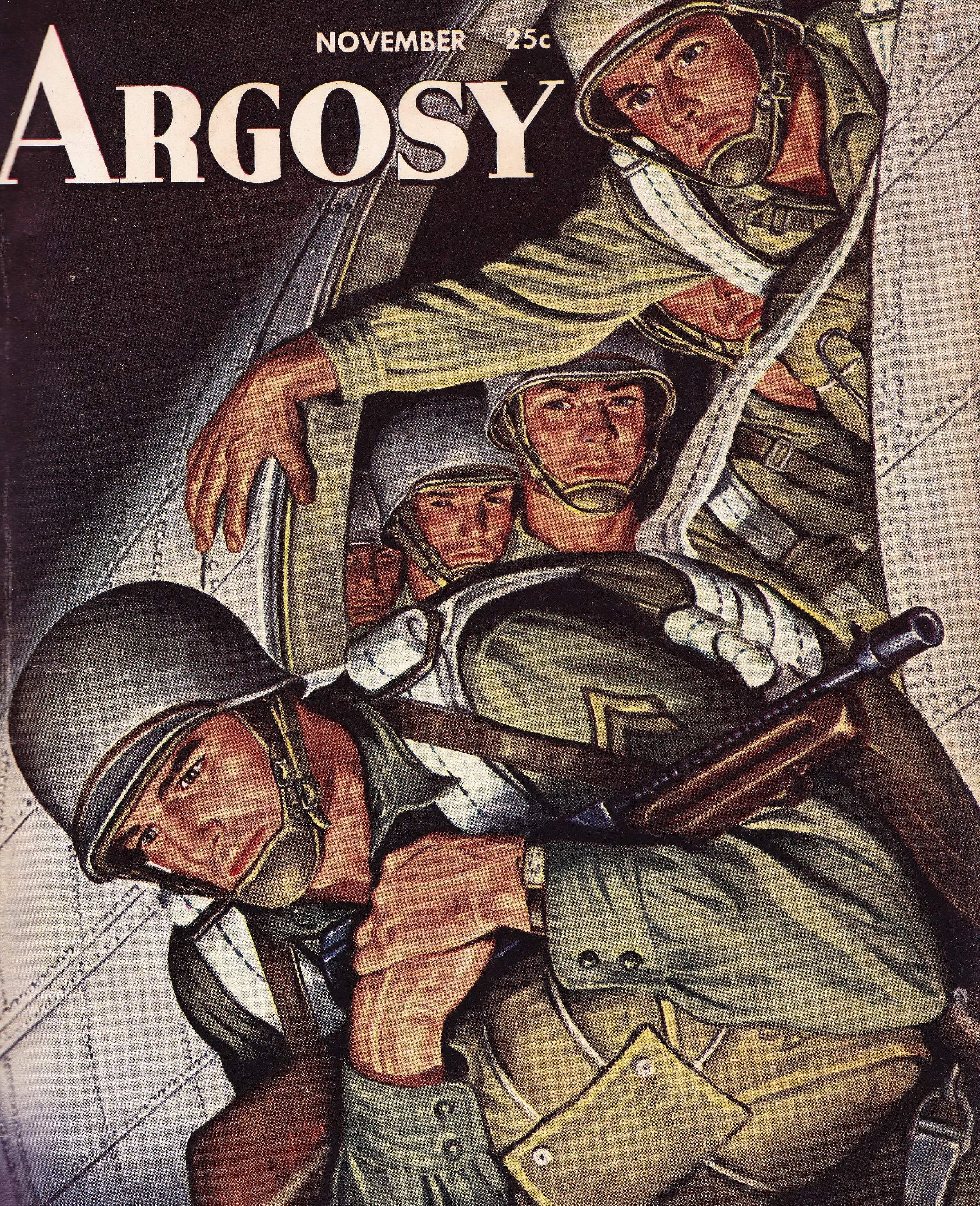
NOVEMBER 25c

ARGOSY

FOUNDED 1882



C. P. DONNEL, Jr.
BILL GULICK
MAURICE BEAM
FLETCHER PRATT

RED IS FOR COURAGE

A Complete Short Novel of the War By STEVE FISHER

FOOTBALL IN THE FAMILY

An Unusual Novel of the Gridiron By NELSON BOND

JOHN RHODES STURDY
GEOFFREY HEWELCKE
WILLIAM BYRON MOWERY
KENNETH PERKINS

"THROTTLE THE AXIS AS YOU AUTO!"—

say the 5 Crowns

We all should take pride
In "sharing the ride"
With the gas that our rations allow,

For each wasted quart
Cuts Uncle Sam short,
And he's driving to Victory now!

LIGHTNESS
SMOOTHNESS
RICHNESS
BODY

FLAVOR

TOUGHNESS
The Car Hog

In the FAMOUS Host BOTTLE

Seagram keeps the
TOUGHNESS OUT
... blends extra
PLEASURE IN

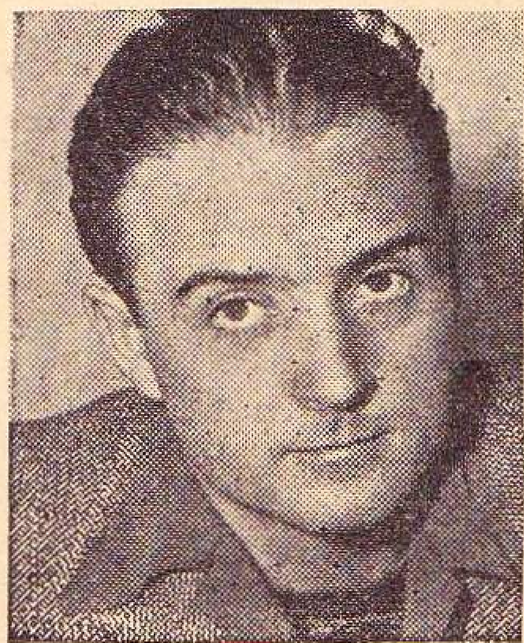
THE FINER
Seagram's 5 Crown

Seagram's 5 Crown Blended Whiskey. 86.8 Proof. 60% Grain Neutral Spirits. Seagram-Distillers Corporation, New York

ARGOSY AUTHORS

WE'VE heard many prognostications about the war, but none quite so pleasing as the simple statement made below by Steve Fisher, author of RED IS FOR COURAGE, the ARGOSY novel for November:

Steve Fisher: Listen, I'll see you in Europe; not this Christmas Eve, perhaps; but by the next one for sure—in Johnny's Bar in the basement of Hotel Chateau-Frontenac, 54 Rue Pierre-Charron, Paris; and we'll have a drink, and we won't sing those songs any more, about Paris the last time we saw it; but of the new Europe being built again, and born again; the new London and the new Madrid; and how we'll spend the holidays in Berlin where American and British soldiers are on patrol.


Steve Fisher

RED IS FOR COURAGE (which 20th-Century Fox is going to film as "Red Cross Girl") is an echo of the *old* world; of things some of us knew and saw and did; history, still a little fresh and raw, so that sometimes it hurts. All of it isn't fiction. I only wish all of it were.

You asked about what I've been doing. In these times, I cannot give you much, except to list, perfunctorily, what I imagine are supposed to be a writer's credits—pictures, novels: *I Wake Up Screaming, To The Shores of Tripoli, Destroyer*—and my forthcoming *Destination Tokyo* which I am writing as both a book and motion picture.

C. P. Donnel, Jr.: A native of Bala, Pennsylvania, which is a suburb of Philadelphia. I've made my home in Norfolk, Virginia, since 1913. Attended Blair Academy at Blairstown, N. J., and Yale, wangling an A. B. from the latter in 1929. Followed nine years newspaper work on the *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot;* jobs ranged from subbing as woman's page editor to police reporting and day city editor. I turned to fiction in the false hope that it would be less strenuous. My hostages to fortune are a wife who likes my stories; Connie, age ten, who likes the Oz books; and Donnie, seven, who wants a scout knife.

C. P. Donnel, Jr.

William Byron Mowery: My family was migratory—the chicken wagon type. Living variously in Ohio, the Upper Peninsula and Ontario, we trapped, guided, hunted, trained dogs and fur-farmed. I learned to trap muskrats when I was six, and at eight I shot a bear. My first eleven years were spent thus, with practically no formal education.

At fifteen I happened on a job in Illinois which staked me through high school. After high school I went to Ohio State and the University of Illinois, graduating and getting a master's degree from the latter. I was on the faculty of English there and at Texas and seemed headed for an academic life.

But some intangible restlessness forbade. I threw over the university and sailed into writing.

After writing stories of the city, society and the underworld, it dawned on me that I could write best of a life I knew intimately. This started me writing of the Ozarks.

William B. Mowery

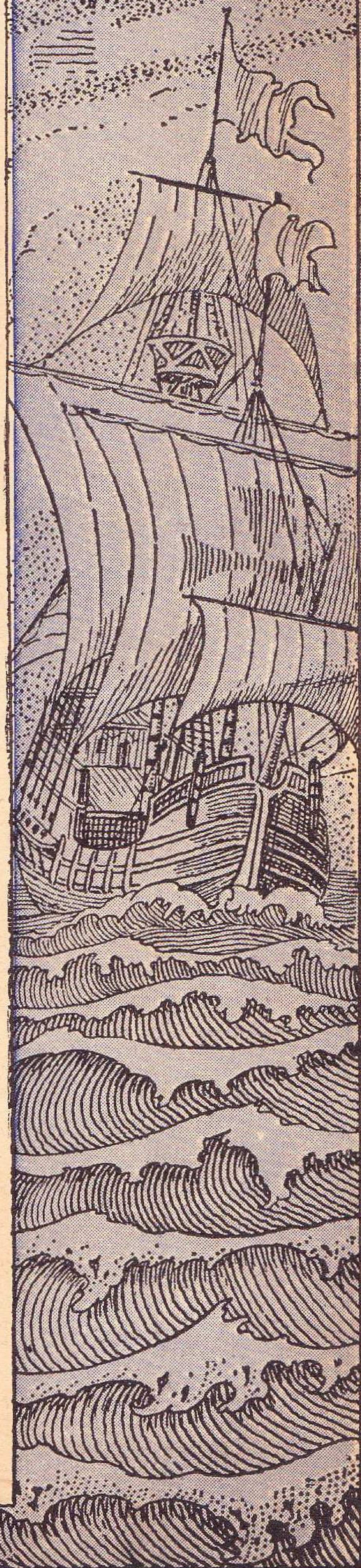
Bill Gulick: When I was a kid, my life had two ambitions. One was to be a big-league ball player, the other to be a famous writer. Which just goes to show you that I wasn't very bright, even as a kid. Well, I played a little baseball—high school, college, semi-pro—before an arm injury put an end to it (and, incidentally, made Uncle Sam decide that I couldn't carry a gun in his army).

I bounced around from one job to another for several years, picking up a good deal of valuable story color. Most of the jobs were in the construction game, chief of which was a couple of years spent as timekeeper for an electrical high-line construction crew.

We built transmission lines, distribution circuits, sub-stations, power plants, etc., throughout Kansas and Oklahoma. It was fun. And also hard work. I don't believe there's a more colorful group of men than those who build and keep in service the high-voltage lines. It's a dangerous, fascinating game.

Bill Gulick

During a long lull between jobs, I decided to give story-writing a fair chance. Here I am, four years later, just beginning to realize how little I know. Some thirty-five or forty yarns of mine have seen print and an equal number have descended into the depths of my waste basket.



ARGONOTES

NOT the least embarrassment of publishing a fiction magazine these days is the chance that must be taken every time a story dealing with any of the world's far-flung battle fronts is bought and scheduled. A yarn that may be timely and full of good news tie-ups on the day the story is bought may be as dated as a bustle when it reaches the newsstands.

Ever since a national magazine bought and scheduled an article entitled "Hawaii, Garden Spot of the Pacific," for its issue of December 7, 1941, editors have been using Ouija boards in their frantic efforts to avoid a similar bit of bad timing.

Have you noticed, by any chance, the lack of war stories which concern themselves with any easily identified land front? Land battle, by its very nature of conquest and evacuation—advance and retreat—presents an unpredictable picture. The fighting front of today may be 500 miles behind the line this time next month.

All of which moves us to an expression of grateful appreciation of the foresight shown by C. P. Donnel, Jr., in his story "Invasion, Limited" (Page 4 of this issue). Written when Sicily was not yet invaded, when the German plan of action in Italy was as yet unknown, and when the world at large knew nothing of Italy's unrest which led shortly to Mussolini's downfall, we feel that Mr. Donnel did a good job of fiction forecasting.

* * *

ARGOSY is grateful to the many readers who took the time and trouble to send us congratulatory messages on the first flat-sized September issue. We reprint below, with pardonable pride, excerpts from a few of the nicest:

Steve Fisher: "New ARGOSY now on stands out here. Looks really terrific. Congratulations."

Robert J. Hogan: "Just want to tell you what a grand job I think you have done with ARGOSY. May I report from the up-country that it is getting a large display?"

David F. Perkins: "Congratulations. All that you told me about the new format and contents of the September ARGOSY has come true. I have been spreading the good word about the new ARGOSY to all my friends—and you have not let me down."

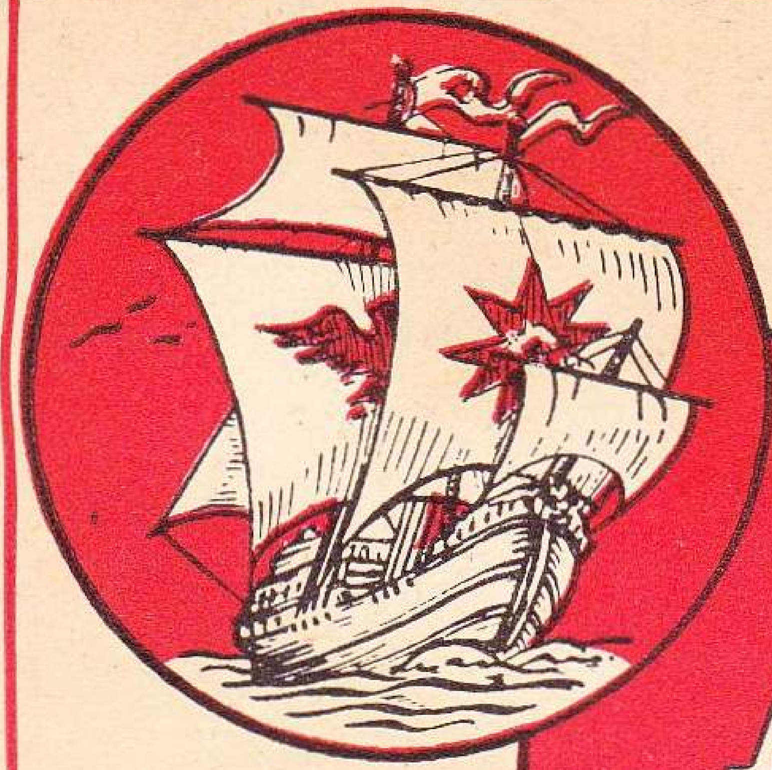
Charles Hubay, SK3/c: "Just wanted to express my appreciation on the fine magazine you have turned out. Before today your magazine was always worth its former price. Now, it is far more than worth the quarter I have to pay."

Thomas F. Waters: "I would like to be, but will probably not be, the first to congratulate you on the excellent September issue of ARGOSY. I'm convinced that it is the best-looking magazine on the stands."

Tom Blackburn: "A short while ago I came home with a copy of ARGOSY's September issue. It practically shines with the confidence of an editorial staff which knows it has accomplished something very special."

Ralph Prentice: "I glanced through my copy in the afternoon and started to read it after dinner. It was after twelve when I quit, and it has to be something to keep me up that late."

CONTENTS FOR NOVEMBER, 1943



ARGOSY

FOUNDED 1882

Vol. 316 No. 4

NOVELETTES

INVASION, LIMITED........................C. P. Donnel, Jr. 4
An American on special assignment finds recompense for danger in the hand of King Victor Emanuel

WAR SONG OF THE HIGHLANDS............Philip Ketchum 28
Cromwell's invading Roundheads were already victorious, when Black Donel Macdougal came home to Scotland

SHORT STORIES

BACKGROUND FOR SOUND............John Rhodes Sturdy 17
They wanted the sound and fury of war—in pictures

TOMORROW MORNING'S FINAL.............Maurice Beam 21
A good newspaperman should never completely ignore his conscience

COMING IN ON A PRAYER..................Duane Yarnell 39
There comes a time when even the best soldier must choose between himself and a pal

TRACK CLEAR!..............................Charles W. Tyler 40
They were hauling the oldest engines out of retirement, when Iron Mike came back to the railroad

HONORABLE RAT.......................Geoffrey Hewelcke 44
Dr. Peter Lang proved the truth about rats when the Japs came to Burma

REUNION ON THE RIVIERA...........Russell Gordon Carter 48
They were a Frenchman, a German, an American prisoner—and the woman they all loved

BAD TROUBLE IN SMOKY BOWL......William Byron Mowery 61
There are some things a man must do, even at the risk of going back to grim, gray walls

SICILIAN NIGHT........................Howard Bloomfield 75
Joe feared only the empty desert night

DECEMBER ARGOSY WILL BE PUBLISHED NOVEMBER 10

Published once a month by Popular Publications, Inc., 2256 Grove Street, Chicago, Illinois. Editorial and executive offices, 205 East Forty-second Street, New York, 17, N. Y. Harry Steeger, President and Secretary. Harold S. Goldsmith, Vice President and Treasurer. Entered as second-class matter March 19, 1943, at the Post Office at Chicago, Illinois, under the act of March 3, 1879. Yearly subscription $2.50 in advance. Single copy, 25 cents. Foreign postage, $1.00 additional. Subscription Dept., 205 East 42nd St., New York, 17, N. Y. Trade Mark registered. Copyright, 1943, by Popular Publications, Inc. All rights reserved under Pan American Copyright Convention. Printed in U. S. A.

ARGOSY NOVEL OF THE MONTH

RED IS FOR COURAGE

By Steve Fisher **90**

They met in besieged Madrid, a doctor, a nurse, an ambulance driver and a girl reporter whose lives were tangled by love and war. A great novel of the Red Cross in Europe and Asia

SHORT STORIES

JUNGLE ASSIGNMENT .... **Arthur J. Burks** **76**

The point of greatest danger is not always in the front lines

HOT WIRES .... **Bill Gulick** **79**

It was the sort of night when maintenance men are called out on tough and dangerous jobs

SERIALS

FOOTBALL IN THE FAMILY (1st of 2 Parts).... **Nelson S. Bond** **52**

Every fall for eighteen years the Brady twins had heard about the great team Pop had captained in 1912

RED SUN OVER BENGAL (2nd of 3 Parts)...... **Kenneth Perkins** **64**

In which Stokes-*sahib* kills his first Jap

HELL AFLOAT (Conclusion)............... **Eustace L. Adams** **83**

The *Calistralia*, a floating miniature of the war, drifts closer to the ice pack

FEATURES

ARMCHAIR ADMIRAL........................ **Fletcher Pratt** **26**

Test your skill as a naval strategist in this actual battle problem!

700 MILES PER MINUTE!...................... **Robert Clark** **51**

Will the rocket remodel the science of war?

ARGOSY AUTHORS.. **1**

ARGONOTES **2**

LOOKING AHEAD.. **3**

Cover painting by Rafael de Soto

DECEMBER ARGOSY WILL BE PUBLISHED NOVEMBER 10

Editor
ROGERS TERRILL
Associate Editors
WILLARD CROSBY • BEATRICE JONES
Editorial Assistants
MICHAEL TILDEN • IRENE WISSNER
Art Director
ALEX PORTEGAL
Associate Art Director
ARTHUR POLLAK

LOOKING AHEAD

SHE was a ravishingly beautiful product of the white man's East. He was an officer of U. S. Army Intelligence. His job was to find the island where the Japs were reportedly constructing a huge air base for a new offensive southward. Her job was to see that he didn't get there.

These are the characters and the situation about which William Chamberlain has woven a compelling novel of romance, intrigue and adventure in today's South Seas —"Golden Island," selected as the ARGOSY Novel of the Month for December.

If you like the slumberous, heady beauty of tropic nights—if you like your romance spiced with danger—you'll enjoy this powerful novel of a South Pacific island caught in the swirling cross currents of total war.

Robert Carse, freshly graduated from the Merchant Marine Academy, has devoted his precious post-commission leave to writing for ARGOSY another great story of war at sea.

"Glory Road" has just reached our desk and we're happy to report that it's novel length and will run in two parts starting in the December issue. It's the tale of an east coast yachting ne'er-do-well who discovered on the pitching deck of a war-time freighter that he still had much to learn about ships and men.

Theodore Roscoe, author of "Wacs, Macs, and Warlocks" in the October issue, returns next month with a swashbuckling novelette of the Crusades. If you would like to forget for a little while the trials and tribulations of today, to go bravely adventuring against the Infidel, this is recommended reading.

Look for the title, "Swords Against the Saracen." Starting in Medieval Paris and proceeding across Southern France, it will bring you eventually, with the armies of Bohemund and Bishop Adhemar, Godfrey of Baoullon and Raymond the Lombard, to the fabled siege of Antioch.

Herbert Ravenel Sass, whose stories of the early Mississippi have won deserved popularity, contributes a story of a traveling carnival on the Natchez Road in the days when Andrew Jackson, pride of the West, was campaigning for the Presidency.

In "Without Warpaint," Allan R. Bosworth spins a beguiling tale of an American Indian who, though he knew nothing of woods craft, found something of ancestral glory in the jungle lands of the South Pacific.

C. P. Donnel, Jr. contributes a heartwarming, whimsical tale of training-camp entertainers.

W. Ryerson Johnson is represented with "Black Salvage," a dynamic novelette of a coal mine salvage gang, whose job it was to clean out an abandoned, collapsing drift before it caved.

There will be a short-short of love in a ball park, by Robert Fontaine, with a title which Irving Berlin should steal for a song, "What Would I Do With Heaven?"

In addition, the December issue will include a salty tale of roistering South Pacific traders in the days before the Japs came to establish their present monopoly on piracy in the trade lanes; a dramatically different yarn of horse racing; a short, heroic tale of modern Scotland; plus seven other stories and features.

INVASION, LIMITED

BY
C. P.
DONNEL, JR.

Illustrated by DONALD PIERCE

FOR First Lieutenant John David Monteverdi Smith, of Army Intelligence at Tunis, the war had fizzled out. The battle-thunder rolled ever northward across the Mediterranean. But Lieutenant Smith, his feet itching for the high roads of glory, was shackled.

An intimate knowledge of the Italian language, the heritage of his Italian mother, had proved Smith's undoing. The vast, ratty villa which was Intelligence headquarters had become his prison. In a rabbit hutch of an office, he was glued night and day to radio earphones which poured into his tired brain the nervous, contradictory barkings of the official Italian short-wave station at Rome. From time to time Smith would yield his head-set to a junior, laboriously digest his voluminous notes, and convey the result to one Major Mackison. Exactly what Mackison did with these gems of condensation, Smith could only guess, for the major was noted for his silences.

One of Mackison's longest speeches to his restive subordinate was delivered early on a searing morning in July.

"Sit down," he began, which was something new for Mackison, as was the atmosphere of unease, almost of tension, in the steaming office.

Smith sat. Mackison rose, a youngish middle-aged man with a philosopher's forehead under sparse blond hair. His bony hands and forearms were salted with large freckles, and Smith was uncomfortably conscious of a frankly speculative gleam in the major's deep-set gray eyes. The major might have been inspecting a horse with an eye to a purchase. Smith fidgeted.

Mackison stepped to an inner door, threw it open. The girl who came out had a wealth of dark hair, a slender body, graceful legs. Her great dark eyes were deep and weary, and she did not look at Smith until Mackison had established her in a chair beside his desk.

The major rubbed his angular chin. "Signorina Maria Casagni, Lieutenant Smith," he said.

Sitting, Smith tried to bow. The girl nodded absently, her attention straying to Mackison. Smith was vaguely annoyed. He wished he had brushed his hair. She was something more than pretty.

Mackison said abruptly, "You've heard of the Sons of Mazzini?" To Smith's surprise, the question was in Italian.

Hesitantly, Smith took the cue. "Isn't that a secret society? Anti-Fascist—anti-Nazi? Pro-British-American?"

To his amazement, Maria Casagni was on her feet. Angrily, she said, "You Americans think the world worships at your feet, you and the British!" She paused, continued less violently, "The Figli di Mazzini want the Germans out of Italy. We want peace with dignity. We have a nation to rebuild," she added significantly.

Her olive-tinted face was alarmingly white. Smith jumped up.

She shook her head. "I am not going to faint," she said scornfully. "After what I have been through these last four days, do you think I would faint now?" Her mouth went suddenly slack, and her knees gave way.

Mackison swore softly as they caught her, lowered her into her chair. Over her drooping head the major said thoughtfully, "She wants us to get her brother out of Italy."

"Where is he now?" Smith asked.

"In Florence." Mackison lifted the girl's chin, patted her cheek rather helplessly, peered into her unseeing eyes. "Hansa, the new head of the Nazi political police in central Italy, has him in custody. Oberst Helmut Hansa. You've heard of him?"

"Hansa? He made himself a name in Prague, didn't he?"

"Quite a name." Mackison's teeth clicked. "The girl's offering us rather an attractive deal. Seems her brother stole and cached some pretty red-hot Nazi policy documents. Stuff we could use if we could get to him."

A cold, hollow sensation invaded the pit of Smith's stomach.

"It could be done." Mackison drew down the corners of a wide mouth. "The job's yours if you want it." He added, in the same thoughtful undertone, "Better get some water. I want you to hear her."

"MY BROTHER, Guido Casagni, was wounded early in the war," said Maria Casagni. "When he came home, and saw what the Germans are doing in Italy, he turned bitter. He is a writer, a poet. He knows all of Dante by heart. Think of it! And he believes—oh, so very intensely!—in a fine destiny for Italy."

She had color now, and vigor. Smith realized with some pleasure that she was addressing her explanation chiefly to him.

"Guido became a journalist in Florence. He found others who felt as he did. They founded the Figli di Mazzini. Guido was the leader. He has fire and vision and courage. Such courage!"

Something in the girl's desperate salesmanship made Smith look away from her eyes. Mackison coughed.

"Aldo Santacroce was the practical one. He kept the records. He and Guido worked well together. Aldo was connected with our propaganda ministry office in Florence."

Maria Casagni's hand went to her throat. "Four nights ago Guido came to my aunt's house in Rapallo. His face was that of a dead man. He went straight to the kitchen and burned a sheaf of papers in the stove.

"I asked him what the papers were. And Guido told me. Aldo's duties took

Hansa laid a hand on Maria's bare arm. "You have certain commitments to me which I expect you to fulfill."

It happened in Italy during those last hectic weeks before the Fascists fell. Its chief protagonists were John Smith, American, Maria Casagni, beautiful Italian—and those secret and treacherous German plans which later led to Mussolini's downfall

him often to the Nazi headquarters in the Palazzo Venezia. Somehow Aldo had stolen some important documents relating to Nazi policy in Italy. He was arrested, and our police turned him over to a certain Colonel Hansa for questioning. But Aldo had already given the documents to Guido. They tortured Aldo. He broke. He told them that Guido had the documents. Then —so they said—committed suicide in his cell at the Palazzo Venezia.

"Guido hurried to the shop of Michael Santacroce in the Ponte Vecchio, thinking that Aldo's father might have the records of the society. But before he got to the shop he learned that Michael Santacroce had been arrested.

"So Guido fled Florence. He hid three days before coming to me. During that time he learned that Michael Santacroce had been released. The Germans were satisfied he knew nothing.

"But Guido was not satisfied. He was returning to Florence to see Michael Santacroce. Without the records, Guido said, it would take years to bring the Figli di Mazzini together again. And make use of those German documents for which Aldo had died. I asked Guido if those were the papers he had burned. He said yes. I said, 'Have you no copies?' He said, sounding very strange, that he had. But he would not tell me where. Then he—he kissed me and went away—back to Florence—back to see Michael Santacroce. . . ."

HER tears were at the surface, but she spoke with a lambent pride that sent a tingle up Smith's spine.

"The next night I heard that Guido had been arrested as he boarded the train. They took him back to Florence, to the Palazzo Venezia—to Colonel Hansa! Like Aldo!

"In desperation I decided that I should, if I could, take my story to you or the British, to bargain for help for Guido. I went to Nice, to a friend of my brother's, a Monsieur Penelli who has a flower shop in the Rue Decies. Monsieur Penelli was interested, but he said I had better talk to Major Mackison in Tunis. That night he arranged for me to go to Beaulieu, and from there I was brought here."

Mackison, spotting the question in Smith's face, said, not without pride, "We're running a fairly regular ferry service to the Riviera these nights. Subs. Small ones." He frowned at Smith. They seemed to be waiting for Smith to say something. The hollow sensation returned.

Smith heard himself say, "The bigger the bluff, the better chance you'd have. Bluff goes a long way in Italy."

"I have an idea or two," said Mackison. "I want yours first."

"Suppose," said Smith, scowling at the floor, "that an Italian officer of some rank—say, connected with Intelligence —appeared at the Palazzo Venezia and demanded an interview with Casagni.

He hoped he was not as pale as he felt. The girl was sitting very still.

"Go on," said Major Mackison.

"That's about all," Smith said feebly. "He'd need papers, of course. And his racket would only be good for a day or so. . . ."

"We have several complete Italian officers' kits on hand. Picked them up when we moved in here. There's one belonged to a colonel of the Piedmont Hussars that would fit you. The man's dead, by the way. And his papers would serve nicely as models." Mackison hesitated.

Smith, his senses abnormally acute, knew that the major was about to break bad news.

The girl anticipated Mackison. "I am going back, too," she said defiantly. "I know you do not want me to. But I must go. I know Michael Santacroce. He might talk to me. Besides, if I traveled as—" she nerved herself, flushing "—your wife . . ."

"But you are known in Florence." Smith felt a little dizzy.

"I could wear a veil. I will be in mourning."

There seemed to be no answer. Mackison stood up. "I shall send you into Tunis at once to make your purchases of mourning clothes."

She said suddenly, "You are both kind. I am sorry if you think me a traitor. But if I can help betray my country into peace—"

Mackison flushed, touched her arm awkwardly. "No traitor would return to Florence. Traitors don't have that kind of courage."

"For good faith—" she smiled "—I give you the password of the Figli di Mazzini. It is *'Romanticismo'*, the word which the Austrians once used in belittling the work of Garibaldi and Mazzini. You must say it twice in conversation, pausing before the second time."

When she was gone, Major Mackison said, "You seem to want this job. . . . You'll be pretty expendable, you know."

"I'm scared stiff," Smith said honestly. For emphasis he held out his right hand. It was shaking. "It's just that I'm more afraid of what I'll think of myself if I don't take it."

Mackison weighed this speech intonation by intonation.

"You relieve my mind," he said firmly. "I was afraid you'd say you weren't frightened. It's no job for a moron. And if you get the documents you'll have to get out by way of Nice. Remember: Penelli, 24 Rue Decies. We'll be delaying some pretty big moves on this end until we hear from you. The commanding general says we can wait six days—no more. If you're not back by then we'll have to carry on with our old plans, which leave much to be desired. Now come on. We have a lot to do."

II

THE Italian colonel who boarded the express at Rapallo was a mild-looking young man, despite his height and shoulders and good jaw. He peered almost apologetically into a first-class compartment where the four men, three of them in uniform, lounged in travel-weary attitudes.

Two of the men, youthful artillery captains languid after a gaudy furlough at Monte Carlo, rose grudgingly, then stiffened with eager, starchy respect as they spied on the newcomer's collar the crossed sabers of the famous Piedmont Hussars, and on his breast the bright ribbon of the ill-fated North African campaign. This was no Blackshirt upstart, no political monkey-in-uniform from Rome. This was a warrior who had met the dread British Eighth Army—if without success, at least without dishonor.

By a mutual impulse they glanced toward the German *oberst* who held the best seat, the one by the window, facing the engine. All the way from Monaco they had been a little overwhelmed by the *oberst's* frigid courtesy, just as they had been sullen and a trifle uneasy in the presence of the thick-bodied, over-dressed Italian government official who had attached himself to the German. The German at least had been aware of them, if distantly so; it was their own countryman who had ignored them as beneath notice. He had talked only with the German, in German.

At the sight of the Hussar colonel, the boys perked up. One gestured shyly toward the two empty seats. The other cast a second and openly triumphant glance at the German. In that moment they were bathed in the reflected glory of the Hussars. All the world knew how the Hussars, deliberately thrown to Montgomery's wolves by Rommel, had surprisingly covered the flight of the vaunted Afrika Korps for a hundred kilometres with a desperate valor the more gallant for its utter hopelessness.

The Hussar nodded, smiling, and turned and spoke to someone in the corridor. Then he picked up two handbags and stood aside to let a woman enter. The train lurched with the effort of starting.

The appearance of the woman—she was a girl, really, not more than twenty —sealed the young artillerymen's delight. Not only had their *amour propre* been somehow restored by the arrival of the colonel; now they were to breathe the same air—albeit tainted by the government official's malodorous cigar— as the colonel's lovely companion.

She was in mourning; a pity, for the black half-veil covered much of her face. It did not, however, hide the red lips shaping the passionate mouth, nor the piquantly modeled tip of her nose. Through the veil they could glimpse the enormous dark eyes. Her small hat had an air, and the mourning gown was not cut to conceal the lines of a fine figure. Nor could the sleazy cotton stockings of war-time Italy kill the contours of her legs.

The girl sat down wearily. The German and the government official were staring now, the German's pale blue eyes expressionless, the official's beefy face openly appraising.

The Hussar colonel swung the handbags lightly into a rack, and, waving the artillerymen down, dropped into the seat beside the girl. Like a man getting his bearings, he met the German's eyes squarely. The German retired calmly into his paper-backed novel, and the Hussar turned his attention to the government official, who, through the smoke cloud from his cigar, had not taken his eyes from the girl. The young artillerymen sensed a change in the Hussar. He seemed to be shedding, like a superficial skin, his mildness.

A vagrant draft wafted a feather of cigar smoke close to the girl's face. She took a handkerchief from her handbag.

This move seemed to resolve all indecision on the part of the Hussar colonel. He inclined his body toward the smoker, smiled winningly. "Would you be so kind?" he said. "The cigar, I mean. I am sorry to inconvenience you, but my wife. . ."

The artillerymen gave little sighs. Had she but been the colonel's sister. . .

THE German looked up from his novel. The smoker reddened, took the cigar from his mouth, contemplated it, returned it to his mouth, and picked up a newspaper and began to read. The German's eyebrows elevated themselves a fraction of an inch. He was very much the detached spectator.

"I fear you did not understand me." The Hussar addressed the newspaper without relaxing his courtesy. The artillerymen's respect was increased immeasurably, for the Hussar spoke with the pure accent of a man of family, with no trace of Roman affectation.

The government official gave no sign. The Hussar's long arm went out. Gently he removed the newspaper from the pudgy, ringed hands. Then, as the man's jaw dropped, the colonel's long fingers twitched the offending cigar from the thick lips. The colonel stepped into the corridor. When he returned, he no longer held the cigar. His shrug of apology to the compartment excluded only the government official.

The artillerymen smiled uncertainly. The German nodded back gravely before looking to the government official for the next move.

The official struggled to his feet, clutched a strap as the train pitched. There was venom in his eyes.

"Do you know who I am?" he bellowed. The newspaper momentarily entangled his feet and he stamped childishly upon it. He repeated the question, his voice cracking with anger.

The Hussar considered the question seriously. "You are a very noisy person," he said simply, "with bad manners." His tone was without rancor and his long hands lay limp on his knees. He bethought himself of his own manners and added hastily, "I am Colonel Giovanni Monteverdi, recently of the Piedmont Hussars, at present assigned to Military Intelligence."

"And I," fulminated the official, "am Secretary Francesco di Malla."

The colonel nodded. It was a big name, with ugly connotations.

The Hussar had caught a gleam in the German's pale eyes. He addressed himself to the German. "Was it not, Herr Oberst—" the German also wore a colonel's bars "—an Englishman who said that there is no fool like the fool in office?"

The German's thin lips twitched, but he maintained a diplomatic silence. Di Malla addressed him furiously: "Are you going to sit calmly there and let this pipsqueak of an officer trample me, Oberst Hansa?"

An exclamation escaped the colonel's wife. The scene seemed to be agitating her. Her head was pressed back against the cushion and her body had gone rigid. Her husband turned solicitously to her.

The German frowned. "Lower your voice, di Malla. You are alarming the lady." He regarded the girl with a male and human eye. A trifle too human, her husband decided.

This routed di Malla. He plunged to the doorway, blundering over the feet of one of the artillerymen.

From the safety of the corridor he stuck his bushy head back into the compartment. "You shall be demoted," he yelled. "The minute I get back to Florence your record shall be investigated." He stopped dead, flinched nervously as the Hussar stood up.

But the Hussar only bowed. "I shall be honored," he said. "My record, poor as it is, is not entirely bad. In turn, Signor di Malla, I shall have you investigated, for I also have friends. I hear you are too rich to be an honest man. It is most convenient that I, too, am going to Florence. We shall have a pretty little scandal."

Di Malla, panting, looked helplessly at Oberst Hansa.

Hansa said, in a bored tone, "I shall see you sometime in Florence, di Malla."

Speechless at last, di Malla thumped away. The artillerymen stared in awe at Colonel Giovanni Monteverdi. Di Malla had made millions from war contracts. He had power. Yet this Hussar colonel had dealt with him like a surly peasant, and had bested him completely.

COLONEL MONTEVERDI'S next words added yet another inch to his stature. He said to the German, "I do not care for politicals. Little, yapping dogs."

Oberst Hansa smiled. Not caring to voice agreement before the young captains, he said, "There is a buffet car, Colonel Monteverdi." His Italian was far superior to the average German linguist's. "I would be honored if you would join me there for a brandy."

"I must have the lists," she murmured.

His head made a quarter turn. "And you, too, gentlemen."

The artillerymen thawed, flustered. They were disappointed only when Monteverdi declined graciously, pleading that his wife needed him. The girl's hand was on his arm now; she had drawn closer to him.

Monteverdi added, as the German rose, "You are at the Palazzo Venezia in Florence, I believe, Oberst Hansa?"

The German nodded in some surprise.

"I have not yet received my orders," said Colonel Monteverdi, "but I suspect—one hears things—that I may have business with your department. It will be a great pleasure to collaborate, even in my small capacity, with you. I have much to learn in my new assignment. I shall do myself the honor of calling on you at the Palazzo Venezia soon after our arrival." He lowered his voice. "I believe you have a man there named Guido Casagni."

The German tensed visibly. He was a medium-sized, well-constructed man with a round face, and his uniform was a thing of precision and polish. He said to the artillerymen, "If you will proceed to the buffet, gentlemen. . . ." He moved closer to Monteverdi as they took the hint.

"I have Casagni," he said. "And—"

An interruption came in the form of a trainman who interposed himself between the speakers in a cloud of apologies, removed di Malla's luggage from the rack and hastened away.

Oberst Hansa treated himself to a dry chuckle. "I shall not miss that man. It is bad enough that my affairs occasionally require me to work with him. But to ride with him for hours, face to face, when I am returning from a little pleasure jaunt—that is more than I bargained for." He picked up the thread of his interrupted thought. "We have not been able to do much with Casagni. I admit it freely. Your government was most courteous in turning him over to us. But as I say, we have not yet got anything from him. This Casagni is the true martyr-fanatic type. But with brains. He threatens to die. I have had some trouble keeping him alive. I shall not be disappointed if you are assigned to assist me, Colonel Monteverdi. You have—" he gave a small bow "—the flare for words and persuasion."

And Oberst Hansa was off to his brandy. But not before he said to the girl, "My apologies, Signora Monteverdi, for this talk of violence and affairs which must bore you."

The girl made a motion with her head, without looking up.

Monteverdi said quickly, "My wife is not well, Herr Oberst." A wave of his hand called attention to her mourning. "Her brother," he said in explanation. "I took her to Rapallo, but the sea air did her less good than I had hoped."

"I am truly sorry," said Oberst Hansa, and left them.

The girl's hand tightened on Monteverdi's wrist. He said, without looking at her, "At least he is alive."

"Alive!" she said bitterly. "How consoling! Alive!"

"Keep your voice down." Then: "Think, Maria, of our good fortune. To run into Hansa in this way. True, I could easily have made his acquaintance in Florence, but this is far better. I tell you, Maria, it is a good omen."

Something in his tone made her glance up. He had leaned back; his eyes were closed, there was little blood in his lips, and his hand trembled.

"You are frightened," she said wonderingly. "Why, from the way you talked to that German beast and that pig of a di Malla—"

"Scared stiff," said Lieutenant John David Monteverdi Smith, in English. His eyes popped open. They both glanced at the corridor.

"What did you say?" The girl frowned.

Francesco di Malla

"Slips," said Colonel Monteverdi with a pallid grin. He added hurriedly in Italian, "I said yes, I am very frightened. That Hansa makes me uncomfortable in my stomach. I prefer the stiff, brutal type. This man can smile. He has an intellect. Also, he has designs on you."

The girl raised her veil. There were scarlet spots high on her cheekbones. "You think perhaps I might. . ."

"Yes, possibly. But let me try my way first."

There was a silence overflowing with thought.

"You are tired," Monteverdi said finally. He slid an arm about her shoulders, held it there as she instinctively pulled away, waited patiently until she relaxed. She sighed as though completely exhausted. By degrees her head came against his shoulder. He said, half to himself, "*Riposi bene,* Maria. Rest well."

Maria Casagni smiled drowsily. Smith glanced at his watch. It seemed months ago that he had paddled the rubber boat into the surf-wash of that dark cove below Rapallo; a tricky business, that, what with Maria and the handbags aboard, and his head still stuffy from those stifling hours aboard the submarine. And yet if he could believe the watch, only five hours had passed since their landing.

When Oberst Hansa returned from the buffet he found Colonel and Signora Monteverdi fast asleep, their heads rolling loosely and dreamily to the motion of the train. Oberst Hansa stood several seconds in the doorway. Monteverdi would have been both gratified and alarmed to see that Hansa's pale eyes were interested only in "Signora Monteverdi."

III

TO THE very end, Smith never forgot those first soul-paralyzing moments when, in the madhouse of the station at Florence, reality materialized from nowhere and perched grinning on his shoulder. It came to Smith, standing there with Maria Casagni's arm linked in his, that he had never actually believed this thing could happen. Florence, when he had discussed it with Major Mackison, had seemed as remote as death.

An elderly, infirm-looking porter, attracted by Smith's height and rank, wheezed up and volubly offered his services. Smith assented numbly. Maria pressed closer. He could feel her shivering. The sooner they were under way, he told himself without conviction, the sooner this spell of apprehension would be broken for both of them. Yet for the moment his feet and legs refused the command of his brain.

Francesco di Malla passed like a thundercloud. He did not look their way, but Smith knew di Malla was quite well aware of them. The man managed to radiate a hostility that was almost tangible. It occurred to Smith that Oberst Hansa might not be far away. He had seen di Malla talking to Hansa on the platform right after the train had stopped. Hansa had been met in style, by a young, lean, dark-haired German captain and two blond, flat-faced orderlies.

The thought of Oberst Helmut Hansa gave Smith the final incentive to get going. He wished to have nothing more to do with the German until his nerves had been allowed to relax in a brief vacation from the man's presence. He and Maria had seen a lot of Hansa between Rapallo and Florence. The *oberst* had been flatteringly friendly throughout the long night and longer morning on the train. He had proved most helpful about getting the best compartment when they changed trains at the new Macchait junction, where station officials had deferred to Hansa with a perspiring solicitousness.

The aged porter picked up the bags. To Smith's mild alarm, he immediately put them down again. The man's rheumy eyes glanced sullenly past Smith's shoulder. Smith turned to see the Hansa party just behind them. Hansa had just completed a negative gesture to Smith's porter. One of the or-

derlies leaped forward and took Smith's bags. Hansa took Smith's arm. The young German captain stepped up and the other orderly moved into a position protecting Maria Casagni from the throng.

In that instant Smith experienced, to its fullest degree, the sensation of arrest. It was not until his racing pulse slowed to a gallop that he realized that Hansa was merely continuing his policy of efficient neighborliness.

"My car is waiting, Colonel." Hansa was looking at Smith but actually addressing Maria Casagni. "If you are going to a hotel let me recommend the Dresden-Danieli. The food there is excellent."

In his release from fear, Smith managed a note of surprise and pleasure. "How fortunate. I believe—I hope—I have rooms waiting for us there. I wired from Rapallo." Inwardly he showered blessings upon the anonymous, bird-like man in Tunis who had insisted upon this detail. It was an authentic touch. The mere sound of the words gave Smith confidence. But not enough confidence to make him wish to ride with Oberst Hansa.

"MY AIDE, Hauptmann Grenner," said Hansa. The dark-haired German captain—he had the face of a youth, save that his eyes were old and bold—bowed gravely. "Hauptmann Grenner," continued Hansa, smiling, "was not so fortunate as to be able to accompany me on my little pleasure jaunt to Monte Carlo. I left him in charge of the office. Observe my misuse of the privileges of rank, Colonel Monteverdi."

"My sympathy to Hauptmann Grenner," Smith said lightly. He glanced at Maria, expecting to find her pale and shrinking. Instead, she was facing Hansa boldly, her chin tilted up, her lips forming a smile of welcome that was just short of coquettish. Smith took heart. Maria had courage.

And wit. She said, "My dear, were you not intending to stop at headquarters on the way to the hotel? You said last night your orders. . ."

Smith looked at his watch.

Before he could reply Hansa said, "I shall be glad to take you there in my car."

There was nothing to do but to accept. They strolled through the crowded station. Smith found himself shuffled smoothly into the lead with Hauptmann Grenner, while Hansa brought up the rear with Mario. He heard Hansa say in a confidential tone, "Your husband, *signora*, has a courage I admire. Yet I must warn you that in the di Malla matter it outran his judgment. Di Malla can be difficult, you know."

Maria rose eagerly to the bait with expressions of apprehension. Hansa dropped his voice even more, and Smith could not catch the continuity of his reply. But the words "not without influence myself" and "put my services at your command" confirmed his diagnosis of Hansa's tactics. Old stuff, yet still effective in Italy.

A big brown Army car was waiting. Smith, following Maria into the tonneau, took the far seat so that she might be between him and Hansa. If Hansa, preceding his aide to a seat, noticed a peculiar pallor on the face of his guest, Colonel Monteverdi, he gave no indication. The fact was that Colonel Monteverdi had suddenly realized that he had not the remotest idea as to where the Florentine headquarters of Military Intelligence were. It was one point on which the Tunis expert had been unable to enlighten him.

Colonel Monteverdi swallowed. He was feeling sickish.

HAUPTMANN GRENNER got in, took a small seat facing them. Over his shoulder he said to the driver, "Via Tornabuoni, Number 50."

It was as simple as that.

The car shot forward across the square and burrowed into a narrow street. Smith controlled the impulse to stare about like a tourist, sat back nonchalantly. They pulled up before a squat, timeless stone building with heavy window grilles. Beyond, the shallow, muddy Arno flowed flat and sluggish between its rails.

"Do not hurry yourself, Colonel," said Oberst Hansa, offering Maria his cigarette case. A small gold lighter flamed in his hand.

Smith got out. His knees, he was relieved to find, did not buckle.

A sentry, very young and somewhat undernourished, came sloppily to attention as Smith passed under the scrolled arch of the doorway. Smith found his footsteps echoing in a great hall, lofty-ceilinged and cool with tiles. Behind a marble counter, at a switchboard, sat the sole visible occupant of the building, a middle-aged man in undress uniform.

For the moment Smith was completely at a loss. He had expected, hoped for, a place bustling with officers and clerks, where he might lose himself for five minutes or so. But now the switchboard man was looking at him. There was a directness and insistence about the encounter that chilled him. To linger unexplained would be inviting disaster. To reappear too quickly at Hansa's car might be equally perilous.

The pigeonholes saved him. There were a number of them behind the switchboard, and in some were mail.

The switchboard operator eyed him.

Smith drew breath. "My mail, please."

"If the colonel pleases. . ." the switchboard man began uncertainly.

"I am Colonel Monteverdi. I am expecting orders here."

"Oh. Your pardon, sir." From the pigeonhole lettered 'M' he plucked a handful of mail, riffled through it. "I am sorry, sir."

"It is not important. When is the next mail?"

"Late this afternoon. And dispatches from Rome tonight."

"Thank you. I shall call again in the morning." And just as easily as he had walked in, he walked out. Maria and Oberst Hansa were laughing at some remark Hansa had made. Hauptmann Grenner was smiling.

"To the hotel," said Hansa gaily, as Smith got in. Grenner relayed the order to the driver. Hansa said, "Your orders have arrived, Colonel?"

"Due yesterday." Smith made a wry mouth. "I may get them tomorrow."

"Which pleases me," said Maria Casagni. "Now we shall have time for our shopping. You have not forgotten your promise, Giovanni?"

Smith smote his forehead dramatically. "The silver!"

"We have promised ourselves a new service," said Maria to Hansa. "Do you know the good shops, Oberst! Our friends suggested Fusconi's."

They rounded a corner into a broad, busy street. Less than a block away arose the Dresden-Danieli, with its tall windows and straight ranks of balconies.

"There is but one place for silver these days." Oberst Hansa spoke positively. "A small place, but the man's workmanship is beyond compare. Di Malla put me on to it. For all his swinishness the man is a bit of a connoisseur. The shop of Michael Santacroce on the Ponte Vecchio."

They were stopping at the hotel.

"Santacroce—Ponte Vecchio," Smith repeated, as if committing it to memory.

Then they were all on the sidewalk.

"You have been more than kind, Oberst Hansa." Maria gave him her hand.

"I am already your debtor, *signora*." Hansa's eyes were curiously bright.

The man's guard was down. The decision to speak came into being in Smith's mind almost without volition on his part. He touched Hansa's arm. To the others he said, "If you will excuse us for only a moment. . ." and drew Hansa aside.

HANSA'S gaze left Maria reluctantly, fixed itself on Smith.

"Did you know," asked Smith, without preamble, "that an agreement now exists between my service and the sister of Guido Casagni?"

Another man might have pretended to such knowledge out of pure vanity. Hansa, almost without hesitation, shook his head. "I did not," he said. "I was not aware that Casagni has a sister. Why was I not informed?" The tone was coldly official.

"I am informing you now," Smith said flatly, shedding deference.

To be addressed thus by an Italian evidently was a new experience for Oberst Hansa. He said, less coldly, "Please go on." Smith saw the new look in his eyes. Before, Smith suspected, Hansa had regarded him solely as a minor obstacle in the conquest of Maria. Now Hansa was turning wary.

"I saw the girl in Rapallo," said Smith. "Twice. That was why I went there. My wife does not know it. She thought I was on leave."

Hansa was silent.

"Before she would talk," Smith continued, "I made concessions."

"It was my impression," Hansa said loftily, "that Casagni had been turned over to my government."

"Other considerations have arisen," said Smith. "May I suggest that this is hardly the place to go into detail?"

Oberst Hansa nodded absently. Either he was rattled, Smith decided, or he was playing some subtle game of his own.

"If you will come with me to the Palazzo Venezia. . ." Hansa suggested.

"Certainly. At once. If Hauptmann Grenner will be so good as to assist my wife in seeing about our suite at the hotel."

"Of course," said Hansa.

"LET us face facts. Casagni is in your hands and you have no intention of relinquishing him. Shall I tell you why?"

They were facing each other across Hansa's desk in the Palazzo Venezia.

"I would be interested in knowing what you think," said Oberst Hansa. His round, undistinguished face was a mask. More than anything in the world, Smith wanted a cigarette. But he dared not trust his hands.

"There are passages in those documents Casagni possesses which you do not wish to have my government see. Let us say, matters of policy."

"You spoke of other considerations that have arisen," said Hansa, courteous again, at least in tone. A bad sign, Smith decided. But there was nothing to do now but go ahead.

"There are. We have learned that Casagni knows the whereabouts of certain lists of membership in the Figli di Mazzini. These lists we want. I tell you frankly that if we get them we will forget the documents stolen from you in this building. We will not concern ourselves with their contents."

"What guarantees do you offer me?" Hansa inquired. "And what did you promise Casagni's sister?"

"To you we offer this: Casagni will remain in your hands. You yourself will attend my interviews with him."

Hansa turned this over in his mind.

After an interval, Smith said, "To Casagni's sister I offered two things: her own safety and her brother's life. I made these as solemn pledges. She accepted. In return—" Hansa's eyes began to glisten "—she gave me what I believe will prove the key to her brother's tongue."

"And that key?"

Smith leaned back, smiling. He did not bother to shake his head. Hansa picked up a pencil, stared at it a full minute. So still was the room that Smith could hear, through the pounding of his pulse, the thin ticking of his watch.

Hansa stood up. "Shall we visit Casagni now?"

* * *

A young man in white shirt and dark trousers struggled up from his cot as the cell door opened. The light from the corridor fell across his face, and Smith, his nostrils flaring, experienced a qualm of nausea.

They were deep in the old *palazzo,* so deep that the rattle of typewriters and sounds of feet in the offices overhead had died completely. Here there was only silence and a smell.

The young man raised a hand to his forehead as he blinked into the light. The fingers of that hand were curiously misshapen and swollen.

Smith forced himself to look directly at those fingers. The look repaid him with a quick rush of anger.

Guido Casagni looked at Oberst Hansa. "So you are here again. I beg you to get it over with quickly." Because of broken teeth and the ugly swelling of his mouth the words were nearly unintelligible.

Hansa did not answer. He looked at Smith.

Smith said, "I am from your own Military Intelligence. I have come to tell you that this *romanticismo*—this quixotic foolishness of your silence—must stop."

Casagni sat down, put his face into his hands, laughed hysterically. The spasm passed. He looked up at Hansa. "This is subtle," he said. A mixture of a cough, a laugh, and a sob rose in his throat. "You are going to torture me with the talk of idiots now. Send this fool away and let the finger-breakers come."

Smith said calmly, "I give you until tomorrow noon to talk. You think you will not? You shall, I promise you. I am sick to death of you hole-in-corner patriots with your everlasting—" he paused as though hunting down an adequate word "*—romanticismo.*"

Casagni did not move.

"Tomorrow at noon, you understand?" Smith turned away, then lingered a moment. "By Maria!" he exclaimed. "By Maria, it will be sooner if you are wise!"

"Go away," said Casagni weakly, looking directly at Smith for the first time. There was a dreadful questioning in his eyes.

Smith dared not say more. Casagni saw it and dropped his glance. The vitality seemed to be drained from his slender body. He was a slender young man, black-haired, physically not dissimilar to Hauptmann Grenner. Yet the eyes were very different.

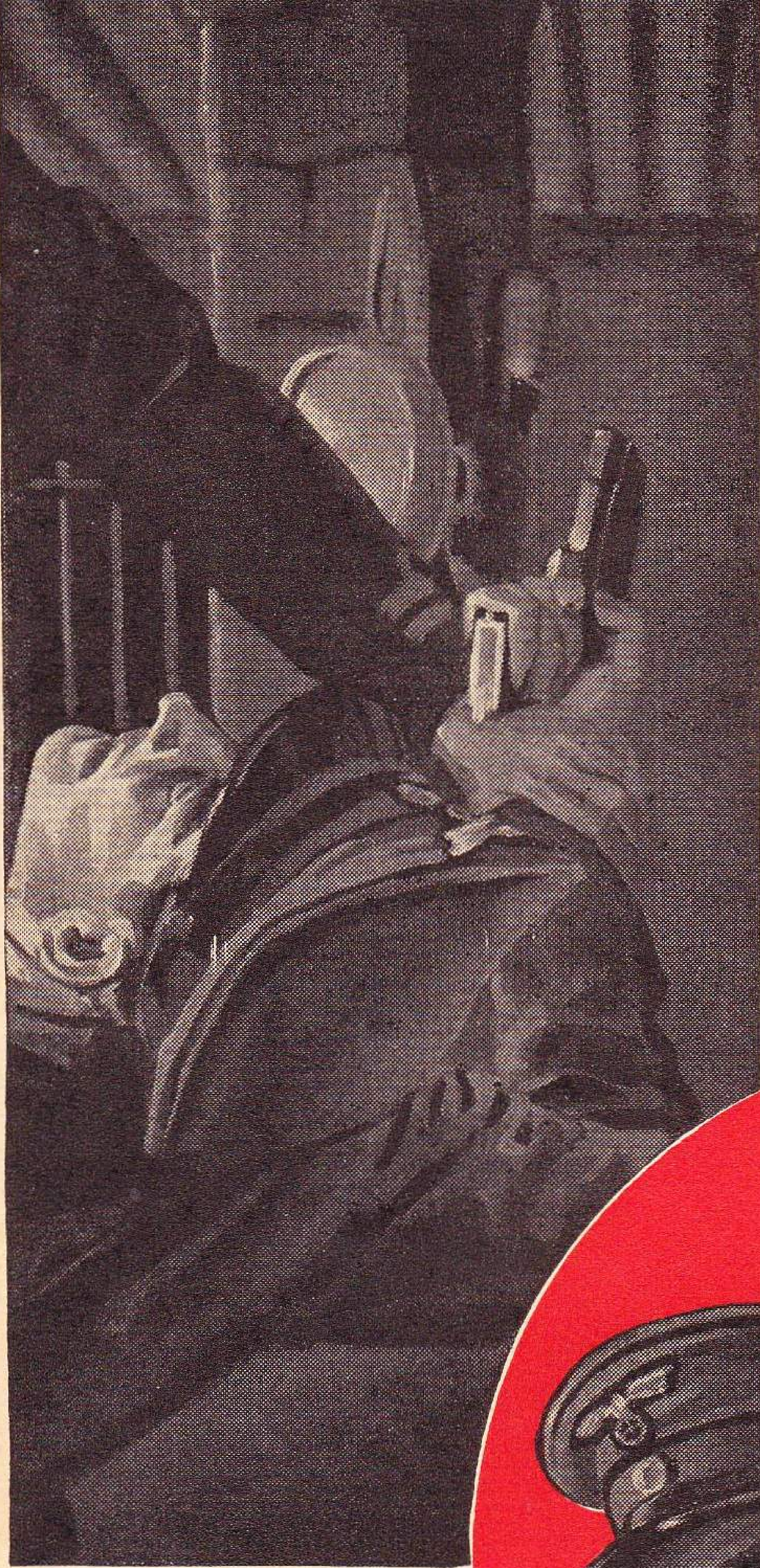
Upstairs again, outside Hansa's office, Smith stopped.

"You are disappointed," he said accusingly. "You have no confidence in my prediction that Casagni will talk."

"On the contrary." Hansa smiled thinly. "I take it that the word is '*romanticismo.*'"

"You do not really believe that. If you did you certainly would not have mentioned it—to me." Smith's laugh sounded genuine. "Come," he said, "let's call a truce of suspicions until tomorrow—tomorrow at noon. Then, if I am wrong, chastise me. For the present, I put business aside and insist that you dine with us at the hotel. And Hauptmann Grenner, too, if he is free."

"Hauptmann Grenner will be on duty here tonight," said Oberst Hansa. He made no attempt to hide the implication of the remark. There would be no tampering with Guido Casagni—unless Hansa or his assistant was present.



Smith's hand closed around his throat.

"Did you give him the—the word?"

"Yes. And I think he understood. But. . ."

"Tell me. I shall not weep. I am long past that."

"There is nothing to tell." He spoke irritably, out of a sense of utter failure. "Hansa is coming to dine with us tonight."

"He is most attentive," she said. "I would prefer a snake."

Smith stood up, so unexpectedly that she was startled. "Do you suppose," he asked her, "that you could keep Hansa to yourself tonight for an hour or so?"

Her small hands became fists. "If you say it is necessary I will do anything. Anything, you understand?"

He reached for his cap. "Make ready," he said. "We are going to see Maestro Santacroce, the silversmith. The Ponte Vecchio is quite near. The walk will do us good."

* * *

The shop of Michael Santacroce was old and cool and austere, and in that setting the pimply-faced clerk who essayed to wait on them seemed wholly out of place. It was only when they were escorted back to the workroom—a privilege, the clerk assured them, accorded only to the most distinguished visitors—that Smith felt the scene was right. Here was the Renaissance and here a master craftsman—an older, grayer Cellini.

Michael Santacroce, at work on a tall silver goblet, did not look up. They stood silent, awed. Smith thought he had never seen anything so exquisite as that goblet. Its round base was perhaps an inch high, and around it tiny figures swayed and danced against a background of scrollwork and characters so infinitesimal that the eye ached trying to distinguish one from another in the blended whole. From the base the body of the goblet flared up and outward, ornamented with a crest and initials, around which vines were cut in nearly full relief.

When the clerk had gone Maria Casagni introduced herself, speaking in a soft voice. She said, then, "I give you *romanticismo!* And—" Smith tingled at the pause "*—romanticismo.*"

IV

MARIA CASAGNI was standing before the towering French window of their drawing room as Smith entered the suite. She turned, stood silent, her body as still as deep water, her eyes devouring his face.

Smith tossed his cap on the piano and dropped into a chair. He closed his eyes, trying to quiet his ragged nerves.

She left the room, returned quickly. "Here," she said. It was brandy. "I ordered a bottle as soon as Hauptmann Grenner left. I saw your face as you went off with Oberst Hansa."

He drank. The stuff seemed to have no taste.

"I do not think," he said, "that I can go back to that place."

"That feeling will pass," she said. "I know. I had it in the car this morning when you left me with Hansa. I wanted to jump out and run. Never stop running. . . . You saw Guido?"

"Yes."

"Were you able to talk with him?"

"Only in Hansa's presence."

SANTACROCE looked up. "Can you not see I am busy, *signora?*"

He was a hook-nosed man with sunken cheeks. His eyes were elusive behind the thick lenses of his spectacles. He waved a bloodless antenna of a hand toward his left. Shining in a case were two completed goblets, identical to the one now under his hands.

"I have no time for commissions," Santacroce said querulously. "Signor Francesco di Malla has ordered a dozen of these. In four months I have completed only two."

"You have the lists of the leaders of the Figli di Mazzini," Maria Casagni said relentlessly. "We have come for them. My brother wishes them."

"Raise your veil," breathed Michael Santacroce.

She raised the filmy black net. Her eyes shone down on him.

"You are Maria Casagni, it is true."

"I must have the lists," she murmured. Smith could hear it coming, dreaded its effect. "My brother's blood is upon your dead son's head. The Sons of Mazzini are scattered. My brother cannot pull them together without the rolls."

Santacroce's cheeks were pasty. He lay back in his chair, breathing hard. "Tell your brother—" Smith and Maria had to lean closer to catch the words—"that the lists have been well preserved. My clerk is a police spy. He has found nothing. Bring your brother here, Maria Casagni. To him only will I give them."

Breathless though he was from the speech, he nevertheless was the first to hear the footsteps outside the door. He snatched a goblet from the workbench, thrust it into Smith's hand. As the door opened he was saying fatuously, "Signor di Malla is greatly pleased. Observe the design of his initials, so well worked into the design of the whole—the curve of the 'F', the 'di' half hidden under a leaf, then the graceful 'M' . . . . Yes, Andreas?"

The clerk's face appeared in the doorway. "You called?"

"I did not call. But wait. Show the officer and his lady out. I am sorry that I do not have the time to execute your commission now, my friends. Come back in a year."

They were almost back to the hotel when Smith noticed the tiny black smudges on the ball of the thumb and forefinger of his right hand. He rubbed at them with his handkerchief, absently, incuriously. The goblet, no doubt, been slightly tarnished, leaving its mark when he had held it.

At the hotel Maria went straight to the lift. Smith had business downstairs. He conferred at length with the *maitre*

d'hotel and the wine steward. The dinner, because of Signora Monteverdi's mourning, was to be served in their suite.

There was one more commission before he ascended. It consisted of a brief chat with the chief porter. It ended with the porter pocketing a substantial tip and promising, "Promptly at nine, sir. I shall not forget. Nine o'clock."

Smith got a railway timetable from the man and went to the lift.

Maria was in her bedroom. He knocked, waited.

The door opened an inch. "I am making myself beautiful for Oberst Hansa," she said sardonically.

"I just thought I would tell you that the matter we have been discussing will be settled tonight—one way or the other." There was no use affecting a confidence he could not feel. She would not be deceived.

She said, "And my role?" Her voice was quite calm.

"I will be called away for a little while. Try to make the time pass quickly for Oberst Hansa while I am gone. It would not do for him to wonder where I am."

A moment's silence; then, tremulously: "You will be careful?"

He was still in the grip of honesty. "No," he said thoughtfully, "it is too late for that."

The brandy bottle was still in view. Smith drank, coughed. Then he, too, went to his room to make himself beautiful for Oberst Hansa.

ALL things considered, the dinner went off delightfully. If Maria's color was a little high, it set off her olive skin to perfection. And if Colonel Monteverdi was a trifle preoccupied, it merely encouraged Hansa to devote his full attention to his hostess. Only two things occurred to mar the feast.

The first was a piece of news given them by Oberst Hansa over the first cocktail: "You have heard, I suppose, about Santacroce, the silversmith I recommended?"

"We called on him today without success," said Smith. "He is too busy for us. A commission for your friend di Malla appears to be taking all his time. We shall have to go to Fusconi, after all."

"Di Malla will be bitterly disappointed," Hansa said. "Santacroce died late this afternoon. Heart attack. Collapsed at his work."

The second jarring incident came at exactly nine o'clock. The telephone rang and the waiter answered. He said it was for Colonel Monteverdi.

Smith listened at length, said, "Oh, very well," and hung up. He grimaced. "My headquarters," he explained ruefully. "General di—that is, a superior of mine has just arrived from Rome. He wants me to report, *viva voce*, at once. I shall not be long. He is flying on to Bolzano in an hour. You will forgive me, my dear. Oberst Hansa, my apologies."

He hurried into his bedroom, came back belted, capped and cloaked. The pistol felt good at his side. He vanished with a flourish of the cloak.

"He is a handsome man, your husband," Oberst Hansa said sadly.

"Too many women think so." The barest suggestion of bitterness in Signora Monteverdi's tone quickened Hansa's pulse. This conquest might not be so difficult, after all. A young wife, jealous . . .

And now Signora Monteverdi was eyeing him over the rim of her wine glass. "Your Iron Cross, Oberst Hansa —would it be rude to ask how you won it?"

Oberst Hansa pulled his chair a little closer to hers. "It was in the fall of '40," he said. "I was a staff officer then at . . ."

Below, Colonel Monteverdi was getting into a horse-drawn cab. "Palazzo Venezia," he said.

IT WAS a highly excited Colonel Monteverdi whom the orderly showed to the office of Hauptmann Grenner at the Palazzo Venezia.

"We have been fools!" he exploded. "Fools! And now, where is Oberst Hansa? I must see him at once."

Hauptmann Grenner's eyebrows lifted. "I thought he was dining with you, Colonel Monteverdi."

"He was called away. I thought he might have come here. Sitting there, after he left, it suddenly was all very clear to me. I tell you, Hauptmann Grenner, I have been most dense."

"May I ask . . ." Grenner began.

But Colonel Monteverdi was in spate. "Casagni!" he said, and Hauptmann Grenner sat up straighter. "Do you know where those documents are, Hauptmann Grenner?"

"Where?"

Colonel Monteverdi looked mysterious. "Can you take short-hand?"

Hauptmann Grenner hesitated. Usually he preferred to forget certain plebeian beginnings of his career. But he was on fire with curiosity now. He said shortly, "A little. Why?"

"The documents lost from this office!" Monteverdi exclaimed. "We heard they were burned. But they still exist. Where? In the brain of Guido Casagni! I tell you I cannot be wrong. I was thinking it over tonight. The man knows German. He is a poet. He has a phenomenal memory for the written word. He knows all of Dante by heart."

Hauptmann Grenner was already rooting in his desk for pencil and pad. By rights, he should delay until Hansa was present. But there was credit to be gained from this affair. Properly presented, the report might very well make it appear that he, Hauptmann Fritz Grenner, had been instrumental in obtaining Casagni's statement. And if Hansa made trouble, he could plead urgency.

They hastened through the half-lit building, down the stairs, down the first long corridor. A left turn brought them to an iron door. At Hauptmann Grenner's knock they heard the inner guard approaching. The door swung open.

"Casagni?" said Grenner.

"Restless, sir. Complains that his hands pain him."

"They may pain him even more before we are through. Wait here, guard, outside. Give me the cell key."

"Very good, sir."

Hauptmann Grenner led the way down the dark corridor. Beside Casagni's door Grenner flicked a switch. Casagni's cell was flooded with light. Casagni himself, seated on his cot, raised a face that was sheet-white between its purple patches. He shut his eyes against the light.

Colonel Monteverdi put a warning hand on Hauptmann Grenner's shoulder as they entered. "Let me speak first," he said.

Casagni, opening his eyes, squinted painfully.

"Casagni!" Monteverdi's voice was low and urgent. "Listen, Casagni—can you walk?"

Thinking it over later, he decided that it was the answering expression on Casagni's battered countenance, rather than his own incautious question, which aroused Hauptmann Grenner's suspicions.

"Here!" Grenner said harshly. "Wait a minute!"

HIS pistol was half out of its holster as Smith's left hand closed around his throat. The right joined it a second later. Grenner was strong and he was wiry. He fought back viciously and was unsporting enough to raise his knee to Smith's groin. The resulting pain killed any lingering scruples Smith might have felt about the course prudence demanded that he take. He did his job with attention to detail, for he could not afford to make a mistake. Even after Grenner's lean length had turned limp and unresisting, there was still a bit of work to be done on his face before it was sufficiently messy to bear a resemblance to that of Guido Casagni. He placed the wreck of Grenner in a sitting position upon the cot, and then, because Grenner must not be able to talk tomorrow, or the next day, or the next, he banged the back of the man's head judgmatically against the stone wall.

Some eight minute later the guard, hearing shuffling, irregular footfalls in the corridor, hurriedly opened the iron door. Colonel Monteverdi was supporting a staggering Hauptmann Grenner—a Hauptmann Grenner whose once-neat uniform was crumpled and bloody, and whose lacerated face was virtually hidden behind a large and very bloody handkerchief.

Colonel Monteverdi was livid with anger. When the guard could understand him, he gathered that Hauptmann Grenner had been attacked by the prisoner Casagni and badly battered before Colonel Monteverdi could intervene.

"I have subdued Casagni—perhaps permanently," said Colonel Monteverdi, lobster-colored with anger. "Understand this: Casagni is to have no medical attention whatever. Let the swine lie in his blood where I left him. He is to remain unattended until you hear di-

rectly from Oberst Hansa. . . . You understand?" shrieked Colonel Monteverdi.

From behind his bloody handkerchief Hauptmann Grenner made corroborative sounds.

"I must get the *hauptmann* to a physician at once," cried Colonel Monteverdi excitedly, and led the injured man away.

V

OBERST HANSA, sitting with his arm over the back of Signora Monteverdi's chair, was too much the man of the world to leap up when Colonel Monteverdi's footsteps sounded in the hall. Oberst Hansa was flushed with wine but by no means befuddled. He withdrew his arm without haste, his fingertips trailing over Signora Monteverdi's dove-soft shoulder. Signora Monteverdi's eyes met his, and in her look Oberst Hansa was sure he beheld paradise.

Colonel Monteverdi entered. There was a curious pallor about him; the result, perhaps, of the sight of Oberst Hansa's flat-faced orderly standing outside the suite. The man had not been there when he left.

Monteverdi made a small ceremony of folding his cloak over a chair back. When he approached the table his color was better.

"I wonder if you would do me a favor, Oberst Hansa?" He smiled what he hoped was a winning smile, did his best to sound rueful.

"Command me." Unless Smith's ear deceived him, there was a peculiar, brittle note in Hansa's response.

"I have been ordered to Nice for three days. I leave tonight. I called the station to reserve a compartment. You understand that I do not wish Maria subjected to cattle like di Malla again. But they tell me they have no compartments. It is an embarrassing thing to ask, but I know you have influence here. . . ."

"I could not possibly spare Signora Monteverdi for three days." Hansa's eyes were oddly large and bright.

Smith stared. "I beg your pardon," he said sharply.

"One minute." Hansa turned his head. He called, "Giegen!"

The hall door opened as though Hansa's voice had tripped an electric ear. The flat-faced orderly stepped in, saluted.

Hansa ignored Giegen. He said, "You are pale, Colonel Monteverdi. Are you upset about something?"

The excitement and pressure of the past half hour were dying in Smith's veins. The presence of the orderly, and its implications, was numbing. It was brutally evident that Hansa was no longer—or, more accurately, had never been—an entirely unsuspecting guest. Worse, there was no indication what was in Hansa's mind.

Smith sagged visibly, which cost him next to no histrionic effort. Hansa did not move. He merely waited.

"I will tell you the whole story," Smith said in a low voice, and Maria gave a little cry.

Hansa stared into Smith's eyes a full five seconds before he said, without turning, "Giegen, wait outside. I may need you." The threat was plain. When the door had closed: "I telephoned Intelligence in Rome early tonight, Colonel Monteverdi. They showed a curious reluctance about acknowledging you."

Deep inside, Smith uttered something very like a prayer.

"I take it," said Hansa, without animosity, "that you and this woman have been assigned to some childish blackmail or intrigue connected with Guido Casagni. I have played along this far out of a desire to learn exactly what the motives of your government are."

Smith thought, "By God, he still thinks I'm Italian!"

"But I am getting impatient," Hansa

Oberst Hansa

went on. "Tell me the truth and I shall protect you as far as I can. Believe me, Monteverdi, your government will throw you over once they learn you have not deceived me. And I shall have to take stronger measures to get at the heart of this."

Maria rose unsteadily. "If you will excuse me . . ."

"No," said Oberst Hansa. "You are not to leave the room."

Smith leaned forward. As he did so, the holstered barrel of his pistol nudged his wrist. He said, "My wife is Guido Casagni's sister."

Whatever Hansa felt, he controlled his features. But he could not control the storm building behind his eyes. In that moment Smith had a glimpse of what this man could be. He groped for some line to take; could think of nothing better than the gambit which had captured Grenner's interest.

"The documents," he said, "no longer exist. Casagni memorized them, then destroyed them." Watching Hansa's eyes, he plunged on recklessly: "And where do you think Casagni is now, Oberst Hansa?"

Hansa sat up, glanced toward the door. His next move would be to have Giegen call Hauptmann Grenner at the Palazzo Venezia.

"Casagni is in this hotel," Smith told him. "I brought him here."

"That is a lie," snapped Hansa.

"Send your orderly to Hauptmann Grenner's room on the floor below," Smith suggested. "Tell him to bring back the man who is there."

There was a flat silence against the background of Maria Casagni's irregular breathing. Smith thought, "This is where I get off." The pistol seemed to be insinuating itself against his hand.

"Giegen!" Hansa called suddenly. The door flew open. "Go to Hauptmann Grenner's room at once. A man is there. Bring him here. Be careful. He is dangerous."

Giegen saluted, unblinking. He wheeled and was gone.

Hansa stood up, laid a hand on Maria's bare arm. "You shall persuade your brother to talk," he said. "After that, you have certain commitments to me which I expect you to fulfill. As for this man who passes for your husband . . ."

The snick of Smith's holster clasp interrupted him. He flung out a hand to stop Smith, but was a full second late. The pistol barrel smashed against his jaw and he became a limp heap on the polished floor.

FOR a moment Smith was incapable of further action. The blow with the pistol had been, in a sense, an emotional explosion. This was the reaction.

"Is it true about Guido?" Maria asked thickly. She did not look down. "He is here?" She sounded half asleep. But as Smith slid his hands under Hansa's armpits and heaved him up, she ran ahead and opened the bedroom door.

"Listen very carefully," Smith said, dumping Hansa on the bed. "You must stay in here. When I come back, the orderly and Guido will be with me. You stay clear."

She nodded without expression. Smith closed the bedroom door, hurried across the salon, put his ear close to the door leading to the outside hall. When Giegen opened the door, he was back in the center of the salon.

Ahead of Giegen stumbled Guido Casagni. He looked questioningly at Smith.

Smith motioned. "Oberst Hansa wants him brought to the bedroom. He is waiting." He took for granted Giegen's compliance, marched ahead of them. He flung open the bedroom door.

"Here they are, *Oberst,*" he said loudly, and shoved Casagni through the doorway, standing aside to let Giegen follow his prisoner.

Giegen was one step inside the bedroom when his eyes picked out the figure on the bed. He stopped dead. In that instant the depression where his thick neck joined the skull was motionless and inviting.

Smith used the butt. If his stomach revolted, necessity gave strength to his

arm. Giegen went to his knees. Smith was irresistibly reminded of a man with his neck bent to the executioner's axe. Through a sanguinary haze he struck once more, then stood rigid, his whole body a-tremble. He felt a little sick.

There were soft, broken words behind him, and sobs. It came to him that the sobs were not Maria's. He stooped, dragged Giegen across the polished floor to the closet. Locking the closet was an unnecessary precaution.

WHEN Smith turned, Casagni had an arm about his sister's shoulders. Their eyes were fixed on him as though he represented salvation and more. And in Maria's face was something else, something that troubled him.

To break the spell, he said directly to Casagni, "Do you know a doctor in Florence whom you can trust?"

He glanced at his watch. Quarter past ten. There was so much to do; so little time to do it in. And now the responsibility for Maria had begun to weigh on him over everything else. He was weary almost beyond endurance. He looked at Oberst Hansa and tried to collect the stray ends of his thoughts.

After a moment's thought Casagni said, "Doctor Giacomo Tasinari. Lung Arno della Zecca. Number 80."

"A Son of Mazzini?" Smith kept his voice low.

"Yes."

The telephone was in the salon. Smith tried to square his sagging shoulders as he left the room. The effort was painful.

Dr. Tasinari was a sleepy bass voice. He said crossly that he did not make night calls. Colonel Monteverdi had better try some other physician.

Too tired to phrase a sentence, Smith said, *"Romanticismo."*

"Ah!" responded Dr. Tasinari, less sleepily.

"I give you—" Smith paused *"—romanticismo."*

"Half an hour," said Dr. Tasinari promptly, and hung up.

For some obscure reason this minuscule triumph was amazingly heartening. Smith took a drink of brandy. Its effect was almost instantaneous. He put the bottle down and seized the telephone again.

"The railroad station," he barked. His voice had strengthened, his spirits risen.

The ticket clerk was rude. A private compartment! Reserved! All the way to Nice on the Marseilles express! Did Colonel Monteverdi not know that the trains these days were . . .

Smith had a mental picture of the man gesticulating. The brandy was racing in him. He demanded a word with the station master. Without looking around he knew that Maria Casagni was listening from the bedroom doorway.

The station master, evidently forewarned, opened with a protest.

Smith cut in sharply, "Urgent government business. I am calling on behalf of Oberst Helmut Hansa."

The wires hummed. "Will he himself be of the party?" asked the station master in a different tone.

"Of course. There will be four altogether, one a lady."

"I will see what I can do," the station master responded slowly.

"You will do nothing of the kind." The outburst was no pretense. Smith's overwrought nerves were near the breaking point. "Yes or no. At once."

"Compartment Seven," said the station master sullenly. "It will be held."

"Good!" Smith slammed down the receiver, found Maria at his side. She did not speak, but sympathy and concern were in her face.

He said, "Please bring Guido out here. Give him brandy. I will talk to him in a few minutes."

He waited until they came out, then stepped into the bedroom, closing the door behind him. Oberst Hansa roused himself at the touch of Smith's hands. He drew one leg up, the boot-heel scraping the spiny lace of the coverlet.

Smith swallowed. He was nearly at the end of his emotional tether. The brandy was having its way. He hit Oberst Hansa behind the left ear as scientifically and humanely as he was able. Then he left the room without looking behind him.

IN the salon he found difficulty keying his mind to a normal tempo. His limbs insisted on moving jerkily. His voice sounded queer.

"You know of Michael Santacroce's death?" he asked Casagni.

"Maria told me." Casagni stood up. He said wearily, "If only Michael Santacroce could have lived one more day —even twelve hours." He stared down at his swollen, distorted hands.

Smith, too, stared at those hands. He found it difficult to speak. The moment was here and it found him shamed. To bargain with this man over things he held sacred, to trade on gratitude, was not to his liking. But it could not be avoided.

"What of the German documents?" The words seemed naked and brusque.

Guido Casagni's bruised lips tightened stubbornly. Maria said in a small voice, "I told you, Guido, what I had promised. I know it was not my right to do so."

"I think," said Smith, "that I know where Michael Santacroce kept the records for his son."

Guido Casagni merely looked at him.

"In Santacroce's shop," Smith said slowly, "are two goblets. Carved about their bases, around and around and very, very small, are words. They do not look like words—" it was like explaining something to a very young child "—because they are carved backward, like type. But if you were to ink those bases and roll them over smooth paper, you would find words. I found ink on my fingers today after handling one of those goblets. I believe Santacroce had been proofing his work."

"How shall one recognize these goblets?" Casagni asked quietly.

"They are the first of a set made for Francesco di Malla. They bear his initials. I believe that was what first suggested the plan to Michael Santacroce when his son entrusted him with the records. 'F. di M.' could mean the Figli di Mazzini."

"Before God!" Casagni's eyes were glowing.

"Think, Casagni. Santacroce admitted to Maria that he had the records. His shop had been searched. His clerk was a police spy. But who would look for the rolls of the Figli di Mazzini on goblets fashioned for Francesco di Malla of the Fascist Council? I believe the bulk of the records is on the first two goblets. Santacroce could have kept them indefinitely, telling di Malla the set must be complete before it could be delivered."

CASAGNI said shortly, "You wish the German documents? You shall have them. They are things of treachery. They provide for the withdrawal to the Po Valley of all German troops if an invasion force takes Sicily. Also the destruction of all our heavy industries, all our utilities, as they withdraw northward."

Chills were marching along Smith's spine, and he could wait no longer. "These documents—they are in your head?"

Casagni smiled for the first time as he touched his temple with a forefinger swollen twice the size of a normal thumb. "It is well Hansa did not guess, or I should be dead. Now if you will get pen and paper, Maria. . . . I fear I cannot yet write."

"Can we not wait until we are in Nice?" There was a dreadful urgency in Maria's voice, but no conviction.

"You know very well, Maria," said Guido Casagni gently, "that I cannot go with you."

She clung to him, wordless, tearless.

Casagni said gravely to Smith, "After Sicily your people will be coming to Italy. After I have told you what was in the German documents, I shall tell you how and where to get in touch with me. When your people come this way, I beg that I be notified beforehand—if you trust me. There are lives to be saved."

"We'll let you know."

"I'm afraid we had better hurry," said Casagni.

Maria had set out pen and paper. Casagni, head in hands, began to dictate, the rough German words curiously softened by his accent. Midway in the job, Maria substituted for Smith. That was when Dr. Tasinari arrived, a butterball of a man with snapping black eyes. When he saw Casagni his eyes became luminous with tears. Casagni told him about Smith and nothing would do but that Dr. Tasinari should leave the imprint of his mustaches on Smith's cheeks. Smith led the good doctor in to see Oberst Hansa and told him what his plan was. Turning professional in a twinkling, Dr. Tasinari stripped Hansa of his tunic, fumbled in his bag, came up with a hypodermic. He grinned puckishly as he sent the needle into Hansa's arm.

"A good sedative," he said. "Also, it interferes seriously with the will power. When you are ready to leave, give him a large glass of brandy. That will put him on his feet for half an hour. But he will need guiding." He put a small cardboard box into Smith's hand. "Each hour, on the train, one of these tablets. You will have no trouble. Pour some brandy on the swine, for the smell. Everyone will think him drunk."

With that, Dr. Tasinari was gone. Only the cardboard box, that and a new note in Hansa's breathing, remained as evidence of the visit.

Smith returned to the salon, silently took the pen from Maria. Just as silently, Maria went to pack. Casagni's voice began again, and Smith wrote.

An hour later a blank-eyed German colonel and a very jovial Italian colonel, arm-in-arm and reeking of brandy, reeled through the empty lobby of the Hotel Dresden-Danieli and headed for a cab. Maria had preceded them to the station with the baggage. During the bustle attendant upon their departure —for Colonel Monteverdi was tipping everyone liberally—no one noticed the slender German captain with the battered countenance who slipped out of the hotel and vanished into the night.

At the station Colonel Monteverdi, soberer now, guided his intoxicated fellow-warrior tenderly along the platform and into Compartment Seven, where Maria awaited them behind the drawn shades. A moment later—it had been well-timed—the whistle blew, the wheels began to turn.

Maria's hand sought Smith's. He felt he ought to say something, but there seemed to be nothing to say.

VI

NICE, as always in fine weather, was spectacular. Nowhere, Smith decided as their ancient taxi jiggeted along the Boulevard Massena toward the Rue Decies, is the sea so violently blue, the sunshine so belligerently yellow, the greenery so richly tropical.

He looked across Oberst Hansa at Maria. Under the veil—she had resumed her mourning—her lips smiled at him. He looked, with sudden alarm, at Hansa. So effective had Dr. Tasinari's course of treatment proved that Smith was inclined to regard Hansa as no more animate or menacing than an extra suitcase.

A moment's inspection reassured him. Hansa's pale eyes were half shut, his jaw slack, his person heavy with the odor of brandy. It had taken two murderous slugs of the stuff, administered between Monte Carlo and Villefranche, to get Hansa on his feet, and the effect was already beginning to pass. Smith wondered if Hansa was capable of thought, and if so, what he was thinking. The taxi swung grandly into the Rue Decies, traveled hardly a block before its brakes squealed.

"Voila!" The driver indicated a small flower shop with a faded sign: PENELLI.

The driver got out and assisted Oberst Hansa from the cab. There was a puzzled line between the driver's swarthy brows that bothered Smith.

Hansa entered the shop obediently on the man's arm, stood swaying as the support was withdrawn.

Smith handed the driver a twenty-franc note. "Wait," he said. "We will be going to the hotel soon—once we have ordered our flowers." The driver shuffled out, mumbling.

A door in the back of the shop, half hidden behind blossoms projecting hugely from wasp-waisted vases, opened quietly.

"This way, please," said a soft voice. Smith took Oberst Hansa's arm. . . .

