "I warned you that this was a matter of life or death. You failed to meet me according to agreement. Therefore it is death!"

"What nonsense, death!" The *babu* laughed shrilly. "What—"

Hugo Brenner snatched the package from the *babu's* hands, stepped quickly aside to unmask the Walther automatic pistol which Minson held.

From his vantage point on the *syce's* seat, Cousin Danilal had seen the automatic a second before Brenner moved aside. He reached for the whip, stood up, grasped the stock in both hands, swung downward with all his might.

At the instant Minson pulled the trigger, the rain-heavy lash cut across his wrist.

The pistol flung its flaming thunder harmlessly downward, the bullet plowing under the carriage.

The *gharri* horse reared and bolted.

Gundranesh Dutt was flung against the back seat as the *gharri* leaped forward, bounded over the curbing, careened and

jolted across the lawns. Behind him he heard Brenner shouting: *"Esel! Schwein!"* The door banged shut. Like a multiple echo, three more shots cracked.

Danilal stood with his thin legs wide apart, clinging to the reins like Ben Hur coming into the stretch. The horse continued its panic-stricken gallop through the night in the general direction of Fort William.

THE *gharri* swayed and bumped through a clump of shrubs, bouncing the *babu* to the floor. He was just hoisting himself to the seat again when one wheel caromed off the base of a tree trunk, and he was back on the floor. This time he lay there, panting quietly, his eyes closed, his head reposing on the remaining briefcase.

Suddenly he sat up, his eyes wide open. He lifted the wrapped briefcase to his ear, listened intently. Then he began pounding on the door of the *gharri*.

"Cousin Danilal!" he cried. "Cousin Dani!"

Danilal at last managed to pull the frightened horse to a stop. The *babu* stumbled out, holding his package.

"We are betrayed, Cousin Dani!" he shouted.

"You are no doubt referring to breach in contract," said Danilal. "Also observed that Mr. Y failed to pay promised five hundred rupees. Are you proposing return for collecting same?"

"Am referring to final words of Mr. Y. Speech was Germanic in character."

"Quite possibly. Was puzzled at not understanding same."

"Then Mr. Y is enemy agent, Cousin Dani, therefore capable of criminal tricks. Listen." The *babu* held the package against his cousin's ear. "What are you hearing?"

"Am able to distinguish ticking noises within," Danilal said

"Do not ticking noises indicate presence of infernal bombs?" the *babu* demanded.

"Have heard that such is often true. Indicate functioning of clock mechanism for explosion at given moment."

"What to do, Cousin Dani?"

"Greatly regret am novice in matters of ticking bombs," said Danilal. "Perhaps should proceed to nearest book stall and purchase standard volume on subject."

The *babu* shook his head. He listened to the package again. It was still ticking.

"Am making counter-proposal," he said. "Suggest we make rapid journey to Bow Bazaar police station for consultation with Inspector Prike or Deputy Inspector Robbins. They are perhaps acquainted with methods for disposing of explosive machines."

The *babu* climbed back into the carriage, holding his package at arm's length. Danilal headed the horse back toward the center of town, toward Bow Bazaar.

When the horses' hooves rang on the pavement of Old Court House Street, the clock in the church at the corner of Dalhousie Square marked exactly one minute to eight.

VI

DEPUTY INSPECTOR ROBBINS sat at his desk in the Bow Bazaar police station, fingering the sharp ends of his waxed mustache. Facing him were an excited young girl with curly brown hair and a very dejected naval officer in mufti.

"I assure you," he said, "that even if Nancy were not Inspector Prike's niece, I should do everything I could to help you. As it is, I have sent men to all the railway stations, docks, and trunk roads. They will see that the books are not smuggled out of the city. In addition to that—while I appreciate your position, Lieutenant—I suggest you notify your own people without further delay."

"But this *babu*, Mr. Robbins?"

Deputy Inspector Robbins smiled. "Gundranesh Dutt is an old friend of ours," he said. "I'm sure he's not criminally involved."

"I still think there was something peculiar in this watchmaker's being in the *babu's* office. He acted so strange—guilty, even. I'm certain—"

"Hugo Brenner's shop is under surveil-

lance from several quarters. I promise you we'll have him here for questioning before the night is over."

The telephone rang. Robbins picked up the instrument. "Hello," he said. A startled expression came into his eyes. "Send him in," he said.

He replaced the instrument and stood up. "Your *babu* is here now," he said to the girl. "Step into the next room, please, while I question him. I'll call you."

A moment later Gundranesh Dutt waddled in, followed by Danilal. He deposited a damp, bulky paper package on the desk and backed away.

"Have just now made distressing contact with enemy German agents," he panted. "Greatly fear am in possession of infernal bomb with unknown hour of detonation. What is next procedure, please, Mr. Robbins?"

The deputy inspector's expression was half-puzzled, half-incredulous. "Where the devil did you get this, *babu?*" he asked.

"From Teutonic party bearing false alias of Mr. Y. Greatly fear same has dishonorable intentions. Kindly observe ticking sounds, Mr. Robbins."

The deputy inspector bent over to listen, then straightened up instantly. His face was grave. He found a pair of shears in his desk, clipped away a corner of the paper wrapping, explored the leather of the briefcase with his fingers.

The *babu* and Danilal backed against the wall.

Robbins lifted the package even with his eyes, trying to peer into the hole in the paper. As he did so a round, shiny object slipped through the opening and plunked to the floor.

Danilal reached instinctively for the loop of string by which his timepiece usually dangled around his neck. The string was gone.

"What comical joke, Cousin Danilal!"

"Quite bizarre mishap!" Danilal said. "Must have wrapped watch inside package while manipulating paper in kneeling posture on floor of *gharri!*"

The *babu* picked up the thick nickeled turnip and held it to his ear. "Watch still functioning regardless," he said. "Same explains ticking sounds, no doubt."

Deputy Inspector Robbins, grinning broadly, stripped the paper from the package which no longer ticked. Carrying the briefcase, he opened the door to the next room.

"This it, Lieutenant?" he asked.

Tom Kellogg examined the leather case eagerly. With trembling fingers he took a key from his pocket, fitted it to the lock.

"Thank heaven!" he said.

The telephone rang again. Robbins picked it up, listened briefly, jammed it down.

"I can't begin to thank you," Tom Kellogg began.

"Thank me later," Robbins said. "I've got to run now. There's been a bad explosion on the Maidan near the race course. Motor car blown to bits. Two men killed, apparently. Cheerio."

The door opened and closed. Tom hugged Nancy ardently. He kissed her, too—until he observed the *babu* watch him with unabashed curiosity. He came over and extended his hand.

"I don't pretend to understand what part you've played in all this, *babu,*" he said. "But obviously I owe you my gratitude."

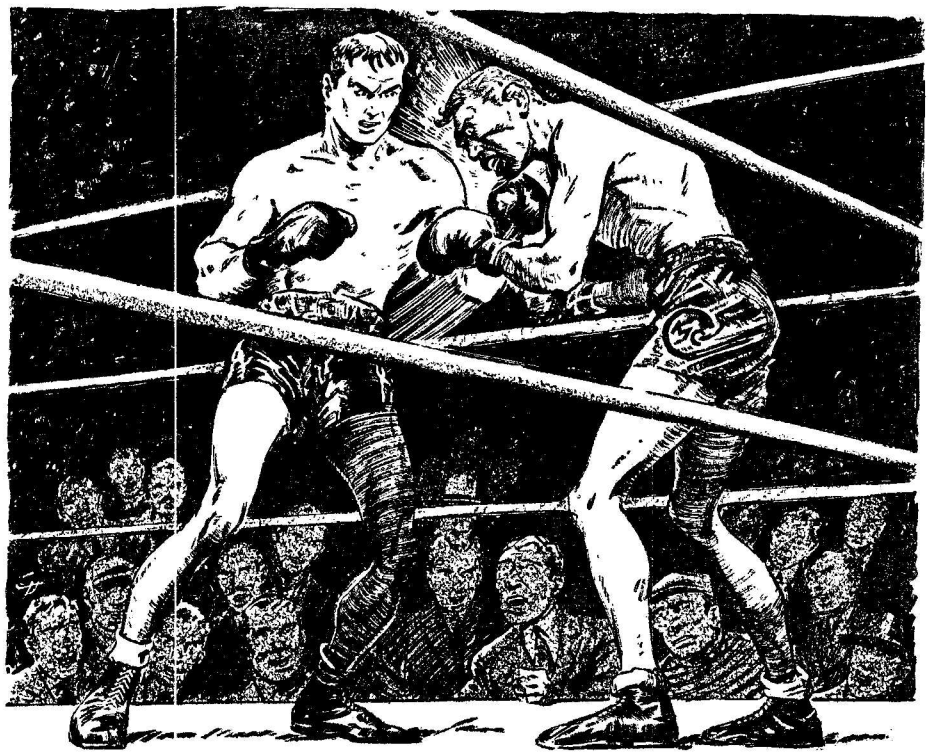
"Am constantly pleased to serve patriotic duties for defense of *raj* against alien enemies," said the *babu,* shaking hands. "If desirous of expert operatives for aiding secret investigations am recommending Grand International Det—"

He broke off suddenly, as he fumbled in the loose folds of his *dhoti* for his business cards. A blank look came into his round brown face.

"Is this what you're looking for?" asked Nancy, taking a card from her bag.

The *babu* beamed. "Perceive that newfound fame as secret agent already attracting widespread notice," he said. "Therefore, if in future time you are needing—"

"As one secret agent to another," interrupted Tom Kellogg, "I'll call on you."



Haymaker

He's a little, white-faced guy, quiet and sort of frightened. He fights smoothly —just tap-tapping. But watch his eyes, or you'll never know when the rabbit turned into a wildcat

By CARL RATHJEN

Author of "Dry Job," "SOS Monotony," etc.

I

IT WAS a crazy thing to do. I mean put Joe Kelsy in the training ring with the champ. But I was on a spot, and I was forced to take a chance.

It was the first day open to the public in the training camp, and some two hundred odd spectators and reporters and photographers were packed around the training ring for their first glimpse of the middleweight champ, Gunner Garrick, in a workout for his coming brawl.

He'd shadow-boxed about the ring a bit and now he was sitting on the stool and leaning against the ropes and breathing easy while everyone waited for a three-round sparring bout with Stab Trenton, a scarred veteran whose mitts could ape the style of any fighter but whose feet carried too much weight on the heels.

The spot occurred when Trenton came along the wooden aisle toward the ring. He was grinning his crooked grin at the crowd and not watching where he was walking, and he stepped on a banana peel some kid

had dropped. He went down as though Joe Louis had hit him. There was a nasty cracking sound like when you break a stick of wood across your knee. Trenton got up with his left arm dangling. Well, after I splinted it temporarily and sent him off to a doc's to have it fixed up proper, I climbed into the ring.

"I'm sorry, folks," I announced, "that'll have to be all for today. The champ's other sparring partner, Battleship Brogan, is getting over a touch of flu and the doc won't let him go in the ring. So there's nobody to put on the sparring bout with the champ, and I'll refund your—"

A voice interrupted me from up on the top tier of the seats.

"I'll go in the ring with the champ," it said.

Everyone turned to look, and I saw a husky little guy standing up with a white face under a greasy cap. He started to move past the knees of the people between him and the aisle. I decided to ignore him. I smiled at the crowd.

"Well, folks," I said, "if you want your two bits back I'll refund it, or give you passes to come in some other day. Whichever you want."

"Wait," called the little guy, reaching the aisle. "I said I'd go in the ring with the champ."

I smiled indulgently. "That's one way to commit suicide," I remarked, and the crowd laughed and I didn't catch the little guy's reply. I started to motion Garrick out of the ring, but the little guy caught the lower rope and pulled himself up.

"If you ain't afraid I'll hurt him, I'll fight him for five hundred bucks," he said. "I need the dough."

The crowd guffawed. They thought this was part of the show. I didn't like it. I reached for my wallet.

"I wouldn't want to see you get hurt," I said, "even if you do need the dough. Here's a ten-spot."

"I couldn't take charity," he said, his little dark brown eyes caressing the ten-spot. "But I could use the five hundred, if you ain't afraid I'll hurt the champ."

GUNNER GARRICK was scowling at him. "That's the second time he's said that," Garrick growled. "Give him a pair of gloves, Riley."

"Go ahead, let him have a try," someone in the crowd yelled. Others took it up. I shook my head stubbornly. Why should I be a sucker? Here I was building up the champ for what was maybe going to be one of the biggest fights of his career and I should take a chance on his getting hurt maybe if the little guy landed a lucky blow?

"Nothing doing," I snapped. "Beat it," I told the little guy. A couple guys in the crowd booed. I glared in their direction. "Maybe you guys would like to come in the ring with the little Ego here. Come on," I taunted them. "We'll put on a bout and I'll put up seventy-five bucks for the winner."

All I got was more boos, but no takers. And the little guy shakes his head.

"Nothing doing," he declared. "They'd be soft, wouldn't know how to take care of themselves. I don't want to—to murder anybody. But I'll go three rounds with the champ for seventy-five bucks. He ought to be able to take it."

"Come on, Riley," barked Gunner Garrick, shaking off his robe. "He's asking for it."

"Yeah, Riley, what are you afraid of?" called one of the reporters, Fitzpatrick of the *Globe*. "From the publicity hooey you've been handing out to us Garrick ought to be able to go out of his weight class and take on Joe Louis with one hand tied behind him."

Fitzpatrick has always had it in for me since the time I barred him from one of my camps and he got in plenty of hot water with his city editor.

Most of the other reporters were giving me sour looks, and I couldn't have them down on me, so I hung up my better judgment.

"All right," I snapped, after sizing up the little guy. His reach was shorter than Garrick's, and he was handicapped by about twenty pounds and his solid little white

face wasn't marked as though he'd done much fighting. He looked kind of scared anyway, so I figured he was just a sucker who was in a spot and was trying to get some dough the hard way, going into the ring with the champ.

"All right," I snapped, and his face seemed to get whiter.

"For—for seventy-five bucks?" he asked.

"For seventy-five bucks," I said curtly, "and you pay your own hospital bills," I added, hoping I could scare him off.

So Mike, the trainer, took him off to the bungalow to change his togs and the crowd buzzed with excitement and there was a nasty buzz boring up and down my spine. I was mangling a cigar when Broderick, of the *Chronicle,* stepped up to me and shook his head.

"This is the first time, Riley," he said, "I ever thought you were a chump."

I tried to strike a match for my cigar and broke it.

"Yeah," I growled, "the first time, and I went the whole hog."

He nodded. "You're overlooking more than one angle. You'd better get a release."

II

SO WE went inside and the little guy, Kelsy, Joe Kelsy he said his name was when I asked him, was stripped. He was bandylegged and had a set of shoulders that would have been no disgrace on a six-footer. I felt kind of sick.

"Where'd you get shoulders and arms like those?" inquired Broderick.

"I work in the dairy a couple miles from here," said Kelsy. "I'm a milker and we milk the cows by hand, but I've sort of come by my shoulders naturally, just—just like my fighting."

"Ever done any fighting before?"

Kelsy slowly shoved back his limp brown hair straggling over his brow.

"Not in the ring," he muttered. I looked sharply at him.

"Listen," I warned, "this isn't any back alley rough-and-tumble fracas. You fight, you *spar* clean or I'll—"

He pressed his lips and nodded.

"Scared?" Broderick asked kindly.

Kelsy thought that over a moment.

"Yeah—sort of," he murmured, then looked intently at me. "Listen," he said seriously, "you tell the champ to watch himself, will you? Keep plenty covered up and—and—I don't want to hurt him."

That buzzing was ripping through my spine like a saw. There was something fishy here about Kelsy but I couldn't find it.

"Brod," I said to Broderick. "Will you write up that paper for me? I'll be back in a minute."

I went into the next room which was my office and closed the door. I telephoned the dairy. Yeah, they had a little guy named Joe Kelsy working for them as a milker. He'd worked for them the past two years. No, he'd never done any fighting in the ring as far as they knew. I wanted to know a whole lot more about him, but they closed up as tight as a can of condensed milk.

I went back in the other room. Broderick raised his eyebrows at me inquiringly. I shrugged angrily. He handed me a sheet of paper and his fountain pen. I turned to Kelsy who was now wearing a white jersey and black trunks.

"Here, sign this. It's a release in case you get hurt. It's your own doing going into the ring with the champ."

He read the paper carefully and nodded, then he took the pen. But he didn't sign his name. He began writing on the lower half of the sheet. He finished and met the stares Broderick and I were giving him.

"I'll sign if you'll sign this," he said, handing the paper to me.

It was a release too, worded much the same as the one Broderick had written, and it released Kelsy from all responsibility and/or liability for any injuries Gunner Garrick might receive from him!

I waved the paper at him.

"You're not even going to try to hurt the champ if you could," I shouted. "This is an exhibition sparring match, not a fifteen-round brawl."

"You mean you won't sign it?" he asked uneasily.

"No! You're carrying a gag too far."

"It's not a gag," he declared somberly. "But I won't go into the ring unless you sign it."

"All right then," I took him right up. "You won't go into the ring. The bout's off!"

Boy, was that an out for me, I thought.

Broderick was shaking his head. "Just how are you going to explain it to them out there, Riley?" he asked softly.

"I'll tell them," I began, "that the little Ego has gone too legal on me and the champ. That we're not signing any paper that if the champ gets hurt we'll—"

It wouldn't sound good, even if a radio announcer smoothed it up, that I was training the champ for the biggest fight of his career but I wouldn't let him spar with an unseasoned unknown punk because the punk wanted a release in case he hurt the champ. I could see all the sports writers jabbing sarcastically at me in their columns.

"Where's that pen?" I demanded. I signed my part of the paper and Kelsy signed his and tore off the lower half and folded it and tucked it inside the top of his right shoe.

"What," Broderick wanted to know, "makes you so sure you'll hurt the champ?"

Kelsy pretended not to hear him as he went toward the door with Mike, the trainer. But I was standing to one side and I knew he'd heard because I could see him wince slightly. Broderick looked at me.

"You've certainly got yourself trapped in a corner, Riley," he remarked. "I hope everything goes all right. Maxie Maxwell's been trying to get the match with the champ for a long time. I hope you won't have to forfeit the big bond you—"

I DIDN'T hear any more. I was on my way fast to Gunner Garrick's corner of the training ring. I leaned over the ropes and started speaking low into his ear, his good ear, the left one.

"Don't worry, boss," he interrupted. "I'll smear him so fast he'll—"

"Shut up and listen to me," I snapped. "You're not going to try to smear him until I tell you to."

"*Try* to smear—"

"You're going to feel him out till we see just what he's got. You're—"

"You talk like I was going out against Maxie Maxwell, not some little hot-air guy who thinks he's—"

"I wish it was Maxwell even if you're not quite ready for him," I declared. "At least I'd know what to tell you to protect yourself against. I'm warning you, there's something fishy about this Kelsy. Watch yourself. Don't try to nail him until I tell you. You understand?"

One of the reporters offered to act as referee.

"Keep it clean, boys," he said to Garrick and Kelsy, "and remember it's a sparring match!"

Kelsy licked his lips and went stiffly back to his corner, rubbing his gloves together. I warningly caught Garrick's eye as he came back to his corner. His lips blew a silent Bronx cheer inside his mask.

"Don't be a sucker," I snapped, low and intense.

They both went out slow at the bell. Garrick poised and ready. Kelsy all crouched like spring steel ready to snap open. His guard was none too good, too low. I was afraid it might be a come-on and I prayed Garrick would remember my instructions and not try to nail him yet.

They sparred lightly, dancing in and back, the way a cat tentatively flicks its paw at something it isn't quite sure of. I watched Kelsy. He was light on his feet as he weaved and circled just beyond Garrick's reach. There was something familiar about his style. When he feinted, with his back toward me, the muscles in his shoulders moved as smoothly as cream. And no one had to tell me there was plenty of power packed in them.

When the round ended I tried to light my cigar and found it was all frayed. I flung it away and climbed up beside Garrick as someone in the crowd yelled to Kelsy.

"Hey little champ, I thought you were going to hurt the big champ."

Garrick turned his head to me. "He ain't got anything, boss, so maybe now I can—"

"You mean he hasn't showed you yet what he's got," I said, coughing because my throat was dry.

"Hey, Garrick," came a call from the stands, "is that the way you're going to fight Maxie? You don't get my dough on you if—"

"I can't let Kelsy make a monkey out of me, boss," said Garrick.

"Yeah," I agreed, "that's why you're still going to keep feeling him out like I told you to."

THE first two minutes of the second round went as placidly as the first, in the ring that is. I was sweating for both Garrick and Kelsy. The crowd buzzed impatiently like a swarm of mosquitoes looking for blood.

Kelsy, his brown eyes just slits in his white face, danced and weaved around Garrick who tried to bait him by leaving himself slightly open a couple of times, and failing in that, Garrick tried to herd him into a corner where he'd be forced to open up and show what he had.

"This doesn't make sense," said Broderick coming to stand beside me. "I'd have banked anything that Kelsy was on the level when he said he was afraid he'd hurt the champ."

"Just a showoff I guess, whose bluff was called," I said, relieved that Kelsy was letting me slide off a spot so easily, and yet I was oddly disappointed that I'd sized him up wrong by warning the champ to feel his way. I was going to shout the go-ahead signal to Garrick, but for some reason I was still worried and held it back.

The crowd was getting derisive. They wanted action and got it.

"Oh, waltz me around again, Gunner," someone yelled shrilly. And someone else took up the theme. 'Hey, Champ, Maxie Maxwell doesn't like to waltz."

Garrick whisked a questioning glance at me. I let it bounce off me. Somewhere in the stands somebody began lah-lahing the *Blue Danube* and the whole crowd joined in. Garrick looked at me once more, his eyes flashing. I didn't make a move. Kelsy still danced around him in that oddly familiar manner. Garrick whirled to follow him. I saw his shoulders hunch and I knew he was going to close in without my signal. I wanted to cross my fingers but I couldn't pry my fingernails out of my palms.

Garrick's left shot out. I knew that wallop. It was one of the most potent in his bag of tricks. Involuntarily I braced and jerked my head aside for little Kelsy. But fast as Garrick was, Kelsy's head wasn't there when the blurred glove whammed past his ear.

And a split heartbeat later it wasn't where it had moved to either. His eyes had popped wide open, and there was a wild killer light in them that made me go as cold as ice inside. His head bored in at Garrick's chest and—

Blam . . . blam . . . blam.

You could hear the smash of his gloves into Garrick's stomach all over the little clearing in the grove of trees.

Broderick gasped beside me, and a grunt boomed up from the crowd.

It's slow telling, but it all happened fast. Even before the crowd grunted Garrick recoiled, stumbling back on his heels and creasing across the mid-section. Kelsy was right after him and all over him like a wildcat. I couldn't begin to tell all the punches he threw. Even Clem McCarthy's lightning tongue would have been lagging behind.

Garrick stayed doubled over and covered himself with his arms and gloves while Kelsy flailed away at him. He came out of it suddenly at jabbed his left out. Kelsy swayed away from it and bored in, triphammering at the stomach to cut Garrick down to size. Garrick's feet started to brace far apart to prop him up. He gasped. His eyes were glassy.

His left started out once more. Kelsy swayed away from it, saw the right coming and rolled with it. But the right was only

a feint. Garrick's left was continuing on its way and it caught Kelsy flush on the jaw. It was a lucky blow for a guy in Garrick's condition because he didn't know what he was doing. Kelsy went loosely up on his toes, then plopped face down to the canvas.

III

I DIDN'T wait for the count. When a guy goes face down like that, counting to a hundred wouldn't be time enough for him to get to his feet. I went through the ropes and grabbed Garrick and grinned and patted his shoulder for the benefit of the cheering crowd, but I was helping him stay on his feet.

