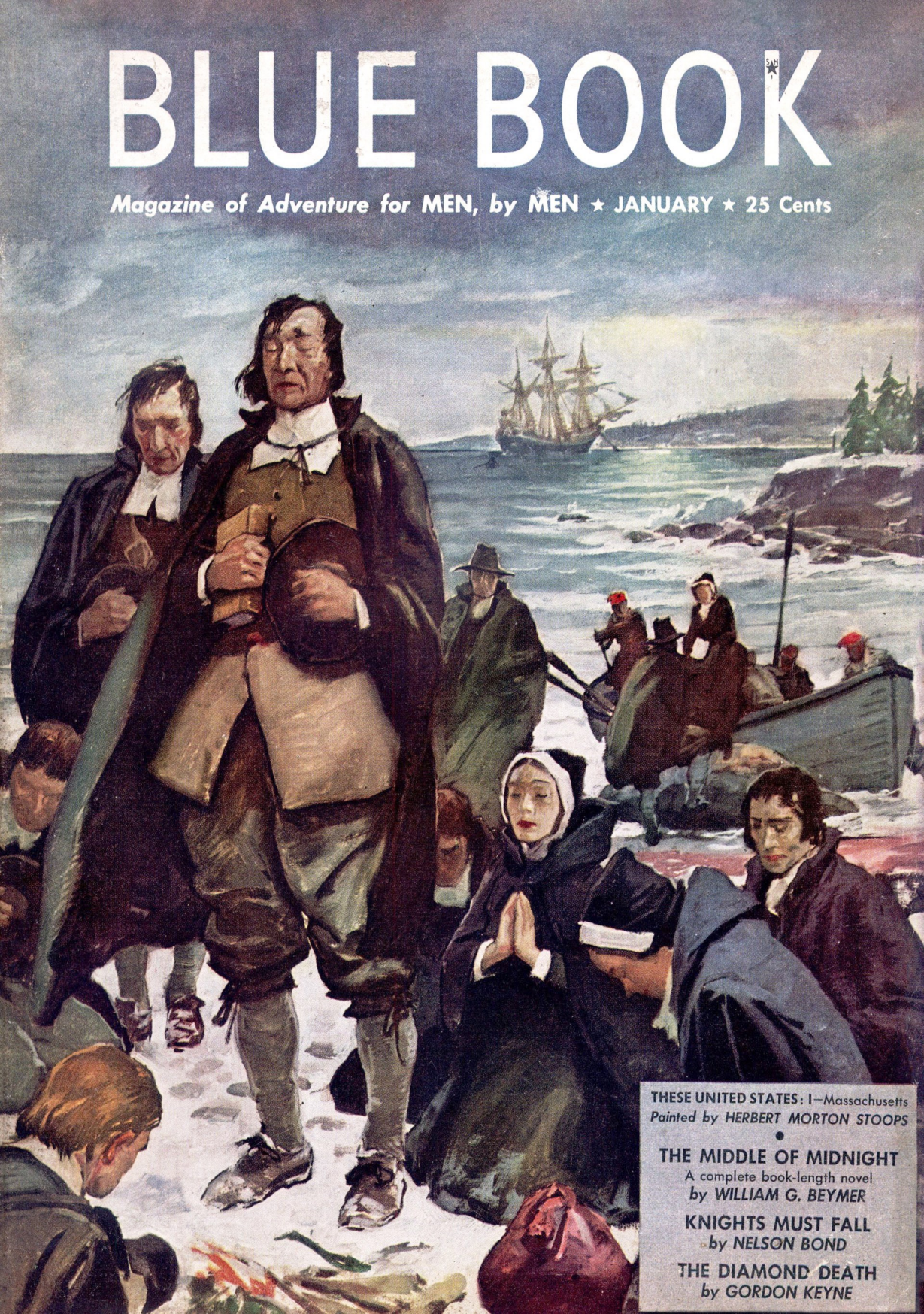
BLUE BOOK

Magazine of Adventure for MEN, by MEN ★ JANUARY ★ 25 Cents



THESE UNITED STATES: I—Massachusetts
Painted by HERBERT MORTON STOOPS

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THE MIDDLE OF MIDNIGHT
A complete book-length novel
by WILLIAM G. BEYMER

KNIGHTS MUST FALL
by NELSON BOND

THE DIAMOND DEATH
by GORDON KEYNE

THESE UNITED STATES.... I—MASSACHUSETTS

The Pilgrims Come

WE were fearful enough, let me tell you, in a haunting, anxious fear—stark afraid of the pitiless shore, of the snow and the pounding tides; in a shivering fright o' the bleak bare coast, the savages lurking near, the gray skies the loneliness. Aye, stout hearts can well afford the child's confession; afraid, since we were the first to settle this new heathen land. We had no mighty armada, no lusty power to seize and subdue; but the man who can master his own dark fears can best the enemy as well. We knew only one inspiration, one source of strength and support, one single comfort and helper —and this was a Book. So, upon landing, we sought its aid.

I take no shame to vaunt it how we started this work with prayer; I boast it proudly. Be he Brahmin or Papist or Gentile, Pagan or Gnostic or Jew, the man who asks not the help of Heaven in starting a labor aye sets himself in the seat of the scornful. God is in the secret places of the heart, my friends, and knows no sect nor creed.

Mark well, we landed here not to find gold or conquest, rich trade or far sea routes. In our bitter need we sought not the pretty gauds of this world, or even safety. Homes we desired, where we might have fields and farms to keep us from want. In the Old World, fear of enemies had girded us on all sides; here we thought to cast away these hatreds.

We needed a place where we could think as we might be inspired, and freely speak what we believed. Our religious faith was tied in with speech and thought and daily action; but others misliked it and evilly entreated us. In a word, this New World offered us tolerance, one of the fundamental concepts of the universe, yet if we should accept it, we must struggle and fight and suffer. What is worth while must be won, even with tears and sacrifice. So we took hold, and were not ashamed to ask our God to help us.

Methought this New World was a veritable refuge for all the helpless and oppressed, an opportunity to establish tolerance and charity, with prosperity. Our own hands must do the work; with this necessity we were content. Oh, greed would eventually take its grip, and intolerance would creep into the structure; devils of all kinds would sneak in to wreak harm, and we must fight them away repeatedly! Man rises only by falling and then putting forth greater effort. Obstacles, failures, are given to sharpen wits and harden muscles and stout resolution. Perhaps some of us thus thought about the future, perhaps not.

All of us, pastor and woman and soldier, were deeply and bitterly afraid. If you doubt, look at our faces! But it was not panic. It was honest fear, such fear as claws at the soldier's heart while he marches forward, such fear as assails the young student when he faces the world of action and achievement. This fear can hurl one into the morass of despair and panic—or it can be overcome, and its force of imagination added to the inward strength that wins success.

Yet help may be needed, and a strong man disdains not to ask. Behold, our Book said unto us: "The kingdom of Heaven is within you." And, my friends, I think it was.

—H. Bedford-Jones

Readers' Comment

Our New Cover Series

BLUE BOOK *represents great reading value with your many gifted writers and fine stories and I have spent enjoyable hours reading it.*

Nothing pleases me more than the historical paintings by your gifted artist Herbert Morton Stoops, and I am especially taken with "Rails Across the Continent" on the cover for September issue, as I have read everything obtainable on the subject, and this painting is my idea of an actual scene in the great work of building the transcontinental lines.

I think it would be very nice if you would publish inside the cover, or elsewhere, a short sketch telling about the paintings. While most of your readers may know what the paintings are, most all would like to have their memories refreshed, which I hope you will do in the future.

Ralph Emerson Woods.

(Many other readers besides Mr. Woods have written of their pleasure in our cover series "This Is Our Land." Beginning with this issue, we are starting a new series, "These United States," each devoted to a specially colorful or noteworthy episode in the history of some particular State. And while this first one, the Landing of the Pilgrims, requires no explanation, some of the others will be less obvious; and if it meets with your approval, we shall each month elaborate the idea with an interpretive page like the one opposite. —*The Editor*)

Biographies Too?

I BELIEVE it will enhance the prestige and entertainment value of BLUE BOOK *if you would give us the biographies of our national figures of the present or past generation. Men instinctively like to read of the struggles and accomplishments of their heroes, such as Knute Rockne in football, Babe Ruth in baseball, Eddie Rickenbacker in aviation, Wendell Willkie in politics, etc. Great living men leave living ideals.*

This additional feature, I believe, will give BLUE BOOK *a better balance and will stimulate keener interest.*

Mack Garson.

*The Editors of BLUE BOOK are glad to receive letters of constructive criticism and suggestions; and for the ones we publish each month we will pay the writers ten dollars each.

Letters should not be longer than two hundred words; no letters can be returned and all will become property of McCall Corporation. They should be addressed: Editor of Letters Blue Book Magazine, 230 Park Ave., New York 17, New York.

BLUE BOOK

January, 1947 MAGAZINE Vol. 84, No. 3

A Complete Book-Length Novel

Eleven Short Stories

Stories of Fact and Experience

Special Features

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

DONALD KENNICOTT, *Editor*

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Knights Must

"THIS guy," began Square-deal Sam McGhee, "had two heads—"

Such a statement, emanating from the lips of anyone else on earth, would have brought me bolt upright in my seat. But long years of acquaintance with the old gambler, con and carny man had sharpened my powers of perception—and thrift. In his narrative hook I recognized the inevitable preamble to a touch. So being determined to get value for vanished cash, I countered his gambit.

"Convenient," I approved. "Except perhaps on windy days? Two hats blowing in opposite directions—"

Sam frowned, and cast a meaningful glance at the decanter on my desk.

"Funny man!" he said disapprovingly. "You ought to be in vaudeville. *Comedy Songs an' Patter.* You could have followed Fink's Mules—with a broom. Is that there stuff to be drank, or are you savin' it to be embalmed in?"

I passed the bottle. He smacked his lips over four stiff fingers, shuddered away a proffered chaser, and chose a blunt Havana from my humidor. Wreathed in a halo of fragrant blue, he was the picture of seraphic contentment—if you can conceive of a slightly weatherbeaten angel wearing a battered old hat and a pair of high-top shoes.

"This," Sam conceded magnanimously, "aint a bad hunk o' rope. You must be doin' pretty good these days—financially, I mean. Which reminds me, if you could spare me a loan of a few bucks a couple o' weeks—"

"The man?" I reminded him gently.

"Huh? What man?"

"The one with two heads."

"Oh, *him!*" said Sam. "It's a sort of a long story. I don't want to waste your valyable time—or mine."

"I'll lend an ear," I promised; "and if the story is good enough, I'll convert the loan to lucre. Check?"

SQUARE-DEAL SAM MCGHEE undertakes to manage a robot chess-player at carnival shows, and finds that life can be troublous and exciting in surprising ways.

Fall

by NELSON BOND

Illustrated by JOHN FULTON

"I'd druther have cash," said Sam promptly. "Well, now, this guy I was talkin' about—"

THIS guy (began Squaredeal Sam), had two heads. He was the foreman of a small electrical manufacturin' plant, so he had two heads: the president an' the general manager. How I happened to meet him: him an' me was warmin' two stools adjacent to each other in a small downtown bar which aint been discovered an' made rowdy yet by café society. He ast me for a match, give me a cigarette, an' the next thing you know, we was buyin' each other drinks an' lettin' down our hair to revile our innermost secrets like unanimous contributors to the confession magazines.

I told him I was a well-known promoter of athaletic an' entertainment features. He stroked his jaw over this for few minutes, then ast me: "Speaking of indoor sports, how's your chess, Mr. McGhee?"

"Okay," I said. "It's the alcohol makes me wheeze. Now, this ping-pong tournyment I was tellin' you about—"

"Not chest," he said. "*Chess.* The royal game; the oldest game known to man: the game of check and mate."

"You mean that game they play with funny-carved men on a checkerboard? I tried it once, but it was too wearin'."

"On the seat of emotions?"

"On the seat of the pants. I give up the game when gettin' up to open a window, I accidentally jarred my opponent offen his chair. The guy had been dead for three days."

"That's a hazard of the game," acknowledged my newfound friend dubiously, "but it doesn't happen very often. I wonder, though, if you've ever considered the promotion of an important chess tournament? Or the handling of a great chess personality?"

I said gently: "Look, Wally!" His name was Wally McQuail, this guy. "That idea leaves me colder than a Eskimo old maid's kiss. Americans like participation sports—"

"Over seven million of them play chess, or at it."

"—or if they *are* spectators, they like to be in a crowd along with thousands of others—"

"That's where your genius for promotion and publicity comes in. Chess has never been sold to the American public. In Russia, where it's the national game, chess contests draw crowds numbering into the tens of thousands. If you can popularize the game over here—"

"It won't work, Wally. Americans don't give a hoot about seein' two men hunched over a little board. They react to *big* personalities, *colorful* personalities."

"Mine is seven feet tall. He's dressed in robes of gold and silver, and his face is green."

"They don't want—" I stopped abruptly, and stared at him. "Huh? What's that? Seven feet tall? Green face? Who in tunket are you talkin' about? The Martian open champ?"

"Do you have a few minutes to spare?" asked McQuail eagerly. "Then come with me to my workshop; it's just around the corner. I'll show you what I mean."

An' he picked up the check, so I went.

THIS workshop of McQuail's, I suppose it was pretty much like any other electrician's ohm, sweet ohm. I couldn't give you a money-back guarantee on that, though. Because the first thing I seen when we entered caught my attention like a peekaboo blouse on a sunshiny day, an' I didn't have eyes for nothin' else thereafter.

He was squattin' in the center of the room; a huge great big monster of a guy which, at first glance, I took for the Patagonian delegate to a Shriners' convention. Tall? He was so tall his shadow had to bend double to stay in the same room with him. His legs was crossed under him—you know how them Muslins set?—an' on his lap was a chessboard, which he was studyin' so hard he didn't even look up when we come in.

McQuail had used the truth about how he was dressed, but had stretched it a trifle describin' his complexion. The big boy's face *was* green, but not pea-green. It was the sort of coppery-greenish color you get from bein' in the sun a lot—or from mixin' dill pickles an' ice-cream.

I gasped: "Holy St. Vitus, you mean to tell me that man-mountain's hobby is *chess?* His favorite game ought to be tiddlywinks, played with manhole-covers! I must be dreamin' this night-mare. Would you mind pinchin' me?"

"Better yet," grinned McQuail, "*you* pinch *him.*"

"Who—me? No, thanks! When I want to commit suicide, I'll choose some gentle method like shavin' with a buzzsaw, or wrestlin' a hippopotamus!"

"Go ahead!" coaxed Wally. "He won't hurt you. Abdul's perfectly harmless."

"Who?"

"Abdul. His name is Abdul Hamid Ali Bey."

"Any relation to Hudson?" I ast. But I edged up to the tremendous Turk, who all this time hadn't even glanced up from his board, an' nodded real friendly-like. "How are you, Mr. Bey?" I said. "My name's McGhee—Squaredeal Sam McGhee. How's Mrs. Bey, an' all the little inlets?"

I reached out to shake his mitt—then started like a hen on a hot griddle.

"Hey!" I yelled. "Hey, Wally, this aint no human! It's a statue!"

"Not," smirked McQuail, "quite. Watch!"

He punched a jeweled ornament on the thing's tummy. For an instant there was a faint hummin' sound. Then Abdul's head lifted, turnd toward us, an' nodded a polite greetin'!

"Not a statue," repeated Wally. "An automaton."

"A—a which?"

"An automaton. A chess-playing automaton." An' he loosed a catch concealed somewhere in Abdul's robes. Then a panel slid open just abaft the critter's spareribs an' exposed innards composed of wires, coils an' vacuum-tubes all scrambled up like housecleanin' day at General Electric. "See? He's a gigantic calculating machine, geared to excel at chess. Want to play him a game?"

"We-e-ell—" I hesitated—an' was lost.

"Fine!" said Wally. "Now, you sit across the board from him over here. . . . That's right. Take the White pieces, if you want. Abdul doesn't care. I'll watch the game, and keep a running record of it in my pocket chess-wallet, if you don't mind."

He slipped a little miniature chessboard an' pieces from his pocket an' hovered over us as me an' Abdul got ready to match wits an' wires in the ancient an' honorable game. I stopped an' figgered the angles for a minute. There's a mess of possible openin' moves in chess. Pawn to King four—pawn to Queen four—the various knight openings. Bein' a machine, like he was, it stood to reason Abdul did have his limitations. A mechanic just couldn't take into account *every* possibility—he'd have to prepare for the most likely ones. Consequently, my best bet was to pull some outlandish, unusual openin' move that would throw Abdul's tubes into hysteresis.

"Okay," I said, "here we go! Pawn to King's bishop three!"

I sat back, smirkin', as Abdul let *that* one trickle through his relays for a minute. It was clear I'd loused him up. As Wally shifted the little piece in his pocket set, the towerin' Turk's copper paw wavered uncertainly over the board an'—as if in desperation—settled on the King's pawn. His move, pawn to King's four, was routine stuff; conclusive evidence that he didn't know how to counter my play.

I knew what to do now. Throw my King-side pawns at him while he was off balance; drive home a fast attack endin' in a snappy mate. I chuckled an' made my next move—pawn to King's knight four.

Again there was a moment of dazed silence. You almost could hear the grindin' confusion in Abdul's metal mind. His hand glided out over the pieces—decided on the Queen—lifted it—plunked it at his rook's five; an'—"Check!" boomed Abdul in a tone of brassy finality, *"and mate!"*

"This," Sam conceded magnanimously, "aint a bad hunk o' rope.

"Sam!" I said reproachfully, "Samuel McGhee, don't tell me you blundered into Fool's Mate? I'm surprised!"

"*You're* surprised!" said my friend. "How about me? I was surprised, shocked *an'* humiliated, to be mated in two by an overgrowed refugee from a walky-talky factory.

"That is, at first I was. Later I learned I didn't have a chance against Abdul, anyway. He could have licked me with any openin'. He knew them all: The Ruy Lopez, and the Four Knights, and the Queen's Gambit. Accepted, Declined, or discarded. He even knew the knight to King's bishop three openin'."

"Reti?" I asked.

"Whenever you are!" nodded Sam, passing his glass.

I filled, and he emptied. Then; "That's how I come to be a chess promoter—" he said.

THAT'S how I come (continued Squaredeal Sam McGhee) to be a chess promoter. Abdul's demonstration was proof that he had somethin' on the ball, an' after Wally explained a few more of the details as to how Abdul operated, I seen we had a good thing. I agreed to manage the titanic Turk for a modest salary plus board, lodgin', travelin' expenses, an' fifty per cent of the gross. I paid for my own laundry an' haircuts.

McQuail had some highbrow ideer of exhibitin' Abdul at private chess-clubs around the country, but it didn't take me long to talk him out of that. I didn't care whether Abdul won or lost, as long as he *drew* well—so I booked him where the all-day suckers are sweetest an' thickest. I took a concession with a carnival outfit, bought myself a horse-blanket suit an' a ten-carat imitation diamond stickpin, give Abdul a fresh coat of paint, an' we hit the gold-dusty trail.

Our set-up was simple. I spieled the show outside, an' Wally displayed Abdul inside the tent. It cost the rubes on'y ten cents to come in an' gawk at the tin Turk as he went through a simple routine of mechanical gestures—liftin' his arm, smilin', noddin', an' so forth, but where we granulated the real sugar was when McQuail challenged any an' all comers to play Abdul chess at a dollar a game.

Confidentially, I was amazed at the number of dopes we roped in at a buck a throw. Apparently Wally's statistics was right when he estimated seven million chess fiends in the United States, because there wasn't no tank town so tiny, nor no hamlet so hid, but what there was a handful of eager-eyed addicts of the royal game willin' to match gambits with Abdul.

Not on'y that, but when Abdul *had* beat them—which was practically one

You must be doin' pretty good—financially."

hundred per cent of the time—they always demanded a return match. Which is just plain psychology. No flesh-an'-blood human was willin' to admit he had been licked by an animated addin'-machine: they always had some alibi for losin', like they'd been careless, or had underestimated their opponent, or whatever.

Which is why, atter a very short time, me an' Wally changed the set-up. We made it that anybody who wanted could play Abdul for any amount he wanted. If he lost, he lost his original stake. If he got a draw, no money changed hands an' the challenger got an autographed picture of Abdul along with an almost-bronze medal certifyin' excellence at pawn-pushin'. Anybody which beat the Turk got paid double his bet at first. Later we raised this to triple, then four times, then five times the wagered amount.

If you was a reader of *Variety* an' *Billboard,* you'd be up on all this without me havin' to tell you. Both sheets give us a big play as we moved along the summer circuit from Rasia, Tenn., to Owattasoggie, Mass. Everywhere we went, Abdul was a smash hit. *"Abdul $-and-¢-ation!"* reported *Billboard,* while *Variety* headlined: *"Mech Wiz Nix Hix in Stix!"*

Most of Abdul's games was push-overs, wins in twenty moves or less against local yokels who shelled out their buck just for the privilege of bein' able to say they had played the mechanical giant. Others was tougher, bein' against local champeens, *et cetera,* who sometimes give Abdul a mild struggle before he boomed his victory cry. An' once in a while he lost, even—though generally his losses was carefully figured in advance, for publicity purposes.

Eventually, as might be expected, the scientists got on our trail. They come in droves, tryin' to figure how Abdul operated. They poked, peered, fiddled, examined an' investigated, convinced themselves there wasn't anything hokey in the deal—an' went away proclaimin' Abdul the Eighth Wonder of the civilized world.

One particularly obnoxious character named Professor Patoff done his feeble-minded best to prove Abdul was a hoax, claimin' he was but the latest in a long series of such chess-playin' automatons. Which was, of course, perfectly true. I had read up on such things, an' knew Abdul's ancestors as far back as Kempelen's fake, in 1769, up through Hooper's "Ajeeb" an' Gumpel's "Mephisto"—but all these was based on trickery which had been exposed, like havin' a man concealed inside, or runnin' a set of wires through the floor to a man downstairs. But Abdul wasn't tied, hitched or connected with nothin', an' he didn't have nobody inside of him. Patoff fretted himself into a tizzy, but never could figure how Abdul worked. He lost thirty-six dollars tryin' to lick the Turk at chess, got beat worse than a Salvation Army drum, an' eventually crawled back under his rock, grumblin' somethin' about how this was another of Pat Pending's "diabolic inventulations" an' that was the last we seen of *him.*

Oh, things was rosy all right! Me an' McQuail was makin' more money than the Hungarian mint; we had half a dozen night-club an' vaudeville offers for the winter season; Hollywood wanted Abdul to star in a series of shorts; every chess organization in the country was pleadin' to entertain Abdul as its playin' guest, an' the foreign countries was beggin' too. For once, even the Russians was sayin', "Me too!" instead of, "Veto!"

Everything looked just too good to be true. It was right at the pinochle of our success we run into the Brat.

Squaredeal Sam McGhee stopped, sighed and shook his head.

"There ought to be a law," he opined, "against kids. And especially little-boy kids atween the ages of twelve an' sixteen. An' extra-especially against smart-alecky fifteen-year-olds that play chess."

"You're talking now," I asked, "about the Brat?"

"I'm talkin' about the nastiest, grinnin'est, an' wisecrackin'est unspanked youngster that ever sassed his betters. The Brat was fifteen years old; if he lives to be sixteen, it'll be a miracle. Nobody could be as smart any of the time as he is all the time."

"I see," I nodded. "The lad was quite a thinker?"

"That rhymes," said Sam.

WE met up with the Brat (continued Squaredeal Sam), in a town which I won't tell the name of, on account of I don't want to be sued by the Chamber of Commerce. Abdul was puttin' on his last exhibition for the night, an' I had come in from outside to watch the *fee*-nale, then help Wally clean up after the crowd.

The Turk was playin' a scraggly-lookin' individual with a ditto mustache. Wally, as usual, was recordin' the moves of the game in his pocket chess-wallet. I flung him a questionin' glance, an' he nodded to leave me know it was in the bag, so I was just standin' there mindin' my own business—which was tryin' to estimate the night's take—when this here Brat interrupted my reveille.

He sidled up to me an' give me an elbow in the ribs that made me oof.

"Hey, bub," he said, "aint you the character which barks this gyp joint?"

"If you mean," I answered, "am I the *entrepreneur* of this cultural exhibition, the answer is yes. Otherwise,

get your marlinspike the hell out of my solar plexus, my little man, before I give you a pat on the head that raises an ugly welt."

"I thought so," said the youngster. "I'd know that nose anywhere—except maybe in a beet-patch. Say, Pop, how about a little inside info? What makes the tinworks tick?"

"My dear child," I said haughtily, "the question you so nonchalantly ask is one that has baffled the brilliantest brains of our day an' time. Abdul is unique an' unfathomable to all save them which is conversant with the highest mathematics, includin' but not limited to spherical trigonometry, nuclear physics, an' the abstruse theories of Einstein. Mental wizards marvel at Abdul's stupefyin' mastery of chess—man's greatest intellectual pastime; but the man aint been born that can match his puny wits against Abdul's—"

"Yeah, I know all that," broke in the kid. "I been listening to your spiel for two days, now. But what I want to know is—how does he work? Who pulls the strings?"

"There aint no strings," I said, "an' it's none of your business, anyway. Now, will you pull your freight out of here, or do I have to kick your little caboose to get you started?"

"Keep your size 12-Ds to yourself, Bulb-beak. I'm a minor, remember? Come clean, now. That guy over there"—he jerked a thumb at Wally—"where does *he* fit into the act? And what's he doing with that halfpint chess set?"

"That's my partner. He built Abdul. An' he's just keepin' a record of the game," I explained.

"Oh, yeah?" jeered the Brat. "Come again, bub! Do I look like I was born yesterday?"

"You look," I told him, "like you died then. Or if you didn't, it was an oversight. Now, go on! Chase yourself out of here. Show's over for the night; I've got to put Abdul to bed."

Because Abdul had just bellowed his triumphant cry, *"Check and mate!"* Wally had put away his little wallet, an' was herdin' the lambs to the exit.

On'y the Brat lingered, approachin' the now passive Turk an' studyin' him with a thoughtful gaze.

"Bed, huh? I suppose next you'll tell me he sleeps under a blanket?"

"That's right," I said. "A steel wool one, sheared offen a hydraulic ram. Now, for the last time, will you get out of here? Or—"

"Okay," said the kid suddenly. "Okay, pickle-puss! I'm going. But I'll be back tomorrow. That is, if you have no objection to me playing Abdul a game?"

"Abdul," I said scornfully, "plays all comers—includin' mental deficients—for peanuts, marbles or chalk."

"We'll make it money when I play him," said the kid dreamily. "Good night, sucker! I've got to get home and rob my piggy-bank. See you tomorrow."

He left, an' Wally come to my side curiously.

"Who was that, Sam? What did he want?"

I shrugged. "A refugee from the reform school. He wants to lose his bubble-gum allowance tomorrow."

McQuail grinned. "Doesn't it beat everything, Sam, the way they line up for the slaughter?"

I grinned back at him. "Well, it beats workin' for a livin'," I agreed. "An' the birth-rate aint changed a bit since the days of P. T. Barnum."

Which just goes to show you how cocky a guy can be just before Fate slips him the hotfoot.

THE Brat come back the next night. From the way he'd acted the night before, I expected him to put up an immediate squawk for a match with the Turk. But he didn't.

For an hour or so he just hung around watchin' Abdul play other suckers. Sometimes he'd wander up close to Abdul an' sort of listen, his shrewd little monkey-face wrinkled up like a ponderin' prune; other times he dogged Wally's footsteps, peerin' over Wally's shoulder at what Wally recorded in his chess-wallet. Which, of course, give Wally the worst case of jitters since Horatio went down one, doubled an' vulnerable, in that famous bridge hand. He tried to get rid of his unwelcome shadow, but the Brat was harder to shake than a summer cold. Finally, atween games, Wally come to me.

"Sam," he complained, "we've got to get rid of that nuisance. He's making a nervous wreck out of me. Can't you think of something?"

"Plenty of things," I said, "but nothin' legal. I wonder if he's got relatives?"

I went inside. What I could have said or done is a big question mark. But the Brat solved the problem hisself. He grinned at me as I entered, an' before I could say a word, "Okay, Pop," he said. "I'm ready to go now."

"Fine!" I said. "The exit's straight ahead."

"Let's not be funny, Rum-snoot," frowned the youngster. "Do I get to play chess with this clockwork Capablanca, or must I call in the sheriff and tell him your sideshow's as phony as a three-dollar bill?"

I glanced at Wally, who nodded. There was lines of outrage at the corners of his mouth, an' a steely glitter in his eyes.

"Okay, squirt," I said. "I told you yesterday, the Turk plays all comers. Do you want to lay a little wager on the outcome of the game?"

"I might," drawled the kid. "What odds?"

"We've *been* givin' five to one," I sneered. "But I think in your case we can double it. Want to turn your dime into a dollar bill?"

"Ten to one, eh? Fair enough," nodded the Brat. He reached into his hip pocket, pulled out a wallet that would have gagged a Percheron, an' peeled off a note with more zeroes than a Labrador winter. "I'll take five hundreds' worth."

"Fi—!" gasped Wally, and cracked on it. "Did you say *five hundred dollars?*"

"What's the matter? Not enough? Want to make it an even grand?"

I said sternly: "Wait a minute! Just where did you get that money, kid?"

"Out of the bank, of course. Why?"

"Has the robbery been reported yet?" I demanded.

The kid smiled lazily. "That's libel, I think," he said. "Or slander, or something I could sue you for. But I won't. Thompson"—he spoke to a guy standin' beside me—"tell the alleged gentleman my money's good, will you? He's a stranger in these parts."

"Yessir, Mr. Leroy," gulped the stooge obediently. An' to me: "This here's young Mr. Leroy Castleton, Mister," he explained. "His old ma—that is, his late lamented father, owned practically all of our town. He died last year and left his entire fortune to the boy. It was well over a million dollars."

I glanced again at Wally. Like me, he was a little green around the gills at the idea of pittin' five thousand of our hard-earned bucks on Abdul's skill against a stranger. But we was in a lock, an' he knew it. Moreover, that tight, angry look was still around his lips. He wanted this nervy little jerk to play an' lose. So he nodded.

"All right, sonny boy," I said. "It's your funeral. We'll take your bet. But I don't know what you think *you've* got that will let you beat Abdul, when some of the best chess players in the country aint been able to get a draw."

"All they had," sniffed Leroy, "was brains. I've got Lady Luck playing on *my* side."

An' from his coat pocket he drew an' displayed triumphantly somethin' that almost made me snigger. The time-honored symbol of good luck—a horseshoe!

I sneaked another look at McQuail, an' the worried look had vanished offen his face as if it had never been there.

He ast smoothly: "Would the young gentleman prefer to play with the White or the Black pieces?"

"White," said the Brat, an' took his place opposite Abdul. He laid his horseshoe alongside the board an' set up the pieces. "The standard rules of chess apply, of course?"

"Confidentially, I was amazed at the number of dopes we roped in at a buck a throw."

"Naturally," nodded Wally, draggin' forth his wallet an' preparin' to record the progress of the game.

"Very well," nodded the kid. "Pawn to King's four."

Abdul's bronze paw lifted, selected a piece, replied with the almost-standard pawn to King's four—an' the match was on!

I WON'T bother (sighed Squaredeal Sam McGhee), goin' into details of that game. I could recite every move of it for you if you wanted me to, it's that indelicately traced in my mind. But I won't. I don't see no point in deliberately causin' myself pain.

The openin' moves was more or less routine. The kid chose to play a Giuoco Piano—which is *Eye*-talian for "quiet game"—so for the first seven or eight moves on each side, nothin' excitin' happened.

Nevertheless, Leroy looked a little more nervous than he'd acted a few minutes before. He took plenty o' time over each move, studyin' the possibilities; an' atter his eighth move, he unconsciously tipped off his excitement by fingerin' the good-luck horseshoe beside him.

An' brother, don't never sell lucky charms short! On the very next move, somethin' went haywire, an' Abdul made the first mistake he'd ever made in months of play! His hand reached out to move a bishop, faltered in mid-air—an' come down to touch a knight!

Instantly the Turk took his fingers offen the piece he had touched unintentionally. But just as instantly, Leroy looked up an' said sharply: "Move the knight, please!"

A murmur of excitement passed through the crowd. Wally stared at the two sets—the one in his hand an' the one they was playin' on—as if stricken.

I spoke up, as ingratiatin'ly as I could over the frog in my throat: "Abdul can't hear you, sonny. I'm afraid you'll just have to overlook that little accident. Mechanical error, you know."

"Oh, yeah?" snapped the Brat. "Then get a riveter, and hammer the message into his cast-iron cranium. This game is being played by the rules of chess. A piece touched must be moved. Tell him to move the knight."

"Now, don't be unreasonable, kid," I argued. "You *know* it was an accident. He *can't* move the knight. Anywhere he puts it, it can be took."

"I know," smirked the noisome little twerp. "Tough luck for him, aint it?"

There was nothin' to be done. Wally opened Abdul's belly-trapdoor an' wiggled a few wires. Abdul made a legal move with the offendin' knight, an' the kid took it.

It's no use goin' into the details of that game. It was a catechism. On the fourteenth move Leroy won another piece when Abdul moved it smackdab into a spot where it could be captured. Two moves later, Leroy won Abdul's Queen with a straddle-check. There was nothin' to be done from then on. As the spectators watched with danglin' jaws, the towerin' Turk, terror of the tabletops, lost in twenty moves to an infant only a hop-skip-an'-jump from the three-cornered pants stage!

An' that's how come I got out of the chess-promotin' racket.

SQUAREDEAL SAM scrubbed the butt of his cigar in my ashtray, licked his lips meaningfully and said, "Sure makes your mouth dry, talkin' a lot."

"There's water," I suggested, "in the carafe behind you."

"Water!" exploded Sam indignantly. "Water! Didn't you never see what that stuff does to the insides of rainpipes? If it's all the same to you—"

He poured himself a beaker full of straight bourbon and downed it in a gulp. I frowned at him.

"I wish you could learn to finish off stories," I complained, "the way you finish off bottles. What do you mean, that's how you got out of the chess-promoting racket? Don't tell me one loss ruined your whole act?"

"I've had more practice with the bottles," Sam acknowledged. "As for the other—yes. Deader than the doornail you keep hearin' about. You see, the kid's victory give them snoopin' scientists the clue they'd been lookin' for. The minute he showed 'em how Abdul worked, they ballyhooed it to the four winds. We struggled feebly for a while to keep the act goin', but once the rubes knew the answer, we didn't have no more draw than a plugged-up chimney. You can fool some o' the people some o' the time, an' you can fool some o' the people all the time—but you can't fool all o' the people all the time."

"*I'm* fooled," I confessed frankly. "*I* don't understand it yet. How *did* Abdul work?"

"How? Why, by remote control, that's how. Didn't you never see one o' them radios you can tune from across the room by turnin' dials in an end-table at your elbow?"

"Yes," I said. "But what—"

"The radio," explained Sam, "was Abdul. The remote control was Wally's pocket chess-wallet. Wally wasn't *recordin'* the games as they was played! He was settin' the plugs which made Abdul's moves for him.

"IT was a perfect set-up. Wally was a good player, anyhow, but bein' the unsuspected brains behind Abdul, he was practically unbeatable. If he got in a real tight spot, he could just slip out of the tent for a few minutes and go over to our wagon, where he had a complete chess library to study. Anybody which played Abdul was actually playin' the combined brains of Alekhine, Marshall, Tarrasch—all the great chess players that ever lived!"

"Comes," I said, "the dawn! Of course! But in that case, I still don't see how Leroy succeeded in winning. How did he overcome such a terrific handicap?"

"Luck," said Sam gloomily. "That damn' lucky charm!"

"What? Oh, come now, Sam! Don't tell me you think the boy's horseshoe had anything to do with his winning?"

"Anything! Everything! Horseshoes aint just plain horseshoes all the time, you know. Didn't you ever see one that could pick up nails?"

"What? You mean the kid's horseshoe was a—"

"That's right. A magnet. The Brat didn't know *how* Abdul worked—exactly. But he was smart enough to realize electricity was mixed up in it somehow. So he brung a magnet with him. By pointin' it at various pieces an' parts of the board, he was able to louse up every move Abdul made.

"So, you see, we didn't dare keep the act goin' any longer. Come this time next year, every time we opened our doors we'd have had a tentful of customers with more magnets than the village smithy."

Sam rose, eying me hopefully, expectantly.

"So," he said, "if you could loan me a few bucks for a few days? It aint like I was astin' you to *give* me the money. It's an investment, so to speak, on a sure-fire deal."

"What now?" I asked as I paid off.

"Abdul. I'm buyin' him from Wally."

"Abdul? But I thought you said he was through, finished, all washed up?"

"As a chess-player," nodded Sam, "he is. But, hell's fire, man, aint you got no *ee*-magination? He moves; he talks! With a little rewirin', he'll be the most sensational chewin'-gum an' Honest Weight dispenser that ever collected pennies in a subway!"

The Green Parrot

He was named Starboard, and his red-feathered mate was named Port; and between them and Fate and the bos'n, mystery shadowed the tragic voyage of the *Marvale*. (Mr. Torode knows the sea; his biography appears on the inside back cover.)

by WILLIAM G. TORODE

THE Bishop's Rock Lighthouse was a flashing arc on the starboard quarter when I took over the *Marvale's* bridge at four A. M. for my first watch. Tompkins, the second mate, gave me the ship's course, informed me that the skipper was still cockeyed drunk, and went below. I took a quick look around the empty horizon and stepped into the wheelhouse to brew a pot of coffee on the electric heater.

In the glow of the binnacle light I saw the face of the helmsman, an odd, austere countenance. His eyes were small and slanted—almost Oriental; the features bronzed, with a deep tropical tan. He was short and heavily set. His hands, as I saw them in the circle of light when he juggled the spokes of the wheel, were long and thi and strangely white. I followed one c those tapering hands as it reached int the surrounding gloom. It was the that I noticed the parrots.

Except that their wings were ur clipped and one of them was crowne with a diadem of red feathers, the seemed like an ordinary pair of pa rots. It was a strange place to fin

them, though. Perched atop the quadrantal spheres on either side of the compass, they didn't budge an inch when the helmsman ruffled their head feathers.

I poured two mugs of coffee and set one on top of the brass helm-indicator. "Had them long?" I inquired, reaching to pet the nearest bird.

My hand was knocked viciously aside, just in time to avoid the savage jab of a hooked bill. "Never touch them," the helmsman warned earnestly. "Never! They're holy birds!" His voice was musically pleasant, yet terribly intense. With an amused grin, I set my coffee down and stepped out of the wheelhouse. The drunken voice of Captain Parland was bellowing:

"Mr. Matthews! Mr. Matthews!"

The flabby bulk of the *Marvale's* skipper staggered to the bridge. He squinted up at me with fishy red-rimmed eyes. He reeked of whisky. "Who the hell are you?" he roared.

"Dunn," I told him. "Chief Officer Dunn. You signed me on last night, a few minutes before we left Plymouth."

He tottered on his heels to the lazy roll of the ship. "Dunn?" he repeated in puzzled tones. "Dunn? Ah, I remember. Matthews died, didn't he? Fell down Number Four hold. Chasing a damned parrot. Anyhow, he was no good, Mr. Dunn. Too officious—too damned officious. He was after my job. Hope you're not that kind, Mr. Dunn."

Then he lurched along the bridge, steadied himself against the bridge compass, and staggered to the open window of the wheelhouse. For several moments he hung there, shaking his heavy jowls, until his eyes grew accustomed to the gloomy interior. Then he saw the parrots. "Get those lousy birds off my ship!" he screamed at the helmsman. "Didn't I tell you to get rid of them yesterday?" He leaned into the open window, grabbing frantically at the birds. Scarlet feathers stood up in a fan. There was a flashing sweep of a beak, and Captain Parland backed away from the window with the tips of his fingers dripping red.

THE helmsman leaned across the wheel and spoke to the birds—in Hindustani. With a defiant squawk, both the parrots hopped from their perches to the window ledge, and went soaring into the night like a couple of seagulls.

I followed the pain-maddened Captain around to the chartroom behind the wheelhouse. His bloated face was ghastly as he stared at the blood, dripping from his fingers in crimson blots onto a chart spread across the table. He was scared almost sober. Pulling a bottle from a drawer, he drew the cork with his teeth, spat it

"Get those lousy birds off my ship!" the skipper screamed. "Didn't I tell you to get rid of them yesterday?"

through an open porthole, and hastily downed half the contents. Suddenly he swung around on me.

"You get rid of those lousy parrots," he snarled. "Understand! Kill 'em! Do anything. But get rid of 'em. They're bad luck—Jonahs! And remind me to log that man for disobeying orders." He sucked blood from his fingers. "Holy birds!" he sneered. "That's what he says they are. Says one of 'em talks to him—tells him things. Thinks we're a bunch of superstitious shellbacks. He's crazy. But you get rid of those birds, Mister." His voice dropped to a confidential whisper. "Better watch that guy—Bowers, his name is. Something queer about him. Told Matthews he was going to die, hours before it happened. Queer—damned queer." He reeled against the chart-table, sucking again at his bloody fingers.

Through the communicating window to the wheelhouse I could see the helmsman's apelike figure. He looked sinister enough in the eerie, flickering light from the binnacle. But a glance at the flushed, bloated face of the skipper convinced me he was on the verge of the D.T.'s. I left the sot there, lolling over the bloodstained chart.

From the wing of the bridge I looked out over the empty gray-green waters of the English Channel. Walking over to the wheelhouse window, I said to the helmsman: "You'd better keep those parrots off the bridge in the future. They're bad medicine to the skipper. He's told me to do away with them. I don't want to do that. He's going to log you for disobeying orders—but might forget about it, if he doesn't see the birds around."

"He won't log me, sir," the helmsman whispered tersely. "He'll be dead before sunrise."

"What do you mean by that?" I demanded.

Bowers didn't get a chance to reply. The halting footsteps of Captain Parland sent me back to the wing of the bridge. I didn't want further discussion with the drunkard; neither did I want to invite his abuse by not attending to my job. I could hear him cursing and muttering to himself as he staggered from the chartroom to the bridge ladder. It was at that moment the helmsman struck two bells, and the clangor of the bell was echoed by a sickening crash.

When I reached Captain Parland, he was sprawled across the foot of the bridge ladder—dead—his neck broken.

RELIEVED from the bridge at 8 A.M. by the third mate, I went on a tour of inspection. A typical British

Illustrated by Raymond Sisley

tramp, the *Marvale's* dilapidated engines vibrated through her empty belly as she wallowed through a lazy groundswell at nine knots. Her superstructure was a sight, pockmarked with the ingrained filth of a hundred ports. Yet I was proud of her. She was my first command. Chipping-hammers and paint would heal many of the scars she'd suffered at the hands of Captain Parland.

The fact that he, as well as Chief Officer Matthews, had died to make room for me, didn't bother me much. After all, any overzealous officer could fall down a hatch, just as any drunken skipper could be startled by a striking bell and tumble down a ladder. That's how I had things figured—then.

It was while I was checking the late commander's logbook that I was reminded of Bowers and his parrots. In a slovenly scrawl the skipper had written:

Chief Officer Matthews, age 45, fell down Number Four hold at 4:35 P.M. *today, while chasing a parrot belonging to a seaman named Bowers. Before he died, Matthews informed me that the seaman had warned him of his impending death. When questioned, Bowers told me that one of two parrots he owns told him the chief officer was going to die. I am convinced Bowers is crazy, and have ordered him to get rid of the parrots.*

I decided to have a talk with Bowe
While a steward went to fetch him,
looked up his record. The *Marva*
was his first merchant ship. He h
recently been medically discharg
from the Royal Navy, after servi
teen years in the Far East. Rated
chief petty officer, he had earned
commendation for some special servi
performed at a jungle village in Ind
I slipped his discharge papers into t
desk drawer as he knocked and ente
my cabin. At my insistence he s

down, his black, slanted eyes riveted on the open logbook.

"How did you know Captain Parland was going to die?" I asked abruptly.

He raised his eyes in a contemplative stare that made me feel uncomfortable. "Port told me," he replied, glancing furtively about the room.

"Port?" I inquired.

"Yes—*Port!*" he challenged. "That's the parrot with the red head-feathers."

The fanatical expression on his face stopped me from grinning. "Come now," I coaxed. "Are you trying to tell me that a parrot—"

With a hopeless shrug of his heavy shoulders, he shot off the chair. I intercepted him on his way to the door and pressed him back onto his seat. "All right," I conceded, "so one of the parrots told you. Tell me something about them." I could see that he wanted to talk but was afraid—afraid of being ridiculed, I figured. "Tell me all about the birds," I urged, resuming my seat.

BOWERS' lips tightened as he stared at me in speculative silence. "You're not going to believe it," he blurted finally. "You'll think I'm crazy. Everyone does. I'm not. But I will be if I don't talk to someone." He paused briefly, then went on suddenly. "I got the birds in India, from a Buddhist priest. I was serving on a British cruiser, anchored in Diamond Harbor, just below Calcutta. One day we received a report from a small inland village that several natives had been killed by a man-eating tiger. Because I could speak Hindustani, I was sent in charge of the party to investigate. There was a tiger, all right, and he'd already cut the village population to about half. The village headman, a Buddhist priest, tried to assure me he could handle the situation, though there wasn't a gun in the place. I knew he would lose face with his people if we succeeded in killing the tiger. But I had my orders.

"We bagged the tiger the first night, and I tried to soothe the priest's hostile feelings by presenting him with the hide. With ceremonial expressions of gratitude before his people, he gave me the two parrots. The following morning, on the pretext of escorting our party back to the ship, he walked beside me through the jungle. All pretense of friendship had disappeared. In Hindustani, he told me that the parrots were holy birds—that the bird with the red feathers carried the transmigrated soul of his predecessor, a priest who had also lost face with his people. I laughed when he told me this bird would warn me of impending disaster—disaster I would be powerless to avert. And the green parrot, he said, would be unable to talk until it, too, acquired a soul. *Mine!* I can still hear his fiendish chuckle as he assured me that, upon my death, the green parrot would acquire my soul and that both birds would then return to his temple and he would be able to punish me for what I had done."

Bowers shifted uneasily in his chair, his mesmeric gaze searching my face. To cover my embarrassment I poured two stiff drinks of Captain Parland's whisky. "You can't take that stuff seriously," I said unconvincingly. "Just a lot of Oriental jargon."

Bowers downed his whisky at a gulp, caught his breath. "I didn't—at first," he replied soberly. "Until Port made his first prediction. It was two days later. I named him Port because of those red feathers. Starboard was a natural for the other bird. We were pulling out of Diamond Harbor when Port said, in Hindustani: *'Men die—men drown. Men die—men drown!'* I thought, as is the case with most parrots, he'd been taught to say just those words. Yet within an hour the last duty-boat to leave shore had rammed a dhow in midstream. Twelve ratings lost their lives."

Hurriedly, as though afraid of being interrupted, Bowers went on: "Two weeks later it happened again. We had put into Colombo for fuel. Port said: *'Men die—gun fall!'* He kept repeating the words until I was almost crazy. I knew the watch on deck were making replacements on the eight-inch-gun batteries. I went to the officer of the deck and told him there was going to be an accident; tried to explain that Port had previously warned me of the disaster at Diamond Harbor. The deck officer laughed, said I'd been too long in the sun. When I insisted he take precautions he called me a crazy fool. I struck him and was placed under arrest. From the brig porthole I saw two bodies being carried ashore. Two seamen, the guard told me, had been killed on deck when an eight-inch gun slipped from its sling. From that day on, so far as the navy was concerned, I was crazy."

I poured Bowers another drink and took a good one myself. "Sometimes," he went on, "Port would tell me who was going to die. Like with Captain Parland and Mr. Matthews. It was awful, knowing people were going to die and not being able to do anything about it."

"Did you ever try getting rid of the birds?" I interrupted.

A mirthless laugh escaped his lips. "Try—my God, how I've tried! It can't be done, sir. I took them aboard an obsolete minesweeper once, chained them to a cable down below. Five minutes after I stepped off her deck she was towed to sea and scuttled. The two birds arrived home before I did. Only an hour before I joined this ship, I sold them to a saloonkeeper. I helped him fasten rings to their legs and secure them to the bar. They were on the fo'c'sle head waiting for me when I brought my gear aboard." His face twisted into a leer. "Do away with 'em? I wish I could." Hopefully, he added: "Maybe you'd have better luck, sir."

My own experience with the birds in the wheelhouse and the memory of Captain Parland's lacerated fingers were reasons enough for me to shake my head at the suggestion. I leaned back in my chair to ponder the problem. It was a fantastic tale, and I'd been knocking around the Seven Seas too long to ignore it completely. I couldn't swallow it either—not whole. Sure, I've heard parrots talk. Pretty clever, some of them. But this?

Suddenly, Bowers was at the door. "It helps, sir, just talking to someone. I guess that's part of the trouble, keeping it bottled up inside."

"That's the stuff, Bowers," I said. "You've been living alone with this thing. It's got all out of proportion. If Port makes any further predictions, come and tell me about them. Maybe we can do something about it next time."

"You mean that, sir?" He was like a drowning man grasping at a straw. "You wouldn't think I was crazy if I told you something—something concerning yourself?"

I got up and crossed the room, a little awed at the urgency in his voice. "What is it, Bowers?"

"You're going to lose your ship in a collision, sir, with all the passengers," was his startling reply.

I laughed in his face. I just couldn't help it. The man was stark, raving mad. Passengers? On the *Marvale?* There was barely enough accommodation for the thirty-five crew members. I doubt if the old tub had ever carried anything but wet hides or bulk grain in thirty years of service. Passengers? That was a laugh. "I suppose your damned parrot told you that, too." I snapped impatiently. "You're crazy, man. Just plain crazy."

"Yes sir," he mumbled. "I understand." Then he was gone.

I went back to my desk, chuckling at the thought of an old tub like the *Marvale* carrying passengers.

At ten-thirty that night I received orders by wireless to evacuate two hundred and fifty refugees from Valencia, Spain, and transport them directly to Buenos Aires.

WITH hasty accommodations built into the shelter-decks of the after holds, we steamed into Valencia harbor. My radioed protest to the company's agent regarding use of the decrepit *Marvale* as a refugee ship had been completely ignored. I received short shrift from British authorities in the port, who saw no reason for my objecting to help a group of unfor-

"Better watch that guy—something queer about him. Told Matthews he was going to die, hours before it happened."

tunates seeking a happier land in which to live. I couldn't tell them about Bowers and his parrots and the sinister shadow that hung over my ship.

With the towering bluff of Gib well astern, in clear sunny weather, I concentrated on making the passengers as comfortable as possible. They seemed blissfully unaware of their plight. Two hundred and fifty hapless souls, undernourished women and children mostly, some sick, others lame from long-neglected injuries, were stowed like animals in pens. They didn't see the useless open-seamed lifeboats hanging in the rusted davits. Coal gas escaping from the sievelike funnel casing did not annoy them as they limped and shuffled around upon the after deck. Neither did the complaining whine of the antiquated engines cause them any anxiety. Or perhaps they were aware of these things and, comparing them with the horrors they had already known, thought them inconsequential.

I set a course well out of the regular shipping lanes. I had the lifeboats patched up and made seaworthy and insisted on lifeboat drill every day for all hands. And with the Cape Verde islands astern and the South Atlantic stretched before me like a sheet of shimmering glass, I began to feel easier in mind.

I even got used to the constant presence of the two parrots, which for some strange reason preferred to perch on the slanting foretopmast stay, in plain sight from the bridge. At regular intervals during the day they would flutter to the deck, where Bowe would feed them. I knew his l among his shipmates was not a happ one. They scorned him for a supe stitious fool, taunted him for h unwillingness to retaliate to their co tinual gibes. So I gave instructions t the bos'n that he be given work whe he would be alone. He didn't sa anything, but I could tell from the e pression in his black slanted eyes th he was grateful.

It was the morning after we crosse the equator that Bowers came to m cabin again. I was sitting at my desl checking a list of fresh-water tanl soundings Chips had just brought i When Bowers spoke, his sing-son voice trembled with emotion. "You'v got to take me off that winch, sir," h

blurted. *"You've got to!* Port told me I'm going to die—on that winch."

A sharp rebuke became merely an expression as I looked up into his face. His bronzed features were gaunt and haggard. He slumped onto a chair, his slanted eyes popping, his mouth clamped shut.

It took me several moments to remember that he was driving the number one winch; that the holds were being cleaned in preparation for a cargo of grain. "Pull yourself together, man," I told him. "You've got to lick this thing before it licks you." I walked around the desk and laid a hand on his trembling shoulder. "I'll have the bos'n give you some other job, if you think it'll help."

Smelling the whisky I poured and stuck under his nose, he took it at a gulp. "They're up there on the forestay," he said, without looking at me, "waiting for me to die. I don't want to go to no bloody temple, sir."

THE fear edging Bowers' voice crept along my spine in an icy chill. I poured him another drink and took one myself. A good one. Then I urged him, almost pushed him, towards the door. For whatever it was that had happened to him was happening to me. I could feel it sneaking up on me as the sight of him recalled to my mind the gruesome tale he had told. "Tell the bos'n I want him," I said, trying to keep my voice normal.

"Thank you, sir," he singsonged. "You've been pretty decent—maybe I'll be able to find a way to repay you."

I went back to my desk and drank whisky. My hands trembled as I poured the stuff. I found myself wishing that the fool would die—that he and his damned parrots would get off my ship. But when the bos'n came, I told him to take Bowers off the winch. He said something about the foremast needing a coat of paint and went away.

With the list of tank-soundings in my hand, I went aft to see the chief engineer. The passengers' water ration would have to be cut down again, or we'd have to put into a port. I didn't want to waste the time, I'd kept telling myself, knowing that the real reason was that I wanted to keep away from the regular shipping lanes. Out here there was little chance of getting into collision.

I paused at the end of the midship deck to watch a group of passengers dancing to the music of an accordion. Sunshine and fresh air had worked wonders with them. I turned away to step into the engineers' alleyway, and was stopped dead in my tracks by a piercing scream that ended suddenly in a dull thud.

When I reached the foredeck Bowers was already dead, lying across number one winch—his back broken. The frayed end of a Manila rope dangled portentously from the foremast he had just begun to paint. I stared at the rope and began to laugh. Bowers was dead. I wouldn't have to listen to any more of his gibberish. Now, his damned parrots would leave my ship. I was still cackling when I reached my cabin, to duplicate Captain Parland's feat with a bottle of whisky.

A grim silence had descended upon the ship when I stumbled from my cabin to the lower bridge. The sea was blue and still, the sky cloudless. But there was something ominous in the brassy glare of the sun. Suddenly, with ear-splitting screeches, the parrots left their perch on the forestay and began circling high above the mast. Occasionally, they would lunge violently toward the prostrate figure that still sprawled grotesquely across the winch, wheel sharply a scant foot above the corpse, then soar aloft again to continue their horrible din.

All through the long night, while Bowers' canvas-shrouded form lay under the fo'c'sle head, the parrots kept their clamorous vigil. Their raucous cries kept me company as I paced the lower bridge, besieged by a dread that no amount of whisky could still. Why didn't they leave? Bowers was dead. And he'd said that when he died the green parrot would acquire his soul and both birds would be free to return to their temple in India. Crazy? Sure it was crazy. But so was the death of Matthews and the skipper—and the *Marvale* carrying passengers—to say nothing of Bowers' death.

At eight o'clock next morning, when Bowers' body slid into the calm blue sea, the parrots became mercifully silent. When they remained astern circling over the ripples left by the weighted corpse, I prayed silently that I was seeing the last of them. But fifteen minutes after I'd read the burial service the green parrot was back—alone—winging overhead in frustrated silence. How I longed to have a rifle in my hands!

Why had the green parrot returned alone? If there was anything to Bowers' crazy predictions, the bird should be on its way back to India. Though how any bird could fly across thousands of miles of ocean and land was beyond me. Yet the red parrot had disappeared. Was the green parrot back to see Bowers' last prophecy fulfilled—to witness the sinking of the *Marvale* in collision? The whole thing was crazy.

A few more drinks and the coming of night finally blacked out the weird antics of the green parrot. I turned in too exhausted even to dream of it. . . .

The first choking sob of the ship's siren penetrated my brain with almost physical violence. I was on the bridge when it roared again—and stone cold sober. The fog was bad. You couldn't see a hundred feet ahead of the bow. Long spears of green and red ran at crazy angles from the sidelights. The masthead lights were like blurry fireflies dangling from the heavens.

I joined the second mate and extra lookout on the bridge-wing, keeping up a running fire of questions between the sonorous blasts of the ship's whistle. "Was anything in sight when the fog closed in? Were the engines at dead slow? (I could see they were) Had Sparks been called? What was the ship's position?" Fog! Collision! The words were synonymous. And somewhere up there in the swirling mist was the green parrot—waiting.

"Get all hands on deck—passengers too!" I barked at the second mate. "Have all lifeboats ready for lowering. Tell the third to post extra lookouts."

Sparks came out of the radio shack. The drone of his voice reading off a list of ship's names and their position by the glow of the bridge compass, left me weak with relief. A little rapid calculation assured me there wasn't a vessel within three hundred miles of the *Marvale*. That was a smart decision I'd made; to stay out of the regular shipping lanes. At the speed we were making, there wasn't a chance of our meeting another ship if we stayed on our present course. "Stay glued to that set," I told Sparks, "and send our position out every half hour."

I checked the compasses, the steering gear. When the third mate came to report that he'd posted the extra lookouts, I sent him to check course and speed. With the siren hurling its grim warning into the night and Sparks crouched over his instruments, panic oozed out of me.

"All hands on deck—boats ready for lowering, sir," the second reported, retiring to the port bridge-wing. I knew he thought I was a little crazy, taking such drastic precautions when the ship was in the middle of the South Atlantic and miles from the regular shipping lanes. I couldn't blame him. But I couldn't afford to take any chances, not after the experience I'd gone through with Bowers and his parrots. So the hours dragged by with everyone's nerves getting a little frayed at the constant braying of the siren and the fog-drenched hours of waiting.

IT was just after six bells when the green parrot started; with a swish of wet feathers, it lunged over the bridge with a wild terrifying shriek that chilled me to the marrow. Not even the blast of the siren could drown out the long, wailing screech of the bird as it wheeled sharply above my head and disappeared into the inky well shadowing the foredeck. It must have sallied out a mile ahead of the ship, but its raucous cries still penetrated the rasping howl of the siren. Time and again the bird returned to the ship, its cries rising and diminishing

but never stopping. How it navigated through the gear and rigging of the foredeck was a miracle. I tried to follow its course with a pair of binoculars, but fifty feet ahead of the bow it mingled into the swirling eddies of fog. So I kept the glasses focused on the spot, waiting for it to reappear. That's how I came to see the hulk!

She loomed up dead ahead, a silent, towering monster, wallowing in a slow lazy sea. The binoculars froze to my eyes. "Hard a-port! Hard a-port!" I screamed at the helmsman. The second mate came running, pushed his head over the dodger. "Good God!" he breathed.

"Hard a-port, sir," the helmsman called back.

I clung to the bridge dodger with one hand, my nails digging into the stiff wet canvas. The hulk grew bigger and bigger. I had heard the grinding of the wheel, but the *Marvale's* bow showed no signs of moving. "Ship dead ahead," screamed the forecastle lookout, and the clatter of his feet sounded along the foredeck as he fled from the mist-shrouded ghost ship.

I prayed as I had never prayed before. Slowly, the *Marvale's* bow began to move away from the grim specter. The green parrot was directly overhead, still screaming. Only when it came within range of my glasses did I notice that it would fly only as far as the derelict, and realized the bird had been warning us of its presence for the past half hour.

Frozen to the spot, I watched the *Marvale's* bow begin to swing sluggishly—then more rapidly—away from the silent, lifeless hulk. With a blast from our siren echoing against rust-scarred deck-houses, the ghost ship drifted slowly along our port rail—so close that a man caught between the two ships would have been crushed to a pulp. The stench from her was awful, and as she swept by I got a glimpse of buckled superstructure and sun-bleached woodwork. Somewhere aboard a swinging door hammered a melancholy cadence. Then she was gone in the fog-drenched abyss astern.

My mind was functioning long before my body was capable of any movement. Was the green parrot screaming offense at the odorous hulk? There was no doubt in my mind now that for the past half hour the bird had been flying out to the hulk and back, screaming a warning of the approaching disaster. And if I hadn't attempted to follow the flight of the bird, I would never have seen the derelict in time to avoid a collision. I stumbled to the wheelhouse window. "Get her back on her course," I told the helmsman. Then I realized that the bird was no longer screaming.

And when the sun came up to absorb the mists of the night, the green parrot had disappeared.

It lunged over me with a terrifying shriek that chilled to the marrow.

CHAMP GOES TO WAR

AFRICA, which had been a ballooning and not-too-familiar shape on a map, a few jungle scenes in pictures starring John Weissmueller, and a book plus a couple of strangely disturbing short stories by Willy Boulder's favorite author E. Hemingway, proved to be none of these things. It was a boulder on the side of a hill, a hill much like those in Midstate, U.S.A. There were four men and Tech Sergeant William Boulder, and the sun glinted on their weapons, and then went down and glinted on some tiny men in toy vehicles. Puffs of smoke arose frequently, and from afar someone was playing soldier with cannon, making booming noises.

Jay Bell, one of the four men, fell down and gurgled in his throat. Patsy Dollar, lean, nervous in action but always the first to move, hauled out his first-aid kit. Then he put it away and said in his child's voice; "Well, Jay's had it."

Augie Meisner said: "That's British —'had it.' You owe two bits."

Pete Crane shuddered, staring at Willy. He choked: "Jay—they got Jay."

Pete had long, light bones, covered with stringy muscles, and his face was haunted, gaunt. The water of Africa had not agreed with him, and he was just off sick report this morning. Down below the narrow ledge the gray little men were arranging their vehicles in a sort of spread formation, like a high-school football team planning a very tricky play.

Jay lay on his side. . . . Corpses do not bleed, Willy Boulder had learned. Augie spat, and looked to his rifle. Patsy just waited. Pete stifled a sob.

Willy was the leader of this tiny group. There had been more, but they had encountered the little men below and been lost. Only these three and Willy were left. Now they expected Willy to comfort them, to say something which would atone for the death of Jay Bell.

Willy Boulder grinned sadly at Patsy. "In the history books you always read where the enemy is licked and the Americans scarcely suffer any losses. I guess we're over here to prove it aint necessarily so." That was the way he talked to them, and he prayed to God that it was correct. It had kept Augie going along tough. Patsy seemed to like it. The good boys who were dead had died with their faces in the proper direction.

Pete Crane said passionately: "Infantry can't hold this hill against tanks and artillery. You know it. We know it. The damned generals know it. We're expendables—that's what we are!"

Willy watched the deploying tanks and half-tracks of the Germans. He had talked tough right through the disaster, but he had never said what Pete Crane now put before them. There were so few left, he thought, that it made no difference. . . . He said idly, from his past experience: "It's a matter of style."

Then he saw Patsy's eyes, and the little beginning of hopelessness. Patsy was so young—barely nineteen. He was whipcord tough; he had as neat a

Cocteau came up with a left hand as unorthodox as a Holy Roller . . . . threw a right, powerful and swift.

February of 1943 finds Willy Boulder an infantry sergeant fighting Germans in North Africa—and fighting a French heavyweight, in an improvised ring, for the morale of his fellow-soldiers.

left hand as any welterweight Willy had ever seen. Patsy was trying to smile easily. He said: "Champ'll get us outa here. Mebbe we can't lick the German Panzer Corps all by ourselves. But Champ knows an out."

IT was probably the most unimportant detail in the whole action of the Army in Africa, Willy thought. A sergeant and three survivors on an outpost against a full Panzer division forming for its overwhelming advance.

Willy said: "You sure Jay is dead?"

They were sure, but it gave them something to do. They covered him up, and did what was necessary. Augie methodically distributed his ammo.

Another shot ricocheted off the rocks, and then Willy knew it was a sharpshooter and not a stray piece of shrapnel which had caused Jay's demise. He said, almost with relief; "Duck down, kids. I gotta see a man about a dog. Keep cover."

He went around the rock and up the path. The gun cracked, some distance off and he almost felt the bullet as it skimmed past his head. He mounted higher and came to a tree. He knelt here and watched. The sniper fired again. Willy jumped and ran for his life. The man was a better shot than he, that was for sure. Willy's eyes were not superb—he had stopped too many punches in the ring.

He paused behind another large rock, with which the hills were well supplied. He was in good shape, he thought grimly, at any rate. He could have climbed into the ring with any challenger right now, without a day's boxing. He sparred with Patsy when he could, and the African campaign was fine for his legs. True, he hadn't eaten too well. . . .

He laughed shortly. Here he was, Willy Boulder, middleweight champion of the world, in the prime of his life—and he wore a filthy pair of coveralls, an ammo belt, and a helmet pulled hard over his eyes; and across a small green ravine a man with a rifle sought to kill him—and was likely to succeed.

He was not, Willy Boulder continued, in any degree mad at anyone except some Japs who had bombe Pearl Harbor; and even this wa academic anger, not the hot, person kind which demanded action. He ha enlisted in the Army, but only becau other men were enlisting and he coul not ever hold himself different c better than other men. He had nc ever liked one moment of regiment tion; he had not enjoyed the life c a soldier; he had hated some of th men he was forced to associate wit each day. He had enjoyed only Pat Dollar, the waif from the West Side c New York City.

Of the three men left, Augie was sadistic ex-criminal, Pete Crane whining ex-writer. Only Patsy wa real. Augie and Pete were characte out of a bad book. Patsy was a decer kid, scared of being killed, quick t see danger—and humor—honest in a his reactions. And beneath it all h was tough and realistic.

At least, that was Willy Boulder judgment. He was learning a fe things in this Army, despite his distast for it all. He was learning that h judgment was not infallible. His lieu tenant, a certain Hack Fortney, former captain of football at an Iv League University, and something o a jerk, had proved that Willy Boulde was often in error.

He gurgled a little in his throa wondering where Fortney was now, i the officer had survived the mornin attack. Willy slid down the hill ways, and another bullet sent him t the cover of a tree which had bee uprooted by shell-fire. This area wa devastated for a distance of a coupl of hundred yards in each direction and he gratefully dug into a hol

He brushed dirt from the rifle. H lifted it—an impersonal motion, as h had distaste for it also. He had neve been a rod-and-gun man. In happie days he had never sought the deat of wildfowl or beast. His trainin as a prizefighter had sent him agains men with gloved fists, but his avoca tions had been peaceful.

He thought of the last few month before the war, when he had bee getting closer and closer to Mary Car son, back in Midburgh. The red haired girl had been very solemn thos days, and unexpectedly reluctant t marry. When December 7th hac come and gone, she told him flatl that she was entering training as

by JOEL REEVE

Illustrated by John McDermott

nurse, and would not think of marriage until the conflict ended. He had accepted this decision as another blow—and of course had enlisted.

But she had been tender with him; and when he had fought for the War Fund and the Bond Rally and all the other things he had fought for, each time eating into his private money, because of course he got nothing for these bouts, Mary had been with him as much as possible. She had even learned enough nursing to change the bandage when Boo Dorengo had split Willy's eye that time in the Garden.

The eye injury had ruined Willy's chances in OCS, but they had made him a sergeant. His division was sent overseas and Willy was swallowed up with a hundred other prizefighters who had jumped in early to help win the war against tyranny. Fortney took care of him after that, in no uncertain way.

Willy lay in the hole and considered. The sniper must have been sent up to clean out the little nest which commanded the German advance. The shelf on which his men lay was directly over the road. Before they were blasted to Kingdom Come, it was a cinch his men would get one or two tanks with their grenades. Tanks were push-overs for grenades, he had learned.

So the Germans had sent a sniper. Probably they had sent one to each of the advance posts in the Pass. This one was working close enough to wipe out all of them, Patsy, Augie, Pete and Willy, without even being seen. The Germans had wonderful riflemen, and they were far more experienced than the Americans.

WILLY lifted his head over the edge of the hole, thinking it was a hell of a thing, war, and that he did not like it and would never have anything to do with another one. He poked his rifle out and saw movement across the way. He looked for a target, his finger nervous on the trigger.

Something slapped him on the shoulder. He rolled back into the hole. He thought: "I'm hit. This is it. I've had it." Then he remembered that British expressions cost twenty-five cents in the beer pot, and mentally erased the "had it."

He could move, he found. He might be killed, but he could move. He opened his mouth to call to Patsy to come and get him. Then he remembered that if Patsy came up, this sniper would get the kid. Willy cautiously tried to move. His right shoulder was numb.

But he could move. He could and did. He picked up his rifle in a sort of daze. He stared across the ravine.

He saw two Germans. They were peering in his direction, and they evidently knew he was hit and were preparing to advance that much closer to the outpost where the boys waited. Willy held the rifle very steady. He could not use his right arm, but he had the strength in his left. He pulled the trigger of the rifle.

One of the Germans howled in anguish, throwing up his arms, then clutching at his belly. The other ducked back, quick as an animal. But up above, rifles crashed, seeking without vision the spot whence came the obviously Teutonic *"Mein Gott!"* of the man wounded in the belly.

The bullets sang and whined, and the second German died without sound. Willy held the rifle in his left hand and stayed where he was. His head was reeling, and down below there was action, he felt. He ought to be back on the ledge, where the bag of hand grenades nestled snugly under rocks. He ought to be back there with Patsy and Augie and Pete. He tried grimly to get onto his feet.

To his utmost amazement, he did get on his feet. He staggered a step. He took another step. His shoulder began to hurt like hell. He went up the hill, over the crest. He came down a path, and now his shoulder was a torment.

Patsy said: "Geez, Champ, you're hit." His first-aid kit danced in his hand. "Get down here. Those Krauts below are startin'. Come on, Champ. . . . Did we clean up the sniper, the so-and-so?"

Willy said: "Get those grenades out and be ready."

Augie and Pete got out the grenades. Patsy cut Willy's coveralls with scissors. Pete said tremulously: "This is it. We get a tank, two tanks; then they get us."

Augie said: "Listen to the pansy! G'wan, ya bum, I oughter drop one o' these down yer pants!"

Patsy dabbed at the wound. He said: "Just a furrow, Champ. You're the lucky one, pal. Just a li'l ol' scratch. You'll fight that Frog yet. They can't tell us any Frog is the best fighter in Africa. You'll fight him."

Patsy always got excited. Pete was scared; Augie was cold and interested in killing; Patsy was tense, like a racehorse. Willy tentatively moved his arm, and it was all right, although it still hurt like a flame. The little tanks started through the Pass.

It was some time before Willy and his trio knew that they were the first outpost. The snipers had wiped out the others. This was only a tiny piece of the pattern of that day's fighting, and their Pass only a unit of the passes through which the Panzer Division was moving that day—and they were the only outpost not cleaned up by German snipers.

Their first grenades fell on a medium tank. A command car had gone by, Willy restraining Augie from destroying it. The medium tank blew up with a wonderful noise. Augie got his rifle and shot the command car all to pieces and killed the officers, while Pete and Patsy and Willy threw some more grenades which did much damage and stopped the Pass with a fine tangle of wreckage.

Pete babbled: "Now they'll get us. Now they'll send shells up here."

That was true. A gun crew came down from a half-track and with their light weapon started vengefully for the hill. Augie phlegmatically killed the two men, but others were taking their place. This was close-up work for this war. They could plainly see their opponents. Willy got interested, and shot an officer who was waving a Luger in great excitement. The man dropped over the corpse of one of Augie's victims. Pete was praying or something, but he was shooting his rifle at a tank back of the débris they had caused, and somehow the gun he feared did not go off. Maybe he had put one through the slit, Willy thought detachedly, which would be a great joke, for Pete was a poorer marksman than Willy.

But the German Army was not to be held all day by three men on a small ledge a hundred feet or so above them. There were ten cannon leveled from the half-tracks and tanks, and in a moment there would be no ledge, no Willy Boulder, no nothin', as Augie said without emotion.

Willy said: "All right. Up the trail with you."

This would be it. The first up would probably get picked off. He stepped forward. He figured some of them might get by, at that. He said: "Patsy, you come last." He shouldn't have said that, but he wanted to save the kid. He knew he was wrong to pick out one to save—those things should be left to Providence. But the kid was so far the best of them.

AUGIE said: "Aw, let's git goin'." He shoved Willy aside. Pete was white and panting, and his legs shook. He broke and bolted past Willy. He hit the slope; and for a moment there he was, naked before the Germans, scrambling dream-like to get around the turn in the mountain path.

Shots crackled. Augie said: "T' hell wi' 'em." He broke after Pete.

Augie hit the turn as the bullets struck Pete. The squat squarehead caught the frightened, wounded man on the bounce, it seemed. In another breath-taking instant they were out of sight—and for the moment they were safe. . . .

Patsy said: "I aint goin' until you go, Champ. I'm scared." His face was taut and without color, but his eyes were steady. He looked straight at Willy and said: "What the hell, you're scared too, aintcha, Champ?"

"Scared?" Willy Boulder laughed on the hillside in Africa. Shots came around the rocks behind which they hid. He laughed again. "Patsy—I been scared since they measured me for shoes, back in camp in Midstate!"

Patsy said: "Geez, I'm glad. I mean, I'm glad you are, because then it aint so bad that I am."

Willy said: "Let's run like hell."

"Sure," said Patsy eagerly. "I'll run first."

Willy shoved him back. He lurched a little, for he had lost some blood, but he knew he was only scratched. He said: "You follow me. That's an order, understand."

HE tried to take off. The Germans had their rifles ready, and a cannon from halfway up the stalled line was being wheeled to range. A stone rolled under his foot, and he almost fell. Patsy went down with him, and there was a new sound; for a moment they crouched, staring upward.

An A-20 was coming over. It was a dun-bellied angel-ferry full of lousy airplane-drivers and such, and it held silver fish with detonating heads, and some genius of command had actually sent it over to see if the Panzers had been stalled in the Pass.

Willy said: "Now we'll all be killed by a dumb bus-driver and his lads!"

They shrank against the hillside as the silver fish turned over and plummeted amid howling, struggling Germans. There were awful noises. There was a round when confusion took every pot.

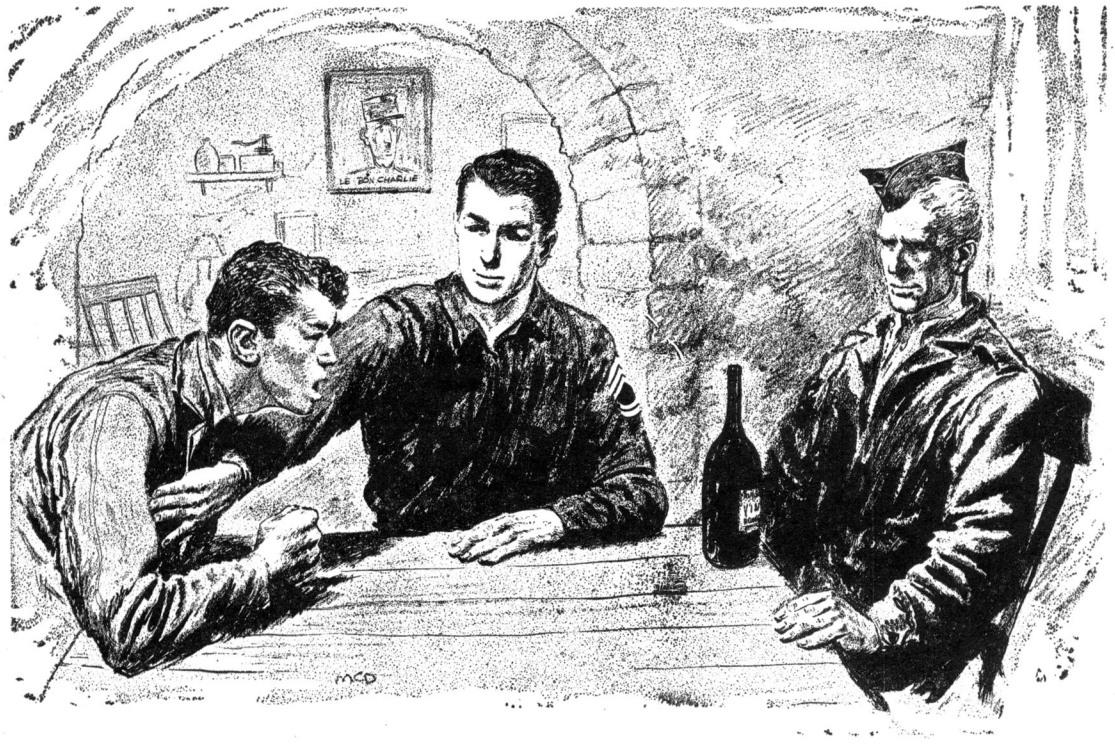
Willy said: "Hurry, before he gets our range!" They both went at once, scurrying around the corner of the trail and up, then across the slope and down and around to the road beyond, the very road the Germans would have been on had they got through the Pass.

They got all the way back to the division, then to their company, without conversation or thought. Fortney was there, spic and span, giving orders like an Ivy League football captain. Willy reported.

Fortney listened until Willy was finished. Then he said: "Sergeant Boulder, this is disgraceful! Where is your rifle? You have lost most of your detail, and now you haven't even returned with your weapons!"

He said a lot more, but Willy did not even mind, very much. He was too glad to be alive and glad Patsy was alive. He knew Augie had slipped away, and the squarehead would be AWOL, claim all sorts of things when he turned up later, and get away with it. He thought Pete must be dead. He supposed he should want to punch Fortney in the nose. Patsy did. But Willy only wanted to lie down and sleep. He had come out of the Valley of Death; and nothing, at that moment, was important.

Willy cautiously tried to move. His right shoulder was numb.



Patsy came off his chair. "You—you bet on Cocteau? Why, you dirty, low-down, stinking—"

THE Army was poised, a cumbersome, sprawling encampment which overran its section of Africa and broke up into individual problems for its officers.

Lieutenant Fortney at his stuffiest, said, with great condescension: "You understand this is for the morale of the Army. You will be excused from enough of your duty to do what training is necessary. Of course you, a champion, should require little preparation to defeat this Frenchman. I follow boxing enough to know that."

"Yes sir," said Willy Boulder, because there was nothing else to say to a jerk like Fortney. The Frenchman's name was Pierre Cocteau; and he was a light-heavy at least, and he had whipped seven British heavies and four good American light-heavies and middles while Willy's shoulder was healing. The bullet had not torn muscles beyond repair, but sometimes the shoulder was pretty stiff, and his right hand punching lacked timing, he knew. Nevertheless he was to be let off only part of his duty.

He went back and told Patsy about it. The youthful soldier said: "Fortney is a lousy officer. In the whole Army there is no worse than Fortney. But it will be fun to fight Cocteau, won't it, Champ?"

"Oh, sure," said Willy wearily. "Much fun." Even Patsy, because of his youth, did not know.

They trained, boxing only, as the legs and wind were taken care of by the African campaign. Willy was twenty-eight—no youngster. He had been boxing professionally since 1932. He had boxed as a lightweight, a welter, and finally a middleweight. He had fought a lot of good men, tough men—but he had never met anyone like this Cocteau.

He became aware of this the first time the Signal Corps posed them for a picture. The Frenchman was four inches taller than Willy, and his shoulders sloped with the power in them. He would weigh a rangy 170 at ringside.

Cocteau said in surprisingly good English: "I am glad to have chance to box weeth you, Weely. After war is over, I come America."

Willy said: "Same to you and many of them. Look me up in America, if I am alive." Privately he wondered cynically if he would survive this bout for the morale of the Services. He would weigh in at 155, tops.

He trained, with Patsy as spar-mate. The lean kid was learning so rapidly that Willy became earnest in his lessons and almost forgot that it was he who was training for the bout. Patsy was going against a welter to be picked later, on the same card as the big fight. Willy got Patsy sharp as a tack, ignoring his own welfare. There remained only a week.

Augie Meisner came back. With him was Pete Crane, alive but a specter of his former self. They had been in the hills, they proclaimed, wandering. They had picked up with a native tribe, and a girl had nursed Pete back to health, and Augie had stayed to bring Pete back in. All this Augie told in his tough, cryptic way, Pete only assenting, feverish-eyed, frightened still.

FORTNEY commended them; they came back to the company. Augie slipped into the house where Willy and Patsy were billeted, and broke open a bottle of wine. He sat and drank and grinned evilly at them, and told how he had made his way to a jeep, lifted dead soldiers out of the way, put Pete in the thing and managed to drive to the city which the Americans took the next week. He had found a native doctor, got an ugly old crone to nurse Pete, changed his uniform for native dress and had himself a wonderful, obscene time. The French had come in to take charge of the city, and he had re-donned his uniform and decided to come back to the Army.

He said: "Willy, this here Frog is terrif'. I seen him, pal, and he will moralize you. He aint scared of nothin', and he is tougher than nails, and he can hit like Louis. He will strictly murder you."

Willy said: "Thanks, pal. I love you too."

Augie shrugged. "Aint no use bein' dopey about it. This here Rack Nebo aint no dummy, is he?"

Willy said quickly: "Who? Rack Nebo? What's he got to do with it?"

"He is over here with a stable of boxers for morale shows," Augie said carelessly. "He seen this Cocteau and moved right in. The Frogs think this Nebo is the real thing. He is trainin' this Cocteau like mad. I bet a thousand dollars in francs he would beat your can, Willy."

Patsy came off his chair, his face scarlet. "You—you bet on Cocteau? Why, you dirty, low-down, stinking—"

WILLY put his hand on the boy's chest and gently pushed him down. He said: "Augie's got a right to bet where he wants."

"Where'd the dirty thief get a thousand bucks?" demanded Patsy. "We do the dirty work, hold the position, come back and ketch hell from Fortney —and this slob goes out and steals enough dough to get rich!"

Willy said, "Augie was in there while the shooting went on. He carried Pete out. Augie is an opportunist. Some people are like that, Patsy. I wouldn't say Augie is wrong."

The squarehead sipped his wine. He said stoically, "I do not give a damn what you think, Willy. I would not have carried this bum Crane no place only he was in my way. He is a drip and a crumb. Only for him I might still be in town with the Frogs. The Frogs think I am a great fight expert too, mainly because I tell them I am, and because I stick away from this Nebo. They are all crazy about Cocteau. So what does Crane do? He tosses one at Cocteau's babe. So I figger I got to come back to the Army. I tap Crane on the bean and steal a jeep and here I yam."

Willy: "You are quite a fellow, Augie. There is one thing I know for sure—I'll never forget you if I do live through this War. You will always live in my memory."

Augie finished his wine. "This Frog has got a right hand like a mule's hind leg. I feel sorry for you, Willy. I seen you was scared back in the Pass, and when this Frog gets you, the geezer will come out again. I am telling you right, pal. This guy is a murderer. He will make you jump outa the ring. I bet that grand because I knew you had a slight streak. Well, so-long, Champ!" He laughed in his evil way. He turned toward the door, and again Willy had to restrain Patsy until the portal closed behind the hard-boiled soldier.

Patsy said passionately: "He called you yellow! He can't do that—"

Willy said quietly: "I was scared up there, in the Pass."

"Sure, so was I," said Patsy instantly. "But not the way he makes it sound. That dirty son—"

"We were scared. He wasn't. He had that jeep located. He scrammed, stole it, took Pete with him so Pete couldn't squawk. Augie is tougher in his way than we are."

Patsy choked: "I'll show him who's tough. I'll—"

"You'll get some sleep," Willy told him. "We got a week of hard work. I hadn't thought about the betting. I mean, I hadn't really thought about it, about all the G.I.'s, and the boredom, and the way they will be laying it on the line. I been all mixed up since I got in this damn' army. But if Rack Nebo is in the Frog's camp—there'll be hell to pay."

"He's smart, huh, Willy?"

"He used to handle Boo Dorengo. They lifted my title once," said Willy. "Rack's no worse than other Jacobs Beach characters. But he's smarter, and we haven't got Pat Hafey to battle him."