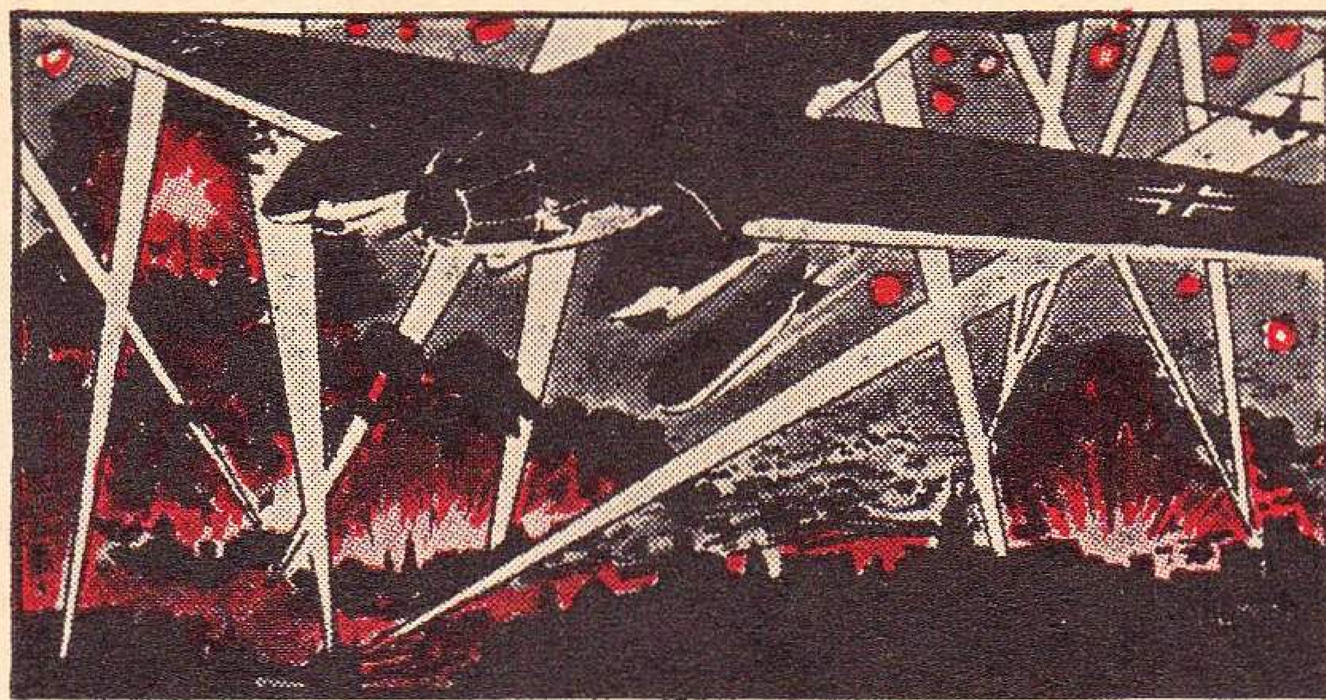
Monsieur Penelli was honored. He was a large man. He had a broken nose and capable hands. In his back room, as he advised Smith to dump the German on the floor, his brown eyes were peculiarly bright and his manner was vastly calm.

Maria Casagni had entered before the others. She lay on a couch, resting, and when Smith brought Hansa in she opened her eyes and smiled tiredly.

Inside Smith's shirt a bulky wad of hotel stationery pressed against his

LONDON'S FAMOUS "MIDGET MARSHAL" TELLS BOMBING THRILLER!

This true story of the blitz was told to a war correspondent by Michael Davies, Chief Shelter Marshal, London Area. Mr. Davies is famous as the smallest Air Marshal in England; his height is 3 ft. 6 in. Mr. Davies was a practicing optometrist before the war, was active in organizing youth camps, is now in charge of one of the largest air shelters in England. The shelter extends 4 acres and includes 4 miles of underground corridors. Complete with interior radio communications and sixty-five large sleeping bays, it can normally house 10,000 people—in a pinch, 14,000. Over one and a half million bricks were used to build the blast wall.



1. "Jerry had been giving it to us in fine style that night. We were out on our usual 4 A.M. patrol, picking our way between craters and smoking piles of rubbish, when we passed the ruins of a small house that had received a direct hit . . .

2. "One of my party called: 'There's a light there—somebody must be alive!' There was, right enough . . . a bright little sliver of light coming from between the stones. Guided by that, we got on with the rescue work as quickly as we could . . .

3. ". . . and found our man, half dead from injuries and bomb shock, his hand still gripping his flashlight like a vise. Seems he'd grabbed his flashlight to show others to the basement when the bomb fell. And that —plus having fresh batteries—was what saved his own life!"

PLEASE NOTE: Don't blame your dealer if he's out of "Eveready" flashlight batteries. The Armed Forces are taking enormous quantities, and the war industries with the highest priority ratings are taking the rest.

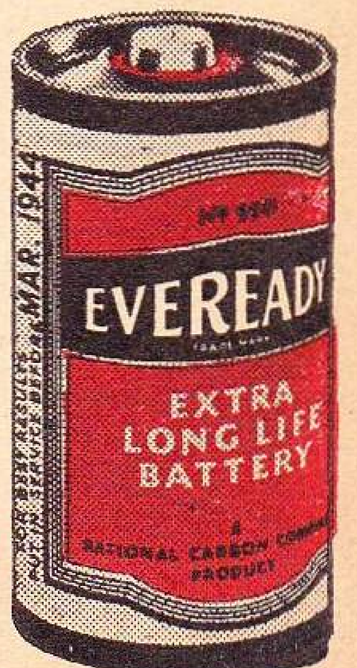
WRITE FOR YOUR FREE COPY of "You and the War," the new O.C.D. guidebook which tells you how you can train and what you can do to help win the war. There's a job, and a very important one, too, for every man, woman and child in America! Address National Carbon Company, Dept. B.T., 30 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y.

NATIONAL CARBON COMPANY, INC.
30 East 42nd Street, New York
Unit of Union Carbide and Carbon Corporation

UCC

The word "Eveready" is a registered trade-mark of National Carbon Company, Inc.

FRESH BATTERIES LAST LONGER... *Look for the* **DATE-LINE**



middle. Those papers, bearing Guido Casagni's statement, might put Italy out of the war in time to save many lives. For all its apparent lack of incident, the trip from Florence had been anything but restful. There had been German officers on the train, and an Italian general and his staff, politely curious about the shaded compartment. And there had been an evil moment or two with a hard-faced German inspector at Ventimiglia. That was when the sight of Oberst Hansa's insignia had paid off; that and a bit of nonchalance on Smith's part.

"How soon can you get us back to Tunis?" Smith asked Penelli.

"I will find out at once," said Monsieur Penelli. He picked up a telephone and called a flower grower in Beaulieu. He began a discussion about the price of red roses. Then he broke off and listened. He hung up abruptly. Smith, watching his face, had the sensation of a long, sickening drop in an elevator. Penelli was no longer calm. Without a word he darted through the store. He was back in twenty seconds, mopping his forehead.

SMITH was up, his fears the more acute for being nameless.

"You must leave at once," breathed Monsieur Penelli. "Thank God the driver waited. As long as you have him . . ." His voice trailed off.

"Go on," Smith said hoarsely.

Monsieur Penelli caught his breath. "A general alarm on the Rome radio." His voice was little more than a whisper. "Our men in Beaulieu caught it. His set is in the greenhouse. The ribs make good aerials. He can transmit, too. That is how the signals go out to the submarines. And. . . ."

Smith gripped his arm. Monsieur Penelli stiffened and Smith saw him getting hold of his nerves. "Go slowly," Smith ordered. His hand went instinctively to the bulge of papers at his waist.

"It has been discovered—the escape of Casagni," said Penelli. "They are seeking you. Two Italians, the radio said, with a woman—and a German officer. They are not sure yet exactly what happened. But they order all points to hold you. You must go at once to Beaulieu, of course. You may get through. They will probably confirm by wire to the police here. But perhaps it has not yet come through. And until the police talk with this driver that brought you from the station. . . . You must get in that cab at once and keep that driver."

The final words were muffled, for Monsieur Penelli was bending over Oberst Hansa. He lifted Hansa, stood him on his feet. He looked at Smith. "If you were to leave this Nazi here," he suggested, "I could—er—dispose of him."

Smith shook his head and said, "Tell me what to do in Beaulieu."

"Direct your driver to take you to the Pension Marcal. It is safe and near the water. Tonight at ten, stroll down to the smaller of the two fishing piers. There will be a boat. A fisherman named Jean will ask you if you wish to go sailing by moonlight. He is our man. He has permission to remain out over night, food being so scarce. He will take you. He knows where to go. At two tomorrow morning, God willing, a submarine . . ." He was already edging toward the door with Hansa.

AT quarter past seven they turned in at the Pension Marcal in Beaulieu. It was a small, square villa, half smothered by roses, perhaps a hundred yards from the shore.

Madame Marcal asked no questions. She kept her eyes carefully averted from Oberst Hansa, even when she brought a meal of chicken and cold salad up to their room. Hansa was sleeping restlessly on the one bed. He seemed to be having dreams. Smith had fed him the last of Dr. Tasinari's pills.

At quarter to ten Madame Marcal rapped on the door. Smith let her in.

"It is a fine night for a stroll," she said. "For the fishing pier, turn right as you leave the garden." She turned to go. She seemed in a hurry.

Maria said, "Our bags—if we should not return . . ."

"They will be taken care of," Madame Marcal assured her. "Good night."

A wine glass of brandy, poured an hour before, stood on the marble table by the bed. Smith picked it up, raised Hansa's head. "Here," he said. "Drink."

They crunched down a gravel walk into a moonlit darkness. The iron gate swung to behind them. Hansa stumbled, lurched against Smith's shoulder. Maria took Hansa's other arm. A hundred yards before them the fishing pier was a black path floating in silver-flecked water. A small blot beside it Smith took to be the boat. His attention divided between Hansa and the boat, he did not see the little knot of men at the head of the pier until he was nearly upon them. It was Maria's sharp intake of breath that brought him up short. The men were not ten yards away.

The knot divided. One man stepped back on the pier. The other two came forward. One of them said politely in French, "One moment, if you please. We are police officers."

Then Smith saw the uniforms and the faces: a slender young man and a heavier, older one. Behind them he could see that the man waiting on the pier wore a fisherman's jersey.

"What do you want, *messieurs?*" He was surprised to find his voice steady. His left hand gripped Hansa's arm tightly, his right touched the holster at his belt.

The older gendarme said, "We have orders to be on watch for a party of four: two Italians, a young woman, and a German officer."

Smith said, "Yes?"

His thumb and forefinger undid the holster flap and his fingers touched warm steel. He wondered why he was not trembling. There seemed to be no emotion left in him.

"We are looking for a boatman named Jean," he said into the silence. "We wish to go for a sail." A light breeze was cool on his cheek. His fingers went a little deeper into the holster.

"The orders said four persons." This from the younger policeman.

"There are only three in this party," said the older man. He stepped aside. "It is a beautiful night for a sail." He looked directly at Smith. For the first time, Smith saw his face clearly. The man was smiling.

The boatman called softly, "I am Jean, *monsieur*. I am ready."

"Let me assist you with your friend." said the younger officer. "He seems to be in wine. Etienne, lend a hand."

Smith found himself strolling down the pier with them. They assisted Oberst Hansa into the cockpit, handed Maria aboard with a Gallic flourish.

The older man put his face close to Smith's. "You will return?" he asked.

There was no mistaking his meaning.

"Sooner than you think," Smith said huskily.

"We shall be waiting," said the older man, and turned away.

Smith got aboard. Jean was casting off the bow line.

"AND that's about the story," Smith concluded.

Major Mackison rose. Into a briefcase he stuffed the Hotel Dresden-Danieli stationery that had weighed so heavily on Smith. Major Mackison was in a hurry. He and Smith had an appointment with several high-ranking officers who were most anxious to hear Smith's report and read the transcript of the stolen German documents.

"I saw the doctor this afternoon," said Mackison. "They're working on your Nazi pal. It'll be a couple of days before he comes around. The sawbones says he never saw a man so saturated with depressants. By the way, you'll have some leave coming to you out of all this. How and when'll you take it?"

Smith glanced at Maria. Maria turned her dark eyes on Major Mackison and smiled. Major Mackison looked from Maria to Smith.

"Well?" he said briskly.

"At once," said Smith. "I've got—that is, we—"

"Hey!" said Major Mackison.

"Honeymoon," blurted Smith.

"You mean you two want to get married?"

"Married already, sir," mumbled Smith. "Sorry. Forgot all about asking permission. But—"

"What! How?"

"The sub captain," explained Smith. "You see, we—"

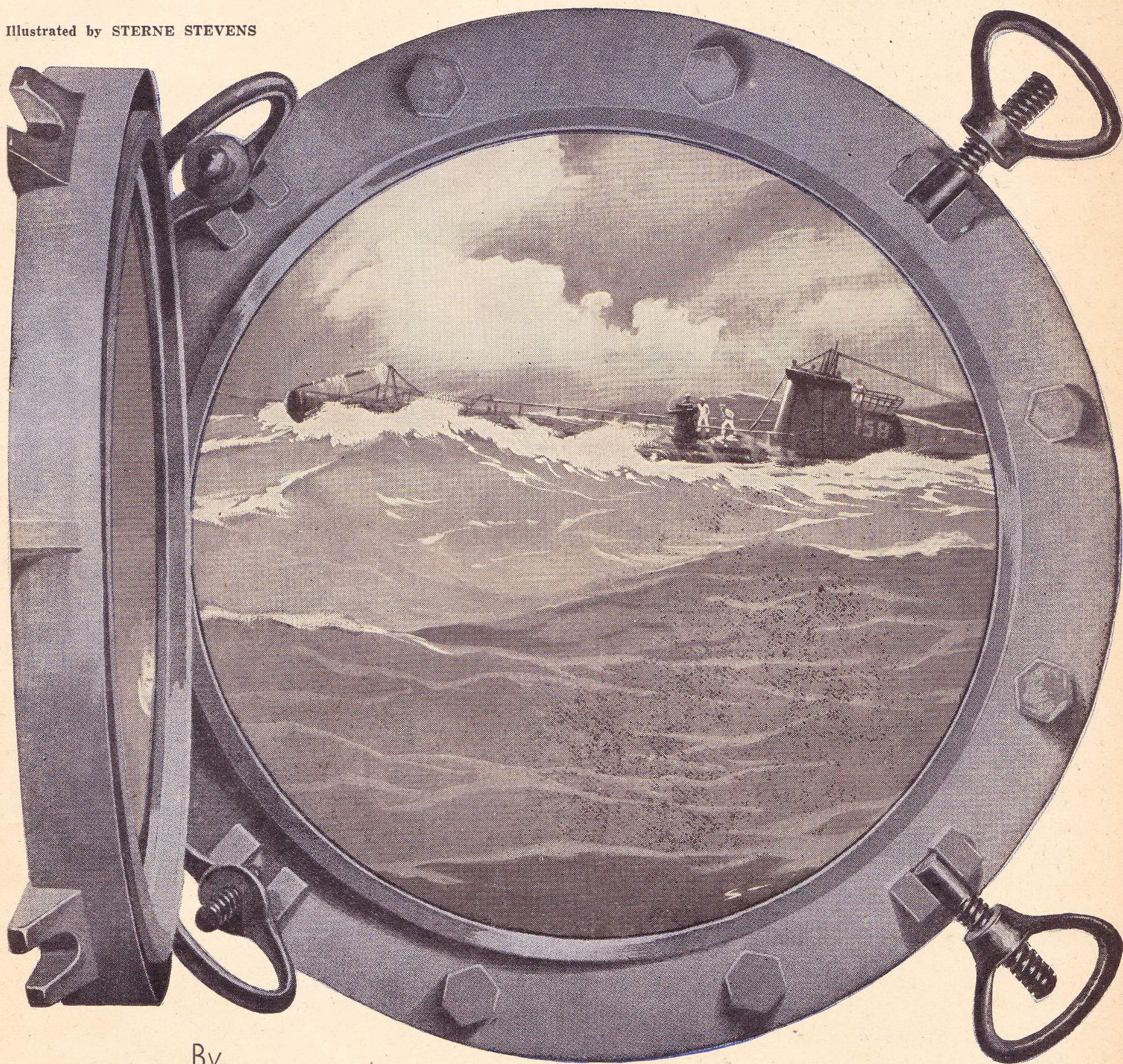
"Well!" Major Mackison glanced at his watch. "We'll have to be going. Got time for this, anyhow." He darted forward, kissed the bride inexpertly. "There," he said, and started off. "Come along," he said over his shoulder.

Maria Casagni looked after him. "A nice man," she murmured. "He was embarrassed."

"I'm not," said Smith shamelessly. "Come here." ● ●

BACKGROUND FOR *Sound*

Illustrated by STERNE STEVENS



By

JOHN RHODES STURDY

The story of a Hollywood picture crew that went out to photograph a phony deep-sea battle and found instead a real one

WE CAME through the gate at midnight, coated with salt and with most of the paint chipped off our hull. We were tired and sore, and as we ran up the black waters of the harbor, and the dimmed-out lights of town flickered for us, we were thinking more of bed and sleep than the usually anticipated good time ashore.

"Ah!" I heard the Old Man mutter, and I echoed him.

A berth at last—maybe for two or three days. We dared not hope for a week. The bottom had to be practically torn off before they gave us a week.

We gathered in the little wardroom

after tying up, and the steward brought rums to us. We were cold, and our eyes were closing.

Then the Old Man came in, tossing a signal on the table. "Our orders," he said, and his red eyes turned to the steward. "Bring me a double."

I looked at the crumpled signal:

To H.M.C.S. Brant.
From Captain D
You are to slip and proceed at 0800/14 for filming of movie scenes. Camera party will board you in morning. You will remain in Area B until 1900/15 and then return to port.

Over my shoulder, Williams, one of the J.G.'s, said, "It's a gag."

The Old Man finished his drink in one gulp. "Captain D doesn't pull gags," he reminded Williams.

"But it's tomorrow morning," I said. "And we just got in. No sleep!"

"Jones," said the Old Man, eyeing me, "we're going to make movies. Don't you understand? A corvette officer doesn't think of sleep when he is about to fight a war for Hollywood."

Williams cursed. He had a girl up town. Well, I had a wife. And so did the Old Man. You came in from a three weeks' convoy, with your body dirty and your eyes sore and your brain numb, and you were told to slip and proceed—to make movies!

"Give me a double, too," I said to the steward.

THE film people came aboard at seven o'clock the next morning. There were four of them—a fat one, who said he was the director, and three cameramen. They seemed to have a couple of tons of equipment.

"Very glad to see you," I said to the director, lying brilliantly.

His name was Doolittle. "Are you the captain?" he asked.

"No, I'm the executive officer."

"I'd like to see the captain."

"The captain is asleep."

"Oh!" he said, in a tone of voice that suggested that Mr. Doolittle did not like people being asleep when he called. Then he said, "I'd like my bags put in my cabin."

Williams, who was sipping a cup of coffee, blew the liquid halfway across the wardroom, nearly choking.

I smiled politely. "There isn't a cabin, Mr. Doolittle," I said. "I'm afraid you'll have to use one of the wardroom settees."

He looked at the narrow strips of leather, and his face turned a trifle pale. I smiled to myself, thinking how it would be when that sea-going camel started rolling.

"I'll wait here for the captain," he announced abruptly.

The head cameraman and his assistant broke out a deck of cards and dealt a round of gin rummy. They were behaving like ordinary folks.

"May I have a cup of coffee?" demanded Mr. Doolittle.

The steward brought him a cup. He took one gulp and turned even paler. Corvette coffee being the worst in the world, Williams and I smiled secretly at each other.

"Well, make yourself at home," I said, as I left the wardroom.

Mr. Doolittle was patting the hard surface of his "cabin."

I went on deck. Hanging over the bulwark, on the water side, was a small, thin man with nervous hands and deep, gray eyes.

"Hello," he said. "I'm the operator cameraman." Then: "Where are we going?"

Lack of sleep was beginning to get me. "Out to sink the German navy," I told him.

He smiled. "I wish we were, instead of making a few sea backgrounds for a picture. I'd like to run into a submarine."

Yes, I could imagine it.

"My name is Frank Lawes," he said. "This war is plenty tough, isn't it?"

"Oh, no—it's a game."

"I'm not kidding," he said.

I felt suddenly embarrassed. "I just got out of bed," I explained. Still, I didn't know why I should be making explanations to a little guy from Hollywood.

"I understand," he said.

I went away. . . .

As we were running down the harbor, the Old Man muttered. "Have you seen the schedule that director gave me? We're going to turn the ship inside out for him—have action stations, abandon ship, fire the gun, go full speed, stop, go full speed again, shoot down imaginary airplanes. That's today. Tomorrow we carry out depth-charge attacks. Then we sink a sub."

"Who supplies the submarine?" I asked.

"Oh, they build that in the studio. It's a great war."

The camera had been set up on the fiddeley deck, over the stokehole. Beside it squatted the head cameraman and Joe, playing gin rummy.

Still hanging over the bulwark, staring at the sea, was the little man, Lawes. I watched him for a moment. He was a queer duck. Slap-happy from too much Hollywood, maybe.

At least, it was a glorious day. I was sunning myself on the bridge when Mr. Doolittle approached. He was dressed in a windbreaker, with a wild-colored scarf around his neck.

The fresh breeze and the sun had made me feel a lot better, so I asked cheerfully, "Well, when do we get started?"

Mr. Doolittle said, "This is no good."

"No good! You mean, the ship?" I demanded. "The *Brant* is the best bloody corvette on the North Atlantic. See those swastikas on the gun shield? They stand for U-boats we've sunk."

He shook his head. "This is no good. We need heavy seas. Nuggets."

"Nuggets?"

"Clouds. I can't shoot in this weather. We might as well go home."

"Why, sure!" I cried. "I'll tell the captain."

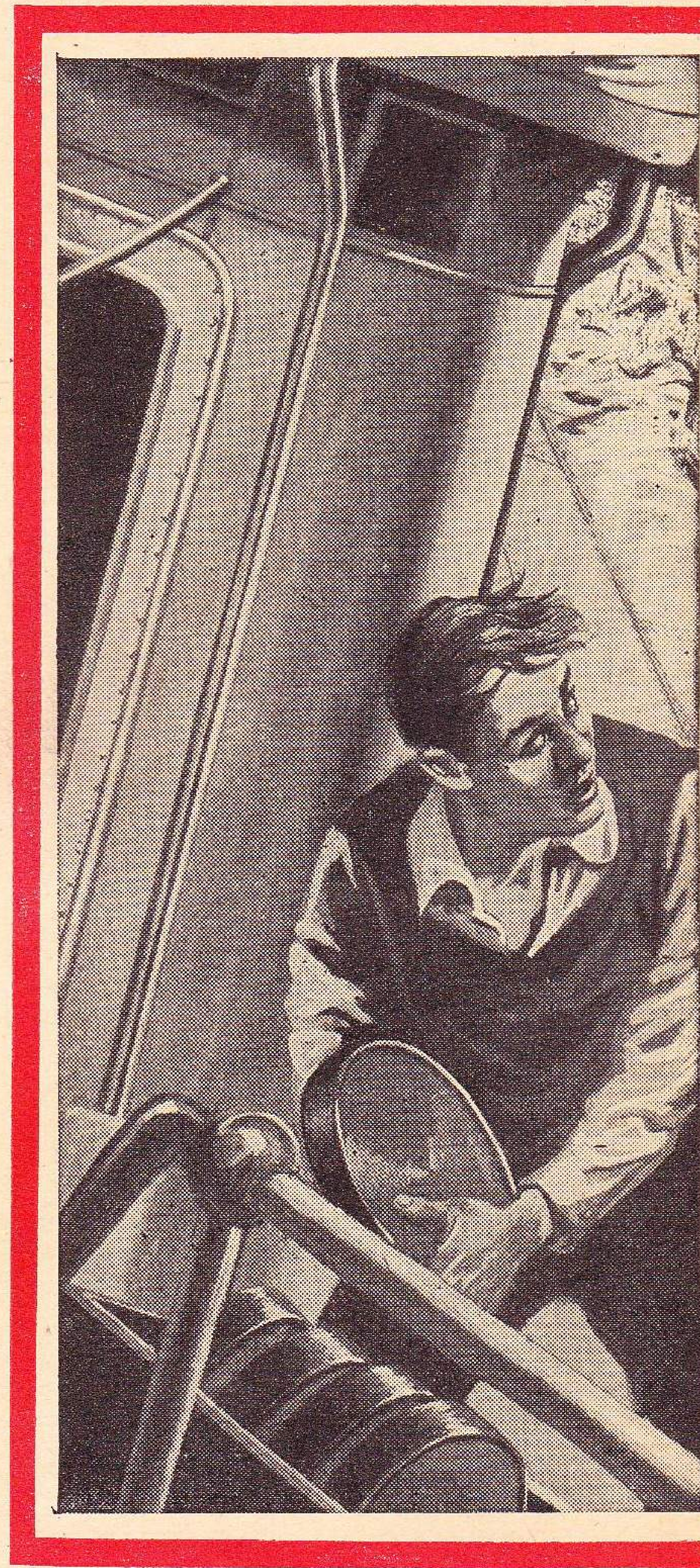
"Never mind," said Mr. Doolittle. "We'll wait and see."

ALL DAY long we ran around in circles, searching for "nuggets." The head cameraman and Joe played gin rummy. Mr. Doolittle stood and bit his fingertips.

When I relieved Williams on the bridge that night, he said, "Look at the glass. It's dropping like a ton of bricks. I'm going to enjoy watching those birds when that wind hits us."

"Me, too," I agreed.

It blew up during the night—not a big wind, but enough to turn us over thirty-five or forty degrees. I could picture Mr. Doolittle trying to keep on top of the wardrobe settee.



The camera was set

Suddenly there was a small figure beside me. It was Lawes.

"Hello," he said. "Getting windy."

"Bit of a breeze," I agreed.

"Can submarines operate in a gale?"

"Look," I said, "have you got subs on the brain?"

He gave a little laugh. "I guess it sounds like that. You see, this is my only chance to get into the fight. I'm too old."

"You're lucky," I told him.

"I don't think so."

I felt like talking. Maybe it was the moonlight.

"You don't understand," I said. "It isn't like this all the time. It's hell.

You ought to be glad you're out of it."

"I'm not, though." Lawes' voice was very dry, as if his throat had suddenly grown taut. "I'd like to kill a German."

The way he said it, I stared at him in the darkness.

"Well, so would I," I said eventually. "The more of them the better. Then I can get home to my wife."

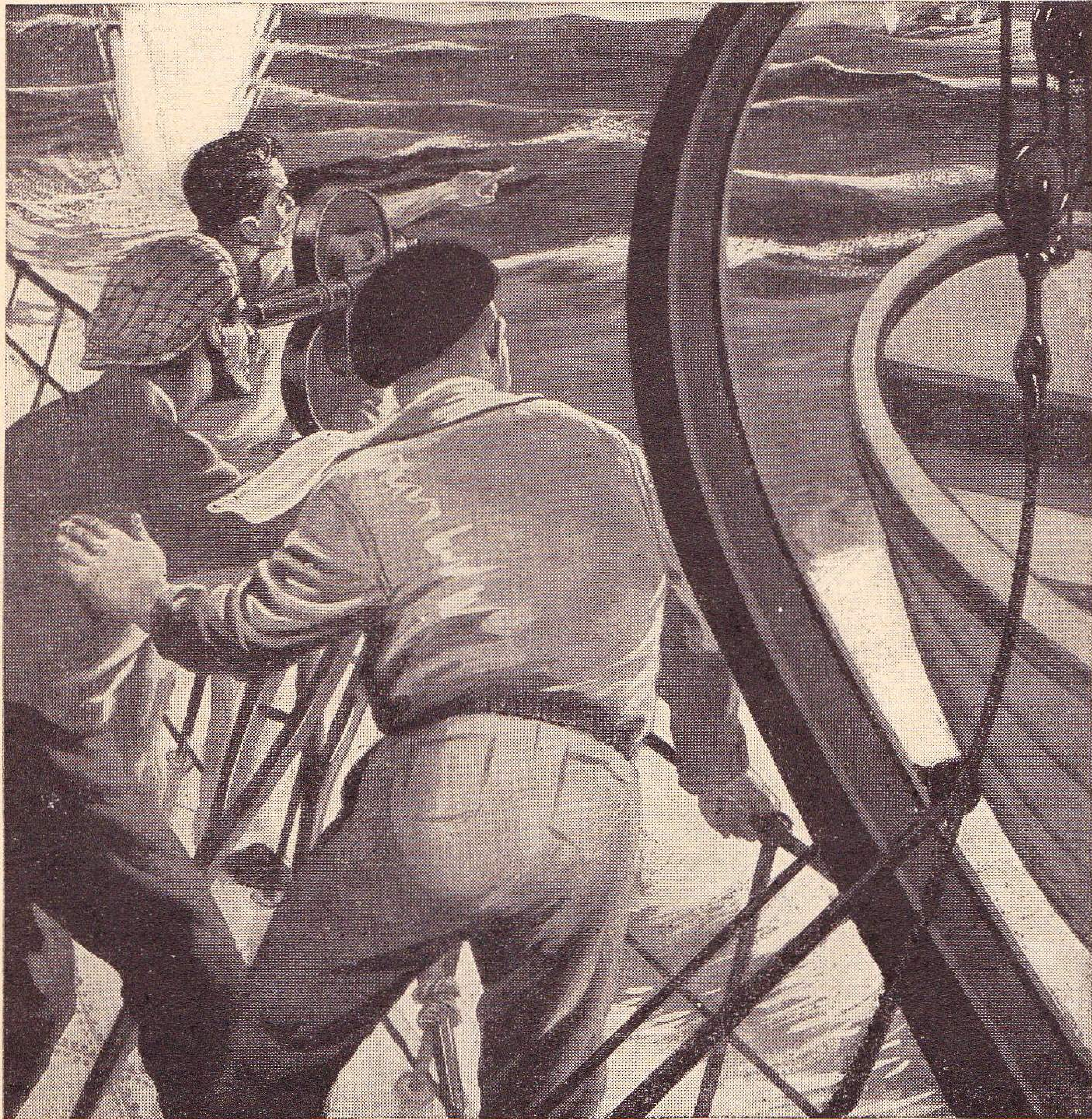
"You're lucky," he allowed, and walked away.

A few minutes later Joe came on the bridge. "Seen Frank Lawes?" he asked me. "We can't sleep. That wardroom is like a roller coaster. We're getting up a game of penny ante and we need Frank."

"He was here a minute ago," I said. "He's looking for submarines."

"Yeh, I know," Joe said. "He'd like nothing better than to get one of those Nazis by the throat and strangle him slowly. He was over there in 1939, making backgrounds. The Gestapo grabbed him—him and his wife. Tossed them into a concentration camp. Starved him. He weighed ninety-five pounds when they let him go." Joe paused. "Frank's wiry. He stood it. His wife died there."

I thought of my wife at home. She was safe. I was fighting to keep her safe, and our home intact. And yet, that little man from Hollywood was a damned sight closer to the war than I was. In his heart was a hate I didn't know. And I had seen men drowning in burning oil and boys machine-gunned. But a wife . . .



up on the pitching deck against the rail.

BY MORNING we were running against a heavy sea and taking water on the bridge. Mr. Doolittle was beaming all over his fat face. He was standing up to the pitching and rolling much better than we had thought he would.

He was also taking command of the ship, ordering the men here and there, setting up scenes, telling the Officer of the Watch to steer this course and then steer that course, generally running things the way Hollywood wanted them.

The Old Man was getting annoyed. This was a tired crew, cheated out of their only shore leave in three weeks, and the Old Man did not like the fat director ordering his men around.

"Now," cried Mr. Doolittle, puffing up to the bridge, "we'll do the depth charge attack. I want all the men at action stations, and I'd like to go as fast as possible. Now, I want—"

"Mr. Doolittle," the Old Man cut him off, "you look after your camera. I'll drop the depth charges."

"Okay," said Mr. Doolittle. "But this is for a picture. We aren't fighting a war right now."

"Mr. Doolittle," the Old Man said, his tired eyes burning, "whenever this ship leaves harbor she is fighting a war."

"Okay," said Mr. Doolittle, "but we can fight a war and make pictures, too."

I thought the Old Man was going to hit him.

They set up their camera on the after gun platform, and I could see Lawes busying himself around the machine.

"Settings at a hundred feet," the Old Man ordered. We went up to fourteen knots and made a run against the sea. The water struck the stem and drenched us on the bridge, and back aft the camera crew held on grimly, trying to keep their feet on the pitching platform. I saw the Old Man grin. Mr. Doolittle and his bunch were getting their first experience of a corvette in action.

"Fire your pattern," the Old Man ordered.

We let them go—all the throwers and six off the stern. I have seen many a depth charge dropped in action, but this was the most terrific barrage I had ever experienced. When those cans exploded the corvette shook from stem to stern, and the bridge deck jumped under my feet. How that camera crew ever kept standing was a miracle. The whole ocean quivered like jelly, and then mountains of white water shot for the sky.

"I bet that gave their stomachs a workout," the Old Man muttered.

The operator came on the bridge to report that the explosions had knocked out our listening apparatus. Then Mr. Doolittle came puffing up, his wide face flushed.

"Beautiful!" he cried. "Now we'll do it again, with the camera shooting back from the bridge."

The Old Man made strange sounds in his throat. "That's the end," he said.

"But we need another angle. We got to get another angle. . . . And," Mr. Doolittle added darkly, "the Admiral said I could have anything I wanted."

"Jones," the Old Man said to me, "how many depth charges are left aboard?"

"About sixty, sir."

"Drop them all."

I stared at him. "Sir?"

"I said, drop them all. Fire all the ammunition from the guns. Shoot off flares. Shoot off rockets. Then send out a general message to all available U-boats that we are making moving pictures and request their cooperation."

"You're kidding," said Mr. Doolittle. The camera crew had now reached the bridge, and he directed the setting up of the camera. The Old Man went to the other end of the bridge and stared out at the Atlantic.

Lawes came close to me. His eyes were shining.

"It was great to see them go," he said. "If only—"

"Come on, Lawes," cried Mr. Doolittle, "get to the camera. The light's fading."

We made another run, and let another pattern go. I thought the ship was going to break in half. Great geysers of white and green water rose from the sea astern of us.

"Magnificent!" shouted Mr. Doolittle. His fat body was dancing. He rushed over to the Old Man. "Thanks very much, Captain! We can go home now."

The Old Man looked at him coldly, said nothing.

Twenty good depth charges dropped for the glory of Hollywood. Twenty cans of TNT that might have put another swastika on the *Brant's* gun shield. Ah, well! At least we were going home.

Then came the lookout's scream: "Submarine surfacing on the port quarter!"

IT WAS all a nightmare—fantastic absolutely screwy. I looked out on the port quarter and saw the long black shape. It was so absurd, so utterly incredible, that I wanted to laugh. But I didn't.

A gun opened fire. There was an explosion. I looked at my hand and it was all red. Then I saw the bloody hand move for the alarm bell, and I was pressing it. I heard the Old Man giving orders to the quartermaster. Out of the corner of his mouth he shouted at Mr. Doolittle and the movie crew: "Get below! Get off the bridge! Get under cover!"

I saw Mr. Doolittle's big mouth sag. And I saw Lawes with a strange wild look in his eyes.

I was too busy to see more. At the voice tubes to the forward gun, I was giving orders.

The submarine was making a fight. Her deck gun was as yet unmanned, but from a concealed position on her bridge a crew was pumping explosive shells into us from what I figured to be an Oerlikon rapid-firer. The sub was a big brute, rising and falling in the swell about five hundred yards off our quarter.

"Hard a-port!" I heard the Old Man yell.

The forward gun started blasting from our fo'c'sle. It was point-blank range, and a shell tore into the body of the U-boat. But the sea was high, and laying the gun was difficult.

The Old Man was coming in to ram. The submarine grew larger and larger in front of my eyes. I saw the captain of our gun throw up his arms, as the muzzle was depressed to the limit and the open sights still went over and above the long shape of the German.

In the few quick seconds before we hit—before the nose of the ship struck the U-boat abaft the conning tower—I think I saw many things. I think I saw the machine-gunner on the port wing of the bridge knock Mr. Doolittle and his crew aside. I think I saw the camera crash to the deck. I think I heard groans. I think I saw the Old Man's face, all sweat and blood, and his cap badge, green with salt water and torn, hanging crazily over the peak of his cap in front of his eyes.

The ship stopped, shuddered, went on. The black body of the U-boat leaped for us, then fell away, as steel crunched against steel and the submarine rolled over on her side. My ears were filled with the sound of plates being rent. Water cascaded over the bridge and washed away the blood, and we stood ankle-deep in swirling foam, staring down at the sea.

The rolling U-boat kept her buoyancy, wallowed in the trough of the ocean as we fell farther away from her. Her gun, silenced during the seconds of ramming, suddenly opened fire again, and we were strafed along the port side even as our own short-range weapons made their answer.

I glanced amidships, just abaft the port sea-boat, where the U-boat's shells were now hitting. The camera was set up on the pitching deck against the rail, with Mr. Doolittle and his crew huddled around it. Their grim white faces were turned toward the submarine.

I wanted to scream, "Get under cover, you bloody fools!" for they were standing on one of the most exposed parts of the ship, without a square inch of protection. But my eyes were on the U-boat again. And, somehow, I think I knew that all the screaming in the world would not have done any good.

Those men were taking pictures.

The ship under us wheeled on a dime as the Old Man barked orders and came in to ram again. This time we struck with all the power of the pounding engines, and the air was filled with thunder. The U-boat was so close I felt I could have leaned out and touched her. We slid along her wet side, and the long after part of her banged against our port bulwarks.

We rolled heavily from the collision. We fell away, and the boiling sea came between the two pitching vessels. White foam flew in the air.

I heard a yell: "Man over the side!"

I looked down and could see a head bobbing in the water, quite close to the U-boat. My eyes shot aft along the deck and I saw the head cameraman and Joe running forward, waving their arms. Behind them the camera was still upright, and clinging to it was Mr. Doolittle.

Then I knew the one in the water was Lawes, knocked overboard by the shock of the collision.

Lawes was closer to the U-boat than to us, and he swam for her in desperation. He reached the sub's tail and tried to pull himself onto her deck. She was stopped and her gun was silent.

I gave an order, "Cease fire," and we watched, fascinated. For Lawes had managed to scramble on deck, and he slung there on his hands and knees, a weird, fantastic little figure.

"Boarding party!" the Old Man shouted. There was a rush to the port sea-boat. I saw Williams with a revolver in his hand, taking charge.

The boat was being lowered when the deck hatch of the U-boat opened. A figure emerged from the hole and stood on the deck. A second head and pair of shoulders followed.

I saw Lawes raise himself to his feet and run forward on the still rolling deck. The German made a quick grab for his Lüger. The little man did not stop. He crashed into the Heinie, his fist driving, and the German staggered back, arms waving in the air. The little man hit him again, and he went over the side. He did not come up.

The second German was almost out of the hatch. Lawes leaped at him, smashing a fist down on the man's head. The man dropped out of sight and the next I knew Lawes was wrestling with the hatch cover. He slammed it shut.

The little man planted himself squarely on the hatch and waved to us. . . .

He came over with the first boatload of prisoners. His deep gray eyes were gleaming, his body was shaking.

The Old Man wiped the blood from his face and said, "I think you kept them from scuttling. Thanks to you, we'll tow this prize back to port."

Lawes turned to me and shouted, "To hell with prizes! I got one! Did you see me clout that Heinie?"

And I knew that, though nothing could repay his loss, he had come as close as he could to avenging his wife.

"WHERE is Doolittle?" the Old Man wanted to know. We were inspecting the ship's damage. He said, "Probably down in the engine room, taking the chill out of his—" He broke off. Because we had come across Mr. Doolittle.

The fat director was clinging to the camera on the port rail. He was white in the face, but he managed to smile.

"Magnificent!" he gasped. "Absolutely magnificent! Most beautiful scene I ever saw!"

"We're making port now," the Old Man said abruptly.

"Sure!" gasped Mr. Doolittle. "Sure!"

His hands let go the camera. He took one unsteady step forward, then fell headlong on the deck.

We turned him over. There was blood oozing through his clothes at his midriff. The Old Man tore open the windbreaker and shirt, and we saw the hole and the battered flesh.

Mr. Doolittle opened his eyes. "Sorry—sorry I was overbearing," he said to the Old Man. "I guess I didn't know, then, that there was a war on."

We got him below, and the Old Man went on the bridge and told the engine room to give him all speed possible and still keep the submarine in tow.

The Old Man's tired eyes stared out at the sea, and suddenly, quietly, he said, "He'll pull through. Jones, it's funny how wrong you can be about some men." Then, almost angrily, "What the hell does a little sleep matter when losing it gives you a chance to meet such men as these?" ● ●

Like a time-bomb, the story would explode upon the minds of the *Journal's* readers, and it would change the course of thought throughout the city, for the *Journal* had a record for telling the truth . . .

TOMORROW MORNING'S *Final*

BY
MAURICE BEAM

Illustrated by
HAMILTON GREENE

A good newspaperman, like a woman, may occasionally compromise with his conscience—but never ignore it

DRIVING to the office that afternoon Martin Farris, managing editor of the *Journal*, was thinking how much certain members of his staff would relish knowing he was on a spot. They weren't overly fond of him, he knew, though they were loyal to the paper. They thought him arrogant.

Well, he had traveled a long, hard road to get where he was. He hadn't wasted time sitting at bars, swapping journalistic experiences. Perhaps he had flouted other minor traditions of his craft. If so, it had brought him success beyond his years. A national magazine had labeled him "slender, neat, sharp-minded, one of the keenest of that anonymous breed of men who pull the strings on metropolitan newspapers." He was secretly proud of the pert accolade. Newspapers had been and were his life.

Now he was in the worst spot of his career, and it was ironic that he had been put in it by the Platts. He frowned

as he thought of Bill Platt's wife. He hadn't known her well and had not seen her in years. Last night she'd talked to Coyle, the *Journal* news editor. She'd told Coyle she would return today because it was Mart she must talk with. It wasn't hard for Mart to guess what she wanted. It would be about Cawthorn, the *Journal's* candidate for mayor.

BILL PLATT had phoned him yesterday and told him he had absolute proof that Cawthorn was crooked. He'd cut Bill off. It was elementary that the *Journal* couldn't admit on the eve of election that its candidate was not an honest public servant.

The fact was, this election was of great importance to Richard Winter, the *Journal's* publisher. And, therefore, to Mart. Richard Winter was about to go East to close a merger deal with the owners of the *Enterprise*, their afternoon opposition. It would be Winter's biggest gamble to date and the publisher had timed his trip to coincide with the mayoralty election, for Cawthorn's victory would be the *Journal's* victory and what the *Journal* gained in prestige, the *Enterprise* would lose.

Mart's future, too, hung upon the outcome of Winter's negotiations.

As he entered the Gothic foyer of the *Journal* skyscraper, he saw Mrs. Platt. She was waiting near the counter where the public files were kept. Retreat, with dignity, was impossible.

"Could I speak to you alone, Mr. Farris?"

He said brusquely, "All right. Step over here." He led the way to the end of the table and faced her. His manner said plainly, "Let's get this over with."

"I came to ask you to go see Bill, my husband. Do you remember me?"

"Yes, I remember you." He was surprised that she'd changed so little. She was still plump and her face had remained strangely youthful, without lines. Her blue eyes were wide and friendly. Bill had married her that first year Mart had worked on the *Sentinel*, he recalled. She'd worked for the paper as correspondent in a small town nearby.

"Bill phoned me," he said shortly. "What's the matter with him? He's been doing well enough with the Cawthorn publicity—" He stopped, careful not to commit himself. He'd helped Bill get the Cawthorn job as he'd helped him get other jobs on the fringes of journalism during recent years.

"Bill's quit Cawthorn," she said quietly, "because Cawthorn's stolen more than forty thousand dollars from the city on paving contracts. Bill wanted you to know."

"Proof!" His irritation grew. "No politician's immune to rumor."

"This isn't rumor. Bill has names, dates, figures. It can be checked easily. He has the story written and you've nearly three hours before your Home Edition goes to press."

"So Bill wrote the story."

"Yes. Late last night, and he mailed it special delivery to you after you refused to talk to him or see me."

There was no malice in her words and her eyes were filled with a gentle kindliness. They were—Mart realized it suddenly—they were happy eyes. He shifted his own gaze quickly.

"Why should I go to Bill?" he asked cautiously.

"Because he can't come to you." Mrs. Platt laughed in genuine amusement. "There's a warrant out for him on a charge of embezzlement. Cawthorn wants to keep him out of the way until after election. A very old trick." She became serious. "But Bill escaped the trap." Her voice dropped. "He's staying at the Raymond, a little hotel on McKenzie. You can go see him there."

"Why didn't Bill give this story to the *Enterprise*? They're fighting Cawthorn." He wanted a moment to think. The potential danger in the situation was looming bigger.

"You're the one Bill thought of, naturally. He swears by you; always has, ever since you and he were on the *Sentinel*."

Mart felt relief. He made a decision quickly. "I'm sorry, Mrs. Platt. There's nothing I can do."

She didn't seem to understand. "The *Journal* can swing the election either way. Bill says the *Journal's* got great prestige—"

"Perhaps." A little desperately he groped for ideas. But the right words would not come. So he said, "You know newspapers," and tried to make it sound significant. Surely, during the uncertain years she'd spent as the wife of Bill Platt she had learned that the business was not as completely romantic as the movies pictured it.

She spoke gently. "You do remember, don't you? I wasn't sure. I was Farmington correspondent for the *Sentinel*, remember?" She smiled proudly. He knew now that his hint had made no impression whatever, that it was impossible for this woman to understand innuendo. "Bill always said that you were the best newspaperman he'd ever known. Please come and talk to him."

"I can't." His face grew warm and he knew it was flushed. Mrs. Platt seemed not to notice. "It's impossible for me to get away."

She turned away. "Well, if you won't, you won't. I shouldn't be keeping you away from your work. I'll tell Bill. Goodbye, Mr. Farris."

She extended her hand and he shook it. Then Bill Platt's wife was gone, leaving him with a depressing sense of finality. She wouldn't return. She'd have a childlike belief that he'd meant what he said. She wouldn't question it any more than she would resent it.

Exasperated, he walked rapidly toward the elevators.

HE SAT down at his desk in the glass-paneled office on the editorial floor. Beyond the panels the local room staff bent over desks and typewriters under a high white ceiling. The repressed clamor of their work and the racking of concealed teletypes were an orchestration that usually gave him a comforting sense of sanctuary. Today, it did not.

For a time he tried to concentrate on early proofs of election stories slugged for the first edition. He told himself irritably to forget Bill Platt and Bill Platt's wife. Long ago he had learned caution and the wisdom of avoiding chance tentacles of sentimentality that came seeking a successful man out of the past. He reminded himself that he had tried to help Bill often enough, but what could you do with a man who wouldn't help himself?

His secretary entered. "Mr. Winter phoned. He's leaving on the night plane and will see you before he goes. I made the appointment for six."

"All right. Has the afternoon mail been sorted?"

"Not quite, Mr. Farris."

"There's a special delivery addressed to me."

"Yes sir."

He would destroy Bill's story. Then he could forget it.

His mind came back to Richard Winter. For himself, Winter's success—the success of Cawthorn's campaign—meant promotion, his last step up the ladder, to the very top. He was sure of it, sure of the reward for his striving, for the ability and single-minded devotion to career that had carried him so far since those uncertain years on the *Sentinel* of which Mrs. Platt had reminded him.

HE moved to a window and stood watching traffic in the street, angry at his feeling of restlessness. Angry at Bill Platt for not understanding ambition, the demands it made on a man.

Bill Platt was honest. There was a simple quality of integrity in him that made him incapable of deceit.

Moreover, Bill was an expert reporter. If he said Cawthorn was crooked, his proof would be unimpeachable. The *Journal* was backing a thief for a position of public trust. Mart Farris faced it squarely now, having evaded it at first. It outraged his sense of caution; it challenged his arrogance; it was a nasty spot and he was on it.

He seized a phone and asked for the Raymond Hotel, but before the connection was completed he cancelled the call. "Forget Bill Platt!" he told himself sternly. But an image rode his memory and he could not dislodge it—the image of a squarish, weathered face under a thick tangle of iron-gray hair, a long, horsey, blunt-boned face framing a pair of wide open blue eyes.

The face of Bill Platt as he'd seen it first that summer night so long ago, a kindly, wise face, but, he'd come to think, weak. Yet he had never forgotten the face, nor his awe and respect for Bill Platt when he had hired a midwest village boy named Martin Farris as a raw, scared cub reporter.

He was glad when Coyle came in. He felt reassured by Coyle's towering size, strong, rather cruel face and cynical, work-lined eyes. Before them the

memories of Bill Platt's inept magnanimities seemed childish. They and the mood accompanying them faded.

COYLE spoke exuberantly. "Mart, it's cinched! Cawthorn's as good as in. Sommer and Thorne have got stuff on his welfare work for twenty thousand reform votes. What a politician that bird is! He gives these amateurs lessons even in philanthropy." Coyle laughed. "He and us."

Mart smiled. He said, "You aren't here to talk about Cawthorn." He had put Bill Platt out of mind. Coyle understood about ambition. Coyle was sensible, not a dreamy idealist like Bill Platt.

Coyle grew serious. "What's the chief said about the final set-up?"

"You know as much as I do."

The news editor went on with conviction, "You'll be in charge after the consolidation, Mart. No doubt about it. Now look. If I'm not curious, my wife is. There are others on the staff who'll think this M. E.'s desk belongs to them. Between you and me—who gets it?"

Mart said, "You know it's yours if I have anything to say. I'm to see the chief at six." He glanced at the clock as his secretary opened the door.

"Here's the special, Mr. Farris." She handed him a long, bulky envelope.

He tore it open. Inside were eight pages of typescript, triple-spaced. He thumbed through them, began reading at the beginning. He handed them one by one to Coyle. As he reached the end of page four, Coyle interrupted breathlessly.

"Say, this is the stuff the *Enterprise* has been hinting at! Who's the correspondent?"

Mart stopped reading and looked up. "Bill Platt."

"There was a Mrs. Platt—I told you —here yesterday, asking for you. And there's a guy named Platt been handling publicity for Cawthorn. I get it!"

Mart did not commit himself and Coyle gave him a quick look. "Who is Platt, anyway?" he demanded.

"A newspaperman from the corn belt, like you and I. He was my first editor. I was a kid feeding a clamshell press on a country weekly. The county-seat daily owner sent to Chicago for an editor and the editor was Bill Platt. I went to see him as I'd gone to see all editors within bicycle range. The others had no opening for an inexperienced native. Bill made one. He gave me a job as cub." Mart stopped, surprised at having said so much.

"Sure, I know. You've got a sentimental feeling for the old boy, naturally. You took the paper away from him, didn't you?"

"No," Mart said. "I didn't take it. He gave it to me. He taught me to run it, then he moved on."

"Fired?"

"Quit."

"A tramp?"

"In a way. Bill drank too much and he was restless. He married a girl from a nearby town, the one you met. She went with him when he left the *Sentinel*. I would have gone, too, but he made me promise to stay. So I ran the paper alone at a time when most cubs are chasing obits."

Coyle smiled bleakly. "Did you a favor against his will, eh? He still sounds like just another booze bum."

"He wouldn't deny it." Mart let his mind ride on a flood of recollection. "Used to call himself a sprint man. Never satisfied. Not just dreaming of greener pastures, but going to find them or at least hunt for them, and always winding up on another copy desk or rewrite or as convention reporter during the season. In between times making plans to buy a weekly or write fiction and never doing either. You know the type. Newspapers draw them or maybe breed them."

A young girl was murdered in one of the dives . . . and Stark's buildings were cleaned out.

An odd vehemence showed in Coyle's answer. "They breed 'em. It's the tension. In other lines a man makes mistakes and nobody but the insiders know it. Here you make 'em and half a million readers are there to spot 'em. It's a constant strain, knowing your errors will be printed. You begin to think of roads branching off—" The news editor caught his words and bent toward Mart eagerly. "That's what this guy's in now —a branch line, publicity. He's dug up some dirt on Cawthorn; he's all set for a little genteel blackmail, using the *Journal*, using your friendship—"

"No!" Mart's tone was firm.

"Then he's angling for a job," said Coyle, unabashed.

"Not that either. Bill doesn't trust himself where liquor is concerned. He won't work for me, though he'll work for others. One of his quirks." He hesitated. The notion came that Mrs. Platt must be a woman of rare sympathy, though in no sense a martyr. The calm contentment in her eyes had been genuine.

Coyle's eyes were watchful, his tone placating. "I know, Mart. An old pal. But that's no reason for taking this seriously. An about-face the night before election would do more than lick Cawthorn. It would hurt the *Journal*. It would hurt you. It could kill the merger." The news editor swallowed hard and Mart realized that he was deeply shaken. He continued stubbornly. "Let's be realistic. Cawthorn's no worse than other politicians." He added defiantly, "Dig deep enough anywhere and you'll find dirt. It's no crime *not* to dig."

Mart, smiling, answered his phone, then rose and put his hand on Coyle's shoulder. "The chief's waiting. Now don't worry, Ed. We're not crusaders. The breed's died out. Did you think I've worked all these years just to turn Don Quixote?"

Coyle stood up. For an instant he seemed to grope for words, then said quickly, "Listen, Mart, long ago I hitched my wagon to you. It's not a new trick, you know. You're a top man in this game and I made up my mind to follow you, if I could." He forced a wry smile and the heavy, lined face was almost comical in its intensity. "That's why I shot off my mouth."

"Why—thanks, Ed." It occurred to Mart that here was honesty also, that honesty had no single, narrow definition. He found the notion comforting.

RICHARD WINTER'S office was massive but finely finished, matching Winter, a hairy, rugged man who wore the cloak of courtliness impatiently. A fighter, Winter used the rapier for effect, yet loved the bludgeon more. So Mart Farris had dramatized him. He had never fully understood Winter's uncannily sharp, fiscal mind. There was a legend that Winter thought of reporters as editorial clerks. Mart always felt slightly ill at ease with Winter.

"Martin, I'm leaving in an hour. Got those *Enterprise* pirates lined up, I think. Hope by day after tomorrow to wire you the merger's gone through and the *Enterprise* is ours. May as well tell you I'm thinking of you as general

manager of all editorial functions in both outfits—if and when. You'll pick your own managing editor."

"It would be Coyle, of course." Mart controlled his quick elation, aware that Winter hadn't entirely committed himself, knowing that Winter always withheld a little more than he expressed.

The publisher continued, apparently rambling. "But for three years the *Enterprise* crowd will be on the receiving end of this contract. They'll try to dictate personnel, to push their own staff. The Robbins people; chain owners. I want to be fully prepared."

Winter's obliqueness was apparent. "What is it they've got against me, or is it specific?" Mart asked carefully.

The publisher shed politeness, became more abrupt. "It's nothing against you. But it is specific. This'll be a big job. Twelve years ago when you came to me I investigated, naturally, and I was satisfied. Since then I've been more than satisfied with what you've accomplished here. But now—I've got to be positive on one point before I face this gang."

Winter cleared his throat, allowing time for reply, but Mart waited, really puzzled.

"You were once editor of a small paper down-state," said Winter quickly. "The *Sentinel.*"

He sensed now what was coming. "That's correct."

"While there you tore the lid off a local scandal that embarrassed your publisher, a man named Stark. What was it?"

Mart answered calmly, hiding his anxiety. "Stark owned half a block of apartments in a not-so-good district. They were rented to gambling dives, and worse. In them, miners and factory workers were mulcted regularly. Small-time crooks in a small town, but vicious. We exposed them."

Put so baldly, it sounded inconsequential. But not to Winter, apparently. "Quite a story. Common, though," Winter grunted.

"More than common. Classic. Though it didn't seem so then; it was my first big story."

"Your publisher wasn't responsible for what his tenants did."

"That occurred to us. For months we held off. Stark was a retired manufacturer, who traveled a lot. Then, while he was away, a young girl was murdered in one of those dives, a decent girl who'd been deceived into going there. It was a sordid mess, but we printed the facts. Well, the public put up a howl and Stark's buildings were cleaned out."

"And the tenants—where did they go?"

"They scattered, except for two, who were convicted. Most of them left town."

"To repeat the performance in some other town. Martin, you don't believe you can eradicate evil merely by making it move to another town?"

Mart said sheepishly, "In those days, we never thought of it that way."

"You say 'we'."

"My editor was a man named Platt."

The publisher's frosty look became one of thoughtfulness. Then he said, "Thank you. This is between us. What happened so many years ago doesn't count. No one will know it, anyway, unless we tell them. The Robbins crowd—this deal means more to us than to them—won't be as meticulous as I've been. I'm a careful man, Martin. I think you understand."

"I certainly do, Mr. Winter."

Winter glanced at his watch and his tone lightened. "Oh, by the way, the campaign—no change in line-up, eh? Cawthorn's safe?"

"As good as in." Mart smiled. He felt relieved. The chief hadn't minced matters. He knew exactly what he wanted.

Winter rose, extended his hand and Mart took it. The older man's grip was strong. "Understand, I wasn't carping in mentioning the *Sentinel* history. I just wanted to check the story with you." He pointed his next words. "A paper's value is based on intangibles. Prestige can be measured in dollars and cents. We'll make them realize that."

"Good luck, Mr. Winter."

"For all of us," Winter said jovially. "And a bigger *Journal.*"

MART didn't return to his own office. He rode the elevator to the composing room. Long batteries of linotypes chattered their unending, uncadenced beat. Trucks bearing page forms rolled between the make-up banks and mat rollers. Sterotype casters clanked slatily at intervals. Workmen who recognized him greeted him respectfully. In the old days as night editor he had come here regularly. Now his duties did not call him here except on inspection trips.

Tonight, though, it was no inspection of externals that had brought him here. Vaguely, he wanted to see again, in its wholeness, the giant mechanisms which represented the palpable force of this newspaper, mechanisms controlled, finally, by the touch of *his* mind alone. Always before they had given him an inward sense of power, had restored his ego.

He stood breathing in the pungent odor compounded of steel and oil and ink, the essence of this foundation upon which daily was reared a towering edifice of words, of these solid black engines and the men who moved them, the only realities in a fragile world built of paper. Yet the product they created, a newspaper called the *Journal,* was intrinsically worthless even though, as Winter had said, it had an intangible value. What gave it value?

The obvious answer to the paradox made Mart shrug impatiently. Was it so trite as that? Was there no deeper mystery worrying him that so shallow an explanation could not dispel?

He returned to his office through the feverish beehive of a city-room at deadline. At his desk he pushed the Platt story aside angrily. Sanity was returning! Winter, Coyle, were right. They were realists. Bill Platt was childish, had always been so, unable to shape a personal morality, yet always trying to impose morality upon others through the power of print. He was full of wispy sermons. Phrases out of one of them came back to Mart now.

"The public supports us, makes us possible. We owe them everything. Fight for them. Protect them. . . . Words are powerful, good or bad depending on how they're used. Never forget that, kid. And printed words are a thousand times more powerful than spoken words. They build pictures, sure, and more—they are pictures. . . ."

Tripe. Silly sentiment. That Bill Platt believed in it lent it no dignity. Bill's honesty was pathologic, without self-righteousness. Ambitious men knew the futility of that kind of idealism.

COYLE came in, smiling expectantly. "The chief get away?" From below they heard the faint thunder of the presses. The Street Edition was rolling.

Mart returned the smile wearily. "Want to move in now? This is your office."

Coyle's elation grew. He unconsciously dramatized. "You're at the top, Mart, all the way. I'm—" He broke off, staring. "What is it? What is it, Mart?"

"A note—here at the end." Mart spoke in surprise. He had picked up the Platt story, to destroy it. He hadn't seen the note before, in Bill's writing, the heavy-lined, erratic writing he remembered so well. He read swiftly:

> Maybe I'll see you before you see this, Mart. Mrs. P. thought it best to tell you personally. But if I don't, I want to say that it's true, every word. Cawthorn's crooked. His kind will ruin any town they run. At the same time, I know this isn't a little burg in the corn belt, so if you don't want this, no one else will ever get it. The *Journal* isn't the *Sentinel,* eh, Mart? It was really a sentinel, wasn't it—a better one than Stark ever realized he had, though Stark wasn't really bad because he never knew. Not like Cawthorn—

Mart let the paper fall from his hand. He looked up into Coyle's worried eyes. He thought: *To him this is nonsense. Or is it?* Had Coyle, too, sometimes recalled the thrill of his first assignment, of seeing his first scribbling in print? Had Coyle, too, dreamed, or had he from the first accepted without question the realities of compromise and expediency as the price of success?

He stood up suddenly. Coyle, watching him, said, "You're going to break that story!"

"Yes." Mart glanced at the clock and his words flew like bullets. "Send a man to head off Winter at the airport. Have Sommer and Thorne find Bill Platt, Mrs. Platt. Here's the address. When the Street Edition comes up, kill everything on Cawthorn. Tell Sloan to do a three-column box for page one, explaining."

He thrust the Platt story into Coyle's hand.

"Mark it for seventy-two point banner. By-line William Platt. When proofs come, I'll write an editorial note to lead it."

"I've never argued with you, Mart, but—don't do this!"

"I must."

"For the sake of an old boomer who happened to work with you years ago?"

"And for the sake of what he taught me," Mart said tiredly. He felt no triumph.

"It'll wreck you. It'll hurt the paper."

"The paper will recover. So will I."

Desperately, Coyle changed tack. "There's never been a business office 'must' in this shop. Winter's been fair. We owe a duty to him."

"There are many kinds of duty."

Coyle glanced down at the paper rolled in his fist. Mart wondered if the big man would tear it into shreds. Then Coyle said huskily, "Okay. I'm still following you," and walked quickly to the door.

Alone, Mart inserted paper in a typewriter and began pecking the keys. The sheet inched from the roller. He took it out, read it, made one or two pencil corrections, then laid it face-up on the desk.

HE CAME into the news room slowly, savoring its noises. A man on the copy-desk rim lifted vacant eyes, looked at him. Then the eyes cleared and their owner regarded him curiously, alertly. At a far door, Mart stopped and looked back.

Only Coyle and one or two men on the copy desk would know as yet of the Platt story. But through the queer grapevine of the news room it would presently be known to everyone, even before proofs came up. By now, it was torn into takes and distributed to the machines. Parts of it were already in type, lying moribund on a cold steel surface. The whole would not come fully alive until it was on newsprint and hundreds of thousands of copies had seeped through the city and the city's suburbs. Like a time-bomb, it would explode upon the minds of the *Journal's* readers, and it would change the course of thought throughout the city, for the *Journal* had a record for telling the truth and nobody would doubt the story.

Truth. Without it a newspaper was nothing but a bundle of wood fibres daubed with lampblack!

Coming back to his own office at last, he found Richard Winter waiting.

The publisher was seated at the desk, holding two long strips of first proofs on the Platt story. He frowned.

"This is it, eh? You're ready to run?"

"The presses are rolling already. But my resignation frees you of our contract. It's there on the desk. You can stop the story." His voice was unsteady.

Winter looked at him coldly. He was no longer polite. He asked harshly, "What the devil's got into you?" And before Mart could reply: "This would make us look silly after the way we've nursed Cawthorn without finding out he's crooked. What kind of newspapermen have I got?"

"We've known about Cawthorn, but we've deliberately kept our eyes shut. Didn't you say that evil cannot be stopped merely by making it move?"

"And you agreed," shot back Winter.

It was coming now, Mart thought, the final blast of sarcasm, the barbed insults that, from Winter's lips, could smart like acid. He had seen others writhe beneath the lash of Winter's tongue. Now he would feel it.

To his surprise, Winter veered. "What did Coyle have to do with this?"

"It wasn't Coyle's job to have anything to do with it. He didn't have."

Winter breathed heavily in the still room, looked at the proofs. "Platt's the man you were with on the *Sentinel*. Where is he now?"

Mart told him, in some detail. As he finished, Winter stood up. Mart had never seen the deep eyes gleam so brightly. "I accept your resignation," Winter said. "And I'm having a new contract drawn up for Coyle."

MART stood still, his face burning. He waited for the rest of it. It would come now, Winter's outburst. He'd take it and swallow his pride. He was no longer a man of authority and responsibility. He was a jobless newspaperman.

But Winter's voice softened. "And I'll draw another contract for you—as editorial director of all *Journal* operations."

"What?" Mart gasped.

"You started this. Now finish it." Winter's tight smile appeared miraculously. "Go after Cawthorn. Use your best men. Get Platt in here." His eyes still gleamed though not, Mart saw now, in anger. "As for the *Enterprise* crowd—the *Journal's* best asset is its honesty. I nearly forgot it for a while and you did, too. A simple fact, a childish idea, but one worth dollars and cents—an intangible." Winter's brows smoothed and he laughed. "Damned easy to forget. If you're ever an owner you'll learn how essential it is to have an editor who knows how to remember."

He began buttoning his coat as he strode toward the door. "Have someone call the airport. Tell 'em to hold the eastbound sleeper. Air-mail me tomorrow morning's final."

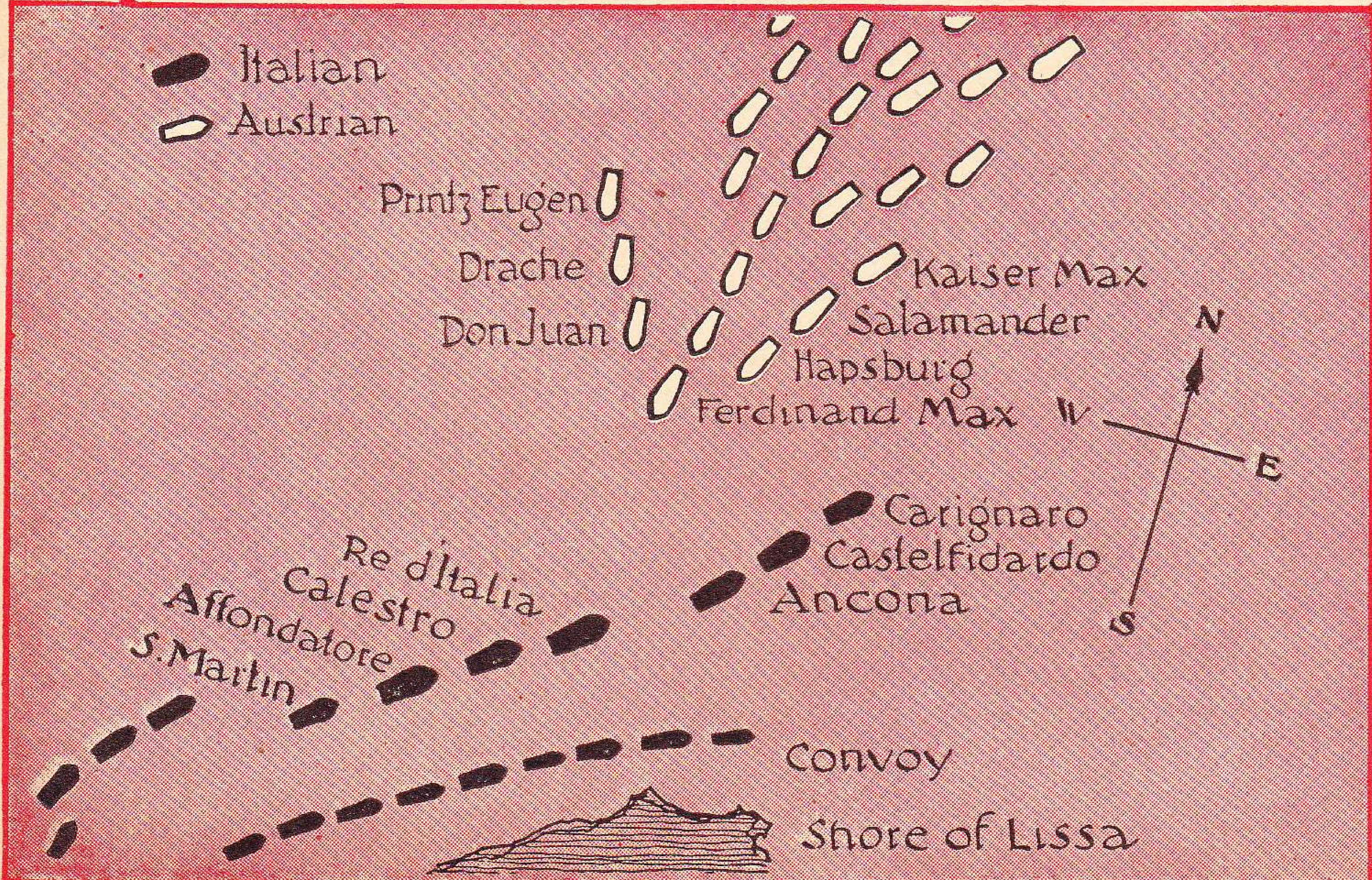
Then Winter was gone and Mart grabbed the phone. His voice crackled in an old and familiar pattern. "Airport!" he said to the PBX operator. "And send Coyle in here. Tell Sommer or Thorne—either one you can locate—to go to the Raymond Hotel and bring both the Platts here. Both of 'em, understand—Mr. and Mrs. William Platt." ● ●

This Thin Gillette sure has the stuff—
Talks turkey to beards plenty tough—
Lasts long, shaves fast, saves dough as well—
And that's why wise men say it's swell!

Top quality at rock-bottom price

Produced By The Maker Of The Famous Gillette Blue Blade

Test your skill as a naval strategist in this actual battle problem!



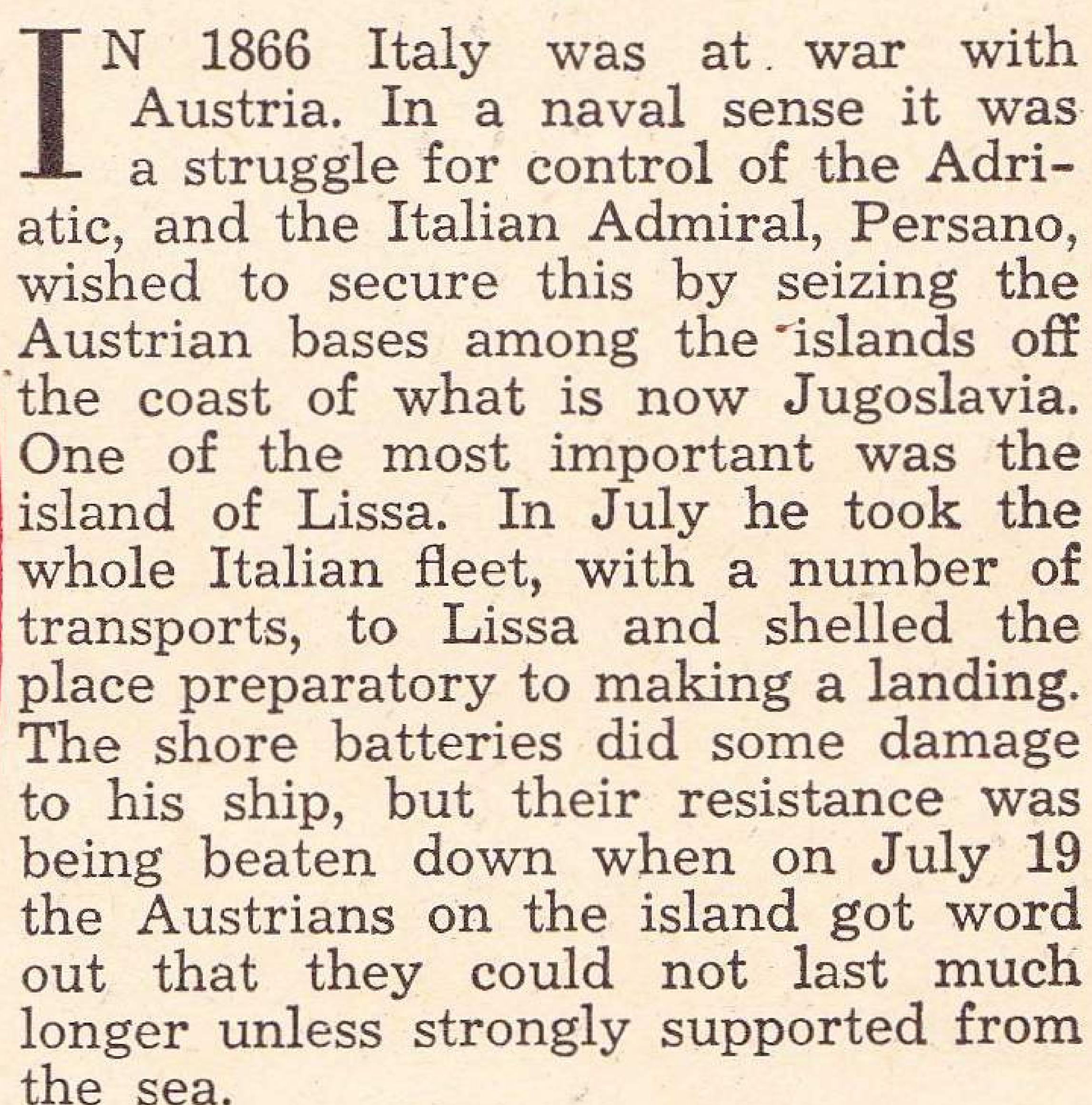
ARM CHAIR ADMIRAL

BY FLETCHER PRATT

No. 3
The Battle of Lissa

When Admiral Tegetthoff's little Austrian fleet stood protectively before Lissa in 1866, the admiral faced an Italian fleet which outclassed his own in number, armor and gun-power. Read here the battle plan as outlined by Mr. Pratt—then see if you, too, could have plucked victory from defeat

Illustrated by GORDON GRANT



IN 1866 Italy was at war with Austria. In a naval sense it was a struggle for control of the Adriatic, and the Italian Admiral, Persano, wished to secure this by seizing the Austrian bases among the islands off the coast of what is now Jugoslavia. One of the most important was the island of Lissa. In July he took the whole Italian fleet, with a number of transports, to Lissa and shelled the place preparatory to making a landing. The shore batteries did some damage to his ship, but their resistance was being beaten down when on July 19 the Austrians on the island got word out that they could not last much longer unless strongly supported from the sea.

It was the transition period between iron ships and wooden; both fleets included vessels of each type, but the Italian navy was stronger than the Austrian in the proportion of nearly two to one, both in armored ships and heavy guns. The Italians had two powerful frigates with 7-inch armor, built at New York, which were among the strongest vessels in the world; five frigates with 4.5-inch armor, only a little less strong; two heavy armored gunboats, two big central battery ships and the ram, *Affontadori*, Persano's flagship, with a turret like a monitor. In addition, they had eleven wooden ships mounting, all told, 382 guns.

On the Austrian side there were two frigates about the size of the two largest Italians, five smaller frigates, also with 4.5-inch armor and five wooden ships—twelve fighting vessels against the twenty-three Italians. Their Admiral was W. von Tegetthoff.

The Austrians had remained at their base at Pola during most of the campaign, unable with their weaker fleet to challenge the Italian control of the sea. When the appeal from Lissa came, Admiral Tegetthoff perceived that the Austrian position would become still weaker if he did not stop Persano's operation against his island bases. He put out to see what he could do, steering for Lissa, with a few small gunboats carrying some troops to reinforce the garrison in case he could reach the place. On July 20th, as he approached Lissa, he could see the Italian wooden ships and their transports close inshore, firing at the batteries and preparing to land troops.

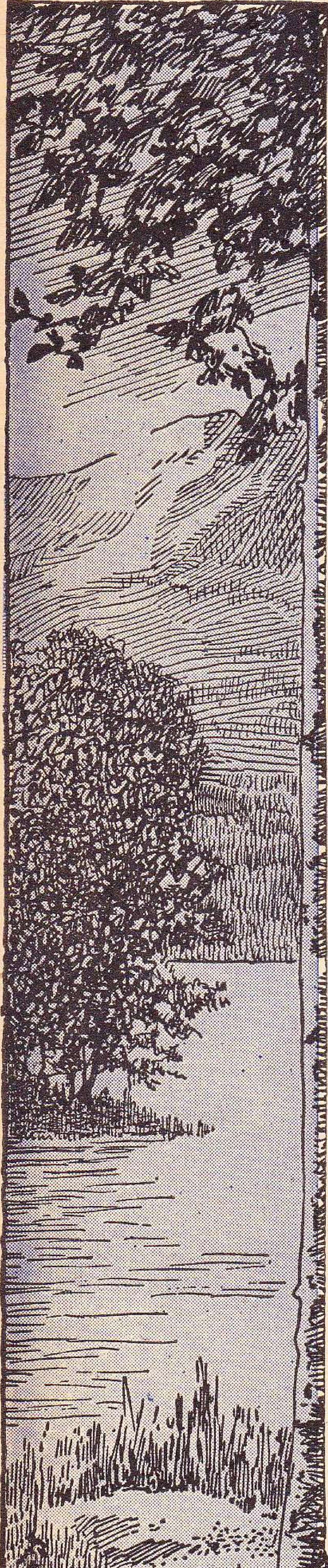
Out in front of them, in a long line of battle now curving toward him, came the eleven Italian ironclads, with the huge first-class frigate *Re de Italia* and the turret ram *Affontadori* at the center. Tegetthoff's own outweighted and outnumbered fleet had been formed for the approach in a double wedge since he did not know when or where he would find the Italians and he wished to give his unarmored ships and small gunboats the protection of the more powerful vessels. His flagship, *Ferdinand Max*, was at the center of the first wedge, with his other armored vessels slanting away in either direction behind and offering protection to the second wedge, which consisted of his wooden ships.

If he now retreated without a battle the Italians would take Lissa; and since some of the Italian ironclads were faster than his wooden ships, it was probable that he would lose several vessels in trying to get away. If he continued to advance slowly on his present course, the head of the Italian line would curve around his armored ships and smash up the small vessels in the rear, meanwhile concentrating on his left wing as they went past.

What could Tegetthoff do?

(What would you have done? Think it over carefully before you decide, then *turn to page 34* *and see how nearly right you are.)*

Illustrated by
DONALD PIERCE



These light swords of the English were no match for the heavy claymore blade.

IN the forward cabin of the ship, Donel Macdougal changed from seaman's clothing to the tartan kilts, the Lincoln green tunic and the soft leather brogues which he had last worn two years before. Atop his flaming red hair he placed a Highland bonnet and around his waist he buckled his broad-bladed claymore. Turning then toward the man seated at the table, he asked bluntly, "What think you, Captain? Has the sea robbed me of my Highland look?"

Captain Gartney glanced up from the ship's log in which he was writing. He shook his head. "Nay, Donel. You are taller, perhaps, than two years ago, and deeper of chest. It may be that your skin is a shade darker. That is all."

A faint smile touched Donel's lips. His hand moved to the hilt of the claymore, then dropped to his side.

"Come and look at what I have just put down in the log-book," suggested the captain. "It might interest you."

Donel crossed to the table and peered

Go with Black Donel Macdougal to his highland home—when Scotland, still untamed, was feeling the crushing weight of Cromwell's invading Roundheads

BY PHILIP KETCHUM

WAR SONG OF THE Highlands

over the captain's shoulder. The entry covered most of a page. It read:

> At dawn of this day and within sight of the coast of Scotland, picked up a fisherman whose boat was lost in the storm last night. From him learned of Cromwell's victory at Worcester and had other news of important happenings.
>
> Also on this day at some time after dusk, two seamen, by name Donel Macdougal and Angus O'Shannaig, deserted the ship, stealing the gig and rowing for shore. Efforts to re-take them failed though the gig was recovered.

"You are a real friend, sir," Donel muttered.

"My wife was of your clan, lad. A Macdougal from the Loch Ardin country." He turned as the door was opened.

Angus O'Shannaig came into the cabin. He was a short, stooped man, much older than Donel. His face was deeply wrinkled and he had a thick russet beard, streaked here and there with gray. He, too, had changed to a Highland costume.

"Ready, Angus?" Donel asked.

The older man nodded. "If you insist on it, lad. Yet I doubt we can accomplish anything. You will find few friends among them."

The captain got to his feet and crossed to the door. "I'll see to the gig. We should not be far from the shore."

Donel moved to the older man's side. "Angus," he said slowly, "it was never my purpose to return to Scotland. You know that. Yet, after the news the fisherman brought, there is nothing else I can do."

"He may have lied, Donel. Cromwell may not have been victorious over the Scots. And even if he has been, it does not sound reasonable that your brother Alastair and the other clan chieftains would be thrown into jail."

"If they are free I shall leave again."

"Unless you meet too many O'Mores."

Donel shrugged. He turned to the door and made his way to the deck. A light rain was falling and it was very dark. He found the captain at the rail.

"The gig is lowered and waiting," Captain Gartney said. "Beach it well, for I must recover it at dawn."

Donel shook the captain's hand and wondered what he could say to show his appreciation to this man who had taken him aboard two years before, who had been so patient with him during his first few months at sea and who was being so loyal now.

"Good luck to you, Black Donel," whispered the captain. "And strike one blow at Cromwell's roundheads for me."

"Aye, sir. A blow for you," Donel promised. Then, grasping one of the ropes which hung over the side, he slid down to the gig. Angus followed him and in another moment they had cast off and were rowing toward the heavy shadows which marked Scotland's coast.

IN the first village which they reached the next morning they verified the story the fisherman had told them. It was a year since they had had any news of affairs in Scotland and England, and during that year much had happened. Charles Stuart, heir to the joint throne and rightful king, since Cromwell's execution of his father, had returned from exile in France. He had been crowned at Scone and a great Scot army had been raised to take issue with Cromwell, who had made himself ruler of England and Ireland and who also sought to dominate Scotland. And it would seem that Cromwell had succeeded, for a year before at Dunbar,

and then at Worcester within the past month, the Scots had been defeated.

"One of Cromwell's generals, a scoundrel named Monck," said an old villager, "has been sent north to crush the rebellion in Scotland. His men have arrested our leaders. Some they have executed. Others they hold in jail. The land is no longer ours. It belongs to them."

A deep bitterness sounded in the man's voice. He muttered Cromwell's name and then spat out an epithet. "Where have you been that you know not this?" he asked suddenly.

"Across the sea," Donel answered.

The old man sighed. "You have returned to Scotland in a dark hour."

Angus and Donel moved on across the lowlands and toward the distant green hills to the west. From all sources the story was the same. Cromwell's roundheads had made themselves masters of Scotland. Two names besides Cromwell's were mentioned over and over—General Monck and Captain Giles Preedy. It would have been hard to tell which of the three was the most hated. . . .

DONEL and Angus spent that first night at an inn, and next morning they were able to secure horses. By dusk of the following day they had reached a familiar land on the fringe of the hill country. Here, wide moors and marshlands dotted the rolling face of the earth and a chilly night wind carried the scent of the heather in its arms. Thick bracken lined the sides of icy cold streams. Far ahead, the bold dome of Benlomand was outlined against the purple shadows of the sky. This was home, and the feel of the country stabbed through Donel Macdougal with the sharpness of a knife, making his blood tingle with a strange excitement. Old memories crowded upon him, bringing with them a nostalgia that put a lump in his throat.

The road they were following came to a fork and Angus swung to the left. Donel called him back. "We will go the other way. It is shorter."

Angus scowled. "You would go through Badernoch?"

"Aye. And why not?"

The frown on the older man's face deepened. "Think you the O'Mores have forgotten Black Donel?"

A bitter smile touched Donel Macdougal's lips and he automatically lifted a hand to his flaming red hair. It was this red hair of his which was partly responsible for the nickname 'Black' Donel. The reason for it reached far back into his family's history, back to the days of Kenneth MacAlpine, Scotland's first king. In that ancient time, so the story went, the king had been warned by the Taghairm oracle to beware of his red-haired son, in whose veins ran all the evil of the MacAlpine line. As a consequence of this warning, Kenneth MacAlpine had sent his son to another part of Scotland. The story of the oracle's warning, however, had gone with him, and his Highland neighbors had taken to calling him 'Black' Donel. In the generations which followed, each red-haired MacAlpine descendant had been labeled from the day of his birth as a trouble-maker, a rebel, a man to be regarded with suspicion.

In his own case, this had caused Donel only a faint resentment until that day, three years ago, when Robin O'More had been found slain in a wooded glen near the falls of Tammerloch. Men had recalled, then, the bad blood between Robin O'More and Donel Macdougal and when Donel had not denied the slaying, the old curse of the Taghairm oracle was remembered. From that day on, men had called him Black Donel and the O'More's had sought his life. At first he had stubbornly refused to flee from the country and in many a brush with the O'Mores he had given them additional reasons to hate him. Finally, however, he had listened to the advice of his father and, with Angus O'Shannaig, had gone to sea. . . .

"Even in times such as these, the O'Mores will not have forgotten you," Angus was saying.

Donel laughed and in the sound of his laughter there was a trace of his old recklessness. "Come," he said to Angus. "There is an inn a few leagues up this road where we may eat and drink. Let's not worry about the O'Mores."

The inn was situated on the banks of a wide stream and was protected on another side by a high stone cliff. Friendly lights blinked from its windows, and as the two Highlanders rode up a boy came running out to take charge of their horses.

Donel swung stiffly to the ground and for a moment stood listening to the sound of rushing water and to the whistle of the wind down the canyon the stream had cut in the rock. The door of the inn opened and a shaft of light stretched out across the ground. It was almost immediately blacked out by the broad figure of a man who appeared in the doorway.

The man in the doorway stepped back, and Donel entered the inn. Angus followed him, looked swiftly around the room.

"By your tartan you are Macdougal men," said the innkeeper, "and are far from home. Perhaps you would stay here the night."

"Nay," answered Angus gruffly. "We seek only food and wine."

The innkeeper nodded. "I have it, and of the best."

He was a short, heavy man with a ruddy complexion and dark hair. He stared hard at Donel, his eyes going repeatedly to the red hair.

"I like this not at all," Angus whispered as the man hurried from the room.

Donel shrugged and moved to the wide table in front of the fireplace. He sat down and leaned wearily back in his chair.

Suddenly, and with no warning at all, the front door burst open and a man clad in kilt and tunic staggered into the inn. One hand clasped a blood-stained claymore, the other was clutched to his breast. The man took several steps into the room, swaying, and in that moment Donel saw that he was young and that his face was very pale. Blood was oozing between the fingers of the hand that was clutched at his chest. Then the man's body went limp and he sprawled to the floor.

Donel jumped to his feet and would have moved to the man's side, but Angus laid a heavy hand on his arm and said quickly, "Wait, lad! There are others."

Even as he spoke, the sound of voices came from the darkness beyond the door and four soldiers burst into the inn. They were short, swarthy men, and they wore the leather breeches, steel breastplates and casques of Cromwell's Roundheads. With triumphant shouts they rushed over to the fallen man and one of them cried to the others, "Back! He is mine! I swore to finish him, and if he is not yet gone to hell he soon will be!" As he spoke, the blade in the man's hand pointed downward for a final thrust.

DONEL moved swiftly. Before the man could thrust his blade into the figure on the floor, the red-head's claymore had slapped it aside. "What of the living, Roundhead?" he taunted. "Or do you make war only on the dead?"

A moment of startled silence followed that ringing challenge. One of the four men in the group jerked his head around as though fearful they might have fallen into a trap and anxious to find a way out. Then he whose blade Donel had turned aside shouted hoarsely, "Another of them! And tonight we have no wish for prisoners."

"Who would ever believe that Black Donel would help an O'More!"

As he spoke he whipped his sword into the air and slashed at Donel's head. The claymore lifted to meet it, turned it aside. Donel's laugh rang mockingly through the room as he drew back a pace, then lunged forward, swinging the heavy sword from left to right. It was a good blade, keen of edge and heavy. It bit deep into the shoulder of one of the men. It cut into the thigh of another. It caught a third on the side of the head, and the casque against which it struck afforded little protection. The fourth man whirled and ran for the door, but Angus O'Shannaig was waiting there and drove the man to his knees. Stooped and old Angus O'Shannaig might be, yet he could still give a good account of himself in a fight.