When we were inside the bungalow and he was stretched out on the table I got a good look at his stomach. It was an angry red. Garrick winced as Mike, the trainer, touched it.

"How is it inside?" I asked anxiously.

"Plenty sore, that's all," he said. "What'd Kelsy use, a battering ram?"

"Yeah, two of them," I said. "One in each fist."

I went in the other room where Kelsy was still out cold. Broderick was there.

"Lucky for you, Riley," Broderick said, "that Garrick stopped him when he did. Now if Garrick had been doubled up like that before a polished fighter like Maxie Maxwell who would have known how to finish him off—"

"That's it," I exclaimed. "This little guy, Kelsy, fights in the same style as Maxie Maxwell."

Broderick looked at me, then nodded. We stared down at Kelsy.

"That gives me an idea," I murmured. "The champ's never been against a fighter with Maxwell's style. Here's his chance to get used to it. I'm going to sign Kelsy on as a sparring partner for him."

"Don't be a chump again," cautioned Broderick. "Kelsy's dynamite. I was studying him. He doesn't know how to control—"

"How'd you study him? With your eyes closed?" I jibed. "For a guy who's never been in the ring—and I believe Kelsy somehow—he's got the most natural ring sense, control, I ever—"

"I wasn't talking about ring sense when I said control," declared Broderick. "He doesn't know how to control his *power*, the power of his punches. You saw him. He either sparred around, hitting like a feather, or he hit like a bomb. There wasn't any in-between. It's like a gun, either it goes off or it doesn't.

"He'll be no good as a sparring partner. He'll hit too light and Garrick won't be ready for the jolts he'll get from Maxwell, or Kelsy will hit too hard and injure Garrick, and where would that leave you with the papers signed and the bond posted for the Maxwell fight?"

"Maybe so, maybe not," I said slowly, thinking it over, "but I can still use him as a sparring partner just for the style. He can use his feather punch. If I want Garrick to have heavier blows, I'll put in another man. Kelsy's worth hanging onto anyway. With a punch like he has, he'll go places in the ring."

Broderick shrugged. "It'll be your funeral and Garrick's if he hits Garrick too hard in training."

But Kelsy, when he came around and got dressed, wouldn't hear of it when I propositioned him about signing on as a sparring partner for the champ.

"You said you needed the dough," I reminded him. "I'll pay you double what you're making at the dairy."

HIS brown eyes stared at me, then he shook his head slowly. When I told him I could make him into a great fighter, he looked scared and said he'd have to be leaving and would I please give him the seventy-five bucks I owed him for going in the ring with the champ.

I tried to find out why he needed dough, why he wouldn't sign up with me, but I was as helpless as a stumblebum in the ring with Joe Louis. Finally Broderick flashed me a high-sign to take a count, so I shrugged my shoulders and told Kelsy

I'd have to send a guy to town to cash a check before I could give him the seventy-five bucks. I went into my office, but left the door on a crack.

Well, cutting out all the slow motion of Broderick's casual talk and questions, it came out that Kelsy needed the dough because he had a girl out in Arizona. She had bad lungs and was in a sanitarium there and it was taking most all his salary from the dairy to pay her bills. She was getting close to recovery and he was hoping somehow to get enough dough together to stake himself and her while he quit his job in the dairy and went to Arizona to find a new job and make a home for himself and her.

That still didn't explain why he didn't take my offer to go in the ring, so Broderick sparred around verbally until he found out the girl had had a brother before she'd gone to Arizona. Kelsy seemed reluctant to talk about the brother, but Broderick gained his confidence and . . .

"Her brother," Kelsy said so low I couldn't catch every word, "a nice guy until . . . ugly moods when an injury to his head from an auto accident bothered him . . . ugly one night and went for her . . . tried to stop him and he turned on me."

I heard Broderick's voice then. "What happened?"

"I—I had to hit him. I hit him, just once. I . . . killed him!"

Broderick asked some more questions, softly. I sauntered into the room a couple minutes later when Kelsy was saying the D. A. had let him go after speaking to neighbors who had seen the fight and convinced him it was a plain case of self-defense. I let Broderick tell me the whole story as if I hadn't listened in to it, then I turned to Kelsy who looked kind of sick as though he was living over again that one sock that killed the girl's brother.

"I know just how you feel, Kelsy," I said. "You're afraid of your own strength, that it?"

He nodded somberly.

"I'm not going in the ring," he declared. "I'm not going to kill another guy."

"Fighters in the ring can take it," I argued. "They're not soft. They won't pop off like this girl's brother did."

He looked up at me from where he was sitting hunched over.

"That's what I'd sort of been trying to tell myself until today, why I went in the ring with the champ. But—but he didn't take it so good," Kelsy muttered, "so what would happen if I tore into some guy who wasn't a champ?"

You'd be another Joe Louis or Jack Dempsey, I thought, but I couldn't get him to sign up. He took his seventy-five bucks and left. Broderick said it was best, but I wouldn't listen to him. I couldn't get Kelsy out of my mind, so the next morning I drove over to the dairy.

I FOUND Kelsy in the milking barn, a long low building with a cement floor and a wide center aisle down which I walked while to either side about thirty Grade-A givers lifted their big wet noses to study me with their velvet glossy eyes. I saw Kelsy—in rubber apron and boots—sitting on a stool to the right side of a Bossie. His back was to me and I stood quietly a moment to watch the creamy smooth ripple of his shoulder muscles while Bossie's best drummed into the pail.

At first I had no luck in trying to persuade him to sign up. But I followed him around after the Grade-A givers meandered out and he and the other milkers were flushing out the barn. And I really got some punch into my arguments when I saw him pick up a one hundred-fifty-pound sack of feed the way you would a five-cent bag of peanuts. He carried it under his arm and began dumping little piles of feed for the next group of Bossies in the troughs to either side of the center aisle.

I told him I'd teach him to handle the power in his fists and I finally got him to agree, somewhat reluctantly, to sign on for his spare time as a sparring partner, just sparring, not hard hitting. He wouldn't sign a contract to let me make him into a fighter and get some fights for him. He just wanted the extra dough from the sparring

contract to send out to Arizona. He didn't want to kill anybody.

The next day I put him in the ring with Garrick and warned Garrick not to stir up Kelsy the way he had the day before. I didn't want Garrick to get hurt and I didn't want Kelsy to be scared off. I had big plans for him.

Well, one afternoon three weeks later I pulled a surprise on Kelsy when he was waiting in the ring to spar with Garrick. I put a fighter in the ring he hadn't seen around the camp before. He got a worried look.

"What's the idea?" he demanded.

"You've gotten control of the power in your fists," I said, "from just sparring, not trying to hit hard the past three weeks. You're going to prove it to yourself now in a six-round bout with Jurgen, one of my boys I've had come up from the city."

I didn't tell him that Jurgen was called Iron-jaw because he'd never been knocked out. I had to make Kelsy believe somehow that he had learned to control his power.

The first two rounds Kelsy was afraid to let go. I got word around to Jurgen in his corner to rough up Kelsy and take a couple on the jaw without rolling the steam out of them in the third. He came out, drove a shocker to Kelsy's heart and left himself open with a wry grin.

Kelsy hung back a second after that wallop to the heart. He got his breath, saw the opening, and whipped one through to Jurgen's iron-jaw. Jurgen's eyes tried to look at the sun through the top of his head. He dived to the canvas and stayed there.

I don't know whether my cigar dropped out of my mouth or whether I swallowed it. Anyway I got into the ring fast as Kelsy started to bend anxiously over Jurgen.

"Never mind him," I shouted, flinging his bathrobe at him. "You're all sweaty. You want to catch cold standing around in this chill? Get inside."

"I didn't hit him hard," he began, his eyes as scared as a kid's, "and look at him! I haven't got control and—"

"Sure you have," I said, shoving him toward the ropes. "I told Jurgen to take a dive. Didn't you see the way he grinned just before you hit him?"

"Why doesn't he get up then?" Kelsy demanded as I pushed him through the ropes from one side and Mike, the trainer, pulled him from the other side. Mike, who is in his fifties and has been around the ring as long as he can remember, isn't usually surprised at anything, but this afternoon his eyes were wide with amazement.

"Why doesn't Jurgen get up?" Kelsy repeated.

"He's a great kidder," I replied.

AFTER he was safely inside I turned back to the ring and discovered Broderick had arrived and was watching a couple of the boys trying to bring Jurgen around.

"You're playing with dynamite," said Broderick. "Kelsy's too dangerous for the ring. I was watching from the side. He still doesn't know how to control his power. He's either too weak or too strong. There's no in-between with him. You're leaving yourself open for a lot of grief if you try to make a fighter out of a skull-cracker like him."

I just laughed at Broderick, and when Jurgen came around I hurried him inside to Kelsy after warning him to say he'd taken a dive. The story went over swell because Jurgen, being sore at being knocked out for the first time in his life, got wild when Kelsy wouldn't believe him at first about the so-called dive and kept saying he hadn't hit him with all his power. Jurgen wanted me to put both of them right back in the ring, and when I wouldn't he tried to start a fracas with Kelsy inside the bungalow. I kept them apart and bundled Jurgen back to the city.

"Well," I said to Kelsy, "do you believe me now that I've trained you right? How about signing up with me and making some dough for yourself and that gal out in Arizona?"

And as I said it, I saw Broderick look accusingly at me and shake his head, but I got out the contract and a pen and Kelsy

signed it. Broderick was still shaking his head when we were alone a little while later.

"It's none of my business, Riley," he began, "but it strikes me that Kelsy isn't going to thank you for—"

"What's come over you?" I snapped.

"I like the little guy," he said. "He's honest, clean, too good for the fight game. I'm wondering what's going to happen to that girl out West, what's going to happen to him after he murders his first man in the ring."

"He's not going to murder anybody," I retorted. "Fighters can take it."

"Are you kidding Kelsy or yourself?" said Broderick. "I hope he never hauls off at *you* for misleading him."

I rubbed my jaw and went inside. I didn't feel I was misleading anybody. Kelsy was strong, sure, but not so strong he could kill a fighter in good condition.

Well, Kelsy quit his job with the dairy and I coached and trained him plenty and had him spar with the champ and some of the other boys, but I never let him do any hard hitting. No, I wasn't thinking of Broderick's warning, I just didn't want Kelsy to get scared.

I figured he wouldn't be afraid to hit hard if I found a fight for him where he'd make some real dough and would see that each time he punched with power it would be like punching a cash register, and that he didn't have to be afraid of killing anybody. Fighters can take it. It's their business.

IV

I GOT a break a week before the champ was to go into the ring with Maxie Maxwell. Dave Dillon, who was putting on the card, and who is the Tex Rickard of today, called me on phone from the city. He said that one of the fighters for the preliminary just before the championship brawl had broken a bone in his hand in training.

"I can't line up another fighter who's ready to go on with such short notice against a biffer like Scarface McCoy," he said. "And I've heard you've got a new boy named Kelsy, who you think is pretty good. I've been wondering if the price is all right for you, if you'd be willing to risk him against McCoy."

"For the right price," I declared, "I'd put him in the main event, and I wouldn't be risking him."

Dillon laughed and told me to lay off the bottle.

He didn't laugh when he lamped Kelsy's shoulders at the weighing-in.

"If he's got a punch to go with those shoulders," Dillon remarked, and that's as far as he got, because Scarface McCoy's manager confronted us then and demanded to know what kind of a dark horse we thought we were going to put against his fighter.

"I just found out," he snapped, "isn't Kelsy the guy who knocked out Iron-jaw Jurgen?"

I saw Fitzpatrick of the *Globe* trying to look disinterested while catching every word. He must have found out somehow about Jurgen and spilled to McCoy's manager. That scribe can sure carry a grudge too far.

I pointed a thumb at him.

"You ought to know better," I retorted to McCoy's manager, "than to listen to a guy who got fired from one paper for libel and slander."

Fitzpatrick's face crimsoned. "If it isn't true about Jurgen," he challenged, "sue me."

Kelsy looked worriedly from Fitzpatrick to me.

"I was right about Jurgen, wasn't I? I'm not fighting tonight, Riley. I don't want to kill anybody."

Scarface McCoy stepped off the scales then.

"Who's going to kill who?" he demanded, advancing toward Kelsy.

Dave Dillon stopped him. "Save it for the ring tonight."

"What ring?" snapped McCoy's manager.

Dave Dillon, who is the original guy

with the iron hand in a velvet glove, looked around slowly and smiled silkily.

"All right," he purred. "I see one of you is going to default this fight and leave me with a nice big hole in my card. I won't be able to fill it up by putting the main event on earlier because of radio contracts.

"So go ahead. Default the fight. I won't expect you to worry about the hole in my card. You'll have enough on your mind wondering how you'll ever get one of your fighters, champ or no champ, into a big time again."

When Dave Dillon makes a threat like that in his quiet way it's as good as done. McCoy's manager called in his protests fast. Kelsy frowned and didn't say anything until we were outside.

"Look, Riley," he muttered. "You've been paying me good dough and treating me pretty swell, and I don't like to put you on a spot where you can't get good fights for your other fighters, but you'll have to put one of your other fighters in my place tonight—"

"No buts about it," I said. "I haven't trained you just to put another fighter in your place, even if I had one ready to go. You're fighting tonight. I've taught you to control your power. You've got nothing to be afraid of. Fitzpatrick just has a grudge against me. He'd say or do anything to make trouble for me."

Kelsy stared at me.

"Fitzpatrick seemed pretty sure of what he was saying about Jurgen, so I'm not going to fight and risk—"

I argued with Kelsy about that all the way back to the hotel and got nowhere until I got him to phone some guys who assured him that Fitzpatrick did have it in for me. He stopped arguing.

"All right, I'll go in the ring," he muttered. "I don't want to put you on a spot with Dillon."

He stretched out on the bed and kept frowning at me until I couldn't stand it.

"Forget Jurgen, will you?" I snapped, and went in the next room to see if the champ was relaxing.

BUT Fitzpatrick wasn't satisfied with the way his monkey-wrench in the Dillon matter had sort of bounced out of the works. So he threw a bigger and heavier one. It landed five minutes before Kelsy was to go to the ring. Broderick did a Paul Revere from the arena to the dressing room to try to warn me.

"Dillon or no Dillon, Riley," he said, out in the corridor, "you'd better default Kelsy's match. The D. A.'s upstairs and he's—"

"What does that add up to?" I asked. "The D. A.'s a fight fan."

"He was until Fitzpatrick called his attention to Kelsy's name on the card," declared Broderick. "Now he's all D. A.—I know. They were right behind me at the ringside and I heard everything that was said. If the fight goes on and anything happens to McCoy—"

He stopped as the D. A., trailed by Fitzpatrick, came marching along the corridor with a fuming stub of cigar cocked between his heavyweight lips and a cross-examining look in his eyes. I didn't let myself get too worried because I figured Fitzpatrick had probably said a lot of phoney things to sway the D. A.'s better judgment.

"Are you fighting Joe Kelsy tonight?" the D. A. demanded.

"No." I grinned. "Scarface McCoy is doing that."

"If you take my advice," said the D. A., "you won't let Kelsy fight tonight or any other night."

"Why?"

"He's too dangerous for the ring," declared the D. A. "You ought to realize that. He killed a man once."

"So what?" I retorted. "The guy was weak to start with because of a brain injury. You yourself admitted it was self-defense, an accident."

Fitzpatrick came edging near. "An accident the first time, sure." He smirked. "The second time it was coincidence, but the third time, maybe tonight, it'll be criminal negligence."

That was like a sock in the solar plexis. I glared at him until I got my breath back.

"What second time?" I barked.

"Iron-jaw Jurgen," he answered.

I relaxed a little and laughed and faced the D. A.

"If Jurgen's been killed, somebody ought to tip him off to lie down. He's still walking around like he's alive."

The D. A. spoke up. "This isn't a laughing matter, Riley. You were just lucky that Kelsy didn't kill Jurgen."

Broderick nodded and looked intently at me.

"And," the D. A. continued severely, "the Jurgen matter, along with your knowledge of the killing, should be sufficient warning that Kelsy—"

"I've taught Kelsy to control his power," I snapped.

Fitzpatrick laughed. The D. A. looked at his cigar and then at me.

"You'd better be pretty sure of that, Riley," he warned, "because if you haven't got sense enough to keep Kelsy from fighting and something happens to McCoy, you'll be as guilty as though you put a gun in the hands of a known criminal. In other words, you'll be an accessory before the fact."

My heart drummed like a punching bag and blood piled up in my face. Broderick pressed his lips and watched me.

"This is cockeyed," I protested to the D. A. "Nothing's going to happen to McCoy. But suppose it does? Suppose he puts added sock into one of Kelsy's punches by running into it, you haven't got a right to go building up a case and dragging in past happenings. I ain't a lawyer, but it strikes me I heard once that if a guy is tried for something and acquitted, he can't be tried for it again. So if an accident, which ain't Kelsy's fault, does happen to McCoy, you can't build a case by citing the killing of the gal's brother."

"You're right on the point of law," remarked the D. A., "but there's just one flaw in your argument. Kelsy was *questioned* on that killing. But he was never *tried* on it!"

I just stared. I didn't know what to say.

"That's right, Riley," muttered Broderick. "That killing can be used as evidence if—"

"Well, Riley?" demanded the D. A.

I glared at Fitzpatrick and thought of Dillon's warning about defaulting the fight. I turned angrily to the D. A.

"If you're so sure something's going to happen, why don't you stop the fight yourself?"

"I just learned a few minutes ago," he said, "that you were putting Kelsy on. I haven't got time to get a court order to stop the fight. So it's all up to you, Riley, whether it's worth risking the long gamble. Money from the fight if you're lucky, or accessory before the fact."

HE AND Fitzpatrick left just before a guy came along the corridor and told me it was time for Kelsy to go up to the ring.

"Take the lesser of two evils," Broderick advised me as I stood uncertainly outside the dressing room. "Take Dillon around your neck instead of the D. A. You don't want to face a homicide rap. Default the fight."

"Then what have I got left?" I growled. "A stable of top-notch fighters who can't get any good fights because I'm managing them and Dillon is sore at me."

"You can't risk putting Kelsy on," Broderick insisted. "If he ever gets going in the groove, he can outbomb Joe Louis and you know it."

"Yeah," I muttered, staring at Broderick, "if he ever gets going . . ."

I squinted, then slowly pushed open the door. Mike asked me if it was time to go up. I nodded slightly. Kelsy looked scared and glanced at his lethal hands. I stared at him. He fumbled in the pocket of his bathrobe, then handed me a wad of bills and his hand shook as though he wouldn't be able to swat a fly.

"Take care of this for me," he mumbled, briefly meeting my appraising stare. "It's my last pay from the dairy and what you've been paying me. It's all I've got for myself and—"

"For the gal in Arizona," I murmured, watching. Then suddenly, I added pointedly: "Whose brother you killed!"

He stiffened and looked sick. I heard Broderick draw his breath sharply. Mike gave me a queer look, then tugged at Kelsy's arm to lead him out to the corridor. I stood rigid a moment, a bit shocked and scared by what I'd said.

From the corner of my eye I saw Broderick move. The next thing I knew his hand clawed my shoulder to make me face him. His face was as white and hard as ice and his eyes were like boiling pools.

"Of all the dirty underhanded—"

"Wait a minute," I protested, backing away. I'd never seen him so mad.

"You lousy rat!" he barked. "So that's your way out! Kill any nerve he's got left so he'll be crucified in the ring to save your own rotten neck!"

"You ought to know me better," I tried to explain. "I—"

I saw the blur of his zooming fist. It jarred me alongside the mouth and I nearly went backward over the table. He leaned over me and grabbed a fistful of shirt and coat.

"When the Boxing Commission hears of the way you sold out—"

I grabbed his other wrist.

"Listen," I shouted. "Don't get me wrong! Give me a chance to explain! Before I make Kelsy uncork, I want some of the dangerous power tired out of him by McCoy! That's why I had to make sure he'd be so scared he wouldn't uncork too soon and—"

I stopped as Broderick let go of my coat and cocked his fist. I watched its white knuckles, but it didn't come. Broderick stepped back slowly, angrily studying me.

"I don't believe you," he snapped. "But I'll give you the benefit of the doubt, temporarily. Not for yourself, but for Kelsy. He needs a decent break, and you'd better see that he gets it."

He turned and strode out. I wiped a trickle of blood from my mouth and started after Kelsy, and I was scared. If I let Kelsy get beat up and lose the fight, Broderick had enough influence through his paper to have me outlawed by the Boxing Commission for selling out my fighter. I didn't kid myself that he wouldn't be mad enough to do it.

But if I forced Kelsy somehow to put up a fight to win, and I forced him too soon and anything disastrous happened to McCoy, the D. A. was ready to pounce. I wasn't kidding myself any more about Kelsy's power now. And if I tried to sidestep Broderick and the D. A. by defaulting, I'd have Dave Dillon on my neck. If . . . if . . . if . . .

V

I COULD feel myself melting and my collar wilting under the glaring furnace of the floodlights over the ring just before the opening bell. My biggest fear was that Kelsy would forget himself and uncork on McCoy in the opening rounds when he was too strong.

"Feel him out," I rasped. "And don't try to nail him."

Mike gave me a queer look. The opening bell jarred my nerves and I gripped the edge of the ring. Kelsy edged out from the corner like a kid who's climbed to the top of a high dive and is afraid to dive and afraid to back out because everyone's watching him.

"Get your guard up!" I yelled to him as McCoy came across the ring. He just stood there, waiting. Waiting to be knocked out maybe. My voice zoomed to the girders in panic.

"Kelsy! Your guard! Get it up! Keep moving!"

I groaned as McCoy jabbed out a left. But McCoy wasn't even within range. He suspected a come-on the way Kelsy stood there with a low guard. He weaved warily squinting at Kelsy. He'd get over his suspicions if Kelsy didn't snap out of it. I cupped my hands.

"Kelsy! Snap out of it!"

Kelsy lifted his gloves slightly and feinted weakly with his left. McCoy, watching for Kelsy's right which never

came, sprang back. Kelsy flatfooted listlessly after him. McCoy was cagey, afraid of him. That first round wasn't even a good sparring match.

In the second the fans began demanding some action and McCoy, keeping himself carefully covered, wafted a couple of hooks. Kelsy got on his toes and danced away.

Between the second and third I saw McCoy nodding grimly to instructions his manager was giving him.

"Look out for a blitzkrieg this round," I told Kelsy. "But don't try to start one of your own."

McCoy threw enough gloves for both of them but Kelsy kept dancing just beyond range. Beside me Mike growled.

"McCoy's leaving himself open. Kelsy's had plenty of chances to sail into him."

"Leave Kelsy alone He's doing just what I want him to," I snapped, loosening my collar.

Mike gave me a long look. "McCoy ain't in a mood to let Kelsy keep dancin' like that."

In the fifth, McCoy finally trapped Kelsy in a corner. The fans yelled to their feet for the kill. Everywhere Kelsy ducked a slugging glove met him. I got scared when I saw the killer light flare in his eyes and I remembered he had cut loose when Garrick had trapped him like that. McCoy saw the killer look too and got set for something to happen. It didn't.

The light lasted just long enough for Kelsy to bluff his way out of the corner without throwing a solid punch. McCoy tore wildly after him and the slugging slowed Kelsy's dance to a waltz. Then things got bloody under the brutal tempo of McCoy's gloves. Kelsy still looked too strong to me when he came back to the corner at the bell. Mike sponged the blood from his face.

"You gonna let him do that to you?" he barked at Kelsy. "Go out there and—"

"Keep yourself covered," I cut in. "That's all."