A flood of memories of Pat Hafey—who had managed him from the start, who was home working in an airplane factory at night, turning over his pay to War Relief, making a living off the few fighters left him by the war—engulfed Willy for that time. He thought of little Sue Jr., six years of age; of Willy Boulder Hafey, that sturdy two-year-old; of Sue Sr., who had raised him when his parents had died in Midburgh, although she had been young herself and alone in those far-off days. Pat and Sue were his home folks; they were the backbone of his existence. He turned to the training with renewed gusto—and a minor miracle occurred. . . .

Boo Dorengo came into camp. A general had sent him, he said. He was on a pass until after the fight. His dented, homely features were the most welcome sight to Willy since home.

Boo said: "'At Rack's got the Frog. He is teachin' him how to beatcha. Me an' Rack, we're t'rough, of course. I can't feature him with no Frog, workin' against Ammuricans!"

Boo was one of the best. If he was touched, just slightly, with the disease of all old campaigners who have fought not wisely but too bravely, if his head buzzed at times and his eyes darkened, he could still spar with the twelve-ouncers. He was still top-flight, far better than the average spar-mate. Willy had five days with Boo.

They went down to the place of combat, which was a natural amphitheater. There was room for a hundred thousand to see. There was a stout ring, built by the Engineers, and seats for all the brass and politics in the area. There were two dressing-rooms, large and airy, with the opponents carefully separated from each other before the bouts.

It was a bit different from the Yankee Stadium, from the Garden. Fortney came strutting in with a three-star general. They swaggered around talking about the honor of the ——th Corps, to which Willy belonged. They got in the way of Boo and Patsy, who were annoyed. Patsy had to go out and fight, and Willy went out with him.

Boo and Willy seconded the lean kid; across the ring was a Neanderthal black man, a Senegalese like an ape, with a cunning, low brow. Patsy laughed when he saw this opponent, but Willy frowned.

The bell rang, and the thousands howled as the slim lad went out. Patsy had a style which Willy had never thought of changing. It was entirely unlike Willy's way of boxing; it was unlike anyone's else now fighting. It was almost pure Dempsey. It was bob and weave, and short inside hooks, but with a bit more of defense in warding off punches than Dempsey had. Patsy never took as many as he should, Willy thought. Patsy was very good.

He feinted twice with his head and once with the weave of his torso. The Negro swung his hands as though he held a scythe, throwing punishing blows which could upset a horse. Brown gloves whizzed over Patsy's head.

Then the kid, still grinning a little, was inside the terrible reach of the Negro boy, and was sweeping those little hooks into the mid-section of his adversary. Without instruction, without conscious thought, he had picked the body as his target, ignoring the heavy-boned face, the tough noggin.

THE Senegalese cracked wide open, then doubled up with pain. Patsy walked around and tagged him at the base of the jaw. Perhaps the Negro was not kayoed, Willy thought—but he wouldn't get up to fight Patsy again.

Boo Dorengo was looking queerly at him. Willy said happily: "Some boy, huh? That's my kid!"

Boo said: "Uh-huh. He's nineteen, huh?"

"Sure," said Willy. "Just a baby."

"You was a welter when you was nineteen," Boo said gloomily. "Ah, well. You was a great champ when you had it, pal."

Patsy was coming in, grinning from ear to ear. He said: "We'll show that Augie who's got geezer. You see that character fold up?"

"You were great, kid," said Willy. He led the way through the cheering, wildly happy G.I.s to the dressing-room. The M.P.s were having a time keeping the crowd off the frame building. He went inside, and Patsy took a shower and toweled, laughing, happy, the nervous tension relaxed.

Patsy said: "You'll make Cocteau quit the same way. These monkeys

aint got it, Willy. They aint in our class, pal."

"Don't say 'aint'," Willy heard himself admonish the boy. Away back, in the beginning of things, Sue Hafey had pleaded with Willy Boulder to mind his double negatives, to abandon slang. He added hastily: "Kid, you're going to be a champ some day. You got to talk like one. I had to learn it the hard way. Not that I'm a great talker now, but—" He let it go. Patsy's mind was on Cocteau and the money he had bet. Everyone had bet, and of course there were great plans afoot when Willy knocked out the Frog.

He dressed slowly, and Boo wound the bandages. His old opponent said, "This bum weighs 172, they tell me, this noon. He's eat since. You got to strictly stay away from this bum, Willy."

Patsy said: "Willy will stab his ears off. Willy will moralize him."

"This bum is comin' to the States with Rack Nebo when the war's over," said Boo. "I meet a guy, he tells me all about it this mornin'. This Cocteau wants Lesnevich; he wants Conn after the Louis bout. He can't afford to blow no duke to you, Willy."

"Uh-huh," Willy nodded. "This bout is important to everyone but me."

Boo shrugged. "Nebo's got a new meal-ticket. Cocteau wants that U.S. dough. The Army gets morale built up some. Willy gets a lacin'."

Patsy said: "Don't talk like that, even in kiddin'. Willy'll slay him."

A Special Services officer came and called them to action. He had a mustache like an eyebrow and looked slightly frightened at the trio of gladiators he led stiffly down to ringside. From the serried rows of brass stepped Fortney and the General. Willy thought the General was a little tight, but Fortney was just the same old jerk. He said loudly: "Sergeant, this is for the honor of the ——th Corps. We expect you to do your best—and perhaps a little better than your best."

Boo Dorengo muttered, "Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers—" which was pretty funny, and Willy had to laugh. The General's face grew red, and Fortney nearly burst, but the trio went on up and into the ring.

Patsy said merrily: "We'll all be court-martialed for that. . . . But you were terrific in there, Boo. . . . Geez, looka the Frog!"

Cocteau was oiled from hair to chest. He was grinning like an ape, racing across the ring in true Gallic fashion, responding to the roar of the Frenchmen present, bowing, dancing, grasping Willy, leaving oil all over Willy's sweater, racing over to salute some brass he recognized. He was colorful, all right; and the narrow, cynical face of Nebo was pleased.

Boo said: "Rack's teachin' the Frog how to beatcha."

Rack Nebo felt Willy's bandages and ignored him, also ignoring Boo. It was his life-long habit never to speak directly to a fighter, deeming them beneath his dignity. He sought to address Patsy, stared, saw that Patsy was the welter who had belted out his Senegalese. He choked, swallowed hard, looked straight up in the air and said: "Well, it's tough on fadin' bums to meet better chumps. But that's life. A fadin' champ should never get stooged inta somethin' like this." He turned and marched to his corner.

Willy said: "Get him. He is sorry for us."

"The Frog is a cut-up," said Boo. "He jest kissed the ref."

Willy said: "I'll take my chances he's square without kissing him."

Patsy laughed, but it was a nervous laugh. Patsy glimpsed the hairy chest, the long arms depending from the sloping shoulders, the muscles which rippled on the man who outweighed Willy twenty pounds. Boo Dorengo put water on Willy's hair, which was cut short, crew fashion. Boo's gnarled hand was gentle, rubbing Willy's scalp. It was not Pat Hafey, but it was good, and Willy was grateful to the man he had fought so many times.

Boo said: "That Rack. He's a circumstance, aint he?"

Boo was in the Army. Rack Nebo had sold his contract just before he enlisted, and Boo had spent his last dollar buying it back from the crook who had bought it. Boo didn't care—he thought he had a lot of fights left in him. He expected to return from the wars, recoup his fortunes and buy a bowling alley in his home town. But Boo didn't have that many good ones left, Willy knew.

Well, that was another matter. Pat could handle that. All such deals were Pat's meat. Boo wouldn't go goofy and into a hospital for feebleminded, because Pat Hafey and Willy had ideas about fellow-fighters who got bruised too badly, and because Mary Carson's brother had started a taxicab company in which Willy had invested, and which provided a place for retired boxers.

The crowd was yelling in staccato rhythm. The Army crowd was supreme, of course; but the Navy was there, betting on the Frog. And there were a lot of French who were now Free French, whatever they had been before. The Army had the edge in noise and numbers, but there were plenty others who wanted to see Willy whipped. He sat sidewise on his stool, forbearing to look at Cocteau, staring out over the heads of the assemblage.

The brass gave way, at last, and the referee was an old friend who also had come over on Special Service tour, a square guy who cautioned the Frog emphatically about hitting on the break. The oil on Cocteau smelled bad in the sun, and Willy was grateful for the tip given in the referee's warning.

He walked back and tried the ropes, and they gave a bit too much, a fact he tucked into his mind for future reference. A gang of G.I.s rushed some empty ringside seats, and he saw the hard, impudent face of Augie Meisner among them. It was a harbinger of ill tidings if he had ever beheld one.

He had listened for the gong which called for action many, many times. As a boy he had come out fast, eager, using his left, pumping it, seeking an instant opening for his right. Now he wheeled and kept wheeling, steady, patient, as the Frenchman leaped and pranced with a roll to his body and cat-motions with his gloves. Cocteau was swift, agile, practised in his style.

Over the years, Willy had come to know that in boxing style was all. Beginning and end, if he could figure out a man's style and produce one of his own to beat it, he could remain a champion. Indeed, the true test of the real champ was to accomplish this, to do it regularly, to be never dismayed.

THE Frenchman bent almost to the floor, swung his torso, came up with a left hand as unorthodox as a Holy Roller. He threw a right, powerful and swift, in a one-two as weird—and effective—as ever was seen in any ring.

The left landed high as Willy slid with it. But the right came in like thunder from the Frenchman across

the way, and Willy went down like the setting sun.

He was as much surprised as hurt. He rolled over, on hands and knees, facing his corner, looking for Pat Hafey to give him the count. Pat wasn't there. He saw Boo Dorengo, and thought it must be some sort of screwy affair, because nobody else except Boo had ever hit him that hard, and why wasn't Boo wearing gloves, and since when did they allow him out of the ring during a fight?

Then he got turned to the other corner and saw Rack Nebo, and that couldn't possibly be his corner, because Rack was really on the opposite side, always. So he cocked an ear for the referee and heard the official intoning, "Six, seven, eight—"

HE noticed then that Boo and some strange lad were giving him eight fingers. He calmly waited for nine and then got up. To his utmost astonishment, he almost did not make it. His legs wavered as the referee stepped aside to let the eager Frenchman in. He fell into a clinch, and Cocteau almost tore out his guts.

So he subconsciously fought back, resenting this rough treatment. He drove his arms, and his gloves sank into Cocteau's ribs. For a moment the two arched their backs and slugged, and away back they could not see it, but up close they were yelling, and Augie Meisner could see it swell.

The bigger man was fresh, and had not been down, and he hit very hard. Willy was not caring very much just then, so he stayed in there and matched blow for blow. Then, as it seemed that he would collapse, he stepped back, and while the G.I.s moaned, stepped in again with a right uppercut, brought from the years of his experience and draped across the features of the Frenchman, with loving care.

The totally unexpected break and return caught Cocteau unaware. He spun, his arms wide, still flagrantly hammy, his face a howl of protest turned to the sky. A buzzard flew, wheeling a little, watching from beady eyes. Willy stepped in again, breathing hard, his body aching, his head spinning, but calm, steadying himself for the *coup de grâce*.

The bell rang. The round ended. Willy laughed and turned, going to his corner. Tears were in Patsy's eyes. Boo looked solemn and worried. Willy sat down and said: "Don't rub me. A li'l water—"

The Frenchman was big and strong and durable. He was already shrugging off Willy's punch, laughing at Rack Nebo's warnings. He was blowing kisses to the still-applauding Frenchies. He was all ready to end it next round.

Willy said half to himself: "He's a big hitter. . . . He's got the guns. . . . He about tore me up inside. . . . My shoulder aint right."

He looked at Patsy and said: "You see? In the clutches I still say 'Aint!' "

The bell rang like a funeral bell. He got up from the stool, and Cocteau came into his corner in two bounds. The Frog was like rubber, and his arms were steel-lined. He kept pawing, though, Willy found. He had not yet learned how to get the full devastating force of him into each blow. Only that overhand right was lethal.

He tried it again. Willy, matching styles, went inside and took it on his shoulder—his right shoulder. It was proper, but the wound was not healed enough for that. He began to bleed a little, from the shoulder, and the G.I.s screamed, knowing it was his wound.

He backed away, and there was blood on his chest and on his face where his nose gave with the claret. He smiled, and it was a ghastly grin. He moved easily away from Cocteau's left and caught the right in the body. He began to feel all gone inside.

It was a fight in which everyone had something to gain but Willy, he remembered. His title was not at stake. He was no up-and-coming youngster like Patsy. He had been whipped before—he was not too proud to accept defeat without heartbreak. This Frenchman, strong as two horses, might cripple him, prevent him from recouping his fortunes when the war was over. He was stupid to stay in there and take the punishment, and in his maturity he was fully aware of the depths of his stupidity.

The bets of the men meant nothing. The money would be spent on liquor. If they lost—they would be better soldiers until the next pay-day. The bout was a brass-hat arrangement; he had been literally ordered to make it against a heavier, stronger opponent. He was silly for not taking one and going straight into the tankeroo, and Willy knew it well.

He tincanned, and he had the old skill to swing the bigger man onto the loose ropes. He knew how to play them. He tied Cocteau up in their looseness and looked down, grinning, winking at Meisner. The squarehead scowled and looked puzzled.

Then Willy remembered. Meisner had thought he was yellow. The tough soldier had said so. He swung Cocteau again, just as Augie jumped up and howled some obscenity.

Cocteau's face went white, then scarlet. He switched his gaze for a split second from Willy to Meisner. There was a moment when all Willy had to do was let it go and kayo the Frenchman. Then Cocteau spat, "*Canaille!*" and returned to the bout.

Willy stepped back, let a long left go by. He stepped in, let the right clip his shoulder. The blood ran.

He stepped close and threw in a right to the body. He felt Cocteau go away from him. He settled to the count, and let one, two, three lefts go to the body. It was the style he thought would fit. He feinted with his right. His shoulder was pretty useless. He feinted again, threw the left to the body.

Cocteau's face was pea green. He essayed to clinch. He bent himself away, crouching. Willy opened him, straightened him with a left. The hook went in, booming like a drumstick, socking into Cocteau's body.

The bell rang. Willy sat sidewise on his stool and looked at Meisner. He wondered if it was Augie who had made a pass at Cocteau's girl. He saw Cocteau making motions, pointing to the place where Meisner sat. He saw a Frenchie in uniform galloping after an M.P. He saw Augie get up and leave in a hurry. The bell rang.

He went out and threw two lefts into Cocteau's swollen, reddened ribs. As Cocteau doubled up, he feinted a left hook to the body and almost yawned as he dropped a perfect right cross, short and inside, laying his body into it, enduring the pain in his shoulder. The punch landed on Cocteau's lantern jaw.

The Frenchman took a step sidewise, got mixed up, came forward. He waved his arms theatrically, then fell on his face. The referee, sighing in relief, counted him out. . . . The odd style had been solved by a champion.

PATSY said: "All right, I had a drink. It's a cele-celebrashun, aint it?"

Willy said: "Drinking is all right, if you control it. But you're plastered." It was very late, and Patsy had run the guard to get in without being thrown in the clink.

Patsy said: "They clunked Augie in. The Frog complained. Augie stole the thousand bucks from him. Pete really did make a pass at his mouse, too. Pete's in the pokey also."

Willy said: "I'm not surprised."

Patsy said: "Augie squealed on Pete. He said he wouldn't take it alone. That's how they got Pete."

"You see? You can never tell who's yellow," Willy said quietly.

Patsy rubbed his slightly bleary eyes. He said slowly: "I think I see. We were scared—but we kept on doin' something. . . . Augie's scared—so he rats on Pete."

"Sure," said Willy. "Go to bed." It was stupid to bring the boy along, he supposed. Boo had been right. Patsy would be a middleweight, a young one, a strong one, in a year or so."

He looked at the young face on the bunk across the room. Moonlight softened the eager outlines. Patsy was far from slumber. Willy sighed and said: "It's all a matter of style."

The Man with the Red

by De Witt Newbury

THE grass was lush in the sloping meadow, and fell cleanly with each sweep of the scythe. It would be cured by tomorrow. The sun would shine brightly through a long northern day.

Such grass and such weather should have pleased a farmer. Yet Hari Akkason seethed with anger as he mowed. That sun was heating his heart to a sullen glow.

This was not his field. No, he was toiling for another man, the great man of the district, while his own hay crop was neglected.

He could look down the long slope, to the log steading above the fiord: Bergtor's new house in its guarding palisade. He could see the booth of green boughs outside the garth, and Bergtor the Herse and his dozen housecarls drinking ale in the shade.

They were lounging comfortably in their summer shirts of linen and greasy leather breeches. Big, lazy fellows, good for nothing but feasting or fighting! They scorned all useful work; and Bergtor kept no thralls except those who served about the steading.

Hari gritted his teeth. He, a freeman, was obliged to labor like a slave!

It was to pay scot, the land tax.

His small farm and a fishing right had been granted by King Olav Trygvason, who was liberal in such matters. But now Olav was dead. His enemies, the sons of Jarl Haakon, ruled Norway.

Only last year their man Bergtor had appeared in North Moere. He was the new *herse*, the official who mustered the levies in time of war, and he had been given a huge slice of the district.

And then suddenly everything was changed for Hari Akkason. He was no longer a freeholder. He was only a bonder, a tenant bound to pay rent.

Bergtor had turned out to be a swaggering, overbearing sort, who would have his own way. His way was to demand labor for land-rent, instead of meat or meal, flax or wool, as customary. . . .

Hari had reached the upper part of the meadow, where a dark wall of forest hemmed it. He stopped to rest, wiping his forehead with a thick forearm. The sweat prickled in the short hairs of his beard.

He was glad to see the girl coming from the garth. He slung his scythe over one muscular shoulder and went to meet her.

She looked about as she walked. A slender figure with bare head—yellower than his own—shining in the sunlight. Her braids swung and her body swayed as she stepped over the swathes of cut grass.

Hari took the wooden measure of ale from her hands. "Thanks, Gyrid," he said. "You are kind."

The girl smiled up at him. She seemed almost happy when her lips crinkled so. "And you are lucky," she answered. And she stood watching him drink, a hand raised to shade her eyes. They were fine eyes, he thought. Bluer than the bluest sky.

He swallowed a mouthful. "Lucky, eh? To be working for another, when I should be making my own hay?"

She nodded. "Lucky to be out in the sun. I have been indoors, spinning for another woman!"

He looked at her over the ale-measure. She was neat and trim, in a kidskin bodice and a russet kirtle. "Don't they treat you well?" he asked.

For answer Gyrid lifted one shoulder a little and dropped that blue glance to the ground.

She was a thrall-girl, a captive. Bergtor had taken her last spring when he went to punish the Orkney vikings, and had given her to his fat wife, Bergliot.

She had been rebellious at first—until Bergliot laid the birch stick across her back and taught her obedience.

Now Gyrid took back the empty bowl, raising her eyes to his again. "Perhaps I can help you rake tomorrow," she said. "I used to help my father, at home in Rossoy."

Hari watched her as she walked away, stepping so lightly over the swatches. His heart didn't feel hot any longer, only heavy.

A bondmaid must be freed to be wedded. Bergtor was grasping, Bergliot more grasping still. He couldn't pay their price. . . .

He went back to his mowing, and had nearly finished when the call interrupted him.

"Akkason! Here, Akkason! You are wanted!"

One of the carls was shouting, hands cupped at his mouth. The scar-faced, brown-whiskered man; his name was Vagn. There seemed to be a commotion down there at the booth, too. Hari took time to hang up his scythe again, then hurried down the slope.

He found Bergtor still seated on a bench, pulling at his bristly mustaches. Vagn was busily chopping an arrow into small pieces with a battle-ax. The others were scowling at a gnarled, sea-stained fellow with fish-scales in his beard.

The Herse turned, grunting. "You must carry the war-arrow, Son of Akki. This fisherman has seen two strange sails outside the skerries—yellow sails. They may be nothing to worry about, but we'd best make sure."

Hari didn't understand at first. "Yellow sails?" he repeated.

"Yes, yellow!" Bergtor barked. "If they were striped—red, blue or green—they wouldn't be strange, would they? These are dyed with saffron, after the Erse fashion."

Vagn Cut-face gathered up the pieces of arrow. Each one was a sign of authority and a summons to battle.

"I will need twenty rowers," the Herse went on. "You must go to the bonder of Brattadale; he has seven sons. Then to the farms in the dale beyond. Hurry! And see that every one is fully armed."

Hari took the bits of painted wood and pulled his belt tighter. He would stop at his own shieling on the way back, he thought, to pick up his mail and weapons.

AS Bergtor's ship slid out of the fiord the sun was sinking but it would be light for a good while yet—summer nights were short.

Hari looked over his shoulder as he swung his oar. He was ready to fight as well as row, for this was not like working out an unjust tax. This was duty.

He was harnessed with iron. His shield was slung at the railing beside him, and the bone handle of his sword nudged his ribs. Bow and quiver were on his back.

He could see the loom of the rocky islets, nothing else. But Bergtor, high by the sternpost, pointed into the sunglare.

"They are still there," the Herse growled, "hanging off and on. Hiding behind the skerries, waiting for night."

"To make a quick raid and get away," Vagn Cut-face guessed. "Erse

Beard

A spirited Viking saga by the author of "The Warlock Swordsmith."

Illustrated by John Costigan, N.A.

sails, sure enough. The Gaels were never so bold before!"

Bergtor spat to leeward. "Hm, bold enough in their own waters! We'll bear wide and cut them off from the sea. They can't see us over the rocks—can't see our bare mast as we see them." He shook his thick body to settle his ring brynie and pushed his tall helm tighter.

Hari gave way at the order. All the rowers put their backs into it. The wind was offshore, the tide just beginning to flow. Lucky that Bergtor's ship was a swift *skeid!* It had a carved horse's head on its stem-post and was named *Storm Racer.*

They bore southward around the skerries, and before long he could make out the strange craft. They were riding close together—small, narrow hulls with dingy yellow sails.

By this time the Irish had spied the Norse ships. The yellow sails came down, oars slid out and churned. They came about and made for the *skeid,* parting to take it on both sides.

"We have the wind now!" Bergtor shouted. "Up with the sail, ship oars! We'll shoot between them too quickly for boarding. And give them a dose of iron as we go!"

He laughed when he saw the enemy crews, and Hari wondered. Not more than twenty men in each—only five oars to a side—and half of them wore no mail. There were tow-colored beards among them, yellow and ruddy beards.

Leinster Gaels, perhaps mixed with some Norse renegades from Dyflin. Picts would be darker.

They came on bravely, converging now to nip the Norse ship. But the wide-sailed, high-prowed *skeid* had both wind and tide. Bergtor himself was at the tiller. It picked up its heels.

A spear or two came arching over the water. One fell into a wave. Another struck the foredeck; and a carl was tugging and cursing, his foot transfixed. Hari heard a sharp thump beside him. An arrow was sticking in his slung shield.

He crouched behind the shield. He had shipped his oar and strung his bow, and all the other rowers had done the same.

Now the small ships were surging up, one on each bow. The one to starboard was nearest, and its prow struck

Hari waited for the chance. His sword rang on mail, and Bergtor grunted—he knew the stroke had told.

Storm Racer's stem a glancing blow. Some fellow on it threw a grapnel. A forecastle-man knocked it loose with his ax.

Next moment the Norse ship was foaming between the two, sending a flight of arrows and a volley of thrown spears into both.

Hari sent off three shafts. He couldn't see how they struck, as the enemy crew had knelt under their bulwarks. A spear grazed his neck. The haft rapped his helmed head, half stunning him. Then *Storm Racer* had passed on, headed straight for a channel between the skerries.

Impossible to tell how the Irish ships had suffered. They were not daunted. They put about and hoisted sails, so it seemed as if the Norse ship were flying for their pursuit.

That channel was dangerous! A tide-rip was running there like a river: white water was spouting around jagged rocks, whirlpools boiling.

"Wear! Wear to larboard!" Bergtor bellowed. "Down sail! Out oars and heave!"

It was a struggle, but they did it. Clawed out of the current, drove into the wind and stayed, rowing northward.

One of the Irish ships was not so fortunate. Running with all the force of wind and tide, it was caught in the flow. Fighting desperately with every oar, pitching and slewing, it was swept against the rocks.

Hari heard the cracking of its ribs, saw it heel and fill, the water pouring over. Saw the men spill out, some swimming and some clinging to the wreck.

The other ship saved them, or most of them. A shrewd mariner captained that one!

It headed boldly into the rip, with mast bare and rowers backing water. It avoided the rocky fangs, sped and checked and sped again, until it hung in a whirlpool, turning slowly, while man after man was hauled aboard.

Then it slipped on through the channel.

Storm Racer bore northward around the islets, but by that time the Irish ship had rounded them to the south and was heading seaward.

"They have learned their lesson," Bergtor decided. "No need to chase them all the way home." Satisfied, he puffed out his mailed chest and pawed his mustaches.

IT was late next day when Hari went to finish the mowing.

The thrall-girl had been raking, he saw. The cured hay was all in cocks, and her rude wooden rake was leaning against one. But he did not see Gyrid in the field.

He went up the slope, pulling the whetstone from his belt. The scythe was hanging where he had left it. He reached for it, then let his hand fall as his ears caught a murmur of voices.

Peering into the forest shade, he glimpsed a bit of color between the dark tree trunks: Gyrid's russet gown.

He stepped inside the forest rim. The girl was there, a few paces away. A man stood beside her, a stranger.

Hari strode to them, a sharp uneasiness stirring in him. What did it mean, this hidden meeting? Gyrid heard his step and turned quickly. Her cheeks were pale; they flushed as her eyes searched his.

"This poor carl is wandering," she said. "He was hungry, so I gave him the bread and ale I brought for you, Hari. Do you mind?"

He shook his head.

She spoke to the stranger. "Perhaps you should tell him!" Then, with a swirl of yellow braids and russet kirtle, she was gone.

"Yes, I swam from the wreck. My friends think I am

Eying him, Hari saw a lean fellow of some forty years, with weathered face and reddish beard. His blue coat was in tatters. He wore neither belt nor sword, but a spear leaned against a tree near by, a shield under it, a wooden shield with peeling paint.

The man made no move for his weapon. He chuckled, wagging his tangled beard. "That's a good girl! I called her, and she came to me without fear."

"Who are you?" Hari demanded.

The stranger winked a bright blue eye. "My name is one you would not know—Brigg. I'm only a farer who must walk warily,"—he gave a friendly grin—"lest the land-rulers interrupt my travels."

"A wood-dweller," Hari nodded. This fellow was an outlaw, he thought. There were many landless men hiding in the forest; men who were foes of the Jarls, or had refused to pay scot.

dead, I suppose! I lost my helm, sword and mail."

Brigg stared at him shrewdly and winked the other eye. "She said I should tell you—"

"Tell me nothing!" Hari cut him short. "My land and my fishing-boat are my livelihood. I must be loyal to the rulers or lose them."

THE other spoke more cautiously. "Your district chief is Bergtor the Herse, the girl said. And she is his thrall."

"From Rossoy, in the Orkneys," Hari told him.

Brigg wrinkled his forehead. "Why, Orkneymen don't let their women be taken easily."

Hari laughed at that. "Bergtor waited until their fleet was away at the spring harrying. He landed hastily and only burned a few steadings. I know, because I was there, pulling an oar. Not willingly; but when the Herse calls a man must go."

"Of course," Brigg said thoughtfully. "The girl, though—she is not mistreated?"

"Not much," Hari sighed. "She is better housed and fed, perhaps, than she was at home. Yet freedom is better than thralldom, even if one has no home. You know that yourself."

"Of course," Brigg said again, nodding until his beard fluttered. "Oh, certainly!"

Hari slapped his ragged shoulder. "You shall not go hungry tonight, Wood-dweller, or sleep under a tree. Look, you must go north through the forest until you top the fell. Then below you will be my little farmstead by the water. There you will find food and a bed, and can wait safely for my coming."

He finished the mowing cheerfully, all his uneasiness vanished. Surely Gyrid was a good girl, he thought. Always ready to feed the hungry! He would scold her, just the same, for talking to a stranger so boldly. Next time she might meet a bad outlaw instead of an honest one. . . .

The young farmer was not so sure of Brigg's honesty, however, when he went down the path to his shieling beside the fiord.

The wood-dweller had not waited there. He had come and gone, and helped himself to a generous supply of food: Smoked fish, barley bread and cheese. He had taken a reindeer hide as well, with a bit of rope to make a pack.

"He fares poorly in the forest, I suppose," Hari told himself. "Hunting wild meat and wild herbs." A sudden thought struck him. "My boat!" he exclaimed, and hurried down to the strand. The tubby craft was still safe enough, hauled up with sail furled and oars stowed. Hari breathed deep with relief. "It's lucky," he muttered, "he didn't take a fancy to speed his faring!"

Hari drove in his goats and milked them. And began to think of Gyrid again, as he always did when working on his own land. What a comrade she would be, what a helper! If he had a wife, he would manage to buy a cow or two for her, besides the goats and swine. Then the narrow farm would be a place of plenty, a little kingdom.

BY morning he had almost forgotten his acquaintance, the outlaw. He was afoot early. Today he must harness Bergtor's horses to the wain, draw in the hay and stack it.

One of the Brattadale lads, the youngest, was to help him. The boy was waiting outside the closed gate when he reached the garth—waiting and listening, with mouth hanging open.

"Something is wrong," young Alf told him. "They are quarreling!"

Hari cocked an ear, and heard Bergliot's voice. The fat woman was a great *husfroya,* always up to direct her bondmaids.

Now she was screaming angrily. "The she-whelp has run off, I tell you! The best milker, the best hand in my dairy! You must rouse the country, Bergtor. Have her brought home and whipped!"

Bergtor's answer came, growled and grunted. "Where would she run? Into the sea or the forest? No bonder in the district would dare to hide her from me."

Hari pushed the gate open and stepped into the stockaded yard. He saw the Herse and his wife facing each other by the cow-house, both red with temper. A few of the carls stood near, amused grins on their whiskered faces.

"What has happened?" he asked.

Bergtor shrugged a heavy shoulder. "Our wench, Gyrid, is missing. I think she has gone to pick dewberries

Hari swallowed a mouthful. "Lucky, eh? To be working for another, when I

and strayed a little. Bergliot thinks she has run away. Humph! That would be silly—to leave a snug home and starve."

"I know it!" the woman stormed. "If she starves in the woods, it will serve her right! Yet I will lose my best spinner!"

A pain, keen and barbed like an arrow, sliced through Hari's heart. He spoke before he thought. He couldn't help it.

"I know it, too! She has gone with the stranger!"

Bergtor turned on him quickly. "What's this? What sort of stranger?"

"A wood-dweller, an outlaw. She met him yesterday beyond the hayfield—I saw them together. She said she had only given him bread, but they must have laid plans. Why was she so foolish?" He struck his forehead distractedly.

The Herse was twisting his long mustaches. "Well!" he puffed. "It would be foolish of me to rouse the district for a thrall-girl. But an outlaw is different! There'll be a price on his head."

He shook his big body. "Call the Brattadale folk, Hari. I'll lead out my men, and we'll beat the bushes."

The house-carls went off, grumbling, to fetch their gear. Hari ran out of the garth. He didn't obey Bergtor, but sent young Alf home with the news and ran on to his own house. He must arm himself! A man's first thought, in time of trouble, was of weapons.

He would not wear his mail-coat. Brigg wore none, and it would hamper him in the forest. He clapped on his iron cap, though, took his sword down from its wall-peg; and his round shield of oak and ox-hide, studded with brazen nails.

Outside his door he paused. Before him was the strand, behind were the forested fells with a few valley farms between. Which way should he go?

He racked his brains for a moment. What would a man and woman do, a couple who had offended the district chief? Hide in the near-by woods, or flee the district?

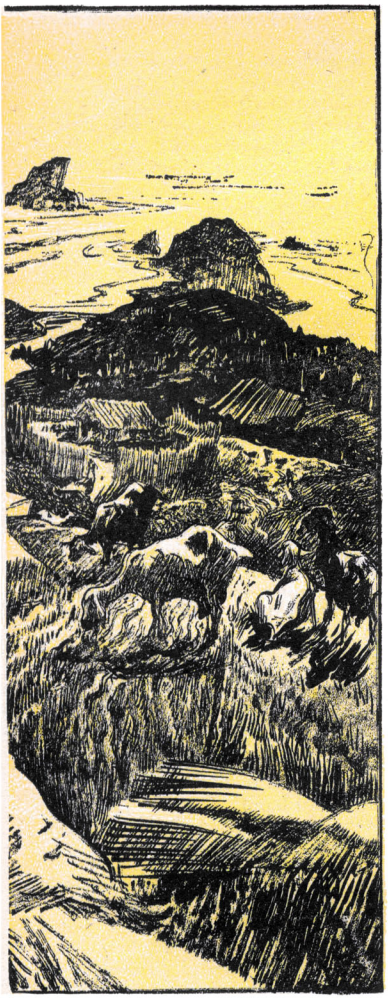
Alone, the man might lose himself easily, but not when burdened with an island girl, unused to rugged country.

THEY'D leave North Moere as soon as possible, Hari decided. To the east lay mountain wastes, no woman's road. And they could not go south without crossing Dovre Fell, a terrible journey. Therefore they'd flee northward into Trondheim.

The fiord wound inland, a narrow wick cutting off the north. The fugitives must circle; and if Hari rowed his boat up to the head, he might intercept them.

"Lucky Brigg didn't take it!" he said for the second time.

He thought of Gyrid as he kicked the grounded anchor loose and heaved



should be making my own hay?"

at the beached prow. Had that grinning red-beard wooed her with promises? Had she yielded willingly? No, he couldn't believe it! She had been sick for freedom, too sick to be wise.

Yet a fire of jealousy burned in him, a fierce mixture of anger and grief.

The boat was nearly afloat in the rising tide, and he pushed it free. The tide was with him as he pulled up the fiord. He might be in time! The runaways had a longer and rougher path; they couldn't have gone far in the short night.

Hari rowed steadily, mile after watery mile. He felt no weariness, was still strong when he nosed into the sharp cove at the fiord's head. He sprang ashore with his anchor and snagged it among broken rocks.

The frost-shattered ledges rose to a jagged escarpment. Beyond that was a gorge, cutting pine-grown steeps.

He climbed from ledge to ledge, thankful that he wore no heavy brynie. The cliff was not too difficult; there were storm-worn gullies. The descent on the other side was a series of sliding drops, from tree to tree.

Soon he was in the pass. At its highest point, where it leveled between rise and fall. He took his post behind a gray-lichened rock, to watch and wait.

It was hard to wait! To stand motionless, straining eyes and ears. The blood seethed in his veins. He grew more and more impatient, began to doubt his judgment—until he heard a stone roll and rattle, far below.

They were coming! He had been right! Hari stepped out of hiding and stood solidly, his feet planted wide, shield on shoulder, arms folded.

At first he couldn't see them, down there in the forest. But in a few minutes they came into the bare gorge. Brigg with spear slanted forward and a pack on his back, Gyrid following.

Gyrid saw him first, and gave a cry. Brigg's head swiveled then. The two half stopped and hurried on again.

"It's you, Hari!" the girl called. "You will aid us—we are followed!"

He answered bitterly: "Yes, I will aid! I'll save you from running wild in the woods."

Brigg swore, as if perplexed. "Fire of Lok! Gyrid said you were her friend!"

"I am her friend," Hari scowled. "One who will stop her folly."

The red-beard was not grinning now. He dropped his spear level and swung his shield forward. "Then I must slay you," he said regretfully.

Hari readied his own shield, slid his sword from the sheath. The touch of the bone handle made him feel better. "You'll die trying!" he taunted.

A hoarse shout came from below, answered by another. The pursuers were close! They were calling to each other as they beat the forest.

Brigg started at the sound, made a threatening move. "Will you get out of the way?" he snapped. "We don't intend to be caught!"

"You are caught already," Hari said. He glanced aside at the girl. "Why did you go, Gyrid? With a stranger, an outlaw? Did he tempt you with freedom in the wilds? Talk of sleeping on soft pine boughs, of toasting venison over juniper twigs? Ah, did he also speak of hunger and cold, when the Frost Giants are aboard in the land?"

She waved her hand as if quieting a child. "You don't understand! Brigg Briggson is no outlaw—and no stranger. He is from Rossoy!"

The shouting sounded again, down in the woods. Hari hardly heard it.

He gaped at Brigg. "From Rossoy? Then you must have won ashore from the wrecked ship, the Erse ship!"

Brigg was grinning again. "They were Irish ships, but Orkneymen were on them."

Hari shook his head to clear it. He felt confused, almost dizzy. "And you knew this fellow at home, Gyrid? You know him well—and like him?"

"Like him?" She smiled. "I love him!"

Suddenly Hari's heart was drained of anger, even jealousy. It held nothing but pain. He uttered a stifled groan and turned his eyes from her flushed face. Then he stiffened.

Two men were panting up the gorge.

"Very well," he said, "you shall have him! Run, both of you. I'll hold the pass!"

Brigg crowed. "My girl was right to call you friend! I'm not much good at running, though. We'll stand here together." He unslung his pack.

BERGTOR and Vagn Cut-face were nearing, stumbling and hot with haste. Hot with the weight of metal, too. Vagn's brown beard was dripping sweat, and Bergtor's broad face was fire-red under his peaked helm. He bellowed as he neared, shaking his drawn sword.

"So you found them first, bonder! Good work! Smite the carl down—seize the wench! We have them!" Hari made no move, and Bergtor's look of triumph changed to one of doubt, astonishment. "What!" he said. "Have you turned traitor?"

"I have grown tired of paying scot," Hari flung back. "Now I'll settle all!"

The Herse was too angry for further words. He rushed at Hari with a great hacking and hewing. He seemed enormous in his brynie of steel rings and pointed helm.

Hari saw chips fly out of the shield-rim before him, notches appear in it. He couldn't see how Brigg fared; only heard the Orkneyman laughing, Vagn grinding curses, and the rattle of spear-hafts whacking each other.

He had warded off half a dozen blows before he gave one. He wasted no strength on Bergtor's shield, but waited for the chance and struck under it cunningly. His sword rang on mail. The Herse grunted like a boar, so he knew the stroke had told.

His left arm was aching from shock after shock, his shield was being chopped to splinters. Still he managed to cover body, head, legs. His blade met Bergtor's once and again. Sparks shot from the clash.

The Herse was a mighty fighter. Yet he was bulky with ale-drinking, and the summer heat troubled him. He began to pant and gasp. His face turned from red to purple.

Hari received one battering blow on his iron cap. All the Northern Lights seemed to blaze in his skull; it was still sore from the rap taken on shipboard. For a moment he tottered, jarred to his very heels. Another good sword-swing might have finished him.

Bergtor was too slow. The ale-fat man was struggling for breath, his mouth a wide gap under the huge mustaches. His shield sagged.

Hari was waiting for that. He went back a step, forward again, swung his sword in a full arc, brought it down.

The bone-handled sword broke. But Bergtor's pointed helm broke, too.

Hari stood still, holding his shattered weapon. He watched the Herse stagger drunkenly, face turning lead-color and eyes rolling up, then fall as if dead. . . .

There was time now to learn how Brigg had fought.

Well enough! Vagn was sitting on a stone, left hand grasping his right arm. Red drops were trickling through his fingers; and a red stream was running down one leg.

The Orkneyman was still sound, still grinning. He grounded his spear and gave Hari a clap on the back. "The game is done," he said, "unless more gangers are looking for sport."

No more were within sight or hearing. The men had spread through the woods in couples, it seemed, and only these two had followed the right track.

Bergtor lay like a log, except that he was breathing. He would sleep soundly for a long time! Hari knelt to make sure; and took the Herse's sword. It had a silver grip, was better than the broken sword had been.

When he rose, Gyrid was binding Vagn's wounds with his linen leg-wraps. She would always help those in need! The scar-faced carl thanked her gruffly, mortified at his worsting by an unmailed man.

That man, the grinning red-beard, was slinging his pack. Getting ready for travel. Hari turned to him with a question.

"Why didn't you take my boat, last night?"

Brigg wrinkled his red brows, surprised. "You were my girl's friend. I wouldn't steal half your livelihood."

"You could have crossed the fiord, at least."

"Nay, we kept clear of you purposely, not wanting to mix you in our troubles. You had to be loyal to the land-rulers."

HARI pointed to the western ridge. "The boat lies at the fiord-head yonder. It is seaworthy—it will make the voyage to Rossoy. I always keep the water cask full. You have food, and can stop at my shieling for more. No danger in passing Bergtor's garth; all his folk are in the forest."

Gyrid was beside him now. One braid had loosened, and she pushed back the yellow hair. "Come with us, Hari!" she said.

"Ay, come!" Brigg urged. "You've lost everything here through befriending us, and our Jarl Sigurd is generous. He'll give you a fine farm. A freehold, I'll warrant that!"

Hari shook his head. There was a stone in his breast, he thought, heavy and cold. "I wish you joy, Gyrid. But could I bear to see you joyful with another fellow? No, I am the wood-dweller now, the outlaw. I will go tramping on to Trondheim."

"Foolish!" Gyrid said. "Foolish!"

He looked at her searchingly. "Tell me one thing: Are you sure, very sure, that you love this Brigg?"

Her eyes smiled at him, bluer than the sky.

Bewildered, Hari shook his head again. "A good *dreng*, certainly. Yet old enough to be your father!"

The girl's laughter was half happiness, half exasperation. "You are so thick-headed, Hari!" she said. "He *is* my father!"

There was silence, full of the sough of summer wind through pine boughs. It was broken by a shout from Brigg. "I started to tell you, and you stopped me!"

Then, while Hari listened dumbly, Brigg told his story:

"I was with Jarl Sigurd, fighting the Irish. As you said once, a man must follow his chief. Well, when I came home my daughter was gone. Stolen, I learned, by Norsemen from North Moere; of course I wanted to find her!

"None of our mighty vikings would bother about one woman more or less. Old Sigurd the Stout is generous, though. He gave me the two ships we had captured from the Ersemen, and I found some friends for the faring. They think I am dead, I suppose!

"Yes, I swam from the wreck; I was bitten by the rocks and had to wriggle out of my mail—that was a job! I lost helm and sword, too, but my shield and spear floated.

"Now you know everything, and I ask for the second time. Will you come with us to Rossoy?" He thrust out a lean hand.

Hari struck the hand with his own and gripped it firmly.

Bread & Mr. Graham

About a zealot who tried to reform our diet—and a woman reporter who caught John Adams bathing in the Potomac and sat on the Presidential pants till he talked for publication.

by FAIRFAX DOWNEY

For pottage, and puddings, and custards, and pies,
Our pumpkins and parsnips are common supplies.
We have pumpkins at morning and pumpkins at noon.
If it were not for pumpkins we should be undoon.

Anon.

BOARDERS—some called them inmates—at a well-regulated Graham boarding-house rose at four o'clock, though as late as five in the winter months. Rising with less reluctance from the fact that their couches were never featherbeds, but pallets with mattresses of hair, moss, or straw (and the harder the better), they shut their windows, which had been wide open for plenty of fresh air, and began on their regimen.

First, a cold sponge bath. Rules also insisted that everyone must bathe his whole body at least once a week in winter, and thrice weekly summers, despite the prevailing opinion of the 1830's and '40's that such abandoned ablutions were both decadent and dangerous. Next, for the sake of beneficial friction, Grahamites applied a flesh-brush from head to foot.

Now it was time for exercise: A good, brisk walk. For the vigorous, perhaps some boxing and wrestling. Horseback riding was thought very good. Hearty laughter was also recommended. (It was echoed by outsiders, highly amused by the goings-on in Graham boarding-houses.) An hour of rest, gratefully taken, was scheduled for ten.

Breakfast had been at seven; dinner was at one, and supper at an hour agreed upon. No fourth meal, not ever, and no snacks. No meat; animal food was sternly ruled out as unnecessary. No pastry, no condiments, no tobacco, no coffee, tea or chocolate, and certainly no liquor. The faithful drank only pure soft water. They ate sparingly of vegetables, "boiled fruits of the earth," and bread, made of the whole of the wheat, unbolted and coarsely ground, and at least twelve hours old—the bread which took its name and fame from Mr. Graham himself.

Sylvester Graham was the seventeenth and youngest child of a minister of the gospel who was seventy-two when his last son was born. Reared by a succession of relatives, the boy's health and education suffered. That, sniffed unregenerate Americans, was why he became a reformer when he grew up. But numerous other countrymen of his hailed Mr. Graham as a benefactor of the health of mankind, and thousands affirmed this in written testimonials.

The Demon Rum was Mr. Graham's first-chosen adversary. He was well launched on a career as a lecturer for the Pennsylvania Temperance Society when it forcefully struck him that moderation in matters other than drinking might well be advocated. Indeed, various other appetites and passions were being indulged in a large way. Mr. Graham heard a call to save the American people from their physiological follies.

He was appalled by their prodigious meals of meats and starches. Frontiersmen might manage ten pounds of buffalo meat a day, or a potpie whose one-inch crust covered a thick layer of ground ham and onions, beneath which lurked one turkey, two chickens, two partridges, two pigeons and two rabbits (cooked, to be sure), decked with slices of bacon. But such fare was not for sedentary townsmen who took no exercise. Nevertheless they ate it, disregarding dyspepsia, gout, death and destruction. They gorged themselves on meat four times a day, and on flapjacks, doughnuts and all sorts of hot breads. They topped off with rich desserts: ice-cream, pies, pastries, jellies, sillabubs. The national sweet tooth was a menace. Mr. Graham shuddered to find the young so ominously fond of confectionaries, a fondness which seemed so insurmountable at female seminaries that it filled him with gloomy anticipations. There was no telling but that this craving might lead its victims along a downward path until they arrived at the lowest point of the scale of intemperance, gluttony and debauchery.

AND what help, pray, were the doctors? Mr. Graham found some enlightened members of the medical profession on his side, but others he made rather angry when he declared in one of his eloquent lectures that right living was a more certain means to health than resorting to drugs and doctors. Medicos, who ought to know better, ranked among the worst gourmandizers. Few of the gargantuan banquets of the day surpassed the feast—they called it a "supper"—tendered by the New York Society for the Relief of Widows and Orphans of

Frontiersmen might manage ten pounds of buffalo meat a day, but not sedentary townsmen.

When the hussy cornered President Adams, he spoke for publication.

Medical Men. One glance at its menu, and any Grahamite shrank back aghast—as well he might!

Banquets with a score or more meat courses surpassed only in scale regular family meals, where from three to eight meat dishes were entirely usual. No wonder diners staggered away from the table, whether or not they had washed down an avalanche of food with a flood of liquor. No wonder that after hearty repasts the sharp crack of waistband buttons and breaking stay-laces rang out in many a household.

Mr. Graham took up gluttony's gauntlet. He launched a series of lectures in New York and New England, attended by audiences that ran as high as two thousand. Listeners "trembled under the torrent of truth poured upon them." Converts and disciples, flocking to his standard, began giving up everything from third helpings at dinner to steak for breakfast. They forswore beverages ranging from fishhouse punch to tea. One coffee-drinker, after a bitter struggle during which he feared his rash resolve would cost him his life, wrote he had redeemed himself from the curse of caffein.

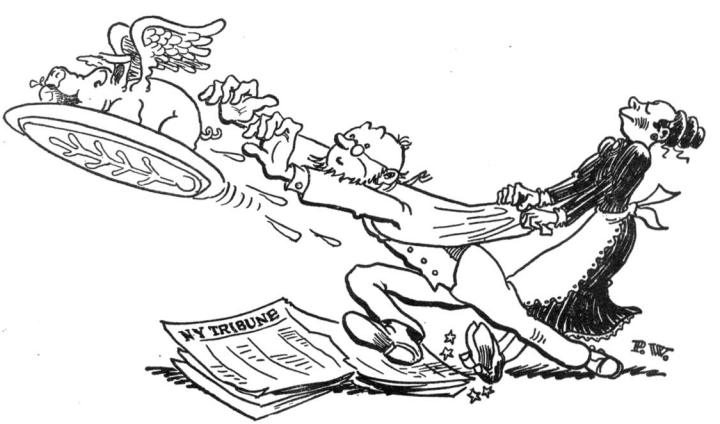
Reform was in the ascendant. Graham boarding-houses sprang up in the larger cities and resort dining-rooms were forced to install Grahamite tables. The demand drove millers, willy-nilly, into producing Graham flour. A special bookstore opened in Boston to purvey Mr. Graham's and other works on bread, health and kindred reforms. The *Graham Journal* and other weeklies proclaimed that now was the time for all good men to come to the aid of their physiology.

Not only right but luck was on Mr. Graham's side. He made an important convert from the viewpoint of publicity: Horace Greeley, editor of the New York *Tribune*. Scoffers sniffed that Greeley could hardly speak with authority on food, when he never knew whether he had lunched or not until he had asked a member of his staff. Since the editor suffered from dyspepsia (his mother had been a poor cook), he enthusiastically went to board at a Graham house. After a while he tired of vegetables and Graham bread and would have backslid had it not been for his wife, a born reformer. All the rest of his life she held him to the diet, allowing him no meat, condiments, tea or coffee—"not even a pickle," the unhappy Horace moaned. However, his promotion of reform, though it distressingly rebounded personally greatly furthered the cause.

ONCE roused, the zeal for reform could not be confined to urging temperance in food and drink. It plunged into the controversial question of bathing, where there was an excess of temperance, amounting in some quarters almost to total abstinence. Dr. Daniel Drake declared that in the Mississippi Valley people seldom bathed. One was apt to catch one's death of cold bathing in winter with the water heated before an open fire, and stoves made it only a little less hazardous. Plumbing was still in its infancy. Harriet Beecher Stowe, partisan of hygiene though she was, granted that the cold contents of the old oaken bucket that hung in the well could not be expected to be dear to the heart of childhood when flung over its shivering form.

Undoubtedly a chore was the process of warming kettle after kettle of water on the stove, filling the wooden or tin tub for a bath, bailing it out afterward and mopping up the floor if the scuppers had been awash. Bathers living near a shore preferred to follow the custom of President John Quincy Adams whose daily custom it was to take a plunge in the Potomac at the foot of the White House garden. Weather permitting, he took his dip daily between daybreak and sunrise; but even so, untoward incidents occurred. Once some miscreant swiped the Presidential pants lying on the bank, and Mr. Adams was forced to hail a passing lad and dispatch him for more attire. On another occasion a woman reporter, a pioneer in her craft in more ways than one, caught the Chief Executive at his matutinal ablutions. Previously he had refused to give her an interview, being prejudiced against women reporters, but when she had cornered him up to his neck in the Potomac, the hussy refused to leave until the President spoke for publication. That was only one of the many instances of the trouble one could get into while tubbing.

But the upholders of hygiene, while admitting risks and obstacles, were making no compromises. When a young man, earnestly seeking advice,



The rest of Horace's life his wife allowed him "not even a pickle."

wrote, "I have been in the habit during the past winter of taking a warm bath every three weeks. Is this too often to follow the year 'round?" reformers saw him and raised him. They replied that three baths *in one week*, even in midwinter, are desirable, adding that in summer once a day is not too often, and there are few, if any, bathers who would not be benefited.

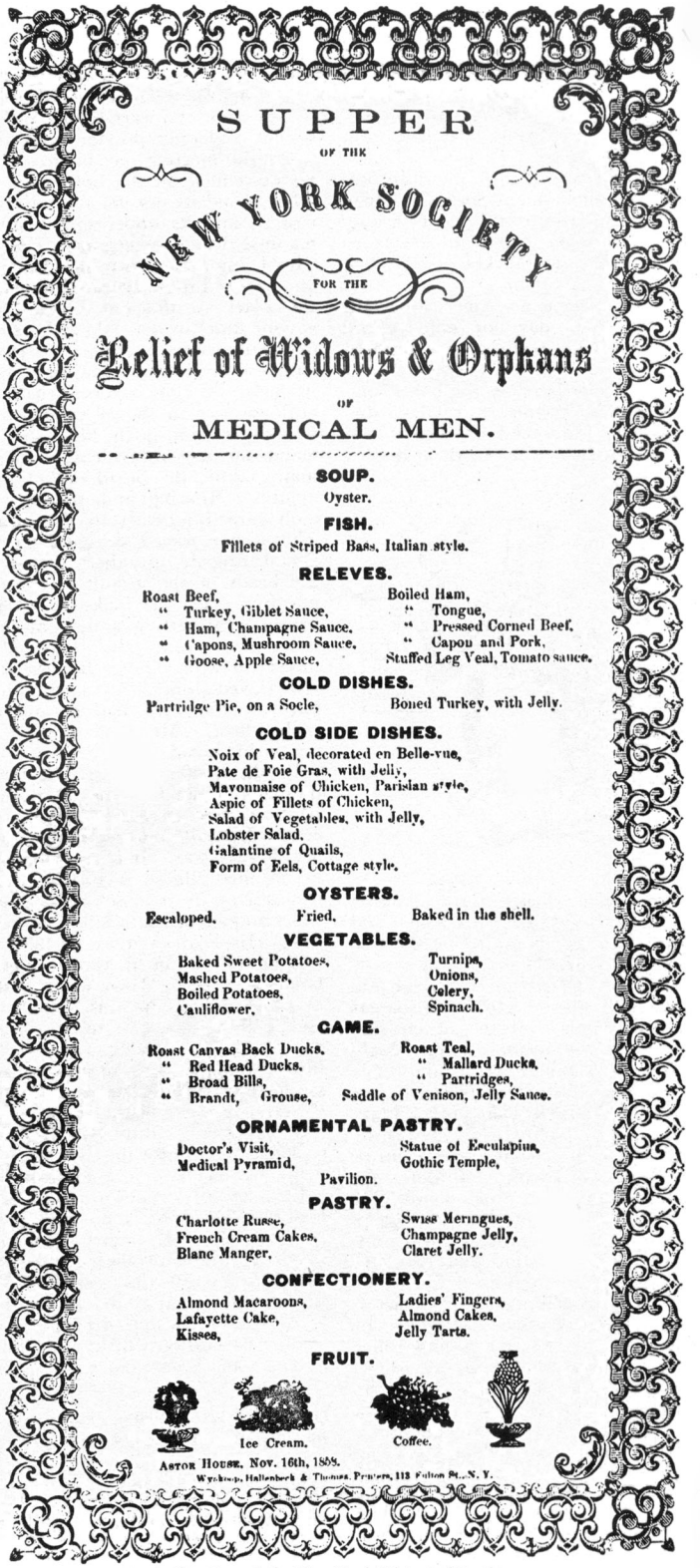
"Bathing is so inconvenient," complained the unwashed. "So are many essential things," the hydropathists sharply retorted. "But many do without bathing, and I do not see that they suffer by it," maintained an objector. To which reformers tellingly replied: "People *do* suffer by it, as well as by the prevailing practice of bathing the throat and stomach in useless and poisonous liquids."

King Alcohol was tottering on his throne. By 1838, wearers of the White Ribbon were powerful enough to push through the Massachusetts legislature a law forbidding the sale of spirituous liquors in quantities of less than fifteen gallons, "and that delivered and carried away all at one time." (That law, however, turned out to be a mistake and was repealed a year later; two-fisted drinkers had welcomed it with loud cheers.) The fervor of the Washingtonians, founded by self-redeemed drunkards,* felled thousands of apple trees, the fruits of which might otherwise—and probably would—have become hard cider. But although Mr. Graham lent his aid, abstinence from alcohol being part of his regimen, it was apparent that the White Ribboners had plenty of help. Grahamism could concentrate on other much-needed reforms.

WITH eloquence and enthusiasm, Mr. Graham praised hard beds, addressed young mothers with an extraordinary candor, and lectured young men on chastity. He even published that lecture in 1842—and in Boston! He encouraged female followers who spoke on hygiene and dress reform to audiences—of their own sex, of course—and spoke with such frankness that not even pungent smelling-salts could prevent wholesale swoonings. A solemn warning was uttered that women who laced themselves into hour-glass figures were in a well-advanced stage of evolution toward wasp. What bosom, so constricted, could even begin to heave? "There is," the reformers cried, "no more motion in the chest of a tightly-laced female when she breathes than there is in the towering Alps when fanned by the gentlest zephyr."

An anti-corset society was founded, its members pledging that never again

*The Alcoholics Anonymous of the day.


SUPPER

OF THE

NEW YORK SOCIETY

FOR THE

Relief of Widows & Orphans

OF

MEDICAL MEN.

SOUP.

Oyster.

FISH.

Fillets of Striped Bass, Italian style.

RELEVES.

Roast Beef,
" Turkey, Giblet Sauce,
" Ham, Champagne Sauce,
" Capons, Mushroom Sauce,
" Goose, Apple Sauce,

Boiled Ham,
" Tongue,
" Pressed Corned Beef,
" Capon and Pork,
Stuffed Leg Veal, Tomato sauce.

COLD DISHES.

Partridge Pie, on a Socle, Boned Turkey, with Jelly.

COLD SIDE DISHES.

Noix of Veal, decorated en Belle-vue,
Pate de Foie Gras, with Jelly,
Mayonnaise of Chicken, Parisian style,
Aspic of Fillets of Chicken,
Salad of Vegetables, with Jelly,
Lobster Salad,
Galantine of Quails,
Form of Eels, Cottage style.

OYSTERS.

Escaloped. Fried. Baked in the shell.

VEGETABLES.

Baked Sweet Potatoes,
Mashed Potatoes,
Boiled Potatoes,
Cauliflower,
Turnips,
Onions,
Celery,
Spinach.

GAME.

Roast Canvas Back Ducks,
" Red Head Ducks,
" Broad Bills,
" Brandt, Grouse,
Roast Teal,
" Mallard Ducks,
" Partridges,
Saddle of Venison, Jelly Sauce.

ORNAMENTAL PASTRY.

Doctor's Visit,
Medical Pyramid,
Statue of Esculapius,
Gothic Temple,
Pavilion.

PASTRY.

Charlotte Russe,
French Cream Cakes,
Blanc Manger,
Swiss Meringues,
Champagne Jelly,
Claret Jelly.

CONFECTIONERY.

Almond Macaroons,
Lafayette Cake,
Kisses,
Ladies' Fingers,
Almond Cakes,
Jelly Tarts.

FRUIT.

Ice Cream. Coffee.

ASTOR HOUSE, Nov. 16th, 1858.

Wynkoop, Hallenbeck & Thomas, Printers, 113 Fulton St., N. Y.

Courtesy of the New York Historical Society.

would they encase themselves. In union, they discovered, there is more strength than in whalebones. One reform organization after another sprang up: The Anti-Tobacco Society, the New York Ladies' Moral Reform Society, the New York Female Benevolent Society, and the American Seventh Commandment Society. There was even—if you could believe a waggish fellow—an American Society to Prevent Children Kicking off the Bedclothes.

Neither Rome nor American health was built in a day, nor built without a battle. Mr. Graham was stepping hard on the toes of various vested interests—the butcher, the baker, and the ladies' staymaker—whalers and distillers, featherbed firms and banquet caterers! None of them heeded

Mr. Graham when he protested that he had nothing to sell—they had; and that he was only working for the welfare of the race.

Name-calling began. "Bran-bread Graham," the Boston newspapers branded him. Even the austere Emerson in his "Journal" took a high-flown and obscure but indubitable crack at the distinguished vegetarian. "O worthy Mr. Graham, poet of bran-bread and pumpkins," he wrote, "there is a limit to the revolutions of the pumpkin, project it along the ground with what force soever. It is not a winged orb like the Egyptian symbol of dominion, but an unfeathered, ridgy yellow pumpkin, and will quickly come to a standstill."

Once Mr. Graham faced the martyrdom which sometimes is the lot of one who seeks to save a stubborn and stiff-necked generation in spite of itself. When in the winter of 1837 he announced a lecture at Amory Hall, Boston, local bakers rose in wrath. They threatened that any old reformer asking them for Graham bread would be given a stone. The terrified proprietor of the hall canceled the booking, and none other was available. Thereupon the owner of the new Marlborough Hotel, a temperance house, gallantly and appropriately offered Mr. Graham his dining-room for the talk, and steadfastly stood by the offer even when the Mayor of Boston warned that his constables could not provide protection.

On the meeting day bellicose bakers descended on the hotel in force. They found its first floor stoutly barricaded and its upper-story windows manned by a determined garrison who, being armed with shovels, might be presumed to be prepared to defend the place to the last ditch. The valiant hotel owner, taking his stand in the doorway, attempted to parley with the howling mob milling about in the street. The bakers hurled back vituperations to the effect that that fellow Graham, with his crazy demands for stale brown loaves, was virtually taking the bread out of their mouths. Roaring and yelping, the mob surged forward to the attack. The owner waved a signal to the shovel brigade upstairs. Down on the heads of the assault cascaded a powdery mass. It looked as if the bakers were getting a dose of their own medicine in the shape of a shower of white flour. But the stuff was slaked lime. As a chronicler puts it, "the 'eyes' had it, and the rabble fled." Mr. Graham had his say on his bread.

In the 1840's Sylvester Graham's influence began to wane. Undaunted, he carried on until, as is the lot even of health-reformers, his own health gave way. It is recorded that in his final illness, such accustomed restoratives as a dose of Congress water and a tepid bath failed to revive him. His death occurred in 1851.

A man ahead of his time, Sylvester Graham. Yet to dawn was the day of calories and vitamins. Medicine had still to concentrate on "lazy" colons. Fresh air and exercise were future fetishes. So were sun-tans and sacroiliacs. Still to be exalted were the panty-girdle and the great American bathroom. But Mr. Graham, striving mightily for the well-being of mankind, had laid firm foundations.

Undeservedly, renown passed him by. His should be a more prominent pedestal* than the pantry shelf with its box of Graham crackers. Even his bread now is generally called wholewheat. Forgotten is the commotion he caused his own lusty-living, hearty-feeding generation which might have quoted some lines from Pope for his epilogue:

Fame is at best an unperforming cheat;
But 'tis substantial happiness to eat.

*Graham was one of the two or three men to whom this nation might, with propriety, erect a monument. (James Parton, "The Life of Horace Greeley." New York, 1855.)

For one day he thought he was rich—and the error had important results

By GEORGES SURDEZ

"I'M not against equality; I only say there's no such thing," old man Changars stated that evening, nursing his pipe between gnarled fingers. He was preparing a story, discoursing for his large family and the friends who gathered in the courtyard of his farm during the summer twilights. A wealthy farmer and the sage of the village of Saint-Pierre-aux-Bois, in the French Jura, Changars professed to be a royalist, or, as he called it, a legitimist. "There must be master and man, no matter what words you use; and for my part, I prefer leaders who are born and bred to lead. Now, take pigs, for instance—"

"Pigs?" repeated a vacationer in the circle of listeners. He was a smart young man from the city, perhaps thirty-one or two, dapper and toying with a cane. Changars and his people amused him; that was evident.

"Pigs, yes." Changars was not accustomed to interruptions of the sort, and resumed after a pause: "Pigs are better off when they are tended to by a man who has been trained to tend them, whose father and grandfather tended pigs—better off than when tended by a man who has suddenly decided he loved pigs and wants to make his career—"

"That isn't an argument, old fellow," the young vacationer protested, with a tolerant smirk. "Pigs have only physical needs. They have no intelligence and cannot select—"

"No intelligence? I wonder!" Old Changars shrugged and spat. "If they voted, I'm pretty sure they wouldn't vote for the man who promised them truffles rather than the one who gave them real potatoes. As I was saying—"

"Your pigs don't make sense," the other insisted. "And I am telling you, old chap, that your princes and nobility are all nonsense. Money is what counts. And manners, of course; but one doesn't need to have been born a marquis to have those." The young man drew up his cuffs, shrugged his shoulders. It was evident that he was showing off, seeking to attract attention, to impress the young lady nearest him. She was very pretty and fresh, nineteen or twenty, wearing a modish summer frock. But she was a local girl, Ernestine Planchet, and her father owned a dairy farm nearby.

The Smell *of* Money

Changars looked at the young man, looked at her, for a long minute. He seemed to ruminate quietly. Perhaps he understood that the other would heckle him, that he would not get told the story he had in mind.

"Money?" he said at last. "No, not money—but the smell of money. I could tell you that money doesn't make a leader, young man; it simply makes a buyer. But that would be quibbling. Money is powerful, not in itself, but in its belief. If a man can convince himself he has money, he finds it easy to convince others. That's the secret of all famous adventurers, you know, what all *chevaliers d'industrie,* confidence men, have—they are convinced of their ability to make money. Then they think they have wealth, and convince others. If anything occurs to puncture that belief, they deflate like toy balloons. Who is the most successful man from this region? Ah, I see you all know him, Fernand Charron."

"The Senator?" asked the young man.

"The Senator," Changars agreed. "He has just been elected, and may end up as prime minister—he is but fifty-two. But you don't know how it happened, do you? Seventeen years ago, at thirty-five, he was a poor nobody. Then he believed himself rich for one day. No harm in telling you; no one would believe it, and he is well started and beyond reach now."

THE Charrons (Changars related) have been around a long time, since before the Revolution. Good, strong, honest folks, most of them, but always poor. This one, Fernand, had ambition, and instead of returning here after his military service, he went to Paris to make his fortune. Ah, yes, he tried to get an education! He studied and supported himself by odd jobs; he delivered coal and wood, was a clerk in a grocery, even tended bar. It took him about five years to get a clerical job, and a petty one at that.

He held that job without a change, save a few francs increase every year, for seven years—*seven!* Once, when he had been ill, he came back to this village to recuperate, and he was tempted to abandon all hope of success in Paris and settle again with us. You see, his situation was too poor for him to get married, because he had high aspirations in that, as in everything else—and he was growing old and bald. If there had been a book-

Illustrated by James Ernst

"Your chief has reported that you were insolent. Have you been drinking? Are you mad?"

keeping job open in the region, he'd have stayed. But he could not quite make up his mind to be a farmhand again.

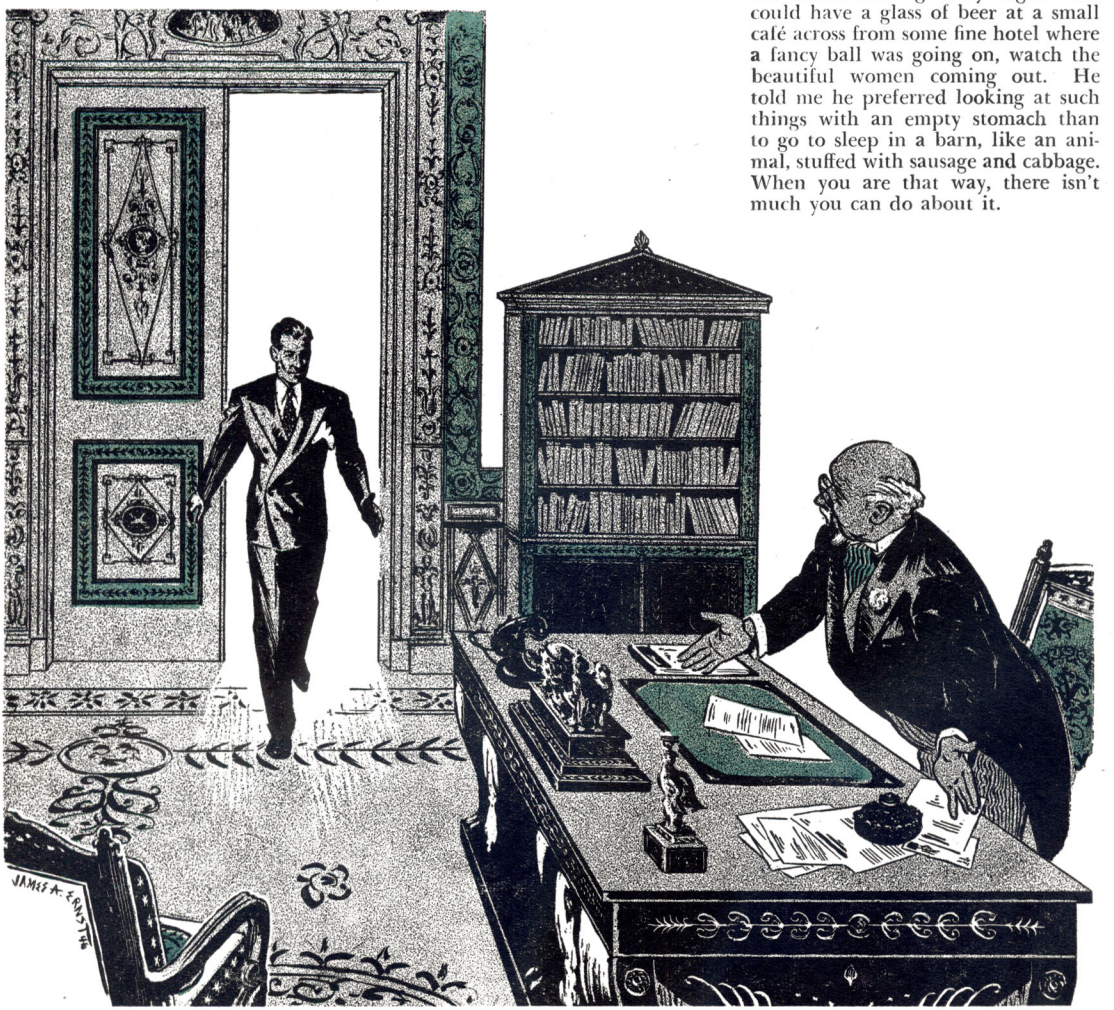
He was some sort of clerk in the administration branch of a large firm handling general merchandise, you know, the kind of business that sends out catalogues all over the world, to the colonies in particular. He told me that he got pieces of paper, white, blue, pink, all duplicates one of the other; and he had to add a couple of figures, pin a white slip in the corner, and pass it on to another clerk. They were twenty-five or thirty in an immense room, fetid and hot in summer, freezing and stale in winter. He figured that more than half his life was spent at his desk—six days a week, and weeks without end.

He had to dress properly, or the office chief made remarks. Above the office chief was a department chief, very feared; and above him another chief, and another, until the director was reached. There was a battery of bells that would ring sharply, a given number of times for a given employee in a given specialty. His ring was two and one and three, followed by another code signal which informed him who wanted to see him, from director to office chief. He told me everyone in that place seemed determined to make the whole business a Chinese puzzle, a Greek rebus.

He hardly earned enough to live decently and dress properly. He often wondered how his co-workers who were married and had children contrived to get by. A torn shirt or a dirty collar was a tragedy. And the competition to get twenty francs more a month was terrific. But he kept on hoping that somehow, some day, he would be distinguished from the herd and get promotion in one leap to a decent job. He told me that when the bells rang his signal, his heart would start to pound hard, that he sweated. The bosses seemed to delight in worrying their people, and used ironic, cutting words.

For instance, the director would take the trouble to send for him to say: "You mixed up the three dozen German silver ladles billed to Tananarive with the four dozen billed to Tamatave—I regret to warn you that if this happens again, we shall have to dispense with your services."

WHY did he stay? I asked him. He replied, other jobs were hard to get and likely to prove unpleasant. And then, he loved Paris, and he loved luxuries. He couldn't have them for himself, but he enjoyed the reflection of them. He could not afford a balcony seat in a theater every week, but he could mingle with the crowd leaving every night. He could have a glass of beer at a small café across from some fine hotel where a fancy ball was going on, watch the beautiful women coming out. He told me he preferred looking at such things with an empty stomach than to go to sleep in a barn, like an animal, stuffed with sausage and cabbage. When you are that way, there isn't much you can do about it.



The first hint that things were not too bad came when the boss said: "All this could be modernized, Charron"

One morning, while breakfasting on a cup of coffee and two rolls at the terrace of a corner café, he saw an announcement in the newspaper: Ticket Number 33,457,082 had won the Grand Prize of one million francs in the Lotérie des Grandes Villes. He smiled and shrugged—his one extravagance was to spend five francs, occasionally, on a lottery ticket. He always had six or seven of them in his wallet. But he knew very well, at heart, that the one chance in several millions would never come to him. He knew it was a waste of money, but it was very Parisian to speculate a bit.

He drew his wallet, still amused at his childishness, and spread the slips on the marble top of the table. And the incredible had happened! There was Ticket Number 33,457,082—before him! He was therefore worth one million francs! (At that time two hundred thousand dollars.)

I saw him perhaps a year later, and when he spoke of that moment, he still grew pale. He told me that the effect on him at the time had been oddly quiet. He had looked at his watch, noticed that he might be late, and shrugged. He had ordered himself a breakfast, English style, bacon and eggs, toast and jam, with a package of fancy cigarettes to follow. The wallet had been replaced in his jacket pocket. And he insisted he had quietly read the other items in the paper, the lost and found, the advertisements, the serial. The waiter, an old acquaintance, had warned him it was growing late, and he had shrugged and smiled. Then he had left forty sous as a tip, two francs!

Fernand Charron said he had imagined precisely this situation a thousand times and acted as if he had rehearsed. He strolled to the office, and arrived one hour and ten minutes late. He signed the crime-sheet with a flourish and went to his desk, where he sat down and lighted a cigarette. He took the various slips and piled them in bundles, and contemplated them admiringly. The office chief came to his place after a while.

"I say, Charron, you walk in here just as if this were a windmill, more than an hour late. If I were to report you to—"

"Report away, old chap," Charron suggested, blowing smoke out of one nostril, then out of the other. "I'm still in plenty of time to do anything that needs to be done here, you know. I mean, kill time until lunch. Now, old chap, don't shout—everyone looks up and stops work when you yell, and it wastes the company's time." He tapped the packages of slips, shoved one into the basket: "You know, if these were burned, the earth would still turn as before."

The office chief went away, puzzled. Charron smoked on and casually handled the slips. At the end of an hour, what he expected happened. The bells rang his signal; he was wanted by the big chief, the director. He ignored the summons. When it was repeated, the man at the desk next to his called his attention: "The big boss wants you, Charron."

"He knows where I am."

The big boss evidently did know where Charron was, for he appeared, escorted by the office chief and several minor tyrants.

"Everyone keep on working," the big boss called out. "This is none of your business—"

"Oh, come, Monsieur Marnes," Charron put in mildly: "you know they'll just pretend and will listen. Why not let them look, too?"

"You have a strange attitude, Charron. Your chief has reported that you were insolent when—"

"I deny being insolent, Monsieur Marnes."

"You do? Haven't you been insolent with me just now?"

"Not at all. You know there won't be any work done in here until we are through. And remember that if you fire me summarily, you must pay me a compensation. I should sue for it, and I have the means to carry the suit where it will get publicity."

"Monsieur Charron," the big boss said formally, "you will call the cashier for—"

"In due time, Monsieur Marnes. I consider myself sacked. But—"

"Have you been drinking? Are you mad?"

"Neither." Charron smiled. "What you smell is one glass of good old Armagnac I had after breakfast. No, no, I am sober. I warn you that if you call the porters and they touch me, I'll hold you responsible. I am not violent. I am a French citizen, and I have the right to talk. You admit that? Thank you." Charron indicated the bells: "It no longer is my concern, monsieur, but the sharp tone of those bells is an attack on the dignity of man. I understand that you must have bells, as you are not progressive enough to have telephones; but for heaven's sake, my friend, have them softer, discreet, coaxing rather than commanding. It would make a great deal of difference—not to mention the fact that whenever they ring so stridently, people not concerned jump out of their skin and lose working time."

"Any other suggestions?" the big boss asked sarcastically.

"Oh, ever so many!" Charron indicated the room with a gesture: "Do you know that all the work done in here, by more than a score of men, is altogether useless? Why? Because the people who organized this business came over from Government administration, where the main idea

Charron checked the number—there was no mistake!

is papers and more papers, where archives are important. You are not running a Government Ministry, my dear fellow, but a private business; and *you* pay, not the taxpayers. The Government needs to keep full records and archives—no one knows why, but it does.

"But you? When will it ever be important that you sold several gross of sieves to a trader in Saigon, Cochin-China? An entry at the time of sale should be sufficient. Why set a lot of people to recopying the transaction a dozen times? In the Ministry of Marine it may be important to know, ten years or a hundred years afterward, what quantities of such and such a rope was bought for how much, because of budgets and statistics. But here, it's an absolute waste.

"YOU would do better by taking the chaps in here and setting them to writing letters to dealers all over, asking for new business, instead of embalming records of the old business. You are fifty years behind the times. I was reading an article on business methods in the United States. Ah, there you have concentration upon the main thing, the dollar, and no nonsense about records! One bill goes to the customer, and even that is automatically copied at the time of writing, not transcribed from a ledger to slips and so on. Once an article is sold, it is forgotten—the customers will remind you soon enough if anything is wrong! The idea there is to sell more, always more."

Charron then executed his next move: "I think a little fresh air would do me good, or a bit of fishing. I'll be in to collect my compensation to-

morrow morning." He nodded, and smiled at the director, and went out.

The ordinary procedure then would have been for Charron to call at the Lottery's office and claim his prize. But he had caressed a fond little dream for a long time—if he ever won a prize, he had decided, he would let the people seek him out, to receive the news with extreme nonchalance.

"A million, monsieur? You say I have won a million? That's nice, a nice lump of money. I will let you know where to deposit it in a day or so." Charron felt that such a reception would be out of the ordinary. Nevertheless, he checked the number, torn from the newspaper, with his ticket: Yes, it was true; a miraculous coincidence had indeed struck him! He started to think he had felt it would all along, and that that was why he was not incoherent with excitement.

That night, still incognito, he put on his best clothing and went out with his savings in his pockets. He made a night of it, too; and it was almost noon when he awoke the next day, triumphant but aching. He lined the money remaining on the table, seven or eight francs in silver, one goldpiece, some copper. And he laughed—before long, if the fancy suited him, he could align fifty thousand goldpieces like that one on the table. The gold would cover that table to a height of several inches!

GOING out, he ordered an excellent lunch, unfolded his newspaper, to see how the search for the new millionaire was progressing. And he discovered that it had progressed far better than he liked, for he saw that a Monsieur Aristide Boivin, glassblower in the city of Oyonnax, Department of Ain, had won the Grand Prix des Grandes Villes, with Number 33,457,082! Boivin's wife had fainted at the news, but Aristide had been stoical, had said merely: "Well, I guess I'll rest my lungs."

Charron knew there was a mistake, and that the poor fellow would be disappointed. He might offer him ten thousand as a consolation. He looked at the ticket again, checked the number—there was no mistake about this! He had his hors-d'œuvres, his soup, before looking again. Then he noticed something: He had Number 33,457,082, that was true, and in the Lotérie des Grandes Villes; but—*for the preceding year!* The coincidence was phenomenal—holding the right number for the wrong year—he had never heard of its happening!

It would be an exaggeration to say that Charron did not feel foolish. He did. But he was a good loser, and finished his meal. That cut into what money he had left. He decided to quit Paris, and go back to the Jura and be a farmer, as he had been intended to be all along. He could pawn his watch for the fare. . . . Then it occurred to him that he had compensation coming to him, as he had been discharged. So when the offices reopened after lunch, he called at the cashier's. There was nothing for him, so he went to his office chief.

He had half a mind to say he had been drunk and to plead for another chance. But his behavior had been too enormously bold; they would never tolerate him about the place. To his surprise, the office chief greeted him politely, claimed to know nothing of the compensation, and suggested he go to his desk and wait until the director could be consulted.

Charron sat down and automatically started sorting the slips, assembling them, with the added bit of paper. Suddenly he started—the bells were ringing, giving his code signal. But how muted, how discreet, how crystalline in sound!

"The big boss wants you, Charron," said the man at the next desk, kindly.

"But—but—" Charron stammered. "The bells, the bells—what—"

"Well, after you left, the big boss had them rung, and he said they were too loud, too disturbing. He had the electrician fix them temporarily, until a new set can be installed."

Charron rose as in a dream, left the big room, walked through hallways with thicker and thicker carpets. He went into the big boss' office, a spacious room furnished in Second Empire style. The boss nodded for him to sit down. The first hint that things were not too bad came when the boss swept his hand about:

"All this could be modernized, Charron."

"I wish to explain and apologize about yesterday, monsieur. I understand you cannot keep me on after—"

"Well, you picked the wrong time and the wrong place for your suggestions, young man. But—you want to think things over. I understand, of course, from your behavior, that you have no need of the position. You came into money, didn't you? Oh—I am not curious. Nevertheless, idleness is evil for a young man, so unless the amount is sufficient to keep you in comfort for the rest of your life, you'd better stick with us. You are, in a way, right. Some of our methods are old-fashioned. But you cannot transform Frenchmen into Americans just like that. It will take a little time, a year or so.

"Meanwhile, I have been seeking for a capable secretary, an *alter ego.* That means an increase for you, naturally, and a little office near mine. You have had the initiative of studying foreign methods; and your suggestions, properly presented, will be very welcome to the firm."

"In five years," old Changars went on, but in a somehow different voice, because he had passed the peak of his story, an old story-teller's trick to brush up the crumbs casually, "in five years, Charron was the youngest member of the firm, which was beating out the British merchandising firms in our colonies, because he had thought of writing advertising copy in pidgin. Five years more, and he had spread to a big bank, to an automobile factory —you know, the snowball. Finally, he ran for Senator and was elected. Just because, for some hours, he had been confident, had believed himself a millionaire! In other words, he had exuded the smell of money."

THE old farmer swept his audience with his keen eyes, sucked at his pipe, resumed in even tones: "Yes, it's the smell that does it. But you have to be convinced yourself; you can't have doubts." He smiled at Ernestine and the young man at her side. "For instance, peasants like us aren't very bright, but just the same, we can't be fooled just by sight. Supposing a smart fellow comes around, with labels of big hotels on his baggage, and such good clothing on his back he seems a gentleman—well, we think, maybe he is a millionaire; maybe also he just works as a clerk in some hotel on the Azure Coast and takes his vacation out of season, in the summer.

"No harm in that. One can always hope to dazzle some naïve girl or other, have a good time and perhaps even cash in on her father's money. Peasants, however, know how to read and write—and the postal service to Nice is prompt and regular. Yes."

There was a short silence. Ernestine looked straight ahead, with a fixed smile, and the dapper young man was running a finger to and fro inside his collar, to and fro. . . .

"Talking of pigs," Changars resumed suddenly, "we had one once, when my wife was still alive, who was so smart and cute she let him run loose, like a dog.. He was the cutest son of a sow you've ever seen, too. For instance, if he found something to his taste left around, he wouldn't grunt, as is the ordinary way of pigs, but he would eat it quickly and without noise. For he had figured out for himself that if he was a good little pig and got what he wanted quietly, he was less likely to be bothered. And, fact is, he wasn't bothered, not until he tried to swipe from the table or ate too much. And he had a pretty good idea of what too much meant. Now, as I started to say a while back, you take pigs, for instance; there you have—"

And old Changars told his favorite yarn about pigs without further interruptions.

A brief drama of the Mexican War

by

T. F. TRACY

Illustrated by Herbert Morton Stoops

Young Man at Monterrey

IN spite of the rifle-fire the tall colonel kept squinting anxiously around the sandbags piled against the scarred adobe chimney; and the adjutant kept saying: "Better be careful, sir, better be careful!" in a nervous voice, before taking his own brief look across the sun-scorched mud roofs where the battle of Monterrey was snarling itself into a dirty, bitter fire-fight.

Bullets made a dry sound, "*Pwit . . . . pwit,*" smacking into the 'dobe chimney, and chunks of mud bricks kept spatting down on the sandbags. The colonel's black campaign hat was brown with dust; there were layers of dust across his shoulders, and muddy streaks lay along the sweat-soaked back of his shirt.

"Every blasted Mexican in the place must be piled up against our position," he said in a crusty voice, and lifted his field-glasses impatiently to the sandbags.

"Better be careful, sir," the adjutant said.

Even with the field-glasses the colonel could not see much. Ahead of him across a straggle of little interior courts where some fig trees and tamarisks were growing, was another line of one- and two-story adobe houses, their windows and parapets blocked with sandbags. Shreds of gray smoke unraveled in the sun-glare over the roofs, and little mushrooms of darker smoke bloomed low along the fire-points. The slam of rifle-fire made a steady racket in the gathering heat.