Two of those facing Donel were down now and the third was looking wildly about for a way out. Donel stepped forward and struck him heavily with the flat side of his sword. As the man fell Donel lowered his blade and glanced at Angus.

"A fair welcome home," he said grimly.

"You chose the fight, lad," Angus replied.

"Aye, and would you have me sit by while a Highlander was murdered?"

The boy who had taken their horses came running breathlessly through the door. "More of them are coming," he cried. "I heard their horses."

Donel stooped over the wounded Highlander. Though the man had lost consciousness, he was still breathing. How badly he was hurt Donel couldn't guess. The innkeeper came back into the room. There was a frightened expression in his eyes.

"Who is he?" Donel demanded, indicating the wounded Highlander.

"Fergus Dubh Gallda," said the innkeeper.

"An O'More?" Donel's lips were thin.

"Aye."

"He would be safe, then, at Badernoch. And who are these others."

"They are Roundheads serving under Captain Preedy."

Donel slipped his arms under the wounded man's body, lifted him and turned to the door. "If Captain Preedy wants to know who is responsible for what happened here," he called over his shoulder, "tell him Black Donel Macdougal."

The boy had their horses ready. From down the road Donel could hear the sounds which had warned the lad that more Roundheads were coming. The approaching horsemen were singing hymns, as was ever the custom of Cromwell's men. Donel handed the wounded man to Angus, mounted his horse and then, leaning down, pulled the man up into his arms.

"You mean to take him to Badernoch?" Angus demanded.

"Aye," Donel replied. "To Badernoch, the home of the O'Mores." He turned his horse toward the bridge over the stream and Angus mounted and followed him.

II

THE home of the Laird of Badernoch was built on a steep craig overlooking the southern tip of Loch Ardin. Below it sprawled the main village of the O'Mores, by daytime almost hidden under a leafy covering of trees. Angus and Donel followed the twisting road up the hill to the Laird's home and dismounted in the courtyard. Over to one side there was a group of saddled horses. Donel looked at them and frowned. He turned the wounded man over to Angus and whispered, "Wait out here until I call you." Then he went to the door and knocked.

The girl who opened the door was tall and slender, with dark hair. Her face was shadowed from the light in the room behind her. Over her shoulder Donel caught a glimpse of several men in uniforms similar to those he had seen at the inn.

"You!" the girl said huskily. "What are you doing here?"

Donel had hoped he would not be recognized. He said swiftly, "I have brought Fergus Dubh Gallda with me. He is badly wounded."

The girl caught her breath. She glanced back at the group in the room, then stepped outside and pulled the door shut. "Where is he?"

Donel indicated the place where Angus was waiting and the girl hurried over. Angus had lowered the wounded man to the ground. The girl knelt down and peered into his face, then got to her feet and turned to look at Donel, who had come up behind her.

This, he knew, must be the Lady Eileen, sister of the slain Robin O'More and daughter of the Laird of Badernoch. In the years since he had seen her she had matured to womanhood.

"You found him and brought him

With the flat of his claymore Donel drove Preedy to his knees.

here," she said. "Who would ever believe that Black Donel would help an O'More!"

Donel shrugged. "Shall we carry him inside?"

"No!" she said hastily.

"Why not? Because of the Roundheads who are here?"

The girl bit her lower lip, nodded. Still staring at Donel, she said, a tone of wonder in her voice, "*You* brought him here. You, Black Donel Macdougal! It hardly seems possible—yet I believe you."

Donel caught the faint scent of the girl's hair, so close to him she stood. He had a sudden, crazy impulse to reach out and touch her. This almost passed belief—here was gratitude where he had least expected it!

"Why are the Roundheads here?" he heard Angus asking. "Do the O'Mores seek a friendship with Cromwell's men?"

THE girl shook her head. "Never! The Roundheads came looking for Fergus. They arrived but a short time ago, six men led by Captain Preedy. Another troop is coming to search the village."

Donel glanced at the wounded man. It would be risky to carry him to some other place. The man needed immediate attention.

"I would like to see this Captain Preedy," he said suddenly, looking up at Angus. "You take care of Fergus. At dawn tomorrow, if the English are gone and if he has not been found, he can be put on a boat and taken to some hiding place along the shores of Loch Ardin."

"And you, lad?"

"I will meet you at the cave of Adullam."

Donel turned abruptly and walked back to the front door. He opened it, stepped inside and closed it behind him. Captain Preedy he marked at once, a tall, wide-shouldered man standing with his back to the fire in the open hearth; a man with sharp features and coarse dark hair. Preedy wore a richly embroidered tunic and over it a long black cloak. He had on high boots, and a light sword was belted at his waist.

The six soldiers who had come with him were standing around the walls and were all heavily armored. At the far end of the room was the Laird of Badernoch and several of his male kinsmen. The Laird, a short, heavy man with only one arm, had a deep scowl on his face. Apparently he had been arguing with Preedy just before Donel came in.

At Donel's entrance the Laird stiffened, rubbed a hand over his eyes in the bewildered manner of one who cannot credit what he sees. Donel smiled at him and said quietly, "I hope you will pardon this intrusion, but I heard that Captain Preedy is here and I want to see him."

Preedy glanced at Badernoch, saw his antagonism. He looked puzzled as he turned back to Donel.

"Who are you and what do you want?" he demanded.

"I am a Macdougal. For some time I have been away from the Highlands. A few days ago I learned that my brother Alastair had been arrested by Cromwell's men. I have come back to see that he is released."

"You have what!" Preedy gasped.

"I have come back," Donel repeated, "to see that he is released."

A flush of anger showed in Preedy's face. "Haber!" he shouted. "Wesson! Take him! Perhaps he would like to join his brother!"

TWO of the soldiers moved swiftly forward, but before they could seize him, Donel's claymore was out. The long, heavy blade slapped one of the men on the side of the head and its keen edge bit deep into the other's arm. A scream broke from that man's lips as he staggered away, tripped and went to the floor.

"You must do better than that, Preedy," Donel called mockingly. "Have you no finer murderers at hand?"

Preedy was shouting at the other soldiers, but his commands were unnecessary. Drawing their blades, all four of them came charging forward. Donel saw the Laird and the Scots who were near him start after the soldiers.

He shouted, "Keep out of this, O'More! 'Tis my fight!"

Donel had backed up to the wall at the side of the door and the double-edged claymore, swinging from side to side, cut down another man and wounded a fourth. A blade nicked Donel in the shoulder and the point of another stabbed at his thigh, but these light swords of the English were no match for the heavy claymore blade. With a sudden rush Donel drove the other two soldiers back.

"'Tis not even good sport, this fighting the Roundheads," he shouted at Preedy. "They are cowards as well as murderers!"

Preedy had drawn his own weapon and was now coming forward, but Donel waited no longer. He stepped back, reached behind him and opened the door. He called, "Farewell, Preedy. But we will meet again—and soon, I think."

The two soldiers, with Preedy following them, ran through the door after him, but Donel had already reached the horses. He caught one, swung into the saddle and headed for the road.

"Come on!" he shouted over his shoulder. "I will race you to the bridge over the Tammer!"

Preedy and the two soldiers took after him, as he had known they would, for in this flight they believed he was rushing headlong into a trap. More soldiers were coming up this road, perhaps the same ones he had narrowly missed at the inn.

Donel settled back for the ride, paying little attention to the three who followed, but straining his eyes and ears to catch some sight or sound of the troop ahead. It was the hymn-singing that gave him warning. When scarcely three leagues from Badernoch, Donel heard it, and a little farther on he swung left on a plainly marked trail which led across a glen and then over some low rolling hills. To make sure Preedy would know he had gone this way, he drew up his horse and shouted back Gaelic curses on the names of Cromwell, Monck and the whole Parliamentarian government.

And Preedy followed, bringing the whole troop with him.

Beyond these rolling hills the country was rough and mountainous, and there, Donel knew, he could lose these

men easily, and perhaps so effectively that they could not reach Badernoch before Fergus Dubh Gallda had been taken by boat to a place of safety.

Clouds swept in over the sky and a sharply bitter wind whistled down from the hills. But the wind was not so cold that it could chill the fever of excitement which was coursing through Donel's veins. Never had he experienced such exhilaration. For a year before he had left these Highland hills he had known many a narrow escape and had well earned the name Black Donel. But in those days he had been an outlaw through force of circumstances. Now he was an outlaw by choice, and he could not find it in his heart to regret anything that had happened. . . .

At dawn, and deep in the quiet of the hills above Loch Ardin, Donel Macdougal faced the thoughts which had been running through his mind all night. He was still aware of a thrill of excitement, but the knowledge of what lay ahead had tempered it. When Scotland was in danger, clan-lines became unimportant. He was a Macdougal and had left here under a cloud, yet in spite of that the hot bloods of the Highland clans would flock to the hills to join him. Leadership was his by right of birth, and now by right of what he had done.

Soon he would not be alone—a hundred, perhaps five hundred men would be his to command. Then the few psalm-singing patrols now in the hills could easily be driven out. After that, however, the way would be harder. Five hundred or even a thousand men could not defeat Cromwell's army. He could not look ahead to a successful revolt. His was to be the harder task of holding the men back until every hamlet in Scotland could be organized against the Roundheads. It would not be easy.

III

GENERAL MONCK paced restlessly back and forth across his room, pausing now and then to scowl at his desk and at the half finished letter which lay there. The letter was addressed to Oliver Cromwell and was in the nature of a report. In the first part of the letter he had written Cromwell that the people of Edinburgh, Stirling and Glasgow and throughout most of the lowlands of Scotland had offered him no opposition.

Now he had come to the place in his letter where he must refer to the Highland clans, and it was not to his liking to report the revolt nor to admit that the troops he had sent up there had been driven out. Neither did he like to send a false report and say there was no trouble at all.

A knock sounded at the door and at his barked invitation to enter, Captain Preedy came into the room.

"The messenger is waiting to carry your dispatches to Cromwell," Preedy reported.

Monck ruffed a hand through his hair. He was a large man, solidly built, well past middle age. Slow to make a decision, nothing in the world could shake him from it once the decision was made. History would write of him that he was one of Cromwell's best generals.

"My letter is not finished," he said bluntly. "I have not yet written of the trouble in the Highlands."

Preedy shrugged. "Why mention it at all? Give me a thousand men and I will smash that rebellion in a week."

"It was on your advice," Monck reminded him, "that we made prisoners of the heads of those clans we thought might cause trouble. You said that without leadership, the clans would offer no resistance."

Preedy flushed. "Two of the leaders we missed," he said defensively. "Fergus Dubh Gallda and Black Donel Macdougal. But Gallda is sorely wounded and will give us no more trouble. We have only to take or kill Black Donel. It is he who has stirred up the revolt. Without him it would collapse."

"You have mentioned this Black Donel before. What kind of a man is he?"

"A murderer," Preedy answered bluntly. "An outlaw from his own clan. A thief and a robber who seeks to serve only himself."

THERE was the rustling of a curtain at the window and a voice said sharply, "Why not let me speak for myself, Preedy?"

The two Englishmen jerked around to face the window. Through it, from the balcony outside, stepped a tall figure clad in the leather breeches, the steel breastplate and casque of one of Cromwell's soldiers, but bearing in his hand the naked blade of a Highland sword. A red fringe of hair showed under the steel helmet and there was a mocking smile on his lips.

"Black Donel!" Preedy gasped, backing away a step. And then, loudly: "Ho! The guard! The guard!"

Donel stepped swiftly forward and Preedy jerked out his sword. He tried a wild thrust at the man bearing down on him, but Donel's blade turned it aside. With the flat of the claymore, Donel drove Preedy to his knees.

Swinging around then, Donel faced General Monck. "I might have killed him," he said, "or even you, but I have come here to talk. I hear the guard coming up the hall outside. It might be wise for you to send them away."

General Monck had not been wearing a sword when Donel burst in, but as Donel spoke he had backed over to the wall, and he now held one in his hand. "You are Black Donel?" he demanded.

"So men call me. And in spite of what Preedy said, my death would not stop the revolt in the Highlands."

Monck looked down at Preedy, who was breathing heavily and whose face was covered with perspiration. He moved past the man to the door, at which someone was knocking. He opened it and called out, "You are not needed. Go back to your posts."

Donel sheathed his claymore. He said to Preedy, "You may get up now, but do not call out again. Next time I'll not be so gentle."

Monck walked back to his desk. No fear showed on his face. "I may still call in those guards," he said. "But first I would hear you and learn how you came here and why."

Donel shrugged. "The coming was easy. The armor and the trousers I wear, I borrowed from one of your soldiers. He did not give it to me willingly. After that I had only to find the house in which you had taken quarters. It was an easy climb to the balcony."

"There were guards outside."

Donel laughed. "I neglected to mention that it was necessary to call one of them away. After I am gone you will find him bound and gagged beyond the hedge."

General Monck scowled. "I begin to see why you have caused us so much trouble. Why did you come here?"

"To tell you how you may have peace in Scotland."

"So you are a traitor as well as a murderer. What is your price?"

Donel shook his head. "You misunderstand me. I spoke of peace, not conquest."

"Then how may we win this peace?"

"You have imprisoned half a score of clan chieftains. Never, until they are free, will the clans lay down their arms. Free them and count on the older and wiser heads among them to hold the others back."

"You think they would?"

"I think they would until there was some hope of a successful rebellion."

"You ask their freedom, but you still talk in terms of rebellion."

DONEL leaned forward. He said earnestly, "Scotland may bow for a time to the rule of Cromwell, but to every true Scot, Charles Stuart is the king. I have a feeling that the day will come when he will be so recognized by the whole world. Tonight, however, I face the fact that Scotland has no army and that Charles Stuart is in exile. I offer you a means to temporary peace. Free the clan chieftains and trust to their wisdom to see what I see. Keep them prisoners and, though it cost the life of every man in the Highlands, you will have nothing but trouble with Scotland."

A flush of anger showed in Monck's face. "You would threaten me, rebel?"

"'Tis no threat. I speak but facts which you must recognize are true. You cannot grind your heel in the faces of the vanquished and expect them to like it. Free our leaders and deal with them as equals and you may ride the Highland trails alone and without fear."

"Free them so they can call more men to join in the revolt," Preedy put in bluntly.

Donel looked at the man. He had risen to his feet and one of his hands was clenched above his belt, holding, Donel was sure, the haft of his dirk.

Monck sat down at his desk. He picked up his pen and scribbled a few more lines on the unfinished letter.

"This," he said, standing up again, "goes to Oliver Cromwell. It reports that a few members of the Highland clans are in revolt and that I am sending men into the Highlands to preserve order."

"That is your answer?" Donel asked.

"Aye. That is my anwer."

Donel stepped to the window. He saw Preedy jerk open the door and heard him shouting orders at the guards. Looking at Monck, Donel said flatly, "I hope you send Captain Preedy to the Highlands in command of the troops. It should make our work much more pleasant."

Monck gave no answer but stood looking at him. He was still scowling. Donel stepped back through the window. He lowered his body over the balcony and dropped to the ground. There was a sound of commotion from in front of the house. Men were coming around it on the run. Donel moved swiftly to the hedge and along it to the narrow street where he had left his horse tied. No one had bothered it. He swung into the saddle and rode back past the house in which General Monck had established a temporary headquarters. Preedy was at the door, still shouting his commands. Donel waved to him, and lifted his voice in a Highland yell.

"There he goes! There!" Preedy screamed. "After him! All of you!"

Donel urged his horse to a gallop. In the narrow streets of the town it was easy to lose those who would have followed him. Beyond the town was the military camp of the Roundheads. He circled it and after a time came to the road leading back to the Highlands. As he rode through the night he considered the problem which lay ahead.

This trip, on which he had counted so much, had ended in failure. He had hoped for peace. A peace with honor. He had bargained for the freedom of the Highland chieftains, but Monck had not agreed. Monck would send his armies into the hills. Donel knew his men could not stand up against them. He knew too that they would not back down. . . .

The Lady Eileen was waiting for him at the bridge across the Tammer. Donel had known she would be here. How much of his success he owed to her he could only guess, but through the early days of the Highland revolt, Eileen had always been near at hand to encourage him. It was at her insistence, he knew, that the O'Mores had joined him, and the Donlevys and Gilbrides and their women-folk. And if any thought it strange that the Lady Eileen should champion the man who had been accused of killing her brother, talk of it had not reached Donel's ears.

"He would not listen?" Eileen asked as Donel dismounted.

Donel shook his head.

"Then it is war, and we have lost."

The girl stood very straight. Her eyes, dark and wide and set in a high forehead, were strangely calm.

"Yes," Donel answered, "we have lost."

Eileen moved closer. She rested her hand for a moment on Donel's arm. In the pressure of it Donel could feel her comradeship, and a new strength seemed to flow into his body.

"We will yet find a way," he heard himself saying. "The hills are wide and deep."

IV

THE army of the English Commonwealth rode into the Highlands of Scotland three days later. They met no resistance. Captain Preedy found Badernoch a deserted village. His men moved on around Loch Ardin and beyond it. They came to one village after another, each as deserted as the first. Scouting patrols were sent up each trail they passed, and returned with nothing to report. Men, women and children, even the sick and the aged, seemed to have vanished.

For a week Preedy waited for something to happen. As the time passed, his nerves grew ragged and his temper shortened. He sent his men farther afield in search of the Scots, but with no success. Messengers arrived from Monck asking definite word as to the progress of his campaign and he could think up no story that he felt would satisfy his general.

Then a few scattering incidents began to come to his attention and to worry him. A party of men quartered on the northern shore of Loch Ardin went hunting one morning and failed to return, and those sent out to search for them came back to report they could find no trace of the missing men. A riderless horse galloped into his camp with an empty dispatch case tied to the saddle. A sudden midnight fire broke out in one of the villages where he had quartered some of his men. A hundred horses, turned out to pasture in a field near another camp, disappeared between dusk and dawn. The bridge over the Tammer was destroyed, and other bridges, one by one, fell into the streams they crossed.

None of this was accidental, Preedy knew full well. The supports of the bridges had been cut; the stolen horses, he knew by the prints on the ground, had been driven away; the men who were lost must have been killed. He came to feel that the enemy were all about him, that they were watching his every move, and his rage became a consuming fire. He had a thousand men to command, and only shadows against which to throw his strength.

* * *

From his hiding place in the cave of Adullam, Black Donel Macdougal directed all this work. Messengers reported to him by night, bringing him word of the movements of Preedy's men, and left with orders to the score of groups hidden in the hills and awaiting his instructions as to where to strike next. Occasionally he went out on a venture of his own, but only to work out a great restlessness which had come over him.

A week after the arrival of Preedy's men, Fergus Dubh Gallda had been brought to his cave and Donel had had a long talk with the man. He had felt an instant liking for Gallda and had said to him, finally, "It is you who should be directing this work. You are a Highlander. Though born and reared here, I do not belong."

"You are thinking of Robin O'More," Fergus guessed.

Donel nodded.

"Why did you kill him?" asked Fergus.

"We will not talk of that," Donel replied.

Fergus sighed. "You do not have the look of a murderer, Black Donel. I care not what men say. But in spite of what they may think or say of you, they will still obey your orders. Who else could have persuaded them to move their families high into the hills and there sleep under boughs or in caves in the rocks while the English lie in their beds?"

"It was necessary," Donel said. "We are too few to risk an open fight."

IMPATIENT at the delay in breaking the revolt, Monck sent more men into the hills and recalled Captain Preedy. Donel heard they were coming the day before they crossed the Tammer.

Angus, who was at the cave when the messenger arrived with the news, said to him, "What now, Donel? The men are growing tired of light blows. They talk endlessly of battle. With the arrival of these new men, the task facing them will be twice as hard."

Donel shook his head. "We might have defeated the men Preedy brought. We might even defeat an army twice as large. But more would come to take

ARMCHAIR ADMIRAL

(Solution to the sea-war problem on page 27)

Admiral Tegetthoff determined to bring about a mixed action at very close range, where the Italian armor would be of less value, and to ram as many ships as possible, striking especially for the Italian wooden ships off the port of Lissa. To achieve this he ordered his whole fleet up to the fastest speed possible without regard as to whether some of his ships dragged behind, and flung his double wedge at the center of the Italian line. His flagship *Ferdinand Max* struck *Re de Italia* amidships and that vessel went down in less than five minutes. In attempting to get away from the ram of the second Austrian vessel, the Italian *Calestro* was hit near the magazines by Austrian guns, set afire and blown up. The Italian line was broken and the Austrian wedge poured its fire into each of the Italian ships toward the tail of their line as it passed. The Italian wooden ships and transports scattered, and before Persano could collect his fleet the Austrians were at anchor under the guns of Lissa. Two more Italian ships sank before they could reach harbor, from damage inflicted by the Austrian guns, including *Affontadori*. Admiral Persano was court-martialed and disgraced.

the places of those we killed, and in the end we would surely lose."

"What can we do?"

Angus started away, then turned back and said, "Margaret is here, Donel. Even in Edinburgh they have heard of you. She has word of your brother Alastair."

Donel jumped up, cried, "Bring her here!"

Angus turned down the ledge and after a while came back with the tall, dark-haired wife of Alastair Macdougal. She seemed thinner than Donel recalled and her face showed lines of suffering.

The minute she caught sight of him, Margaret called his name and came running forward. She grasped his hand and fell on her knees at his feet. Donel lifted her and held her out at arm's length and stared into her eyes. He said, "Nay, Margaret. 'Tis not like you to break down. The lark was never more cheerful than Margaret Macdougal."

Margaret tried to blink the tears from her eyes. "My cheerful days are past, Donel. Within a week Alastair is to be taken aboard a ship and sent to New England."

"To New England!"

Margaret nodded. "They have shipped many of the Scot prisoners across the sea. Some to Barbados, some to the colony in Virginia. There they are sold as slaves or as servants, by the master of the ship which takes them over."

Donel was silent for a while, staring thoughtfully at Margaret. He said finally, "How is my brother?"

Margaret's lips trembled. "He has been ill," she said slowly, her words hardly above a whisper. "He has been confined in a stable hardly fit for the sheltering of animals."

"And the others who were taken with him."

"They are held in the same place, and are to be sent on the same ship."

"This prison, you say, is a stable?"

"Aye, Donel. But a well-guarded stable and the men are held in irons. Don't think that I haven't tried to plan some way to rescue Alastair. But even with a hundred men it would be impossible."

DONEL stared out at Loch Ardin. He turned finally and called Angus to his side. "Go from camp to camp, Angus," he ordered. "Seek men who will volunteer for a dangerous mission —a mission from which they may not return. I should like twenty men and no more. Those twenty must be men you can trust, men of good judgment, yet with a reckless regard for danger. To the others, give this order: Until this mission is finished, all Highlanders are to stay back in the hills, away from any clash with the English army. Do you understand?"

Angus O'Shannaig nodded. "You mean to go to Edinburgh, lad?"

"Aye," said Donel. "To Edinburgh."

"You could die more easily here in the hills."

"Perhaps."

Angus sighed. "Where shall we meet you, lad?"

Donel named the place and the time and then turned back to talk with Margaret.

"THE revolt is broken," said Captain Preedy. "You did not need to send extra men into the Highlands. The rebels numbered so few that they fled at the very sight of our advance guard."

"Yet this Black Donel has not been taken," Monck pointed out.

"'Tis but a question of time."

General Monck shook his head. "I will not feel easy about conditions in the Highlands until someone who can speak for those people assures me they will not oppose Cromwell's rule. Sometimes, Preedy, I think that this Black Donel was right in suggesting we release the Highland chieftains."

"So they could lead their people against us?"

"Nay, Preedy, so that they could hold them back. Such a promise might be made a condition of their release."

"A promise they would break."

Monck scowled. "There are honorable people even among the Scots. Preedy, you are a good soldier, but narrow of view. You can never see the other man's side of an argument. 'Tis a lack in you that sometimes troubles me."

Preedy flushed. He laid some papers before the general.

"What are these?" Monck asked.

"Orders to transfer some of the prisoners to a ship waiting to transport them to Virginia. The orders need only your signature."

General Monck glanced through the papers, then signed his name. "'Tis a better fate than they would have in the prisons in England," he muttered. And then he added, "I think I shall consider the matter of freeing the Highland chieftains. The man who took your place in the Highlands has reported no success in dealing with the rebels."

Preedy shrugged, saluted and turned away. Outside the general's headquarters he glanced through the list of names of the prisoners to be transferred to the ship bound for Virginia. Included in that list were the names of nine Highland chieftains. Monck obviously hadn't noticed them. A look of satisfaction came over Preedy's face. Monck, he was sure, was wrong in even considering the release of these men. But the general's own carelessness in not examining this list more closely would save him. In a few hours these Highland chieftains would be out to sea on their way to slavery in the new world.

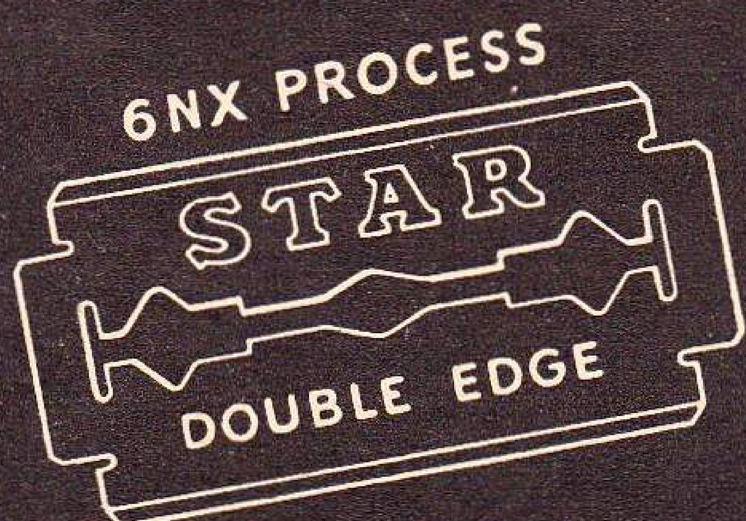
Preedy mounted his horse and rode through the streets of Edinburgh to the old stable in the lower part of the town where some of the Scots prisoners were quartered. To the officer in charge of the guard he showed Monck's order.

"Have the prisoners ready to leave within an hour," he commanded. "I will have a troop of soldiers here to take them to the boat."

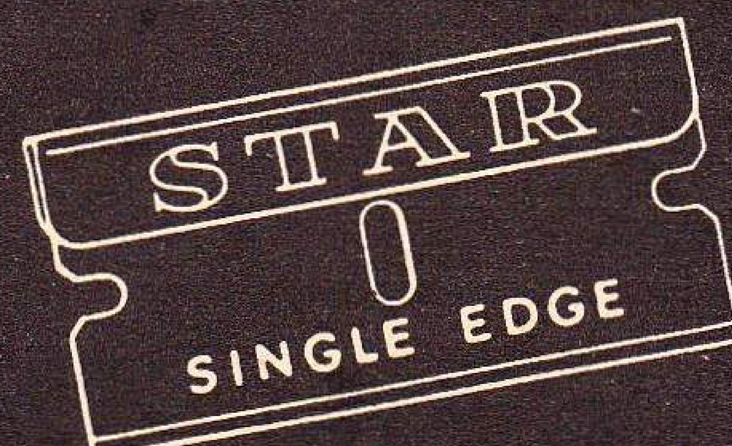
The officer of the guard studied the

HEY--NO ROUGH STUFF!

NOT ME! I SHAVE WITH STAR BLADES!



4 for 10¢



list. "One of these men," he reported, "is scarcely able to walk."

"His name?"

"Alastair Macdougal."

Preedy laughed. "He must walk as far as the boat, at least. Or the others must carry him. And I want these nine prisoners fastened together by chains. . . ."

There were always a few people standing around near the prison, people drawn there, Preedy reasoned, out of curiosity. He never paid much attention to them, nor did he waste a glance on them this morning.

"Have them ready within an hour," he said again to the officer of the guard. Then, wheeling his horse, he rode away.

One of the men who had been standing nearby as he issued his orders, hurried off in another direction and at a place scarcely a mile away, reported to a waiting group. "The time has come. They are to be moved to the boat in an hour."

Every man in the group looked at Donel, and Donel got slowly to his feet. The past few weeks had deepened the lines in his face and had left shadows under his eyes. He was thinner, more nervous, and when he spoke there was an edge to his voice that gave a decisive emphasis to what he said.

"You all know the plan and what part you have in it. Angus, you will go ahead and see what line of march they take and bring word back to us. David, you will bring up the horses. Brian, you will drive the cart, and a hard job of driving it is. The rest of you will follow me. It may be to a quick death. If there be any who would hold back, now is the time to let me know."

In that group facing him were men from a dozen different clans. Several of them shifted restlessly and finally one of them spoke for them all, "You are not the only Highlander, Black Donel, who fears slavery more than death. Let's waste no more time in talking."

A smile broke over Donel's face. He said, "Aye, let us make ready."

V

WITHIN the hour a column of soldiers arrived at the stable to escort the prisoners to the ship which would carry them to Virginia. The soldiers were heavily armored and well armed and numbered more than fifty. For nine chain-bound prisoners, this was indeed a strong escort. The officer in charge of the column lined them up four abreast with a space in the center for the prisoners. In this way, the guards would be two deep on each side of the Scots.

The prisoners were brought forth, and a sorry lot they were. Their hair was long and matted, their clothing filthy. They were gaunt of figure and several were so weak they could hardly stand. One in particular looked so near to death that some of the people in the gathering crowd exclaimed in pity at the sight of him.

Each prisoner's wrist was chained and all nine were bound together by a chain which ran from one pair of locked wrists to another. The man who looked so near to death staggered and almost fell.

Through the crowd ran whispered names as some of the men were recognized, and here and there mocking voices cursed the soldiers. The officer of the column gave a sharp order and the march toward the harbor was started. It proceeded without incident for several squares. Then from a side street, a funeral procession moved abruptly across the path of the marching column and turned down along the side of it. The column stopped while the procession made its turn and the soldiers watched it curiously. Some respectfully muttered prayers.

The funeral procession was headed by a tall figure in the black robes of a monk. He walked with head bowed, intoning strange words, apparently a chant for the dead. Immediately following him came a cart. Hitched to it were two spirited horses. It was all that the driver could do to keep them in hand. A black-draped coffin lay in the bed of the cart.

Following the cart came the mourners. They walked in single file and all were tall men. Cloaks covered them from shoulder to heel and wide-brimmed hats shielded their bowed faces. Like the monk, they were mumbling a chant in strange, unintelligible words.

As the funeral procession turned to cross ahead of the column of soldiers, one of the prisoners suddenly stiffened and looked over his shoulder. "Do you hear that, Kenneth?" he said under his breath.

Several of the other prisoners were staring at the funeral procession, startled expressions on their faces.

Suddenly the man leading the line of mourners sprang into the bed of the cart, uttered a loud shout, stooped over, grasped the coffin and tilted it out of the cart into the street. The heavy box struck on one corner and broke open. The man jumped back to the street. He seemed to have gone crazy. Ripping savagely at the boards of the coffin, he got it open, rolled it over and spilled a body out on the street.

A cry of horror went up from the soldiers at this desecration of the dead. Wide-eyed, they stared at the mummy-like shape that was completely wrapped from head to foot in white. Then the mad-looking mourner jumped to the street and knelt beside the corpse. He pulled at his hair as though broken by grief. He was a tall man, this mourner, and his hair was a flaming red.

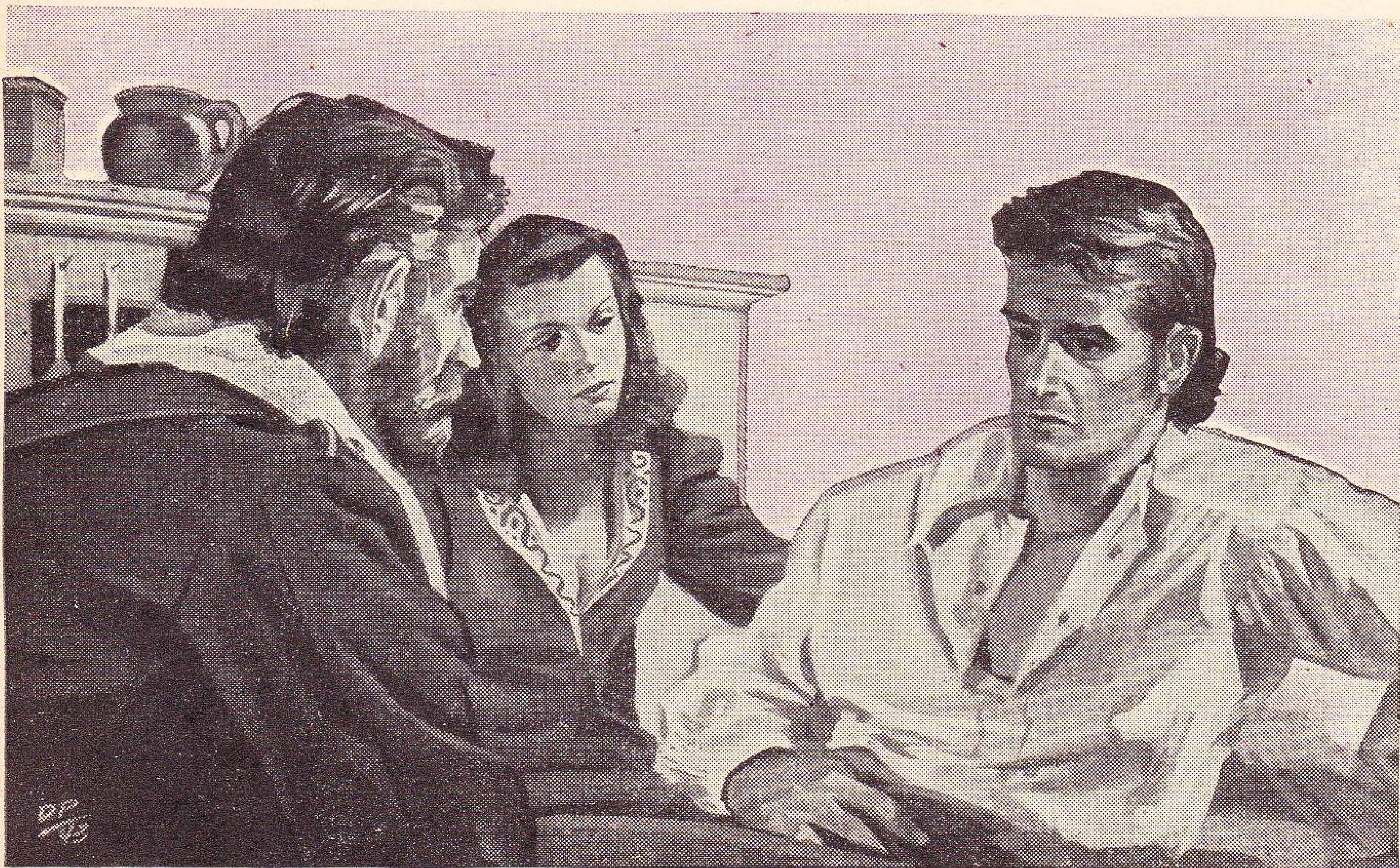
The captain of the troop and several of the soldiers started toward him. As they did so, the other men in the mourners' line began throwing off their cloaks and drawing the blades belted at their waists. One of them lifted his voice in a Highland cry and others echoed it. Then in a sudden fury they fell on the soldiers, slashing at them with their heavy Highland swords, breaking the line that surrounded the prisoners.

The man in monk's garb had turned and climbed onto the seat of the cart. He was screaming at the top of his voice. His words were still unintelligible to the soldiers, but not to the nine prisoners, for the monk was speaking in the Gaelic tongue—the tongue in which the mourners had been chanting and which the startled prisoners also understood.

"Into the cart!" the monk was shouting. "Into the cart!"

The prisoners started for the cart, their shackles clanking heavily. When some of the soldiers who were not yet engaged in the fighting tried to stop them, the red-headed mourner drove them back with a slashing double-edged sword which he had drawn from under his cloak.

And now, at the end of the street, there appeared a man leading a score of saddled horses. He swept down on the group, scattering the stunned onlookers out of his way. The prisoners now were in the cart and the voice of



"My way lies not back to the Highlands," he said. "It must be across the sea."

the red-haired man screamed, "Drive, Brian! Drive!"

It was doubtful if the driver of the cart could have held the horses much longer. They were spirited animals and were rearing against his restraining rein. The driver slackened his grip and the cart jerked down the street. People scrambled out of its way. It swung around a corner and disappeared from sight.

BY NOW the first shock of the surprise attack was over and the soldiers were giving no more ground. A score were down but they still outnumbered Donel and his men. Donel took a quick glance over his shoulder. He saw, then, for the first time, that David had come with the horses and he shouted to him to turn them loose and to his men to take them. Here and there a Scot caught the bridle of a horse and pulled himself into the saddle, but some were too hemmed in to make such a break. Angus rode suddenly between Donel and the men he was fighting, leaned over and caught Donel by the hand, helped him to mount behind the saddle even as they galloped away.

"We did it, lad!" the older man exulted. "We got them away!"

"Aye," Donel nodded. "But some we left behind. Nor are we yet safe. 'Tis a long way to the Highlands, and Preedy will not take this matter lightly."

Back once more in the house where they had hidden for four days, Donel knelt at the side of his brother Alastair. The chains had been filed from Alastair's wrists. One by one, those who had escaped from the fight in the street drifted back. Most of them had been wounded. Five did not return at all.

Alastair smiled up into his brother's face. "Even in that prison, Donel," he said weakly, "we heard of your return and of all you had done. I was not so worried over being shipped away as some of the others. I knew that we could depend upon a Macdougal."

Donel rested his hand on his brother's head. It was hot and dry. Alastair's body was racked by fever, but a few weeks in the clear sweet air of the Highlands, Donel knew, would mend him.

"'Tis your job to lead the Macdougals, Alastair," he said quietly. "That was decided long ago."

"Nay, 'tis yours."

Donel shook his head, lifted a hand to his side, frowned. Alastair, seeing the gesture, glanced at Donel's hand, saw the bloodstain on the tunic.

"You have been wounded, Donel!"

Donel shrugged. "The wound is of no consequence."

THE Duncan, who had been freed of his chains, the Macgregor and the Gartney and most of the others gathered around the place where Donel was kneeling. They were older than he, most of these men, and they were not given to much speech, but one after another, they clasped his hand and murmured words to express their gratitude.

And then Duncan said gravely. "I will go back to the Highlands, Black Donel, but only to serve under you. The Duncan clan is yours to command."

"And the Macgregors," said another voice.

Gartney nodded. "All of our people, Black Donel. United, we can sweep the English from the Highlands, move on across England and chase Cromwell into the sea. In the past we have fought too much among ourselves. This time we will fight side by side, under a leader all will obey."

Donel shook his head. "What know you of me, Gartney?"

"I know you have the imagination necessary to a great soldier, the bravery we Scots have always prized."

"And that I am a murderer?" Donel asked him.

Gartney bit his lips. He said steadily, "I care not what you may have done as a hot-headed youth. Your services to Scotland during the past few weeks have erased that from my memory."

Macgregor nodded. "We need you, Black Donel, in the turbulent days that lie ahead."

Donel made no answer. He stared at the floor and tears came into his eyes. A thickness in his throat choked him. They meant what they had said, these men. He knew it. He could go back to the Highlands, not only with them, but as one of them. As a recognized leader of his people. And perhaps what Gartney had said was right. Perhaps in the days to come the death of Robin O'More might be forgotten, might be excused. A vision of Eileen rose before his eyes and an unsteady smile came momentarily to his lips.

It was very quiet in the room. Donel lifted his head and glanced from side to side. He slipped a hand under his tunic and felt of the pack pressed there against the wound in his chest. It was moist with blood. How serious the wound was he didn't know. He had received it early in the battle there in the street and the pain from it had spread throughout his whole body.

Donel's glance centered on Gartney. "I helped you to escape," he said slowly, "not that you might fight the English but that you might make peace with them."

"Peace!" Gartney exclaimed.

Donel nodded. He looked around at the others. Some were scowling. Others looked puzzled. He said, "Yes, peace, for to oppose them now is folly. Cromwell is riding on the crest of his popularity. He commands all of England and Ireland. He has tens of thousands of men under arms. He could send army after army against us until the very heather of the Highlands would be stamped out under their marching feet. The flower of our youth has been slain at Dunbar and Worcester. We cannot hope to successfully oppose the men of Cromwell. To do so would be folly."

There were a few angry denials of that, but unmindful of them, Donel continued his speech. He had thought it out long ago. He knew that what he was saying was true, but it still came hard.

"I wanted you free, not to carry on a revolt against Cromwell but to continue as the leaders of your clans, to hold them in line, and to look forward to the day when Cromwell's strength will pass and when our king, Charles Stuart, can be brought back from France. That day is coming and we must be ready for it. We must not waste our strength now. We must look ahead, build for the future. It is a gloriously bold thing to fight a battle against great odds. It furnishes a theme for the songs of our bards. But the cost in lives does not justify it. Far wiser are the men who look ahead to the morrow."

THERE was a deep silence following that statement, broken at last by the Duncan, who asked, "How would any peace be possible? We are escaped prisoners and the Highlanders are in open revolt."

Donel shook his head. "There was no revolt in the Highlands save mine, and I am a well known rebel. The few who were seen following me were never identified by name. General Monck, I believe, is a reasonable man. He wishes no trouble in the Highlands. My request is this: That you return home and talk this over together. If you then think my advice is wise, send a messenger to General Monck with an offer of peace."

"Never," someone said bluntly.

Donel shrugged. "In a short while it will be time for you to start leaving this place. Horses have been provided at various places. Brian Ross will tell you where. You will leave one by one or in couples. We will meet again in our own country."

There was little more discussion of what lay ahead and as soon as it was dark the men started to leave. The Duncan, first, with one of his own clansmen, and after him Gartney, and then Gilbride and Macgregor. Donel watched them go, still sitting at his brother's side. They had talked over some of the days of their boyhood and Donel had spoken of his adventures at sea.

"But that is all over now," said Alastair.

Donel smiled. He got up and crossed over to where Angus was standing and said to him, "You will go with Alastair, take him to where Margaret is waiting with the cart. Hidden by the hay, he should be safe."

"And you, Donel?"

"I will come last, Angus."

"Your wound, lad?"

"Only a slight cut."

There were none left now but the three of them. Angus crossed over and lifted Alastair in his arms. When he reached the door he paused for a moment.

Donel said, "We have a surprise for

you, Alastair. Margaret is waiting for you."

"Margaret?" Alastair cried.

Donel nodded. "This was the house in which she lived while you were prisoner. She is a fine lass, Alastair. A fit mate for a chieftain."

"Come with us, Donel."

But Donel shook his head. "Only three can go by the cart and my red hair marks me too plainly. I would be recognized and all our plans would go for naught."

After the two were gone Donel leaned against the wall and drew a long, shuddering breath. The strain of the past few hours had been almost more than he could bear. The continual bleeding of the wound in his chest had sapped his strength and its pain was beginning to make him dizzy.

The door was suddenly opened and he looked up to see Captain Preedy staring at him.

"I saw two men leaving here," said Captain Preedy. "I wondered why one should be carrying the other and decided to look in."

Donel's hand moved to the claymore at his side. He managed to draw the weapon, but with obvious effort.

Preedy's eyes narrowed. His own blade was in his hand. He advanced a step. There was a tight grin on his face. "First," he said softly, "I shall finish with you. Afterwards I will take care of your friends."

Donel had no more warning than that. He saw Preedy rushing forward, saw his blade whip up into the air and he knew he had no chance at all to ward off the blow. He lifted the claymore with both hands and lunged forward desperately. He thought that he heard a cry and that he felt some resistance at the point of the sword. But he couldn't be sure, for at that moment the whole world went black in agonizing pain.

VI

HANDS were holding Donel down and the voice of Angus O'Shannaig was saying, "Easy, lad. Easy. The man is dead, I tell you. He is dead."

Donel blinked open his eyes. He felt terribly tired, and on the fringe of his consciousness was the memory of a weird nightmare.

"How came you here, Angus?" he whispered.

"The man is dead," Angus told him.

"What man?"

"Captain Preedy. He has been dead for a full seven days, yet for two nights now you have tried to get up and fight him. Had not the lass been with me to quiet you, I don't know what I would have done."

"Where am I?" Donel asked.

"In the same house where I left you when I carried Alastair away. After I got him to Margaret he insisted that I come back to see that you had gone. I found you here, sorely wounded. And at your feet, the dead body of Captain Preedy, your claymore through his chest."

"That was seven days ago?"

"Aye, lad."

Donel closed his eyes. "You mentioned a lass. Margaret?"

"Nay. The Lady Eileen. Margaret took Alastair back to the Highlands. She told Eileen of what had happened and Eileen got here just when I was having the most trouble with you." He smiled. "*I* have to *hold* you down, but her hand resting lightly on your forehead is enough."

Donel looked again at Angus. He wanted to tell him that it wasn't right for Eileen to be here, but the words wouldn't come. Suddenly he was sound asleep.

There came finally the day when Donel felt he was well enough to leave and he said as much to Angus and Eileen.

"But my way lies not back to the Highlands," he said. "It must be across the sea."

"Not back to the Highlands?" Angus repeated.

Donel shook his head. "Black Donel must be thought of as dead, his rebellion as one that was quickly ended. Without me to complicate things, the Highland chieftains can make peace with the English and look forward to the time when Charles Stuart will be called back to the throne."

Angus smiled. "I had not told you, lad, but such a peace has already been made."

"And there is no reason why you cannot return," Eileen added.

Donel looked steadily at the girl. "Do you forget your brother?"

"Nay." Eileen's voice was very low. "I do not forget him, Donel, but from Margaret I know the true story of his death. It was not your hand that struck him down, but hers. She has told Alastair the story of how Robin met her and of her struggle with him. Three years ago she let you take the blame. She has more courage today. She will make the truth known."

"None would believe her," said Donel. "It would be thought merely a story to clear my name. Nay, Eileen, even if it were told and believed, I still could not go back. No man is more unfortunate than a rebel without a cause, and that would be my heritage in the Highlands. Only one course lies open to Black Donel—he must disappear as suddenly as he came."

By their silence Donel knew both Eileen and Angus recognized the truth in what he had said. He turned toward the wall, buckled on his claymore, then settled his cloak over his shoulders.

Eileen touched his arm. "You can't go off like this, Donel. The Highlands owe you their peace. Its clans owe you the lives and safety of the chieftains. Surely there must be a place for you here."

Donel shook his head. "A man must follow his destiny. Mine has led me to heights few men have reached, but it now turns down the hill. My work is finished."

"But not your life."

"No. Not my life."

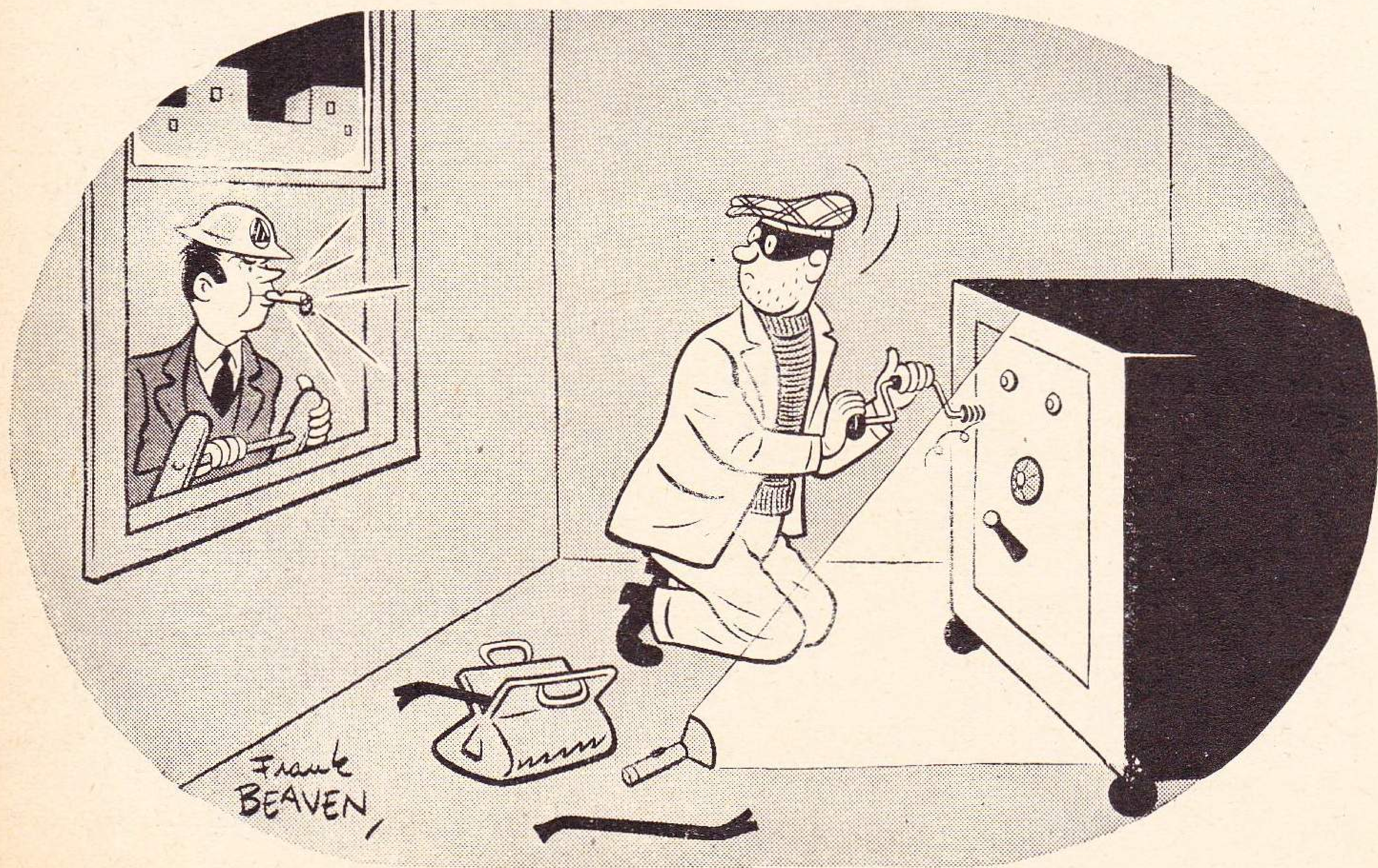
Eileen looked back at Angus. "You spoke of a Puritan ship in the harbor that was leaving tonight. Could we get passage on it?"

Donel stiffened, stared at Eileen. "You would go with me, Eileen?"

"Aye," said the girl. "And proudly. For neither is your life nor your work finished and in them both I have a part."

A slow smile broke over Donel's face. His arms closed about Eileen. "See to our passage, Angus," he called. "Passage for three!"

And in the tone of his voice sounded all the happiness of a man who knows that the best of his days are still ahead. ● ●



Coming in on a Prayer

BY DUANE YARNELL

A BURST from an F-W 20-mm. cannon ripped into the belly of the big Fortress just as she unloosed her bombs over the German airfield. Up front, Captain Joe Naylor swore and fought the controls.

The Fortress shuddered as Joe Naylor pushed her nose into the clouds. Joe always felt responsible for the ten lives in his hands, but today he had an additional responsibility.

Today, Eddie Bates was Joe's tail gunner. . . .

They were still fifty miles from the channel when the clouds gave out. The sky was suddenly a clear blue. The rest of the squadron had disappeared.

"Pilot to crew." Joe spoke with a soft Texas drawl into the interphone. "Keep your eyes peeled for F-W's."

"Here they come! Six o'clock!" Eddie Bates' voice came through the interphone, from the tail turret. The fear in Eddie's voice made Joe Naylor feel a little sad. He could not see Eddie's eyes, but he knew how they would look. Once again, Eddie was depending on Joe to get him out of a jam.

Then five F-W's came diving out of the sun with guns blazing. The first burst hit near the tail turret, and the impact slammed the tail down. Then cannon fire raked the crippled bomber, and Number Three motor went dead.

Joe Naylor had his hands full, but he kept worrying about Eddie. They were from the same town, he and Eddie. In school, Eddie, a thin, frail kid, had spent his time writing poetry. And all the kids had poked fun at Eddie. All but Joe Naylor.

Joe never laughed at Eddie. He guessed it was Eddie's eyes that stopped him. They held the look you see in the eyes of a homeless dog.

"Here they come again!" The warning came from the bombardier. "They—" The bombardier didn't finish. He died quietly, at his gun.

"Radio man to pilot—the radio room's afire, sir!"

"Are you all right, Harris?" Joe said into the phone.

The radio man replied, "I will be, sir, if I can find my foot."

"Can you handle the fire, Harris?"

"I can always spit on it, sir."

Sweat gathered on Joe Naylor's forehead. With everything else to think about, why was he worrying about Eddie? He spoke into the interphone again. "Pilot to tail gunner—how're you doing, kid?"

No answer from Eddie Bates' phone. Not for a full five minutes. And when the message did come, it came from Harris, the radio man. "The fire is out, sir. And I took a look to see if I could help Eddie. I'm afraid he's dead."

Eddie had followed Joe through life like a frightened child. They had been in plenty of tight spots together. Always, Joe took care of Eddie first, then worried about himself. Sometimes he wondered why. He guessed there was a reason for everything. But the reason for his urge to protect Eddie had, so far, eluded him.

But now Eddie was gone. Joe was glad he had not seen Eddie's eyes when that burst hit the tail turret. . . .

"Co-pilot to pilot—we'll never make it, Joe."

They were down to four thousand and dropping fast. They were flying on two motors, now, to ease the vibration. The channel was beneath them. Ahead, the Dover cliffs lay like a white cloud against the sea. The Fortress would never clear the ditch.

Joe left it with the co-pilot, got up to have a look. He moved back through the plane's belly. The Fortress was a shambles. Her body was sieved with shell holes and he wondered what kept her flying. Morgan, the waist gunner, was dead. Harris, the radio man, was shot through the foot. But all of those who remained alive were still able to jump.

Joe hurried back to his post. As he bent to sit down, all hell burst around him. In a moment the instrument panel became a shattered mass of metals. Joe felt dizzy and his right thigh was numb. He probed through the tear in his flying suit and his hand came away warm and wet.

Joe spoke into the interphone. "This baby's finished. Hit the silk, all of you!"

One by one they bailed out over the channel where they would float around until they were picked up. Joe's co-pilot touched Joe's shoulder, smiled faintly, then jumped.

Joe got up, moved toward the door for his jump to safety. Then he heard a scraping sound behind him. He turned. . .

The face was the white face of a ghost. Only the eyes were human. There was terror in those eyes.

Eddie Bates had dragged himself the length of the ship. His legs were shot up and there was a nasty wound over his temple. Eddie didn't say anything. His eyes said it for him.

Eddie couldn't jump in that condition and Joe knew it. Eddie's only chance was for Joe to fly him down. His eyes pleaded with Joe . . . for the impossible.

Joe hesitated. He knew that Eddie was about gone. If he jumped to save himself, he must do it quickly. Leaving Eddie would not be like abandoning a wounded man, for Eddie would die before Joe could hit the water. But when Joe looked at Eddie's eyes again it was the same as it had always been. He couldn't resist that appeal.

Joe sat down behind the controls. The cliffs were very close. He strained at the controls, fought them frenziedly. Now it was too late to jump. . . .

Joe kept staring straight ahead. When they piled into the cliffs he did not want to be looking at Eddie. He looked down. A tree loomed ahead and the Fortress clipped the tree top branches.

Then, dead before him, lay a friendly landing field.

Joe hit the strip at one hundred and thirty-five miles an hour. One tire blew out as they neared the end of the runway. The bomber spun horribly, sickeningly, stopped. . . .

Joe got up with a deep sigh. He looked down at Eddie and there was a great heaviness in his chest. He was glad that Eddie had died with his eyes closed. Now the reaction set in and Joe asked himself why he had taken this chance, why he hadn't bailed out. He groped for a reason, just as he always had, but it continued to elude him.

It was then that Joe made the discovery that the cannon burst which had torn a gaping hole through his flying suit, had also gone through his parachute. But for that look in Eddie's eyes, Joe would have bailed out in a parachute that couldn't have opened!

Joe stared down at Eddie and his eyes were very bright. He knew the reason, now. He couldn't explain it. But it no longer eluded him. He took a deep breath, and turned toward the door through which the bright, warm sun streamed ● ●

Always Joe had taken care of Eddie first, then worried about himself. But that time over the English Channel he couldn't do both

BY CHARLES W. TYLER

TRACK CLEAR!

IN THE old days they had called him Iron Mike. But that was long ago, and now, with the flaming fire of youth gone from his faded blue eyes, a stoop to his shoulders and his hair streaked with gray, he was just Old Man Hogan. He was headed for the scrap pile—like the grimed, cold-bellied engines that stood on the back track by the Lynchburg roundhouse.

As a young man Mike Hogan had held rights on the Central Valley's River Division. He had been a fireman, tough and cocky, with the ability to stand and make steam on the swaying deck of the toughest road engine on the line.

Before long he had been an engineer, reckless, headstrong, his Irish temper always ready to boil over. Then, with four years' seniority on the right side of the cab, he had drawn a thirty-day suspension for an infraction of rules. He had quit the Central Valley the day they did that to him.

The years slipped by. Now Iron Mike was on the Boston & Albany, now the B. & O., the U. P., the Southern Pacific, the Great Northern, the Rock Island, the Santa Fe—a boomer, making the "fruit rushes," working on extra boards all up and down the country.

And then, suddenly, there weren't any more jobs. The day of the boomer was done. It was the home guard handling the trains now—men who had stayed on one road.

Mike Hogan was past fifty when the depression hit. He was married, with two boys growing up. He drifted back to Lynchburg, to live in a house on the slope beyond the East Yards, while he turned his hands to such menial jobs as came his way. When his day's work was done, he liked to sit on the back porch and watch the engines and the trains, and live again the days when he had been a part of the iron road.

Came December 7th, 1941, and the United States was at war. Mike's two boys were already in service. Young Mike had died at Hickam Field.

Mike Hogan wanted to get a gun in his hands; he wanted to fight. But he was too old. He was all washed up, he told himself grimly—like that row of rusting, dead locomotives on the track behind the Lynchburg roundhouse.

When he looked at those old engines, memories crowded in on Mike Hogan. Here were pages out of yesterday—an album of engines that had been storming down the rails when he had started railroading on the Central Valley. The 2440, the 2625, consolidations—freight engines. That once-sleek Pacific, a passenger hauler, the 3621, and others.

Bigger engines had taken their place.

One day old Mike noticed that some of the engines behind the roundhouse were gone, and he mentioned it to a young engineer, Dan Pratt, when he met him on the street.

"See they been cleaning out the bone yard." Mike's voice held a note of sorrow. "Sent them to the scrap pile, I guess."

"Scrap, hell," said Dan Pratt. "They're in the back shop."

Mike Hogan blinked. The 2440 and the 2625 were to be returned to service. The road needed engines—and men, too, Dan Pratt said. Dan's father, Mike knew, was still running passenger, pulling one side of the Colonial Limited. And Charley Pratt was crowding seventy, too.

Mike stopped at the barber shop and got a haircut and a shave. When he got home his wife was putting away the supper dishes.

"How old do I look?" he asked her.

She regarded him curiously, said, "Not a day older, Mike, than when I first knew you."

"I'm going to Baytown in the morning," he announced. "I'm going back on the railroad—if they'll have me."

When Mike Hogan returned from Baytown, there was a new spring in his step; a fire was kindled in his faded blue eyes.

"The next time you write our Tim," he said, with the old-time ring in his voice, "you tell him the old man is back in service."

IN OTHER days, Lynchburg had been the terminal of a main-line engine division, but now most of the locomotives there were pulling branch trains or were used as helpers on The Hill, the twelve-mile grade to Summit.

The engineers at Lynchburg now were younger men, and the firemen were green. The motive power was made up of old engines, grimy brutes that had seen better days, hand-fired locomotives, like those on the spur track by the roundhouse, that had been put in shape in the back shop and were now doing their bit in the battle of transportation.

Old Mike Hogan's hand shook a little when he signed the caller's book for the first time. He was going out on the 2440 to help on The Hill.

He had fired the 2440 over thirty years ago. And now war had turned back the clock.

His wife kissed him at the door, and handed him his dinner pail. Mike stared at it. It was one of those big two-deckers that had been in use years before, with a tin cup sticking up on the lid like the dome on an engine. He had almost forgotten he'd ever owned the thing.

"I've had it waiting on the top pantry shelf," his wife told him. "I—I thought you might use it again sometime. It was a railroad man's dinner pail. It belonged to a man called Iron Mike." Mary Hogan stood back and surveyed him proudly, standing there in his crisp new railroad man's overalls and jumper and cap.

Mike looked at the old dinner pail reflectively. "I mind the time Charley Pratt used to carry hard coal home in one of these things every night."

He was an hour ahead of time when he checked in at the crew dispatcher's office. He was as nervous as he had been his first time out on an engine.

He signed the register; then went out and walked around the cleaning pits to the 2440, standing on the lead track near the water crane. In the old days when a locomotive came out of the shop it looked spick and span, but these times they couldn't stop to prink. Anyway, she was alive now, with fire on her grates and hot steam in her boiler.

Mike Hogan rested a hand on a side rod. "Been a long time since you and I went down the railroad, old girl."

He shoved his dinner bucket and long-neck oiler into the gangway and climbed up. He stood on the apron then, his eyes drinking in every detail. His glance touched the throttle, the big reverse lever—Johnson Bar, they had called it once—the handles of the train and engine brakes, the steam and air gauges, the water glass, the Hancock injectors, the fire-door and the chain that swung it, the lubricator, the wet-down hose, the whistle cord and bell rope.

There was grime and soot, and asbestos showing at the seams of her jacket. There was the same old litter in front of the fireman's seat.

Mike Hogan drew a slow, deep breath. "You damn mangy old tea kettle," he said, "you're the sweetest thing I've laid an eye on since Hector was a pup."

He stowed his dinner bucket in the seat-box and swung the fire-door open. Smoke puffed into the cab, and Mike cracked the blower to clear it. The surface of the fire was ragged, and

Illustrated by HARVE STEIN

The ancient 2625, consolidated engine—with old Iron Mike in the cab —was roaring down the rails again, carrying green for Uncle Sam

caked with the partly burned green coal a hostler had shoveled in.

Mike reached for the two-pronged fire-hook on the tender. He broke the blackened crust, smoothed the humps and hollows. He picked up the No. 3 scoop, balancing it in his hands almost lovingly. He shot a shovelful of coal into the firebox, cracking the scoop on the door-ring, just to get the feel of it.

This was no part of an engineman's job, but it carried him back, made him think of those yesterdays when they had called him Iron Mike.

WHEN the fireman climbed aboard, old Mike had a sweet fire built up. Steam was purring at the dome; the needle of the steam gauge was on the pin.

"You start with a heavy fire," Mike told the fireman, "or run into trouble on the 2440."

"You start out on this damned old scrap-heap," growled the fireman, "an' you got trouble any way you look at it."

Mike scowled. "You got to have hair on your ears to railroad in this man's army, my boy." Trouble with the present generation, they were soft; they wanted things easy, like firing those stoker jobs.

The head brakeman showed up and said they were helping an extra freight. A little later the 2440 was coupled in head of the caboose of a heavy drag.

Once under way, the engineer of a pusher had little to do. Mike watched the fireman awkwardly heaving in coal. The steam pressure was falling.

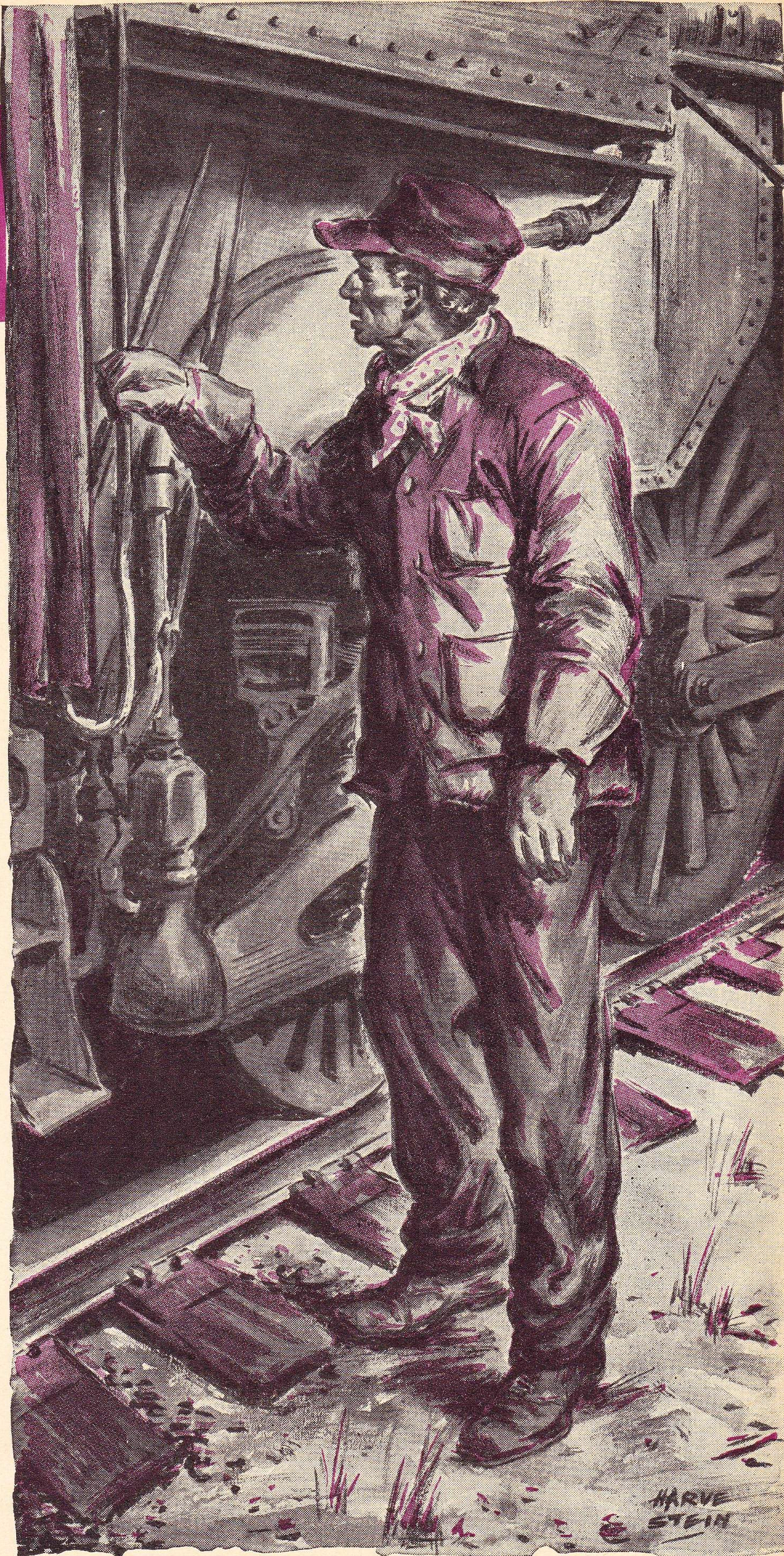
"How long you been firing, son?"

"Oh, a month or so."

"Listen, you got to keep those back corners filled with green coal," Mike said. "Cold air is sucking past your fire. And don't use that hook so much; it starts clinkers forming. Then you got trouble. Shake the grates now and then. Keep her bright underneath."

The fireman swore, and continued to fire his own way.

"When I started firing," Mike said, "there wasn't any stoker-fired engines on this pike. These old muzzle-loaders were all there was, and they made a fireman, or broke him, and sudden. I know. You fire like I told you and you'll make steam."



"Been a long time since you and I went down the railroad, old girl."

"You know so much," snarled the fireman, "why don't you take a crack at this old pile of junk?"

"Give me that scoop."

Mike flipped the fire-door open, inverted the scoop and looked under it into the roaring fire-pit.

"Always watch your fire," he called above the thunder of their going. "Put the black on the white. Put the green coal where she's burning the hottest. Spread it so it will burn fast. Like this."

The years dropped away. Mike was a young man again, bouncing the scoop off the door-ring with deft twists of the wrist, as he swayed back and forth. "In my day," he said, "it was a tough engine I couldn't keep hot." He might have added that was why they had called him Iron Mike.

Four trips the 2440 made, helping on the hill—tough, bruising trips, for all trains were over tonnage. Most of the time Mike Hogan was down on the deck, swinging the scoop. Never did he let the fire get away from him. Always there was a thin, jaunty feather of white above the grimy dome.

Pride of achievement was his. He could still take two handsful of train and go down the railroad. But that evening, climbing the path from the roundhouse, he was Old Man Hogan, creaking in every joint.

"It was murder," he confessed to his wife. "But I showed 'em."

She drew a hot bath for him, and Mike eased into the tub with a blissful sigh. He ate supper and fell into bed. Hardly, it seemed, had his head hit the pillow before the call boy was there again.

Groaning, Mike crawled out, moving his arms experimentally. His fingers were painful, wooden things that wouldn't bend; his back was one huge, howling ache.

"Today," said Mary Hogan, "you let the fireman do the work."

"If those old engines can get out there and ball the jack," Mike said, "I can too. "And we're moving war stuff. It's got to go through."

The Central Valley, along with all of the other roads of the country, was doing a Herculean job. Day and night it was throwing men and guns at Hitler and Tojo. Trains were storming down the rails with troops, with war cargoes.

In every state of the union, superintendents of motive power were scouring the back tracks and the bone yards for engines. More and more, old locomotives entered the forming ranks, their exhausts cannonading from rusted stacks, their whirling drivers joining in on the battle chant.

The iron horse was fighting a war—the iron horse and old Mike Hogan. . . .

Mike had to do a lot of catching up before he was qualified for main-line service. He had to learn the River Division all over again. There was centralized traffic control out of Baytown; the telephone had, for the most part, replaced the telegraph for train dispatching; there were position light signals, replacing the arm-type semaphore of the automatic block system.

There were fast new trains with fancy names—the Stampede, a stock train; the Thunderbird, handling perishables; the Merchant Prince, fast merchandise—symbol trains, Red Ball stuff.

The varnish, the lace curtains, had luxury fliers like the Empress, the Pilgrim, the Mohawk, the Colonial Limited. When these haughty passenger trains came streaking down the rail they had clear rights over everything—everything except Army Transport.

Mike Hogan met a lot of old friends on the River Division, renewed acquaintances with men he had known in the dim and distant past. He was climbing onto an old ten-wheeler one day in Baytown when Charley Pratt hailed him from the cab of a big Northern 4-8-4 engine that was about to couple onto the Colonial Limited.

"See they been raiding the junk yards," Pratt called, grinning.

"We're pulling our tonnage," Mike shot back. "War stuff, too. You and them lace curtains are just hauling a lot of fancy pants."

"Don't get in our way," Pratt said, "or we'll run over you. . . ."

The train dispatchers came to know old Mike, and the trainmaster, and big John Tobin, the superintendent. "Iron Mike," they said. The old-timers would tell with a chuckle of the time Mike had trailed the first section of a fast freight, with the headlight of his engine shining in the rear door of the caboose, while the conductor and flagman hung out on the steps, cursing and ready to jump.

Once Mike saw Tyson—old J. D. Tyson had been super on the River Division in those days. He was president of the Central Valley now, a man who had come up from the ranks.

J. D. had recognized him, called him Mike. They had talked in the free and easy manner of old friends. That night Mike told Mary about it. "Came right up and slapped me on the back. Common as an old shoe."

THERE was a young captain in Army Transport, and he was ready to take the River Division apart to find fifteen missing cars of war material. They were long past due at Baytown. They had been headed for the base port, to transfer their consist to a freighter, part of a convoy getting ready to put to sea.

Cargo hunters of the Central Valley's freight traffic service got busy and located the cars in the yards at High Bridge, one hundred miles away.

The wires fairly smoked. The brass hats said, in effect, "Get that stuff through, even if you have to couple it to the rear end of the Colonial Limited."

A harried yardmaster at High Bridge conferred with the roundhouse foreman, and they glumly shook their heads. In days gone by High Bridge, like Lynchburg, had been a main-line terminal, always with plenty of big road engines at hand. Now the only available locomotives were those grimed old veterans that had been hurriedly returned to service.

Mike Hogan and the 2625 had come in on a double-header. The old consolidation had been turned and was on the lead by the coal sheds, her fire cleaned and with coal and water aboard, waiting to go out as a helper. It was the only engine ready to go.

The train dispatcher checked the West End. There was nothing coming east but the Colonial Limited. Every minute was precious. They were holding up a convoy.

Quickly the dispatcher made his decision. Mike Hogan had been making a name for himself; he'd performed wonders with those old engines. Just maybe he could do the impossible. No. 10, the eastbound Colonial Limited, with Charley Pratt at the throttle, had been delayed on the West End. They were forty minutes late, but making up time.

It was in the dispatcher's mind to hold the eastbound Merchant Prince, hot-shot merchandise train, at Lynchburg for Mike Hogan and those cars of army stuff. The Merchant Prince, with a cracking big 4-8-2 Mountain-type locomotive, and an authorized speed of sixty-five miles an hour, forty cars or less, would have to drop part of her train to make way for the fifteen cars of war material, but she'd wheel them in from Lynchburg in something like fifty minutes.

That part was simple. But how long it would take Mike Hogan to cover the fifty miles from High Bridge to Lynchburg was something else again. It was tough going, upgrade all the way except for the last twelve miles from Summit to Lynchburg.

In the High Bridge yards, men marshaled the train quickly. The 2625 backed onto the cars of army material, an old passenger coach was coupled behind for a caboose, and the air pumps started slamming air into the train line.

Mike Hogan and the conductor received their tissues and a clearance, and *First* No. 10 was ready to highball. The begrimed 2625, with green flags flying jauntily on her boiler front—the 2625, with old Iron Mike in the cab, running as the first section of the varnish, carrying green for the Colonial Limited and Charley Pratt.

Mike Hogan had been wiry and tough, and steel-nerved, back in the days when he had been given the name of Iron Mike. Too, the 2625 had been new. Now she'd been dragged back from the garden where old engines go, to fill in and do the best she could until the war was won.

Coming west, the fireman had experienced little difficulty in keeping up steam, for the grade had been with him from Summit. But now he ran into trouble at once. Mike, his seamed face grim, was rapping the stack unmercifully, working the 2625 with the reverse way down in the corner and the throttle wide open.

The needle wavered, fell away from

the two hundred mark on the steam gauge. Mike looked at his watch. They had twenty-eight minutes on Charley Pratt and the Colonial Limited.

The fireman, in those first mauling miles, shoveled in coal and sweated and cursed. He hooked the fire, with the injector screaming in his ears, and lost another five pounds.

Mike yelled, "Fire her light and keep that hook out of her!"

"Fire her light, hell!" cried the fireman. "These damn old engines are coal-sluggers!" He was big and husky, but he hadn't been firing too long. Furthermore, today's run had been his first trip with Mike. He yelled for Mike to shut off the injector and reached for the long steel firehook.

In Baytown a convoy was waiting, and the fireman was cry-babying about that stream of cold water being forced into the boiler by the injector. Cold water made steam, made it in a hurry, and steam slapped those clawing drivers around.

In the old days, a good fireman could "wind her up against the gun." That meant bringing up the steam pressure with the injector on, a tough job but one that could be done.

Mike bawled at the head brakeman to move over to the right side and watch the signals. He swung down to the swaying deck, pushed the fireman out of the way and grabbed the scoop.

Charley Pratt had said, "Don't get out in front of me with those old scrap-heaps or I'll run over you." Charley Pratt's Colonial Limited was coming up behind, running like a bat out of hell —a high-iron aristocrat, wheeling as the second section, eating the dust of a pair of old has-beens.

The 2625 had been a dandy in her day, and the boys in the back shop had done a good job on her. She was still a lot of engine in her class, but she had been built for freight service, not to outrun a big Northern engine with eighty-inch drivers.

Mike Hogan put his back against the corner of the cab, planted his left foot over the pedal that operated the automatic air doors, and went to work, with the fireman on the seat-box on the left, his lips twisted in a sneer.

What the big fireman saw, he never forgot. Old Mike might have been an automaton. Every move was timed and graceful. The fire-doors opened and banged closed with sweet precision, allowing little opportunity for inward-rushing cold air to smash at the flue-sheet. Mike swayed back and forth like a slow-swinging pendulum. One scant scoopful at a time he fed into the roaring fire-pit.

The scoop clattered on the door-ring, spreading the coal in a thin spray over the spots where the fire bed burned the brightest, "putting the black on the white." The quivering needle of the steam gauge started to climb.

One hundred and eighty-five pounds now. Ninety. Ninety-five. Then the needle was riding the pin—a full two hundred pounds—when First No. 10 thundered past Wayland.

First No. 10 was waving a white feather above the grimy jacket of the old 2625 when it crashed down on Grange. The operator there "OS'ed" her—reported her by. The dispatcher at the train sheet in Baytown had a tight-lipped smile at his mouth-corners.

Old Mike Hogan was walking down the railroad.

Coming into the yards at Valley Center, Mike took his place at the throttle again. The fireman said, "Pop, you can sure fire an engine. I've learned something."

Iron Mike's Fireman

Mike was thinking about water for the thirsty 2625 now. The big Mountain-type engines and the Northerns, with some 22,000-gallon capacity, could go from hell to breakfast without a drink, but not these old girls.

Mike's jaw was grim. They'd have to stop at Royalton for water. Moultonville, at the latest. It was going to mean the loss of precious minutes, and Mike wanted to stay ahead of the Colonial Limited.

He scrambled back over the coal and banged open the cover of the tank, and decided he could go to Moultonville. With the varnish coming up behind him, with the ever-present threat of hot journals, with coal shifting back in the tender, there was plenty to worry about.

The Limited had a scheduled stop at Valley Center, and Mike figured this would just about offset the time they would need to take on enough water to make it into Lynchburg. He eased off the throttle a little, and hooked up the reverse, shortening the valve stroke. He looked at his watch. It was going to be nip and tuck all around.

"Be up there on the tank when I stop at the water plug," he yelled across at the head brakeman. And to the fireman: "You shake the grates and smooth your fire. I'll squirt a little oil at her, and see if anything's running hot."

THERE was a red order board at Moultonville. Old Mike's heart sank. They were going to let the Colonial Limited run around them, making the varnish the first section.

When they got in, the waiting Merchant Prince would pick up the fifteen cars and highball as Second No. 10.

John Tobin, the super, and old J. D. himself had dropped into the dispatcher's office, and now had grandstand seats for the show.

Tobin ran his eye down the train sheet. "Good Lord!" he exclaimed. "Mike Hogan is close to running away from the Limited." He looked at J. D. Tyson and grinned. "That's railroading." Then, to the dispatcher: "Better hold them at Moultonville. Mike is liable to try to go to Summit for water, and I doubt if he'll make it."

J. D. was smiling a little. "Iron Mike," he said, half to himself. "They put guts into those old-timers, just as they did in those old engines."

The dispatcher was saying, "It's working out all right, better than I dared hope. I pulled a Pacific, the 3621, off a light hitch coming east. I'm going to put her on those cars of war stuff at Moultonville in place of the 2625, and let old Mike run her through. That way, it will save switching over to the Merchant Prince. The crew of the 3621 have taken water and are all set to back on the minute First No. 10 gets there."

Mike Hogan almost cried when the Moultonville operator gave the dispatcher's instructions. He was going to ball the jack right to Baytown, with Charley Pratt and the lace curtains behind him.

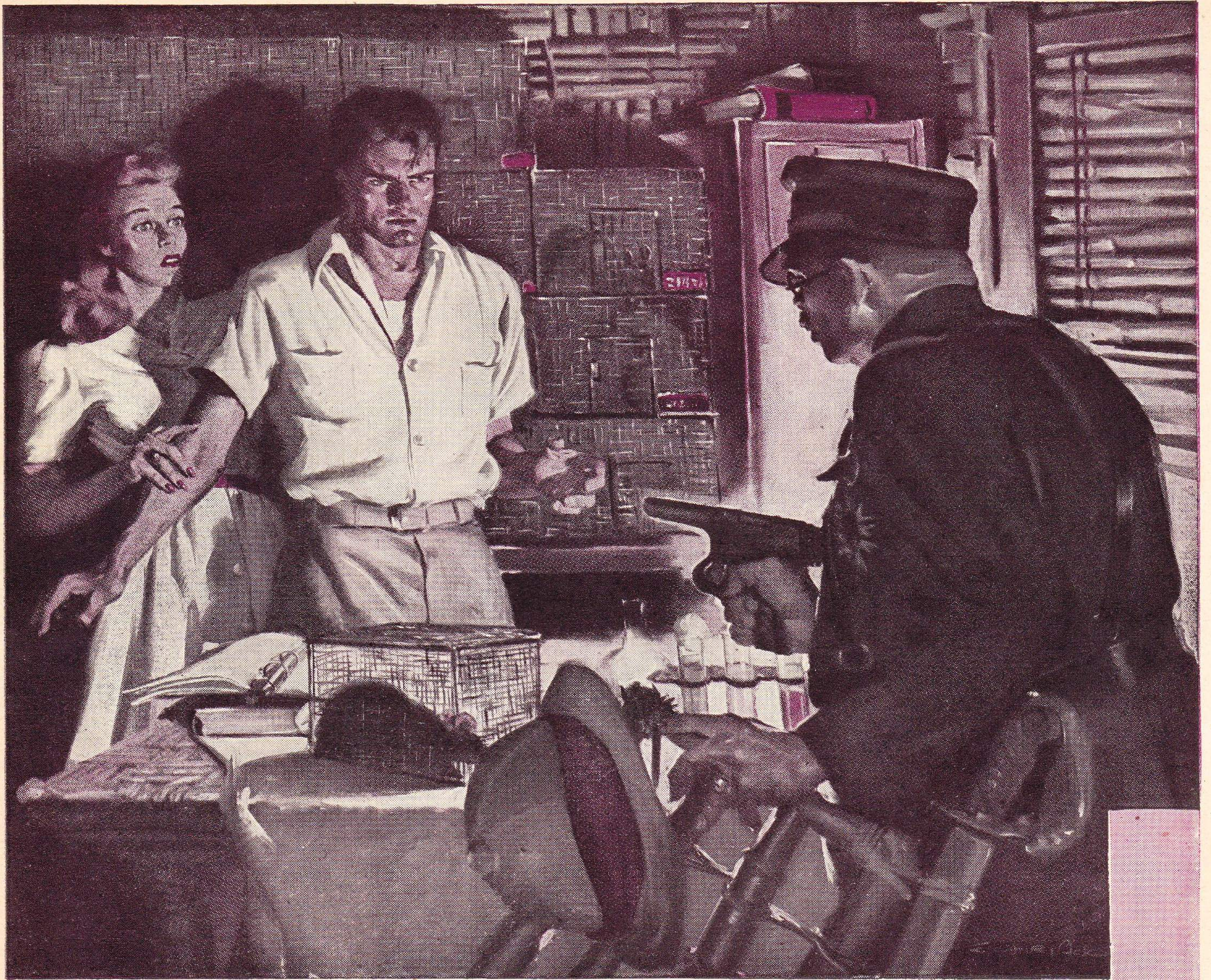
The engine change was made quickly, and once more First No. 10 was rushing east. It was a hard pull, Moultonville to Summit, and Mike gave the old 3621 a beating.

Summit came in sight, and Mike climbed to the seat on the right, wild exultance surging through his veins. He was riding on top of the world. From here on in he had the grade in his favor. With his fifteen loads of hot consist, he was off to the wars.

When the 3621 screamed past the Merchant Prince, there on the third iron outside of the Lynchburg lower yard, old Mike put a lot of feeling into the long and two short whistle blasts that called the attention to the fact that he was displaying signals—carrying green—for a following section, namely the high-faluting Colonial Limited and Charley Pratt.

Mike whistled once for the tower, and once—passing the house on the slope—for Mary, a long, triumphant scream from the white-feathered dome of the high-wheeling 3621. Mary would know who was at the throttle.

A gaunt little old man—Iron Mike Hogan—grimy-faced and weary, sagged over the arm-rest, his cap visor pulled low, as he squinted past the glass weather-wing, looking down the rails that reached away to Baytown, feeling proudly that this was another battle won on the road to victory. ● ●



"For that, you die!" he said.

Dr. Peter Lang insisted that anyone could learn a lot from rats. He proved his point—to his pretty nurse's satisfaction—when the Japs came to Burma

THERE were four of them in the slat-sided bungalow on the Salween, and time passed slowly while they waited for the Japs.

There was Dr. Sigrid Nielsen, honey-haired, honey-skinned, attractive as no research physician in tropical diseases for the Rockefeller Institute had any business being.

There was Dr. Peter Lang, tall, spectacled, thin of face and thin of hair, stooped over the ant-shredded black leather ring book in which he made careful, tiny fountain pen notes about his rats. Someday his findings would get to the Institute—he hoped.

There were also his two Shan boys; Maung, old, a lump wrinkled like a walnut in his neck below the left ear—that was his amulet against death by tiger—and a ceremonial *lungyi* of rose silk falling from his short ribs to his ankles; Min, his son, smooth-skinned, alert, mission-educated, wore a skirt of bright forget-me-not blue.

The two natives had spray guns and were busy at their routine task of killing fleas in the hundreds of wire rat cages stacked against the walls of the laboratory. The insecticide smelled a bit like rotting fruit.

Outside the teak and bamboo house, heat shimmered and danced over the yellow water of the river. It jiggled the outlines of the steep Shan Hills which were already cushioned from the eye by a hundred foot high jungle.

Off two hundred yards downstream was the little stockaded town of Möng Yöng and just outside the wall rose the whitewashed pagoda spire of the Buddhist monastery.

Sigrid Nielsen, leaning against a teak pillar and looking through split bamboo and the wire fly screen, could see the little town and the distant hazy hills flanking the river. Far away, perhaps ten miles distant, three lazy mushrooms of black smoke were slowly growing up into the heat-yellowed sky.

"They've got the mission," she said over her shoulder. "I hope the sisters got away."

Peter Lang finished a case notation on a rat, and laid down his fountain pen.

"We would have seen them here, if they had," he said. "There's no other place they could have gone. The Japs are between us and India on the west.

They're in Siam to the east. They're down river to the south."

"I know." Sigrid Nielsen was impatient. "Five hundred miles north is China, and on each side of the river is jungle. I still don't see why we don't try to escape."

"I've told you before," he said wearily. "The Japs have done a swell job of propaganda. The Burmese monks are inciting their people to welcome their little brown brothers in Buddha. We'd be picked up by our own villagers the moment we leave the house."