"McCoy's gettin' through his guard," Mike protested. "Kelsy's got to start carryin' the fight. It's his only chance."

"You heard me," I shouted to Kelsy.

Thirty seconds after the start of the sixth McCoy slammed through Kelsy's guard and downed him right above us.

"He's gotta fight now," Mike yelled at me as Kelsy crouched over us.

I DIDN'T say anything. Kelsy got up at the count of three. McCoy rushed in and pounded him down in almost the same spot again. Mike was watching me instead of Kelsy. I clamped my teeth on my cigar.

Kelsy wasn't hurt or tired. He was just following instructions I'd trained into him —never to bounce right up, always to take at least three counts to make sure the shock of a blow wouldn't catch up with him just as he got to his feet.

Mike raged at me as Kelsy got up and reeled backward across the ring from the force of McCoy's attack.

"After tonight you can get yourself a new trainer!" Mike snapped. "I don't train guys to be licked by their managers!"

I winced slightly. The Boxing Commission would be interested in that remark if Broderick—

I kept my eyes on Kelsy.

"Next round he fights maybe. If he's lost enough of his edge so he don't kill—"

The crowd yelled as Kelsy went down again across the ring. This time he didn't get up at three. When he finally lurched up at seven I'd mashed my cigar. The bell stopped McCoy's walloping. I spit out shreds of cigar and climbed up outside the ropes.

"All right, Kelsy," I ordered. "Give him all you've got. You can take him."

He waited while Mike lifted his heaving ribs for him. He stared across the ring.

"I told you once," he gasped, "I wasn't going to kill another man."

"You're not going to kill anybody," I retorted, and somehow my eyes involuntarily sought the D. A. across the ring. I saw Broderick too, sitting in front of the D. A. and staring at us.

"What are you going to do?" I snapped to Kelsy. "Quit? Turn yellow?"

He gave me a look that stabbed just as

the warning signal sounded for the seventh round.

"I'm not quitting. You don't have to throw in the towel. I'll see it through."

I grinned and patted his shoulder, thinking he meant he saw things my way and would get McCoy. But all he did was try to dance and avoid the gloves McCoy threw at him. Man, how he saw it through! He didn't retreat. He was battered backward.

Mike shook his head at me.

"You scared him too much, Riley, remindin' him of that killin'. You won't get him to fight now."

"He's got to!" I snapped, looking toward Broderick.

"It's too late," growled Mike, watching Kelsy trying to clinch and McCoy pounding him away. When the bell sounded Kelsy couldn't find his corner. Mike had to go out and get him.

"Kelsy," I shouted, pounding his shoulder to get his attention. "You're so groggy you couldn't hurt him too much if you wanted to."

"You fooled me about Jurgen," he mumbled between gasps.

"What if I did?" I barked desperately. "I had to do it. I had to get you on your feet after the knockout that fellow's death had given you. A guy can't stay down forever. He's got to get up and fight sometime. Now go out there and get McCoy. You've got to before you're too tired and it's too late. Go get him!"

At the end of the eighth Mike joined in, pleading with him, but it was no use.

"We need a miracle to make him fight and we ain't got one," Mike muttered to me during the bloody ninth round. The crowd, which had been booing Kelsy, began to murmur wonderingly about his courage and stamina when he went down three times for the count of nine and got up and staggered in for more each time. When Kelsy went down for the third time across the ring I saw Broderick's eyes blazing.

I SWORE bitterly. I didn't give a hang about myself or Broderick or the D. A. now. All I thought of was Kelsy, the little champ, scared stiff but going through with the fight and taking all that punishment because he didn't want to put me on a spot with Dave Dillon. There's only one word that describes a guy like that, and it isn't game or nervy or courageous. Yeah, it's *guts*.

Nobody likes to see a guy like that keep taking it on the chin. I had to find that miracle to make him start handing back punishment to McCoy.

At the end of that bloody ninth round, the ref came to the corner to examine Kelsy. He shook his head doubtfully.

"Looks like I'm going to have to stop it, Riley," he called down to me.

"Wait, not yet," I pleaded. "Give him a chance."

"He couldn't take the chance if I gave it to him," the ref retorted.

"I'd like to bet some dough on that," I began angrily, and then I remembered something. The miracle, maybe! "Hold off, ref, hold off," I shouted.

I scrambled outside the ropes and got Kelsy's ear.

"Kelsy," I yelled, "you're sunk, you and the Arizona gal, if you don't nab McCoy. I bet all your dough on you!"

His puffy eyes looked at me dazedly, blood trickling out of his nose and from the corner of his mouth.

"I bet all your dough on you!" I repeated. "Even the dough you'll get from the fight! You'll be broke if you don't win."

His glove groped for my arm as the warning sounded.

"You mean—"

"Yeah. Everything. I was that sure you'd win. You'll be broke if—"

"You sap," he said through his swollen lips. "Why—"

"You told me to take care of it, didn't you?" I declared. 'I thought you meant—" The bell clanged. "Get him, Kelsy, you've got to!"

He lurched himself out. He spun offbalance with a wild swing that missed. The crowd laughed. McCoy slammed him in the face. I winced. His head and shoulders

banged the canvas. He rolled over and staggered up. The ref was watching him closely. Mike shook his head doubtfully at me.

Kelsy made another wild swing. This time he managed to get out of the way of McCoy's counter blow. He threw a hook that looked good when it started, but his aim was bad. It landed on McCoy's shoulder and McCoy half-turned. Kelsy shuffled in but McCoy hung him on an uppercut and jabbed him off his feet.

He came up fighting and McCoy began to look worried. I saw the D. A. lean forward intently. I ruined another cigar even though I reassured myself Kelsy couldn't be dangerously strong after the beating he'd taken. The crowd was trying to tell Kelsy how to throw his punches when the round ended.

His glistening chest heaved as Mike lifted his raw ribs for him. He looked around for me, blinking his eyes from the swab of the sponge.

"All my dough and hers?" he gasped.

I nodded. He glared at me, and I pointed across the ring to McCoy whose manager was talking insistently to him.

"Don't let McCoy rob you and that gal in Arizona," I said.

I glimpsed Broderick and the D. A. staring at me over the far edge of the ring as the bell bonged.

THE crowd yelled as McCoy came out with a rush. He slammed into Kelsy and I saw the top rope press into Kelsy's shoulders just above me. Then he slipped off and it was the middle rope. He grabbed the lower one as he went to his knees.

"Take a count," I yelled to him.

But he groped up. McCoy pummeled him along the ropes and he went down again in a neutral corner. He started to get right up again and the ref wanted to take a look at him. He shoved the ref away and reeled across the ring to meet McCoy.

He was like the sea hurling itself against a seawall, thrown back and down every time, but always coming back for more. The ref tried to take another look at him and had to duck when Kelsy swung at him. The howl of the crowd was something out of the Stone Age.

His right streaked for the body and the response from the crowd was like the thunder that follows a streak of lightning. McCoy barely side-stepped in time.

"Boy," Mike yelped. "Kelsy's comin' back fast."

"Too fast," I snapped, beginning to get scared.

Kelsy went down again. He bounced right up. He charged at McCoy. They met with a shock. Their mix-up in the center of the ring was as hard to follow as a dogfight. The place was bedlam. The crowd kept up one continuous scream for the kill.

Kelsy seemed to be getting stronger with the punishment he took. Too strong. I saw trouble looming in the way he began bombing for the jaw. He struck a glancing blow. Just glancing. But McCoy dropped to one knee and his eyes glazed a moment. The ref had to shove Kelsy toward a neutral corner. Kelsy danced impatiently, his fists swinging. I was no longer beginning to get scared. I *was* scared.

"The body, Kelsy!" I shouted. "Lay off the jaw! The body will be enough, Kelsy! The body!"

The words were crammed back in my throat by the engulfing roar of the crowd as McCoy surged up at three and barged toward Kelsy. Again they slammed into each other. The killer look blazed in Kelsy's slitted eyes.

"The body, Kelsy" I shouted, pounding the canvas frantically with my fist. "The body!"

Kelsy had eyes only for McCoy's jaw. His sights weren't lined up well enough yet, but they would be soon.

Mike began shouting.

"The body, Kelsy! The body!"

Kelsy's bombing gloves came closer and closer toward their target. McCoy caught on and began keeping his jaw covered. He staggered back as Kelsy pounded his head and protecting gloves. He suddenly ducked

under Kelsy's attack. His elbows drove in and out like pistons.

Kelsy went down on his haunches. He came up, faster than he'd gone down, with fists flying. McCoy, right over him, covered up and started to back away. Kelsy let him go to just the right distance. He collapsed McCoy's guard with a jolt to the stomach. McCoy started to wilt. But Kelsy . . .

"That got him!" Mike shouted in alarm. "Stay back, Kelsy!"

I saw Kelsy's shoulder muscles gather like heavy cream pouring through the lip of a pitcher. I pounded the canvas and yelled in panic. This was it!

I yelled my lungs out.

"Kelsy, don't! Look out, McCoy!"

Kelsy poured power into his right to the jaw. *Blam.* I could hear the explosion of it through the roar of the crowd. McCoy spreadeagled against the ropes, and then the ropes flung him sprawling on his face.

Around the arena twenty thousand guys stood up and opened their throats for a tremendous Tarzan yell; each one yelled as if he had his foot on McCoy's inert body, while the ref raised Kelsy's right arm. Kelsy didn't seem to hear them. He just stared down anxiously at McCoy who hadn't so much as twitched. I froze inside when I glimpsed the D. A. fighting his way to the ring with his eyes on McCoy.

VI

I BUNDLED Kelsy off to the dressing rooms while McCoy's seconds were still working over him. Kelsy kept asking about McCoy as he was being rubbed down. I told him to quit worrying, then ducked out to find out myself because I was scared. I bumped into the D. A.

"McCoy had to be brought down on a stretcher," he snapped. "He hasn't come around yet."

I started for McCoy's room. Gunner Garrick came into the corridor and grabbed my arm.

"Hey, remember me? We got a fight on upstairs."

"Let me know, will you?" I said hoarsely to the D. A.

His hard eyes promised he would, plenty.

During the third round of the champ's brawl with Maxie Maxwell, one of the D. A.'s dicks appeared at the corner.

"They took McCoy to the hospital. Mind if I sit here? I got nothing else to do at the moment," he said, watching me.

I groped for the edge of the ring. I don't remember much what happened after that except that everything was confused, and Gunner Garrick's voice came through the confusion once.

"Hey, boss, you're supposed to grin. Not look like we'd lost."

When I got to the hospital, with the dick tagging along of course, Kelsy was wearing a track in the linoleum of the waiting room. There were other guys in the room, but I saw only Kelsy who was at the far end and hadn't seen me enter. I started toward him, then Broderick was suddenly in front of me and swerving me quickly aside.

"I should have known you were on the level about trying to tire him," Broderick said softly. "But you'd better keep out of his sight. He's waiting for you, and if he ever hauls off it won't do you any good that you're right here in the hospital."

I nodded nervously and let Broderick guide me to a chair somewhat concealed by a potted palm that reminded me too vividly of an undertaker's parlor. I hid my face behind a magazine.

A nurse hurried through the room and shook her head before anyone even asked her. Through the palm I glimpsed Kelsy's face and it was gray. He looked across the room at the D. A. who stared hard at him, then he rubbed his fist in his hand and looked at the door where I had come in. I slouched down a bit lower behind the magazine and it shook in my hands.

I SWEATED there another half-hour and I did some tall thinking. Broderick leaned toward me. "You'd better get out of here," he murmured. "The D. A. will

let you leave with one of his dicks. I'll ask him for you and—"

I let the magazine slip to the floor. Kelsy saw me. His eyes bored at me.

"Sit tight. Don't make a move," Broderick warned me.

I stood up. Kelsy walked slowly toward me from the far end of the room. My stomach fluttered like a rag in a breeze. I didn't wait for him. I went across toward the D. A.

"Listen, D. A.," I said huskily and quickly, trying to keep an apprehensive eye on Kelsy. "I'll take full responsibility for whatever happens. I tried to save Kelsy from this by letting him get tired, but I didn't know his strength. He didn't know that you'd warned me. He didn't want to fight. He only went ahead because he didn't want to put me on a spot with Dave Dillon by defaulting. He wasn't going to hit McCoy hard, but I—"

"But he did hit McCoy hard, too hard," declared the D. A. He tapped his coat over the inside pocket. "I've got warrants here for both of you, just in case."

Kelsy came close, too close to me. But just then a doc, smoking a cigarette and inhaling deeply, came into the room.

"I don't know how we did it, but we did," he said as everyone faced him. "McCoy's all right now. But what the devil was in that glove that hit him?"

He walked out, muttering something about twentieth century barbarity. The D. A. scowled at me, then spoke softly to McCoy's manager who shook his head. The D. A. tore up one of the papers he took from his inside pocket. He held the second paper in both hands and looked at Kelsy.

"Shall I tear up your warrant, or are you going to hit Riley? Maybe I ought to tear it up anyway."

Kelsy stared hard at me. Broderick suddenly came between us.

"Listen, Kelsy," he said anxiously. "This was a tough break all around, but Riley didn't mean to get you in a spot like this. I've known him for years and you can take my word for it that—"

I backed slowly away as Kelsy, his face white and set, pushed slowly past Broderick. He started to lift his hand. I backed away fast.

"For Pete's sake," I yelled. "Somebody grab him!"

He frowned at me. "Where's my dough?" he asked.

THE D. A. and his dicks laughed at me. I stared uncertainly at Kelsy and my face felt hot. "Your—your dough?" I stammered.

"You shouldn't have bet it for me," he said. "But—how much did I win?"

I looked at his lethal hands.

"You're not sore at me?"

"A couple of minutes ago I was plenty sore," he admitted, "because I thought you'd let me go ahead and stick my neck out for the D. A. I didn't know then that your own neck was right out there with mine. I guess tonight was as much my fault as yours. I should have known better than to let you talk me into trying to be a fighter, but—"

"You needed the dough," I muttered, and he nodded.

"*Trying* to be a fighter?" interrupted the D. A., who was forgetting he was a D. A. and was becoming a fight fan again. "Man alive! Those last two rounds—"

Broderick began to laugh.

"Listen, Kelsy, if anybody says you're not a fighter after tonight, you just haul off and— No, you'd better not haul off. Let a weak guy like me protect your reputation."

"Weak guy?" I muttered, feeling my jaw and staring at Broderick's bruised knuckles.

"I didn't get these from you," he mumbled, his face reddening. "On the way over here I bumped into Fitzpatrick."

I saw Kelsy take out the contract he had with me. He was going to tear it up.

"No you don't," I said. The D. A. and everyone looked hard at me. "You keep it," I explained. "Then if anyone ever tries to talk you into fighting again and you fall for his line, you won't be able to do anything about it unless I give my okay."

Kelsy nodded slowly and put the contract back in his pocket.

"Not a bad idea," said the D. A.

"It'll be sort of an insurance policy that says I can't fight," said Kelsy.

"Yeah," I muttered, blinking sweat from my eyes as I looked at his hands. "A sort of insurance," I said, taking a deep breath. "Well, Kelsy, how do you like this payoff on the policy? Nine grand. Nine thousand bucks for you and that gal in Arizona. I got good odds for you on that bet because you were a dark horse. Nine grand. How does that sound to you?"

"Swell." He grinned.

An hour later he said goodbye to me and Broderick at the airport after he'd suddenly decided to take the night plane for the West.

"There he goes," I sighed, scowling and watching the plane disappear into the darkness. "The little champ. I'm letting a million-dollar gate go to bury itself somewhere in Arizona like the Government gold at Fort Knox."

"It's just as well," declared Broderick. "You wouldn't live long if you had to go through a night like this each time before and after he hit a guy. You're lucky he looked at things the way he did and didn't hit you."

I winced.

"And who says he didn't? He hit me hard, and right where it hurts. In the pocketbook. For nine grand!"

Broderick stared at me.

"You mean—"

"Yeah. I didn't bet that dough of his at all!"

"Nine grand!" Broderick whistled. "And you didn't bet his—"

"But what makes it hurt more," I complained, "I had so much on my mind, I didn't even get down a bet for myself!"

Broderick began to laugh. I glared at him.

"And don't call me a chump," I snapped. "If I'd tried to tell him I hadn't bet his dough—"

I shivered slightly when I thought of Kelsy's lethal hands.

"I know," laughed Broderick. "All you did was buy yourself some insurance."

"Yeah." I grinned. "Life insurance."

Standing before the court-martial board, Dan Moore could not control his bitter anger

Fools Fly High

Start now this magnificent story of the airmen whose skill and crazy daring was to conquer the mysteries of the sky

By LOUIS C. GOLDSMITH

BOTH of them are competent airmen, well fitted to instruct the cadets at the Army training school. But there the similarity stops, for LIEUTENANT DAN MOORE is big and reckless and ingenuously friendly, and CAPTAIN ALVIN NAGEL is a suave, graceful man, with a calculating intelligence. Both men are gamblers, but Moore never counts the odds, and it is that quality in the big man, along with his magnificent war record, that Alvin Nagel envies and hates. In those years immediately after World War I a flyer was expected to be a madman.

So, finally, Nagel challenges Moore to a test of courage. Together they go up in a plane and kick into a tailspin; they plummet toward earth, until Nagel finally weakens and pulls the plane out of the spin. His vivid imagination has played him traitor; and afterward, when he has recovered from his terrible fear, he is even more determined to have revenge on the imperturbable Moore.

NAGEL goes about it with characteristic cleverness. He dares Moore to take crazy risks; regularly he wins Moore's salary in card games. A genius with cards, Nagel has never before stooped to sharper's tricks, but he does so now. Finally he sees a chance to get Dan Moore into serious trouble. LIEUTENANT BUNNY BEST has been ordered out to rescue the survivors of a crash, and Moore remarks to Nagel that he doubts Best's flying judgment. Later Moore discovers that Nagel has reported this to the commanding officer, MAJOR ANTAI, and apparently to Best himself.

Temporarily Dan Moore is acting as solo check pilot, and right now he has an unpleasant job to do. He suspects that CADET JULIAN HOYT is timing his maneuvers by sneaking a

This story began in last week's Argosy

look at the tachometer, an unforgivable sin in Army flying; and if that's true, the cadet is finished. The situation is particularly difficult for Moore because he has just met Hoyt's sister, THERESA, and the girl's charm and lively interest in flying have strongly attracted him.

ON THE test flight Hoyt does cheat, using instruments, and Dan Moore is forced to report that to Major Antai at an officers' meeting. During that meeting Antai reprimands Moore for his criticism of Lieutenant Best's flying judgment, pointing out that the remark could have a dangerous effect. Also the major makes reference to the army reorganization bill, which is going to throw a number of officers out of the service. But Moore, confident because of his fine record, has paid no attention to the posted list of dismissed men.

After the officers' meeting CAPTAIN PATRICK, a war buddy of Moore's, reveals to him that Nagel has been using a marked deck in the poker games. Dan is furious, but Capt'n Pat convinces him that the smart thing to do is to work Nagel's own trick in the next game. While they are discussing this, they hear the thunder of a plane—Best returning from his rescue mission.

That's the night of the Cadet Solo Ball, and when Dan and Capt'n Pat reach the landing field, they find there an excited group of cadets with their girls. And they find tragedy. Best, attempting a foolishly daring landing, has cracked up; flames are geysering from his plane. As Dan Moore rushes to rescue the pilot, he is tortured by the thought that his criticism of Best's flying might have driven the man to take this risk. Nagel suddenly appears, wildly triumphant, proclaiming Moore's responsibility for the disaster. Then, before the cadets and their girls, Moore's anger breaks: He knocks down Captain Nagel. . . .

CHAPTER VIII

GIVE US A CRACKUP SONG

THE guard had been called out. Major Antai had the cadets assembled at one end of their recreation room. Their girls, who had come for the Solo Ball, were in the mess room where they had been dining when the crash occurred. Mrs. Antai, and Mrs. Lant, the official chaperon, were with them, probably trying to explain this thing, trying to lessen its horror.

The commanding officer talked in his mild, dry voice, facing these young men who would some day be army pilots—if they could take things like this crash impersonally.

The cadets were all standing; all of them but Cadet Tracy, who sat in one of the lounge chairs, both hands clutched to his face, rocking a little in his chair. Jensen, the cadet commander, stood in the forefront, his square, bony face expressionless.

Captain Patrick and Lieutenant Dan Moore stood beside the major. Antai knew that these two war pilots had the entire confidence of the young men. They were his moral support. Their presence would help to quiet the cadets.

Lieutenant Moore had pulled on a leather flying coat. Nobody there could know the agony that each movement cost him. His arms and shoulders were raw where the seared skin had pulled off.

"These are things," the major said, "that happen in flying. They were commonplace during the war, but in the future they will happen less often. You boys are flying in the future. Remember that and forget this."

The cadets shifted uneasily but when Cadet Jensen spoke he seemed to voice their feelings. "Don't worry about us, sir. Anyway, I'm not going to have bad dreams over it."

Some of that tense strain left the room. They were smiling, in a nervous, uncertain manner.

Dan Moore had to clench his teeth against the sickness that was in him. Those smiles were forced bravado now. But how long would it be before they hardened into a natural expression of indifference? How long before these fresh, wholesome kids lost their regard for human life and built for themselves a protective shell of cynicism, a sneer for death and suffering? And what did that do to a man? What had it done to him?

But that was a part of it, to avoid an inward searching, an urge to break through the shell and touch life—the simple, commonplace emotions of normal living.

The major was speaking again. "Fortu-

nately, Lieutenant Moore was able to get the pilot's safety belt loosened and drag him clear of the fire. He has some broken bones, but the report is he'll live—providing he didn't breathe any of the flames."

CADET TRACY dropped his hands from his face; a sudden, jerky movement: "Yes, he'll live," he said, voice high and thin. He moved toward the officers like a man walking in his sleep.

Captain Patrick stepped to the door. "Corporal!" he spoke sharply.

"He'll live, all right, damn his soul! But what about those two in the rear cockpit? I saw them . . ." he choked, sobbing and laughing.

Captain Patrick came inside, a non-com of the guard with him. "Cadet Tracy is ill," he snapped. "Take him to the hospital immediately!"

"I saw them," Tracy shouted, dragged away by the corporal. "I saw their feet kicking against the fabric—trying to get out. I saw—"

Lieutenant Moore spoke loudly to drown out the hysterical voice: "It was a crack-up, men," he said. "Look at me! I've cracked 'em up from hell to breakfast."

Tracy's voice came faintly from outside: "*They* breathed the flames, all right . . ."

It couldn't stop here. They had all heard that voice. The major was looking at Moore, commanding him to go on. Moore saw their faces, grotesque, distorted as though they were a mirage flickering in the heat waves.

Dan's voice lowered. "I've cracked them up, but I'm here, men. And I'm still whole."

They were listening.

Cadet Lambert interrupted: "Heck, Capt'n Dan, we're not babies. We knew airplanes cracked up and burned up. And you're not foolin' us with the coat. We saw you go into that fire and we know you got burns an' should be in the hospital right now."

"Thanks, Lambert. But it goes deeper than just laughing it off. I know, believe me. When it's Lights Out you'll be lying in your blankets and then all of a sudden you'll be in that plane, hoping to clear the fence and telephone line. Then you'll be in the flames, wondering how it feels to breathe them."

Moore paused. "Not only that, but pretty soon it won't have to be dark; you won't have to be in bed; to see and feel it. The thought of it'll come when you're flying. Well, then you're through, all washed up. If a Benzine Board doesn't kick you out of flying something else will —a bad crackup.