The colonel lowered the glasses and looked bitterly at the tumbled blue heaps scattered under the trees of the little court where his first assault waves had been beaten back. With the same bitterness he raised his glasses again to the opposite sandbags.

"They're holding damn' well," he said irritably.

"I think we've come up against their regulars, sir," the adjutant said.

The colonel bit his lip. His command had advanced five blocks deep along these streets in the first hour of fighting. At this block they had been stalled for nearly three hours.

"Are all the men up, Williams?"

"Yes sir," the adjutant said positively.

The colonel turned his head. Scattered along the uneven roof-levels, ten companies of the Third and Fourth Infantry were strung in a long irregular firing-line; little teams of two or three men flattened behind the cover of 'dobe chimneys, crouched in wall angles, or sprawled out behind captured sandbags. They were firing steadily and carefully, each team picking its targets and counter-shooting swiftly at flashes from the loopholes across the court.

Now and then the hard voice of a noncom rode above the brawl of rifles:

"Ammunition up, Third Squad!"

"Ammunition up, Sixth Squad!"

An orderly heaved himself up the ladder of the colonel's roof and crawled gingerly toward the adjutant.

"From D Company, sir," he called, holding out a folded paper.

The adjutant nodded.

"Just a minute," he said, and unfolded the paper. A frown wrinkled the sunburned skin between his eyes.

"From D Company, sir!" he shouted. "Lieutenant Davis has been seriously wounded. They've had to take him to the dressing-station."

"Davis," said the colonel slowly, as if reluctant to believe the word. "Damn! He was the only officer left in D Company."

"That's right, sir," the adjutant admitted. "That young quartermaster lieutenant has taken over. He sent the report."

"Quartermaster lieutenant?" the colonel said sharply.

"Yes sir," the adjutant said soothingly. "But I believe he's an infantry officer detached to the quartermaster."

The colonel wiped the sweat from his face with a dust-streaked handkerchief.

"Would that be the scrubby lieutenant with the wooden face?"

"That's right, sir."

"Ammunition up, Second Squad!" a noncom bawled from the adjoining roof.

"Well, I'm glad he had gumption enough to take over," the colonel said, frowning, "but I prefer my own officers. Make out an order to Captain Maxwell of B Company. He will send Lieutenant Connor to take over D Company. Connor to let me know when the order is carried out. . . . How is Davis?"

"Bad shoulder wound, sir, but the surgeon is working on him," the adjutant answered, his pencil already busy making out the order. He motioned to the orderly.

"Take this to Captain Maxwell of B Company. You will then guide Lieutenant Connor to D Company's position. Have you got that clear?"

"Yes sir," the orderly said, and repeated the message.

"Good. And keep your head down, orderly. They've got some pretty fancy riflemen over there."

"I've found that out, sir," said the orderly, and backed alertly toward the ladder head.

The sun rose higher and laid a more solid weight on the flat roofs. Heat boiled up from the mud bricks in slow waves, building a streaky haze over the parapets. The dust from the chipped 'dobe settled a little lower, and smoke made a rank smell in the dead air. Men rolled aside from their loopholes to draw at their canteens, wiping sweat wearily from their faces.

"It's getting damn' hot here," a red-faced corporal said, reaching back for the ammunition bag. He lifted his head and bawled to the signal man:

"Ammunition up, First Squad!"

Below in the street, the supply sergeant caught the order, looked uneasily at his ammunition cases, and beckoned to a runner. Fishing a stub of pencil from his pocket, he wrote hastily on the back of a requisition form.

"Get this up to the C.O. on the double," he ordered. . . .

The adjutant wiped his sweaty hands on his trouser-legs before he reached for the paper.

"From the supply sergeant, sir," the runner told him.

The adjutant nodded. He gave the paper a single troubled glance, and made a dive for the colonel's lookout.

"Supply sergeant reports we're low on ammunition, sir," he shouted. "No new supplies have come up for two hours. Only about fifteen rounds a man left in the cases."

The colonel swung around.

"Dammit!" he broke out savagely. "Where are the supply mules?"

"No one seems to know, sir. They haven't come up lately. The fire is pretty heavy in the lateral streets," he added in explanation.

The colonel's mouth tightened.

"Orders!" he snapped. "All company commanders to take immediate steps to conserve ammunition. All officers not in command of companies to assemble in front of this headquarters in ten minutes. Get all the orderlies moving on that."

"Yes sir," replied the adjutant, and crooked his thumb at the orderlies.

TEN dirty and tired-looking officers stood in the narrow shade of the headquarters adobe. One of them, the colonel noted irritatedly, was the quartermaster lieutenant.

He was as dirty as the others, but somehow did not look as hot. The blue eyes looked out calmly under the rim of the black campaign hat. The straight stubborn-looking mouth was composed.

The colonel compressed his lips. "As wooden-looking as ever," he thought, and turned his attention to the other officers.

"Gentlemen, we're in a bad spot. For almost two hours no supply mules have come up. We're dangerously low on ammunition. We're out of communication with the main body and we—"

He paused and turned his hard black glance upon the quartermaster lieutenant.

"You, sir! Have you any idea why those mules aren't getting up?"

The quartermaster lieutenant nodded coolly at the lateral streets.

"Those streets are under very heavy fire, sir. I presume the last detail failed to get back to the depot."

"Well, someone has to get back," the colonel snapped, and looked at the crossings. He knew they were badly exposed. They were under direct fire from the Citadel and from a whole block of roof-tops and windows. Sprawled bodies and dead mules at every crossing showed just how good that fire was. He looked back at the tired officers.

"I need a volunteer who will report our position to General Twiggs, and who will get some ammunition up here. I want an officer, because that will expedite matters."

The sober-faced quartermaster lieutenant stepped forward.

"I will go, sir. These gentlemen are needed with their companies."

The colonel gave him a blunt look.

"You think you can get through?"

The stubborn lips moved composedly.

"Yes sir," they said.

"Very well," the colonel accepted gruffly. "Here is my written report for General Twiggs." He hesitated, and put out his hand stiffly. "Good luck, Lieutenant. We're depending on you."

"Thank you, sir," the lieutenant said, and swung up to his saddle. His hand touched the brim of his hat in a quick salute; his spurs touched his horse into a canter. As he neared the crossing, he leaned forward, and the iron-shod hoofs clattered on the stony clay as the big horse bunched itself and shot across the open corner.

A volley of rifle-slugs kicked up sudden dust on the crossways.

"Good man!" a stocky lieutenant applauded. "He made it clean."

"He's got five more to go," the colonel said soberly, and stood there heavily, wiping sweat from his forehead, his eyes fixed on the lieutenant's dwindling figure. Only when the horseman turned to wave his hat from beyond the last crossing, did the colonel thrust the handkerchief back in his pocket—and relief made a sharp change on his vinegary face.

"Well, he made it out, at least. Take your posts, gentlemen."

Then he turned and went into the 'dobe. . . .

The colonel moved back from his lookout niche and took another look at his watch.

Answers to "What Do You Read?"

(Appearing on page 90)

1. *Pilot*
2. *Star*
3. *Bee*
4. *Mirror*
5. *Telegram*
6. *Camera*
7. *Eagle*
8. *Gleaner*
9. *Globe*
10. *Traveler*
11. *Press*
12. *Union*
13. *Mail*
14. *Post*
15. *Constitution*
16. *Day*
17. *Enquirer*
18. *Sentinel*
19. *Journal*
20. *Ledger*
21. *Bulletin*
22. *Observer*
23. *Republic*
24. *Advocate*
25. *Beacon*
26. *News*
27. *Examiner*
28. *Hour*
29. *Argus*
30. *Call*
31. *Chieftain*
32. *Gleaner*
33. *Reporter*
34. *Herald*
35. *Dispatch*
36. *Outlook*
37. *Record*
38. *World*
39. *Nonpareil*
40. *Register*
41. *Messenger*
42. *Item*
43. *State*
44. *Independent*
45. *Gazette*
46. *Enterprise*
47. *Repository*
48. *Capital*
49. *Review*
50. *Chronicle*

"Twenty-five minutes," he said. "Are you sure that lookout can see the street, Williams?"

"Yes sir," the adjutant said, "I posted him myself."

The colonel turned strained eyes back to the parapet.

"Their fire seems to be building up on the right," he said after a little.

"I've been noticing that, sir," the adjutant said. "They must be bringing in more troops."

The colonel pulled out his watch.

"They are," he grunted, "probably building up an assault. That's all we need now."

"It's thirty-two minutes, sir," the adjutant said. "The supply animals ought to be here almost any minute now."

"I hope they come soon enough," the colonel said. . . .

"Mounted troops approaching from the left!" The lookout's call droned through the hot air, and the colonel flicked his hand at the adjutant.

"Take a look!"

"Yes sir," the adjutant said, moving fast across the roof. He stood up in the shelter of the lookout's chimney, lifted his field-glasses briefly, and then swung them over his head.

"It's that quartermaster, with six mules!" he yelled.

"We'll go down and meet them," the colonel decided brusquely, and something like a smile relaxed the corners of his mouth. . . .

"We got six mules through out of ten, sir," the sober-faced lieutenant reported matter-of-factly. "C company has salvaged the ammunition of one lost mule. General Twiggs is moving infantry and artillery up to your support."

"Good work," the colonel said with stiff cordiality. "You have done a damned good job sir."

The sober-faced lieutenant did not say anything, and abruptly the colonel felt a twinge of his previous irritation. He suppressed it.

"You have the thanks of the entire brigade, Mister—er—" he began, and hesitated. "Ah—what *is* your name, Lieutenant?"

The sober-faced lieutenant looked at him steadily from cool blue eyes.

"Lieutenant Ulysses S. Grant, sir," he said.

Watch

MAYBE I better not mention the guy's real name. He wouldn't like it—not one little bit! Maybe I better just call him Bill. The first time any of us ever laid eyes on him, he walked into the field office about four o'clock one afternoon, looking for a job. The field-crew wasn't in yet; but I was there because Mac, the surveyor, had sent me in early to work up the survey notes. And of course the office force was there—which was Bonnie Britton and the Old Tiger.

The Old Tiger is Jim Hargrove, and he really isn't so awfully old. He's forty-two, and he sticks to field work because he likes it. Why, the places that guy's been would make your head spin—Sumatra, Venezuela, Mexico, Canada; and if you start on the United States, you'll run out of toes and fingers before you've scratched. He's the toughest boss a guy ever had—and the whitest! I wouldn't trade him for a million.

And this Bonnie Britton—well, she's something special. With that turned-up nose and those brown curls, she looks darned cute stashed in among the dynamite boxes, slinging ink over a stack of seismograms. They tell me when she hit the Old Tiger up for the computer's job four years ago, he predicted she wouldn't last ten minutes. And now he's shaking in his shoes for fear he's going to lose her!

Before going further, I better explain about us: Geophysical seismograph is our racket. We're the guys who go around the country looking for humps and bumps and things in the earth's subsurface where oil is likely to accumulate. Collectively, they call us "shooting crews;" individually, "doodlebuggers."

Me? Well, I'm Johnny Rossner, but the fellows call me "Butch"—I guess because I'm a little younger. I got out of Mines four months ago and got myself a job with this outfit. Now I'm rodding for Mac, who is the surveyor.

But to get back to this guy Bill: Even though it was October, that day was as warm as summer, and we sat in the office with the front door open. Our office was one long room in a worn-out café building. It was the best we could do in a town of one thousand, three hundred and eighty-seven—counting cats and dogs, I think. The Old Tiger's desk was up front, because that's where the telephone was, and Bonnie's desk was farther back and facing the opposite wall. Then came the filing-cabinets made out of empty dynamite boxes, and the record racks. In the back was a conglomeration of hypo, developer, spare tires, niggerheads and a mud-hog, and that's where Mac's desk was. And that day, that's where I was.

The guy had walked by twice and looked in, so it wasn't much of a surprise when he stopped the third time. He was twenty-seven, maybe twenty-eight, and his clothes were good. The dark brown hair looked as if it had been out in the sun too long, and his skin was bronzed, but it had a pallor about it too. He kept his hands in his jacket pockets, and he threw a quick look at Bonnie as he walked up to the Old Tiger's desk.

"I was wondering, sir, if you could use another man," he said.

Brother, we could use several. With all the swell doodlebuggers not coming back from Bataan and Okinawa and a lot of other places, it'll take ten years to get this profession back where it belongs.

The Old Tiger looked the guy over and his eyes began to light. "Sure could," he said, "—providing he's got qualifications, and he's interested in seismograph for a career. We're not taking any more drifters."

"Electrical engineering," said the guy, and he named a darned good school in the East. "Research, before the war. Looking for something outside, though. Your line was suggested." There was a clean, hard look about his face—all except the eyes. They were gray, and a little bewildered.

THE Old Tiger stretched out his legs and pointed to a chair. "Sit down, young man. Let's talk this over."

With deliberation, the guy took his hands out of his pockets and began fishing for a cigarette. There was a tremble in his fingers I could see all the way from the back. "Only fair to tell you, sir, I'm battle fatigue."

The Old Tiger lowered his eyes. "I see," he said, and he began drawing circles and crossing them out with x's. That was a bad sign.

Out–It's Dynamite!

"Army?" he asked.

"Marines," said the guy. "Out six months. Went back to my old job, but couldn't cut it. Inside work. Doc said to stick outside." The guy was watching the circles and x's, and hope in his face began to fade.

"It's like this, young fellow," began the Old Tiger, and unexpectedly he looked up. He must have caught the expression in the guy's eyes, for whatever he was going to say, he didn't finish. "Tell you what: we'll give it a month's trial—to see how you like it. Then we'll talk it over. Okay?"

"Okay," said the guy.

After he was gone, the Old Tiger settled down to his circles and x's with a vengeance. I stole a look at Bonnie, but she was as busy as a bee. We both knew the Old Tiger was sitting there kicking himself for being a three-cornered sentimental sap. One thing about the Old Tiger: leave him alone with his troubles long enough, and he'll come out with them. Finally he exploded.

"Battle fatigue! And I hired him!"

Bonnie came right back at him. "We would be tired too, if we had gone through what those fellows have."

The Old Tiger ran a hand through his receding hair. "I know," he said. "And it isn't just this fellow. There are hundreds like him—thousands! Their problem is not something just for today, or for tomorrow. It will last a whole dad-gummed generation, and it's up to us to lend a hand. But a shooting crew is no place for battle fatigue."

"There ought to be something he could do," said Bonnie.

"There's a dad-gummed lot that he could do," snapped the Old Tiger. "Did you notice his hands? Jitter-fingers! I saw a whole shooting crew wiped out by jitter-fingers in Oklahoma, once."

BONNIE looked thoughtful. She must have known what he was talking about, but I didn't.

"Gee," I said. "What happened?"

The Old Tiger glared back at me. "Any young punk that doesn't know about that, has got no business in this racket."

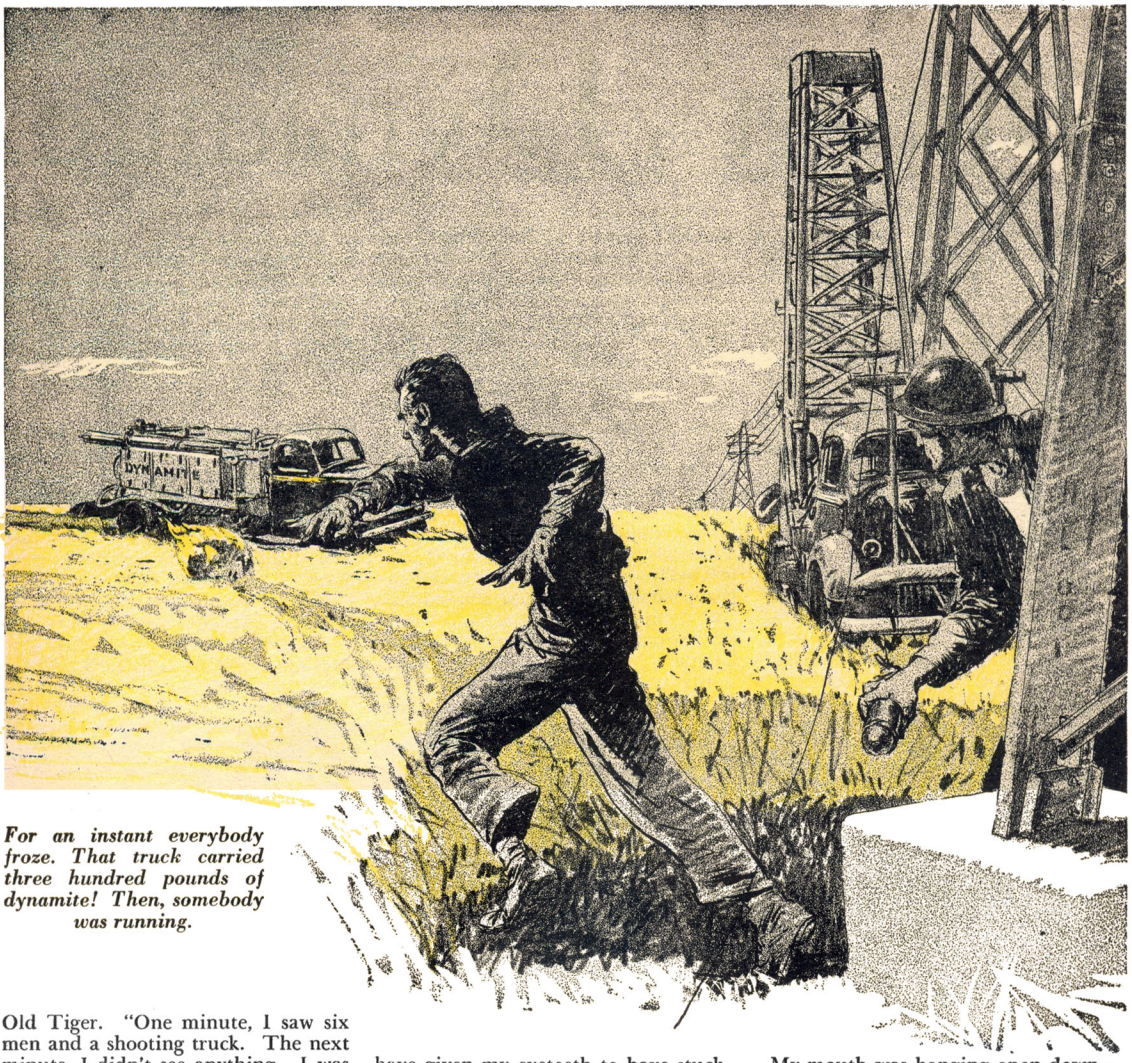
"Gee," I said, and I moved up to the corner of Bonnie's desk.

"I learned a lesson that day I'll never forget as long as I live," said the

Prospecting for oil by seismograph records of dynamite explosions is a highly technical —and sometimes highly exciting—business. The author knows a lot about it, and we think the story good enough to make it an exception to our "by men" slogan.

by IRMA LOCKHART

"Jitter-fingers!" snapped the Old Tiger. "I saw a whole crew wiped out by jitter-fingers once."



For an instant everybody froze. That truck carried three hundred pounds of dynamite! Then, somebody was running.

Old Tiger. "One minute, I saw six men and a shooting truck. The next minute, I didn't see anything. I was a young punk like Butch, here, and they had me water-monkey on the drill."

I knew what he meant. Wish I had a nickel for every truckload of water I hauled that first month while the Old Tiger was sizing me up.

"That morning was plenty chilly. The drill was waiting on water, so the driller and his helper rode with me as far as the shooting truck, where they had built a fire in the ditch. Nearly the whole field crew was there —the observer and his two helpers, the shooter and his helper, and the drillers. We had had a little whinging the night before—" The Old Tiger rubbed his chin and looked wistful. They say he was quite a heller in his day. Seems funny, now—him married, with a swell wife and a couple of kids.

"Anyway, the fellows were kidding about the night before, and I would have given my eyeteeth to have stuck around, but they needed water, and the driller told me to get-th'-H down the road. In those days, they made up charges ahead of time, so the shooters began pulling dynamite out of the truck. The last thing I remember was hearing somebody make a crack at the shooter's helper about his shaky hands."

Bonnie and I had both leaned forward, but the Old Tiger was a thousand miles away.

"I filled the tank from a stream about two miles up the road, and started back. Coming over a rise, I saw the shooters pull the last of the loading poles out of the hole. The observer had gone back to his truck about a quarter of a mile away, but the rest were still around the fire. Then the next thing I knew, an explosion nearly burst my eardrums, and I ran the water truck right into the ditch."

My mouth was hanging open down to my belt-buckle. "How'd it happen?" I asked.

The Old Tiger got to his feet. "Only the good Lord knows," he said. "Dynamite experts came out with the verdict that by mistake, the blaster had been attached to a charge on the ground, instead of the charge in the hole. But nothing was left bigger than a dime, so it was merely supposition." Without a look at either of us, he stomped out of the office.

"Gee," I breathed.

Bonnie was sitting there, staring off into space, her chin in her hand. "But that was different," she argued. "In that case you had a bunch of careless fellows kidding about a party the night before. Here you've got a man who's been through hell and high water, and who's doing his darndest to get hold of himself. No, I don't think the Old Tiger is right about this new man."

I squirmed uncomfortably. In ninety-nine-point-pine per cent of cases the Old Tiger is *always* right. . . .

Next morning this guy Bill showed promptly at seven in field boots and leather jacket, looking as rough and tough as the rest of us. The Old Tiger doesn't always come down to see us off, but that morning he did. He greeted this Bill civilly enough, and told him to go out with the drill. Of course we all knew why. The drill is about as far away from the dynamite as you can get.

Mac and I had our own headaches that morning. We started to run a line cross-country, and before ten o'clock we bumped into a tough tenant farmer who wouldn't let us on his place. The permit from the landowner was back in the office, so there was nothing to do but high-tail it to town.

It was fifteen minutes of eleven when we walked back into the office, and the Old Tiger greeted us with a growl.

"Now what-th'-H has busted?"

While Mac was telling him about the farmer, I wandered over to Bonnie's desk. Her brown curls were bent over a roll of cross-section, and she didn't look up when I draped a leg over the corner of the desk.

"Got pencil on your nose," I said.

She brushed at the turned-up tip, and fished for a compact. When she found I was kidding, she gave me a dirty look.

While I had her attention, I said: "How about cutting a dido to-night, chick?"

"Go outgrow your rompers," she said.

That Bonnie! I was racking my brain for a snappy come-back when the phone rang. Something about the way the Old Tiger hunched his shoulders into the mouthpiece said it was long distance.

"Yeah, this is Hargrove. . . . What? . . . *What?* . . . The hell you say! . . . Sure. . . . Sure thing. . . . Yeah. We'll make it all right. G'by." He replaced the receiver and pushed back his chair at the same time.

"All hell's busted over near Norton," he said. "Brought in a wildcat last night. We're moving over."

"When we leaving?" asked Mac. Where we were was three hundred miles away from Norton.

"Tomorrow."

Don't think this announcement fell like an atomic bomb, for it didn't. Quick jumps, long moves, here today, there tomorrow—that's everyday stuff for us. Without a word, Bonnie began rolling up the cross-section, but the Old Tiger started barking orders like a top-kick.

"Bonnie, you phone my wife. She'll get word to the rest of the girls. Mac, you run down the dynamite peddler. See if he can move our powder in the morning. I'll clean up all the bills around town. Butch, you scram back to the field and bring in the crew."

Feeling like Paul Revere, I grabbed Mac's car and scrammed.

THAT afternoon the office looked as if a Kansas tornado had moved in and taken over. We sorted junk from the stuff in the back, and we unscrewed legs off of tables. We stuffed seismograms into cardboard boxes, and we stuffed still more stuff into dynamite boxes.

This guy Bill stood around like a lost pup in a thunderstorm until Bonnie put him helping her with things she usually did herself, like cleaning out desk-drawers and putting pens and pencils in cigar-boxes. If she noticed the jitter in his fingers, she didn't let on; and after while he didn't look so bewildered any more. Smart girl, Bonnie. . . .

It was after dark before everything was packed and stacked, ready for loading in the morning. Mac stood around first on one foot, then on the other, and finally he said: "Look, Jim, I was wondering if we couldn't—"

"Go ahead," grinned the Old Tiger. He knew what was up. "You call your missus, and I'll call mine. Tip off all the others that want to be in on it."

In a few minutes the fellows' wives started showing up. One still had a smudge on her face from the packing, but they were all grinning like Cheshire cats. Mac pulled out a fifth of Scotch the dynamite man had left, and we settled down to a round of drinks.

GIVE a doodlebugger half a sniff of anything, and he'll start talking about doodlebugging.

"When I was in Persia," said the Old Tiger, "we each had a trained dog that stuck right by his master's side. Even at night, he slept at the door of the tent."

"Whatever for?" asked a blonde girl who was the shooter's wife.

"To kill poisonous snakes and scorpions," said the Old Tiger. "The woods were full of 'em."

"Remember the time we moved to Medicine Lodge, Kansas, the night of the Wheat Festival?" asked Mac. "We sat in the hotel coffee-shop, drinking canned beer. We stacked the cans, and they would have reached the ceiling, if that dumb cluck of a waitress hadn't knocked 'em over." . . .

There were plenty more remember-the-times, and I looked around at all those people. There was the Old Tiger with a degree in geophysics, and his missus who is on the plump side and is a Phi Beta Kappa. Mac's got a civil engineer's tag behind his name, and Bonnie is from the University of Oklahoma. Yet, there we sat on dynamite boxes in a worn-out café building, drinking Scotch and water out of paper cups, and having more fun than if we were at the Stork Club—whatever that's like.

This guy Bill must have been thinking the same thing. He didn't have much to say, but he laughed at the tall yarns, and his eyes lit up like a couple of headlights every time he looked at Bonnie. And Bonnie didn't put any dimmers on when she looked at him.

After while, when the Scotch was all gone, we drifted over to Pete's for a round of steak. Then Bonnie said she thought she better go home.

This Bill was up like a jack-in-the-box. "I'll walk along with you," he said.

Bonnie didn't say no. He took her arm, and they were laughing like old pals when they went out the door. After that, we all said we thought we better go home, so we did.

Loading up next morning took the better part of an hour and a half. Bonnie buzzed around, cute as a bug's ear in dark blue slacks and a red plaid shirt. This Bill was in the spirit of things too, and he turned into a darned good hand at loading things so they'd fit. By eight-thirty we were practically on our way.

I wish you could see us on a move. We're better than a three-ring circus. The mast of the drill is full of trunks and boxes, and the shooter's kid's kiddie-coop fits on the shooting truck, right above the "EXPLOSIVES" sign. Since we are not allowed to move dynamite on the highways, the dissected tables and folding chairs go in the portable dynamite magazine. Besides the drill truck, water truck, shooting truck, and recording truck, there's the Old Tiger's company car, the survey tudor, and eight personal cars—most with luggage trailers, and two with house trailers.

THAT morning the Old Tiger told this Bill to ride with the water-monkey; then he turned to me.

"Butch, Mac's driving his own car today. That leaves the tudor for you."

My heart turned a flippity-flop right there. The tudor carried the typewriter, adding-machine and other office effects, which included Bonnie.

We started off, me telling myself what a swell day it was going to be, but before long I noticed Bonnie was unusually quiet. I tried a few wisecracks, and she made a come-back or two, but after while she just sat in her corner, staring straight ahead. I began to sing:

"From the halls of Monte-zu-u-ma, to the shores of Tripo-le-e-e—"

I don't think she even heard. I kicked the speed up to sixty, and kept my eyes on the road. . . .

Finally I said: "You're a sad sack today, chick."

She tried to smile, but it didn't jell. "I'm sorry. I feel lower than a shoe."

"Boot," I corrected. "Look, chick, if you got it that bad, why don't you marry the guy and forget him?"

"He won't be having any," she said. "Not for a long time, anyway."

"Then marry me and forget him."

She looked me right in the eye, and I believe she meant every word of it. "I'd do it in a minute, Butch, if I thought it would help Bill any."

I was as curious as a cat, and no use pretending. "Say, what'd you find out last night? Was he shot up?"

"Getting anything out of him is like pulling railroad spikes with a tack hammer," she said. "He was in it from the first, and he ended up in a Jap prison-camp. That's all I know."

"Gee," I said. "Is that what makes him jitter?"

"Oh, that," said Bonnie. "That's something involuntary about his voluntary muscles. Doc says he'll get over it all right. Doc says some day, without even knowing it, he'll take charge of those muscles, and act in a perfectly normal way. When he does, he can consider himself as cured."

"But when's he going to do it?" I pressed.

"Maybe tomorrow. More likely, ten years from tomorrow." Bonnie looked away. "Ten years is a heck of a long time," she said. . . .

The new job was right out in the middle of the wide open spaces. I climbed from the car and stood knee-deep in parched prairie grass to look around.

Back in the new office, the Old Tiger had said to Mac and me: "This area's hotter than a firecracker. We start the survey here." He marked *"here"* with an X on the map. "It's a couple of miles off the main road, but keep a weather eye out for scouts. Crew'll be there by the time you get the spread laid."

It was one of those clear autumn days with a gusty wind from the south. The surrounding country was as flat as a pancake, and nothing stood in the way of the scenery except a few bunches of tumbleweed. And the only sign of civilization was a power line that struck off cross-country to the west. I began to sing.

"Gimme land, lots of land—"

"Okay, Sinatra," said Mac. "Grab that chain and light out."

I grabbed the chain and lit.

He yelled: "Hey! Can't you see the wind's from the south? Stay to the right of that power line!"

We were finishing a six-to-fourteen correlation spread when the drill came lumbering across the prairie with its portable rig folded over its back. Close on its heels came the water truck with its three-hundred-gallon tank of water. They moved up to location, and this Bill and the helper raised the mast while the water-monkey dug the slush pit. In no time at all, the driller had her spinning.

This guy Bill was beginning to stack up with all the fellows, and Mac was as curious as I was to see how he worked. With the big stuff, he was certainly no slouch—he hustled ten-foot drill-stems as if they were toothpicks. But when it came to handling the wrenches, that was something else. His fingers fumbled so that the driller finally put him at the water-monkey's job, which was to keep the slush pit full of water.

The drillers were pulling out of a hundred-foot hole when the rest began to show. The Old Tiger led the procession, and there beside him in the front seat was Bonnie. I'd had a hunch she'd devil him into letting her come.

The observer took the recording truck on past us to location a thousand feet beyond, but the shooter pulled up near the open hole. The Old Tiger yelled instructions from his car window:

"Drillers stand by in case of a clean-out. Make the first shot thirty at a hundred."

Thirty pounds of dynamite at a hundred feet, was what he meant. He moved on to follow the recording truck, but Bonnie had climbed out.

About this dynamite—we got respect for that stuff. Yes sir, we have! In the shooting truck, caps and dynamite are kept in separate compartments: a little box lined with sponge rubber on the side for caps, and a larger compartment in the back for dynamite. When the shooter makes up a charge, he gets out the exact amount of dynamite needed for one shot. Then he gets out a cap. With a brass punch so there'll be no sparks, he makes a hole in a stick of dynamite and puts in the cap. Attached to the cap are a couple of wires called the "cap leads," and he fastens these around the charge with several half-hitches. Then to the end of the cap leads he fastens a longer cable similar to an electric light cord. This cable is called the "firing line," and it reaches from the cap leads to the blaster. He lowers the charge into the hole with loading poles—rods of known length that may be joined one upon the other—so he always knows exactly where the charge is.

That day, the shooter got the charge down without any trouble. He added extra water for tamping, then tossed up a handful of sand for wind direction.

"Plenty gusty," he called to us. "Give 'er a wide berth if you don't want to get splattered."

The drillers moved over to the water truck, and Bonnie moved over too, because that's where Bill was. I moved over because that's where Bonnie was.

DOWN the line, we heard the observer "beep" his horn for all quiet, and we knew he was telling the shooter over the portable telephone, "Contact. . . . Shoot!"

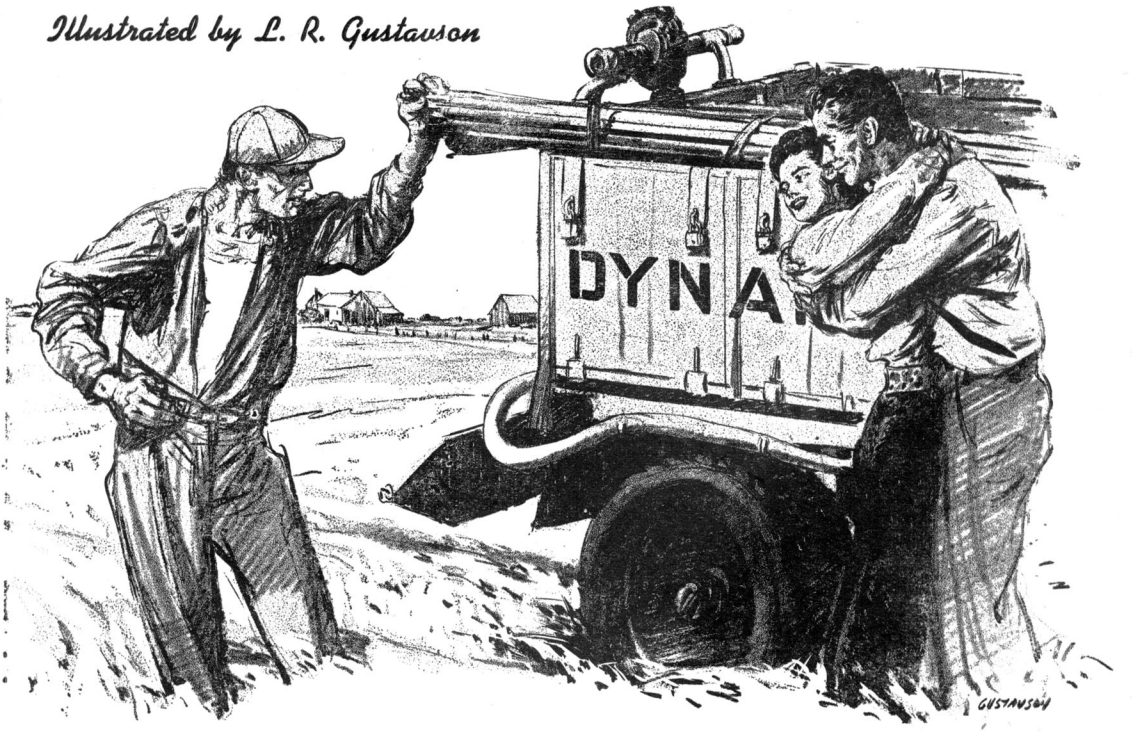
"Boom!" went the dynamite, and a geyser of mud and slush shot up into the air.

At the shot point, you stand with face up so you can dodge anything that comes down. So everyone saw it: a thin, black line floating up and out the open hole.

The shooter began to swear. It was the firing line.

Firing lines are not supposed to break away, but sometimes they do. And once in a blue moon, they do exactly what this one did. This one floated a few seconds like a kite-string; then a gust caught it, and it headed back into the wind, straight for the power line.

Illustrated by L. R. Gustavson



"It's all right to save thirty thousand dollars' worth of equipment," the Old Tiger roared. "But when it comes to stealing my computer, by golly, I draw the line!"

We held our breath as the firing line began to settle. One end reached the ground all right, but the other end draped itself across the power line. And then to make it good, it gave itself an extra wrap.

Mac let out a cuss-word and started for his car. When a firing line falls across a power line, we know exactly what to do: Leave the whole works strictly alone, and high-tail it to the nearest telephone to notify the power company. More men have been killed in this racket fishing firing lines off power lines than any other way.

The rest of us went over to inspect, but not too close. It was Bonnie who first saw the fire. A black streak in the grass at the grounded end of the firing line. Then the wind caught it.

"Get the extinguishers," somebody yelled. In two shakes, we had them out and working like mad.

We were doing all right, too—we thought. But the wind was full of tricks that day. A big tumbleweed began to blacken; then the wind tumbled it, and it burst into flame. The ball of fire rolled through the grass right over to the shooting truck and lodged under it. In less time than it takes to tell it, flames were licking up around the gas tank.

For an instant, everybody froze. That truck carried a box of caps and three hundred pounds of dynamite!

Next thing I knew, somebody was running. It was this guy Bill. He had the door of the shooting truck open before I remembered his hands.

"—nothing left bigger than a dime," flashed through my mind. I thought: *One fumble with the ignition key!*

FOR a couple of centuries, I forgot to breathe. Then the engine kicked off, and the truck began to move. The guy meshed gears like an expert. Soon as the truck was out of danger, the rest put the fire out. I didn't help. My legs wouldn't work.

About that time the Old Tiger came blustering up with the observer and helpers at his heels. "What-th'-H is going on?" he demanded.

Then he saw the blackened circle in the grass. He looked at the circle, and he looked at Bill. He looked at the shooting truck, and he looked at Bill again. This Bill was just standing there, staring at his hands. They were as steady as the Rock of Gibraltar.

Bill's reactions had only been an instant quicker than ours. But it was the kind of instant that determines whether you play a juke-box or a harp. The Old Tiger turned on the rest of us.

"If that's battle fatigue," he snarled, "you other punks go get yourselves outfitted with some just like it." And then he turned back to Bill. Only Bill wasn't there.

"Where-th'-H did that fellow go?"

Bill was behind the shooting truck, kissing Bonnie. When the Old Tiger saw them, he let out a bellow that sounded like an explosion of the dynamite, after all.

"Listen to me, young man," he roared. "It's all right to save thirty thousand dollars' worth of equipment. It's even all right to save the hides of these other dad-gummed punks. But when it comes to stealing my computer right out from under my nose, by golly, I draw the line!"

Bonnie took her arms from around Bill's neck and let the Old Tiger have it with both barrels. "*You* listen to *me,* Jim Hargrove! When you hired me four years ago, you made it plain this job was just for the duration. 'When those men come back,' you said, 'girl computers are out.' Well, I *like* this racket." She said, "I like eating breakfast in Montana, lunch in Texas, and dinner Lord-knows-where." She said: "By golly, I'm fixing it so you *can't* ditch me!" And she reached for Bill's hand.

This Bill was grinning from ear to ear, and the Old Tiger began to grin too. It tickled him, what Bonnie had said. It tickled all of us, what Bonnie had said. You see, we like this Bonnie. And we like this guy Bill.

The

RELUCTANTLY Frosty unbuckled his belt-gun and laid it on the counter beside his hat, and looked across the smoke-hazy store at the big trapper who was making the remarks about the "Yellow-striped so-and-so's" and "our new, fancy-Dan buck cop."

Factor Kirke leaned tautly over the counter and said: "Don't let him bait ye into a fight, Constable Nolan. Ye'd only take a beating. He's plain too big for any ordin'ry-size man, is Tump."

"I can see that for myself," Frosty answered glumly. "But when he insults me and this uniform before a storeful of men, I've got to call him. If I'd let him get by with that, my reputation around here wouldn't be worth a whisky damn."

"It does put ye in a fix," Calvin Kirke admitted. For a moment he was silent, looking with sympathy at the soldierly gray-eyed constable, who was new to the North and without friends among the Barrens men. "But Tump fights ugly, lad. Elbows and thumbs and hob-boots. Ye'll nae be a pretty sight when he gets through with ye."

Frosty said nothing to that. There was nothing to say. Across by the door of the fur-storage shed Tump Lasky was standing up on a bale of wolf pelts so that nobody could fail to hear his remarks. The hum of talk had tailed off to silence. The room waited.

Kirke leaned closer and lowered his voice: "I could manage some trick to get ye out of this store—like some duty-call back to your own place yon." He motioned through the open door at the small police cabin just up the shore of the great Northern lake.

Frosty shook his head. "I've got to have a show-down with this Lasky sometime. I'll have it now."

Words that Sergeant Clifton had said, at Division headquarters, were jigging through his mind as he went on readying himself for the fight. "Musk Ox is a nice little one-man post, Nolan, but it's got a bug or two," the grizzled Northern sergeant had told him. "You'll like the Barrens; they're genuine man-country. You'll like the Barrens men—except for a sour-belly called Tump Lasky—after you get to know 'em. The Smokies around there behave pretty well, and the half-breeds are a simple, good-natured sort, though they stick to themselves. They're French-Chipewyans. If you can get their confidence, maybe you can do something about this tension between them and the whites.

"This Lasky specimen, though: He's a white trapper, born mean. He'll try to mess up your job. He's the kind you've got to kick his teeth out, or he'll kick yours out. But let me give you a tip on him. Under the bark, Tump Lasky is as yellow as they come. Just knock billy-hell out of him once, and he'll be scared of your shadow from there on out."

The trouble with that advice, Frosty thought ruefully, was that Clifton had neglected to explain the little matter of how to knock billy-hell out of a man who was half a head taller than yourself, fifty pounds heavier, tough as rawhide, and a dirty fighter. This wouldn't be like those times in the gray war-skies of Europe when Messerschmitts came diving out of the clouds at you with cannon stabbing. Courage and flash-quick thinking could bring you through that. Here it was brute strength; Lasky had it on him there.

He hated it that the store was so jam-packed, that late-October evening. But that was why Lasky had waited a month before picking a quarrel. The fellow had known he would have a bang-up audience when the old stern-wheel *Pride of Keewatin* visited Musk Ox on its last trip of the open season. Two hours ago the steamer had docked at the little wharf, bringing back a crowd of Musk Ox trappers who had been Outside that summer, and they were all in the store, getting up their outfits before drifting off to their fur paths in the Barrens. The hard-rock men who had been struggling out of the tundra for the last couple of weeks were there too, to catch the boat out.

But it was the half-breeds that Frosty hated most to have around and see him take a mauling. About fifteen of them had canoed up from the Lac du Loup settlement ten miles down the

A Mounty meets friendship under strange disguise in this story by the author of "Heart of the North" and "Forbidden Valley."

by WILLIAM BYRON MOWERY

Trouble at Musk Ox

lake shore, to get early-winter supplies and ammunition for the caribou traverse. Swart, silent French-Chipewyans, in smoke-tanned leather clothes, quilled moccasins and bright sash-belts, they were sitting at the slab tables along the east wall and waiting patiently till Kirke got through dealing with the trappers and hard-rockers.

FROSTY felt it might not damage him too much with the whites for him to take a licking from Tump Lasky, but with the simple half-breeds it would dynamite him completely. And from them above all he needed respect and trust, if he was to ease off the dangerous tension between them and the whites.

Cursing the senseless fight on his hands, he gave his ring and wrist-watch to the factor and started across toward big Tump.

The little walk was one of the longest, loneliest walks of his life. It seemed to him that except for mild old Calvin Kirke, he was without a friend in the crowded trading-store. Not one of the trappers or hard-rockers was openly siding with him or lifting a finger to help him through this idiotic business. Not that they were hostile; they just didn't seem to realize that order and lawfulness in that territory was just as much their concern as his. So they were keeping strictly neutral and watching—to see how much of a man their new-come Mounty really was.

He had wanted badly to get started well and make good there at Musk Ox. Even with everything breaking right, Musk Ox was a heavy load for one man. Heavy and important. Besides the usual police work, he had the responsibility of guarding that route to the strategic mining area up near the Circle, and of ending the tension between whites and half-breeds before it became ugly. But most of all, the Keewatin Tundra—"man-country" Sergeant Clifton had called it—had already begun to take strong hold on him. Just that evening, on a little swing back through the poppy prairillons and granite swells, he had listened to the wailing of the dog wolves and the sociable gabbling of the ducks, geese and wavies as they gathered in their migration flocks; and the spirit of the wild, elemental land, gradually darkening toward winter, had challenged and exhilarated him.

And now, he thought, to have his important job there loused up by a worthless hulk, for no reason on God's earth except that the fellow got satisfaction out of lousing things up—it made him want to kick some teeth out, as Clifton had suggested.

As he passed the first slab table, one of the half-breeds spoke up unexpectedly, in a booming voice that all the store could hear:

"*Sacre bleu!* De Yellow-stripe is actu'ly going to fight! I t'ought he would sneak home to hees *cabane* and lockit de door."

Frosty swung around and looked. The *métis* who had flung the taunt at him was sitting at a table with three others. A huge, broad-shouldered fellow, he was even taller and heavier than Tump Lasky. In fact, he was the biggest man in the store.

At his first look Frosty knew he had seen the oversize fellow before. Then he remembered. It was on his trip north to Musk Ox, on the *Pride of Keewatin*. The big 'breed had been fuel-wood hustler for the steamer. His name was Hannibal St. Boniface; he trapped in winter and water-dogged in summer; and he lived at the Lac du Loup *métis* settlement down the lake shore.

Without the faintest idea of why the half-breed was jumping on him like that, Frosty stared at the man in blank silence. The big Hannibal went on, in his booming voice:

"But I don' t'ink de fight'll last long. M'sieur Lasky'll joost slap hees face and den boot heem out of de store. *Nom du nom*, w'y didn't de p'lice sent us a *man* op here?"

THE three half-breeds at the table tried to make Hannibal shut up. Frosty noticed, in spite of his anger, that they were as much surprised by the unprovoked attack as he was. The rest of the *métis* too seemed surprised and very uneasy.

Across the store Tump Lasky called out: "You 'breed—keep your nose out of this. It's between the policeman and me."

Frosty was trying to think. That trip on the *Pride*, a month ago—there was something else about it. Then it came back to him, out of the welter of strange faces and new scenes: That *métisse* girl, Celicia. She'd been a waitress on the *Pride*, and more or less engaged to this big Hannibal, who was very much in love with her. A naïve, young, sweet-natured girl, Celicia Delbecq. And strikingly pretty, with dark eyes and hair from her Chipewyan blood, and that seductiveness of body peculiar to *métisse* girls.

Then he remembered the city chap Willitson, the professional marksman, traveling around to the different Northern posts to demonstrate his firm's rifles and ammunition. And how Willitson had heartlessly set out to have a pleasant little interlude with the half-breed girl, caring utterly nothing about the tragedy it might bring her and Hannibal St. Boniface.

"I wonder," Frosty thought, groping around, "if that Celicia business—Hannibal knew I was mixed up in it—Why, hell, *that's* why the big baboon is jumping onto me here! He's got the facts all twisted up!"

Hannibal's taunts were still burning his ears, but he kept hold of himself and made no answer. Trouble with one of the *métis* would get them all down on him. One of his goals was to be a welcome visitor at Lac du Loup settlement, down the lake coast. None of his predecessors had ever been invited there. None of the white men ever went there.

He turned and started on for Lasky. But again the 'breed's booming voice stopped him flat. This time the big fellow flung half a dozen epithets at him in bush French. Thunderous in the silence of the store, they seemed to reach out and crackle like the lash of a bull-whip. They jarred even the trappers and hard-rockers.

In a blazing anger Frosty headed for the big *métis*. In a vague fashion he realized he would stand even less chance against the towering half-breed than against Tump Lasky. But that didn't matter. It was the wanton name-calling. As for his part in the Celicia affair—to get the blame for something when he not only was innocent but had stepped in and splashed Willitson!

He strode up to the table and seized the half-breed by his jacket collar, yanked him backward and dumped him chair and all on the floor. With a kick he upset the slab table and shoved it out of the road. As he swung around, Hannibal was just scrambling

"Great Lord John!" a hard-rocker burst out, above astounded gasps. "He's whipped Bonnyface!"

up. Frosty's fist, with all his anger behind it, caught the big *métis* off balance, caught him flush on the jaw, and knocked him over backward again.

The three *métis* got out of the way and edged over toward the side door. Hannibal got to his feet and for a moment or two stood sizing Frosty up. For all his bigness, he was light-footed and quick and muscled powerfully. In a flash-quick picture Frosty remembered how the huge fellow used to stand on the log piles ashore and toss the five-foot cuts through the steamer's boiler-room port as though they were kitchen stove wood. From the expressions of the other men, who were hastily clearing a space and making a semicircle around them, he knew they had seen Hannibal St. Boniface fight before and pitied the man who faced him in a knockdown battle.

Then Hannibal moved toward him, hands out to grapple. Frosty backed up a couple of steps, watching for the rush he knew would come. When he saw the big fellow start the lunge, he stopped and tensed himself, weaving a little. As Hannibal came in, clutching at him, he drove a bare-knuckle smash to the chin, tore free somehow from the grapple, side-stepped, then landed another hard smash that caught Hannibal just back of the ear.

The blow and the man's own momentum sent the big *métis* barging head-on against the split-log wall.

The impact jarred Hannibal considerably. He straightened up and turned around slowly, shaking himself to clear the fog out of his brain. A surprised mutter ran around the circle of onlookers. Hannibal noticed the men's surprise, looked at them and growled:

"W'en I cotch dis sleeppery Yellowstripe, I'll tweest hees neck off—joost lak dat."

Frosty eyed him and thought: "You dumb ox, if you had a head on your shoulders instead of just the end of your neck haired over, you'd have figured out the truth about that trouble on the *Pride!*" It seemed crazy for Hannibal to be fighting *him* about that affair. Fighting the person who'd warned Willitson to let the young half-breed girl alone, and then had given the marksman a thrashing at Lobstick Bay when he caught Willitson taking her on a woods walk! Then he'd talked some sense into Celicia Delbecq and persuaded her to leave the steamer at Lac du Loup, her home. Altogether he'd as good as handed her back to Hannibal on a platter. And now the big ape was promising to "tweest hees neck off—joost lak dat."

Hannibal came lunging at him again, recklessly, head down and arms clutching at him. Again Frosty drove in a smash, tore out of the grapple and side-stepped. He was amazed to find himself outfighting the huge 'breed—so far. It seemed to him partly luck, partly Hannibal's overconfidence in his huge strength, partly that the big *métis* was playing him along, not unloosing his full strength or really trying to crush him—yet.

At his lunges Hannibal was laying himself wide open, Frosty noticed, to a maneuver he had used on Willitson. The marksman too had tried to grapple and ride him down, and had been careless; failure of the maneuver had stretched Willitson out cold. He wondered whether he could draw this Hannibal into that same deadfall. At least he stood a chance and ought to try it. If he merely kept on side-stepping, the huge 'breed was going to get hold of him at one of the lunges, and that would be like getting caught by an avalanche.

He could see that the trappers and hard-rockers around him were watching the battle with astonished eyes, as though they had never before seen any man fight huge Hannibal St. Boniface on even terms. They were being fair and unprejudiced, not one of them jeering when the big half-breed took a smash. The other *métis* had drawn away and gathered in a tight group near the side door, plainly intending to get out of the store and down to their canoes rather than let any general fight break open between themselves and the whites.

OVER the heads of the onlookers Frosty had a glimpse of Lasky, who had stepped up on the woodbox by the central stove and was watching drop-jawed, as though he was changing his mind about the new-come Mounty being easy meat.

Illustrated by John Fulton

"What the devil? You felt thankful —so you haul off and call me a string of vile names."

For a last time Frosty tensed himself to meet big Hannibal's lunge. He had no great confidence that the maneuver which had put Willitson out would work against the huge, powerful Hannibal St. Boniface, but he knew he could not possibly whip his big enemy any other way. He had no illusions about the fight or about himself being the better man. He could sense, as the others could not, that Hannibal still had not turned on the power. He knew also that he had several times smashed Hannibal with everything he had and it scarcely had fazed the big fellow. He had shot his bolt, except for the maneuver.

"I'd better make it good—and good the first try," he warned himself. "This 'breed won't lay himself open to it a second time."

Then the moment was upon him. He braced himself and met Hannibal's lunge squarely, with his fists unclenched and his left shoulder turned a little to take the impact. At the instant that Hannibal plowed into him, he bent a little lower, his left arm flashed out and circled the 'breed's neck, and then he suddenly straightened up, with an explosive heave.

Timed to the split-wink, the maneuver sent Hannibal cartwheeling over his shoulders in a flying mare—cartwheeling bodily through the air, his arms thrashing, his moccasins striking against a rafter. Then the big *métis* landed flat on the slab floor, with a heavy *th-uu-pp*, and lay there spread-eagled.

"Great Lord John!" a hard-rocker burst out, above the astounded gasps of the whole circle. "He's whipped Bonnyface! I'll be a red-eyed carcajou, if he aint laid Bonnyface out cold!"

FROSTY saw Hannibal was not getting up; the fight was over; but in that same breath it came home to him jarringly that the real fight, for which his battle with Hannibal had been an accidental prelude, was still hanging over him. He turned and looked at Tump Lasky, on the woodbox; and the trapper's taunts came flooding back into his mind. With his blood up, he gestured at Lasky to come over to the clear space, and then he turned back to Hannibal.

The big fellow managed to sit up groggily, with help from one of the men. He looked at Frosty and the others and asked thickly: *"Sacre bleu!* W'at happen?"

"Why," a trapper told him, "you finally met your beat and got splashed, Bonnyface. But that's the first time I ever saw *you* pick a quarrel. What got into you, anyhow?"

Hannibal did not answer. Still amazed at whipping the big *métis*, Frosty swiped the blood from a bursted knuckle and said curtly: "He got me mixed up with somebody else. On the steamer, a month ago." He glanced across at the group of *métis* at the side door and cursed. After this fight with one of their number, his chance of ever being a welcome visitor down at Lac du Loup had gone out like a snuffed candle. Sternly he ordered Hannibal:

"Get yourself together. When I've settled with Lasky, I'm going to march

you out to the police butter-tub and let you cool off overnight."

Hannibal nodded. *"Oui,* Constable Nolan," he said, completely without rancor.

Frosty thought: "You certainly got over your yambang at me in a hurry!" The big fellow seemed like a different person from the man who had flung those epithets at him just a few minutes ago. He remembered how sunny-hearted the big Hannibal had been on the steamer trip, before the Willitson business had taken the laughter out of him. Always genial, and perpetually booming out some old *chanson* of the Strong Woods—doing the work of several men so he would have money to marry Celicia Delbecq in the Moon-of-the-Waterfowl-Southing – that was the real Hannibal St. Boniface.

He became aware that the tense silence had gripped the store again. He turned and looked for Tump Lasky. The man had not come over to the clear space and showed no signs of coming over. Instead he had backed off toward the fur-storage door. To Frosty he looked as big and formidable as before, but Frosty started for him, hoping that the gods of luck who had helped him put Hannibal out might still be around.

He wondered why Lasky was not coming to meet him and not getting off his hat and jacket. It seemed as though the big trouble-maker wasn't so hot for a fight or so cocksure he could win it, after what he'd seen happen to the huge 'breed. *"Under the bark, as yellow as they come"*—Clifton seemed to have said it.

As he marched on, past the pot-bellied stove, he saw Lasky start to edge away from him along the wall. A little quiver of elation washed through him. Lasky was afraid! Was trying to get out of the show-down he'd asked for, with the "fancy-Dan buck cop!" The fellow didn't want any part of a leg-to-leg slug-fight, or any other sort of a fight with the man who'd put out huge Hannibal.

Frosty marched on toward him. "Lasky! Were you saying something about me and the Mounted a few minutes ago?"

Lasky backed into a rack of ax-handles and swore as they clattered to the floor. He called out, jerkily:

"Why—uh, Constable—don't take what I said unfriendly. I was just doing a little rough joshing."

"Glad to hear that," Frosty said. "And don't you take it unfriendly when I knock your teeth down your throat."

Lasky stooped and picked up one of the ax-handles. "Keep away, you, or I'll—"

"You'll what?" Frosty demanded. Neither pausing nor hurrying, he walked straight on toward Lasky, bare-handed.

In a near panic Lasky backed to the fur-shed door, tried to get inside, found the door locked, rattled it furiously, then whirled around again, brandishing the ax-handle in Frosty's direction.

The trappers and hard-rockers were beginning to snicker and catcall. It was as Frosty had figured, in his bad time over by the counter with Kirke. They could excuse a man's getting whipped. Not one of them had snickered or jested when big Hannibal went down. The 'breed had stood and fought. They had respected him, even helped him sit up. But for Tump Lasky, they had nothing better than a sneer.

When Frosty was almost upon him, Lasky looked around wildly, saw the open side door and broke for it, dropping the ax-handle and losing his hat as he thumped across the plank floor. The catcalling spread all over the store. The *métis* standing around the door made way for him; a roar of hoots and guffaws followed him out into the dark.

HALFWAY to the Mounted cabin and the little log jail, Hannibal slowed down and asked disconsolately: "M'sieur Frosty, do you joost got to put me in de p'lice butter-tub? De udder fellers, dey're going back to Lac du Loup tonight in de *chaloupes,* and I'll have to walkit home."

"You should have thought of that before you shot off those names," Frosty said sternly. "Another thing: How you could make such a dumb-head mistake about that Willitson and me, I wouldn't know; but I'm going to put you straight about that business here and now. I was the one who—"

Hannibal interrupted. "M'sieur Frosty, I've knowed de facks 'bout dat beezness all 'long. I knowed how you warned Willitson and he tol' you to go roll your hoop, and how you wheeped heem at Lobstick, and den persuade Celicia to stay on at home at Lac du Loup."

Frosty stopped in his tracks. "What's this? You knew all that all along?"

Hannibal nodded. *"Oui,* I knowed." He laid his big hand on Frosty's shoulder, and there was a bottomless gratitude in his tones. "For your keeping dat Willitson carcajou from harming *p'tite* Celicia—I joost can' tell you, M'sieur Frosty, how I feel 'bout dat, inside of me."

PUSHING back his hat, Frosty pawed at his hair in a thoroughly puzzled way. "What the devil? One of us is drunk or dreaming. You felt thankful for my doing you a good turn—so you haul off and call me a string of vile names before a whole storeful of men— Where are we?"

"Look here," Hannibal explained. "You was starting across de store to fight Lasky, *n'est-ce pas?* He would have lickit you cer*tain,* M'sieur Frosty. He was joost too beeg for you. I said: 'Hannibal, don' let M'sieur Frosty take dat beating. Stop it! Call heem insolting names and make heem fight yourself. Den, let heem stretch you out col', and it'll scare de pants off dat yellow-belly Lasky.' So I hurry and t'ink op dose insolts, and we fight. You onnerstan' now, *hein?"*

Frosty jerked and grunted. "You *let me—"* he said, and then choked. He took off his hat and bashed it and swore. After some seconds he said: "But I did know something was funny. I knew you weren't fighting all-out. I wasn't fool enough to believe I'd really licked you."

They started on for the cabin and the "butter-tub." Frosty thought: "I've been calling him a big dumb ox, and he pulled off that trick in front of all that crowd!" He felt a respect and a warm deep friendship for the huge *métis* walking beside him in the queer twilight of the tundra. When all the others in the store had merely watched, this big, simple, unpretending half-breed had stepped in and paid off a debt.

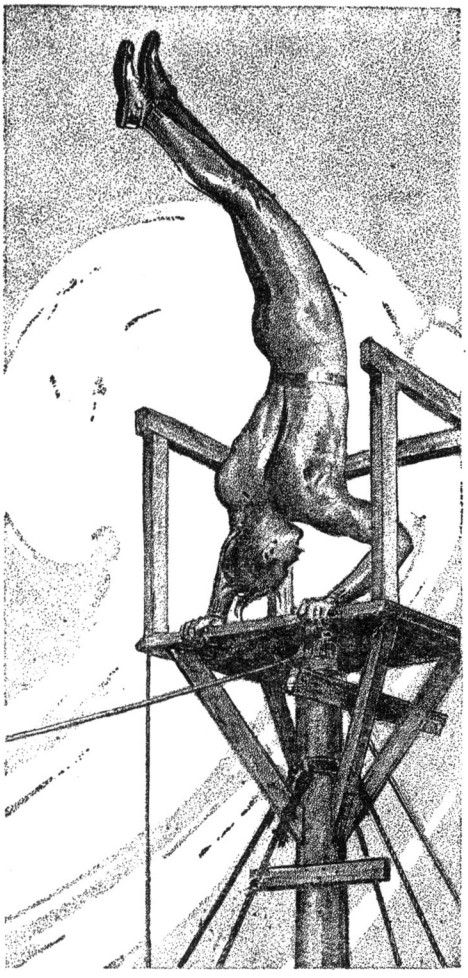
It started him to thinking again of that affair on the *Pride,* and he asked: "How are things between you and Celicia, Hannibal?"

"W'y, dey're fine-dandy. Nex' week, if *le bon Dieu* permeets, Celicia and I will be marriet. *Voilà,* M'sieur Frosty, you couldn' come down to Lac du Loup for dat occasion, *hein?* Besides de marriage, you could meet de udder *métis* pipple, and us fellers could have a caribou hunt. W'at you t'ink?"

Frosty grunted again and swore; it was so thoroughly unexpected, so thoroughly what he'd been wanting.

"I'll try to make it," he said. "I think maybe I can."

SIGNS in



Uncle Dan had a gift for the spectacular. In "High, Wide and Hazardous," he pinch-hit for a parachute-jumper. Here he again goes up in the air—walking a tight-rope while wearing a sandwich-board sign that made the local welkin ring with cheers and curses.

"Oo-o-o, Uncle Dan's gonna do a trick!" Joey exclaimed; and everybody's attention went back to the man on the top of the south mast.

MY Uncle Dan MacMurty was unpredictable but he was never dull. He was my father's youngest brother, the one that Father said wasn't worth his salt; but of whom Mother said: "Dan's just a boy. His heart is good. He likes to do things. Dan's different."

Uncle Dan MacMurty sure did like to do things, and my father always claimed that Dan could even re-do all of those things in his nightmares—my father's nightmares, that is. And as for Dan being different, nobody in old Lawrence would argue on that point, and especially my father.

Uncle Dan liked to do things like grabbing a through freight, over in the South Lawrence yards, and going out to see the world. And that made my father say: "The man's a tramp. And I don't care a hannacook what you say, he's a loafer." But the loafer saw the world, and I think it was all through rose-colored glasses.

Uncle Dan knew the ins and outs of old Boston far better than any Cabot or Lodge, even when they were doing their best talking with God. He could always get a ridin' job at the horse auction, and go off through the country riding like some gay don, either atop a fine Morgan or a broad-beamed dray. And as a general thing, horses were his meat. He knew every inch of towpath on the Erie, from the Hudson to the Lakes. When he wasn't away from home ridin' or canalin', he'd maybe be moving with a circus, Wild West show, or doing Florida, to the utter abandonment of the old Bay State and its deadly winters. Uncle Dan and Ponce de Leon must have been kindred spirits; and maybe that's why he'd never grow old. Yes sir, perhaps that's why my Uncle Dan always came back to Lawrence with his kiddish spirit and impulses fully intact.

"So he's back again?" my father would remark. "And as foot-loose and brain-addled as ever. I should call the police, or maybe do some honest praying. Well, what's he up to this time?"

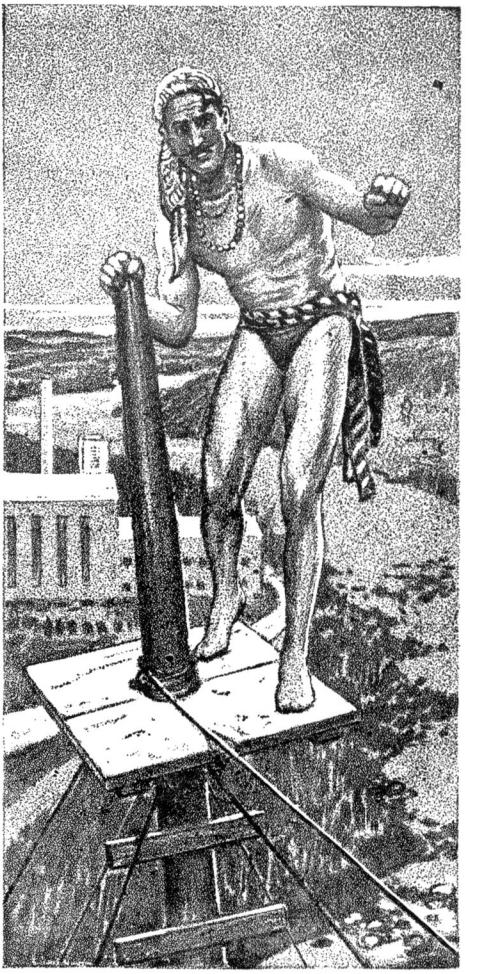
That was a reasonable question, especially when you think of all the things Uncle Dan liked to do. For that matter, you could hardly think of anything Uncle Dan didn't like to do—with the possible exception of steady hard work. For example, he liked to race sulkies over at the Riding Park oval, but my father's ice-wagon plugs were no good for that. Dan also liked to race bikes, but bikes—back there in the late 80's and early 90's—used to run into real money, maybe as high as a hundred dollars, and Uncle Dan seldom had any of that stuff. Best of all, and closest to any MacMurty heart, Uncle Dan liked to race single shells. At that time, Uncle Bill, Dan's next-oldest brother, was single-shell champion of these United States and Canada.

You couldn't tell Uncle Dan that he didn't have the champion stuff in him too; but Uncle Bill couldn't afford to lend Dan his shell. However, Dan was flexible, and if he couldn't have one thing, he'd take another. All Father had to worry about was what Uncle Dan might take, and how. And worry he would, for a fancy-free foot-loose youngest brother can think of the damnedest things to do—like going to the outskirts of town and playing off he's drunk, then grabbing the lines when the patrol comes out to pick him up, just so's he can drive a good tandem of horses back to the Common, and in public. Or like when he went up to Glen Forest—with us three young MacMurty kids in tow—to see the balloon ascension, then wound up by substituting for the sick performer, and making the ascension and parachute-drop himself—all for ten dollars, and then only after a big argument with Professor Wolcott, the owner of the balloon.

TELL you what: few kids ever had an uncle to compare with Uncle Dan. It doesn't matter what our father thought or said, for after all, he was sore. But we kids knew that nothing on earth was too big, too tough, too outlandish for Uncle Dan. He was our knight in shining armor, the uncle who went to far places, then came back to an otherwise dull town. He was our hero, our Buffalo Bill, our Sir Galahad; and at times our favorite clown.

the SKY

by
Andrew Caffrey



Señor Grande had finished his walk; and now he just stood there atop his mast, a flood of vituperation bluing the air around him.

As a general thing our Uncle Dan wasn't a man given to strife, local friction or personal animosities; but he couldn't stand one Oakland Kelly and he didn't like Martin Muldoon. (Not their real names, but they'll serve for this story.)

"Oakie" Kelly always had a finger in every Lawrence pie. He owned the Kelly Metal Works and he was a great joiner and organizer. He and Martin Muldoon—prominent undertaker—had founded a fraternal order we'll call the American Noble Fellowship, for its real name was no less grandiloquent. It was a catch-all order, promising all things found in the honest organizations; but there was no local evidence showing the American Noble Fellowship ever worked that weary field of grief so well tilled by the Masons, Elks, K. of C., and others—that field wherein the widow and orphan find kindness and relief, that field where the givers really give, and expect no "take" except anonymity.

The Kelly-Muldoon faction borrowed this and that from the older organizations. The dress uniform was Mason-Elk-Knights of Columbus, plus. The only requirement for membership was a belief in the Deity, and my father always said that Kelly, Muldoon and the American Noble Fellowship weren't above cutting Satan in on the deal. "The hounds should be in jail," he said. "The American Noble Fellowship! It's worse than the Louisiana Bubble."

Now the Kelly-Muldoon fraternal order had nothing to do with Uncle Dan's dislike—or utter hatred—for Oakie Kelly. The hate was much older than that organization. Dan had been apprenticed to the Kelly Metal Works. He was only eleven then. The work was too stout for a youngster. He had asked Oakie Kelly for his very small quitting pay. Kelly stripped a few greenbacks from a fat roll and tossed them on the floor near the forge—between the forge where Dan had been pumping the bellows, and the wide street door. And when Dan had stooped to pick up that small pay, big Oakie Kelly had put the boot to him, tumbling the small MacMurty out into the black cinders of Methuen Street. Dan remembered the boot.

The Kelly-Muldoon fraternal machinations weren't merely local. American Noble Fellowship lodges had been established throughout the Greater Boston area, and here and there in many other New England cities and towns. Especially in the mill towns; and the Scotch, English and Welsh textile workers were the easiest, most-ardent push-overs. Needless to say, it took much promoting, plenty of drum-beating, lots of the old advertising whoop-la. Both Kelly and Martin Muldoon knew that money gets money. They spent plenty. The stuff was coming easy, and there was no limit to future possibilities.

ELECTRIC cars had just replaced the horse cars in our Lawrence area. The Kelly-Muldoon organization ran special trips, *via* electric, up to Lowell, and down to Haverhill. They put on balloon ascensions—right off the Playstead and over at the Riding Park. They arranged bike races and put up big purses. They also pursed the week-end sulky heats at Riding Park. They furnished the prizes for the All-New England track meet. They uniformed the American Noble Fellowship baseball nine. They financed and touted "Weaver" Wolf and sent him down to Boston to take a crack at the great John L. The great John L. chose to meet the Weaver in his favorite bar—fully two days before the scheduled match in Mechanics Hall—and sent him back to Lawrence on a stretcher. But Kelly and Muldoon could afford to laugh at that. The papers told all about it, didn't they? And wasn't that the big idea—publicity, and the mention that the American Noble Fellowship's champ had met and been out-champed by the champ?

In mid-July it was announced that the Lawrence lodge of the American Noble Fellowship had arranged to bring Señor Grande, the daredevil high-wire aërialist to Lawrence. Señor Grande had been walking everything that summer: Hell Gate, Niagara directly above the falls, the Charles, and now he'd walk the Merrimack. Others

had walked the Merrimack. They did it every season, but not where Kelly-Muldoon & Co. announced Señor Grande would do it. The Señor was going to walk a high wire directly above the high dam in the heart of Lawrence. The Merrimack is five hundred yards wide at that point, and the dam itself is thirty feet high. Below the dam, the river bed is solid stone ledge and giant-rock fill. If a man fell from a high wire—no matter how high or how low the wire—he'd be a dead man at the end of his fall. The publicity said that Señor Grande would walk a wire one hundred fifty feet above the crest of the dam. At first the Essex Company said Señor Grande wouldn't walk the dam. The Essex Company built the dam. It owned the land on either end—where the high-wire poles must be erected and rigged. It also owned the approaches to such land.

Well, it took some lawing and it took some wrangling; and, after a few hot sessions, Kelly-Muldoon & Co. got some sort of a court order saying that the Essex Company could no more control that sky above the dam than it could refuse a man passage through the locks in the north canal—said canal, plus the south-side canal, being the reason or reasons for the dam in the first place. Yes sir, the court said a man had a right to walk that air if he wanted to walk that air; and don't think for a minute that the American Noble Fellowship didn't beat the drums and toot the trumpets when Señor Grande got the word to go ahead!

It took a lot of rigging to get that high wire one hundred fifty feet in the air. The special poles, colossal sticks of timber, were rafted down from somewhere above Nashua, and a crew of ship's riggers came up from Newburyport and proceeded to upend and point those stepped masts into the sky. It was a big job of work, cost plenty of money; and the local papers—at the usual space rates—kept the Lawrence area well informed, step by step, day after day. The Essex Company was still seething—boiling over, in fact—and Father said it was the first nice break Lawrence had had in many years. "Yes sir," he said, "the company is big enough to lay Oakie Kelly and Martin Muldoon by the heels. They're not going to take this sitting down."

Finally, toward the end of July, the masts were up and the fifteen hundred feet of high wire was in place; and that wire looked like a thin thread high in the sky. You wouldn't think that any man could go up there—even to stand on the small platforms at the top of each pole—say nothing of putting a foot on that wire. But the man who'd do it, Señor Grande, came to town the very day the local papers announced that all was in readiness for the great, death-defying, awe-inspiring event. The Señor was enshrined at the Park Hotel, down on Depot Square, that local center of all sporting events. On the eve of the big Saturday, strange to say, the Depot Square betting said three-to-one on the company.

Señor Grande's big walk was scheduled for three o'clock on that last Saturday of a hot July. All factories and mills knocked off at noon Saturdays, so the mid-afternoon schedule spot gave the folks from Methuen and the Andovers time to get in *via* trolley, bike, horse and shanks' mare. Needless to say, Kelly-Muldoon & Co. wanted them all to be on hand—there'd be plenty of American Noble Fellowship advertisements on all sides for all eyes. So, come one, come all, and it's all free.

UNCLE DAN hadn't been up on Water Street, or over at the ice-houses, for quite some time. July and August were hard months in the ice business; and Uncle Dan knew enough to keep away from Father and all that back-breaking work. Somebody said Dan was working for Peabody & Muldoon, driving hack.

When Saturday noon came, with everybody planning to go down to the Falls, we young MacMurty kids felt more or less out of luck. We always counted on Uncle Dan, especially in summer, for our father couldn't spare time away from the ice-house loading platform. But there had been no word of Dan; and the Falls bridge and the dam was a long way off for three wet-behind-the-ears little squirts.

Then, being a riding knight in shining armor, Uncle Dan showed up. He was driving a team of Peabody & Muldoon's matched bays, hitched to the light work-wagon. He pulled into our drive, off Water Street, yelled, "H'ya, boys!" and trotted down through the back-yard toward the stable. We three young MacMurtys made dust in his wake, and Joey was yelling: "Hey, Uncle Dan, aint we gonna see the man on a wire? Aint ya gonna take us, huh?"

"Sure I'm takin' you," Dan replied. "Go tell your ma, then get aboard."

We told Ma from where we were standing, or better, as we climbed into the rear of Peabody & Muldoon's work-wagon. Meantime, Uncle Dan had gone into the barn. He came out and tossed a pair of rubber-soled sneakers in with us. They were the sneakers Uncle Dan used when he could borrow a shell to pull. Then he went down behind the barn to the rack where most of the ice-cutting tools were kept. We watched him pull out and examine two or three long-handled ice hooks. Those float-hooks had mighty long handles—sixteen and eighteen feet long—and were of good stout straight-grained ash. Heavy, too.

Uncle Dan took each one at the middle, in both hands, holding it horizontally and giving it a sort of quick jerk, sort of measuring it for weight and balance, and for feel-at-hand. Finally he made his choice, then shoved it into the wagon, with the hook end up over the seat-back, and said: "You boys hang onto that. And see that you do. Your pa'll be sore if we lose it."

Uncle Dan swung the team back toward Water Street, yelled into the house at Mother as he drove by the windows, then stopped half across the sidewalk and looked up the street.

"What we waitin' for, Uncle Dan?" Joey asked. "Are you gonna miss the man on a wire?"

came down again, and he was carrying a sort of a double frame with white canvas on each member. He carefully shoved it into the rear of the wagon and told us to take good care of that. Right away we knew what it was. It was a sandwich-board, like the men

Illustrated by Charles Chickering

We watched Uncle Dan examine the ice hooks and test them for weight and balance.

"Not a chance, Joey," Dan said. "I'm waiting for Harry Logan. . . . Here he comes now."

Harry was a close neighbor. He followed all sporting events. If a MacMurty was pulling an oar anywhere in New England, Harry Logan was sure to be there. So it wasn't uncommon for him to be going down Water Street with Uncle Dan to see an exhibition upon which the Depot Square sports had placed three-to-one odds—in favor of the Essex Company.

When we came down to Broadway, where Uncle Dan should have turned right toward the river, he turned left, toward the business district. We MacMurtys put up a three-voice wail. Harry Logan just glanced back at us and laughed. Uncle Dan said: "Keep your shirts on, scalawags. We got plenty time. It aint two yet."

At the end of the block he turned right into Methuen Street, then stopped, handed Harry Logan the lines, and went up into a paintshop loft. A few minutes later Uncle Dan wore on Essex Street each time Mr. Peavey bought out another eating-place. And though none of us young MacMurtys could read, we knew that Mr. Peavey's sandwich-boards always read: SOLD OUT TO PEAVEY. We knew that, because Father would always say, "Sold out to Peavey! Sold out to Peavey!" whenever he was mad enough to cuss, but wouldn't cuss because he was in the house.

WHEN Uncle Dan turned back toward the river, Joey opened the boards a mite, and we glanced at the printing. It was in nice red letters. Joey closed them again and said: "It aint Mr. Peavey."

The Falls bridge, the dam and the south shore form an obtuse-angled triangle. The obtuse angle is where the bridge meets the south shore; and at that point the dam's south end is two or three hundred feet away—on the short side of the triangle. The acute angle is on the north side; and the bridge's west walk looks directly down on the dam's end. It was here that the crowd was greatest and noisiest when Uncle Dan snaked his team through the Broadway jam and strove to move ahead. The Essex Company's canal-control was on the small "island" there between Broadway, the end of the dam and the north canal. It's only a few acres in extent, but highly important. That canal, at the time, had the reputation for turning more spindles than any other like water-course in the world. The Essex Company guarded that control-station; and no Lawrence kid ever thought to trespass there.

Nobody was on that property when Uncle Dan reached the crowd at that spot. But out on Broadway, with his horses' noses hard up against the closed gate, Mr. Oakland Kelly was arguing with the gate guard. Martin Muldoon and two other local biggies were also in the Kelly carryall. And the guard was giving the great Oakie Kelly nothing more than a cold stare. But just as Uncle Dan pulled his team to a stop where Kelly's carryall blocked the way, the guard did say: "Better pull away and clear the sidewalk, Mr. Kelly. Nobody goes in but this Spanish gent and his manager, and them only by court order."

Uncle Dan was now standing, with a long lash-whip in one hand, the lines in his left, and one foot atop the high dash.

"You heard the guard, Kelly," Uncle Dan sang out. "Get the heck outa the way an' let a man pass—or do I have to wrap this dang' lash around your fat neck?"

Oakie Kelly glanced back over his shoulder. When he saw our Uncle Dan, he cussed. Dan brought the whip high. "One more word, Oakie me boy," Dan sang out, "and I'll put a draw-string on that vulgar mouth with me lash. Now get!"

Kelly didn't utter another abusive word, and he got. There was a string of slow-moving electric cars on Broadway's single center-of-the-road track. Kelly found an opening and whirled his carryall through to the east side of the street. Then Uncle Dan went ahead just a few hundred feet to the north end of the bridge. Officer Billy Martin was on duty, keeping the bridge approach clear. Uncle Dan pulled up at the curb and spoke to Billy Martin. "How about puttin' the MacMurty squirts up against the rail, Billy?" Uncle Dan asked.

"Sure, Dan. Hand 'em down," Martin agreed. Uncle Dan turned and said: "Climb out, scalawags. You fellers stay right here where Billy puts you. I'll be back to pick you up. I've got to go over and tie up this team on the south side, away from the crowd."

With us in tow, Officer Billy Martin made his way through the sidewalk crowd toward the cross-barred steel

guardrail. "Gangway, folks," he said. "Guess there's room on the rail for these small fry, eh? They won't be in anybody's way. . . . Okay, boys. Sit down on the plankin', and let your legs hang through. Stay there, now."

We had the best seats in the house. Sitting as told, with our feet through and dangling, and our heads the same way, we could look straight down to where the mighty pour of falling water was pounding itself into tossing white foam on the ledge below the dam. It was a good forty-odd feet down to that ledge. Looking south across the river, our line of vision was perfect throughout the great length of the 1500-foot dam; and looking up, there was the high wire—that thin string in the blue summer sky. It was terrifying.

Along the curb behind us, from the end of the bridge toward town, every foot of the way was packed with horse-drawn equipment. Parked closest to the bridge were two of the Kelly Metal Works' pipe drays, great long-bodied stake-wagons. Both wagons were bunting-decked and under the full panoply of the American Noble Fellowship advertising. On the nearest of these two wagons, the American Noble Fellowship band was tootling. Most of the bandsmen were krauts from up in the Prospect Hill German section; and the Irish kids from South Lawrence, and the English, Scotch and Canadian squirts from Water Street and the Swamp were beginning to get obnoxious—yelling for something more American than *Turnverein* favorites. The Germans were a long way from home, and Officer Billy Martin was keeping a sharp eye on the explosive set-up.

On the second dray many fine folks sat on Peabody & Muldoon undertaker chairs, the folding kind; and presently Oakie Kelly and his three carryall mates came through the crowd to climb up and take their place on the platform furnished by that big dray's stake body. That wagon platform was just opposite—and within thirty feet of—the north high-wire mast, just beyond the picket fence on the Essex Company "island." Right away, Oakie Kelly began to wave his silk stovepipe hat for attention. The band took the tip and fell to silence. Mr. Kelly would make a speech. And he did, a nice long one—till the Irish kids from South Lawrence, and the English, Scotch and Canadian squirts from up Water Street and over in the Swamp began yelling: "Aw, dry up, ya big fat f im! Where's the Spanish gink 'at's gonna walk the wire?"

The gink, Señor Grande, arrived at the gate at that very moment. He and his manager were riding in a livery rig; and the Señor had come over from the Park Hotel all ready to walk—a mighty gay dressing-robe over his shoulders, and underneath the glistening white full-tights of the professional aërialist, plus spangles and a red-and-yellow sash. They quit the rig on the drive, over near to the control-house. Then, with long balancing-pole and "elephant-feet" in his hand, the Señor strolled across the lawn toward the base of the high mast. Right away, the band tootled a short snatch of a triumphant German marching song—for a Spaniard!—and Señor Grande strutted like the very devil, whirled his gay robe, twirled his handlebar mustaches, and backed and bowed until he fell over one of the mast's guy-ropes—and did the Irish kids from South Lawrence, and all those other kids from those other sections, hoot and holler!

Oakie asked: "Are you ready, señor?"

STANDING on a wagon platform, stovepipe in hand, Kelly went into his gala introduction. "Lad-ies an' gents," he bellowed, "in behalf of that grand fraternal order, the American Noble Fellowship, it gives me great pleasure to introduce that genu-wine, notorious, world-renowned, death-defying high-wire walker, none other than the famous Señor Grande. The Señor, lad-ies an' gents, will presently get in a boat and be rowed to the south-side end of that wire in the sky!" And Oakie Kelly stopped for a long pause and pointed to that small string so high in the sky. "Then the brave Señor Grande, lad-ies an' gents, will climb that south pole. After that, if you are brave enough to watch, you will see the great Señor Grande walk the Merrimack—above our great dam, high above death." Oakie paused to point high in the sky and low into the watery, rocky depths. "Are you ready, Señor Grande?"

"Si, si, si! Ham ree-di, Señor Kelly," Grande made known, then bowed and backed some more—and fell backward over that same guy-rope.

We saw the Señor climb down to the little boat-landing just a few yards above the crest of the dam. First, the Señor went down the grab-iron ladder set in the solid granite wall; then his manager passed down the elephant-feet and the long balancing-pole and followed. It was the Essex Company's own flash-board boat, and one of the dam-maintenance crew was rowing. That feller wasn't afraid of the dam, and he kept only a scant four or five yards from where the mighty flood came to the crest, curved over, then roared down to the ledge. We could see the expression on Señor Grande's dark face, also the expression on his manager's, and it was a cinch that the Señor was afraid of that dam even if you couldn't scare him on a high-wire. After all, you can't fool with a thirty-foot drop, plus tons of water helping you down.

Finally, we could see the Señor and his manager going up the grab-iron ladder on the south wall. At the foot of the high mast the Señor shed his gay robe, hung the elephant-feet over his shoulder, then started the long climb, *via* the cross-cleat steps, to the small platform atop the 150-foot mast. It sure did look like a long climb; and when the Señor finally stood on that little square of boards, against the blue sky, he certainly seemed mighty small and mightily alone. Right away he began pulling up his long balancing-pole; it looked like a little stick of wood going up a thin string.

Señor Grande rested his balancing-pole across the small platform. Then he sat down for a few minutes, and we knew he was putting on those big elephant-feet that the wire-walkers always used when they went across the Merrimack, up at Glen Forest. When he stood up again—picking up the pole at the same time—he faced the north; and everybody knew he was ready. He held the pole high overhead, as a signal, and the band tootled out a loud fanfare. Then, just as suddenly, the band fell to silence, utter silence, and the hush seemed to fall across the whole Merrimack Valley.

Oh, you could still hear the mighty waters falling on the ledge at the foot of the dam. And you could hear a yard grunt breathing and hissing steam over on the Boston & Maine bridge, just across Broadway. And you could even hear the steel under-braces and girders of the Falls bridge vibrating to the pounding at the foot of the dam, as they always rattled and vibrated to that mighty flow. But somehow or other, we young MacMurtys didn't hear any of that stuff now, and it was as though all things had stopped, just waiting, just watching, with us

holding our breaths till the Señor stepped off. And then the Señor did step off.