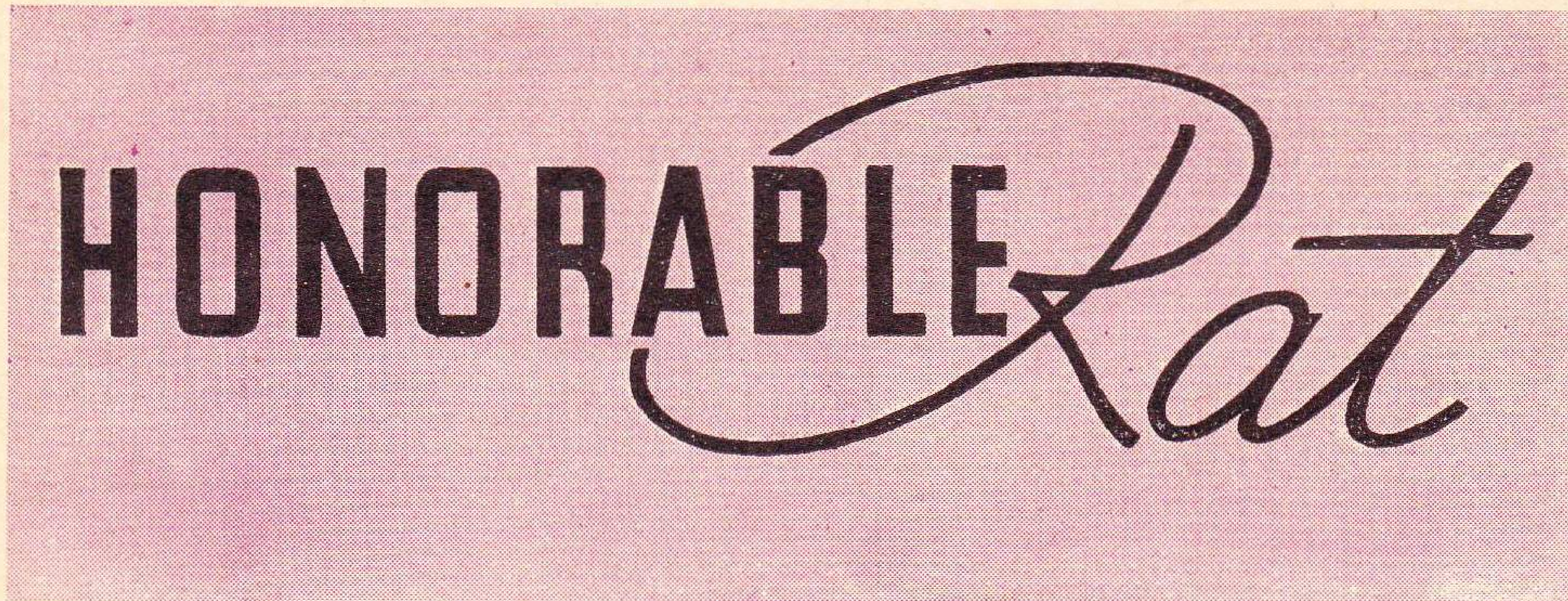
He got up and walked over to a bank of cages. . . . Yes, there was no doubt about it—rat G673 was dying.

"Even a rat will try," Sigrid murmured.

"You're wrong," Lang said angrily. "Rats are intelligent. They won't try to escape unless there's a real chance. You don't see them rushing about their cages now, do you? You can learn lots from rats!"

"One should always keep trying." She set her mouth stubbornly. "You'll never get anywhere if you don't. I got my traveling research scholarship by trying and keeping on trying when they said that a girl could never win one. I could have been caught by the Japs in Singapore and again in Rangoon. But I kept trying and I'm still ahead of them. I don't intend to be

Illustrated by ERNEST CHIRIACKA



By GEOFFREY HEWELCKE

trapped like a stupid rat. I know what the Japs do to white women!"

Lang pulled on a pair of heavy leather gloves. He stared thoughtfully at his hand.

"I have thought of that," he admitted. "But I feel sure the Japanese will realize that, as scientists, we work for the good of humanity. They might even allow us to continue our work."

Sigrid Nielsen stared at him blankly. Then she laughed. It was a bitter laugh that ended with something like a sob. To Peter Lang she was only a fellow scientist. She had to constantly remind herself of that because she wanted so badly for him to see her as a woman—a woman in love. . . .

"You're hopeless," she said. "I've helped myself to some of your potassium cyanide in case it comes to the worst."

Peter Lang looked genuinely shocked.

"Oh, I'm sure—" his hands fluttered in their thick gloves "—I'm certain—the Japanese have some very intelligent research men. They'd never dream—"

"Forget it!" she snapped. "I can take care of myself. And right now I want a drink. Something long and cold."

MIN carefully laid down his spray gun and wiped his hands on one of Peter Lang's handkerchiefs which he carried up the sleeve of his short black jacket.

"Chota peg, miss?" he asked brightly.

"A long, long one," Sigrid said. "With ice in it."

She slipped into a rattan chair and picked up an old copy of the *Lancet.*

"Rats!" she said slowly.

Peter Lang glared at her. She evaded the look, pretending to read the medical magazine.

He tugged the gloves on firmly and went back to the rat that interested him. Cautiously he pulled up the slide door. Rat G673 did not even try to bite when he carried it to the work bench and strapped it to his miniature operating table. He searched its skin for sign of flea bites. There were none. This was as it should be. A hypodermic syringe pricked the rat into slight activity. He squeezed a drop of blood onto a microscope slide and a minute later knew what was killing the rat.

"Septicaemic, all right," he grunted, and consulted his card index. Yes, that was the form the sickness should take. A shot of adrenalin now . . . Deftly he prepared it, deftly inserted a needle and pushed the plunger.

There was the noise of a motor truck on the dusty highway outside, but he did not associate the sound with danger. He was unstrapping the rat when there came a shattering blow on the flimsy door of his laboratory. The door whacked flat against the floor and the rat, suddenly imbued with strength, writhed in his leather-covered fingers.

Suddenly the room was full of little men in dusty khaki. They pointed pistols at him. They pointed small rifles that looked strangely like toys. They had flat, brutal faces with avid black eyes that swept the room for signs of danger and of loot. And the eyes stopped, as if magnetized, upon the cool white woman who sat in the chair, a magazine in her lap.

Brakes squealed outside and cars stopped. There was a shouting of orders in Japanese. Then leather-soled boots stamped into the bungalow.

Dr. Lang looked at Sigrid Nielsen. She was watching the soldiers grouped in front of her with unafraid interest. They seemed awed by her lack of fear.

The soldier nearest the door drew stiffly to attention as an officer appeared, squat, brisk, broad-faced, his bandy legs encased in looted English riding boots that were much too long for him; that almost covered his knees.

The officer glanced at a slip of paper in his hand.

"Preace." He smiled toothily. "You are Honorable Dr. Peter Rang?"

Lang bowed his head in acknowledgment.

"I am Major Otihara." His eyes had turned to Sigrid Nielsen. "Who iss young woman?"

"My assistant, Dr. Nielsen," Lang said.

The smile became a smirk. "It iss preasure to take so beaut'fu' prisoner."

Peter Lang spoke swiftly. "I demand proper treatment for us both," he said. "We are scientists. Our work is for humanity in general. We want—"

He broke off as Major Otihara, still smiling, walked over and slapped his face.

"Quiet!" the Jap officer said. "You are prisoner. You make answer when spoken to. You bow when speak to Nipponese. You bow when pass Nippon soldier. Otherwise keep quiet."

Sigrid Nielsen raised her drink to her lips, then lowered it without sipping from it.

"And what do I do?" she asked huskily.

"General Shuru attend personarry to you, Honorable Miss Doctor." Otihara grinned. "He will have preasure."

From behind him there was a sudden noise of scuffling and he turned as quickly as a cat. Two Japanese soldiers were dragging Maung back into the laboratory. The old man was struggling, spitting curses at his captors.

Min, who had been standing quietly in a corner, started to his father's aid, but a Japanese soldier shoved a bayonetted rifle against the bright blue silk of his *lungyi* and made a ripping motion.

One of the soldiers with Maung jabbered shrilly and pointed at the walnut-like lump on the old man's neck. The officer nodded. The soldier swung his rifle butt down on the old man's head. It crunched in with the sound of a bursting melon. The soldier stooped. There was the flash of a knife. Then he was up and something bloody rolled on the palm of his hand. He passed it to Major Otihara.

"Beasts!" The cry came from Sigrid Nielsen. "Oh, the bloody beasts!"

There was a small whimpering sound from Min, and the Japanese private guarding him shoved the bayonet against his chest. A bit of blood dripped in a crimson line down Min's blue skirt.

Peter Lang was staring, his eyes wide with horror. The rat bit savagely at his leather-covered finger, and he realized with a start that its teeth were almost down to his skin. Hastily he shifted his hand.

Major Otihara examined the dead Maung's amulet closely, then tossed it back to the man who had cut it from Maung's neck.

"Worth nothing," he deigned to explain in English. "Sometimes they have rubies in neck. This just crystal." He added a few words in Japanese, and a soldier near Sigrid Nielsen suddenly lunged forward and knocked the glass out of her hand. The tumbler smashed on the floor, its contents splashing.

Otihara giggled at her dismay.

"You pretty," he said. "But you do not make foo' of me. Poison in drink, yess? Honorable General Shuru disappointed if you die. Angry with me."

Peter Lang swore softly. By the expression on Sigrid's face he knew that Otihara had guessed right. She had put the cyanide she had boasted of in the drink. And now that was gone. Lang had heard of the Japanese commander, General Shuru. He was notorious for his treatment of the white women at Hong Kong.

THERE was a sound of more tramping feet in the bungalow. A group of officers entered and fanned out to make room for a more important personage.

Major Otihara clicked to attention as a pear-bodied officer waddled in. There was gold braid on his cap; gold on the hilt of the long straight sword that swung at his side. He had a jowl like a pig and eyes that were almost buried behind creases of fat. A scraggly black mustache hung over his full lips.

The major saluted. He spoke briefly, triumphantly. He pointed to Sigrid Nielsen and then to Dr. Lang.

General Shuru nodded. He looked at Sigrid and smiled.

"Pretty," he said. "I wir give you presents."

Otihara turned stiffly to Lang.

"Stand up," he shouted. "Stand up and bow to Honorable General!"

White hot, yet icily composed in his rage, Peter Lang stood up and bowed. Then his fists thrust forward and he placed something that twisted and snapped in the general's hands.

"A present from me, too," he said, quietly removing his gloves.

There was a shriek of rage from the general; a shriek in which anger was mingled with pain. He flung the rat away, but blood spurted from his thumb where the rat had bitten him. The beast dashed madly about the room, amid stamping feet. One of the boots found the furry body and an instant later it was crushed to a bloody pulp.

Tense with fury, Major Otihara pointed his automatic pistol at Peter Lang.

"For that, you die!" he said.

Lang crossed his arms. He was smiling now.

"So does your general then," he said. "That rat was loaded with bubonic plague germs!"

"The pest?" Otihara cried. "I don't believe you. I shoot!"

Dr. Lang said, "If you know my work, you'll know that I've been doing research in bubonic. Most of these rats have been injected with one or the other of its forms."

GENERAL SHURU suddenly slapped Otihara's pistol down. His face was a mask of combined fear and hate.

"How long pest take for me?" he asked abruptly.

Lang looked at him and laughed. "You're interested, aren't you?" he gibed. "Well, I won't tell you. I'll let you worry."

The general swung about heavily. He glared at Sigrid.

"You are doctor," he panted. "You tell how long."

Sigrid Nielsen looked at him contemptuously. "I don't know," she lied.

There was a gabble of voices and two of the officers dashed out of the laboratory. Peter Lang watched them go and guessed their mission.

"I have a bargain to propose, General," he suggested.

"Yess?" The Japanese commander turned eagerly.

"There is a serum I can inject you with. I can do it right away. Then you won't need to worry. I don't know if your army surgeons have it or not, but in any event they will not know what type to use. Bubonic comes in several forms, like pneumonia."

"Yess?" The general thrust his head forward. "The bargain. What is it?"

"Freedom," Peter Lang said. "Liberty for Dr. Nielsen, for myself, for my servant, Min."

"Yes," the general said decisively. "I make that bargain. You inject me right away."

"Very well." Peter Lang stepped to the laboratory bench, picked up the syringe with which he had drawn blood from the rat. There still was a bit of fluid in the syringe. He wiped the needle and turned to the general.

"The same finger that was bitten will be best," he said. He grabbed the pudgy thumb and jabbed it with the needle, pushed down the plunger.

Lang stepped back. He smiled at the angry Jap officer.

"Now then," he said. "I want to be flown across the border to India with Dr. Nielsen and my servant. There you can drop us by parachute."

General Shuru looked at his thumb, at the slow flow of blood from the needle puncture, and at the ragged tear made by the rat's teeth. Then he faced Peter Lang again.

"I stick by bargain," he said. "But nothing in bargain about flying to India. Freedom you arr three have. You start now, prease. In five minutes I send men after you."

Major Otihara guffawed with laughter. He slapped his leg with an open palm, and translated to his brother officers. They also burst into raucous Japanese glee. The general preened himself. His eyes went again to Sigrid Nielsen.

"I give you presents yet, my pretty," he said tenderly.

Sigrid Nielsen started up. "Come along, Peter," she cried. "We have a chance. Let's get going."

Dr. Lang shook his head. "Remember, I told you that you could learn plenty from rats. A rat doesn't try to get out of its cage until the door is open. The door is not yet open to our cage."

"We've got five minutes start," Sigrid cried.

"And the jungle to buck," he replied. "That's no start at all."

General Shuru chuckled. "You no rike bargain?" he asked. "Me—I rike!"

Dr. Lang strolled over to the refrigerated cabinet in which he kept such sera and bacterial cultures as would spoil in the heat of Burma. Tacked to its outside was a sheet of paper on which there were numbers written, and brief descriptions beside the numbers.

HE TOOK the list and brought it to his marble-topped laboratory bench.

"You have sent for your staff surgeon, haven't you, General?" He asked. "Well, I have here something he'll be interested in." His hand reached over and picked up a glass-stoppered bottle. The bottle slipped from his fingers and smashed on the stone slab of the bench. The liquid in it puddled on the paper he had left there, and it started smoking at once.

Major Otihara leaped forward. "You try to destroy that paper!" He grabbed the wet sheet and dropped it as sulphuric acid in full strength bit at his fingers.

"You're quite right," Dr. Lang said. "I wanted to destroy that list and I've done so. You can't save it now."

Otihara grabbed for the list again and it crumbled into ashes in his hands.

"Why?" he asked. "Why you do that?"

"I'll tell you," Dr. Lang said. "And your general can check with his surgeon when he arrives. You see, bubonic plague is spread by the bite of fleas which have lived on rats that had it. You know that?"

Major Otihara and the general looked at each other and nodded.

"Yess," said the general.

"Well, I played a little joke on you, General, when I gave you that rat. The rat had bubonic all right. But its bite would not necessarily infect you. You see, a flea, when it infects, injects a bit of the rat's blood into you, and it's the blood that does the damage. It's the blood that is loaded with the bacilli of bubonic."

"You joke with me?" The general swelled with anger. "The rat not give bubonic?"

"That's what I'm trying to tell you," Dr. Lang continued with laborious simplicity. "The rat did not give it to you. But I did, when I gave you that injection!"

"You—you did with the injection?" The general's slit eyes opened wide.

Dr. Lang smiled. "You see, I didn't trust your bargain, General. And I had a bit of the rat's blood left in that hypodermic syringe. Considering the temperature here, the bacilli should have remained nicely active. So I shot 'em into you."

General Shuru turned a rotted plum color. *"Baku!"* he yelled at Major Otihara. "You are cause of this. Your family never see your dishonorable ashes. I, personarry, scatter them in dung heap here!"

The major shrank at the threat. To be called *"baka"* by his general was in itself a dreadful thing. In the old days the *samurai* code would have demanded honorable suicide. And the threat about his ashes was even more horrible. But, of course, the general had lost face in front of the other officers; something for which he must have vengeance.

At this moment one of the officers who had rushed out to find the staff surgeon returned with the medical man panting behind him. The general turned to the surgeon and snarled a question. The physician, mild, spectacled, made hesitating answer. General Shuru uttered an expression of disgust.

"Arr right." He turned to Dr. Lang. "You are Yankee cheat, but you win this time. You give me proper injection and I promise you all fly to India. I promise I drop you from bomber."

Dr. Lang sat on the edge of his work table, his long legs dangling awkwardly. He smiled at the fuming general.

"No doubt you would drop us, all right," he said. "This time I suppose you'd say that parachutes are not included in the bargain! Well, I'll have to protect myself. You will drop the three of us by parachute across the border of India. And you will drop with us one of your small field radio sets. Then, when we're safely landed I'll send you a message telling you which flask of serum to use. That list I destroyed showed its position in the refrigerator."

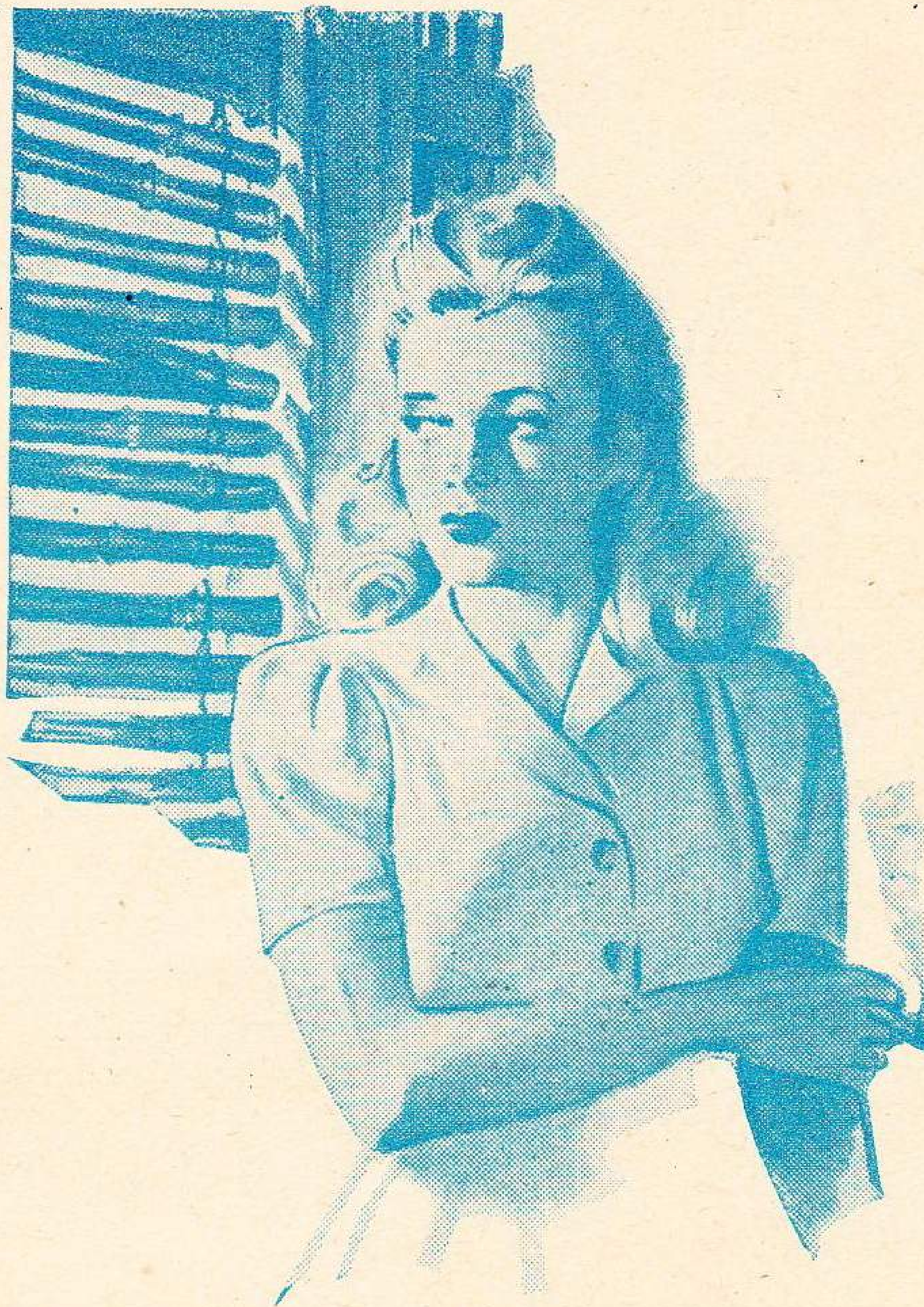
General Shuru cast a glance at the white porcelain cabinet. Then he yelled at his surgeon and jerked open the refrigerator's door. Within was an array of racks holding test tubes, flasks and bottles. Some were labelled with numbers. Some had almost illegible scribbles on them. Some had no identifying mark at all.

The Japanese army surgeon peered at them, took the racks out and carefully scrutinized the labels. Peter Lang glanced at Sigrid Nielsen and smiled.

The Japanese surgeon shook his head. He could not identify the serum required. He explained volubly in Japanese that it would take many hours and perhaps days to make tests.

GENERAL SHURU gave up then. "Yankee cheat!" He spat the words at Peter Lang. "You can send message on radio?"

"You will have to make all adjustments before you drop it," he said. "I don't know the Morse code, but I will tap the key a certain number of times for the row in the rack, another number for the position from the left, of the bottle. I'll tell you now that you should have an intravenous injection of ten cubic centimeters. The radio man on



Sigrid Nielsen

the bomber can catch the message and forward it to your headquarters."

General Shuru nodded. He looked grim and worried.

"And," Dr. Lang went on. "I want a proper compass and I'll set the course for the bomber. Then I'll pick the place where we will be dropped. Also, I don't care to be machine-gunned after having sent the message, so you can tell the bomber pilot that we'll seek shelter in the jungle with the radio set before we send the message."

General Shuru looked at him closely. "You know position of bottle now?"

Lang shook his head. "No. But if you will all leave my laboratory—Dr. Nielsen and Min can stay—I will make sure of its location."

The general glared at him. Then he rapped an order and his men began to file out.

"I order bomber to come here at once," he said. "You have five minutes alone in the laboratory." He paused. "I have word of honor from you?"

Lang nodded. "My word of honor."

As the Jap left the room Min flung himself upon the body of his father and sobbed.

"I'm sorry, boy," Lang said awkwardly. "There was nothing I could do."

Min rose and rubbed the tears away with his thumb. He stooped and picked up the bloody crystal ball his father had carried as his tiger amulet. For a moment he looked at it, then clenched his fist about it.

"This bring bad luck to Jap man," he said in English. "Now I help you, Master."

Lang said, "First thing you can do is lower the blinds over all the windows. I don't want any Japanese spying right now."

Sigrid Nielsen got out of her chair, came close to Peter Lang and laid a hand on his arm.

"You're clever, Peter," she said softly. "As clever as one of your own rats. And that's a compliment."

"Thanks." Peter Lang stared down at her as if he was seeing her for the first time. He smiled. "I'll tell you more about rats sometime in the future."

Sigrid's hand tightened on his. "I'll listen," she said. "I could listen for years and years."

Min had pulled down all the split bamboo shades and the laboratory was dimly lit.

Peter Lang turned and went to the refrigerator. He moved bottles, arranged them in orderly rows.

"All right," he said. "Call the Japs."

Sigrid Nielsen laughed. He said, "You've got a lovely laugh."

"You were a long time discovering it," she said.

He glanced at his watch. "I still have two more minutes to make further discoveries. . . ." His hands closed over her shoulders. "I've been rather blind to a lot of things—about you and about myself. I've just discovered that you are a lovely woman as well as a good scientist. . . ."

Her eyes were shining. "What did you discover about yourself?"

"That I love you, Sigrid."

He held her close for the rest of the two minutes.

Once he turned when there was a noise from the refrigerator.

"Min," he asked, "what are you doing there?"

"I put father's tiger amulet in there too," the youth answered. "It brings bad luck to the Japs."

LATER—much later—the three of them were kneeling in a patch of Indian jungle. Overhead a bomber with the red blob of the rising sun on its wings was wheeling eastward.

Peter Lang pressed the radio sending key a last time.

He said, "That ought to be clear enough. Third shelf, eleventh flask. He must have got it the first time I sent it, because he's heading for home."

"And so will we be soon," Sigrid said. "Where, by the way, is our home going to be?"

"Some place," said Peter Lang firmly, "where I can keep rats."

"Lots and lots of them," agreed Sigrid.

Neither of them heard Min as he made a brief prayer to the spirit of his father.

"Old Man," Min prayed, "you will be happy now! Old Man, for you I moved the bottles in the white box!" ● ●

REUNION ON THE *Riviera*

BY RUSSELL GORDON CARTER

Illustrated by SAMUEL CAHAN

IT WAS a tiny thing, pearl-mounted and deadly. Standing tall and slim and supple beside the boudoir table, she lifted it from the litter that crowded the half-open drawer and slipped it into her black velvet bag. From the drawing room below came General Kurt von Hegel's loud laugh. She imagined his stubby hands clutching the arms of his chair, his broad face flushed, his little slate-blue eyes moist with merriment. He laughed, the general, even while the ring of steel daily grew tighter round Europe, as British and American bombs flattened the cities of his homeland.

She closed her eyes momentarily, picturing the Frenchman beside him. Jean Vilanelle would perhaps be trying to smile, his swarthy forehead glistening from the effort; the general's humor had always made Vilanelle writhe. Her heavily rouged lips tightened and her hand curved round the bag. It was not the general she feared; with the Germans one knew where one stood. But Vilanelle was a Frenchman who had sold out to the Germans. It seemed incredible that she should once have fancied herself in love with him!

Her lovely lips curled in contempt at the thought of the two men who were waiting for her—those two busy and important men who had flown in the general's hydroplane from Marseilles to see her once more after four years. There was a possibility that they had not come merely because they still rested under the spell of her beauty. . . .

With a grace that had thrilled the capitals of Europe and South America, she moved on dainty slippered feet to the tall casement window. Her eyes went toward the western bluffs overlooking the hidden cove where the pilot had set the plane down. He too would be waiting, on guard beside the plane, until the two important men should again have need of his skill. Below her the olive groves loomed black against the Mediterranean, all that remained to her after years of work and self-discipline—dusty olive groves sloping to the sea, a neglected villa on the Riviera, and a life barren of the thing that means most to a woman. She had never known love; with Vilanelle she had only glimpsed it. Many men had loved her, but she had treated them with indifference, or as she had treated Paul Montfort. . . .

The American was uncomfortably in her thoughts as she slowly descended the broad carved stairway leading to the salon. Yet, she had treated Montfort badly. She regretted it now for he had loved France with a love that rivaled her own. If he were alive and she could see him again. . . .

The sudden quivering of her under lip surprised and annoyed her. She gave her head an imperious toss as if to be rid of the intruding past. But, as she continued her slow descent, she recalled the broadcast that had announced his death. It had been folly of course, that bold attempt at escape. Yet, for a group of American aviators three thousand miles from home to have to spend weeks, months, perhaps years in a Nazi concentration camp—even a concentration camp in so lovely a part of the world as the south of France—ah, she could understand their feelings!

The general bowed briskly from his ample waist as she entered the salon. "Mademoiselle has grown more beautiful," he greeted her. His eyes twinkled. He spoke French thickly, resentfully. "Beautiful as a flower!" he added.

"Thank you, dear general," she said and smiled.

Vilanelle's long fingers were unpleasantly cold. She felt an urge to draw her hand away before he could raise it to his lips. "You are too kind, Jean," she said in acknowledgment of his more subtle compliments.

They seated themselves in the amber glow of a floor lamp, and a servant brought liqueurs.

"It is four years since we last were together," the general was saying. "Do you remember, mademoiselle, at the Monopole? There were four of us then."

She was not likely to forget that evening. A Berlin audience sprinkled with notables had acclaimed her wildly. Afterward, they had sat in a small private dining-room, and there had been wine, too much wine. And there had been the American, Montfort. . . .

Raising her glass, she said impulsively, "Let us drink to the memory of the fourth who was with us then!"

Vilanelle regarded her quizzically, one eyebrow lifted. "Why to the memory of one who is not yet dead?" he inquired.

She stared at him, bewildered. "Not yet dead!" she exclaimed. "But the broadcast—"

"It was a Vichy broadcast," the Frenchman observed dryly.

Her heart was suddenly racing, but she succeeded in remaining outwardly calm. "Then it was not correct, that broadcast?"

The general cleared his throat, his manner both annoyed and apologetic. "A slight error," he conceded. "Two of the prisoners were killed in the attempt. The third, our friend Montfort, has not yet been taken. It is of course only a matter of time . . ."

Vilanelle was smiling sardonically. "Yes, of course," he agreed, "although a week has already passed—long enough to enable him to reach Switzerland. And yet," he added thoughtfully, "if I had been in his place . . ."

As he paused, she tried to complete the thought. Did he think Montfort might seek shelter at the villa? Was that perhaps what had brought Vilanelle here at this particular time?

THE general lifted his glass and drained it. The wine seemed to warm and relax him. He smiled. "We were speaking of that evening in Berlin," he remarked. "Ah, I enjoyed myself that night! I drank too much, of course. Always I drink too much in good company. But even with my head on the table, Vilanelle, I could hear you quarreling—you and Montfort. It woke me up, that quarrel. I saw him hurl the wine glass at you." He rocked from side to side at the memory. "How I laughed! There you stood, blinking the wine from your eyes. Wine dripping from your chin. Wine all over your shirt front. It was funny. You a French diplomat, and the young American business man was the cool one that night! Mademoiselle remembers how I laughed?"

Yes, she remembered. She also remembered something which he did not know. Only a high-ranking officer in the Intelligence section of the German army could have possessed the startling array of facts that he had unknowingly revealed to her that night. Facts which later she had so carefully written down. . . .

"How I laughed!" he repeated, still shaking. He jabbed a pudgy finger at Vilanelle. "Never could I get you to talk about it, that quarrel. There must have been a woman. Always there is a woman, eh, mademoiselle?"

"That night there were two," she said.

"Eh, two?"

"Myself and Marianne."

"Marianne? I do not know her—" He frowned, trying to remember.

"Merely a name," she said. Her mood was suddenly exultantly reckless. She knew, now, why Vilanelle had come. She knew his tenacity, his ruthlessness. She looked straight at him now and continued. "Marianne was ill, and she was in danger. I wrote to her, warning her of the danger. You may recall, *mon général*, that Jean was returning to Paris the next day. I gave him the

The shot was hardly louder than a sharp note on the piano.

It was a strange reunion—the Frenchman who sold France, the German invader, the American prisoner, and the woman they all loved...

envelope to deliver. Montfort objected. He too loved Marianne, I knew. Therefore, I did not understand, then, his objection to my entrusting Marianne's fate to Jean. There were sharp words. All three of us were angry. I hated Montfort for the things he told me that night, for I had fancied myself in love, you know. I refused to believe him, refused ever to see him again. And then one day I learned the depths of degradation to which a Frenchman can descend. . . ."

Wrinkles puckered the general's broad flushed face. She knew he had not understood. She had not meant that he should understand. Her words were for Jean Vilanelle.

The general reached clumsily for the decanter, slopped wine on the table as he refilled his glass. He said, "You sang like a nightingale that evening! Will you sing for us now, mademoiselle? It is music I need these days when the war goes so badly!"

"But first, *mon général,* you play for us," she said.

Vilanelle stared, tight-lipped, at the floor as the German pushed himself awkwardly to his feet, moved with short uncertain steps toward the gilt-and-ivory piano looming ghost-like at the far end of the dimly lighted salon.

"You choose to make things difficult for me, Audette. I had hoped—"

"He will play beautifully," she said. "Even though he is very drunk."

"You know why I have come," Vilanelle went on. "Audette, I want you! I would have come before—and alone—but they permit me to go nowhere unaccompanied, those boches!"

"Can one blame them?" she asked.

The German struck a few chords and let his hands travel lightly over the keyboard. Sitting with head thrown back, he reminded her of Brahms, ponderous, masterful—Brahms in field gray, a pistol in his holster. . . .

"Why should you still want me, Jean?" she inquired curiously. "You know I never could love you."

"As my wife, you might learn to love me," he said hopefully.

The general was playing Chopin, one of the waltzes, bright, melodic, infinitely tender. She felt a tug at her heart. Long ago he had first played for her like that, in the days when she was striving for recognition. She was beautiful and had a voice, and he had helped her with his encouragement, his sound advice, his valuable connections. . . .

"It would have made no difference," Vilanelle was saying. "The information you got that night, it would not have saved Marianne. France was doomed. I knew it and merely chose the winning side. I never understood why you failed to do the same."

"Sometimes there are obstacles," she said carelessly. "Early teachings of *la patrie,* for example."

Vilanelle looked at her longingly, and the look left her cold. "When the invasion comes, I shall know what to do," he reminded her. "I have always had foresight, as you know. I use my opportunities well. I have much to offer you—security, comforts, even a few luxuries. Come, Audette, I beg you—reconsider!"

He knew her weaknesses! Unwittingly her gaze roved about the bare shadowy salon which had once been sumptuously furnished, thronged with people of importance, a show place pictured in magazines no longer published. He was clever, resourceful, and he loved her. She would be safe and comfortable with him. . . .

His hand covered her own resting on the table. The question was in his eyes. It would be so easy to say yes. He was practical, not like those gallant idealists who had died for France in North Africa, not like Montfort.

She moistened her lips. Yes, Montfort was an idealist. It was that quality, even more than his paternal French blood, that had sent him into the RAF and later into the American Air Force.

She drew her hand free of Jean's grasp.

"It is no?" he inquired.

"C'est non," she nodded.

He leaned backward, not looking at her. The general was sitting with head bent, as if listening to the final notes of the waltz. Then he began to play again—Beethoven, the Moonlight Sonata. She closed her eyes. . . .

When she opened them again, Vilanelle was toying with an envelope. It was not necessary to peer at it closely. Tightening her fingers on the bag in her lap, she remarked, "You have kept it a long time, Jean."

"One learns not to destroy that which may be of value," he said. "You could expect no mercy from the general," he added, still not looking at her. "As a man, he might shrug his shoulders over the contents, but as a German officer, he would act in accordance with the code. You would not be happy in a concentration camp, Audette!"

She had expected the threat, nevertheless his words shook her. Oh, he knew her weaknesses! A concentration

camp; the hardships, the deprivations, the lack of elementary comforts. . . . She shuddered. Even if she were to kill him she could not hope to escape the consequences. He was useful to them; they would mete out swift punishment. She had not thought of that. No, for her own good, she must not use the pistol.

Vilanelle leaned toward her, his lips parted expectantly.

"C'est non," she repeated.

His eyes were angry, baffled. "You never used to be a fool!" he said.

Neither of them heard the door open or the whispered words of the servant. It was as if the tall, dark-clad figure had come out of the shadows at the end of the room. As he came slowly forward, she observed that the only thing military about him were his boots. They were wet and scratched and left moist, glistening spots on the polished floor. His black threadbare suit was wet. The jacket was torn.

He halted within a few feet of the table. He was smiling. *"Bon soir,* mademoiselle," he greeted her quietly and bowed. *"Bon soir,* Monsieur Vilanelle."

The general came striding the length of the floor, pistol drawn. "Montfort!" he bellowed. *"Gott in Himmel!"*

She had the queer feeling she ought to laugh.

The American made a casual gesture toward the German's hand. "There is no need of that," he remarked. "I am unarmed. Your prisoner, of course."

The general thrust the weapon back into its holster. "Why are you here?" he demanded, glowering.

Montfort hesitated, then he looked at her again. "I came here," he said slowly, "in hopes of looking once more, perhaps for the last time in my life, at the loveliest of all women!"

She felt the hot color come flooding into her cheeks and with it a sudden sense of confusion. To add to her discomfiture, she was vividly aware of Vilanelle's sharp, penetrating eyes.

"You expected to find mademoiselle alone, eh?" the general inquired.

"It was my hope," Montfort acknowledged.

The general reached for the decanter. When he had set his glass down, empty, Vilanelle suddenly stretched forth a hand. "What is this?" the German demanded, frowning.

"A document for your attention." Vilanelle's tone was casual, but his eyes were bitter and malevolent.

The general glowered at him. "Urgent?" He snapped the word out.

Vilanelle shrugged. "It can wait."

The general stuffed it inside his tunic. He appeared to have regained his good humor. "It is no time for business, eh, mademoiselle?" he said, smiling and blinking at her. "We are together again, the four of us. Afterward I must concern myself officially with Montfort, but now let us enjoy ourselves. *Ach,* it is like old times! You remember, Montfort, at the Monopole? How I laughed that night! You remember the quarrel? Let us drink. Mademoiselle will ring for more wine?"

The general sat sprawled across the table, a hand dangling, an arm curled under his round close-cropped head. The contents of an overturned bottle formed a widening pool an inch or two from his darkly mottled face. Only the slight lift and fall of his heavy shoulders showed that he still breathed.

"Boche!" Montfort spoke the word almost as a Frenchman might have spoken it. "And this is the super-race that would rule the world!"

Vilanelle raised bloodshot eyes. "One must admit they rule France today," he pointed out.

"With the help of traitors, yes!" the American retorted.

Vilanelle merely shrugged, but in his eyes there was smouldering rage. He was not the kind to forgive. Choosing his words with deliberate care, he said, "It does not matter, Montfort, what you think of me or what I think of you. That which is important, it seems to me, is what mademoiselle thinks."

Stepping to the other side of the table, he bent over the general. She watched his long fingers deftly loosen the upper buttons of the soiled tunic and draw forth the envelope. Holding it in his left hand, he allowed his gaze to move downward toward the dangling hand, the limp outstretched leg. "When he regains his senses he will remember nothing," he said, looking quickly up at her.

Again he was threatening her, offering her the choice of marriage or its alternative. Her hands tightened impulsively on the velvet bag. He was smiling at her now, hopefully, confidently. It would be so easy to say yes! She looked appealingly at Montfort, and there it was again in his eyes, the message: "I love you, Audette!" She lowered her gaze, then suddenly lifted it.

"C'est non, non, non!" she cried. *"Toujours c'est non!"*

He dropped the envelope among the bottles and glasses. His right hand darted swiftly downward, past the edge of the table, to the general's holster. As he fumbled with the flap he seemed oblivious of her presence. He lifted the pistol and with great deliberation aimed it at the American. A shot rang out, but it was Audette, not he, who had fired.

The shot was hardly louder than a sharp note on the piano, and the echoes of it were much like a soft phrase from the sonata. She stood immobile, surveying the result of her bullet. He lay on his back beside the general's desk, as immobile as herself. And again, as at the Monopole, there was a dark stain on his shirt front. Montfort, kneeling beside him, was holding his limp wrist. At her feet lay her bag, open. She picked it up and replaced the small pistol among crumpled, perfumed bank notes, cosmetics, other trifles. The jaws snapped shut.

Montfort rose and came slowly toward her. The envelope lay tilted against the general's sleeve. She lifted it, plucked a packet of matches from an ashtray. The envelope vanished in a swift flame. "These are the notes I made of the things the general said that night at the Monopole," she explained. "You were right, of course, about Jean. But that night I did not believe a Frenchman would sell his country to the Boche."

He looked at her thoughtfully, then at the sleeping general. He said, "I could easily convince him it was I who fired the shot."

She smiled with a kind of tender indulgence, shook her head.

"It would not be hard," he added persuasively.

"No," she said.

He was looking at her uncertainly, inquiringly. She felt her control slipping. "Oh, don't you understand?" she burst forth in a choking voice. "I love you!"

Her head fell back as he drew her to him. When he kissed her it was as if her whole life had been merely a prelude to this ecstatic moment. One little moment, that was all they would have. . . .

But he was talking of marriage, of future happiness together! Didn't he realize? In a few hours the general would come to his senses, and then . . .

"Yes, *cherie,"* she said, because she knew it was what he wanted her to say.

She allowed him to lead her to a door opening onto the moonlit terrace. A dark, silk-lined cloak lay upon a chair; he put it gently about her shoulders. She was grateful for its warmth as they made their way along a narrow path through the once lovely gardens. Beyond the gardens an old road led toward the nearest village. There would be a curé at the village. Marriage, yes, of course. The thought sustained her. but only for a moment. Now both of them would be fugitives in a hostile country.

But why did he avoid the road? Why was he leading her toward the western bluffs? She wanted to ask questions, but she was tired, desperately tired. . . .

On the bluffs, he halted. Down below she could make out the plane resting like a silver bird on the dark water. There was no sign of the pilot. Montfort was saying, "I planned to escape in it. We fought, the pilot and I. He lies yonder." He motioned toward the water.

"It was then, when I knew I could escape, that I felt I must see you once more, even though it might cost me my life. Of course I didn't know who was at the villa. I thought the pilot had been forced down here."

Her world was suddenly spinning. He had not come to the villa for help! He had risked his hard-won freedom once more. . . .

"I've examined the plane," he continued. "There's enough fuel to reach North Africa. But it will be a risk of course. Audette, my darling, have you the courage?"

She struggled for control. When she spoke it was as if she were speaking a prepared line. "When one loves there is always courage!" she heard herself murmur. ● ●

700 Miles Per Minute

The rocket, first used in war six hundred years ago, is at last coming into its own

MOST Americans, when they sing "*. . . the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air,*" think that the rocket which glared so redly and the bomb which burst so thunderingly over the bastions of Fort McHenry one September night in 1814 were two separate entities. Actually, they were one and the same.

And although many civilians today think of a rocket as merely a toy, fit only for fireworks and signaling devices, this is not true. They are now in general use on the battlefronts, and before World War II is over many spectacular developments are expected.

Early in 1943 the United States announced that a new weapon was in use in North Africa to which the euphemistic name of "bazooka" was given. Little was said about it, but the word "rocket" was mentioned in the communiques, confirming the fact that the U. S. had been experimenting with military rockets and evidently had found them satisfactory.

As far back as 1940 military men knew that the Germans used twin rockets on their bombers to help them get off the ground. And early in the war, Hitler's airmen had preliminary success with what they termed their "upside-down" rockets—so named because they were shot down toward the earth from a plane. These first appeared during the bombardment of Malta.

Once launched, these engines of destruction were self-propelled, and most spectacular to watch. Flying earthward they trailed a long stream of sparks which gave them the appearance of a comet, and at the same time they emitted a wild shriek like that of a tropical hurricane.

Other belligerents use rockets too. The Russians have a tank-fighting device known as a "multiple rocket projector" in use against the Germans. It fires twenty or thirty rocket shells at once, and any tank that crosses its pattern of fire is in somewhat the same fix as a rabbit in front of a double-barreled shotgun.

Perhaps many people are now wondering, "Why haven't we heard more about rockets before this?" The answer is simply that, during wartime, any experimental development of a new weapon is a closely guarded secret. It remains one until it is known with certainty that the enemy has learned of its existence. Too, the development of the present-day military rocket is relatively recent.

This is understandable, for there's nothing like war to bring about a revolution in military science and strategy. Before World War I, tanks and poison gas had never been heard of, nor had the airplane been used as a military weapon. And now in World War II, the rocket, which had been pushed aside for so many years as a device of little value in modern warfare, may emerge as the number one weapon of the day.

A very definite need has brought this about, for ordnance has grown more and more massive until practical limits of size have been reached. The rocket, however, needs no heavy ordnance. It starts with zero velocity and accelerates as long as the fuel lasts. As a result, rockets can be used in sectors where no ordinary cannon could be conveyed because of weight.

This often means they can be brought closer to the front, and any method of transportation available is adequate. They can be carried by men, horses, dog-sled, or canoe into areas absolutely impassable to wheeled vehicles. Still another advantage is the problem of concealment. Heavy artillery is easily spotted by hostile aircraft. But a rocket, complete with launching equipment, and carrying a punch equivalent to the 14-inch shell of a railway gun, can be transported in a laundry wagon, camouflaged as ordinary civilian traffic.

No story on the subject of war rockets would be complete with a brief mention of their history, for the use of rockets in battle precedes that of the gun. One of the earliest accounts of their use was during the siege of Kai-fung-foo about 1300. At this time the Chinese fought off their invaders with simple rockets much like those we used to shoot off on the Fourth of July.

It is known, too, that the Arabs manufactured rockets at an early period and that in Europe, Roger Bacon, Hanns Hartlief, and Albertus Magnus toyed with their military possibilities.

The first use of rockets as a true weapon of destruction was when they took the place of their primitive ancestor, the fire-arrow. Though different in principle, the purpose was identical—to carry fire to the enemy camp.

About 1820 the French got out a rocket which weighed nearly forty-five pounds. It had a range of two miles and could plow a hole six feet deep when it exploded. The United States, too, had been experimenting with war rockets during this period.

However, by 1887 the war rocket fizzled out as a military weapon. Improvements in ordnance made them obsolete. Newly developed artillery was far superior to anything the rocket could produce.

This brings us pretty well up to the present day and the revival of military rockets in World War II. One wonders what some of these developments will be. It is fairly safe to assume that before final victory is won over the Axis, we shall find naval vessels using rockets. On shore as well as at sea they will no doubt be used as anti-aircraft defense—and here they would be in their natural element.

Conventional anti-aircraft guns are limited in caliber because of the difficulty of aiming a heavy piece at a rapidly moving target. A cannon firing a fifteen-pound anti-aircraft shell is more difficult to move about than the launching tube necessary for a rocket weighing twenty times as much.

But whatever the future holds in the way of specific developments, one thing is certain: Decided changes in world politics and in world warfare are going to result because of the introduction of military rockets in World War II.

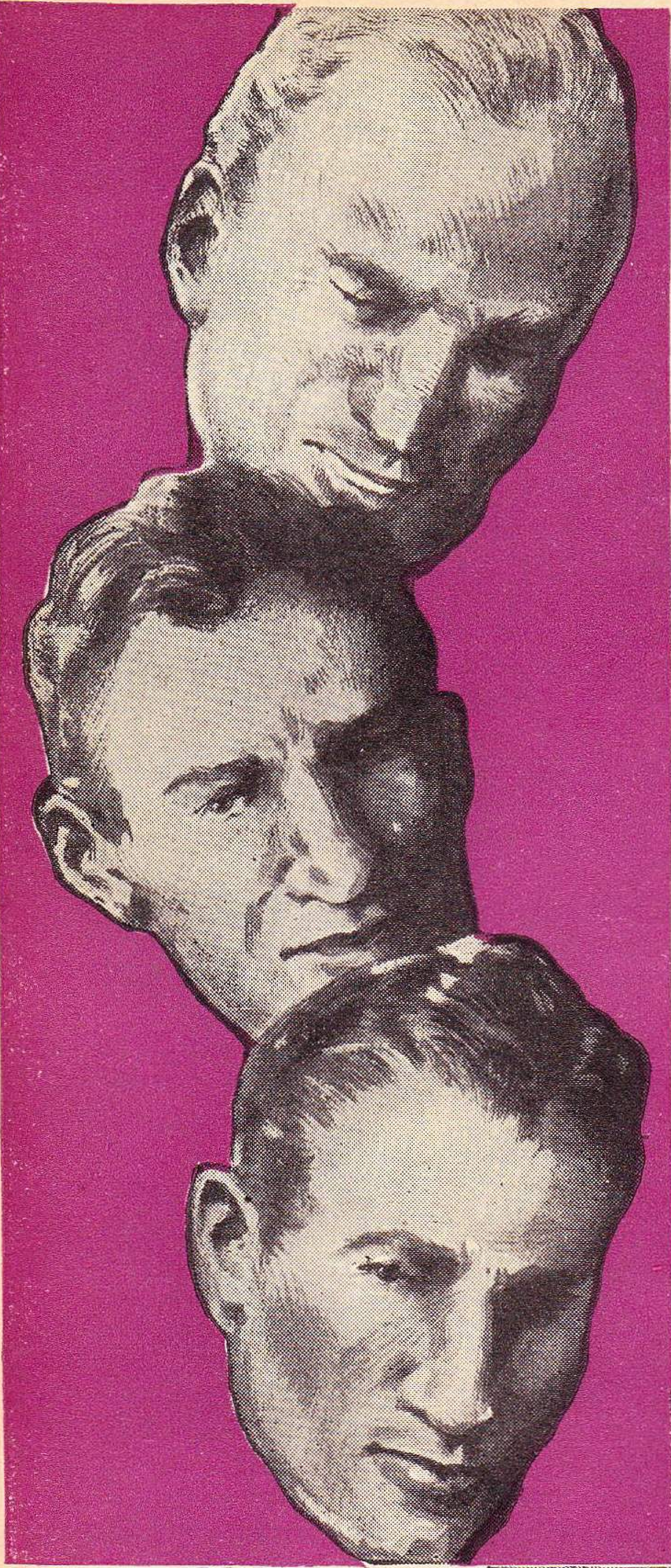
For with a rocket one can honestly ask, "What are speed, time and distance?" A hundred miles is a long way—four days' march for the infantryman. An experienced cyclist could make it in a day. It's slightly over an hour's trip for an express train, and a trifle over fifteen minutes for our fastest warplanes. The shell from a long-distance gun would traverse the hundred miles in three minutes.

And the rocket?

Theoretically, rockets can be made to travel at the fantastic rate of 700 miles a minute! **About five minutes** from New York to Berlin! ● ●

BY ROBERT CLARK

FOOTBALL



Illustrated by HAMILTON GREENE

Every fall Pop Brady would tell his twin youngsters about the great State team he captained in 1912. Then in their freshman year came Pearl Harbor. . . . A story of college football that will have you in there carrying the ball for State

BY NELSON BOND

Beginning a two-part novel of the gridiron

IN THE FAMILY

AS LONG as the Brady kids could remember, this is the way it was every fall. Pop would go out on the veranda for his after-dinner pipe. Only instead of lighting up, he would stop and sniff at the deep, rich, honey-suckle-scented smokiness of evening, and he'd look sort of surprised and puzzled, realizing all of a sudden that it was autumn again.

Then he'd come inside and call the kids. He'd take them to his den and drag down off the shelf an old dog-eared scrapbook. He'd blow the dust off and open it, pointing to a picture yellowed with years. A funny old picture: a group of young men with thick, long hair and Jerry Colonna mustaches, clad in striped jerseys and skin-tight pants, frozen in stiff postures of camaraderie about a central figure whose features were strained in a rigid smile.

To this tall young man Pop would point. "This was me," he'd say, "in 1912. When I was captain of the State team. A great team. A *great* team . . ."

Once, when they were very young, Joe had interrupted at this point to ask, "Did you go to the Rose Bowl, Pop?" Pop's eyes had clouded and he had said sternly, "Rose Bowl? Nonsense! In those days they didn't have such frills and folderols as Rose Bowls. . . . . But if there had been any, we would have gone to 'em!"

Then he'd go on, "A *great* team. We were undefeated up to the last game of the year. State's never had so fine a team since. But—" and here he would start beaming proudly "—but she will have! In just a few more years, there'll be another Brady in for State. And *then* we'll show 'em—"

At this point he would stop and grin

Game after game, he took the ball, booted, passed and ran it all over the field. . . .

at Joe, and reach out and tousle Joe's thick, unruly hair. Because Joe was that other Brady he was talking about. Joe . . . not Jerry. Jerry was the wrong twin.

You know how it is with twins. They may look pretty much alike, but there's always some difference. There's the strong one and the weak one, the athlete and the scholar, the muscle and mind, the brawn and the brains.

That's how it was with the Brady kids. Jerry was the smarter of the two, but Joe was Pop's boy. Oh, Pop was pleased enough when Jerry graduated at the head of his grammar school class . . . but he was even prouder when Joe won the Junior Mile at the Penn Relays. It was a big occasion when Jerry was chosen editor-in-chief of the high school paper . . . but Pop *really* strained when Joe's foul throw in the closing seconds won Rockland High its first conference basketball championship.

And, naturally, Pop saw to it that Joe went out for football, too. Joe made the high school team in his freshman year, an accomplishment previously unheard of, and he was elected captain in his junior year. Joe couldn't understand algebra or geometry worth a hang, but when those bewildering sciences were translated into sports terms . . . well, his brain was a reservoir for the most intricate signals, and his notebooks were always crammed with bafflingly involved plays.

Oddly enough, Jerry also went out for the team. He couldn't—or wouldn't—explain why. Not even to his closest friend. A psychologist would have understood, maybe, that deep within the less physically gifted Brady twin lurked a hunger for the understanding which stretched like a binding thong between Pop and Joe.

He didn't make the team. He was game enough, but just not tough enough. His lean, wiry frame was no match for the hammering meted out in a grid game. Even in scrimmage sessions he invariably emerged raw with bumps and bruises. And in his first real game he hit the jackpot—a broken rib and a sprained ankle.

Even so, he would have come back for more, except that Coach Edmonds flatly vetoed the idea.

Joe, too. Joe said, "Now, look, Wink. Fun's fun, but enough is too much. I want a real, live brother, not a reasonable facsimile thereof." Joe came to his bedside, and stared angrily at his taped ankle, and called him Wink, an old pet name carried over from their kid days. It came from a poem Pop used to read them:

"Wynken, and Blynken, and Nod, one night,
Sailed off in a wooden shoe;
Sailed on a river of crystal light
Into a sea of dew . . ."

They'd always liked that poem, and for some reason or other Jerry had become "Wink," Joe "Blink," and Pop "Nod."

"You," said Joe sternly, "lay off football. It's a rough, tough, nasty game, and you're too smart a guy to get yourself chopped into a cube-steak once a week for dear ol' Alma Mammy.

"Oh, I know why you did it," he continued hastily as Jerry started to protest. "It was on account of Pop wanting to see another Brady in for State. Well, okay. I'll take care of that. Meanwhile—" and he grinned "—you just hurry up and get yourself a couple of M.A.'s and Ph.D.'s, so you can support your lame-brained brother when he's S. O. S."

"S. O. S.?" repeated Jerry curiously.

"Senile or slap-happy," explained Joe. "That's how all gridders end up eventually; one or the other. Well, what do you say?"

Jerry said, "I suppose I could go out for track—"

"Sweet saints!" moaned Joe. "Don't you ever give up?"

THAT was when they were seventeen. The year was 1941, and it was a big year. Joe was not only the sensation of Rockland High that year, he also became a national figure of importance when, glittering like a gem in a backfield especially built around his grid genius, he ran, passed and kicked R. H. S. into the unofficial high school championship of America.

More than that, he set a new individual scoring record, beating Bill DeCorrevont's old one by four touchdowns.

Jerry, somewhat to his own surprise, made the track team. His ankle wouldn't let him try the distances, but under the painstaking tutelage of old Doc Lebbing he turned into a fair dash man. His time for the hundred was around ten, which isn't any world's record, but it's good enough for run-o'-the-mill high school competition. He even won a couple of points for his school in meets.

Pop beamed and said, "Very good, Jerry! Very good! We'll make an athlete out of you yet. Won't we, Joe?" Then he said, "There's just one thing, Joe. You're still fighting that ball. You've got to fondle it. Hold it as if it were a baby. . . ."

Joe was Pop's boy. He was that other Brady who, in another year, would be in there for State.

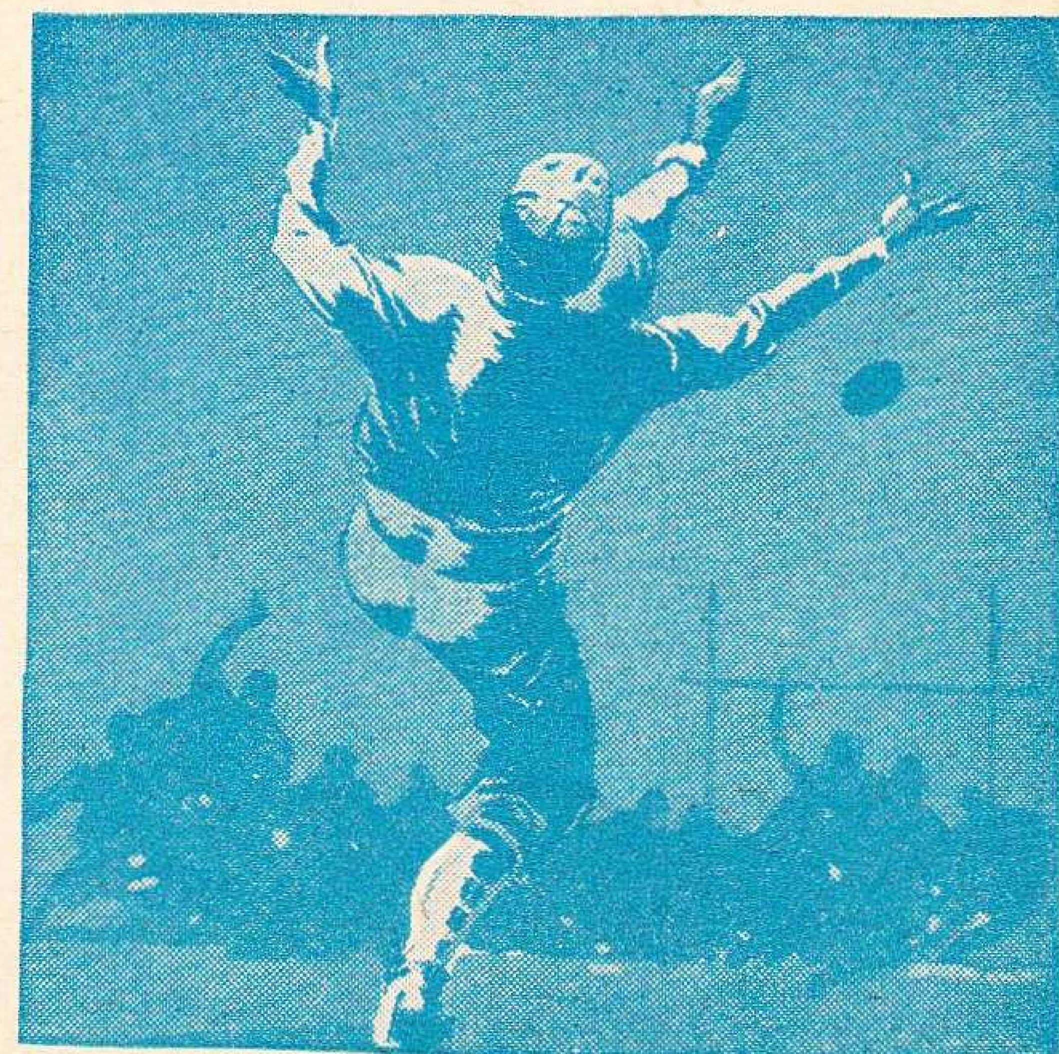
When the Brady twins graduated in June they both won scholarships. Jerry won his the hard way. It came with the congratulations of the Fotheringham Foundation, and provided free tuition for a complete course in engineering. To earn it, he had to present evidence of a straight A record in science courses; to maintain it he must stay within the top ten of his class for four college years.

Joe's scholarship came up the back stairs. It came direct from the Alumni Association of State University. It said, *For outstanding scholarship*—and didn't mean a word of it. What it meant was that Joe was the most likely looking football prospect in a blue moon, and so long as he could run, boot and pass the pigskin for the Garnet-and-Gold he was assured of free tuition, board, lodging, books, laboratory equipment and other "necessary expenses." The "necessary expenses" were to consist of fifteen bucks cold cash spending money per week.

Of course Joe had to *earn* this money. State University was an honorable school and a member of the Prairie Conference, which frowned upon subsidization of athletes. Joe's job was that of winding the library clock. He performed his obligation faithfully. It was an eight-day clock. . . .

So the Brady twins were in college together. And that was something for each to be thankful for. Because they supplemented each other perfectly. Through, Jerry, Joe became acquainted with professors, scholars, members of the faculty who ordinarily looked down their pince-nez bestraddled noses at athletes. This did him no harm. When his exam papers were full of errors, these friends of Jerry's were inclined to be lenient with the red pencil. Afterward they would take Jerry aside and suggest that he "brush his brother up a bit" in math . . . or in History . . . or whatever the subject was.

The companionship helped Jerry, too. Through Joe he got to meet football stars, campus big-shots, social leaders. Joe, entering State on a blaze of national publicity, was immediately tapped for every fraternity on the campus. He made it known that he was interested only in societies that wanted *both* Brady twins. Which is one reason



Jerry was—at the same time as his brother—pledged Phi Chi Omega, the swankiest house at State but a fraternity which had not had a *student* in its gay fellowship for more than ten years!

So a semester rolled by swiftly. Jerry went out for the college track team, and found the going a little too fast. But he persevered, and in the final meet of the year he justified a season's efforts by taking a third place for his squad.

That fall Joe went out for the freshman team. He made it, of course. Game after game, he took the ball, booted, passed and ran it all over the field, and spark-plugged the State Bullpups into an undefeated and untied season.

He won his numerals, which etched the grin-crinkles an inch deeper in Pop's leathery cheeks. Pop said, "I told them, Joe! I told them there'd be another Brady in for State one day. Wait till next year, when you're on the Varsity."

Joe happened to notice Jerry's face. He said carefully, "Sure, Pop! Er . . . Jerry won his numerals, too."

Pop looked startled. "Huh? He did?"

Jerry grinned with an effort. "For trying," he explained. "I was an also-ran most of the season. But I picked up a point in the Harvard meet, and three more in the Intercollegiate."

"Swell!" said Pop. "I'm proud of you, son. We'll make an athlete out of him yet, won't we, Blink?"

And after that, of course, it hardly seemed worth mentioning that Jerry had also been elected president of this year's freshman class. . . .

II

THAT was when Pop was up for the Thanksgiving game. Two weeks later, things happened. On a bright Sunday morning, early risers in Hawaii viewed the most treacherous attack in the history of modern warfare. An armada of death, emblazoned with the crimson of Japan, snarled out of the East to strike at America's Pearl Harbor-based Pacific fleet. When they left, America's proud naval might lay crippled and helpless in the blood-stained basin.

It took a dazed, stunned hour for the news to sink in. The brothers of Phi Chi Omega, like young Americans in every state of the union, stood grim-faced and tense before their fraternity house radio, listening to the news reports coming in by bits and snatches.

Then, when it finally penetrated that this *had* happened, that America *was* involved in a war not of her own devising, the dam burst. The rumble of throaty young voices was like the deep, inchoate thunder of wakening gods. And the voices spoke a single thought.

Joe spoke that thought to his brother. He turned to him, and: "Well," he said simply, "this means us, Jerry."

Jerry nodded. They were both eighteen now. And they were both Americans.

Jerry said, "And Eileen?"

Joe said, "She'll understand. She's got to." He didn't look altogether sure when he said it. It was obvious that, for the moment, he had forgotten Eileen Dale. That, in itself, was odd, because since his meeting her some months ago, she had been the closest thing in his heart, and the closest subject of his mind . . . except maybe football. He repeated, "She'll understand. I hope."

"What will it be?" asked Jerry "Army? Navy?"

Bill Todd, who was standing beside them said, "The Air Corps for me. I want to lay eggs on those Japs till—"

"Army's mine," said Walt Roper. "The other forces are okay, but it's the good old infantry for me. I want to get in close to 'em, hand to hand, and stick 'em like the pigs they are—"

"You name it," said Joe.

"Navy," decided Jerry "It will take months to get an army built up, months more to maneuver it into a fighting position. The Navy will be fighting immediately, right now. That's where I want in."

So that's the way it was. They reported to the recruiting station Monday morning. They and hundreds like them. The campus of State was a sorry looking place that Monday morning. Almost empty. . . .

Jerry wrote home, ". . . so I'm writing for both of us, Pop. We hope you'll understand why we joined up so suddenly, without even letting you know. But there wasn't anything else to do. We had to do it . . ."

Pop came up from Rockland. He asked quietly, "When do you go, boys?"

"Next week," said Joe. "They gave us ten days to get out affairs lined up. Then the Training Station."

"You'll be together?"

"Yes. That is—" Joe frowned "—we think so. Wink got a call from the Recruiting Lieutenant this morning. He has to go down again."

"What for?"

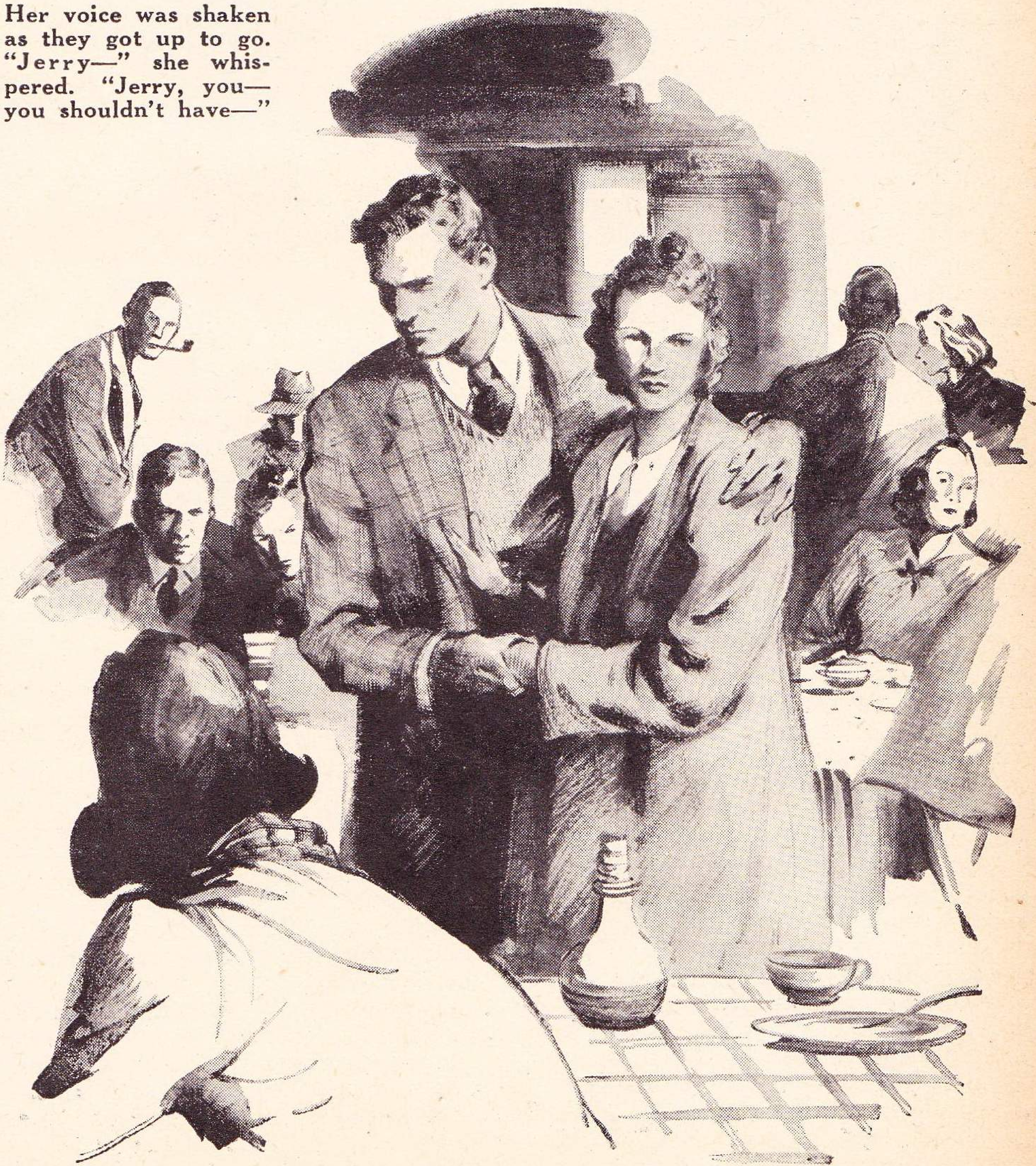
"I'll tell you this afternoon," said Jerry.

But that afternoon it was the naval lieutenant who did the telling. He leaned back in his chair and took an azimuth reading on Jerry's left eyebrow with a stub of pencil. He said, "Brady, you're not to report as previously ordered."

Jerry's heart skipped a beat . . . another. He gulped. He said, "Not to—What is it, sir? My—my physical?"

"No," said Lieutenant Fraser. "You're in perfect physical condition."

"Then—then, why, sir?"



Her voice was shaken as they got up to go. "Jerry—" she whispered. "Jerry, you—you shouldn't have—"

"Because, Brady, we don't want you . . . yet! We need you, yes. But only for the additional man-power you have to offer. Later on, we will need you even more for something else. For brain-power!"

"I'm afraid I don't understand, sir."

"We've checked up on all State University volunteers. After doing so, we are rejecting about fifty young men like yourself, on specific instructions of the Navy Department. Brady, you are in the Engineering School, aren't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"And our reports indicate that you are one of the best students in your class. For that reason, it is considered advisable that you should remain in school and complete your course of study."

Jerry choked, "But that will take three years sir! The war won't last that long! We'll lick the Japs in six months! I want to get in there now."

Lieutenant Fraser smiled, but there was no mirth in his smile. He said quietly, "Don't kid yourself, Brady. We're not going to lick the Japs in six months, or a year, or maybe not in six years. Maybe not at all . . . if people continue to think as you do."

"But everyone says, sir—"

"Everyone has listened," Fraser said bitterly, "to one of the cleverest propoganda campaigns ever inspired by a deadly enemy. No official of the United States War or Navy Departments ever claimed the Japanese could be defeated without a long, bloody war. That rumor was inspired deliberately, years ago, by the Japs themselves, in order that we might wink at their Far Eastern policy.

"No, Brady. This war will probably still be going on when you've finished your course. And then we will want you, badly! Right now you'd be just another common seaman. But when you've graduated we can use you as a trained technician.

"And if the war should be over . . . the world will still need trained technicians to reconstruct a shattered shell of civilization."

Jerry said dully, "Yes, sir. I see, sir. Then this is an order?"

"As much so as if you had taken the Navy's oath of allegiance. Your Government wants you to go back to school."

Jerry rose. He said, "Well, Lieutenant, that being the case, there doesn't seem to be anything else for me to say. Except that—"

"Yes, Brady?"

"My brother. You haven't mentioned him."

"No. Your brother is to report next week as ordered."

"Yes, sir," said Jerry. And left.

EILEEN was with Pop and Joe when he got back. Her glance was bright and clear, and her greeting was cool, gay, measured. He had to look twice to understand why it was that she looked somehow different. Then he saw that she was wearing more makeup than usual, just the faintest bit too much. As if she had applied it hastily in a dark room. Or as if she had been trying to cover eyes puffy with crying. . . .

Jerry said, "I think I should tell you, sir, I'm not really—"

She said, "Hi, sailor! They teach you how to reef in the tops'l and mizzenmast?"

Jerry essayed a grin that didn't quite jell. Blink looked at him and knew. That's another thing about being twins. You always know, somehow. You can sort of feel it.

Joe said, "You're out, kid?"

Jerry nodded. "That's right." There was bitterness in his voice. "I'm essential," he said. "I'm eighteen years old and wet behind the ears, but I'm a Boy Wonder. A genius. I've got to stay in school and discover the fourth dimension."

Pop asked suddenly, "And Joe?"

Jerry shook his head. He said, "I tried to argue him out of it, Joe."

Joe said softly, "You poor, unlucky bum! You never get the breaks, do you? We'll fight a delaying action till you

finish school. Then we'll really cut loose on 'em . . . together."

He smiled, then. He was the only one in the entire group who looked even remotely happy. He said, "Anyhow, you can keep an eye on Eileen for me while I'm gone. That's been worrying me, wondering how to keep her in line while I'm away. You'll take good care of her?"

"If I don't get under foot," Jerry promised.

"In a pinch," said Eileen, "he'll do. I'm glad he's a twin. I've got a poor memory for faces."

Jerry grinned and said, "Don't worry about that! She can still tell us apart. Just toss us a football, and whoever fumbles it is me."

He thought it was funny when he said it. Then he happened to see Pop's eyes, and all of a sudden he realized it wasn't so funny, after all.

Next year, when State's Bulldogs took the field, a dream would end. It would not be the team Pop had hoped for, planned for. There would not be a Brady in for State.

SO JOE went away, and with him went many other familiar faces from the State campus, and for a while things looked pretty strange around the varsity lanes. Eventually readjustments took place, and things settled into a semblance of order again.

In January, since he was a mid-termer, Jerry Brady became a sophomore. In March, track training began. In April, Jerry quit the squad on the advice of the coach, who shook his head and said, "No use, Brady. You've gained too much weight during the winter. What do you weigh now?"

"One seventy-six," Jerry confessed.

"You can't pick 'em up and lay 'em down fast enough with that much meat," said the coach. "Not in the dash."

So Jerry bowed out as gracefully as possible, from the only athletic squad he had ever made. And that night he dialed a number grown familiar with long usage. He thickened his voice and said, *"Heil,* me! Dis is der Gestapo! Vot are you doing tonight?"

Eileen hissed, "Blowing up a couple defense plants. Want to come around and help plant the dynamite?"

"Same time," acknowledged Jerry. "Same place. I'll be wearing a potted rubber plant. See you."

Since Joe's departure, they'd carried on as Joe had hoped they would, meeting each other, going out on dates, finding mutual consolation in each other's company.

He told her that night about the track team. Eileen frowned. She said slowly, "It's too bad, Jerry."

"It doesn't really matter. I wasn't much good, anyway. Just one of the filler-inners."

"I'm not thinking of you," she said. "I'm thinking of Pop. It will be a disappointment to him."

Jerry thought it over. He admitted, "I see what you mean. Even if it wasn't football, one of the Brady boys was—"

"Jerry," said Eileen suddenly, "Jerry, why *couldn't* it be football?"

Jerry choked on his coke. "Are you kidding? Awkward Algernon, the triple-threat casualty!"

"You are forty pounds heavier than when you played in high school. Don't look now, Wink, but you're a growed-up man."

"I know I've gained a little," Jerry began. "But—"

"Nice suit you're wearing," said Eileen.

Jerry nodded abstractedly. "Thanks. Not new. It's Joe's. Figured I might as well get the wear out of it, since he's away. But to get back to the subject—"

"We never got away from it. For an honor student, you're the dumbest man I've ever met. You big dope! You sit there filling Joe Brady's clothing as if it had been made for you . . . and claim you're not tough enough to play football. Your only trouble is an inferiority complex!"

A slow, puzzled look creased Jerry's brows. He said, "Hey! Maybe you're right, at that! Maybe—"

"Spring training begins on Monday. Why don't you surprise Pop by reporting?"

Jerry stared at the girl solemnly. "Sugar-plum," he said, "I think you've got something there. As a matter of fact, I think you've got so golly Moses much, that you deserve a decoration of honor! Here!"

He leaned across the table, seized her shoulders, and pretended to kiss her on both cheeks in French fashion. They were at the soda fountain, with people watching, and Eileen laughingly attempted to squirm away. Jerry's lips found not her cheek but—purely by accident—her lips.

And that was too bad. Or too terrifyingly, bewilderingly wonderful. Because in that split second, when their lips met and the world spun dizzily, Jerry Brady realized too late that this was not at all funny.

Eileen drew away immediately, but by the sudden flame that touched her cheeks and by the strange, frightened veil that clouded her eyes, he knew that she knew, too.

Her voice was shaken as they got up to go. "Jerry—" she whispered. "Jerry, you—you shouldn't have—"

"I know," Jerry said abruptly, brusquely. "It was a—I'm sorry, Eileen. Let's get out of here."

He walked her home. They didn't mention the matter again. It might have been better if they had. All the way home there was not one word spoken. Once their near hands touched accidentally. They both drew away as if they had been burned.

It was a sweet and bitter fire. . . .

III

BUT Jerry did go out for football. He didn't mention it to Pop. He didn't see any sense in raising false hopes in Pop's too-often disappointed heart. He just reported to Coach Warren like any one of a half hundred other young hopefuls. There was a difference, though. On that first day, when the coach called the roll, he stopped at Jerry's name.

"Barlow . . ." he read. "Benson . . . Blavatski . . . Brady—" He stopped there and looked up. "Brady," he repeated.

"Jerry Brady," said Jerry.

"Oh." Warren stared curiously at the well-knit frame of the youngster in front of him. You could almost read the speculation in his eyes. He said, "You're Joe's brother?"

"Yes, sir."

"Any football experience?"

"A little. Not much."

"I see. Well, report to Travers."

"Travers!" The name leaped unbidden from Jerry's lips. Rocky Travers was backfield coach of the Varsity team, the first team, the fair-haired boys. The top drawer was more than Jerry felt qualified for.

"That's right," said Warren. "North field. Get a red jersey."

"Y-yes, sir," said Jerry. He applied for the equipment humbly, realizing very well he had won this chance purely on the strength of his brother's reputation, hoping he would not turn out to be too terribly much of a bust.

He felt a little better when he actually reported to the north practice gridiron, though. This year's top-drawer squad was a pale ghost of the team that had represented State's Bulldogs last year. Henderson and Walejowski

and Cremer had graduated. Lafferty and Muller and Joltin' Johnny Wainwright had gone into service. There remained only one or two of the old-timers. The remainder of the Varsity squad was made up of a bunch of guys named Joe, fellows who, last year, had been good enough to serve their five or ten minutes in the closing minutes of cinched games.

Tommy Siler, Art Carstairs, Sam Hoskins . . . Jerry knew them all. They were good enough players, but not gilded with the brush of grid greatness.

He felt a little better.

Rocky Travers squinted at him as he came across the field. Travers had gray hair and gray, obsidian-sharp eyes. He said, "Jerry Brady, aren't you? Lord-amighty, son, when I first saw you I thought it was your brother. Or maybe your old man, even, you looked that much alike. All three of you."

"You knew my dad?"

Travers snorted. *"Knew* him! Howling Hades, son, I played football with him in—"

"Nineteen-twelve," Jerry supplied. "I remember you now. You were third from the end in the picture."

"With sideburns." The old coach grinned. "My wife made me shave 'em off twenty years ago. So your pop's still got that old picture, eh? Well, I don't wonder. We had a great team . . . a *great* team."

Then he was all business again.

"You're out for backfield, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir."

"All right. We're just getting ready to go through some practice plays. Get out there and let's see what—"

Jerry said, "I think I should tell you, sir, I'm not really a—"

"Never mind that!" Travers interrupted, almost testily. "I don't need a preview. Do your stuff. After I've watched you, I'll tell *you.* Now . . . *git!"*

Jerry nodded and joined the others. Jacky Mills, calling signals, said, "No numbers. Just pass the ball when I say, 'Hup!' This is just so the Old Man can see how we run, and stuff like that. Routine plays. We'll put one through their left tackle. Got it?"

Jerry glanced at the left tackle on the hapless scrub squad aligned to give the Varsity opposition. The guy looked plenty big and plenty hard to run over. He was glad *he* didn't have to lug the leather—

"Brady will carry," said Mills. "Okay."

Jerry, looking as dazed as he felt, wanting to protest but, unable to summon words to his dry lips, turned like a mechanical man and moved to the right-half position. His hands felt wet and slimy, and he wiped them carefully on the seat of his britches. His cleats felt new and raw. He dug his left foot into the turf, flexed his right knee to get it feeling ready and spring-boardy.

Mills yelped, "Thirteen . . . forty-five . . . eight . . . *Hup!"* The ball shot back from center. Mills palmed it easily, turned and shoved it into Jerry's hands. Jerry lurched forward toward the hole which should appear at left tackle.

It didn't appear. Instead, a solid wall of sand-colored scrub jerseys loomed like a bulwark before him. He turned, shifted, tried to reverse his field and wriggle out of the man-trap. Hands clutched, tightened about his knees, thighs, ankles. Something hit him like a bolt of lightning. He said, *"Oof!"* and the ball squirted out of his hands.

That was the last he saw of it, or anything, till they piled the human debris off his submerged frame.

Mills clucked reproachfully. He said, "Nice going, Brady. You only lost eight yards and the ball!"

It wasn't a game, it was just scrimmage. So the scrubs had to surrender the ball, and again the first-stringers plotted. Mills said, "You were green coming in, Brady. Maybe you were a little nervous. We'll fool them this time. They'll be expecting something different, so we'll do the same thing Ready?"

Again they lined up, and again the opposing tackle looked awfully big and solid. Jerry thought his hands would never stop sweating. He rubbed them in the sandy turf. This time he was poised like an arrow in a bow. He shot forward to take the ball on the signal, and smashed toward the enemy line.

At the last moment, when he was about to go down beneath a veritable flood of sand-jerseyed attackers, he saw an out. Far down the field, entirely clear of all scrubs, stood lanky Tom Siler, who had fruitlessly penetrated the second-team defense line. It was a long chance, but the only one.

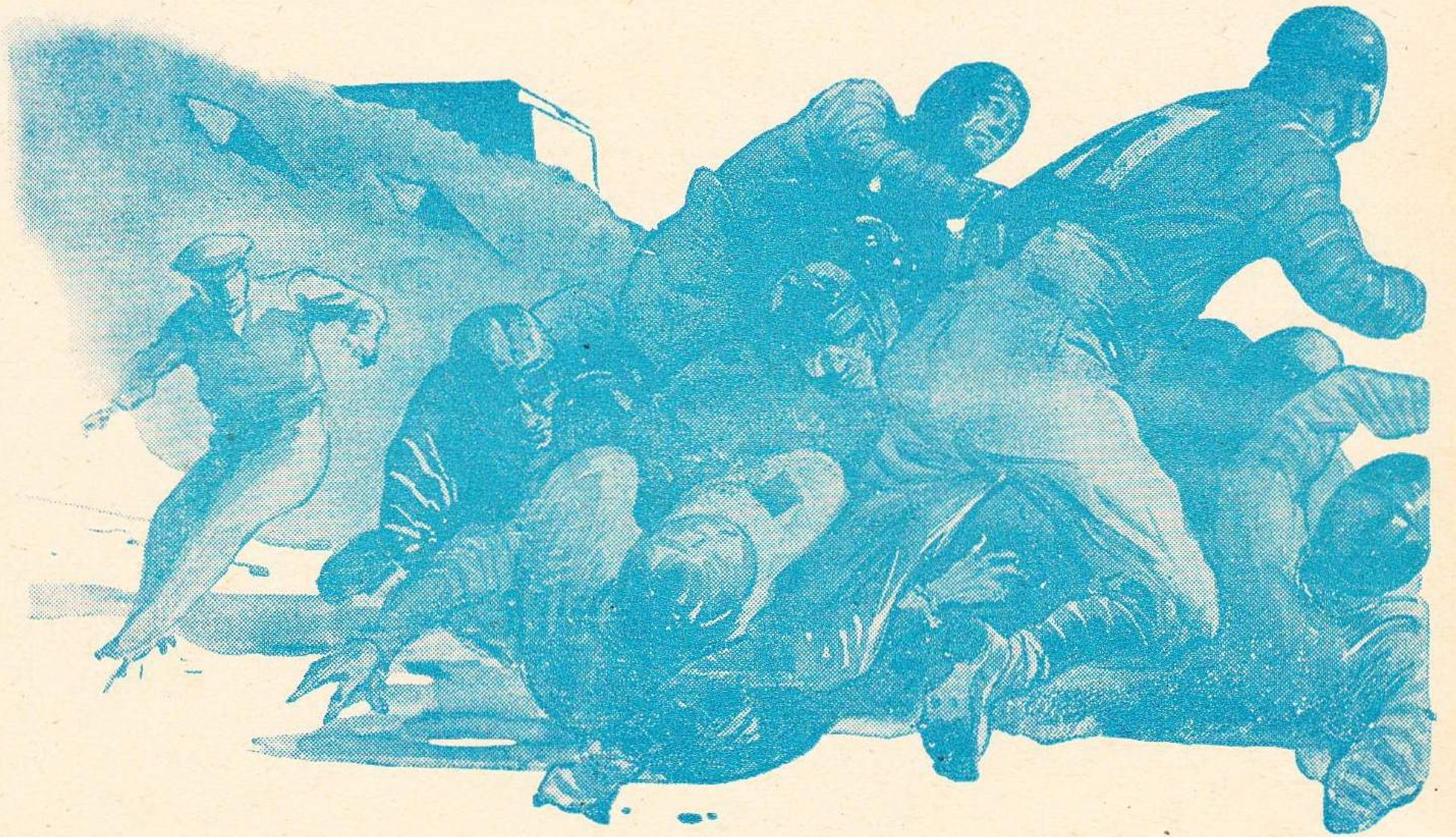
Jerry yelled, *"Tom! Hey, Tom—"* Without cocking his arm, he threw. The ball wobbled a trifle, then straightened out, soaring in a clean arc into the air. Then a hundred tons hit Jerry and he went down.

A whistle blew and the pile unscrambled. Jerry rose and said apologetically, "I'm sorry, Jack. There wasn't any hole there. I didn't mean to—"

Jacky Mills was staring at him with a sort of awed expression. He said, "Sorry! The lug chucks a forward sixty yards and hits his target on the nose, and he's sorry!"

"SO?" asked Eileen.

Jerry forgot and leaned on his right elbow. They were lounging in the guest parlor of Eileen's sorority house. Jerry said, *"Ouch!"* and took his weight off the elbow, which was as raw as a five-minute sirloin.



But again that wall bulked before him! This time, in a sort of wild desperation, Jerry avoided the hands groping to pull him down. All plans of campaign abandoned, he swung away from the scrimmage line, retreated.

The Varsity men were all before him. The only ones anywhere near were scrubs, anxious to smash him, eager to make him look bad and make themselves look good before the critical eye of Coach Rocky Travers.

Jerry continued to fall back. With a sort of sick dispair he realized he had lost a full fifteen yards now . . . maybe more. He craned to left and right. No openings. He momentarily considered trying to outflank his charging opponents . . . he realized it was no good.

"So?" repeated Joe's girl impatiently.

"So," continued Jerry ruefully, "Travers called me into his office after I'd showered. He pointed out the things I'd done wrong."

"For instance?"

"Well, in the first place, I looked at the place we were supposed to run through. That didn't do anything but tip off the other team where to be. Then I hung a *'Here I come!'* sign on myself, Travers said, by wiping my hands and digging my feet in, and generally acting like a colt in its maiden race. Then, when I found the plan had flopped, instead of grounding the ball and taking the loss of a down, I backed up and lost distance."

"But you're still on the team. Why?"

"Well, that's the funny part of it," Jerry confessed. "Because it turns out I can pass a ball. Afterward they had me chucking it all over the lot. It's a pipe. For some reason, I seem to be able to heave it wherever I want to. Longer than most of the other fellows can throw."

Eileen's eyes were happy. There was something else in them, too. Pride. She said, "Wait till Pop hears this. He'll just about bust."

"Don't tell him," begged Jerry. "There's many a slip, you know. This is only April. By the time the season opens in September, I may be a fourth substitute on the ninth team."

Eileen said, "But you'll be going to training camp with the team. How will you explain that to Pop?"

"Easy. This year we're training at Long Acre Farms. We pitch hay and do farm work in the mornings and practice football in the afternoons. That way, we help the war effort while we're getting in shape. I'll just tell Pop about the farming."

"We-e-ell," conceded Eileen. "And Joe?"

"He mustn't know either. I don't want either of them to know about it until—I mean *unless* I make good."

"Until," Eileen said firmly. "Until you make good." She touched his hand.

Jerry said, "Eileen, we—"

"Yes?"

"We . . . if we're going to the movies, we'd better get going," Jerry said to his brother's girl.

Jerry faded one . . . two . . . five paces, his eyes scanning the field.

IV

ONE day there were three letters. There's a lot between the lines of letters.

Pop wrote: ". . . wish I could have seen you for more than one week, but I realize that the work you're doing during these summer months is important to the war effort. In its own way, it's just as important as the work Joe's doing at the Naval Training Station.