"So here's the cure. I wouldn't lie to you in this and you know it. A man's brain can stand only so much. At that point nature cuts the switches. You may move after that; you may walk and talk but it'll be automatic stuff. Upstairs here," he tapped his head, "it's all a blank.

"It's happened to me in a couple of bad crackups. It's happened to other pilots I've talked with. It's—well, ask Pat here. An engine jerked out of his plane, dive bombing."

"That's right," Capt'n Pat affirmed. "The last thing I remembered of that day and for a week after, was getting the key to the ammunition shed. Don't remember flying at all."

"So," Moore picked it up, "you don't need to wonder how it feels burning up alive. You won't be there—only your carcass." He grinned. His voice crackled with sarcasm. "An' the way most of you fly I'd say you're too wet to burn. My personal opinion is you're the dumbest bunch of cadets it's been my misfortune to instruct."

"Aw, not the dumbest, Capt'n Dan!" The cadet was laughing. And it was unforced laughter. "Give us a break!"

Moore grunted.

"You, Hartwell . . . I'll give you a break when you learn to tighten up on your verticals. And you, Munson; you can't do stall wingovers for sour owl spit. Get on that piano stool, Jackson. Lord knows you're no good in a cockpit. Give us *Dapper Dan, the Railroad Man.* Naw,

give us a crackup song. And remember, you sons, it's a good landing if you can walk away from it."

The young cadet went a-stunting,
And as 'neath the wreckage he lay . . ."

DAN MOORE sucked the cool night air into his lungs. I'll always hate that song! The finest gang of fellows in the world. A hundred and nineteen—a hundred eighteen, now that Tracy's washed up. Please don't hang onto my arm, Major. I can walk all right."

"I'll go with him to the hospital, suh," Pat insisted.

"I want to thank you for what you did in there, Lieutenant," the major said, in precise, parade-ground voice. "I'm sorry you struck Nagel, a superior officer."

"You saw it?"

"And too many others saw it," the major said. "Officers, cadets, mechanics—and those girls. Nagel will have to be transferred to another post. The hell of it is, this thing tonight might have saved you."

"We better get on to the hospital, Major," Pat broke in hurriedly. "Dan's pretty badly scorched, suh."

"Very well. I'm sorry, Lieutenant. You'll have to consider yourself under arrest in quarters—in hospital. Good night, gentlemen."

The boots clumped hollowly on the boardwalk leading to officers' row.

CHAPTER IX

HOSPITAL LANDING

LIEUTENANT MOORE lay on the high, narrow bed in an officer's ward of the post hospital. Prent, his wardmaster, had fixed pillows so that he could sit up without putting weight on tender shoulders. They had taken the paraffin-oil bandages off and he could move his arms. There was some pain left but it was the good, healthy-feeling pain of wounds that were almost healed.

Capt'n Pat moved restlessly about the small room. From his oil-splattered face Dan knew he'd been flying a rotary-engined plane. He had stopped by on his way to quarters.

"I may be wrong" Pat concluded his arguments, "but I just got a hunch that Nagel didn't tell Bunny Best what you said about his flying. I told the major that and I think maybe he's got the same idea. Anyway, nobody's allowed to visit Best."

Moore fingered the coarse white hospital sheet. "How is Best, Pat? Be honest, fella."

Pat sat down. "Well, his lungs ain't burned, Dan. Only something seems wrong with his head, even though they can't find any skull injuries."

"He's still raving?"

"Yeah. But none of it makes sense. It stands to reason, Dan, that if Nagel told him and if he came back here that night because of what you said—well, that's what he'd be ravin' about."

"I don't know, Pat. He got an awful jolt; enough to scramble a man's brains."

Pat jerked to his feet and stood over his friend. "Now look here, Dan, you're makin' a lot of somethin' about nothin'. Can't you see what Nagel's doin' to you? He says you caused that crackup and, by Harry, he's got you talked into thinkin' the same thing."

Moore's jaw was stubborn. "You know how flyers are, Pat. If you started a story around camp that I couldn't do an outside loop, I'd probably try one, even though any fool knows they're impossible. Well, that's what I did to Best."

Pat shrugged resignation. "All right. If you wanta help Nagel crucify you." Anger twisted his chubby face. "And that's not all Nagel's done to you. Remember the bet he made you wouldn't run your car through that fruit stand?"

Moore grinned. "I won more than enough for the damages."

"Yeah. But you spent the night in jail. That ain't helpin' your army files."

"Don't be a fool, Pat. Things like that don't get on our records. Everybody knows it takes a fool to fly. They make allow-

ances for us looking for a little outside excitement—just so we don't hurt anybody."

MOORE was puzzled by the soberness of Pat's face. "You mean they *used* to make allowances, Dan." He turned away, with an abrupt movement; walked to the door and back.

"Things are changed in the Air Service, Dan. Used to be all they asked for was good flyin' and fightin'. Now—I don't know—seems like they talk more about careful flying and good formation work an' navigation—things we used to laugh about, over a bottle of good licker."

Moore chuckled at Pat's tone. "Hasn't it always been so? Haven't the brass-collared kiwis always preached it to us? But the flyers know it's all bunk." He bent sidewise to get a cigarette from his table. "Who was one of the best men we had overseas?" he demanded, through the tobacco smoke.

Pat grinned. "You weren't any slouch at it yourself, Dan."

Moore waved this aside. "I'm talkin' about topnotchers. I'm talking about Eddy Rickenbacker, for instance. The flyin' fool. That's what a lot of us called him." Moore leveled his finger. "Was he careful? Was he all those things you've mentioned? Lord, no! It was a red-letter day when Eddy made a three-point landing and nobody ever gave him any medals on navigation. But could he knock 'em down!" Moore settled back on the pillows. "There's your answer," he concluded.

Pat seemed suddenly anxious to get away from this subject. He agreed with Dan's contentions. And yet . . . well things were changing.

He sat down on one of the visitors' chairs. "Nagel got that deck of marked cards back," he told Moore. "Remember he came into my room that night just before the crackup? Musta took 'em then.

"But I'm getting four more marked decks from the same outfit, in Chicago. I talked to Frank, downtown at the poolhall. He knew how to get ahold of them."

"Better forget it, Pat. I've an idea Nagel could take you with your own deck. How's everything else?"

"Just so-so. Tracy resigned. Rest of the cadets are gettin' along all right. Say, Dan, would you mind talkin' to young Hoyt?"

"Does he know he's up for Benzine?"

"Yeah. But he don't blame either of us for gettin' kicked out, Dan. Funny thing is he didn't know he was cheating. I'll swear it. He thought usin' instruments was a good idea."

Moore wanted to ask about Hoyt's sister. He'd never forget that look she had given him the night of the crash. "Sure, I'll be glad to talk to Hoyt," he told Pat.

HE LAY back with his eyes half-closed, when Pat had gone. But his eyes came wide open as a Liberty pounded the air above the hospital. It backfired on closed throttle.

Moore waited tensely in the following silence. "Blast that throttle," he muttered.

Prent, the wardmaster, shoved his good-natured face in the open doorway. "You-all needin' somethin', Capt'n Dan?" he inquired in undiluted Cracker drawl.

"Take a look, Prent. See if that D. H. landed all right."

Prent came back into the room. "Hit looked all right to me, Capt'n. Lawd, suh, you-all been landin' ever ship come in this whole week."

Moore relaxed, grinning. Prent made a fuss over his pillows and over filling his water glass. He left the room but returned almost immediately.

"Company, suh," he told Moore. His manner indicated something unusual about this company.

Cadet Julian Hoyt and his sister stood in the open doorway.

Moore's startled glance changed to truculence because of the girl's presence. She seemed to understand this. She moved quickly to the bedside, her gray eyes meeting his steadily.

"Don't order me out," she begged, "until I've had a chance to apologize."

Young Hoyt was beside her. "You see, sir, she didn't understand, that night."

"Not only then," the girl's voice showed anger at herself, "but I didn't understand anything that happened that day. And yet I passed judgment on you."

Moore's first annoyance melted under the girl's sincerity. He smiled. "All of this is a bit confusing. But won't you sit down?"

"No," Theresa Hoyt said. "I've apologized. I'll leave now."

"Why leave? Perhaps I should apologize for knocking him down in front of you. Let's forget it and be friends."

"Would you expect that? After you had my brother dismissed from the cadet training?"

"Now, sis! Captain Moore simply did his duty. You promised me you wouldn't—"

"All right. I won't. But why is it any crime to use an instrument in flying?"

Moore's smile acknowledged her persistence. "I'll tell you why," he said. "It's because you can't depend on them. In this one case, your brother depended on his tachometer as an indication of airspeed. In other words, if you dive the engine hasn't any load to pull, so it speeds up. So you turn that reasoning around and say that if the engine speeds up, more revolutions per minute show on the tachometer, then you must be in a dive."

JULIAN HOYT had sat down, campaign hat with its white cadet band crushed between skinny legs, his body bent forward, face alight with eagerness. "And what's wrong with that reasoning, sir?"

Moore smiled at this eagerness. "Because you get to depending on it. You get so that when your tachometer speeds up you want to pull the stick back, to get out of the dive."

"Yes. That's right, sir."

"Well, then you get into thick weather, depending on that. You can't see the ground. Your tack r.p.m's. increase. You pull back on the stick. But the devil of it is, my boy, you're just as apt to be in a tailspin. And in that case the harder you pull on the stick the worse the spin gets. So you crash."

A quick spasm crossed the girl's face. She controlled it, smiling uncertainly. "You've thought about those things, haven't you? I've wondered."

Moore squinted at her. "You mean about instruments?"

She shook her head.

"No. About crashing. About getting killed—yourself."

"I'm human," he said. "But I don't let it bother me. A man can't in this business."

"No," she admitted. "You wouldn't."

"Don't pay any attention to her," Julian advised. "What you didn't mention about that tachometer business is, there's other instruments. You've got to use all of them at once."

Moore nodded absently. He was thinking of what the girl had said about him not being afraid of death. There was nothing complimentary intended; no flattery for his courage If anything it was the reverse.

"There's inclinometers and airspeed meters," Hoyt continued, "and there's that Sperry turn indicator."

Moore gestured impatiently. "They'll all fail you. That turn indicator works like one of those fancy spinning tops that balance themselves on a string. Well, an airplane isn't a string. I've upset those instruments time and again till they didn't know left from right or upside down."

The boy made a quick gesture.

"But if you could just keep your ship exactly level and straight, sir—then you'd have it."

Moore waved this aside. "I'm not going into all the details. I'm just telling you that you've got to see the ground—the horizon to fly. Take my word for it. I've been flying quite a few hours."

"That's just it," Hoyt agreed. "A man'd have to be good at flying before he could hope to do it."

"Do what?"

"Why, fly by instruments, sir."

CHAPTER X

YOU CAN'T HELP FLYING

MOORE examined the two faces that were studying him with such intent, vital eagerness. This persistence should make him angry. Instead he felt an amused sympathy, as a grown person does for children who persist in the impossible.

"Trick," he said, unconsciously using her nickname, "you two are the most persistently stubborn people I've ever met. Now let's forget this foolishness about instruments. You're lucky, Hoyt, to be getting out of this flying business. It really isn't a business. Just a form of insanity."

Both pairs of eyes met his, incredulously. "But I'm going to keep on flying, sir!" Hoyt exclaimed. 'Just the same as you are. We can't help it, Lieutenant."

It seemed to Dan that his case was a little different.

"You see," Hoyt explained, "I—we have a little money our folks left us. A good jewelry store. My father was a watchmaker." Hoyt laughed. "An Irish watchmaker, if you can imagine that. He taught me the trade."

"Then you two children go back to it. Forget this foolishness."

Trick Hoyt spoke with asperity. "You talk as though we were infants. And you were a million years old. I'm eighteen and Red's almost twenty."

"We've got some ideas, sir. They may be nutty. But I'm going to learn how to fly well enough to test them out. And so—well, the way things are, we thought you might be interested."

Dan was vaguely uneasy. He couldn't help these two youngsters. Yet he felt sorry for the boy and a little responsible. He was the one who had figured out Hoyt's amazing progress in flying, his being ready to solo after five hours of dual instruction.

Hoyt was talking: "Five hundred dollars for an OX Jenny, new, still in the crates. And down at Ellington they've got two hangars full of Thomas Morse scouts. Some guy bought up the whole lot of them at fifteen dollars each. He only wants a hundred and fifty, as is and where they are.

"And in San Diego . . . well, sir, a fella can pick up these wartime ships for almost nothing. So it wouldn't cost so much to get together a whole flight of planes."

"Wait a minute, Hoyt. There's no flying outside the Army. Maybe a few tramp barnstormers, but they're living from hand to mouth. Fly a passenger, get a square meal."

"You mean fly a passenger, get drunk."

"Drinking goes with flying, Hoyt. Fill your ship with gasoline and yourself with booze. That's what keeps 'em in the air. That's why I'm telling you two—stay away from it."

"You're no booze hound."

"I drink my share or more. Be practical, Hoyt. You get ten dollars for every passenger. But there's darned few groundlubbers with nerve enough to take a ride."

"What about exhibitions?"

"All washed up. Last one I saw was about nineteen thirteen. Barney Oldfield and—I think it was a flyer named Johnson. They packed a county fairground. The main feature was Barney, in a four-wheel drive Fiat, racing the airplane around a mile track. But that was before people knew what airplanes looked alike. That's all done for."

HOYT had been waiting impatiently for him to finish. "I think you're wrong, Lieutenant. Remember what they called a well-known flight of planes during the war?"

"You mean a circus?"

"That's right. And that's where you would come in. You're an ace. Well maybe we could find some more famous flyers. Anyway, we'd get a half-dozen or more planes together and go around the country showing people how it was done over there."

Moore's eyes took on a distant look. "Dog fights, eh? Make a sort of picture for them—a story. Here comes the enemy, here we go out to fight him down."

"That's it," eagerly, "you get the idea. And bombs—flour in paper bags—set off a little dynamite on the ground when they hit. Maybe get somebody to walk out on a wing, hang onto a strut. And parachutes, too."

Moore lay back on the pillows, chuckling. "Hoyt, you've got an imagination, all right. Not so crazy as it sounds, either. Magazines 're full of stories about the big brave war aces—I'd spell it a different way. But there's no doubt it'd have pull. I'll bet somebody does cash in on it."

Hoyt was on his feet. "And you're the fella, Lieutenant."

"Now look here, Hoyt—"

"Yes, sir. You're not going to stop flying just because that darned reorganization kicks you out of the army. We'll—what's the matter, sir?"

"Out . . . of . . . the . . . Army!"

"What's the—Lieutenant, didn't you—you didn't know about it!"

Moore took a deep, shaky breath. So Pat, old well-meaning Pat, had kept the news from him as long as he could. They all knew about it. All but him. He hadn't read the reorganization bill. So his name *was* on the list. He was going to be kicked out of the Army—out of flying.

He held himself quiet, as the full weight of it struck in. It was so plain to him, now that he knew. The way they had all avoided talking about that reorganization. The embarrassed silences when he'd expressed sympathy for the other officers who were let out.

But why was it being done? He wasn't old. He wasn't twenty-five yet. There were years of flying in him, providing he didn't crack up. Perhaps that was it. They were afraid of his recklessness. Of course! Pat had said as much, telling of the change in Air Service policy.

He'd said more. That about Nagel—about their bet, when he ran his car through the front end of a store. And there was that tailspin test of nerve, when he and Nagel spun down from four thousand and Nagel had lost his nerve at the last moment and pulled out.

That was why Nagel was trying to force onto him the blame for Lieutenant Best's crackup. Nagel had been hating him all this time, planning revenge, at the same time pretending friendliness.

HE WAS aware, dimly, that Hoyt and his sister were staring at him, with something akin to horror in their expressions.

Theresa Hoyt stepped swiftly forward, laid a slender hand over his. There were tears in her eyes.

This wouldn't do. He'd have to cover up some way or other This girl was staring into his mind.

"Dan . . . . Dan Moore!" Her voice choked. She bent, and he felt the softness of her lips on his forehead. "Just don't think of it," she begged. "We'll fly. Of course we'll fly. And in a better way, Dan Moore."

With this strange promise, she left. He was alone—terribly alone.

His hand moved up to his temple. He examined, curiously, the dampness on his fingers. A woman had kissed him and cried over him, as though he were a baby.

What was this, anyway? He couldn't fly. Well, he hated flying. He'd hated it ever since the war. So what the hell? He was getting out, while his record was still clean as a hound's tooth, so far as flying went.

Pat was right about Nagel. He'd been lying to him all these months, with his pretended friendliness. Lying to him and cheating him in cards and letting him win the money back in wild bets, like that crashing his car into the fruit store. That was to smear his service record and get him kicked out.

And Nagel was lying about Best. They'd have the proof of that when Best's mind cleared. He wasn't responsible for that crash; for those men killed and burned up. Best would clear that.

Moore relaxed a little in the bed. Sure, Best would clear him of responsibility for that crash. And that was the only blot on his flying record.

"Jest stopped by tuh tell you-all, Capt'n Dan." Prent, the wardmaster, stood just inside the door in the attitude of an old woman gossiping over the fence. "Bunny —I mean, Lieutenant Best, he jest kicked the bucket, suh. Made a mighty big flop-pin' aroun' about doin' it, suh."

Moore sat straight up in bed, ignoring the pain of his burns. "He—did he regain his senses? Did he talk rationally before he died?"

"Law' no, suh. He jest up an' started floppin'. Nex' thin' he's daid. Capt'n Dan, d'you-all think I could evah learn tuh fly, suh?"

CHAPTER XI

TRAIN TO NOWHERE

DAN took his two suitcases from the colored boy and tossed him a quarter. The Pullman porter recognized him immediately. Dan and Pat and other officers had made a number of holiday trips on the Fort Meyer train. He remembered the last one. He'd been feeling high. He'd paid this man five dollars for a pint of moonshine, giving him a twenty dollar bill and telling him to keep the change for a tip.

"'Aft'noon, Capt'n suh. You let me carry them baggages, suh."

Moore winced at the title. "I've got lower three," he said, extending his ticket.

The porter brushed the seat with his whiskbroom and went off for some comfort pillows, giving Moore the impression that he was the only worthwhile man in that car.

Moore sat down and stared at the other seat. He wished the train would pull out and leave the little Florida town behind; leave behind the shame of that military trial he had faced for striking Nagel.

He saw the court, as it had fronted him, in an impassive row behind the long table. It was a general court, all of the officers ranking him; colonels, lieutenant colonels, majors and captains, who took their places amid the tinkling, chilly rattle of sabers.

He, Lieutenant Moore, had struck a superior officer, before witnesses, including persons of civilian status. And these men were here to judge him for that act.

The judge advocate was a slender, gray-haired little man with a brain as sharp as his hard blue eyes. He was like a small terrier in his handling of the prosecution. He was a calvary officer and made little effort to hide his dislike of the Air Service; of men like Lieutenant Moore who had no understanding nor respect for military traditions.

Moore's plea in abatement, claiming justifying provocation, was ruled inadmissible, but not until examination had brought out the remarks he made about Lieutenant Best's flying ability and the crash resulting in the death of four men.

Nagel calmly denied what Moore charged him with saying the night of the crash, and Moore was unable to remember, under sharp questioning of the judge advocate, the exact words used by Nagel. When the time came for this testimony he didn't care to remember them. What difference did the words make? It was the intention behind them.

Moore's sullen defiance increased. At the end, facing those nine men who represented all the dignity and justice of the military, he refused the right allowed him to make a final statement.

Bitterly he tendered his resignation, tossed his lieutenant's commission into their faces. The resignation was refused, but Moore was granted an indefinite leave of absence. As for the court-martial decision, it might not be announced for months, since the case must be reviewed by various Army officials. Whatever the decision was, Moore was finished because of the reorganization. But the trial had stripped him of honor.

"ORANGES, bananas, chewing gum . . ." Moore jerked to his feet and stood facing Theresa Hoyt. Actually she did have a small basket of oranges.

"They're awfully good," she said, with a kind of wistful defiance in her face and voice, motioning toward the fruit.

"Yes." He cleared his throat, searching for words. "Yes, I remember I thought so, too, when I first came down here. You get tired of them, though." He stood uncertainly, trying to read her intentions, trying to be casual.

She sat down in the other chair, still with that air of daring him to object, yet pleading with him not to. "I don't think I ever would." She bit into one of the skins, revealing beautifully even teeth whose whiteness contrasted sharply with the golden color of the orange.

Her eyes examined him gravely over the fruit. "I mean, get tired of them," she explained, starting to peel it.

"You're . . . traveling north?" The commonplace words came mechanically from his tongue. It seemed that he was speaking them over a dead distance that they both refused to recognize.

"Yes. Red and I. Traveling north." She tilted her head and dropped a segment of the fruit in her mouth. "Now you," she commanded, "open up."

For a moment he failed to understand. He smiled then self-consciously and opened his mouth.

"Good?" she inquired.

He was chuckling, tasting the orange. "Good in a lot of ways, Trick. I was sitting here feeling sorry for myself."

"And running away from that farewell dinner the other officers are giving you."

"They'll understand. I left a note for Pat."

"Of course," she agreed. "They'll understand. I hate farewells, anyway. Don't you? Where are you going?"

"Chicago. Newspaper work."

Her eyes dropped away from his. "Fine! That's just fine."

"I did a little of that work in high school and college." He added, "I only got in two years of college before . . . the war came along."

A pause followed. He said, impulsively, without intending to play on words: "You're a funny little trick."

She acknowledged this with a small smile. "I'm Scotch and Irish. A person's bound to be queer with that mixture in them. And besides I'm a sort of tomboy. I'd always rather play baseball than with dolls."

She talked in a quick, nervous way, trying to put him at ease, trying to cover that spector of his past. "We were all that way. My grandmother used to turn windlass for grandad. He was a miner. In a small way." She motioned upward with her hands. "You know, they have to get the ore out of the hole—the shaft."

Moore nodded.

"Once she baked dried apple pies and sold them to the other miners so she could hire a man to do assessment work. Grandad had gotten mauled by a bear, a grizzly. I lived with Granny when she was very old. She always told me that a woman should know how to bake pies and stick by their men. . . . Here comes Red."

Young Hoyt had entered the coach, was coming down the aisle.

The train started moving. "And can you?" he asked. The question didn't seem trivial to him.

"Yes," she said. "I can bake good apple pies."

JULIAN HOYT approached diffidently. "Good evening, sir," he greeted. It seemed that he felt the need of explaining his presence. "We just happened to be going—"

"To Chicago," his sister broke in.

He seemed surprised.

"We might as well," she said carelessly. "It's not much further around. Lieutenant Moore is going to Chicago, too, Red."

"Oh. Well, that's fine. We'll have a chance to talk."

Moore looked at the brother and sister, a thought edging into his mind. "Say, where do you two live?"

Hoyt grinned and sat down. "In Idaho. In Craig Point, Idaho. Bet you've never heard of it before.'

"No-o. That is, not the city." He brightened. "But I knew a man from Boise, Idaho. He transferred to our outfit from the 116th Engineers."

"Yes, sir. That regiment was made up from the Idaho national guard, sir."

"Let's drop the army stuff," Moore suggested. "You call me Dan; I'll call you Red." His eyes questioned the girl.

"All my friends call me Trick," she prompted.

Moore found it pleasant, listening to their talk about Craig Point, where it was a problem to keep salt grass from encroaching on the lawns, where thousands of wild horses had been shipped out to the Allies.

He asked them about gun fights and Indians and they met this question with blank looks and then laughter.

"It's not quite that wild," Trick said.

There was no talk about the Army or flying. Several times Red approached the latter subject, only to be hurriedly detoured by his sister.

It wasn't until the next afternoon that Red Hoyt broached the subject. "I've got something to show you, Dan," he said.