Near us—just above us—a woman's voice said: "Oh, I can't watch. I can't!" Another woman's voice added, "Nor I," and we could feel them turn away from the rail. But we MacMurty kids were looking. You bet your life! Gosh, you'd wonder why women came all the way down to the Falls bridge and then were afraid to watch the great Spaniard do his act. Joey said: "Gee! I bet them ladies don't like Se—Señ—the Spanish gink, eh? Oo-o-o, look at him now."

The Señor was walking. The horses hitched to the Kelly drays were battling flies and tossing their heads, and you heard the bit-rings clanking and the harness slapping. There were several yards of traveled wire behind the Señor now, and he seemed just a spot in the sky, a spot spitted on a long horizontal pole. And there was an electric car clanking across the frogs over which the Water Street line came into Broadway—a long block and the canal's width to the north, but it seemed close enough to touch. Another woman at the rail, not more than ten feet from us, said, "Oh-oh, oh, dear, I'm fainting," and she did! And the *Startled Fawn,* leaving her float, an eighth of a mile west of the dam, tooted a long blast, and by gosh, everybody jumped. It was like an elephant bellowing in a small theater. And Señor Grande was nearing what you'd judge as the halfway mark in his long walk.

Then, of a sudden, Señor Grande lost his audience, or at least the greater part of it. And where we were sitting, Joey was the first to notice the new attraction. "Oh, look!" he called out. "Look. A man with red underdrawers climbin' the pole!" He was pointing to the south-side mast. Sure enough, there was a man climbing that mast, a tall thin man, and he was wearing long red flannels, or maybe they were tights, but they sure did look like red flannels—and last winter's, at that! They were badly faded, and you could see where there was a rip on the inside of the upper left leg, each time the climber reached for a new rung. His right elbow was sticking out, too.

Everybody was watching the new man now; and the show, as far as Señor Grande was concerned, was over. We could hear Oakie Kelly and Martin Muldoon bellowing, demanding who the interloper might be, and calling for the Chief of Police. The Chief was somewhere in the crowd.

Directly behind us, and leaning on the rail over our heads, were Councilman Sale and Alderman Lynn. Father always said these two city fathers were neck-deep in the public trough and up to their ears in all the Kelly-Muldoon

"Si, si! Ham ree-di, Señor Kelly!"

dirty-work. Sale was a great Riding Park man, and he ran a few of his horses there. So, as to be expected, he had his binoculars along. And now, as the red man reached the top of the mast, climbed aboard the small platform, and turned north to face the crowd, Councilman Sale took his binoculars from his eyes. He turned to Kelly and said: "Oakie, know who that is?"

"No, you damn' fool! That's what I'm trying to find out. Who is it? Can you get 'im through them glasses?"

"MacMurty—that —— —— so-and-so Mac ——"

THAT was as far as the councilman got. Luckily, he was standing almost between Joey and me. Joey bit him on the left calf, and I sank into his right; and at the same time our heads hit hard, and I saw stars. . . . And a few moments later Officer Billy Martin was through the crowd and saying: "Come, come, Mr. Councilman! What's this? Here, here, give over. . . . Now what's wrong?"

"The brats bit me legs!" Councilman Sale wailed. "Who in blazes are they, Martin?"

"The MacMurty kids, Mr. Councilman. Dan left them here when he went over. And to think that the devil was going to climb that pole! . . . All right, young MacMurtys. Quiet down, now."

"He called my Uncle Dan bad words," Joey said. "He can't say that about Uncle Dan."

"Damned if he can!" Alderman Lynn laughed. "Not while you MacMurtys have teeth. . . . Councilman, when the devil will you learn to keep your big trap shut?"

"Oo-o-o, Uncle Dan's gonna do a trick!" Joey suddenly exclaimed; and right away, everybody's attention went back to the man on the top of the south mast.

Uncle Dan was bending over, legs straight, with his long arms and fingers pointing to the outer edge of the small perch. Then his fingers gripped that edge, and the red-flannel body seemed to flow upward—heels high—and he was doing a handstand. When he was sure of his "steady," Uncle Dan began to give and press, and his chin came down to the edge, then up and away, then down again. And you could hear somebody pulling a canoe over the rollers on the Lawrence Canoe Club's float, nearly a quarter-mile away.

A man on the rail, just beyond Alderman Lynn, turned away and said: "Damned if I can watch this!" And just about then Uncle Dan began to steady again, and we MacMurtys knew that the best part was coming. We knew what Uncle Dan could do on a handstand. We had seen him do it on the barn ridgepole, and on the outer stringpiece of the ice-runs, forty or fifty feet in the air. Shucks, our father often said Uncle Dan was more ape than man, and we didn't bite him for saying it.

Anyway, when Uncle Dan was sure of his steady again, he began to shift his weight to the mighty right arm—then his left hand came free of the platform and found its akimbo, as it should be, with hand on hip. And was that pretty!

"Oh, by hell," that man near Alderman Lynn exclaimed; and we could feel him leaving the rail. And a woman ran through the crowd, too, and another cried out: "Oh, Mother of God, the b'y'll kill hisself."

Uncle Dan, still on the one-hand stand, began to put a little sway into the thing—just sort o' giving it a little corkscrew motion—and now and then he'd jerk his heels, as though losing his balance. . . . Well, all good things have to come to an end, so Uncle Dan finally put his left hand back to the platform's edge, then dropped his feet to the boards. And you could sort of hear everybody blow out a thank-the-Lord breath of relief.

Joey, with his head still out between the guardrail's metal-strip grill, turned to me and said: "Wasn't that keen? I wish Uncle Dan'd do a backflip for the people. He could too do a backflip up there. Uncle Dan can do anything in the world."

"Don't remind him now, young MacMurty," Alderman Lynn said; and everybody seemed to think it was funny, for they laughed. It seemed sort of a crazy laughter, maybe the hysterics of relief.

Uncle Dan, like Señor Grande before him, was now pulling stuff up by that long rope. It was his long ice-

hook and the sandwich-board; and everybody around us began to ask: "What the devil now?" or "Is that man going to walk the wire?" or as some darn' joker said: "Maybe Dan's going to sit by and wait for the ice to come. That looks like a float-hook, don't it?"

If you think the place was quiet when Señor Grande did his walk, you should have heard—or failed to hear—it when Uncle Dan untied his pole and sandwich-board. Then he lifted the sandwich-board over his head and brought it down and seated the shoulder straps. Next he knotted some tie-strings at either side. Then he stooped and reached for the long float-hook; and he faced north. Man, oh man, it was quiet! A white-bellied fish broke water a hundred feet above the dam, and it sounded like a slap on the rump when it hit surface again.

Uncle Dan raised his horizontal pole sky-high above his head in salute—just as grand as Señor Grande! Then he put a foot on the high wire and started his walk.

"Sale! Sale!" we heard Oakie Kelly yelling to Councilman Sale. "What does it say on that sandwich-board—*Sold Out to Peavey?*"

Sale had his binoculars on the board, and he said: "No, by thunder, Oakie! It says: '*American Noble Fellowship.*' . . . It's a mighty good ad, Oakie."

"Damme if it aint!" we heard Mr. Oakie agree. "By gosh, gentlemen, MacMurty's better copy than the Señor." And at that everybody looked up at the forgotten Señor Grande. The Spaniard had, of course, finished his walk; and now he just stood there atop his mast, black rage on his face, and a flood of Latin vituperation bluing the air all around him. Maybe he'd wait there for Uncle Dan's arrival! Maybe there'd be a fight. And maybe the Señor would do a high dive that wasn't on the program.

BUT nobody had any time for the Señor. Uncle Dan and his red-lettered sandwich-board were nearly a quarter of the way across the river; and his walk was easy—gosh, a lot better than Señor Grande's—and the people along the far south end of the bridge were giving him a cheer. Uncle Dan stopped to answer that cheer.

Yes sir, we saw him stop and steady. Then he took his right sneaker from the wire and balanced on one leg; and balancing, he began to pump the wire, up and down, up and down—and another lady near us made a quick sign-of-the-cross and sat right down on the plank walk, covering her head and crying. And all the people stopped cheering, and it was awful quiet. Then you only heard the roar of the water below and the grind of the tall mast where it was joined, and the give-and-take of the block-and-tackles on the guy-lines. And somebody whispered: "The fool will snap that wire. Man, is he asking for it!"

Uncle Dan began walking again, and soon he was close enough so that everybody could read the red print—AMERICAN NOBLE FELLOWSHIP. And we could hear Mr. Oakie Kelly, Martin Muldoon and all the other biggies on the wagon-platform grandstand saying nice things about our Uncle Dan with never a word that you'd have to bite them for. Even Councilman Sale and Alderman Lynn, just above us, were all praise, only as they should be, for they too were high in the councils of the American Noble Fellowship, and no doubt heavy in the rake-off

"If you are brave enough to watch, you will see the great Señor Grande walk high above death."

from that source of revenue. After all, with the City Hall gang it was one for all and all for one, and may the devil take the ordinary citizen!

Uncle Dan had passed the halfway mark; and now you could watch his every move. You could see how he was holding that long ice-hook: arms wide and with the horizontal balance at hip-height—palms up, and no tension on those strong arms and mighty oarsman's hands. And you followed his feet and saw how the toes in their soft sneakers seemed to come down and curl around the wire, like a bird's feet on a twig. Still and all, you held your breath, for your falling gaze always reminded you of that waiting death one hundred fifty feet below the slim wire.

Somebody yelled: "Hey, Spaghetti Grande! Get off that perch! There's a man coming your way! . . . Come on, climb down!"

Señor Grande just glared down, and he made no move to vacate that small platform. We heard Oakie Kelly calling to the Chief of Police. Then the Chief climbed the picket fence and spoke to Grande's manager. The manager called aloft to Grande. Grande yelled groundward, but remained aloft. He'd have it out with Dan.

Finally Uncle Dan reached a point within two hundred feet of the north end; then he came to a stop. Slowly he brought his balancing-pole chin-high in a sort of salute, and he yelled: "H'ya, Mr. Oakland Kelly, sir!"

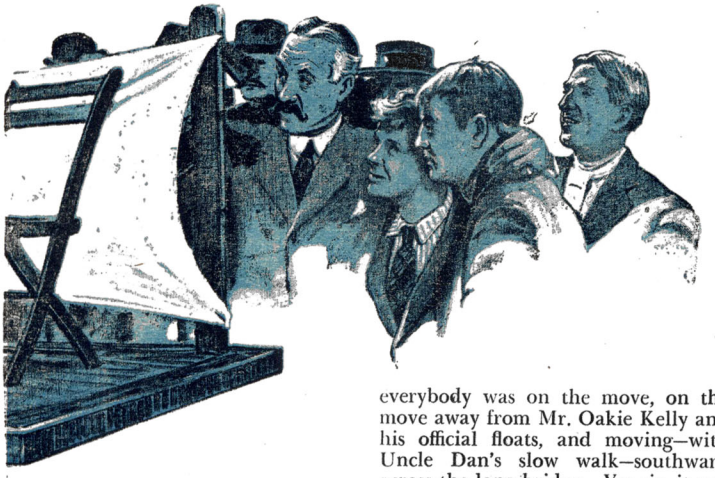
Both Oakie Kelly and Martin Muldoon waved their stovepipe hats and cheered like mad. "H'ya, Daredevil MacMurty! More power to you!

You're the man for our money, Dan me boy!" Oakie called.

"Three cheers for Daredevil Dan MacMurty, honorary life member of the American Noble Fellowship!" he then yelled; and the crowd gave three cheers, and three times three.

Now Uncle Dan was balancing on one leg again, and pumping the wire; and you could see Señor Grande make a quick grab for the mast's top, so violent was the jerk of that pumping. But Uncle Dan was laughing.

Now because of the way the line of the dam—and the line of the high wire—angled with the Falls bridge, nobody, even on the far side of the span, could read what Uncle Dan had printed on the back panel of his sandwich-board. Chances were, nobody had given the backside a thought, and most certainly the well-satisfied Kelly-Muldoon faction hadn't. So, when the cheers had subsided enough for further orders, Oakie Kelly called out: "Mr. Band-



leader! Give Daredevil MacMurty a fanfare, and a march tune. Hit it!"

The German band-leader rapped his baton against his music-stand for attention, and the downbeat. The fanfare swelled and filled the sky; and Dan saluted again. And there he was, one moment facing the throng, with that sign down his front—

And then he placed one foot behind the other and made a quick turn, starting to walk back toward South Lawrence; and you saw the other side of the board—

Pandemonium broke loose. It was a joyous, cheering pandemonium. Even the kids were jeering Mr. Oakland Kelly and his official group—and even the councilman and alderman were muttering things for which they should have been bit. But we MacMurtys were too busy watching Uncle Dan. Everybody was too busy. And everybody was on the move, on the move away from Mr. Oakie Kelly and his official floats, and moving—with Uncle Dan's slow walk—southward across the long bridge. Yes sir, it was like a Pied Piper leading his followers away from Kelly and his American Noble Fellowship. Like a Pied Piper in red-flannel underwear, and what a grand sight Uncle Dan was!

We three MacMurty kids remained where we were, just because Uncle Dan had ordered us to stay put. And soon only the alderman and councilman were there on the rail; and Oakie Kelly and his small group were alone atop that Kelly Metal Works dray—and we could hear Kelly saying some awful things. But our minds and eyes were too much occupied with Uncle Dan—Uncle Dan and all that crowd which was pouring itself off the south end of the bridge and then over the picket fence which separated the south-side "island" from South Broadway. And the few Essex Company guards were helpless in their poor efforts to keep that cheering throng off the forbidden property, or perhaps the guards weren't really trying.

We saw Uncle Dan end his walk and come to a stop on that small platform atop the south mast. Then he hooked his long pole so that it dangled from the platform's edge. Then we saw him untie and lift the sandwich-boards over his head. Next he threw the boards astride the high wire, and taking his long ice-hook, pushed them far out on that wire so that the sign would remain until the Newburyport riggers removed all evidence of that day's doings; and one side of the sandwich-board would remain readable from the Falls bridge—the side which said: THE BIGGEST SWINDLE ON EARTH.

By then, even from where we sat with our faces through the diamond lattice of the guardrail, you could see the crowds packing in close to the foot of the mast; and the cheering was gay and loud; and Uncle Dan was waving down and doing a jig up there where there was hardly room enough to stand. But that was our Uncle Dan every time.

Yes sir, that was Uncle Dan, but even we young MacMurtys were just a bit awed by our Uncle Dan's next move. You see, he had to come down, and he did—but how!

There were three stay braces holding that mast in place against the load of the cross-river high wire's pull. One of the stays was the continuation of the high wire itself; and that cable went down to a dead-man buried in the lawn on the far side of the "island," over at the edge of the south canal. There was a good two hundred feet of slick cable in that south stay. So Uncle Dan, waving palm-down to his audience, brought that mighty crowd to silence—and even Mr. Kelly, Mr. Muldoon, the alderman and the councilman stopped cussing and whispered "What now?" Which was a fair question.

WHAT now? Uncle Dan ran his long float-pole down that south stay. Then he put the hook on the cable, and not a single person was able to cheer when he swung off into space and started that mighty slide for life. It was awful. And there he was, swinging north and south, like a small ball on the end of that long pole, and going down and down. We knew he was swinging so that the action would act as a brake on his downward speed; but not even we MacMurtys expected him to do stunts on that monkey-pole, but he did. Yes sir, he did. He was skinning the cat, over and over, and swinging and skinning; and then the crowd was rushing in and grabbing for him, by way of keeping him from hitting the ground. So it was all over, and Uncle Dan was back on the ground. Gosh, what a finish! My father always said Uncle Dan was a show-off. I guess he was. But, boy, was he fun!

"Every day reports would come in from little bands telling of Germans killed and trucks destroyed."

GUARDING PATTON'S

THE pilot bent over the maps in the tiny briefing-room of a blacked-out London airfield.

"We're dropping you here, fellows."

Three eager young parachutists—a French captain, an American captain and an American sergeant—bent over the table.

Four times before, these three men had gone through the nerve-shattering strain of preparing for such a departure, only to have their long, dangerous flight with its breathless climatic jump into occupied France aborted at the last minute.

They stared at the spot on the map the pilot had indicated. Then slowly they straightened up, speechless with amazement. The indicated dropping-zone was over sixty miles from the area for which they had so furiously briefed themselves. This zone was completely foreign to them. To German dispositions, the underground leaders or the resistance situation in this area, none of them had the slightest clue. Yet they all knew that should they raise a question, their long-awaited departure would again be postponed. Furtively they exchanged a quick look. And though not one word was spoken, OSS Jedburgh Team Alec had decided to take the chance—one of the most dangerous chances any parachutist could take. They would jump blindly into an area, knowing absolutely nothing about it.

The briefing continued in a routine fashion. Captain George Thomson, team leader, and the others were relieved to learn that there would be a reception committee for the arms drop which was to accompany them. At least, there would be someone to receive them! As for the rest, they would work that out when they arrived. The important thing was to get into France.

Such was the fateful departure of Jed Team Alec. Like many things in war—particularly the split-second, deathly dangerous operations of underground agents—plans seldom went perfectly. Before their mission was to be concluded with a magnificent achievement in support of General Patton's sweeping armies, one of the three was to give his life. But rarely would one Allied casualty be exchanged for so many German lives and such a bag of prisoners.

Commanding the mission was a spirited young American who had already seen a large and bitter part of the War. George G. Thomson, six foot, 170-pound, twenty-three-year-old graduate of St. Marks and Harvard, had left his pre-med studies in 1941 to enlist as a private in the historic King's Royal Rifle Corps of the British Army. After eleven months in the ranks, he had been commissioned a second lieutenant and shipped to North Africa, where he participated in the Tunisian campaign as part of the Eighth Army under General Montgomery.

Still with the Tommies, Thomson had gone into Italy in 1943, and for seven bloody months had fought in the Italian campaign as part of the British 10th Corps, at that time attached to the American Fifth Army under General Mark Clark. As platoon leader of an armored reconnaissance-car unit, he had led rugged seventeen-hour patrols daily for as long as three weeks at a stretch in the thick of the winter campaign.

Then, while his regiment was resting, there came a visit from American Brigadier Theodore Roosevelt, who advised Thomson and his fellow-American, Stuart Alsop, that they could be shipped back to North Africa and transfer to the American Army. Both the young officers had long hoped for such an opportunity; and in February, 1944, they left Italy to report to Algiers for transfer. The combined British and American red tape licked them, however, and they grabbed at the chance to join the crack British behind-the-lines parachute unit, the famed SAS (Special Air Service), whose exploits in Africa and North Italy had already earned it a fabulous reputation. The SAS was moving back to England to prepare for the invasion of

Illustrated by John McDermott

FLANK

The extraordinary story of the OSS mission led by Captain George Thomson, who parachuted into occupied France, organized Maquis who fought a shooting war of their own, and after Patton's breakthrough, provided a fighting screen for his exposed flank.

by LT. COMDR. RICHARD M. KELLY, U.S.N.R.

the Continent, and with it went Thomson and Alsop.

In London they met an American parachutist friend who was with Major General "Wild Bill" Donovan's Office of Strategic Services; and this American told them of the newly formed Jedburghs—an international unit of British-American-French officers and men being formed to parachute to the aid of the resistance movements of occupied Europe. This sounded interesting. Both Alsop and Thomson promptly joined the Jedburghs, and took up the highly specialized training for the dangerous work ahead.

JED teams usually had a British or American officer, a French officer and an enlisted radioman. Thomson was fortunate in the choice of his partners. His Frenchman was André Bordes, a lieutenant in the Regular French Army who had transferred from North Africa to volunteer for an underground mission. Twenty-three years old, short and husky, he was a tough and well-disciplined officer. For a radioman, Thomson chose twenty-year-old Sergeant John White of Cambridge, Massachusetts. A former student at M.I.T., he was an excellent radio operator and a rugged soldier. The three became good friends—an invaluable asset to their professional teamwork. Each of them knew that in the months ahead their ability to work together as a team would mean success of their mission—and their lives.

By early May, Jed Team Alec was ready to go. Their first assignment was to jump into Brittany. Feverishly they studied their maps, memorizing every scrap of available information on their area of operations. Then off they went to London for final briefing and the flight to France. At the airfield that first time came the disheartening news that their reception committee had been mopped up by the Germans.

This first disappointment occurred in mid-June. Three more times they went through the same tense procedure—the detailed briefing on their mission, the cramming of information, the hurried trip to London, which was being plastered with buzz bombs, the elaborate security precautions, and finally the bitter frustration at the airport when the final go-ahead from the Maquis failed to come. It was small wonder that the men of Jed Team Alec refused to be deterred even by the fact that they were to be dropped sixty long miles away from their proper pinpoint. By this time any part of France, provided it was behind the German lines, looked good to them!

The trip was to be made in a virtually unarmed Liberator, and at a twenty-minute interval another plane was to follow with the bulk of the arms. As they boarded, late in July, at nine P.M., the three Jeds realized woefully that they had no maps for the area—they would have to depend entirely on their reception committee. With luck they would eventually be able to make their way to their proper zone.

Their course passed just south of Cherbourg, which was then being assaulted by American troops. A tremendous barrage of antiaircraft shells greeted them at the coast, but the sturdy plane sailed along without a hitch. Once over France, the men had an added job to do—and this helped take their minds off the very real danger of German night-fighters, which would have made short work of their practically defenseless plane.

This job was the dropping of leaflets over French towns and cities. The leaflets were addressed to both the French, promising them imminent liberation, and to the Germans, who were warned that Allied might would soon crush their armies. This propaganda-distribution was a welcome diversion, save for the fact that ack-ack announced their appearance over every populated dropping-point. More than once it seemed to the Jeds as though they would have to make a premature jump, and it was with incal-

culable relief that they heard the pilot finally announce that they were crossing the Loire River and would soon be at the pinpoint.

Thomson and the others peered out into the bright moonlight. All they could see was thick woods below. With the help of the dispatcher they got into their chutes and carefully checked the static line to which their rip-cords were attached. Everything was made ready, and then they spotted the lights —three flickering fires in a tiny clearing. The supplies were dropped; then the plane circled for another pass. The dispatcher ordered "Action Stations."

They were to jump when the light on the signal panel changed to green.

ALL three lined up facing the open blister hatch. Suddenly the green light flashed, and "Whitey" disappeared through the hole. Seconds later, André went out; then Thomson plunged into the night. The strain of the trip and his apprehensions over what might await them below had left him almost without feeling. His first recognizable sensation was delight at finally being out of the plane; then a sense of relief as he heard the sharp snap of the opening chute and found himself dropping swiftly through the moonlight.

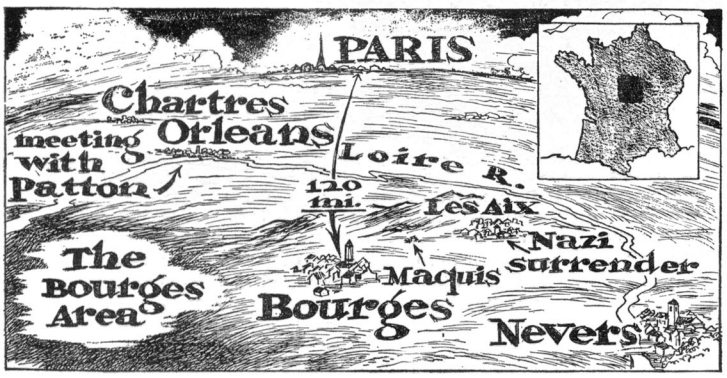
Below him loomed dark and formidable-looking pine trees. Immediately he realized that he was well off from the field, and was heading directly for the dangerous forest. By working his shroud-lines, he managed to avoid the tallest of the trees, but hitting the clearing was hopeless. A few seconds later he crashed into a medium-sized tree, and dropped heavily through the branches. A few yards from the earth his chute caught, and quickly releasing his harness, he dropped deftly to the ground—landing on a bicycle resting against the tree.

Thomson recalls vividly the scene that greeted his first appearance on French soil. "I heard French voices from the direction of the clearing, and started toward the fires. Halfway there, a Frenchman wearing a beret ran up and embraced me. I told him I was an American, and he greeted me very emotionally. When I reached the center of the clearing, I found that Whitey had landed almost on the middle fire. André had landed safely in the trees on the opposite side of the dropping-zone. It was a fine feeling to know we were all there safely.

"I asked for the leader of the group, and suddenly was approached by one of the most extraordinary characters I have ever met. He was six feet two, very thin; wore civilian clothes with a large revolver in his pocket, and on his head the dashing beret that seemed uniform. His first words were startling, considering the circumstances.

"'*Vous avez abîmé ma bicyclette!*' he announced sternly. 'You have wrecked my bicycle.' Later when I came to realize how precious was any kind of transportation to the Maquis, I could better appreciate his concern. Then, speaking in perfect English, he asked us who we were. When he learned of our mission, his welcome was most heartening. Naturally he had not expected us—our arrival and the arms drop was the greatest lift his tiny Underground had ever had.

"The leader's battle name was 'Colombe', which meant *Dove,* but I later learned that he was really Count Armand de Vogué, a member of one of the most prominent French families. He was the leader of the entire Underground movement in the center of France, though his actual fighting strength consisted only of a few hundred men hiding in the forests. One of the brothers was a top-ranking civilian leader of the French Underground; another, a French judge, had had to go into hiding after he had sentenced two Germans to death. A third brother had been condemned to death by the Germans for Underground activity, but so great had been the outcry in France that the sentence had been commuted to life imprisonment in Germany. For three years the Count had been leading a life on the run. In all that time, he had had only four nights with his family, visiting them secretly at his chateau.



"All the containers of arms were gathered up, and before dawn we headed deep into the forest to the few huts that were the headquarters for this Maquis band. The containers were dumped into a lake, and the arms distributed among the sixty men in the Count's band. These were the first real arms that had come to them since the fall of France. They had received some explosives, which had been put to good use, but arms were what they really wanted. Their joy convinced me that we would have no difficulty in getting them to fight. Their spirit was superb.

"We had landed at just about the dead center of France, seven miles north of the city of Bourges, a key road, rail and air-communication hub, garrisoned by approximately twenty-two thousand Germans. There were another twenty-five to thirty thousand Germans billeted in the small towns around us over an area of about forty square miles. Several units of battalion and brigade strength were within three to five miles of us—altogether too close for comfort, we Jeds felt, considering our feeble forces. But the French seemed unconcerned, and we soon became accustomed to living practically within speaking-distance of the enemy.

"After a long talk with the Count, it seemed to us that it was really a break that we had been dropped near Bourges. Here was the head of the Resistance Movement for the whole central zone, a critically important area to the Germans. We decided that our mission could do more good here than anywhere else, and so the next morning I radioed our decision to London, advising them of our safe arrival, proposed plans and urgent supply needs. That same evening Headquarters approved my decision, and told us to expect four additional planeloads of arms that very night. We had been in France less than twenty-four hours and were already in business! All of us, particularly the French, were delighted that things were getting under way so fast. The planes came through on schedule, and with these arms we were able to equip another hundred and twenty men.

"When leaving London, I had been told to contact a certain mysterious 'St. Paul,' whom I was told was the chief Allied agent for central France. I asked the Count about him, and he said that he knew him very well and would take me to him. By great good fortune, however, St. Paul himself arrived at our forest hide-out three days after our drop. He proved to be unquestionably the most amazing man I have ever met. He spoke perfect English, perfect German and perfect French. So well did he speak English, and so familiar was he with our Intelligence organization that for sever-

al weeks I thought he was an English agent.

"It was from the Count that I eventually learned St. Paul's background. A forty-five-year-old French tea-planter, he had lived for years in English colonies. His French wife and eight children lived about thirty miles from Bourges. Five times since the fall of France he had been flown secretly back to England on Intelligence missions, and successfully parachuted back into France each time. Once during his three years of fabulous operations he had been captured by the Gestapo; but the Underground had attacked the jail and liberated him.

"On his way to visit our group, St. Paul had had another fantastic escape. He was riding in a French car, dressed as a French civilian; but in an occupied town he had been recognized by some Germans who had known him when he was their prisoner. The Germans immediately opened fire on him and gave chase. He was finally forced to abandon his car, but made good his escape into the forest under a barrage of German bullets.

"We had a stimulating talk with St. Paul. He impressed me as the perfect agent. Of medium size, stocky, well built, he had no distinguishing features other than the quickest, brightest eyes I have ever seen. I turned over to him twelve million francs which Headquarters had given me for him. He was delighted that we had arrived as we were the first Allied team to enter his huge area. He turned over the whole Bourges zone of about 150 square miles to our direction. This left him free to concentrate on other sections, where he had no assistance.

"THE situation in our department was surely ripe for development. The German Gestapo, Military Police and the despised Vichy French Milice were all very active against the local population, and particularly vicious in their efforts to crush the Underground. St. Paul had organized several supply drops of explosives, and other demolition equipment had been received from French sources. With this the Count's men had done considerable sabotage—had blown many bridges across the Loire, mined roads and railroads, and harassed the Germans in other ways. The Germans had retaliated with terrifying atrocities against the local population. Peasants had been shot, their houses burned and hostages taken. One of their special tricks was to send armored trains up and down the railroad, blasting all the houses on either side of the tracks!

"All this had the French seething with a grim desire to strike back. Prior to our arrival this had been largely impossible, save for the sabotage activities. When we arrived, the Count had four small groups of Maquis. These varied from ten to fifty men, their size being kept down by the scarcity of weapons. Just before the invasion, and particularly after it, many volunteers had sought to join the bands, but realizing his lack of arms, the Count had been forced to discourage recruits.

"'You have wrecked my bicycle,' he announced sternly."

"Prior to our unannounced appearance, the Maquis in this section had thought they had been forgotten. It didn't take long for the word to get around, however, that Americans and arms had arrived. Within two days, hundreds of eager Frenchmen had flocked to our secret headquarters. I had impressed London with the important nature of this area, lying across the main German north-south, east-west communication lines; and we began to receive heavy arms drops almost every night the weather permitted. As soon as these arms arrived, we distributed them and started to build up a fighting force.

"Three days after our drop, we decided to pull our first attack on the Germans. I was anxious to get our shooting war under way, and also wanted to try out our Maquis and see just what they could do with their new weapons. Our first target was a garrison of 150 Germans located in a town about four miles from our camp. Our Intelligence had reported that the enemy was billeted in the town hall, and that only a few sentries guarded the entrances to the village. From the information it seemed that we could easily gain access to their headquarters for our attack. Obviously the Germans would not expect us, as they had never before been bothered. We took sixty men, split up into three groups. The Count and I each had twenty-five men; and André, who was to create a diversion at one end of the town to facilitate our entrance, took the remaining ten.

"We moved into position in the outskirts about midnight. Soon we heard gunfire from the far side of the town—it was André's men opening up on the two sentries, whom they killed. The sentries on our side immediately raced toward the gunfire, making it possible for the rest of us to move quickly on the German headquarters. When we were within forty yards of the building, we opened up with light machine-guns, rifles, tommy-guns and one grenade-launcher.

"The Germans, already aroused by André's firing, had begun to rush out of the building in various stages of undress, but all of them wore helmets and were armed. As they poured out the front door, our fire took them completely by surprise, and we mowed them down. They soon recovered, however, and began to fire back from positions around the building and the windows on the upper floors. Our grenade-launcher was lucky enough to shoot one right through the window, where it exploded inside with gratifying results. After five minutes I gave the order to retire, and we pulled back to a prearranged rendezvous, then hurried off to the woods. Two of our men had been wounded and had to be left behind. That was one of the hardest things about this type of hit-and-run warfare.

"The next day we received word that fifteen Germans had been killed and twice that number wounded. The Maquis and the local population were terribly excited. It was the first open attack on the Germans since they had occupied the area three years before, and the resistance spirit soared. I was glad things had turned out so well, but was apprehensive of the German reaction.

"It wasn't long in coming. German observation planes from the nearby Bourges airport searched our forest carefully, and the surviving troops in the village exacted a horrible vengeance. They took the Mayor, a highly respected old gentleman, and after torturing him severely, hanged him and hacked his body to pieces with bayonets. Then they threw the mangled corpse behind a wall. They also took several other leading citizens as hostages and locked them in the jail. This retaliation was so bloody and harsh that we decided to change our tactics

for a while and avoid the towns. The killing of just a few Germans was not worth such atrocities in reprisal.

"Instead, our men commenced small nightly ambushes on German convoys. These were very effective, and seldom resulted in any casualties for us. Every day reports would come in from little bands telling of a few Germans killed and a few more trucks destroyed. I imagine these pinpricks were all very annoying to the German command.

"TWENTY out of every twenty-four hours André and I were busy. We traveled around extensively, visiting Maquis units, arranging for supply drops and the distribution of arms; training squad leaders in the use of new weapons such as bazookas; organizing an Intelligence system and planning additional operations.

"Adequate and coördinated Intelligence, I immediately realized, was our most pressing need. To my dismay, I discovered that the Count had no information on what was going on in the surrounding areas, and no tactical liaison with other Maquis units. It was imperative to have an extensive Intelligence coverage if we were to have advance information on German convoy moves. With the Count, I immediately recruited 150 agent couriers, who soon began to give us daily reports on the enemy situation.

"Just such a report resulted in a typically successful convoy ambush a few nights later. We received word from Bourges that a big German troop convoy was heading north on its way to Orléans. An immediate attack was planned. We split up into five groups of ten men each, and moved into well-hidden positions as close to the road as possible, at intervals of a mile. Then we lay down to wait. I was in command of the fourth group down the road. Our position was behind a bank only twenty yards from the road. We lay there quietly and the French passed around the inevitable bottle of wine which seemed to be as important as the ammunition for all operations. After a short wait we heard heavy gunfire down the road where our first ambush was located. Our instruction had been for them to wait for the last few trucks before opening up. I later learned that they had attacked the tail of the column, after which the German troops had debarked and fired wildly into the dark after our fleeing men.

"The firing stopped after about half an hour, but a few minutes later it broke out sharply again at the ambush below us. There the same performance was repeated. Our men managed to set a truck on fire, and again exacted casualties—the number unknown, for the Germans always took their dead and wounded with them. Soon the shooting died out below us, and we all grew a little tense as we heard the trucks start up and head toward our position. While they were still a few hundred yards away, I was startled to hear another sound, the tread of boots on the macadam road. The German soldiers had evidently demounted, and were marching along the flanks of the thoroughly aroused convoy to give it added protection.

"We were now faced with quite a different problem than had been anticipated. I knew that these guards along the flanks would have their guns aimed in our direction—ready to let go at the slightest sound. Regardless of that, I didn't like the idea of pulling back. I decided to carry out our original plans, though I knew we would have to make a fast getaway after our first few volleys.

"My men were armed with grenades and automatic weapons. In a few seconds the head of the column was abreast of us—moving slowly, completely blacked out, and with a dangerous-looking file of armed soldiers pacing along on each side. They were so close we could see and hear them all perfectly. They were in an ugly mood. We lay perfectly still and watched them pass. About fifty trucks passed, and then as the last few rolled by, I gave the word, and we opened up on the guards—twenty-five yards away! I saw a few of them drop, then the rest flopped down and went to work on us. Fortunately, one of our grenades exploded right next to a truck and set it on fire, and the glare lighted up our targets perfectly; but we didn't have much time to take advantage of it, for the whole force of Germans started after us, and we were forced to run for our lives. They chased us for a few hundred yards, but when we hit the brush they called a halt. They did not know the terrain; and as always in that case, they were deathly afraid of going into the woods. Our last ambush party never did get a crack at this beat-up convoy. The Germans had had enough, and picking up all their dead and wounded, they put on top speed and raced away.

"On a smaller scale, this type of operation was going on all over our area from a few days after we arrived until the last German unit had either left or been destroyed.

"ON the eighth of August the Germans made their first determined effort to crush our growing Maquis force, which by that time was causing them serious trouble. Our first inkling of serious trouble came that morning. I was sitting in our forest when, without warning, shells began to burst all around us. This was followed almost immediately by machine-gun bursts. I knew we were in for it. At once I gave the order to pack up and head deeper into the woods—an order which had been anticipated by many of the Maquis.

"I had a whole file of highly secret papers which I knew must be burned. It only took me a few minutes, but it seemed like hours, for the Germans were rapidly closing in on us. Our whole party, consisting of two hundred Maquis, twenty British SAS who had parachuted in to us a few nights before, and the three members of our team, started running down an escape trail which led deeper into the forest. Because of my delay in burning the papers, I was the last in the column, and several times I caught sight of the pursuing Germans.

"IT was terribly hot, and we were all weighted down with gear. After running at top speed for a mile or so, we slowed down to a trot, but kept going. Finally the Germans gave up the pursuit, though they occupied our previous campsite. Luckily, they did not discover our hidden arsenal where the surplus arms and ammunition were stored. By nightfall the Germans pulled out of the woods; and undismayed, we returned to our camp the next day. We now knew that the enemy knew where we were and had determined to get us. Furthermore, from nearby garrisons, they could throw nearly fifty thousand troops into the effort. The more active we became, the greater would be the German effort to exterminate us. Our only hope lay in our knowledge of the country, the thick forests and our hit-and-run tactics—with the emphasis on 'run.' Fortunately, the rapidly changing German military situation in France saved us from a major mopping-up which we were powerless to prevent.

"Bourges, seven miles south, was not only the key German center of central France, it was also our most important source of information on German moves and intentions. Some of our very best Intelligence operatives were living in this city of fifty thousand, and I decided it would be well for me to visit them.

"I dressed in an old pair of blue slacks, a blue shirt, a pair of French shoes and, of course, a beret. The Maquis supplied a set of false papers; and these, plus a straggling mustache, were my disguise. I must confess I placed very little faith in it, and didn't feel a bit like the French student I was supposed to be. A .32 pistol in a shoulder holster under my shirt gave me some confidence, but I knew very well that should I be discovered in the city, my chances were one thousand to one. The Germans knew of my presence with the Maquis, and would have given almost anything to catch me.

"Three of the Maquis, one with an old cart, made up the party. We casually walked down the road toward the city and approached the German

guards at the entrance. It was my first real undercover experience, and I was pretty nervous. To my surprise and tremendous relief, the Germans ignored us completely, and we entered the city without being challenged. Then my companions showed me the various German Headquarters—the Army command, the Gestapo, the military police. The streets were filled with German soldiers of all ranks and services, but no one paid us the slightest attention. I began to breathe more easily.

"Our destination was a barber-shop, the back room of which was a Maquis hang-out. After carefully checking for possible German customers, we slipped through into the private room. Here I had an unusual experience in meeting the proprietor and his wife. They had once operated a beauty salon in Jordan Marsh Company in Boston, and to prove it, they eagerly brought out an old copy of the Boston *Transcript* which carried their advertisement.

"On this trip I also met Dr. Pierre Malgras, who I was told was the first surgeon of France. He was the doctor for the Maquis, and for the past four years had also secretly been taking care of injured Allied aviators. His was one of the great stories of the French resistance. From all over central France these shot-down airmen would be spirited to Bourges by the Underground. From here, Dr. Malgras would take them to a clandestine hospital which he had established in a secret room in the cloister of the local Carmelite convent. There he and the nuns would nurse them back to health, and then he would radio to England and arrange for them to be picked up and flown back.

"On my return to our camp, I heard most exciting news: Our informants had reported that the Gestapo in the surrounding towns were packing up and planned to leave for Germany very shortly. This we knew to be a most reliable signal that the Boche would soon be pulling out of France, for the Gestapo were always the first to go. To a man, our Maquis were determined that they should never get home alive. These were the most hated of all the Germans. All of them were very well known, and their unspeakable cruelties had made them marked men.

"A sixty-year-old woman, daughter of a former president of France who looked after us at the Maquis headquarters, was typical in her blazing hatred, and for the usual reason. Following the collapse of France, she had started sabotage operations against the Nazis. In spite of her age, she was unbelievably active, and had personally helped to blow bridges, railroads and other daring operations. In all this she had escaped detection; but one

"As a traitor he suffered an even worse fate than the others."

"General Patton wanted to know what I could do about protecting his exposed right flank."

day the Gestapo discovered some hidden arms in her cellar. They took her and tried to make her talk. She refused. They placed her in a torture cubicle so small that she could neither stand upright, sit, kneel or move. Still she refused. Finally they tore all the fingernails off her left hand and threw her out. She came to us, and continued to work with the Resistance.

"Immediately we suspended all other operations and concentrated on getting the Gestapo. Orders went out to all our bands to deploy on the roads outside the towns which the Gestapo were preparing to leave. The group I commanded had a typical experience. We had agents inside the town who kept slipping information to us as we lay hidden along the road. We actually received almost constant couriers reporting on the Gestapo movements. Then they came—in eight stolen French cars. Just as the convoy reached us, every man let go with everything he had. Grenades and bullets smashed into the cars and wrecked all but two of them. The vicious hate of the French was appalling but very understandable. Our party killed ten of the Gestapo and took four terrified prisoners, one of whom was a French Milice. As a traitor he suffered an even worse fate than the others. All of them were promptly executed. Similar actions took place all over our area, and many an old score was settled in a bloody fashion.

"ON the twelfth of August came news of the highest significance. The Germans had suddenly withdrawn their garrisons from most of the outlying towns. Events to the north, where General Patton had made his historic breakthrough at Saint Lô and was now sweeping east across France, were making themselves felt in our zone. This development called for a complete revision of our tactics. Instead of operating at night, we were now able to work right around the clock. Now we could use transportation to a degree, and come out into the open. Many German units were on the move, and their schedule did not allow time for extended mopping-up operations against the Maquis. They also were less inclined to stop after an ambush and retaliate with atrocities against the civilian population. All these factors, plus the increased strength of our forces—now grown to fifteen hundred—enabled us to commence operating on a really large scale.

"It was now that our Intelligence network really began to pay off. We were constantly receiving news of German moves and taking action against their convoys. This went on day and night. One of the most successful that I remember was an attack on a column of seventy-five horse-drawn vehicles. Our men managed to knock out forty-seven of them, and to all effective purposes practically destroyed the convoy. Our major strategic effort, however, was against the Loire bridges, the Number One target of our mission. Many of them had been blown by the Underground prior to my arrival. It was imperative that we knock out the rest to impede the withdrawal to Germany of the several hundred thousand German troops still in central and southern France.

"Within the next few days our men blew six more bridges. By the fourteenth of August there were only two bridges still standing between Orléans, seventy-five miles to the north, and Nevers, due east of Bourges. The bridge at Nevers was guarded by three thousand SS troops, and we were never able to attack it; but I felt we still had a chance to do something about the remaining bridge at San Cerre, guarded by 150 SS men.

"Our hit-and-run attacks had so disrupted German communications that their Intelligence system had broken down badly. Convoys were still being directed to cross the Loire at places where bridges had already been destroyed. I knew that as soon as the Germans discovered there were only two bridges left, they would heavily reinforce the guards. We had to move fast.

"I TOOK sixty of our best men to do the job. When we arrived at the target early in the afternoon, it looked hopeless. The SS, the toughest troops Hitler had, outnumbered us nearly three to one. Fortunately, their positions were all on the opposite side of the river, but they had set up heavy machine-guns which controlled both approaches, and they were well dug in. Here again our liaison system with neighboring Maquis paid off. We were fortunate in making contact with another Maquis of about two hundred men who were located across the river. We sent them details of our plan, and asked them to engage the SS to divert their attention from our side of the bridge. This they did with a well-executed and determined attack. The Germans turned their full strength away from the bridge to meet the attack coming from the opposite direction.

"As soon as this attack was mounted, my men ran out on the massive concrete bridge, and we started rapidly laying our charges. The Germans realized suddenly what we were about, but it was too late. At considerable cost, the other Maquis kept them occupied, and comparatively few shots were fired in our direction. In half an hour we had the explosives placed and wired. Then with one tremendous explosion, the whole arch disappeared into the river. The Germans now had only one exit from the whole Loire pocket.

"By the fifteenth of August, when the Seventh Army invaded Southern France, General Patton's Third Army had reached Orléans across the Loire to the north. He had pushed so far east, so fast that his whole southern flank was unprotected. There were still a couple of hundred thousand Germans south of the Loire. It occurred to me that General Patton must be rather concerned about what was going on south of the Loire and about his exposed flank. My Intelligence sources had given me a pretty clear picture of the German dispositions in the whole area so I decided to take a chance and drive north to make contact with the Third Army.

"We were desperately in need of more arms and gasoline for our rapidly expanding fleet of cars and trucks. If we could do something for Patton, there was a good likelihood that he would turn over some of the supplies we needed so badly. The proposed trip involved a seventy-five-mile drive through German territory, but I figured that the possible results were well worth the risk.

"Accordingly, on the night of the sixteenth, I took off in my Citroën with one Maquis bodyguard. I gave orders for a civilian truck to follow and wait for me south of the Loire. The two-and-a-half-hour ride that followed was the wildest I ever hope to take. We started out about midnight and kept going at top speed. The roads were crowded with German convoys, and most of the towns we passed through were occupied by German troops. On one ticklish occasion we raced right through a German convoy, nearly crashing into one of their big trucks. I had put on my uniform and captain's bars, and couldn't help thinking how surprised the Germans would have been to know that an American officer was riding past them that night. We reached the Loire at about three in the morning. We crossed on a little French-operated ferry, and hid out in a farmhouse. I was now in American territory—that is, there at least were Americans about.

"Next morning I went out on the road until I saw what I wanted—a jeep jogging along with a good old American private at the wheel. I flagged him, told him who I was and asked him to take me to Patton's headquarters. Since Headquarters was miles back, he offered instead to take me to the 35th Division, the nearest field headquarters. Once there, I went directly to the divisional G-2 and told him my story. I had no identification —I would have to wait a few hours until he could check up on me. This was a disappointment. I had no time to waste, but there was nothing I could do.

"I was sitting there rather disconsolately, when who should arrive but Major General Manton S. Eddy, former 9th Division commander, whom I had known in England some months before. I jumped up, gave him a fast salute and told him my problem. I discovered he was now commanding the 12th Corps of Patton's Third Army of which the 35th Division was a part. In a few seconds he had me straightened out with the G-2. When he heard my story, he said that I was just the man they were looking for—that General Patton was terribly worried about his southern flank, that he had no information about the situation south of the Loire, and that he felt sure the Third Army would be glad to give me all the help they could.

"After lunching with the 35th Division commander, to whom I gave my information, we drove to General Eddy's 12th Corps headquarters. There I met Major General Gaffey, Patton's Chief of Staff. He took down my request for bazookas, mortars, heavy machine-guns, ammo, gasoline and medical supplies, and arranged for me to see General Patton next morning.

"My visit with the General was very satisfactory. He was very interested in the news I had, and thanked us for the work we had accomplished, particularly in blowing the Loire bridges. He wanted to know what I could do about protecting his right flank. I said bluntly that I could mobilize seven to eight thousand Maquis for the job if he could supply me with the arms to equip them. He readily agreed to this, wished me good luck—then started talking again of his exposed flank. He and his staff were really worried about that. I told them I didn't think there was much likelihood of the Germans' crossing the river in any great strength, as they seemed to be concentrating on getting back to Germany. But there was a very real danger that a strong fighting patrol might cross the river and raise hell with the Third Army's thinly stretched supply lines.

"BEFORE leaving Third Army, I paid a call at the OSS detachment there. Then, the next night, after my precious arms had been transferred to our truck, which was waiting across the river, we started back. Our return trip was uninterrupted, and with these extra weapons we immediately went to work building our strength up to five thousand Maquis. These we deployed to guard all roads that the Germans would have to travel to harass the Third Army flank. Meanwhile we greatly expanded our continuous convoy attacks.

"On the twenty-third of August we received some very excellent additional reinforcements. Twenty-five daredevil Frenchmen were dropped in to us with five terrific jeeps. These jeeps had the hitting power of a light tank, plus great speed and maneuverability. Each carried a bazooka, two .50-caliber machine-guns and an air-cooled Vickers .30-caliber machine-gun that could fire 1200 rounds of armor-piercing bullets a minute. The French crews of these jeeps were brave to the point of being reckless. It was now no longer a matter of always lying in ambush. Their idea of a good time was to race down the main street of a German-occupied town with all guns firing. So terrific was their firepower, so unexpected their onslaught, that they had surprisingly few casualties, and their toll of German personnel and vehicles was amazing.

"Several days after these wild men arrived, we decided that the time had come for a definitive action against the Germans. Prior to this, our actions had of necessity been limited to the hit-and-run variety. Now with the

Germans in a state of confusion and their forces continually in a state of flux, we determined to capture a key town and hold it. By now we had plenty of German prisoners, taken in ambushes and attacks on isolated garrisons. We took two of these, put them under a white flag and sent them into the town of Les Aix D'Angilon to deliver the following message to the major commanding the garrison of 150 Germans:

"You are surrounded by five hundred French with a contingent of thirty jeeps, armed with bazookas and automatic armor-piercing weapons. Will you make an honorable surrender and avoid useless bloodshed?

"Meanwhile we deployed our force of fifty-five men—thirty on foot and twenty-five in the five jeeps—on a small hill overlooking the road that led into the town. Fifteen minutes later the two prisoners returned with the refusal of the German commander, who did not believe that he was threatened by any such force. With but a few minutes' delay in order to learn the German dispositions from the prisoners, we started our attack. The main strength of the Germans was concentrated in the town hall, which fronted on a large square where their vehicles were parked. There was only one exit from the square, and it was a narrow one. We split our thirty foot-soldiers into two groups of fifteen men each. I commanded one group, and André, my French partner, took the other. As the jeeps started their run toward the town, our two foot parties started to infiltrate, one from the right and the other from the left.

"WHEN the jeeps reached the entrance to the village, they put on full steam and raced into the town with all guns blazing. The Germans streamed out of the town hall and tried to get away in their vehicles, but all but two of them were trapped by our slugging jeeps. Most of the Boches then started to run out the rear exit of the town. As these disorganized Germans streamed out, our foot parties were able to kill a few and take a good number prisoner. The remainder succeeded in establishing themselves in a farmhouse at the outskirts of the town. When this happened, I took stock of our situation and discovered we had had one man killed and three others seriously wounded. Two of the Frenchmen in one of the jeeps were also badly wounded when a bazooka shell hit a telegraph wire and bounced back onto their jeep.

"Before André and I had any chance to get under cover on the far side of the town, a machine-gun in the farmhouse just occupied by the Germans opened up on us. I was standing right next to my French partner when the first burst knocked him to the ground. By some miracle the Spandau missed me as I slammed myself down beside him. The rest of our men likewise threw themselves down, but we had absolutely no protection, and I knew we would have to take cover, or be wiped out. There was no chance to do anything for André. The slugs had pierced his arm and shoulder and penetrated his chest. He was very badly wounded, and could do nothing for

"A machine-gun opened up on us."

himself—nor, under the circumstances, could we do anything for him. We had to leave him where he fell. The nearest cover was about seventy yards in the rear, and after yelling encouragement to André, I gave the word for the rest of our people to pull back. Fortunately we made it without many more casualties—the bullets kicking up the dust around us for the whole way back.

"We had no sooner got behind some cover when another group of Germans who had set up a mortar in an orchard began to lay down a barrage on us. It was imperative for us to do something quickly, so I organized our remaining men into two groups, one to eliminate the mortars and the other to storm the farmhouse. Meanwhile the Germans came out of the farmhouse and dragged André back. We were determined to effect his release, and if possible save his life.

"After an hour of stiff fighting, our two task forces, with splendid help from the jeeps, accomplished our two objectives. When we took the farmhouse, we found that the Germans had given André some first aid, but he was in a critical condition. I ordered the Maquis to call out all the men and boys from the surrounding area to garrison the town and hold it, should the Germans attempt to retake it. Then I took André back to our Maquis doctor. During the engagement we had killed fifteen Germans and captured forty, and the balance who had escaped into the fields eventually gave themselves up.

"THE organization of the town's defenses occupied me for a few days, but the German situation was deteriorating so rapidly that it was soon evident that they would not try to come back, and we were able to use our men on other offensive operations. Save for André's critical injury and our few other casualties, the operation was a tremendous success. And this victory brought thousands of additional recruits to our forces.

"By the fifth of September the whole area north of Bourges was cleared of Germans. Many of these were made prisoner, and the balance had been severely harassed in their escape by the aroused and armed Maquis. The city of Bourges itself was still filled with enemy troops, however; but on the sixth day they began to pull out in earnest, and we had a field day up and down their escape routes. Then, on the seventh, as their last contingents hastily withdrew, we entered the city in triumph, to the wild cheers of the celebrating populace. It was a truly memorable occasion.

"I asked for volunteers to repair the airport, and two thousand turned out. Twelve hours later we had the principal runway in working order, and a crew of French machinists standing by to assist Allied aircraft. By a stroke of luck we discovered a huge cache of German aviation gasoline hidden at an outlying German airfield. I had flashed the news about the airfield to base, and we soon began to receive a number of fighters and even some Fortresses that were either damaged or out of gas. It gave us a great thrill to be able to fix these planes up and send them on their way back to the bases in northern France and England. In turn, we weren't forgotten, and we presently began to receive special planeloads of arms and ammunition from the grateful airmen.

"Although the area north of Bourges was cleared of Germans, there was still a force of some twenty thousand farther to the south which was causing

considerable concern. On the fifteenth of the month a Frenchman from this southern area arrived at my headquarters in Bourges, and reported that the Germans were desirous of surrendering, but under no circumstances would they surrender to the Maquis.

"It was decided that I as the only American officer in the whole area, should go down and see if I could effect the surrender. We were guaranteed safe-conduct, and the next day I was driven to the headquarters of the German commander, Major General Elster. This Prussian was precisely correct in his dealings with me, but he was adamant on the point of surrendering to the American Army. He was not satisfied with me, because I was with the Maquis.

"The surrender situation was stalemated because of his uncompromising attitude on this point. He was naturally afraid that his men would fare badly if they surrendered to the Maquis, because they had been under constant attack on their march from the Biarritz area, and they had retaliated ferociously against the Maquis and the populace along their line of march. Some other OSS men had arrived at my headquarters, and one of these returned to the American lines with the German terms of surrender. He made contact with the commander of the American 80th Division, who sent down a platoon to arrange the details.

"The agreement that was finally made was most unsatisfactory to the Maquis and to all of us who had been working with them. The Germans, whose surrender had been forced by the efforts of the Maquis, were to be permitted to retain their arms and march seventy-five miles north to surrender to the American Army. This infuriated the French, but there was nothing that could be done about it. We arranged for safe passage of the Germans, and the French kept their word. The Germans turned the march into a sort of face-saving triumphal journey, and killed a few more French on the way, which didn't help matters any. Actually, however, this arrangement saved a lot of lives, both German and French, as the Germans were very well equipped and full of bitter hatred for the French.

"This surrender wound up Jed Team Alec's mission. Shortly after that I returned to Paris, leaving my French partner at the hospital in Bourges. For a while he seemed to be coming along very well, but at Christmas-time he was ill again as a result of his wounds, and died."

(Captain Thomson received two Bronze Stars and the Croix de Guerre with Palm for his daring achievement as leader of Jedburgh Mission Alec.)

My Most Amusing Experience

Sober Today

MANY years ago I joined the crew of an intercoastal lumber schooner. She was an old wooden vessel, battered and leaky, with seamen who were required by her tight-fisted owners to load and discharge cargo whenever she touched port. For obvious reasons the personnel carried were sub-standard and there scarcely floated a craft whose complement bent the elbow at greater frequency.

One afternoon as we put to sea from a large mill town in the Pacific Northwest the captain stamped angrily through the pilot-house to fling open the logbook and scrawl plainly: *"Mate drunk today."*

Later, when the chief officer appeared bleary-eyed to stand his watch on the bridge he discovered the skipper's entry. As such an offense, officially stated, would cause him to lose his job if not his "ticket," he accosted the master and pleaded to have the record changed—but to no avail.

At last, sensing that his arguments were useless, he stood gazing unhappily at the setting sun. Suddenly, his face lit up and with a nod and half smile to me he brushed through the wheelhouse and stepping over the coaming into the chartroom entered in the log under the day's heading: *"Today the Captain was sober!"*

Geo. F. Burnley.

It Wouldn't Work Twice

WE had quite a lot of words for Major F—, and "strictly G. I." was among the more flattering. He was a martinet with a terrible temper and a pair of eyes that could spot an unbuttoned button at fifty paces.

One evening I ran afoul of him in the company street. The situation posed a nice problem in military courtesy. I was coming from the supply-room with the barracks' quota of clean linen draped over my left arm; and I was smoking a cigarette. I couldn't transfer the butt to my left hand, and I couldn't throw it away. So I pinched it between my right thumb and forefinger and saluted the Major.

"Corporal Smith," he said, "you've been with us for some time, haven't you?"

"Yes sir."

"And somewhere along the line, you must have received some instruction in the prescribed form of the salute?"

"Yes sir."

"Well, Corporal," he said, "it seems to have been insufficient. You will report—"

At this moment, luckily, a strange figure passed us. He was wearing fatigues, G. I. shoes, a leather belt, no hat. He didn't even glance our way.

"Hey, soldier!" roared the Major.

The strange figure kept going.

"Hey, *you!*"

The Major took after him on the dead run and caught up with him.

"*You!*" he bellowed The man stopped.

"This," boomed the Major, "is the most flagrant exhibition of discourtesy I've seen in my twenty years of service. Even if you've only been a soldier for ten minutes, you should know better. You *are* a soldier, aren't you?" he added with heavy sarcasm.

"No," said the man.

"What!" The Major went scarlet with fury. "Then where did you get those clothes?"

"Bought 'em in an Army-Navy store," said the man. "I'm a civilian employee—in the garage."

For a moment the Major was speechless. He made sounds which indicated a struggle with his vocabulary.

"Look," said the man: "don't yell at me. That brass doesn't scare me. And next time, ask questions before you make a fool of yourself."

I tore myself away from this fascinating spectacle and moved out of range. I didn't want to be the first G. I. the Major met.

Not long afterward I ran across the man in fatigues in the PX. He recognized me, and joined me in a beer.

"That Major of yours is a beaut, isn't he?" he asked.

I admitted it.

"Guess I'd better keep out of your area," he went on. "That's a good gag, but it won't work twice."

My jaw dropped.

"You mean," I gasped, "you really *are*—"

"Sure!" he grinned. "Pfc. Miller, Company D of the —th. If you get over my way, drop in. Good thing this is a big post!"

H. K. S.

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The Justice of Amru

THE young man was robbing a corpse, with perfect composure and efficiency. From the bearded shape lying in the shallows he stripped a fine camel-hair burnous and linen garments, spreading them to dry in the hot Egyptian sun. A purse, fat with gold, a saber of quality, a silver-sheathed knife, followed. A lump, wrapped in cloth and sealed with resin, was laid aside for future examination. The young man, who wore only a native white cotton gown, dirty and tattered, then removed excellent sandals from the feet of the corpse, eyed them with complacent approval, and set them also to dry. This done, he shoved the dead man out into the Nile current and sat down, wearily.

He was thin, hard, but had scant strength. The open neck of his robe revealed the start of a half-healed scar on his left chest. Another showed on his arm. A ring showed on his hand. His features were regular, unshaven for days and blurred with brownish beard; yet his gray eyes sparkled and there was a whimsical humor in his look. He had an air of cool, deft efficiency as he sat looking at the water of the Nile and the opposite shores.

"So our elegant sub-prefect of the Memphis nome now robs dead men!" said a voice.

The young man scarcely seemed to move; yet the knife on the sand beside him vanished. His whimsical look became a wary glint. He glanced around; no one was in sight. The desolate desert hills, the rocks and sand dunes, stretched emptily.

FANATIC FOLLOWERS OF MOHAMMED STORMED OUT OF ARABIA IN THE SEVENTH CENTURY TO SLAUGHTER THE GREEK TROOPS OF THE GREAT EASTERN EMPIRE AND CONQUER EGYPT . . . AND AGAIN THE STRANGE SPHINX EMERALD CAME ON THE SCENE TO PLAY ITS PART IN THE UNROLLING HISTORIC DRAMA.

by H. BEDFORD-JONES

"A dead Arab," he observed, "may preserve the life of Gregory, the sub-governor who has lost his district, his army and everything else. If you know me, come into sight."

A movement stirred. From the sand close behind him rose a woman. In this waste of naked sand and rock she seemed a dream-figure: white-clad, jeweled, golden hair knotted behind her head, exhaling a delicious scent of perfumes. Gregory saw her and stared.

"Impossible! Claris—or her ghost! Do ghosts appear in full sunlight?"

"This one does," said she, coming forward. "Did you come to save me?"

"Save you? I can't save myself," said he. "The world's gone to pieces. I was left for dead—those Arabs smashed our troops at the first charge. Some natives took care of me afterward. I floated down the Nile last night on a log, crawled ashore here, and saw this dead Arab—"

"We can get to Memphis?" she queried.

"As slaves, yes. Those Arabs came straight across the desert from Arabia. They struck us at Memphis, took the city, and now they're marching down-river for Babylon and Alexandria. Nor is that the worst. But I'm famished—have you anything to eat?"

"All you want, at the villa," said she. "I've been there, ill, for two weeks. Everyone's gone now. I came to the river hoping to find a boat going downstream."

"Too late," said he. "Where's the villa?"

"A mile away, back from the river. I walked." Her tone was petulant.

"And you complain? Look, then."

He ripped away his robe, baring himself to the waist. Her lovely eyes saw the great wound-scar in front, the others about his ribs; those eyes lost their fixed blankness—they became human. She seemed to waken from a dream. He saw she had been in a stupor of fright.

"Come. I'll take you," she said, turning. "There are no boats."

"None," he agreed dryly. "I can save you—perhaps. It's a gamble."

She struck out, led the way, spoke no word. He followed, unsteadily gathering up the Arab garments and sword; he was shaky, but clear mentally; she was physically well but cloudy and confused in mind, a person who had run slap into the world's end. Gregory knew her father must be dead with the Greek troops—few had escaped the Arab steel. Byzantium, the great Eastern Empire, had ruled Egypt; now, in this April of 640 A.D., the Arabs were taking it.

A QUEER situation, thought Gregory. Except for scattered upcountry garrisons, the Greeks ruled from beautiful, impregnable Alexandria. The Egyptian country people, the Copts, were oppressed serfs. Then, a bolt from the blue, appeared Amru and his horde of desert Arabs—leaping suddenly out of the desert and capturing Memphis, nominal capital of the country. Strange men, these Arabs, fiery zealots of a new religion, enemies to the Greeks but not to Christians. The Greeks fled to Babylon or Alexandria, or were slain; the Copts fraternized with the invaders. And then—

Makokas, imperial prefect or governor of central Egypt, struck a bargain with Amru. Upon payment of one dinar per head, the Copts, who regarded the Arabs as saviors, were to be left unmolested. Grim Amru wanted converts to Mohammedanism or else a money payment. The bargain was struck; the Copts became friends; and down the Nile like a swarm of flies went the Greeks in wild panic—or else died. Babylon, an old fortress on the Mokattam hills across the Nile from the Pyramids and Great Sphinx, and Alexandria alone remained to the Greeks; and Amru was now marching upon them.

"And we happen to be in between," said Gregory, explaining the situation as he plodded along through the sand. "Parties of Arabs have gone ahead. Amru follows with his main army—I hoped to get through, but could not make it. Any hour now, they'll be upon us."

"I can always die," she said—her only comment.

He spat out an oath. "Bosh! These Arabs are ignorant fellows, plain desert rats. They'll kill Gregory the sub-prefect like a dog. Illas the Magician they'll revere. I know their customs; I can talk their lingo—wait and see! And without a fleet they'll never take Alexandria. A fleet with aid and supplies will come from Byzantium, and they'll be helpless. Jackals baiting the moon—you'll see."

She said nothing. She appeared to be frozen inside.

They followed a road up along a wadi and came abruptly upon a house, a villa with some trees. It had water, obviously from a spring. Everything was wide open; when the slaves departed, they had looted it. Several horses showed in the stables, however. Gregory fed and watered them while she looked on; then they went indoors.

"Now, Claris—wake up, move," he said abruptly. "Off with those fine

clothes; put on the roughest you have. Gold? Jewels?" He shrugged. "Get what you have. I must eat, so must you."

She came to him, touched him, looked into his eyes.

"Is there hope? Can you save us?"

"Yes," he lied. "Of course. You must be my female slave, say my wife. And we've no time to lose. Eat first. Then clothes, then horses and get away from here."

"Come and look. The villa's been plundered."

The dishes, delicate glassware—everything was smashed and littered. They found food in plenty, and wine. Gregory made her eat, and did likewise. He had known her father well, and her too, in the days before the world's end. For the world had ended in Egypt, and the desert had come in.

The meal over, she disappeared. Gregory changed into his new garments. Curious, he cut open the wrappings of the hard object taken from the Arab. Green caught his eye,

A man, he wrote, had sought him, demanding that he produce gold by magic. Amru understood, and swore heartily.

Illustrated by Maurice Bower

stopped his breath. An emerald? Undoubtedly. Hastily he wrapped it up again. Jewels were of no value now, but might come in very handy.

He roamed about the house, finding nothing other persons would value, yet upon which he seized with avidity—bits of parchment, a reed pen, glass trinkets, odds and ends such as sewing materials. He knew the desert people and their ways—simple, direct, incredibly wrapped up in their new religion. These tribes had come out of Arabia with a fierce and consuming belief, a disdain of death, which swept away the finest legions of the Empire like water. Nothing could stand before them. Amru had only four thousand men, yet had already won Egypt. If Heraclius the feeble emperor sent no help, then Amru would win Alexandria as well.

"As for me," reflected Gregory, "I may escape—and there's only one way. I don't pine to be a martyr. If I can use my head, well and good. One error will get it sliced off."

Claris appeared while he was saddling two of the horses. To his delight, she was now a different person—fine Greek raiment replaced by ordinary blue cotton garments covered with a white burnous, a dirty cloth wrapped about her head. Gregory caught her hand, touched his lips to it, and laughed.

"Excellent! Just be yourself—a Greek slave, eh? You can sew? Then mount, and let's get away from here. I need some sewing done; then we'll be ready for anything."

BY degrees, he perceived, she was emerging from the frozen hopelessness, and returning to her warm self. She had seen everything she knew pass as a dream; she had heard, too, that her father was dead. He could not discuss the matter now. He knew time was short and fate hard upon their heels.

She did not look back; they rode toward the river highway. When they sighted it, Gregory saw it was empty, the river empty, but high dust was rising to the south. On the north, it was not far to Babylon; indeed, across the Nile the ponderous blue masses of the Pyramids showed against the horizon, but Arabs would be riding there, skirmishers for the army. At the villa, Gregory had smeared his bearded features and hands with dust and grime. These Arabs were no darker than he, but it was imperative that he be not known for a Greek.

Within sight of the river, he halted beside a cluster of rocks.

"Time for the sewing, Claris," he said. "While you sew, I must write; and I think I'll play dumb after this. Speak with me by signs only."

She dismounted. There was no shade; they sat by the rocks in the sunlight. Gregory doffed burnous and the shirt beneath, and showed her what he wanted sewed. She went at it with nimble fingers. He had fetched a small horn of ink from the villa, and with the reed pen began to write on scraps of the parchment—not in Greek, but in queer letters without vowel signs. He had received an excellent grounding in Arabic, which was largely similar to Aramaic, the language generally used. Much of his official work had been among the nomad tribes, in consequence.

The sewing was finished, to his delighted satisfaction, and he dressed.

"Well! Now, with luck, we're ready for anything! Mount and ride."

"North?" she asked. "To Babylon?"

"No. South—toward victorious Amru, who's not far."

The dust-cloud, rising to the zenith, was close at hand now.

Gregory took the reins of the other horse, for the looks of the thing. Afternoon was wearing on. Behind him was now nothing—his career gone, family lost in the whirl of war, life itself a mere gamble. Claris remained, a relic of the past, a lovely relic. . . . Worth while? He could not tell, as yet. He recollected the emerald, laughed, and handed it to her.

"A gift for you, fair lady—an emerald, I believe. It may amuse you—"

She took it, then lifted her head. A cry escaped her.

"A wonderful thing, Claris," Gregory muttered. Now he stared at it, enthralled, as the sunset lighted it.

"Look—steel! Coming toward us!"

He saw the party of horsemen, steel glinting in the sun.

"Very well. Remember, I'm dumb; say nothing. Use signs if you must."

They rode toward the horsemen. Behind these appeared others, extending into a great dun dust-cloud that mounted the heavens. Here was the entire Moslem army on the move. The vanguard drew near—gaunt brown, bearded figures in makeshift armor. The leader wore mail taken from a Greek. He drew rein, gaze glittering on Gregory, with harsh challenge.

GREGORY lifted his hand, turning down the two central fingers—an approximation of the Arabic characters for Allah. He drew rein stirrup with the warrior, pointed to his mouth, making dumb play. Arabs clustered around.

"Kill the dog!" went up growls. "Take the woman, Musa. They are Greeks."

Gregory looked at the leader and laughed. He leaned forward, and they all saw him pluck a scrap of parchment from the ear of Musa's horse. He gave this parchment to Musa, who took it, opened it, saw writing, and stared in astonishment. Amazed grunts went up. A man who could read was shoved forward. He looked at the parchment. His jaw fell.

"It is the name of Amru ibn el-Aas!" he stammered.

"Then, by Allah, this is his affair and not mine," said Musa, and beckoned a warrior. "Guide these two to the General, tell him what happened. Forward!"

Gregory and Claris followed their guide out of the road, and the vanguard pushed on. After them came the main body of the army—all horsemen or camel corps, marching by tribes, tough desert warriors. Slaves and loot had been left behind; there was no baggage convoy; they were going to fight and nothing else. Tents loaded on camels brought up the rear.

Amru with his chief leaders and finest horsemen held the center of the march—a fine vigorous man, exceptional in feature and body, simple and fanatical like them all, yet vibrant with authority and conscious power. The serried lines opened up for the guide and his two charges to gain the General's staff. Amru glanced at them, listened to what the guide said, then waved his hand.

"Everything to its time," he replied. "When the night halt is made, when the sunset prayer is said and we have eaten, I will see them. Until then, upon your head be their safety and care. Forward."

The staff, the army, moved forward. A little army, barely four thousand in all, but of such men as were rarely seen in the world. Intent, fearless, utterly obedient, with a supreme confidence in heaven's aid, and superbly capable. And a leader, thought Gregory, like unto his men, worthy of them. It was no wonder these men had scattered the legions of the Empire like grass in the wind.

No convoy of luggage, except tents. No engines of war. No slaves and captives. No vast stores of food and loot. Just four thousand iron men moving to capture Babylon and Alexandria, in order to spread their faith.

Gregory played dumb and heard much talk. On the morrow they would sight the towers of Babylon and, across the Nile, the Pyramids and Sphinx. Many of these Arabs had been in Egypt previously. They knew the country. They marveled at the Sphinx above all things. One man said there was a second Great Sphinx, back in the Mokattam hills—one came first to forests of petrified trees. They told fantastic stories about the place. The Sphinx was an ancient river-beast turned to stone like the trees, they said.

The captives wakened great curiosity, and the stories of the guide; but Gregory heard nothing and spoke no word. At the afternoon prayer, when all dismounted and bowed toward Mecca, he moved not. He was quite aware, however, of the interest roused in one man by Claris. This man, Khalid, was a warrior of renown, to judge by his arms and bearing, and was a handsome dark devil to boot. The guide, however, warned him away from the girl, and he obeyed for the moment. Gregory saw trouble there, ere long. These men amazed him and frightened him. Jackals baiting the moon? Plain desert rats? At thought of his own words, he grimaced. He was readjusting all his opinions now.

The march was halted at last. No tents were pitched. Food was given the two; the army ate. Ablutions were made. Then, as the sun touched the western sand, voices of muezzins were heard, and the army prayed as one man. After that, the guide took his two charges to the circle of captains and the presence of Amru.

Claris was left aside. Gregory came forward and sat down, face to face with the hard-eyed Amru. He made no pretence of being deaf, but made signs of writing, and in the sand drew letters with a stick. As he did so, he uncovered a bit of parchment. Everyone saw him pick it from the sand and look at it. He gave it to Amru, whose eyes glinted in astonishment. It was handed around. Grunts broke forth as the words written on it were read aloud: *"Victory. Egypt is given to Amru, the slave of Allah."*

Very careful not to cheapen his tricks, Gregory guarded all he said and did. Writing in the sand, he gave his name—Illas the Magician. Illas, of the tribe of Pent, from the country to the far west and south—the desert. Puzzled, caught by his magic powers, they followed the stick in the sand, fired in questions; Amru alone said nothing—sat watching everything. When Gregory picked up pebbles and they vanished, when he changed bits of dry stick into gold coins before their eyes, Amru spoke at last.

"Magic is from Allah or from the devils. Whence comes yours?"

Gregory took warning, and wrote: *"Who is Allah?"*

This roused instant indignation, anger and jeers. "He is an infidel—slay him!" rose the cry. Gregory wrote rapidly, and Amru read the words. He had come with his wife, in search of a new deity foretold him. This was all Amru needed.

"By Allah and Allah!" he exclaimed. "Look you! I, of the Koreish tribe, once flouted and fought against Mohammed, the prophet of Allah. May he be blessed! Now I fight for him, for the Caliph Omar, for the true faith. Was I not brought to see the light? Shall this infidel come from afar in search of Allah, whose very name he knows not, and be slain? For shame! He comes, and by his magic foretells victory. Why?"

He turned and shot the direct question at Gregory:

"Listen, infidel! Do you seek instruction in the true faith?"

Gregory nodded. An eager word escaped Amru.

"You see? That is it. Allah be praised! Cursed with dumbness, he yet speaks with us; Allah has given him some power of magic, also. Let him be given a tent, with his wife; let food be supplied them; let one of the scribes be assigned to instruct him."

Khalid, who had edged into the circle, struck in with bold words.

"Let him be shaven, also, and tested to see if he knows Greek."

"Be shaven—and shamed before all men?" said Amru acidly. "Is that how you would interpret the hospitality due to a guest—one who asks your aid and seeks your faith? When such men as you, Khalid, give orders in the Caliph's name, then will the true faith become accursed of men! Let it be done as I have ordered."

SO, upon the next night, within sight of the massive round towers of Babylon, and the Pyramids west across the Nile, the tents were pitched—the massive dark tent of Amru first, center of the encampment. In those days the river ran so close to Babylon's walls that a huge stone quay jutted into it from the enormous towers. Greeks were jammed into the place, but Amru's clouds of light horse swept the whole land unopposed. And amid the tents was that of Illas the Magician

and his wife. When he came into the tent that afternoon and stretched out beside her, he was in deep gloom.

"There's no hope, Claris," he said under his breath. "I've just heard terrible news. They say no aid will be sent Alexandria, and that Heraclius has given up the entire province as lost."

"Is that so terrible for us?" she demanded. "We're safe. We have shelter. These Arabs give us food."

He grunted. "Yes. I hoped for escape to the fortress here, or to Alexandria. But the Greek troops are leaving the fortress, going down to occupy the island in the river, leaving the citadel empty. Treachery, of course. Amru will occupy the place tomorrow. And Alexandria will be a death-trap for all who are in it. I hear most of the ships have already left. Well, I'll have to sleep here in the tent."

She laughed lightly. "Don't be absurd about it! All conventions are swept away; we remain alive—nothing else matters. Now come closer. I want to show you something. I've had plenty of time to study it, and it repays study."

GREGORY made the discovery of the Sphinx emerald, as he sat on the sand looking at it in the sunset light—the emerald he had taken from the dead Arab, the emerald at which he had scarcely glanced. Now he stared at it, enthralled, as the sunset lighted it up.

Immediately he began figuring how he could make use of it. What he had learned of news brought in by the scouts, had confirmed all his half-formed plans and schemes. He had been playing a sure thing with the Arabs; they were eager for converts above all else, and it really mattered little to him what he was. Religion had never meant much to him, anyway. With his knowledge of Egypt, of war, of the Empire, he could rise to any height he liked among them.

Sight of the Sphinx in the beryl captivated his fancy. It was a perfect, tiny Sphinx image, formed by the flaws and bubbles of the beryl, which came together, making it. The perfection of it startled him. The stone was, otherwise, rather poor in color, and had been poorly cut or trimmed in cabochon form.

"A wonderful thing, Claris," he muttered. The sunset light, entering by a chink of the tent-flap, struck athwart the stone now, straight across it. Gregory found sudden new depths and vistas opening to his fancy, and fell silent in amazed interest. The play of refracted color hushed his hurried thoughts and stilled all impulses; it was like a benison—a silent blessing upon the mind—filling him with noble and inspiring fantasies.

Not that noble thoughts were of any avail, he reflected later, when he stretched out in the sand to sleep. He and Claris were at the end of the world; anything that would save them was justified. He would be killed; she would be sent, like other golden maids of Egypt, to the bed of the Prophet, were the truth known about them. And now he knew there was no help, no escape. Alexandria and everyone left in it was lost. Noble thoughts, indeed! Poppycock!

Morning found her laughing, gay-eyed, intent upon turning the shabby tent into a home. She had changed enormously; the shock was absorbed; she was herself again. Gregory went off to watch affairs, thinking of her, marveling at her, but highly uncertain of her.

Amru and his captains were slow to occupy the great massive towers of Babylon. The Greeks had abandoned the fortress and were hurriedly entrenching upon the island; it seemed madness, and it was madness, but the Arabs scented a trap and had no men to lose. Not until evening did they seep into the fortress and finally seize it, almost without a fight. For the Greeks, who had no boats, there was no escape. Amru sent off hurried orders upriver to Memphis to bring all available craft at once.

Gregory, that day, received lessons, which he protracted with idle queries, from a scribe, touching the new faith of Mohammed. He sat long gazing at the emerald, too; he was at this when a shadow touched him. He covered the stone as Khalid appeared, dropped beside him in the sand, and grinned through spiky whiskers.

"Greetings, and peace," said the Arab. "Inside that burnous there is a patch, under the left arm, sewn with red thread. I sold the burnous to El Bokhari. Where is he?"

Gregory met the impudent grin and knew himself caught. El Bokhari had been that dead Arab whom he had tripped. It was truth about the patch. He leaned forward and wrote in the sand. Khalid squinted at the writing.

"He is bewitched—ho, you bewitched El Bokhari, did you? I'll bewitch you with my sword, infidel! That is, unless you make it worth my while. Eh? Yes or no?"

Gregory thought fast. He had the pouch of golden loot. Conversion would make his position secure, but this was still in the future. For the moment, he must buy silence or else be ruined by this rascal. Khalid, sensing his hesitation, chuckled.

"Lend me your woman for two or three days or nights. Either that or gold. Yes?"

Gregory nodded and wrote. Ten golden byzants. Good enough, said Khalid, but when? Tomorrow night. The Arab rose.

"Good; a promise. See that it is kept, or you'll be sorry."

He departed. Gregory uncovered the emerald again, and was staring at it when he heard a step. Claris, this time. She laughed lightly. Her eyes were dancing.

"Looking at the magic stone again? Well, tell me something. How far goes this game of religious instruction? Do you intend to assume the Arab faith?"

He eyed her narrowly. She seemed in extraordinarily high spirits.

"There seems to be no other prospect," he said slowly. "Yes, to be honest. I think it must be done. I suppose you'll upbraid me for a renegade Christian?"

"Not at all," she returned, to his surprise. "I didn't think you had that much common sense, Gregory. And what about me?"

"You?" He fingered his new beard, still watching her. "You? Oh, I'll manage to assure your safety—"

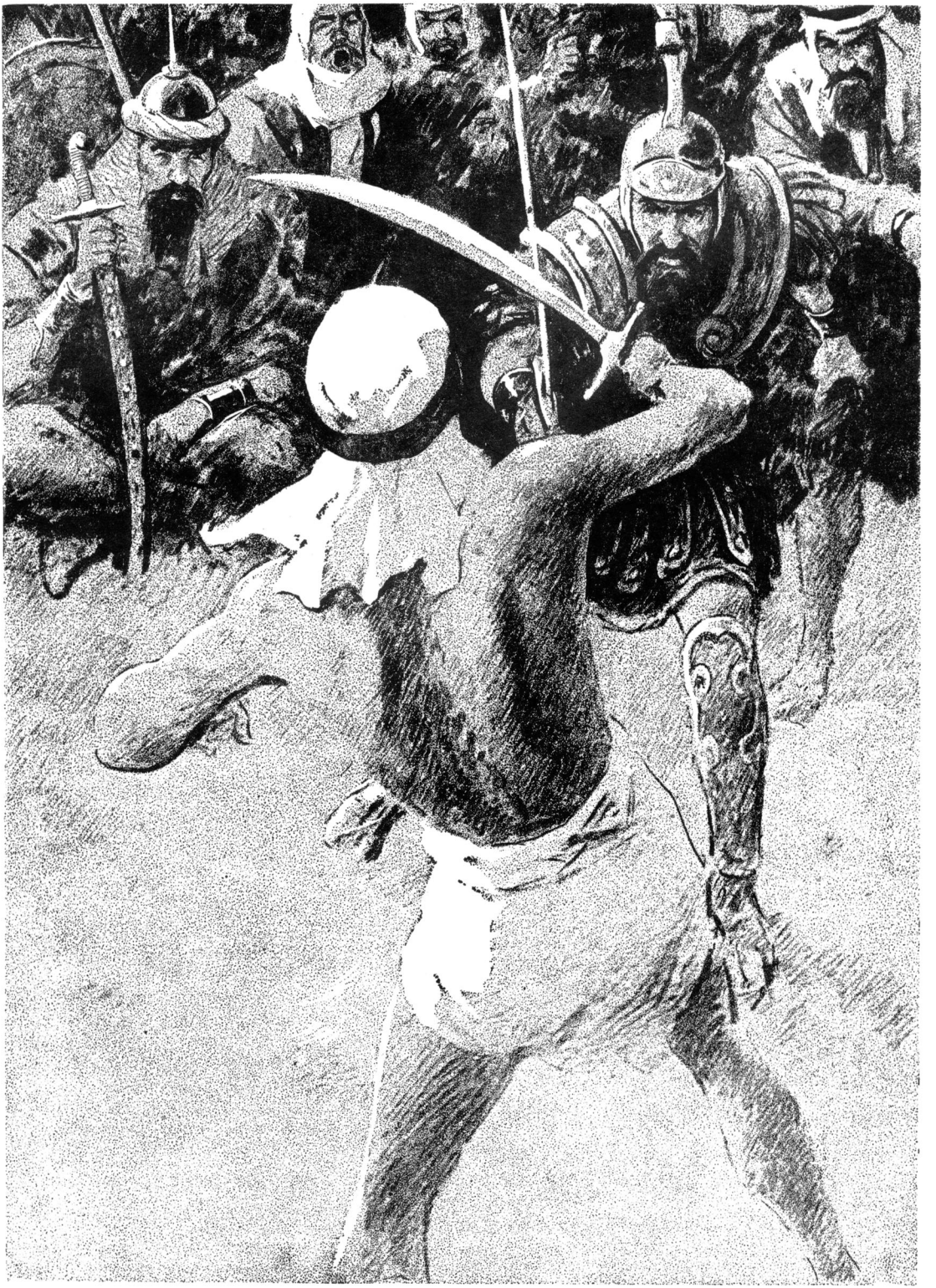
"I'm not worried about my safety," she said, dimpling. "That handsome Khalid tells me—well, never mind now. You've relieved me. Good luck, my dear."

She went, and Gregory returned to his emerald. She was appearing in a new and vastly different light now. No longer the dazed, hapless refugee, she was bright, cheerful, heartless, indifferent to what fate might bring, so long as she did not suffer. Aye, herself, her true self!

He growled under his breath. There must be a devil in this emerald, the way it made him see things clearly! Why, he himself was just what he had seen her to be—no whit better, assuring himself safety by any means at hand! The green stone blinked at him. A scheme had come into his head regarding those ten golden byzants, also; he had laid a pretty trap there for Khalid. He had the gold in his pouch now.