"You've no idea how lonely it is here with you boys away. Sometimes I sit and think of how different things are from the way we'd always planned them. My little dream of seeing Joe play football for State seems selfish and silly, now, alongside this world crisis. . . ."

The one from Joe said: ". . . can imagine you standing out there in the hot sun for hours, pitching hay (and maybe less fragrant stuff, keed?) for the good old American bread-basket. Keep it up, Wink; we'll need all the grub we can grow to feed the world after this mess is cleared up.

"Speaking of which reminds me that if things turn out as I expect, I'll get my commission and be out of here before fall. Ensign Joseph Brady, U.S.N.R. Sound okay? Please don't mention this to Pop yet. I want to break it to him when I get my ten days. They'll probably ship me out right after graduation. . . ."

Eileen said: ". . . dreary summer with both you and Joe away. If it weren't for my O.C.D. work and nursing course, I wouldn't know what to do with myself in this lonely place.

"I'm just as pleased and proud as I can be about the fact that you've definitely won a berth with the Varsity team. I always *knew* you could do it, Jerry! I'll be your loudest rooter in the cheering section. Please make the summer hurry past so I can see you again. . . ."

Between the lines of Pop's letters Jerry read a hurt that no amount of rationalization could assuage. Wild horses couldn't have dragged the words from Pop's lips, and the chances are he wouldn't even let himself *think* the thought . . . but it was there. You could sense his wonder. "If one of them had to go . . . why couldn't it have been Jerry?"

Blink wasn't so hot, either, at disguising his inner thoughts. His bland "they'll probably ship me out right after graduation" meant that Joe had put in for the quickest and most dangerous active duty on the books. That was Joe. No waffle-seat jobs for him. He wanted to be where the going was toughest.

And Eileen. Jerry re-read every letter he got from her a dozen times. And he *knew* what lay between the lines of those oh-so-casually-friendly letters that always—and painstakingly—spoke a trifle too often of Joe. . . .

The long summer was over at last, and returning students began to think in terms of bands and jam-packed stadiums, and the Bulldogs' chances in the season that lay ahead. Most of them were pretty glum. They pointed out that the weakest Garnet aggregation in a decade was slated to meet nine strong teams.

Prentice, Scranton, Kanawha Military, Prairie, the Army Air Cadets . . . these were the curtain-raising elevens. All of them were good, some of them very good. Jackson-Lee, Central Tech, the Field Artillery, and Midland University were State's final four opponents. All were dangerously powerful. The Rebs were last year's Sugar Bowl champs, while Midland and the technologists had won their respective Conference championships. And the Field Artillery . . . well, this was their first season, but the members of this star-sprinkled eleven were drawn from the All-American check-list of the nation.

Coach Todd Warren held his tongue and bided his time.

BY the time the shrill of the whistle signaled the opening play of the season, Jerry Brady was one big bundle of nerves on legs.

He had felt the old gut-grip before. He'd tried to subdue those hobnail-booted butterflies in his belly when he was awaiting his sprint call on the track, and he'd experienced the exhaustion of anticipatory jitters when he was preparing to address an audience in formal debate. But never had he felt such a sensation of horror and dread as when, with his squadmates, he stood like a mote on a gigantic field, encircled by thousands of staring eyes, awaiting the signal for the kick-off.

Then the whistle blew, and the thin red line wavered forward, and a blue triangle charged forth to meet it. Bodies met and tumbled . . . and all was well. Jerry forgot the crowd, forgot the stadium, forgot everything but that he was playing a role in a practiced campaign.

In the first few minutes of play, Jerry found little to do. The Prentice Panthers had won the toss, elected to receive. The opening plays were in their territory, and the weighty responsibility fell on State's line. When State finally held the enemy for three tries through the line, Prentice kicked to Wade Huffman, who gained not a foot on the return.

Consequently, power plays were the order of the day. Art Carstairs tried to

circle right end. Jacky Mills hit the center of the line. Huffman blasted at left tackle. Nowhere did on opening appear, and Huffman booted, gaining two yards on the exchange.

Whereupon the Panthers tried two plays, and kicked. State tried a couple, and kicked. For fully half of the first quarter, the crowd yawned as two evenly balanced teams seesawed up and down, back and forth between the twenty-yard stripes, in a punters' duel to chip a flake in the armor of the opposition.

It was when the red hand of the scoreclock reached the figure 8 that the Garnet Bulldog seized the advantage. Huffman, who had been booting brilliantly, excelled himself with a booming lofter that soared all the way to the Prentice eighteen-yard line. The Panther fullback made a wild stab at it, nicked it with his outstretched fingers, and let it get away! Almost before the belatedly aroused crowd realized what had happened, Tom Siler had thrown himself on the bobbling pig. It was State's ball, first and ten on the enemy eighteen!

"They'll look for power," Jacky Mills said, in the huddle. "We'll give 'em the Double X. You, Jerry. To Jordan or Siler."

Jerry nodded and moved to his position. He didn't look at Siler. He didn't look at Bob Jordan. He didn't hitch his pants or spit on his hands or flex his leg muscles. He stood like a lump, a dull, thick-witted, callous lump. Which is exactly the way good poker-faced football players have to look.

Mills was in there looking strained and excited. Only the ball didn't go to Mills. It shot straight from center to Jerry. Jerry faded one . . . two . . . five paces, his eyes scanning the field. Siler had gone down, tripped by a tangle of arms and legs. But Bob Jordan was romping happily for touchdown-land, lifting an arm, waving.

Jerry let the ball go. The summer had done him lots of good. The pass didn't wobble or twist or spin. It lobbed smack into Bob's arms. Bob took two more steps and plunked it down. The stands came awake with a roar.

That was the first score of the game. It wasn't the last. In the second quarter Jerry connected again, this time on a pass from his own forty-yard line to Siler, who was streaking past the Panthers' thirty. Tom Siler had only to avoid the safety man, and it was 13-0.

And after that, the dam burst. The Panthers, trailing, got a little desperate and started an aerial offensive of their own. Desperation plays seldom click. These didn't. Art Carstairs intercepted one of those pitiful gliders, and when he got done messing around with it the Bulldogs were three touchdowns ahead. Then, just before the half ended, Wade tried a juicy little field goal from the Panther twenty, and laid the ball between the uprights. That made it 23-0 at the half.

Coach Warren said, "Okay, boys. First team sit it out. I think this one's in the poke."

And it was. The second team more than held its own against the pathetic Panthers. And Jerry Brady had sparked his team to its opening victory, being in the game only thirty minutes!

THE game had immediate repercussions. When he got back to the fraternity house that evening, Jerry found two telegrams jumping up and down on his bureau.

The one from Joe said:

JUST CAUGHT RADIO FOOTBALL SCORE ROUNDUP STOP GREAT GOING STOP BUT WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO DO COMMA GET YOURSELF KILLED QUESTION FOR PETE'S SAKE STOP

And the one from Pop—more between-the-lines stuff—read:

WHY ON EARTH DIDN'T YOU TELL ME QUESTION COMING UP NEXT WEEK TO SEE SCRANTON GAME EXCLAMATION

Jerry showed them to Eileen, and for some silly, altogether feminine reason her eyes misted. She said softly, "You've got a great family, Jerry. A *great* family!"

Jerry said, "You sound like Pop when he used to talk about his football team. I wish to goodness I hadn't been so lucky in this first game of the season."

"You weren't lucky!"

"Then I wish I hadn't been so whatever-I-was."

"Why?"

"Don't you see? I got some breaks and acted like a football hero. Now Joe and Pop are all excited. They think I'm hot stuff. Pop's coming up here, and Joe will be hanging on the radio for our broadcast games. And when I flop, later on in the season—"

"That," said Eileen, "is exactly what you won't do."

"Like to make bet on that?"

But if he had a flop coming, it didn't make its appearance in the Scranton game. This year, due to graduations and military enlistments, the boys from old St. Thomas just didn't have a team. The big State steamroller swung into motion with the opening kickoff, and before the game was five minutes under way it had flattened a path to payoff territory. After that, Jerry had his innings. He flipped one of his specialties to Jacky Mills, who scampered and scored. In the second period Coach Warren took his first-stringers out to rest.

They went back into the game completely refreshed in the second half, and immediately scored twice more over a battered Scranton team that was weak on replacements. So Warren took them out again in the final stanza, and they heard the gun from the locker room.

Pop, of course, didn't like that. Pop took Eileen and Jerry to dinner at a downtown hotel. "On me," he announced. "I'm celebrating tonight. There's another Brady on a State team. Eat up!"

But Pop didn't approve of Jerry's having been taken out of the game.

"Rocky Travers," he grumbled, "is a nit-wit! Always was! Tell him so when I see him. Taking a man out just when he's going like a house afire! Why, you could have scored a dozen times—"

Jerry laughed. "That's not the idea, Pop. Nowadays you don't try to run up the biggest possible score against an opponent. You get a comfortable margin, and coast. Give the second- and third-stringers a chance to get some experience and show their stuff It's the modern way—"

"A darned fool way, if you ask me!" But Pop stopped grousing. "Anyhow," he remembered, "Joe'll be getting his ten days soon. He'll get out here in time to see the Prairie game, maybe. Or the Jackson-Lee."

It was just about then the waiter came and whispered into Jerry's ear. Jerry excused himself and left the table. When he came back a few minutes later his eyes were bleak.

Pop didn't notice this. Eileen did. She said, "Jerry! What—"

"Gonna give you a banquet?" asked Pop. "They ought to. You were terrific today, son."

"Pop—" Jerry said hesitantly.

"Yeah?"

"It—it's Joe."

Pop pushed back from the table. "On the phone? Great golly Moses! Where—"

"No, Pop. He—he's hung up now. He only had a couple of minutes. He tried to catch me at the fraternity house, and they told him we were here."

Pop said, "He's got his leave? Is he coming here? When? Where shall we meet him?"

"That's just it," Jerry said gently. "We're not going to meet him for a while. His leave was canceled. He's shipping out immediately. He doesn't know where, couldn't tell me if he did know. He said his address is care of the Postmaster, New York City."

Pop sat stunned. Eileen said, "Postmaster! That's active service. Sea duty, Jerry!"

"Yes," said Jerry. "That's right." Then, quickly: "But he'll be okay. He's in fine shape. He's got his commission, and he feels swell, he says."

At the moment, he didn't tell them the rest. Later he would tell them the part Joe had been so enthusiastic about, the part he, Jerry, hadn't liked at all. That Joe wasn't on one of the nice, big, comfortable fighting ships that can take care of itself in a scrap. He was a junior officer on one of the meanest, most dangerous, most fightingest little vessels afloat—a cockleshell bristling with guns, a twig laden with dynamite. A corvette. A destroyer-escort ship.

"He sends his love," Jerry said, looking strangely at Eileen. Her lower lip caught between her teeth. Pop looked at them both curiously. . . .

(To be concluded next month)

With a sudden violent thrust, Dave Hardy toppled him backward.

Illustrated by MONTE CREWS

BAD TROUBLE IN Smoky Bowl

BY WILLIAM BYRON MOWERY

If Rood was caught hunting rabbits with Bill Tolliver's ferret, it meant the penitentiary again. But the Nixons, his nearest neighbors, were without food

IT WAS bad trouble at the Hite Nixon farm. Trouble and cruel luck, Rood was thinking. As he ripped through a pile of saw-wood that white December morning, he kept glancing across the snowy bottoms to the old house at Nixon Hollow.

A falling tree had caught big kindly Hite—that was Lela's father—and broken him up so he wouldn't walk again before the Ozark dogwoods bloomed. The two old gran'kins, the aunt that was useless and fluttery as a bird, the two Alf Nixon orphans and Lela's younger sister—'twas seven people on Lela's shoulders, and Lela only nineteen herself.

Till an hour ago Rood hadn't known there was stark hunger at the Nixon place. With the pride of a hill girl, Lela hadn't told him. But he'd just seen her go out to the slope above the spring-house and gather an apron of haws, and he knew it meant they hadn't a bite of human food left, in this bitter weather.

Rood had no food worth mentioning,

to take up to them; he himself was making out on crackling soup and pumpkin. At his own small croft at the mouth of Pawpaw Hollow he was just getting a toe-hold again. It was only in August that he'd come back from the penitentiary and started chopping the place out of the brush. He was nearly caught up. He'd been trapping, hunting, cutting railroad ties and loping the hills for wild gingseng; and by summertime his croft would be as flourishing as any in Smoky Bowl.

But next summer, Rood mused, wasn't now. The Nixons needed help now. They needed something to eat for supper.

He leaned his big tough body against the sawhorse and looked thoughtfully at the blue feather of smoke curling up from the house. He had in mind a way to get the Nixons some food, but he couldn't quite decide that it was the thing to do. Getting caught at it would mean that he'd go back to the gray, smothering penitentiary for two more years. He'd be full twenty-three when he got out. His croft would be ruined. Lela might be married. A man who was on parole and broke the law ran a dreadful peril. 'Specially when all the people of the Bowl were keeping an eye on your doings, because you'd been to the pen. And an officer was all the time spying on you from the hills and rimrocks, itching to send you back there.

But they needed food up yon, the old 'uns, young 'uns, and sick-helpless Hite. How could a person shut his eyes to that? How could he be like that man in Luke who passed by on t'other side of the road?

Rood's big fist suddenly clenched. "Damn all, we'll take the chance, Tasher!" he said to the young Walker hound that Lela's father had given him. "Let's go!"

He hurried around to the back porch of his cabin, where he kept a small slat cage concealed under a pile of sacks. He reached into the cage and said, "Come out, Sudie; bylords, we're going a-hunting!" and he lifted out a ferret.

She was a small brown creature no larger than an ear of popcorn, with dainty black feet, black tail and long whiskers for guiding her through dark holes. She was not Rood's ferret but Bill Tolliver's. It was illegal to have them, but Bill had asked him to keep her while he was in the Army, and Rood had promised.

For a minute he cuddled Sudie in his palm, gentling the weasel wildness out of her and looking ahead to the forbidden thrills of ferreting. Then he slipped her into a small feather-lined poke, slung the poke under his jacket, and headed across the bottoms for a sassafras hill-slope beyond Smoky Creek.

The wind had laid, and the sun was dazzling white on the eight-inch snow. The zero cold, unusual in that Ozark country, bit through Rood's thin clothes, but it set his blood surging. The frisky Tasher started chasing crows and yelping, and Rood called him in.

"You keep to heel, dawg, and keep quiet. Dave Hardy could hear you three miles. Remember he's not only the game officer but the man I'm parolled to. His say-so 'ud send me back to the pen. So let's not go ferreting like a brass band."

On the footlog over Smoky Creek he stopped to search for Dave Hardy. He looked around at the white hills and white silent hollows, and listened for jaybirds calling a warning. But he saw and heard nothing, and hurried on.

As he crossed the north bottom, he falied to see a single rabbit track and he knew this was a good omen. The rabbits, he told Tasher, had heard a snow was coming and knew that open bottoms was no place for cottontails when a snow was on; the owls could see 'em too plain against the white and make a slaughtering. So they'd drifted to the timbered hillsides. On the sassafras slope yonder they'd be flocked up like sinners at camp-meeting.

At the Nixon home Lela came out for an arm-load of the stove-wood he had cut for her yesterday. Rood stopped at the sight of her and waved, but Lela didn't see him and he went on, with a gloom over his thoughts. Lela had stuck with him faithfully during his black years at Ogilvie pen, writing and sending little gifts, and she was looking ahead to their marrying next summer. But Rood couldn't feel that this would be right—right to her. Not with two more pen years hanging over him. And not if he was to be an outcast in Smoky Bowl, with no one ever coming to his house or inviting him to their sociables. Exposing Lela to all that would be a shabby way to pay back her loyalty.

At the foot of the slope he struck a rabbit track and followed it through a briar patch to a den under a boulder. Another track led into the den.

He prodded around the boulder, found a second entrance to the den, plugged it up and then went back to the first.

At the mouth of it he put down a dry burlap sack so that Sudie wouldn't have to walk in the snow. Then he brought Sudie out of the feather poke and blew his breath on her several times. This was because the little thing might run onto a fighting animal back in there, like a bull weasel or a mink. If she had fresh man-scent on her the animal would shy off instead of pouncing and killing her.

He put Sudie on the sack and she went sniffing down into the dark den.

ROOD spread his hands over the hole and waited, listening closely. For a minute everything was dead still. Then he heard a *thup-thup* back in there—the warning stomp of a buck rabbit. But Sudie had fighting blood in her and didn't scare. She darted straight at the bluffer, and it bolted. The hole was filled with a rumble like a partridge drumming on a log.

After trying the other opening and finding it plugged up, the rabbit came thumping back to the hole where Rood was waiting. Rood caught it and gave it a sharp rap behind the ears. Another rumble started up and another rabbit came banging out, so fast he barely managed to grab it.

"Bylords, Tasher"—he let the young dog give each rabbit a shake—"this beats hunting with a gun all hot 'n hollow!"

In a minute Sudie came out and walked up onto the sack. Rood put her back into the feather poke, and then strung the rabbits. They were fat big cottontails, and it made him happy to think of the fine supper the Nixons would have. Wild rabbit stew in a kettle, with parsley and dumplings—a better meal wasn't to be found in woods or field or stream.

Around the next hole the rabbit tracks were thick in the snow. He put Sudie in and she chased two out to him, and a third broke up out of a hole he had overlooked. Tasher streaked after it, yelping his loudest. In the deep snow he ran it down easily and came trotting back with it, so proud that Rood hadn't the heart to scold him for making all that noise. After all, he told himself, Tasher didn't know about Dave Hardy's eternal spying. Or know that Rood Crockett had shot and wounded the officer three years ago, when Dave Hardy was a deputy sheriff. Or know that this ferreting, if Dave caught him, would send him back to Ogilvie pen for two forevers.

As he and Tasher hunted on up the slope, the rabbit tracks got thicker and thicker. Not a hole but had cottontails in it, stomping, rumbling and squirting out when Sudie went back in. It beat any ferret hunt he'd ever made with Bill Tolliver. By the time he was halfway to the rimrock he had thirteen of the two dozen which it would take to pull the Nixons through the cold spell.

Across Smoky Creek his croft at Pawpaw mouth stood out clear on that fine white morning. It made a picture that warmed Rood's blood. The fields were grubbed and refenced for the spring seeding. The house and sheds were shingled, painted. In a garden plot covered with shade lattice several thousand baby plants of golden-seal were sleeping under the snow. They would grow into hundreds of dollars of golden-seal root. If, Rood thought, he was there to tend 'em. If he didn't go back to the pen at Ogilvie.

You couldn't be sure of your next breath when a law officer was a-watching you from the hills and rocks. 'Twas said Dave Hardy was a just man, and the people of the Bowl liked him; but he carried on his face a bullet scar from the Crockett rifle. He couldn't be blamed for honing to see Rood Crockett back in the pen.

That dreadful evening of the shooting was still a nightmare with Rood. It had been mostly an accident. True, he'd been helping Bill Tolliver avoid arrest, blocking the path to the Tolliver still while Bill made his getaway; but he'd meant nothing worse. There'd been a scuffle and the gun had gone off and Dave Hardy had been wounded.

But Dave didn't know it was an accident. Or the people of the Bowl.

By the time he reached the sumacs near the rimrock he had picked up seven more rabbits in three holes, and had twenty of his two dozen. Then he came to a den that beat any he'd met with yet. For a rod all around it the snow was padded down, and paths fanned out to the nibbling thickets like sheep runs.

Hurriedly he plugged the extra holes he could find, then crouched down at the main one to put Sudie in. As he was breathing on her he heard Tasher growl, and looked up.

Between him and the rimrock a man was walking out of a sumac patch. He had a shotgun on his arm, and he was Dave Hardy.

Rood sat frozen. Dave Hardy had caught him with a ferret in his hands and twenty unlawful rabbits lying all around on the snow.

The game warden walked up close, saying nothing. He looked at Sudie and at the rabbits. He was a big man of forty, in boots and hunting clothes. His jacket bulged with rabbits he himself had shot. On his face, ruddy from the cold, the bullet scar across the right cheek was white and accusing.

Rood's eyes were on the shotgun. In desperation he was thinking that if he could somehow get that gun he could stand the warden off and break free. Could fade into the hills, with Tasher, and escape the pen.

Gooseflesh broke out on him as he remembered the other encounter with Dave Hardy three years ago. Grabbing the shotgun might mean another happening like that. Or worse. Somebody might get killed here.

Dave Hardy finally said, "That wouldn't be Bill Tolliver's ferret, would it? You've got into troubles no end, Rood, for letting that rapscallion use you."

Rood refused to answer. Bill had gone off to war and a person oughtn't to incriminate him.

The warden looked again at the rabbits. He didn't appear to be gloating much about catching the man who'd scarred him. His gray eyes seemed more sad than gloating. His voice, though, was uncompromising as he said, "If you'd caught just a coupla rabbits for your own need, Rood, I'd be minded to overlook this. I ain't ever yet jugged a man for taking game he needed for grub. But a whole slew of rabbits liken that—Rood, I've got to haul you in. I warned you that any law-breaking meant two more years in Ogilvie, and you did this nohow, so you'll have to 'bide the consequences."

SUDIE squirmed out of Rood's hand. Excited by the rabbit scent drifting out of the den, she popped into the hole before Rood could get her.

Dave Hardy said, "Go ahead and catch 'em. One more hole and a few more rabbits won't cut any ice in this situation."

Rood spread his hands, hoping that this ferreting might somehow give him a chance to seize the gun. Then Sudie got well back into the den, and the place was suddenly full of *thup's* and rumbling. It seemed alive with rabbits back in there. Rood caught the first and second that came thumping out. The third broke up through a hole by a tree, and Tasher took after it. The fourth Rood got. A fifth squirted out past him, and Dave Hardy rolled it with his shotgun. The sixth Rood caught one-handed, and then Sudie came out, hackles up, her eyes gleaming with the weasel wildness in her.

Dave Hardy walked out the slope to get his rabbit. When he came back, he leaned his gun against a rock to take the rabbit which Tasher brought. It was Rood's chance. He leaped and seized the gun.

Dave Hardy grabbed for the weapon too and got hold of it. Both were clutching it. Both were big men, and the struggle between them, each fighting to tear the gun away, was a deadlock. They fought violently, twisting and prying.

"Rood! Let go!"

"I don't go back—to Ogilvie," Rood panted. He gave a twist that lifted Dave Hardy off the ground, but the warden hung onto the weapon.

"You might have thought on that sooner," Dave Hardy rapped, across the gun barrel. He tripped Rood and all but tore the weapon free. "Only a cussed fool 'ud risk a pen term for a dab of fun a-ferreting."

"It was not for fun," Rood denied. "I've had Sudie all fall and today was the onliest time I used her. And I done it today only—"

With a sudden violent thrust Dave Hardy toppled him backward, and they fell together on the snow. Rood found himself pinioned, then half dazed by a crashing fist-blow to his jaw. Dave Hardy scrambled for the shotgun, grabbed it, and swung it on him as he got to his feet.

Breathing heavily, Dave demanded, "Do you go with me peaceful, Rood Crockett? Or do I hog-tie you and take you in to Junction at the point of this gun?"

Rood leaned against the rock for steadiness. He looked across at his neat small croft, vaguely thinking it was his last look. His eyes traveled up valley to the blue feather of smoke, where he would not go any more in the twilight after work. He felt a nudging at his feet and it was Sudie, shivering in the snow. He reached down blindly and picked her up and put her into the feather poke.

"I'll go quiet," he said finally. "The onliest favor I'm asking is to go past up yon"—he motioned at the Nixon home—"so's I cain hang these rabbits in the spring-house, where Lela cain find 'em."

Big Dave Hardy jerked. The shotgun muzzle sagged. He glanced at the smoke and looked at Rood, and the hardness started draining out of his gray eyes. "Why—why, hell, Rood," he stammered, "you wasn't aiming on giving these rabbits up there, hunh?"

Rood nodded. "There's hunger up yon, and that's the cause I broke parole."

Dave Hardy sat down heavily on a rock. "Why, damn it," he grunted, "I was a-taking some rabbits up there myself! Why to heaven didn't you tell me what brought you a-ferreting?"

"What I do and whyever I do it," Rood said, "don't seem to make any difference with people. I was to the pen and that puts the tar brush on me."

Dave Hardy shook his head. "Rood, that ain't so. You've been imagining too much. I've been a-watching you; been admiring the way you've hustled, skimped and built your place up; and been purely glad to see it. And that's how you stand with most of these Bowl folk. People are bound to be some leery of a fellow out of the pen, but in the long run they'll judge you by what you do and are. You've just got to keep plugging. Dreckly you'll have people dropping by your place and asking you to their'n."

Rood stood silent, bewildered. It seemed Dave Hardy wasn't arresting him, but this he couldn't believe. Then the deputy began pulling the rabbits from his hunting-jacket and tossing them on the snow with the others.

"You might as well take mine along with you up von, Rood," he said. He looked at Sudie, who had put her head out between the buttons of Rood's jacket. "And you cain keep that damn thing," he added. "By law she belongs to be seized and shot. But she's Bill Tolliver's, and I'm not killing any creature of a man who's away to the war. Only, don't use her any more 'thout my special permittance."

Bewildering or not, Rood was getting it into his head that he was not going to Ogilvie pen but staying on in Smoky Bowl. He managed to ask, "About my breaking parole, Dave—how am I to square up for that?"

For a minute Dave Hardy looked thoughtfully at the white silent hills. He said slowly, "It sounds queer for a law officer to say, mebbe, Rood, but the way I see it this breaking parole was the damn finest thing you've done since you come back from Ogilvie. You knowed the risk and took it. You laid two years of your life on the table because there was hunger under the Nixon roof. If I'd arrest a fellow for that, I couldn't associate with myself. You take your game and go and forget about this morning, and so'll I."

Rood began picking up his rabbits. He was feeling that something besides the shadow of Ogilvie pen had lifted from him. Feeling that if this man whom he had scarred for life was judging him kindly, then surely the people of Smoky Bowl were charitable too and he could win his way among them. He would be accepted for what he did and was, as Dave had said. And that was all he asked, for himself and Lela Nixon. ● ●

Red Sun Over Bengal

In which Stokes-*sahib* kills his first Jap and learns something about Hindu character

The circle of natives around them widened. The Jap puffed smoke and grinned.

The story so far:

FOR six years Clem Stokes, American engineer, had devoted his life to building the great Sirdar Dam, in Bengal. Now the Japs were coming, and the Dam would be an even more important objective than the Sirdar airfield, down in the valley. In the black hours of the morning, the alarm was raised. At the Residency, where arrangements were being made for the white populace's evacuation, Stokes learned that a Japanese division had by-passed the out-lying garrisons and that there was nothing to stop them until they reached the Dam, where Colonel Braithe's native troops stood guard.

As others of the white colony were packing their loved ones into lorries, for a hurried flight, Stokes returned to his bungalow to order his car—so he could go to the Dam. At the bungalow he found waiting for him Jane Crewes, a former American nightclub entertainer who had been a guest at the Rai's palace. He had seen her only twice before, yet she turned to him on this morning of calamity.

He agreed to take her to Calcutta, but first they must go to the Dam, to see that all was well. His car had been sabotaged during the night, so they had to make the trip in a truck. At the Dam, though, he found that the situation was so desperate that he would have to stay and trust the evacuation officer to see to Jane's safety, but be-

BY KENNETH PERKINS

fore she left him he told her the thing that he had come to realize during these last few crowded hours—that he loved her.

Colonel Braithe was gravely ill and incapable of commanding the garrison; he had been poisoned. It was presumed that the Japs were going to blow up the Dam, to neutralize the airfield, and the colonel had already sent word to abandon the field. Sirdar's defense would be under the direction of the Subadar Major, a native officer, but Stokes promised the dying colonel that he would stay and help.

He tried to get the loyal Hindu workmen at the Dam to arm themselves against the Jap's attack. They worshiped him, but would not relent in their grounding of passive resistance; they refused to take up arms. Then a white man, fleeing before the Japs, came with word that the invaders were only a few miles away. In talking with

Illustrated by STERNE STEVENS

him, Stokes learned that his name was Ashe-Beville, that he was a captain in the Punjabis who had been wounded and caught behind the enemy lines six months before, and that he was seeking an American—Jane Crewes.

Stokes could not bring himself to tell the man that Jane had promised to wait for him, Stokes, in Calcutta, and he let Ashe-Beville go his way. Later, after a telephone call to town informed him that Jane and Sir Robert and Lady Panguern, the Resident and his wife, had been unable to get out of Sirdar, he and the Subadar Major hastened to join them at the Residency, which was now surrounded by an increasingly unruly crowd of natives. And while he was there a message came that Ashe-Beville, after taking refuge in a *dahk* along the valley road, had had a row with a native mob and shot one of the crowd. Now he was trapped in the *dahk* and the angry natives were about to burn him out.

The only man at the Residency who had the natives' confidence, and who might be able to save Ashe-Beville, was Stokes. He alone could ride through the rioting throngs without being stoned. Watching Jane Crewes, he volunteered to go to the besieged bungalow and try to help Ashe-Beville.

Jane said nothing to stop him.

Now go on with the story:

MONSOON vapors had piled up in the west, turning solid and black. In the east, dust smoked from the Jap column streaming down the *khor*. The crowd in Government Gardens was like a restive herd of cattle. But when they recognized Clem Stokes stepping down from the Residency veranda the uproar stopped.

The lorry, driven by the *burra* engineer Stokes himself, chugged down the palm drive of Government Gardens between lines of natives standing in a fitful silence. They neithe- hooted, nor salaamed, nor smiled, nor spoke. Sir Robert was right. Stokes was unmolested. For his Dam had made Sirdar. It had made their Rai a rich industrialist as well as a jungle king.

As he rode through the whitewashed gate he could no longer see the *dahk* bungalow, because of the lower angle of vision, but he could see the valley beyond and the parallelogram of brown in the rice paddies—the landing field. He noticed with a shock that it was completely emptied of planes. A corrugated iron go-down at the airport's edge was already burning, sending up a pillar of smoke blacker than jet. Obviously the ground personnel, preparatory to evacuating, had set fire to their petrol dump.

Following the main street of Sirdar, Stokes found it almost empty except for the looters. Nearly the whole town had drifted up to Government Gardens and the Residency. But another smaller angrier crowd had gathered about the *dahk* bungalow at the town's edge.

That column of smoke in the valley worried Stokes more than the crowd at the *dahk*. For it meant that the British had been warned of the possibility of a flood. It occurred to Stokes that this abrupt evacuation might have been just what the Japs wanted. Old Colonel Braithe, dying, had said, "Until the airport is neutralized they will not move in in force." It was neutralized now and without the destruction of the Dam!

He drove into the *dahk's* compound.

"You there, Stokes-*sahib!* Do not enter! Or else abandon hope, Stokes-*sahib!*"

He was surprised to see that it was a Moslem who shouted this. The Gandhi Hindus were passive onlookers, following the teachings of the Great Soul. But here were Moslem bazaar keepers, jute mill workers, clerks, students from the law school. It was possible that they, not the Hindus, had provoked Ashe-Beville into a fight.

"Did the Englishman strike one of you Moslems?" Stokes asked.

"Even so, *sahib*," an old man with a henna-dyed beard answered. He led a young Moslem out, a lummox in a fez.

This victim mumbled through broken teeth and cut lips, "And he shall pay by joining that pillar of smoke yonder in the sky! Even these pork-eating Hindus agree to the punishment."

A Hindu rioter added, "We have voted as an ex-tempo congress, *sahib*. We will show this English *afsur* that Sirdar at last has won independence!"

"What do I care what you're going to do to him? I'm an American," Stokes said. "But His Excellency the Resident asked me to counsel this rash man. He is armed and will fight. He will kill some of you. I will counsel him to give himself up to your congress for a fair trial." He got down from the driver's seat.

A Moslem with a tin of petrol turned from the *dahk's* veranda. "Think of your life, *sahib*—and take counsel instead of giving it. We are burning this *dahk* over the Englishman's head."

The oldest Moslem pleaded, "We will not stop you, Stokes-*sahib*, whatsoever you do. But I cannot hold back these men from burning the bungalow, whether you go in or no."

Stokes called their bluff and went in. But he discovered soon enough that it was no bluff.

THE *dahk's* dining room was empty, for the *chowkidar* and houseboys had joined the mob. Hurrying through to the stairway, Stokes ran up to the little bungalow bedrooms on the flat roof.

Ashe-Beville was in the middle bedroom. Seeing Stokes at the door, he wiped his forehead with a ragged sleeve and grinned. "You find me in a nice hobble this time!"

"Maybe I can help you out of it," Stokes said. "But you can't shoot your way out."

"Why not?"

"You haven't read about the Calcutta riots, have you? In an up-country station they soaked one of you English officers in kerosene. A mob exactly like this one. He made a swell blaze."

"And you're telling me not to shoot my way out! The blasted swine are

asking for it! I see you have a gun—"

"I'm saving it for the Japs."

"But look here! Those beggars are setting fire to the veranda thatch! Jove, man! What do you expect me to do? What are *you* going to do?"

"I'm getting you out. Stay away from that window and I'll tell you how. Those natives don't want me. They don't even want to hurt me." Stokes took off his white jacket. "My truck's on the other side of the bungalow, the engine still running. You go downstairs and be ready to jump into it. Drive out and head for the Residency."

"But look here, what happens to you?"

"Nothing. I mean what I say. They won't touch me. Put this jacket on. And my topi. I'll wear yours."

"I don't like this. Leaving you here to take the brunt of it!"

"I'm taking no brunt. They're my friends."

"They won't be when they find out your trick. I shan't leave you here. Hell, man, that goes without saying! I run off in your car and they find you posing as me! Oh no!"

"Give me your blouse and shut up."

Smoke curled up from the thatch of the front veranda. A native shouted, "Will you commit *suttee*, Stokes-*sahib*? And to what end? There is yet time to save yourself!"

Stokes grabbed the Englishman's blouse by the collar. "Cut this fool palaver, Ashe-Beville. And don't fire that gun! It'll get the whole town rioting. They'll kill those English up at the Residency. Jane Crewes is at the Residency. She's in one hell of a jam too."

Ashe-Beville staggered, getting his balance. He gripped his blouse at the lapels, as if to straighten it. But then, instead of straightening it, he whipped it off.

"Thanks, Stokes." He caught his breath. "Thanks for this thing you're doing." He put on the white jacket and the topi.

Stokes rushed to the window which opened on the compound behind the *dahk*. As Ashe-Beville ran downstairs Stokes fired a shot out of the back window. He fired haphazardly into the flock of crows that were cawing madly at the smoke.

He gave the crowd a moment to circle the bungalow and in that moment he slipped on the ragged blouse and battered brown helmet. Then he jumped.

The crowd had stampeded around to this side of the bungalow now, thinking that the besieged man had done the natural thing—that is, had jumped from the side opposite to the fire. Some in the mob must have noticed the refugee in the white topi and white jacket stepping into the lorry. They must have seen him swing to the driver's seat, his profile partly hidden by the *puggree* that fell from his pith hat down to his shoulders. The fact that he was in a big hurry to get out of this ruckus did not impress them.

For that was natural too.

CHAPTER SEVEN

STOKES found himself sitting in the debris of broken potted plants, looking up vacuously at a ring of turbaned heads. Some had red beards, some had caste marks. The two factions—Moslems and Hindus—were now at one in their just rage. Stokes wiped his eyes clear of the blood that dripped from a bruised scalp. He was bruised all over, for they had pelted him with stones until they saw they had the wrong man.

"Bring him away from this smoke," a voice calmer than the others said.

Stokes struggled to his knees. As one arm brushed against his thigh he realized that they had taken his gun.

"But he is not the man! He has tricked us! This is Stokes, the builder of the Dam!"

"He has taken the place of the one we want," the first voice, the calm one, spoke again.

Stokes glanced up at a fat Brahmin with Krishna's stamp of yellow on his forehead. It was lucky that the spokesman for the enraged mob was a Hindu and not one of those Mohammedans. The latter would have made short shrift of him, but the Hindus preferred to inquire into the spirit of the deed first.

They led Stokes away from the heat of that burning thatch. The whirl of sparks gushing from the front of the *dahk* had brought a larger mob, passively interested in this immolation of an Englishman. They were disappointed to learn the truth. The American Stokes-*sahib* had got the Englishman out. The immolation had turned into a trial by this ex-tempo congress. A descent to the ridiculous from the sublimity of *suttee!*

The thatch roof of the front veranda burned out after a flash and roar. The Brahmin lawyer seized what was left of drama in the crowded compound. Stokes remembered him now as one of Judge Wykhoff's staff, a man who had ambitions to be a suddar judge. Here was a "disturbance" in which he could distinguish himself. A writer *babu* brought a chair from the *dahk's* dining room and set it in front of the go-down for the Brahmin to sit on. The crowd put aside their firebrands and petrol tins and stones when this new judge spoke, for what he said appealed to their Indian love of metaphysics.

"Since you have taken the place of the man this congress wants," the Brahmin said to Stokes, "why should you not receive his punishment? Look, you are even wearing his mantle on your shoulders, which means you are not Stokes-*sahib*, but the British Captain of Punjabis."

"That satisfies me," Stokes said, knowing as well as the Brahmin what these Hindus liked. "I am Ashe-Beville. I am guilty of what he did."

"Then you are to be stoned." The Brahmin put up his hand, waving the crowd back. "Since Suddar Judge Wykhoff forsook his post at four this morning, I am now Suddar Judge of Sirdar. I shall pass sentence here according to law, not the dictates of a rabble. You are Ashe-Beville, Captain of Punjabis. You admit that point. As Ashe-Beville you may offer your defense. Not as Stokes-*sahib*. Is that clear?"

Stokes understood this Brahmin—that is, he understood one part of his complex psychology. He was a man who displayed an "M.A.-Failed" after his name, which told the world that he had at least matriculated in college even though he had failed in the examinations. But he was still a Krishna Brahmin.

"I am Ashe-Beville," Stokes had admitted, and the mob was intrigued. Here was something of reincarnation.

"I was taken prisoner by the Japs in Burma," Stokes said, assuming the new identity. "I was reported dead, but after much suffering at the hands of the Japs I escaped to the teak forests. For many days, it is true, I was as if dead, but I clung to life because of my love for the *memsahib* who was to be my wife."

"Wait a minute!" a Moslem said. "You are Stokes-*sahib*, who built the Dam. And yet you talk as if—"

"He is the English Captain of Punjabis," the Brahmin judge said. "Do not interrupt."

The prisoner went on: "This *memsahib* loved me and I knew it. For that reason my suffering meant nothing, but was rather a support to me so that I could follow her through the Patkais and rejoin her. I thought of her joy when she was to find that I had come back from death."

The crowd, even the Brahmin judge himself, listened, fascinated.

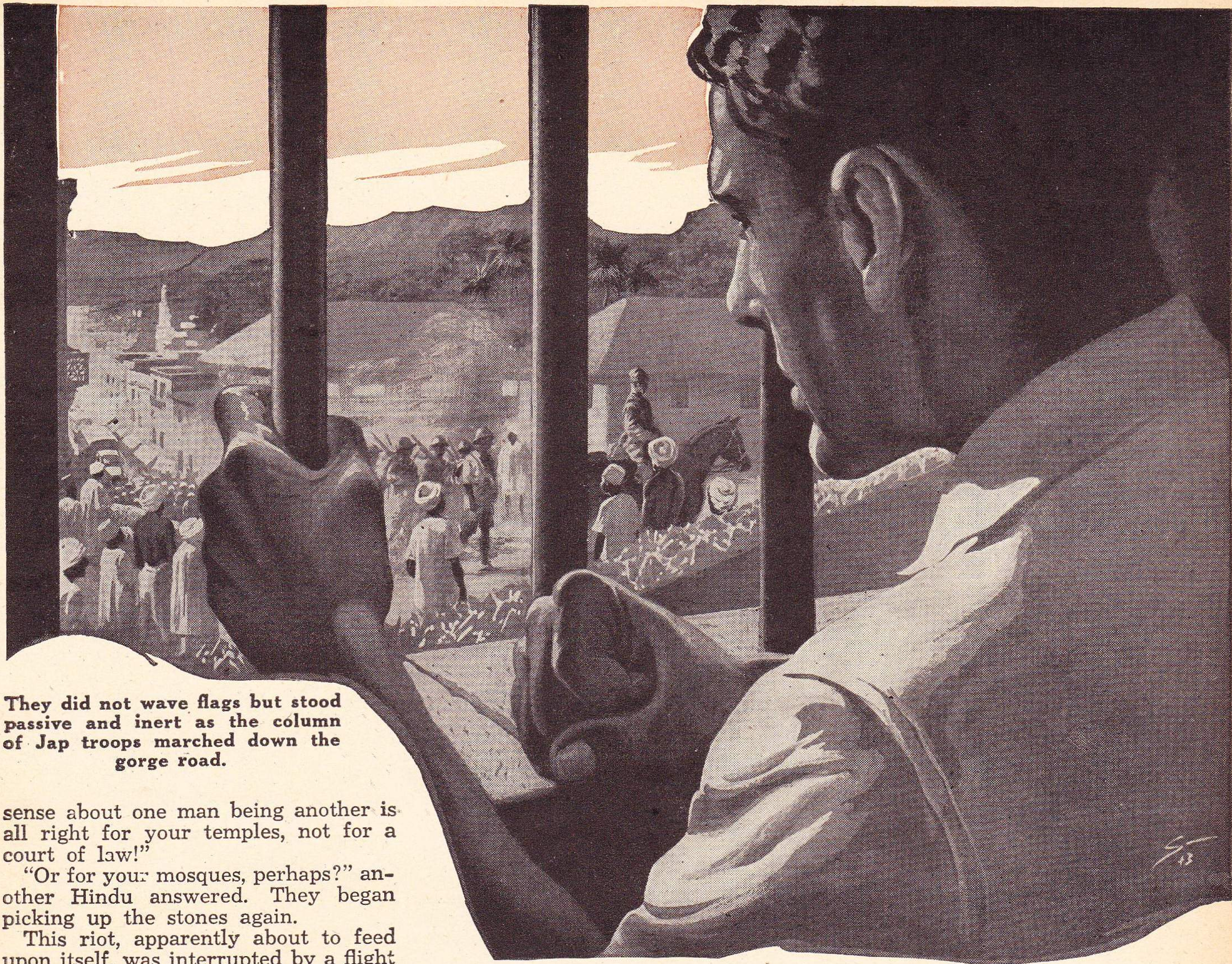
"I found out that she was in Sirdar. When I came here to the *dahk* bungalow, I was beside myself in the frenzy to find her and to be on my way. Some of this mob tried to hinder me from joining her. In my frenzy I fought them. I struck one, not measuring my blow, for here I was a dead man returned to life and to my mate. That is my offense."

The Krishna Brahmin nodded. He was delighted. As for the Moslems, they did not believe in any of this hocus-pocus about transmigration, and for that very reason they were on Stokes' side. He was not Ashe-Beville to the Moslems; he was Stokes, and they did not want to punish Stokes. The punishment of an innocent man for the guilt of another was a philosophy their Prophet would have despised. It stank of the Nazis. It had nothing to do with the mercy of Allah.

An old Moslem said, "This man is really Stokes-*sahib*. And his defense of his friend is logical."

A Hindu threw his stone on the ground. "We have already shed this man's blood. And for a crime which as he specifies had some merit. It was a Moslem he struck, anyway."

"He did not strike a Moslem! It was the British captain, not this man, who struck a Moslem! This Hindu non-



They did not wave flags but stood passive and inert as the column of Jap troops marched down the gorge road.

sense about one man being another is all right for your temples, not for a court of law!"

"Or for your mosques, perhaps?" another Hindu answered. They began picking up the stones again.

This riot, apparently about to feed upon itself, was interrupted by a flight of Otoris on reconnaissance soaring out of the mists of Burma. The formation, heading for the abandoned airport below the city, was unchallenged by fighter planes, unheralded even by the teak mill siren. Probably the air-raid spotters had left their posts to join the looters or the crowd at the Residency, or this firebrand mob at the *dahk*.

As the planes' hum grew to a roar, a maintenance lorry from the Dam trundled down the Valley Road and into the *dahk* compound. The driver and a half dozen turbaned men in the lorry were Stokes' own crew!

The suddar judge, hoping to stop the riot and uphold the dignity of his court, said, "This case is dismissed!"

THE maintenance lorry bumped up with a spatter of gravel. The crowd dwindled rapidly. The fat Brahmin was in a hurry too, waddling off to a less conspicuous spot in the compound.

This gave Stokes a seat to flop into. One of the natives washed his bruised forehead. The *chowkidar*, busy beating out brands of thatch that had fallen on the veranda, yelled to a houseboy to bring the *burra sahib* a drink.

It was the Dam's headman of coolies and two welder *wallahs* who salaamed to him. "The sound of machine guns at three o'clock, *sahib*—"

"I've already heard," Stokes said. "It wasn't a scout detail."

"We have caught the Japonay who perpetrated this act with a hundred-pound drifter drill," one of the *wallahs* said.

Stokes took a gulp of brandy pawnee the houseboy had brought. "If you search the Dam, the tunnels, everywhere—"

"We have searched, *sahib*, and likewise a detail of *sipahis* came after you left and we have posted them at every place of import. There are no more Japonay who can work mischief. Nor is there dynamite. But we found two by the drum gates."

More of Stokes' workers piled out of the lorry, dragging two squat, bony-jawed men. One was dressed in European whites, the other in the black gabardine of a Burman. But their coarse black hair and muddy skin—instead of the gold-yellow skin of Burmans—gave them away. They were Japs.

Stokes sat like the suddar judge, his topi in his lap because of the bruise on his head. As the two prisoners were marched up to face him the crowd came back, now that the Japanese planes had passed without dropping a bomb. The planes were circling above the airport now like a flock of *mynah* birds about to alight in a rice paddy. But they did not alight. It was a reconnaissance flight, obviously, to check on the evacuation of the Flying Buffaloes and the small British squadron.

Stokes looked down again at the circle of natives about him. "You fellows took my gun. I want it back."

There was some argument among the Moslems, but not much. A beardless youth in a fez came out of the crowd, salaamed, handed him the gun. Then he waited expectantly to see him use it on the two Japs.

The headman, pointing to one of the Japs, said, "This is the one we found with the drill. This other—" he indicated the Jap in the white zoot suit "—was hiding in the tunnel, likewise, but he denies knowledge of the sabotage of the Dam. However, he confesses with pride that it was he who has damaged the cars of the refugees."

Stokes addressed the one in the gabardine. "If you started blowing up the Dam, why didn't you finish?"

"Is this man Yankee?" the Jap said, laughing.

"Sure I'm a Yankee—which means bad luck."

"Maybe to you," the other Jap said. He was the cocky one in the whites, smoking a cheroot, his topi on the side of his head.

Stokes held his temper and repeated, "Why didn't you finish your job of blowing up the Dam? You were working at three o'clock and they didn't catch you till six or eight hours later. What were you doing meanwhile?"

"Who wants to know?" the cocky Jap asked. Stokes recognized him now as a bazaar keeper in Sirdar who had sold photographic supplies before the war.

"I'm not talking to you." For the third time Stokes asked the question of the Jap in the gabardine. "Why didn't you blow the Dam up?"

"The Britishers all get out. Planes get out. My general keeps the Dam for the Japanese. What you think anyway? Why blow up the Dam which belongs to Japanese?"

Stokes had no answer. The question itself was an answer. The British, fearful of a flood, had got their planes out, hence the airport could be considered neutralized. The Japs were ready to move in now in force.

The robed Jap held up his hands, seeing Stokes fingering his gun. But the other one said, "What you think you're doing, Yank? You touch us and the Rai will turn you over to our general when he comes. Go ahead shoot. What you afraid of?"

Stokes lifted the gun slowly, pointing at the Jap's cheroot. The circle of natives around them widened. The Jap puffed smoke and grinned.

Stokes put his gun back. He said to the headman, "Why didn't you turn these body lice over to the Municipal Police?"

"The police said bring them to you. Their injury was worked upon you, so spake the Head Constable. This one —this heap of filth who affects your whites like an Eurasian—it was he who sabotaged your car before dawn. And Suddar Judge Wykhoff's car. Hence it is your affair. The police will have none of it."

Stokes rubbed the sweat from his palm against his holster. Through his teeth he forced himself to say, "Take them back to the Dam. I'll be there after I stop at the Residency."

"What? Not shooting us, Yank? Too bad. Everybody disappointed."

When the Japs were thrown into the lorry the fat Brahmin waddled out of the shade of the tamarinds. "If I might say, Mr. Stokes, I admire your forbearance. Let these vermin gnaw their own destruction. For look you, I have just heard that Judge Wykhoff's car was sabotaged in such a manner that it did not break down until it had gone some miles. He is trapped down in the heat of the plains and with a child who is very sick. Such an exquisite plotting of injury—"

"Judge Wykhoff's little girl?" Stokes interrupted in a queer voice.

"Even so. Dying, so I hear. Let the gods punish that inhuman deed. For as it is written, the thief who steals meat is reborn a vulture, who steals rice is reborn a crow, and similarly this Japanese will be reborn as vermin."

"Bring that Jap back here," Stokes called steadily. "The one who is smoking."

"What's the matter, Yank? More questions?" The Jap laughed, showing his great yellow teeth.

The teeth were blown out by Stokes' slug. The shot, tearing through the back of the Jap's skull, knocked him over by its impact. He lay staring upward, his face carved, as if in cheese, in everlasting astonishment.

"You in there! Did you kill this Japanese?"

CHAPTER EIGHT

When Stokes walked to the truck no one stopped him. The elder Moslems shook their heads, plucked their red beards; they did not want to be mixed up in this murder of a Japanese. As for the Hindus, they got away from Stokes' shadow as if he were an untouchable. Not that they objected to a Jap being shot. The Jap was no better than a monkey, but shooting a monkey will get any white man in trouble in Sirdar as well as Bengal. The Hindus fled from Stokes-*sahib*, who had thus put a curse on himself.

Even his own workers seemed to be of this notion, for they got out of the truck as he came toward them. Their prisoner, the humbler Jap in the black gabardine, had taken advantage of the general stupefaction and slipped away. His captors did not stop him. They might be branded as accomplices, bringing these two Japs to the *burra sahib*. They wanted nothing to do with him. By the time Stokes got up to the driver's seat and looked into the lorry, the prisoner had scrambled over the compound wall and was gone.

Stokes was deserted except for his headman, who was chewing betel cud excitedly. "Where now, *sahib?*"

"To the Residency."

"When the Japonay come to this city, *sahib*, this thing you have done—"

"How are they coming to the city?" Stokes snorted as they drove out of the *dahk* compound. "The garrison at the tank can hold out for weeks."

"The garrison will fight, according to their blood," the headman admitted. "The Sikhs and Punjabis will fight. So will the Non-Silladars, for the pay is good. But with no longer any protection from the death in the skies . . ." The headman nodded his turbaned head to the forsaken landing field.

"What do you think Wavell's troops are doing? They know what's happened here in Sirdar."

"What did the British do at Singapore and at Rangoon?"

"The Dam and the gorge is a Gibraltar," Stokes said, trying to convince himself. He drove to the side of the road, giving the right of way to a *sunnyassi*. He almost lost control of the truck, for the headman had gripped his arm excitedly.

"What the hell did you do that for?" Stokes demanded.

"This holy-man prophesied not a quarter of an hour before the thing happened—this thing you have done."

"He made a good guess."

"But he pointed to the very Japonay you killed and said, 'There is the smell of death on this man!'"

"He said the same thing to me. A stock phrase. The only one he knows, maybe."

The headman said nervously, "Did he in truth say the same words to you, *sahib?*"

"Repeats them like a parrot. What are you worrying about?"

"There are *sunnyassi* who have the gift. They smell the death that is about to strike. And look you, the prophecy he made has been fulfilled!"

"We were talking about the garrison at the Dam," Stokes said.

The headman was silent as they drove up into Government Gardens. A change had come over the crowd on the Residency lawns. There was no longer the air of a *tamasha* or fair. The catechist and the Salvation Bandy had disappeared; so had the juggler with his palm basket and vanishing woman. Parsis had drifted back to their bazaars, *ryots* to their wells and buffaloes. But the harder residue—the looters—still waited in the background like jackals.

The Subadar Major cakewalked down to the steps as Stokes drove behind the parked dump lorry in which Ashe-Beville had escaped. "Quite a performance down there at the *dahk*,"

the Subadar said breezily. "Messed you up, I see. Your blouse—or *is* it your blouse? You are a Captain of Punjabis, Mr. Stokes!" The Subadar gave a mock salute.

"I notice the captain got here," Stokes said, nodding to the parked lorry.

"He's inside safe and sound, thanks to you," the Subadar said. "He collapsed but we got him to bed. Miss Crewes is taking care of him."

Stokes got out of the car and walked up to the veranda, the Subadar beside him.

"There was shooting down there, wasn't there?"

"One shot," Stokes conceded.

"Who fired it and at whom?"

"That's the affair of the Municipal Police, Major. Not yours."

"Ha, ha! Good joke! Now I'll tell you one. It's about the pass and your Dam."

Stokes was about to enter the bungalow, but he turned. "You mean the Japs have reached the tank?"

"Don't be apprehensive. They are not going to attack us. You saw them flying over just now, and we did not give the air-raid warning, you noticed. And they won't burn our houses. We are all safe, for which let us thank His Highness and the diplomacy of his Diwan."

"What are you talking about!"

"I'm no diplomat, Mr. Stokes. I am a soldier. But the Japs have promised to make the Rai a maharajah. I think I would have done the same thing he did."

"You mean he's capitulated!"

"Righto. The garrison at the tank surrendered. Or I should say they offered to escort the occupation forces into Sirdar without resort to arms—except the beat of drums. Come in and have breakfast with us, Mr. Stokes."

IT WAS not the usual midmorning "big breakfast" at the Residency. One of the "Rai's Own" was a Gurkha, luckily, and hence did not lose caste by bringing food from the go-down. He piled tins of biscuits and bully beef and jars of marmalade on the table and brewed tea. It was another *chota hazri,* not *burra hazri.* But it was served in the splendid surroundings of the Residency banquet room.

The only one at the table was Lady Panguern. Her husband picked up a plate of bully when she reminded him, but he ate it standing up as if at a cocktail party. Jane Crewes put some food on a tray and took it into the next room to the exhausted refugee. She had just closed the door as Stokes walked in.

Sir Robert came to him with outstretched hands. "Fine of you, old chap! Ashe-Beville told us everything." Lady Panguern actually stood up in his honor. Concerned about the bloody welt on his forehead, she wet a napkin with hot water from the caddy and came to him.

But Stokes put his hand up to stop her. "This business of the Rai capitulating—" he said.

"That's just what we're going to discuss with you," Sir Robert said.

"How are you getting out?"

"We aren't," Sir Robert said grimly.

Stokes turned to stare at the room where Jane Crewes had gone. He was only vaguely aware of Sir Robert chattering at him excitedly.

"You see, Stokes, there's nothing we can do about it. The Japs are moving in. A sort of parade, I hear, at twelve o'clock noon. We're giving them Sirdar on a platter. But we aren't giving them the Sirdar Dam!"

Stokes turned to him, slowly awakening. "What's that you just said?"

Sir Robert lowered his voice. "Stokes, you wouldn't give them the Sirdar Dam."

Stokes' eyes felt hot and stiff. He had to jerk them as he looked at Sir Robert's face and then at Lady Panguern. He knew what they wanted him to do.

"You could do the job, I dare say, with some of your crew helping you. You can't ask for a demolition squad, of course. If the Rai hears about the plan he'd put a stop to it."

"No, no, the Rai mustn't know!" Lady Panguern exclaimed.

"You have the gelignite in your go-downs—"

THEY went on jabbering at him like crows pecking at his eyes. He had stopped listening because Jane Crewes was standing at the door.

When she came toward Stokes, it was like a bird that attempts flight and fails. She stopped in front of Stokes and, seeing the welt on his forehead, she reached up and brushed his hair back.

Aware of what this meeting meant, Lady Panguern handed her the sopped napkin. The girl spoke, looking at his forehead instead of his eyes. She spoke meaningless words—meaningless to him—about what he had done down there in the *dahk.*

Sir Robert, jabbering away, drowned her out: "You have until twelve o'clock, Stokes. The only point is, don't let the Rai get wind of it. He made his bargain with the Japs. They were to get the Dam. They don't want his palace or his people or his women, and they don't want Sirdar. They want the Dam."

"Which they won't get!" Stokes' eyes left the girl for that moment.

"Good! I'm glad we won't have any argument with you about it," Sir Robert said. He gave his argument, anyway: "With the Dam working for them, all these villages and their industries would fall into the Japs' hands. We'll put a stop to that!"

"I won't let them have the Dam," Stokes repeated.

"And don't forget the airport—an advance base fallen into their lap! A British column is already on the way here. They'll find it a bloody campaign if the air base is left intact for the Japs to use. . . . I say! I wonder if you understand what we want you to do!" Sir Robert exclaimed.

Lady Panguern turned on her husband in gentle, suppressed anger. "Why do you badger him? Can't you see he was badly hurt? He was struck on the forehead and the moment he comes here we both tell him calmly to blow up his years of work. Let's leave him alone."

What she really meant, of course, was to leave him alone with the girl. Sir Robert took the hint. He got a glass and English water and bottle from the sideboard and went to Ashe-Beville's room. Lady Panguern followed him.

Jane stood facing Stokes, still smoothing back his hair. She pressed his head down to the side of hers. Then she said, half whispering, "You knew who he was."

"Yes. And," he added, "I know how it is."

"You understand how I—"

"How you promised him? Go ahead, say it."

"But I can't! Not now. Not after what you've done for him. He said the mob down there was like the one in Calcutta that burned an Englishman alive. You saved him from that. You took his place." She said this, her hand stroking the ragged khaki blouse.

"All right. You have him safe now. You said only death could separate you. Well, he isn't dead."

Her hands fell away from his blouse and she clutched her fingers together, wringing them. "I promised you both."

"You can't love us both."

She shook her head definitely.

"Then he has the first right, but you haven't the heart to say it."

But not to say it would be still more heartless to that refugee in there. As Stokes caught the girl's tortured eyes glancing at the door, he knew she was thinking the same thing.

He said, "It's not your fault, what's happened. Or his either. Or mine."

Again she shook her head. "I'm glad I didn't have to tell you that. You understand it all, I can see. You understand what I've got to do."

"You've got to cross off the time from three o'clock till sun-up. We were dreaming. Like these Hindus say, it was a dumb man's dream. It'll never even be told."

This time she nodded.

THE monsoon thunderhead moved up from the southwest, turning the veranda dark. Stokes went out there and stared at it. That dismal sky reminded him how his Dam had saved Sirdar from the last monsoon floods.

But he found himself back again at three o'clock in the morning, thinking of the one thing in the world that was most precious. For there was nothing else to love or worry about or save. He was without a tie to bind him to a single human being. He was not Judge Wykhoff frantically concerned about his child. He was not an *ayah* wailing, nor a Lady Panguern worried about her husband's eggs and tea. He was Stokes-*sahib,* the builder of the Sirdar Dam.

And he was alone.

A little later, when the Resident and Lady Panguern came back to the dining room, Stokes went in and faced them.

"I've thought over that idea of yours, Sir Robert—that scorched earth policy you advise. But I'm not a Russian. I don't believe in blowing up my six years of work."

"But the Japs—"

"Let them have the Sirdar Dam. As long as they don't hurt it, I'm satisfied."

CHAPTER NINE

"STOKES-*sahib* has disobeyed orders of Government. He has refused the command of His Excellency the Resident to destroy the Sirdar Dam."

This was the report given to the Subadar Major by a Ghurkha who had been acting as cook as well as spy. The Subadar Major, at the moment, sat on the veranda with a whiskey peg. Like any Englishman in India, he sat with his legs spread out on the extended arms of the grasshopper chair. The Gurkha had interrupted an interview the Subadar Major was granting to two Sikh policemen.

These Sikhs were men of mature wisdom, having served their time in the Silladar system, one of them with a beard touched with silver. As Deputy Superintendent of the Sirdar District Jail he was more of a politician now than a soldier. He said, "This Stokes-*sahib* is wise in his decision to disobey. For in disobeying Government he makes himself our friend. Down with the British!"

"Mr. Stokes is an American," the Subadar said. "As for his being a friend, I am not too sure. Nevertheless, I shall insist on being his friend now that he needs one. . . . Tell him I want to see him," he ordered the Gurkha cook.

The Gurkha went on the errand and it was scarcely a minute before Stokes, having changed the ragged blouse for his white jacket, hurried out.

"Ah! Richard is himself again!" the Subadar Major said without getting up.

Stokes looked at the Sikhs. "I'm glad to see some hereditary warriors on this veranda. Or are you giving up to the Japs too?"

"The Deputy Superintendent of the Jail," the Subadar said, waving his peg tumbler at the older Sikh, "is offering to keep you immune from the Japs."

Both Sikhs gave a half salaam, half salute. The deputy superintendent said, "I regret, Sahib, that it is my duty to inform you that you are under arrest."

Stokes glanced at the lancers posted at regular intervals along the veranda, then at the crowd of natives on the lawns. He decided not to scratch his holster, which he itched to do.

He said with a wry grin, "You're arresting me? For what?"

"For the murder of a citizen."

"You mean that rat down at the *dahk* bungalow? He wasn't a citizen. He was a Jap agent, sabotaging our cars."

"Whether citizen or no, you have abrogated to yourself the right of the police. It is to my sorrow, *sahib*, that you must come to the jail-*khanna*."

Stokes felt a queer turn in his stomach which was definitely panic, but not on his own account. He had tried to persuade himself that what happened to Jane Crewes was no longer his business. But it did not stop the itch in his hand.

At a signal made by the younger Sikh, two lancers moved up from each side of the veranda. They had their guns with butts resting on their hips.

The prisoners inside the bungalow must have got wind of what was happening. Stokes saw Sir Robert standing there—for the first time in full view of the waiting mob.

"What's this nonsense about?" he asked. Lady Panguern had come out to stand at his side, and just behind them Stokes saw Jane and Captain Ashe-Beville.

"This nonsense may mean disaster, Your Excellency," the Subadar Major said, "unless you all get back into the bungalow. I counsel, please, sir, as your friend—"

A chunk of *chunam* flew through the veranda flowers, landing at the Resident's feet. The mob set up a hooting cheer.

Sir Robert stuck to his guns. "You aren't going to arrest this man. I forbid it. You as deputy superintendent," he said to the old Sikh, "are still in my department—"

"They aren't arresting me, Sir Robert," Stokes lied easily. "The Rai wants the keys to the Dam's go-downs. He sent his Sikhs for me. I'll be back."

The Sikhs waved to the crowd. A lance sergeant and his platoon pressed their horses between the hooting natives and the veranda. Before another stone was thrown at the old Englishman and the group standing with him, Stokes walked down to the patrol lorry and climbed in.

THE jail compound behind the Municipal Buildings was deserted, for all political prisoners had been released long since. Jap shopkeepers imprisoned here for months were now decorating bazaars with paper Rising Suns. Stokes could see them from his cell window.

He could see the crowd milling around the bank. With the news that the Japs were marching in, there was of course a run on the Bank of Bengal, Sirdar State Branch, and the prolonged riot seemed definitely in tune with the appearance of those Jap flags.

Inside his cell, without benefit of electric *punkah*, Stokes gasped at the growing heat of day. The cell was an oven, as well as a vacuum of silence, apart from the rioting city. Stokes had the feeling that he was the only prisoner in Sirdar's jail that morning, with the exception of the only other one he could see—a man lying on the cot in the adjacent cell. According to the Sikh guard sitting on a camp stool outside his door, they had released everyone except the *thags*.

That must have been a *thag* in the next cell, which was separated from Stokes' compartment only by bars. The man lay on his side facing the other way, evidently in deep sleep.

Stokes sat on his cot, a siphon of English water on the *chunammed* floor. The English water and a bottle of whiskey were a special gift from the old deputy superintendent. The D. S. had presented it with a speech: "I am your friend. We are all your friends. This civil disobedience of yours concerning the Dam's destruction has made you our friend. To hell with the British!"

This was consoling to think about during the hours until noon, when the drums began to beat.

STOKES saw the jam at the bank breaking up. In the small sector of Government Gardens visible across the prison compound, he saw the crowd drifting down to the road. Bazaar keepers came out with their children—but without their women. The children held flags and gift limes and flower wreaths. They did not wave flags, but stood passive and inert, like their fathers, as the column of Jap troops marched down the gorge road.

It would be like this in every city in India, Stokes reflected. A pretense of giving limes but actually a dreadful passive silence. The silence was like the old-time moving pictures with a superimposed "sound effect" — the drone of planes over the city.

The Sikh guard, anxious not to miss the show, came into the cell next to Stokes and stood at the window almost shoulder to shoulder to him. But the prisoner in that next cell did not move.

The white prisoner and the black-bearded copper-faced guard watched the battalion of tired infantrymen, then the labor battalions—trucks, with heavy dynamos and steam rollers and an enormous amount of iron network and corrugated plates for hangars and emergency airfields. Stokes and the Sikh guard stared at the squat, thick-skinned, chunk-jawed men. In contrast to the perfect features of even the blackest Hindus, this sea of mud-brown faces was shocking. When the roar of escort planes dwindled, the Sikh said, aghast, "Never have I seen so much thick skin outside the leper home at Matunga!"

The distance from the cell window and the swarm of them gave one composite picture of a Jap soldier's face—toughened in the Malay and Burma campaigns, hardened and disfigured further by weeks of marching through the Arakan Mountains. This distant view of ten thousand Japs—it was a whole division, Intelligence had warned—this composite Jap against the background of Indians was, in truth, a leper! Swollen skin, lips eaten away above mongoose teeth, bunchy black hair that leprosy makes coarser.

Stokes took a drink.

Rather than watch that endless column of fours marching, those mud-caked tractors, those lepers on horse-

back, Stokes watched the empty corridor of the jail, the broad back of the Sikh guard, the cell on the other side of the bars where the sleeping prisoner lay. Stokes found himself staring, for some reason intrigued by that motionless figure. The silence in there was deathlike except for the buzzing of green-bellied flies that filled that particular cell.

Staring harder, Stokes had the growing conviction that the prisoner was dead. He had the disagreeable feeling that there were only two prisoners left in the jail-*khanna*—a dead man and himself.

He called to the Sikh, "Have they freed everybody else?"

"All under-trial prisoners, *sahib*. The petty offenders and agitators were freed at sunrise. But in the next wing there are the *thags*. You are the only one in this wing, *sahib*."

That settled it. The man in the next cell was not a prisoner at all. At least not any more. He had escaped not only the bars, but the coil of flesh.

"The occupation authorities," said the Sikh, "will free the rest of you, as I understand it, after something of a preliminary hearing."

"You mean my preliminary hearing will be before a Jap court!"

"They will have some voice in the matter, doubtless," the Sikh said and turned back to watch the parade.

But Stokes called to him again. "Why don't you run this jail-*khanna* decently? Why don't you take that thing out —that thing lying on that *charpoy* in there?"

"He is a political thing, *sahib*."

Time marched with the tread of troops. There was no end. "They march to the Valley Road," the Sikh said.

"Did any of them go into the Residency bungalow?"

"I can see no more from this window than you can from yours. But I can compute the matter from hearsay. They are not going into the Residency, so the Rai stipulated in the treaty he made with their general. Such British and Americans who are left in Sirdar are to remain in the Residency unmolested. Prisoners, yes, but in a sanctum of refuge."

Stokes felt so relieved at hearing this that he poured himself half a peg tumbler of whiskey. If the guard had not been an orthodox Sikh he would have asked him to join in celebrating.

But the whiskey made the dank heat of the cell intolerable. The Sikh saw him mopping his neck. "Sir, would you like ice for the whiskey pegs?"

"A *punkah* would help more. It's stifling."

"I shall see what may be done about a *punkah*." The Sikh walked down the corridor and there was talk, the voices echoing in the empty jail-*khanna*. He came back with a pompous fat official, a man with the yellow stamp of Krishna on his forehead. It was the sweet-smelling Brahmin lawyer, the judge in that mock trial at the *dahk*.

"We meet again, Mr. Stokes!" the Brahmin said, waddling up to the bars. "And I am glad to say I am in a position to help you. Judge Wykhoff got away safely on the last ambulance plane with his little girl. She will not die, let us hope. With Judge Wykhoff gone, I am Suddar Judge."

"Is this another trial, Judge?" Stokes inquired grimly.

"Not as yet. The Rai has been advised by his *diwan* and other ministers to let the Japanese conduct the trial. He is afraid they may have learned something from the Nazis in the matter of slaying whole populations to avenge one death. For the murder of one Japanese a hundred of the Rai's subjects might have to pay the price. Quite a reasonable view of the matter, I might say. We must have no Lidice here in Sirdar."

"Which means I am the goat," Stokes said.

"That philosophy of the scapegoat is quite intriguing," the Brahmin said. "But there is also another philosophy from your Occidental literature. I refer to the mariner who had an albatross hung on his breast—the bird he himself had killed."

Stokes followed the Brahmin's sidelong glance to the next cell. The dead man lay huddled, squat, shapeless, thick-necked. In that instant Stokes recognized the neck, the color of bread crust. He had seen it when the Jap saboteur walked off—the moment before Stokes called him back and put a bullet into his head.

CHAPTER TEN

"I SHALL demand a change of venue for you, Mr. Stokes," the fat orator went on, declaiming through the bars. "It is very irregular, this that the Rai's ministers have done to you. I shall object. As Suddar Judge I shall get you out of this dilemma by taking advantage of a point of law. A court of justice—I mean myself—has the right to change the place of obtaining a jury and of holding trial. Count on me." He waddled off. And Stokes saw no more of him.

For hours the Jap division moved on past the prison compound. They rattled and creaked and banged, against a background roar of Otori formations overhead. Each hour the column stopped and infantrymen broke ranks, swarmed into the bazaars or crowded into the *serais* for food. They spent their invasion currency like drunken sailors, gorged themselves, stuffed plantains in their cheeks monkey-wise, swilled liquor from the dram shops.

"Katazuita!" a Jap called out there in the prison corridor. It was a call Stokes had heard before during that afternoon. *Katazuita!* The situation is well in hand!

Stokes said, "Couldn't you see it was a trick? I thought you were smart enough to figure that out!"

Stokes looked out to the compound and saw a Jap officer with a truckload of sloppy infantrymen. Behind the truck four white prisoners trudged into the compound, carrying their own bags, satchels, pith helmets. A crowd of natives followed as far as the compound gate, where the Jap soldiers stopped them. The Hindus and Moslems watched, some smiling, some wide-eyed and frightened, all of them silent. For here was His Excellency the Resident of Sirdar carrying his own luggage!

The four were lined up but made to stand apart from each other—an order which Lady Panguern was slow to obey until a Jap pushed her into place.

Stokes clung to his bars, his hands shaking like an old man's. He heard a good part of what was going on out there in the prison compound, for all noise in the city seemed to be sup-

pressed. The last of the trucks and field pieces had clanked by. *Hawkahs* stopped yelling their wares. There were no planes humming in the sky for those few moments, and the street dogs, excited for hours at the parade, had barked themselves to exhaustion and to sleep.

A short-legged Jap officer with a patch over his eye did the barking now. "I am the Prison Officer. I have charge of you." He read from a paper, "Robert Panguern, Resident. Answer to your name." Sir Robert put his hand up wearily. "Mrs. Panguern. Occupation—housewife. Why don't you answer?"

"Lady Panguern is out of breath from carrying the luggage," a Sikh said. It was the D. S., standing at the door of the jail.

"Albert Ashe-Beville. Occupation?" the one-eyed Jap yelped.

"Soldier."

"Soldier? Then you are military prisoner." The Jap officer jabbered something in his own lingo to the non-com. Then in English: "Pick up your bags and go with this guard detail. You will be kept separate." He squinted at his paper. "Jane Crewes. Occupation?"

"Entertainer."

HIS one eye went up and down the girl's whites. "Entertainer—how's that? In a nightclub?"

Stokes could see her indifferent shrug. "Sometimes."

The Jap read the next name, but looked up at her again. "Clem Stokes. Occupation?"

It was the D. S. who answered this time from the door. "We already have Mr. Stokes in custody, sir."

"He is the American held for murder? Good. I will tend to him now. Lock these people up. Separate cells."

A few moments later the one-eyed officer and a squad of mud-caked soldiers tramped down the corridor. Stokes heard the old Deputy Superintendent's voice as they marched in. "And may I ask, sir, if the Resident and Lady Panguern may occupy the same cell? Her ladyship requested it, as she wants to stay near her husband."

"You mean the old woman?" the Jap said. "Sure. Keep 'em in the same cell. But the other one—the entertainer—keep her separate. And the military prisoner, keep him till I report to General Mutsu. He may have him shot."

The D. S. led the procession to Stokes' cell, and Stokes saw three Hindus with Gandhi caps in the crowd. He recognized them as part of that petrol and torch mob at the *dahk* bungalow.

The D. S. explained their presence: "I have brought three witnesses, sir. If you need more I shall send for them. There were many. A hundred."

"Three is plenty. Make this short."

They made it short—a matter of minutes. The trial was started by the D. S. pointing through the barred doors. "Here is the prisoner, sir. And the man he murdered, as you may see. That you may be sure this was no affair of the Rai's subjects, these three witnesses will specify—"

The Jap officer, not listening, went into the cell next to Stokes and turned over the body that lay hunched on the *charpoy*. He made a clicking sound with his teeth, then turned to the bars that separated the two cells.

"You in there! Did you kill this Japanese?"

"Why should I answer you?" Stokes said. "Who are you, anyway?"

"I counsel you, Mr. Stokes," the D. S. interrupted. "This is your only chance to plead your case."

The Jap turned to the D. S. "Let him out." He spoke to his soldiers in Japanese. When the soldiers came into the cell and shoved him out and down the long corridor Stokes could see the white faces in the cells he passed.

He heard one voice—Sir Robert's. "Where are you taking him?"

"Out to be shot," the Jap officer laughed. "Where do you think?"

Stokes supposed that the execution was to take place with as much dispatch as the trial—right in the prison compound. Instead, the Jap officer stepped into the superintendent's office. He had purposely given everyone the impression that his word alone had condemned Stokes to death, but he had to make a slight qualification.

As the procession went through the superintendent's office the Jap stopped at the desk. "You three witnesses sign this paper."

The D. S. spoke up humbly. "Then, sir, this is only a preliminary hearing?"

"You think so? I have condemned this man to death. I am taking him to headquarters. Routine only. Why do you always interrupt? Why don't you stop pulling your whiskers?" He pocketed the signed papers and walked out in a short-legged strut, followed by the others.

The rabble of natives out by the compound gate shoved and tussled for a better view. They watched their one-time *burra sahib* of the Dam taken to the truck, bayonets poking him from behind as the Japs in the truck hauled him aboard. Japs came out of bazaars and started to hoot.

The runt officer evidently expected some hoots and cheers from the natives too—these citizens who were being liberated from their British persecutors. But Sirdar's streets were silent. Even the younger Hindus in Gandhi caps stood dumb.

A Sikh policeman riding a bicycle gave the same answer every time a voice spoke up from the crowd. "They are taking Stokes-*sahib* for execution. There is no resistance accorded to us. The thing is written."

THE compressor plant, headquarters before sunrise for Colonel Braithe, and later for the Rai's Irregulars, was now stuffed with crop-headed Japs.

Evidently the dwarf-sized conqueror, General Mutsu, was too busy to bother about the white prisoner, for Stokes was taken into another room.

This tiled lean-to of the old plant was likewise hot with Jap officers and the sweet-sour smell of Jap sweat. These officers were laboring over the blueprints of the Sirdar Dam.

They were browbeating two Hindus who stood before them—a Vishnuite who was Stokes' plant engineer, and the bearded old headman of coolies. The Hindus had the aloofness of gods, in their resignation, and the appearance of gods compared to the excited Japs.

The headman, much cooler than the men bullying him, said, "Here is Stokes-*sahib*. He alone can answer all questions which we ourselves cannot answer."

The one-eyed Prison Officer, Stokes' captor, shoved him up to the table. The staff of Jap Army engineers seated about the blueprints looked up.

One, a colonel of engineers, said, "What sort of records do you keep of these works? Can't you write English? What is this stuff?" He pointed to a sheaf of papyrus. "When we ask your headman a polite question he only points to this stuff."

"It's my timekeeper's report," Stokes said, grinning. "He pricks it out in Sirdarese on papyrus."

"But this map here. Why do you write notes in Sirdarese if not to show secret wires for destroying the Dam?"

THERE were two maps on the table, one a blueprint they must have filched from his bungalow, the other a map of the Dam bearing Japanese inscriptions, evidently drawn by a Jap secret agent.

"I wrote those notes in shorthand," Stokes said. "It's only the instructions to my men that I write in their dialect."

"How much kilowatts here?" another Jap asked, pointing to the blueprint of one of the generating units.

"Forty-one thousand," Stokes said without looking.

They checked on their own map and nodded.

"And what are these holes here? We inspected same. Your headman says he forgot what they're for. It is for dynamite, I think."

"They are drainage holes for pressure grouting where the Dam is to be enlarged," Stokes answered.

"What is water pressure at base of Dam?"

"Fifteen thousand pounds per square foot."

They barked a dozen more questions about the flood-tide run-off of the monsoon, the tonnage of the steel gates that let the water through the penstocks, the normal flow of the river. He answered them all from his head.

"But the present flow?" one asked.

"The monsoon rains up in the Patkais have swollen the river. It is very high."

"The exact amount! I ask you a question. Answer!"

"It is very dangerous. One of the aqueducts from the main tank should have been shut off this morning. I intended to do it this morning, till you Japs turned up to run the works. It's your funeral now."

"Which aqueduct?"

Stokes pointed to one that led from the main tank to the irrigation system in a foothill village. The Japs looked at each other, one of them wiping his forehead. That aqueduct through the jungle was one of the main points that worried them, for it cut across their line of supplies. If the conduit gave way the flood would hamper them, perhaps for several days.

"Send this headman to cut the water off!" the colonel of engineers said.

Stokes gave the instructions. A Jap officer accompanied the headman with a squad of soldiers, obviously to see that the work was done.

The engineers at the table jabbered in their own lingo and then one of them got up. "I am going to talk to the general," he said to Stokes. "I am going to tell him we need more information from you."

The Prison Officer objected: "It will do no good to ask the general. He has a grudge for Americans. This man will be lucky if he is not tortured."

"General Mutus may give us twenty-four hours," the colonel of engineers said. When he went out, half of his staff went with him, some carrying blueprints.

A few minutes later Stokes was called into the general's room. At the desk where Colonel Braithe had sat writhing with poison, Stokes saw a small chunk of a man with an enormous head. He wore ribbons of the Manchurian and Malay campaigns. When he looked at Stokes his tight lids, like strips of thong across his eyes, narrowed. "My engineers tell me not to have you shot. You are a valuable man. I don't think so." He took the death warrant, which had been made out at the jail-*khanna,* and reached for a fountain pen.

"If I may be allowed to make a statement, sir," a smooth voice said. Stokes turned to the group of Jap officers behind him. A tall, thin Bengali stood there, the only man of normal height in the room—a distinguished looking patriarch in a coat cut like a Prince Albert, but of alpaca. This was the Rai's three-hundred-a-month prime minister, the Diwan.

Stokes was glad to see an Indian in this crowd. The Diwan was an opportunist, a collaborator and a crook. But in this crowd of Japs he was a real man among monkeys.

"His Highness the Rai instructed me to make this statement," the Diwan said. "We are in accord with you that Mr. Stokes is guilty, and the penalty is just. But the cost must be considered. Mr. Stokes is the only man in India who can operate and maintain the Dam, the tanks, the pressure tunnels, outlet works and penstocks. The whims and vagaries of—"

"No speeches, no speeches!" the general said. "I am busy today."

"I mean to say, sir, a Dam is not merely a wall of concrete with water behind it. It is like a woman that must be tamed by a master before she will work. No, it is like a ferocious beast that has been tamed by a *bomo,* but when the *bomo* is taken away the beast is rampant."

The staff of engineers started jabbering. Stokes knew they were arguing in his defense.

The runt general listened to them while reading dispatches which orderlies kept handing him. For a moment he drummed on the table, perplexed and impatient. He said to Stokes, "What is this my engineers say about the monsoon rains? The monsoon is over."

"Except in northeast India, due to a storm in the Bay of Bengal," Stokes said truthfully, knowing that he was pleading for his life. "There is a lot of water to handle. The grade conduits and concrete siphons and pumping plants can handle just so much. Let them figure it out."

"They ask me to give you another twenty-four hours to live. They want problems answered. Have you a wife and children?"

Stokes was blank-faced at this sudden question. "What's that got to do with it?"

"If I let you show my engineers the Dam, I want a hostage. How do I know you won't blow it up like the Russians at Dneiprostroi?"

"May I answer that question?" It was the patriarchal Diwan who interrupted again. "Your fear is unfounded, although very reasonable. In fact, the British Resident ordered that very thing. But this man, Mr. Stokes, refused point-blank."

The engineers were impressed. But not the general. "I have more important matters to do. You are wasting my time. I will not trust this American. You want him to show you around his Dam. Then get me a hostage—his wife, his daughter, there must be somebody—a friend, a woman. Get one in an hour, or else shoot him."

He turned to his dispatches.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE one-eyed Jap took Stokes to the anteroom, followed by the staff of distracted engineers. Stokes knew they were chattering about getting a hostage. The Prison Officer talked to them and they seemed to arrive at some sort of a solution. The engineers left the room. A moment later the Diwan came in and sat down.

The Prison Officer, sitting at the desk, squinted his one eye at Stokes. "Do you have no wife or children?"

"If I had, I'd have sent them to safety before you Japs got here."

"May I put in a word," the Diwan said. "Mr. Stokes has no family ties, no ties whatsoever. Not even a very dear friend."

"Nobody! And he lived here for years!" the Jap said in a rage. "He must have somebody." His eyes bored into Stokes in sheer frustration.

"Mr. Stokes has devoted his life to the building of this Dam. He has sacrificed everything for it. Hence he has been without friends of any sort."

The Prison Officer cleared his throat and for the first time spoke politely. "Please answer. There is this American woman—her name is Jane Crewes. Who is she?"

"Why ask me?" Stokes said. "You know as much about her as I do. Probably more."

The Jap took out his list of prisoners. "Entertainer. I know that. And I know some more. She comes from your city of Brooklyn in the States. She was vaudeville performer, she is twenty years old. She is not married. Yes, I know very much. This woman left the Rai's palace and his guests this morning. Explain please."

"Explain what?"

The eye snapped down brightly at the notes, scrawled in Japanese. "The woman was offered a car by the Rai, but she left and went to your bungalow. Explain."

"She wanted to ask me about her fiance, so what interest would I have in her or she in me?"

"I believe Mr. Stokes' statement," the Diwan began.

"I don't. But I will find out what is true. Why listen to your Yankee lies? I will write a letter." He called an orderly. "Write in English what I say." The orderly sat down.

"'Will you have dinner with me?' Write that down. 'We will have a little chat. We will chat about a friend of yours, Mr. Stokes, who is to be executed. A word from me—a little word from you—and I will release him. I am, my dear miss, your special admirer—' "

While this was being typed the handsome old Diwan said, "I can advise you truthfully, sir. You are wasting your valuable time."

"I have an hour to waste." The Jap showed a mouthful of teeth.

When the typed message was handed to him he read it, making the house-lizard click. "Not strong enough. Any woman might have dinner to save a man's life. Put in something that it'll be more than dinner. A sacrifice she makes to save only one man in the world. Fix it like that. I have no time to write love letters. . . . What?" He looked up as Stokes muttered an oath. "Yes? You object about something? Caught you, didn't I?"

"Hell no," Stokes shot back. "She'll tear your filthy letter and spit on it! I told you I mean nothing to her."

The Jap merely turned to the typist. "Put in a P. S. 'The bearer of this letter will see that you get out of jail at once. I wait for you. With hopes!' That makes it stronger."

The engineers were called in. There was a quarter of an hour or so which could be used while they were waiting for the answer to the decoy letter. Since there was still some question about the time Stokes was to live, it would be best to use every precious moment. The engineers sat at the table and spread out their maps, shooting questions at him.

At each answer, Stokes looked at his watch. At eighteen minutes, he felt positive she would not come. Stokes put himself in her place. She knew that any promise a Jap made was worthless. She would be throwing herself away. It wouldn't be fair to the man she loved and the man who loved her. It would ruin Ashe-Beville's life just as it would ruin hers. And it would not save Stokes, anyway.

At eighteen minutes and forty seconds, a staff car drove up to the compressor plant and jerked to a stop.

Jane Crewes was in the car.

THEY brought the girl straight to the anteroom where the Prison Officer was waiting for her. The Jap engineers looked up from their maps, their slant eyes snapping.

Stokes said, "Couldn't you see it was a trick? I thought you were smart enough to figure that out!"

"If there's a slim chance of saving your life, what do I care if it is a trick?"

"You aren't going to save me doing this. You can renege. Think of Ashe-Beville instead of me."

"I am thinking of him. You saved him this morning."

"You're paying me back, is that it?"

"Isn't that fair?"

The Jap stepped up to them and bowed, sucking his breath. "I interrupt, please. The letter was a trick, yes. My general will explain why I sent for you. This way, please."

He opened the door to the main headquarters room. Stokes started to swear, but the sound of his voice was as banal as the words. The girl took his arm as if to follow him, but it was she who did the leading. She went into the general's room as if footlights lighted her eyes.

The Prison Officer, cocky and triumphant, reported to the general how he had brought about this solution.

The general made short work of the whole incident. He stopped looking at Jane's coral red mouth and said to Stokes, "You'll go with my engineers as their prisoner. You will answer their questions. I give you twenty-four hours to show them you can be a help. If you can, I appoint you consultant engineer. If you can't, this sentence will be carried out." He scratched the death warrant with a fingernail that was thick as turtle shell. "The execution will be public. I will show these people what happens to an American who dares put a hand on a Japanese."

He turned to the girl. "You sit over there." He pointed to a bench. . . .

That was the last Stokes saw of Jane Crewes until he had the Dam wired and planted with gelignite for the dynamiting.

He came to this decision concerning the dynamiting in the next five minutes. The engineers were packing their blueprints, mechanical drawing kits and copious notes and figures, preparatory to following Stokes to the power plant.

In those few moments, while Stokes, under guard, stood at the door, he heard the Diwan give a speech: "If I may have the honor to inform you, General, in order to show our cooperation—"

The general did not look up from his papers, but the old Bengali went on in his gracious, delightfully smooth voice, "Our Intelligence in East Bengal has advised His Highness of a British column—"

The general waved him aside. "We already know about that."

But the Diwan wanted to tell it, anyway. The extent of his "cooperation," Stokes suspected, was merely to tell the general something he already knew. "His Highness is worried about the matter. There are six tanks in the British column—"

"Six!" The general showed his bad teeth, grinning. "Did you count my tanks when they went through your town?"

"Somewhere around eighty, I believe."