He and his sister exchanged glances. "I think I'll wander through the cars," she decided. "If I only had a nice lace handkerchief to drop I might bring me back a man."

They went to the Hoyts' section and Red pulled an old suitcase from under the seats. "I was afraid to check it," he explained. "They might get wrecked worse than they are."

HE OPENED the case with a certain air of reverence and removed a cloth wrapping from an old turn-and-bank indicator.

Moore's face tightened. He started to speak, but Hoyt interrupted hurriedly. "They're not government property. They've all been written off as useless."

"What good are they, then?"

"Don't you remember me telling you? I'm a watchmaker."

"You think you can repair them?"

"I can try. I'm going to try. Of course I'll have to build up my own laboratory. Pressure and vacuum and all that, for testing."

There was a disapproving silence.

"You don't want to see the rest of them?" Hoyt asked, a wistful note in his voice.

"Nope. No, I don't want to see the rest of them."

Hoyt closed the suitcase and strapped it. His mouth tightened a little.

"Sit down," Moore said. He continued. "Apparently you don't take my word for it that instrument flying is impossible."

Hoyt clasped his hands between knees, sitting on the seat's edge. "I don't say that it is, or isn't," he said defensively. "But I want to find out. I've heard of pilots flying when they couldn't see the ground."

"For a short time, perhaps. Not longer than five minutes. You can hear a lot of high stories about flying, Red."

"Yeah. I know. Barracks flying."

Moore examined Hoyt's thin, freckled face. It was the face of a dreamer, of an idealist. "Hoyt," he said, slowly, "I think you and your sister are two of the nicest youngsters I've ever met. And two of the most stubborn. Can't you get this flying bug out of your system?"

Hoyt spoke slowly. "I—we don't want to. What if the Wright brothers had done that? Why, the same year they flew there was a scientific article published that proved flying was absolutely impossible."

Moore took a deep breath. "There's no use in me going over the reasons why instrument flying can't be done. But look. You know about the semi-circular canal in our ears, that gives us a sense of balance? That little organ is so sensitive that it would be impossible for man to reproduce it. And yet it fails us in flying. When we can't see the horizon, we don't know whether we're right-side-up or not.

"Here's another thing," Moore continued, taking a different angle. "Are you aware that even birds can't fly without seeing the ground or horizon?"

Hoyt looked startled. This statement seemed to put him at a loss for a moment. Then he grinned into Moore's earnest face. "They can't loop, either. But we can—you can."

MOORE sat back in the seat and for a thoughtful time watched the passing landscape. He spoke, still with his eyes turned away. "You and your sister can very well ruin yourselves with this thing, Hoyt. You can spend every cent your folks left you. You may even kill yourself." His eyes met Julian Hoyt's. "Does your sister realize that?"

Hoyt nodded soberly. "Yes. We've talked that all over. She's just as much in favor of it as I am."

"Does she realize that it'll take months, perhaps years?"

"Yes."

Moore jerked around impatiently. "Damn it all, what good'll it do? Just granting you do learn to fly without seeing the ground?"

Hoyt wet his lips. "That's the only thing that keeps aviation from being worthwhile; keeps it from being a commercial success."

"It *is* worthwhile. Right now! Given a chance it'd be one of the finest weapons in the world. You've read what General Mitchell has to say about airplanes and battleships. That man knows more about what he's talking about than all the gold-braid admirals in the navy!"

Hoyt spoke slowly. "If the airplane is to be used only as a war weapon, it would be better if it never had been developed. If it is a good weapon for protection it'll be just as good for destruction. It'll be worse than poison gas. What about bombing cities?"

Moore shrugged. "Give me a few good men in Spads and I'll shoot down all the bombers they can put in the air."

Hoyt's voice was eager. "I know you can. You've done it, as everybody in this country knows. That's why we need you."

"Oh." Dan Moore leaned back in the seat. "I've wondered about that, just a little. How you and Trick happened to be on this same train. You've still got that goofy circus idea in mind. You still want to start a flying show and use my name to put it over."

Trick Hoyt had come back. She sat down by her brother. "Red might get another man. There's more than one famous war pilot in this country."

"Then you'd better look him up. I'm through with flying. Through—washed up. D'you understand?"

"It's not only your name," Hoyt said, simply. "It's because I trust you. And you're the natural man for the job."

"Not me," Moore shook his head. "I'm no Wright, nor Alexander Bell, nor—I've no desire to have my statue in the parks. And besides I'm through with flying. And besides I'm thirsty and I know a man who knows a man who may know where I can get a drink."

Moore stood up. "Goodbye, youngsters. You'll soon forget this."

Trick Hoyt's face was white, so that the small dabs of rouge stood out on her cheeks, and her eyes seemed enormous. "He won't forget it. I won't let him. Dan Moore, haven't you any imagination at all? Can you see any farther ahead than your nose?"

Moore bowed. "My vision is perfect. Absolutely perfect. The flight surgeon told me so, on my last 609."

Trick's eyes blazed as she stood up, facing him. "You're a fool, Dan Moore, if you think you can give up flying. Just a fool!" Her eyes brimmed with angry tears. "Yes, by heck, and I'll prove it to you. I'll—oh, go away! Go on and get yourself drunk."

CHAPTER XII

DON'T CALL ME EDITOR

WHICH the ex-lieutenant proceeded to do, in a mild comfortable way. And while he was doing this he got into a small-time poker game in the smoking car. And during the game a cotton broker said something that planted a seed in the flyer's mind.

It was just a chance remark.

"There's money in these small country newspapers, I tell you. The right man—a fellow with brains who'll stick—can make a fortune outta them."

The next morning Dan Moore had a half pint of moonshine left. While shaving he placed this with what he'd had the night before and the results were gratifying. It was too late for breakfast and too early for lunch. But such trifles didn't bother a man who was going to edit and own a country newspaper—and make a fortune.

The porter told him that the next town had a population of about five thousand and that there was another smaller town just across the river. That suited Dan's purpose exactly. After he'd gotten established in the first town he'd start another paper across the river.

He sent the porter for his baggage and suggested that he might find another pint of moonshine while he was at it. There was a small delay in his destiny while the train pulled in and stopped, but Dan Moore was in a mood to forgive the railroad company.

A man in bib overalls and an old overseas cap took the suitcases from the porter and said, aggressively, to Moore: "You wanna go to a hotel."

It seemed a good idea. Moore got into a Ford touring car and tried to find a place in the seat where the springs didn't prod through the covering.

The hotel was old but at one time it must have been grand enough to live up to its name. It was the Palace Hotel, and his bathroom had the biggest tub he'd ever seen. But there was no stopper for it. He plugged it with a face towel and started the water running.

He took a pull of the moonshine. The trouble with small town newspapers, he decided, was that they didn't try out new ideas and didn't have enough features. Always the same old thing.

He'd fix that.

He took a look to see if the tub was filled. It wasn't. And what water there was in it was snuff-colored and looked gravy thick. He took another drink from the pint bottle and tucked it into his hip pocket and left, without bothering to shut off the water.

HE FOUND the office of the Selma *Bugle* on a side street. It was a narrow building wedged in between a plumbing shop and a garage. The first sight of it was so depressing that Moore went back to the cafe on the corner and got some ham and eggs and coffee. The girl who waited on him told him that the Selma *Bugle* was the only paper in town and that it was a weekly.

He found that it wasn't so bad, after he'd gotten past the small show-window display of funeral and birthday cards, covered with fly specks and gray with dust. There was a comfortable smell of printers ink and the regular clank of a press came from the rear regions.

A deserted, railed-in space spread to his right and to the left was a door marked *Editor's Office.* A typewriter clicked fitfully inside.

He knocked and waited. He knocked louder and again waited. He opened the door and stepped in.

A stocky young man in shirtsleeves glanced up over and past him. His face was a little bloated, and it had the redness of high blood pressure. Thick-lensed glasses gave his eyes the appearance of being unusually large. His forefingers continued punching at the keyboard.

Moore stood silently, not wishing to disturb this inspired writing. The young man was bald-headed, or well on the way toward that condition. A fat-bodied fly spiraled down and made a landing on the smooth surface.

The young man jerked the sheet from his typewriter, cocked one leg over the carriage and scanned the writing. "Splendid!" he approved. "Excellent! Mr. Dawson, this is undoubtedly the finest piece of editorial writing you've done since—well, since the last time you were drunk."

Dan cleared his throat, not wishing to eavesdrop.

The young man glanced up. "Listen to this," he commanded: "During my five years of incarceration in this beauteous little stink hole of Selma there have been many things—" He stopped reading, shook

his head. "No," he decided, "you don't know these slab-sided, puritanical, narrow-minded—no, you wouldn't appreciate the beauties of this."

He sighed and, wadding the masterpiece, tossed it into the wastebasket. He took a half-burned cigarette from its ear perch and lighted it. "Now sir," he asked, "what can I do for you?"

Dan met his grin. "Nothing," he said.

"Oh, come now! A stranger in our midst." He pointed a quick, accusing finger. "Don't deny it, my good fellow. You *are* a stranger. You don't want me to write up your wife's tea party. You're not here to raise hell because this illustrious sheet carried no fitting obituary for your deceased grandpappy."

He got up and extended his hand. "My name, sir, is Dawson; Thomas D. Dawson, the D. standing for Dewey, since I arrived on this earth just as Admiral Dewey was—well, charging San Juan hill, or whatever the admiral was doing at that moment. And now, let us quaff a little rum."

DAN pulled his own bottle out. "Quaff some of mine," he suggested. "Where's the editor?"

Thomas Dewey Dawson choked a little on the moon. "Goes down like a roll of sandpaper," he commented. "And what makes you think I'm not the editor?"

Moore chuckled, not bothering to answer the question. Dawson laughed with him, without annoyance. He dropped his grand manner. "You looking for a job?"

"Is there one?" Moore took the bottle and a short drink.

"Nope. Come on, sit down. I liked the cut of your jib on first sight. I'm not as drunk as you think."

Moore sat down.

"Lookin' for something in the front or back?"

"I don't know. I've had a little experience in writing."

"Writing! Hell, what's that got to do with a newspaper—a paper like this?" He went to an old-fashioned closed bookcase and came back with two glasses and a gallon jug half-full of a coppery colored liquid. He poured drinks. "On the level, that stuff of yours'd kill a goat."

Moore took a sip. It wasn't bad moon, despite its metallic edge.

Dawson had been examining him through the thick-lensed spectacles. They gave him the appearance of a fish staring through the glass tank of an aquarium. "You're not a newspaper man," he decided. "You look too prosperous. You look funny. What's the matter with your face?"

"Same face I was born with."

"Like hell. Look in that mirror."

Moore looked in the fly-marked glass, dangling from a nail on one side of the bookcase. There wasn't anything wrong with his face except that it was burned to a dark mahogany by sun and propeller blast. Then he saw what Dawson meant.

But Dawson had already forgotten about this. "You've come to the right man about a job," he assured Moore. I know everything about everything in this town and in the other town, across the river. That's Alcova."

He straightened suddenly. "Old Tallow could give you a job!" He relaxed, shaking his head. "No. Nope, you're a friend of mine. While I have a spear or sword to hand I shall protect you from old Tallow."

Moore sat down and emptied his glass. "Who's old Tallow?"

"Bert Tallerand. Owns the Alcova *News*, across the river. In fact, he owns Alcova." Dawson chuckled. "Plus a white elephant." He threw his head back with laughter. "Plus a white elephant," he repeated.

Dan wasn't interested in animals. "What about this job?"

"It's a paper job. Same's I got here. Only my boss is a gent. Name's Lyons. Only he's got a political bug, just like old Tallow. State senator. That's why my boss is away now; kissin' babies. No, you don't want to work for Tallow."

"Why not?"

"Why not! Didn't the last man work six months on his paper and end up owing him money? Didn't that—say, listen. He got one of our town painters to paint his

house. By the time the job was finished, old Tallow owned the painter's scaffolding and ladders. No kidding. I'll tell you some more, too."

DAWSON filled the glasses in preparation. Moore took small sips of his. He wanted to stay feeling just as he was. This Dawson would give him the whole layout around here and Dawson was the kind of good company he liked to hear yarn.

He looked about the small office and wondered why he'd ever thought it depressing. This certainly had it over the army life where every man was labeled in rank and degree; where every thought and action was prescribed. He leaned back in his chair, appreciating this new-found freedom.

"I'll tell you about the time his chief of police arrested one of our town boys," Dawson promised, serving more shine. "That night we had a lynching mob and a jail delivery. All of 'em from this town. Bibbs—Bibbs owns the garage next door—Bibbs and I were the jail delivery. Bibbs has an old Packard he uses for snakin' in wrecked cars. . . ."

It was a grand, heart-warming yarn and between lines was another story of the feud between the two small towns. It took Dawson a long time to tell, with suitable gestures, how a hoax lynch mob, formed of Selma men armed with shotguns, made an uproar in front of the Alcova city hall while Bibbs, with his wrecking car, jerked the bar grating from the jail-house window and Tom Dawson carried the Selma boy off in triumph.

There were other stories and it was already past sundown. Moore didn't mind that at all.

"But the best one yet," Dawson assured him, "is about Tallow's white elephant. Only," he added regretfully, "it was a stranger that pulled that one. An airplane pilot."

Moore had been pouring himself a drink. His head jerked up. "What did you say?" he demanded.

Dawson raised his voice so Moore would understand. "An airplane pilot," he shouted. "He walked away with five hundred dollars worth of clothes and stuff, an' owing a month's hotel and feed bill that Tallow had guaranteed payment for. He said it cost ten thousand dollars. And maybe it did. But old Tallow couldn't sell it for a load of broom straw."

"Sell what?" Moore asked.

"The airplane," Dawson again shouted to make it clear. "And Jess's cows licked some paint off of it. So old Tallow had to lease Jess's pasture an' build a shed. And they say old Tallow goes out there of nights and looks at that airplane an' chews nails and cusses. He can't sell it, an' the old skinflint can't bring himself to burn up something that cost him so many dollars."

"I'M AN airplane pilot," Moore said. He hadn't intended to say it. The words seemed to come out by themselves.

"So every week since then my boss has run a For Sale ad in our paper. Will take a dollar and a half or a sack of hog feed for a ten-thousand-dollar airplane! An' old Tallow threatened to sue him. What'd you say?"

Again the words came of their own volition. "I'm an airplane pilot."

Dawson looked deeply hurt at having his new friend lie to him.

"Yes, I am," Moore insisted. "Honest to Pete, Tom."

Dawson took a drink in heavy silence.

Moore looked at his hands; looked desperately around the room for some means of proving his story. He remembered about his face. "Look here," he said, "that's why you thought my eyes looked funny. It's these white patches around them, where my goggles kept the wind and sun out."

Dawson removed his spectacles and wiped them carefully on a piece of newspaper. He put them on again and stared owlishly at the markings.

Moore felt this was one of the most critical moments in his life. He couldn't let good old Tom think he'd deceived him.

"Where's a broom?" he asked. "Where's a stick of some kind?"

He saw a yard ruler. He broke it over his knee and laid one piece crossways in front of his feet. "That's the rudder bar," he explained. "This other piece—it's the joy-stick."

Tom's face relaxed with returning confidence. "They do have joy-sticks," he affirmed. "I read that."

"Now, look. I'm goin' to take off. See, my engine's already started."

Tom nodded acceptance of that fact.

Moore pushed the yardstick in his hand forward. "I get the tail up, see. Now I got flyin' speed. I bring her back. Just a little jerk. Then I level off."

"Why?"

"To pick up flyin' speed."

"You already got it. You said you had."

Moore frowned. "Gimme a drink," he ordered. He saw this was going to be more than a routine flight.

Tom had a drink with him. "Look here, Dan. Long's you're goin' to fly, why can't I fly with you?"

"Sure. Sure, you can, Tom. Put your chair right back here. That'll be the rear cockpit."

They took off, doing just plain straight flying till Dan got the feel of this ship. No use taking chances, especially with good old Tom back there.

BUT Tom was a daring fellow. He wanted to loop-the-loop. They stopped in the middle of the loop to have a drink. Then something fumbled along the wall outside and the door opened and a tall, cadaverous looking gentleman fell into the room.

He picked himself up and frowned back at the treacherous door.

"Is everybody drunk tonight, Al?" Tom wanted to know. "This is Al Bibbs," he explained to Moore. "Al and me was the ones that made the jail delivery. Or did I tell you about that?"

Al held his finger to his lips. "Sh-h-h!" he cautioned. "It's against the law."

"This is Dan Moore. He's the best airplane pilot in the world. Whass against the law?"

Al scratched his head. "Tamperin' with the United Staches mail," he decided.

Al's full first name, he explained with dignity and some difficulty, was Abiathar, after his uncle. Unfortunately Al couldn't fly with them because this was only a two-place ship and Dan refused to fly at night with a man out on a wing. He knew of a case . . .

"But it ain't night," Tom pointed out.

"Thass moonlight," Al said. "Itch night and itch been night for days and days. And anyway, nobody can fly at night because—nobody can fly at night." Al looked at Dan with a mixture of triumph and suspicion.

Tom's first doubts returned. He got hurriedly from the rear cockpit of the plane. He'd been flying with a man who didn't know how to fly!

"Thass all right," he said patronizingly. "Thass all right, Dan. Anyway, you're a good gent an' I like yuh. You hear that?" he challenged Bibbs. "I like him, even if he can't fly."

All the good humor left the room. "Think I can't fly, huh?" Moore said. "You just take me over to that airplane across the river an' I'll show you."

Bibbs hiccupped. "Sure I'll take you over," he said belligerently. "Sure I will."

Moore sobered a little. "You got to have gasoline. Gas an' oil an' water."

"I'll get that. I got it already. In my wreckin' car. You can't come here an' make a foola us. You're—Tom, he's jus' smart aleck from Chicago."

But Tom sided with Moore. "Like hell! You looka his eyes."

"He don't have to lookut my eyes. I'll show him. Come on. I'll show him."

MOORE took deep breaths of the spring air. The moonlight glinted dully over the tarnished brass frame of the windshield as they charged through the main street of town in intermediate gear. They were on the bridge before Al remembered to shift into high.

There was a moonpath of silver across the water. Moore knew that the cool air should smell of growing things, but his mouth felt as though he'd been chewing tin, and all he could smell was that moonshine.

He wasn't so very drunk, he told himself. He'd flown lots of times in worse shape than this. But not at night, taking off a cow pasture.

They skirted the town of Alcova, white and dead looking in the moonlight.

The gate into the pasture was locked. Al swung crossways to the main road and surged back against it. The wood splintered and he continued backing up till they reached the airplane shed.

The doors to the shed were padlocked, too. Al got a pinch bar from his wrecker. Silently and methodically he prized the hasp loose.

Moore's admiration for Bibbs increased by the minute. He knew now who had been back of that fake lynch mob and the jail delivery.

The plane was a "Canuck," an OX5 Curtis with single ailerons. They wheeled it out into the moonlight. Dan made a quick trip around the wings, thumping the struts, testing the landing and flying wires.

Al Bibbs approached from the other side and confronted him. He was swaying a little as he stood. "Well," he demanded, pronouncing his words carefully, "well, wha's you say now?" The moonlight etched every line of his face, to show the leering triumph.

Moore grinned. "Throw some gas in and get her started. I'll show you some flying, partner."

Bibbs' mouth and eyes opened wide in drunken astonishment. "Why," he exclaimed, in a wondering voice, "you're even crazier'n I am!"

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

With Sword in Hand

He could kill one or two, perhaps, but sooner or later they would come

Stand straight, Hollander. Stand alone on your homeland, waiting for the destroyers; and remember that a man sometimes finds victory in the moment of defeat

By CHARLES MARQUIS WARREN

Author of "Appointment in October," "Bugles Are for Soldiers," etc.

IN THE ensuing lull the sergeant-major's voice echoed down the trench with a flat stabilizing ring. *"Koest!* Down! Everyone down but section lookouts. They'll be coming back. *Koest!"*

Finding himself alone in his traverse of the trench, Kees Elst, private, Seventh Amsterdam Rifles, did not at once obey the sergeant-major's voice. He remained rigid on the firing step, clasping his bayoneted rifle, eyes gazing over the parapet, and there was in him an unfamiliar, singing disregard for danger.

The last ten minutes had plucked much of the youth from Kees Elst's eyes, much of the fear from his chest, and now he stood very straight and tall, his heart kicking proudly inside him.

Through the mists of smoke he watched them—what was left of them—paddle back across the *lazy water* and climb out of their rubber boats and disappear behind the rise in ground which was nearly as high and solid as this one, where the Amsterdam Rifles had intrenched.

He felt like shouting.

"If Tinika had seen me," he said aloud. "If she could know."

A small breeze snatched away the last of the oily gray vapors that had lain close on the *laag water* since they first tossed their smoke grenades to conceal the attack of their boats.

He could see endless paraphernalia floating about, but mostly his eyes sought the many pairs of boots—their toes protruding from the water—that were anchored by equipment-laden bodies which rested head-down on the soft earth beneath the *laag water*.

This was polder country, bed of former lakes drained by dyke-pumps for farming and bulbfielding. Somewhere near, a pathetic *dijkbreuk* had occurred—a fresh-water dyke had been purposely opened to flood the land and break the hearts of Hollanders and check the onslaught of the invaders. Briefly Kees wondered if the submerged helmeted heads out there rested upon soft beds that until five years ago had been acres of narcissi and daffodils.

A skitterish droning pulled his head up and far above he could see a V formation of big Heinkels and Junkers 87's passing on their way to Rotterdam. Twelve compact Messerschmidts danced alertly about the bombers. The portable radio in *Heer Luitenant's* dugout down the way had this morning announced that Rotterdam was already strangled in flames.

AND now the muffled voices in the trench penetrated his feelings and he heard the cries of, *"Ziekendrager!* Stretcher bearer! Here! Here!" and slowly he turned around and saw that he was the only man on his feet in this traverse of the trench.

He slid to a seat on the firing step, laid his rifle across his knees and looked at Korporaal Jan Oorschot who was his best friend and who sat in an awkward position with his shoulders slumped against the back wall of the trench and his head resting oddly on his left shoulder.

Jan's eyes were closed and he looked very tired, his huge body seeming deflated inside its uniform. His rifle lay beside him on the wet duckboarding of the trench, and that was no way to treat a Dutch rifle, antiquated as they were, and especially no way for Jan to treat his rifle, fine soldier that he was.

The sergeant-major came running down the trench, shoulders hunched and head bent forward, like a fleeing duck.

"Reload!" he gasped between breaths. "They will be back."

In front of Kees Elst he stopped. His thin hard-boned face was contemptuous as he looked down. Ten minutes ago he had killed three human beings.

"Ach, Kees Elst, you are alive and unharmed. I am not surprised." He glanced at the men who lay like bundles along the watery duckboards and scorn pinched his lips. "And the only one alive. *Verdoemdt!* Even you—with the care you take—will not live when they return."

The sergeant-major had been a regular patron in the café in Amsterdam. He knew about Kees Elst. But the derision in his voice could not nip the elation in Kees' chest.

He started to say, "It's different with me now, Sergeant; and I am not the only one alive. There sits Jan Oorschot—"

But the sergeant-major had hurried on.

Over the portable radio the Amsterdam announcer's voice was shrill as he begged the milling thousands to leave the city at once. The dive-bombers were at work. The canal-city's marshy base afforded few underground shelters and Kees could almost hear the thunder of the falling brick and stone as it crushed those who sought refuge under the buildings.

Tinika would not be among those. She would be in the country, at Hendrick's father's farmhouse. Kees remembered this and breathed a silent, grateful prayer.

He leaned forward.