"Just like her," he thought, staring into the emerald depths. "Grabbing at any straw that may save—save what? Life? Why, it's a shabby thing, anyhow. Honor? That's lost in any case. Position? A new future? Bah!"

QUEER thoughts, certainly. Did they come from the green stone? Was there something magic in it and its tiny emblem of the Sphinx? He put it away, and instantly felt relieved, once more confident and assured. Trap Khalid, yes; accept the teachings of the scribe, pronouncing the few words that would make him one of the Moslems, the enlightened—then he was safe, his future secure. So little a thing to do, so much to gain! His old wounds were healing—his strength had returned—he was himself again. He laughed a little as he fell asleep that night. Amru had the fortress now—see him tomorrow and bait the trap for Khalid!



Khalid pressed the attack, gaining confidence, putting out everything he had. Suddenly, swift as light, Gregory saw his chance coming—

On the morrow he turned again to the emerald; it fascinated him, though it left him troubled and ill at ease, since somehow it confused all his purposes. He took it out into the full sunlight. Far beyond, the hills and fortress and the Nile were outspread, Pyramids and Sphinx in the distance. The Greeks were entrenching feverishly. As yet, Amru had made no attack, for he was awaiting the boats due today or tomorrow.

The hot, direct sunlight wakened new depths within the green stone. Gregory was conscious, now, of the mental effect upon him. He was quieted, eased, his troubles were wiped away; his temptations were all folly. He had never heard of auto-hypnosis, yet the condition was plain enough. To him it seemed that the emerald was guiding him. That tiny Sphinx held him spellbound, was almost speaking to him. Saying what? Things he disliked and rebelled against; yet he could not forego listening and looking.

The scribe came and spoke of Mohammed and the law, the new faith, Gregory listened, and accepted dutifully; in the sand he wrote that he almost believed—just one or two things more to be understood. The teacher went away rejoicing. Gregory, having made ready his pieces of gold, went to see Amru, at the big tent.

Seated beside the General, where his writing in the sand could be deciphered with ease, he fell to work. A man, he wrote, had sought him, demanding that he produce gold by magic. Amru understood, and swore heartily.

"By Allah, produce that man, infidel!" he said. "His name!"

Gregory demurred. Charges were one thing, belief another. Perhaps on the morrow he would make public profession of his belief. Let Amru judge for himself. Upon this, he plucked the first byzant out of the sand beneath Amru's foot.

One by one he produced them, one from the very hand of Amru, while the watching captains grunted and marveled. Ten in all. He piled them together, then wrote rapidly:

"Beloved of Allah, with your knife-point mark each coin secretly, so that you will know it again. Tomorrow I will summon the man who takes the gold from me."

PERCEIVING how the trap was being laid, the General chuckled, and the warriors around watched the scene with amusement. Amru swore them to silence, then with his knife he made faint marks upon the coins—solid coins, minted in Byzantium, of full gold, soft to the steel point.

Gregory pouched them again. Amru said that if he were a true believer, he might fight against the Greeks on the morrow in the ranks of the faithful; the island would be attacked as quickly as the boats arrived. This was a distinct shock. It had never occurred to him that he must fight against his own people.

"Better, perhaps," spoke up someone, "to let him try a sword against whatever warrior of the faithful he accuses."

"As Allah liveth, let it be so!" exclaimed Amru. Gregory assented and withdrew. He had made his point, and now let Khalid, avid of gold and women, beware the trap!

That afternoon fighting began, for the boats were coming down in swarms from upriver and the troops were eager to attack the island. It was close, hand-to-hand work, but Amru stopped it before the sunset prayer. It was obvious that the position of the Greeks was hopeless, therefore, said shrewd Amru, attack in the morning, that the remainder of the day might give time for slaughter and prisoners.

Khalid came to Gregory's tent in the evening dusk, obtained his promised gold, saluted Claris with a flourish, and went his way. Gregory made no comment. He was thinking of what must happen when he became one of the Moslems and must fight the Greeks, here or at Alexandria or elsewhere. He lay sleepless a long while that night, his mind busy, and noted that Claris laughed in her sleep. She, at least, no longer dreaded the future.

Kettledrums and trumpets wakened him. It was just after the sunrise prayer, and in swarms of boats the Arabs were at the attack. Amru sat in his tent and watched. For a space Gregory watched also, heartsick, but then turned away from the sight. The Greeks were doomed. . . .

For a space, Gregory sat under the sunrise, gazing at the emerald, oblivious to the slaughter at the island. The green stone spoke to him, wakened bitter things in his brain. He knew that destiny was upon him now, that he could not postpone decision; action was imperative. He must go ahead with his schemes and advance the future, seize the prepared strings and go forward to fame and fortune—

"Oh, renegade! Renegade!" He started. The words actually seemed to come from the stone. He could hear them as with an inner ear. The green fields shining in the sun, the scintillant emerald depths there before him—he looked up and away with eyes that hurt, and sighted Amru sitting in his tent entrance. Amru—oh, by God, there was a man! A true man, a great man, no palpitant coward scheming and conniving to save his pitiful little life. . . .

A groan burst from him. He shoved the emerald away and let it lie in the sunlight, came to his feet, and going into his tent, took the keen curved sword he had found on the dead Arab. He flung off the heavy burnous and walked to the tent of the General. After a moment Amru looked at him, and made a gesture. Gregory seated himself and laid the sword before the feet of the Arab.

"We have conquered, thanks to Allah!" said Amru.

"I too have conquered," said Gregory. The other, with startled surprise at this speech from a dumb man, gave him a piercing look. "Aye, Amru. I am Gregory, sub-prefect of central Egypt, your captive. I played a dark and subtle game and I am sick of it. I do not care for life. I am not a convert. The woman is not my wife. I am not dumb. Call your warrior Khalid, who took my money under threat of exposing me, and let him kill me and end it all. I am alone and weary, and wish to die."

THE bitter words poured out of him. Amru made no reply, but gazed at him for a long moment, then crooked a finger at one of the guards and ordered Khalid brought. Gregory sat, chin drooped on chest, staring at nothing. It was done, and he was glad.

There was a wait. One man after another came with reports—the island was taken; the Greeks were slain or captive. The messengers stood waiting. The captains came from the island and the pursuit, wiping their weapons or binding their hurts. All looked at Amru and the bowed figure before him as word passed around of what Gregory had confessed.

Then came two men bringing Khalid. He was eager and laughing, and wore fine Greek armor taken from an officer. Amru cocked a finger at him and spoke to him.

"Peace to you, Khalid. You fought well. Where got you that armor?"

Khalid laughed. "From an infidel Greek who no longer needed it."

"So! Is it true that you are blessed by Allah with money of gold?"

Khalid felt beneath his armor and brought forth a pouch that hung about his neck by a thong.

"A little," said he. "I took it from the Greek who wore this same armor. He sought to buy his life with it—in vain."

Amru stretched out his hand and took the pouch. He opened it, and examined the gold coins it revealed. Khalid flung a glance at the motionless Gregory, but sensed nothing amiss—until, with a sudden violent cry, Amru threw the coins from him and scattered them afar in the sand.

"Liar! Each of those coins bears the secret mark I myself made on them. You had the gold from this infidel to buy your silence. You have taken part with infidels to betray your brethren of the faith."

Gregory looked up and uttered a harsh laugh.

"Behold justice, Khalid!" he said. "In the trap, my friend—in the trap!"

Hearing the dumb man speak, seeing the look on the faces of those who stood around, suddenly perceiving that he was lost, Khalid could find no words. Nor had he time, for Amru's voice pealed forth in deep anger.

"As I swore by Allah, so let it be done. Your sword, infidel—and you, Khalid! Up! Up and kill!"

Men came crowding forward to see. The hot, quiet sunlight was abruptly electrified by the savage words. To his feet sprang Gregory, baring the sword he had brought. There were no preliminaries. Khalid whirled upon him, snarling and furious, then leaped forward with naked blade.

But, to the amazement of all, the infidel could use his weapon. Gregory knew it was the end of everything for him, and smiled. At least he could die fighting—a soldier, not a craven! He parried the assault, unheeding the stark ferocity of the man facing him, then launched his own attack, sharply.

In those master hands the blades clashed and clashed again, slithering in and out. No quarter—a fight to the death, and both men knew it. Each put forth his skill, and for a space it seemed that little happened; but the keen watching eyes knew swordsmanship, understood each twist of muscle and stance, and yells of approval went up. A leap, a turn of the sword, a parry swift and deft as the assault, in and out, in and sideways, then they were standing almost toe to toe, blade countering blade, hot breaths panting, steel ringing as the quick chopping strokes were parried.

MORE and more watchers gathered. The word spread; men came running; they ringed the open space a dozen deep. Wagers were laid and taken. Still the angry steel rang and clashed. blows missed by a miracle, skill countered skill. Khalid had a disadvantage in his looted armor, and Gregory was aware of it; he knew that armor; Khalid did not. He was saving himself, waiting until he could get a chance at the shoulder-chink. Both men were beginning to fail; the terrific expenditure of energy had told on them, and they were running with sweat; but Gregory gave ground more and more, waiting for the one chance that he dared not miss.

Khalid pressed the attack, gaining confidence, putting out everything he had. Suddenly, swift as light, Gregory saw his chance coming—as sure of it as though a whisper at his ear told him. Khalid drew back, poised for a blow. There was the opening, and Gregory was ready for it when it came. His steel flamed in the sunlight; the keen edge found the shoulder-chink and sheared in—in and in—down through the shoulder. Then Khalid staggered back and wrenched the haft from Gregory's sweaty palm, and stood there with the sword fastened in him and his arm almost sheared away and the blood spurting.

In that one frightful instant, Khalid reacted convulsively, almost blindly. The sword left his hand. He threw it, as he fell—flung it point first. The steel struck Gregory, who was staggering from his own effort and unsuspecting—struck him under the arm and brought him down in a sprawled heap as it pierced into him.

There they lay, as the yelling, excited watchers leaped out and huddled about them. Amru strode through the throng, looked at the dead Khalid, then turned to Gregory.

"He is not dead," said a man, examining him. "A bad hurt, but he will live."

"Slay! Slay! Kill the infidel!" went up hot voices.

Amru swung around and lifted his arms.

"In the name of Allah, the merciful!" leaped out his dominant voice. "Know ye not what is written in the Ninth Sura of al-Koran? Listen, then! If any of the infidels demand your protection, it says, give him your protection, that he may hear the word of God; and afterward let him reach the place of his security. So long as they act with fidelity toward you, do ye also act with fidelity toward them: for God loves those who fear him.

"So it is written, and I obey," he went on, amid a deep hush. "This infidel came not against us with arms, but demanding protection. Now carry him away, bind up his hurts, and when he is well let him go in peace to his own place. So this matter is settled. We have overcome the unbelieving enemy. Let the prisoners be gathered in this fortress. Let our wounded and a hundred sound men remain to hold the place. The remainder of the army marches tonight, after the evening prayer, upon Alexandria. Strike the tents and be ready!"

SO Gregory was carried away, and in the mercy of Allah passes out of the story. Yet the tale is not ended.

The Greek camp was looted. Much time was spent gathering the prisoners and finishing the pursuit of those who escaped. Amru himself had a look after many details. While he was about them, a warrior came to him saying he had found a piece of glass lying on the sand in the camp. Most of these desert men had never seen jewels.

Amru took it, perceived that it was not glass but a great emerald, and when he looked more closely he saw inside it the tiny figure of the Sphinx—like to the mighty stone Sphinx with red face and headdress across the river near the Pyramids. He stared at the emerald and marveled, and stared again; then, sighing, handed it back.

"Turn it in with the rest of the booty for later division," he ordered, "that no man may profit more than another."

So was it done. What then became of the emerald, or what became of the girl Claris, is not set down in the records. One thing, however, is known of a certainty. That is, that as the afternoon waned, Amru saw that the tents were not being struck; he demanded the reason.

It was reported that, at the very top of his own tent, a pair of doves had made a nest. The birds were shown him at their work; he was asked for the definite order to destroy their nest that the tent might be struck.

"God forbid," said he, "that any true believer should refuse protection to whatever living creature sought the shadow of his hospitality! Let those birds, who have become my guests, be respected as such. Leave my tent here where it is until we have taken Alexandria and returned here."

Thus, to this very day, Mohammedans know as Al Fustat, the Tent, the great city which rose upon this site—the city known to the rest of the world as Cairo.

Anne caught her breath. "But if you know so much—"

The

GORDON KEYNE here tells

TWO days after the funeral of Sir James Trent, I was talking earnestly with his old friend Colonel Magruder. Poor Magruder! For him, the devil was indeed let loose, most literally; but he hated to admit it.

This precise, steely, lantern-jawed old British soldier was merely the shadow of himself. Here in California, fate had caught up with him. I told him the whole truth about Trent's murder, and he mopped his forehead nervously.

"Yes, yes, Doctor Clements. It does seem incredible, unreal! Can you describe the fellow? What is he like?"

"But you should know, Magruder. You're the man who captured him."

He gestured irritably. "That was years ago, Clements, in India. Now we're in California. He was only a half-wild dacoit—I don't remember him. How can one be sure he is the same man? He may be lying."

"Sir James Trent was murdered. That's answer enough."

"And his murderer was found dying."

"The actual killer, yes. I'm talking about the man who sent him, the man who threatened Trent—and who will soon threaten you."

Magruder winced. I was deliberately trying to rouse him, of course, for his own sake; unless he acted, I knew he was a doomed man.

After seven years in the north of India—I had charge of the Lacpore hospital since before the war—I had barely landed at home when I was tossed into this ugly puzzle of murder. While in India I had known Magruder and the others concerned. After retiring from the service, Magruder lived in Hollywood; a niece of his from Scotland had won some vantage-post in the movies, and he lived with her. Unreal as my story must have seemed, he was aware of the facts, and knew I spoke the exact truth. I went on speaking, bluntly:

"Your nerves are gone, Magruder; don't blink it. Now, I've seen and talked with this Hindu who is rightfully Rajah of Sirvath. I don't know his name; I hoped you would. He was not Trent's actual murderer, but instigated the crime. He told me so himself and talked freely. You, he said, are next on his list."

Magruder winced again and scowled at me. I gave him both barrels now.

"This Hindu is a man of education, of wealth and culture. I saved his life while in India, and he remembers it. He claims that four or five men railroaded him, framed him, most unjustly. Trent, he says, was one of those men."

"Absurd!" Magruder shifted uneasily. "During the war, Clements, things had to be done hastily but there was no framing, no injustice. That's the fellow's story, of course. Every scoundrel is an innocent victim, by his own tell. This man was identified as the bandit and put away, that's all."

I got it. Identified—by whom? By Howard Chaffee—perhaps fraudulently. Then the Englishmen acted on that identification. They were not framing anyone. Any blame must attach, not to them, but to the American teak-buyer Chaffee. Yet the victim blamed them all.

It seemed unreal, in this sunny living-room that overlooked most of Hollywood. The villa was perched on the high hills framing the movieland city. Magruder, with a touch of his old decisive air, turned to me earnestly.

"I've taken every precaution, Clements. My friend Count Marinao has helped; he is consulting with me right after luncheon, indeed, regarding a brace of watchmen he recommends. My niece is most capable, too. She knows this country and its customs, and is advising me. The grounds here are well policed at night—"

"Trent was murdered in broad daylight," I broke in. I knew his thought; that I was an obscure physician without wealth or influence, incapable of coming to grips with our enemy. "I'm helping Virginia Trent run down the

Diamond Death

the story of the second Californian marked for murder by the vengeful "Rajah from Hell."

murderer of her father; for your own sake, you must pitch in with us," I said. "Four men are menaced. One is dead. The other three must get together. Virginia has gone up to Santa Barbara to see Balfour, who lives there. You don't, apparently, realize your own acute peril."

"Yes, I do," said he, then looked around in obvious relief. He probably resented my insistence and regretted his own hesitation. "Here's Anne now, so let the dashed affair rest for the moment. —Hello, my dear! This is Doctor Clements, of whom I've so often spoken."

ANNE MAGRUDER, more famous under her screen name of Anne Hastings, came forward with a cordial greeting. Sunny-haired, trim, graceful, her lovely features and laughing eyes had rapidly pushed her to the front of her profession. She had plenty on the ball.

"I'm dying to ask you a hundred things about India, Doctor Clements!" she exclaimed as we shook hands. "Uncle, those insurance men are here to see you. I'll take Dr. Clements into the garden and make him talk, while you take out the insurance."

"Better take out plenty, Magruder," I said with grim significance. His Scotch refusal to meet the greater issue squarely had angered me. With a grunt at the shot, he left us, and I stepped into the garden with Anne.

No sooner were we alone, than she turned on me in warm anger.

"What made you say that? Don't you know that he's all worked up over nothing?"

"Nothing?" I echoed, frowning at her. "Why, he said he had confided in you! And you must know Sir James Trent was murdered—"

"And his murderer, a Hindu, was found dead," she flashed defiantly. "All this talk about some old feud from India, a man seeking revenge, is sheer moonshine. I've tried to make him realize it. So has Count Marinao, who is certainly no fool. Then you along and get him upset and terrified. I don't like it! I sha'n't permit it!"

This was the second mention of Count Marinao.

"Who is this count?" I asked. "One of your peculiar Hollywood nobility?"

Anger sprang in her eyes and voice. "He's a Brazilian gentleman who owns diamond mines, a very good friend, a man of the highest standing."

I shrugged. This fool girl was actually an enemy; obviously, she had spiked my hopes of getting constructive help from Colonel Magruder. I spoke quietly, bitterly:

"Well, my dear, let me as a professional man give you some unpleasant facts: The man who murdered poor Trent was a mere agent. Behind that murder was a man known as the Rajah of Sirvath. Some years ago, in India, he was identified as a notorious bandit and condemned to penal servitude for life. He believed himself framed unjustly; he himself told me so. He holds four men, all at present here in California, to blame."

Her gaze widened on me. "What? Do you know the man?"

I nodded. "One day in Lacpore I picked up a poor devil on the street, half dead and in delirium. In my hospital I brought him back to life; then one night he disappeared. Here in Los Angeles I met him again, the day of Trent's murder. This man was the Rajah of Sirvath, as I must call him for lack of a better name. He is now wealthy, powerful, bent upon being revenged for his supposed injuries."

She caught her breath. "But if you know so much—"

"Listen, please," I broke in. "Your uncle is one of the four men he blames for his supposed injuries. Another is Chaffee. I think he was an American teak-buyer in India, but I know little about him except that he was a scoundrel. Third is the Honorable Fitzjames Balfour, K.C., who is now in Santa Barbara. Fourth was Sir James Trent, now dead, after receiving full warning from the man who hated him. Our enemy is no skulking killer, but

"My boy, this gaudy thing set back Marinao a fat twenty thousand pounds."

Abandoning the lady with a rush, I plunged through the crowd. Good Lord! Could it be? I must make sure!

gives fair warning of his deadly intention."

She was clearly impressed by my words.

"Have you informed the police of all this?" she asked.

"I've no evidence. They'd call the yarn fantastic. I don't know what name the man uses or where he lives. He's able, wealthy, driven by a frightful sense of supposed injustice. He's a monster, a killer."

Her lovely features were troubled, irresolute. She eyed me sharply.

"And you? Just what is your interest in this affair?"

"Sir James Trent was my friend. His daughter Virginia is—well, I hope she may be more than a friend. I'm helping her to run down the murderer of her father."

"The actual murderer was found dead."

"Yes. I killed him."

I hoped that the bald shock of this statement would put some sense into her head. I should have known better. After all, she was English, or Scotch, and a movie actress to whom the cinema world was everything; she would permit nothing to menace the petty illusions of that little world of hers.

"Oh! Doctor Clements, I think you must be out of your head!" she breathed. "Such things—here in California, in Hollywood—why, they simply can't be as you say! They're not real. You may believe all this nonsense, of course, but I beg you not to frighten poor Uncle any further."

"I have no wish to frighten him," I rejoined curtly. "My entire aim is to save his life, if possible. I'm sorry you think it nonsense."

"I don't know what to think," she said. Then, suddenly beaming, she put her hand out to mine. "But I do feel you're honest about it; you mean well. Perhaps you're too fresh from India and its wonderful scenes—"

"Wonderful fiddlesticks! The world is the same everywhere," I interrupted sharply.

Then I was aware of Colonel Magruder approaching us. There was a change in him. He was more himself, firm with military bearing; evidently something must have happened to cause it. He pressed me to remain for luncheon, but I refused.

"Thanks, no," I said. "I'm leaving my hotel this afternoon. I've found an apartment, and must get moved into it."

"Then come tonight, do!" Anne exclaimed impulsively. "I'm having a party—everyone connected with my end of the studio will be there, and half Hollywood besides; a grand and noisy and gorgeous affair. It'll bore poor Uncle stiff unless you're here to brace him up. Any time after eight. We'll expect you."

I ASSENTED. She departed gayly, like the useless and artificial creature she was, a butterfly in a world of men and sense and action. Magruder stroked his gray mustache and eyed me with grim intentness.

"Well, what's happened?" I asked bluntly.

He grimaced. "Dash it all, Clements—a chap just telephoned me. Spoke Hindustani. Said he was speaking for the Rajah of Sirvath."

"Hello! Our Rajah from Hell in person?"

"No. An old man, evidently."

I whistled softly and waited. He went on with a snap in his voice. The actual contact with peril had restored him to himself.

"Devilish impudence, I call it! The chap said that the Rajah would pay his debt to me within twenty-four hours, in my own house, among my own people. Then he rang off."

I regarded him gravely.

"Magruder, this means business. Our man warns before he strikes; he warned Trent. What shall you do? Count on my help in any way."

MAGRUDER beckoned to a man who had followed him from the house. Despite his garb of butler, his military figure betrayed the old soldier. A sturdy, capable man who approached and stood at attention. I liked his craggy resolute features.

"Dr. Clements, this is my old striker, Parr, who knows all about the business," Magruder said. "Parr, that Hindu chap just telephoned me in a threatening way. You'll stay armed, and watch every stranger who arrives. The two men Count Marinao is sending will arrive this afternoon. Watch the house and grounds carefully today and this evening. Check on everyone who comes. Take nobody for granted."

"Very good, sir," Parr said flintily.

"And," I cut in, "your bullets won't hurt our Rajah from Hell! He wears some sort of bullet-proof vest, as I found to my cost."

"That won't save him if he shows up," declared Magruder with a snort. "Upon my word, I hope he does come and give us a chance! Well, why are you frowning?"

"I think we should get in touch with Balfour," I replied. "Virginia Trent went to Santa Barbara to see him. He should make common cause with us—"

"Harrumph!" Magruder snorted again. "We can handle this filthy native without help. Balfour's a pompous ass. Trust Parr to take care of the rascal if he does appear."

With this, he dismissed Parr and took my arm as we walked toward the house. I asked him a question about Count Marinao.

"A splendid chap, Clements. Confidentially, I'm sure he has a romantic interest in my niece; I'm meeting him downtown after luncheon. He's rather formal, pleasantly old-fashioned. I fancy he wants my permission to pay his respects to Anne. You're at the Etruria? I'll stop in there this afternoon."

"I'll be there till about three," I rejoined. "Then I'm moving."

"Right. I'll stop in. I'm delighted that you'll come around tonight. I'd like you to size up Marinao—I'm sure you'll take to him."

"I'll come, yes," I told him. "With a pistol in my pocket."

With this, I took my leave, somewhat irritated. Magruder's contempt of the Rajah and the attitude of his niece disturbed me. Knowing so well the Rajah's implacable hatred and deep guile, I had hoped for a union of all our forces against him. I knew that his agents kept me under surveillance; this was why I had taken an apartment, which insured me more privacy than did the hotel.

True, the Rajah had sworn not to harm me, since I had once saved his life, but he had said frankly that with his agents it was another matter. And if it came to death grips he would forget his oaths. For agents, mere pawns to him, he could get plenty of Hindu workmen from the inland regions about Fresno. . . .

Luncheon past, I sat down and wrote lengthily to Balfour at Santa Barbara. I had known him in India, a rather pompous fellow. With Virginia Trent now there to see him, my letter would help to impress him; I meant to join her there soon. I urged Balfour to try and locate the man Howard Chaffee. I knew vaguely that he was now rich and settled somewhere up the coast. We needed to present a united front against this deathly terror.

My letter was barely posted at the hotel desk when in walked Colonel Magruder from the taxicab entrance. He was most cheerful, and noting a perceptible bulge in his coat pocket, I presumed he was armed; but my presumption was incorrect.

"Hello, Clements!" He gave me a firm, quick grip and motioned to a corner of the lobby. "Come over here; I want to show you something. Well, it was precisely as I anticipated. The Count has requested my permission to speak with Anne." He emitted a dry chuckle. "My permission, in this day and age and country! Rather a joke, what?"

"You seem to be hugely delighted over it," I observed, as we settled upon a divan before the huge expanse of windows that overlooked the gardens.

"Frankly, I am, and so I should be." With a sigh of relaxation, Magruder sank down and accepted the cigarette I offered. "An extraordinarily fine chap, this Marinao. And a brilliant lawyer, by the way."

"Yes? Anne told me that he owns diamond mines."

"In his native Brazil, yes. Purely as a matter of form, I've cabled my solicitors to look up his family and so forth. Personally, I'm entirely satisfied about him. What's more to the point, naturally, Anne is satisfied. And this, my boy, speaks more loudly than anything else."

He tapped the bulging pocket, giving me a bright smiling glance.

"Must be a bank statement, so to reach into your canny Scots soul," I said.

He laughed. "Something just as good, anyhow. I want you to see it, Clements. He asked me to allow him to present it to Anne this evening. I agreed and brought it along with me. To be honest, I wanted to make certain the stones are what they appear to be, as I know nothing of such things."

The cautious old Scot produced from his pocket a magnificent case of scarlet morocco upon which Anne's name was stamped in gold. It was four inches wide, eight in length, and quite thick. Magruder unhooked the two clasps and threw back the lid to display, with obvious pride, a handsome necklace of diamonds mounted in gold and platinum.

They were not ordinary stones, but glorious blazing diamonds astonishing to look upon—the sort of thing that one sees displayed in great jewelers' windows. I poked at them with a finger.

"Are they real?"

"Exactly what I asked myself, Clements. Yes, I stopped in at Brook's and had them examined. My boy this gaudy thing set back Marinao a fat twenty thousand pounds! What a present! It'll take Anne's breath away."

"It takes mine away," I said dryly, "to think of you walking about Los Angeles with that in your pocket."

"OH, Parr's with me; he's just outside now." Closing the case again, Magruder slipped it back into his pocket. He rose, then paused. "I must run along. By the way, I was telling Marinao that story of yours, about the Rajah and so forth. He's inclined to take it gravely, and wants to go into the matter with you tonight."

"I'll be glad," I responded. "Anything that may change your attitude will be well worth while. I suppose you're going to give Anne a sneak preview of the necklace, eh?"

He shook his head. "No; I had to promise him I wouldn't. He's keen on giving it himself and all that. I told him bluntly I'd like to make sure it was real, and he seemed amused."

As well he might, I thought.

Outside, Parr joined his master, stalking close behind him to the car. The very presence of that bulldog of a man was reassuring. I began to think that the Rajah from Hell might have made a mistake in announcing his intentions so dramatically. None the less

I regretted that my original plan to take Magruder to Santa Barbara for an immediate conference with Virginia and Balfour, had fallen through. Perhaps, I thought, I might get him away tonight following the party. We could drive up there in two or three hours and return tomorrow. I resolved to work toward this objective.

IT was close to eight-thirty that evening when a taxicab landed me at the hilltop villa, and none too early. When Magruder said eight o'clock, he had meant just that, and I was the last guest to arrive. I was frankly curious to see what a Hollywood party was like. The precautions surprised me. Before the taxi door opened, my name was checked, and at the entrance stood Parr and another man watching all arrivals.

Once inside, I was in the midst of a throng that filled the place to the doors. Of Magruder, at first, I saw nothing. Here were actors, directors, and every other type of person from the studios. Anne took me in hand, introducing me to a host of people, and upon finding a couple of old Anglo-Indians among the guests, I got on famously. Somewhat to my disappointment, there was nothing wild or rakehelly about the party. It was even sedate.

Everyone seemed to know everyone else. Hors d'œuvres and a buffet supper were on the program, with drinks in profusion, yet a reasonable sobriety prevailed. Most of these people were doing things, and liquor does not assist mental activity. It was not the outlander's notion of a movie party, but it was vastly interesting. I enjoyed it.

After a time Colonel Magruder appeared, making a way through the crowd to my side. He was obviously in high good humor, heightened by a cocktail, and greeted me jovially.

"Where's your nabob from Brazil?" I asked. "So far, I haven't seen him."

"He was in the library with me just now," Magruder replied, "looking at the necklace. Said he was taking it to give Anne. I imagine they're somewhere about." He glanced around, and took my arm. "See here, Clements! Some of the crowd, old Indians, are coming to the library for a chat and a quiet drink. We'll shut out all this chatter and noise. You know where the library is? Good. Come there in ten minutes or so, then."

Someone called him, and with a resigned look he left me. For no reason that I could assign, his words lingered in my head: "Said he was taking it to give Anne." They had a faintly sinister import, an odd significance. I frowned over them in vain, and could find no cause for my uneasy feeling.

A director's wife who had once gushed over the Taj Mahal at sunrise fastened herself upon me, and for a few minutes I abandoned myself to intensive gas attacks about India. Then, all of a sudden, I was brought wide awake and alert, with sharply incredulous surmise jerking at me.

Threading his way through the throng and making for the entrance doors, was a man. His face I could not see; but his shoulders and back, the proud set of his head—good Lord! Could it be? Abandoning the lady with a rush, I plunged through the crowd after him. His face—I must make sure! The figure, that carriage, brought the Rajah to mind, but I dared make no mistake with so many foreigners in this throng.

Long before I could catch up with him, my quarry had passed out of the entry. At length I shoved my way through the last groups, got outside, found Parr standing there, and caught his arm.

"Parr! Who was the man who just came out—ah, there he goes!" I caught sight of the figure striding rapidly toward a car that stood in the drive, its engine purring. "That's the one! Who is he?"

"That, sir? Why, that's Count Marinao," responded Parr.

This answer staggered me. For an instant I hesitated, then jumped forward. If this were Marinao, I had every excuse to stop him; I wanted to meet him, anyway. But why was he getting into that car, as though to leave? I advanced into the drive, hurrying; my man was already in the car, a foreign cabriolet.

"Count Marinao!" I called sharply.

I was almost at the car when its door swung open. In the house lights, I saw the face of the man who looked out and smiled at me. I heard the voice of the Rajah from Hell, vibrant as a bronze temple-bell.

"Looking for me, Dr. Clements? Too late, my friend—better take a look at Magruder."

The car door slammed; the engine roared; the car leaped past, nearly knocking me down. Marinao—the Rajah from Hell himself! The car was gone. I looked after it, stupefied by the devilish audacity of the man, realizing too late the ghastly truth.

FROM inside the house shrilled the thin scream of a woman.

A commotion had arisen in there. I turned to the entrance, found Parr gone, heard his voice calling me to enter. It was a job; the crowd was in a milling mass, voices were shrilling madly, and working through was a slow matter. Parr stood at the library door, on guard. When I reached him he motioned in, and admitted me.

A studio physician, one of the guests, was in the library with Anne Magruder. It was she who had screamed. Now she stood pale and silent, looking on, one hand at her face.

Colonel Magruder was dead.

He sat in his chair at the desk, across which he had collapsed. Almost under his hand, open and empty, was the scarlet morocco case that had held the diamond necklace.

The physician was leaning over the desk, holding Magruder's wrist. He straightened up and seemed about to speak, when I saw a swift pallor sweep across his face. I was barely in time to catch him as he keeled over, senseless.

I spoke sharply, Anne, with bewildered tragedy in her eyes, helped me to get him on the couch at one side. He was breathing hard, but now he relaxed. After a moment he appeared to be all right, and leaving Anne beside him, I turned back to the desk.

Neither of us spoke. I touched Magruder's wrist; his pulse had ceased. He showed no sign of any violence; to all appearance he had succumbed to a

heart attack. I knew better. The physician's collapse had given me a hint, and I could guess the rest. Quickly, I went to the window beside Magruder, opened it wide, then returned to the desk.

A glitter there caught my eye—tiny shards of glass. I moved the hand of Magruder aside. Other glass shards showed, so incredibly thin as almost to crumble at a touch, and a slight vanishing stain on the blotter. Even as I looked, it was gone. I took up an envelope and into it gathered some of the glass fragments.

"He's better now," came Anne's voice.

I looked up. The physician was sitting up, looking around with a bewildered expression.

"It—it's my heart," he murmured. "I've had one or two attacks. They come at the most inconvenient times—never knocked me out before—"

He came to his feet, quite all right once more. Anne introduced us. He shook hands, then nodded at Magruder.

"Heart got him, eh?" he said.

I was about to make hot denial, when I saw the steady gaze of Anne fastened upon me. She made an impulsive gesture, and this checked my words. I read her message, and with a shrug obeyed her eyes.

"YES, so it would seem," I assented, and turned to the door. Already the whole infernal scheme was coming clear to me. The gorgeous scarlet of that morocco case, so unusual in color for a jeweler to use, revealed the diabolic cunning of the crime. At my summons, Parr came into the room.

"Have you called the police?" I demanded.

"Not yet, sir," he replied, eyes on the dead man.

"Then go slow. Find either of the watchmen supplied by Count Marinao and bring 'em here—by force. Colonel Magruder has apparently been the victim of a heart attack. Tell the guests and clear 'em out."

Parr departed. I turned to my confrère.

"Doctor, will you help get rid of the guests? You know them, I don't. Then, if you'll be so kind, return here and take charge of the formalities. The cause of death is evidently quite obvious."

Missing the sarcasm in my tone, he nodded and left the room. I swung around and looked at Anne Magruder, who had missed nothing.

"Well?" I said grimly. "Why did you want me to keep quiet?"

She had pulled herself together. Her gaze was defiant, her voice had a bitter edge when she replied.

"Do you think the police could do anything—now that he's dead?"

"They couldn't save him, true." I looked down at the dead man. "Poor Magruder! To think that the very man you feared was pretending to be a friend, tricking you, a Hindu pretending to be a Brazilian! And I unmasked him too late."

My words shook her out of her calm and brought a rush of color into her face.

"Dr. Clements! What do you mean by that?"

"Precisely what I say. I saw the Rajah of Sirvath leaving the house. I followed him. He jumped into a waiting car, laughed at me, and sped

Illustrated by James A. Ernst

I was barely in time to catch the physician as he keeled over, senseless.

"Beg pardon, sir," came his hoarse voice. "If I might offer you a bit of help—"

away. He was your friend Count Mariano, young woman!"

"Count Marinao—oh, it's fantastic, impossible!" she cried.

"Did Marinao give you the diamond necklace that was in the scarlet case there?"

"Diamond necklace—of course he didn't! I never saw that case before."

Her name was on the top of the case; it might have proved my story, but her shocked incredulity, her actual hostility, silenced me.

Parr came into the room, alone.

"Those two men, sir," he reported. "Not here. Gone."

I turned again to the girl.

"Your uncle has been murdered," I said. "Do you want to call in the police?"

She stiffened; her eyes hardened on me.

"There's not one single thing to indicate murder," she replied steadily. "Your mania is unjustified. Certainly I shall not summon the police."

At this, I perceived the truth; and it sickened me.

"A Hollywood murder story splashed over the newspapers would hurt; you can't take it, eh?" At the scorn in my voice she winced, but her eyes remained hard, inflexible. "Well, the choice is yours."

"Yes, it's mine," she said. "He died from heart failure. A doctor says so."

I made no retort, but bowed silently; the matter was closed. After all, she had herself, her career, to think about. Murder publicity might be highly injurious. There was something to be said for her attitude, but it made her shrink to less than nothing in my sight.

"Do you know Marinao's address?" I demanded.

"Of course. The Roosevelt. He's well known. This accusation you make is so utterly preposterous—"

Her voice died away under the look that I gave her. Turning, I walked out of the room, only to be halted abruptly. Parr was clutching at my arm. His face was white, strained, agonized.

"Beg pardon, sir," came his hoarse voice. "I—I heard what was said. If I might offer you a bit of help—"

"So you don't care much for her either, eh?" I observed. "Very well. Do you want to take service with me—until I'm through with this Rajah from Hell?"

"So help me, I do!" he said fervently. I had read his look aright. "Was it him done it, sir?"

"It was," I said. "How soon can you clear out of here?"

"In ten minutes, sir—now that he's gone. Lor' love me, I've served him these fourteen year past—"

"Get your stuff," I said curtly. "And show me where's a telephone. I'll order a taxicab."

The house was emptying rapidly. Parr showed me to a telephone. The guest physician nodded to me as he went back toward the library and said something about the coroner. I ignored him and picked up the telephone. I was in a cold fury. Like Parr, I wanted nothing more to do with this house or anyone in it.

After summoning a taxicab. I called the hotel and asked for Count Marinao. I was not surprised to learn he had checked out that morning, leaving no forwarding address.

"Has he been stopping long with you?" I demanded.

"Over a month," was the response. "He has gone back to Brazil, and said he would send his address later."

I went outside and walked up and down the drive, waiting for the taxi.

No use calling in the police; all tracks were covered. Marinao had vanished forever. No wonder he had laughed at me! With that golden skin, he could pass for a Latin of any sort. Count Marinao, with a suite at the Roosevelt, had been in no danger of having his real identity disclosed. His imposture was safe.

How Magruder had died, was only too clear. Magruder had brought the necklace home this afternoon, probably putting it on his desk. On arriving tonight, Marinao had joined him in the library; they had looked at the necklace. Then Marinao had pocketed the scarlet case, ostensibly to present the necklace to Anne.

I could picture the two men leaving the library, parting at the door. Magruder was off to find me and his Anglo-Indian friends, inviting us to a private chat; Mariano slipped back to the library and put a duplicate of that scarlet case on the desk.

Magruder, presently returning, saw the scarlet case lying there and was startled by sight of it. He hastily opened it to see whether it still contained the diamonds. It did not; it contained several glittering glass objects that puzzled him. He fingered them, and under his touch they went to pieces. He sank down as the filmy things collapsed, spilling their volatile fluid. He died, as the fumes clutched at his heart. Long moments afterward, enough of that unseen death remained to cause the collapse of another man, though not his death.

Of course, this was all pure conjecture on my part. It could be con-

firmed only by a microscopic examination of those tiny filmy glass bits, now in my pocket. . . . I should add that this confirmation was later obtained by me personally.

It was Parr who jumped me out of my reflections. He came running, carrying a suitcase and calling me, as the taxicab appeared.

"Something I forgot, sir," he panted. "I happen to know where the Count keeps his ruddy car. A garage it is, in Los Angeles. We were passing there one day, and I saw his chauffeur a-washing of the car just inside. Only a glimpse it was, but there aint no mistaking that car, Dr. Clements."

Hang the police! Here was what we needed—the garage, a direct line on the elusive Brazilian count! Once we could locate him or his chauffeur, we could go to the district attorney and start direct action. So I popped Parr into the taxi, he gave our driver the garage address, and we were off.

"Just a bare chance, but big enough to reach the gallows," I said. "Marinao would never dream that anyone knew about that garage. A big place?"

"Fairish, sir. A public garage," said Parr. "That 'ere machine is a cabriolet and distinctive."

I gave our driver ten dollars and told him to go fast; he did. On the way, I sketched for Parr how his master had been killed, as I surmised. I liked Parr. He was a hard, grim, faithful fellow, and he had brains. He had a pistol in his pocket, too.

"Suppose we fail, and get no line on our man, sir?" he asked.

"Then we'll rent a car and drive to Santa Barbara, to find Miss Trent and Mr. Balfour. Pompous or not, Balfour's a fighter. I know him. You can return here later for Colonel Magruder's funeral."

Questioning Parr more closely, I learned that the two watchmen supplied by Count Marinao were not Hindus but white men. He had spoken once or twice with the chauffeur, and would know him again—he was a Hindu, certainly.

"Well, let's hope the garage clue will lead us somewhere," I said. "But our man is crafty; the car may not be registered in his name. Don't hope for too much."

A FEW MOMENTS later we reached the vicinity of Westlake Park, a once elegant residence section of Los Angeles, now sadly gone to seed.

"Around the corner ahead and halfway down the block," Parr directed excitedly.

The garage hove in sight. It was fairly large but by no means a first-class place. I had our driver go past and halt at the next corner. There we alighted. I paid the driver to deliver Parr's suitcase at my own apartment, and the taxi departed.

As I fell, the chauffeur fired again and the bullet whistled past my ear. Then Parr, from behind me, dropped him with one sure bullet that drove through his brain.

The two of us walked back to the garage. In the doorway a night man was loafing with a pipe. No one else was in sight. While Parr stepped in, I spoke with the watchman, asking about hotels in the vicinity. Presently we walked on.

"No sign of the car there," Parr said.

"Let's wait a bit. If the car comes, grab the chauffeur—no use trying to trail him. Once we get him and learn where to find his master, I'll prefer a murder charge and get him tangled up with the law."

"And if the man won't talk, sir?"

"Get him, and I'll guarantee that he talks!" I said grimly.

Parr chuckled at this.

We put in a solid half-hour, walking about and keeping the garage under strict observation; the side-street was totally deserted. Then, quite without warning, a car came abruptly around the far corner, swung down toward the garage, and drew to the curb out in front. The driver descended and went into the office of the garage.

"Cabriolet, sure enough!" An excited breath came from Parr. "That's him, sir, and the car—driver's all alone. He's not putting it up, either; maybe just paying the bill and taking the car away."

"Come on! The driver's an accessory to murder—we can't let him get away."

We walked down the street opposite the garage, then started across the street diagonally toward the cabriolet.

The chauffeur came from the garage office into the lighted entry. He was a slim, dark man in whipcord. He caught sight of us there in the street. Some intangible warning must have reached him; perhaps he recognized our figures. At any rate he did not try to reach his car, which was closer to us than to him. Turning, he started up the street—fast. It might have been to see if he were followed or not.

We left him in no doubt. I started after him full tilt, and he broke into a shambling run. Parr dropped behind. I gained rapidly on my man. We were approaching the corner when I sent a call after him in Hindustani.

"*Raho!* Stop! I want to speak with you."

He halted, under a street-lamp, and swung around. There was a jet of flame, then a pistol-crack. I was knocked off balance, wrenched around, and pitched sidewise. As I fell, he fired again; the bullet whistled past my ear. Then Parr, from behind me, dropped the man with one sure bullet that drove through his brain

A police radio car, summoned from the garage, was on the scene within five minutes. My hastily framed story of a hold-up waked suspicion, until the two officers examined the dead man; then all suspicion fled.

"So he tried to hold you up, eh?" exclaimed the sergeant in charge. "Mister, you're lucky; we won't bother you to explain how you had a gun handy. We've been lookin' for this bird a long while; got an ugly mug, aint he?"

"Looking for him?" I echoed.

"Yeah. Tikat Dao is the name; this is him, all right. Killed a dance-hall girl up near Sacramento a couple months ago. Let's call an ambulance for you; then we'll look over his car."

I refused the offer. The bullet had gone through the fleshy part of my thigh, causing a painful but by no means disabling wound which Parr, under my orders, could see to. My whole interest lay in the dead man's car and what clues it might give.

It gave none. A driver's license was made out to James Drew; the car was registered in the same name, at a palpably false address. There was no scrap of other writing in the car or the dead man's pockets—nothing!

Once more I had failed miserably. An hour later, as I packed a bag to head north with Parr, I fancied that I could hear the mocking laughter of the Rajah from Hell. He had left no trace. He had killed Colonel Magruder, at cost of a car and a criminal's life, and was clear of the law. As I was thinking thus, Parr came to me, and put something in my hand.

"I didn't say anything about this to the police officers, sir. I found it on the sidewalk beside that man. He must have dropped it."

The object was a plain, unadorned ring of silver, set with a single stone. A glittering black stone, which seemed filled with sharp crimson light. A remarkable gem, when you stop to think of it—like a black diamond with a heart of fire. I could not name the stone, but recollection leaped in me.

Not long ago I had seen a similar stone, larger but of the same kind, in the cravat of the Rajah from Hell. Carefully, I slipped it on my finger.

"Good work, Parr! This may lead to something. Bag packed?"

"All set, sir. The car is waiting."

"Let's go."

Two minutes later we were off—off, to the frightful thing that awaited us in Santa Barbara.

What Do You Read?

A Quiz

By Fred Green

HOW many of these fifty American newspapers can you recognize through their synonymous camouflage? For instance, the Boston (Mass.) *"Written Copy"* is the *Transcript*. The initial letter of the newspaper name is given, and as a further clue, the number of dashes indicate the number of missing letters needed to complete the name of the newspaper. Correct answers count two each. A score of 60 is fair, 72 is good, and 84 or more is excellent.

1. Plymouth (Ind.) *Aviator* P----
2. Washington (D. C.) *Heavenly Body* S---
3. Fresno (Calif.) *Honey-Producer* B--
4. New York (N. Y.) *Looking-Glass* M-----
5. Worcester (Mass.) *Telegraphic Message* T-------
6. Boulder (Colo.) *Picture-Taker* C-----
7. Reading (Pa.) *Ten-Dollar Goldpiece* E----
8. Athens (Ohio) *Gatherer* G-------
9. Joplin (Mo.) *Earth* G----
10. Arkansas City (Kans.) *Tourist* T-------
11. Asbury Park (N. J.) *Squeeze* P----
12. Sacramento (Calif.) *Association of Workers* U----
13. Charleston (W. Va.) *Postal Matter* M---
14. Denver (Colo.) *Place of Assignment* P---
15. Atlanta (Ga.) *Established Law* C----------
16. New London (Conn.) *Sunrise to Sunset* D--
17. Cincinnati (Ohio) *Questioner* E-------
18. Santa Cruz (Calif.) *Sentry* S-------
19. Jacksonville (Fla.) *Diary* J------
20. Newark (N. J.) *Final Business Record-Book* L-----
21. Anderson (Ind.) *Public News Statement* B-------
22. Charlotte (N. C.) *Perceiver* O-------
23. Phoenix (Ariz.) *Self-Governed Nation* R-------
24. Stamford (Conn.) *Barrister* A-------
25. Wichita (Kans.) *Guiding Signal* B-----
26. Miami (Fla.) *Recent Tidings* N---
27. Los Angeles (Calif.) *Inspector* E-------
28. Norwalk (Conn.) *One-Twelfth of a Night or Day* H---
29. Rock Island (Ill.) *100-Eye Monster* A----
30. Newark (N. J.) *Shout or Cry* C---
31. Pueblo (Colo.) *Head of a Highland Clan* C---------
32. Henderson (Ky.) *Reaper* G-------
33. Sweetwater (Tex.) *News-Gatherer* R--------
34. Bridgeport (Conn.) *Proclaimer* H-----
35. Columbus (Ohio) *Promptness* D--------
36. Santa Monica (Calif.) *Lookout View* O-------
37. Philadelphia (Pa.) *Written Factual Account* R-----
38. Tulsa (Okla.) *Universe* W----
39. Council Bluffs (Ia.) *Six-Point Type* N--------
40. New Haven (Conn.) *Range of a Voice* R--------
41. Plymouth (Ind.) *Errand Runner* M---------
42. New Orleans (La.) *Newspaper Paragraph* I---
43. Columbia (S. C.) *Predicament* S----
44. Grand Island (Nebr.) *Not Bound by Party Politics* I----------
45. Little Rock (Ark.) *Newspaper* G-------
46. High Point (N. C.) *Venture or Undertaking* E----------
47. Canton (Ohio) *Museum* R---------
48. Topeka (Kans.) *Seat of Government* C-------
49. Decatur (Ill.) *Critical Examination* R-----
50. San Francisco (Calif.) *Narrative or Account* C--------

(Answers on page 40)

The valiant Fight performed in the Straight of Gibralter by the Centurion of London against five Spanish Gallies in the moneth of April 1591

One of many such doings to be read at large in Richard Hakluyt's "Principall Navigations of the English Nation," here bravely illuminated by Peter Wells

The Gallies were grapled to the Centurion in this maner, two lay on one side, and two on another, and the Admiral lay full in the sterne, which galled and battered the Centurion so sore, that her maine Maste was greatly weakened, her sailes filled with many holes, and the Mizzen and stern made almost unserviceable.

During which time there was a sore and deadly fight on both sides, in which the Trumpet of the Centurion sounded foorth the deadly points of warre, and encouraged them to fight manfully against their adversaries: on the contrary part, there was no warlike Musicke in the Spanish Gallies, but onely their whistles of silver, which they sounded foorth to their owne contentment: in which fight many a Spaniard was turned into the Sea, and they in multitudes came crauling and hung upon the side of the shippe, intending to have entred into the same, but such was the courage of the Englishmen, that so fast as the Spaniards did come to enter, they gave them such entertainment, that some of them were glad to tumble alive into the Sea, being remedilesse for ever to get up alive. In the Centurion there were in all, of men and boyes, fourtie and eight, who together fought most valiantly ... that many a brave and lustie Spaniard lost his life in that place.

The Centurion was fired five severall times, with wildefire and other provisions, which the Spaniards threw in for that purpose: yet, God be thanked, by the great and diligent foresight of the Master, it did no harme at all... In every of the Gallies there were about 200. souldiers: who together with the shot, spoiled, rent and battered the Centurion very sore, shot through her maine Maste, and slew 4. of the men in the said shippe, the one of them being the Master's mate.

Ten other persons were hurt, by meanes of splinters which the Spaniards shotte: yea, in the ende when their provision was almost spent, they were constrained to shoote at them hammers, and the chaines from their slaves, and yet God bee thanked, they received no more domage: but by spoyling and overwearying of the Spaniards, the Englishmen constrained them to ungrapple themselves and get them going.

There were present at this fight Master John Hawes Marchant, and sundry other of good accompt. {sic.}

The Middle of Midnight

A complete book-length novel of Germany today.

by WILLIAM GILMORE BEYMER

THE PLACE IS DORTHEIM, OF SEVEN OR EIGHT thousand population, in Upper, which means southern, Bavaria.

When C Company, of the American Army of Occupation II, on a day in early June, 1945, rolled in over the clean cobbles of the narrow streets and through the arched passageway under the clock-tower and had pulled up for the first time in front of the Rathaus facing Dortheim's marketplace, Juggy Marr, Pfc, in the second lorry, had taken one all-embracing look and then said: "Soldiers, I'd tell you if I knew. Has this burg been wished onto us as Reward—or Punishment? It's too early to know. Ask me later."

Months later, Juggy Marr and C Company still had not been sure. Days on end, days of seemingly tranquil routine in medieval Dortheim, C Company felt that being in Dortheim was Reward. Top Kick "Pop" Carty, C's 1st Sergeant (behind his back, "Old Settler" and "Retread") would blow the foam off, and pat his no longer lean belly, and say: "So far, it's Coblenz in '19 all over again. Coblenz lasted. But that was in my first war-peace. This won't last, even here in Dortheim. Make the most of it. It's too good." Sergeant Ben Carty was a "thirty-year man," shortly to go on fat retirement pay. . . .

Dortheim's heart beats true to its past. Dortheim's heart is surrounded by portions of high, thick walls, breached in 1637 in the Thirty Years' War, and the breaches have not been repaired. Around the walls is a moat. Except for puddles and a trickle, it has been waterless for a couple of hundred years. Nevertheless, a moat. But Dortheim's houses—most of them as old as moat or wall—have been kept in repair and are eternally clean.

Other days in those early months, Dortheim's tranquillity sorely irked the rank and file. To lusty soldiers, too much peace can become almost as grueling as too much war. But Captain Leonard Harkliss, in command, and his officers, had headaches—Dortheim-headaches, which the rank and file had not been let in on. There was more going on, in or around Dortheim, than met the eye. There was, for instance, the Schloss Grafenberg, perched on a precipitous hill three miles to the south.

The present owner and occupant was, rightly enough, a princess—Anna, Princess of Ploessel and Huss. This had been impressive to C Company. A real princess, eh? This castle was class! Then they got the rest of the dope. The princess was sixty years old, skinny, and a relative of Kaiser Bill, who'd started the other war their dads had had to fight in. She'd lived all alone in the castle for years, with five old servants.

Captain Harkliss's first headache arrived in Dortheim all alone in the tonneau of a big, open touring car heaped with luggage. This was in itself exceptional—not many Germans these days were tooting around Germany in autos. But his travel-permission papers were perfectly regular when he was destination-checked at HQ in the Rathaus. He had then been driven to the castle, the luggage unloaded, and the rented car returned whence it came.

That afternoon, Captain Harkliss received a Rush Confidential from the Division's G-2 at Munich. It said, in effect, that Herr Professor Werner Schweinitz was one of Germany's ace inventor-scientists, largely responsible for—among other things—the unfinished V-3s. He had been permitted to accept an invitation to the Schloss Grafenberg "for a rest," because it seemed unlikely that he could get into further mischief there. Captain Harkliss, however, was herewith instructed that the Herr Professor was not to conduct any sort of experiments or to set up in the castle any sort of laboratory no matter how small; and careful check must be made from time to time to make sure nothing of the sort was being done. Harkliss swore violently when he read that message. Had G-2 ever in their lives seen a medieval castle?

Captain Harkliss's other headache was also known at this tranquil time to the men of C, but it was not recognized as such—merely as a minor nuisance. This was Oberst Soden's "dog-farm" a mile east of town. There were still nearly a hundred partly trained war dogs, though there had been many more—shepherds, Doberman pinschers and Rottweilers. Harkliss's headache about the dog-farm was because, vaguely, he had a feeling it was all wrong. His dogs, Oberst Soden claimed, were personal property—his profession, his bread and butter. Certainly there'd be no more war, no more army. But he could keep his dogs, couldn't he, so as to sell them for police dogs whenever the Americans permitted German police forces again? Yes, Harkliss admitted, he could do that.

OTHER POTENTIAL HEADACHES soon showed up, but not together, in Dortheim, their old home town. One of these—spotted as a newcomer, because German men in their twenties and thirties were a scarce article in Dortheim in those early days—was big, good-looking, hard-looking. He wasn't arrogant, he wasn't surly, but he over-acted just enough to show that he was making an effort not to be arrogant, not to be surly. He attracted attention because he showed that he was trying not to attract attention. The grapevine quickly had it that he was SS. His identification papers said *"Wehrmacht."* He had inherited the Essen farm, a couple of miles beyond Soden's place, and most of the time this Kurt Essen stayed on his farm. When he did come to town, he behaved himself.

Captain Harkliss had not been at HQ when Kurt Essen registered his return to Dortheim. The first time he passed him in the market square, Harkliss didn't know who the fellow was. But he had the instant feeling that he had seen him before, rather long before, and rather often. This feeling persisted and grew stronger at each occasional meeting.

It was different in every way in the case of the other returnee. Her name, it was quickly learned by all, was Erika Wulf. Inescapably she attracted immediate attention. In the first couple of days, GIs who hadn't yet heard of her, and had not yet seen her face, followed her figure. By every canon of art her figure was perfection—though perhaps too tall, five-ten, for those who like 'em

small and delicate. This girl was unmistakably strong and lithe and swift. GIs followed her figure until they saw her face. Then, not even the most confirmed chaser would have ventured a "Hi, baby!" Yet there was probably not a fairer Nordic face in all Germany, blue-eyed, fair-haired, unblemished. In profile especially it was distinctive, alluring, fascinating, because the features were so intriguingly irregular. Yet somehow, intangibly, providentially, her mind and heart showed through.

Juggy Marr summed her up, and for once he was serious. He said: "Lay off! She's like this: she looks you over; she doesn't bat an eye; there's not a flicker of her face; but you know just what she thinks. She's thinking: 'With this one, which would be most fun—to stick the knife into his throat, his heart or his belly?' She's poisonous. I'd call that one 'The Queen of Poison.'" The name stuck.

So, even this soon after war's-end, there were being assembled in tranquil Dortheim the ingredients for a major explosion.

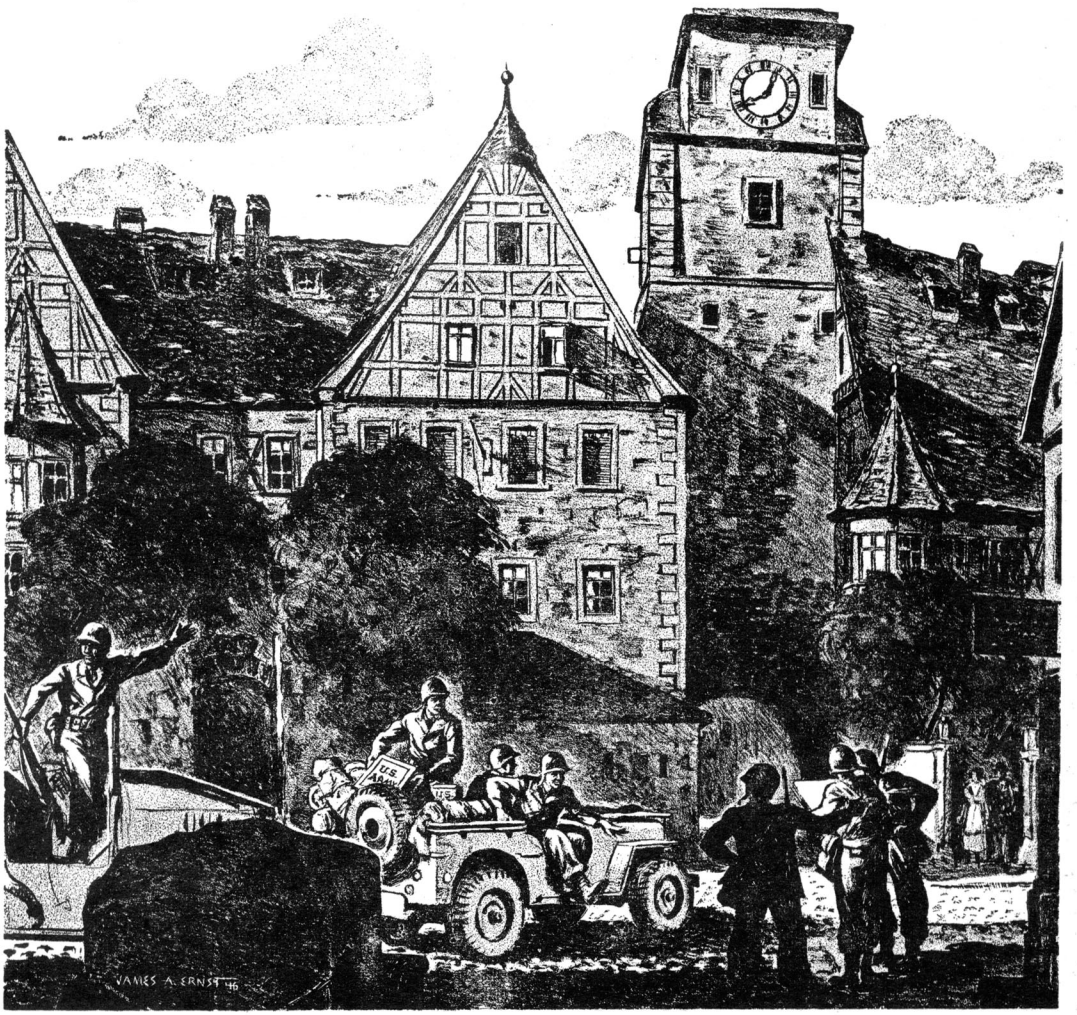
When the order came from G-2 regarding Prof. Werner Schweinitz, Harkliss took his Medical Corps Captain, Ames Cairns, and 1st Lieut. Mike "Red" Frazier with him, and they were driven to the Schloss Grafenberg. The castle had been inspected the day after C Company arrived in Dortheim, but this was to be different—G-2 different.

Around the base of the precipitous hill was what had once been a park but was now an unkempt tangle of untended shrubbery and wild berry bushes. The car drove in between high, rusted iron gates apparently unclosed in many years. Old beeches and lindens lined the road. Above, the Schloss rose toward the sky impressively. The road grew narrower and rougher and began the steep spiral around the hill, and Bavaria began to unfold beneath them. From the south side, the side away from Dortheim, was a view of the Grafensee, a narrow lake somewhat more than a mile long. Its blue waters lapped the base of the castle's hill. Dark forests of fir covered the steep slopes of the hills which surrounded the lake.

Harkliss said: "One of the first nudist colonies anywhere in modern civilization used to flourish at the far end of this lake."

"How did you know that, sir?" Mike Frazier asked. "Sure it isn't still there?"

"Not a chance. Better join my German history class. More'n forty of the men volunteered for it. The nudist movement rates in with history, because Hitler got blamed for a lot of corrupt things here in Germany that were already going strong when he took over; but it paved



the way for Hitler's start. It's easy to corrupt people who show they like corruption."

"Here, here!" Ames Cairns chuckled. "Hang onto your pants, male and female, say I. Any good psychiatrist, like me, will tell you the same. Soul-preservers—pants. Don't forget, though, it was the Russians started all that rash of nudism. They said, 'The bourgeois wear clothes; therefore we don't wear clothes.' So by the millions they peeled off everything, and nobody could suspect them of being bourgeoisie. Nothing up their sleeve. No sleeve."

Harkliss said: "The Russians didn't go in for round-the-clock nudist colonies like Germany. Everything with Germans is serious; everything has to be 'organized'. They didn't get started until '29, and then they solemnly organized Bunds and federations of nudists. Imagine registering to be a nudist!"

They suddenly swept around the last twist of the spiral roadway that ended at huge double doors, the wood gray with age and crisscrossed with bands of iron.

The doors began to swing open. The car's approach evidently had been watched. They drove into a narrow stone-paved courtyard, open to the sky. A gray-haired flunky in a faded livery opened their car doors and in silence bowed them out of the car. At the courtyard's farther end was a flight of perhaps twenty stone steps of the entire width of the courtyard, and leading to an unrailed stone platform also courtyard-wide. At its back the dressed stone wall towered up and up to a row of windows not much wider than loopholes a good forty feet above the platform.

At the platform-level the wall was broken only by big wooden double doors, fast closed. There was a small door, one-man size, in one of the big ones. It was jerked open from inside, and a man came hurrying through and down the stairs. Herr Professor Werner Schweinitz—it could be no one else. He didn't look as a scientist-inventor ought to look. Instead, he was like a plump and prosperous banker on a weekend—tweeds, and a fawn-colored sport-shirt with flaring unbuttoned collar. He was bald, with a well-trimmed red mustache streaked with gray. And he wore a monocle! Smiling broadly as he approached, he looked as if he meant to shake hands, but thought better of it and bowed instead:

"I'm Professor Schweinitz. I am glad to see you." He hit the "am" too hard. "It's devilish dull here already, and bound to get duller." He spoke English with only a trace of the inescapable German guttural. Otherwise, they might not have been sure he was really German—he was too sprightly, too volatile. Or, overacting? He rattled on: "I'm not the host here, you know. I'll lead you to the Princess—princesses don't come to meet guests."

HARKLISS, WITHOUT A SMILE, answered: "We are not guests. I'm Captain Harkliss, in command of the Dortheim sector. This is Captain Cairns, of the Medical Corps, and Lieutenant Frazier. We will inspect the entire castle."

"Splendid!" Schweinitz said heartily. "There's a lot of it I haven't seen yet myself." And then, slyly; "You'll be disappointed though. I've not had time to set up a laboratory."

"There's to be no laboratory of any sort, Professor Schweinitz," Harkliss said curtly. "Do I make that clear?"

"I should have known better than to kid conquerors," Schweinitz said bitterly. "A laboratory in Germany today? For what? In smashed, ruined, conquered Germany? A laboratory here—of all places! Without equipment, or supplies, or assistants, or electricity. You make me laugh." He snapped out of it. With his former jocund manner: "'To kid,' is that still hot slang in America—or do I show I'm a back number? It was good when I was there—'36 and again in '37. You'll never guess why. To study under our own Albert Einstein! We chase him out, and I have to follow him from Germany!"

"Let's meet the Princess," Harkliss spoke as though giving an order.

"Follow along, then," Schweinitz answered with equal brusqueness.

They went through the small door single file and found themselves in the great hall of the castle. All stone: vaulted roof, rows of tall columns supporting stone galleries along each side and across the end of the hall. Close under the side galleries were narrow windows. Stone staircases with stone balusters and broad stone rails curved up from the far corners of the hall. There was almost no furniture. It was all austere, gloomy, depressing. As though irritated, Schweinitz walked unnecessarily fast, and the three hurried after him—up the right-hand staircase to the side gallery and along it, past a number of closed doors to one which was open. They went through a room furnished with comfortable, heavy, old-fashioned living-room furniture. A door, open, through which streamed welcome sunshine, led out onto a long stone terrace with a battlemented parapet, closed at each end by the wall of a tall round tower.

AND HERE WAS ANNA, Princess of Ploessel and Huss, sitting very unregally in a weathered wicker garden chair under a big, sadly faded beach umbrella! She was small and thin. Her dress was a lifeless black, like mourning crape, unrelieved by any ruching at wrist or throat, any jewelry or ornaments. She wore black cotton stockings, and oxfords with blunt toes and thick soles. Nevertheless, a princess, by the disdainful way she carried her head.

There was no acting about the deference with which Professor Werner Schweinitz formally presented the three officers. He spoke in German with great precision, and repeated each time all her titles. Unused to meeting authentic princesses, the Americans said, "How do you do, Princess?" and made their stiff and very small American bows.

The Princess of Ploessel and Huss said nothing, merely inclined her head to each. There were other wicker chairs, but she did not ask the conquerors to sit down. She fixed her black, keen eyes on Harkliss with a long look, hard to stand up to. Then, in German, she said: "You will wish to quarter some of your soldiers on us? I cannot prevent it."

Harkliss tried not to show his astonishment and disquiet. She had read his mind. He said, coldly, in his best German: "Yes. A corporal and not more than three men. They must have access at all times to all parts of the castle except your actual living quarters. They will bring Army cots and bedding and Army rations. Arrangements must be made so that they can do their own cooking."

Cairns and Frazier gave him surprised glances. There'd been nothing said until now about billeting troops here. Harkliss had decided it only after meeting Schweinitz and the Princess.

"Is that all?" asked the Princess, with a manner of dismissal.

"No, Princess. We must also inspect the entire castle—now."

"I will show you."

That was the astonishing part of the afternoon. She did. For two hours they went at a steady pace up and down uncountable tall towers and through dozens of rooms; endless passageways and galleries; stables, kitchens, servant quarters; cellars and sub-cellars and wine-cellars and empty supply rooms and dungeon cells.

Professor Schweinitz saw them off at their car in the courtyard. He looked a wreck. "I don't know how she did it," he complained. "Pride, I suppose. It could all have been very pleasant. We might have had refreshments and small talk and some laughs. Instead, I blister my feet. Are you always going to be this way?"

"That depends," Harkliss answered, liking and trusting the fellow less and less.

On the way down the hill, Harkliss asked: "Think we saw it all?"

Mike Frazier groaned. "I hope to tell you. I'd hate to think there was more. I swear there were seven thousand stone steps, all high ones. To hell with castles!" And: "Jeez, what a Princess! How ever did she do it?"

Cairns said: "I bet we passed plenty of hidden doors or sliding panels or such into secret tunnels and stairways and big stone rooms. Maybe the hill's honeycombed clear down below the bottom of the lake. We'd never know."

"Probably enough to store equipment and ammo for a regiment," Harkliss said gloomily, "and spots for a dozen hidden laboratories. What about the Professor?"

"A bad egg. Whatever he's here for, it's not to rest."

"What I noticed," Harkliss said slowly, "was the way the Princess treated him. She's supposed to have invited an old friend 'for a rest.' My guesses: she never saw him before yesterday; she was ordered to invite him; he was ordered to come."

"By whom?"

"When we know that, the war will be really over. It's our job to find out."

But it was to be on their next visit that they got the real surprise—a first-class shock. . . .

Dortheim had been untouched by the hardships of the war, and had not yet felt the hardships of the peace. There were good sights to see. Besides the picturesqueness of the town, there was the beauty of the countryside with its colorful farmhouses—discounting the huge manure pile sure to be found bang up against each of them. And everywhere were lumbering oxen hauling huge farm ricks.

And in the list of good sights there must certainly be included many of the girls and young women. They had figures—a bit on the Amazon side, and they all wore the Bavarian type, flaring, full-flowered skirts 'way above the knees, and white blouses cut 'way down the front. Their thick, shining blonde hair hung loose in natural waves below their shoulders. They were sun-tanned golden brown. And all had ready smiles which were not smiles of shyness. Very quickly, C Company grew tired of romantic architecture, of buildings. They even grew tired of the picturesque oxen.

In manner, these people seemed ceaselessly preoccupied, and were united in efforts to ignore, whenever possible, the presence of their "keepers." They did not openly show that they were irked by all the restrictions placed on their daily lives. That in itself was a bad sign. Grumbling would be normal. They kept their faces and voices stolid, but an invisible, inaudible sullenness emanated from them. You could almost smell it.

"The Heinies in Coblenz," Sergeant Carty often reminisced loudly, "used to stop and watch our ball games, f'rinstance, and they would talk and laugh. But these Krauts are green for trouble, but they're on their way to gettin' ripe—not like Coblenz."

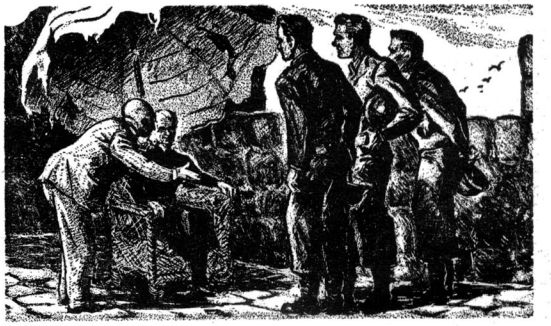
"You an' your Coblenz," Juggy Marr scoffed. "I'm surprised you didn't stay there. But you'd ought've seen the freeze I got from a neat job yesterday. By the time I was past her, I was practically plastered with hoar frost."

"An' what were you up to that got you so frozen? You doin' skirt patrol in this town?" demanded Sergeant Carty severely. "You'll find yourself in for a six months' stretch in moosh without pay, and on top o' that a sixty-five-plunk fine, in cash, for fraternizin'. If it's worth all that moola to you—"

"Quit racing your motor, Sarge. You wouldn't pull your rank on a gentleman who gives you his confidences when you're off duty, would you, Sergeant Carty?"

"Give me none of your oil," retorted Carty.

This had been Juggy Marr's first contact with Erika Wulf, but he didn't know then who she was. It was also just before the nonfraternizing ban was lifted. The ban had lasted a little less than nine weeks. In World War I it hung on for nearly ten months. Not that it made any difference in the case of Erika Wulf. Ban or no ban, she went her way in Dortheim streets as though there wasn't an American nearer than America. A sure sign, if any had seen smart enough to read it, that she had something much more important to think about.



Schweinitz spoke with precision, repeating her titles.

Chapter Two

THERE WAS NO CONNECTION BETWEEN THE LIFTing of the ban and the first Operation Tally-ho, though it came only eight days later. Everyone has read the news-stories about this monumental raid by five hundred thousand American soldiers, who without warning combed the American zone with a fine-tooth comb and bagged eighty thousand suspects and tons of contraband. C Company worked as hard and as joyously as any unit in the whole Army, but got nothing out of the ordinary. The Schloss Grafenberg got a vain going-over, along with Kurt Essen's farm, and Erika Wulf's mother's house, and Oberst Soden's dog-farm. They weren't, apparently, worth sweating over. It was too soon.

But in regard to Schloss Grafenberg and Professor Werner Schweinitz, G-2 was not satisfied for long, though Corporal O'Toole, billeted at the castle, had reported faithfully. The Professor spent most of his days on the terrace in a deck chair, reading books, sleeping a great deal (they watched him from a loophole in a tower overlooking the terrace); seldom talking to the Princess, who sat near him. "Why doesn't he sleep nights?" Harkliss growled. "You sure he stays in his room at night?"

"Unless there's a secret stairs out of it, sir."

G-2 kept nagging Harkliss. The more G-2 learned of Professor Werner Schweinitz's past, his uncanny knowledge, his achievements, his persistence, his indefatigable labors, the more distrustful G-2 was of the Professor's present and his future. Was Captain Harkliss absolutely certain that Schweinitz wasn't up to something? No, Captain Harkliss wasn't certain. Far from it.

So Harkliss took Mike Frazier—Cairns was busy with his own job—and went again to see what they could see. There'd been a thunderstorm that afternoon; the terrace was still wet, and there was a coolish wind. So they all sat in the Princess' sitting-room. She looked just the same, but was more affable. She invited them to sit down. A flunky arrived alomst immediately with two bottles of hock, sandwiches and little cakes, for four. There had not been time to prepare these sandwiches since their arrival. Evidently the level road from town was watched. The "small talk and some laughs" which the Professor had craved, began.

There was a rocking-chair across the room from where the four sat. All of itself, the empty chair began to rock

She let the dog sniff the boot. "Fetch him," she ordered.

back and forth, steadily, sedately, uninterruptedly. Harkliss had been looking directly at the Professor, who leaned back, relaxed, his hands folded across his stomach. He hadn't moved a muscle. The Princess was eating a sandwich. Though they too were facing the rocking-chair, they did not seem to see it, or if they did, to consider it was doing anything unusual. Harkliss wondered if he had had something happen to his eyesight, or his mind—something terrible. He looked quickly at Lieutenant Mike Frazier. Mike was staring at the chair—it continued steadily, unhurriedly rocking—and all his freckles seemed to stand out from his face, and his Adam's apple went up and down as if keeping step with the chair.

Harkliss could see Schweinitz and the Princess and the chair all at the same time. Neither Schweinitz nor the Princess moved so much as a finger, but the chair stopped rocking. "Excuse me," Harkliss said, and went over and sat down in the motionless chair. He kept his eyes on the two Germans. They did not move, but the chair did. It began rocking again. Harkliss said afterward that never before in his life had he wanted to scream, but he wanted to then. He'd braced himself in every way—but he rocked along with the chair. Something indescribable seemed subtly to tug at him—at his muscles, at his insides, at his mind itself.

Professor Schweinitz and the Princess were shaking now with silent laughter, laughing until tears came. Nothing was holding Harkliss. He got up from the continuously rocking chair, and with all his strength, as though it would be necessary to wrench it loose, he lifted the chair. It came up without any more resistance than its normal weight. The chair was inert in his hands. It had been standing on a small rug. Harkliss kicked the rug to one side. Nothing was visible on the floor where it had been. He carried the chair across the room, set it down on bare floor and turned it at right angles to its former position. Then he went back to the Professor and the Princess, and stood just in front of them, between them and the chair, and watched them. They did not move, except to grin up at him. Harkliss couldn't see the chair, but now he heard it, on the bare floor—*rock-rock, rock-rock.* He heard Mike Frazier sucking air in between his teeth with a hissing sound.

"All right," Harkliss said to Schweinitz. "Very pretty. You've had your fun. Now, I'd like you to tell me what makes that chair rock. Go ahead. Tell me."

Still grinning, Schweinitz said; "Just a little parlor trick—like sleight of hand—with which I amuse my guests."

"I'm not your guest, and I'm not amused, and that's no parlor trick."

Still grinning: "Maybe I hypnotized you. Maybe you see whatever I will for you to see. Maybe it does not rock at all."

"It damn' well rocks, and I'm not hypnotized," Harkliss said, angrily. "Tell me! It's an order."

Schweinitz turned to the Princess and said, as though alone with her: "You see, Princess Anna, it is just as I told you this morning. If our great Fuehrer—heil Hitler! though he's dead—had ordered me to explain to him why the chair rocks, and if I had refused, he would have ordered me shot, then and there. But these Americans! As I told you, we are a truly dominant people and they but poor imitators, who in many simple situations do not know what to do. Except, perhaps, to take a vote on the matter."

Red-haired Mike Frazier jerked out his pistol and strode to Harkliss's side. His red face was flaming. "Don't be so sure, Heinie, that we don't shoot. You resisted arrest, threatened us; we shot you. That'll be good enough."

"And do Americans shoot old women witnesses too?" the Princess asked mockingly.

"Go to it," Schweinitz gibed. "Be sure you shoot me in the head. Then all my great knowledge will run from the hole and will be yours."

"Put it up, Mike," Harkliss ordered, white with chagrin. "There's a better way."

"You see, Princess Anna! They do not even arrest me, because they do not know a legal charge. The Americans and the English, they are so legal, so just!"

"Shut up," Harkliss ordered. "You chatter too much. We know what to do, all right. When we do it, you won't like it." He was sick with disgust at himself: he *didn't* know what to do. "First, we'll take that chair, for evidence."

"It's not mine," Schweinitz jeered. "Go ahead and steal it."

"It is mine," smiled the Princess. "I make you a present of it—for not shooting me."

The chair, forgotten, was steadily rocking. They picked it up and carried it to the door. "Wait!" Harkliss whispered, "I've got him!" With cold dignity again, he said: "Schweinitz, you were a citizen of Leipzig. You escaped—ran away. So, you belong now to the Russians. We'll probably turn you over to them. If they want to know about the trick chair, I imagine you'll probably tell 'em—the Russians!"

Professor Schweinitz unconsciously put his hand to his throat, but said nothing in answer. They went out with the chair.

NEITHER OF THEM SPOKE all the way down the hill-road—the chair in the back of the jeep—and then, on the level road to Dortheim, Harkliss said, with deep disgust: "I never saw grown men make such damn'-silly fools of themselves. I'm sick at my stomach with shame—as if by ordering him, I could make him tell a thing like that! And you weren't so hot, Mike, with that kid-stuff gun act."

"That damn' chair got us both," Mike Frazier said sheepishly. "Whatever made the Kraut pull the gag on us in the first place? He might have known it would get him into trouble."

"Conceit. Prussian arrogance. German basic stupidity. He knew he'd show us up, make fools of us, and that we'd make fools of ourselves. He knew there was no way we could force him to tell, and no way we could find out from the chair itself. He knew we'd be fools enough to take the chair—just an all-wood, common rocking-chair, not even with coil steel springs in a cushion seat. We could take it apart to splinters and learn nothing. 'Get him into trouble?' What trouble? He's up there on that hill laughing his head off."

"I don't think so, sir," Mike Frazier said. "You got him. Russians—remember?"

"No good," Harkliss said bitterly. "It sounded good when I said it. But suppose they did make him tell—and they would. Then Russia would have the secret, and

we wouldn't. It's probably some newly discovered principle which sets up some sort of vibrations by remote control. Today, Schweinitz makes a rocking-chair rock—an unsteady object—from across a room. Remember how we and the British laughed at 'German secret weapons'? We quit laughing quick. If they'd been just a little faster getting them perfected! Maybe by day after tomorrow Schweinitz, or some other German, will discover how to step up those vibrations—step them up until some day he can, for instance, set New York City's skyscrapers rocking like that chair."

When they got to the Rathaus, Harkliss told Cairns and Mike Frazier that he evidently wasn't smart enough to handle as hot a case as this one, and was going, chair and all, straight to G-2. On the way, he got the germ of a really bright idea.

COLONEL HUGH BUCKLEY, CO of G-2, at Division headquarters in Munich, was small, quick, well set up, with a neat gray mustache and gray eyes, very bright.

He listened frowningly to the chair story. He then said it didn't seem likely that Schweinitz, just since his arrival at the castle, could have made such a discovery, and didn't seem possible, without equipment, that he could develop the idea further at present. One thing seemed obvious: someone outside that room had manipulated whatever the apparatus, undoubtedly simple, which was used to start and stop the chair. The Colonel said that possibly one of the five old servants had been used to manipulate it. He said that the adjoining rooms should have been searched immediately. And what sort of space was above the room—what was below it? Harkliss was feeling more diminished every moment. And then the Colonel asked a particularly nasty question: Had Schweinitz's luggage been searched when he stopped to register at the Rathaus? Harkliss, in a small voice said, "No, sir." Col. Buckley swore tremendously. Then he showed he was the right man for his job. He told Harkliss:

"Don't let this get you down, Captain. Before Schweinitz arrived, G-2 should have sent orders to search his luggage. We didn't know then as much of his past as we know now—didn't know his former great importance. And the chair—probably I'd not have done any better at the moment than you did. A thing like that chair, without warning, would 'rock' anybody loose from clear thinking. You'll probably never see it done again. Schweinitz wouldn't take another chance, and you couldn't make him do it. So, we're in for a stretch of watchful waiting. Maybe your corporal and his men will stumble into something."

Of course, they took the chair apart, splinter by splinter, and of course learned nothing—which was what they expected. Then Harkliss ventured the bright idea he'd evolved *en route* from the castle to Division HQ. It eventually worked out like this:

A young—age about thirty—German woman, Frau Cilly Pohl, in Mensebrun, also in the American Occupation zone, had sometime previously slipped stealthily into the offices of G-2 there, late at night, and offered her services —to do anything, *anything*, please, sir—to get square with the Nazis and especially with anyone who had ever been in the Gestapo. This sort of volunteer was by no means unusual those days. They checked her story, and it was just as she'd said.

Her young husband had been a skilled mechanic with an excellent brain, but he was just a bit hunchbacked. So he became a supervisor in an airplane factory, and did well until slave labor came. He was, as Cilly Pohl said, "a *good* man." He simply couldn't go all out in the brutal treatment he was required to give the slaves. He got in bad, very bad, with the Gestapo. Finally the Gestapo really took him, and they made his wife, Cilly Pohl, watch what they did while they were liquidating her husband. When she told this part of her story, in detail, a look came into her eyes which was not good for anyone to have to see.

So Frau Cilly Pohl was made a secret agent of G-2, and all sections of G-2 in the American Army of Occupation were notified that a female agent of such-and-such age, appearance, qualifications and background, was available. They gave her a code number, No. 174, and also gave her another name—except in the master file—for her better protection. (But her own name, Cilly Pohl, will be used here, to simplify matters and avoid confusion.)

Colonel Buckley also had the file of another Nazi-hater, a lady who in her girlhood had been a lady-in-waiting at the court of the Kaiser. Eventually, this lady, also a G-2 agent herself, skillfully worked out all the plausibilities and requirements of the case, and then for several weeks coached and trained Cilly Pohl. Then they concocted a pathetic letter to Anna, Princess of Ploessel and Huss, and Cilly copied it and sent it. Presently the reply came: *"I am a lonely old woman, and though I have never seen you, my dear, I now want to. My own kin! Come."* It was a nice letter.

So Cilly Pohl, agent No. 174 of G-2, was "planted" in the Schloss Grafenberg as a poor relation of Anna, Princess of Ploessel and Huss. Professor Werner Schweinitz also welcomed this good-looking, well-born, nice-mannered young woman, who was now all alone in the world except for her dear cousin, the Princess. Harkliss and Colonel Buckley rubbed their hands, and waited for events. And waited.

CHAPTER THREE

A DISTURBING INFLUX OF YOUNG MEN STRAGGLED into southern Bavaria close to the end of an unsatisfactory harvest season. "Farm laborers," they said. They gave no indication of being acquainted. One peculiarity was that they all got jobs without confusion or loss of time. They scattered and were swallowed by the farms. Their new employers, as required by AMG rules, dutifully reported them to their sector headquarters.

Harkliss, examining each day's report, noted that Kurt Essen had signed up for four of these farmhands. It seemed too many for the size of the Essen farm; but so far, since returning home, Essen had done nothing to arouse question or suspicion. The major worry, increasing daily, stemmed from the *Soldbuchs* which these newcomers had dutifully presented when they checked in at headquarters upon their arrival in the sector.