"And you say the Rai is worried. What's the matter with him? Can't he add?"

The engineers took Stokes down to the Dam's power plant.

A squad of snipers in split-toed rubber shoes padded along with the engineers. More Japs guarded the spillway steps. A whole company was posted at the tunnel outlet works. A dozen sentries with tommy guns stood on the horseshoe platform of the power plant.

The colonel of the engineers said to Stokes, "You will show us the turbines first. The inlet from the reservoir and the outlet to the river—I want to know how much water. You will tell the exact answer. I will check from the gauges and from your other answers."

Stokes took them to the first generating unit. They watched every move he made.

It was while he was explaining the oil circuit breaker to one of the officers that the headman of coolies came down from the tank road. He came with one of the Jap engineers—a sloppy looking runt who smoked cigarettes continuously. Stokes judged by the shake of the runt's hands that the tobacco was mixed with hashish.

When the headman reported to Stokes, the colonel snapped, "What is that man saying to you?"

Stokes interpreted, "He says he turned off the water from this conduit." He pointed to the map. "It was a mistake. There is no danger there. I told him to stop that conduit leading to the villages in Sirdar-*ghat*." He spoke to his headman in Sirdarese: "Turn both off. And see that these Japs do not let the water out."

"The river is high, *sahib*. With all this water held in the tank—"

"I am fighting for my life, Parawajee Tom. The more water in the tank the more they will need me. By tonight they will be at my knees begging for help."

The headman left. They examined the steel penstocks next, the colonel and his staff taking copious notes. They inspected the conduits and the bungalow that housed the needle valves. They crossed the dry bed of the river below the Dam to the outlet works on the other side. From there they worked back to the Dam and the intake towers. When the tour of inspection ended where they had started at the timekeeper's office in the power plant—they found the headman waiting for them.

THE Jap colonel said to Stokes, "This headman has worked for you how long?"

"Six years."

"He is working for us now. I have a report that he is a good man for us. This morning he refused to let his coolies bear arms against us." He turned to the gray-bearded old Hindu. "You will be rewarded, old man."

The headman gave a slight salaam, his leathery old face drawn and proud and sad. While the staff was busy transferring notes to the blueprints and photographs, the headman turned to his master. "I shut off the conduit to the Sirdar-*ghat* villages, *sahib*. It will mean much water in the Dam."

"Did you see the lady-*sahib* up at headquarters?" Stokes asked.

"She is still there, *sahib*, sitting among dogs. That is to say, among the Japonay."

"You salaamed to these dogs here."

"It was as a *thag* salaams, *sahib*, who after salaaming to a man, puts him to death."

Stokes was able to mask his surprise. "Are you on my side, Parawajee Tom?"

"One of their soldiers has done injury to my daughter, *sahib*."

"Who was the Jap?" Stokes asked. "The Rai will see that he is taken before their general for punishment."

"I do not know which man it is, nor does she, for all monkeys are alike."

"Will you pray now to Vishnu the Preserver, Parawajee Tom?"

"No. I pray to Siva the Destroyer."

"Then sabotage the weirs so that the water cannot be turned out of the tank into the village wells. Turn all water into the tank so that the Mother River is dammed up. Take the electrician *wallah* with you. I will tell these Japs here that you are repairing the drum gates at the weirs."

"It is done, *sahib*."

This time the headman gave a real salaam as only a Hindu can!

(To be concluded in the next issue)

Sicilian Night

Joe was a friendly guy from populous Brooklyn—afraid of nothing but the empty desert night

PRIVATE JOE FLYNN of New York City was alone, and it scared him. The sky held more big and little stars than he knew existed, but they gave him just enough light to see his own feet and make out his armful of tommy-gun, and in a vague ghostly way they confirmed the black wasteland of rolling sand and upheaved rock. Joe Flynn shivered in the night air. And that was wrong too, for in Sicily you were supposed to be waving the sweat off your face with a fan.

Out here the whole war could have packed up and gone home. There wasn't any sign of Germans and Italians in front of him. And worse, there wasn't any sign of Americans in back of him. That was what twisted his nerves into knots. There wasn't even a sound. The Army had put him out on a pile of dirt in a night that was as black as a subway train with the fuses blown, and left him there alone. It was a real bag he was holding.

Suddenly there was a sound. A scurrying in the sand. He jerked the gun up, and his heart thumped wildly. Joe Flynn had never figured he was afraid of anything, up until now. He couldn't see anything. The scurrying sound came again, then stopped. It was like little feet running. It was a sound he'd heard the rats make as they scurried around the East River docks. Would a rat live in the desert? He wished he knew more about the desert. He wished that when he went to school he had paid more attention to geography. He wished he had somebody to talk to. He hunched his thick shoulders and shifted on his solid legs.

Silence closed in again. Not even another whisper from the sand. Joe waited with a drawn face. . . . Even if it was only a rat, why couldn't it stick around?

He cleared his throat and the sound of his own voice struck his ears startlingly.

What are you scared of? he thought. *Just bein' alone with yourself? Nuts to you!*

What he liked was a lot of guys around, maybe a loud-mouth looking for trouble, maybe a fight. Joe liked fights. He had even gone in the Golden Gloves, where he was stopped by a smooth blond lad named Willy. Joe liked the sort of fight where there was somebody in there with you.

He lifted a cold cramped hand from the gun and stretched the fingers. The Army was all right. The only beef he had was the standing in lines. A guy was always standing in lines in the Army. They lined up for physical examinations and shots in the arm, and shoes and uniforms, and meals and mail and payday, not counting the formations. But the Army was good because there were a lot of guys around all the time. And Joe loved company.

Joe Flynn looked at the coldly remote stars and shivered. The Army was all right until it stuck you out in the middle of the night alone, and told you to use your eyes when it was too dark to see and listen when there wasn't anything to hear.

The little sound scurried on the sand again, closer now. Joe stayed very quiet, because he didn't want to scare it away. . . . There was a stuffed rat in a Fulton Street window that the newspapers said had killed cats. But this sounded like a very little rat. The rat went away again, with the same swift withdrawing sound that ceased and left the night utterly still.

What do you care about a rat? Joe thought. *Do you think it's a pal? Nuts to you!*

But as he listened hard, a little chuffing noise began. The rat was sitting up and chewing on something, he decided. The chewing grew louder. Maybe it wasn't such a little rat, only light on its feet. He tried to think how much noise that stuffed rat would have made, chewing on something hard. Something hard, like a rock. The crunching became louder. Even the Fulton Street rat couldn't make all this noise!

Joe's heart started to jump around again. This sound wasn't a rat chewing! It was a man-made sound. It was feet marching in the sand! He got ready to say real tough, the way you would to a pal, "Who goes there?" But suddenly he thought of something and stopped the words. The feet were coming from the wrong direction!

Near him ran a little gully that was a blacker pocket in the darkness. The starlight outlined an object moving past, in the gulley, another and another. Those were helmets! Twelve he counted as they passed along. One low growl of words drifted across to him, alien but familiar. Pushcart talk. Joe Flynn grinned. It was good to hear some familiar lingo again, even if it was Italian!

Joe walked softly after them and joined the line. And now that they showed up on the level against the sky, the night was not so black. Clear hard shapes, they were a nice little target. He had his finger on the trigger. But it was nice to be with some guys again. . . .

He said in a tough rasping voice, the way you would to a pal: "All right, you mugs. Hands up—and keep movin'!"

By the sudden changing of shapes he knew they all had turned to face him.

"You deaf?" yelled Joe. "Hands up!"

AT the head of the line one man whirled aside, his arm flung out like a pitcher—like a pitcher with a lousy delivery. Joe knew the hand held a grenade. He triggered his gun. There was a rocketing burst, and the man staggered backwards, away from the group, and the grenade went off against his black shape. Now all the men were scattering.

"Where you think you're goin'?" Joe Flynn yelled. "Halt!"

He shot a burst to the left of them. He swung the tommy-gun with desperate speed and shot a burst to the right. Then something struck the ground near him with a little thud. Joe dropped flat. It went off very close, and he got up with ringing ears and blew the dirt out of his face. Then he saw a man with a glinting blade charging toward him. Joe had the reach on him, with the tommy-gun. The man went down with a funny cough and the bayonet took a dive into the sand at Joe's feet. Some of the mob put their hands in the air, but four of them dropped in a group and began to crawl. Joe ploughed the sand at their feet with bullets. One stayed down. The others drew together. Rifles thudded to the sand. All the hands rose against the sky.

"Okay," panted Joe. "You play ball with me and I'll play ball with you. Get in a line, see?"

"I speak the English," one of them said. "I tell them in Italiano."

"One of the quiz kids, huh?" demanded Joe. "Okay. Tell them this: Forward! Hrr-rrch!"

The Wops could fight, all right. There were always a lot of them in the Golden Gloves contests. These guys jostling and shoving ahead of him were all right guys. They were not like the Nazis. . . .

"Keep in line, you mugs! You hungry?" It was swell to have some guys to talk to again. "You like spaghetti? We give you spaghetti. You like minestrone? Spumoni? Red ink? You speak the English, no?"

Joe Flynn's mouth took a happy twist. This was a good fast-moving line . . . and he had his ticket in his hand. ● ●

BY
HOWARD BLOOMFIELD

JUNGLE

SERGEANT Dan Gillespie heard the sharp crack of a Springfield rifle and knew that someone had just taken a "sighting shot" on the Marine Corps rifle range at Halfmoon Bay. He shrugged, sighted carefully along his alidade and drew a straight line in the direction of the point where the trail he followed curved away to the right. He was in charge of a mapping detail of seven men who were sketching the jungle trails above Olongapo, in the foothills of the Zambales. Of course he did a stint himself, even if he *was* a sergeant. He was pretty proud of being a Marine Corps sergeant. It was an honor when a man was twenty years old, to get such a rating in such an outfit.

"One day you'll lead a platoon into battle," his colonel had said when he had given Gillespie his warrant. "Personally, I don't want to see a war out here. I got enough in the World War."

It must have been exciting, that war, Gillespie thought, as he closed the legs of the tripod which held his sketching board. He let the alidade fall to the end of the string by which it was fastened to the board, and paced off the length of the "traverse." A traverse was the distance a sketcher could see from one point to another along a road or trail. It was also all of one complete trail; but Gillespie didn't like to be too technical about this business of making maps. He hadn't known anything about making maps two months ago, or even one, but the colonel had said:

"You'll make a map of the area south of the Kalaklan. I've learned topography a dozen times and forgotten it just as many. You'll have to learn it yourself, then teach it to the men who'll be assigned to you. And you'll have to turn in a map men can risk their lives by."

That hadn't made sense at first. How could the lives of men depend on how well one made road sketches, position sketches, panoramic sketches—sketches which were all run together by pantograph on a "control map"—when the trails one covered were almost unknown to anyone except Tagalogs?

A drop of sweat fell from his chin down the open collar of his olive drab shirt. His hair was drenched with moisture. His Colt .45 automatic slapped against his right thigh with every step he took alone along the trail. To right and left over a vast area south of the Kalaklan, seven other enlisted men were sketching other parts of other trails—a great network of paths that,

when all the sketches were put together, would make a map that had to be accurate enough to be used as firing data, *if*. . . .

That "if" was something over which older men expressed grave concern, and Gillespie thought of with an accelerated heartbeat. There were twenty-five hundred marines and about an equal number of sailors at Olongapo. He had no idea how many there were at Manila, Cavite, Baguio and other places on the island of Luzon. A sizeable army was tucked away, certainly, among the thousands of islands of the Philippines. And somewhere on countless other trails, other sergeants and other privates and corporals, as well as lieutenants and captains, were making maps against the day when Hell itself might break loose over the islands.

A roaring sound came out of the south. Gillespie paused and looked up. Sweat from the dank, steaming jungles flushed his face as he took a breather to watch the amphibian roar over his head. A leatherneck officer was at the controls, he knew. Water from Subig Bay streamed off the pontoons. The flying boat had just taken off. Yet, afoot, it would have taken Gillespie an hour to get back to the spot whence this plane had just catapulted itself.

It was about time for him to check with his men. He put his noncom's whistle to his lips, blew three short, sharp blasts. There was a slight pause. Then, dimly, far through the jungles, came an answering two blasts. That would be private Drake. His whistle would be heard by Private Hogan, further on; Hogan's would be heard by private Freeman, still further on, and answered. When Drake blew twice again, it would be proof that all his men were alive and on the job.

The check-whistle—an idea that Gillespie himself had originated, to make it unnecessary for him to hunt up each one of his men—came back to him in about two minutes, proof that all seven men south of the Kalaklan were safe and busy.

Setting up his tripod and twisting the sketching board around until his compass showed him magnetic north, he prepared to lay off, on the sketch, the number of paces he had just counted along the latest traverse. So many paces on the ground were so many hair-breadths on the map. The routine of topography had become second nature to him and this was only his second day at it.

SOMETHING tightened underfoot. Instantly he remembered all he had been told when he had first arrived at Olongapo. He jumped, swung around, looked down, all in the same movement. A tiny head lashed out at his ankle. A venomous white-lined mouth was open. Beady red eyes glared at him. A rice snake, he decided. A chill coursed along his spine, like a flood of ice water. If he had been bitten by it he would be dead, according to the best authority on the subject, in about three minutes. He scarcely realized

Beady red eyes glared at him.

that his automatic was in his hand, and his finger tightened on the trigger. But he relaxed, locked the safety catch his thumb had automatically snapped down, and slowly returned the automatic to its holster. A shot would bring his men running, and a lot of time would be lost. Since the reptile had missed him, what was the use? It stayed there, coiled, tongue licking out, glaring at him.

He set the bunched feet of the tripod down in the middle of its coils and twisted. That settled that snake.

His heart hammered. His breath threatened to choke him. There were many other rice snakes in these jungles, back along the trail he had mapped, ahead along the trail he had yet to see. The ones behind him had missed him, though they'd have their

Assignment

Illustrated by HAMILTON GREENE

BY ARTHUR J. BURKS

Sergeant Dan Gillespie of the Marines, who had never seen a jungle before, learns that the greatest dangers are not always found on the firing line

chance when he ceased work and returned to camp. The snakes ahead could be dealt with in their turn.

Had he told his men, carefully enough, what to do in case of snake-bite? Better still, had he told them how to watch so carefully that they would avoid being bitten? Had he failed anywhere in his duty?

He closed his eyes, wiped his perspiring forehead. If he had such a feeling of responsibility with only seven men, how must the colonel feel, with so many more?

Faster and faster rolled the rifle fire at Halfmoon Bay. The chattering of machine-guns was in it now, and the stuttering of auto-rifles. He wished he were on the range himself. After all, it was all cleared off, and there were no places where snakes could hide.

He paused where the trail swerved sharply to the right, to plot into the sketch, "by inspection," a location for a machine-gun nest, against the possible time when an enemy might come up this trail as Gillespie was now coming, intent on exterminating the island's defenders. He could well understand why his sketch, and the map that would result from *all* the sketches, were important.

He sighted along his alidade again, in the new direction, alidade parallel with the sketching board that had been leveled off so that its right hand side was parallel with the needle of his compass, and drew the new line. He started pacing.

Something long and sinuous dropped from a big tree under which he was passing. There was a swish to it, a purposeful swing that took his heart into his throat again. For a brief moment he was paralyzed with fright.

But the rock python coils he had expected to curl around him did not materialize. The "snake" had been a liana, a vine. But it *could* have been a python. Let's see, what did one do if attacked by a python? His hand went to his belt, fingering the ordinary flencing knife that was like all the other flencing knives his men carried.

". . . You don't run from a python," he could still hear the droning voice of the instructor, an oldtimer in the Philippines, explaining so simply a contingency that was so horrible, "for he'll get you if he wants you. Matter of fact, he's probably got you the instant you are aware of his presence. The liana has become a snake, see? And you're done the first time he tightens his coils!"

What if that liana *had* been a python? He let his breath out, remembering.

"You get your arms close against your sides," the voice in his memory was going on, "for if he gets a coil around an arm away from your body, you're lost. With your hands inside his coils, and one of them gripping a knife, you start cutting your way out before his head gets busy."

The python's head, the instructor had said, was like a battering ram. The python liked to smash human beings in the face with it, with results that only a sledgehammer could equal.

And if that liana *had* been a python . . .

He shook himself, turned back to his work. His men, every last one of them, were going through exactly this same feeling, this same sense of fear. All through the jungles, on all the islands, men were moving, small as ants, swift as death, efficiently doing their jobs.

Gillespie looked at his wrist-watch. He'd been on the trail for four hours now. Almost time to eat the thick sandwich he carried inside his shirt in oiled paper. For four hours the thing he had dreaded had not happened; there had been no shooting by any of his men. None of them had been attacked by a python, or bitten by a poisonous reptile. They had all, if the whistle signals spoke truly, done their work right to the hilt.

But suppose enemy agents knew the signals? One of them could start in on Mike Drury, at the far flank of the patrol, and knife him from ambush. Then he could answer the whistle signals so that no alarm would be given. Then one by one, he could close in, taking a leatherneck at a time, until he got to the patrol leader. . . .

The whistle-signals were a mistake, then! He should have realized it before starting this job. He should have asked for another man, so that he would be free to move constantly back and forth in the pattern of trails, keeping an eye on each of his men at regular intervals.

Even the trails were beginning, this far from Olongapo, this deep in the jungles of danger, to take on sinister meaning. They had been started no man knew how many centuries ago, by Igorotes, and Tagalogs, who chased the Igorotes, and heaven alone knew who before that. These trails had all known bloodshed. One of the islands, Samar, was known as "The Dark and Bloody Ground."

He gulped and swallowed, remembering the tale of the "worst disaster that ever befell American arms." It had happened to ninety-six marines, in 1901, when they had marched, a punitive expedition, across the island of Samar. No survivor of the resulting horror had ever been entirely sane afterwards. Some of them wandered away into the jungle and were never seen again.

It could happen here and now!

Suppose one or more of his men wandered away, never to be heard of again? *He*, at twenty, was responsible for these men. . . . He blew his whistle, waited three minutes for the answer. The last minute was the longest he had ever endured! And when the check-whistle sounded, he was trembling with tension.

Maybe he should have been a corporal longer! Maybe he wasn't fit as yet to be a sergeant!

His jaw set. It was a good jaw, hard, firm. His eyes were gray under his campaign hat. He was just under six feet tall, a perfect leatherneck specimen. Every one of his men was as nearly perfect.

Each one looks as if he isn't afraid of anything, Gillespie thought. *But each one thinks I look unconcerned. I wonder if ALL of us are as scared as I've been several times today!*

IT was a lonely business, this sketching. One had to have eyes in the back of one's head. He thought of the Kalaklan, the river that flowed out of the mysterious jungles and into Subig Bay just south of Olongapo. He'd walked along the road that paralleled the Kalaklan, at night, when he had had to feel his way with his feet, so intense was the darkness. And he had been scared half out of his wits by gleaming eyes in the water. Alligators he had thought they were, following him, stalking, waiting. But when he started on, a snort came from the "alligators" and then he had realized that he had seen the reflection of the moon from the eyes of *carabao,* standing back-deep in the Kalaklan.

He told it as a joke on himself, to another sergeant, an oldtimer—who didn't smile at all, but said:

"Alligators wouldn't have been as dangerous. *Carabao* hate everybody but Filipinos. They always try to run a white man out of the country. And if they catch him . . ." He didn't have to finish. Every marine knew about the *carabao.*

The whole island seemed to be one vast brooding mystery, one endless danger. Snakes so small one could scarcely see them. Snakes so big men were helpless in their grasp. . . .

A scream ripped through the woods suddenly. Then Private Drake called his name! He left his sketching-board standing, started straight through the almost impenetrable jungle in the direction of the voice. Snakes could strike at him now and he wouldn't even be able to see them. He had to take a chance. Drake was in deadly danger, or he wouldn't have screamed.

An automatic spoke sharply, as if to accent the urgency of the plea.

Somehow he fought his way through the jungles between the two trails.

Private Drake was standing with his back against a tree. His pants were rolled up above his knees, and his lower limbs were a mass of blood! His face was as white as cotton. His whole body shook as with the ague.

"What is it, Sergeant?" said Drake, scarcely above a whisper. "I don't feel anything, but that blood is *mine!*"

Gillespie stared at Drake for a moment, noting that the private had taken off his leggins and fastened them to his sketching board. Gillespie had expected to find Drake in the coils of a python, at the very least.

"Drake!" he snapped. "Didn't I tell you not to take off your leggins? Don't you remember why?"

Then, suddenly, he realized that he hadn't told Drake, or anyone else about the leeches. The leeches of the loam under the Zambales trees had simply fastened themselves on Drake's flesh. They were harmless, if you pulled them off before they sucked too much blood. They sucked blood through the skin without breaking it, or without seeming to. But they left a man bloody.

"Brush them off as best you can," he told Drake. "Put on your leggins and finish your work. You haven't lost enough blood to yell about."

Gillespie noticed that none of his other men had come through to Drake. That was orders, too. None of them would come unless he signaled.

He blew a reassuring blast on his whistle. It meant to go on with their work. But he knew very well that the men had heard the scream and the barking of the Colts. In the eye of his mind Gillespie could see the other men, standing quietly, frozen into statues, waiting to find out what had happened. Each of them would say to himself: *If something has happened to the sergeant, what happens to us? What do we do?*

He knew they'd think that, even though every last one of them was quite capable, in an emergency, of taking care of himself. But they held him responsible, would look to him, and if they thought he was not with them any longer, they would be bewildered for a few minutes.

Long enough for leeches to get to each of them, even with their tight leggins on, he told himself. *Long enough for rice snakes to crawl close, and strike when they move. Long enough for a python to swing into action. Long enough for the silence of the jungles to drive them mad. Long enough for each man to realize just how much alone, how much on his own, he really is!*

Answering whistles sounded. Drake, looking sheepish but still white of face, resumed work. Gillespie noticed that his legs shook uncontrollably. Gillespie turned and faced the silent, dark terror of the return through the strip of jungle where death lurked in many places. He hesitated. Then he realized that Drake was aware of the jungle, aware of Gillespie and his hesitation. If he, the *sergeant,* hesitated to go *back* into the jungles, it *must* be dangerous; that's how Drake would look at it. No matter how he felt, he must not hesitate. He must set a good example to his men.

He turned, said casually to Drake, "We'll knock off in two more hours and start back. I'll signal."

Drake nodded. Gillespie swung into the jungles again.

He got back to his tripod. Across the trail where it stood, in the dust, was the trace of a reptile of some sort. He gritted his teeth. One had to make oneself endure these things. Hundreds of marines, in the forty years or so since marines had been stationed in the Philippines, had found themselves out in the open like this at night, and had, somehow, got through it. A man had to learn.

Moreover, he had to do good work. All this time he had to be making sketches, and supervising the sketches made by others, that were as accurate as if they had been engineers using transits. *More* accurate, even, for they worked to a different purpose. You couldn't put in "conventional signs" with transits—signs that indicated "woods," "spring," "trail visible from airplane," "trail invisible from airplane," and the like. Gillespie and his men were making a *military* map. Inaccuracies on these maps would be paid for in lives.

The firing at Halfmoon Bay Rifle Range sounded far off now. He had to strain to hear it at all. That meant that a lot more danger lay between Gillespie and his men and the post.

The flying boat swept back, four or five thousand feet up, heading toward the spot whence it had taken off. It looked so safe up there. He wished he were in it!

He made an end of one sketch, rolled it up, thrust it into his sketching case. That sketch represented two miles of trail. Nobody knew how much there was left to do. It might take weeks. Each day the seven traveled farther from the post.

A WEEK from now they would be camping out at night. . . .

He shuddered to think of it.

When the time comes, though, he told himself, *it will seem a commonplace. I suppose a man gets used to it. Maybe, even, a man gets used to being a sergeant!*

The two hours were up, finally. He blew the "recall" signal, shouldered his tripod, turned back. He had to hurry, as did his men, for it would be dark when they got back to Olongapo even if they traveled at their very best speed. But if a man traveled too fast and got careless, he might walk to his death. Plenty of marines, in forty years, had done it. One had only to make such *little* mistakes!

The sun was dropping into Manila, far to the west, when Dan Gillespie came out onto the main trail into Olongapo, where it merged—between the graveyard on the side of the hill and the ebon Kalaklan—all its branches into one. He stopped, waited a minute or two. He seemed to be the first one back.

Drake appeared, trying to act as if he had forgotten the leeches. But his trouser legs were pinkish to his knees, where the blood had come through.

One by one the others came, trying to look nonchalant. All seven assembled.

"Let's march in singing!" suggested Drake.

That's how they went into the post. At the gate the Sergeant of the Guard said to Gillespie: "How'd it go, up there in the hills, Dan?"

Gillespie let out his breath, relieved to be safely home, refusing to think of tomorrow on those trails, stretching farther and farther away, and all the tomorrows after that, until his part of the map was finished. It was a dreadful thing to think about; but it was part of the business of waiting and preparing for war. He licked his dry lips.

"Get's a little tiresome, that's all, climbing so many hills," said Gillespie. "Too busy making sketches to be bothered about snakes and things. I'll bet we're less than one percent inaccurate! We really make *maps!*"

The Sergeant of the Guard, another oldtimer, knew the signs, and knew the jungles, but one would never have guessed it by the expression on his face.

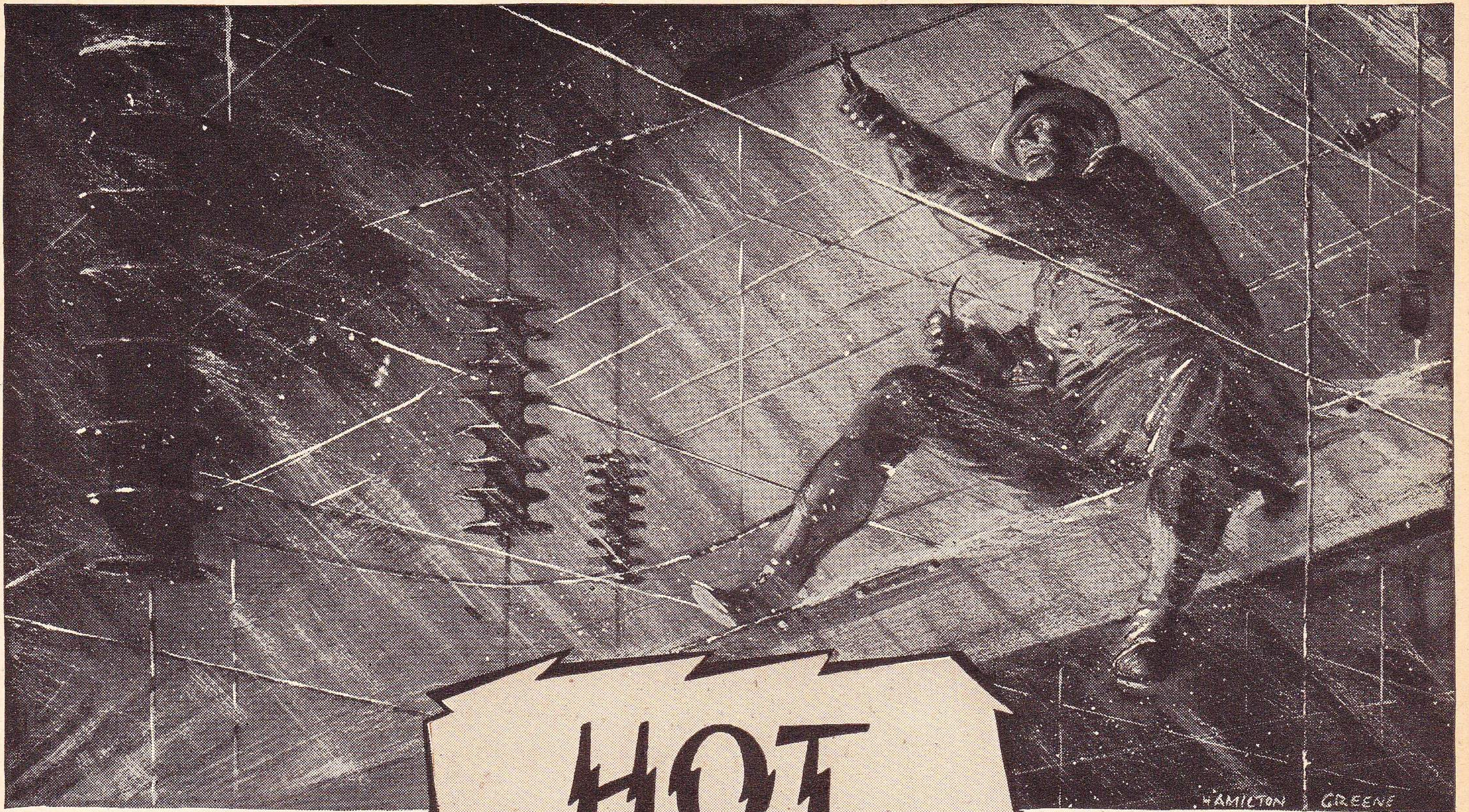
"Well, that's Marines for you. They thrive on stuff that *kills* ordinary men." ● ●

Next Month:

GLORY ROAD

A Novel of the War at Sea

by ROBERT CARSE



HOT WIRES

BY BILL GULICK

One mistake in a spot like this and you didn't get a chance to make another.

Illustrated by HAMILTON GREENE

HANDS thrust deep into the pockets of his mackinaw, Les Clerk stood with his back to the cold wind, staring up at the two linemen working on the pole above him. Discontent wrinkled his forehead into a frown of distaste.

Maintenance. A tedious, never-ending task. Replacing a broken insulator here, changing a blown transformer fuse there, splicing a break in a power line someplace else. That was his job. To keep the wires hot for the home folks. That, while the other side of the world was aflame.

He moved around to the lee side of the big high-line truck and lit a cigarette. Mike Judson, straw-boss for the crew, was leaning against the metal side of the truck, phlegmatically puffing on a stubby pipe. He removed it from his mouth and grunted, "Cold, ain't it?"

Les nodded absently. Judson was a square-built, amiable man, competent in a steady, unimaginative sort of way. Exactly the type of man, Les thought, that would make an excellent maintenance foreman. He wondered if Judson knew how glad he'd be to turn the crew over to him if he could.

Judson put the pipe in his pocket. "The missus told me to ask you and Christine over for supper tomorrow night," he said. "Can you come?"

Les frowned. Once a month Mike Judson and his wife invited them over for the evening meal. The food was invariably well cooked and plentiful, the small, neatly kept house cheerful and pleasant. It was as if Mike Judson and his wife were trying in their simple, good hearted way to convince him and Christine Thomas by example that marriage, a home and children were the ultimate values in life. He used to enjoy those evenings. So had Christine. But lately . . . He tossed his cigarette to the ground and stepped on it.

"Thanks, Mike," he said. "I'll ask Chris and let you know this evening. Be all right?"

"Sure. That'll be fine."

Les looked at his watch and saw that it was almost quitting time. "Keep an eye on the boys," he told Judson. "I'm going into the storeroom."

"Okay. We'll be finished in half an hour."

Walking downstreet to where the pickup truck was parked, Les got in and kicked the starter. Dissatisfaction rode with him all the way to the office. It was high time he made the break. He'd tried before, of course, but only half-heartedly. This time he'd make it stick. This time he'd pin O'Brien down and make him see it his way.

The maintenance superintendent, Sam O'Brien, looked up from his desk as the foreman entered the office. He smiled and gestured at a chair. "Sit down, Les."

Frowning, Les stood for a moment by the window silently staring out at a crew of men unloading poles from a flat car across the way. Suddenly he turned and said, "Sam, I want to quit."

O'Brien ran an absent hand through his graying hair. "Just like that, eh? Any particular reason?"

"You know the reason."

It was the sort of night when ice-laden wires start falling and maintenance men are called from warm homes to their tough and dangerous jobs aloft

"The Army turned you down once. Because of the leg the pole fell on, wasn't it?"

"Sure," Les said impatiently, "I got a trick knee. But the Army's not as particular now as it was two years ago. They'll snap me up."

"And what would the company do for a maintenance foreman?"

"You've got a dozen men who could take my place."

"Name one."

"What's the matter with Mike Judson?"

O'Brien shook his head. "Nothing—as long as he's got somebody to fall back on. You don't pick up a good line foreman every day. It's a job that takes judgment and initiative and imagination. Some men have those qualities, others don't."

Les made an impatient gesture with his hands. They'd been over all that ground before. With a trace of desperation, he said, "Sam, I'm young, single and sound enough of limb. I belong in this scrap. You talked me into asking for occupational deferment. You said I belonged here. But I—"

"I still say it," O'Brien interrupted.

"But you're dead wrong. Let me quit and get into the fight where I'll do some good."

O'Brien frowned and leaned forward. "I'll make you a proposition," he offered. "Let things ride as they are for a week. Keep your eyes and your mind open. Then, if you still want to go, I'll release you from your obligation here."

Les nodded. "I guess that's fair enough."

Leaving the office, he felt like a man who could breathe freely again after long months of being stifled. At last it was settled. A week. He and Chris would have that together, and it would be time enough to make them both forget the petty quarrels of the past months.

He'd tell her tonight. He wondered how she would take it.

HE picked her up at the office when she got off at five. As he pulled the car away from the curb, she leaned back and sighed. "It's nice to have a boy friend with a 'B' card. How I hate those crowded buses!"

"Have a busy day?" he inquired casually.

"Not particularly. You?"

He shook his head. All his days were monotonously the same. But it would be different soon. A week. . . . He pulled up in front of her apartment and she started to get out. He put a hand on her arm and said, "Will I see you tonight?"

"Afraid not."

"Got a date?"

She made a face at him. "You know better than that. This is the night for my first aid class. Remember?"

Until now, he had forgotten it was Tuesday. He took his hand off her arm and looked down at the steering wheel, wondering what earthly good a first aid course would do a secretary in an accounting firm.

"Mike Judson and his wife want us to come over for dinner tomorrow night," he said.

"Gosh, I'm sorry. But there's a USO dance and I promised—"

"To dance with lonesome soldiers."

Her eyes snapped. "Why not? They're entitled to some fun once in a while. They're nice boys."

"And me, I'm a nice boy, too—but I'm at home. Does that make a difference?"

She flushed. "Please, Les, let's not quarrel about it again. If you were in the Army . . ." She stopped.

His face grew wooden. "Go on," he said stiffly.

She bit her lip and looked away for a moment. When she looked at him again, she spoke carefully, earnestly. "Les, this war is bigger than either one of us. It's so big that it makes what any one person does look small and insignificant. Yet we've got to keep doing those small things. Don't you see?"

"The only thing I see," he said stubbornly, "is that you're trying to win the war all by yourself. USO dances, first aid courses, benefits—they're penny-ante stuff. Why don't you leave them to women with nothing else to do?"

"For the simple reason that I've got to do something to make me feel I'm carrying my share. To me, those things you call 'penny-ante' are important."

Les laughed shortly. "Glad you think so. The way you reason, I suppose you'd call my job important, too?"

"Certainly."

He looked at her closely for a moment. He sensed vaguely that the cause of all their misunderstandings was rooted in his own dissatisfaction with himself and the job he was doing. A man didn't feel right sitting at home doing the job he had always done while others were sacrificing home and job and even life itself. He wished he knew how to explain the feeling to her.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I had no business popping off like that. See you tomorrow?"

She smiled and got out of the car. "Five o'clock," she said.

He started the motor and drove slowly down the street through the darkening winter evening. He wondered what had kept him from telling Chris about this thing he'd made up his mind to do. "Keep your eyes and your mind open," O'Brien had said. *For what?* he thought.

Clouds, dark and heavy, obliterated the stars as he drove home. The street lights were ringed by misty halos. A good night to sit by the fire with a magazine, he thought. And, if this mist turned to sleet, a good night for ice-laden wires to start falling.

He was sitting in front of the fire, later, reading, when the phone rang. It was straight up eight o'clock. "Yeah?" he said into the mouthpiece.

"Nasty night to call you out," came O'Brien's heavy voice, "but there's a break in the north Riverside line."

"Bad?"

"Two spans of wire down, the patrolman said. Three miles north of the refinery."

"How's the east Riverside line?"

"Holding. But we've got to get the north line up as soon as we can. Can't take a chance on an outage at the refinery. We'll call your crew for you."

"I'll be there in fifteen minutes," Les said, and hung up.

OUTSIDE, he found the weather had taken a turn for the worse. A fine mist fell steadily, freezing as it struck the windshield.

Les was familiar with the network of high-tension lines serving the small town of Riverside. Most of the population of the town was employed at the refinery which was operating twenty-four hours a day now, turning out high octane content gasoline. Because the load was so vital, two power lines fed the town. One led in from the north and another from the east, either capable of carying the refinery. But with ice on the wires, doubling the weight each pole had to support, you couldn't depend on just a single line. Safer to have them both up and hot.

The crew had the line-truck and the pickup loaded when he reached the storeroom. Quickly he checked them over: spare crossarms, wire, insulators, flares. Judson hadn't overlooked a thing. A good man, Judson.

"Take the truck and drive to the break," Les told him. "Keep the men on the ground till I give you line clearance."

The big truck rumbled out of the yard into the night. Les checked with the dispatcher to make sure the line was dead, signed the clearance cards, then drove south out of town in the pickup.

Judson had the flares set out and his men ready by the time Les reached the break. It wasn't as bad as he had feared. A good deal of wire was down and a few crossarms splintered, but the poles stood in good shape.

Les got out of the pickup and Judson came up, shouting to make himself heard above the wind. "All clear?" he asked.

"Open at both ends," Les said. "Get your men up in the air."

Judson gave instructions to the crew. Les stood silently by, offering no advice, but critically watching the way the straw-boss handled the crew. Judson would have it on his own soon, and now was a good time to see how he took the responsibility.

The work proceeded without a hitch. Les kept pacing up and down the road to keep the frost-bite out of his feet. Several times he was tempted to suggest shortcuts to Judson, who had a tendency to do everything the slow, sure way. But he kept his silence. There were some things a foreman had to learn by experience.

Big Pete jockeyed the truck around so that its winch could suck up the slack in the wire. The truck, parked broadside in the road, blocked it completely. Les took a red lantern and

walked a hundred yards north to flag down any approaching cars.

He had just set the lantern down when he saw the white beam of a car's headlights dancing against the sky just over the hill. The car was coming fast, very fast. He picked up the lantern and waved it from side to side.

The car topped the hill and slithered to a stop a few feet away. A man stuck his head out the window and said sharply, "What's the trouble?"

Les told him.

"Get that truck out of the way," the sharp-voiced man snapped. "I've got to get to Riverside. I'm a doctor."

"Rush call?"

"Hell, man, there's been an explosion at the refinery. Half the town is afire."

Les wheeled and stared to the south. The lights of the town were hidden below the crest of a distant hill but a huge orange glow, fading, then brightening, illuminated a wide half circle of sky. He stepped on the running board and said, "Gun it. I'll move the truck."

When he was a few yards away from the line-truck, he stepped off the running board and shouted, "Pete, pull into the ditch!"

Motor roaring, the truck lumbered out of the road like an awkward beast. "Thanks," the doctor called, and his car moved swiftly away.

For a moment, Les stared at the southern horizon. This was no small localized blaze. The entire sky in the direction of Riverside seeemd aflame. His crew would be needed in town. No doubt distribution circuits were down, the live wires making a hazard for the fire-fighters.

The crew had stopped work and gathered around the truck. Les turned to them and snapped, "Pick up your tools and hop in the truck. We're going to Riverside."

"How about this break?" Judson asked.

"Forget it. We're needed worse in town."

The refinery was spread over a square of ground half a mile on a side and contained a veritable maze of circuits whose voltages ranged from twenty-three hundred to thirteen thousand. Hand operated switches controlled each circuit. The town itself was fed by a single thirteen thousand volt trunk line, also controlled by a hand operated switch. It was vital, Les knew, that that line be kept in service tonight.

A wall of flame struck his eyes as he topped the hill above Riverside. He saw that only the fact that the wind from the north saved the entire town from being consumed. The streets were crowded with panic stricken residents. An occasional ambulance screamed by. The roar of gasoline-fed flames nearby shook the pavement.

He parked the pickup on a side street north of the refinery. He got out, puffing impatiently on a cigarette while he waited for the crew to arrive. When the truck at last rumbled up, he tossed the cigarette away and ordered, "Check every circuit. If you find any wire down, cut it clear. Open the line switches on all circuits that aren't needed. Soon as I check on how bad the fire is, I'll meet you at the main sub-station."

The blaze appeared to be most intense at the center of the refinery grounds so it was toward that spot that he walked. The police had roped off the area, he found, and he did not attempt to pass through the line. He could see all he needed to see from where he stood.

A burly highway patrolman was standing nearby and Les spoke to him. "Many hurt?"

"Plenty. They're carrying them out as fast as they can reach 'em. A few are still trapped in the buildings."

SHIVERING involuntarily, Les turned away and started back to the pickup. The street was alive with hurrying men and women. A relief unit had arrived from Camp George and a few uniforms were in evidence. Several of the larger buildings had been turned into temporary hospitals into which injured refinery workers were being carried by volunteers.

Suddenly, ahead of him, Les was startled to see Christine. She was carrying an armload of blankets, which she had evidently taken from a car parked at the curb, up the steps of a two-storied frame rooming house. Breaking into a run, Les called to her. She halted, turning.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded as he came up to the porch.

Her eyes were wide with fright or shock, Les wasn't sure which. "It's terrible," she said in a voice that didn't sound like hers. "There aren't enough doctors or nurses. The Red Cross asked us to help, so we came."

The door opened and he got a glimpse of a long row of injured men lying on the floor inside the room. Christine started inside and some of the blankets fell from her arms. He picked them up.

"I'll give you a hand," he said.

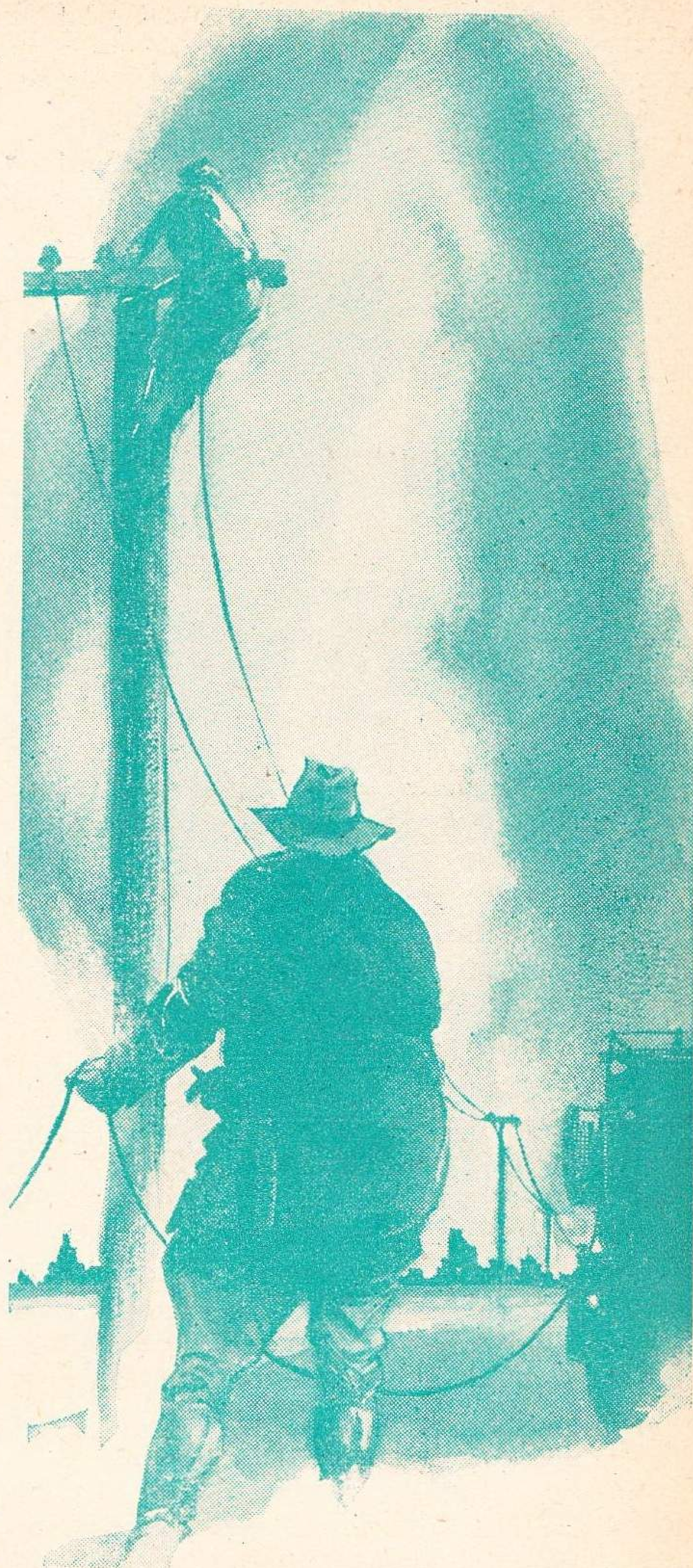
The acrid smell of antiseptics struck his nostrils as he entered the room. The bright glare of the electric bulbs in the ceiling chandelier forced him to squint for a moment to get accustomed to the light. Christine said, "Put the blankets down here."

He was leaning over when a sudden violent blast shook the floor under him. Awkwardly he struggled for balance, then pitched face forward to the floor. The bulbs in the chandelier flickered, went out.

Blinded by the sudden darkness, he stumbled to his feet. A stunned silence hung over the room. Somewhere a man in pain gave a terrified, child-like whimper. Somebody shouted hoarsely, "The lights! What's wrong with the lights?"

A chill of fear clutched his throat. "Chris!" he called. "Where are you? Are you all right?"

Suddenly he touched a groping hand in the darkness, felt her clinging to him. She was trembling, "Yes, yes!" she whispered after a moment. "I'm all right. What happened?"



Lambert sent the replacements up on the line, and Les fastened them in place.

"Explosion," he muttered. "Fire must have reached a storage tank."

"What's the matter with the lights?"

"Don't know. I'll see what I can do."

His answer had been instinctive, like words spoken by a sleep-walker. Now he turned and groped his way out of the house to the street. Pausing there, he shook his head to clear it. The bitter wind cut into his face with tiny knife-like fingers, bringing full awareness abruptly back. To the east, a new blaze filled the horizon. He suddenly felt a shiver of premonition. That explosion must have been close to the sub-station. That's why the lights had failed. And Judson and the crew were there, perhaps only a few yards away from the tank which had exploded.

He broke into a run, reached the pickup, climbed in and kicked the starter viciously. The ice on the streets made the car slide sickeningly as he wheeled it around the abrupt turns.

A block away from the sub-station, he almost collided with the line-truck. It was parked at the side of the street alongside what was left of a section of the trunk line which served the town. Men were milling around in the light of half a dozen flares. A searchlight,

pointed upwards, outlined a dangling crossarm on a splintered pole top.

Getting out of the pickup, he shouted, "Judson—everybody all right?"

The straw-boss turned and nodded. "Yeah. We missed gettin' it by seconds."

"Thank God for that! How about the line—is she bad?"

"Ain't had time to check it all yet. Two spans of wire down here. One pole splintered."

"How about the sub-station?"

"Don't think it's hurt. The fuses blew in a hurry."

"We better check it and make sure. If a transformer is burned up, there'll be hell to pay. You and Lambert come with me. Rest of you men start cleaning this mess up. We're going to have the lights back on inside an hour."

REACHING the sub-station, Les paused and looked around. The steel framework of the station was outlined clearly in the intense white light from the blazing storage tank nearby. Above, the maze of wires and switches, coated thickly with ice, glittered like silver.

Staring upward, he let his eyes run over the leads dropping down to the high-voltage side of the big transformers. They were intact. The transformers themselves were undamaged. He checked the fuses on the town circuit and saw that they had blown as Judson had informed him. Nodding in satisfaction, he started to turn away. Suddenly his eyes caught something that made him freeze.

On the thirteen thousand volt circuit, not far from the transformers, a string of suspension insulators had shattered. The bare wire was dangling there now, dangerously close to a steel "I"-beam.

Seizing Judson's shoulder, he pointed up and shouted, "If that wire falls, the whole station will burn up!"

Judson stiffened, then nodded silently. Les' mind raced. If what was left of those insulators should give way, the energized wire would ground across the "I"-beam. Only a miracle would save the transformers then. And if they blew, the station would remain out of service indefinitely. He thought of the injured men back there at the rooming house and of the panic which the sudden darkness had brought. Doctors could not work without light.

"We've got to change out those insulators," he said grimly.

"Better kill the station first," Judson warned. "She's hotter than hell up there."

Les nodded and crossed the yard to the switch stand beneath the incoming sixty-six thousand volt line. Ice was crusted thick on the padlock. Borrowing a wrench from Lambert, he chipped the ice off and removed the lock from its bracket. Then seizing the long wooden switch handle, he threw his weight sharply against it.

The switch did not give. Again he tried. It remained stuck solidly. Looking up, he saw the long, dangling icicles depended from the copper blades of the big switch twenty feet above. He turned to Lambert.

"Run up and see if you can clear her."

Hooking a hand-line into his tool belt, Lambert moved carefully up the slippery steel. When he was set, he called for a hot-stick and Judson tied it onto the line and ran it up. For several moments the lineman pounded on the switch, sending down showers of ice. At last he shouted, "Try her now!"

Les swung his weight onto the handle, pushed hard. It did not budge. He stepped back wearily and signalled Lambert to come down. No use wasting precious time on the switch. She was jammed tight. He looked again at the dangling wire and the shattered insulators which supported it. They might give way any minute, yet he knew that they could not be replaced until the station had been killed.

"We could phone the dispatcher," Judson suggested, "and have him kill the line from the other end."

Les shook his head. "I thought of that, but it's no good. Every phone line in the county will be down." He stared at the dangling wire. There was but one thing to do. He took a deep, quiet breath and said, "We'll have to fix her without killing the station."

Judson stared at him in disbelief. Lambert looked apprehensively at the wires above and shifted his feet uncomfortably. Les knew what they were thinking. You didn't do jobs like this one with the wires hot. If it were daylight and the steel were dry, you might possibly risk it. But at night with every beam coated with a couple of inches of ice and a bitter, sleet-laden wind driving in—well, it just wasn't done.

"You're crazy!" Judson exclaimed. "It'd be murder to send a lineman up there."

"I'm not sending anybody up," Les said quietly, and turned to Lambert. "Take off your belt. I want to borrow it."

The lineman looked at him steadily for a long, silent moment. Slowly, then, he took off the belt and handed it over. Les buckled it on. Judson started to speak but Les cut him off coldly.

"Get back to your men and patch up that break. Lambert, go to the truck and get me a string of insulators. Shake it up. I'll be ready for them in a few minutes."

"Somebody ought to stay here," Judson protested, "just in case . . ."

Les shook his head in irritation. "Hurry up! We haven't got all night."

Lambert and Judson walked away reluctantly, leaving him alone in the station yard. He hooked a hand-line into his belt and started up. As he moved over the ice-covered steel, he felt a curious, detached coldness. Climbing by instinct, he moved slowly up through the criss-crossing maze of wires.

Each wire was sudden death, he knew. If your foot slipped, if an outflung elbow brushed against the wrong thing, you'd be dead before you knew what hit you.

HE was opposite the dangling wire now. Carefully he passed his safety around an "I"-beam and fastened it. He waited till Lambert returned, then called for the tools he needed. He worked slowly. That was the only way you could do "hot" work. One mistake in a spot like this and you didn't get a chance to make another.

His gloves made his hands clumsy so he pulled them off with his teeth and let them fall to the ground. Snubbing the wire up so that it would not sag, he removed the string of shattered insulators. Lambert sent the replacements up on the line and Les fastened them in place.

The clamp was stubborn. He cursed it quietly, and wished that he had three hands. At last the pin went home. He leaned back, then, and let out a long, relieved sigh. His fingers were stiff with cold, but his forehead was beaded with sweat.

"How does she look?" he called to Lambert.

The lineman was staring up, his face intent. "Looks good," he said; then added hoarsely, "For God's sake come down while you still can!"

Les grinned and unfastened his safety. "I'm on my way."

It was half an hour later when Judson gave him the all-clear signal on the line. He replaced the fuses in the town circuit, then removed the lock from the open switch. With his hand on the switch handle, he paused for a moment, staring up. Above, a glittering white network of ice covered wires gleamed against the dull red of the sky. His eyes moved to the spot where a string of shining porcelain insulators supported a bit of copper wire, paused there. He felt a brief glow of satisfaction. *A good job*, he thought, *and a job that counted.*

Grimly, he wondered if the circuit would hold. Turning his eyes away from a possible flash-over, he swung the switch handle around in a sharp, brisk motion. He felt the blades go home cleanly, heard them find their clips with a metallic twang.

He turned, then, and gazed at the town. Light gleamed in bright squares from every window. It was, he thought, as if life had returned to something that had died. He smiled wearily, slipped the lock into the switch bracket and snapped it shut.

"All right, boys," he said, "you can go home now."

The fire was under control by dawn. Les picked up Christine at the rooming house. As he started the car, he turned his head and looked at her. Her eyes were closed; lines of fatigue and strain showed in her forehead.

He had intended explaining something to her. Instead, he said softly, "Tired?"

Without opening her eyes, she moved closer to him. "I'm so tired," she murmured, "I could go to sleep on your shoulder. Please take me home."

He smiled and put an arm around her and said quietly, "Sure. That's where we're going. Home." ● ●

HELL Afloat

The *Calistralia*, a floating miniature of the Pacific war, drifts closer to the Antarctic ice pack

The engine room was a hell of noise and violence, of screaming men and exploding guns, with Jordan and Goggin firing steadily, calmly.

BY
EUSTACE L. ADAMS

Illustrated by HAMILTON GREENE

The Story So Far:

LIEUTENANT Peter F. Jordan, of the U. S. Army Air Forces, bound home on sick-leave from the South Pacific, was knocked unconscious when a torpedo from a Jap submarine hit the former luxury liner, *Calistralia,* somewhere off the usual ship lanes on the way to San Francisco. He recovered consciousness to find himself, apparently, the sole survivor aboard the badly listing liner; all the lifeboats were gone and the decks were strewn with dead crew members.

While searching for water, Jordan found a girl trapped in a cabin. He rescued Mickey Lane, a night club singer on her way home from a job in Australia, and with the aid of the girl's flashlight they made their way through the dark ship to the galley where they found a huge stock of food that would last them, Jordan assured her, for years. However, there was no heat or light, due to the dynamos being out of order, and Jordan knew that they could not survive long in the cold waters of the Antarctic Ocean toward which the derelict ship was slowly drifting.

They slept that night in adjoining cabins. Jordan awakened abruptly in the night to find the glare of electric lights in his eyes. Knowing that only

human hands could have repaired the damaged dynamos, he and Mickey made their way below to investigate.

In the engine room they found two dungaree-clad oilers—Stolp and Goggin—who were bitterly angry because the officers had left them trapped in the ship's tool room. Sight of Pete Jordan's officer uniform did not improve their tempers, and they turned their venom on him. They refused to agree to his suggestion that they all stand watches, and they defiantly informed him that they meant to spend their time drinking and eating and enjoying the company of Mickey Lane.

During the fight that followed, after Stolp and Goggin were drunk on whiskey from the first-class bar, Pete was knocked out and Mickey saved him by turning his gun on the two oilers. As a result of the shock, Jordan came down with a malaria attack. Mickey nursed him day and night, at the same time holding off the two drunken seamen with Pete's revolver. When Pete recovered consciousness, they managed to get more ammunition and moved to a more strategic cabin. Then began a game of hide-and-seek in which their daily trips below for food became a deadly cat and mouse game with Stolp and Goggin.

Day after day Mickey and Pete became more and more conscious of a love that was growing up between them, and life looked sweeter even as it appeared to shorten. One day Mickey noticed that she now had to wear throughout the day the sweater that she had at first needed only at night. Then, as a showdown with Stolp and Goggin seemed imminent, a Jap sub drew alongside the derelict ship.

This forced Goggin and Stolp to join forces with Jordan and Mickey. With Goggin and Stolp holding off a contingent of the Japs, Jordan made a desperate try at dropping a case of sixty per cent dynamite over the rail, onto the submarine floating alongside them below.

Now Go On With The Story:

IT SEEMED to take that wooden box forever to fall. The Japs on the deck of the submarine did not move, except for their heads, which moved in unison, as if motivated by some invisible cam shaft, as they watched this incredible thing arc down through the air. Even the two officers on the conning tower, at which the box was aimed, moved only imperceptibly. The one who had been shooting up at Jordan dropped his arm. Both swayed away from the descending box. That was all they had time to do as the missile landed.

Jordan's heart skipped a beat when it looked as if the box was going to miss the submarine's open hatch. In that moment he became aware that Mickey had come up to the rail, was standing there beside him. He lashed out with his right arm, swept her backward with a force which hurled her halfway across the deck.

The box almost missed, but not quite. One corner hit the after rim of the hatch, but the deflection was downward. There was a splash of red and yellow flame inside the vitals of that Jap submarine. Instinctively Jordan leaned away from the volcano of flame that belched upward. He fell inboard, away from the rail, with all his muscles loose. He felt the heat of that blast as it went by him and was dimly conscious of a roar that made his eardrums sing.

There was screaming from the submarine. Then another explosion which made the first seem, in retrospect, like the popping of a firecracker. The *Calistralia* shuddered as if a giant foot had kicked her amidships.

The sub's torpedoes! Jordan thought. The dynamite blast was setting them off.

For a moment he couldn't get up, so far over did the great liner heel. A huge puff of flame and smoke rose from the other side of the rail amidships, then ended as suddenly as if it had been sliced off at its base with a knife.

For a moment or two there was complete silence except for a gushing, bubbling noise coming up from the sea. Then Jordan pushed himself to his feet. Mickey was on her knees. Just beyond her was a dead Japanese sailor, blood gushing out of a hole in his throat. Stolp and Goggin were picking themselves up, both looking dazed. And just inside the doorway which led in to the deluxe quarters, a Jap sailor was clambering to his feet. Jordan grabbed his gun out of its armpit holster, took careful aim and shot the Jap between his startled eyes. All this in the space of a score of heartbeats, while the *Calistralia* was still rolling wildly.

Jordan staggered to the rail, looked overside. The Jap boat was still there, but it was a submarine no longer. The deck had been wiped clear of all sailors. There was no bow, just a lot of plates spreading outward, and the water was being sucked into the hull as into the intake of a conduit.

There was no more flame, very little smoke. There were Jap sailors afloat on the surface of the sea. A few of them were swimming. The rest were just lying there, held up by whatever air was in their lungs, and even in that quick glimpse Jordan saw some of them sink quietly below the surface. And then the battered object which had but a moment ago been a submarine was on her way down, too. The lines which had held her to the side of the *Calistralia* snapped like pistol shots. The stern came up. Jordan had a brief glimpse of rudder, of diving planes, of twin propellors. Then they were gone in a smother of bubbly water, glittering with oil.

For seconds an awed silence hung like a shroud over the decks of the *Calistralia*. Jordan looked around to see Mickey, Stolp and Goggin lined up beside him at the rail, peering overside in incredulous amazement. He shook his head to clear it of the impressions of dead and dying forms down there in the water. There were things which had to be done, and done right away.

"Let's get away from here," he said.

He grabbed Mickey's arm and began to tow her aft toward the cabin they had just left, toward the line of retreat to the lower decks of the ship. Stolp and Goggin fell in behind them, apparently too stunned to say anything at all.

"Where are the Jap searching parties?" Jordan snapped.

"Don't know," Stolp replied. "Three of them busted out on us while you were throwing that dynamite down on the sub. We got one, you got another and the third took it on the lam."

"Any idea how many of them are aboard?"

"No," Stolp said.

"It'll be cozy, sharing the ship with them," Mickey observed quietly.

"We ought to have a look at the pumps," said Stolp. "The concussion when that sub blew up might have started some new leaks, or even loosened up the bulkheads."

"Nuts to that," Goggin snarled. "But we ought to start the pumps."

"We'll start them if we have to," said Jordan, "and if we can."

Single file, keeping close in the darkness which increased to utter blackness as they moved deeper into the bowels of the ship, they descended one iron stairway after another. At C deck they stopped suddenly and waited, not daring to breathe. Just on the other side of the thin bulkhead were Japs, apparently searching along the passageway. Muffled, high-pitched voices came thinly through the partition and the closed door was suddenly framed by a narrow oblong of light. Guns in hand, they waited there, until the sound of the voices faded into nothingness astern.

"Go on down," Jordan whispered, and one of the oilers began again to descend the ladder. Mickey clung tightly to Jordan's left hand.

THEY were now groping their way forward somewhere deep down in the hull of the *Calistralia*. The scent of warm engine oil came to Jordan's nostrils. Suddenly the two oilers came to a full stop. Jordan crashed silently into them and Mickey bumped against Jordan, who put his arm around her and steadied her.

Stolp moved close to Jordan. "There's someone in there," he said in a thin whisper. "Listen. Over toward the auxiliaries, I think."

But there was no need to listen. As one, the four of them shrank against the port bulkhead as a sudden beam from a flashlight split the darkness at the forward end of the engine room. It seemed to waver, then steadied to a settled glare. Slowly, cautiously, Jordan bent forward for a look.

At the extreme forward end of the engine room three Jap sailors stood looking at the switchboard with its complicated maze of wires, bus bars and copper switches. For some time they stared at this board, chattering among themselves. Then the beam of the flashlight swung and focussed upon, first, the main engines, then upon the auxil-

iaries. It finally came to rest upon the silent generator.

"They're going to start it," Stolp said in a whisper. "We'd better scram out of here before the lights go on."

Jordan shoved the two oilers out of his way. For an instant Mickey's grip on his hand delayed him. He turned and, in that almost total darkness, kissed her.

"Let me go, darling," he murmured. "I'll be right back."

Mickey sighed deeply, relaxed her hold on his fingers.

"You stay here," he told Stolp and Goggin. They nodded, apparently willing, now, to accept his leadership.

He kicked off his shoes and advanced silently into the half-light of the engine room. Stepping carefully over the coaming, he ducked to port of the port engine housing. Like a khaki-clad ghost he crept aft, unable to see the three men who were examining the dynamo, yet knowing exactly where they were because that was where the light from their flashlight was brightest. He had the .45 in his hand, with the safety off.

The Japs, working at the generator, were talking among themselves in their unintelligible gibberish. Their voices covered any small noise he might make. He passed the engine housing, ducked behind the auxiliary pump. Now he knew he was not more than twenty or thirty feet from where they were. He slipped past the pump and came to a stop at its forward end. He peered cautiously around the pump engine and saw their yellow faces, slant eyes and thick lips bathed in the backward wash of the light. Crouching there in his stocking feet, he got his gun out.

He felt no sense of compunction at all, having been one of the last to leave Manila, one of the last to leave Bataan, one of the last to fly from Sumatra to Java and from Java to Australia. He knew what the Japs did to whites when they could, especially to white women —to girls like Mickey Lane.

So he braced his wrist on a metallic bulge of the pump engine, carefully examined his targets and coldly, slowly, squeezed the trigger three times. His first bullet caught one of the Japs in the back of the head. The other two Japs stiffened, looked up, then began scrambling for cover. The next bullet found the non-commissioned officer. He clawed at his breast, as if there were something there that he could pluck out with his fingernails. He died on his feet while he was still trying to tear away the pain.

The third, the one who had the flashlight, remembered to switch off the light then.

There are always two sounds when a bullet goes home into a human body, even a Japanese body. First, the sound of the firing of the cartridge; second, the dull *thwuck* of the piece of lead smacking into flesh and blood. If you have ever heard it, you'll never forget it. It is like a butcher's cleaver striking into a piece of heavy beef. This sound Jordan heard after his first and third shots. He fired the fourth shot into the dark and heard it hit a metal bulkhead and go ricocheting off with a banshee wail which could mean only that he had missed his target.

Quietly, then, he began to creep through the blackness toward the spot where the third Jap had been standing. About ten steps he would have to take, and he took them slowly, all his senses alert to locate the living enemy who should now be almost within reaching distance. To his nostrils came a human scent, one which, by its rankness, its strangeness, lifted the short hairs on the back of Jordan's neck.

HE PULLED all his muscles together, crouched a little, then flung himself forward. Almost instantly his left hand struck yielding human flesh, a face. He slashed down, found the chin. He yanked the man close to him and with his right hand started to bring his .45 around in a sweeping arc. But in the blackness the gun missed the Jap, struck some part of the generator engine. It exploded and flew out of his hand.

For an instant he and the Jap wrestled in savage silence. He kicked the Jap's left leg away from him and bore down with all his weight. They crashed to the hard deck with an impact which caused a belly-deep grunt to come out of the Jap. Pete reached for the Jap's right hand, which he hoped might still be holding the flashlight. But the Jap, flat on his back with Jordan spread out on top of him, brought his left hand up, curved his fingers like the tines of a rake, dug them deep inside Jordan's collar bone. Jordan groaned, tipped his head over and jerked, breaking that wicked hold. He worked along with his hand, trying to find the flashlight, but the Jap's hand was empty.

Jordan managed to sit upright, astride the Jap's squirming body. He got his two hands free, grabbed handfuls of the greasy hair and began to bang the Jap's head against the deck plates.

The Jap's hands came up, clawed viciously for Jordan's eyes. Jordan dropped his head and butted it full into the upturned face below. For a second the taut figure beneath him went slack. And in that instant Jordan's hands slid down, caught the Jap under the chin and got a firm hold on the man's throat. The Jap writhed like a wounded rattlesnake but Jordan's seat was firm astride the wriggling body. Down, down, he bore with his thumbs. And suddenly the squirming ceased. He could feel the muscles beneath him relax, become flaccid.

"Pete!" came Mickey's frantic voice through the darkness. "Pete, where are you?"

Jordan relaxed his hold. His arms, wrists, and especially his thumbs, ached from that full-out pressure. He pushed himself off the body of the dead Jap and stood up.

He said quietly, "I'm here, Mickey. Where are the men?"

Mickey's body came solidly against his and for a second her slender frame was racked with sobs. It was soothing to have his arms around someone who was clean and fragrant. It was fine to know that somebody loved him, worried about him, but there was no time to think of such things now. Very gently he put her aside.

"Stolp!" he called. "Goggin!"

"Well?" came Stolp's voice, close by in the darkness.

"Get this auxiliary started," Jordan commanded.

There was silence which stretched out uncomfortably. At last Stolp said, "Why?"

"You damned fool!" Jordan raged, his control hanging by a very thin edge. "Somebody sent three Japs down here to get the current on. If it doesn't go on, they'll come down to find out why."

"Okay, okay," said Stolp in a slurred voice. "But don't talk to us like that, see?"

Jordan heard the two groping their way past him. Mickey put her hand out and touched his sleeve gently. She was not holding him, not restraining him. She was just letting him know she was still there, very close to him. The tightness ran out of him, and so did his temper. He heard the two men working on the engine. At last he heard it start.

Then the lights flared on, blinding them all. They stood there, waiting for their eyes to come into focus.

In the light Mickey saw the first Jap, and the thing that Jordan's bullet had done to the back of his close-cropped head. She saw the second one lying in a puddle of his own blood. She saw the third, his face blue and a great purple tongue hanging out of his slack mouth.

She sighed and for the first time in her life fell flat on her face in a faint.

CHAPTER NINE

IT WAS not pleasant, cleaning up a mess like that. The aftermath of violence is sometimes worse on the nerves than the fighting itself, for reaction sets in swiftly and all the senses rebel against the things you see.

Stolp and Goggin stood staring dully at the dead Japs, then they turned to look at Mickey, who had been scooped up by Jordan and was now cradled like a baby in his arms. Her eyes flickered and opened. She smiled apologetically.

"I don't specially want to," she said in that sweetly husky voice of hers, "but I guess I can stand now. Sorry to have flopped so."

"What girl wouldn't faint?" he retorted gruffly and swung her down to her feet, holding her for a moment.

Jordan glanced at the dead men, then at the two oilers, who stood staring, eyes filled with respect if not with friendliness.

"We've got to get rid of those," he said decisively. "We can't go topside to put them overboard. We'd be seen. Where'll we put them?"

The two oilers thought that over. "In the bilge keel," said Stolp, finally. "They'll be all right there, for a while, at least."

"Let's do it, then, before the other Japs find them," Jordan decided.

So it was done, while Mickey, pale as a ghost, stood and watched. They returned to the engine room and, with mops, cleaned up the blood, leaving the steel plates spotless.

"Five of them dead," Jordan said harshly, when they had finished. "I'd give a lot to know how many pals they have aboard."

Nobody could hazard a guess, but it seemed to Jordan during the next few hours that there must be hundreds and hundreds. They were all over the ship, exploring, ravaging the foodstuffs in the first-class pantry and refrigerators, and, apparently, hunting for the three who had been sent below to start the generator.

Just after midnight, after hours of dodging back and forth like hunted animals, after slinking down passageways and climbing stairways to avoid searching parties, Stolp and Goggin, who had been ranging ahead of Jordan and the girl, ran head-on into a single Jap sailor. He had lagged behind the others of his party in the galley, where he was prying open a can of food with his knife. There was no struggle at all. Goggin threw his arms around the man, the flat of his immense hand over the Jap's mouth while Stolp neatly, quietly, cut his throat. He joined his three dead friends in the bilge keel.

"Six," Jordan counted grimly, and Mickey shuddered as if with a chill.

Sometime after daybreak the Japs appeared to realize that some of their men had definitely disappeared. The next few hours were very bad for the four Americans. Organized searching parties started at the wreckage forward of the bridge and worked their way aft, but fortunately there were not enough Japs aboard to come aft along every passageway and on every deck at the same time. Once, on C-deck, Stolp led the others around into a 'thwartship corridor and across to the port passageway as a Jap party, armed to the teeth, scoured the starboard passageway, opening every cabin door on their way aft toward the stern. Forward, then, the four raced, and crossed again to the starboard side, hiding in a cabin which the Japs had already searched.

Again, about noon that day, they crept aft on the boat deck, listening to the chatter of the Japs who were moving forward on the deck below. That sortie gave them more cause for worry. Stolp, acting as rear guard, reported that he had peeped into the window of the wireless shack, midway between the wrecked bridge and the forward stack, and had seen two Japs inside, one of them apparently sending out radio messages, the other standing guard.

"Probably sending a call for help to some other Jap ship," Jordan hazarded.

"Why didn't you send out an SOS on the set?" Stolp asked in a disagreeable voice. "Don't you flyers know radio?"

"We can use small sets, where all you have to do is flip a switch and talk," Jordan said, holding his temper well under control. "But a set the size of this one is as much of a mystery to me as it is to you."

Jordan was strongly tempted to turn back and to take a chance on wiping out those two Japs in the wireless shack, but the rest of the Japs were on the move and any sound from the wireless shack would stir up a hornet's nest too hot to handle.

Hot? The truth was that they all could have used a little heat right now. Even with so many other things to worry them, it was impossible to ignore the fact that in the past thirty-six hours there had been a decided change in the weather. The sky was gray and covered with a high overcast. The seas no longer looked like the tropical Pacific. They were gray and somber and here and there they were obscured by small patches of fog. And the temperature had taken a nose-dive. A cold, wet chill was in the air even at noon. Jordan found himself staring southward across those gloomy waters with increasing frequency, looking for the first sign of drift ice. The interior of the great ship had become chilled through and through, and the effect upon Stolp and Goggin was definitely bad. They began to brood, to be more and more insolent, became more and more free in their talk with Mickey, and Jordan realized that if they did not need his fighting ability against the Japs he and they would have long since had their final show-down. He never let Mickey out of his sight for a moment. Nor, as a matter of fact, did Stolp and Goggin.

THE next day the Japs found the dead men who had been dropped into the bilge keel. And after that it was harder than ever to keep out of their way. Only the immense size of the liner made it possible for them to escape detection. But the ship was like a rabbit warren. There were literally a hundred places in which to hide. And Stolp and Goggin knew them all. But not since the day the Japs came aboard had the Americans been able to get to the first-class pantry and galley. The Japs had that part of the ship too well guarded. There was plenty of food in the second-class galley, however, and there the Americans went when they wished to eat.

The day after that, a cold gray morning which followed a night of chill discomfort, Jordan got another Jap. He and Mickey and the oilers had slept in three adjoining cabins in the second-class section. Jordan had arbitrarily taken the middle cabin. He had yanked his mattress from the berth, laid it against Mickey's closed door and had napped there, his gun within easy reaching distance of his hand. He had not slept well. Once he had heard Japs tramping past the doors in the passageway outside. Again he wakened up with a start, thinking that the knob had turned in the door separating his from the oilers' cabin. But at last the long night ended and they made their cautious way to the second-class galley for breakfast.

Jordan, as usual, when he had once learned his way through the labyrinthine passages and corridors of the great ship, led the way, with the uncomplaining Mickey close behind him and Stolp and Goggin bringing up the rear. They slipped aft for a bit, then descended a stairway, and were halfway across the second-class dining salon when Jordan saw the Jap sailor who had apparently been posted as a sentry there in that big room. The man suddenly appeared from behind one of the fluted columns, his gun in firing position. There was no time to dodge. They just had to stand there and trade shots, taking it on their feet.

Jordan, holding his breath, dug for his automatic while the Jap had a free shot. The Jap's gun blazed and Jordan felt the warm breath of the bullet whine across his left cheek. His shot and the Jap's second try exploded almost simultaneously. Something twitched at Jordan's sleeve, just under the left armpit. But Jordan's slug struck home. It spun the sailor around, threw him forward on his face and he lay there on the deck, thrashing around and screaming until Mickey sobbed, "Oh, Pete! Can't you do something about that?" Pete could, and did, although it was not, probably, what Mickey had in mind. He marched between the tables, bent over and put a single bullet through the Jap's temple.

"Seven," he murmured with cold satisfaction.

When he returned to the others, Mickey was crying, her shoulders shaking in great rasping sobs.

"What's the matter?" he demanded. "Would you rather he'd have died a little at a time? And have you forgotten what the Japs would have done to you if you'd been in Manila, or Hong Kong, or Singapore—or what they'll do to you here if they get their hands on you? Stop that damned crying and come on. We can't get anything to eat, now. They'll have heard the gunfire all over the ship." His harshness stopped her hysterics, which was his aim.

CHAPTER TEN

TWO mornings later they saw ice. Pete Jordan sighted it first. And he wondered if he were not asleep and dreaming at last after more days and nights of sleeplessness than he could remember. He had caught catnaps now and then, but not many. He couldn't even remember how many days had passed since the Jap submarine had burst asunder like a squashed melon, leaving twenty or thirty of her crew aboard the *Calistralia.* Time had lost all meaning. He and Mickey ate when they could find a place which had just been searched by the Japs and would probably not be searched again for some hours.

Everything was more difficult now. The Japs, alarmed and infuriated by the loss of seven of their men, had posted sentries in pairs at as many strategic points as their numbers would allow. They dogged down most of the watertight doors leading from one compartment into another. Only Stolp's and Goggin's intimate knowledge of every passageway, every ladder, in the whole great ship permitted the Americans to move about at all.

Mickey had begun to thin down badly. There were deep shadows beneath her lovely eyes and her high cheekbones were daily becoming more prominent. But never once had she complained about anything. Nor, except for that one time when she had fainted, had she shown a single sign of weakness. Her instant, gallant smile, whenever Jordan said anything which was supposed to be humorous, twisted the flyer's heart. If she were as afraid of Stolp and Goggin as she was of the Japs she made no sign, even when the steady pressure of their eyes drove the color out of her thinning cheeks.

Tension between Pete Jordan and the two oilers was tightening daily, and it had already been taut enough before the Japs came aboard. On the morning they sighted the ice Jordan overheard a snatch of low-voiced talk between the two. The Japs were searching the ship and the four harried Americans had taken refuge in the casing of the after stack, whence they could scurry up or down the ladder to any of the decks if the Japs drew close. Pete and Mickey were on the B-deck landing and the oilers were one full deck below. But by some trick of acoustics Goggin's voice came clearly to the listening pair above.

". . . but it would be easier for three than for four to duck them stinking Japs. After all, this ain't like a battle where you got to have a lot of men to hold a line, or something. We can't slug it out, so we got to hide out 'till we get a break. Me, I got a good big bellyache from seeing that lousy hero and the gal pairing off together like we was dirt, and . . ."

Mickey started violently and edged closer to Jordan. He slipped his right arm around her, holding her close while he waited breathlessly to hear what they were saying below. Stolp appeared to be speaking but his low voice was blotted out in the cavernous interior of the stack casing.

"Yeah," said Goggin. "You know, I was getting to think that maybe you liked that guy, the way you were yessing him all the time."

Jordan restrained the impulse to go down and have it out with the oilers, once and for all. He stood there, soothing the girl and dreading the things she would have to see before this fateful cruise drifted to whatever end fate had in store for it.

After a while Goggin and Stolp came scrambling up the ladder. Japanese voices, they reported, were coming from one of the lower decks. Jordan led the way up the zigzagging steel steps to the boat deck where they cautiously debouched into the cold gray daylight. He cast a quick glance forward and aft. No Japs to be seen here. Casually he looked out over the sea. His eyes widened and he drew a quick breath.

"Look!" he cried. "Ice! Drift ice!"

And there it was, the thing he had been dreading all these weeks, spreading over the horizon to the southward. A limitless expanse of steely-gray ice, light glittering from a million facets as it rippled on the long, easy rollers. From it came vapor in a constantly rising cloud which turned into fog immediately above it.

Jordan's heart sank. Never, he thought, had he seen a more lonely, depressing sight. How long would the *Calistralia* drift along with, or in, that inhospitable field of ice? Weeks? Months? Years? And who, he asked himself dismally, would be left aboard when the great liner at last became weary of her hapless wandering and began her long slide to the bottom of the frigid sea?

He glanced at Mickey. Her eyes met his and they were cloudy with the somber wonderings behind them. But she said nothing at all.

"Jeez," Goggin muttered. "Once we get caught in that ice, we'll never get out!"

Jordan turned to look at Stolp. The man was staring out at that drift ice as if he were looking at unnamable horrors, as if his imagination, too, could span the weeks and the months ahead to envisage some final catastrophe beyond any words to describe. His colorless eyes slowly swung to Jordan's and the flyer was shocked at the wildness in them.

This was it, the showdown. The sight of that drift ice had caused the feral little man to cast aside all restraint, and whatever evil had been in him all this time was now coming out. Automatically Jordan braced himself to take head-on whatever might be coming.

Stolp's two hands came out like twin streaks of lightning. Palms flat, they struck his chest with an unexpected impact. He went back on his heels, took three or four steps backward. And an eye-bolt set into the deck finished the job Stolp had begun. Jordan's heel caught in it. He fell on his back with a spine-jarring crash. His head smacked solidly against the deck and for an instant the sky and the ship itself seemed to spin in dizzy circles.

He rolled to his hands and knees and pushed himself erect. As he got to his feet, he grabbed for his gun. There was a metallic slam. Jordan found himself staring helplessly at the steel door leading to the stack casing. It was closed tight, and behind it were Mickey and the two oilers!

Desperately he flung himself at it, yanking at the handle, but there was no give there, and he could hear sounds behind that steel panel which told him it was being dogged down from the other side. It was like trying to wrench open a bank vault with two bare hands. And faintly to his ears came a despairing cry:

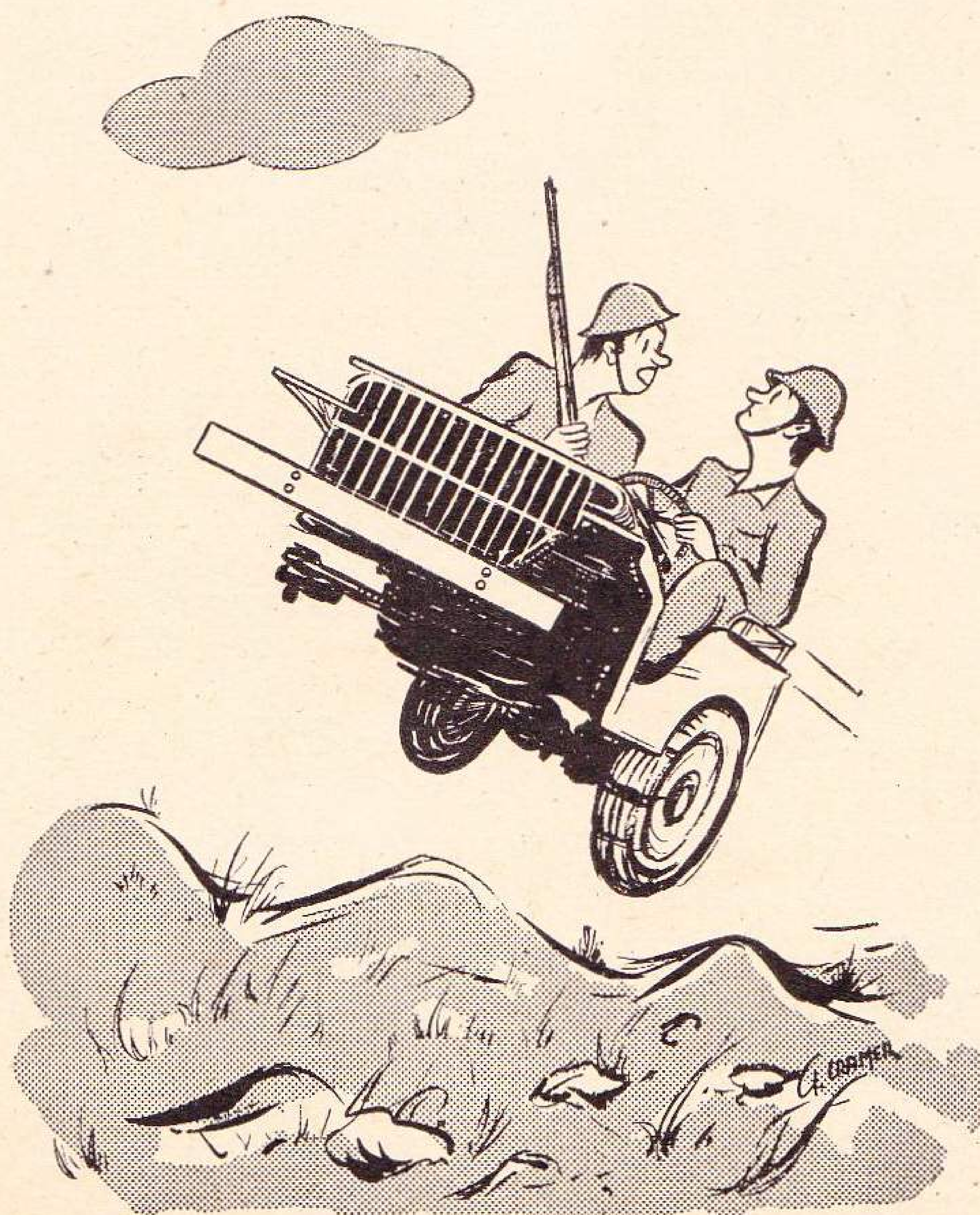
"Pete! They're taking me away!"

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE worst of such a moment is that you can think of only one thing at a time. Already the ice field had ceased to exist. The Jap sailors had been wiped from Jordan's mind like a chalk drawing from a wet blackboard. Gone was any thought of hiding from them. They simply were not there. The flyer's conscious world had contracted like the snapping of a stretched elastic band. It contained now only four persons—Mickey, Stolp, Goggin and himself, and of these he fully intended to kill two.

For a second or so Jordan pounded foolishly at that unyielding steel door. He could no longer even hear Mickey's voice. Suddenly a degree of sanity returned to him. He wheeled away from that door and sprinted aft, remembering another companionway which gave entrance to the superstructure. He skidded into that open doorway and flew forward along the corridor to the door which had been locked against him. But Mickey was not there. Helplessly he tried to think where they might have taken her. The ship was so huge that he and the others had been able to hide for days—or had it been weeks—against the constantly-searching Japs. There were hundreds of hiding places. How could he find the right one, not in an hour or a day, but now?

A desperate cry, filtered by distance, snapped him to attention. "Pete!" Mickey cried thinly. Before the echo of that despairing call had died away Pete Jordan was on the run again. He raced across the passageway to the stack casing. He was halfway down to the next deck when he remembered he had seen something in the passageway he had just left—Japs, half a dozen of



"Don't it seem to you the motor ain't hitting quite right this morning?"

them, coming aft from the forward end of the ship. But so full had his mind been of Mickey, the image had not registered. They had seen him dive into this place and would be on his trail like hunting dogs on hot spoor. But even that didn't seem important now. The only really important thing was to find Mickey.

To which deck would they have taken her? Feverishly, as he raced down the zigzagging iron ladder, Jordan tried to decide. He would only have one guess. The engine room, he told himself. That's where they would feel most at home. Praying he might be right, he passed deck after deck. And as his heels hit the slippery plates of the engine room he was richly rewarded. A bullet clanged against the bulkhead so close beside him that he ducked without realizing he had moved his head at all.

And then he saw them. Far forward on the catwalk between the engines were Mickey, Stolp and Goggin. Stolp had paused to throw a slug back at Jordan but Goggin was rushing Mickey toward the bulkhead door which led into the compartment ahead. Mickey was resisting but Goggin was easily skidding her across the oil-slick deck plates. Jordan plunged ahead with every ounce of speed that was in him. He grabbed for his gun but didn't dare shoot for fear of hitting Mickey. And if they opened that watertight door, got through and locked it against him, that would be the end for Mickey.

Goggin reached the door, released Mickey to wrench at the handle. The girl spun around, tried to get past Stolp. But that feral little man caught her and slammed her back against the bulkhead. Stolp flashed a look at Goggin, who was still sweating at the handle of the door. Then he faced the oncoming Jordan, dropped to one knee and carefully steadied his gun arm. Instantly Jordan knew what had happened. The Japs had dogged down that door from the other side in their effort to cut as much of the ship off from the Americans as they could.

In mid-stride Jordan veered to starboard, putting the huge silent bulk of that engine between himself and Stolp's pointing gun. He was in time by a whisper. A bullet whacked solidly into the engine, went ricocheting up to a deck beam far above.

His own gun was pointing forward as he hurried silently up that narrow alleyway.

The engine room was now silent except for the rhythmic purring of the generator, and a new, an alien, sound whose true portent penetrated slowly into Jordan's violence-drugged mind. He took several forward steps before he realized what that new sound was—Japs, coming down the ladder he had just left! Now, and for the first time since they had come aboard, they knew exactly where the Americans were!

Jordan had almost reached the forward end of the engine. Remembering that most men aimed high—usually for the place they figured the head should be—he dropped to his hands and knees, moved ahead in a slow crawl like some weird, three-legged animal, his right hand holding his automatic ready for an instant shot.

At the forward end of the engine Jordan got his weight carefully balanced, poked his gun around the steel bulwark of the engine and followed it with his face.

There, hardly thirty steps from him, were Stolp and Goggin and Mickey Lane. Each man had a gun in one hand. The other hand was tightly encompassing one of Mickey's wrists. And she was limp and unresisting, as if altogether played out after her struggle all the way down from the boat deck.

"Mickey!" Jordan called sharply.