"You *are* all right, aren't you, Jan? Did you see how I acted when they left their boats and came up? Did you notice me taking that big fellow on my bayonet?" Kees smiled and the feel of it on his lips was fine.

"Together we will tell Tinika. We will watch her face as she hears, listen to her laughter as we tell her how I was. She will be proud. . . . Jan, you don't hear me; you don't move. You're hurt!"

No; Jan did not move at all. He did did not say a word. Kees felt suddenly cold.

He sprang forward, crouched beside Jan Oorschot, throwing his arm around the big shoulders of his friend.

"Jan!" Kees shook him gently.

Jan's lids raised and because his head was bent forward his eyes gazed fixedly at the *korporaal's* chevrons on his sleeve.

An *officier van gezonheid,* followed by two stretcher bearers, swashed along the duckboards of the traverse.

"Heer dokter!" Kees called. "This man here; the *korporaal.* Tend him, please!"

The surgeon stooped, widened Jan's eyelids with his thumb. He stood up.

"No," he said. He was tired. "No. We tend only the live ones."

He slogged along the traverse, the stretcher bearers following.

KEES couldn't get his breath. He felt his chest retract and realized that was because a kind of paralysis had taken the place of the elation inside him.

Mechanically he rocked the shoulders of Jan in his arms. The motion was gentle. There was the small metallic *click* each time Jan's helmet touched his own. The arm which encircled Jan underneath the big man's left shoulders felt sticky and he removed it. The sleeve was darkly wet and he knew where Jan had been hit.

"Jan," he said softly. "You were too big and strong—"

And it came to him that grenade shrapnel was no respector of the strength of flesh. He said no more.

In the next traverse he could hear the sergeant-major's brittle cry.

"Allo, op! Up with you. Along the firing step. They come again!"

For some reason the radio in *Heer Luitenant's* dugout was still going. A woman in Amsterdam was singing. Her voice reached an hysterical pitch and quavered but she kept on singing.

Hoog van moed,
Klein van goed . . .

She sounded scared to death.

Kees looked at Jan's face and thought it very calm and almost sleepy except for the fact that the eyes remained open.

"They come!" the sergeant-major's voice rang loudly. "Hold your fire until they're out of the smoke."

Kees sat still. Jan's head resting on his shoulder, and it seemed to him that he was hearing the song sung again, not as the woman in Amsterdam was shrilling it, but as two voices had sung it at him thousands of years ago.

In courage high
Of small estate, but good
With sword in hand
The arms of Amsterdam!

Two beloved voices; Tinika's and Jan's. And not in the dim past, but six short days ago. Last Sunday.

He saw it again, quite clearly, and the pain of that day was on him again, making him cry out suddenly, "Tinika!"

IT WAS their final picnic. As they bicycled out from Amsterdam in the softness of middle May it seemed like any of the countless excursions they had taken together through the last four years. Almost —not quite.

The great blond head and pumping legs of Jan Oorschot leading, Tinika following and Kees bringing up the rear with the luncheon in his handlebar basket. Laughing, singing, as always. As though this were any other day, and not the last.

But when Tinika turned her head to smile and make a silent kiss at Kees—as she did always many times in each kilometer—there was that look in her eyes, that new look which brought a swift stab to the breast of Kees; the stab a woman brings when unknowingly she loses her love for a man.

For the first time Kees could not see the beauty of the canals running through the polder land like silver ribbons on an emerald package; nor did the endless carpets of hyacinths and tulips leave him humble as always.

Beside the Zuider Zee Dam they spread their snowy linen and had bits of browned chicken and little sausages garnished with onions and boiled chestnuts, and rice *rijsttafel* with clear Amsterdam beer. It was like a hundred other times only Jan was in uniform.

Kees could not taste but he had only fine things to say about the lunch Tinika had prepared.

And for Tinika and Jan there was much laughter and the afternoon must have passed quickly.

For Kees, each moment added a little to the pain that had settled coldly over his heart.

"It has been the best of all!" Tinika cried gaily at last as she packed the cloth and cups and plates into a neat bundle. "Never have we three been closer, and yesterday I should have thought it impossible to be more so."

She stood up and laughed and looked down at Jan, stretched full length on the grass, contemplating the fleeciness of the sky, looking very huge and capable in his *korporaal's* uniform.

"We are close," Jan said. "Now more than ever."

She knelt beside him, put her small hand to his cheek.

"Do you feel how very close, Jan?"

He sat up, taking her hand and looking at her, his love for her coming strongly into his eyes.

"Yes, I feel it."

Kees watched Tinika, feeling doubly the pain her beauty brought him, for she was no longer his.

On the way back he could not talk or smile. Tinika and Jan more than made up for his silence, speaking rapidly, as though the retelling of the lives the three of them had lived must be crammed into one exquisite afternoon, as though they might not be able to tell them again to each other—ever.

Tinika pedaled abreast Jan. They laughed intimately and once Kees heard their voices.

"You remember, Jan, the time walking along Haarlemmer Straat when that huge workman shoved you into the gutter because you were as big as he?"

Jan roared.

"I told him in another month I would pass my police examinations, and that frightened him so much he scampered down the street—a man his size! Another month!"

Kees held his breath, blood pounding in his temple. Then slowly his head cleared with relief. They had not mentioned his own scampering when he'd thought a street brawl was looming. Tinika and Jan were too happy in their new-found intimacy to remember he had been along. Or they were being kind.

NEAR the city a company of troops marched stiffly along the road, the sun turning brightly on their helmets and rifle barrels. They walked with that earnest but irregular cadence which showed their newness. They were headed east and were in a hurry. Their officers swore a lot.

Jan and Tinika and Kees dismounted and wheeled their bicycles to one side to make way. The troops looked a little bewildered. It was more than a hundred years since Holland had been at war. A few of them, glancing up and seeing Jan in uniform, smiled and waved.

Jan and Tinika waved back and then impulsively they both began to sing.

. . . With sword in hand,
The arms of Amsterdam! . . .

The troops took it up as they swung along. It was a fine thing to hear, Kees thought. Some of them would have such a short time to sing.

Her voice beside him was strong and urgent. He tried to sing with her, but the kicking in his chest took his breath away

and he stopped. He felt ashamed that he had not worn his uniform. This morning, rising eagerly for their last picnic, he had wanted only to be with Tinika and Jan as he had always been; the uniform had made his hands shake when he'd started to put it on and he had laid it aside for the tweeds he reserved especially for their outings. It had seemed proper. Now he wished he had worn the uniform regardless of what it did to him.

The troops had passed but their voices hung over the road.

"You did not sing, Kees?"

Tinika looked up at him, her eyes soft and searching.

"A little. I have a poor voice."

She turned away.

"We must hurry," she said. "Even this last evening you must not be late to the café."

He did not answer. The shame in him was an actual sickness. He should have sung as loudly as any.

"Coming, Kees?"

Tinika called to him from the road as she might have called a wayward dog—gently, without thinking.

Jan said, "Do not hurry him." The big man's smile was kind. "Let him have all of this day that he will."

Kees mounted and began to pedal, his eyes following the road and not lifting.

HE WENT early to the café on the Leidschestraat where he played the piano. He had put his uniform on. It made him feel cold and hot by turns and his fingers stumbled a little on the keys. He had put it on for Tinika although she would be with Jan this last night and they would not come here. Hendrick, the proprietor, had granted her permission to be absent tonight.

He kept looking over his shoulder at the small table by the door where she usually sat, selling coffee to those who wished no liquor or those who had had too much.

Now she would be walking with Jan along the barge-touched quays where so often she and Kees walked at nights, feeling the breeze from the canals in their faces, speaking earnestly and eagerly of love.

Hendrick came over.

"You are in uniform at last." The proprietor's round face was even more red and kindly than usual.

"Yes. Ours is the last regiment to go. We leave in the morning."

"You are thinking of Tinika and the kisses she makes at you from her table. I can tell from your playing."

"Tomorrow and it will make little difference who makes kisses at whom."

"Stop playing," Hendrick said. "There is no use entertaining me alone. Everyone will spend tonight in the coffee shops. I've no need for you here. You may have this last night, Kees."

"No. Someone may come in later."

Hendrick was surprised. "You don't wish to be with Tinika?"

"She is with Jan."

"Oh." The proprietor's face suddenly beamed. "At last!" Then he looked apologetic. "I do not mean I am not sorry for you, Kees. But everyone has always expected—"

"I know. It's all right."

Automatically his fingers pressed out *Ach du, mein Holder Abendstern,* from *Tannhäuser* until Hendrick said gravely:

"No. Not any longer now."

He switched into chords of his own making, his mind not on his playing.

It was strange how no one would be surprised at Tinika's last minute transference of her love to Jan. But there had always been a strangeness about her affection for Kees and everyone said so. "When she could have Jan for the asking," they said reprovingly. "There would be respect in that match." Now they would think: She has wakened at last.

SINCE they were children and parentless, Jan and Kees had lived and worked together. In the *groote markt* they vended cheeses and bright red meats for the stall-owners, and because Jan was smiling and huge and eager there were always

left-overs to be had at the end of the day. At nights they slept snugly on straw mats in the empty stalls. This way they economized, leaving their weekly salaries of three florins for Kees' piano lessons and Jan's night study to enter the police.

Whenever the customary squabbles of youth arose—and there were enough, stall-boys being what they are—Jan would brush Kees aside, step up to the others and say, "Speak to me about it. Speak to me with your fists if you will, but leave Kees alone. He has better things to do than waste his hands on you."

At first Kees objected strenuously, but Jan's laughter had little respect for objections.

"You are above these things, my thin genius. Your hands must furnish music, not split lips. Fighting is brutal and ugly. And who is to be the policeman and administer law and order, you or I—I ask you?"

After a while Kees learned it was futile to object.

Later, they lived in an ancient boarding house along the Waterlooplein, a fine tall house with blue and white tiles and quaint gables leaning this way and that. It was a respectable house, which was why Tinika chose to come there and live.

They did not quarrel over Tinika; love for her was deep inside each one in his own way. It was Kees she chose, perhaps because of his fine thin face and the emotions he brought to her when he played for her after-hours in the café; or perhaps because he was friendless except for Jan and needed her and the confidence she could give to him.

He persuaded Hendrick to give her a job in the café and they were happy, biding their time.

But Hendrick was not so happy. The proprietor had grown paternally fond of his small golden coffee-seller.

"You have made a poor choice, my Tinika," he would say sadly, often in Kees' presence. "Kees is a strange lad; a fine lad, perhaps, but no lad for you. He has not demanded more money of me in order to marry you. He thinks I would hire someone else. Jan is the one who has bullied me into it, so that my offer of an increase is waiting whenever Kees decides the time has arrived."

Kees would flush, feeling troubled and ashamed.

But Tinika could always smile and say lightly, "Is it an arrogant roughneck you would make of my Kees, Mijnheer Hendrick? He whose music fills your café with guests each evening?"

"I want him to be worthy of you, Meesteres Tinika. He has not even the courage or the confidence to forbid the other lads calling upon you now that you are spoken for."

"They do not call."

"That is because Jan has promised to break their heads if they do not leave you alone."

And again Tinika could smile. *"Ach, mijnheer,* boldly courage is for policemen and soldiers. Self-esteem often becomes brass. The inner courage that you do not see or feel—my Kees has that. Else, how could he master the music masters? I could not marry a coward, Mijnheer Hendrick. That I know."

She would smile at Kees, a strange smile —uncertain.

KEES stopped playing the piano, perspiration warm on his brow. It was true. Tinika could not give her heart to a coward. No woman could.

He closed the piano and got his uniform cap. Outside a steeple bell daintily chimed a tiny passage from German opera and followed it with the twelve strokes of midnight.

Hendrick, completing his checkup at the till, came over. Embarrassed, he held out his hand.

"There is no cheering, no bands, no waving goodbye," he said. "Not this time. It is a strange war."

Kees took the hand and let it go.

"You are not taking your music, Kees?"

"No. I'd like to leave it here if you have no objections."

"Of course. You will be welcome when you return. You are a fine musician, Kees."

"Goodbye, Hendrick."

"I am sorry about—the other. I have always known how you loved her. It is just that for her own good—"

"Of course. It's best. I will bring you a helmet."

"Bring two. We will drink beer from them. Goodbye, Kees."

Outside the moon furnished the only light in the complete blackout of the city. Small fingers clasped his arm and Tinika's voice said, "Kees?"

Instinctively they followed the pale line of white paint on the pavement and presently the air was cooler with a faint tangy smell of clams, and he could hear the gentle creaking of the barges as they tugged at their moorings along the quays.

The pressure of her fingers stopped him. He could feel her turn to him, felt her body close although she was not touching him except with her hands.

"Why?" he said. It was all he could think of to say.

"Kiss me, Kees. Please kiss me."

"No." They had been here so many times before and its familiarness stung him. "Jan—"

"Jan is home. I would not come into the café earlier. Hendrick would have lectured. I could not stand a lecture tonight, Kees. Except from you. I can stand anything from you."

The tautness of his body relaxed and he began to tremble so that he thought he would fall. Then her arms were about his neck, seeming to support him, and he clutched at her savagely, lifting her a little and kissing her warm, willing lips.

After a moment he said hoarsely, "But today I thought—you and Jan . . ."

"Yes. But I couldn't. I tried for him because he has done so much for you, because he deserves whatever his fine heart wants. But I couldn't, Kees. I told him tonight. He understands."

"Jan always understands."

"Oh, Kees!"

"Tinika." He kissed her again, roughly, as though his heart were breaking of it. "I thought I'd lost you. He's worthy; I've never deserved your love. Tinika—"

"It isn't your courage or your fear I love," she whispered. "It's you, Kees. All of you—whatever you are."

After a while they walked home and at her door she paused, her hands seeking his cheeks, his eyes.

"Kees, you may not come back!"

A pain stabbed through him at the thought. He swallowed to keep from suddenly sobbing. She looked more beautiful than he had ever seen her.

"I will come back. I will be with Jan and it is always safe with Jan. He knows about these things."

"You could not get along without Jan, could you?"

"There is no need. We are always together."

Her body stiffened suddenly and her arms brought his head down so that she could whisper next to his ear. "Kees, I love you, my dearest!"

Then her door closed and she was gone and he walked slowly down the corridor toward his and Jan's room, hearing his own loud breathing, blinking rapidly so that he would not cry as a coward cries.

FOR five days he had been living in this filthy water-bottomed ditch; living with a terror that kept his face dirty white, his mouth continuously dry. Without Jan he would have collapsed, simpering and screaming. But there are always Jan's big hand on his shoulder, his kind smile.

"It will not be so bad, Kees lad. This is dirty stuff and not for you. Am I not here? They'll have a time getting over my stupid hulk to you."

"Ach!" The sergeant-major's bony face was contemptuous. "That one! I remember him at Hendrick's. Always he obliged the big men with their requests for selections, lest they break his head. He will do no good here when the bayonets come."

"Be easy with your tongue, Hans." Jan's big voice was quiet.

Day after day the pitifully equipped

regiments ahead leap-frogged one another in retreat until at last the Amsterdam Rifles had solitary possession of the front line. And ahead the quiet roar converged steadily until it seemed to be immediately behind that rise of earth beyond the *laag water.*

To stop his ceaseless trembling Kees repeated Tinika's name over and again until he found himself screaming it and then he would be quiet, ashamed but still trembling.

The men in his traverse leaned woodenly against the forward wall of the trench, watching through rifle slots in the parapet. For days they had been doing that—watching, waiting.

More planes hurried overhead, the black-and-silver bombers, the red-and-black fighters; but there were always a great many planes and there was no way of telling . . .

Across the *laag water* the low ridge of earth appeared empty of life and although there was the roar, there was nothing else.

Most of the time Kees kept his eyes closed, tight closed.

And then, quite unceremoniously, smoke shells burst densely in the *laag water* and there they were and he saw them.

They were coming in rubber boats which looked like green sausages curled around flat rafts. They came on steadily out of the smoke into the sunlight, load after load of them.

He saw their gray uniforms, their grenade packs, their flat helmets, the Mauser rifles whose bayonets thrust above them, glinting wickedly; he saw the light machine-guns and the blunt white faces above the gray collars.

He stood still, frozen. He could hear the breathing of the men beside him. Someone was cursing vilely.

They came on, not firing a shot, supreme in their confidence, displaying their absolute contempt for death and valor. Then their voices could be heard, a growl that seemed to come from some giant beast.

"Raus schweinkopf! Get out, you swineheads!"

He felt the coldness in his heart gush up into his brain and he glanced at Jan, who nodded gravely and then smiled reassuringly.

By now they were entirely out of the smoke screen. Those in the prow of the boats stood up and began throwing grenades, arching them so that they dropped accurately into the trench. The explosions tore white flames along the traverses and shrapnel whines mingled with the sudden screaming of men.

KEES was not aware of the exact moment the change in him occurred. It must have been the instant the grenade exploded some feet down the traverse, killing—as he discovered later—every man but himself.

All he knew was that there was no longer any chill in his breast and that in its place was a hot fury, unfamiliar to him; a hatred that burned and was directed at the invaders who came inexorably toward him over the *laag water* which covered a bulbfield.

There would be no nights with Tinika, no picnics by the Zuider Zee, no job at the café while he studied for the future. There would be no anything that was free and unburdened and equal once these boatloads spilled their cargoes past this last line of defense. And in a frenzy he joined the firing that swept from the trench.

It did not last long. They were falling out of the boats like potato sacks into the water. He emptied his magazine and crammed in a fresh clip and got that off.

There was one fellow who jumped from his boat and waded to the parapet, grenade in hand, and Kees scrambled up the ladder and took him on his bayonet, not feeling ill but only fiercely exultant, and shouting, "Tinika! Tinika!" with all the fresh strength that had come into his breast.

. . . Now it was over for the moment. They would come again, there were millions of them, it was said. So many things had happened it was difficult to comprehend it all at once.

Jan, beloved Jan, whose head he held gently in his arms, was dead; powerful, kindly Jan was gone and there would be no one to help with his telling Tinika of his courage, of the faith he had kept with her love for him.

There would no longer be the protection he could instinctively turn to; no kindliness to buffer his lack of confidence in himself.

He was alone, except for Tinika and the men who believed that this vile thing that was happening could not happen.

He looked down.

"It was you," he said quietly to Jan. "I know that now; very suddenly and surely. Poor Jan. You meant to help me always, as best you could. I, who thought I lacked everything you had, really possessed everything you wanted. I am sorry, Jan."

He got up, knowing at last that he was on his own legs and knowing also that because of this his life would be different.

Quickly he laid Jan's head on the duckboarding, folded his hands.

From the radio in the dugout a voice, resignedly calm, was issuing artificially loud.

"I, H. G. Winkelman, supreme commander of the Dutch land and sea power, am telling you personally . . .

He picked up his rifle, jumped to the firing step. He could see them coming. There were twice as many this time. There was no end to them. They were close. He thrust his rifle through the slot, wondering at the sudden silence of the other rifles along the trench.

". . . Our cities have been bombarded, our women and children bombed, military and non-military objectives have been demolished . . ."

The fury in his chest was a wild thing, mingling with his new strength.

The men in the boats were laughing and standing up and waving. They were calling to the intrenchment. But only one voice came in answer.

". . . we are not equal to modern weapons and offensives . . ."

Kees swore at them and fired his rifle and one of the grinning figures spun out of a boat and disappeared in the *laag water*. The others shouted angrily and shook their fists Strangely, they did not raise their Mausers in retaliation.

"Hold your fire down the line, fool!" The sergeant-major's voice was rough with urgence.

Kees turned his head, bewildered, and the words from the radio echoed from the dugout and found him listening at last.

". . . so that I, your commander in chief, am compelled to give the order to cease firing in order to spare further bloodshed and complete destruction of the country. At least a small part of our beautiful land will be saved . . ."

KEES stood very still. His face was grim and taut and there were lines about his mouth that had never been there before and would never go away.

He stared at his rifle. He couldn't control his thoughts A man found something worth fighting for at last—and he was denied the chance to fight because of the blindness of false security, which they called neutrality until too late. Suddenly it was inside his chest, his rage, white and hot and uncontrollable.

He made for the ladder, climbed up it, stood there at the parapet, exposed from the hips up.

He shouted at them. He shook his rifle. He didn't know what words he used but the meaning was there, tumbling out in a furious torrent. They had no right to come where they did not belong; their force could crush an antiquated defense but it would not grind out the strength of a heart; they could not have Tinika, or his music, or the right he'd had to be afraid without being punished.

One of the grinning men in the foremost boat shrugged and carefully raised his Mauser to his shoulder and took aim at the impudent-appearing figure on the parapet. Very deliberately his finger squeezed the trigger and the Mauser kicked gently as it fired.

Kees' feet hit the duckboarding of the trench with a head-clearing shock. The sergeant-major released his grip on Kees' belt and said gruffly:

"Shouting at them won't stop them, laddie. You'd be floating in the *laag water* if I hadn't given you a pull."

The sergeant-major's face was grim, but his eyes were no longer bleak. His voice was almost gentle and there was a note of quiet respect in it.

"You had it in you after all," he said. "*Mocd.*" He was surprised.

That was good to hear.

Kees' breathing came thinly through his nose. He looked down at Jan. Some day he would tell Tinika how Jan died; it would be a fine story but with little glory unless he made the glory himself.

He could hear the sounds the rubber boats made as they slithered toward the parapet. There was the clanking of equipment and voices rang out deeply and laughter was close.

And that other voice:

". . . *Hollanders, let us bear our lot with calmness. Be faithful in the future. Our civilization will be restored, because that is the first destiny of a free country. . . .*"

The radio suddenly went dead.

The sergeant-major put his hand on Kees' shoulder.

"Easy, laddie. They won't all be like this. Caught like this. We will wait a little, behind charged wire fences, perhaps; but it will not be forever."

Kees turned slowly, watching them come. For a moment he felt nothing at all; then he began to cry, quite openly, as a brave man cries.

No, it would not be forever.

Two wheels of the buggy dropped into a ditch; and the lurch was so great that Marion was thrown completely out

The Shame of Arizona

By W. C. TUTTLE

VIOLENCE has again become rampant in Wild Horse Valley, down near the Mexican Border; and the Scorpion Bend *Clarion* is once again on the trail of Tonto's three lawmen:

HENRY HARRISON CONROY, sheriff; JUDGE VAN TREECE, his deputy; and the giant OSCAR JOHNSON, jailer.

Two Patrolmen—TED VICKERS and JACK BENNETT—have been dry-gulched near the Border. A stranger, known only as John Jones (but later identified as SHANGHAI CHARLEY, expert appraiser of contraband jewels) is shot and killed in front of the King's Castle Saloon. Another stranger is killed by Banker FRANK HALE when—according to Hale's story—he tries to hold up the bank.

Henry identifies this last fellow as THOMAS MITCHELL, alias Tom Miller, alias Tom Marsh, wanted for smuggling Chinese and drugs from Mexico. There is just a possibility that he may have been an accomplice of Shanghai Charley—but how? Henry wouldn't know.

Anyhow, there are other things to think

The first installment of this three-part serial, herein concluded, appeared in the Argosy for November 30

about. ZELL HORK, a cowboy on STEVE MALLOY's Quarter Circle M ranch, is the next casualty. He is found shot dead behind the Tonto Saloon, after he and NICK BALLEAU, another Malloy hand, have rounded up some horses for Henry's JHC ranch.

TROUBLE now begins to creep right up behind Henry's back and prod him in the shoulders. THUNDER and LIGHTNING, two Mexicans whom he employs on his ranch for no very good reason, are gathering mesquite on the Border when they discover a treasure in diamonds. Not being of very great mental stature, they decide to keep their find a secret—which turns out to be too bad for them and for Henry too.