These *Soldbuchs*, the small, service-record books which all German soldiers must carry in addition to the identification card carried by all citizens, invariably, in the case of these new arrivals, read "Wehrmacht," but the bearers seemed of a different stamp from German privates and non-coms of the regular army; ex-SS troopers would have been more like it: picked men. There were some, though, who carried *Soldbuchs* who did not carry themselves like soldiers at all; they smelled of the Gestapo. And all the *Soldbuchs*, though dirty and worn, seemed hardly dirty and worn enough for the age indicated by their dates. Four other arrivals in Dortheim were obviously civilians, whose legitimately clean *Soldbuchs* read *"Volkssturm"*—People's Volunteer Corps. These men were given scant attention, once more ignoring the adage that the least expected generally happens.

When the number of sudden arrivals began to be noticeable, Harkliss ordered photostats made of all *Soldbuchs* when presented. As these photostats accumulated, they were thrown on a screen, and greatly magnified, then compared. Similarities of handwriting began to show up disturbingly. Copies, grouped by similar handwriting, were forwarded to G-2, which gloomily reported back that this influx with probably phony *Soldbuchs* was tak-

ing place in most of southern Bavaria. "Keep awake and on your toes."

And Cilly Pohl was making trouble—not because of what she did, but because of what she didn't. Cilly Pohl, thus far, was a washout. Each time Harkliss had dropped in to make one of the routine "castle calls," Cilly showed she was having a happy, peaceful, useless time of it. She and the Princess Anna seemed to have become genuinely fond of each other. Cilly Pohl, before the war, must have been quite pretty and with considerable charm. She was getting back some of the prettiness and much of the charm. She teasingly called Professor Schweinitz "Uncle Werner," and behaved to match. And so far, she had found out just plain nothing. Harkliss ordered Corporal O'Toole and his three men back to Dortheim. With them out of the castle, the Professor, it was hoped, would become more free and easy, and act accordingly. But still nothing happened. Colonel Buckley was getting restive.

ABOUT THE TIME the sector had taken all the new farmhands it could reasonably hold, four of them vanished. They were the four who looked, not like ex-soldiers or Gestapo, but like oldish students. That was significant—that it was these four who had disappeared. One by one, and several days apart, they had come to the Rathaus and applied for travel-permission; farm-labor was too tough; clerical jobs were opening up in Munich. They got the permits. One by one, they started on bicycles. One by one, they checked at the HQ in the sector adjoining on the east, and when last seen, each, alone, was steadily pedaling eastward toward the next sector. None of them arrived there. Each sector was required to report back to the sector issuing the travel-permit that the bearer had cleared and gone on. There was, of course, a chance that they had hidden by day in the sector adjoining Dortheim—or even in the one beyond—and then, in the night, dodging road patrols, had doubled back into the Dortheim sector. So all three sectors conducted intensive man-hunts, but found never a trace.

Harkliss made a written report to G-2 in Munich. Colonel Buckley got Harkliss on the phone. The Colonel said, in part, that the requests made by these four men to go to Munich, might, at first dim sight, have seemed reasonable; but—four men of the same general type, and so nearly at the same time? They must have had some special reason in the first place for coming to Harkliss's sector. How about a tie-in with you-know-who? And what about that no-good girl there? By gad, all officers of the Occupation Army were going to have to sharpen their suspicions, or there would be some court-martialing!

Harkliss sent Mike Frazier to the castle with a message to Cilly Pohl to be on the alert for the possible arrival of the four men. While being "readied" for her job, a means of communication had been worked out. American magazines were gratefully received by the Professor and the Princess. Cilly knew French, and so one French magazine was included in each lot; and in it, by a prearranged code, was any message from Harkliss. When she returned the magazine, it contained her answer, or any report of her own. There was also another, but risky method, for emergency communication.

Restlessly, Harkliss again got out the card-index records of the four and re-read them. The second to apply for travel-permission, the one who claimed to have been a clerk in the Diehl-Zander paper manufacturing plant in Leipzig, had been a farmhand on Kurt Essen's farm. Harkliss sent a corporal and two men in a jeep to fetch Essen. He ordered Sergeant Carty to come into the inner office when Essen arrived and remain for the questioning.

Kurt Essen, big, good-looking, lusty, ushered by Carty, came in smiling and self-confident. Harkliss ordered, in German, in a level voice: "Tell me all you know about Johann Boehm, that farmhand of yours who quit to go to Munich."

"That won't take long," Essen replied easily. "I probably don't know as much as you have right there on that card." And he rattled off the identical information Johann Boehm had given for the card-index record.

Harkliss thought; "You have that pretty pat." He said coolly: "All correct. Where did he get the news about the clerical jobs?"

"I didn't ask him. I didn't care. I never talked to him except to order him around. A skinny guy with less muscle than a woman. I was glad when he quit—not worth his salt, and never would be."

"Boehm didn't come from Leipzig on a bicycle. Bicycles in Dortheim are scarce as hen's teeth," Harkliss said. "Your freed slaves stole all they could find. Today bicycles—if you can find any—come high. But he left here on one."

Kurt Essen said, indifferently: "You seem trying to get him for something. Think he stole the bicycle?"

"He vanished on it," Harkliss said, watching Essen's face.

"I'm not surprised," Kurt Essen said. "You'll probably find him hanging from a tree in some woods. His kind hang themselves, in these rotten days. There'll be plenty more this winter."

"I see. So, Herr Essen, you think Boehm bought a high-priced bicycle and started for Munich so as to hang himself in a woods? And the three other ex-'clerks' who left here about the same time on high-priced bicycles and disappeared? They hanged themselves too?"

Kurt Essen laughed heartily. "I wondered how soon you'd get to them. The story is all over Bavaria by now. Grapevine. Farm to farm."

"Well, Herr Essen—" Harkliss began.

The German interrupted. His face was flushed now. "That's twice, Captain, you've called me Herr Essen. My record's there in front of you. I'm a Captain too."

"This war is over," Harkliss said sharply. "All war is over from now on for you Germans. You're all *Herr*, to me, from here on out. In fact, for your information, I think so well of that idea, that I've already made the suggestion, in writing, through channels, that our whole Army should take it up. You Germans have always been gluttons for rank and titles. You'll be better people when you forget about them. We'll help you forget. You may go now."

Kurt Essen, standing, was looking down at Harkliss with a small, enigmatical smile on his lips and his head a little to one side toward a shoulder that lifted a little as though to meet the head. A slight, but rather a curious gesture. Sergeant Carty was staring at Essen. On the Sergeant's face was a mixed expression of incredulity and triumph. Whether it was telepathy from the Sergeant, or recollection brought back by that curious little gesture, Harkliss knew now where he had seen Kurt Essen.

THE MOMENT ESSEN SHUT the door, Carty said: "May I ask a question, sir?"

"Go ahead. Then I'll ask you a couple."

"Can anything be done now about spies who were spies while the war was on?"

"No," Harkliss said. "International law says spies must be caught in the act. Why didn't you tell me where you'd seen that fellow?"

"You too, sir?"—in surprise. "I kept trying to remember where, sir. I had to be sure. When he stood with his head down sidewise and his shoulder up, and that cockeyed little grin, then I remembered."

"That's how it was with me," Harkliss said. "What was his name then?"

"Cap'n, I never knew his name. It got so, when I'd go past him there at regimental headquarters, we'd nod, that's all. Tech' sergeant, he was. What I had to go for at HQ was inside. He was always outside. I saw him just a few times. Couple of times he was standing like

he did in here. We never talked. . . . Wait, sir! I got friendly with one of the clerks, Corporal Tom Gillis. He'd know. Gillis is in Munich now."

When Harkliss put down the phone, he said: "They'll have Gillis—he's a sergeant now—over here by eleven tomorrow morning. Don't tell him what for."

SOMEWHAT AFTER TEN O'CLOCK next morning, Harkliss was driven in the command car to the Essen farm. He had never seen the house. It was bigger and better than he had expected, one of those colorful Bavarian farmhouses that you see in pictures and can't quite believe could be really like that in real life. Instead of sending his orderly, Harkliss himself knocked at the door. He was curious to see the inside of a house whose outside was so completely foreign. Also, he hoped to be able to make a bit of a test.

Erika Wulf opened the door. She held by the collar a Doberman pinscher. The dog leaned against the collar in hostility, but made no sound. Harkliss was not surprised except by the dog. He had checked her card record at HQ, which gave her changed address as the Essen farm; new occupation, "farm work"; reason for change, "to improve health." C Company's own grapevine already had the whisper that the Queen of Poison had "shacked up" with Kurt Essen.

"Good morning, Frau Essen," he said in German.

She answered without a smile, "Herr Kapitan, I am Fräulein Wulf," and stood waiting for him to speak further.

Harkliss thought: "Well, that test came off quicker than expected. Thea Eichhorn had said to him, charitably, that perhaps at some time Kurt and Erika maybe had married. After all, what business was that of the Occupation Army? Thea Eichhorn was the daughter of the man in whose house Harkliss and Dr. Ames Cairns were billeted. She had often told them of the days when she and Erika Wulf and Kurt Essen were playmates.

Obviously, Erika Wulf had no intention of asking him in. She must have seen the car drive up. Had she brought the dog to keep him out? Was there any special reason, at this time of day, for not letting him in? He thought grimly what a German officer would have done if the case were reversed. A German officer would shoot the dog, push the woman aside, and would go in and stomp around all over the place just on a suspicion. Probably that sort of thing was what the Americans should do—Germans then would respect them. Instead, he said in his soft-spoken Virginia accent: "I have something at Headquarters to show Kurt Essen."

"He is up in the north orchard." Then, with cold resentment: "He was at your headquarters only yesterday."

Harkliss, exasperated, snapped like a Prussian: "Send for him. At once. I'm in a hurry."

The girl's eyes had never shifted from his. "Very well," she said coolly. "I'll send the dog. There's no one else. Just a moment—" And to the dog: "Stay!" She went into the house. The Doberman, its forefeet planted on the threshold in the middle of the doorway, stood so motionless it might have been an image of a dog, except for tenseness, of inner eagerness to be at his throat.

Harkliss heard behind him the car door open and then quick footsteps. "Don't get closer than I am," he ordered sharply, without taking his eyes from the Doberman.

Behind him, a voice said: "I didn't like that bitch's looks, Cap'n."

Harkliss chuckled to himself. A great kid, this Juggy Marr. Never missed a chance to play with words. "This happens to be a dog, Marr," he said.

"They both bite, sir."

Erika Wulf came back quickly, carrying an officer's boot. She let the dog sniff it. "Fetch him," she ordered. "Out!" The dog was gone so swiftly it seemed an illusion

"It means being always proud of being an American."

to have thought a dog had ever been there at all. The girl stood on the middle of the door-sill, her hands insolently on her hips.

Harkliss said, coldly: "That dog, it looked like one of Soden's."

She shook her head impatiently. "It is *verboten* for Oberst Soden to sell any dog without American permission. It is your own order, Herr Kapitan."

"I didn't say he sold it," Harkliss answered sharply. "Where did it come from, then?"

"A Wehrmacht dog, from Kapitan Essen's company. Dogs are needed on German farms. All dogs in Germany, except war-dogs, were killed by Government orders in '40, to conserve food."

"That is true," Harkliss said, "In England, too. Total war, win or lose, is an ugly thing, even for the dogs." Erika Wulf made no reply. Abruptly, Harkliss said: "This wind is cold. We'll wait inside. Come along, Marr."

Taken by surprise, the girl hesitated, though her expression did not change; then, without a word, she led the way into the house and unexpectedly showed them into a cold, dimly lighted room. Before she quickly closed the door behind them, Harkliss heard hobnailed boots moving cautiously somewhere beyond. Erika Wulf went to the window, raised the sash and pushed wide open the heavy shutters.

"Fetch those two men," Harkliss sharply ordered Juggy Marr. And still the girl said nothing—until the footsteps of the three were close.

Then she said, in a clear tone, sure to carry out into the hall: "They are two of our neighbor's farmhands come to borrow tools."

Shoulder to shoulder, the two Germans came in, big, powerful, alert fellows; close behind, Juggy Marr, herding them. The Germans' hands and clothes were clean; so were their boots.

"What are you men here for?" Harkliss asked sharply.

"You heard the Fräulein, Herr Kapitan," one replied impudently. "Tools."

"What tools?"

"Two long-handled shovels, ax, cross-cut saw," the fellow answered glibly.

"In America, one man could easily carry those."

"In Germany, we don't argue with the boss. He sent both of us."

"Your identifications," Harkliss ordered, irritated by the slippery answers. They handed them over. Without looking up from his notebook, where he was jotting down their records, he said to Erika Wulf: "You said no one was here?"

"I said there was no one to send a message by—except the dog. I do not order our neighbor's men to run errands for me."

"And the tools? Tools are kept here in the house?"

With exaggerated patience, she replied: "They are kept in the tool-room in the barn. Instead of helping them-

"And you say my brother did a thing like that?"

selves, these men stopped at the house to ask for the loan. Just then, you came."

Harkliss wished bitterly that he had not let Juggy Marr come with him. This girl was making a royal fool of him. She was knocking out a home run from every curve he pitched. "All right, Marr," he ordered curtly, as he handed back the Germans' identifications, "see that they get what they came for, and get on their way."

Harkliss went over to the window and stood looking out at the view, his back toward her. Neither of them said anything. Presently they heard Kurt Essen coming fast around the corner of the house, and talking to the dog. They came into the room. At sight of Harkliss: "So soon? I saw the car, but I didn't suppose you'd come yourself. I'm honored."

"I've something at headquarters to show you—something not there yesterday."

"All right," Kurt Essen said sulkily. "I hope this isn't going to be a daily habit."

"Before we start," Harkliss ordered, "just hold that dog so that his head's in the sunlight—and hold him tight."

"What—" Kurt Essen began.

Erika Wulf, opening the door, turned quickly and said: "The Herr Kapitan will be disappointed. In the Wehrmacht, the quartermaster doesn't put the code brand on the inside of the ear with the electric needle until the dog is fully trained and accepted. That's what you told me, isn't it, Kurt?"

"That's it," Kurt Essen grinned.

"In that case," Harkliss said coldly, "it won't be necessary to look."

Chapter Four

When they reached HQ, Kurt Essen was turned over to Sergeant Carty, who led him into Captain Harkliss's office, and remained there with him.

Harkliss went into Ames Cairns' medical office. "Come on, Ames. The show-down begins." Harkliss and Cairns, taking Juggy Marr with them, went into one of the rooms, adjoining Harkliss's office and noiselessly opened the door a little way. They wanted to watch the expressions of Gillis and Kurt Essen when they unexpectedly saw each other, and they wanted to hear what Gillis and Carty would say while unhampered by the presence of shoulder-straps. Harkliss sent Juggy Marr to bring Gillis in through that other door.

Juggy Marr threw open the door and Sergeant Gillis entered the office. Marr, remaining outside, closed the door. Gillis merely nodded to Carty, because they had already visited together, then glanced casually at the German civilian. Then he looked quickly again, sharply, startled and incredulous. Harkliss and Cairns fairly held their breath. Kurt Essen had looked up as the door opened, but at sight of just another American sergeant he indifferently looked away again. Gillis started forward, his hand outstretched, a wide puzzled grin of mingled pleasure and astonishment on his face. "Well, I'll be damned," he said pleasurably. "Let me rub my eyes. You had 92 points an' went home, an' here you are! And how! What the hell?" Kurt Essen stared at him and at the outstretched hand. Gillis took a more intent look; then, "Okay, okay, Rod," he said, not yet impatiently. "Cut the comedy. I aint sucked in by the masquerade, even if I don't get it."

"What does he say?" Kurt Essen appealed to Carty.

"He says you don't fool him," Carty translated. "He's called your bluff. He knows you. Why don't you give up and say hello to an old pal?"

"I never saw the fellow before," Kurt Essen said, disgustedly. "Is he drunk?"

Carty, frowning, translated to Sergeant Gillis, who lost his temper and retorted: "Drunk, hell! I wish I was. What is this gag? Who's tryin' to make a sucker o' who?"

Harkliss, frowning, whispered to Ames Cairns: "Come on. It's not coming off right. Gillis has made a mistake."

"I don't think he's made a mistake," Cairns answered. "And I don't think Essen's that good an actor. Something's haywire somewhere."

Harkliss opened the door and they went in. "What goes on?" Harkliss asked. The two sergeants stiffly came to attention. "At ease," Harkliss ordered. "Is this Sergeant Gillis? How are you, Sergeant? I sent for you to identify this man. Sergeant Carty said you two would recognize each other. Do you?"

"I do, sir. I know him, but I think he's gone nuts. He keeps giving out with nothing but Heinie talk and pretends that's all he knows. He talks English as good as I do—better. He'd gone to college, an' he always talked like a college guy. I don't know what'n hell—beg pardon, sir—this is all about."

Kurt Essen also was losing his temper. To Harkliss, in German, of course: "I have work to do at home. If I'm to answer anything, somebody has got to tell me what's being said."

Dr. Ames Cairns unexpectedly said, in a purely conversational tone: "The stinking blackhearted blackguard's lying himself black in the face." Kurt Essen looked at him blankly, but gave no other reaction. Ames Cairns said earnestly: "I swear he doesn't understand English. There'd have been some inyoluntary reaction: anger, change of color—something."

"He can't make a monkey out of me. I'd like to take a punch at him, sir," Sergeant Gillis said hotly. "All the time we're in the Army we're good friends. Now he tries to show me up for a liar."

"Take it easy, Sergeant," Harkliss said. "Something queer goes on. None of us get it."

Unexpectedly, Kurt Essen snapped: "No one tells me anything. I go home now." His head was a little to one side, his shoulder a little lifted as if to meet it, and the faint, meaningless little smile was on his lips.

"There!" Sergeant Gillis exclaimed, triumphantly pointing, "I've seen him stand like that a hundred times. We kidded him about it. If Rod Braun thinks he can pretend to me he isn't Rod Braun, he oughtn't've 'stood coy'—that's what we called it."

Kurt Essen turned sharply to face Gillis, opened his mouth to speak, but closed his lips tightly as if to hold back the words.

"Ah!" Ames Cairns said softly.

"What was that you nearly said?" Harkliss demanded of Kurt Essen.

"I was going to say that never in my life have I seen this fellow!"—gesturing angrily at Gillis. "What am I supposed to say now, Herr Kapitan?"

"You're not supposed to say anything," Harkliss retorted. "Herr Essen, you may go now. We'll call it, for the moment, a case of mistaken identity." Kurt Essen, clicked his heels and bowed so formally it was almost mocking; then he marched out without a word. None of the four said anything until they heard the car drive away.

Then Harkliss said to Gillis: "Sergeant Carty and I had recognized that fellow—and by that same funny little gesture—but we saw him only in passing and didn't know the name he used in our army. That's why I sent for you."

"Kurt Essen recognized the name 'Rod Braun,'" Cairns interrupted. "It was the only thing said here in English that he did understand."

Harkliss asked, sharply: "Sergeant Gillis, did this fellow Rod Braun speak with a German accent?"

"Yes sir, he did, but only a little accent. He said he'd been born in Germany."

"Check! So, Cairns, he hung it on you, psychiatrist or no psychiatrist. He'd simply have to speak English to have been a spy in our army."

"Spy?" exploded Sergt. Gillis. "Now I'm worse balled up than ever!" He said plaintively, "You know, sir, I never have been hep to what any of this was all about. Rod Braun couldn't have been a spy, sir. Why, there was a fellow in our company—Pete Monoddy, who went to school with Rod in Chicago all the time they was kids—grammar- and high-school. Then Pete went to work, and Rod went to college. But they still lived in the same precinct and the draft board got 'em both at the same time, and they both landed in our company."

Harkliss and Cairns and Carty stared at Gillis incredulously. Cairns said to Gillis: "And you still say that that fellow who went out of this room was Rod Braun?"

"It was him or his ghost or his twin brother."

Both together, Harkliss and Cairns fairly shouted: "Did he have a twin brother?"

"Why, not that I know of," Gillis said. "That was just a manner of speaking. I never heard that he had any brother at all."

With the help of old Diedrich Eichhorn—now mayor of Dortheim again by AMG appointment—Harkliss found the record of adoption, March 18, 1927, by Bruno and Bertha Essen, of an orphan, Kurt Braun, born Jan. 4, 1920. Parents, Gustav and Elsa Essen Braun, of Munich. G-2, on Harkliss's request, checked the Munich birth-records and found that twin boys, Roderick and Kurt, had been born to Gustav and Elsa Essen Braun.

THUS FAR, HARKLISS had made only routine written reports of the case to Colonel Buckley. When the latest one reached Buckley, he phoned Harkliss that he was starting for Dortheim. He said he also had some information and wanted to talk, "but not over any telephone." And Harkliss replied in a worried tone that he himself had been just about to ask him to come, because of new developments in the case of that girl—"very disturbing."

Colonel Hugh Buckley needs to be explained. Gossip at Division HQ had it that he was a millionaire and had never had a job in his life until he came into the Army, via a captain's commission handed him in Washington. But no one since then had ever said he had not risen to Colonel by anything except his own hard work and unusual abilities, plus a background of world travel, and fluency in four languages. He was forty-three and a bachelor; he was respected, liked and admired.

Colonel Buckley arrived in Dortheim and went into an immediate huddle with Harkliss. The Colonel said: "I cabled a rush request for your American twin's service record. Here it is. First, though, what's the 'disturbing' news? You don't mean she found out anything?"

With a worried frown, Harkliss handed over a square of tissue paper which had been folded many times.

Cilly Pohl had sent a surprising and disquieting note *via* the emergency (and dangerous) communication method. Unblushingly she reported that, as the only possible way to gain Schweinitz's complete confidence, and perhaps his confidences, she had accepted several invitations to spend the night with him. Then she had gone twice to his room, late at night, uninvited. He was not there! The first time, she had waited until nearly dawn before slipping back to her own room. Next night, while waiting for him, she had fallen asleep. She was awakened by being violently shaken by the Professor, who was very, very, very angry. So—two nights he had been secretly away from his room.

"Don't you agree," she asked, *"that this is really important?"* Then she said that she would find out where he went and what he did. *"I shall find out, no matter what happens to me."* That was the way she ended the note. The Colonel also frowned as he read the little note, but he handed it back with a shrug.

"She seems to have gotten under way at last."

Harkliss said: "It gave me shivers, sir, when I read that last line of hers, *'no matter what happens to me.'* I'm ashamed of what I've thought and said about her. I reckon, sir, I hadn't realized, until I got this note, what I'd sent her into. It was my idea in the first place, you remember."

BUCKLEY SHRUGGED AGAIN. "When you ordered your men to storm an enemy-held hill, you knew you were sending some of them to be crippled or killed."

"That was during war, sir, and I went with them; and she's not a soldier—she's a woman; and I suppose I've got soft in these months of peace."

"'She' usually is a woman," Buckley said dryly, "But that didn't stop the Gestapo from making her watch what they did to her husband. As for 'these months of peace,'" he said grimly, "we've only thought we had peace. Perhaps you'd rather let me handle this twin business alone?"

"I'm sorry, sir. If you please, let me see the record."

Harkliss started to read the War Department service record of T/Sgt Roderick Braun. "Make notes," the Colonel ordered. So Harkliss jotted down from here and there in the record: *"Hon. discharge, July 27, 1945. . . . Latest reported address: 1748 S. East St., Chicago, Ill. Born Jan. 4, 1920, Munich, Germany. . . . First naturalization paper: Jan. 6, 1941; arrived in America, Nov. 10, 1932, with foster parents (aliens), Dr. Hildebrand Braun and Gertrud Huss Braun."*

What was the use? The first line settled everything. Harkliss pushed the paper from him.

"Well? What's significant?" Buckley demanded.

Harkliss shrugged. "He's out of the service, sir, and home—four, five thousand miles from here."

"You've missed two actual points, Captain." Harkliss's face reddened. The Colonel gave him a friendly smile. "I had a chance to study the papers." So the Colonel pointed out, first, that Dr. Braun, probably the father's brother, left Germany in November '32—only four months before Hitler came to full power. So, by supposition, the Doctor was anti-Nazi and making an escape, probably in the nick of time. And second, that Roderick Braun, born Jan. 4, 1920, took out first citizenship papers Jan. 6, 1941, just two days after he was twenty-one. So young Roderick Braun, it could be assumed, was, (a) a red-hot anti-Nazi; and (b), a red-hot American.

"You think, sir, he'd come back here?"

"Perhaps. If the right man put it to him in the right way. Not, of course, for a re-enlistment, but for special limited service. For a vital service—to America." Colonel Buckley became grave. "There's a devil of a disturbing undercurrent in your sector, isn't there? Well, there's more now than even you know yet. And more in the whole American zone. Sooner or later a Nazi Underground was inevitable. It's come—sooner. We know that much. But we're getting nowhere with it. If we can get to its top, and slice off its head, it may be a long time be-

fore they try again. Maybe never. If we only can get into their chain of command, anywhere, it may lead us link by link to the top." He looked at Harkliss quizzically. "Ever study Latin, Captain?"

"Quite awhile ago, sir."

"Much longer ago for me. All I remember are a few phrases and quotations. Know this one? *'Certum est, quia impossible est.'* Keep thinking it: *'It is certain because it is impossible.'* Now then! Any one of three things could stop us cold, before we could even start. First, because of that infernal Wulf woman—being shacked up with him—it's going to be necessary to check every square inch of Kurt Essen for scars or birthmarks or tattooing. If he has something which can't be reproduced or duplicated in the similar place on Rod Braun, we're sunk. The whole deal will be off. Next, it'll be necessary to check Braun's bare body, while it is still in Chicago, to make sure he has nothing of the same sort which cannot be obliterated. In other words, being identical twins means, in this case, just that. Identical, every square, bare inch of them. Braun will have to make Essen's weight, too."

"Have you mentioned, sir, how Rod Braun, safe at home again, is going to be talked into taking this job—which, he'll know, is mighty apt to get him killed?" Harkliss asked, trying not to sound pessimistic.

"That's the third stopper," the Colonel admitted. "However! Where do you suppose our old CO of G-2, Colonel—he's Brigadier-General now—Dick Nixon, is stationed at present?"

"Surely not in Chicago, sir?"

"Not quite. Detroit. Less than two air-hours from Chicago. At Division HQ, we used to say that Dick Nixon could talk the Angel Gabriel into lending him his horn for the week-end. Well, that's about all for now. There's nothing we can do yet about the Pohl woman. She seems to know her stuff, after all. I look now for quick results there. As soon as you send me a report on Kurt Essen's beauty marks, I'll air-mail a letter to General Nixon. Remember, every square, bare inch! And Essen's weight." He got up to go.

"Excuse me, Colonel. Just to be realistic, sir," Harkliss asked, "how do we get that close-up of Kurt Essen's entire hide?"

Colonel Buckley said, blandly: "The Germans themselves wanted total war, didn't they? They permanently scuttled Hoyle and the Marquis of Queensberry and the Golden Rule. You have a medical man in your outfit, haven't you? You've heard of such scientific discoveries and modern conveniences as knock-out drops, *et cetera*, haven't you? Well, then!" The smile faded, and the earnestness came back, even gravity. "Maybe this whole thing is ordained—predestined. Maybe this Chicago boy is being offered to us on the palm of the Hand of God. Let's believe that. Let's believe that now we can't quit. We've got to just keep trying. We've got to go on hitting our heads against stone walls until either the heads or the walls crack up permanently." And again he said: "This is more important than you know."

Chapter Five

IT WOULD MAKE A GOOD STORY, IF TOLD IN detail (but the Army would probably censor it) if the unethical trick played on Kurt Essen, who woke up with a hangover but with pleasant memories, which did not include having been stripped and gone over and his most distinctive tattoo design discovered. Not another like it in all the world, for a very good reason, and in a most unusual place on his anatomy. The design was carefully measured and photographed. He'd been weighed, too.

And this is an even better story: How a brigadier-general in full uniform and all his ribbons came to be waiting alone at noon in the private office of the general manager of the Bessel-Howell Mfg. Co., of Chicago, when Rod Braun, ex-sergeant, summoned from the drafting-room, came in, in considerable perturbation. All that Rod had been told was that the big boss wanted to see him.

"REMEMBER ME, SERGEANT?" the General affably greeted him.

"Yes, Colonel Nixon—General, sir," Rod Braun answered, almost too dumfounded to be able to speak. He'd saluted him plenty of times, but never before spoken a word to him.

"You and I are going to have lunch at my hotel—on the Army. This is official business, Sergeant. Your boss says you may take the rest of the day off, and you won't be docked. Come along now. It's a long story."

Imagine a shock like that to a young fellow's nervous system! So they rode in an Army limousine to the hotel, and lunch was served in the General's suite. Before the waiters brought it, the General said: "Something has developed in Bavaria which makes this interview an Army must. I've come here from Detroit to interview just you. Try not to die of curiosity while we're having a good lunch."

Rod Braun thought fast and hard. "I'll try not to, sir, if you'll tell me just one thing now. Is it on account of my brother?"

The General looked at him keenly, and nodded in a satisfied way. This boy was quick in the head, plenty quick. Well, he'd need to be. "That's it," the General said. "We can't talk now, with waiters coming in. Sergeant, I like food. Let's put our minds on it." It seemed to Rod Braun there was everything in this lunch that he best liked. . . . As though the lighting of their cigars were a signal, there came a knock, and a Medical Corps Captain entered and saluted. Rod was instantly on his feet and at attention, but he remembered he was a civilian in time not to salute.

The General laughed genially. "Now that you're on your feet, Braun, just run along into the next room and get your 'physical' over with."

Rod looked his utter astonishment. "I'm not re-enlisting, sir," he said sharply.

"Certainly not. Do you take me for a recruiting officer? It's not really a 'physical.' We can call it an examination for identification."

"What for?"

"That's a fair question. But I don't know how to answer it until after the examination."

To a man just out of the service, a general is still a general. Sergeants don't cross-examine them. . . . When they came out again to where the General was waiting, and the doctor had reported, "Absolutely no marks, sir," and had given General Nixon the records of measurement and weight, and when the doctor had gone, Rod said: "I can see what goes on, sir."

For the first time since Rod met him, General Nixon's manners became those of a general. "What I'm going to say to you, Braun, is 'Restricted, Confidential, Secret.' You understand?"

"Yes sir."

General Nixon gave a clear-cut picture of the hidden conditions in the American zone—a much deeper account than Colonel Buckley had ever given Harkliss. He finished: "You have guessed, of course, what I'm doing this for?"

Rod answered grimly: "Yes sir."

"What affection do you have for your twin brother—for Kurt?"

"None at all, sir. We haven't seen each other since we were seven. Never did get along together. I was twelve when I and my folks had to leave Germany—fast. Even

then, the Essens were all out for Hitler. Kurt was in a Jugend camp. You see what I mean."

By five o'clock everything still hung up on the same point. "If it were just me," Rod repeated wearily, "I'd have said 'yes' right at the beginning. Even just being engaged to be married, is a partnership. And I've told you, sir, that Christy and her mother are mailing out the wedding invitations as soon as they come from the engravers. As I said, we've been engaged ever since we were juniors in the University. And Christy's waited all though one war."

"If anyone could do this job besides you—"

"I understand, sir. But it's confusing, and tough, when duty pulls in opposite directions. It was right, for me to want to get into the war. Christy was all for that, too. But the war's won."

"Is it?"

"All right, sir!"—a little desperately. "I'll promise I won't tell her a word. I'll let you tell it all. We'll be here, sir, at seven."

The three of them had dinner together in the main dining-room, and Miss Christy MacKinnon was very gay, very happy. Or was she? General Nixon looked as a general is supposed to look—big, and distinguished; and as a host he was always high man. He made even Rod at a time like this laugh heartily at his stories and reminiscences. In no time at all he had Miss MacKinnon's flattered permission to call her Christy; and Rod just automatically became Rod.

Although the coffee was to be served in the General's suite, and the waiter had cleared their table, they still lingered. Christy MacKinnon was watching their faces and trying not to be caught at it. She was a girl who thought deeply about many things. Rod wondered, miserably, what she was thinking now. . . .

When the coffee was all gone and there was quite a bit of tobacco smoke in the room, General Dick Nixon told himself it just couldn't be put off any longer, but how could he have foreseen she'd be a girl like this?

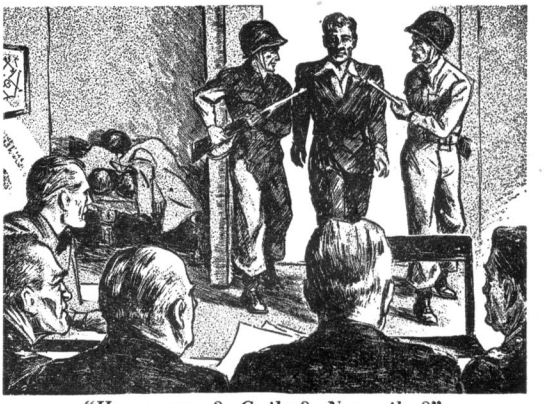
"Christy—" He cleared his throat and started again. "My dear, I have a very singular request to make. I want you to tell me, from clear down in the very bottom of your heart, just what your country means to you."

She smiled at him, and unexpectedly got up and made them a little curtsy and clasped her hands behind her as though about to make a speech from behind footlights to an audience. There was no smile now, but her eyes were shining.

"It means," she said, "being thankful—and often telling God so—that out of every other place in the world, I was allowed to be born in America. It means being proud, always proud, of being an American. Proud that I am a little part of it, and that it is such a big part of me. It isn't enough just to be proud and keep telling how proud you are. You have to prove it—all the time and over and over—by what you do.

"It means memorizing things like the Declaration of Independence and Lincoln's Gettysburg Speech, and saying them over to yourself often, and to your friends when they'll let you—then living up to what those speeches say. It means trying your level best to find out who are the best men running for office, and then trying to get them elected. And if someone gets into office who proves that he isn't a true American, it means trying as hard as you can and as quick as you can to get him out before he can hurt America.

"It means—well, it's like being married and living up to the vows, 'To love, honor and obey—in sickness and in health, for richer for poorer, for better for worse—till death us do part.' That's the way it is with me. It means something to love and work for and fight for, and to put first in everything, for all of my life, and if need be, to die for. That's what my country means to me, and I'm no different from other Americans."



"How say you? Guilty? Not guilty?"

She looked down again into their faces. "So now, General, you needn't feel the way you've been feeling, and not hiding it very well, about whatever it is that you have to tell me. You can't help it. It's just something you have to do." . . . She even understood when he told her he couldn't even tell what it was that Rod was to do.

General Nixon went out with them, and stood in front of his door, watching them go down the long dim hall to the elevators, their arms around each other. He blew his nose noisily, and kept saying to himself: "If that boy doesn't come back from Germany—doesn't ever come back—" Then he went in and shut his door, hard, and said very loudly, "Damn Hugh Buckley!"

It took time to get the matter straight with Washington. Limited service for an untried G-2 agent and a temporary Army commission of 1st Lieutenant were not easy to talk Washington into. General Nixon finally was flown to Washington and held a lengthy conference with the Major-General commanding G-2 of the General Staff. Then he sent a radiogram to Colonel Buckley: "MISSION ACCOMPLISHED. INSTRUCT."

In answer: "CONGRATULATIONS AND THANKS. WHEN TATTOO HEALS FLY HIM TO MENSEBRUN. BANDAGE HEAD AND FACE TO UNRECOGNIZABLE. RADIO ARRIVAL DATE."

CHAPTER SIX

MEANWHILE IN DORTHEIM, EVENTS MARKED time, and there were no new developments connected with Kurt Essen. G-2 had failed so far to get proof of his having been SS. It would have meant an easy means of "removing" Kurt Essen, when the time came to substitute his twin. And then came Gen. Nixon's radiogram, and it became imperative to get something on Kurt Essen—anything entailing a jail sentence, something which could be sprung on him at the right moment, something which would stand up in court.

That's how Juggy Marr got his promotion at last. He was made a corporal, was given two men, and billeted at Kurt Essen's—because a "patrol check-in station was needed there." Essen was too shrewd to protest. "It's the sort of thing we get for getting licked," he shrugged.

One of the foreseeable hurdles in the impersonation, was insurmountable. Twin or no twin, you don't fool a dog. The Doberman pinscher was doomed.

Harkliss, presently, when he estimated that the tattoo job on Rod Braun had had enough time to heal and to have been "aged" by a skin specialist, summoned Juggy Marr by phone—one had been installed at the Essen farmhouse as part of the patrol check-in system. In his inner office, Harkliss gave Juggy Marr confidential instruction.

Then: "No slip-ups, Corporal," he warned. "Remember, when Sergeant Carty phones and says 'DP Day,' you pull it off as soon as possible, and report to Carty by phone that it's done. Then bring him in." Juggy Marr, his eyes shining with anticipation, saluted exuberantly and promised: "There'll be no slip-ups, sir!"

While Rod Braun was still "healing," another message came from Cilly Pohl, a most mysterious message, also by the emergency (and dangerous) communication method. This message was short and obviously hurriedly written: *"Shall be away two days expect important news when I return."*

Colonel Buckley was at GHQ in Frankfurt for a few days. On his way back to Munich, by plane, he stopped off at Dortheim in response to Harkliss's urgent request.

Harkliss took from an inner pocket the last note from Cilly Pohl. The Colonel read it. "Nearly forty-eight hours overdue! I'll wait here in Dortheim until tomorrow. But I do not believe now that she will ever come."

There was a knock at the door. Both men's faces twitched, and Harkliss fairly jumped to the door. Sergeant Carty said: "I took the chance, sir, that you'd be willing to be disturbed. Professor Schweinitz asks to see you."

SCHWEINITZ TOLD A STRAIGHT STORY. He and the Princess Anna were greatly worried. Frau Cilly Pohl had left the castle to be gone two days. It was now four days, and she had not returned. The story that she had told him and the Princess was that her dead husband's brother—whom she had thought dead also—had sent a messenger. The husband's brother was in hiding in some farmhouse, but the messenger would not tell where; he would show her. Queer things these bad days were happening everywhere in stricken Germany, said the Professor. At the time, this messenger-business did not seem too queer to him and the Princess.

Harkliss asked how the dead husband's brother knew Frau Pohl was at the castle? The Professor said he had asked that same thing. She had told friends in her home town that she was going to visit the castle for an indefinite time. Check! Go on. What did the messenger look like? Neither he nor the Princess had seen the messenger. Frau Pohl had put a few overnight things in a paper parcel. This had been midafternoon. The Professor had seen them, from a tower window, plodding along, well on the road to Dortheim. And that was all. Could search be made? Captain Harkliss assured him that it could, and would.

Search parties were sent out. A corporal reported, about eight o'clock, that a young woman matching the description, carrying a paper parcel, and accompanied by a man, had been traced on the Old Road, out from Dortheim, the road that led past Soden's and on past Kurt Essen's. When last seen they had been about midway between. That was the last trace of them. Harkliss ordered Frazier to double the road patrols and search parties, and search every room in every farmhouse and building from that point to the sector's boundary.

No further news came. At the Eichhorns', while a spare bedroom was being readied, Harkliss and Cairns and the Colonel chatted with the Eichhorns in the upstairs sitting-room. Then above the voices in conversation, they all heard the rushing sound of a sudden wind. They paused to listen, for the wind was increasing moment by moment. It began to sound like a gale, a hurricane, a fury. It was a strange wind, so high, as yet, it did not whistle around the chimney-pots, or tear at the leafless trees, or rattle windows. There was no sound except a mighty and far-off rushing, an eerie, soul-chilling sound.

"It is getting worse," Thea Eichhorn said. She had to raise her voice to make herself heard now above the sound of the wind—if it could be said now to sound like wind. It was an uncanny, far-off roar. Yet nothing on the earth so much as stirred.

"I'm going to Headquarters," Harkliss said. "Come along, Cairns." Buckley said he'd come also. He told the Eichhorns to go down to the cellar. The three officers went into the street. Dozens of people were already there, curfew or no curfew. It was a crisp, snappy cold night. The sky was a purple-black velvet. There seemed more stars and brighter stars than there should have been. Not a cloud was anywhere in sight—nothing to show the direction from which the wind came, or toward which it was going. The tall, leafless poplars were motionless. But the sound seemed tearing the tranquil sky to shreds. Any moment the glittering stars, loosened, ought to come tinkling down. Cats were streaking in every direction. They seemed to have gone crazy. Some would run half a block, whirl about, and come streaking back, almost invisible, faster than cats had ever run before. Babies were crying now in many of the houses.

"We'd better take it on the double," Harkliss said. Instinctively they ran in the middle of the narrow, cobbled street as though, expecting something to fall on them.

"God A'mighty," panted Buckley, "what's that?"

"Soden's dogs."

Evidently the dogs had been too cowed to howl until one broke down and started it, but now all hundred of them howled as never before. It made a hideous overtone to the steady, rushing sound from the sky.

The three ran faster over the cobbles. "Wait!" Harkliss ordered sharply. The other two pulled up, peered in the darkness at him. "That's not wind!" Harkliss said. "It's—it's noise. Something's being done to ether waves. Something that's never been done to ether waves before. Something that shouldn't be done to them."

It was only coincidence, of course, but it seemed reaction—now that someone had called the turn. The noise stopped. It didn't die away. It stopped. The silence hurt the eardrums, although there had been neither vacuum nor pressure. It was the nerves which hurt—the suddenness of the silence was a shock.

Into this silence, Ames Cairns' voice rose shrill and unnatural: "Damn his clever soul to hell!"

They were standing in an intersection of two narrow streets; there was a clear view toward the north. Against the purple-black star-studded sky, the Schloss Grafenberg's pointed towers were faintly seen as perpendicular black shadows. No lights were in any of them.

"Come on," Harkliss snapped. "We'll take a couple of squads and give that joint a going-over to be remembered."

"Waste of gas," Buckley said grimly. "It isn't that simple. He's expecting you to do just that. If there was anything you could find there, he wouldn't have done—whatever he did."

They went on more slowly to HQ, and phoned the adjoining sectors in all four directions. From each they got answers in virtually the same words: "What noise like wind? None here, sir."

No word of Cilly Pohl that night or all next day. Starting back to Munich, Buckley said: "That's all. I don't believe we'll ever hear of her again. But keep searching. You may find the body."

THE RADIOGRAM FROM General Nixon came at last: "Mensebrun Friday early."

The fair-sized city of Mensebrun, well to the west and north of Dortheim, was in the American zone and was HQ for another Division. Everything possible was being done to safeguard Rod Braun. No one from Dortheim, except Harkliss and Cairns—at least that was the original plan—was to be allowed to see him as "Lieut. Sam Welland," the name under which he was traveling. No one in Mensebrun was to know that Sam Welland was not his real name, or what he had come for.

Thursday evening, Harkliss and Ames Cairns were flown to Mensebrun, and presently turned in on cots in a back room at HQ, leaving word to be called as soon as Lieut. Sam Welland was checked in.

A little after two A.M. they were called by Major Dillon, in person. He commanded this Division's G-2. His expression and general condition seemed not so good. He mumbled: "Sorry. I've had a helluva shock, and you'll probably get a worse one." He pulled himself together and said, more naturally: "I wish I didn't have to do this to you. Agent 174—you reported her missing in your sector—has come back, has been brought back, right here where she started from. We took her into the service in this very office. She's back. One of our patrols picked her up, a little while ago, stumbling, not two blocks from HQ. She couldn't possibly have come by herself from your sector—you'll see why. But she's here."

HARKLISS AND CAIRNS were dressing fast while the Major sat on the edge of a cot and held his head in his hands, as if he didn't want them to see his face while he talked. "She was brought, make no mistake," he said. "They brought her, on purpose, to show us up, to make monkeys of us." And he repeated: "Right back where she'd started from. We didn't think they'd ever know that. They want us to know they knew! But it's what they did to her before they brought her back! The dirty—" He went back to his swearing, because no other words seemed to give him any comfort.

Harkliss and Cairns, thus far only grave and troubled—they had not yet seen Cilly Pohl—finished dressing, and followed Major Dillon to his inner office. A memory of the last time he had seen Cilly Pohl flashed up in Harkliss's mind. She had been vivacious that day, teasing "Uncle Werner."

They went in. Cilly Pohl sat alone at the table in the middle of the rather large room, which was garishly lighted by too many unshaded light bulbs. She faced the door, so that they saw her the moment the door was opened, but at first glimpse they could not grasp what had happened to her. Always before, her fair hair had been worn fluffily, framing her face in soft, shining waves. Now the hair was pulled back, tight and straight, and was gathered in an oily-looking bun behind. But it was not that. When they did comprehend what had happened, they could not believe that such a thing really had been done: Her ears were gone.

She sat up very straight, both hands clasping a half-emptied glass of cognac. Her eyes were wide open and stared straight ahead, but it was unmistakable that she did not see them, directly in front of her.

Harkliss's voice, unrecognizable in its sudden harshness, asked, loudly—as though, because her external ears were gone she would be unable to hear: "Have they blinded her, too?"

"Not her eyes," Dillon answered somberly. "No. Not her eyes. Her mind. That's what is blind."

Cilly Pohl, wide-eyed, showed no consciousness of these words, or even of the presence of the three men. She lifted the glass, both hands around it like a child, and sipped at the cognac, smacked her lips and hiccoughed and set the glass down, but still cupped it with her two hands as if afraid someone would take it from her. And then she—spoke. There were no words, not even animal-like sounds, but instead, thick, slobbery, sickening noises. Harkliss and Cairns looked at each other unbelievingly, then both looked at Dillon as if begging him to tell them it wasn't true.

"Oh, yes!" he said in a rasping voice. "Yes, indeed. They got her tongue, too. She couldn't have told anyone anything on account of having no mind; but just the same, they took her tongue. It's like I said to you. She hears all right. So, if she had any mind, she wouldn't let herself make those sickening noises."

"Hiya, Sarge," Rod Braun said. "Remember me?"

Harkliss turned suddenly on Cairns, and in that harsh, loud voice, he ordered: "Well! What are you standing there for? This sort of thing is your job, Cairns: do something!"

Ames Cairns brushed the backs of his hands across his wet eyes. "I can't, Len," he said gently. "There's nothing to do. Nothing anyone can do. Nothing. She'll be like that the rest of her life. Probably she'll live a long time."

Harkliss stared at him, getting this slowly. Then he said, as if he'd grown small and very tired: "I can't take any more of it." He started to walk out of the room, but unexpectedly turned back and said to Dillon: "You don't understand, Major. You don't understand at all what this means to me. I'll tell you: I'm the one who sent her there. You didn't know that, did you? I'm the one." He turned again to go.

"Don't do that!" Dillon said sharply. "Don't think that way. It wasn't your fault. It's the sort of thing we all have to do. Soldiers, you know. We're soldiers. We have to order men—women too, in this war—to go get mutilations and death. It's all in the day's work. Snap out of it, Captain. What you're to think of, is to think of the people who did those things to her." Harkliss paid no attention to him, but just walked away.

"He'll be all right," Cairns said thickly to Major Dillon. "He's my best friend. I know his mind. This thing's different—and sudden. He'll go walk it off. He'll snap out of it." They let him go.

Out in the crisp, fresh air and the silence, Harkliss felt better. His head cleared, though it still ached—along with his thoughts and his heart. Behind him, from beyond the farther end of the town, came the drone of a plane, a big plane. It had evidently signaled that it was coming in for a landing, because the floodlights at the landing-field suddenly made a blue-white glow on that part of the sky. Well, this was "Friday early." Harkliss hurried back. Major Dillon and Ames Cairns were standing in the cold of the open doorway.

"Your man's been reported just coming in," Dillon called.

"Fine," Harkliss answered, and, a little shamefaced: "I'm all right."

On the short ride to the field, Harkliss said, desolately, to Ames Cairns: "I sent the other. Now I'm sending this one too."

"What you're doing," Cairns said sternly, "is sending someone—the only one—who can find out what we now want most to know. Don't you want to pay them off? This is the only way you'll ever be able to."

ROD BRAUN—"LIEUT. SAM WELLAND"—was waiting at the landing-field to be picked up. There was no trouble in identifying him. His head and most of his face were neatly bandadged, so that only his mouth and one eye were in the open. These bandages covered no wounds

or mutilations. They covered a young, strong and intelligent face, made completely unrecognizable by the trick of the bandages. His only luggage was a musette bag. He had no need for luggage, because very soon he was to be stripped literally of everything, and was to take over every possession of another man—including that man's girl.

Harkliss introduced himself, then Cairns. When they got to the back room of HQ, Captain Harkliss said: "Lieutenant, this room is out of bounds—for everyone except us three. Wouldn't you like to have those bandages off for what's left of the night? Dr. Cairns, here, can put them back or give you a fresh dressing."

"Wait a minute," Cairns interrupted. "We ought to tell the Lieutenant what has hit us tonight. He'll be supposed to know all about it."

"I never said that," Harkliss said sharply. "We haven't proof. The last seen of her, she was midway between Soden's place and Essen's. Maybe she never got there."

"Well, I'll say it," Ames Cairns said stoutly. "Proof or no proof, I say she got there. I say it because what was done to her was not what men would think of to do to a woman."

Rod Braun was frowning at them with his one visible eyebrow, trying to make sense out of all this—now that Essen had been mentioned.

"All right," Harkliss said. "Then tell him. I thought morning would be soon enough."

"Morning will be too late," Ames Cairns said, without explanation. He told Rod the story of Cilly Pohl.

When Cairns finished, Rod said, scowling: "And you say my brother did a thing like that?"

"Probably not with his own hand. But I do say that he knew. And I do say that it was almost certain to have been the 'Queen of Poison's' idea."

"Whose?"

"One of our men hung that name on her."

"On who?" Rod Braun asked. "Who is this woman?"

"Erika Wulf, of course." Harkliss and Cairns exchanged suddenly uneasy glances.

"Who is Erika Wulf?"

With fast-mounting anger, Harkliss asked: "General Nixon didn't tell you anything about Erika Wulf?"

"Never heard of her."

Harkliss said, bitterly, to Ames Cairns: "No wonder General Nixon can talk anyone into doing anything." And to Rod, bluntly: "She's Kurt Essen's girl-friend—ever since they were kids. The Mayor's daughter told us. We're billeted there. Erika Wulf had Kurt's 'soldier for Hitler' when she was fifteen. She's shacked up with him, again, at the Essen farm. General Nixon knew."

"That was a dirty trick—not to have told me," Rod Braun said slowly. "What am I supposed to do now, sir? I'm engaged to be married. General Nixon knew that, too. What all does 'patriotism' include? Isn't it enough that I'm to get evidence for you which will probably hang my own brother? So, also I'm supposed to be 'patriotically' unfaithful to my fiancée? Is that what General Nixon meant by 'being a good American'?"

Ames Cairns looked quickly at his wrist-watch. "Come on," he said hurriedly. "We can talk about all this later. We'll have to show him, quick, what he's got to see. She's to be hospitalized—for the rest of her life. The ambulance may come any time now."

WHEN THEY CAME BACK—Rod Braun visibly shaken—from looking at Cilly Pohl for the last time, Cairns said to Rod Braun: "Well? People who do things like that to a girl have got to be paid off. You're the only one who can get evidence. What are you going to do?"

Rod Braun answered grimly: "I'm going to get the evidence." And then, miserably: "But I'm still an engaged man."

Cairns said ostentatiously. "We'll sleep on it. There are only a couple of hours left."

They began to undress. Rod said, with unexpected loudness," "Look here!" as though shocked by a sudden idea. "You've seen her. Well, then, tell me." He was stripped to the waist, and he raised his left arm high. Close under the armpit was the tattooed design which had been photographed from Kurt Essen and copied upon Rod Braun. It was the profile of a girl's face, distinctive, alluring, fascinating, the features intriguingly irregular. "Well?" he asked.

"It's herself," Harkliss said grimly. "No one, who has ever seen, could mistake her."

"Funny joke," Rod Braun said, slowly putting on his pajama coat. "I'm to go through life wearing the indestructible portrait of Erika Wulf! I hope I meet General Nixon again sometime."

CHAPTER SEVEN

ALL NEXT DAY, SATURDAY, THEY WORKED ON details, Rod Braun doggedly practicing his brother Kurt's signature and handwriting; studying the copious notes Harkliss and Cairns had made from the stories Thea Eichhorn had told them of the childhood of Kurt and Erika. Rod had never been to Dortheim. So he studied Signal Corps ground maps and aerial maps of the sector, and maps of the town's streets, and photographs made in and around Dortheim. And, of great importance, sketches of the floor plans of the Essen farmhouse, including even the placing of furniture. Also, another set of plans, the grounds and farmyard and location of various buildings and outhouses. These were Juggy Marr's handiwork, of which he was no little proud, though obviously mystified by Harkliss's orders to prepare them, and "on the quiet."

The part played, unintentionally and unknowingly, by the Eichhorns, father and daughter—especially by the daughter Thea—was to prove invaluable to Rod. Without the details of Kurt's boyhood, and the accounts of the interwoven lives of Kurt Essen and Thea Eichhorn and Erika Wulf, Rod Braun wouldn't have been able to last out even his first day in the rôle of Kurt Essen.

When Harkliss and Cairns had listened to Thea, evening after evening, there in the pleasant upstairs sitting-room of the Eichhorn house, they had no idea that any part of what they heard would ever have any practical application or benefit. They had listened because what they heard was unusual and interesting.

Harkliss's and Cairns' friendship with the Eichhorns had not begun until the four of them had lived for several months under the same roof. The house was one of the oldest in Dortheim, but one of its best—trust a billeting officer to take good care of his CO. A tall, narrow, four-story house, its front was flush with the sidewalk, and it was the only house in the block with a small, ornamental fountain in a niche in the wall beside the front door.

Diedrich Eichhorn, after having spoken to his two "guests" only perfunctorily for a couple of months, knocked on the door of their first-floor quarters on a hot August evening, and without formality, invited them to spend the evening in his upstairs sitting-room, "where it is cooler." They accepted with surprise and interest. Diedrich Eichhorn had long been mayor of Dortheim, until a loud-mouthed, ardent Nazi took over. Because his two sons were officers in the Wehrmacht, the Gestapo let him alone. He was in his middle sixties, taller than average, and not quite too fat. He had a ruddy face with a huge, white mustache, and a great mane of white hair which always looked windblown. He was a widower. His only remaining daughter, Thea, kept house for him.

The evening in the cool sitting-room ended stormily. This was the room with the bay window overhanging the narrow street. There were many books and a piano and some good paintings by German artists of long ago, also an obviously modern French painting, and near it, still more incongruous, a Russian ikon. The two young officers had been formally presented to Fräulein Thea when they first entered.

Thea Eichhorn seemed to be in her late twenties. She was slender and not really tall, and, like all true Bavarians, dark-haired. Most of the time she kept her eyes on the sock she was knitting. Presently, Diedrich Eichhorn discovered to his astonishment and delight some of the extent of Harkliss's knowledge of Bavarian and German history. They began having a great time. Thea excused herself and left the room. She walked with a noticeable limp. She returned carrying a tray; on it was a big pitcher of beer, four steins, and a plateful of buns. As Diedrich Eichhorn took one of them, he sighed. "A very special occasion, Herr Kapitan and Herr Doktor. *Dampfnudeln*—steamed rolls, with spices and raisins. Our last." Scornfully, he added: "And the Nazis thought to own the world!"

"Here! Here!" Ames Cairns said jovially.

Harkliss, watching Thea Eichhorn, made shift to change the subject. He said: "I'm interested in that French painting."

"Very modern. A fine example, I have no doubt," Diedrich Eichhorn answered. "But of it I am ignorant. I can tell you nothing."

"I can," Thea Eichhorn said. "It was cut from its frame, and stolen from some art gallery or chateau in France. The ikon there beside it was once reverently prayed to by a Russian family in their home."

"It was the French art of which I said I was ignorant," her father answered stiffly. "I make no secret—why should I?—that these things were sent me by my sons."

Thea answered: "Like the Russian sables, and the gowns from looted French shops—locked now in a closet in my room. Like the great white electric refrigerator in our kitchen. German homes today are full of such loot. I say get them all out of our house, and feel clean and honest again."

"My sons did no differently from thousands of other Wehrmacht officers," Diedrich Eichhorn said defensively to his now silent guests. "These beautiful things are something to remember them by."

"To remember that Franz lies in an enemy-made ditch-grave somewhere in Normandy? That Otto's body is under the rubble of Stalingrad? That is what I remember!" Thea Eichhorn said.

Soon after that outburst, the party broke up. In their rooms, Harkliss asked: "Well?"

"Probably congenital dislocation of the left hip," Ames Cairns answered.

"You damn' well know that's not what I meant."

"Well then, if you insist: her act about the loot was just a little too good."

"Give up psychiatry and stick to medicine," Harkliss said hotly. "My money is on both the Eichhorns."

After that first evening, the two men went back often to the upstairs sitting-room.

Thea Eichhorn told much of the recent past of Dortheim. The war had dealt lightly with Dortheim, except when the slaves finally had their day. Thea told of Dortheim's slave-block, and of auction days when batches of slaves were put up for sale. She described scenes which were almost unbelievable in modern times. One of the most extensive slave-buyers was Oberst Soden of the dog-farm. He bought so regularly that it made talk in the town. Among the townsfolk, Oberst Soden had no friends; most were vaguely afraid of him. No one visited the dog-farm. After one slave auction, when Oberst Soden was very drunk in a taproom, someone twitted him on the number of his purchases, and Oberst Soden had hiccoughed a reply: "When I can find cheaper meat, I'll buy it." This was repeated, and made a stir, but it was shrugged off as a drunk's idea of a joke. But, Thea said, with a shudder, Soden kept on buying slaves.

Opening his eyes, Rod found Erika was helping him.

And then she told of the day when all the slave-horde suddenly found itself free. She made Harkliss and Ames Cairns feel that they themselves were right there through those terrible days and nights when the vengeance-mad drunken slaves ruled the town. But it was the outlying farmhouses which really caught it. In this way Kurt Essen inherited his foster-father's farm. Though Bruno Essen and his wife were killed, the house and barns, by some chance, escaped the torch. One farm was shunned as though plague-infected: Oberst Soden's dog-farm.

But it was when Thea told, bitterly, of Kurt Essen and Erika Wulf, that Harkliss and Cairns were really stirred. Thea had forgotten, or perhaps never known, Kurt's own name or where he was born. He was seven or eight when she first knew him. She and Erika were the same age, the three of them, all born in 1920. Erika had always been pretty, always glib-tongued, always a wild little thing. She cheated at games and in schoolwork, and merely laughed when caught. She was always a leader; girls imitated her; boys were always at her heels, especially Kurt. Erika and Kurt grew tall and strong unusually fast, and therefore were admitted into sports and clubs of older youths. Thea, tears often in her eyes, looked on; she was too lame. Sometimes Erika taunted her, sometimes was sweetly sympathetic. Kurt, when they had to leave her behind, loudly pitied. This was hardest to take of all. The three began to draw apart, to separate—one pair, one lonely one.

In the back room of the Mensebrun HQ, Harkliss and Cairns drilled Rod Braun all that weekend of his arrival. Colonel Buckley was notified that they would arrive in Dortheim on Monday by plane.

Harkliss phoned Sergt. Carty in Dortheim: "DP Day, Sergeant," and Carty repeated: "DP Day, sir. I understand."

Within two hours, Carty phoned Capt. Harkliss: "All objectives attained, sir."

"Any casualties?" Harkliss asked anxiously.

"The Corporal's wrist is bitten through, sir, is all."

With "Lieut. Sam Welland," Harkliss and Cairns were flown to Dortheim. It was early evening when they arrived. Colonel Buckley had come from Munich, and was waiting for them. Juggy Marr, his cauterized wrist in a sling, made his report to the four of them, in Harkliss's office in the Rathaus.

The deal came off, Juggy reported, better than expected—except for his getting nipped—in fact, "sort of automatic and spontaneous and not a bit fakey." As

soon as he got the order "DP Day," he took one of his two men, Bill Matlock; they barged in on Kurt Essen and Erika Wulf having their supper, and the Krauts were plenty mad. The Doberman came out from under the table, and crouched, and just shivered all over, it was so keen for flying at his throat, Juggy said. The Wulf girl spoke a German word that Juggy had never heard before, and the Doberman sprang without warning. Juggy 'just managed' to get his left arm up, and then he went down with the impact of 'fifty pounds of dog coming like a bat out of hell,' and everything got confused until he 'just managed' to stick the Doberman in the throat with his knife that he'd had up his right sleeve."

"Leave out the sleeve."

"Yes sir. Well—that brought Herr Essen, 'just berserk,' at him with the carving-knife from the supper table, but Bill Matlock nearly pushed the muzzle of his automatic into Herr Essen's kidney and that kinda quieted him, so they brought him along and slung him into the clink."

"*Very* good," Harkliss said, beaming.

"What reason did you have for 'barging in' on them?" asked Colonel Buckley judicially.

"Oh, yes, that's right, sir! Why, sir, one of the farmhands was missing, and we went in to check with Herr Essen. The farmhand turned up all right later. My other man had been learning him to shoot craps back of the barn."

"Skip the part about the craps," Buckley cautioned. "Otherwise, *very* good, Corporal. Just about the way you gave it. Stand by until we send for you."

When the boy had saluted and gone, Buckley said, "Perfect!" and they all grinned.

HARKLISS WENT BACK TO THE JAIL CELLS. Kurt Essen was still in a blazing rage. The moment Harkliss came into sight, Kurt Essen began storming: "He killed my dog." But he quickly slumped into a stunned silence when Harkliss said, coldly: "The charge will be 'Felonious assault with deadly weapon upon a noncom of the American Army of Occupation.' That rates a military trial. So we'll give you a drumhead court-martial. Tonight! We can hand you five years for that. And Fräulein Wulf set the dog on Corporal Marr—you heard her. Our man might have been killed. So we could give her plenty too. But just now we'd prefer not to jail any Dortheim woman. I'll tell you what I'll do: If you plead guilty, we'll drop the charge against Fräulein Wulf, and I'll promise you'll get no more than nine months, with time off for good behavior."

"Nine months!" faltered Kurt Essen in a stricken voice.

"It beats five years," Harkliss said coldly. "Think it over." He turned back. "You have the legal right, you know, to counsel. One of our officers will be appointed. Do you want to see him now?"

Kurt Essen said sullenly, yes, he would, and added shrewdly: "Maybe, if he's honest, he'll tell me what all the rush is about. Tonight! Trial tonight!"

"I can tell you that, myself," Harkliss snapped. "We got the idea from you Nazis. Only, you seldom bothered to give a prisoner any trial at all."

When Harkliss rejoined the others, a hot argument started. Harkliss said, elatedly: "Here's a chance we never thought of, for 'Lieutenant Welland' to study Essen's voice and manners and personality, and maybe pick up something that'll later be priceless."

"Lieut. Welland" and Colonel Buckley jumped at the chance, but Ames Cairns said slowly, feeling his way: "I'm afraid of it. If Essen doesn't suspect, now, that he's being railroaded, he will when he gets time to think. Don't forget he knows we mistook him once for Rod Braun. So he knows Rod Braun is somewhere in our Army. He's not a dumb Kraut, this Kurt Essen. Don't take the chance," he said earnestly. "Don't let him ever see 'Lieutenant Welland,' even at the trial."

"Lieut. Welland" was just as earnest. "What I could learn in just a few minutes in that kind of talk might sometime make the difference between life and death. My life, or my death! We haven't seen each other since we were seven. He'll never suspect, and with these bandages—"

Cairns argued, hotly, "Maybe it'll be the bandages which will make him begin to suspect." Colonel Buckley finally settled it: The certain important gains are worth the slim theoretical risks.

"Well, then, Lieutenant, when you're with him, remember one thing, and for Lord's sake remember it," Cairns said. "Keep your head up and your shoulder down, and don't smile."

"I know," Rod Braun smiled. "'Standing coy.' It's one of the few things I remember about my dad. Kids copy little tricks like that. It got to be a habit. Both of us kids did it."

"Both of you still do it," Cairns said. "If you hadn't, you wouldn't be here now. After tonight, keep doing it. It'll be expected of you."

And so Harkliss took "Lieut. Welland" back to the cells, introduced the brothers and left them together.

"Lieut. Welland" was gone so long that they began to worry. When he did come back, the waiting three at the same time snapped out a loud: "Well?"

"I don't know," Rod Braun answered. "I got some. Maybe I gave some too. I can't be sure. See what you think. Kurt looked me over, hard, my size and build, and then the bandages again. Kurt said: 'I thought the war was over?'

"'No Purple Heart for this one,' I told him. 'I got pitched out of a jeep and plowed one of your *Autobahns* with my face. Only skinned, mostly, except for a broken nose.'

"Now, get what he answered. He said: 'We have good Autobahns—considerate. They hit everything else and miss mouths.'" Rod Braun added anxiously: "Well?"

Cairns asked: "Any sneer?"

"No sneer. Just said it straight."

"Can't tell." Harkliss and Buckley agreed with Cairns that it might have meant something, or might not.

"That was Number One," Rod Braun said. "Then we talked awhile about the case against him. I tried not to let my German be too good. 'How long have you been a naturalized American?' he asked. I dished up a really classy lie. I said my dad was American, in the first Occupation Army, and married my German mother in Coblenz and I was born in America. Then I said my mother had taught me German all the time I was a kid, along with English. Pretty soon he tried something else, my age. Said our troops pulled out of Germany in '23 and if I wasn't born till my folks got to America, I'd be only about twenty-two now and he would have guessed I'd be just about his age, twenty-six; but, he said, of course he couldn't really tell on account of these bandages. I said I was sorry I couldn't take'm off to accommodate his guessing, and he said he was damn' sorry I couldn't. He sounded as if he meant it. I said: 'Why be so interested in *me* at a time like this?—'It's curious, that's all,' he growled, and that's everything he would say. Now then," Rod Braun asked anxiously, "What do you think?"

Nobody knew what to think—for sure. But they looked uneasy.

"There's something else," Rod Braun said. "His voice is heavier and harsher and more guttural than mine."

"I can do something about that," Dr. Ames Cairns said, "at least for a while—so that they won't notice the difference so suddenly. I'll fix it later."

"How's he going to plead?" Colonel Buckley asked in a worried tone.

"He wouldn't tell—said he hadn't decided—he'd let me know as soon as the trial began."

"That'll be just about right away," Buckley snapped.

Chapter Eight

By making "Lieut. Welland" the prisoner's counsel, it became necessary to bring in one more officer to meet the minimum voting number required by Army Regulations. Lieut. Mike Frazier was sent for. Colonel Buckley, who, as the senior officer present, automatically became the court's president, appointed him judge advocate. And "Old Reliable" Carty, because he wrote shorthand, and because a commissioned officer was not required for the job, was brought in and made recorder. Neither of these two was told as yet the significance of this trial or the identity of "Lieut. Welland."

President Buckley convened the court, and the prisoner was brought in under guard. He came, glaring. The guard was posted outside the closed door, and the trial of Kurt Essen began. The judge advocate read the charges, then said: "The prisoner will stand. How say you? Guilty or Not Guilty? (Harkliss was interpreter.)

The prisoner asked warily: "Is this court aware of the promises made to me by Kapitan Harkliss, and will the court abide by them?"

President Buckley, frowning, said yes.

Sardonically: "Then I'm guilty as hell," said Essen.

The president gave the sentence—nine months, six weeks off for good behavior—and the "trial" was over. The Americans breathed easier. Kurt Essen was silent, but his face was a white blank, and the glow in his eyes showed that he was thinking fast and hard.

Colonel Buckley said briskly: "Lieutenant Frazier and Sergeant Carty, there's a GI prison outfit of clothes in the next room. Get him into it. Sergeant, make an itemized list—his own clothes and all—I say all—personal belongings, they to be kept here. Give him a copy for a receipt." He glanced at his watch. "Snap into it. The plane for Frankfurt takes off in half an hour."

Kurt Essen came to life with a roar and a stream of German curses. "I have been tricked! Half an hour? Frankfurt? I will not leave so soon. My farm, my money, my obligations! I must have time to arrange my affairs. This is not war. It is over. I have legal rights!"

Harkliss fairly bounded forward until his face was close to Kurt Essen's. "'This is not war. It is over. I have legal rights!'" He mimicked him perfectly. They had never seen him in such a rage. "Listen, you! I saw a girl, a German girl. It was not war, for her, either. But it was not over! She had more than legal rights—she had human rights. Much good they did her!"

Kurt Essen involuntarily drew back. His eyes were almost closed, his lips a thin straight line, his face sickly.

"'I will not leave so soon,'" Harkliss mimicked again. "God A'mighty, will you Germans never learn? Your days of threatening to do this or do that are over. You Germans are going to do whatever you're told to do, for probably as long as you and I are alive. Get in there and do as you're told. Get the hell out of my sight!"

For the few minutes that those three were in the adjoining room, the four in the office said nothing. Buckley busily made out commitment papers. From the next room came the drone of Mike Frazier's voice calling off item by item, and the clatter of Carty's typewriter as he listed them. When they came out, Kurt Essen was in GI prison clothes from the skin out and from head to foot. He was sullen and quiet. Colonel Buckley said to him: "I can give you just five minutes to write out instructions about your farm and your affairs."

While Kurt Essen wrote furiously, Buckley took Mike Frazier out and instructed him. He was to accompany the prisoner to Frankfurt. "I'll phone G-2 to meet you. Here are the commitment papers. G-2 prisoners labeled 'Important' get special prison attention and no questions asked—or answered." Then they went back. "Time's up, Essen." Kurt Essen folded the paper and put it in an envelope. "No use sealing it," he sneered. "No use at all," agreed Colonel Buckley heartily. Sergt. Carty handed the copy of the inventory to Essen, who glanced at it, tore it to bits, and threw the pieces in Carty's face.

Jason grabbed the letter. "Maybe secret information."

Harkliss took a pair of handcuffs from a drawer. "You were getting these anyhow, Essen," he said. All of them closed in on him, menacingly, ready for rough stuff. In his soft, Virginia voice, Harkliss warned: "Be a good boy, Essen."

The change of pace took Kurt Essen by surprise. "*Gott!* Imagine a German officer speaking so! You Americans!" Instinctively he held out his hands, and then the bracelets were on him. He was staring at "Lieut. Welland" directly in front of him, staring as though his eyes could burn through the gauze bandages. "Next time we meet, Herr Lieutenant, you'll not have those bandages."

The night was cold, and Kurt Essen wore an army greatcoat with its collar turned up and his hat was low over his eyes. Colonel Buckley, Harkliss and Mike Frazier crowded close around him as they went out to the waiting car. Cairns, Sergt. Carty and "Lieut. Welland" still were in the inner office. Cairns began to unwind "Lieut. Welland's" bandages, Carty watching in puzzled surprise. As the last bandage came off, "Jesus Lord!" Carty said, and crossed himself.

Cairns laughed. "That really was low, Sergeant. I was told to tell you—not shock the hell out of you. This is Rod Braun, all right. Clear from Chicago to do a great job for America." Then, very gravely: "His life depends upon not getting found out."

"Hiya, Sarge," Rod Braun said. "Remember me?" He tilted his head a trifle to one side, raised a shoulder, smiled faintly.

Carty did not smile. "If I had anything to do with bringing you into this, sir—and I had—may the Saints forgive me!"

"It'll work out," Rod Braun said. "Quit mourning. I'm not dead yet. Fetch me a mirror."

He studied his own face carefully. "Well?" he asked the others. "See what's wrong?"

They squinted and studied. Carty said: "The hair, sir. The Kraut's was just a bit longer."

"That's it," Rod Braun said anxiously to Cairns. "If Carty noticed, they'll notice—especially the Queen. I can't grow it overnight!"

Cairns studied, then, thoughtfully: "Would this do? Suppose we gave you a GI haircut, and you can make a joke—tell the Queen you needed a haircut and made the *verdammt* Americans give you one for free?"

"Good enough!"

So they clippered his hair to the regulation GI cut. Then he dressed quickly in brother Kurt's clothes, underwear, socks, shoes, and on up.

Cairns said: "When you get back to your cell, study everything you find in the pockets. And here's that note

of instructions he wrote to the Queen about the farm and his money. Memorize it, and then destroy it. It mustn't be on you when you go home. What a swell break—getting all such intimate dope."

Just then Harkliss and Buckley returned. "In the air and on his way," Buckley said with immense satisfaction. They inspected the new Kurt Essen minutely, and they approved the haircut.

"Now the voice," Cairns said. "I'll go fill a hypo. In the morning, you'll wake up hoarse as a crow."

"What is the stuff?" Rod asked, frowning. "What's it really for?"

"Part of a new treatment for thyroid trouble. The reactions you'll get will be mere incidence, but mighty handy for this job. You'll have what seems a bad head cold and about a degree and a half of fever. You won't have to fake anything. They'll show for themselves. It'll all be gone in thirty-six hours, but you can malinger for days about how your head aches and how dull and stupid you feel. You can pretend to be a little deaf, and quite forgetful. For a while they'll excuse almost anything on account of your condition. Work especially the forgetfulness and the 'feeling stupid' part of the act, work 'em for as long as you can get away with it, and by then you ought to have your bearings."

"Thanks a lot," Rod Braun said gratefully. "I'll ease into Kurt's shoes so gradually I'll be able to walk in 'em without a squeak."

Cairns went for the hypodermic. Colonel Buckley said: "Corporal Marr probably saw and heard the way Essen talked to and treated the Queen, and bossed his farmhands—details like that. Let's have Marr in."

"I don't entirely agree, sir," Harkliss said. "I think they'd freeze up and not be natural any time Marr was around. Marr might give us the wrong slant without knowing it was wrong. And besides, the 'secret' is beginning to get a bit widespread." Colonel Buckley said Harkliss was probably right.

CAIRNS CAME BACK with the hypodermic. Buckley held up his hand to Cairns as though with the thrust of the needle Rod Braun's mind would immediately black out. "First, just one more bit of coaching, Lieutenant," Buckley said. "Forget everything you ever learned in America and in our Army about being a good fellow. In Germany everyone with any authority bullies everyone under him, kowtows to everyone above. Don't ever let down to your men. Bark and growl and sometimes bite, but never wag your tail. The way we have the real Kurt Essen figured, he's the Underground leader in these parts. You would never find him taking any back-chat from an underling. It'll be easier for you if you handle 'em that way. It heads off questions. Now then, Doctor."

It was only a hypodermic, but to all of them it seemed suddenly to be something grave and serious—a symbol, the taking of an irrevocable step. It was like watching a condemned man being strapped into the electric chair. As the Doctor drew out the needle and dabbed the tiny red puncture with antiseptic, Rod Braun seemed a man set apart. And as he slowly rolled down his sleeve it was with the manner of a man who felt terribly alone.

"I guess that's all," Colonel Buckley said with an air of reluctance. He shook Rod's hand. "You're doing a fine thing, Braun," he said. "Good luck." One by one the others shook his hand and wished him luck, and tried to make it sound casual and their voices even genial. "Take places," the Colonel ordered crisply. They took their former chairs at the long table. "Sergeant, call in the guards."

The two guards, who had been posted all this time outside the door leading to the cells, marched in side by side, keeping step—a curiously ominous sound. To them, the court-martial had just now ended. If they noticed the absence of the judge advocate and the prisoner's counsel with the bandaged head, it meant nothing to them. "Lock him up," Colonel Buckley ordered. The new Kurt Essen stood. The guards stepped up, one on either side. They were merely taking back the man they had brought in. They made an about-face; "Kurt Essen" fell into step between them and, eyes front, the three marched to the door, opened it, went through. . . .

In the morning, close to nine o'clock, Harkliss sat at his desk, Carty showed in Erika Wulf, who was accompanied by an elderly and pompous little man. Harkliss abstractedly glanced at them and said: "Sit down." He continued writing. Presently he looked up and said, "Ah, yes. Fräulein Wulf?"

She and the pompous man came to the desk. "This is Herr Maximilian Barth, my attorney," she said coldly. "You will be so good. We wish to see Kapitan Essen."

"Sure," Captain Harkliss said in German. "You wasted your money getting a lawyer, though. Sergeant, bring in Herr Essen, and send for Corporal Marr." He went back to writing fast again, and let them stand uncertainly in front of him. Juggy Marr came in one door as Carty and "Kurt Essen" came in another. The prisoner's eyes were red and swollen, his face was flushed, and he suddenly sneezed violently. Erika Wulf gave him a hard and inquiring glance.

Harkliss put down the pen and leaned back in his chair. "All right," he said. "You were off the beam last night, all of you—you, Fräulein Wulf and Herr Essen, and our two men, and the dog most of all. Maybe it was the weather. I've gone over the case with my superior, and we've decided to drop it. But watch your step. Let nothing like it happen again. Understand? Herr Essen, have you got everything with you—didn't leave anything in your cell? All right. You may go." He gave them a nod of dismissal, and picked up the pen. They hesitated; then without a word, the three started for the door. "Just a minute," Harkliss called. They stopped and looked back. He said: "I'm sending replacements this afternoon for Corporal Marr and his two men."

Corporal Juggy Marr stood staring at his captain with such a stricken look that Harkliss winked at him.

At the front door, "Kurt Essen" stopped and looked back, then said, hoarsely: "You should be made to get for me a new dog!"

Harkliss answered, with a scowl: "Get one for yourself from your next Wehrmacht!"

Erika Wulf gave "Kurt's" sleeve an angry tug, and the three went out and down the steps to the street.

To Juggy Marr, Harkliss said quickly: "It's all right, Corporal. You did a swell job. The replacements are just for 'policy.' I'm glad I gave you your stripes. You've earned them." He nodded dismissal; and when the boy, happy again, had gone, Harkliss hurried to the window. The lawyer had gone his way, but Erika and the new Kurt were still in sight, crossing the market-place. Harkliss saw "Kurt" take her hand into his, and they went on, hand in hand. Harkliss smiled with satisfaction. If he had been able to hear what was being said, he would not have smiled.

"Do you remember, Erika, the last time we walked here, hand in hand?"

"No."

"It was the day we came back from *Nachtkultur* on the Grafensee."

"Was it?" she answered. "That was a long time ago."

"To me, it seems only day before yesterday," he said. "Let's forget 'yesterday,' Erika, and think only of that 'day before yesterday,' of today, and tomorrow."

"What's got into you?" she asked, pulling away her hand. "Did you read a book there in the jail-house? By God, Kurt, you never mushed like that before. Let's get along home. There's work to do. It's going to be tougher without that dog. Some day I'm going to kill that bastard, that kid corporal, with my own hands."

Chapter Nine

HARKLISS, WITH NO IDEA, FROM THAT DISTANCE, how badly matters were already going with Rod, still stood well back from the window and watched with his field-glasses, reluctant to turn away. A couple of moments more, and Rod Braun would go around that corner and be on his own. Being a spy in the enemy lines is always an appallingly lonely job, but this job was worse, because this spy, with insufficient knowledge of the rôle, had to impersonate another man.

And then Harkliss learned why he had been impelled against his will to keep the glasses on them. From around the corner, almost colliding with the pair—and to the startled Harkliss, almost as though he were coming right in through the lenses of the field-glasses—came Professor Werner Schweinitz. Even the gray hairs in his mustache were visible. The Professor did not seem even to see them. But—one hand came up to about waist level in a most casual gesture, and the tip of the first finger momentarily touched the tip of his thumb. The hand dropped back to his side. He had given the almost universal slang-phrase-of-gesture meaning variously: *"All's well," "O.K.," "It's finished," "Let's go."*

The Professor came on, practically filling the lenses. Harkliss hurriedly put away the field-glasses, and was apparently writing busily at his desk when Sergeant Carty announced the Herr Professor. The Professor came in, hat in hand, clicked his heels.

"Good morning," Harkliss said heartily. "Sit down." He beat Schweinitz to the punch. "Frau Pohl? Just as I've always told you, my men lost all trace of her between Soden's and the Essen farm. If she were alive, we'd have found her long ago."

The Professor murmured. "A fine young woman. It is most—most heart-wringing." He took out his monocle and sat staring at the floor, then raised his eyes and met Harkliss's, candidly. "It was not only to inquire if you had news: It is to make a request, obtain a permission."

"Yes?" Harkliss said. "If it's in line, you get it."

"The Princess Anna had grown much attached to Frau Pohl, and misses her greatly. The Princess has real need for a young woman who will do some of the personal things Frau Pohl did so graciously." He looked blandly at Harkliss. "If some young woman, of good family and high reputation, could be found for her here in Dortheim—"

Harkliss thought: "Why couldn't we have outguessed him? Why couldn't we have seen this coming up, and been ready for it!" He and Buckley had worried futilely as to how they could again "cover" the Professor, and quickly. But how to plant another Cilly Pohl in the castle? And now the Princess herself asking for it!

The Professor was going on: "I had thought, since you must give the approval and permission, that perhaps you might know of such a one—if it is to be permitted?"

"Oh, permitted, of course. Yes, by all means. I can see the Princess needs her. No, naturally I wouldn't know such a young woman, but"—he was thinking fast and talking slowly—"I think I know someone who would."

Harkliss got a very certain impression of disappointment, even anxiety. Harkliss thought: "Probably has it all set up. A young Dortheim woman who will visit her family often—and carry the messages between the Queen and the Professor. But how infinitely better if this were to be a young woman who would carry tales to HQ as well as messages to the enemy!" He said: "The person I had in mind, who may know of such a young woman, is the daughter of the Mayor—Fräulein Thea Eichhorn." And Harkliss looked at his wrist-watch. "Come on. I hope we find Fräulein Eichhorn at home."

Thea Eichhorn made no attempt to hide her surprise when Harkliss presented the Herr Professor Werner Schweinitz. Each acknowledged the introduction with great formality, and an interest which obviously was also great. Harkliss had an uneasy feeling that perhaps he had been too impulsive. But he plunged into the matter at full speed, his eyes trying to flash to her that this young woman must be on "our side." Then his pleasantly spoken words ended with: "So there are the Princess' specifications. Now, Fräulein Thea, do you know any young lady for such a position?"

The Professor was eying Thea Eichhorn with more and more approval. The little, lighter flecks in her brown irises, which in anger were like red sparks, were now bright gold. Their eyes were on Harkliss's as she answered slowly: "Perhaps the only one I think of just now, would not do. Perhaps she is too young—not quite thirty. And she is quiet, and her face is quite plain, but she has much intelligence and her voice is sweet." And all the while, her eyes were saying to Harkliss—he felt sure: "I know what you mean. I will help you." She turned to the Professor.

Fräulein Mildred Weldecker thus entered the castle, but was she really taking the place of Cilly Pohl?

ROD BRAUN, AT ABOUT THIS TIME, also was doing considerable thinking—desperate hair-trigger thinking, with his life depending upon it. There was, first of all, the matter of Erika's name.

It was all of three miles from the town to the Essen farm. German use of vehicles was restricted to farm purposes. So Erika Wulf had walked to town, and now, with the man she supposed to be Kurt Essen, she was walking home. From time to time the new Kurt sneezed violently, mopped his streaming eyes and blew his nose. Before they were a third of the way; "I've got to rest for a minute, Erika." "Just for a minute, then," she said impatiently. She remained standing, and looked down at him with disfavor. "The damn' American jail was cold as a tomb," he wheezed.

"I'll help you remember to leave carving-knives where they belong," she said icily.

Rod remembered about taking no back-chat from subordinates. "There'd have been no knife if you hadn't set the Doberman on that corporal," he said with sternness.

She looked at him sharply, with an expression almost of disbelief. She said grimly: "You must have caught more than a cold from the Americans. You seem to have caught their flip ways. I won't have it. Do you understand? I won't have it!"

"All right," he said, to quiet her. He had to think. There was something wrong here.

She startled him by an unexpected change of pace. "Very well," she snapped. "Both of us made fools of ourselves. We'll get disciplined. Losing our tempers to Americans was one of the things we are especially warned against."

"What sort of discipline?" he asked, to get a first toehold of information.

She shrugged. "You know Dortheim. Try to outguess such a one! What gets me now is the silly Americans. They knew I set the dog on him. They arrest you, and not me. They let us go with a warning. There's something back of it. Did you hear anything, Kurt?"

"Only what you heard," he answered.

She shook her head impatiently. "Well, get up. Sitting on that ground'll make your cold worse. Come on."

He got up. His head was spinning. He thought: "It doesn't look as though I know who gives the orders around here." They walked on, side by side, silent, each engrossed in thoughts. But a mile farther, he had to stop again. His legs were getting rubbery. He wondered if Ames Cairns had given him a double dose by mistake. "I've got to sit down again, Erika," he said, and lurched to the side of the road and sat down.