The two oilers had been looking aft, in the direction of the Japs who were cascading down the ladder. Now, with a start, they turned and looked at Jordan. Both swung their guns up simultaneously. But even as Stolp lifted his weapon, he ducked behind Mickey and held her in front of him.

It was upon that small, vicious man that Jordan had been drawing a bead. But now he didn't dare fire. And changing his target made him a split-second too late to get first shot at the gorilla-shaped Goggin. An instant before he squeezed his trigger Goggin's gun streaked flame. The bullet smacked Jordan's left arm, just above the biceps. It whirled him around and flung him to the deck plates. Stolp's first slug whined through the space Jordan's head had occupied only a heart-beat before.

DIMLY Jordan heard Mickey scream as he tried to get to his feet. There was no pain in his left arm, just a numbness. Laboriously, he got up, turned around so he could look at Mickey. She was struggling wildly with Stolp. Jordan was just in time to see her sink her teeth into the hand which pinioned her. Stolp screamed in pain, released his hold and Mickey flew across the corrugated decking to Jordan's side. She threw herself down on that oil-smeared surface, protecting Jordan's prostrate body with her own.

Stolp, his pale lips skinned back in a mirthless grin, took careful aim. Goggin whirled and cracked down on Stolp's outstretched arm with his gun, knocked the weapon out of Stolp's hand. The little man, screaming curses, bent to scoop up the gun. And then Goggin transferred his full attention to something aft in the engine room, lifted his gun and fired carefully along the catwalk.

Jordan did not dare look to see what Goggin was firing at. He kept his eyes on Stolp, who had retrieved his gun and, his pale eyes narrowed, was aiming it at Jordan, who was getting up and was no longer sheltered by Mickey.

With his elbow braced on the deck, Jordan let Stolp have it. He heard the *whuck* of his first bullet as it smashed through solid bone and flesh. Without compunction he slammed another along the exact path of the first. Stolp's unpleasant eyes popped wide open. He lowered his gun as if it were too heavy to hold at arm's length. Then, slowly, he opened his fingers and let the weapon drop to the deck. He bent at the waist, as if he were giving a courteous bow, and pitched forward on his face.

Goggin did not even glance around at the shots. He was still firing along the passageway.

Jordan managed somehow to stagger to his feet. Mickey, too, was rising.

"You stay here," he commanded, harshly. "Right here, understand? Don't move!"

He whirled and glanced aft. The high-pitched Jap chattering was very loud and close by now. But there were none visible along his passageway as far aft as he could see. Yet Goggin was still firing down the center catwalk. With his left arm dangling like a dead weight and now beginning to hurt, Jordan ran toward Goggin, who flashed one look at the oncoming flyer, then turned back to the Japs. He pulled trigger on an empty gun, then crouched to make himself smaller as he dug in his pocket for a fresh clip.

Jordan came up beside him, spun around and looked aft. There were six, possibly seven, Japs there. Jordan tried to get one of them in his gun-sight, but they dodged behind the steel bulwarks of machinery to port and starboard. And an instant later the high-pitched *zing* of their small-calibre bullets came singing back to rap metallically against the bulkhead. But they were firing high and that, in this first wild fusilade, saved Jordan's life. And Mickey saved it again an instant later. Mickey had not remained where she was. She had come flying after Jordan. And she got to his side just in time. . . .

Stolp was taking a long time to die. He had managed to crawl across the deck plates, his clawing fingers reaching for the gun he had dropped a few violent seconds ago. He got his hand around that gun. As a broken snake will try with its last remaining strength to strike, so Stolp lifted that handful of steel from the deck and swung it slowly, painfully, up at Jordan.

Mickey screamed, threw her small, hard body flat across Stolp's arm, pinning it to the deck. She reached out and wrestled for the gun, twisting it out of the man's fingers. Stolp shivered, let his breath run out in a horrible rasping wheeze, and then he was dead. Mickey shuddered violently and in revulsion rolled away from the body. She had Stolp's gun in her hand when she pushed herself to her feet.

Goggin and Jordan were firing methodically, carefully. A bandy-legged Jap was racing forward along the catwalk under cover of a protecting fire from the less impetuous ones who were still clinging to the shelter of the machinery.

"Wait!" Jordan said to Goggin. "Hold your fire!"

They waited until the Jap had almost reached them.

"Give it to him!" Jordan snapped.

He and Goggin fired at the same instant. The Jap was so close they could not miss. They saw his jumper jerk under the impact of their bullets. He kept on coming for a few steps, then he began to sag. He pitched face-down and slid a dozen feet forward with the momentum of his death-dive.

Following him came another, screaming shrilly as he pounded along the catwalk. Still a third came charging around the forward end of the starboard engine.

Only Mickey saw the third Jap. He popped like a jack-in-the-box into her range of vision. Jordan and Goggin were busy with the others. This one was carrying a small carbine and was already swinging the muzzle to cover the two Americans. Mickey lifted Stolp's gun with both hands. She took careful aim, then closed her eyes and pulled the trigger. When she opened her eyes the Jap was lying beside Stolp's body.

Pete Jordan aimed at a Jap peering around the forward end of the dynamo, fired a single shot. The Jap instantly pulled his head in like a turtle. The engine room was a hell of noise and violence, of screaming men and exploding guns, with Jordan and Goggin firing steadily, calmly, at figures which seemed to materialize out of drifting smoke, then to disappear. But always, when they reappeared, they were closer than before.

"More have come down the ladder!" Jordan snapped. "Mickey, get behind me!"

And then, through all that stultifying noise and confusion there came a sound which laid its weight over the entire engine room. It came down through fiddleys and ventilators, seeming almost to come through the walls of the ship itself. It was a stentorian shriek, and it came from somewhere very close to the crippled liner!

For a moment there was, except for the overtones of that unexpected sound, complete silence in the engine room. Every person in it, yellow and white, stopped what he was doing and looked in gaping astonishment at his neighbor.

Then, breaking that unnatural silence, there came from somewhere above a shrill command in Japanese, and every Jap in the engine room bolted for the ladder.

"Pete, what is it?" Mickey cried.

Jordan did not answer right away. He and Goggin were completely absorbed in their work. Aiming carefully, they were putting one shot after another into those huddled Japs at the foot of the ladder. Then Jordan's trigger clicked on an empty clip.

Goggin picked off one who had almost reached the next deck above. The others scrambled over his fallen body and disappeared behind the ceiling beams. The oiler lowered his gun. An expression of bewilderment clouded his homely face as he repeated Mickey's question.

"What was that?" he asked.

"A ship's siren," Jordan said. "And it wasn't from *this* ship."

CHAPTER TWELVE

IT IS not easy to realize you are still alive when you have practically given yourself up for dead. It takes some getting used to.

Unbelievingly Jordan looked at Mickey, so pale, so brave, so altogether lovely. He swung around to glance at Goggin, who was staring down at Stolp with a puzzled look on his face.

"He shouldn't ought to of shot at the gal," he muttered.

"Let's get out of here," snapped Jordan, "and find out what's happened."

They made their way aft along the blood-stained catwalk. Mickey was right behind him and somewhere behind her was Goggin. Jordan moved past the ladder which zigzagged up the stack casing, stepping over and around the bodies of dead Japs. There was another companionway and another ladder beyond, well aft of the second stack. It was hard marching and even harder climbing. Weak from shock and from loss of blood, Jordan had to drive himself up those steep iron stairs. Jordan set his teeth and mounted one step after another until at last Mickey's quiet voice behind him said, "This is the boat deck, Pete."

Jordan veered to the right, marched through a door and even before he had adjusted his eyes to the gray, foggy daylight, heard a strong American voice call:

"Throw those guns overboard! Line up at the rail, you, and put your hands up!"

Blundering to the rail, Jordan saw something that made his heart beat faster. There, in a clear place between two patches of fog, idled a lean American destroyer, all her guns manned and pointed directly at the *Calistralia.* She was scarcely a hundred yards away, and halfway across the intervening strip of water was a small boat heading toward the crippled ship.

The Japs, and there weren't many of them left, stood stoically at the rail, their empty hands held high. One of them, by his uniform a junior officer, leaned overside and shrilled an order at someone on the deck below. Jordan, Mickey and Goggin, too overwhelmed to speak, advanced to the rail and looked down just in time to see a boarding ladder go snaking down from the main deck.

"Hey!" Jordan yelled, forgetting his aching arm, forgetting his weakness, forgetting everything but the fact that rescue was at hand. He put his good arm around Mickey's slim shoulder. "Hey!" he yelled again, unable to put into words all the things he wanted to call to the Americans in the boat.

A dozen pairs of eyes swung upward. For an instant the sailors stared in amazement.

"Well, I'll be damned!" came a wondering voice from the boat. "Americans! And one of them a girl!"

Five minutes later, while the sailors, under the direction of a grim-faced chief petty officer, were rounding up the Japs, Mickey, Jordan and Goggin found themselves shaking hands with a lieutenant and an ensign of the United States Navy, and trying to tell them of the things they had seen and done since the *Calistralia* had been torpedoed.

"*Whew!*" the lieutenant whistled. "Why, this ship was given up for lost a month ago. Only six or eight of the lifeboats were picked up. Have you three been aboard all the time?"

"Go ahead, lieutenant," Goggin snarled, "and tell him what Stolp and me were doing."

"There was another American engine room man named Stolp," said Pete Jordan. "He and Goggin, here, kept the pumps and the generator going. Without them we'd probably have sunk within the first three or four days."

A long sigh escaped Goggin's lips. The tension seemed to run out of him.

"Where is this Stolp?" asked the ensign, looking around.

"I'm sorry to say he was killed just a few minutes ago in a fight we were having with the Japs."

"But wait a minute," the lieutenant said, excitedly. "Did I hear you say you sunk a Jap sub?"

"He did," Goggin asserted, jerking his blue-black chin at Pete Jordan. "He heaved a hundred-pound box of dynamite down their hatch."

The Navy officers stared at Lieutenant Jordan. One said, "Do you think this vessel will tow?"

"Stern-first, she will," Jordan said.

"She's too valuable to be scuttled or—" His eyes widened. "You three will be in line for a nice hunk of salvage money."

He turned forward and hailed a signal man who came aft on the double with his flags under his arm.

"We won't be able to take you in tow ourselves," he told Jordan. "We're way off our beat looking for a Jap surface raider that's supposed to be sneaking eastward along the edge of the ice. But there's a British auxiliary cruiser thirty or forty miles to the north'ard that'll probably take on the job."

"Flags," said he crisply to the signalman, "my compliments to the skipper and ask him if he'll come aboard with the damage control officer to have a look at this vessel. Ask him if he'll bring a hospital corps man with him. This officer's arm needs attention."

Mickey looked up into Jordan's tired eyes with an expression which made his heart turn over. Not caring who was looking, the flyer bent over and kissed her.

"Well!" said the ensign, grinning. "If you'll hold that pose we'll send for the ship's photographer, too."

"I'll tell you what you can send for," Jordan said. "How about asking your captain to bring over his Bible?"

The young Navy ensign grinned at Jordan and Mickey. "Can't you even wait till you get over to the destroyer?"

Jordan, smiling, shook his head. "We've waited too long already," he said. "This ship has been home to us for a long time. And what better place to be married than right at home?"

THE END

From its beginning in the bomb-blasted streets of besieged Madrid, to its smashing climax on the ravished beaches of Dunkirk, this powerful novel of the Red Cross is living, human proof that courage—and love—cannot be killed by war

RED IS FOR Courage

Frontispiece illustration by WILLIAM FIX

COMPLETE NOVEL

BY STEVE FISHER

ARGOSY NOVEL OF THE MONTH

IN THE afternoon the snow had stopped falling and the sky was a dark silver-gray, but the red Spanish earth of the road had turned to mud and slush. Shell holes and jagged shell splinters added to the driving hazards.

I could see Tony's bloodshot eyes as he leaned forward over the wheel, and it occurred to me that his arms must be sore by now. I told him there was nothing more I could do for the patients until we reached the first dressing station and that I would drive. He said no, but after a while he stopped and I got out and walked around the ambulance. I noticed the bullet hole in the bottom part of the big Red Cross. I sloshed through the mud and climbed in behind the wheel. That was the day of December twenty-fourth, nineteen thirty-eight.

I began to drive and Tony leaned back, fished a cigarette out of the pocket of his trench coat and put it in his mouth. He shoved back his cap. His hair was yellow, rumpled, his high cheekbones were smudged with oil and his face was drawn and tired-looking. I knew how he felt. He lit the cigarette, drew deeply on it.

"How are the soldiers back there?"

"Very good," I said. "Really very good this trip. Only one died."

Tony nodded, puffing at the cigarette. "It's Christmas Eve," he said.

"It isn't eve until evening," I said. "We've got two more hours of daylight."

"We'll make Madrid before six, won't we?"

"Yes. We'll unload and go on in. Probably no more action today. Unless they bombard tonight."

"They probably will," Tony said.

It was nice to be riding with him, to have that warm feeling you can know only in the presence of your best friend. We'd been buddies since we were thirteen. I'd lost track of him once, but ran into him again in New York. I was an interne in Bellevue then, and he and his father were promoting everything from puff sheets to oil stock.

She looked up. Then I was kissing her . . .

Tony, like his father, was too restless to stick to any one thing. His father had been a World War flier, a hero; made a fortune during Prohibition, the boom days of the 1920's, lost it, and had made nothing much since. Tony Saxon was a product of that wild, lost generation.

He tossed his cigarette out and glanced over at me. "Listen, guy! If we're off tonight, I'm dating a certain—"

"You wouldn't be thinking of Noel Leif?"

"Who else, Willie? Noel Leif. Debutante from Wisconsin. And I had to join the Red Cross and come all the way to Madrid to find her."

"Boy, you ache all over, don't you!"

Tony grinned at me. "Do you know what this is, Willie? This is a triangle! I love Noel. Noel has the bad taste to be in love with you."

"The hell you say!"

"And you," Tony went on. "You—who the hell do you love, Willie?"

"Me?" I grinned. "Why, myself, of course."

NOEL LEIF threw back her head and laughed. "You two," she said, "back from the wars. Look at you! Mud-caked, your faces smeared with dirt." She laughed again as if we were very, very funny to look at.

We were in the Madrid office of the Red Cross. The light was bright and yellow and outside the early darkness was purple velvet and it had begun to snow again, soft, white blobs of snow, drifting down gently.

Noel had been working all day in the wards but her starched white uniform was fresh. She looked as elegant as a bright Norwegian doll, her face scrubbed and shiny, her green eyes full of laughter, her flaxen hair whipped back and coiled on her neck. She'd been a deb two years ago, interested in doing charity work for the Red Cross. Then she'd gotten the war fever and joined as a full-fledged nurse. Her first training had been in the wards with the wounded in Madrid. She flipped off her nurse's cap now, and regarded us soberly.

"Gentlemen of the ambulance corps," she said, "I am now free for the night."

"Tony and I'll go get prettied up," I said. "Then the three of us'll go somewhere and sing Christmas carols."

"Lovely," Noel said, looking from Tony to me. She was small, and the uniform was tight across her slim hips. A smile made her face glow, and there were small dimples in her cheeks. "Gosh, if you two don't look like ghosts, though!"

"I've seen corpses alongside the road that looked better," a voice said.

The voice was from the throat of one Henry Drayton, who sat behind a desk in a corner, up to his scrawny neck in food cans, medical relief orders, bills of lading, and other paper work. He wore horn-rimmed glasses, and there were freckles scattered over his pale face. His hair was sand-colored and well combed. He looked about as imposing as a Scout master. But Hank Drayton, mouse though he seemed, was boss with a capital B, in full charge of the Madrid post.

"Old El Toro," Tony said, grinning. "The bull with a voice like a mouse."

"I should like to go with you three tonight if I may," Hank Drayton said.

Tony took off his green driving glasses and stuck them in his pocket. He strode over to Hank Drayton's desk and rattled the papers. "Look, El Toro, you have work to do."

"Hank," I said, "have you any jack?"

"I have lots of it," Hank said. He spoke a little shyly, his eyes bright behind the panes of his glasses. "I have it in Spanish currency, too." He was looking across the room at Noel, his heart in his eyes. Tony suddenly turned and looked at her too. It was a strange, silent minute. For Noel Leif's eyes were looking straight at me.

That's the way it was that Christmas Eve. Then, while we stood there, nobody saying anything for a moment, the door opened and closed, and a girl stood there, shaking snow out of her fur hat.

She stood there, this girl whose picture I'd seen many times . . . standing beside a ruined building in Nanking, watching planes in a Shanghai sky, on the steps of the Kremlin in Moscow.

Katherine Rogers. She was a staff writer. Kadi Rogers, the famous, here in the flesh. Hair shining softly red, face immobile, cheekbones high, lips dark-red, and her eyes shining brown. She wore a white jacket and white fur galoshes. She stood there, smiling, looking at me.

"Mr. Red Cross, I presume."

"No," I said, "that's Mr. Cross over there, the one with the ears, sitting down." I nodded toward Henry, and he rose. Noel had turned her eyes from me and was watching this beautiful new creature, also.

"My name's Kadi Rogers," the creature said. "I have to write an article on the Red Cross tonight. I was delayed in getting here, and it has to be on the cables at noon tomorrow." She put a cigarette in her mouth, accepted Henry's light. "I'd like to have some good photographs." She picked a shred of tobacco off her lip, smiled at us. "I can assure you it'll be good publicity."

"Oh, that makes everything ducky," Tony said acidly. "We scarcely ever get publicity. How did you find out about us, Miss Rogers? Who told you about the Red Cross?"

Kadi Rogers turned toward him. "My, what a funny man. Does he work here?"

"Yeah," Tony said. "I sweep up."

"I'm afraid we shan't be able to give you any material tonight, Miss Rogers," Henry said nervously. "You see—"

Kadi boosted herself onto the edge of his desk, her silken, white-booted legs dangling. She looked at the big red-white-and-blue war poster on the wall which pictured a ragged urchin standing before a bombed church, clutching a doll, and the words: *Contribute Now.* Kadi pointed with her cigarette.

"That's pretty good."

"*We* like it," Tony said. He jammed his hands in the pockets of his trench coat.

"If you'll return the day after Christmas," Hank Drayton was saying, "I could give you statistics—"

Kadi Rogers shook her head. "That isn't what I want. I want something human, a human-interest story. And day after tomorrow's too late."

"I could take you through a ward," Noel said.

Kadi smiled tolerantly. "Darling, that isn't exactly what I mean. You see—" She looked helplessly from Hank to Tony. Tony turned away. I cleared my voice.

"Look, Miss Rogers, *I* can give you a million stories. Maybe we could have dinner and talk the whole thing over."

"Oh, aren't you sweet," she said. "That'll be fine."

"I have to get cleaned up," I said. "I'll drop you off at your hotel, if you don't mind riding in an ambulance."

She laughed. "It can't be any worse than a ricksha, Mr.—"

"Just call me Willie." I turned to the others. "I guess you guys won't mind Christmas Eve without me. Four's a crowd anyway." There was a heavy and complete silence. "It'll cut down the competition for Noel," I said into the silence.

"Merry Christmas, Willie," Noel said. I blew her a kiss.

AND that night, the Silent Night was noisy, for the bombardment started again at eight. It began as Kadi and I were on the little cobbled street, all dressed up, me in my cheap tux, wearing a silk scarf Noel had given me on my twenty-fourth birthday. When the guns started, Kadi halted and looked up.

"What's that?"

"The war," I said. "Some fun, huh?"

"Just like in the movies!" She laughed. But her eyes were sober. And I knew that she was probably thinking of the scared and hungry women and children who crouched inside the darkened houses, wondering where the next shell would hit.

The snow fell around us every which way and in the intervals, when the guns were silent, I heard the chiming of a cathedral bell. Now and then women wearing shawls hurried past, and men on bicycles, going to Mass.

When we were inside a cafe Kadi threw back her jacket and shook the snow out of her red hair. Her eyes were big and very bright. They seemed to take in everything in the room. At last they settled on me.

"Let's drink wine," she said, "and have a fine dinner."

"It won't be very fine," I said. "Nothing in Madrid is fine any more."

"How did you get here?"

"I volunteered," I said. "They needed doctors and I needed experience. It's wonderful experience for a surgeon, you know."

"I can imagine. . . . I'm afraid I got off on the wrong foot with your friends."

"Oh, they don't hold grudges."

"What of that—that big blond fellow?"

"Tony? He was a happy playboy knocking around New York. When I joined he said, 'What the hell, me too, pappy,' and came along for the fun. You'll like him."

"I already do," Kadi Rogers said. "It's funny, but when people insult me it works the other way around." She rubbed her finger across the tablecloth. "I guess that comes from being an international sob sister." She smiled. "You have to like insults or you can't take it."

The room was crowded and smoky. Somebody played a piano and a waiter came and lit candles on our table. We ordered. Then we sat there, Kadi's smooth, beautiful face like polished ivory in the candlelight, her hair like flame on her shoulders, long, loose silken.

"What's it like here?" she asked.

"Well, there's a terrible food shortage, and we have a hard time getting provisions through. But every now and then convoys of trucks succeed in running the blockade. Almost everyone in Madrid is hungry."

On the outskirts of town the heavy artillery kept up its bombardment, and it sounded very close. A young Spanish girl stood at the piano, singing badly. There was a clatter of wooden dishes. And through it all came the regular pounding of the guns.

"And the war itself?" Kadi asked.

"You mean the battles? They are very bad. The Loyalists have scarcely any weapons. They have had little or no training. Half a million of them sweep down from the hills, some of them armed with no more than pitchforks. After a battle we doctors and nurses do what we can, but we are few and our supplies are limited. Money, ambulances and supplies keep arriving from America, but there is not enough. Spanish politics have confused issues. But the only cause the Red Cross recognizes is humanity. We are not here to take sides."

"Yes, I know . . . . Do you believe Madrid can hold out?"

"No. It must fall. Everywhere, garrisoned in the buildings, Franco's men are already here. In the daylight they snipe at citizens. You cannot tell in Madrid who is your friend and who your foe. It is a shambles of double-cross and deceit."

I talked through dinner and Kadi listened, sometimes making notes in a shorthand book. At last I stopped and she smiled at me.

"Thanks very much," she said. "You're a big help to a girl correspondent."

"You look more like one of those American artists in Paris who live in the Latin Quarter and sit all day at a cafe on the Boule' Mich sketching, talking, and drinking coffee."

"Sounds like paradise."

"Paris would be lovely with you," I said.

"Why, doctor, how you talk!"

"I always talk that way to celebrities," I said.

"Am I a celebrity?"

"Yes. Will you autograph my heart?"

Kadi laughed. The waiter brought red burgundy. We toasted one another, and at midnight we leaned across the table and exchanged a kiss.

Wine, mistletoe, and a Christmas kiss.

I kissed her again at the end of the evening. It was a hungry, passionate kiss and she pushed me away firmly when it ended. We were at her room door in the hotel. She held her hand against my chest and looked up, smiling into my eyes.

"Merry Christmas," she said. "But you can't come in. I've got work to do."

She didn't kiss me again. She went into the room. When the door closed I turned away. The thunder of the guns was very faint now, and the chimes had stopped ringing as I went into the street again.

AT NOON on Christmas Day I bought Kadi Rogers a little Christmas tree, just a foot high and decorated with strings of tinsel, bells, and tiny silver saints. I took it to her hotel.

Tony and Noel and Hank were still asleep when I left the hospital.

Kadi opened the door, fully dressed. I handed her the tree.

"Something I did with my little hatchet," I said.

She wore a tight checked skirt and a blue sweater. Her red hair dangled loosely on her shoulders. Inside the room a typewriter sat on a small table. There was a portable phonograph on the bed, and I saw her baggage stacked up, light aviation luggage with stickers from every capitol in the world splashed gaudily across it. Kadi put the tree on the table.

She turned, smiling. "Hello, Willie." She kissed me on the cheek. "I'll give you a Christmas drink. I managed to bring some Scotch from Paris. By the way, that article's written, been censored, and is on the cables—thanks to you."

"I think you're wonderful," I said.

"No, darling, *you* are. You saved my life."

We drank Scotch and talked. We played the phonograph. She had some old Ted Lewis records. *Wear A Hat* was one. Later we went out. Madrid was white and silent, and it did not seem as dangerous on the street as it really was. We spent the day talking and drinking in the cafes. In the evening we ran into Tony, Hank and Noel. They were coming up the street arm in arm.

"Salud!" I hailed.

"Don't even speak to them," Tony said.

Noel looked beautiful, with a white snow cape over her head, framing her glistening, rosy-cheeked face. Her green eyes were sober, but she smiled.

"Hello, Miss Rogers. Hello, Willie."

"Did you get your story?" Hank asked.

"Yes, and it was fine," Kadi said.

We all went to a cafe for a drink. Tony sat down across from Kadi. He stared at her.

"Hello, baby," he said.

"Hello," said Kadi.

Hank Drayton officiously attended the order. The wine should be just so cool, and of 1928 vintage. . . .

I looked at Noel. She seemed sad and I took her hands in mine.

"Did you have a good time last night, Willie?"

"Sure," I said. "I always have a good time."

"We did too," she said. "We sang carols. It was fun. Too bad you missed it."

"You look sad, honey," I said. "Why?"

Tony raised his voice and Noel looked at him.

"Willie, here, is the great lover," he said. "Cupid just took up his option."

Afterwards, when Kadi and I sat alone, Kadi's eyes watched me steadily.

"That girl's in love with you," she said.

I grinned at her. "All the world loves a lover," I kidded.

"Yes, she is, I can tell. She's very young, isn't she?"

The bearers turned and ran as fast as their legs would carry them.

"She's twenty." To me she seemed older.

"Poor infant!"

"Look," I said, "I think she's the most wonderful kid in the world, but I'm not in love with her. It is my fate to fall in love with the wrong woman."

Kadi searched my face. "Oh, Willie, you're sweet!"

"Kadi," I said, "stop me if you've heard this before—I love you."

"Thank you!" She said it lightly and she laughed as if she were taking for granted that I didn't really mean it.

She didn't let me get serious again. We drank our wine, and returned to her hotel. She kissed me goodnight in the corridor and sent me away again.

Two crazy people. Only it wasn't fun at all, not really, and I went outside and walked the streets feeling miserable. I thought of Noel. Now I knew how it felt to love someone who didn't love you. I promised myself that one day Kadi would love me. . . .

It was dawn, and Tony was sitting up in bed smoking a cigarette, his yellow hair touseled. We talked as I got ready for bed. We talked about Kadi.

"That's fast company," Tony said. "She's out of your class. You're just a dumb doctor fixing broken heads, and she's the eyes of the world."

"Why don't you go to sleep?" I said.

"I was asleep, papa. You woke me and started asking silly questions. What do you want, eggs in your beer? Willie, why don't you marry Noel and have kids, and I'll come live with you? Kadi's not for you."

"Tony, you're a fool!"

He flopped back on the pillow, puffed at the cigarette and looked at the ceiling. "That's true. I'm a fool. I'm just a cluck, burning my heart out for Noel Leif."

I sat down and took off my shoes. There it was again, the old triangle stuff . . . Tony loves Noel, Noel loves me, I love Kadi. And Kadi . . . ?

LUNCH was over in an hour, and Noel and I sat at the hard-grained table in the staff mess hall at the hospital. Next door in the scullery you could hear the rattle of tin tureens.

"So that's how it is, honey," I said. "I'm in love with Kadi Rogers."

"And Kadi?"

"She ducks the issue." I sipped coffee. I was wearing hospital whites, had a stethescope jammed in the pocket. Noel and I'd been making the rounds. "Maybe it means she doesn't care a damn. I don't know. But even if—if I haven't got a ghost of a chance—"

"Oh, but I'm sure you have got a chance, and I wish you luck, Willie."

"Thanks, honey."

She looked up, her face flushed. I turned and saw Tony standing in the doorway.

"Old hearts-and-flowers Willie," he said. "Old woo them and wow them. This is going to kill you, son."

"What?"

"I just saw your girl reporter to the station. She's taking the train to Paris."

I was on my feet.

"What time does the train leave?"

"You've got about fifteen minutes."

The station was a shambles of people and baggage, snow and slush. The clanging engine bell, the swishing steam under the car wheels added to the confusion. Kadi's baggage was already aboard. She saw me tearing along the platform, came out of the carriage and stopped me.

"Looking for someone?"

She wore the white fur hat, held the muff in one hand and her hair was gorgeous and careless, as usual.

I began talking fast.

"Buzz buzz," she said, "how much you talk! I thought it was best this way. I've been ordered to Paris, and— Oh, try to understand! I'm always on the go. Maybe there'll be a someday for us, Willie. But the way things are now . . . It would always be goodbye. You're sweet! But I love being a roving correspondent too much to be happy as a wife, darling."

I stood on the platform, desolately, a raincoat over my shoulders, the hospital cap shoved back on my head, and watched the train disappear down the wet track.

IT WAS not snowing, that morning when it happened, but the red Spanish earth of the road was wet and muddy and the empty ambulance lurched crazily as it slithered through it, going toward the front. Up ahead we could hear the sound of artillery, and there were very many planes in the sky. They had told us that Franco was marching on Madrid and we knew that the battle would be a bad one, perhaps the worst. All of our ambulances were in that line headed for the front. Tony's arm jogged on the steering wheel as he drove.

"I got a card from Kadi," I said. "She's in Paris." It was the first time her name had been mentioned between us since she left.

Tony didn't seem to hear me. He was looking upward, his eyes squinting at the sky. I followed his gaze.

And I saw the plane, too. A fast pursuit ship. It was flying low, alone, toward Madrid. Suddenly it swept down toward us, diving at the road.

"Look out!" Tony yelled. I heard the shriek of the machine-guns. Bullets shattered the windshield. The ambulance lurched. I felt a searing sting. Then it was dark, and in the darkness voices were shouting through the gunfire. Suddenly there was silence.

CHAPTER TWO

IT WAS night when I awakened. There were icicles on the window, and the sill was piled high with snow. I heard the motors of ambulances coming in and going out, and the voices of people. The dull, dead boom of the guns was very close. There were planes over Madrid that night, too, squadrons of them, flying high. I could hear them quite clearly.

I remember when I tried to breathe I couldn't, or it seemed that way, and I could hear the wheezing in my throat, as I lay there, inert, feeling nothing. I tried to move my hands and I could not lift them. They seemed to have turned to lead; I had the crazy notion that all of me was lead. I wanted so badly to get up that I began to sweat. I could feel the sweat roll off my body onto the sheets.

After a while there was the swish of a starched white uniform, a certain faint fragrance, a door closing. And Noel stood there looking down at me. Noel, in the pale, half-light from my bed lamp, young, fragile, and tired looking. She put her hand on my forehead. She smiled.

"How do you feel?" Her voice was the calm, matter-of-fact tone of the nurse, but her hands were shaking.

I opened my lips. They were dry, and when I spoke it was a slow whisper, each word sapping at my energy.

"Where am I?"

"You're in your room," she said. "Tony brought you back. He's all right and he's gone back to the front with another ambulance. But he brought you in first."

"A plane got us," I said.

"Yes, Willie, honey, and you mustn't talk any more. It was a Fascist plane. It wrecked the ambulance you and Tony were in. Tony was thrown free. Now try and sleep some more."

"How long—has it been?" I whispered.

"Two days." She was wiping my face now with a cool, wet cloth.

"You—haven't—slept?"

She put a thermometer in my mouth.

"I snatch an hour or so now and then. The battle is still on, and we're terribly short-handed." She grinned at me and whisked back a strand of blond hair. "Remember our motto—wherever pain is—"

"—that's where we are," I finished in a whisper.

She removed the thermometer, read it and wrote on my chart. She hooked the chart back in its place. A squadron of planes was flying directly overhead.

"We operated on you the day you came in. The surgeon—it was Captain Emanuel Ruiz—took three bullets out of your right shoulder."

"Is—that all?"

"No."

I felt it coming.

"When the ambulance turned over, a piece of glass from the windshield—" She stopped.

"My spine?" I diagnosed. Then I lay there, praying that she would say no.

"Yes," she said. Then: "Oh, but you're going to be all right, Willie! You must believe that! You'll be walking in—inside of a year!"

Inside of a year. . . .

I lay there listening to the ambulances, the endless swish of tires, the voices from the corridor and the roar of the guns. . . .

"I wired Kathrine Rogers," Noel said, "in care of the Paris office of her magazine." She was watching my face.

"You—shouldn't—have," I whispered. "Kadi's—busy." I didn't want to ask what was coming next, because Noel's eyes were on me, waiting for that question, hoping it wouldn't come. But it did. I couldn't stop it. "Did you—get —an answer?"

I don't think I fully heard what she said. I was looking at the incredible pain in her eyes.

"No. But don't you worry, Wee Willie. She was probably away somewhere, on a story."

But Kadi didn't answer. Not even a post card.

At first I was not always conscious, but I began to improve, and when I opened my eyes Noel was always there. Gentle hands washing my arms and legs in hot, soapy water. Deft fingers massaging oil into my back. Soft voice making me laugh in spite of the pain.

And there was the night Tony Saxon returned, grim and dirty and tired, trudging into the room, a bottle of champagne under his arm, his green driving glasses stuck in a breast pocket. He pushed his cap back on blond hair, and grinned down at me.

"Well, if it isn't papa," he said. "The romantic interne from Bellevue. Hi ya, kid? How do you feel?"

I said I felt fine, and he said, hell, you should; with someone like Noel around you should feel wonderful. Afterward he sat on his bed and uncoiled the wiring around the champagne cork. He didn't talk about the battle. It was silent outside, now; there were no more planes or guns rumbling.

He popped out the cork and hurriedly wrapped a face towel around the bottle as it foamed over. He poured himself a drink in a paper cup.

"Have you heard from Kadi?" he asked.

"No. She—she's—"

"She's too busy cabling current events at fifteen cents a word. Quit giving yourself the needle, pappy. Kadi just ain't interested in doctors."

"Don't make me laugh," I said. "It ain't good for me."

The days passed, and the nights. Finally I was sitting up in bed. I was reading an American magazine the afternoon Hank Drayton came in. Tony was with him, his arm over Hank's frail shoulder.

"Mr. El Toro has an announcement to make," Tony said.

Hank looked very precise and solemn in a gray business suit, and his eyes behind the horn-rimmed glasses were grave. He loves Noel, too, I thought. It's a funny world.

"It's all over in Spain except for the grieving," he said. "Or just about. The doctor says you're well enough, so I'm transferring you to the American hospital in Paris. Myself, I'm leaving for the Spanish border to set up a food canteen for the refugees flooding into

France. The International Red Cross in Geneva has asked us to help. Noel and Tony will stay in Madrid for a while. There is still much to do here, for the wounded."

"Much," Tony said.

So for us the war, this chapter of Red Cross history, was over. The next day I was on a special train bound for Paris. Tony and Noel sat in the crowded compartment with me until the last minute. The whistle blew, and there was the clang of the engine bell. Tony got up. Noel leaned over and kissed me on the cheek. "Goodbye, Wee Willie," she said softly. Then she turned away quickly and left the car.

"So long, you heel," Tony said.

"I phoned your Paris office," I said.

"Did you? It isn't much of an office, you know. A Frenchwoman runs it and only keeps it open three or four hours a day. I must have been in Germany when you phoned. She forgot to tell me when I came back. I thought you were probably in the States by now."

"But how—"

"Today Noel Leif called long distance from Spain. She said your letters were brief and gay. Too gay, she thought. And that you must be lonely, and were making an effort to pretend you weren't."

"I'll be damned!"

Kadi laughed. "She saw through

I stood up. I took one step. Just one, and I fell headlong on the gravel. She was down beside me at once.

"Willie! Willie!"

I looked up. "How'm I doing, mommy?" I grinned but I didn't feel like grinning.

"Terrible," she said.

WE SAT in the upholstered leather seats, orange walls, chromium, and mirrors around us, in the smart Pam-Pam. Bing Crosby crooned low from a player phonograph. French girls sat at the tables, at the bar, chattering in gay, shrill voices. Young, laughing Frenchmen. Crowds coming and going. Glasses tinkling, waiters

Under relentless fire, wherries, motorboats, tugs and minesweepers came in, loaded and sailed.

"BUZZ-BUZZ," Kadi Rogers said, "what a lovely surprise!"

"Hello, Miss Europe," I said.

"Willie, I just found out you were in Paris, and I rushed right over!"

It was spring now, and I was in a wheel chair in the garden just outside the fine glass solarium of the American hospital. There was a gravel path and grass that was fresh and green. Leaves rustled softly in the trees, and there was the sweet wine smell of Paris in the air.

Kadi looked lovely in a green dress with a red-stitched peasant style bodice. Her hat was in her hand, and her long red hair was windblown.

"It's wonderful to see you!" I said.

"You must think I'm awful. I was in Berlin, an interview with Goering, when Noel wired you'd been wounded. They held me up for weeks. When I got back I found the telegram."

"It doesn't matter."

"Oh, but it does! I felt simply wretched. It should have been forwarded. But you know how things are on the Continent these days. I telephoned Madrid the moment I got it. Somebody in the Red Cross office told me you had left."

your sham, darling. A woman who loves you can, you know."

I didn't bother to deny anything. She was so damned lovely!

"And, oh, I was so glad to find out you were here, Buzz-Buzz. When I heard I came right away to visit you! You see?"

"Yes," I said, "I see." And I did, but not in the way she intended. I saw that it was Noel who had sent Kadi to me.

"You *have* been lonely, haven't you?" she said, and she sat close beside me and held my hand.

My head came up. "Stand there and let me look at you. Aren't you lovely, though!"

She laughed. "Flattery! I love it! We'll fix your blues, Willie. We'll do Paris this spring and summer, you and I. I'll have time on my hands for a while. Darling, I'll roll you in that wheel chair along the Boule' Mich, just like a true girl scout would."

"No you won't!"

"Why not? I'd love it!"

"I've been walking, Kadi." I was kind of proud, and I wanted her to know. "Just a few steps a day, on crutches, of course. But pretty soon I won't need them. Look!"

moving smoothly about. Traffic outside the window on the broad Champs-Elysees, old taxis. Couples on two-seater bikes. Gendarmes in blue capes, low-slung cars. A slate gray sky, April wind, and April rain.

April, 1939 . . .

"Careful, Willie, that man's going to sit on your crutches."

I snatched them away without taking my eyes from her.

"I love you, Kadi."

"The menu says *chateaubriand* for twelve francs."

"That's filet mignon for thirty-six cents—and I still love you."

"Ever hear from your friend Tony Saxon?"

"I get letters," I said.

"He took me around Madrid once, while you were busy at the hospital."

"Yes, I know."

"I wrote him a note, but he never answered."

"You—what?" I felt like someone had thrown ice cold water in my face. "He—he never told me," I said lamely. Or did he? Tony, I thought, who's so crazy about Noel he can't see straight.

Kadi held her head to one side. She

was making a paper hat out of her napkin.

"I sort of liked the big stiff. The way he insulted me the first time we met. Perverse as hell, am I not, darling?"

"I'd be glad to kick you down the stairs," I said, "if it would help my cause. And if there were any stairs handy."

"Oh, I like you much better, Willie. It was just a whim. Let's forget it. I'm taken for granted so much. You know —girl correspondent. Men slam me on the back and call me sis."

"Hello, sis."

She laughed. "I'll kill you. Would you like me to kill you, darling?"

"Not until you marry me."

She leaned forward, suddenly tense. "I may, Willie. Really! Sometimes I get awfully sick of this life. The hurry and scurry, and—"

"And always saying goodbye."

"Yes, exactly!" She looked into my eyes, searching them. "Hello, Willie," she said softly.

What mattered was the way she said it, and how her hand touched mine as she spoke.

I adored and worshipped Kadi. I loved her so much I was scared. One night we went to Montmartre, sat at a table in the Monte Cristo, sat against the austere black velvet walls, and listened to a sad White Russian playing *Dark Eyes* over and over on the piano. I drank champagne, and talked, and talked, and talked.

It was nearly daylight when we left, trees, brick buildings, and iron wicket fences etched black against the dark silver in the sky. There were no taxis and we walked. My crutches sounded hollowly on the cold, silent pavement. Far away in the Madeleine there was the sound of chimes. Pigeons fluttered and cooed from roof tops. A horse clopped by pulling a bakery wagon.

"I've had some excellent surgical experience in Madrid," I said. "And in the States I have a few dollars in the bank. I—I was going to set myself up in New York. Private practice. Does that sound very dull?"

"Very."

"We'd have a little apartment on 22nd Street or somewhere. A hundred a month for rent, and a beautiful view of the clothesline on the tenement roofs below. On a clear day you could probably see the Empire State Building."

"Mmm," she said. "And I'd be a doctor's wife. Fun. A surgeon's wife, with nothing to do all day except, perhaps, write a book. Foreign correspondents always do, you know. Oh, Willie, you can't imagine what it adds up to—but it sounds grand!"

"Darling! Then you really will?"

The sky was streaked with silver and there was a round kiosk at the curb with a gaudy red and green sign that said *Byrrh*. A concierge came out of a doorway and began to sweep the steps. Kadi was looking at me. I leaned forward to kiss her and I dropped one of the crutches. She picked it up.

"I'm so damn clumsy!" I said.

She turned away. "Here comes a taxi."

It was seven o'clock when I reached my room in the hospital. I opened the door and walked in. I was depressed and tired, and my head ached. Tony sat on the extra bed, smoking a cigarette. His bags were stacked in a corner.

"I'm back from the wars," he said. "How's Paris, pappy?"

I MET Kadi at two the next afternoon. It was for lunch and Tony came along. His face was sunburnt, his yellow hair cropped short, his green eyes were full of hell. I couldn't have gone without him.

"I won't steal her," he said. "What do you think I am, a rat, like you?"

"Why am I a rat this time? What's on your mind, pappy?"

"Noel. Talking about you. Working 'til she's ready to drop dead and not being able to sleep because she's worrying about Wee Willie! You want to know something?"

"No," I snapped.

"She'll never love anyone else as long as she lives. I did everything but serenade her with a jew's harp. But it's no soap. Noel can't see me for apples. Only you will ever do for her."

"I'm going to marry Kadi," I said. "She's said yes."

"Tony frowned. "I didn't know she was so dumb. You're both dumb."

So Tony came to lunch with us, and we went to the Cafe de Paris. Tony and Kadi drank wine and ate heartily. I ordered a salad. Tony glanced over at it. "You aren't supposed to eat greens in France, Willie. It ain't sanitary. And you a doctor, too!" Kadi laughed, and Tony looked at her. He nodded his head toward me. "I hear you're going to marry the boy."

She flushed. "Well, I—"

"I suppose you think you're going to give up being a correspondent," he said. "You won't. You never will. So what are you going to do, hang him on your typewriter alongside the eraser?"

She became angry. "I don't think it's any of your business."

"You'll have a terrible time getting him checked through customs with the rest of your baggage," Tony said. "In England for instance there's a law that says you have to keep dogs in quarantine for six months before they can enter the country. Willie'd have a hell of a time in a kennel." Kadi grinned and her anger vanished. Tony looked at me. "Just think, Willie. In a few years you'll have labels stuck all over you—the *Moscow Express, Biarritz Ski Train*. Do you think you'll like that?"

"I'll like it fine," I said. "But it won't be that way."

"Of course it won't," Kadi said. "Why shouldn't I quit my job? There's been so many crises in Europe it's beginning to pall."

"You'll never quit," Tony repeated. "War'll come, and it will be exciting again and you'll be right in there—"

"Don't be so damned cheerful!" I snapped.

"Willie, as a pacifist I've already been up to my neck in blood in Madrid, and I'm sick to my very guts of war. But Spain was just the start. I see the handwriting on the wall. Tomorrow I report to the French Red Cross. If they haven't got anything for me to do here I leave for the States. I'm going back to New York and sell the Brooklyn Bridge to somebody, and watch Europe burn from afar."

I glanced at Kadi. She was watching Tony.

In the afternoon we went to the races, and that night we crossed to the South Bank and had dinner in the Coupole. Tony was still with us. I couldn't shake him. Kadi was in high spirits. She suggested we go to the *Comedie Francaise* and afterward to the Eiffel Tower. Tony had never been in Paris before and she was anxious that he should miss nothing. When they walked arm in arm on the boulevard it was hard for me, on crutches, to keep up. Often they seemed to forget I was there.

On the Tour Eiffel it was very dark and the three of us stood and looked out over the beautiful patchwork of streets, gas lights and roof tops. You could see Notre Dame Cathedral clearly, and flat barges floated lazily in the ivory moonlight on the river Seine. I leaned over the parapet and looked down. When I straightened up Tony was holding Kadi in his arms and kissing her. I didn't know what to do. I just stood there. Then Kadi laughed softly.

"Tony, you fool!" she said. "Why did you do that."

"It doesn't mean a thing," he said. "I always kiss pretty girls. Hey, Willie, I kissed your girl!"

But it wasn't that easy, or that simple. And the only thought in my mind was *He's going to the States. He'll leave in a day or so. He'll be gone! Then I'll have her to myself again.*

TONY slammed the door behind him. "I'm not going back. I'm staying here, to inspect and report on French Red Cross posts," he explained. "I sold them on the idea. A closer collaboration between the French Red Cross and ze big rich American organization."

We were in the room at the hospital. It was late afternoon, and pale champagne twilight filled the room. I was practicing walking back and forth without crutches. I reached out and grabbed the end of the bed.

Tony grinned at me. "Hell, don't look so unhappy about it! I thought we were buddies, you rat!"

I sat down. "Sure we're buddies. You're my best friend—and right now I hate your guts. And you know why."

From there on it got worse and worse. There was that day weeks later. It rained. The streets were steamy. I wasn't using crutches any more and I wandered into the Chateau-Frontenac bar on the Rue Pierre-Charron. It was early and there were no other patrons. An electric phonograph was playing *Lambeth Walk*. I ordered a Bacardi, and sat at the bar, thinking. I was desperate. Tony had been seeing

Kadi. I knew damn well he didn't love her. I decided I'd force a showdown. Tonight.

I don't know how long I sat there. The electric phonograph kept changing records. I had three Bacardis. Then I was conscious of footsteps coming down the stairs. I turned on the stool, and looked up. It was Tony and Kadi. Kadi wore a loose plaid jacket, and a blue skirt. Her hat was off and her red hair fell about her shoulders.

She came over to the bar and I got up. She kissed me, and then I saw that she was crying. Kadi crying!

"You'll understand, won't you, Willie?" she said.

"Understand?"

"Yes," Tony said. "Kadi and I were married an hour ago."

CHAPTER THREE

THE village was built on a hill, and the streets were paved with cobblestones. You could look across to the purple mountains of Spain, from the hill-top, and two miles away there was a border patrol and frontier station.

The refugee camp was on the left of the village and to reach it you had to leave the road and tramp over a rough, rocky terrain, although by now a road had been beaten there by wagon tracks and footsteps. Just below the road were rows of tents and shacks, clothes lines, tin water troughs, soup kitchens, and the squat one-story dispensary which had been hastily constructed. From a pole on the roof of the dispensary flew a white flag with a red cross on it.

My legs ached like hell from the long walk and I was glad to reach the dispensary.

It was just now five in the morning and except for the squawl of a new infant there was neither sound nor activity in the camp. I entered the dispensary and closed the door. An electric light still burned. On two long rows of army cots there were Loyalist soldiers who had either fled or been carried across the border during the night. They were all sleeping and the long room stank with the smell of sweat. At the end of the corridor, I saw a figure in white. She straightened up, pulled a sheet over the face of a soldier, and turning, moved toward me, her head down. Her uniform was soiled; her face was haggard with fatigue.

"Noel," I said.

She looked up, startled. "Willie!" she whispered.

"Hi ya, honey?"

"Oh, Willie! When did you get here?"

"About an hour ago."

She was folding a piece of paper. "A man just died. He wanted me to write a letter, to send back to Spain. Poor souls, they all want to write a letter before they die!"

I nodded. "How's everything else?"

"Remarkably well. The French Red Cross is going to take over completely in a day or so. Henry Drayton and I expect to leave for Paris then."

"Where is Hank?"

"Asleep. He's run himself ragged here. You wouldn't know him. He's lost twenty pounds."

Later we sat at a hard-grained table and she nibbled at breakfast. I tried to drink the muddy coffee the cook poured for me.

"I don't know where we go from here," Noel said. "Back to the States, I guess."

"That won't be so bad."

"No."

"You going to stay with the Red Cross?"

Her eyes were moist. "Always," she said softly. "There is so much misery, pain and suffering in the world, and they do so much to relieve it, Willie! And not just in time of war, either. If people only realized! Too many of them think of the Red Cross as a slogan or a button to wear on the lapel."

"You're upset. You're dead tired, honey. You need a rest.

"Yes, Willie, I am."

"You're very brave."

"Hank's asked me to marry him," she said abruptly.

"Are you going to?"

Outside, the refugees were up, and there was a long, ragged line filing past the brass soup tureens where food was scooped up and put on their tin plates. Mushroom soup for breakfast. It was mushroom country. Children were running and screaming. A dog yipped. Voices rose and fell, speaking soft, fluent Spanish.

"I don't know," she said.

I stirred the lukewarm, syrupy coffee. "Kadi's married." I said. "To Tony."

She searched my face, and her eyes went wide with amazement. "But he doesn't love her!" she said.

"He married her. They've gone to Verdun for a honeymoon." I said. "Kadi has to do an article on the Maginot Line."

"But what's Tony doing? For a living, I mean."

"Nothing. The French Red Cross had him writing reports, gave him an expense account. But that's finished. The last time I saw him he was tight. 'Willie,' he said, 'here I am married and not an ambulance to my name.' "

"Do you suppose he married her to keep you from doing it?"

"I don't need a guardian," I said. She was searching my face and I knew she was trying to find out just how I felt about it. I couldn't hurt her by telling her.

"What are you going to do now, Willie?"

"New York," I said. "Surgery. A private practice. What else is there?"

Hank Drayton came in and sat down. His eyes were bloodshot and heavy with weariness. He didn't notice me at first. He put on his horn-rimmed glasses and looked up to see what there was to eat. Then he smiled at Noel, opposite him.

"Good morning." He always spoke in clipped tones. "We leave for Paris this afternoon, Noel." He gazed at her, infinite tenderness in his eyes, his thin, anemic hands on the table. "Dear Noel! God knows you need a rest." Then suddenly he noticed me.

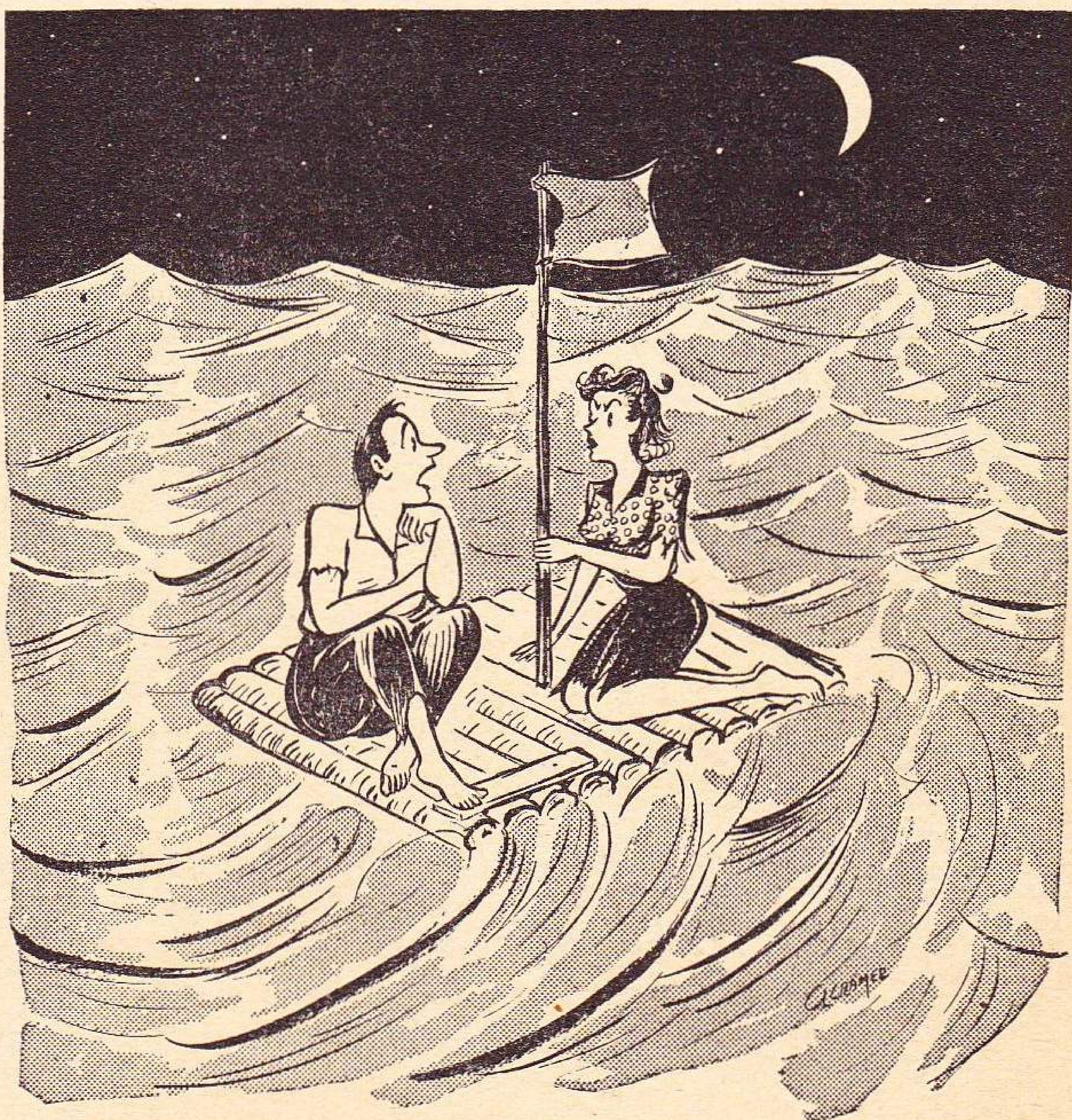
"William!"

"Old El Toro," I said. "The bull with a voice like a mouse."

He laughed and slapped me on the back. He was glad to see me.

Afterward, Noel said it was the first time he had laughed in all the weeks he had been here.

The three of us left together that afternoon, for Paris. Two Spanish refugees begged for permission to carry



"I wonder what the boys in Kelly's poolroom are doing tonight."

Hank's and Noel's scant baggage, and a mob of children walked with us halfway up the hill. When we reached the village we stood on top of the hill and looked down at the camp where the white Red Cross flag fluttered from the roof of the dispensary, and the little, shabby people wandered aimlessly.

"I hate to leave them," Noel whispered. "The poor things!"

In August the skies were gray, and tarnished nickel of rain fell across the roof tops of Paris, and into the streets. People talked of Neville Chamberlain, of Hitler, the crisis in Poland, and the song going around was *Stay In My Arms, Cinderella.* You heard it on records in the Pam-Pam, and the girl orchestra at the Cafe de Paris played it, with a vocal in French. The popular French song was *Mon Legionnaire* which was very sad and pretty; they played it at the night clubs in Montmartre, and at all of the theatres and cafes. Wherever people gathered, patriotic music was played. Wherever you turned you heard *La Marsellaise.* Clerks in shops, perfume girls on the Rue de la Paix, the bank tellers in Place Vendome, all asked feverishly each morning, "Do you think war will really come?"

For two weeks Hank and Noel rested. We three dined in sidewalk cafes, window-shopped on the Champs-Elysées. We sat side by side in Johnny's Bar at the Frontenac, sipping wine. Then one day our tickets were sent through from the New York office. We were booked second class to New York, on the *Normandie.*

"We sail on Wednesday," Noel said. "Are you glad, Willie?"

"It'll be fine to get back," I said.

But I thought of a snowy Christmas Eve on a cobbled street in Madrid, me in my tux, and Kadi at my side, and the thunder of guns in our ears. I thought of Kadi saying, "Let's have wine, mistletoe, and a Christmas kiss." I thought of her at the train that day she left, the fur hat, and the muff. I remembered Paris, and Kadi saying, "I may, Willie; I may marry you!"

But she had married Tony. . . .

"The States will seem nice," Noel said.

"Yes," I said, "they'll seem nice."

I RAN into Tony in Harry's Fly Bar before we left. He sat on a stool, his legs hooked on the rungs, wearing a gray trench coat, a felt hat shoved back on his head. There was a Scotch and soda in front of him. There had been many Scotches and sodas before that one, I could tell at a glance. It was ten minutes past eight on Tuesday night and the *Normandie* boat train would leave early the next morning. I sat down at the bar beside him and ordered an old-fashioned.

Tony looked at me in the bar mirror.

"The scurvy interne from Bellevue," he said.

"I thought you were in Verdun."

"I came back, little man. Do you mind?"

"Where's Kadi?"

"She's still there. Somebody in the family has to work, don't they? She's being shown through the Maginot Line. For all I know she's a German spy."

"You're drunk."

"I've got a start," he admitted. "I was coming to see you later. I talked to Hank on the phone. I hear you shove off tomorrow."

"That's right."

"So we lose track of one another again," he said. "We did that once before. Remember?" He paused. "When we were thirteen."

"Don't make me cry! What I want to know is about you and Kadi."

He rubbed his hand down over his face. "Don't worry about us. We're dandy. I'm practically a kept man. I asked her to quit and come back to the States. I promised to get an honest job and support her." He shrugged, swishing his drink around. "It's no soap. She claims she's going to land me a job on the Paris edition of the *Herald-Trib.*"

"Well, that's all right. Why not?"

"Kadi's scheduled to go to China. I'm supposed to tag along. Get a commission from the Red Cross, Kadi says. Any Red Cross. What I do after I get the commission isn't exactly clear."

"China'll be swell. It'll be good experience."

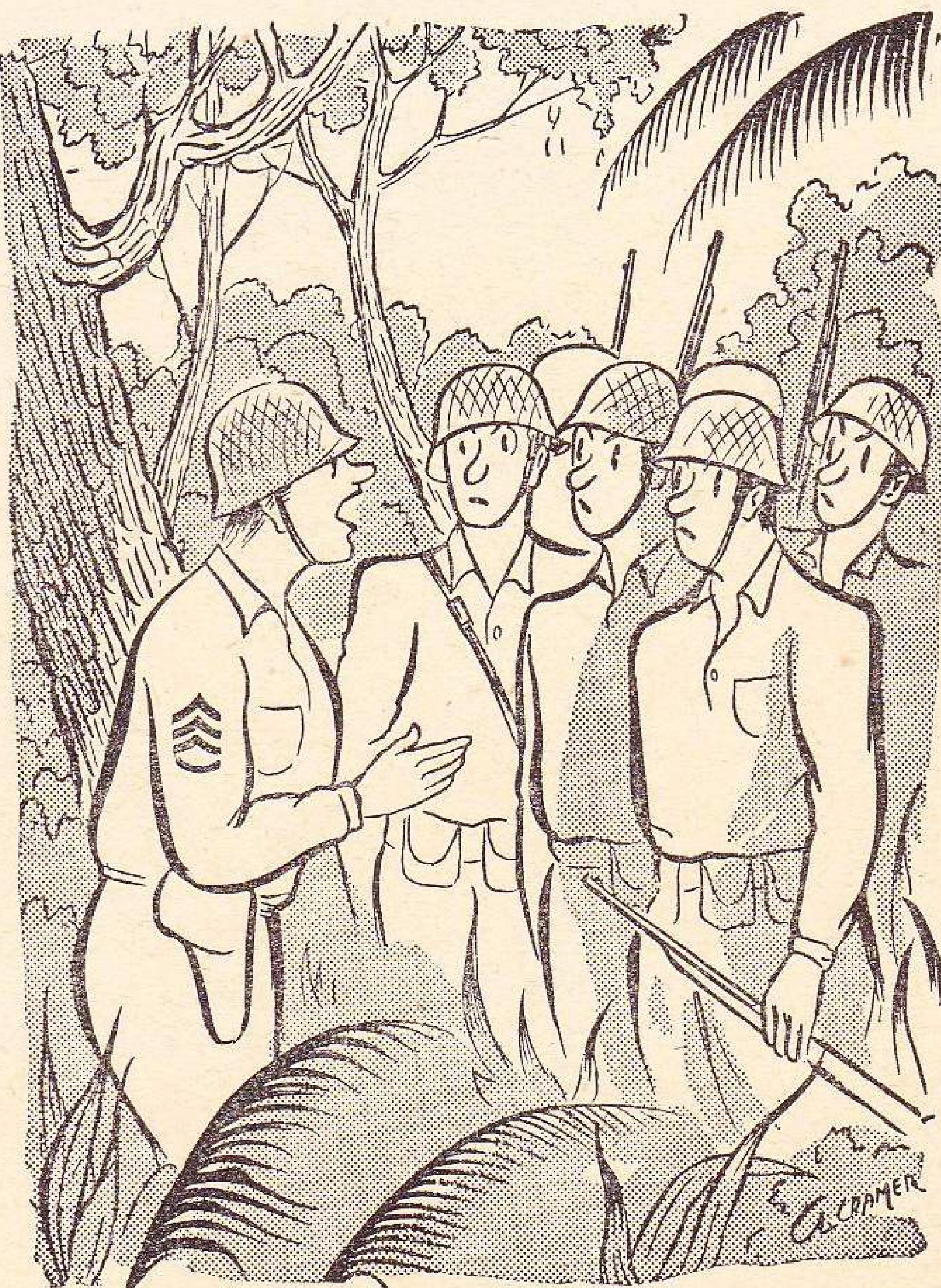
"What experience? I'm a guy that likes slippers, a fireplace, and the American language. And I haven't the temperament of a gigolo."

I drank my old-fashioned. Rain fell against the plate-glass windows of the bar. Automobile lights flared yellow outside.

"Why'd you marry her?" I said. "To spite me? Or because you wanted to give me to Noel?"

Tony glared at me. "Noel may be nuts about you, but I wouldn't wish you on a Nazi!"

I wouldn't let him alone now.



"Now get in there and fight, men! Remember—my promotion depends on it."

"You took Kadi away from me. Why aren't you with her? You double-crossed me, now you're doing it to her."

Tony decided to ignore me then.

I slapped a ten-franc piece on the bar, got up and moved toward the door. I went outside in the rain and the door closed behind me. Across the street a purple neon *Dubonnet* sign was going on and off. I walked up the street. A gendarme blew his whistle at the traffic. There were umbrellas, galoshes. Taxis rushing past, their tires slithering in the rain. I kept walking.

I saw Tony again the next morning in Gare St. Lazare. There were milling crowds, train whistles, running porters. Twenty different tracks of trains. Three of them were *Normandie* boat trains leaving for Havre. I helped Hank and Noel aboard and then went to see about our luggage. I was leaving the baggage depot when a hand landed on my shoulder. It was Tony. A sober Tony.

"'Fraid I'd miss you, pappy!"

"Noel's in the train."

"It's you I want to say goodbye to."

I looked at him. Engine bells were clanging. The boat train on Track One began to move. Tony was holding his worn leather gloves in his left hand. He wanted to shake hands.

"That's the real reason I came up from Verdun," he said. "Don't worry about Kadi. I know how you feel. I'll be good to her, pappy. Honest! I won't beat her unless she needs it. I'll even carry her typewriter across Asia if she asks me to."

"Tell her I asked about her," I said.

"Sure." He grinned. "Be good, Willie." The train jerked, began to move. I hooked on. Tony ran along the platform. "And write, you dog," he said, "in care of the American Express."

He stood there on the platform, waving, as the train pulled out.

I FINISHED tacking the sedate little sign on the panelled, mahogany door, and stepped back. *William Carter, M.D.* it read.

"There it is, Noel," I said. "How does it look?"

"Oh, Willie, it looks wonderful!"

"But what if a patient comes?" Hank Drayton asked. "You're not open for business yet, are you?"

We were in the carpeted hallway on the fortieth floor of Doctor's Building on 57th Street. It was the second of September, late summer in Manhattan, and I had just rented the office.

"No," I said. "But I've been added to the staff of two different hospitals. I've already done six charity operations. No dough, but it makes you feel good to know you're of some value in the world, even if it's infinitesimal." I opened the office door. "C'mon in, before I start sounding like a boy scout."

They followed me inside. There was no furniture, not even a rug on the floor. There were three rooms. I didn't know if I could afford the place, but I was proud of it.

"I've got just enough money in the

bank to furnish it," I said. "All the equipment, leather chairs, special instruments, fluoroscope."

"Where'd you get the money?" Hank asked.

"Dad left it to me, the sum total of all he could save in his years as a country doctor."

"He was a fine man," Noel said.

"He was. And he knew what that dough would mean to me, being a doctor. I shrugged and stuck a cigarette in my mouth. "Without it, I'd have to share a twenty dollar a month office in the Bronx with a dentist or another doctor."

Noel looked at me. "I didn't know you were ambitious, Willie."

"Ambitious? Listen, all my life I've had one big dream—to be, eventually, the finest surgeon in the world." I snapped out of it, laughed. "Take a peek in here. Would you like a leg cut off, Miss Leif? Or an arm? I can make you a good rate on an arm."

"What about an appendix?"

"Appendix I take out with one hand tied behind me."

I turned. She was there facing me, close. Hank was still in the other room. I caught her to me suddenly, and kissed her. I hadn't meant to kiss her. I thought of Kadi.

Noel was very still and her face was white. She didn't say anything but she didn't move away.

"I'm going away for six weeks," I said. "To the mountains. I'm going to get Madrid, Paris, all of it, out of my soul. When I come back I'll be a different guy. I'll furnish the office and be open for business. But for six weeks I want to be where nobody can see me, or reach me."

"I understand, Willie."

"You'll be here when I get back, won't you?"

"Yes," she said.

"They're giving me a six weeks concession on the rent, so the office isn't costing me anything while I'm away."

"What's this in here," Hank called, "this dinky little room?"

"Why, El Toro," I said, "that's the metabolism room. How *is* your metabolism?"

"It's very good," he said. "It's my liver that bothers me."

I left for the mountains that night, to purge myself of memories. Hell, I was a surgeon. I was going to sew my heart back together again.

Six weeks can be a very long time. But it wasn't long enough this time. I sat in a little log cabin, and I watched a big deer standing tensely on delicate legs not a hundred feet from my window. I had the battery radio tuned low and I heard bells tolling far away in London, and a tired old voice saying: *"England is in a state of war. . ."*

I listened to the commentators, and dance bands play *Stay in My Arms, Cinderella.* I remembered April in Paris, the sky slate gray, the Pam-Pam on the Champs-Elysees, and Kadi saying: "Careful. That man's going to sit on your crutches . . ." I remembered a silver dawn, a red and green *Byrrh* sign, and a concierge sweeping the steps. I remembered Tony saying: "I wouldn't steal her. What do you think I am, a rat, like you?" And I thought again of Tony standing on the platform in Gare St. Lazare, waving goodbye. . . .

Six weeks hadn't been enough. I had come to sew together the pieces of my heart. But I was not that good a surgeon. Not yet.

I went back to New York. I took Noel to Leon and Eddie's. Eddie singing *There'll Always Be An England.* Soft, colored lights. The music of the band. Noel and I at a small table. Noel, her flaxen hair falling about her shoulders now, not tied primly back on her head. Noel, a mink jacket thrown open, wearing an orchid corsage. She sipped a Martini while I finished my third straight rye.

"You look like a deb again, kid. Nobody'd ever guess you were a war-hardened nurse." I looked up. "Waiter, another whiskey."

She said, "Did you have fun in the mountains, Willie?"

"Sure," I said, "there was never a dull moment. Nothing but laughs."

"You're as unhappy as you were before you went away. It didn't help, did it?"

"Don't worry about me," I said. "I'm always blue and upset after a trip to the mountains. It's the fresh air that does it. Two more drinks and I'll be fine. How's everything?"

"Well, there's a war."

"Yes. And I'm worried about Tony."

"Tony?" She smiled ruefully.

"Kadi too," I confessed. "I don't know where they are."

"They've written you three or four letters. Hank has them. One was postmarked somewhere in Asia. Came by Air-France and then Clipper."

She was very lovely tonight. She reminded me again of a Norwegian doll, fresh, delicate, lovely.

"The Red Cross is sending units to Poland," she said.

"You're not going, Noel?"

"I'd thought of it," she said.

"No," I said. "Don't go, Noel." I didn't know quite why, but I didn't want her to go away. The band played softly, Cole Porter's *The Honorable Mr. So and So,* and saucy, nearly nude show girls were on the platform, wearing top hats.

She stared at me. "Why, Willie?"

"Stay here," I said. Then, impulsively: "Stay here and marry me."

"Willie!"

"We'll have an apartment on 22nd Street or somewhere. A hundred a month, and a view of the clothesline of the tenements below." This was a retake, I thought. A retake with a new heroine and a different background. Noel was crying. Kadi had never cried, or when she had cried, her tears had not been for me.

WE GOT the license at City Hall at seventeen minutes after two the next afternoon. Noel's face was flushed and happy. We stood there in the big musty room, a Standard clock looking at me from the opposite wall, and I kissed her. I kissed her, and I tried to believe that this was what I wanted. But I wasn't sure.

"Mother's visiting friends in Cleveland," she said. "I'm going to fly there and spend the two days we have to wait, with her. Maybe I'll bring her down for the wedding. Oh, Wee Willie, I'm a fool to tell you, but I was so happy I lay awake and cried all night!"

"And we'll be married Saturday?" I said.

"Yes. You make arrangements!" She paused. "I'll meet you at noon on Saturday. How's that? At the Little Church Around the Corner."

I said, "It's a date, Miss Leif. I'll make a memo of it."

"See that you do!" She laughed. "Oh, Willie!"

I kissed her again. She was trembling.

On Thursday I was in my room packing. There was a knock at the door. I said, "Come in."

Hank Drayton walked in with a packet of letters in his hand. He looked at the littered room, the open suitcases, neckties hanging on the chandelier. I waved my hand at the mess.

"Behold, the last days of Pompeii. I've found an apartment on 22nd Street, and I'm moving in two days early to make everything ready for my bride. Did you know, El Toro, that I was about to relinquish my freedom?"

"Noel told me," he said.

"You can come over every Saturday night and have supper with us."

He shrugged. "You know how I feel, Willie. She's happy. That's the important thing." He glanced at the letters. "I brought your mail. You didn't call for it, and I thought it might be important. In addition to the letters there's a cable marked urgent. From Shanghai."

I opened the cable, glanced at the signature. *Kathrine Rogers.* I had to read the message twice before it made sense. Even then the words were blurred:

TONY LOST SOMEWHERE IN ASIA. IN TERRIBLE DANGER. UNABLE TO REACH HIM. NEED YOUR HELP. PLEASE COME. LIFE AND DEATH. DESPERATE.

Kadi Rogers, article writer with a flare for the dramatic. It probably wasn't that bad at all. Silently, and eloquently, I cursed her. But all the same I felt a thrill—she had turned to me when she needed help.

I read the cable again. I *could* go, of course. Air passage to the coast, China Clipper from there. It wouldn't take me long. But it would cost every cent I had before I was through. There'd be no office furniture, no fine equipment to start in practice as a surgeon. And there was no guarantee that I could be of help to Tony after I got there.

My head ached suddenly. If I was going, every minute counted. My pulse raced. I'd have to leave this afternoon. *What about Noel?*

I left Hank standing there and walked to the window. My ears were ringing. I stared down at the street. Cars were crawling along. I heard the roar of New York . . . Why did Kadi have to cable *me?* Why didn't she leave me alone! Tony could take care of himself . . .

What about Noel?

She was in Cleveland. I didn't even know the name of the people her mother was visiting. I hadn't even asked! There was no way, absolutely none, in which I could communicate with Noel. I couldn't see her until Saturday. *Two days!*

"Oh hell!" I said.

Down on the street a taxi had brushed the fender of a limousine. The cab driver and the chauffeur were arguing. I turned around. The room was like a vacuum. I saw Hank standing there, pale eyes watching me through the horn-rimmed glasses. Either I had to leave for China at once, or I'd never go. Spend the career money, stand Noel up at the church—*or never go!* I thought of Tony, lost somewhere in Asia. I thought of Noel, exquisite, tender. I thought of Kadi . . . And I made the decision I had to make.

"Hank," I said. "Will you do me a favor?"

CHAPTER FOUR

OCTOBER in Shanghai. . . .

There was the clatter of dinky trolleys, rickshas. The smell of incense, fish, sweat, Russian perfume. There were thatched pagoda roofs, red-and-orange shops, bazaar tapestries hanging in long gold strips, and fine white-washed, modernistic buildings, apartments and hotels. There were Englishmen in white linen, Chinese students in long black shirts, Japanese in baggy uniforms, bayonets glistening in the sun. There was teeming movement, sound, smell, confusion, boat whistles, a tinny phonograph, a French lullaby, see-saw voices of the Cantonese. . . .

The hotel was in the International Settlement. I called from the lobby and Kadi asked me to come up.

She opened the door. She was a changed Kadi. She wore white linen, the skirt tight on her lips, her silk-stockinged legs long and lean. Her red hair was cut shorter.

The furniture in the room was all wicker, with white linen covers. I saw her baggage, the gaudy splash of labels. Her portable typewriter sat on an expensive teak table. Beside it stood a gin sling, half gone.

"Oh, Willie!" she said. She grasped my hands and pulled me into the room. She was nervous, distracted, but glad to see me.

I wanted to say, "You look fine, Kadi." But she didn't, not as fine as she had looked in Paris. Her pretty face was worn sharp with worry.

"How was the trip?" Kadi said.

"Have you heard from Tony yet?" I asked.

"No." She leaned forward, her hands clenched. "I know where he is. I found out last night. But I waited for you to help me."

"In your present state of nerves," I said, "I guess it was a good idea." I felt amazingly calm and I was a little surprised at that.

"Yes. I wasn't sure I could get through by myself. It's a hazardous journey, an impossible trip, the white residents say. But nothing's impossible. Do you believe anything is impossible?"

"No," I said, because that was what she wanted to hear.

"I asked them what clothes I'd need to take with me and they said a shroud would be enough . . . It's the one place in China the Japs haven't invaded. And they had a good reason for avoiding it. Willie, it's the plague. Tony's got the plague!"

"God!" I stared at her.

"But Tony isn't dead! He's very sick. But he isn't dead!"

"Where did you get your information?"

"A French priest up there sent word. Willie, it's been awful! I sent wires and cables to just about everybody in the world. There were days when I—I thought I'd go crazy!" She jumped up and walked to the window. She turned. "I must confess you're the only one who thought enough of me to come to Shanghai."

"Tony's my best friend," I said flatly.

She went on as though she hadn't heard. "I pulled every diplomatic and journalistic string I could. Believe me, I had Shanghai popping for a few days! Word got through to T'Sing, and the priest wired that Tony was there." She picked up the gin sling, swished it around, and drank. "But the wire was delayed two days."

I shuddered. "Bubonic plague! Of all the things for Tony to run into! Well, we'll get him out if there's a way out."

She said, "Oh, Willie! I knew I could depend on you!"

I held the cold drink in my two hands and looked at her across the glass. "How'd he get lost in the first place?"

She pinched out her cigarette, her eyes on the ash-tray. "We had a fight, on the Orient Express coming across Asia. I wanted Tony to get a job with the Red Cross in China. I thought he could get a commission to do something. Well, he didn't. He wouldn't. I was paying expenses, train tickets, boat, plane, food. I was *happy* to do it, Willie, but Tony resented living on my money. He kept saying, 'Why don't you hang me on your typewriter alongside the eraser?'"

"He said you'd do that to me," I told her.

She didn't seem to hear. She went on reviewing things.

"In Russia he drank vodka and became very ugly. In Moscow he told friends that I was Kathrine Rogers and he was Mister Rogers. One afternoon on the train he sat and sang the gigolo song for hours. Always moody, depressed. He'd say, 'How does it feel to wear the pants in the family, Miss Rogers? Even though they are black lace.'"

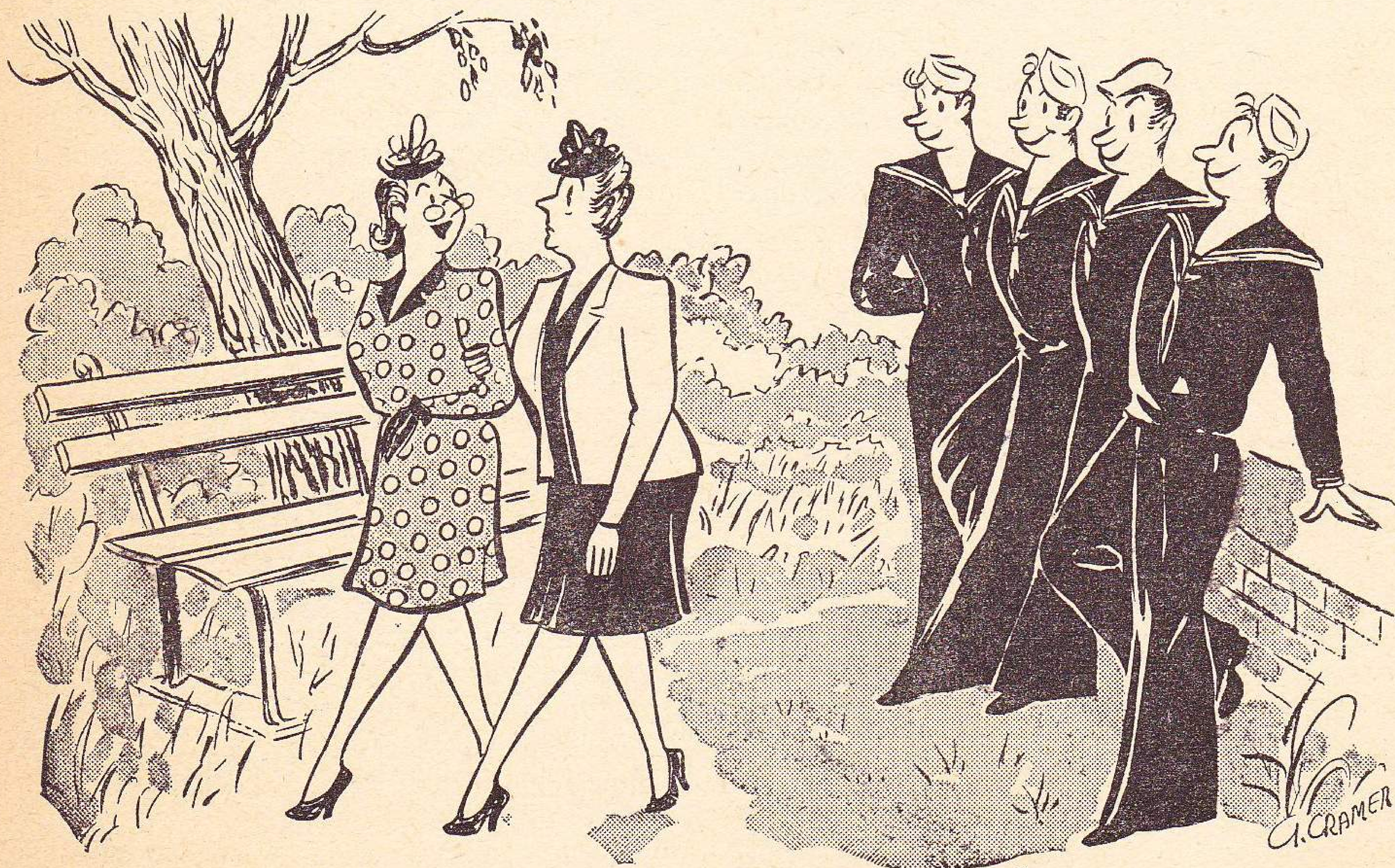
"You'd have to be a man to understand the way he felt," I said. "I understand it."

Her eyes filled with tears. "Willie, I love him! I've never been in love before in all my life. And it's awful!"

"But—about Tony?" I drank the rest of my drink, trying to wash the dryness from my throat.

"Well, two days before we reached Shanghai we had a terrible fight. The same old argument. He wanted me to quit my job and return to the States. I said I couldn't. I had business in China and then I had to get back to Europe. This fight was worse than any of our others.

"That afternoon an American newspaperman stopped in our compartment to chat. The train was sweeping across a flat plain. The man said about six hundred miles across that plain lay the main Chinese army. Tony asked a



"Perhaps in times like this we should unbend."

lot of questions and seemed very interested in the subject. Later, he went with the man into the smoker, still talking about the Chinese army. I was glad to see him show an interest in something besides whiskey.

"I went to bed. I remember that the train stopped somewhere for water just before I dozed off. I didn't awaken until morning. The train was racing through small, thickly populated villages. Tony wasn't there. He hadn't been to bed. His bag was gone." She shrugged. "He'd left the train during the night."

"Didn't anyone know where he got off?"

"Apparently no one saw him. I realized he knew nothing of China, that he had very little money, and no means of getting across the six hundred miles of rugged country to reach the Chinese army, if he had intended to volunteer. I was scared to death. But there was nothing I could do. When the train arrived in Shanghai I wired, cabled, telephoned . . ."

"How far did Tony get?"

"Farther than anyone thought he could. T'sing is nearly two hundred and fifty miles from any railroad or waterway. He got that far, and God knows *how!*"

I paced the floor, trying to plan. Kadi began to cry. I went over and took her in my arms. She clung to me.

"Oh, Willie! I love that big bum so much! No one should ever love this much!"

IT WAS night and cool when we started out for T'sing. Chair bearers jogged along, their yellow lanterns glowing in the darkness. Kadi was in the first chair, I was in the one that followed. Coolies trotted behind with mattresses, blankets, and boxes of medical supplies on their backs. The French priest had wired us a long list of things he needed. Apparently he thought the Red Cross was paying for them. I had gotten as much of the list as it was possible to obtain, and Kadi paid for it.

We had come as far as we could by plane. But the Chinese pilot refused to fly more than a hundred miles inland. He explained there would be no place in the hilly country to make a landing. It was necessary to span the remaining distance by chair.

The moon was cold-white. There was a flash of water, a rice field. We jogged through a thicket of bamboo. The bearers were chattering among themselves. One broke into a tuneless song. It was getting colder, as we climbed. A peasant passed us, a worn face, blue rags, bearing heavy laden baskets on his yoke, on his way to a market.

I thought of Noel and a cold, lonely chill took possession of me. I heard her say again: *"I was so happy, Willie, I cried all night!"* I looked ahead through the darkness, and I felt lost in the vast night over Asia. I was shivering, but not of the cold, now.

The lanterns suddenly flung jagged light across a whitewashed hut, the first shabby house outside a city wall. The causeway rose sharply. In a few minutes we swept in through the gates of the city. Shops were still open; it was the market place. There were crowds of Chinese. The bearers shouted loudly and people scattered, making an aisle for us. We reached an inn and the chair was set down.

I climbed out and stretched my legs. There was a long yard, rooms facing an open court. Chinese sat at wooden tables playing games in which they used beans. Oil lamps were strung above them. There was the pungent smell of manure. A goat walked aimlessly past.

Kadi stood before me, slim, tired, a peasant hood tied under her chin, a bandana scarf about her throat. Her linen suit was wrinkled and dusty.

She said, "I suppose we'll have to stay here." She resented stopping for even a moment. "Ask the guide if we can get food."

When I returned she was already in her room. There was no door, only a tattered screen between us. The floor was dirty. An oil lamp glowed on an earthenware table. There was a bundle of hay in one corner and an *amah* was rolling out Kadi's mattress.

"The royal suite," I said. "Some fun, huh, kid?"

"Mm, boy, just like—" A sob caught in her throat. "It's no use, Willie, I can't joke!" She paused. "How much farther is it?"

"Another two days," I said.

"Lord! And he may be—" She could not say it.

"He'll be all right," I said, but I knew the chances were I was lying.

It was on noon of the third day that we reached T'sing. The village was quite small. There was no city gate, but high on the hill as you entered stood an ancient archway, ivory white against the pale blue of the fall sky. In rows behind the archway were hovels built of dried mud, ugly and obscene. There were no children playing in the streets, no activity of any kind.

The bearers climbed the hill slowly. Four Chinese moved past, carrying an unpainted coffin. I heard Kadi cry out as we passed the corpse of an old man lying in a ditch, black and terrible in death. As we continued there were other corpses, some in advanced stages of decay. They lay in horrible, grotesque positions, and it was obvious from their number that the stricken village was unable to bury all its dead.

At the top of the hill the bearers set down our chairs, refused to go and farther. They had been paid in advance, and when Kadi and I got out they turned and ran as fast as their legs would carry them.

We went on afoot toward a low one-story building that had a sloping roof, and an engraved crucifix on the heavy door.

This was evidently the mission of the French priest. I opened the door. The smell from inside was so foul I inadvertantly stepped back, and Kadi held a handkerchief to her mouth.

All of the benches had been ripped out of the mission, replaced by straw mats. There were so many Chinese lying upon them, men, women, and children, that there were easily two for every mat. They were in various stages of the Black Death, and I saw that some had already died but were not yet removed.

At the end of the room we saw an altar, and several candles burned there, casting eerie light against a stained glass figure of Christ in the background.

Moving down the center aisle toward us now—Kadi and I stood in the doorway—was a very old man, his priest's robes swishing as he walked. His hair was white and cut in a fringe around his head, and his brown face was seamed and lined. He had a heavy, firm mouth and intent black eyes. He reached us, bowed and smiled.

"You are very welcome," he said. The trace of a French accent softened his words. "I am Father Andre."

I introduced Kadi and myself. He came outside with us and his black eyes shone when he saw the supplies.

"They are sorely needed." He looked at me. "You are a doctor?"

"Yes."

"I am not, but I have done what I could. We had one doctor here, a Chinese. He died last week."

Kadi's voice broke. "Tony, is he—"

"He is at my cottage," the priest said. "Come along, I know you're anxious to see him."

"He's alive," Kadi said. *"Alive!"*

The room in the cottage was darkened, the shades drawn, and we came in quietly. "It is not the plague, but fever," the priest said. "I do not know which is worse, but if it had been the plague he would not have lived this long."

A candle burned in a small red glass, and Tony lay upon a cot. He tossed feverishly. His face looked tawny; his eyes were hollow. He was skin and bones. The priest raised the shade a trifle so he could see us, and Tony's burning eyes focused upon Kadi. His parched lips moved.

"Hello, Kat."

She was sobbing now, and she fell on her knees beside the cot, flinging her arms around him. Then Tony saw me. He tried to laugh, and his voice cracked.

"Hello, pappy," he said. "Hello, you dog!"

I DID all I could for him. That afternoon Father Andre told how Tony had gotten here. The evening he had gone out of Kadi's compartment, Tony had not really intended to leave the train. But he had been drinking heavily and was bitter and depressed. In the salon he discovered a group consisting of two Russians, one Mongol, and one American. They had been riding second class, and were preparing to get off. They were volunteers for the Chinese army, all of them familiar with Asia, and they planned to steal some camels and use them to cross the six

hundred miles of plain to reach the Chinese military headquarters.

Tony felt he would be relieving Kadi of the financial burden he had become to her, and he joined the group when they disembarked. Within an hour they had the camels and were on their way across the arid wastes of the Gobi desert.