Henry's safe is blown up. Then FRIJOLE BILL CULLISON, cook on the JHC, reports that Thunder and Lightning have been kidnaped after a bloody fight in which he, Frijole, killed thousands of marauders.

Worried about this, Henry sets out at night for his ranch and is himself overpowered, kidnaped, and taken to a cantina across the Border. Here he learns for the first time about the diamonds. His captors first questioned Thunder and Lightning, then turned them loose, and are now holding Henry to make *him* tell where the diamonds are. He doesn't know, but swears that he will be happy to beat the information out of Thunder and Lightning.

Meanwhile, Thunder and Lightning are converging on the cantina to rescue their boss. By liberal use of shotgun shells one of them simulates a revolution, while the other takes advantage of the confusion to set Henry free and mount him on a half-broken mustang.

They get away through a rain of shots and finally reach the old road which will take them to the JHC ranch-house—*if* Henry and the mustang last long enough . . .

CHAPTER X

WELCOME TO OUR RIOT

AFTER Judge and Danny reached Tonto City that night they found Oscar Johnson and told him something of what had happened. "Henry," said Judge, "is gone."

"Yudas priest!" exclaimed the giant Swede. "Ay vill do somet'ing."

"What'll yuh do?' asked Danny. "Yo're no magician, Oscar."

"Ay vill go seeking the trut'—and Ay vill secoor it."

While Judge and Danny went up to the hotel, hoping against hope that Henry might have returned, Oscar saddled his horse and headed for the JHC ranch.

"Ay vill get de trut', you bat you," he told his horse, "or Ay vill tie dose Mexicans in a hord knot."

Oscar arrived at the ranch and nearly hammered down the front door of the ranch-house, before awakening Frijole, who came to the door with a six-shooter in his hand.

"What in hell do you want at this time of night?" demanded Frijole.

"Ay am seeking de trut'," declared Oscar grandly.

"You've shore come to the end of yore trail, brother," declared Frijole. "Ask and thou shalt git."

"Well"—Oscar rubbed his button-like nose—"how 'bout snort of prune yuice forst?"

"Yeah, we can do that, too. Set down and rest yore big feet, while I git the jug and some cups. Any word of Henry?"

"Ay didn't hear any vords."

Frijole brought in the jug and cups, which they filled to the brim and drained. Oscar relaxed and smacked his lips.

"Das is the best Ay have ever tasted," he declared. "Yust a little veak, but inwigorating, Ay vould say."

"Weak!" snorted Frijole. "This stuff is seven hundred proof."

"Ay vill vait to pass yudgment," stated Oscar, as Frijole filled the cups again. Oscar emptied the cup and relaxed more.

"Yah, Ay can see Ay vars wrong. Das is forst-class yuice, Free-holey."

After the fourth cupful, Frijole said, "What kinda truth was you lookin' for, anyway?"

"Trut'? Oh, yah, Ay forgot. Ay came ha'ar to make Lightning tell me de trut' about Henry."

"Yeah? Well, they're out in the bunkhouse, pardner. If you can make 'em talk, yo're a wizard. C'mon, seeker for truth."

They took the jug and cups along. Frijole said it might be a long session, and there was no use of going thirsty. They made

their way out to the bunk-house, traveling in a decided quarter circle, kicked open the bunk-house door, lighted a lamp and gazed at the empty beds. There was no indication that either of the Mexicans had been in bed that night. They sat down on a bunk and considered the situation.

"I'll tell yuh thish mush," remarked Frijole, "I have found the Mex'can peop'l ver' unreliable."

Oscar sighed dismally. "No Mesicans," he mourned. "Free-holey, Ay vould like to shing a shong."

"Nossir," declared Frijole. "In the firs' place, you've got a voice like a road-runner with the pip, and you don't know the words. How 'bout 'nother snort?"

"Ay vould love it, Free-holey. Das is goot yuice, you bat you."

They drank another cupful apiece. Frijole tried three times to blow out the lamp, missed it very time, and finally extinguished the light by kicking over the table on which the lamp was sitting, and fell on the bed along with the already snoring Oscar.

EVERYTHING was very quiet and peaceful around the JHC. Even the coyotes, which usually shrill their chorus during the night, were silent. Three dim, masked figures came in past the corral, walking quietly toward the bunk-house. Near the corner they grouped together to confer on their final plans. One man whispered:

"It's a cinch they're all in town, except the Mexicans; so this will be easy. If yuh have to bat 'em over the head, do it, but not hard enough to kill the meddlin' fools. All right, let's take 'em."

They walked quietly around to the front, discovered that the door was not fastened from the inside, and walked in. Raucous snores indicated the location of their quarry, both on one bed. Then, without any preliminary action, the three men fell upon what they thought were Thunder and Lightning.

For several moments there was only the muffled sound of struggling men, as Oscar and Frijole were awakened from their stupor. Then, it seemed that Oscar came to life, much as a grizzly might, awakened by prowling wolves. There was a rending sound as Oscar grasped a handful of clothes; the bed creaked alarmingly, and a choking voice gasped:

"My gawsh, look out!"

Crash! A body hurtled off the pile and landed half-way to the door. There was a sound of a solid blow, and Oscar's muffled voice saying, "You vould, eh?"

Frijole was fighting like a wildcat with both hands and kicking with both feet as he fought himself loose. Oscar was up now, both feet on the floor. A bunk-post snapped off, a window crashed out. Then followed a limping rush as the three men managed to fight loose, with Oscar in close pursuit. He and Frijole collided at the door and went rolling.

The attackers were mounting as fast as their racked bones and sore muscles would allow. With a bellow of rage, Oscar got to his feet and headed for them. One man, already mounted, blazed away at the charging Oscar with his six-shooter, but was shooting wild. For a moment or two there was a grand melee of whirling horses, yelling men.

Then two horses seemed to crash together, and one went down. The rider rolled almost into Oscar, who fell upon him like a football player falling upon a fumbled ball. With a clatter of hoofs, the rest of the riders dashed for the main gate.

Frijole was yelling. "What in the hell's goin' on, anyway? Oscar, did they get yuh?"

"Ay got von of 'em, by yimminee!" exulted Oscar. "Das von von't get avay, you bat you! Don't yerk, or Ay vill unyoint you at once."

"Take him in the house," ordered Frijole. "The bunk-house lamp is busted."

Frijole stumbled into the main room and lighted the lamp while Oscar came in, triumphantly carrying his victim, whom he sat in a chair. Panting heavily, Oscar and Frijole stood there and looked at their captive.

Finally Frijole said, "Somebody's crazy, but I don't know who."

"I don't believe," said Henry Harrison Conroy, in a weak voice, "that we need a vote on the matter."

"Ay vill be damned!" gasped Oscar. "Ay yust vill be."

Henry was in rags, hatless, his face scratched. Frijole brought him a glass of water. Henry squinted at Frijole and wheezed, "What does a man have to go through in this country, before he gets something to drink beside water?"

Frijole got the jug from the bunk-house and after a cupful Henry announced that he was going to bed. No one objected. Oscar and Frijole had another drink.

A few minutes later Judge and Danny came to the ranch, fearful of what Oscar might do to Thunder and Lightning in order to force them to talk. Henry was in bed. In answer to Judge's question, he replied, "Please—not tonight, Judge."

"But tell me what happened to you. You are a mess, sir."

"I am," agreed Henry. "Externally and internally. Just try and remember the most harrowing tale you have ever heard or read, and multiply it by ten. Then, sir, you will have a faint glimmering of what happened to me this night. And at my age!"

It was just before daylight when Thunder and Lightning limped in at the ranch, sneaked into the bunk-house and went to bed.

CHAPTER XI

OVER A BARREL

NO ONE got up early at the JHC next morning. Henry was so stiff and sore he could hardly get around, and his face looked as if it had just recovered from a severe case of smallpox. Thunder and Lightning answered Frijole's breakfast bell, bright and shining, showing no ill effects from their adventure. Henry eyed them curiously, wondering just what had happened to them.

Judge groaned from rheumatism and lack of sleep. Oscar, except for a discolored eye, was in fine fettle, and Frijole looked normal. They sat down for breakfast, and were in the middle of their meal when Frijole said:

"Here comes Jim Morton and two of his Border Patrol, leadin' two unsaddled horses. If you've got any lies to tell, think fast."

Henry swallowed heavily and looked at Lightning. "You *rode* home last night?"

"No," replied Lightning.

"Then keep your mouths shut," advised Henry.

The three officers drew up at the kitchen doorway. Henry went out and called a greeting to them. Morton said, "Sheriff, have you lost any horses lately?"

"Why, I—er—possibly, Morton. In these days—"

"Well, here's two of yore JHC horses."

"My goodness!"

"Where did you find them?" asked Judge from the doorway.

"We took 'em in battle last night," said Morton. "Three smugglers cut the fence last night. We didn't take any chances this time, but cut loose on 'em. I reckon one got away on his horse, but two of 'em dived off in the brush and got away on foot. It was too dark to find 'em."

"On my horses!" exclaimed Henry. "My goodness!"

"We've got the saddles," said Morton, "which we will keep for evidence. Someone might identify them."

Henry was profuse in his thanks to the officers for returning the two horses, and watched them ride away.

"Well, that's that," sighed Danny. "Two perfectly good saddles."

"All right, Danny," said Henry. "Do not worry about the saddles—do your worrying later, when they find out who owned the saddles."

"In the meantime," suggested Judge, "suppose you tell us what happened to you, Henry."

"I feel," replied Henry, "that it is time for a general confession. Lightning, suppose you tell us where you found those diamonds, and what you did with them.

There is no use trying to evade the issue. You found thirty-five thousand dollars' worth of diamonds. In some way it was discovered that you and Thunder got them. In order to get away, you both swore that you gave me the diamonds and that I put them in my safe at the office."

"Sure," grimaced Thunder, "and I get my pants keeked so hard you can not seet down for two day."

"What diamonds are you talking about?" asked Judge. "Is this a riddle?"

"Worse," said Henry. "They blew our safe to try and recover the diamonds. Later they kidnaped me and took me to Agua Frio, where they tried to force me to tell what I did with the diamonds. I feel that they were convinced that Thunder and Lightning still had the stones; so they left me tied up and under guard, while they came back to get Thunder and Lightning."

"Yudas Priest!" snorted Oscar. "That is why they yoomp on me and Free-holey last night."

"Exactly," agreed Henry. "But Thunder and Lightning came to Agua Frio, started a shotgun revolution and released me. In order not to meet the men who were searching for Thunder and Lightning, we crossed the border in a secluded place. Well—"

"I see it all!" shouted Judge. "The Border Patrol mistook you three for smugglers."

"THAT, my dear Judge, is elementary. They have our saddles, which may be easily identified, especially by Tommy Roper. Thunder and Lightning cut the fence. That, in itself, is a criminal action. If I may say so, sir, as a peace officer of Wild Horse Valley, I am in a hell of a fix."

"What on earth is to be done?" asked Judge.

"There is only one thing to do," stated Henry. "Thunder and Lightning will give me the diamonds, which, in turn, I shall give to Jim Morton. I shall explain everything in detail, and I believe there will be no action."

"All very well," agreed Judge. "But where in the world did Thunder and Lightning get their hands on thirty-five thousand dollars' worth of diamonds? It is incredible!"

"You see," explained Lightning, "we break a wheel off the tire, and I am peeking een the grass for piece wire to feex heem. On odder side from the fence I am seeing a wire. I pull these wire t'rough the fence and I am finding nodder wire, fasten to heem. On the wire ees these small box."

"And you did not tell anyone, eh?" growled Judge.

Lightning shrugged. "I'm like be reech sometime, Jodge."

"Where are the diamonds now?" asked Henry.

Lightning sighed deeply. "I get heem for you."

The rest of them sat there and looked at each other. Judge glared at Thunder, who was looking very dejected.

"It's a wonder you did not get us all killed," said Judge.

"I guess I'm goin' be poor man all the res' of your life," complained Thunder.

Lightning came back with the little, black bags, which he gave to Henry.

"Open 'em up," urged Danny. "I'd like to see the things."

"No, Danny," said Henry firmly. "We will leave the inspection to Mr. Morton. Frijole, you will please saddle horses for Judge and myself."

"What horse did you ride home last night, Henry?" asked Danny.

"I have no idea who owned the brute, Danny. Like the devil, it had wings and a tail. Possibly sired by a skyrocket, and dammed by a stick of dynamite. I hope and pray that I may never be placed astride another such animal. Danny, in plain words, I am the first man that ever rode his own nightmare."

"But you stayed with the animal Henry."

"True—until it ran into the escaping marauders, routed by Oscar and Frijole."

Lightning sighed and addressed Henry: "Eef there ees any reward, you hope I get some?" he asked.

"Lightning," replied Henry, "the reward for smuggling diamonds into this country is a mighty long sentence to a Federal prison. According to your own words, you did smuggle them, you know."

"I theenk I mak damn bad meestake for talking. I theenk I am liar."

"So you want to change your story, eh?" remarked Judge.

"Sure, Jodge. I fin' heem in the road."

"I'll do what I can for you, Lightning," promised Henry. "I may get them to let you off with ten years in prison."

FRIJOLE brought the horses, and the two men mounted. Henry grimaced from strained muscles, but said nothing as they rode away from the JHC. Henry had the sacks of jewels stuffed in his coat pocket. Luckily, he had a change of clothes at the ranch-house, because the suit he wore out of Mexico was in shreds.

"You were not able to identify any of the masked men, Henry?" asked Judge, as they jogged along toward Tonto City.

"No, Judge. They spoke in husky voices, and there was nothing about their garb to attract my eye. The light was none too good, of course."

"Imagine those Mexicans going boldly down there to rescue you."

"Rough but effective, Judge. I dropped from a second-story window, and nearly killed myself, while Thunder, armed with a shotgun, intimidated the whole town. They thought a revolution had started."

"Well, I hope that the delivery of the gems will clear up things for the Border—*whoa!*"

Two masked men stepped from the brush into the road only a dozen feet in front of them, covering them with six-shooters.

"Wh-what nonsense is this?" demanded Judge.

One of the men laughed huskily. "Get down!" he snapped.

Henry and Judge slid out of their saddles. While one of the men covered Henry and Judge, the other holstered his gun and came in close to them.

"We ain't takin' no chances," he explained. "Keep yore hands up, while I see what yo're packin' in yore pockets. That's fine."

Henry's bulging pockets were quickly emptied. Neither Henry nor Judge was armed.

"We got 'em!" exclaimed the searcher. "All four sacks!"

"Good! Our idea wasn't so bad, eh? Now, you two misfits, get on them broncs and head for town. And next time, keep yore damn red nose out of things that don't concern yuh."

A moment later the two men slid into the brush and disappeared.

"It seems to me," remarked Henry sadly, as they got back into their saddles, "that men should be content with merely robbing, and not add insults by remarking about their victim's personal appearance."

"The allusion to your red nose, I presume, sir."

"Not merely the red nose, Judge—the *damn* red nose."

"And now," sighed Judge, "that we have so successfully disposed of thirty-five thousand dollars' worth of diamonds, what is our next big move? You still have those two saddles to explain away, you know."

"Yes," said Henry, "I am afraid that, in the vernacular of this beautiful valley, they have us over a barrel."

"Us? Not me, sir. I had nothing to do with it."

"My mistake," said Henry quietly.

"Your mistake was in ever employing those misbegotten Mexicans. You should discharge them at once and disclaim any responsibility for their former actions. Let the Federal officers incarcerate them."

"After they risked their lives to rescue me? Why, Judge!"

"All right, all right. It's your funeral, not mine."

"Funeral? My goodness, I hope not."

Tommy Roper met them at their stable, all excited. He said, "Sh-Sh-Sh—"

"Yes, Tommy," saild Henry. "What happened?"

"The Bu-Bu-Bu—"

"Border Patrol?"

"Uh-huh. They gug-got your sus-saddles. They asked me who owned them and I sus-sus-sus—"

"Said that I did," prompted Henry. Tommy nodded violently.

"Thank you, Tommy," said Henry. Tommy helped them unsaddle and put their horses in the stable.

THEY met John Campbell, the prosecutor, in the little hotel lobby, and he went up to their room with them.

"I don't know what it is all about," he told them, "but the Border Patrol have two captured saddles, purported to have been used by two of three smugglers who cut the fence last night and were routed by the officers. I have heard that the horses were wearing the JHC brand, and that the saddles belong to you, Henry. Three of the Commissioners are over in the court house, discussing the situation with Jim Morton. I thought you'd like to know."

"This is rather interesting, John," said Henry wearily. "But I am afraid that saddles and horse brands are not evidence as to who was in those saddles and on those horses."

"The horses and saddles were stolen—of course."

"I would rather say—taken without leave, John."

"It would be absurd to accuse you of smuggling, Henry."

"I believe," said Henry, "that a smuggler must be caught with the goods, and as far as I am aware, I have not been apprehended—yet. And, John, I am far from what might be termed a slick article."

"The whole thing is ridiculous!" snorted Judge. "You leave it to me. If Jim Morton or any of those Commissioners gets personal, I'll tell them a few things."

"Good!" exclaimed Henry. "Go right to it, Judge—but do not stick too closely to the truth."

NONE of the Commissioners came near the office, but they sent a note to Henry, notifying him that the Commissioners were meeting next morning, and that his presence at that meeting was urgently desired.

"If you will accept my advice," said Judge, "you will go to Jim Morton and tell him the whole story. Knowing that the smugglers have the diamonds, he has something to work on, and you will be exonerated."

"Thank you, Judge. Perhaps your advice is sound, but I prefer to handle the case in my own way."

"In spite of the Commissioners, Henry? You never know what they will do."

"You may depend on their doing the wrong thing, Judge. This is not the first time that the Shame of Arizona has weathered a hard blow. And you must admit that we have always triumphed."

"And you, my dear Henry," said Judge, "must admit that you haven't a single clue to any of the recent crimes. In my opinion, you are too bull-headed to admit defeat."

"Or too smart," added Henry. "I have never been quite able to decide that point myself."

Henry met Frederick Hale at the post-office, and the banker was filled with sympathy.

"I wanted to tell you," he said, "that I have absolute faith in you and the operation of the office. I feel that you are doing everything humanly possible."

"Thank you very much," said Henry. "It is good to know that at least one of our leading citizens has faith in my work."

"I might speak to the Commissioners," suggested Hale.

"Thank you—no," said Henry. "Very decent of you, I'm sure. But this is my own personal battle. Your charming daughter is well, I hope."

"Yes, thank you. I believe she will leave on the stage tomorrow night, unless she changes her plans."

"Our loss will be San Francisco's gain," said Henry. "I wish her all the success in the world. A very, very charming young lady."

"Thank you," said Hale. "She is quite fond of you, Mr. Conroy."

"Well, I am flattered. To even think that such a young and charming girl would even give a thought to an old, flea-bitten trouper like me is remarkable. If I am unable to see her, I hope you will thank her for even remembering me."

"I will do that, Mr. Conroy."

"Thank you, sir—very, very much."

CHAPTER XII

FORTY WINKS

THE meeting of the Commissioners was set for ten o'clock in the morning at the court house. Henry was a few minutes late; he was clad in a pearl gray suit, gray fedora, and white shoes; and he carried a gold-headed cane. His linen was immaculate, his tie the exact shade of his suit.

There were four men in the room. First was Al Cooper, chairman of the Board; then Edward Mitchell and Thomas Handley. The fourth man was rather youngish, tall and slender; nearly bald, and long-nosed. His eyes were squinty behind a pair of huge horn-rimmed glasses.

Henry nodded to the Commissioners, looked questioningly at the stranger, and started to sit down. Cooper said:

"Conroy, I don't believe you've ever met James Wadsworth Longfellow Pelly. Mr. Pelly, this is Henry Conroy, our sheriff."

Henry had started to shake hands with Pelly, when Mitchell said, "Mr. Pelly is the editor of the *Clarion*."

"Oh!" exclaimed Henry quietly. "That!"

Then Henry sat down and fondled the head of his cane. The awkward pause was broken by Pelly himself, who said, "I wanted to get the facts, not rumors."

"You seem to have done very well so far—on rumors," said Henry.

"The *Clarion*," said Pelly, "hews to the line."

"But draws its own line," murmured Henry. "But I am very sure that this august body did not meet to listen to a debate between us, sir. Suppose we proceed with the business at hand."

"That's right," agreed Cooper. "There's no need to tell you that we had had two murders here in Tonto City recently, and there is no need to mention to you that nothing has been done about either of them. And there is the matter of two horses and saddles belonging to you, Conroy, which were taken from smugglers, after a gun battle on the Border. The horses were returned to you, but the saddles were held for evidence, or identification."

"If them horses and saddles were stolen from you, that's different," supplemented Mitchell.

"Different than what?" queried Henry.

"Well—uh—different than if you'd used 'em, of course."

"Of course," nodded Henry. "Much different. Thank you, Mr. Mitchell."

"Perhaps you can explain this note," said Pelly, handing a folded piece of paper to Henry. It was written in pencil and read:

Ask the Sheriff of Tonto City what he paid for the diamonds he smuggled out of Agua Frio, and what he did with them.

It was signed *A Constant Reader.*

Henry smiled as he handed back the note. "A constant reader. It is really remarkable what will happen to a man who reads a paper like that constantly. It must gradually wear one down to a point where one might imagine anything."

Pelly flushed, adjusted his glasses and looked appealingly at Cooper.

"That," said Cooper, "is the first time I knew anything about any diamonds bein' mixed up in the deal."

"Constant Reader did," said Henry. "Perhaps, Mr. Cooper, you do not read the *Clarion* constantly. However, that is beside the point. Smuggling of diamonds is a Federal charge, if you will permit me to point this out to you. I will admit that the two horses and saddles belonged to me. I will neither admit nor deny that the horses and saddles were stolen. Neither will I admit nor deny that I knew who rode those horses.

"But I do deny having bought, smug-

gled, or disposed of any illegal gems. The charge, or assertion, is an untruth. In words more understandable, it is a damned lie, gentlemen!"

"There still remain the two unsolved murders," said Mitchell.

"Unsolved as yet," corrected Henry.

"Tell me of one thing you have done," demanded Pelly.

"Failed to read the *Clarion* for one thing, Mr. Pelly."

"THIS ain't gettin' us any place," declared Cooper. "We want action, Conroy. Oh, I'll admit that you fooled us several times, when we had no idea that you were workin' on a case. But you can't always be lucky."

Henry winced, but smiled. "Would you like to be fooled again?" he asked.

"Gladly!" exclaimed Mitchell.

"I shall do my very best," promised Henry.

"How soon?" queried Pelly.

"Well," said Henry, "if I were you, Mr. Pelly, I would not hold the presses—unless you wish to do the readers a favor. When do you return?"

"I have to go back on the evening stage, Mr. Conroy."

"Well, if anything happens, I suppose you will hear about it sooner or later. My middle name is Harrison, and if convenient, I wish you would leave out all reference to the Shame of Arizona."

Mr. Pelly looked bleak, but did not reply. Cooper said, "That seems to be about all, gentlemen."

"Wait a moment," said Pelly quickly. "This meeting doesn't bear out what you told me a while ago. You said that you were going to give the sheriff a very short time to clear up this situation, or resign. You have let him talk—"

"Just a moment!" snapped Cooper. "This happens to be county business, and is none of your affairs, Mr. Pelly."

"I know, but I came all the way down here to—"

"To see me humiliated," said Henry, smiling. "I believe we can get long without you, Mr. Pelly. Go home and write your feelings—if anyone is interested in reading them, which I am not."

"Oh, I shall write them," promised Pelly defiantly. "At least this meeting has proved to me that the Commissioners of this county are as lax as the sheriff. Gentlemen, I bid you good-day."