"We'll hang all three of you—unless one talks."

Again she stood in front of him. "Erika, Erika, Erika!" She stamped her foot. "You know I hate that name."

His predicament made him forget his aches. What for the Lord's sake was he supposed to call her—evidently not Erika.

He tried again: "Relax, Rickey."

"And I hate 'Ricky' even worse, as you damn' well know," she said angrily. "What's the matter with you, today? Who do you think you are?"

"When I get rid of this cold," he said, groping for the "lines" of his rôle, "I'll show you."

She scowled at him. "Maybe you're delirious. For just a little while longer I'll pretend to myself that you are." Then she said brusquely: "Come along now. I've work to do, and people waiting for it."

Without a word he got up and struggled to keep stride for stride with her. He knew that he should be afraid. He was making one mistake after another. But instead of being afraid, he grew angry instead. They had no right to send him so ill-prepared. And then he made another mistake—a bad one. A paroxysm of sneezings prompted him to say, as soon as he could talk: "With a devilish contagious cold like this, I think I'd better have a separate room, don't you?"

The Queen of Poison looked at him with real surprise. "What's more separate than the room you've got?" she asked. "Do you want to sleep in the barn?"

"I meant," he said, "to treat me rather like a contagious ward—as if I was a leper, maybe." He managed a fair laugh, for all his secret bewilderment. "Meal-trays put down outside my door—all that sort of thing."

"I suppose so—you're making an awful fuss over a cold." She gave him a sudden look from the corner of her eye, and laughed unpleasantly. "That 'separate room' of yours! I've been thinking for some time that you've been getting notions. You're in fine shape, I must say, to try building them up today. Forget it. I've other things to think about."

He did not try to answer her. He was too bewildered. So! In spite of all he had been told, Kurt had not been "shacked up" with Erika Wulf again. Then what was she doing in Kurt's house? He would very soon find out, for by this time they had reached the door. He gave the knob a turn. The door was locked. He beat a tattoo with the knocker. No one answered. Erika Wulf was watching him, saying nothing, just watching. He said, "Where's Minna? Why doesn't she answer?" making it sound properly irritated. At least he had the servant's name—supplied by J. Marr.

"You know perfectly well where I sent her, and what for," Erika said. "Or do you?" She was watching him.

He drew his hand heavily across his eyes. There was fresh sweat on his forehead, and it was not from exertion or weakness. "I'd forgotten," he said almost humbly. "I'm sick. I can hardly remember my own name. It seems worse than just a cold."

"You act doped," she said thoughtfully. "They give you anything in that jail? There's stuff that makes you talk. You sure they didn't?"

"Positively nothing," he said quickly. "Nothing!" he repeated. "I didn't have this till I woke up."

"Well, get the door open," she said impatiently.

There were five keys in the pocket of Kurt's trousers. They felt much alike in shape and size. He hadn't the least idea what any one of them was for. He tried desperately to size up the keyhole; groping in his pocket, he tried to pick the key to fit. Erika Wulf stood watching him. He drew out a key. It slipped into the keyhole and he turned it. The bolt shot back and he threw open the door. "Home again," he said somberly.

The hall was just as he had pictured it from Juggy's floor plan. Upstairs, Juggy had been only twice, and briefly. He had drawn all he could remember. The room to the right at the head of the stairs, Juggy had marked "Hers and His," evidently never suspecting that they occupied separate rooms. Juggy didn't know what was behind those other doors. So, now, neither did Rod Braun. He could tell by the dimness that all the doors of the upper hall were closed.

"You'd better go right to bed, Kurt," Erika said, not unkindly. He began slowly climbing the stairs. She stood at the foot, watching him. With each step his feet felt heavier and his head lighter. He was going slower and slower. With great care he went up another step, the top step, and felt himself pitching face downward.

Chapter Ten

When Rod opened his eyes, Erika Wulf was on her knees beside him and giving him another spoonful of brandy out of a glass. He was lying on the floor of the upper hall, which was quite light now, because several doors had been opened. A couple of blankets were on top of him.

The front door opened, and American voices began calling: "Hello, which way?"

"Up here," Erika Wulf called down to them, and they came running up the stairs. Ames Cairns knelt at the other side of him, and a couple of GIs with a stretcher-roll stood by.

Cairns made the usual preliminary examinations. "Nothing much," he said.

Erika explained: "I thought he was maybe dying, and I called on the patrol phone for the American doctor. It was your jail did it. He was all right yesterday."

"He'll be more careful after this to keep out of it," Cairns answered. "We'll get him to bed. I want to make a more thorough check."

"In here," Erika Wulf said. "It is his room." She led the way into Kurt's room. Rod grinned mentally: "'The devil takes care of his own.'" To Cairns, Erika said: "If you want me for anything, call me." She went downstairs.

Cairns sent the GIs to the car. Rod put on Kurt's pajamas, and got into bed. He whispered: "What did it—that hypo?"

"Must have," Cairns whispered in reply. "I never tried it before. Works swell, doesn't it?"

"Very swell. Anyway, it got me into my own room when I didn't know which was it."

"Your own room? But—what goes on?"

"Strictly nothing. The Queen and I have separate rooms—it seems we always have had. All the perturbation

in Mensebrun over my shacking up with her was waste motion. I'm off on the wrong foot here in every direction."

"Then what's she living here for?"—still whispering.

"That's the first thing I've got to find out."

"The first thing—the Colonel told you—is any letter of hers. He's waiting in Dortheim for it. I'll tell the Queen I've got to see your health tomorrow. Can you find a letter by then? It'll be an easy way to get it to the Colonel."

"Quiet!" For Erika was coming up the stairs.

The moment she entered: "Will he be all right soon?"

"Quite soon," Dr. Cairns answered. "Give him one of these pills every four hours. They'll fix that cold. I'll look in at about this time tomorrow. Good-by, Herr Essen. Keep out of our jail. It's drafty." Cairns went on, to Erika: "And let him sleep all he can." Together they left the room.

The house was very still. Just the two of them were in it, and she was probably in the kitchen, too far away for any sound from there to reach him. Rod got out of bed carefully. He moved swiftly, then, first to try the door between their rooms. The door was locked from the other side, her side, and the key was in the lock, for he could see the key's end when he put his eye to the keyhole. To get in to search her room, he would have to go by way of the hall, and that was too dangerous just now.

There was no desk in his room, but there was a small table, a somewhat scuffed and battered table, with one drawer, which he noiselessly opened. Nothing was in it. "Strictly a sleeping-room," he hold himself in disappointment. "My 'office,' where I do my work and keep the codes and ciphers and secret papers, must be somewhere outside this room."

As he was noiselessly closing the drawer, he noticed, crudely carved in the table-top, a heart, with "K+K" in its outline. He thought: "But look here! I, Kurt, was in love with Erika always. K plus E in a heart would mean *Kurt* and *Erika*. What and who, then is K plus K?" And then it struck him, and he chuckled. She hated the name Erika; she hated, still worse, the name Ricky; so then, there was left only Eri*ka*—"K" in the heart!

Besides the table, there was not a great deal of furniture in the room. He tried the bureau. In the first drawer he noticed that the bottom was lined with newspaper neatly cut to fit. Under the newspaper he found three letters laid side by side so as not to be easily detectable under the paper-lining. It was almost too easy. It wasn't regular. If you find anything at all in such a search, it is always in the last drawer, never the first. Then he heard her coming up the stairs, and he had just time to get back into the high bed and cover up before she came in. Almost too late, he remembered the letters, but got them under his pillow. Erika, smiling, came in.

"If I'd heard you snoring instead of sneezing, I wouldn't have come up," she said. Unexpectedly she seemed in good humor. "I thought you'd sleep better if you had something warm in your stomach. Here's some soup."

"Thank you, Kay," he said, and mentally held his breath. She took the name as a matter of course. Elatedly he told himself, "I've licked that one, anyhow."

She said; "I've got to feed you up, got to get you on your feet. I've a lot for you to do." She looked at him curiously. "That didn't sound like you, Kurt—thanking me. You've always been such a boor."

He made a mental note: "Remember to be a boor." He too was in good spirits now, rather proud of himself for solving such a sticker as the name. He said lightly: "Illness softens a man, Kay. Maybe if I got really ill, I'd turn soft as an American."

"That is not to be said, even for what you consider a joke," she said contemptuously. "Soft as an American!" In one instant she was in a blazing rage. "America! Americans! Their men, their women, their children and babies—if only I had it in the power of my two hands alone, I'd blast every one of them to death."

"That's a large order," he said somberly, shocked at the suddenness of this rage and at the viciousness and hatred in her eyes.

"Perhaps some day it will be an order not too large," she said significantly.

"The atomic bomb, I suppose? Too late. They have it. We haven't."

"If we had fought only a very little harder!" she cried bitterly. "Only six months more—perhaps less. Just a little more courage, just a little more patience. If we had trusted our Fuehrer as in the old days! He told us as much as he dared. He promised it would be only a little while more until the secret weapon was ready. If all had believed! He told us to endure, to fight on—just a little longer. But oh, not us, not Germans. We can only win. When we begin to lose, we cave in."

He gave a sigh which he made to sound bitter, and his voice and face expressed utter despondency. "Too late. It is too late now. If we had the atomic bomb today, it would be too late."

"We have something better, and it is not too late," she said quietly.

It was impossible not to believe such words spoken with utter conviction. Unquestionably, there was something definite that she knew. "Well," he said when he had given her time and she had not gone on, "suppose we have. Suppose it's umpty-times better than the Americans'. What good is it to us? How can we use it—ever? We have nothing now. Nothing. And when will we ever have? When will we be able to build anything? A GI with a tommy-gun stands over us even when we make didie-pins."

"Don't get your temperature up, Kurt!" She was doing the taunting now. "We have no need to build anything—except the didie-pins." She came closer to the bed, and although they were alone in the house, she looked behind her before she leaned down, her face close to his. "These bombs will be planted by hand, Kurt. Left, safely hidden, to wait. They will be detonated, when the hour comes, by remote controls, all at one time. Washington, Moscow, London, New York, Chicago, Leningrad, Manchester, Birmingham, San Francisco, Pittsburgh, Magnitogorsk—dozens more. Gone! in the same hour!"

She smiled at him, her eyes shining. "Their leaders, their principal cities, their plans, their records, millions of their people, their hope—gone. Those people in untouched places will be filled with such fear, they will be so numb from shock, so dazed by grief, so crazed with apprehension for themselves, that even German kids would be able to take over whatever countries we please. These stunned, scattered occupation troops here in Germany? We shall be able to kill them with our bare hands. Planes, ships, arms? We have no need to build them. We will help ourselves to what we please. Then ours will be the occupying armies—"

"All that is ready now?" he managed to make his dry tongue and dry lips say the words.

"Not quite," she answered cheerfully. "The bombs, yes. They wait for the perfecting of the controls. There has been almost no time lost. The work goes on."

"Where? Schweinitz?"

"That, I do not know," she said sharply, and frowned at him. He was not sure, from her eyes, but he thought she lied. "I wasn't told, and I knew better than to ask. If I did know, I wouldn't tell even you, Kurt. You should have known better than to ask me." With a manner of uneasiness which she tried to hide, as though she felt she had talked too much, even to him, she went on: "Schweinitz! Schweinitz! To hear you, one would suppose you thought Schweinitz is the only scientist, the only inventor,

who is left to us. I could name you half a dozen more, just as great."

He lisped: "I wish they'd let him alone. That spy they planted there—she gave us a bad day."

"All in the day's work," Erika Wulf shrugged. Then she laughed as at an amusing memory. "The poor little fool! She was certainly a sight. And the comical noises she made! I don't believe they'll try anything like that again." Abruptly, businesslike: "I've a job for you, Kurt, that you'll like better. You'll enjoy this one. The order was here when we got back from your jail. That's the reason I'm in such a rush to get you on your feet."

Even there in that warm bed the sweat which broke out on him felt cold. He answered: "Yeah? I could get up now, if I had to, but I'd drag. A day or two here resting ought to make me a new man. What's the job?"

"The Americans' Colonel Buckley of their G-2. Too smart—in Munich. He doesn't make us much trouble here. They don't want him liquidated there in Munich. So we get the job—it's an honor to be chosen. Besides, it works out better. He comes here often, leaves Munich usually in the late afternoon, gets here after dark. So, it's to be a decapitation-wire job."

He managed to say: "Great! Let's see the order."

She looked at him in pure astonishment. "Since when have I taken to showing you orders in code?"

"I'm the one who is to do the decapitating," he said grimly, playing for time until he could get his footing on this slippery new ground. Instead of being a powerful leader in the underground, he found himself to be only a woman's stooge.

"And I'm the one who gives you the orders to do it. Now! Listen! Do you know a better place than that little hill about three miles east of here?" There was a new sparkle in her blue eyes as though she were now watching what was presently to take place. "It's not steep enough to slow them—this Buckley likes speed—and the headlights will be throwing high just before the road levels off. String your wire about ten feet this side of the top. They'll never see it."

"Sounds good," he said. "Even perfect. What about the patrols?"

"I'll have them taken care of. Your job's the wire. You'll need only one man. I suppose you'll take Emil Schluter?"

"No," he said boldly. "For this job, I'll take Christian—Christian Goettel." All he knew was what was in Juggy Marr's memo: Emil Schluter, the foreman, was the short one, Christian Goettel was tall and thin; and Kurt Essen's third "farmhand" was named Rolf Runkle and sported a mustache.

"I can't imagine why you'd rather take Goettel," Erika said impatiently. "But that's for you to decide. I'll send him up here as soon as he comes from the wood-lot, if you're awake. You'll want to tell him to have the wire and the pliers and whatever else ready, in case. Now then, have a good long sleep, and maybe when you wake up you'll be yourself." He'd managed to finish the soup, and she took the empty bowl. "Those three replacements Harkliss said he was sending this afternoon will probably want to inspect everywhere."

Chapter Eleven

Harkliss, after leaving Schweinitz with Thea Eichhorn, came back to HQ, and all alone, had himself a bad case of jitters. Circumstances had forced him to do something important and do it fast. Now he couldn't decide whether or not he'd been smart.

The first thing he had done when he got back from the Eichhorns', was, of course, to look up the card records of the Waldeckers. Mildred, four years older than Thea Eichhorn and Erika Wulf, had not joined the BDM until she was seventeen, then had joined "under pressure." From 1933 to '39, six whole years, the sole record read: *"Held no rank or office in the BDM."* With the outbreak of war, she had volunteered as hospital nurse; honorable discharge, Aug. '44, reason, broken health. And that was all—nothing significant, except the location of the Waldecker house, right beside one of the breaches in the wall—which greatly facilitated getting in and out of town.

Mildred Waldecker and the Professor came into Headquarters much sooner than Harkliss expected them. Judging by the shortness of time, Mildred Waldecker must have fairly jumped at the chance. It was Harkliss's play to show no interest whatever in her, and he showed none. The Professor presented Harkliss as though they were at a ball. "How do you do," Harkliss said perfunctorily, and turned at once to the Professor, and said: "In case the deal doesn't come off—if she doesn't find favor with the Princess—she'll be able to walk back all right, won't she?"

"I am quite able, Herr Kapitan," she answered for herself. Harkliss asked her a few unimportant questions, and then sent them in a jeep to the castle. He tried to analyze his impressions of Mildred Waldecker, then realized, uneasily, that she hadn't made any. She was a tall, capable-looking girl with a plain but pleasant face.

Ames Cairns came hurrying in, looking fully as worried as Harkliss. When he finished telling about Rod, Harkliss asked, anxiously: "You're sure he'll be all right?"

"His health, yes, of course," Cairns answered impatiently. "That's no worry. The reaction is an asset just now. What I'm worrying about is the separate rooms. What is Satan's little helper really there for, if it isn't for love?"

"Maybe he'll have found out by tomorrow."

"Yes," Ames Cairns answered grimly, "that's just it. Maybe he will have found out. And maybe he will not be there tomorrow."

"Stop it," Harkliss fairly shouted. "Stop that kind of talk, Ames. Right now I can't take it, because—because I've just sent another."

When he had finished telling about Mildred Waldecker, he asked: "What do you think?"

"You beat him to the draw. Of course he can dump the Waldecker girl back into your lap. But I think he'll just let it ride for a while and pretend to like it."

"Thanks, Ames. I knew that's what you'd say." With a faint smile: "But—what do you really think?"

Cairns said, "I've been wrong lots of times. I hope this is another of those times. Mind, all I have against Thea Eichhorn is just one of my half-baked hunches."

The day was not over yet. A motorcycle dispatch-rider brought a Rush—Confidential from Colonel Buckley. The two sectors west of Dortheim were filled with German war-dogs being put to bad uses. Soden dogs, probably. Raid Soden's, immediately, and seize all records to show what dogs were on hand at various dates before and after V-E Day. The message ended with: *"Expect records are well hidden. Expect you to find them. Will join you tomorrow."*

Harkliss read it, handed it to Ames Cairns, and sent an orderly for Mike Frazier.

"Mike hasn't had much sleep," Cairns said, "unless he grabbed off a few winks coming back on the plane."

"He got back from Frankfurt about daylight, according to the note I found on my desk when I came in. Said, *'Package delivered safely and hold receipt for same. No thrills!"*

When Mike came hurrying in, Harkliss said, "Fun for you, Mike," and gave him the order.

Mike Frazier read it. "Fun is understatement, Captain." He grinned as he handed it back. "I'll take Corporal O'Toole and his squad. There'll be no trouble. Soden has only five dog-tenders—old boys, in their sixties.

Soden's crazy, but crafty-crazy. He'll know there's no point in putting up a battle."

"He has over a hundred trained super-savage dogs," Cairns said. "Bad, if the pack got turned loose on you."

"You think of everything," Mike said almost indignantly.

Mike left, and Harkliss said: "Damn! What a day! I forgot the replacements for Marr and his two men." He hadn't told Cairns he had pulled them in, so now he told him why. "The Queen is so bitter over Marr's killing of the dog, there'd be quick trouble if he and his men went back. A new set-up will be smoother."

Cairns agreed. Then he said: "Here's an angle, Len. If you can find the right man, what about letting him in on just a little of what's going on? Not telling him that 'Kurt' is a double, but maybe that he has secretly switched and is working on the quiet for our side? If 'Chicago' gets in a jam, it might save his life to be able to call on our men. And it would be a cinch of a way to get messages back and forth."

"First-class idea—if we get the right man, and if Colonel Buckley agrees. Meanwhile, we'll ask Carty; he knows things about every man in the company that we'd never find out."

So they had Sergt. Carty in, and put it up to him. He thought it over. "There's a Pfc. by name Jason, Pete Jason, in the second platoon, sir. I'd recommend him. He's the best stud-poker player in the Regiment—and the best pistol-shot. He's Texas-born. He's nearly thirty, and a cowpuncher all his life till the draft-board got him. He could've worked up to sergeant long ago, only he'd never take the bother. Mostly, in the Company they call him 'Long-horn.'"

So presently Pete Jason and two very recent replacements, with only routine instructions from First Sergeant Carty, and all their baggage, were in a jeep driving away from HQ—"Into exile," Pete Jason told his two companions, bitterly. . . .

It was well after dark when Lieutenant Frazier came in carrying a bundle of ledgers and loose papers. His face looked drawn and tired. He put the ledgers and papers on the desk, saluted, and said: "We just about took Soden's place apart. These records—not much in them—are only since the surrender." He hesitated, then began again: "There was a bit of trouble—by Soden—very nasty trouble—but not a military offense, worse luck. I—it's hard for me to tell it. You see, I've always owned dogs since I can remember, always loved 'em; and two I've had a good while are waiting at home for me to come back. I— Excuse me!" He bolted into a small lavatory off the office, and they heard him being noisily sick. Harkliss and Cairns looked at each other in astonishment.

When Mike Frazier came out, he said: "But I keep seeing and hearing that dog. I don't know why I didn't go nuts for a minute and shoot Soden too. I nearly did."

He made a new start: "We crashed in so fast they couldn't hide anything. Only one old dog-tender was in the office. Just then, out in the kennels came a couple of shrieks like nothing human. All hundred dogs began howling, the death-howl. I left two guards, and we ran hard. Soden, his back to us, was in one of the runways, stooping over I couldn't see what. The rest of the dog-tenders were outside, watching.

"I yanked the gate open and yelled and jumped in. Soden looked over his shoulder, but he didn't take his boot off the belly of the little Rottweiler he was trying to grind down into the cement. It all happened faster than you can believe. Before I could get to him, he straightened, and as he came up, he tore the other foreleg out of the socket. The dog couldn't shriek any more. Its body just jerked and writhed. I knocked Soden flat, and shot what was left of the dog. Soden got up and said, like it explained everything: 'She bit me. I wanted there to be pain. She made pain for me.' And he stood there looking like an ape, and all splattered, and he still held that foreleg in his hand like—like it was a drumstick. Sorry—sick again—"

Harkliss said, slowly, to Cairns: "It's a civil case. Soden will get fined a few marks, or probably let off with a warning. All we can do is turn him over to their new local government, and then hope we can get him later for something big. We've got to get rid of him somehow."

"Let me at him," Ames Cairns said seriously. "I'm certain he's a paranoid. If I can prove that, medically, they'll have to lock him up for keeps. It'll take me awhile. I don't know much psychiatry. I'd hate to be made an ass of, on the witness-stand."

"Promise, Ames. Don't go out there without an escort."

"Fat chance. This fellow's apt to go raving maniac on me. Now I believe what Thea Eichhorn told us about Soden and those slaves. I'll work on that angle, too."

When Mike Frazier came out again, they took that time to tell him—to keep his mind off the dog—all about the two Kurts. He blinked unbelievingly at first, and said: "Then you should know this; all the way to Frankfurt he spoke only twice: 'I'll find out! I'll find out!'"

Harkliss said, anxiously, "All the more reason for getting hold of some letter of the Queen's. And quick."

Chapter Twelve

THEA EICHHORN WAS ALONE FOR THE EVENING, she told them, when they came up to the sitting-room. The job of being again mayor of Dortheim, in times like these, kept her father busy for many of each twenty-four hours. "It has given him new life—thanks to you, Captain Harkliss."

Harkliss told her: "He's doing a swell job."

She asked: "The Waldecker girl? You want quickly to know about her? There is perhaps not much that I can tell which you do not already know from your records."

Apparently there was nothing else. If there was, she didn't tell it. Out of the tail of his eye, Harkliss watched Ames Cairns. Thea Eichhorn went on: "She is shrewd, and she would make a good actress. So, for all those reasons, I named her when you so suddenly asked me. I was not too quick? I did not give myself away to the Herr Professor?"

"Not a bit of it," Harkliss said warmly. "How did you know what I wanted her for?"

"Your eyes told me. I do not think it wise," she went on, "for you to try to meet Mildred Waldecker here. We are spied upon, just as everyone in Germany is spied upon. She should deliver to me her messages for you, and I will give her yours. That will be safer for us all. And she should not come to this house, because you live here. I will go to hers. Is not that a good plan?"

It was Cairns who answered. "It is perfect." Harkliss knew what he meant.

She made no answer to this, except to go on as though that matter had now been settled. "There was no chance for me to talk to her today. Professor Schweinitz was with me every moment. Now, what is it specifically, which you desire her first to find out?"

Harkliss answered slowly, and not with a wholly comfortable mind. This girl seemed subtly to be directing all the proceedings. He said: "When the Professor is out of his room at night—where does he go, and how does he get there? That'll be enough to start with."

"You know that he does leave his room in the night?"

"We want to make sure whether he does or does not," Harkliss answered.

"Yes, that is important," she said thoughtfully. "I will tell her."

Cairns crushed out a half-smoked cigarette and immediately lighted another.

Erika screamed "Stop!" and darted between the duelists.

"Thank you, Fräulein Thea," Harkliss said briefly, and got up to go.

"Well, well!" Ames Cairns interposed: "You've shifted things around, haven't you, Fräulein? My stars," he said, "the loot is gone—the ikon, the French landscape!"

She smiled deprecatingly. "You are very observing. I had hoped you wouldn't notice for a while—until I have accomplished more, so that I could then boast a little. Until then, I shall be modest and tell nothing." She did not hurry them, but they went.

These two friends had little to say while getting ready for bed. In the morning Harkliss, in a hurry to get to HQ, started for breakfast without Cairns, who had dawdled while dressing. As soon as Harkliss had gone, Cairns sent word by the housekeeper, to Thea, that if not too early in the morning, might he come upstairs and see her for a few minutes?

"Early!" she said to him gayly, when he was shown in. "I'm practically on my way, Herr Doktor. If a certain warehouse is some day to be filled, I have no time to lose."

"That's what I came to see you about," he said, speaking earnestly. "With me, Fräulein Thea, keeping secrets is part of my profession. So now you can talk to me. You're trying to find other good Germans who'll give up their loot, as you did, aren't you? How many others, so far?"

"Four," she said, reluctantly, "but I have just begun. You have guessed because of what I said that first night when you and Captain Harkliss came to our sitting-room? Yes? You are very shrewd. Now can you guess what I plan to do with them? You cannot? It is that I shall try to start a movement throughout Germany for a return of all such things to those from whom they were taken! But I beg your promise not to tell anyone, and especially not my father and Captain Harkliss, until I am sure I can succeed."

"All right, it's a promise." And now he was the reluctant one. "Look here! What you're doing is more important than even you realize. Let's do this in style! I'll make an ornamental scroll on parchment—you've no idea what a good ornamental letterer I am—for you to give Harkliss when the right time comes. A Roll of Honor—'The New "First Families" of the New Germany!' Let's have those four names so that I can begin."

She gave him a look of cold contempt, and the little flecks in her eyes began to glow like sparks. "You think I am a child, to be gulled by such a childish trick?"

"You have my promise," he said quietly, and met her angry eyes steadily.

The anger faded swiftly—almost too swiftly; her expression became wistfully sad. "I trust you, even though you do not trust me." She took a paper from a table drawer; four names were written on it. "You may copy them. I had no idea American men were so naïve, so sentimental," she said slowly, frowning a little. "There really is to be such a fantastic scroll I now believe!" Then in a different tone: "There will be other names to add; there shall! There must be more, and more!"

He copied the names, and again said, gravely: "It is more important than even you realize." She gave him her hand, and it was cold, but it gave him a strong, brave clasp. As he went down the stairs, Ames Cairns kept saying to himself, in astonishment: "She *is* on the level! By the Lord, she is!" Then, stubbornly: "But just the same, I'll keep my eye peeled to see what happens, if anything, to the folks on this list!"

ROD BRAUN HAD AWAKENED that second morning in surprisingly good health, and at first, in good spirits. He was so little awake that he did not know where he was, or care. He felt good! Then he remembered, so much, so suddenly, that he almost groaned: "I am Kurt Essen, spy!" He lay still, thinking things out, trying to anticipate, trying to plan.

His closed door creaked, and very slowly opened not much more than a crack. He had the feeling that someone was watching him. "Come in, then," he called sharply, "now that you've wakened me!" So the door was pushed open wide, and a woman almost filled the entire doorway—one of the all-over biggest women he had ever seen. She carried a china pitcher from which steam arose. He knew he wasn't taking much of a chance on this. "Come in, Minna," he said. "What time is it?"

She came in, talking as she came. "It is late, Kapitan Essen—all of nine o'clock." In spite of her size and weight, she moved with surprising lightness. She was wrinkled and had a definite mustache. "It's a shame, Herr Kapitan, that sickness has come to you at such a time." She began pouring the hot water into the cold in a bowl on the washstand, testing the temperature with a finger of her other hand.

"I'll get over it," he said, trying to make his voice sound hoarse and thick. He remembered what Erika had said about Minna yesterday; so now, he fished: "When did you get back?"

"The usual time, Herr Kapitan."

"Successful?"

"About as always."

He tried another tack. "Fräulein Erika—why does she not come to me?"

"For such short illness you forget much," she said severely. "Never on Wednesdays is she back yet at this hour."

"That's right," he said, stroking his forehead as though soothing an aching head. "Wednesday! I'd forgotten." He was getting a fine start on the new day.

She soaped a washrag and came at him, washed his face and then his hands. "And now," she said, grinning, "shall I give Master Kurt the all-over wash this morning?"

"No, no! By no means, Minna. I'm not as sick as all that."

"That is true," she said, "but I thought, for the sake of old times— You were quite a young boy the last time old Minna gave you the all-over wash. Now you are the large man."

"That's right," he said. "Too large."

"'Too large,'" she repeated, and laughed and shook all over, as though he had said something tremendously funny. "Too large!"

Here was new and totally unexpected danger, the greatest danger of all. Here was the old family servant who would expect him to know and remember countless things for which there was no possible chance to prepare himself.

Whatever was she doing now? She was pouring a little of something white and fine-grained into the palm of her hand. Already she had filled a glass with water, and from behind the wash-bowl she produced a toothbrush and came at him again. Hell's fire, it was brother Kurt's

own toothbrush! He dipped it into the glass of water, then into the salt in Minna's hand, shut his eyes, and brushed his teeth.

She handed him the breakfast tray—gruel, and a cup of steaming coffee, real coffee. She pointed to it proudly. "From the *Americanisches*—the ones who killed the dog. I stole it. I shall steal more from these new ones, who look even greater fools." She stood by, keeping him company.

He asked: "These three who came yesterday—do they make you any trouble, Minna?"

"They have not fraternized me yet," she said, with another of those all-over laughs. "Trouble for Minna? Two are but youngsters who do not even yet shave. The one who is tall and thin and talks with such slowness, he is to be watched—unless he wishes to fraternize." She laughed again.

When he finished, she took the tray. He ordered: "Leave the door open. I want to hear the Fräulein Erika come in." He hoped he would get a chance to search her room.

Minna stood looking down at him, compassion on her grim old face. "While there is still the Herr Colonel Erzburg, she will not come really back to you," she said. "Perhaps, if in some way, you could be rid of him, eh? An 'accident' perhaps?"

"There will come a time," he said vaguely, and she smiled at him as though the answer satisfied her. She went on downstairs.

So that was it! An affair with a Colonel Erzburg. Brother Kurt, then, was still in love with Erika, just as he had always been, but she had thrown him over for this Colonel Erzburg. She was using Kurt, because of his house, which she needed for an Underground headquarters. This colonel was probably one of the fake farmhands with a phony *Soldbuch,* on some nearby farm. Perhaps Erika was with him now.

He took the letters from under his pillow and reread them carefully. By their dates and contents they were shown to be the only letters she had written Kurt in a whole year. Each began, *"Dearest Kurt,"* each closed with *"Your oldest friend, K."* In tone they were careless, perfunctory. They were not brush-offs; they were a toe in the door in case she might want to come in again. The references to Colonel Erzburg were casual, perhaps deliberately casual. And brother Kurt had cherished such letters, had carried them with him through battles and had brought them home at the end of the war.

YESTERDAY AFTERNOON ONE of those letters had made trouble. Rod lay there and remembered the surprise invasion of yesterday. He had been awakened by Erika's angry voice out in the hall. "Kapitan Essen is the owner of this farm, and he is ill and asleep, and it is unnecessary to disturb him." And then he had heard, in a Texan drawl: "What's the lady of the house say, Bokus?" A boyish voice had put it into English. Then the drawl again: "It won't kill him none, ma'am, if we just give his room the once-over. Mebbe he won't even wake up. It aint required." The three GIs had come clumsily tiptoeing in, followed by Erika, her face dark with anger.

Rod Braun smiled now to himself, remembering the act he had put on. "These men have wakened me!" he had said fiercely to Erika. "Turn them out!"—"Is he sayin' anything special, Bokus?"—"Nothing except he said to throw us out."—"The hell you say!" and the Texan's eyes had twinkled. "Take it easy, Jerry," with an even greater drawl. "You an' me might as well begin tryin' to hit it off. Pete Jason, Pfc, is the name; an' don't forget it, because I'm kinda your new boss." Jason had turned to the boy called Bokus. "Now you say all that to him in his own locoed language."

Jason, looking around the room, his keen eyes missing nothing, had seen a corner of one of the letters under the pillow. He and Erika Wulf both grabbed for it. Jason got it. He reached under the pillow, took the other two, and gave all three to Bokus. "Mebbe chuck full of secret information. Read'm to us, fellow." Rod grinned now to himself, remembering the violence of his own and Erika's protests. Bokus began to translate aloud: *"Dearest Kurt, I've had four letters from you, and should have written sooner—'* Bokus began skimming, but not aloud. "Hey, Pete," he said looking up. "These are love-letters —sort of. These don't belong to the American Army." Bokus politely handed the letters to Erika. Pete Jason said: "That settles everything. Come along, you men." He gave a half-mocking wave of the hand. "That's all for now, folks."

The Americans went noisily down the stairs. When the house had become quiet again, Erika, looking down at him steadily all this while, had said: "And you kept them —through everything? They mean so much to you, Kurt?"—"Yes, Kay," he had answered in a low voice.—"I'm sorry, Kurt," she said, "that it has to be this way." She had handed him back the letters. "I've got to go do some work now, Kurt."

THAT HAD BEEN YESTERDAY. Today.... He opened his eyes, and Dr. Ames Cairns stopped gently shaking him. "Oh, hello, Doc," Rod said. "I didn't hear you come in."

Erika came and stood beside the Doctor and smiled down at him. "I'm here too, Kurt."

Cairns was very professional, very brisk this morning. He popped a thermometer into the patient's mouth, and began taking the pulse. Erika pulled a chair close to the bedside, and sat down; she was there for the duration.... Stethoscope, chest and back. Cairns said: "Let's see the tongue, Herr Essen.—Um-m!" He felt the abdomen. To Erika: "In ordinary practice, Fräulein, in the States, we doctors never carry such equipment, but times like these, in Germany—" From his bag he produced a rubber bag and tubing. "Have you—are you a nurse, Fräulein?"

"No!" she said hastily. "No, of course not." She closed the door, fast, behind her. The conspirators shook with laughter.

Cairns said: "Plenty of time now. And she won't come popping back in."

Rod gave Cairns the three letters. Then point by point, told in detail each item he had so far learned. "The big thing right now is the decapitation wire for Colonel Buckley." Cairns told their plan regarding Pete Jason. "He's smart, plenty," Rod said. "I'll be glad to have him in reserve, but when he's told I'm selling out, he'll despise my guts and act accordingly; but he'll carry out orders, whatever he thinks of me."

Cairns got up to go. "Daren't stay too long. Remember, be forgetful, don't be too chatty and bright, and try to keep your voice harsh. Good luck." He came back, and held out his hand. "I'm proud to know you, Rod."

It was the way he had said it, and the unexpectedness. Rod Braun had trouble with his voice. He gripped the hand, hard. "Thanks, Ames." Cairns reached the door, and Rod loudly whispered to him: "Don't forget to tell the Queen you reprieved me!"

Five minutes later there was a knock at his door. "Come in," Rod called gruffly.

A tall, thin, dark-faced man entered, hat in hand. "The Herr Kapitan sent for me?"

So! This would be Goettel, Christian Goettel, his farmhand who was to be his assistant in the decapitation job. Rod let the fellow stand, hat in hand, and said to him, brusquely: "Ever do a decapitation-wire job?"

"No sir. Not yet." Christian Goettel's expression brightened, in anticipation. "But I know how it is done."

"Good. Very soon we'll have one to do, and must be ready. Now, do you know that we have such a wire?"

"For the Autobahn, sir? Cars going either direction, or just one way?"

This was a good question, because the Autobahn was a Nazi-built military highway with a parkway dividing it into a two-way road. Rod pressed his fingertips to his forehead and indicated great aches. "Because of the pain, I did not remember to tell you. It is for a particular time, for a particular car, coming from Munich."

Christian Goettel respectfully said that he now understood. Rod described the spot chosen. Christian knew where it was; it would be a good spot. Rod told him to report as soon as he had made sure of the wire. The man said yes sir, and started for the door. "Goettel!" The man pivoted, brought his heels together loudly, and came to stiff attention. Rod had an inspiration. "Damn it!" he roared. "You've been told not to do that. Farmhands don't do such things. You've been told, haven't you? Answer!"

"Yes sir. It was habit, sir—more than ten years."

"That'll do!" Rod felt better. He had put this fellow in his place—and had learned considerably about his own. "What of the farm-work, Goettel? What's the program for tomorrow? I've forgotten." He went through the business of hands to head again.

"Schluter has your orders for the week, sir. He never tells Runkle and me in advance."

"All right—that's all." When Rod was alone, he put his hands to his head, and it was not part of the act. It didn't seem possible that he would be able to get away with this job much longer. It was too much to expect!

CAIRNS FOUND COLONEL BUCKLEY at HQ with Harkliss. It was a shock to them, and a bad shock, to learn that Kurt Essen, instead of being the Underground's district leader, had been only a woman's stooge. It was a shock to learn that the real leader was Erika Wulf, who alone knew all the secrets. It was a worse shock to learn that she was no longer in love with Kurt.

"A woman in love will betray any secret to the man she loves," Colonel Buckley declared. "It's axiomatic. History's full of women telling their lovers what they shouldn't have told. If the Wulf woman isn't in love with him, she'll tell him nothing. If he has to spend his time rooting around in bureau drawers for scraps of information, he'll throw his life away, because he's certain to be caught at it. His only chance, now, is to make her fall in love with him again. He's got to get her away from this Erzburg. Tell him that, Cairns. He's got to."

"I'll tell him," Cairns said, dismally. "What about the decapitation wire?"

"I was getting fond of that boy just for himself—his personality, and his nerve, and the sacrifices he's making to do a job for America. He's doing it big. Now he's saved my life. You can guess how I feel about him now—all the new danger he's in." The Colonel explained that the wire job now meant nothing, because of this warning. He'd keep off the road, coming from Munich at night, or else come by plane.

"Then they'll try something else, sir," Harkliss said anxiously.

"Of course they will," Buckley agreed, cheerfully. "Doctor, what is it you medical men do in treating a case you can't diagnose?"

"'Meet conditions as they arise,' sir."

"That's it. I couldn't remember the phrase. 'Meet conditions as they arise.' Good technique for handling any sort of trouble. Remember it. What's next?"

"What about telling Jason?"

"By all means, now. Get him in here this afternoon, after we finish with those letters, and I'll talk to him myself. . . . Soden? Very good, Doctor, but make it snappy. Next?"

"What chance of the old servant, Minna, being useful to him?"

"I'd hoped you wouldn't ask." Buckley's face became grave. "There's nothing we can do about it. He's smart enough to wiggle out of his mistakes, with everyone except this Minna. Because, do you see, to everyone else, it's an impossibility that he isn't Kurt! Apparently no one else knows about the twin angle. It would have been natural for the kid, Kurt, to tell those two girls he had a twin brother. Evidently he didn't tell. Probably in his family there was a row, very hush-hush. Hatred is the only plausible reason for keeping such a thing dark. So then, this Minna, the old family servant, is probably the only person in this part of Bavaria, now living, who knows Kurt Essen ever had an identical twin. If Minna ever should suspect, it'll be all over for Rod Braun. Old Minna shows up as his greatest menace."

All three grew gloomier by the minute. Buckley began again. "In the matter of Schweinitz: We could, of course, get rid of him, could lock him up—and learn nothing. We'll give the Waldecker girl a chance. And now let's get at those letters, fast. At least we can do that much for Rod Braun."

Between them they discovered and noted the consistent peculiarities in forming certain letters of the alphabet, and peculiarities of style, and of appearance—such as invariably wide spacing between lines, and on each page, an average of three lines ran sharply downhill. In all three letters there was never a comma; she made dashes do. And a couple of favorite overworked phrases appeared in each of the three: *"I hate to do this—"* and, *"You'll never believe—"* These, they included; and they managed to work in a most telling touch—the name of the dog killed by Juggy Marr. Buckley and Harkliss concocted the letter, first in English; then they translated it into German. Cairns toiled for hours and turned out a masterpiece of forgery. The English version read:

Dearest Kurt— Word comes—you will understand how—telling where you are. I hate to do this—but this is a command. Make no effort of any sort to communicate with any of us. There is a break somewhere in the chain. You will never believe how badly things have suddenly gone. We are watched in a new way as never before. This is sent through unexpected—but safe—channels which can't be used again. Until permission—remember—no other messages—me to you or you to me.

I took a lawyer—you know him—Maximilian Barth—to their headquarters early. You were gone. They would not tell me where. Sometime we will pay them off for everything. Minna storms endlessly over your sentence. Erzburg has good plans for the bastard who killed Kam. I wish you were home. Bear up. Nothing lasts. Destroy this as soon as read. That also is a command. Yours—K.

They sent it to Frankfurt, by plane, with instructions to G-2 to get it planted under Kurt Essen's pillow while he was in the exercise yard.

"That'll stop him cold," Harkliss said exultantly.

Buckley nodded. "Essen's first play would have been to get word out to the Queen. Sooner or later, he'd have done it. It would have ended Rod on the Essen farm."

THEY SENT FOR PETE JASON. When he came in, his shoulders and helmet were sprinkled with snow—the first of the season. Colonel Buckley told him the story they wanted him to believe about "Kurt."

"You don't like this job, do you, Jason?" Buckley asked. "Say what's on your mind."

"Guys that sell their own people out make me sick to my stomach, sir. I hate to go near them."

"So do I, Jason. But it is war still, even though they did sign a piece of paper. That's the kind of people these Germans are. This fellow Essen—whatever you and I think of him—may be very valuable to us. Go ahead, Jason. I can see you've something else on your mind."

"Yes sir. Double-crossers, sir, sooner or later always double-cross both ways. When we catch this Jerry double-crossin' us, may I have first crack at him?"

"You may have first crack at him, when I say the word."

"Thank you, sir." His expression darkened. "But until then, it's going to be hard!"

The Colonel gave him the three letters, and instructed: "Don't let anyone see you give these to Essen."

When Jason got back to the farmhouse, he told Erika Wulf, through Bokus, that when at HQ on a matter of rations, the Doc had given him a most mighty personal and medical message for Herr Essen. Erika told him to deliver it himself. At the bedroom door, Jason said: "All that was fakin', Bokus. I won't need you. All I want is to take a good squint at something. Stand here, an' if anybody comes, you start whistlin' 'Deep in the Heart of Texas,' an' whistle it loud, see?"

Rod was not surprised to see the new go-between. But he was astounded when Pete Jason whispered: "I got my orders. You and I are team-mates for a while." He was astounded because it was in very fair German. Speaking German himself, so as to stay in character, he asked: "What was all that interpreting for, yesterday?"

"When I'm not supposed to be able to talk the language, I can listen to it better," Pete Jason said sagely. He handed over the three letters, and left.

Chapter Thirteen

PROFESSOR SCHWEINITZ AND MILDRED WALDECKER, shaking the snow off, unexpectedly came into HQ and were shown into Harkliss's office. Mildred Waldecker explained it with quiet, simple directness. The Princess Anna had engaged her; therefore she had come to report, for her record, her changed address and occupation. Professor Schweinitz had most kindly, she said, come with her so as to find someone with a handcart to wheel her clothes up to the castle. She must go home now and pack, so that they could get back before curfew. Harkliss noticed with great satisfaction that she was making a favorable impression on Colonel Buckley. The Colonel said that, in such weather, the American Army would take them and the luggage in a jeep.

Professor Schweinitz answered for her. "Splendid!" Then, blandly: "I know, Colonel, that you see completely through me. I came here hoping that Captain Harkliss would make some such courteous offer. America and Germany—we will yet be friends!"

The Colonel laughed, and affably offered his cigarette-case. The Professor lighted one, and beamed. Buckley told Mildred Waldecker he would send the Professor in the car to pick her up in forty-five minutes. She thanked them in a pleasant, dignified manner, and left to go home. Harkliss could see that Colonel Buckley had set this up in order to do a little pumping. Apparently the Professor also could see it, and adroitly "took the ball."

"*Gott!* To have someone besides women to talk to!" he said with such surprising gloom it caught their full attention. "The burden of the future has been weighing me down—my own future. Put yourselves in my place, gentlemen: a lifetime of very great effort always toward one goal, progress and achievement in science. And now? Germany is done, is wiped out; liquidated among nations, as we used to say of troublesome individuals. But I and my trained mind, we live on, uselessly, tiresomely. It is not a pleasant thought."

Buckley said, crisply: "Ninety of your outstanding German scientists and technicians from your V-weapon base at Peenemunde were transferred last September to the United States. They're working right now on military projects for our Army and Navy. Why didn't you go with them?"

"I was never on the Peenemunde staff. I was higher," Schweinitz said listlessly. Suddenly he spoke with Prussian arrogance: "I am a German. No American lives who could make me use my mind on any of your damned military projects." His voice and manner softened. "I am through with wars," he said. "I had thought I might presently be able to get permission to go to America and work for one of your great peacetime industrialists."

Very unexpectedly to both, Colonel Buckley said: "I might be able to do something about that. Perhaps almost at once."

"I did not foresee," Werner Schweinitz said slowly, "that even you would be able to make it possible so soon. Next spring was the earliest that I had in mind. I am tired. More tired than—"

The telephone rang, and Harkliss answered. Then, to Colonel Buckley: "A call for you, sir. It's the CO of the next sector, east. He's having troubles, and asks if you're still here. Do you want to talk to him from this phone?"

"I'll see what he wants, first." Buckley took the receiver and listened to a considerable story. "All right," he said presently. "I'll have supper here, at once—not much lunch, and I'm hungry—and start within the hour. Don't do anything until I come." He hung up. "Sorry, Captain. I'd meant to stay overnight. Oh—my driver said something about having your garage mechanics work on my staff car's differential. Please have your sergeant find out if the car is ready, and also have him see that my men get their suppers now."

Harkliss went out to see Carty, and the Professor got up and began pacing. "I should so like to have talked further. But if you will be so good—that car you so kindly offered?" The Colonel irritably phoned the order. The Professor went to the window and stood silently looking out.

Harkliss came in, frowning. "Sorry, sir. They expected your car would be in for the night, and its rear end is pretty well taken down."

"Then we'll take one of your jeeps—only about fourteen miles, isn't it?" Buckley said impatiently. "Send my car over in the morning, and we'll go on to Munich from there."

Schweinitz, at the window, said, with his back still to them, "You'll have quite a trip, Colonel. Ah—the jeep which just pulled up. For me?"

"You're getting in quite a rush, aren't you?" Buckley said, ice in his voice.

All the Professor's usual blandness came back. "This weather, that's all. I want to get home. And women take hours to pack clothes if you let—" An orderly announced the car. Werner Schweinitz thanked the Colonel and Harkliss effusively, shook their hands, and gave them a most Prussian bow. "A pleasant trip, Colonel Buckley." He went out, smiling.

They sent scowls after him. Buckley said, moodily: "There goes one of the most dangerous men now loose in Germany. I told you once—either a preëminent liar or a consummate actor. He is both. Notice how he slipped out of my bluff to get him to America? Harkliss, we've got to work fast. Find out what he's doing, then get him. It's vital. If the Waldecker girl is 'our girl,' crowd her to get the dope; if she isn't, get rid of her, and we'll find some other way. Now let's get some supper."

OUTSIDE, SNOW HAD BROUGHT the winter night with it, unusually early. Early candlelight made a pale but cheerful glow in many of the windows as they came out of the officers' mess, and Buckley, in better humor, said: "Your town looks like a ruddy Christmas card. Ought to be some carolers, just to make it complete."

"Here they come," laughed Harkliss. "We strive to please. Christmas carols *á la* Germany, 1945."

Debouching briskly from a side-street came a patrol finishing its tour of duty, and lustily singing: "'*What do you do in the In-fant-ry?*'" Their corporal was accenting the beat by bellowing, "Hutt, two, three, four!

Marr shouted: "Keep out o' line with any window!"

Hutt, two, three, four!" . . . "'You march, you march, you march.'" . . . "Hutt, two, three, four!"

The jeep and the Colonel's three men were waiting in front of HQ. Buckley got in, then reached out from his seat beside the driver—it was warmer there behind the windshield—and again shook Harkliss' hand. "I'll keep in touch, and be with you again, probably very soon."

"Come by daylight, sir, when you head this way," Harkliss reminded.

"No chance I'd forget that. Good-by. Good luck."

"Good luck, sir."

There came another flurry of snow. The car disappeared as though a sheet had been lowered behind it.

It was probably no more than twenty to twenty-five minutes since the car left, when Sergeant Carty, with no semblance of military procedure, came barging into Harkliss's office. "Oh, God, sir! Oh, God! Colonel Buckley! A wire—across the road—throat-high!"

NEXT IN RANK TO THE LATE Colonel Hugh Buckley, in the Division's G-2, was Major Bryson North. He had scarcely been able to understand Harkliss at first, on the phone, because Harkliss' voice had been so thick; but when he did understand, he said he'd get to Dortheim as soon as he could. Because of the storm—it had turned into a real storm—it was past midnight when he arrived.

He was out of the car, and at the door by the time Harkliss got there. Major North said: "Bad loss. Friend. Valuable officer." The tone of his voice said all the rest. It was all he ever did say about their loss.

"It's terrible, sir," Harkliss replied, and his voice thickened again. "Horrible. Worse than war."

As they headed across the orderly-room, the Major was slipping out of his greatcoat.

As they stepped into the office, Harkliss said: "This is Captain Cairns, Medical Corps, sir."

"Captain." The way Major North said it, made that one word satisfactorily say all that was needed to be said. "How long before reaching the wreck?"

"Not more than fifteen minutes, sir."

"Nothing to be done?"

Cairns closed his eyes for a moment. "If you had seen them!"

Major North nodded. He understood. He turned to Harkliss. "How many prisoners?"

"Eighteen, sir, so far."

The Major's thick black eyebrows went up. "It seems too many, Captain," he said thoughtfully. "Start at the beginning."

It was a difficult story to tell, because Colonel Buckley had not been back in Munich after going to Mensebrun to meet Rod Braun—that had been only three days ago. So the Major knew nothing of Rod Braun and Erika Wulf, or of Mildred Waldecker, and little enough of Professor Schweinitz. All these had to be interwoven with events of the last few hours.

The wire was about two and one-half miles east of town, across a straightaway of the Munich Autobahn; dark, and snowing hard. A motorcycle patrol, coming in from tour, were so close that they heard the smash—the driverless car having run wild and overturned after hitting the wire. It happened at 5:28. "And that," Harkliss said, "was almost exactly one hour after Schweinitz heard the Colonel say over the phone that he would start within an hour."

"That's it. The time element. It's clear now. One hour. Go on."

"According to Rod Braun, the order to give Colonel Buckley the wire originated in Munich and came to Erika Wulf. She didn't get this new order. Our man Jason reports that everybody at the Essen farm was present and accounted for during that whole hour."

"Forget the Essen people, then. Schweinitz?"

"One of our jeeps took him to the Waldecker house at 4:40; he and Mildred Waldecker came out at 5:15 and were driven by our men to the castle. But there was a kid, who doesn't live at the Waldeckers', and he came out about 4:45 and went down the street. That kid and his mother are here in the cells, for questioning."

"Very good. Important, probably. Would Schweinitz give the order to whoever strung the wire?"

"It's doubtful, sir. Not in his line. But he must have given the information to someone in Dortheim. Someone with the know-how, and authority to give the order. Someone who by-passed the Wulf woman and gave the order direct."

The "wire" had, of course, been brought in for evidence. It was similar to those used by garage tow-cars. The Major examined the ends. The strands had untwisted a trifle and were rough and sharp. "Blood—recent. Here on this end, down in the twists of the strands." He ordered that the fourteen from the three farms be brought in. They were the only ones close enough to have been involved, in that short space of time.

Major North said, while they waited: "If we find a fresh out, we must get the fellow's blood-specimen to compare with the blood on the wire." He paused. "It's illegal to force a suspect to furnish the evidence which may hang him." He looked thoughtfully from Harkliss to Cairns. "We've never worked together before. So I must tell you. When results are necessary, I get them."

Cairns said: "I'll get as much as you want."

"For this job, some in a test-tube. If merely to be type, a drop or two on gauze would do. But I want analyses also."

The fourteen came in, under guard, and were lined against the wall; a curious sight with sleeves pulled back and twenty-eight hands out-thrust, palms up; a beggars' gesture. It didn't take long to find the only one with a recent cut—a nasty-looking, ragged-edge tear on the side of his right hand. Perhaps not yet twenty, he was as tall as Major North; slender, well-built; he had thick yellow hair brushed straight back; his gray eyes and his mouth were scornful. Astonishingly, he said, in perfect English: "I could have saved us all a lot of sleep if you'd had the bloody sense to say what you were looking for." He said his name was Conrad Helfferich.

Arrested with him at the Warko farm were Godard Warko, sixty-five, and Eugen Hingst, twenty-eight. They stepped forward, as ordered, a thin, stooped old man with straggly, yellowish-white hair and a tired, seamed face; and Eugen Hingst, short and stocky, with a stupid expression and piglike eyes. Major North ordered: "Send the rest back to their cells. For their record: 'Investigation completed; no charges; release in morning. They're to walk home.'"

Harkliss watched Major North out of the corner of his eye. There was a suppressed, unholy eagerness when he

said, in German: "We'll hang all three of you—unless one wants to talk. I'll promise a life-sentence instead of the hemp, for the first to tell who gave you the order, and how you got it."

Young Helfferich said loudly, in German: "Not one of us will say one word." Old Warko said: "Not one word." And Eugen Hingst echoed: "No, not one." Warko and Hingst were ordered to their cells.

The Major turned to Helfferich. "You're in a bad spot. They will each try to beat the other to confess. Here's your chance if you're smart."

Young Helfferich said a filthy German word, and laughed derisively. In English: "It's a good bluff, Major. They won't talk!"

"Where'd you get that English?"

"Rugby. I didn't tell all of my real name—Conrad Helfferich Holden. My father was an Englishman, damn his soul to hell—only he's there already. When I was twelve, Mother and I came home, home to Germany."

Major North said: "All right, Doctor. Your patient."

CAIRNS TOOK A LOOK at the hand. "Bad scratch. How'd you get it?"

"Yesterday afternoon. Breaking up a box of kindling. A nail caught me."

"You lie, like all Germans," Major North said in a rasping voice.

Cairns dressed the cut, then took up a hypodermic.

Helfferich jerked his arm away and put it behind him. "No you don't! It's empty—the plunger's down. I know what you're up to," he said fiercely. "A blood specimen! I know my legal right."

Major North stepped in close. "Put out that arm."

"No."

Major North's fist smashed into Helfferich's face. A gush of blood came from his nose; then in a steady trickle over his lips, it began to drip off his chin. Cairns adroitly held the test tube under it. "Enough," Major North ordered. "I'll seal and label it. See if his nose is broken." It wasn't, and Helfferich was marched out, not giving any of them so much as a glance.

"My two boys were in the war," Major North said unexpectedly, in a conversational tone. "John, my oldest, was a paratrooper, and his brigade was dropped behind Utah Beach on D-day. When we were able to advance, quite a lot of those paratroopers were found. They were hanging from trees and poles. They'd been prisoners, but every one of them had had his throat cut. One of them was my Johnny." Such things shouldn't ever be said in such an unimportant tone, which gave no sort of warning.

In the same tone, Major North went right on, but the knuckles of his interlaced fingers were intensely white: "Jim was a year younger than Johnny. He couldn't get into the service, but he was O.W.I., in Africa, and taken prisoner. Roundabout, I got word he was in Buchenwald. When we got there, records showed that Jim had been there, but not what happened to him. No German records were kept in those last weeks. Couple of months later I saw some of our Signal Corps films. Unexpurgated. Not the ones released for public showings in theaters. These were Buchenwald, right after we took over. German people were made to help clean up, for a lesson to them. The film showed German women tossing bodies into a mass grave. Women hadn't any trouble lifting such bodies. One took the arms, the other the legs, and they'd swing and then let go. Some of the camera scenes were close shots, and I saw—"

"Oh, for God's sake, sir, please—" Harkliss pleaded.

"Don't try," Major North said gently. "There isn't anything you can say. I'd rather you didn't try. I just wanted you to know how it is with me. Every Helfferich helps—a little. I thought you ought to have the chance to understand."

Although it was now three o'clock in the morning, the Major ordered Mildred Waldecker up for questioning. She was very angry at having been arrested—and for what? They thought she was bluffing; but when she got the news of Buckley and his three men, her reactions to the shock were not to be mistaken or doubted. When she got control of herself, she told about the kid: Sig Lutze was his name—twelve years old. Thea knew she'd come home for her clothes, and sent Sig to wait, with a note—Captain Harkliss' instructions about Schweinitz being out, nights. If the Professor gave Sig a message of any sort, she didn't know of it, but he might have. She advised against questioning Sig—as fanatical a little Nazi as ever lived. They'd learn nothing from him, but perhaps she could. And she'd work hard to get anything possible on the Professor.

After she'd been sent to her cell, with the promise she and the Professor would be taken back to the castle in the morning, Major North said: "I don't know. Anyway, we've got at least to pretend to trust her."

The boy, Sig Lutze, could not possibly have reached the Warko farm in time for them to string the wire. Helfferich had got the order in some other way. But how? The monitor station had picked up no sort of walkie-talkie message. Well, then, Soden's dogs had made trouble before. Was any dog on record for the Warko farm? Harkliss checked. No dog for Warko. "Come along, then, if you want to," Major North said.

They drove through deep snow to the empty Warko farmhouse. In the kitchen was the unmistakable smell of dog, a wet dog. Back at HQ again, the tireless Major North sent for old Warko.

"Warko, we know more than you think we know. There was an order in a little tube on the collar of the dog that came to your house. We know everything except who signed the order. This is your last chance. Tell us—or else hang."

Old Warko wept and begged. He couldn't tell, because he didn't know. Helfferich didn't show them the order. Helfferich took the dog to the door—after it got warm by the stove—and said to it: "Home." Helfferich and Eugen Hingst had threatened him; he had indeed helped string the wire, but— Harkliss wrote out the confession; and old Warko, still sniveling, signed it.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

ERIKA IMPATIENTLY CAME FROM HER ROOM TO Rod's door in answer to his call. It was this same afternoon that Jason had so contemptuously announced himself as Rod's new team-mate; the same afternoon Colonel Hugh Buckley was to be so tragically killed.

"Need anything, Kurt?" she asked irritably. "Oh, just company!" She became bitter. All he had to do was lie there, while she was at her wit's end. This infernal snow prevented—on account of leaving tracks in it—all hope of delivering the "goods," perhaps for days and days, and "he" was squawking already that he was short. Rod said that maybe, with nothing to do but think, he might be able to dope out a plan, and—hopefully fishing—he suggested that they run over the whole set-up again. But she snappishly told him he knew it as well as she did, and with exasperation she left him.

She came back with quite an armful of pamphlets. She said: "I told Minna how you were yapping, and she gave me these to keep you quiet. They're old farm manuals and directives of your father's. Minna is a wise old thing. Spring is coming some day, and by then you've got to know all you can learn about farming. Nobody on this farm knows a blessed thing about farming. It wouldn't take the damn' Americans long to find that out. Besides, if Germans aren't all to starve, we've all got to really grow things."

"I'd thought to go see some of the old-timers, for coaching," he said, craftily. "Probably most were friends of my dad's, but I can't remember them. Let's see your enrollments. They'll have all the dope on everybody."

"Wouldn't you like to! That's the second time in two days you've tried to pry. Your nose is getting too long for good health. But your coaching idea, it's good. I'll give you the names of the ones to see. But I've told you this before, and I tell you now for the last time: Keep away from the Nelke farm."

"Why?"

She looked at him narrowly. "I spoke of your nose. The Pohl girl lost her ears from overlistening, her tongue from babbling. Some lose their noses from sticking them into wrong places too often. I mean that, Kurt." Sulkily she pulled the scarred little study table to the side of the bed, and lighted the candle so that he could read the farm manuals. And again she left him—to the study of "The Preparation of the Ground for the Planting of Potatoes."

And then he had one of those hunches. The Nelke farm must be where her lover, Colonel Erzburg, was staked out, under a phony name. The more he thought of it, the more sure he was that his hunch was right. Erzburg! Perhaps Kurt and Erzburg had already been snarling at each other.

ROD HAD FINISHED SUPPER long ago and was drowsing over "Preparation of the Ground" when Jason and Bokus came in hurriedly. In an almost unrecognizable voice, it was so flat and colorless, Jason said: "Tell him this, Bokus: 'The Doc says he won't be out tomorrow account of the snow. He says if yuh got no fever, yuh can get up if yuh stay indoors.' That's all." Bokus translated. Jason said: "Run along, Bokus, an' wait in the hall." When the door closed, Jason's face changed terribly. He whispered, in German, fast: "I dassn't linger. Take this in quick: Some of your spawn-o'-hell Nazis put a wire across the road, an' Colonel Buckley and his men got it. All dead."

Rod, stunned, shocked into incoherence, could only shake his head: "No! *No!*"

"Listen, it's true. Listen again, does she know?"

Rod faltered: "No. I'm positive."

"Then get this: You're ordered to report, on when she gets the news, how she gets it, and how she takes it. It's important."

"I understand." When Jason was gone, Rod Braun blew out his candle, and although the room was dark he turned his face to the wall. He must finally have fallen into sleep. Then someone shook and shook him, and the light of a candle was dazzling.

Erika's voice had steel in it: "That soldier knew all about Buckley hours ago, and he told you. He told you, not me. Why?"

"He told me the doctor would not come tomorrow, but if I have no fever I can get up then." He said it with no special emphasis. As though that settled her question, he ordered: "Stop beating about the bush like a woman. What is it, about Buckley? What has happened?"

She looked at him in an odd, weighing manner. "I guess I was wrong about you, Kurt. I think I've been wrong about you lately in a lot of ways." As with new confidence: "Buckley and his men, heading for Munich, were given the wire. It snapped the jeep's windshield off. A perfect job. All of them, dead as hell."

He put on a superlative piece of acting by producing a wide grin and managing to say, heartily: "*Great! Great!*" Then he scowled: "But that was my job. That was what you had promised to me!"

"I did not give this order—did not even know the job had been done. It's past midnight. I got the word, the usual way, only just now."

"Who did give the order, then?"

"'Dortheim'—as you might suppose. I don't know who did the job. All from Nelke's and Soden's and Warko's are now in cells. The Professor and the Waldecker girl too—that, I don't understand."

He remembered the old Nazi principle, "Divide and rule." He said, slowly: "Munich gave the order to you. 'Dortheim,' as you say, gave this order. 'Dortheim' has given you a slap in the face. Do you command, Kay, or don't you?"

She said, violently: "I hoped you would feel that way. I wondered if it would seem so, to you. There has got to be a showdown with Dortheim. Nothing like this split-command must happen again. It is too dangerous to us all."

He had turned on his side and propped his head on his hand, his arm resting on the elbow. It brought their faces close together, for the feather-bed was as high as her breasts. She wore a plum-colored robe over her night-gown, and her hair was in a net. She had set the candle on the stand, and its light on her blonde hair, tight and smooth under the almost invisible net, made the hair seem metallic, burnished, as though she wore a casque of yellow gold. She began looking at him in a new way. "But there's nothing we can do about Dortheim tonight, is there, Kurt?"

"Nothing we can do tonight," he answered steadily.

"I'm cold, Kurt," she said, and clutched the collar of the dark robe tightly about her throat. The sleeve was wide, and it fell away from her bare white rounded arm.

"Must be drafty out there all right," he agreed. "See how the candle flutters!"

Her impatient eyes came back to his face. They were blue eyes, always—variable blue, barometers. Now, they were deepest sapphire. He shifted his away from them. "Oh," he said quickly, "here's something I'd meant to ask. What about Erzburg?"

The unexpectedness of it made her blink. She answered, with restraint: "The message said all were locked up. So, of course, Reinhart too."

Reinhart? That must be his given name—it had not been in the letters. Colonel Reinhart Erzburg! The hunch that Erzburg, under another name, was one of the Nelke farmhands, had come up good. Smiling, he asked: "Aren't you worried?"

"No. If there'd been any evidence, they wouldn't have arrested so many." She was losing her temper over the intrusion of all this. "I'm cold. If I don't get to bed, Kurt, I'll catch a cold out here, like yours." She made a pretense of reaching for the candlestick.

He smiled at her. "You won't like a cold like mine. Makes you limp as a rag."

She gave him an incredulous stare, and picked up her candle. He knew why he was there. He knew his duty. He knew this was his chance. He did not muff it. He threw it away.... Her heart, her soul, were loathsome.

"Good night, Kay," he said cheerfully. "Get warm."

"Good night, Kurt." At the door she turned. "Good night," she said again, and paused, her hand on the knob.

"Good night, Kay. Don't forget! Tomorrow, I'm allowed to get up!"

JASON CARRIED ROD'S WRITTEN report to Captain Harkliss early next morning. Besides the report on Erika, it told of "something" they daren't move for fear of being tracked in the snow—maybe Schweinitz' supplies? Also it told of Erzburg being at the Nelke farm. The report arrived in time for Major North to see it. He had had a hurry-back call from Division HQ., and he took a plane because of the condition of the roads. Rain was now falling on last night's snow.

Harkliss cleaned up last night's unfinished business. The Major had cautioned him not to try anything sharp with either the Professor or the Lutze kid; Mildred Waldecker was to have first chance at them, in her own way. So Harkliss suavely told Schweinitz and Mildred Waldecker that their detention had been just one of those

things bound to happen in times like these, and sent them home in a jeep.

The Lutzes: mother and son. Harkliss asked the boy one question: "Did you see Professor Schweinitz yesterday?" Sig Lutze's face was thin and drawn, but keen and alert; already, at twelve, it bore a permanent sneer. "See him? Until this minute, Herr Kapitan, I never even heard of him." Harkliss let these two walk home.

Before he sent for the Soden and Nelke men, he checked the records of those registered to the Nelke farm. It turned out to be more simple than he expected. Three were in their early twenties; unlikely, therefore, that any of them had been a colonel. The fourth was thirty-two, by name "Ludovic Mauer," and rated as a sergeant in the Wehrmacht.

The Soden and Nelke men were brought in. To his surprise, Harkliss recognized "Ludovic Mauer" as one of the two "tool-borrowers," the insolent, slippery one; but he was very quiet now. Cairns was more interested in Oberst Soden, whom he had never seen before. Soden was forty-four years old. A big man, his broad, dead-pan face seemed flat because the nose was so small, and the face had a pinkness which made it look dyed. His muscular, abnormally short arms were finished off by enormous, powerful hands. These men, with scant ceremony, were all dismissed "for want of evidence." They glowered at the Americans, and filed out sullenly to make the long walk through the slush and the steady rain.

THIS DAY, THURSDAY, WAS THE DAY Rod Braun's real troubles were pretty sure to begin. He was back to "normal" again. He would be expected by everyone in this household to do everything in the "usual" way. Thank the Lord for the farm manuals!

He carried the manuals down to the kitchen, and for two solid days he walled himself in behind manuals. Erika, Minna, his three farmhands and the GIs quickly learned to let him alone, for he nearly bit the head off anyone who interrupted his studies, and when he spoke at all it was only—with fanatical enthusiasm—of the joys and secrets of farming. He bored everyone. But he watched and listened and learned to be Kurt.

Friday morning at the Rathaus came the carrying out of Division Headquarters' orders, which had specified that it would be "unnecessary and inappropriate" to conduct any services before sending the bodies of Colonel Hugh Buckley and his men to Munich for burial with full military honors. Permission was denied, in advance, for any of C Company's officers to come to Munich. They knew the reason. Something big was imminent.

And so the little cortège, the ambulance with its four blanket-shrouded bodies and solemn-faced honor guard of GIs, and Major North's car with his three men, pulled up in front of the Rathaus a couple of minutes before nine o'clock. It had rained steadily Thursday, and intermittently during the night. A raw, gusty wind made woeful sighings around the high gables and the chimney-pots, and caused the storm-size American flag at half-staff above the Rathaus to make brisk snappings.

Harkliss, Cairns and the two lieutenants, followed by Sergeant Carty, came down the Rathaus steps. The four officers lined up at attention beside the ambulance, Carty a respectful three paces in the rear. Captain Harkliss nodded, and the driver threw in the clutch. The four officers and Ben Carty uncovered and came to a held-salute. The ambulance, and behind it Major North's car, picked up speed and rolled away. The saluting hands whipped down and the helmets went back on the heads, and the five mourners turned and began to mount the Rathaus steps. Eyes which had overflowed were alibied by the rain-streaked faces. . . .

Saturday at the Essen farm Bokus and the youth nicknamed the "Lunk" were finishing washing their breakfast dishes when Rod sat down at his little table for another farm-manual session. The two GIs started for their own quarters. Bokus maneuvered until he brought up the rear. A chair stood beside the door. As he passed it, Bokus gave Minna a look, furtively laid one cigarette on the chair-seat, and closed the door behind him. Minna by the stove, Rod at his table, eyed the cigarette and each other. Minna said: "Each day it is the same—one cigarette, for the Fräulein Erika."

Rod's tongue involuntarily went over his lips. He asked: "She expects this one?"

Old Minna gave him a peculiar, long look. "Would you—" She was looking at him in a way which should have alerted him if he had not been so intent on the smoke.

"Would I!"

She wiped her hands on her apron, picked up the cigarette, and brought it to him, not taking her eyes from his face. He lighted it and drew the smoke down, down, inside as far as it would go. "You're a good soul, Minna," he laughed. "You steal Erika's one smoke for me; and pretty soon, when she asks, you're going to tell lies for me."

"Little lies, yes," she said. "Big ones—I don't know." He felt a curious chill around his heart.

The cigarette was gone, when Erika came in through the door from the back yard. A man was with her. They came in unexpectedly and fast; nodded to Rod, and sat down at the center table. Erika said: "I told you, Ludovic, that Kurt has begun to really study farming."

The man stared at him with cold gray Prussian eyes, then turned as from an unpleasant sight, sniffed, and said: "Erika, I smell cigarette smoke."

Erika laughed. "It certainly isn't Kurt's. The damn' Americans quartered here smoke while they cook on our stove. It's hard to take."

The Prussian smiled, and pulled from his pocket a pack of American cigarettes. "A present for you, my dear. It's a military secret, where I got them."

"Ludovic! You darling!" He smiled at her fondly, held a match to her cigarette, and smiled again as she inhaled deeply. Rod, from first sight of him had felt sure who he was. "Ludovic" or no Ludovic, the fellow was Colonel Reinhart Erzburg.

LUDOVIC GAVE A CONDESCENDING NOD, and said: "Erika, he may have one."

"Kurt have one?" she laughed. "Kurt never smoked in his life. Have you, Kurt?" She offered the pack, mockingly.

He knew now why that curious, premonitory chiii had come around his heart. He calmly took one. "I've done lots of things, Kay, that you never knew about."

"Well, I'm damned," she said, half in astonishment, half exasperation.

"Minna," Rod called, "fetch a light—one of the pine spills?" Her hand shook so that it seemed the flame and the cigarette would never meet. Instead of taking the light from her, he put his hand around hers, and as he steadied it, he squeezed it, and looked into her eyes as he lit the cigarette. "Minna has seen me smoke, haven't you, Minna?"

"Yes," she said slowly, "I have seen you."

Erika said, angrily and defensively: "All I know, Ludovic, is that never before have I seen him smoke a cigarette."

Ludovic gibed: "It will probably make him sick."

Rod resumed his studies. Presently he used one hand to hold his head—then crushed out the stub, and held his head with both hands, and made no pretense of reading of farming. They were watching him with amused smiles. He gagged, realistically. Then he got up unsteadily, muttered, "Excuse," lurched out through the door into the yard, and slammed the door. He put his finger down his throat. It worked. He was as noisy as possible. Even through the closed door, he could hear their laughter. . . . Well, for the present, he had fooled two of them, at least.

Chapter Fifteen

THE SECOND ZONE-WIDE OPERATION TALLYHO, at dawn of Sunday, was as staggering a surprise as the great July raid had been. It surprised Rod as though he had really been Kurt Essen. All in the Essen household were routed out of their beds, and the kitchen was made the temporary guardroom. Rod could hear the upstairs getting a most rigorous search. Erika, the last to be brought in, whispered, as she brushed past Rod: "Don't worry so! They'll find nothing!"

Lieutenant George Thomas bustled in, and from his field-notebook called the roll, checking them off as they answered. Then: "Emil Schluter? Kurt Essen? Step forward. You're under arrest."

"What for?" Erika Wulf snapped. "What charge?"

"None of your business. They know. You'll find out when the time comes." To Juggy Marr: "Take'm along, Corporal, and drive fast. There'll be plenty to do when you and your men get back."

Erika called: "Good-by, Kurt. I'll send Maximilian Barth as soon as I can."

"Good-by, Kay. Don't worry. I'll be back soon."

Juggy Marr said: "That's what you think!" Then: "I've a tender heart. You may kiss each other!"

Erika Wulf held up her lips, puckered. Rod went back. They were all watching him. He put his arm about her, drew her to him, kissed her. "I'll be back, Kay," he said again.

"I'll be waiting, Kurt."

Rod saw little of the colossal raid. He and Emil Schluter, his farmhand foreman, were among the first taken; together they were locked in a Rathaus cell. Not unprofitably! Emil Schluter was badly scared, with reason. Rod softened him up, then pumped him. In the afternoon, guards took Emil Schluter away. He had a most foul record as a Gestapo agent. His record had turned up, and Rod never saw him again.

"Kurt Essen" was taken to Captain Harkliss' inner office. Cairns was there too, and when the three were alone, the meeting turned into a joyous reunion. When this quieted, Rod reported the big news that Schluter had inadvertently given away. "'The stuff that couldn't be moved'—some of it is in carboys—is still buried at the juncture of the three farms, Essen's and two others, with a pile of brush on it."

Harkliss exulted: "Then it's Schweinitz's!" He started to write a rush order to George Thomas to go get it.

"Wait," Rod said. "Maybe this might be better. Have Lieutenant Thomas sneak up on it when no Kraut is looking. Just take samples to be analyzed and identified. Then keep the cache under surveillance, and when the Krauts start moving it some dark night, trail them right to the castle's secret entrance. Or maybe I can talk the Queen into giving me the delivery job, and I'll be in the party to carry it right into the lab. Then you nab us."

"That," Harkliss said, "is stupendous! We'll clean up everything and everybody! And now here's special news for you. Your love-rival is locked up too, for questioning. His name just now is 'Ludovic Mauer,' but it won't be when G-2 gets hold of Colonel Reinhart Erzburg's real record." And then Harkliss said that was all for now, because they were swamped with raid-results. They'd keep Rod overnight for a breather and a chance to talk.

It turned out to be a stormy session when the three met again the next afternoon. Rod told, half ashamed, half amused, of the way Juggy Marr had put him on a spot where he couldn't back out of giving Erika a hearty hug, and kissing her.

"Is she a lady of good taste?" Cairns teased.

"Not good taste in underthings, for my money," Rod answered. "She wears stiff corsets. I never before squeezed a gal her age in corsets. Is wearing 'em an old German custom?"

"No!" Harkliss said, with sharp interest. "She must have a special reason. You said she told you, when they were searching the house, not to worry, because they'd find nothing? Well, they didn't. Probably because she was wearing the code we were looking for wrapped around a steel of that corset—right in your arms!"

"I don't know how," Rod said grimly, "but I'll get that corset and take it apart." And then, hesitantly, Rod told about the episode of the cigarette.

Harkliss and Cairns blew up. "After that give-away, can't you see it's murder if I let you go back?" Harkliss said stormily. He told what Colonel Buckley had said about only Minna knowing of the twins. He said: "She'd back Kurt Essen against the Queen and all the rest of the gang, yes. She helped raise him. But you! She never saw you before."

"I'm going back," Rod said.

"Minna is thinking," Cairns spoke most earnestly. "That cigarette started a train of thought. The one thing she'll think about, is, if this fellow who loves cigarettes is maybe the twin brother in her non-smoking pet's shoes, then what has happened to her pet? What have you done with, and to, the real Kurt?"

Rod Braun was shaken, but he said, stubbornly: "I'm going back. I can't quit now. With this scheme about the Professor's supplies, maybe I can clean up the whole gang in just a couple more days. So, I'm going back."

ROD OPENED THE KITCHEN DOOR, and paused dramatically on the threshold. "Home again!" he said heartily.

Minna, as usual, was stirring something on the stove. She kept on stirring, and said: "I hope you stuffed, while you had the chance, with American food."

And that was all the welcome he got. Minna told him, when he asked—but not until he asked—that the Fräulein Erika, in a foul temper and with a bad headache, had gone to bed, and was not to be disturbed by anyone. He sat down at his little table and automatically picked up a farm manual. Minna sat down in Erika's favorite rocking-chair and began monotonously to rock. Rod waited for her to speak, but she did not speak, just rocked, rocked, and he continued to stare at the manual. When the door from the back yard opened, he did not look up, supposing it was Christian Goettel or Rolf Runkle. He jumped, when Ludovic Mauer's unpleasant voice said: "So! You were let out first!"

"Only a little while ago," Rod said coolly. "I see you are safe and free again."

Ludovic Mauer's only answer was a shrug. He turned to Minna, who was also on her feet. "The Fräulein Erika?" he asked, as though it were some sort of demand.

She curtsied, servant-fashion. "Please. She has the headache, severely. The Fräulein has gone to bed."

"Tell her I am here, and with a message."

"Please—" She showed that she was afraid of Ludovic Mauer. She showed that she was even more afraid of Erika Wulf.

Unexpectedly he turned, almost whirled, on Rod, who was standing in his frequent posture—that peculiar little gesture of abstraction: the head tilted a little to the side as though to meet the slightly raised shoulder, and the curious little half-smile. For an instant the two men, without moving, looked steadily at each other. "You tell her," Ludovic Mauer ordered arrogantly.

Rod Braun saw red. Then it was as though Cairns were at his side saying again, "If you make just one more slip—" He stiffened to the rigid affectation of the German Army's "attention," clicked his heels, pivoted, and without a word, marched from the room.

Seeming to require an immediate audience, Ludovic Mauer turned to Minna, the only audience available. He forgot to be either condescending or arrogant. "Never

in all my life," he said, "have I seen anyone stand in so ridiculous a posture as the Herr Kapitan Essen so often does in moments of abstraction."

Minna looked at him steadily. "Two others," she said, "I have seen."

"Indeed!" All his momentary and rare good humor vanished. "How extraordinary! Two others? And who were they?"

"His father—long since dead—and his brother."

"I did not know he had a brother."

"A twin brother."

"A twin? Where is he?" It was not a question; it was a fierce demand.

"I do not know. There was a family quarrel. They were Munich people. The name was Braun. Roderick Braun—'Rurik' he was called—the other twin, was taken when a boy to America. Kurt was adopted by Herr Essen here, and given his name. I saw the twin brothers and their father together only once."

"How interesting!" They were looking at each other steadily. "Could the twins be told apart in any way?"

"They were identical."

"The Fräulein Erika knows? But yes, of course: they were children together."

"She does not know. No one in Dortheim knows. I was sworn. Until now, I have told no one."

The bearer of messages was heard returning. He came in like neither a soldier nor a servant, and he spoke in a cold tone. "The Fräulein Wulf asks that Herr Mauer write his message if important. If not important, she asks that he save it for a better day."

Erzburg-Mauer's manner also had changed. He said, briskly, "If you see the Fräulein again, you may tell her that I have something more urgent to do." Without another glance at either, he left by the door into the yard.

In the early dusk, Erzburg again came in from the back yard, most unexpectedly. Pete Jason had been talking in German to Rod, but at the first sound of footsteps he had swiftly stepped away. These two, until Erzburg entered, were alone. Erzburg looked from one to the other with equal suspicion. He said, with thick sarcasm: "Do I interrupt a friendly, or even confidential, chat?"

Rod gave him a steady stare before answering, then said coldly: "Did you forget something? Don't mind this *dummkopf* American. He speaks no German. Say anything you please in front of him. He'll not know what it is."

"Then what does he do here, without talking?"

"Oh, he talks—much," Rod answered with exaggerated politeness. "But I can understand him no more than he understands me."

IGNORING JASON THEN, Erzburg said hurriedly: "I need your help, Kapitan Essen, at once. Maximilian Barth demands that we obtain, at once, a certain bit of evidence to clear Conrad Helfferich. Come, get your hat and coat. Hurry."

"Where do we go? What do we do?" Rod asked, taken completely by surprise. The thought of going in the dark—in every sense of the word—alone with Erzburg was not a pleasant thought. He demanded: "What is my part in all this? And what's the rush?" He was momentarily becoming more uneasy, more suspicious.

Erzburg said impatiently: "We must start. I can tell you as we go."

"I never start anywhere until I know where I'm going," Rod said sharply. That was to get Jason's attention.

"The Willkomm farm," Erzburg snapped. "The 'rush' is to get there before Sepp Kerling leaves."

There was something special about this Sepp Kerling, evidently, from the way Erzburg said the name. Rod couldn't remember having ever heard it before. He could feel Erzburg watching him, too intently, for some reaction to mention of "Sepp Kerling." Rod reached for his overcoat; and, his face hidden from Erzburg, he said: "Seeing Sepp Kerling makes it different. I'll hurry." Erzburg's expression was that of a man discovering that he has closed his hand on nothing. Through all this, Jason had continued to sit with an utterly expressionless face.

A boy, signaling with a mirror, made his escape.

They went out, Rod managing to slam the door, hard, behind them. He got results from that one. He took a quick look at the lighted windows of Erika's room. Minna—he could tell by her size—came to the window and looked down into the yard. It was not yet entirely dark. Just before they entered the path through the fields, he saw there were two women at the lighted window.

They plugged on in silence. The branching, winding paths confused Rod, who had not the faintest idea where the Willkomm house was. Now he didn't even know in which direction they were going. What a chance Erzburg had, and missed! The Colonel haughtily led; the Captain respectfully followed. They came to the Autobahn, crossed it, and kept on. They topped a low hill, and ahead was a single lighted window across the winter fields. The lighted window was in the end of a one-story one-room extension of the L-shaped house. As they reached it, a door was opened inward; Erzburg stepped aside and Rod went on in, with Erzburg close behind. Someone closed the door quickly, and Erzburg locked it. After the darkness outside, the room, in the first moments, seemed dazzlingly bright, though there were really only four tall candles down the middle of the long bare table, around which sat eight men.

"Good evening, Herr Willkomm. Hello, Sepp Kerling," Rod said with convincing cheerfulness, at the same time watching tensely to see which ones would answer. He had never before, so far as he could tell by his first sweeping glance, seen any of these men. No one answered him.

"Sit next to Sepp Kerling," Erzburg said with an unidentifiable edge to his voice—malice and triumph combined might come closest to defining the tone.

Rod kept blinking rapidly to indicate he was light-dazzled. Since these men were not seated on chairs, but four to a side, on benches, there was no open space next to anyone to serve as a hint. Then a tall, dark man on the far side of the table moved almost imperceptibly as though to make room between himself and a heavy-set man with the good beginnings of yellow beard. Rod took a swift glance of gratitude at the tall-and-dark one. To his astonishment, it was his own man, Christian Goettel, and on the other side of him was Rolf Runkle. And the man with the budding yellow beard grinned at Rod and said: "I'll believe—for a while anyway—it was the beard that threw you, Kurt," Rod looked again. Beard or no beard, he had never seen this man before. Erzburg gave both Kerling and Goettel a look of contempt, then ignored them. They'd wrecked that trap.

Rod went behind the bench to the place between Goettel and Kerling. From behind, he put a hand on the

shoulder of each and gave a friendly, spreading push, at the same time saying jocosely: "Do you think it's a boy who's to sit here? Shove over." Smiling, they made room for him. He stepped over the bench and sat down between them. "Now," he said, "what does all this mean?"

Sepp Kerling asked in a low voice: "You really don't know, Kurt?"

"All I know," Rod answered, loud enough for all to hear, "is that Herr Mauer demanded that I help him find evidence, here, tonight, so that Maximilian Barth can get Helfferich, and the others, off."