On the second day Tony felt deathly sick. They had paused for only two or three hours sleep each night and he thought it was fatigue. By the third day it was all he could do to go on, and he was retarding the others. On the fourth day he dropped off his camel and when they stopped for him he could not move. The two Russians and the Mongol would not wait, but the American strapped Tony on his camel. The only white man he knew nearby was Father Andre and he brought Tony here. The American dumped Tony in front of the mission and rode on, hoping to overtake his comrades. That was a month ago and the plague had only just begun in T'sing.

"But how were you able to wire Miss Rogers? How did you know who Tony was?"

The priest shrugged. "I have my own short-wave radio set. I heard them broadcast the description of the missing American. I notified the army, and they in turn transmitted the information to Shanghai, and eventually to Miss Rogers, or Mrs. Saxon."

Father Andre gave Kadi his room, while he took over the quarters formerly used by his Number One Boy, who had died of the plague. I slept on a mat in Tony's room, to keep an eye on him. And every day, from morning until night, Kadi sat at his bedside.

During the day I worked with the Father in the mission and accompanied him on his rounds of the hovels. We could not save many lives and our main task was to keep the plague from spreading. We worked alongside sweating coolies, helping them dig graves, and we tried to bury all of the new dead immediately and clean up the litter of old corpses. But at the end of the week I could not see that we had made any progress.

"Ah, but we are keeping up with the Black Death," Father Andre said, "and we must not stop. Nothing is ever lost if you keep faith." His bright black eyes smiled at me. "Aren't you afraid of contracting the plague?"

"I try not to think of it."

"Yes, that is best. Some day, I hope you will convey my thankfulness to the Red Cross for these supplies."

"They are a gift from Mrs. Saxon," I said. "But the Red Cross will send you more. I will see to it when we return to Shanghai."

And suddenly I was glad I hadn't become a surgeon in New York. I thought: I'm a Red Cross doctor and this is where I belong. This is the way I want to work. Wherever human beings are dying, wherever there is misery, pain and hunger—that's the Red Cross.

I looked up at the cloudless blue sky and I laughed. And it was very good laughter.

"Father," I said, "I feel strong as an ox! Give me that shovel . . ."

And that day I decided that I loved Noel Leif. I knew that I belonged to her as surely as God belongs in heaven. In the days that followed, the conviction grew, and it was a conviction which gave me courage and strength.

But I was worried too. Hank loved Noel. What if he had not told her Tony was in trouble? What if he had told her only that there had been a cable from Kadi? Noel must have thought I'd gotten cold feet. Used this as an excuse to leave her at the church. What if Noel hated me now? With this thought, I felt sick. I knew I couldn't blame anybody but myself if that was the way it was.

One night Father Andre and I returned from the mission very late. Kadi met us on the road. Her face was tear-streaked. *"Hurry!"* she whispered. "Oh, hurry!"

Tony lay white and haggard on the cot. The skin on his face was stretched tight against the bones. His eyes were so heavy lidded he could not open them. A yellow lamp flickered, and made shadows on the wall. I took his pulse. It was very, very faint. He labored for breath, and his face was burning. I looked at Father Andre. The priest came over quietly, put down his little case, opened it. His hand made a cross over Tony. His voice chanted softly, and tears ran down his brown, seamed face.

Kadi screamed and for a moment I thought she was going to faint.

CHAPTER FIVE

CANDLES at his head, at his feet. Darkness. A gust of wind came through the window and the candles fluttered inward, then went out. Father Andre turned up the oil lamp and yellow light licked the walls. Tony lay rigidly still on the cot. Kadi was on the floor, sitting on her legs, her head bowed. Her lips moved and I knew she was saying what I was thinking: *Dear God, don't let him die! Please, God, don't let Tony die!*

Suddenly, his arm twitched. His fingers fluttered. He was trying to wet his lips. His skin had been dry; now I saw sweat seep from his pores.

"Water, quickly!" I said. "He's going to live! Father, he's going to live!"

"It is a miracle," Father Andre said. "I am a man of three and seventy years, and I have seen it happen before."

He fetched the water. Kadi was unable to speak, peering at Tony, not moving, hardly breathing.

The crisis was over. I took the wet cloth Father Andre handed me, and I began working on him.

You do what you can, and nature does the rest. It was a quotation I'd learned in Bellevue.

Funny what you think of at a time like that. I remembered things that had happened when I was an interne. The times when I'd worked over hopeless cases, and the thrill that would come when I'd sit in on a miracle, save a life that had already been given up as lost. . . .

Slowly, light crept through the ancient archway on the hill. Then the sky was orange with sun, and Tony was breathing evenly. Gradually, day by day, now, hour by hour, he would get stronger. Tony, laughing the way he used to laugh, would be a wonderful sight to see. . . .

Father Andre had not slept for days, but if he was tired he did not show it. I did—my face was mottled, my eyes red. But the priest was like a man of iron.

"I shall have a boy brew coffee and bring you some," he said. "Then I must get to work. . . . My son, do you remember saying that we needed a dispensary?"

"Yes," I said. That had been on the first day of our arrival.

"I've considered it carefully," he said. "It will greatly facilitate our work. I'm having the coolies start on it today."

When he was gone I knelt at Tony's cot, beside Kadi. Both of us watched Tony. He was sleeping naturally. Kadi turned to me. Her skin was like chalk, and her lips pale and unrouged, but for the first time in days the strain was gone from her face.

"Will you stay with him for a little while?" she asked.

"Of course. Where are you going?"

"To attend Mass when Father Andre gives it."

"But the mission is filled with plague victims, Kadi! There's no use exposing yourself to—"

"I'm not afraid," she said. "Oh, Willie, I'll never be afraid of anything again as long as I live!"

"IT looks very good, Father," I said. We stood before the new dispensary building.

"Yes," he said, "it is good. T'sing has long needed a dispensary."

It was not a very good building, really, except to us. It stood beside the mission, a shack constructed hastily of many odds and ends. A skeleton framework and floor of solid wood. The walls dried mud and stone. The sloping roof was made of bamboo, one chute grooved into another. We had used whatever material we could find. As we surveyed the result, I was as proud of it as if it were Johns-Hopkins.

"It's a shame we haven't some cots," I said.

"Pshaw! Don't even think of it. The Chinese have slept on straw mats all their lives. They would not know how to use a cot. The citizens of T'sing will be very proud of this. I shall have them start moving the sick in today. . . . Have you noticed there are fewer cases of plague this week?"

I nodded. I looked at my watch. "You had better be getting back to the cottage, hadn't you?" the priest said. "They were going to leave at ten. It must be that now."

I left him there and went to the cot-

tage. Inside, I pushed back the cretonne curtains at the door of Tony's room. He was very pale, and quite thin, but his eyes were clear now. He wore dark trousers, a lumberjack sweater. He was packing his bag. Looking up, he saw me and grinned.

"The rheumatic interne from T'sing," he said. "How're ya, pappy?"

"Swell."

"Going to miss our nightly card games?"

"Probably."

"We're about ready," he said. "Hey, Kat," he yelled. "Ready?"

"In a moment, darling."

He sat down on the cot. He was still shaky. He stuffed a cigarette in his mouth, lit it. "We're going right back to Europe," he said, "the way we came."

"Except for the camels."

"Yes," he said. "From now on my camels will come in small, square packages."

"You'd rather go home, to the States, wouldn't you?" I said.

"Who, me? No!" He frowned. His eyes avoided me.

"You would," I said, "only there's a war in Europe. Some rather important current history, and Kadi's got to cover it. She really has to, Tony."

"Sure, I know. I'll tag along."

I sat on my heels, looking at him. "You love Kadi?"

"Sure," he said.

"But what?"

He looked at me straight. "It all dates back to my childhood. My parents had quaint ideas about how men ought to earn the dough, take care of the women. Stupid, of course. I suppose I'll grow out of it in time. Everyone knows that in these troublesome days a woman's place is at the typewriter!"

"Cut it out!"

"Sorry, Willie." He was still too weak for the cigarette to taste like anything, and he flipped it out the window. He stood up. "Ungrateful dog, am I not, son? I know exactly where I stand. If it wasn't for Kadi and you, I'd be lying somewhere in Pearl Buck's Good Earth, pushing up Chinese poppies." He shrugged. "So I'm going to be a nice, tame guy from now on, to show my gratitude. And sometime, when the war's over, Kadi's going to let me support her. She promised." Kadi came in now. "Didn't you, mommy?" he said.

"Didn't I what?"

"Promise me vodka on the way through Moscow."

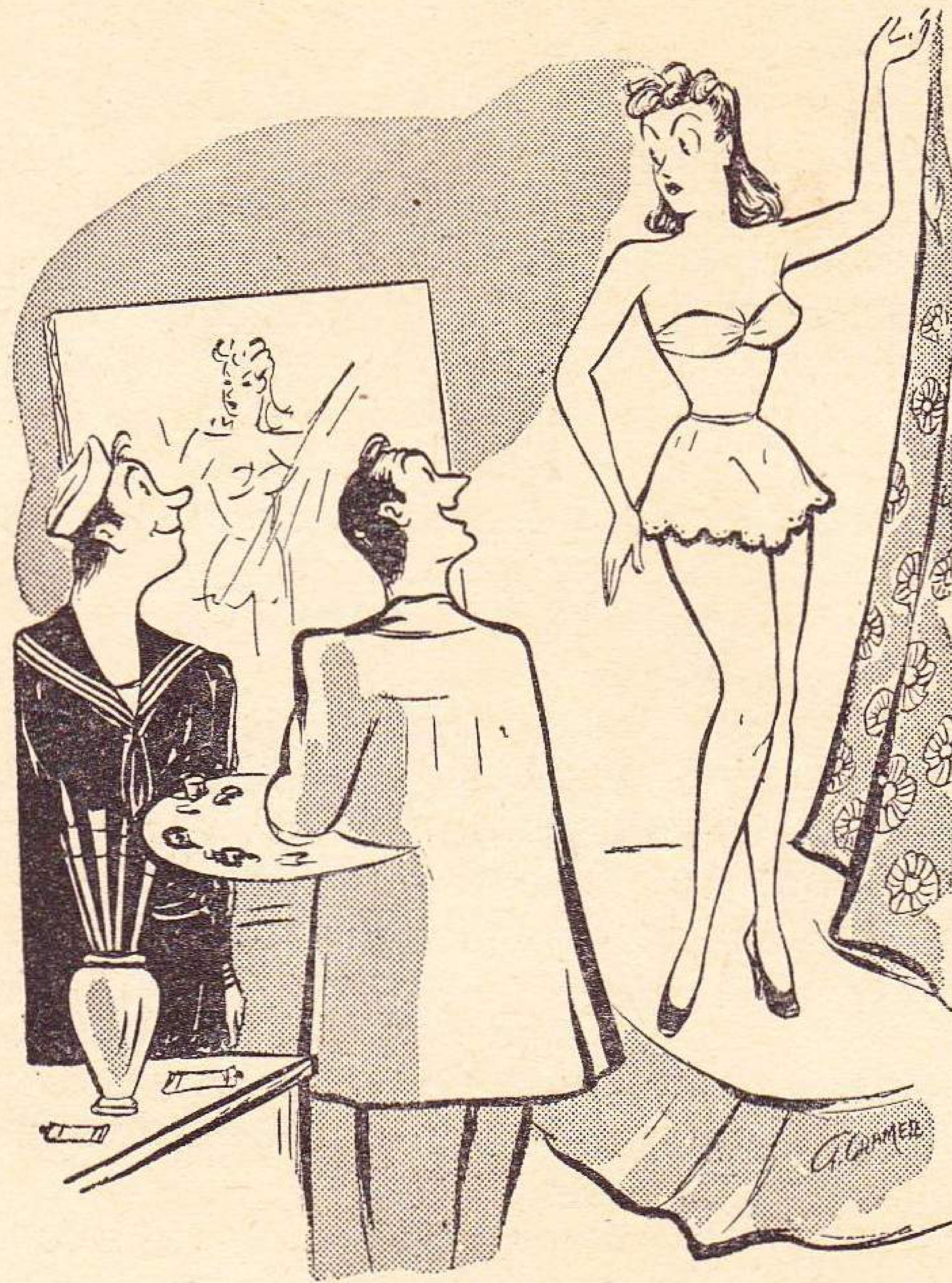
"What!" she said. "And have you join the Russian tank corps! Not on your life!" She watched him for a moment, then she went into his arms. "Oh, darling!"

She loved him like a kid loves Christmas. But it never occurred to her that she couldn't have him and her job, too. Tony *was* grateful. But he'd never be happy in Europe, globe-trotting at Kadi's expense. I was as sure of that as I was about what I felt for Noel.

We went outside. The chair bearers and coolies were waiting. Father Andre was giving them last minute instructions. Tony shook the old priest's hand. They talked for a few moments. Kadi looked up at me.

"Goodbye, Willie." She kissed me. "I'll always love you, buzz-buzz! I'll never see the rooftops and the stars in Paris again without thinking of you. Thank you for my husband's life, darling."

"It was nothing, really, madame," I



"Amazing, isn't it? He just landed after 14 weeks at sea, and all he wants to do is watch me paint."

said. "Good luck to you—and hurry back to the States."

She said, "In a year or two. It depends on how things develop."

She climbed into the chair. Tony walked up, thumped me on the chest. "The safari awaits, pappy. We're off again." He climbed into his chair. "Write me, too, you rat." It wasn't what he wanted to say. But he knew I'd understand.

I stood with Father Andre on the hill and watched the procession move off. . . .

Some days later I followed them. The plague had been checked. I was nearly ill myself from exhaustion and I'd lost eighteen pounds. Father Andre insisted I go.

"You have done splendid work and it is a miracle that you did not get the disease. But you must rest now. You will have much work to do. You are a Red Cross man and there are many other battles to be fought, all over the world. The battles you will wage when the fighting on the battlefield is finished.

"As for me, China is my home, and this is my life. I should feel out of place in any other. I am happy. You see, they are my children, these poor Chinese, and it is my life to look after them.

I gazed at the French priest. He wore his black robes, a Crucifix hanging from a silver chain at his side, and he seemed centuries old, his seamed brown face worn and tired. But the light in his black eyes was bright and strong. It was as though the faith that shone in them would keep them young through eternity.

And I realized that this man and his faith had given me something I would never lose—something good and strong and steadying.

We went outside where the bearers were waiting with my chair. "Look!" the priest said and he pointed at the dispensary. There, flying from a homemade staff, was a large white flag with a red cross on it.

"In your honor," he said. "For all travelers to see, and to remind us here of the good you have done among us."

SHANGHAI again. Rickshas, Japanese bayonets, night clubs, bars. Streets swarming with people. Chinese in robes. Russian girls with high clicking heels. American marines in khaki. December. *Only 19 shopping days 'til Christmas.* Finland invaded. Bombers over Helsinki. *Give perfume this Christmas.* Finns dying. Russians slaughtered. *Give gloves this Christmas.* Give shrouds. Give aid. Pray a little. Pray a lot. Refugee ships sunk. Dance bands playing *It's a Blue World.* Nude sing-song girls hanging in cages. Air raids.

The bar was crowded. There was music, girls dancing. Voices speaking English, French, Russian. A lot of noise. A mirror to look into. A drink of American whiskey.

There had been a letter waiting for me at the hotel. It was dated many weeks ago. It was from Hank Drayton. It told of the day when he had gone to the Little Church Around the Corner, to meet Noel. The preacher had thought he was the groom. The organ began to play *Lohengrin.* It was very embarrassing, Hank trying to explain while the organ thumped *Here Comes the Bride,* that the groom wasn't coming, that *he* wasn't the groom. Hank wrote: *I never really made it clear to Noel. No matter what you say, or how you explain your running away like that, she will never understand. Noel is too clean and fine to understand a thing like that. . . .*

Noel went away somewhere for two days, then she came back to Hank. Hank wrote: *Noel and I have been through much together. We have worked side by side. Now we are engaged to be married. . . .*

I sat there in Shanghai drinking whiskey and reading Hank's letters and wondering if Noel hated me. . . .

Old Willie . . . always too late. Like the time in Paris when you dropped your crutch. Only this time it's Noel. It's always been Noel, you dope. It's always been the Red Cross nurse you loved. But you found out too late!

All right! Give me a broken-down

ambulance and some bandages. I'll be all right as long as I'm in the Red Cross. . . . What time does the Clipper leave? *What the hell do you care?* I've got the other half of that round trip ticket, so naturally I care. . . .

Then New York. And Noel's apartment on Park Avenue.

It was very quiet in her living room and outside you could hear the traffic. If you stood at the curtained window you could see the traffic lights change from red to green, the people hurrying across the wet street.

A maid entered the room and said, "Miss Leif will see you in a moment." I knew then that she wasn't married yet.

I walked around the room. My gray suit was soiled, wrinkled. The cuffs of my trousers were frayed in the back. I didn't belong here. T'sing maybe, but not here. I lit a cigarette and sat down in front of the radio and tuned in some dance music.

It's a Blue World Without You. . . . Oh, hell! I turned the dial. "And remember, ladies, only three more shopping days 'til Christmas!" *"Listen, Willie, do you think we'll make Madrid before dark?"* Wasn't Madrid fine, though? Why does everything that is over and gone seem fine?

"Hello, Willie."

I looked up. She stood there, young and exquisite, the soft, flaxen hair on her shoulders, her face delicate and lovely. Like a beautiful melody, she made an ache in my heart.

"Hello, honey," I said.

She crossed the room, held out her hand. "Did you have a nice trip?" Her voice was cool, calm.

"Noel, listen—"

She turned. "I—I'd rather not, Willie. I'm engaged to Hank. We're going to be married soon."

"Yes, I know."

She sat down, faced me.

"Tony was sick, Noel. Lost for a while. You see—"

She glanced at her hands. "I know. You had a noble reason for going to China. Tony needed you. Tony, your best friend. Kadi, of course, had nothing to do with it."

"But—"

"And you couldn't wait two days for me. I might have gone with you. I could've paid my way. But then, that wouldn't have been so good, would it? You couldn't have said to Kadi the things you wanted to say, with me along, married to you."

I pinched out the cigarette. "I wasn't sure until I got there that it *wasn't* for Kadi. You don't have to believe it. But it's true—it was Tony that mattered most. Another two days delay, with no medical treatment, and Tony would have died."

"I see. There were no doctors in China. So Kadi cabled for you to come from New York."

"Now, look—"

She was relentless. "And of course you never had time to write, to explain to me yourself."

"I was in a place where they didn't have mail. There was an epidemic of plague. I lost track of time . . ."

"Oh, Willie, it's no use! Do you think I've been blind? You've hurt me before. So *many* times! But leaving me at the church was the last time you'll ever do it. The cable was an excuse to get out of something you weren't sure about. You didn't love me. You never did."

"I love you now," I said. It sounded silly and empty and flat. And I meant it more than I'd ever meant anything in my life.

Noel said, "You just want something you think you've lost. It's always been that way with you."

"Noel—"

But she couldn't be stopped now. Her voice was steady, cold. "And even if you did, it couldn't matter now. People don't change much and I know you, now. I know you from way back, Willie."

"Sure you do!"

"And I don't want to cry any more," she said. "I'm tired of crying. And tired of waiting, of empty nights and stale bouquets!"

"That was—"

"Hank's steady. No great fire. But fires burn out. Let's stop here. Let's say that you had a splendid reason for going to China, but that I'm just not listening to it. Let's say that Noel Leif can't take it any more!"

She turned to the window. I moved up behind her, caught her elbows. The radio was playing *Santa Claus is Coming to Town.*

"Very eloquent, kid," I said. "Now let's do the scene over. You run into my arms and say, 'Wee Willie, how've you been, honey?' And I'll—"

"Please go, Willie," she said.

"Go?" I guess I wanted her to hit me with a sledge hammer. The radio had changed to *Jingle Bells, Jingle Bells, Jingle . . .*

"Yes," she said. "I'll see you again, some day, some place. In a Red Cross station, perhaps. I'll always be seeing you. Except that I'll be married to Hank, and you'll have a new girl. Someone who's—"

"Noel, I love you!"

"Goodbye, Willie."

I dropped my hands. I picked up my shabby top coat, my hat. . . . *Jingle all the way* . . . I went to the door. The maid held it open. . . .

On the street, the sky was overcast and traffic splashed through the slush. I walked. People brushed past me. I saw Christmas wreaths at the Waldorf. Red and green lights, gay and festive. It was going to snow. . . .

MANHATTAN. **Broadway, the lights, the last minute shoppers.** It was Christmas Eve. *Old Woo-Them-and-Wow-Them Willie.* Kind of lonesome, ain't you? Isn't it funny how many people you don't know ? I walked along with the crowd. The soles of my shoes were wet. I was nearly, but not quite, broke.

I looked at lighted theatre marquees, the news runner on the *Times* Building . . . *Flood sweeps over Middle West towns. Worst in history. Thousands homeless . . .*

I stood and stared as the lights twinkled around, reeling off bulletin after bulletin . . . *Red Cross asks for volunteers . . . Red Cross . . .* The lights faded. I thought: I'm a Red Cross guy. I've got nothing else, but I've got that!

I had avoided seeing Hank. But now I started up the street, toward the Red Cross office where Hank, an executive, had his office. I began to feel better.

The office was crowded. Doctors in Red Cross uniforms, wearing slickers, carrying rubber boots. Nurses in uniform. A special relief train was leaving at eleven-thirty for the Middle West flood area. It was ten of eleven now. Everyone was talking at once. This was it! That was *my* world! I went over to the desk. An oldish, gray-haired woman sat there.

"Occupation?"

"Red Cross man," I said.

"Yes, I understand, but what is it you do?"

"I'm a surgeon." *I fix broken heads, put the entrails back in soldiers and sew them up again! I dig graves in China, and ride an ambulance in Madrid!*

"Name?"

"William Carter."

The door to the next office opened and Hank Drayton came in. He stared, turned and came toward me. The woman at the desk saw him. She said:

"This man's name is Carter. Haven't we some special correspondence on him? I remember that—"

"I'll take care of it," Hank said.

The woman got up and left the desk. People were going in and out of the office. A radio was playing *Oh, Johnny!* but you could scarcely hear for the noise. Hank stood there beside the desk.

"Hello, El Toro," I said.

He nodded. "Noel said you were in town. She's on her way here. We leave tonight for the flood area."

"I know. And I'll go with you, Hank. Like old times—"

"I'm afraid you can't," he said.

"What? Why not?"

He opened the desk drawer and pulled out a sheaf of correspondence.

"Something came up in China. Technical, of course. But you know how those things are. It's out of my hands."

The pit of my stomach was gone.

"What—came up?"

"It seems that you purchased a large amount of medical supplies. Naturally, you had to have the sanction of the Japanese. Katherine Rogers apparently knew some influential people, and it was arranged."

"Yes, but—"

"You bought these things in the name of the Red Cross. Otherwise you couldn't have gotten them. Kadi and her friends vouched for you as a Red Cross man."

"Sure, I—"

"It so happens we do *not* seek Japanese sanction for what we buy. In granting this concession the Japanese

believed that in return they could put pressure on the Red Cross for a number of things they'd like to have."

"But that's silly!"

"Perhaps. I dare say international politics and the careful office organization of the Red Cross which supervises such matters is something you do not understand. If you'd gone to them—"

"But the main office was miles away! We were in a desperate hurry for the supplies. People were *dying,* Hank, and—"

"Nevertheless you misrepresented yourself as a purchaser of Red Cross relief orders. We've never had trouble with the Japanese before. But now they're in an ugly mood, and eventually it may hinder some of our work in China."

"Hank, it was the plague! A priest asked us to bring supplies. I didn't think—"

"Exactly. A charge could be launched against you for impersonating a relief agency official. However—" he cleared his throat, "I have personally intervened on your behalf, and the charge will be dropped."

"Well, that's swell, Hank. I—"

"But, of course, you can never work for us again."

"I—I *what?*"

"My hands are tied," he said. "You're finished with us, Willie. I'm sorry." He glanced at his watch. "I've got to be going." He slapped me on the back. "You'll get along all right. Take it easy. And—Merry Christmas, old man."

He was already pushing through the crowd. They were all going out now. Doctors, nurses, workers. I caught a glimpse of Noel through the open door, wearing a coat over her uniform, her blond hair whipped back. She didn't see me. She was out in the hall. The office emptied. The door closed. The voices faded. I rubbed my hand over my face. *"You're finished with us, Willie!"* An elevator door clanged shut. The voices in the hall were gone. There was no one in the office but me. I walked over to a window.

Outside, it had begun to snow.

CHAPTER SIX

THE snow that fell past the window came in big, white lumps. On the street below there were trolleys, and people, taxis and cars. A charity Santa Claus on every corner. Bells ringing; auto horns. People doing the things they did every Christmas Eve. Kids hanging up their stockings. Choirs singing Christmas carols. The world going around, while I stood very still.

The door opened and closed. The woman clerk reentered and went to her desk. She sat down, rummaging through a litter of papers. She was jolly looking, heavy-set. What the hell is she so jolly about? Probably very efficient. Good relief worker. Her hair was white, her brown eyes warm. All at once she began to talk.

"I think it's a shame," she said.

"What?" I answered automatically.

"Due to conditions, over which we have no control . . . the program originally scheduled for this time will not be heard."

"About you," she said. "You apparently bought those provisions in China for a very good reason."

"It was nothing," I said bitterly. "Just a few thousand Chinese dying of the plague."

She changed the subject. "The flood is very bad, out there in the Middlewest. They've had a warm spell. It's been raining for a week. River's overflowed into the lowlands." She picked up a meteorological report. "The weather man predicts that a cold wave is going to grip the country from Texas to Atlanta. That'll be bad for those homeless flood victims."

"New York's cold enough," I said. She seemed to want to talk, to be friendly. Maybe because it was Christmas. "You want to close the office now?" I asked.

She shook her head. "No. We have another relief train leaving before morning. Second section." She gazed at me. "Aren't you Noel Leif's friend?"

I nodded.

"Noel's told me about you," the white-haired woman said. "About Madrid, and how you were hurt in Paris. I—I feel as though I almost know you. It's a pity you can't go to the flood. There's an urgent need for trained volunteers."

She rattled the papers, looking for something. "Of course if you were there, on the scene, no one could stop you from working," she said. "I was thinking I could give you a railroad pass on the relief train, there and back." She had the little square pass in her hand. "One passenger, more or less, wouldn't be noticed."

"Renegade relief worker," I said. "Something new! Thanks anyway. But include me out." I turned back to the window. She was being very nice and it only made me more bitter.

"You wouldn't have to tell Mr. Drayton how you got there. It'd cost me my job if you did. But you've always been a Red Cross man, and—"

I turned and faced her. "Look, lady. I've been kicked out of the Red Cross. I'm through. I appreciate your offer but I've got better things to do than chase a flood relief crew." I walked to the door. "Furthermore, you can tell Hank Drayton for me that—" I stopped and suddenly the anger left me. I walked over to her desk. "Where's that pass?" I said.

SHEETS of rain slashed against the window of the train. Lightning flashed through the rain-fogged night, illuminated briefly a sign on a small red-brown station: *Williamsville.* A brakeman stood on the platform, swinging a red lantern.

The passengers were talking shop—about burst levees, lowlands swamped with torrents of raging water, telephone poles down, ham radio bugs signalling through the night.

A conductor came down the aisle of the train. "Track washed out," he announced.

Passengers got up, milled through the car. I left my seat, joined the procession, went out through the rain and into the station with the others. Rain pounded like thunder on the roof. It was cold, and my teeth chattered. There was lamp light, a stove and a wizened station master.

"Where's the Red Cross relief group working?" I asked him.

"All through down yonder." He nodded southward. "Millsburg. George Junction."

"I'm a doctor," I told him. "I'd like to join them. Where can I find somebody to take me there?"

He took me into the baggage room where volunteer workers were putting on hip boots and slickers. Somebody handed me boots, threw me a slicker.

In a few minutes we went out to where two huge trucks were parked. They had small boats strapped to the sides of them. I climbed into the back of a truck with the others. We started off. Somebody threw an arm over my shoulder. He began to sing. Then everybody was singing. . . .

I didn't see Noel until the next afternoon.

Red Cross stations were stretched out at intervals over a number of miles in the heart of the inundated area. I'd gone to work in the first place that reported need for a doctor. It was located on a hill and just below, in the valley, a small village was half-submerged.

I worked in what had formerly been a revival meeting tent. Men, women and children, ill from exposure, lay on cots, under army blankets. Others sat around a stove, huddled together, drinking coffee. Two nurses and I worked under battery lights. Every now and then the canvas door was shoved aside and rescue workers brought in new cases, more refugees. They were all cheerful enough. The evangelist's organ was still in the tent and now and then someone would play it. It kept up morale.

The next morning it was still raining and the muddy, swirling water circled sluggishly about the tops of leafless trees. The little rescue boats floated around the top of a schoolhouse, past a red and white *5 & 10c Store* sign on the roof of a building.

At one in the afternoon I was bandaging the head of a small boy who had narrowly escaped death when he was hit by a floating log, when Noel came in.

She wore a transparent slicker, her white uniform beneath it. Her face was without makeup, yet it was beautiful. Her red cheeks wet with rain, her eyes shining. Suddenly, she saw me.

"Willie!"

"Hello," I said.

"But—what are you doing here?"

"I don't know," I said. "Maybe I'm a sucker for disasters."

She watched me. "Hank told me. . . . But it's swell seeing you!"

"Like old times."

She nodded, her eyes bright.

I finished with the boy, gave him a pat and sent him off.

"Willie," Noel said, "I know what this work means to you. I'm sorry about—"

"Forget it!"

"I—I came here to find a doctor," she said. "I'm working in a unit about five miles south. But all our doctors are busy, and—"

"What's up?"

"Childbirth," she said. "The woman's in the upstairs of a house. The bottom part of it's under water. She's in labor, Willie. Can you come? I have a workman waiting with a boat. We'll have to hurry."

IT WAS dark, although it was still afternoon. Noel held the battery light while I worked with the woman. We could hear water swirling through the house, downstairs, washing at the foundations. The walls quivered, and the whole place seemed ready to go at any minute. It took me two hours and seventeen minutes for the delivery. It was her first baby, but she was very good about it. At last I rose, spanked the infant until it squealed, gave it to Noel to clean. The woman on the bed stirred. Her eyes fluttered open.

"You have a fine boy," I said.

"I'm—so glad!"

"We'll have to move you," I said. "I'm going to lift you into a boat, with the baby. A worker will take you to a Red Cross Station."

"But can't I stay here?" she whispered.

"No. The house is being torn apart. It won't last much longer.

She began to cry softly. "Ned and I own it," she said. "We were so proud." She smiled. "It is difficult to say goodbye to a house. You wouldn't think so, but a house can be—"

"You mustn't talk any more," I said.

I carried her to the window, swathed in blankets. The rain had slackened off. I lifted the woman through the second-story window to the worker who stood in the boat below. He took her in his arms and gently lowered her to the boat. I handed him the tiny baby, bundled in a blanket around which Noel had wrapped her slicker. The worker handed the prone woman her baby, then sat down aft, twisted the rope on the outboard motor. He looked up at me.

"I'll come back for you and the nurse," he said.

I nodded.

When the boat was gone I turned to Noel. She stood in the middle of the room looking at me. We were both exhausted. The walls trembled and the house swayed in the current.

"Where was the father?" I asked.

"They were marooned here," Noel explained. "When the woman started labor the husband was desperate. He called for help, but none came, and at last he plunged in and tried to swim. He was almost dead when we picked him up. He is at our unit now."

"Will he recover?"

"Yes," she said.

"That's good." I fumbled for a cigarette.

"Willie, what are your plans now?"

"I don't know. Resident physician in some little hospital, maybe. A two-by-four room, seventy bucks a month and all I can eat."

"Oh, I was miserable when I heard, Willie! We've always worked together. And I had hoped it could go on being that way even after I was married—"

She stopped. The house had begun to teeter.

"Go on, Noel—"

"It's simply—you're such a *swell* guy, Wee Willie!" She turned away. "It might be better if I never saw you again."

"Noel, that's foolish!"

"No it isn't. When the boat returns I'll go to my unit; you to your station. I won't see you till we're on the train. Then Hank'll be there, and—"

I turned her around. She was crying.

"Kiss me once, Willie! Then I won't see you again, except when people are present."

I held her in my arms and kissed her. I held her very close, and kept kissing her neck, her hair. She was crying. . . .

"But it's goodbye, Willie," she said. "Because it's just—"

There was a jerk and the floor caved in beneath us. I grabbed hold of the door facing, held Noel. We could see the rapidly swirling water below. Then a man's face appeared at the upstairs window.

"Come on," he shouted. "Here's the boat."

I helped Noel to the window, lifted her over the sill, climbed into the boat after her. As we drew away there was a crash and the whole side of the house caved in. The roof became detached, began floating away. I saw the big wooden bed traveling downstream. Gradually the scene was enveloped in darkness. The muddy flood water was cold and swift; the air was chilled and wet. But the rain had stopped and I saw the December stars, very faint, in the sky.

The boatman spoke over his shoulder. "The water's down a foot and a half already. It'll be gone in a couple of days."

I looked at Noel, sitting on the mat in the bow. She reached out her hand and I touched it. We held hands, not speaking, until the boat stopped. Then she got out. I had to return to my own station. Noel stood on the bank of the hill and waved until the darkness swallowed us.

I'd see her again. I had to. Not just on a train, or on the street, or in a crowded cafe. But some place where we could talk, so I could tell her that Willie, the rat, had reformed, and that he loved her rather desperately.

I WAS in the evangelist relief tent, sitting at a table sipping coffee, when Hank Drayton came in. He had a young doctor with him. It was four the next afternoon and the flood had receded another six feet. Before midnight the water would be almost gone. But there was still work ahead, days of it.

"Hello, Hank," I said.

He sat down at the table and the doctor walked away. Hank wore a rubber coat, the collar turned up. He was hatless, his lemon-colored hair rumpled; and he was not wearing his glasses.

"Surprised to see me?"

"No," he said. "I've known you were here. Your name was on the list of people who came in on the second relief train. I've left you alone because I knew you were needed. You don't have to be in the Red Cross to help people who are in trouble."

"Spoken like a boy scout," I said.

"But the tension's eased up," he went on. "I believe it would be best now if you returned to New York. I've brought a doctor to replace you." He poured himself a cup of coffee, creamed and sugared it. "You understand of course that the work you've done here is greatly appreciated."

"Oh, sure! Then why can't I stay?"

"This is a Red Cross—"

"I get it. And I'm out."

"It isn't only that."

"Then what is it? Aren't you being a little officious all of a sudden?"

"It's personal," he continued. "I've talked to Noel. She's upset. I think it would be better if you went back ahead of us."

"What's the matter? Afraid you'll lose her?"

"No," he said quietly. "We're going to be married as soon as we get back."

"I don't believe it."

He put the cup down. "Must you spend your life tormenting her! Leaving me out of it, what have you got to offer Noel?"

"That doesn't't—"

"Yes, it does. It matters a great deal. If you were still on Red Cross salary I suppose you might manage, jumping from one job to another, because she wants to continue doing this work. But you haven't got that any more. And you've no money. You spent the

last you had to run off to China. Now you're back. Penniless. New York is full of doctors. Your prospects are rotten. But Noel has money—"

I pushed back the bench. "Listen, Hank—"

"She could set you up in an office on Park Avenue. In fact, she intends to do that very thing. You've made her *sorry* for you. She wants to—"

"Shut up!" I was on my feet.

He rose. "No, I won't shut up. Why don't you hit me? You've caused her pain enough. Give *me* a little of it. Don't you think it's perfectly obvious to everyone why you followed her all the way down here?"

"Followed her?"

"You've never once, since I've known you, thought of anyone but yourself. Madrid. Those days in Paris. In New York. The way you went to the mountains alone, and then to China. Now you're in a jam, and she's someone to turn to for help, that's all. When you were doing all right you didn't need her. You're still the same Willie. And as long as you're around she'll never be happy!"

"You have me crying, El Toro," I said.

"You go along," he said, "the way you always have. Wisecracks. A lot of laughs. But one day you finally have to pay—you pay for each broken heart, for every lie, for every tear."

"Don't be—"

"I like you, Willie. People will always like you—and be sorry for it later. It is better that you go away. Somewhere a long distance from here. Believe me."

"Sure," I said, "best for you. It'd be elegant for you, wouldn't it? Are you through now? Is the song and dance finished, Daddy?"

"Yes, it's finished," he said.

"Then get out of here!"

He gazed at me, his pale blue eyes calm. "The first time in your life you had a chance to do something unselfish!" He shrugged. "Well, I didn't expect you'd do otherwise—you dirty little coward!"

I dashed the coffee into his face.

It dripped to his coat. He just looked at me; then he turned and walked out.

I had with me the one suitcase I'd brought along. I wore a topcoat, and my felt hat pushed back off my forehead. I entered the big tent in which Noel was working. She was at the wash-trough, her uniform cuffs turned up, scrubbing the face of a six-year old boy. Other children were waiting to be washed. It was nearly time for their supper. Noel looked up, stared at me. She cast aside the washrag, dried the child's face with a towel.

"Willie, why aren't you—"

"I came to say goodbye. The last one. I'm going away."

"Where?" She looked frightened.

"I don't know. Where I can't pick up a phone and call you. Where I can't jump in a car and come over and see you."

"I don't understand."

"Sure you do. Those things you were saying. And besides, I haven't a crying dime. I come back from China with empty pockets and expect you to jump into my arms. I've been an awful dope! Why, it'd take me three or four years to build up a really paying practice, maybe longer."

"But Willie, I was going to—"

"Get me an office on Park Avenue with all the trimmings? You could slap my face, Noel, and it wouldn't hurt as much as your offering me that."

She flushed.

"Besides, I don't want those things. I did once, but I know now it was a mistake. I've got an itchy foot. I've always got to be going somewhere. Haven't you noticed? I'm a sap for foreign settings, foreign wars. It gets me every time. Doc Destiny, they call me. I chase misery like other guys chase ambulances. So, I'm off again."

Her face was pale. "Have you been talking to Hank?"

"No," I lied. "Hank's a swell guy. Anyway, it wouldn't make any difference. I've roved too much to ever get used to a steam-heated ground floor in a second-rate hospital; and I wouldn't take dough from you."

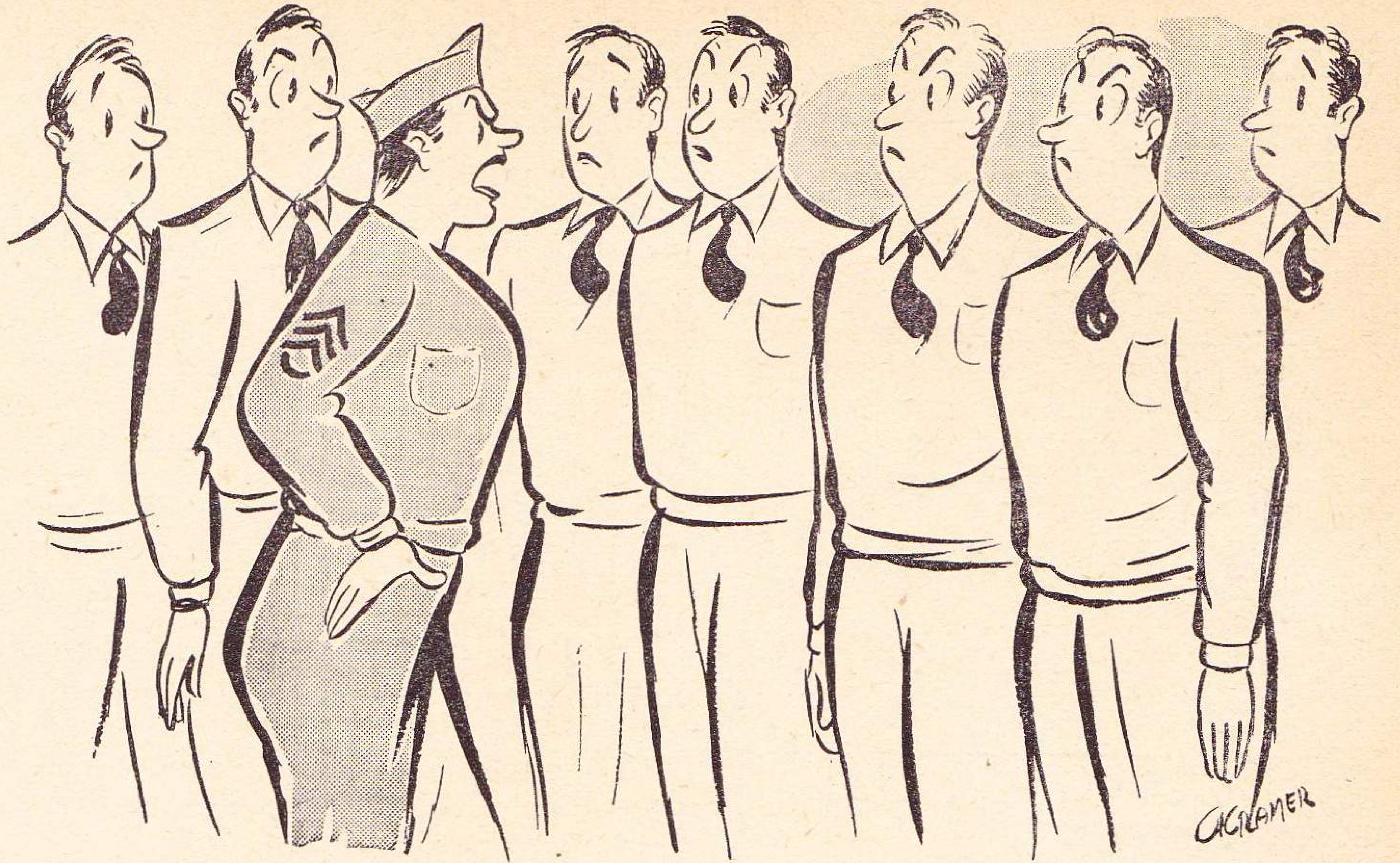
"But you could pay it back!"

"Sure. Next reincarnation. It'd take that long. You marry El Toro. Have kids. Name the first one for me." I grinned at her, shifted the bag to my other hand. "So long, kid. Keep your chin up."

The children were hungry, pulling at her to wash them. She kept her eyes on me; and I turned and went out, leaving her there. . . .

It was dark but stars were coming out. The flood water had receded to three or four feet. I started down the hill toward the railroad station.

OUTSIDE the shabby office there was a sign that read: *Finnish-American War Volunteers—Enlist Here.* I went inside.



"Now everybody agrees with me—DON'T THEY?"

"I'm a surgeon," I said to the man behind the recruiting desk.

"Ah, yes. We have need for surgeons. All we can get. One of our ships leaves New York at midnight tonight. Could you possibly be aboard before then?"

"Sure."

"There is danger of the ship being torpedoed," the man at the desk went on. "But if you are willing to risk it—"

"Where do I sign?" I asked.

I sat in the tiny cabin of the ship, far below decks. There was a small radio in the bulkhead. As a doctor they said I rated these things; the others, the volunteer soldiers, were billeted in compartments, fifty men to each. The ship shuddered as it backed down. There was a swish of water along the hull. I looked up at the closed porthole. The radio was on.

I lay down on the bunk, my hands behind my head, thinking of Noel, feeling the way she must have felt all those nights in Europe. Then I became conscious of the radio. It was playing *I'll See You Again.* Very softly. *Whenever Spring breaks through again . . .* What Spring? Spring 1940? No, I'd never see her again . . . Or, if, by any chance I did see her, it wouldn't be the same.

The ship's whistle shrieked. The tall, shadowy skyline of New York shuttled past the porthole.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE ship docked in the afternoon. It was snowing. The American volunteer soldiers marched down the gangway, and cranes lifted cargo from the vessel's holds. I was met on the pier by a delegation of three Finns, but none of them spoke English, and we did not do very well. At last they led me across the street to a cafe. We had coffee and one of the Finns went out. When he re-

turned there was an American correspondent with him. He was a tall, red-faced man, his hair iron-gray. His name was Riley.

Interpreting for the Finns, Riley explained that surgeons were sorely needed and that I would be a soldier-doctor with the rank of lieutenant. I would be issued a uniform and tomorrow I would be taken to the front where I would be stationed. I nodded and said that was fine, then I glanced up at Riley.

"Are you by any chance acquainted with Kathrine Rogers?"

"You mean Mrs. Tony Saxon?" he asked, grinning.

I nodded.

"Of course! You know her, eh? She's been in Helsinki two weeks. Wrote one of the best articles on the war I've read yet."

"Selling apples at the same old stand," I said.

"Yes. Her husband's with the Finnish contingent here. Ever met Tony? Swell guy!"

I went around to Tony's hotel.

Kadi opened the door. Kadi, wearing a plaid skirt, a blue, turtle-neck sweater, her long, windblown, red hair loose on her shoulders. Careless, but a studied carelessness.

"Willie! Willie—oh, darling!"

I was in the room and she was closing the door. She leaned back against it.

"How'd you ever get to Helsinki, Willie? Gee, but it's wonderful to see you!"

"You too, Mrs. Saxon."

"Here, let me take your coat. How've you been, doctor? No, don't tell me. I'll mix you a drink first. Tony's at the front, working out of Viipuri."

"I'm going there myself tomorrow."

"Really, Willie? Red Cross?"

"I'm not in that organization any more. I'm working for the Finnish government."

She had an empty glass in her hand, and she stopped in the middle of the room. "What?" I repeated it, and explained.

"But that's silly," she said.

"Apparently it isn't; it's turned out to be rather serious."

"Ridiculous! I'll get in touch with those officials in China right away. Wasn't it *my* money that paid for the materials?"

"That isn't the point."

"No, but I don't see how anyone can object."

We went on talking about it. She knew important people; she'd do everything she could to get me reinstated. But suddenly I wasn't thinking of that at all, but of Tony, and the way Kadi had said *my* money. It'd been innocent enough, and yet. . .

"You wait," she promised, "I'll get you back in. And I'll get you a medal along with it. Why, the work you did in Asia—"

"I don't want medals, Kadi."

"No, of course not."

"Did you hear," I said, "that Noel's going to marry Hank?"

"Marvelous! You weren't in love with her, were you?"

"No," I said. "No, you were always my flame, Kadi. Remember?"

"And I double-crossed you, poor darling."

At midnight I walked back to my own shabby little hotel room that was paid for by the Finnish Army. The snow fell very softly, in white crescents, and it was piled deep on the sidewalk. Helsinki was dark, the chimneys ebony black against ivory rooftops. People on the street wore thick fur coats. I felt lonely and cold again, and I tried to forget that, too. . . .

At five the next morning I left for Viipuri.

I arrived exhausted, at dawn. The city had been bombed night after night for days. Houses stood like shattered skeletons in the snow, and the streets were piled with debris. I saw columns of Russian prisoners being marched in. Ski troops were leaving the city. They wore white overalls over their warm uniforms, and white hoods over their heads.

I received my orders from a medical major, and at nine o'clock left for the front, riding on a Red Cross sleigh. There were three other sleighs—Finland's snow ambulances.

I did not see Tony and the few men who could speak English said they did not know him.

The front was a thick forest filled with snow, ice-covered lakes and hills. I was billeted in what had been a schoolhouse. It was new and modern. The seats had been taken out and cots put in. But there were no patients. They had all been removed during the day to hospitals behind the lines. The Finnish major left me with three young nurses. They were pretty and jolly, and until dark we played games trying to understand one another's language. Now and then white-clad troops on skis moved silently past the schoolroom windows.

THAT night a big offensive began. You could hear the crack of Russian guns no more than a kilometer away. Battalions of Finnish soldiers with sleds disappeared into the darkness. Ammunition trucks rolled past, chains grinding, burning glowworm lights. Then came horse-drawn caissons carrying field guns. Russian bombers were droning high overhead, loosing 250-kilo bombs. The bombs crashed everywhere but the sound was strangely muffled. I stood at the window and watched. Speeding over the snow, almost invisible against its whiteness, rifles slung over their shoulders, the Finns were racing into an attack.

Later, Red Cross sleighs began bringing some of them back. We were busy then. An American soldier in a Finnish uniform was among them. His arm was frozen, and he didn't feel it when I worked on the gaping hole in the bruised flesh.

Wounded men streamed in every few minutes. The major-doctor returned and worked with us. By midnight all of the cots were full. We had men lying on mats in the cloak room. Russians were brought back as well as Finns.

In the early morning dead and wounded were stacked up outside our door. Sleds began taking them away. The wounded were going to hospitals. I do not know where the dead were going.

By noon the schoolroom was empty. I was light-headed with fatigue and I lay down on one of the cots.

It was night when I awakened. A nurse was shaking me. I sat up. She motioned, smiling. Tony Saxon stood there, wearing a thick leather coat, his hands on his hips.

"Tony!"

"Hi, ya, kid!"

We shook hands. I gripped his arm,

Talk about ENDURANCE!

Just as they did in peacetime, Harley-Davidson Motorcycles are proving their stamina in grueling service with the armed forces. There'll come a day when war-proved, new Harley-Davidsons will thrill enthusiastic riders at trophy runs, gypsy tours, hillclimbs, race meets and other exciting motorcycling events. That's when you'll want a "World Champion" motorcycle. Buy War Bonds now — and get your new Harley-Davidson when the war is won!

HARLEY-DAVIDSON MOTOR CO.
Department A, Milwaukee, Wis.

Write today for FREE copy of "Enthusiast" magazine, filled with thrilling motorcycle pictures and stories..

HARLEY-DAVIDSON
MOTORCYCLES

rapped him on the chest. "You look swell, baby."

"It's the Finnish air," he said. "I've been drunk on it for weeks. Ran into a medical major today who said I must be the guy you were asking about."

"You're the guy, all right," I said.

He sat down. We lit up cigarettes, talked. It made me feel swell having him around. He'd learned a few words of Finnish and he kidded with the nurses. There were several minutes of by-play, then I said:

"How're you and Kadi?"

"Dandy." He glanced down at his fingernails. "We've got it worked out on a schedule. We only fight on Saturday nights now."

"Fight?"

"Yeah. About you-know-what. I thought that fever in Asia had cured me; but apparently not. It's all right when I'm busy like this, but—"

"But what?"

"Oh, it's no good, that's all. I guess I'm just a family man. Like I told you a long time ago—"

"Fireplace and slippers. Kitchen matches and peanut-butter sandwiches."

"Yeah. Ain't I unglamorous?"

"Kathie's crazy about you, Tony."

He jammed his hands in his pockets. "I hear you talk. But sometimes I wonder. As long as she's the big boss it's fine. But—" He turned. "Are you my pal?"

"Sure."

"I think," he said, "that the handwriting's on the wall."

"Tony!"

"I haven't left her because I'm supposed to be grateful or something. That's the worst feeling in the world. And the hell of it is I could love her like hell if only she'd—"

"I understand."

"But this way, as long as I stay with her I'm the great American heel. Her friends think so. Everyone sees it but Kat." He walked to the window.

"Tony," I said, "don't ever leave Kadi. She, well—I saw her once after you'd left her. It—wasn't very nice."

"Then why in the name of God doesn't she go back to the States with me and be a wife?"

"I don't know. I think she feels she has a mission in Europe, a job to do."

"Yeah," he said, "owes it to posterity. Rot!"

"Sometimes, Tony, when two strong people meet it's that way. It'll work out. Only, be a good guy and don't leave her."

Tony laughed. "Okay. I'll suffer in perfumed silence. Whenever I kiss those gorgeous lips I'll think: this is for Willie. He asked me not to—" He broke off. "Who in the hell started this?"

Sleds carrying skis, bicycles, field guns and a smoking cook stove, were gliding past. Three kilometers away you could hear the sound of Russian artillery. Tony gazed out the window.

"Nothing but night operations in this sector . . ." He glanced at his wrist watch, pulled on his fur gloves, and adjusted a white hood over his head. There was a Red Cross band on his arm.

"Be seeing you, pappy." I went to the door with him.

"I'll drop by tomorrow," he said. He waved to the Finnish nurses as he rode away on a sled.

BUT he did not return the next day. He was transferred during the night to the Karelian Peninsula, and I never saw him again at the front. He wrote one short letter: *Busy as hell—tank traps, barbed wire, and trenches —the Mannerheim Line. Rocks, trees and five million lakes. Kathrine left today for Sweden.*

I went on a week's leave in February, but I missed him. Kadi was touring the Balkans on assignment. And in April, when it was all over, I tried to make contact with him, but he was still working up in the Peninsula. Helsinki was quiet and tragic now. My army job was over, and I had only a few dollars back pay.

This I drew, along with return boat fare to the States. Shiploads of American volunteers had already embarked, and were on their way home. But I had not yet made my plans, and when the major-doctor offered me a humble post in a little hospital just outside of Helsinki, I was glad to take it.

I had a tiny room on the hospital's fourth floor, the very top, and during the long spring days I worked in and out of the wards. The snow thawed and leaves began to blossom on the trees. I wrote Tony and told him where I was, but I heard nothing from him. Kadi was on the Continent.

There was much hard work to do, and the days went by quite swiftly. I did not think of Noel as often as I used to. But sometimes at night I woke and lay still in the darkness and wondered whether she had actually married Hank.

On the tenth day of May I sat in my room, listening to reports on the radio. A Finnish interne, kneeling beside the set, translated fresh bulletins for me. Holland invaded. Belgium. Nazi bombers over Europe. Parachute troops, Panzer tank divisions, motorcycle gunners overrunning the Continent. . . The Total War.

I went to the Major that night.

"I want to join the French," I said. "I want to get to Paris at once."

He smiled. "A doctor-of-fortune," he said. "I believe you can get a Finnish boat to France. We're neutral, and it should be fairly safe. There's one leaving tomorrow. I will have your pay ready for you in the morning. It does not amount to very much, but—"

"That doesn't matter," I said. "You've been very kind, doctor."

"And you've been very efficient. If you should ever want to return . . ."

The next morning I was in my room, packing. I felt excited, elated. The sun shone bright through the window, birds were singing in the trees, and I hurriedly jammed clothes into a suitcase. Behind me, the door opened and closed. I turned around. Tony stood there.

He was wearing a woolen seaman's cap and a flyer's jacket, a brown scarf at his throat. He took off his green sun glasses and stuck them in his pocket.

"My, my, look what the cat dragged in. Where'n hell have you been?"

He said, "In Paris."

"But I thought—"

"A guy flew me over." His voice was very quiet. "We're going back in half an hour. Only not to Paris. He's volunteered himself and his plane to the Belgians."

"Listen, Tony, I thought you were going to—"

"I missed seeing you when I was in Helsinki before," he said. He leaned back against the wall, reaching for a cigarette. "I had an idea what you'd say."

"About what?"

"About my putting in for a Paris divorce."

I just stared at him.

"I'm still in the Red Cross," he went on. "I'm going to drive an ambulance. Kat told me to tell you that you're cleared with the outfit. But you have to go to Paris to sign up."

"*Really?*" My heart was thumping. "You mean, I'm back in?"

"You're back in," he said.

"That's swell! Was it Kadi who—"

"No. Hank Drayton did it. He fixed it up for you in the States. She didn't have anything to do with it, though I suppose she tried."

So Hank had got me back in. I wondered why. Into the silence Tony said, "Noel's in Belgium."

"Noel!"

"Yeah. Kadi talked to her on the phone. She and Hank were on their way through Paris."

"They—are they married?"

"I don't know. No one asked. Why? In love with her, Willie?"

"I—guess I am."

He smiled wanly. "Retribution you rat. Only I guess it isn't very funny, is it?" He looked around, restlessly. "Well, I got to go."

I looked up.

"Be good, Willie, I'm going to try and locate Noel. If the war lasts long enough maybe we'll all three meet at the front. If you see Kadi tell her—I appreciate everything."

"Okay," I said. Our hands gripped. Then he was gone.

I REMEMBER the night I saw Kadi. There were planes in the sky, a summer moon, a dark Paris. No lights but the moon and the pale blue of stars shining on the Seine. A hushed city, listening for the war. A breeze through the Bois de Bologne, and girl cyclists on the Rue des Capucine.

I went to Kadi's room. She was packing, and I remembered the way I had been packing when I saw Tony. Kadi was pale. There was a half-filled highball glass on the dresser. She sat down on the bed and tapped a cigarette on her polished thumbnail.

"Once we fell in love in Paris, Willie," she said. "It is a dear and lovely city."

"I—I saw Tony."

She nodded. "Then you know. It's over. I guess perhaps I always knew that some day it would be over. I guess I always knew he didn't love me."

"He *does* love you, Kadi. But no man could go on being kept. Tony's just a simple American who wants to make his own living. He won't be happy any other way."

She rose. "Yes, so I gather."

"If you loved him enough to—"

She turned. "How do you know I didn't? That I wasn't going to scuttle the biggest story in my lifetime—this war—and—"

"Go back to the States?"

She nodded. "That night he walked out I was going to tell him. He'd always come back, before. This time he didn't." She fingered the highball glass. "There's something else I never told him."

"What?"

She shrugged. "It doesn't matter any more. I've been a two-legged fool." She paused. "I'm going to stay in Europe, now, and cover this war. I've got a military pass to take me in a plane across France."

"Kadi—"

"The ex-Mrs. Saxon is going to have a ringside seat to the biggest event in history." She walked to the end of the room.

"I'm going to the front, Willie. I've got a tin hat, a gas mask, and an old typewriter—"

"But it's dangerous," I said feebly.

"Paris may have a few air-raids. But I doubt the Nazis will get that far."

"Where do you go?"

"I haven't decided exactly. Somewhere along the French channel coast. As near Belgium as possible. Calais, or possibly a place called"—she glanced at the map laying on the table—"Dunkirk."

"I've got to shove off," I said. "A Red Cross car's leaving for the front. I'm in again, Kadi. Signed up this afternoon. Maybe I'll see Tony."

"Maybe."

"Kadi, do you know if Noel's married?"

"No, I don't. She wasn't in Paris long. I only talked to her on the phone. I thought you didn't care?"

"I—I don't."

"You lie, darling. Oh. Willie . . ." Her eyes misted. "It's all such a mess—our lives. I don't know if any of us will ever see each other again. You and Tony and Noel . . . But if you do see Tony, if you should happen to run into him—tell him for me, that when he's in New York again he can come and see his child every Sunday afternoon."

"His—what?"

"Baby," she said. "You know, *infant*. By Kathrine Rogers."

"Kadi!"

"That's the thing I was going to tell Tony."

"Look, I'll find him! I don't know how, but—"

"No. It's over—that marriage part. Just tell him what I said. And if you're near Dunkirk, Willie, drop in."

CHAPTER EIGHT

I RODE in the car with the other doctors, nurses and workers. We flew a Red Cross flag. But we could not make very good time. There were two-wheel carts, wagons, and bicycles; old people, and children, dogs and horses and cows, all moving toward Paris. There were geese, pigs and young girls wearing peasant hoods, and carrying cloth bundles. They trudged silently and slowly through the night, toward Paris. And we went in the opposite direction.

It was the road to hell.

At the front, in those first days, it was noisy. I worked in dressing stations and dispensary huts, and rode in ambulances. I carried stretchers. I was surgeon and doctor.

The positions in Belgium had been blasted, lost. Communication lines were out. Ambulances had been fired upon, wrecked. Red Cross men killed as well as soldiers. Relief stations had been bombed. The Allied Forces kept moving back . . . Sudan was lost.

I worked, and I wondered about Tony and Noel. Then I would be so busy I could not think. The whole world became a complex shambles of war. History in the making.

One night I was despatched with a two-ambulance unit up behind the first line of resistance. I rode in the first ambulance, following behind motorized infantry and artillery—French 75's being drawn by tractors. Along a dirt road the long procession went, through sparse woods, and across a shaky wooden bridge over the Meuse River.

The guns were strung out, forming a long defense line. This was in the path of what would be a likely German dawn attack. It was ironic, but the Nazi soldiers were allowed to sleep peacefully the night through.

I remember that night, and the Poilus, sitting around talking. Just before dawn they were all up and ready. I could see them ahead of me, through the woods. There was no sound except the birds that always commence singing just before the break of day.

All at once the dark sky dissolved into gray. I felt a chill slip over me. It was like the gray of a graveyard. I did not see any Germans. The sunrise came. Then I heard a bugle blast, and the Commence Firing whistles.

The sky was suddenly black with planes. Dive bombers, low-flying, droning, strafing planes. You could hear the pounding shriek of their motors. The shrill, terrifying siren as they dove straight down at the guns. Machine guns clattered. Anti-aircraft batteries chewed at the mass formation of wings.

More planes. They came in waves. I lay flat, my face buried in the ground. The land guns were thundering. It was like Poland. Anti-aircraft batteries were demolished; 75s twisted into molten metal. Corpses were strewn through the woods. A few Nazi planes crashed to earth, burst into flame.

Then the strafing planes were gone, and I heard faintly, growing steadily louder, the grinding sound of Nazi tanks. Panzer Divisions. Light guns from the French forward outposts were already falling back. 75s were firing pointblank into the tanks. But the grinding of the iron monsters came on. I saw them on the horizon, like futuristic Frankensteins, crawling, caterpillaring toward us. . . .

I was up now, working frantically with the stretcher-bearers, gathering men the Stukas had wounded. They lay everywhere. We could not work fast enough. We shoved them into the ambulances. Bleeding men we didn't have room to carry, cried to us for help.

My ambulance was full. We even had two men jammed into the driving seat. There was not another inch of space. Yet we were leaving hundreds behind. We started back. The tanks were close behind us.

We raced through the woods and onto a road. German motorcycle units equipped with machine-guns were coming up behind the tanks. Battalions of them. A spearhead. Infantry would follow.

The ambulance rumbled across the Meuse River bridge. Ten minutes later the bridge was destroyed. On this shore artillery in second defense line was blasting away at medium range. Behind them, on a dozen roads, reserve troops were coming up in trucks. Scared kids in baggy uniforms carrying bayoneted rifles. . . .

These things I remember, and that the French and the B.E.F. kept falling back along the refugee-choked roads. That there were no fighter planes to engage the Stukas; no big tanks to match the Panzers. That generals were shot, or changed, in midbattle.

And I remember working one night in a ruined cathedral, by lamp light, with German raiders flying overhead. A thousand men on cots. Arms and legs cut off, screaming with pain. Men sobbing. A hysterical boy strapped to a cot, singing *La Marseillaise,* shouting it wildly, until he choked up, crying, and died. The wet air, and the smell of roses and yellow lichen on the crumbling walls outside. The candles at the altar. Priests giving Holy Communion . . .

And the end, the last days of fighting in Flanders, with the doctor saying: "New ambulances have come up. Abbeyville has fallen. Boulogne and Calais, on the Channel, are already under fire. A rear guard division is trying to check the German drive there. They are going to try and hold them."

"For what?" I said bleakly. I was tired, and sick and discouraged. Our efforts, or mine at least, seemed so puny and futile.

"There's to be a mass evacuation of both the French and the B.E.F. at Dunkirk. The Nazis have nearly half a million men trapped here. It's to be a desperate try to escape a German pincer movement. There'll be a terrific barrage. Thousands of wounded. Two hospital ships are in port at Dunkirk. We'll need people down there."

"Dunkirk?" It was coming back now, pounding in my head. Kadi was there!

"Yes. There are ambulances outside, drivers already in them. We are sending every available unit."

DUNKIRK . . . Three hundred and fifty thousand weary, heart-sick soldiers. Searchlights combing the sky. Anti-aircraft guns pounding. Nazi dive bombers. Relentless bombardment. Dunkirk in flames. A rear guard of four thousand holding the Germans in the burning city of Calais. Hand-to-hand street fighting. The legion of the four thousand. Three thousand nine hundred and seventy of them died in four days of fighting. They held until the end. British Tommies. French Poilus. The unsung battalion of death. The heroes of Dunkirk.

Other heroes held Calais and Boulogne, forcing the infuriated Germans to despatch to those points two armored divisions of Panzers which otherwise would have attacked the evacuees in Dunkirk.

I found Kadi through a simple process. When in trouble she invariably flung out the word "officials." It was as natural as breathing that she'd run to them. I located an official—the mayor of Dunkirk. Yes, he had seen her. She was returning to England on a hospital ship. Had he himself not suggested it? Which ship? The *Paris,* M'sieu.

The *Paris* was painted white, and there were huge green bands and a big red cross on it. When I swung aboard, it had already made two trips and had been attacked in mid-channel. Bullet-spattered, it stood by for a third load of evacuees. English nurses were working coolly and efficiently. With them was Kadi. She wore a white smock and was working alongside the nurses, doing whatever she could to help out.

The ship was loaded with wounded, and it was about ready to sail. Outside, the noise of guns made a terrific din. Stukas were screaming down out of the sky. But Kadi didn't seem to hear. She looked cool and calm and efficient.

A soldier hopped down the aisle on one foot, his other leg badly smashed, his face strained with pain. Kadi helped him into a bunk. She was adjusting the sheets. I walked over and examined the leg.

"Bring bandages, nurse," I said.

Kadi looked up at me, whisking back loose red hair. "Willie! Oh, Willie!"

"Don't stand there," I said. "Do as you're told."

"Yes, doctor," she said.

When she returned, and I was working on the leg, she asked: "Tony?"

I shrugged. "Haven't seen him. He's probably in Dunkirk somewhere. Practically everybody is."

She nodded.

"I don't suppose you'd take him back?" I looked up. Her eyes were very bright.

She said, "Of course I'd have him back! I'd crawl on hands and knees across the Sahara to get him back!"

"I'll try and find him," I said.

A few minutes later the ship was ready to sail, and I had to get off. Kadi was happy and cheerful. Things were going to be swell. She was certain I'd find Tony. She stood on deck and waved. I remember thinking that she had never looked more beautiful in all her life.

That night in Dunkirk we heard that on that trip that the *Paris* was bombarded and sunk in mid-channel, and that a lifeboat filled with nurses was fired upon and capsized by a Nazi pilot who flew very low and machine-gunned the crouching, terrified women.

THE work went on. There were Red Cross stations near the beach. Oil depots were in flames and smoke poured thick and black over the entire scene. It hampered Nazi aircraft and protected ships from being open targets. A French vice-admiral was directing the evacuation. His headquarters was under relentless fire. Wherries, motorboats, tugs, minesweepers came in, loaded and sailed; destroyers filled to the brim with troops convoyed them.

I worked for hours with the wounded aboard an old steamer that was tied up alongside a dock. It was filled with them, and so was all the other available space that was not crammed with tired, exhausted troops.

It was dark, hours later, when I stood on the beach and watched her get underway. Less than a half hour later this ship, too, was bombed. It came back into port, burning from stem to stern, the flames bright in the night.

But there was a legion of four thousand standing off the whole German Army at Calais, and we did not give up. The wounded in the flaming vessel were put over the side in life preservers, were picked up by other craft.

I worked out of Red Cross stations, treated the wounded, sometimes carrying them on my back and wading out to ships where eager hands hoisted them aboard. Quite often a half-conscious soldier would whisper his thanks. *"Merci, mon ami,"* or "You're a bit of all right, chappie; God bless you!"

In war soldiers get killed. But Kadi wasn't a soldier. She was a woman. . . .

Wading ashore that night I saw a Red Cross flag fluttering from a beach station, and suddenly I was remembering a dispensary in T'sing, China, made of dried mud and stone and bamboo. I thought of Father Andre, of his untiring energy, the way his eyes shone. *There are many battles to be won. The battles you will wage when the fighting on the field is finished. . . .*

And I remembered a line of ambulances on the snowy road going out of Madrid. Ships loaded with food, medicine, crossing the seas to Bordeaux. A convoy of trucks filled with bandages pounding over the Burma Road. Sleds bringing in wounded Finns and Russians. A guy named Tony Saxon in the Karelian Peninsula. A refugee camp over the Spanish border. Flood relief volunteers speeding across America on a snowy Christmas Eve. An ambulance racing over the Meuse River Bridge ahead of a Blitzkrieg. A thousand men on cots in the lamp light of a ruined cathedral. . . .

This, I thought, is the Red Cross, and I am a part of it! This is where I belong. . . .

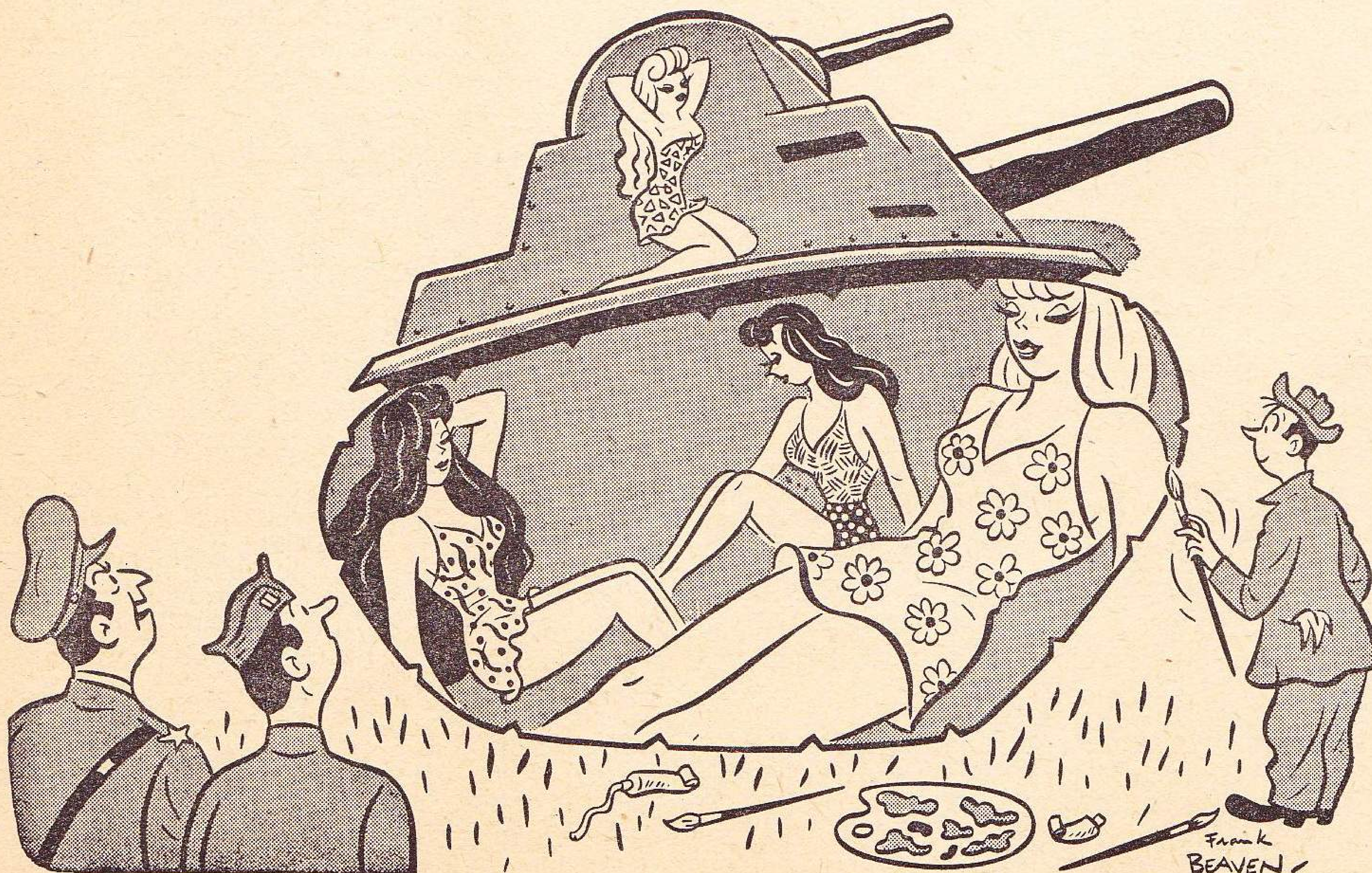
ON the third day I fell exhausted on the beach outside of a relief station. When I woke it was night. Smoke lay over the water in a thick pall. Machine guns were chattering. Anti-aircraft guns roared. Planes were swooping low, bombing. Someone was shaking me. It was Tony, laughing.

"Pappy, I've been looking all over for you!"

I sat up, shook my head groggily.

"I found out you were here. Been looking in all the stations for you for three days, whenever I had a spare minute." He flopped down beside me. "Geez, I'm so tired I'm sick. Been working like a dog. But I had to find you."

"Why?" I looked at him, wondering if he knew about Kadi.



"Where did that new man study camouflage?"

"Noel. Noel's working here. She came with me from the Rheims area."

"How is she? How is Noel?"

He was holding his arm. I saw that there was a bandage around it. It was dirty, and blood had seeped through.

"She's fine. No sleep for days, though."

"And Hank?"

"He's directing the work, or was, from Versaille. Defense of Paris. New General named Weygand is commanding the troops, I hear."

"What's wrong with your arm?"

"Fritz bullet. Machine gun from a plane, I guess. Hell, I didn't even see the damn plane. It was like a bee sting. Then it got worse."

"Hurt you?"

"Yeah."

"You're probably dying of gangrene."

"Thanks, you dog."

I looked at him. His face was drawn. He was sick. I didn't know if I should tell him about Kadi.

"The evacuation's about finished here, isn't it?"

He nodded. "Almost. Hit the peak last night. Sixty-six thousand men were taken off." He got to his feet, gave me a hand and pulled me up. We went into the Red Cross station and I peeled the bandage off his arm.

"Where's Noel?"

"About two miles south of here. Straight along the coast."

I nodded. I didn't like the arm.

"Looks like blood-poisoning. You've got to get to London, Tony. To a hospital. You'll be okay, but you can't waste any time." I was wrapping a fresh bandage. "You're too sick to be of any more use around here, anyway."

"You're the doctor," he said. He glanced up. "See Kadi in Paris?"

"I—I saw her here in Dunkirk," I said.

"What?"

"Oh, she got off all right. I saw the boat go."

He looked suddenly worried. "Do you think the ship was—all right? Do you think—"

"I said I saw it go! Anyway, I thought you were through with her."

"I'm through taking her dough, sure. Look, Willie, she's—do you think she got to England safely?"

"You'd better get over there and find out."

"Yeah," he said, "that's it! That's the ticket!"

I watched him as I spoke: "When I saw her in Paris she wasn't the same."

"What do you mean?"

"She was tired of being Europe's girl scout," I said. "She wanted an apartment in Riverdale. And you selling cars and—"

"She—she *said* that?" He was trembling. I'd never seen him so excited.

"Yeah. And something else."

"What?"

But suddenly I couldn't tell him the rest; it was right that he know she had changed, that she was willing to be a real wife. But not the rest. Because there was no Kadi now, and there would be no little Kathrine either. If he could simply remember that she'd been willing to come back to the States with him, that was enough. The rest would hurt him too much.

"She'll tell you when you see her," I said.

"Willie, it's going to be swell! Kadi and I. That's all it ever needed. For me to wear the trousers." He laughed. "C'mon. Help me pick out a ship."

I waded out with him, and saw him aboard a minesweeper. The flames of Dunkirk were red on the water, and I shouted to him to be sure and get to a hospital, and he nodded. I returned to the beach, wet, dirty and sick.

Your Copy May Be Late

Because of the exigency of war-time transportation, your ARGOSY may be late in reaching you. If it does not arrive on time, please do not write complaining of the delay. This delay occurs after the magazine leaves our offices and is caused by conditions beyond our control.

I started up the beach to find Noel. But I knew, now, that she was married. If it had been any other way Tony would have told me. Even in the excitement. I was sure of that.

And I thought: This is the way it ends, something that started on a Christmas Eve in Madrid in 1938. The day Tony said, "This is a triangle." The snow was white that night, the thunder of guns distant; and Kadi had said, "Wine, mistletoe, and a Christmas kiss . . ."

I thought of Paris, too, the Pam-Pam on the Champs-Elysees, the gay laughter. The sad Russian in Montmartre playing *Dark Eyes* over and over, and Kadi saying "I might marry you, buzz buzz!" And of a kiss, though not my own, on the Tour Eiffel. I remembered Tony standing on the platform in Gare St. Lazaare, waving goodbye . . . And a room in Shanghai, and Kadi saying, "God forgive me! No one should ever love this much!"

This was the end, and I remembered the beginning, and the middle, the tears and the laughter, the days and the weeks that had made up our lives. A cabin in the mountains, and a voice saying, "England is in a state of war." Dance bands playing *Stay in My Arms, Cinderella.* Noel in City Hall, the Standard clock looking at us. Noel saying, "I shouldn't tell you this, Willie, but I was so happy I cried all night." And another day when she stood in her Park Avenue apartment and said, "It's just no soap with us." Then a flood, me with my bag in my hand, saying, "Doc Destiny, they call me." And the stars bright as I walked down the hill to the railroad station.

I thought of these things, and I knew it was ended, and that nothing had turned out the way we intended. . . .

I came at last to the station where Noel worked. It was a tent. There were only a few wounded left in it. The lamp light was dim. A doctor was bandaging a soldier with a head wound. The place was a mess. Outside, the ceaseless bombardment of Dunkirk went on.

Then I saw Noel. Her young face was very beautiful in the lamp light. Her hair was touseled, her uniform soiled. She bent over a patient's cot, took a thermometer out of his mouth, looked at it, then shook it. She said, "I think you can be moved now. Will you be glad to get back to England?"

The sick man nodded, looking up at her, worship shining in his eyes. Noel turned—and saw me. She stared, then she smiled.

"Hello, Willie."

"Hello, Mrs. Drayton."

Her eyes searched my face.

"I—I just saw Tony off," I said. "Kadi was on the *Paris.* He doesn't know."

"Doesn't know what?" she asked. "One of the doctors who was on the *Paris* got to London and made a return trip here on the *Worthing.* He works in this station."

"What about that lifeboat full of nurses?"

Her lips tightened. "The Nazi pilot who machine-gunned that boat made the front pages all over the world. But his bullets, which punctured and capsized the life-boat, missed the occupants. The nurses were all rescued."

"Then Kadi's all right!" I was suddenly shouting. Noel gazed at me curiously. She nodded.

"Tony'll meet her in London. They'll go to New York. They'll—"

"Naturally. And there's something else, Willie. I—I was wrong. I admit it. I loved you so much, and you thought so little of me—I was afraid of you! And Hank—Hank was nice. I actually intended to marry him, but—"

"Noel!" My heart was rampaging.

"I suppose you thought you were being nice and calm about it. But you weren't. You were crazy, and wild, and foolish and wonderful. And after you left I cried for a week."

"But I didn't have anything to offer you. I—"

"I know. That's why Hank worked so hard to get you back in the Red Cross. He's the hero, Willie. Not you. He gave me up, and did that for you. You just went away."

She began walking along the cots. I caught up. "Noel, I—"

She examined a patient's chart. "There's work to be done, doctor."

"I'm aware of it. But—"

She was moving down the aisle again. I was nearly crazy. I grabbed her. "Noel, you've got to marry me!" She looked up. Then I was kissing her and she was crying.

"We'll be married tonight, Wee Willie," she said. "By a chaplain. Before you go off to Tibet or somewhere!"

In a minute or two we returned to work. There was much to be done. Boats still lay off the beach, waiting for the wounded. Nazis were shelling and bombing Dunkirk. Noel and I were working side by side.

"Wherever pain is—"

"That's where we are," she said.

THE END

THE SUN NEVER SETS ON THE MIGHTY JEEP

U. S. MARINES CRASH SOLOMON ISLES

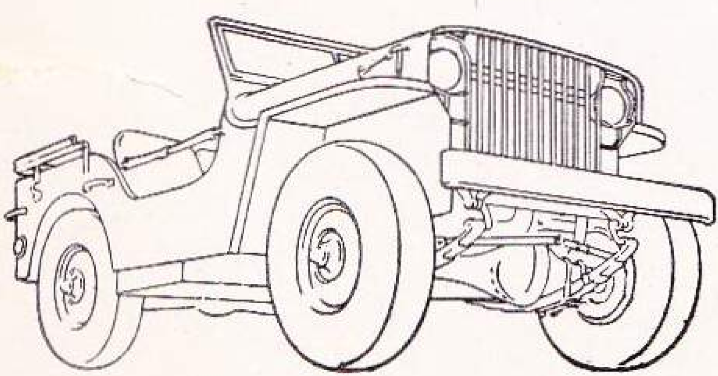
IN JEEPS FROM WILLYS-OVERLAND

ON THE shores of Guadalcanal and on the beach at Tulagi Bay, the fearless, hard-boiled U. S. Marines speeded their attack with modern Willys-built Jeeps.

In the hands of men like these, the tough fighting Jeep now adds new drive and mobility to a striking power already famous throughout the world. The jabbering Japs in the Solomons found this out when husky U. S. Marines charged up the beaches with their rugged Willys-built Jeeps and cleared the enemy out of those strategic bases needed for our advance in the far Pacific.

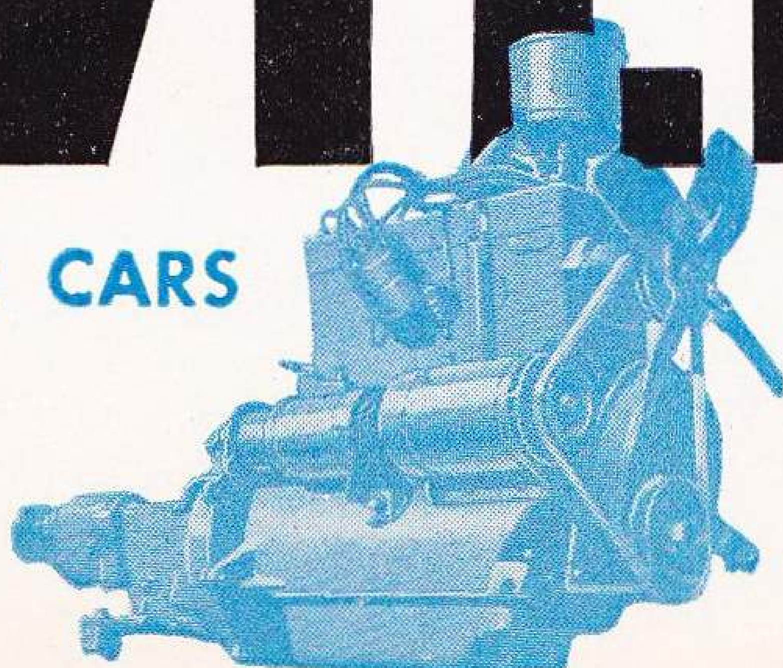
In recognition of the glorious record of the U. S. Marines in the Solomons, the original James Sessions painting of the above illustration is being presented to the Marine Corps by Willys-Overland Motors. This painting was recently honored by being shown in both the Metropolitan Museum of Art of New York, and the Chicago Art Institute. Lieutenant General Holcomb will accept the painting for the Corps and it will hang permanently in the Marine Corps Museum at Quantico.

WILLYS-OVERLAND MOTORS, INC.

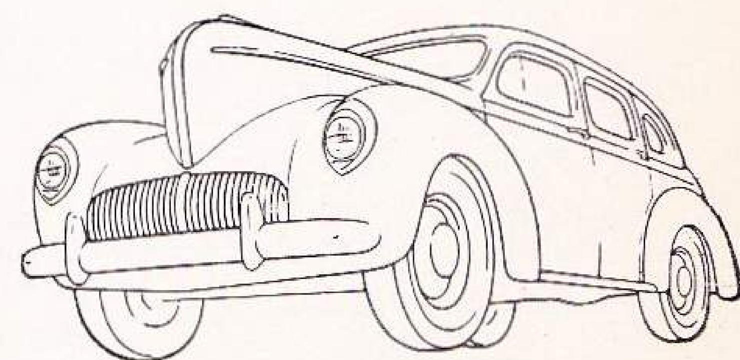


THE JEEP

WILLYS



MOTOR CARS TRUCKS AND JEEPS



THE AMERICAR

"Don't be asleep to danger!"—says HI to HATT

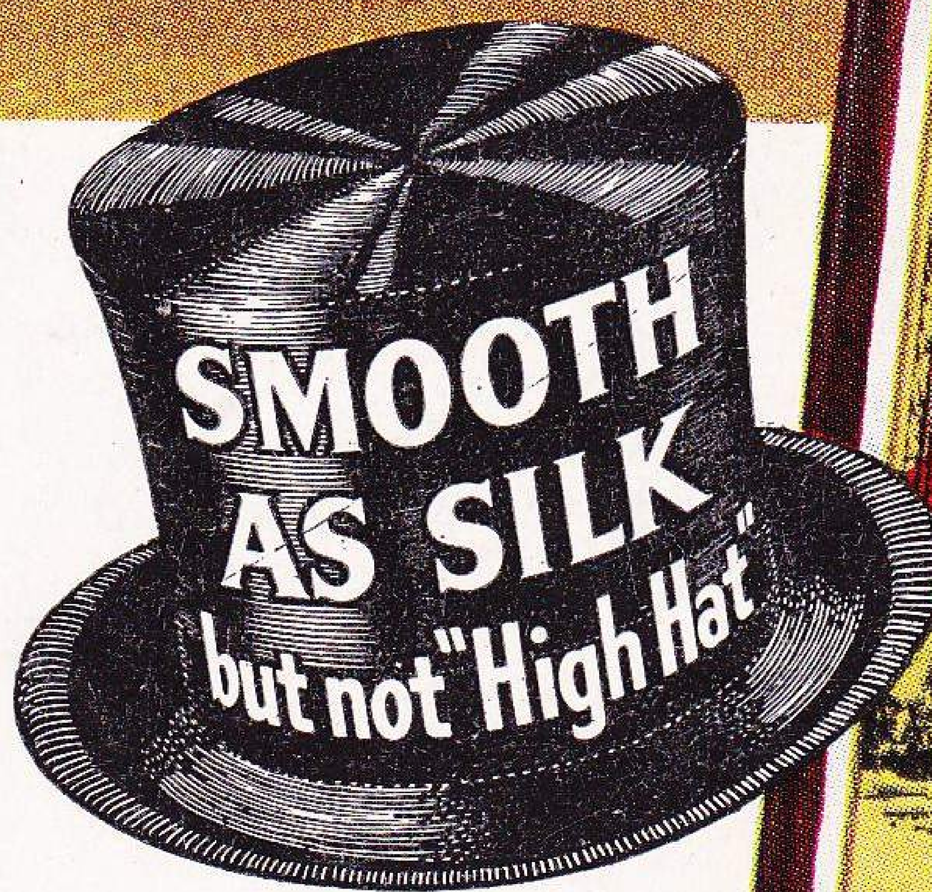
Them plans you're spillin' in your sleep might reach the Risin' Sun!

Well, shut my mouth! We shouldn't peep until our job is done!

WAR AIN'T A DREAM!

This ain't no time for forty winks
an' talkin' in your slumber,
'Cause one of Hitler's prowlin' ginks
could easy get your number!
A patriot what's worth the name
will safeguard this here nation
By puttin' in a lot of work
an' cuttin' conversation!

(Signed) MR. HI AND MR. HATT



KESSLER'S

BLENDED WHISKEY

KESSLER'S PRIVATE BLEND. 55% Grain Neutral Spirits. 85 Proof. Julius Kessler Distilling Co., Incorporated, Lawrenceburg, Ind.