"Why not," asked Henry, "borrow a soap-box and find a vacant corner. I'm sure Tonto City needs educating."

"I bow to your superior knowledge of local conditions!" snapped the editor.

Henry went back to his room and changed his clothes. At least the Commissioners had done nothing drastic. But it did not alter the fact that they wanted something done at once. Henry sighed as he sat on the edge of the bed, clad in his underclothes. In his mind was a glimmering of an idea; but just how to prove anything he did not know.

Suddenly he straightened up, his eyes half closed, his brow wrinkled.

"No, Henry," he said half aloud. "No, you can not do that. The idea is too far-fetched, in the first place. Too many elements. And yet—"

Slowly he drew on his clothes, scowling thoughtfully.

"If I could trust Oscar and Tommy and —Judge. Danny would do it, I am sure. By goodness, it might work. But if it doesn't work we will truly be the Shame of Arizona—in every respect."

JUDGE was waiting for Henry, as he watched the carpenter putting the finishing touches on the work at the office; but Henry was on his way to the livery stable. There he found Tommy Roper, the stuttering cowboy, washing harness. Henry squatted beside Tommy and spoke quietly and at length, while Tommy merely nodded and grinned.

"Do not ask me why I want you to do this, Tommy," said Henry. "It is an order from the sheriff; and one must obey orders."

Tommy nodded and went back to the washing his harness.

Judge had gone to the hotel when Henry got back to the office. Oscar was there. Henry drew him aside. Oscar listened in amazement to what Henry proposed, but was agreeable. Henry gave him some money, and waited until Judge came back.

"We are going to ride out to the ranch and have a talk with Danny," Henry told him. Judge groaned and protested that it would only require one of them.

"I ask you what the Commissioners said to you," complained Judge, "and you order me to ride a horse."

"We must see Danny together, Judge," explained Henry. "I have a scheme which needs coöperation from both of you and Danny."

"Have we ever failed to coöperate?" asked Judge. "Can not my coöperation be confirmed, without me riding clear out to that ranch?"

"I prefer to talk with both of you at the same time, sir."

"We could send Oscar out to summon Danny," suggested Judge.

"This scheme," said Henry, "concerns our immediate future, Judge. If it fails in its purpose, my resignation as sheriff goes to the Commissioners tomorrow morning. In fact, they will demand it. They may also demand my arrest."

"I feel," said Judge, "that we had better saddle immediately."

"On second thought," said Henry, "I believe we will hire a horse and buggy. This may be my last day as a public defender of the peace, and it may well be spent in comfort."

BY EIGHT o'clock that evening, Slim McFee was too drunk to drive the stage to Scorpion Bend; so Tommy Roper was drafted for the job. Oscar Johnson and Slim had spent a blissful afternoon at the King's Castle Saloon; and the world, while a bit dim and shadowy, was decidedly of a rosy hue.

James Wadsworth Longfellow Pelly spent his time absorbing conversation, possibly with the intention of writing a constructive article on Tonto City. He ventured into the King's Castle, where he was obliged to pass the close scrutiny of Oscar and Slim.

"Ay am not sure," remarked Oscar, "but Ay t'ink it is somet'ing that got loose."

Slim roared. Mr. Pelly had been his passenger, and had pumped Slim dry regarding Henry Harrison Conroy.

"He's kinda got it in for Henry," he told Oscar.

"Ya-a-ah!" snorted Oscar. "C'mere, faller!"

Mr. Pelly tried to evade Oscar, but a huge right fist was fastened around his necktie, making him rather submissive.

"Ay am Oscar Yohnson, de yailer," he explained to Mr. Pelly, with his nose almost buried in Mr. Pelly's face. "Who in de ha'al are you?"

"I am James Wadsworth Longfellow Pelly," gasped the victim.

"You vill be Yim—or not'ing," declared Oscar. "Have drink."

"Sorry, but I—I—oh, I may take something soft."

"Soft!" exclaimed Slim. "My gawsh!"

"Soft!" parroted Oscar. "By yee, Ay have yust de t'ing. Come on."

They crossed the street and entered the sheriff's office, which was being rebuilt, and went back to the jail, where Oscar had a jug of Frijole's prune whisky.

"If you don't vant hord liquor, dis fills de bill," declared Oscar. "It yust inwigorates."

Oscar filled three cups and they drank solemnly. Mr. Pelly smacked his lips.

"By jove, that is good!" he exclaimed. "What is it?"

"Prune yuice," grinned Oscar.

"Prunes? Well, that *is* a novelty. I never knew a prune to taste so good. I must get the recipe."

Oscar filled the cups again, and a lowered eyelid warned Slim. But Slim was too drunk to heed any warning; so they absorbed that cupful right away.

"What's yore business, Misser Pelly?" asked Slim owlishly.

"My job?" Pelly's question was followed by a giggling laugh. "Why, I am the editor

of the Scorpion Bend *Clarion*. You see, I came down here to—now wha's the difference what I came for, anyway?"

Pelly rubbed the palm of his right hand all over his face, as if to brush away the cobwebs. Oscar filled the cups again. Slim said:

"Frien' of my youth, I need thee every hour."

Pelly said, "Honeshtly, I never felt like thish before. I wonner wha's matter 'ith me."

"Yo're drunk, par'ner," declared Slim.

"Oh, tha's imposshible," argued the editor. "Why, it's only prunes."

"Can you shing?" asked Oscar.

"Shing? Really! I used to shing in a church; don't you know that?"

"Only one church in town and tha's closed except on Sunday, for which we may be gra'ful. I'd hate to hear you shing, Jim. Better pour that down, before you spill it, par'ner."

James Wadsworth Longfellow Pelly drank it down. A few moments later he made an ineffectual grab at a bar of the cell door, missed it by a foot, and sat down heavily on the floor, where he began snoring.

Oscar spent about five minutes trying to recork that jug, and in the meantime Slim lay down with Pelly, pillowed his head on Pelly's bosom and joined in the snores. Oscar went back to the office. The carpenter had quit for the day. Oscar found the office alarm clock, and spent another five minutes setting the alarm for eight o'clock.

"Ay don't vant that yigger to miss the stage," he told himself. "Ay vill catch for me forty vinks."

CHAPTER XIII

LADY IN A DITCH

AT EIGHT-FIFTEEN that evening Tommy Roper swung the four stage horses around in front of the stage depot. Oscar and James Wadsworth Longfellow Pelly were there sitting on a bench in front of the depot. The editor of the *Clarion* had been quite a burden to Oscar, but the big Swede had vowed to put him on that stage.

Marion Hale was there, clad in a gray traveling suit, accompanied by her father and Lawrence Eddy, the bank's cashier. Marion carried a hand bag, and Eddy carried her large Gladstone. Quite a number of local cowboys were at the depot—just casually, of course.

Oscar succeeded in helping the *Clarion* editor to a seat with Tommy Roper, instead of letting him occupy the stage with Marion. Her bag was placed inside the stage, instead of being tied to the top; goodbyes were said, and the stage started its monotonous night journey to Scorpion Bend.

Tommy Roper was no conversationalist, and James Wadsworth Longfellow Pelly was in no mood to talk. He was inclined to be a bit weak about the stomach, and that lurching stage did not help him in the least.

There was a full moon. They made good time on the valley floor, but soon struck the heavier going of the upgrade along the canyon.

"You-you-you huh-hang on, or I'll have to tut-tut-tie yuh to the sus-seat, pup-pardner," said Tommy. "That ch-ch-ch-chuck-hole almost gug-got you."

"Oh, Lord," groaned Pelly, "what do I care?"

"Sus-sick?"

"Slowly dying," gasped Pelly.

"Sus-stick with it. I've been dyin' like th-that myself."

"I drank something they called prune juice. Oscar had it."

Tommy roared. He had sampled the stuff himself and knew its potency.

"That stuff's dud-dynamite," he declared.

Tommy was an expert with four horses, and his long whip crackled inches above the backs of the leaders as they ground along the grades above the canyon. As the leaders swung wide on a hairpin turn, the stage lurched to a stop, swung full into the moonlight around a rock.

Two masked men, armed with Win-

chesters, had halted the leaders. One of the men stepped in close to the driver, while the other came swiftly to the door of the stage and yanked it open.

"Git out of there and line up!" he snarled.

Marion Hale stepped out, stumbling on the uneven roadway. The man said, "Woman, eh? Anybody else in there?"

"I—I am alone," faltered the girl. "I haven't anything."

"No?" The man yanked the hand bag from her grasp. Then he motioned her to move over and face the rocky wall at the inner side of the grade.

James Wadsworth Longfellow Pelly was too miserable to care what they did to him, and Tommy discreetly kept his mouth shut. Both bandits had moved in toward the door of the stage, examining the interior.

"Keep lookin' ahead and mind yore own business," warned one of them.

Gravel crunched under the boots, and suddenly they were gone, stepping around the corner of the wall, back toward Tonto.

No one spoke for a long time. Finally Marion said weakly, "They—they took my hand bag!"

"Sus-son-of-a-gug-gun!" gasped Tommy. He handed the lines to the unresisting Pelly, and climbed down. He lighted a match and looked into the stage, with Marion at his shoulder.

"My bag!" she exclaimed. "It's gone!"

"Your valise?" queried Tommy.

"Yes!"

"I'll be a dud-dirty name!"

THEY heard the rattle of wheels on the rocky grade, and Tommy ran around in front of his team. It was a horse and buggy, coming from the opposite direction, with barely enough room to squeeze past the stage. The driver worked his vehicle carefully to where he could draw up beside the stage.

The driver was Henry Harrison Conroy. He asked, "Is something wrong, Slim?"

"Th-this ain't Sus-Slim," replied Tommy Roper.

Henry got out and recognized Tommy in the moonlight. Then he saw Marion. "What happened, Miss Hale?" he asked anxiously.

"We were held up by two masked men, and they took my valise," she replied bitterly.

"My goodness! Which way did they go?"

"Back toward Tonto City. They have only been gone a few minutes."

"This," declared Henry, "is insufferable. You get back on the stage, Miss Hale, and I shall do my best to—"

"But I can't go now," interrupted Marion. "My tickets are gone—and all my clothes. I must go back home."

"Yes, I suppose that is true. Well, you may ride back with me. Tommy, if you will pull ahead a few feet, we can make it easily."

Tommy climbed back on the seat, swore feelingly about something, and the stage lurched ahead, leaving Henry plenty of room to proceed. Marion started to climb into the buggy, when a voice said:

"If you do not mind, I shall ride back with you, too. I find that I am in no condition to ride on that stage."

It was James Wadsworth Longfellow Pelly, climbing in beside Marion without leave from anyone. The seat was not built for three people, but three of them were in it. Apparently Pelly had not recognized Henry, because he said:

"I have suffered a lot of discomforts in this trip to Tonto City, but I feel I have gathered enough material to enable my paper to be of great benefit to the taxpayers of Wild Horse Valley."

"In what way?" asked Henry quietly.

"In awakening them to the fact that the present peace officers in their county are the most incompetent in the world. The county is a hotbed of crime, encouraged by negligence and incompetency."

"You are Mr. Pelly, the famous editor?" queried Henry.

"I am," replied Pelly stoutly. "And you?"

"My name is Henry Harrison Conroy."

"Oh!" choked Pelly. "I—I did not realize—"

Henry wasn't sure whether Marion was laughing or crying, because the moon was at their backs, and the top of the buggy cut off any illumination. He said to Marion, "I'm sorry you were molested tonight. We shall make every effort to find and return your baggage, Miss Hale."

"That is—is quite all right," she said quietly.

They descended the grades to the floor of the valley, where they were able to make much better time. They were badly crowded in the seat, and Pelly finally said, "If you could stop for a moment, I'm sure we can arrange things much better, Mr. Conroy."

Henry drew up; and as Pelly started to get out, he pitched forward flat on his face. Marion had neatly booted him. Before Henry realized her intentions, she grabbed the whip and slashed it across the rump of the horse, which reared and broke into a run.

THE next moment a blunt instrument was shoved into Henry's ribs, and the girl snapped, "Keep your hands where they are and keep driving, or I'll pull the trigger, sheriff! And I'm not fooling!"

"My goodness, Miss Hale!" gasped Henry, trying to control the horse.

"Never mind that. You drive and I'll watch for the turn-off."

"The turn-off?" queried Henry.

"The road to Agua Frio, my fat friend. We are not going to Tonto City."

"You—you rather amaze me!" panted Henry. "What is the—"

"Drop it!" she snapped. "You haven't fooled me. Fred and Larry thought you were dumb, but I never subscribed to that idea."

"Amazing, my dear! But why to Agua Frio?"

"At least I shall save my own skin."

"I see—just another skin game, Miss Hale."

"You can drop that Miss Hale idea, too. Slow down and turn here."

"Gladly, my dear, gladly. But you will never get to Agua Frio, because I attended to that detail. I was afraid there might be an exodus, in case anything went wrong in Tonto City."

"Bluffer," said Marion. "I'm going to call it, Conroy."

"As you wish; I am merely your obedient servant."

"Yes, and you better be obedient. A bullet through the belly is not a nice reminder that you took a long chance."

"Messy. And I would also add—unnecessary. You know, my dear, it was a shock to discover that a sweet-faced, innocent little maid should turn out to be a—well, not such a nice person, after all."

"Ditch it! I figured that you were getting wise, but I never thought you'd have my hand bag and valise stolen."

"You pain me, my dear. I deducted that the evidence would be in those containers. Had we forced them from you in Tonto, it might have been embarrassing, in case they were not what I imagined. While we are being brutally frank about things in general, why did you folks murder poor old Shanghai Charley? Was it because you double-crossed him on a big deal, and he came to get his pay?"

"You knew who he was?" asked the girl quickly.

"Oh, certainly. And the alleged bank robber, whom your dear old daddy murdered and who caused you much loss of sleep. I believe he was also crossed and was following Charley's trail, trying to be in on the kill."

"You seem to know a lot," said the girl huskily. "Too much. How did you know all this?"

"Observation and deduction. For instance, you would not leave town until those diamonds were recovered. You invited Danny Regan to supper, in order to have him away from my ranch, when your men were going to capture my two Mexicans. You invited me to your house, in order to try and discover what I was doing about the murders.

"You see, I even know that Zell Hork was shot by Danny Regan, while trying to stampede horses off my ranch. They took

him to Tonto, placed his body in that old corral and fired two shots—to indicate, I believe, that he was shot at that spot. The same tactics were used on Shanghai Charley. But you overlooked the fact that men bleed where they die."

The girl laughed harshly. "You are wasting your talents in Tonto City. I mean, you have wasted them. When this ride is over, so are you."

"You forget the men at the Border," said Henry.

"They would let you pass."

"I do not see—"

"You *will* see. You will either pass them, or you'll never tell them what happened."

And just at that moment Henry found the place he had been looking for. With the horse at a trot, he swung off the road and dropped two wheels into a deep ditch.

CHAPTER XIV

MONUMENT FOR HENRY

THE lurch was so sudden that Marion was thrown completely out of the buggy. Henry managed to keep his seat and swung the horse around. Drawing up quickly he climbed out. The girl's gray suit was plainly visible, as she tried to stand up but sank back.

Her gun was gone. Henry grasped her by the arm and she cried out that her ankle was twisted. Henry grasped her two hands, found that they were empty, and picked her up bodily.

"The tables are turned, my dear," he told her. "Now we go back to Tonto City. Without the gun, you are just a foolish little girl who must sit and take what is given to her."

"I believe my leg is broken," she whimpered.

"Very likely. You promised me a bullet in the belly, my dear. Rather a crude expression, but effective."

They drove into Tonto City and stopped at the front of the office, where they found Judge, Danny, Oscar, Thunder, Lightning, Jim Morton and one of his officers.

"Put the young lady on a cot and send for Doc Knowles," ordered Henry. "Is everything all right?"

"You bet it's all right!" exclaimed Morton. "The diamonds were in the hand bag and the other bag was full of drugs. I would estimate the whole works to be worth at least fifty thousand dollars. What a haul!"

"It took you a long time to get here, Henry," said Judge.

"We thought for a while that we were going to Agua Frio," replied Henry, "but I drove into a washout and the young lady lost her gun."

"It wasn't a gun," groaned Marion; "it was an ivory cigarette holder."

"My goodness!" gasped Henry. "You should be ashamed to fool an old man."

They carried her into the office, and Morton drew Henry aside. "You've got the goods on Hale and Eddy?" he asked anxiously.

"Entirely circumstantial," replied Henry wearily. "I am going down there now. I want you and Danny in close, in case of trouble. Leave Judge with the doctor and the young lady. I believe I can handle it alone."

THE Hale home was dark, when Henry knocked loudly on the door. After a few moments he heard Frederick Hale's voice saying, "Who is there?"

"This is Conroy, Mr. Hale," replied Henry.

"Just a moment, Mr. Conroy."

It was quite a while before Frederick Hale came to the door; and he barely opened it. Henry said, "The stage was held up tonight, Mr. Hale, and your daughter lost her hand bag and valise. She sent word to you that she was going on."

"What was it?" queried Lawrence Eddy from further back in the house.

Hale turned and told him what Henry had said. Eddy lighted a lamp and invited Henry in. Foolishly Henry stepped in, Hale closed the door, and Henry found himself looking into the muzzle of Eddy's gun.

The young man was wild-eyed and deter-

mined. Hale started to say something to Eddy, but the young man interrupted. "So they got her bags, eh?"

"Why, yes," replied Henry. "But I do not see any use of pointing that gun at me, Mr. Eddy."

"Sit down there!"

Henry slumped in a chair. Eddy quickly removed a gun from Henry's coat pocket and handed it to Hale.

"I—I do not understand," said Henry nervously. "I only said—"

"We know what you said. You can't fool me any longer, Conroy."

"But, Larry—" protested Hale, his eyes showing fright.

"He thinks he's got us," said Eddy. "They got those valises. Marion's message. Fred, we've got to move fast. Steve and Nick were at the King's Castle a while ago. You keep this fat-nosed coyote here, while I get 'em. We can get to Mexico, but we've got to move fast. Watch him, Fred, and I'll be right back."

Lawrence Eddy slipped quietly out of the house, and was gone. Hale's eyes narrowed as he looked at Henry.

"Sorry about Malloy and Balleau," said Henry. "He will not find them at the saloon."

"Why won't he?" asked Hale quickly.

"Because they are in jail," replied Henry, "charged with smuggling and murder."

"You lie! You can't prove—"

"Malloy," said Henry, "was yellow. He says that you killed Shanghai Charley—you and Eddy. I didn't believe—"

"He lies!" rasped Hale. "Malloy fired both shots and— Damn you, Conroy, I'll get you if it's the last act of my life!"

He shoved the six-shooter within inches of Henry's midriff and pulled the trigger.

THREE times he squeezed the trigger, but there was only the sharp click of a falling hammer.

"I never carry it loaded," said Henry. "They've got Eddy by this time; so you may as well surrender. I arrest you for murder, Frederick Hale."

In his panic Hale whirled toward the door, but changed his mind and made a dash for the stairs. He dropped Henry's gun, and Henry picked it up, took some cartridges from his pocket and quickly loaded it.

Someone banged against the door, and it flew open. Lawrence Eddy stumbled into the room, looking wildly back, as footsteps sounded outside. Ignoring Henry, he swung up his gun, pointing toward the doorway, as Henry fired from his lap.

The heavy bullet knocked him sideways into the table, where he upset the lamp and crashed down to the floor. Danny yelled from the doorway, "Are you all right, Henry?"

"I am a bit in the dark," replied Henry calmly. "Be a little careful, Danny; Eddy may be still able to bite."

"Where's Hale?" asked Danny.

From upstairs came the dull thud of a muffled shot. Henry said, "I do not believe there is any forwarding address, Danny."

They found another lamp, and in a few minutes the room was filled with men. They brought Hale down from upstairs. His aim had been very good. Eddy was still alive, but refused to talk.

When John Campbell told Marion she would have to stand trial for murder, she was willing to talk. She accused Malloy and Balleau of killing Shanghai Charley in Hale's house, and admitted that Hale had killed the man in the bank, when that man demanded an accounting and a percentage in their new deal. They killed Shanghai Charley and later stole his bag.

"You are not—were not Hale's daughter?" asked Judge.

"No. Hale was the brains of the gang. He bought out this cow-town bank, intending to use it to cover smuggling. Malloy and his gang moved in here to do their part. It looked good, you must admit. Eddy was a first-class peter man, but—"

"Safe cracker?" asked Henry.

"He thought so, until he blew your safe through the roof."

"How on earth did you ever get mixed up in that gang?" asked Henry.

"Larry Eddy was my husband," she replied.

James Wadsworth Longfellow Pelly came limping in, dusty and tired. "Who shoved me out of that buggy?" he demanded. "Of all the unkind things I have ever had happen to me! You did it!" he snapped, pointing at Henry. "You vanted to be alone with this lady. When I get back to Scorpion Bend—"

Judge Van Treece put the palm of his bony right hand against Pelly's nose and banged his head back against the rough wall.

"Put that in your scurrilous rag!" he snorted. "And for your information, you scum, two men are dead, two are in jail and this lady has a twisted ankle. The sheriff of Tonto City has more than justified his position in clearing up both murders; in fact, there isn't a single mystery left, unless it is why do they let you live."

Pelly was speechless.

"Prune yuice, Yimmy," chuckled Oscar. "He vanted somet'ing soft."

THEY turned Marion over to the Federal officers and went up to bed. Danny, Oscar and Pelly went over to the King's Castle to get a drink, and there were only Thunder and Lightning alone on the street, standing on the edge of the sidewalk. Lightning said:

"I don' know w'at you theenk, my leetle brodder. The banker ees keeled and the mos' beautiful *señorita* ees got tweested leg. Two d'ad mans and two *vaquero* een jail. The diamonds are gone. *Madre de Dios*, I drim from getting reech, and look at you."

"I'm fill seek about the diamond," agreed Thunder.

"Sure. I don't know who got heem. Everybody talk fast and I leesten and leesten, but I can' get tail from those heads. Jodge poosh those man een your face and call heem a scom, and the man just take paper and write like hell. Those beautiful *señorita* 'ave 'osban', too, I am hearing."

"Too bad," sighed Thunder.

"W'at ees too bad?"

"Everytheeng."

"*Por Dios*—no! Henry say everytheeng ees all right again."

"*Buena!* Come on, we fin' out queek."

"Fin' out w'at, my leetle brodder?"

"Fin' out eef Pancho trus' us for bottle tequila."

And they went hurrying down to Pancho's cantina, anxious to prove if Henry's word was true. Up in their room, Henry and Judge adjusted themselves in bed. The town was quiet and everything seemed peaceful. Henry sighed deeply and waved for Judge to extinguish the lamp.

"I hope the Commissioners will be satisfied," said Judge.

"I saw my duty and I done it," said Henry soberly.

"In the most intricate and roundabout way I have ever known. You had more cogs in your scheme than that alarm clock on the table. However, each cog worked to perfection. They should build a monument to you."

"My goodness! That is an idea, Judge."

"Yes, indeed. An upset buggy, with a pretty girl digging you in the ribs with a cigarette holder."

"One of the most ticklish situations I have ever been in, Judge. Goodnight. The Shame of Arizona is not ashamed."

THE END

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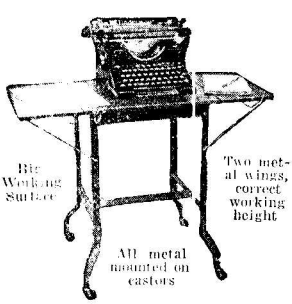

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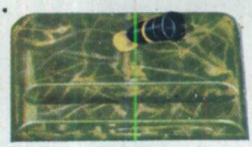

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