Erzburg-Mauer answered. He said, a little hurriedly: "That will perhaps come later. First there is a little task, a problem to be solved. I ask that you do not interrupt, and that you wait your turn to speak." He went to the end of the table nearest the door, but did not sit down in the chair. He said: "Herr Willkomm, you are senior to us all, and this is your house, and you have known Kurt Essen longer and better than anyone here. I ask that you take the chair at the other end of the table, and preside—become the judge." He sat down.

ROD GAVE A QUICK, INSTINCTIVE LOOK about the room for avenues of escape, when the time should come. Behind him were two windows; opposite, across the room, were two more. There was the door, locked, and that other window, at the end of the room. Thin muslin curtains were drawn across all the windows.

Then his eyes came back to the faces of the four men across the table. All were older men. Two, side by side, toward the upper end, were really old, in their seventies; the two at his end of the table seemed close to fifty. All were farmer types, rugged, weather-beaten, strong and vigorous. There was a marked family resemblance in three of them, the two younger men and the old one who now stood up. These, the Willkomms.

"So I am to be a judge, then?" old Helmuth Willkomm said, and went around to the head of the table, and took the chair. He said: "I warn you I shall be a just and thorough judge, and in advance I tell you again, Herr Mauer, I believe this to be all foolishness. As if I could mistake Kurt, after all these years." He gave Rod a friendly smile. To one of his sons: "Viktor, fetch my pipe."

"Don't move, Viktor!" Ludovic Mauer snapped out the words. Underneath the table, Rod had heard a slight, involuntary movement of the feet of the man directly opposite. To everyone else it was not apparent that he had stirred. Ludovic said, without warning: "Essen, point out Viktor Willkomm!"

Rod almost thrust his pointing finger into the face of the man opposite, and said mockingly, "Viktor! Fetch Papa's pipe!" There was a laugh from everyone except Erzburg. Rod gave Erzburg a cool stare.

Erzburg-Mauer reddened, but stood up and said, in a rasping voice: "Suppose that an American spy should work his way into the heart of this area and live with us as one of us, unsuspected? How long would we, each of us, live?"

Judge Willkomm rapped on the table with the tobacco-can his son Viktor had just brought to him. He said: "The speeches come later. State the case and make your point."

Erzburg-Mauer said: "I make no charges, because I am simply unable to make up my mind. Unable to believe my own eyes. I do not know. Today, a few hours ago, the old servant in the Essen house, for the first time in many years broke an oath of trust and silence. She told me something not known before to anyone else now living in this part of Bavaria, except Kurt Essen. Kurt Essen has an identical twin brother who was taken to America as a child, and has disappeared."

He let that sink in. They stirred uneasily, and frowned. He went on: "You remember, Kurt Essen was arrested, locked up overnight, and then, though the charge was serious, was released. Which twin, in Kurt Essen's clothes, came out of that American jail? Which twin has lived, since then, Kurt Essen's life, slept in his bed, received the confidence of some of us, and learned secrets which could send us, all, to imprisonment or even to quick deaths? The Kurt Essen of these past days has made some queer little lapses, some queer little mistakes, hard to accept as explainable. For the sake of us all, for our safety, our lives, and for the safety and success of the cause we serve, I demand that this man here, in Kurt Essen's shoes—which may indeed be his own—be required now to prove beyond any doubt, his true identity."

Rod felt an uncontrollable cold sweat, and he knew that his face would suddenly and conspicuously shine in the candlelight, but he dared not try to wipe the sweat off. He stood up and said: "That was a good speech, well phrased, interesting—even though almost idiotically fantastic. So that's it! That's what all this secret gathering is for? I'm not I! I'm my twin brother. I'm Rurik! How are you, Kurt?" He warmly shook hands with himself. Goettel, Runkle and Sepp Kerling laughed.

Old Judge Willkomm rapped with his tobacco-can for quiet. "Clowning," he said gravely, "at a time like this, may amuse and convince some minds; it fails to convince others. It does seem a fantastic supposition—an utter impossibility. Fortunately, it is to be settled with simplicity, and dispatch. My sons and I were intimate friends with the late Bruno Essen, Kurt's uncle—his foster father. That much we knew. It seems strange that we never heard of this twin brother, but such things do happen for family reasons. We watched Kurt grow up. We can ask a few questions to which only he and ourselves will know the answers. Beside him sits his commanding officer Sepp Kerling, who will know what questions to ask about certain happenings and events in the war, known to both of them. The real Kurt Essen in five minutes can establish his identity to the satisfaction of us all. Kurt, are you ready to answer any and all such questions?"

Rod did not stand up and make himself a melodramatic target. He rested his elbows on the table and leaned forward and spoke in a quiet, level voice. He said: "Now that I learn why I was tricked into coming here, and now that I find myself, suddenly and without warning, on trial—on trial without counsel or advice to guide me—I think you will grant, before I begin answering your questions, that I should, in all fairness, have the right to ask a few questions of my own. Is not that fair, Herr Willkomm?"

"That is fair, Kurt," the old man replied. "Ask your questions."

"Thank you. First, then, who is to be the expert who is to pass upon the accuracy and infallibility of the various minds and memories which will decide my fate? I say this now to you three Willkomms, my oldest friends here. You will, in good faith, ask me questions of my boyhood—which would really be my childhood, for I have been gone from here practically all of twelve years. And such years! You, Sepp Kerling, and Goettel and Runkle, and you, Ludovic Mauer, you know what we have all been through in those years, first as Hitler Youth, then in the years of war. In each of those years we lived, in experiences and emotions, more than most men live in a lifetime here at home in Bavaria. And so, you three Willkomms, you will ask me questions of my boyhood, which to you no doubt seems hardly more than day before yesterday. But to me, with all that has happened since, my boyhood seems more than a lifetime ago. And I may not, therefore, be able to remember and answer what in your judgment you believe I should remember. And so I will be condemned."

He turned and addressed the others. "Or suppose it is I who give the correct answers, and they who forget—as all human beings sometimes forget some things which they believe they correctly remember? Their words, in this

trial, will be taken for the true answers; mine, because I am 'suspect,' will be disqualified. Is that fair?" He held up his hand and shook it back and forth to stave off interruptions and to indicate that he was not yet through. And so he went on clouding the issue, kicking up a dust to get into their eyes, filling them with doubts and suspicions of each other.

"And you, Sepp Kerling: We were together in so many things so recently. You will ask me of things which were, indeed, little more than yesterday. But what two people can invariably see eye to eye, even though they were together and saw the same thing? And what was the condition of my mind, or of your mind, on that day which we both are supposed to remember in the selfsame way? Whose mind was normal on that day? Which mind was suffering strain or hidden shock? Yet, here in this trial, Sepp, your recollection will be accepted as true-fact. But mine will be 'suspect,' and I will be condemned."

Erzburg-Mauer growled: "He's trying to talk us all to death. Or perhaps, trying merely to blind us with our own tears! Let's get on with some straightforward questions of simple fact."

"Herr Willkomm, I had not finished."

"Go on, Kurt."

"And my other question: Herr Willkomm, I ask you, as judge, by whose authority has this 'court' been convened? —by Fräulein Erika Wulf, who commands this area? Or by Dortheim? Or by Munich itself?"

Old Helmuth Willkomm puffed fast clouds from his huge long-stemmed pipe. "You heard where my 'authority' came from." He pointed with his pipe's stem to the table's other end. "Ask him."

"I ask you, Herr Mauer."

"I have no authority. Except necessity." To all at the table: "Shall we break this up? Call it off? Go back home with, perhaps, a spy in our very heart?" There was no one at the table, except Rod, who did not say a loud "No!" "Then," said Ludovic Mauer, "for hell's sake let's get on with it, and get it over with, one way or the other."

Rod said: "We are ten, here. An illegal assembly by American Occupation law—a long sentence if we're caught. But, this is worse! Perhaps you do not yet know Munich's latest ruling for us? Tell them, Herr Mauer—I heard you relay the new order to Fräulein Wulf only this afternoon. Then, I'll tell it: 'All are to do nothing—nothing, repeated—until again given the All Clear. Mark time. Play dead.' In face of that, how will you report what you do here tonight? And by the way, why did you, Herr Mauer, not tell Fräulein Erika of this suspicious twin? Is she to be ignored?"

Sepp Kerling took an unexpected hand. He hadn't liked learning of Munich's newest order, and that he, for one, was already violating it. He said, uneasily: "Damn it, Kurt, you're getting yourself and all of us all confused. This is not a court. Just answer a couple of questions."

"And if I refuse? Even for you, Sepp?"

"It will make me begin to wonder if you really can answer them."

Rod said: "No matter what you call it, this is a trial. By a kangaroo court, by those without rank or authority. I'll answer no questions here."

Chapter Sixteen

THERE WAS A PAUSE, NO ONE SAYING ANYTHING. Each trying to decide what should be done, and not deciding. Into this new silence came a rhythmic, soft tapping on the door, repeated—again. All drew their knives—hunting-knives, or big clasp-knives, the only weapons they dared, under the Occupation, to carry. Ludovic Mauer, nearest the door, asked of all a mute question, and all nodded in answer: "Open it."

Cautiously he opened the door a little way, then threw it wide. In the sudden draft the candle-flames were blown horizontal and fluttered wildly and their light dimmed, so that for the instant no one could see who had entered. Then the little flames straightened and the room grew bright again, and Erika Wulf stood there in the open door. Erzburg stared at her, unbelieving.

"Shut the door," she commanded impatiently. "All of me is in. And I am alone." The nine men at the table scrambled to their feet, but none of them seemed to know what to say. They sheathed their knives. Erzburg shut and locked the door. "Good evening, Fräulein Wulf," Herr Willkomm began in an embarrassed way, and all the rest unevenly echoed him.

FOR ANSWER SHE SENT THE CHAIR—which was in her way —with an angry, backward jerk, skidding against the end wall. "Sit down," she ordered. They sat down. She pulled off her gloves, dashed them onto the table, unbuttoned her leather jacket. And then she spoke, bitterly.

"I see! As I had supposed, a trial! You fools. A trial ordered by whom? Not by me—yet I command here." She turned angrily on Erzburg, who had come close. "Ludovic! I see your hand in this. I'll settle that matter, later. Kurt, come here."

Rod stepped back over the bench and went to her. "What do you want me to do, Kay?"

"Do what you're told—when I tell you," she snapped. "The *Schweinhund* named Bokus heard Ludovic order you to come here, and told me what he'd heard. What terrible thing would they have done to you, if I had not got here in time!"

Erzburg said, angrily: "Erika, the one named Bokus was not there at all—only the one who understands, and speaks, no German."

"And so," she said unpleasantly, "in short, I lie?"

"Ask Kurt Essen," he said sullenly. "He was there with me."

"How could he have been—since this is not Kurt Essen, but his 'twin'—or so you would have these men believe! Oh, yes, I have heard that twin story too—heard it within this very hour. I should have been told years ago. Why did you not tell me, Kurt?"

"Family reasons, Kay," he shrugged. "Like Minna, I was sworn."

"And so," she said to all those at the table, "he was being tried by you for his life! I'll prove to you that this is Kurt Essen, and prove it in not a minute's time. Now you, Herr Willkomm and your sons, you Viktor and Walther, and you, Herr Osmund Nelke, all of you know this to be true, just as all Dortheim knew it at the time. Kurt was the father of my first child—'a soldier for Hitler,' remember? All his life he has been in love with only me. I wish now that I had been as true to him—as I shall be from this night on! But this you did not know. Years ago, to convince me that he would love me always, he had my picture indestructibly tattooed on his body." She turned scornfully to Erzburg. "I suppose my portrait would, of course, be likewise on his twin?" She turned again to those at the table. "Believe this, too. Though Kurt and I have lived in the same house these past months, I have not seen that tattooed portrait for many years. Now I shall see it again, and all of you shall see it, too. . . . Strip to the waist, Kurt. Let us see."

With no reluctance, he stripped to the waist.

"Raise your left arm, Kurt—high." He raised his arm. "There!" she said. "You see?"

Sepp Kerling, always fastest on his feet, was up over the bench and threw his arms around Rod and slapped his bare back hard and wrung his hands. And all the others struggled together to get a turn at pounding him on the shoulders and shaking his hand. Last of all came Reinhart Erzburg, but he did not shake hands and slap Kurt's back. With his open hand, he slapped fiercely first

one cheek, then the other—lightning-swift, stinging blows; then he leaped backward and drew his knife. "That is because the world is too small to hold both of us," he said. "Let's find out, right now, which of us stays in it."

The suddenness of all this did not seem too strange to these people, so used to the surprises and violence of war. As for interfering, no man even dreamed of it. This was the sort of thing men had fought for always, and probably always will.

TO ROD, THESE UNEXPECTED, stinging blows had nearly blinded him with rage. And curiously, he seemed to himself no longer Rod Braun, American, a spy in another man's shoes; he was for the moment that man himself. He was the real Kurt Essen, fighting for all that Kurt Essen would have fought. Besides, there could be no backing down. If he had shown cowardice, they would have allowed Erzburg to kill him as he pleased. His own knife was out as quickly as he could get it from his pocket and open it—a clasp-knife with a stubby but stout and sharp blade.

"Take mine, Kurt," Sepp Kerling called. "It's a better one." He drew it from his shoulder-sheath—a hunting-knife with a six-inch blade and an all-important small hilt, a hand-guard. Rod thankfully took Sepp Kerling's knife, tested its edge on his thumb, and gave Sepp a grin of appreciation. Sepp called; "You were always my favorite captain, Kurt. Go to it, boy!"

Unexpectedly, Christian Goettel called: "Please! Not 'to the death.' Only 'first blood.'"

Reinhart Erzburg gave Goettel a glance of contempt. "'To the death,'" he said. And to Rod; "That is your man, trying to beg you off."

"It's his own idea," Rod said grimly. "'To the death,' Erzburg. Your death."

The recent judge, old Helmuth Willkomm, his eyes bright as a boy's with excitement and anticipation, called; "One moment. Then feet apart; then at my count of 'three' you may close in as you choose."

They took their stand.

And Erika Wulf? She had not said one word. It had all been with such suddenness. She stood with her fists doubled tight and pressed to her throat, and she—the Queen of Poison, the cruel, the wicked, the merciless—was strangely whispering: "No! No!"

Old Helmuth loudly counted: "One—" The duelists, ten feet apart, crouched, ready to spring. "Two—"

One of those unaccountable series of actions by a number of people, entirely independent of each other, took place at the identical split-second of time. Old Helmuth Willkomm shouted: "Three!" Goettel swept all four candles off the table. Instantly the room—and men's minds, for a fragment of time—blacked out. Erika Wulf screamed, *"Stop!"* and darted between them. The two duelists, their knives outthrust, sprang at each other furiously. All in the same split second.

In the blackness, there was a shriek of agony and fear, —a woman's shriek, which could be heard well beyond those walls.

There was a rush of footfalls outside, and Pete Jason's voice, roaring, in perfect German; "Americans are at the door! Open it, or we'll shoot the lock off. Stand clear for the count of three. *One—"*

There was a small crash of glass in one of the east windows. And Jason's voice, "See to it, Bokus," and the sound of running feet toward the east side of the house. *"Two—"*

Then a great crash of window-panes and splintering wood of the casement in a west window. Someone had thrown a chair through it, then himself followed the chair. "Get him, Bokus!" The pounding footfalls outside were heard racing back from the east to the west side. Then the *bang, bang, bang* of a pistol. Someone in the room got the door unlocked just ahead of Jason's impending count of "Three." He came storming in, pistol in one hand, a flashlight in the other, its long, white beam sweeping from side to side ceaselessly. "Hands up! Hands up! Everybody! Hands up! Bokus, get in here! All of you! Line against the wall. Hands up!"

Three Germans, seeing only one American, made a break for a door at the back of the room. The Texan picked them up with that white beam, and fired his pistol just twice. Two men went down. The third, Rolf Runkle, yelled *"Kamerad!"* and pushed his hands as high as they'd go, and he came slowly walking back as though coming up through the beam of light.

Bokus came in with a shamefaced air. "I missed him, Pete!"

Rod called: "The candles got knocked to the floor. For God's sake, light them quick!"

"That you, Essen? You can help. But no funny business." Bokus took over, held his gun and flashlight on the prisoners against the wall. Jason and Rod lighted the candles, and tallied the score: old Osmund Nelke, who hadn't said one word all evening, had tried in panic to make a break for it. He was dead. Sepp Kerling was groaning with a bullet-shattered thigh. And Erika Wulf lay on her face with a stab-wound in her side, from which a small lake of blood had spread until, just as Rod reached her, the edge of the bloody lake was about to stain the edges of the cloud of tawny hair. Rod, on his knees beside her, lifted the hair out of the way, and then not knowing what else to do with it to protect it, he knelt there, holding it out of harm's way. "Soldier!" he called suddenly. "She's not dead yet. She's breathing a little. Do something!"

"My first-aid kit's in my overcoat outside. Bokus, get it."

While they were doing what they could for Erika Wulf, the weeping of the eighth man began to get on their nerves. It was an unreal sound, disquieting, offensive. Rod remembered the fellow had sat on the bench-end on the other side of Sepp Kerling; and up to now he hadn't said a word or made even a sound. Jason at last looked angrily at the fellow. He stood against the wall, and cried, noisily. Jason called to Bokus: "Shut his blubber-mouth up, Bokus—any way you please." Bokus spoke harshly in German to the weeper.

Christian Goettel said; "Please, he cannot help it. He is the dead Osmund Nelke's boy; and besides, he is deaf and dumb."

Without waiting for his interpreter, Jason said gruffly, "Let 'im bawl."

They checked up on Erzburg. The way it figured, Reinhart Erzburg had first thrown his bloody knife through the east window, apparently in the dim hope that the bushes and the soft garden-earth might destroy the finger-prints. Vain hope. The prints were there, beautifully. And also he had evidently hoped that the noise would divert attention to that east side of the house—and it had. Then he had thrown a chair through the west window, and had followed the chair. He had got clean away.

HARKLISS, WELL AFTER MIDNIGHT, came into the prisoners' section of the hospital, and an orderly led him to the lavatory behind the operating-room. Cairns and an assistant were cleaning up. They still wore blood-spattered operating-robes; and towels, turban-fashion on their heads, but at least their hands and bare arms were clean again.

"Is she dead?" Harkliss asked anxiously.

Cairns shook his head. "I thought so, when they lifted her out of the ambulance; and I thought so again about an hour and a half ago. We've given her two transfusions, and she's rallied a bit."

"Will she die?"

Cairns said that, medically speaking, she probably would, but by probabilities she probably wouldn't, be-

cause the Devil wouldn't let her; she was valuable here. Then Cairns hurried his assistant out, and from a locker produced a pair of corsets, one whole side wholly blood-soaked. They'd certainly saved her life. The steels had impeded the knife. Half an inch more penetration, and right then she'd have been a goner. They wrapped the corsets up, and Harkliss said the G-2 lab in Munich would know what to do in case the code was soaked and pulpy. Then Harkliss wanted to know about Rod's condition. He'd been brought in with the rest of the prisoners, but Cairns had brought him to the prison wing of the hospital; and he was sleeping under opiates; what he'd been through was enough to crack any man's nervous system.

Then Harkliss told about Erzburg. After the prisoners and the casualties had been taken care of, they'd followed Erzburg's trail, using flashlights. He evidently had got a glass cut, and there'd been a drop or two of blood every little way. Pete Jason was a great tracker. Erzburg had gone straight to the shore of the Grafensee. His footprints showed he'd waded right in—and never come out! He might have drowned himself, but that would be too good to be true. He might have been picked up by someone in a boat, but that would be an incredible coincidence, because nobody knew he was going to be there. They'd followed the sandy shore for a mile on either side of the footprints, but there was no sign that Erzburg had come out anywhere. Harkliss said that in the morning they'd get a boat and do more and better looking.

IN THE MORNING THEY DID just that. They found, near the last and only footprints, an undercut in a high bank where a small boat might have been hidden behind a curtain of dead vines. But they found no evidence that any boat ever had been hidden there. Then they rowed, very close, all along the face of the castle cliff, and it was solid as Gibraltar. Erzburg had vanished.

Major North stopped off on his way back from GHQ in Frankfurt, where he'd been on Tallyho raid results. Harkliss came along to the hospital, because this was the Major's first chance to meet Rod Braun. So "Kurt Essen" was brought under guard to Cairns' rooms, and the guard remained outside.

Major Bryson North, when Rod was introduced to him, got up and shook his hand. "I wanted to meet you, first, to tell you what I think of the job you've been doing," he said in his quiet, deep voice. "It's—well, it's magnificent. I've known quite a few secret agents—they used to be called 'spies,' but I hate that term. They were brave men. In and behind the enemy lines! But not one of them ever had to impersonate another man to that man's oldest and best friends. Frankly, I can't understand how you've been able to get away with it." He waited for Rod Braun to say something.

"I had an incredible amount of luck, sir," Rod answered, quietly and sincerely; "and so far, the luck has just happened not to run out."

Major North nodded, and Harkliss and Cairns knew he was tremendously well pleased. "You had luck, yes," he answered. "A little of what can only be called actual luck. But most of your 'luck' you made for yourself by your own intelligence and quickness and nerve." He waited again.

"Thank you, sir."

"I wouldn't talk this way to many men; I wouldn't dare. They'd get cocky. I was trying you out, and you stood up to it. Make the most of this. No matter what you do in the future, I'll not praise you to your face like this again. But I'll have confidence in you, always."

And Rod had the sense not to answer in any way.

The Major said, crisply: "The other reason I wanted to see you personally was to let you know, firsthand, a couple of the results of what you've accomplished so far. All three of you coöperated on this one." He gave little nods of satisfaction to Harkliss and Cairns, and handed to

Kurt Essen was calling, "Quick, get me out!"

Cairns a package they had already guessed contained the corsets. He asked; "Has anyone called yet, with a plausible excuse, to take the Wulf woman's clothes? . . . Not yet? Well, they probably wouldn't dare show too much eagerness. Let whoever calls for them have them."

The code, he explained, was there all right, back in its place in the corsets, again wound around the very same corset-bone where Erika Wulf had wound it. By some more of "Braun's luck," the code had been in the dry side. But, he said, even if it had been blood-soaked, G-2's lab could have photographed it successfully. The way he kept coming back to "Braun's luck" showed how pleased he was with that modest answer of Rod's.

The way he had it figured, the Major said, was like this: After the Tallyho raid, there'd be great worrying in certain high circles of the Underground until Erika Wulf had reported that the code had not been found. And now that she'd been stabbed, there'd be more worrying, until someone could report that the code was still safe. So if anyone called to pick up her clothes, it would be someone who knew—or someone sent by someone who knew—that the code had been hidden in her corsets. When it was reported that the code was still safe, that particular code would continue in use, and so— Maj. North gave them one of his rare smiles. "I needn't tell you," he said, "to take good note of whoever calls for the clothes." (It was to be Minna, the very next morning, with the plausible excuse that the poor Fräulein wouldn't need clothes unless she lived; and if she lived, she couldn't wear them unless they were washed.)

Major North went from corsets to beryllium chloride. That was what the samples had turned out to be—the "samples" taken from the cache at the juncture of the three farms. By Lieutenant Thomas' report there were seven carboys of the stuff, which had proved to be beryllium chloride dissolved in water. There were also some small glass vials, each containing radium. Beyond doubt, it was all intended for Professor Werner Schweinitz. Major North became very grave. He explained that this stuff might prove invaluable. It might be the entire amount still in German hands—the very last of it. Most certainly it would be a long, long time before Germany would have opportunity or facilities to make any more of it. Undoubtedly that beryllium was intended for bombardment by alpha particles emitted by the radium, the purpose being to produce neutrons.

Major North got this out rather hesitantly, as though taxing his memory. "Don't try to pin me down. I might as well own up," he said. "All I know is the little bit they tried to explain to me in our laboratory. What Erika Wulf told to you, Braun, I believe is the real story of what Schweinitz is up to. He's trying to work out a way

to detonate some form of atom bomb by remote control. Now you see why he's in such a sweat to get these precious beryllium and radium chlorides. He's not trying to make great bombs to blow civilization to smithereens. It is just possible that they already have some such bombs hidden where we haven't been able to find them. What he wants is just enough of a bomb to test what he has worked out in the way of detonating by remote control. Perhaps he knows that if he doesn't get this beryllium and radium, he may never be able to prove that his remote-control detonating device really works. I think he is about ready to try it out. My guess is that he is in the worst sweat of his life this afternoon, to know how, if ever, he is to get the stuff into the castle now. So am I." He looked at his watch, and frowned. "Here are some orders."

The cache of chemicals must be kept under constant surveillance. In order that Rod could go back tomorrow to the Essen house, all those involved in the Willkomm affair must be given a summary court-martial for illegal assembly—fined, warned and freed. In the matter of Sepp Kerling, that was a good catch. By the time he would be able to leave the hospital, G-2 may have dug up his real name and record, which doubtless would be a bad one. Cairns was asked how soon there'd be an answer on the Wulf woman? Cairns said one little turn for the worse, and she'd be a goner. The Major shrugged. He was in a hurry, he explained, for Cairns to get time to get Soden. He turned to Harkliss: A general court-martial at the earliest moment possible for Helfferich, Hingst and Warko. Get a death sentence for the first two. And, the Major said, he'd then try for permission from GHQ for a public hanging in Dortheim's marketplace.

He looked coldly at Harkliss and Cairns, and said: "You think that is in revenge for my two boys? It is not. It's not even for an object lesson for Germans. It is for our own men. Think of it! In the American Army of Occupation, our own men have to be savagely reminded of what many Germans still are, and what they are still up to. A hanging such as I want to put on wouldn't be necessary if you, Harkliss, had the same men you brought into Dortheim. Those men had fought the war. They'd seen their buddies die. They'd seen the bodies of men like my Johnny who'd surrendered and then, helpless, had their throats cut. But you haven't many of those men left. The new German army has worked faster on your replacements than even you have been able to do. Germany's new army today is an army of women. They're doing what Germany's soldiers couldn't do. They're killing our men's morale. Not just alone with sex. But with what seems to homesick boys like real friendliness, and with plaintive words and self-pity, and soft, smooth lies. That's why a decent, quiet hanging in a jailyard, of the two we've got, would do no good. That's why we have to put on a brutal, public show, with all our men, and all the Germans the marketplace will hold, looking on."

He hesitated, then went on: "Dortheim is only on the fringes of what is going on. Dortheim is backwoods. These few people making trouble in Dortheim are little people. These fanatics think in hours and days. But somewhere in Germany are men who are thinking and slowly working in terms of years and decades: Germany still will rule the world. Some of us believe that these great, silent ones are contemptuously using the little ones, sensationally, to keep the Nazi spirit alive. Some of us believe that there is a link between the two groups, and that sometimes orders are passed down. . . . There!" Bryson North said impatiently. "That was a speech, and I'm against speech-making—or listening to speeches." He got up quickly as though embarrassed, and said a quick good-by.

By midmorning the summary court-martial had given trial to most of those involved in the "Willkomm house affair." The little group parted at the foot of the Rathaus steps. The three Willkomms and the deaf-and-dumb Nelke set out to walk home by way of the Autobahn; Rod, Goettel and Runkle, by the Old Road. Presently "Kapitan Essen" said, severely: "Those candles, Goettel! See what happens when you act without orders? Let's have no more of such!"

And Goettel replied, with humility; "Yes, Herr Kapitan. It was very bad. I am ashamed that I had no more confidence that you would kill him."

At the Essen farmhouse Minna was anxiously watching at the door. She had heard that the trial was on. She had already been to town and back with the Fräulein Erika's clothes, and the clothes were washed and out on the line in the sun and the cold breeze. But not the corsets. Rod said to her: "It's all right, Minna. What happened to the Fräulein Erika and Sepp Kerling and to poor old Nelke, wasn't your fault. It was Erzburg's. We're rid of him."

"Thank you, Master Kurt," she said humbly, and dried her eyes.

Rod's farm manuals and papers were just as he'd left them. He settled down to intensive study of the next step in the Planting of Potatoes. He could have passed an examination on the Preparation of the Ground, by now.

Jason, in style, rolled in in a jeep. Bokus and the Lunk met him with shouts of welcome; they had nearly bored each other to slow death. "Just try just once to make me translate for you, you Texas fake!" was Bokus' greeting.

"We'll have another apple pie, to celebrate," Jason said, and grinning, and in good German, "and this time Minna gets the fourth piece." His greeting to Herr Essen was very cold.

Chapter Seventeen

Harkliss and George Thomas, who was to be the Judge-Advocate, began to sweat over building the American Army's case against Conrad Helfferich and Eugen Hingst. One other student there was today: Dr. Ames Cairns. He had sent away for some books, and now the package had arrived. Cairns was living in the hospital these days, and between frequent, anxious visits to his two prize patients, he dug in, fascinated by his new studies.

Impatiently, Rod awaited the order to run the buried chemicals into the castle. In itself the order would be exciting and important, because it would be from a higher-up—probably "Dortheim," and so that mystery would be "broken" at last. He never doubted, at first, that he would be considered Erika's adjutant. He waited, more impatiently.

Without Erika's vivid personality and the thrill of the danger of her, the house became unendurable. He began visiting far and wide. Everywhere he was welcomed. At almost each farmhouse, the restless and reckless "farmhands," those bitter young men who had once been S.S. or Gestapo, teased to see the tattooed portrait. They all liked him, and talked freely. He picked up so many items of information about the pasts of these "farmhands" that Harkliss was overjoyed. And then Rod got one piece of information, which, had it been given to anyone else, would have meant his own death.

A note had been dropped off at one of the farms by a man just released from Frankfurt prison. He had been given five or six to smuggle out. This one was for Sepp Kerling. It was agreed by all at the farm that Kurt Essen was the one man who might be able to wangle a permission to see Sepp Kerling at the hospital. Rod said that he would try.

It was a bad time to see Harkliss, even about anything as important as this might prove to be. The court-mar-

tial of Helfferich and Hingst was to be next day. The trial was to be public; and Harkliss, replying to Rod's message, sent back word by Jason, that Rod should attend the trial, and after it was over, come to Harkliss's office to "make application for the permission."

The large room in the Rathaus where the court-martial was held was jammed with spectators. Mayor Eichhorn was there, and his daughter Thea, and townspeople and some farmhands, and from the castle, Mildred Waldecker, obviously sent by Schweinitz. No trial ever was more fair and square. Officers from adjoining sectors had been brought in to fill out the number required by Regulations for a general court-martial. Old Maximilian Barth put up a brilliant defense, but nothing could offset Godard Warko's signed confession, and nothing could break him down on the witness-stand. The verdict for both Helfferich and Hingst was guilty, and the sentence "to be hanged by the neck until dead." Warko, by agreement, was given life. Then Conrad Helfferich Holden got up and cursed old Warko until guards dragged him down.

When Major North got the news from Harkliss by phone, he offered to bet a week's pay he'd get a GHQ permission for a public double hanging. "Of course," he reminded, "your money would be up quite a while. There's still the routine review of the findings and approval of the sentence by the Deputy Military Governor."

It was late when Rod went through the routine at Carty's desk. When he did get into Harkliss's office, he said: "On top of such a day as you've had, I show up with more trouble. Let's take a quick look at it, and I'll come back tomorrow." They opened the sealed envelope, addressed in a sprawly hand to *"Sepp Karling, Kraus farm east of Dortheim."* The envelope seemed empty until they shook it; then a tiny square of paper, folded to a size no larger than the end of a pencil, dropped out. Rod explained: "After the messenger smuggled it out, he put it in the envelope to keep from losing it." A precious cigarette had been sacrificed to get this more precious bit of paper. They smoothed it out, and read:

I famish for news of Erika and what goes on. Do not tell her of this message, but get word to me some way. I worry now because I never told this to her or any of you: my identical twin went to America years ago. Perhaps he's in Bavaria now—in the American army! Be on guard.
Kurt Essen.

"That would have been your death-warrant," Harkliss said gravely, "if Sepp Kerling had been there to receive it, or if someone else had been chosen to smuggle it to him in the hospital."

Rod shrugged. "Luck lasts."

"What are you made of? Are you never afraid?"

"Sometimes. And then I'm ashamed—when things like this show how I'm being given all the breaks."

"Come in the morning," Harkliss said. "There'll be a message—on cigarette paper—for you to give to Sepp Kerling, just in case he is ever asked if you brought him one."

After supper in the hospital Harkliss and Cairns split open a cigarette and on its paper wrote a message they'd concocted. It was so cryptic and ambiguous it might have meant almost anything. Chuckling, they signed a name they'd invented. Cairns said with pretended gloom: "It'll protect Rod, but it'll baffle Sepp Kerling into a relapse."

Harkliss yawned. "Tonight I'm too tired. We'll dope out another letter tomorrow *'from* Erika' for the real Kurt. A baffler, too. No mention of Sepp getting a message from him. Mostly, it'll be another, and hotter, warning not to try writing anything to any of them."

Rod Braun in the morning was given his "permission." He was also given a chance to slip the fake message to Sepp and to whisper how the released prisoner had brought it. He was also given a chance to stand for a minute in the doorway of Erika's room. She was too weak to do more than smile at him. He said: "Get well, Kay. I'll be waiting." Her lips formed the soundless words: "Back to you."

Then he went home to the Essen farm and waited for the order. And time passed.

Chapter Eighteen

Len Harkliss sauntered unannounced into Cairns's office in the hospital. Since Cairns had taken to living there on account of his two prize patients, Harkliss had found the room at Eichhorns' empty and dull. He had not imagined how much he could miss Cairns. "Hiya, Ames?" he said cheerily; then giving a sharper glance: "You look low." In sudden anxiety: "Neither of 'em any worse?"

"They'll live," Cairns said without animation. "The Queen's kidneys are acting up, and I'll have to operate again on Sepp Kerling. I'll save his leg, but it'll be an inch or two shorter. I'm fagged for sleep, that's all."

Three days later Cairns came in and laid two small ledgers on Harkliss's desk. "Stink, don't they—of dog! No wonder Mike Frazier couldn't find them. They were on a little shelf up against the underside of the roof of Soden's prize Rottweiler's kennel!" Cairns was pretty cocky. "Know any better way than hypnotism to make Oberst Soden go into the kennel on his hands and knees and fetch out the books to you?"

Harkliss was astounded, and said so. "But when he remembers?"

"He won't even remember that there ever were such books. Post-hypnotic suggestion! He doesn't even know he was hypnotized. He was a cinch to put under. This was a tryout. Monday, I'll give him the works, and he'll spill everything that happened to those slaves. Then we've got him."

Cairns was far too sanguine, however, for he had worked on Soden, and hypnotized him in spite of the fact that he—Cairns—had since childhood suffered from a dislike and fear of dogs. And the next time he visited the Soden farm, the dogs set upon him, and he was rescued only after a savage fight in which Soden and the dogs had been shot and the farm buildings burned. Cairns was a casualty too, however; the next day he was flown to Munich for treatment as a mental case.

After a succession of interminable days, Harkliss was snapped out of his depression. Major North came in by plane from Munich the morning of the day for the execution of the sentence of death, by hanging, for Eugen Hingst and Conrad Helfferich Holden.

And the day proved even more difficult than had been anticipated. Presumably under orders from secret German authority, the townsfolk tried to avoid the grim ceremony, and attended only under some compulsion. And as the traps were sprung, a strange thing happened: apparently through some trick of sound-projection, there came as if from the sky, the defiant strains of a band playing "Deutschland über Alles!" The crowd promptly joined in singing the arrogant hymn. And when the forbidden Horst Wessel song followed, they sang that too.

Forbidden? Yes—but Americans couldn't fire into a crowd of unarmed people, and they got away with it. And though sentries pursued a boy who was observed signaling with a mirror from a roof top, he made his escape.

In the belief that Schweinitz had somehow managed the projection of that defiant sky music, another search of the castle was decided on that afternoon. When the expedition started, it had a new and added incentive. The flag of the Kaiser's Germany was again flaunting from the

tallest tower! "I won't come home empty-handed, anyway," Major North said. "At least I'll have that flag!"

It was all he did have, when they came back, in the rain, well after dark. The sky had begun to cloud up while the square had been still emptying out, and by early afternoon it was raining hard. That had been a humiliating afternoon. The Major came grimly into Harkliss' office, the big, folded, damp flag of the old Germany bundled under his arm. He started to speak, then looked more intently at Harkliss' grave face. "What happened?"

Harkliss was standing at attention. "I'm sorry. I'm ashamed, sir, to have to report such bad and humiliating news. The cache of chemicals is gone. It was taken, evidently, just about the time all the sky music was entertaining everybody. That flag under your arm, sir, probably was flown to tell the news that those chemicals had arrived in the castle safely."

Again Major North asked sharply: "What happened?"

IT WAS THIS WAY: The two pickets in the day observation post, from which, with field-glasses, they kept an eye on the brush pile over the cache of chemicals, had not been found until after dark. The three-man relief, coming to take over and move up to the night post, almost stepped on the two in the dark and the heavy rain. They were still unconscious, bound, gagged, blindfolded. One of the night pickets ran to take a quick look at the chemicals' hiding-place. He found only a shallow hole half filled with rainwater.

Major North gave Harkliss a bitter look, and interrupting, said coldly: "Just try to tell me, will you, what happened. In broad daylight!"

"We may never know," Harkliss answered stiffly. "They're still unconscious. One of them, being lifted into the ambulance, babbled: 'Dogs, dogs—sky music.' That's all we have to go on. It looks as though dogs slipped up through the thicket, while our men were bothering about what they were hearing from the sky, and the dogs knocked them on their faces and pinned them down. The men were not bitten. Then they were slugged from behind—sandbagged, probably; they have no scalp wounds. Probably never even glimpsed the Krauts who slugged them. The rain washed out every track and footprint."

"All right. Reasonable. What have you done?"

Harkliss said he'd gone fast to the lake and found nothing. "Naturally not—six hours too late," the Major snapped. Then, Harkliss said, he'd gone to the Essen farm. Rod—"Herr Essen"—told him they'd all been together out in the yard listening to the sky-show. The way he described it, it must have been as loud and clear, there, three miles away, as it was in town. Harkliss went on: "Something on wheels must have been used to get those seven carboys to the lake, or else they had a good-sized crew. Even one man to each carboy would have had trouble carrying it that distance."

"Four enough," the Major said impatiently. "Very simple. They could have carried the carboys in slings from two poles. Two men to each pole. Another in a canoe from the castle could have met them and handled the stuff from there on. Well, we get two casualties. They get the chemicals. It's been a great afternoon."

Harkliss said nothing. Presently, breaking the silence, Bryson North said: "Sorry I blew up. Losing the chemicals wasn't your fault, Harkliss. We've been outsmarted because we've been fooling ourselves by believing that the Wulf woman plans everything. Notice that the Underground seems to get on even better without her? Who gave the order for the kid with the mirror to signal Schweinitz when it was time to start his sky-show? Who gave Schweinitz his orders in the first place? The way the set-up looks now, Erika Wulf has always been just window-dressing, to pull our attention away from this '12,' this 'Dortheim,' the real leader. . . . When was Waldecker here in town last?"

"Two days ago, sir. Sent me another note by the little girl. It's getting to be a routine. Same run-around—or maybe it's truth. She's the wrong type, she says. Schweinitz very agreeable, but deferential; no intimacies, no confidences."

"Could be she really isn't the type. Or maybe Schweinitz learned a lesson from Cilly Pohl. Maybe, on the other hand, Waldecker, two days ago, carried back with her the orders for today."

"You mean, sir, orders which Thea Eichhorn was passing on, from this '12'? Or would it be possible that Thea Eichhorn herself is '12'? Maybe we sent Rod Braun after the wrong girl! Wait, sir—I'm getting a thought! They were great friends when they were children, Thea, Erika and Kurt. I think Thea was in love with Kurt always. Erika got him. Then she threw him over. But at that 'trial,' she switched back to 'Kurt'—that's why Erzburg wanted to knife him. All right. Now! Suppose, while Erika's still in the hospital, 'Kurt' begins making fast passes at Thea? Then we send Erika back to him, and she finds out that 'Kurt' has gone over to Thea? 'Divide and rule'—it's the Nazis' own technique."

"How soon will she be able to leave the hospital?"

"Any time. We've stalled—kept her there, hoping orders would go direct to Rod."

Major North said: "Jealousy often does things that love can't. But there's one thing wrong with your plot. Instead of 'Kurt' going after Thea, it is she who must be made to seem, to Erika, to have gone after 'Kurt.' It is Thea, not 'Kurt,' that we want Erika to knife."

"We could do this," Harkliss suggested: "Thea got Mildred Waldecker for me, so now I call on her to 'get the dope on Kurt Essen.' I ask her to send for him 'for old friendship,' and then pump him about his war record. Once he's 'in,' it'll be up to Rod to stay 'in.' And he can tell Erika that Thea sent for him. Maybe Thea herself will tell Erika!"

"Perfect!" With a pleased nod to Harkliss, Major North then looked at his watch. "Get Rod in here—'for questioning.' Then we can tell him about his new job.'

THEA EICHHORN, IN THE UPSTAIRS sitting-room next afternoon, said: "It's been a long time, Kurt."

"It's like getting back home, Thea," he answered, looking fondly around a room he'd never seen before. "Hasn't changed much."

"You have," she answered, studying him, bright-eyed.

"More than you'd imagine. In my heart." He'd never intended risking anything like that, this soon. And then she really looked at him. He met her eyes, trying to gauge from them how fast and far he dared go today. He saw the curious little lighter flecks in the brown irises turn golden. So he went on: "I wouldn't have come, Thea, unless you had sent for me. I didn't suppose you'd ever want to see me again. Such a fool I've been, all these years. So stubbornly blind."

"Sit over here on the sofa, Kurt, where the light will be on your face. You are saying such unexpected words."

Rod went over and sat down on the other end of the sofa, and turned so as to face her. "I hadn't meant to blurt it out this way, Thea," he said, watching her eyes, just as she was watching his. "No other woman would have believed me. You have always understood me—when I didn't even understand myself."

Thea smiled at him. "Perhaps you do not know this. She is again well—it is secretly reported to me. She will be in your house again, any day now—with you."

"Can I help that? We do what we are ordered to do. I have to receive her, in my house."

"Remember, I have had a full report from Helmuth Willkomm. Erika, the report told, said before them all, that she would be true to you, 'from this night on.'

"If you had heard her say that as often as I have! Now she has said it once too often. Erzburg is gone, yes. But

there will be other Erzburgs. She is utterly incapable of steadfastness. That, I know at last."

She did not answer. He could not decide whether or not she was believing him. But now he had to go on. He had moved faster than he had intended. Now he had to make it stick—if he could. He said: "When I first came in, Thea, you told me I had changed. I think now, that you saw instantly in what way I had changed. Do I so plainly show that at last I understand and appreciate what steadfastness in a woman means?"

"You know why I sent for you today?"

"Why—" He pretended to stumble. "The note said, 'For old friendship.' "

"That is what I was ordered to put in the note. I was ordered by Kapitan Harkliss to get you here, then find out your war record. They want to imprison you, Kurt. They want to hang you if they can."

He looked at her as though speechless from shock and disillusion; then a slow smile came, then he laughed. "Instead, you warn me!"

"I shall report back to the Herr Kapitan Harkliss that you were very smart, very sly, and so, to try again, I had to invite you 'for old friendship' to come again tomorrow."

"I'll come, for new friendship, tomorrow."

PRESENTLY, HE GOT UP to go.

"Not yet!" she said quickly. "Not for a little while longer. It has been such a long time since you were here." And when at last it was really time to go, she said: "Kurt, I have a question. What do the young men on the farms say of my father?"

Without putting on, he looked grave. "They wait only for the order from '12.' They are sure it will come—soon."

"I cannot help it—the way he acts and feels. He believes he is right. That what he does is for Germany. Yes, I think that the order is sure to come—soon." She went with him down the long flight of stairs, slowly. At the front door, just before she opened it, she said:

"You will come back? Tomorrow?"

"And tomorrow's tomorrow."

She opened the door for him, and the outdoor light coming suddenly upon her face there in the dim hall made it look almost transfigured. He was out on the stone steps when she called to him, softly: "Kurt, I was steadfast!" He came back into the hall, and kissed her. . . .

Major North had stayed over, in case of reaction to the events of "Hanging Day." The gallows had been taken away, and everywhere in the town the night had been quiet. Harkliss and Major North wakened late. Major North said: "It's too quiet. Something's wrong."

At midmorning they went up to Mayor Eichhorn's office. Major North was becoming more favorably impressed all the while by Diedrich Eichhorn. An orderly brought Harkliss a note, addressed in a familiar hand and with Sergt. Carty's familiar notation, *"Brought by little Bessie Tauber."* Harkliss perfunctorily opened it and gave it a quick glance. With his eyebrows he signaled Major North, and they went down to Harkliss' office. This note was not routine. Mildred Waldecker said: "Somehow, he got what he has waited for so long, and last night he was very happy. When he came to breakfast, his right hand was heavily bandaged. He said a door had slammed shut on it. The bandage smelled of tannic acid. I am a nurse. It is for burns. He would not let me see and re-dress his hand."

Major North said, astonished: "That's honest information. And she by-passed Thea Eichhorn to give it."

Sergeant Carty knocked and came in quickly, his expression deeply troubled: "Little Bessie Tauber. If you would see her, sir, right quick?"

The child had followed him in. She was thin, and small for eleven years. It was cold that morning, but she wore no hat or coat, and her flat little chest went up and down as though she had run until all breath was gone. But all that they saw at first were her eyes.

"Tell me, Bessie," Harkliss said kindly.

She made him a bobbing little curtsy. "Yes, Herr Kapitan." She curtsied again, those eyes steadily on his face. "It is my mother. She has hanged herself in the closet in the hall." Suddenly she whirled and threw herself against Sergeant Carty, flung her arms about his waist and pressed her face hard against him. And then at last the tears came, but silently.

Carty, one arm around her, his other hand stroking her hair, looked helplessly at his officers. He said: "She told me she'd spent the night with her uncle and aunt Waldecker; then she brought the note here, an' then went home an' went to hang up her hat an' coat."

"That's enough," Major North said. "Take her out and give her coffee or whatever's good to give a child—hot chocolate, maybe; and then have her taken to her uncle's."

"Yes sir," Carty said. "First, if I may, sir, I should tell that a report came in more'n an hour ago that seemed just a routine sui— Well, one of the same thing. Name of Alvin Lehnen. Funny, though, because real rope isn't so scarce, but this was with a kind of twisted bark rope. I thought, sir, you should know."

"That's right." Harkliss motioned to take Bessie out. "Get word to Lieutenant Ives to report here, fast." They left.

"Just coincidence, probably," Major North was saying. "Two suicides not unusual, especially in Germany now. The bark rope probably just happened to be handy. Still—who were these two, Harkliss? Specially friendly to us? The timing seems significant. Yesterday we hang two of theirs. Last night—"

Harkliss shook his head. "I never knew of either of them. The bark-rope case was not a suicide, sir."

Lieutenant Ives hurried in. He was Medical Corps—Ames Cairns' successor.

The three officers were driven fast to the Tauber house. Bessie's coat and hat lay on the hall floor where she had dropped them when she opened the closet door. One glance finished the suicide possibility. Mrs. Tauber had been gagged and her hands tied behind her before she had been hanged with a short piece of fibrous bark rope. Major North scowled in puzzled fashion. "What about bark?" he asked.

Harkliss hardly gave it a glance. "Linden-tree fiber," he answered absently. He was on his hands and knees with a flashlight examining the floor; the body was hanging almost over him.

"You didn't even look, but you say 'linden,' " the Major complained. Harkliss grunted "Ha!" and picked up a small piece of bark. He held the light to its underside, where, penciled on the smooth surface were the initials, "SSGG." He held it so that the other two might see. "We'll probably find another with the Lehnen body. The *'S.S.'* isn't what you think it is. I'll give you the dope when we get back to the office. Go to work, Lieutenant. How long has she been dead?"

Lieut. Ives made his brief examination. "Ten to twelve hours," he said. It was now near noon. GIs remained to take charge.

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF DORTHEIM, the body of old Alvin Lehnen hung from the rafters of his workshop behind his house. Gag, bonds, linden-fiber rope, bit of bark with *"SSGG,"* all duplicated the situation at the Taubers'. Alvin Lehnen had had a wife and a middle-aged daughter. Their complete story was that Alvin often worked late in his workshop. They'd gone to bed, and found the body in the morning. They seemed too frightened and cowed for grief. Rather sulkily Major North gave up questioning them for the time being, and went out to the jeep.

Harkliss fairly yelled: "Push it, man! Push!"

"What's worrying me," the Major growled, "is why there's no morbid crowd staring at those two houses. Plenty of normal activity everywhere else, but no one so much as comes into this block. They're acting as though hanging is catching."

"This kind is," Harkliss said laconically. And again he said: "I'll tell you, sir, when we get back to the office." But when nearly there, Harkliss suddenly asked Major North to come first to the Eichhorn house. They let Lieut. Ives go on, and they went in, to what had been Ames Cairns' room. All of Cairns' possessions were boxed, awaiting shipping instructions. Cairns had been flown home to the States and to a hospital specializing in war neuroses. It had been a sorry task for Harkliss to go through Ames' personal effects, separating them from Medical Corps papers. He now began opening one of these carefully packed personal-effects boxes.

"Can't you tell me, first, what's so mysterious about those hangings?" Major North asked, impatiently.

"Yes sir," Harkliss said with a sigh. "What I'm trying to do here may turn out to answer a lot of things about those hangings. But I can tell you now what I didn't want the driver, or even Lieutenant Ives, to know just yet. The linden-fiber ropes and the *'SSGG'* initials showed that both hangings were the carrying out of *Feme* sentences. That's why the crowds stayed away from those houses. Germans, for nearly seven hundred fifty years, off and on, have been scared to death of the *Feme*. It's a strictly German terrorist secret society. Once it had over a hundred thousand members. Any passer-by who stumbled on a *Feme* court or a hanging, was grabbed and hanged without trial. You can see why our citizens duck a neighborhood where the *Feme* has been at work."

"And those initials?"

"*'Strick, Stein, Gras, Grün'*, is what they stand for—*'Rope, Stone, Grass, Green,'* secret society gibberish: *'noose, headstone, grassy grave.'* Those initials were always carved on the trees they'd used for gallows, as a sort of signature of the *Feme*. It was ritual to use only a linden-fiber noose."

Harkliss was hurriedly going through the contents of the box while he talked. "In modern times, the *Feme* didn't always use the linden noose, so I think they used it last night to let the Germans, here, know that the *Feme* is alive again. After World War I it was revived, right here in Bavaria, 'for the destruction of democracy and the resurrection of Teutonism.' It was the *Feme*, you know, which practically wrecked the Weimar Republic."

"Do all ex-college history professors know as much as you know, Harkliss, about this *Feme*?"

"German history was my hobby, sir. I got my M. A. on a thesis I titled *'The Foredoomed Weimar Republic.'* I still remember parts of it. When the *Feme* murdered the Foreign Minister, Walter Rathenau, in 1922, there'd already been over 350 assassinations of important republicans. That's rather many. We Americans here in Bavaria are going to learn a lot more about the *Feme* before we get through with this Occupation."

He opened another box, and almost at once drew out a parchment scroll. Very elegantly in ornamental hand-lettering it read: *"The New First Families of the New Germany,"* followed by four names. Frau Elizabeth Tauber was one of them. There was space under the four for plenty more names; clipped to the scroll was a penciled list of five more names, evidently to be lettered in. On this list was Alvin Lehnen.

Harkliss and Major North looked blankly at the scroll and at each other. "I don't know what it means," Harkliss said. "I wondered when I packed it away. That's why I half-remembered the names."

"Message Cairns," Major North ordered.

"I don't believe, sir, his doctors would let him see it. It might give him some sort of backset. He's improving. They tell me he'll get well. But he'll never come back to the Army."

Harkliss copied the names, and they went to HQ to check with the records. Besides the two who had been hanged last night, misfortune or tragedy had already struck three more of the nine families. The house of one had burned, and the shop of another; both families now were destitute. In the third, the daughter had been stabbed to death. At the time, it had seemed a commonplace case of jealousy, one lover too many. But now there was a new face on the matter; this girl's family was one of the list of nine.

"I think, sir, that the four families not yet touched should be warned. When they learn what has happened already to the other five on the list, they may break down and talk." The Major agreed.

They got back to HQ late, tired from the long-drawn-out, futile questioning, and depressed by the ill-concealed hopeless terror they had left behind them. Two messages were awaiting them. One was Rod's report: *"I'm in. Daily welcome guaranteed 'till death us do part.' I hope you're satisfied."*

"I don't like it," North said. "Flip, unsoldierly, bitter. Something's gone wrong there, too." He opened his message. "Sorry, Harkliss. Got to get back to Munich. You'll have to wrestle it out alone."

"Wait!" Harkliss said. "I'm getting a thought. There is one man here in Dortheim—if he doesn't know the answer to those lists—could get it—Diedrich Eichhorn!"

Chapter Nineteen

THE HELFFERICH-HINGST HANGINGS HAD BEEN on a Friday, and this was now quite late Saturday evening, too late to see Diedrich Eichhorn. Sunday, Harkliss, couldn't go upstairs and talk with him without Thea being present. Not until Monday could he take up the problem of the lists.

Pretty well tired out, Harkliss slept until nearly Sunday noon. On his way to late breakfast, he saw Rod coming toward the Eichhorn house. Harkliss got a cold Kurt Essen stare and a sulky nod. Necessary, and good acting, but Harkliss felt there had been considerable reality in it, too. That, and the "report" of last night, indicated that this Thea Eichhorn assignment evidently was mighty distasteful to Rod.

Harkliss, after breakfast, was still thinking about this new problem as he stood idly at his office window. And then he saw Rod, walking rather slowly and as though he wanted to be conspicuous, crossing the marketplace in front of the Rathaus. Rod looked back and saw him,

and with no sort of recognition, went on across the square and into the street leading to the south gate. If he had been going home he would have walked on the sidewalk in front of the Rathaus, toward the east gate and the Old Road. The south gate opened into the road to the Schloss Grafenberg. Rod, obviously, was on some sort of errand or mission for Thea Eichhorn, and Rod wanted Harkliss to know it. Harkliss opened his door and shouted: "Carty! Your two best S-2 men in the guard-room—in here, quick!"

A good two hours later, one of these scouts reported back. They had kept Essen covered to the park at the bottom of the castle hill. Then he went into a thicket and was in there quite a time. They couldn't get close, and the bushes were too thick to see through with glasses. Then Essen had come out and gone up the road to the castle. The scout had left his partner to watch the road. "The Kraut can't get down off, any way except the road, without he jumps off, can he, sir?" And Harkliss answered that there was no other way that he knew of, and sent the man back to help his partner.

IT WAS LONG AFTER DARK; still there was no word that "Essen" had come down off the castle hill. Then came a telephone call from an exasperated Jason at the Essen farmhouse: Herr Essen was either drunk or haywire, and had picked a fight with the Lunk and knocked him flat.

Harkliss asked incredulously: "How long ago?"

"Just now, sir. The Lunk hasn't got back the breath that was knocked outa him."—"Put bracelets on Essen and I'll send a jeep; then you bring him in."

Jason was grim when he brought "Kurt Essen" to Harkliss. "There just wasn't any excuse, sir!"

"All right, Jason. I'll get to the bottom with this fellow. Take the bracelets."

After Jason had gone, Rod said: "Sorry about the Lunk. I didn't hurt him much. Minna saw the whole show, so I'm in the clear for getting in here to see you, quick. I couldn't think of any other way. I've a lot to tell." He took a cigarette avidly, but wouldn't sit down, just paced, rubbing his wrists.

Harkliss asked: "How'n hell'd you get out of that castle? My men are still waiting for you to come down the road."

"First, I've got to get Thea off my chest—only I can't. That's what's bothering me, Len. She's so sure I'm Kurt, and that I'm in love with her at last—after she's loved me all her life and had given up hope—that she's just idolatrous of me. I believe she's one of those dual people, split personalities they call it, don't they? One of her is sweet. I mean that. As sweet a girl as I've ever known, if you can believe me. That's the one who loves me—Kurt. It makes me sick—what I'm doing to such a girl. And then, the other of her! I'm not quite sure yet, but I think I'm going to find she's worse than the Queen ever was able to be. A great job you've given me. I don't know how I'm to come out on it."

Harkliss didn't know what to answer. Before he could try, Rod said: "What do you care? It's the castle you want to hear about. All right—the castle. Thea gave me a note to take to the Professor, an order that she had 'just received.' She didn't say who from or how, and I didn't quite dare ask. Here's a copy of it. It's in the corset code." He took a piece of paper and also a sealed envelope from his pocket and laid them both on the desk.

Harkliss took them, then put them down. "I've got to hear what way you got out of there."

"Well, I got into some bushes at the foot of the hill and went to work on the envelope with my knife—Sepp Kerling's knife, the one he wanted me to carve Erzburg with! I'd spit on the edge of the knife and soften up the stickum a little at a time. So I copied the message and resealed it and went on up to the castle and said the password into the speaking-tube—'Mannerheim,' of all names! I got taken to the Professor and the Princess and Mildred Waldecker. The Professor was stomping up and down. I handed him the message. He said, 'Two American *Schweinhund* spies shadowed you!' He shook his finger in my face. 'I saw them with the glass, because I looked down from such elevation. What happened at the foot of the hill where I could not see—when you did not start up for so long? Answer!'

"The Princess said to him: 'Such bellowing, Werner! You make my head ache. Kurt might have had the message taken from him. Why don't you read it?'

"The Professor ripped open the envelope. 'Code!' he said. 'I'll have to work it out in my room.' And again: 'What did you do at the foot of the hill?' I told him I'd rested—three miles from my farm to Dortheim, three more to here—and I'd dozed off. The Princess said it was lucky they hadn't captured the message then. He answered: 'It's not this one they want. They want my reply. We've got to keep this fellow here until dark.' The Princess curled her lip at him. 'Kurt wouldn't stand a ghost of a show on that narrow road. Then they'd push the body off into the lake.' I said: 'My body?' 'They won't get the chance,' says the Professor, 'because he isn't going by the road. He's going by the bucket—he'll love that.' Len, I'll tell you right now, that 'bucket' was just about the damnedest thing I ever had to do. I'm afraid to go to sleep—I'll dream, and be doing it again.

"The Professor went to his room, and I tried to find out how well the Princess and I knew each other. I don't know yet. She knew my real father and mother, and I got it that she thought Bruno Essen and his wife were—well, like oxen, and she'd had nothing to do with them. What she wanted was to hear about Rurik and Dr. Hildebrand Braun and his wife. Remember, Len, they adopted me, Rurik, and took me to America. I told her that Bruno never let me—Kurt—mention them. So that finished that.

"The Professor came back, and gave me the sealed message—that one, on the desk. He showed the Princess the decoded one I'd brought. She looked at me in a way I couldn't make out. Then—they'd heard all about my near-fight with Erzburg—nothing would do but I must strip down to my belt and show Erika's picture. The Princess laughed till tears ran. She said: 'Of all the bizarre tokens of affection! Every time he moves his arm, the girl's face wriggles!' And the Professor said to me: 'I suppose you'll have Thea's face tattooed under the other arm?' That threw me for a loop—how could he know about Thea and me so soon?"

Harkliss said tensely: "Don't go up to the castle again, Rod. Can't you see? She's known you as a child. She's beginning to doubt, tattoo or no tattoo."

ROD SAID THOUGHTFULLY: "Let's get the whole thing finished. Luck, in time, always runs out. Nothing lasts. . . . I'll spill the rest of this story fast. Well, nothing else especial happened. We had early dinner, and then it was dark and time to go. The Princess said: 'Don't worry about the bucket, Kurt. It's one of the family's best traditions. An ancestor, Prince Roderick, once escaped this same way. It's been used lately. It still works.'

"Then the Professor and I went down to the kitchen. There was a bin, stacked with firewood. He pulled it, and it slid forward as if the bottom was greased, and there in the stone floor was a round hole a couple of feet across. 'Get in,' says the Professor. 'In what?' I asked, plenty scared. 'In the "bucket".' And he held a flashlight so I could see a crossbar and an iron wheel with a grooved edge, and an endless wire cable over it; and what he called the 'bucket' was just a loop in the cable. 'What you do,' he explained, 'is to stand in the loop. There's a

counter-weight. If you're lighter, you pull the counter-weight up; if heavier, pull down on its cable to keep from being dropped too fast.'

"I said; 'Do you think I'm crazy enough to go down such a hole on that?' He said: 'I don't think you're crazy enough to try to stay here against orders.' I still didn't want to go. He was really pretty decent about it. 'The story is,' he said, 'there used to be a real bucket and a windlass. In medieval days this was a cistern, awfully deep, but the spring went dry, and some old prince had his men cut a lateral tunnel to the outside, just in case. You can't miss it when you get down—there's nowhere else to go!' He laughed like a fool at that joke. Then he warned: 'Remember! When you get to the bottom, hang onto the cable—the side you've stood in—and let the counter-weight down, hand over hand. If you don't, it'll come with a run, and smash you.'"

HARKLISS WAS SITTING ON THE EDGE of his chair. "You mean you went down on that thing?"

"I had to. Of course, I could have killed the Professor, or tied him up, and come down the road and let your men take me, but I didn't think you wanted it like that. Besides, if it was a way out, it would also be a way in. Maybe come handy to us some day."

Harkliss said: "I want to know whether or not you got killed on the way down. Don't take me wrong, Rod. It's just that you're giving me the shakes. If any man ever did anything 'beyond the call of duty,' you've done it."

"It worked out all right. Like I said, the Professor was pretty decent about it. He hung his flashlight with a string around my neck, pointing down. 'But don't leave it lighted,' he said, 'when you start out through the tunnel, or it might shine through the bushes piled in the outside mouth. Be sure you put the bushes back, after you get out. And watch your step. You come out on an awfully steep slope.' And then he said: 'You are thinking that the old fellows who thought up this whole thing, castle and all, were just nuts? Maybe they were, but no nuttier than we are today! Inventing the atom bomb!' He said that, Len. And he's dead right."

Before they went back that night and mapped the location of the tunnel-mouth, they decoded the two messages. The one Rod took to the Professor began: *"Trust Kurt as you would trust me. I have known him ever since I can remember. We are to marry. Very soon."* Harkliss sat looking at Rod steadily. "I played it fast," Rod said, angrily, "but I didn't go that far. I suppose I did make her think that I'm in the same state of mind that she is." He pushed the papers away. "'Beyond the call of duty!' This is too far beyond. You've got to take me out of this, Len! There are some things a white man just can't do."

Harkliss said: "Tomorrow I'll send Erika back to you."

They finished decoding the first message: *"Orders just received, are, for you—now that you have what you need—to hurry, hurry, hurry. Reply and state when you expect to be ready."* Werner Schweinitz's reply said: *"Believe ready in not more than five days."*

They looked uneasily at the message and at each other. Rod said: "Not more than five days!"

"We could take him now," Harkliss said, "and someone else would carry on from where he left off. We've got to get what he is working on. We've got to get into his laboratory. And we don't know any more than we ever did, where it is. It's up to you, Rod." . . . .

Mayor Eichhorn, smiling broadly, came quickly from behind his desk to meet Captain Harkliss that Monday morning. Harkliss grimly laid the list of names on the desk. The Mayor of Dortheim stared at it. Slowly, almost involuntarily, he checked the five names. "Where did you get this? What of the other four?"

Harkliss told him how and where he had found the names, then he handed him the ornamental scroll with its fantastic caption, *"The New First Families of the New Germany."* Usually so steady, the old man's hands shook so that he had to lay the scroll down. Bluntly, Harkliss told him of the linden-fiber nooses and the initials SSGG. "Do I need to tell you, Herr Mayor, what they mean?"

"All Germans know," he answered, with dry lips.

Harkliss said, sternly: "I do not know what this scroll means. I know only what is happening, fast, to the people whose names are on it. I must know why. I must know who gave these names to Captain Cairns. We must learn the truth. All of it. No matter what the truth is. It must be found quickly."

"Yes," Diedrich Eichhorn said. "No matter what the truth is. It shall be found. Quickly." His face, always so ruddy, was gray. In a voice so low that he seemed talking to himself, he said: "Already I know how I shall proceed. But I must be very certain. It must be complete proof."

Harkliss copied the names for him, and picked up the scroll. At the door he glanced back. The old man's elbows were on his desk, his head between his hands. . . .

Rod was home again at the Essen farm. He had squared it with the Lunk; hearty apologies, and then they shook hands. All was well.

To Minna, Rod said: "Now I go back to Dortheim, and you are to come with me, bringing the Fräulein Erika's clothes which you washed—or others. I had to come home to tell you. It is an order from the Herr Kapitan Harkliss. Fräulein Erika is well again—enough to be brought home. Because she is still weak, you two will be brought here in style by the Americans in a jeep. It is the Herr Kapitan's own promise."

"And you?" she asked bluntly. "You will not be with us? You will not be here to welcome her home?"

"I have a call to make in town."

Hesitantly, she asked: "You will permit your old Minna—"

"Go ahead. Why not?"

"It is the Fräulein Thea Eichhorn—'for old friendship', as in the note which you showed to me Saturday?"

"That's right, 'For old friendship'."

More boldly: "And yesterday—until long after dark!"

"Right again."

Her usually grim old face was smiling broadly. "And tomorrow, too—if I may be so forward, Master Kurt?"

He answered: "And tomorrow's tomorrow. She asks it." He made it sound fatuously loverlike.

Her face became grim again. "What will you tell the Fräulein Erika?"—her eyes on his, steadily.

"I think," Rod said, "I shall let you tell her."

CHAPTER TWENTY

ALL THIS DAY THE SKY HAD BEEN HEAVILY overcast; the night was certain to be black. In Professor Werner Schweinitz's laboratory the weather outside was of no consequence. Without the artificial lights, the laboratory would have been as pitch dark by day as by night, as any mine deep in earth is dark. There was one small section, however, where daylight would penetrate a little way. The sentry on duty there—a sentry was on duty every hour of the twenty-four—could, in daytime, see through the artificial thicket which was on a float blocking the low entrance into the cliff from the Grafensee. And on moonlight nights he could see moonbeams on the water. But now the daylight had almost gone, and even this close to the outside world, this part of the laboratory was as black as any of its deeper galleries.

The sentry paced, to keep warm and awake, in complete darkness. Except for a guard-rail, he might have stepped off the earthen shelf into the water of the short under-

ground canal. This place was almost as silent as it was black. There were the small sounds of the gunwales of half a dozen canoes knocking together, and there were occasional slight sounds made by a Doberman which shared the post of sentry with the man. And now the Doberman came and pressed hard against the man's leg to alert him. The dog had heard sounds not yet perceptible to the man. The sentry knew that no laboratory canoes were out, and that nothing was expected to arrive tonight *via* the lake. Therefore he carried out orders, which were to take no chances. He gave the Doberman two sharp pats on the rump, and the dog sped up the slope of the gallery at the end of the short canal, to bring reinforcements. The sentry hurried to the end of the shelf nearest the float with its screen of bushes.

This entrance from the lake may have been originally a natural undercutting by the lake. Or it may have been entirely man-made. The gallery had been sloped down to the water-line at the cliff-face, and deepened so as to fill with water. It was known now only to a few of the "importants" of the Underground.

This old mine was not under the Schloss Grafenberg. It was under the much lower hill on the west, which was linked to the castle-hill by a narrow ridge. A steeply sloping subterranean gallery through the ridge connected it with the castle. By boat across the lake the Nazis had stealthily stocked it with laboratory equipment, but the end came before they could put it to work. It was an ideal spot for Schweinitz, and he had been ordered to it.

And now at last the sentry heard what the Doberman had heard, unmistakably the sound of someone swimming—and in that icy water. The sentry turned the beam of his infra-red lamp onto the float's bushes, and presently saw, clearly, the face of the swimmer, who laid hold of the outer edge of the bushes and whispered fiercely: "Kurt Essen—the real Kurt Essen calling, for Schweinitz or Erzburg. Quick! Hell's sake, get me out of this water!"

The sentry, Johann Boehm, one of the four bicycling "farmhands" of last autumn, recognized not only the name but the face, and unhesitatingly he swung the float's end a little inward, and Kurt Essen swam in and was helped up onto the earthen shelf.

In the Eichhorn sitting-room this afternoon's end, there was pleasing warmth from the huge green tile stove. From where Rod and Thea sat on the sofa, they could see the dark sky through the big bay window, and at the room's other end see the yellow light of the burning peat shining through the vents under the belly of the tile stove.

Thea was in Rod's arms; she was saying: "Hold me tighter—tight enough to hurt. We have lost such a terrible lot of time, Kurt. Can we ever make up for it?"

There came a curious, stealthily scratching sound, not loud, which seemed to have a rhythm, almost a pattern. The sound came from an adjoining room whose door was a little ajar. Rod straightened, and looked at her questioningly. "That's from your room, isn't it?"

"Everywhere in Dortheim," she evaded, "the rats, in these old houses—"

"Look here!" he said sternly, "it's our job to tell big lies to many people—but never to each other."

She stood up. "Come, then." He followed her into her room and to a shallow closet in the side wall. She put her hand in among the clothes hanging on the back of the closet, and pulled, and the whole rear opened a little way, like the cover of a book, and a hand holding an envelope came through. She took the envelope and the hand withdrew. She closed the closet wall.

"Suppose you have a reply to send out?" he asked casually, as though there was nothing unusual in all this.

"I signal from this side. Someone is on duty all the time in the house which adjoins ours. You must excuse me, Kurt. This must be decoded."

"I understand," he said. He went into the sitting-room and waited. She was not gone long.

"It is an emergency," she said. "You need not carry the message unless you want to, Kurt. I have the usual messenger. But it is of such importance I would rather send you."

"Of course," he answered. "What is it? What's it say?"

She drew herself up. Though there was still no other light in the room except the small glow from the stove, he could feel, with no need to see, the incredulity and the anger in her stare. "You mean that you expect me—that you believe that I—"

"Yes!" he said with sudden, fierce earnestness. "In this one case, I do expect you to tell. It is a test. For those who do not trust each other implicitly, marriage, Thea, becomes a hell on earth. If you do not trust me, say so; where there is still time, by refusing to tell what is in this one message."

She came and stood so close that he felt her body trembling, quivering, everywhere. She said: "Before I am permitted to give you all my body, I must first give you all my soul? Is that it, Kurt? This, then, should prove the depth—which has no measurement—of my love for you. I put into your hands my oath, and the office of which I have been so proud, and my life. All this, because I cannot give you up, now that I really have you so suddenly for my own."

She pulled him down, closer, so that her moving lips brushed against his ear, and her words did not seem words at all, but, instead, soft, warm waves of sound which managed to be articulate. "It is the order to Schweinitz to leave tonight. To get away—with what he has been working on—while there is still time. He knows where he is to go, and how, and where to make first contact with the chain which is to pass him safely on. All those instructions he has had, but not from me. This order starts him on his way, tonight!" She pushed him back a little, and said, still in that almost soundless voice: "Does that satisfy you, Kurt? Have I met your test for marriage?"

"Yes," he said humbly.

So now he had it! And he hated himself! His inner self was saying over and over, savagely: "No one should ever have to do what I have just done. How can I live with myself, remembering what I have made this girl do to herself? How can duty ever be such treachery?"

He was sitting on the sofa again with Thea in his arms, and he didn't know how he got there. Then she was on her feet and tugging at his hands. "You must go now, dearest. You must go quickly."

"Yes," he said. "Start now." And then from some instinct, he was saying words coolly: "Look here, I'll never ask you to meet any test again. But just to put Erika in her true place for all time, settle this for me: Erika always claimed that the order and instructions for punishing the spy, Cilly Pohl, came from herself, Erika. I always thought she lied.'

Thea Eichhorn said angrily: "Of course she lied. Erika and I have hated each other all our lives. We work together now because we must. Because those above us, command us to. The order and instructions for Cilly Pohl were, of course, mine—all mine."

There came to him a too-vivid memory of Cilly Pohl, earless and tongueless. "Thanks!" he said. "That's what I wanted to know. That fixes everything."

It was she who kissed him good-by, but she didn't realize that it was she who did the kissing. Their lips were so tightly pressed together that they burned and ached, and that was what she craved, and so, for the moment, was satisfied. And then he was gone.

The cold evening air made him feel clean and young again. And so he knew just what to do and how to do it. He came boldly around the corner of the Rathaus and

barged into a sentry, who grabbed him angrily by an arm and held him. "You blasted, clumsy Kraut!"

"G-2 Lieutenant Essen for Captain Harkliss, quick. Emergency! Tell him with his driver to pick me up outside the east gate. Got it?" This in English, low-voiced, poured-out.

"Yes sir," gasped the sentry, who played his rôle well. "Get the hell on your way, then, and watch where you go." And he gave the clumsy Kraut a shove, and himself hurried up the Rathaus steps.

Just how much this fooled Rolf Runkle would be anybody's guess. He had followed from his hiding-place near the Eichhorn house, but he wasn't close enough to Rod even to hear that what was said was in English instead of German. Rolf Runkle still followed, doggedly, toward the east gate.

By now Kurt Essen—the real Kurt—was warm and dry and well brandied. From a filled storeroom in another gallery, he had been given a new Wehrmacht uniform and new boots, a long two-edged knife, and a Luger. He had even given himself a shave. It was comfortable there beside the charcoal brazier. In this laboratory were cushioned chairs, and even a few rugs, so that the technicians' feet would not get too cold on the rock floor. Acetylene lamps made such good light, that in the gallery's stone walls could be seen the pale tracery of salt veins.

Professor Werner Schweinitz had been summoned from the castle, and he listened to Kurt repeat his story. "Everyone here knows me now, Professor. At first Colonel Erzburg wanted to go on from where he thought we'd left off at Willkomm's. But I convinced him it's my twin, Rurik, that he ought to carve into thin slices. It is Rurik that Erika now is in love with, not me, Kurt. But Erzburg isn't going to get the chance. I broke out of Frankfurt prison just for that reason, and I'm the one who is going to kill the bas—, well, no, that's hardly what I'd call my twin." He was in great spirits—besides the brandy.

So then he told in detail the outrages done to him—how he must have been drugged when he thought he was merely being made drunk, and it must have been then that the tattooed portrait was measured and photographed—stolen for Rurik. And then how he'd been railroaded into Frankfurt prison. For Rurik! So that Rurik might step into his shoes—and into his bed, along with no doubt, Erika. And then how Sepp Kerling had gone off his beam in a concentration-camp and started a riot, and got sentenced to Frankfurt, and they'd met in the exercise yard. "And so," he said, "I broke out, and I've come to kill Rurik. Before he can do more and bigger damage to us all. I'll kill him tonight."

"Don't go all the way home just for that," the Professor said genially, "and probably get yourself hanged. I'll send for him, and you can kill him here, and pitch the body into the Grafensee where it belongs. None of us will get the blame. We'll fix it to look like there'd been a scuffle out on the road. We'll say we didn't even know he'd planned to come to the castle. He just never got here." He sat looking thoughtfully at Kurt Essen. "You don't speak English at all, do you? No. So it is impossible. But it would have been rare. If only you could have impersonated him, the way he has impersonated you! So then, you must kill him. . . . Well, I go. I shall have the Princess Anna write the note." He gave a quick nod. "You'll be told when he has arrived."

In Dortheim, Erika Wulf came out of the house adjoining the Eichhorns'—the house which opened into Thea's room by the hinged closet wall. She had been told by Minna, what Minna had been told to tell. She had come to Dortheim, bringing Rolf Runkle with her, to have it out with Thea—but not while Kurt was there. She had ordered Rolf Runkle to watch, and to report to her—where she waited in a nearby house—whenever Kurt came away from Eichhorns' and started home.

So Rolf Runkle had trailed Kapitan Essen closely in the early darkness, and from behind a tree at the side of the Old Road had incredulously seen him get into a jeep and drive off with the American Kapitan Harkliss. When he reported this to Fräulein Erika, she had made him swear that what he said was true. "Very good, then," she had said. "Now I shall find out why!" And she ordered him to watch again, where he had watched before, and when she came out, to join her.

Then Erika had gone through the secret panel into Thea's room, to settle all scores, old and new. And she had settled them, but not in the way she had intended. Now she was out of the house again, and had been joined by Rolf Runkle. It was nearly curfew-time.

Whether Kurt Essen was actually Kurt Essen turned traitor, or whether he was the twin Rurik, a spy, she could not decide. It made little difference now. It was too late. One or the other, Kurt Essen or Rurik Braun, carried a code message for Schweinitz and knew its contents. Thea had not only told Erika that he knew the contents, but also had tauntingly told her what the secret message said.

Then Erika had told Thea what Kurt—if he were Kurt—had done. Message and all, he had ridden away with Kapitan Harkliss. Thea scornfully said that she, Erika, lied. That, as usual, she lied. "Not this time," Erika said; and the way she said it, Thea could not help but believe, and her face whitened, but she kept the scornful smile on her lips. Erika told her: "You are so overwhelmed by sudden love, Thea, I can understand why you told him what the message said. But why you have dared tell it also to me—that, I'll never understand!" Thea contemptuously answered: "Because it will make no difference—telling you!" Then Thea had shot at her with a pistol with a silencer.

To Erika, walking along Dortheim streets, the little smile of remembering with satisfaction, came back for a moment; then her frown deepened. Now that the Americans knew an order had been issued for Schweinitz to make a get-away, tonight, what would the Americans do about it? Would they break in at once and take him? Probably not. More likely they would secretly surround the castle, then allow the message to be delivered, and try to catch him when he came out with "what he has been working on." That's what the Americans would want, "what he has been working on." She felt sure that the Americans did not yet know the whereabouts of the laboratory, and so would not be picketing the lake passageway. There might still be time to tell Schweinitz of the order. He must be told. He must take what he could, must destroy his records and his unfinished work, must get away. He had to be warned, and fast.

A guard at the west gate gruffly called to them: "Speed up, or you won't get home. You're almost on top of curfew now." They nodded to him and hurried on.

The Americans did just what Erika Wulf expected they would do—up to a certain point. Harkliss and Rod, sitting in the dark, in the jeep on a side road, had swiftly worked out the plan. Besides secretly picketing the castle everywhere outside—which included two heavily armed boat-loads at the castle cliff—they would secretly picket everywhere inside too. Rod would go to the door, give the password; and when the old flunky Karl let him in and started to lead the way, Rod would noiselessly sap him from behind, and let in the detail to scatter and hide everywhere behind pillars and in dark corners. All this must be very fast. Then Rod would go up, give Schweinitz the code message, and Schweinitz would come out of the living-quarters and go through the secret entrance into the laboratory, and some one of the hidden GIs would be close enough to "get the answer."

"The beginning of the end!" Harkliss said exuberantly. "Tonight is the clean-up. Everything! You're as good as on your way home, Rod. Home and the girl!"

Although pitch dark, it was still early evening when Rod, Harkliss, Mike Frazier and the detail of twenty picked men stood close around the castle entrance, but out of sight of anyone inside who should open the door. Harkliss eyed the minute hand of his wrist-watch, waiting for the zero hour.

So far the operation had been without a hitch or a falter, and at great speed. Although more than half of D Company was now in the field, no German in Dortheim could suspect what was under way. Those in the castle would be completely surprised. While the other men of the operation were being briefed, two lorries pulled away from HQ with loud, fake talk of a fast trip to Munich. One of the lorries carried the two folding boats and their crews; the other, the arms and equipment for the rest of the men.

The expedition had not marched out of town. Instead, in twos and threes, laughing and talking like men on Class B passes, they drifted out through all four gates—the best fraternizing is in the houses beyond Dortheim's walls. Once past the fringe of houses, it was different. In complete silence, they hurried to a patch of woods where they picked up their arms from the second lorry. In small detachments they filtered across the fields to their posts. The early evening was very dark, with a blustery wind.

Harkliss let drop his arm with the wrist-watch, and gave Rod a pat on the shoulder, the signal to go in. Rod walked quickly to the speaking-tube and whispered the password. Instead of the usual wait for old Karl with his lantern, the doors were opened at once. Surprised and uneasy, Rod went in, to darkness. The ponderous doors were shut and barred.

Outside Harkliss and Mike Frazier and the twenty men waited. Momentarily, tension increased. It should not have taken Rod more than a couple of minutes at most to have sapped old Karl and reopened the doors. More minutes passed. Harkliss and Mike Frazier whispered together. Neither of them knew what was best to do—or anything to do. It was the beginning of the unexpected, the unforeseeable, possibly the tragic. Mike Frazier and his men were still in their stocking-feet, their shoes strung around their necks. Their feet were getting numb. Harkliss ordered them to put on their shoes but leave them unlaced. There was still a chance that Rod might at any moment open the doors. A dim chance.

In intervals when the gusty, noisy wind died down, it was intensely silent. In one of those intervals they heard cautious footfalls. By the uneven sounds, there were at least two men coming up the road. The wind rose again, and the sound of the footfalls was lost. Then two shadows in GI helmets came in right upon them. The men were Carty and Jason. Their news was very bad.

Carty reported that Mildred Waldecker had come into HQ. She admitted she had a note for Kurt Essen, which was to have gone to him through Underground channels, and she told Lieutenant Thomas to open the note. It was from the Princess Anna, begging Kapitan Essen to come at once. The Waldecker girl asked: "He is at home? He must be kept there!" She asked if they could get a message to Captain Harkliss, and they said, if really important, yes. She begged to send it fast, and say: "The real one is in the castle waiting for this note to be delivered."

"God A'mighty, God A'mighty!" Harkliss groaned, "Couldn't you have got here just fifteen little minutes sooner?" He could hardly believe what he had heard. The real Kurt Essen—in the castle! It didn't seem possible. And it didn't as yet register that Mildred Waldecker had proved after all that she was "their girl."

Pete Jason's news wasn't as bad; nevertheless it was vaguely ominous. It must somehow tie in. Jason said, shamefacedly, that Erika Wulf and Rolf Runkle were missing from the farmhouse. The two of them had given him the slip.

They held a council of war. Mike Frazier wanted to toss a couple of pineapples against the hinges and bring the old doors down. Harkliss said that probably they were already too late, but if for any inconceivable reason it hadn't happened yet, such an attack would certainly end it for Rod. The only possible chance, he said, was to get in quietly—by way of the tunnel and the "bucket." He told how Rod had described the wood-bin that slid forward as though its bottom had been greased. Someone, who came up in the bucket, might be able, from underneath, to slide the wood-bin off of the hole, and then come and open the big doors and let them all in. "Even then," he said, "we wouldn't know where to find him."

Jason demanded the chance to be the first to go up in the bucket. He and Juggy Marr started for the tunnel. They'd get plenty of help there, for it was heavily guarded. For those around the big doors, there was nothing else to do but wait.

Chapter Twenty-one

With the sound of the barring of the big doors, Rod angrily ordered: "Make a light, Karl."

Then a flashlight was turned on. Instead of old Karl, it was Professor Werner Schweinitz himself. "Devil take you," Schweinitz scolded, "you took long enough to get here. Come on."

Every foot that they traveled from the big doors, Rod had to fight off the temptation to take the easy way—blackjack Schweinitz, go back and open the doors. And then hunt again for the hidden entrance to the laboratory—which they might never find. That was the thought which made him keep the blackjack in his pocket and follow along.

Schweinitz held the flashlight in his left hand; the right hand, as Mildred Waldecker had told, was still bandaged. He kept the flashlight on. Its battery was weak, and the oval of pale light ahead of them on the stone floor was like following a modernized will-o'-the-wisp, that treacherous signal of evil spirits luring the benighted to destruction. They went up the stone staircase and along the balcony to the living-room, and in. The Princess Anna, all alone, glowered up at them from the book she was reading.

Schweinitz said: "Here he is, Princess. You wrote the message. Now tell him what you want."

"At last I have been thinking," the Princess of Ploessel and Huss said, and she said it in the tone a princess should use. "I'm tired of all this. I've had enough and to spare. You ordered me to write the note. So, you tell him. I tell you I'm tired of everything that goes on here in my own house."

Professor Schweinitz stood looking down at her, his lower lip outthrust. He said, significantly: "It would be unfortunate if I were obliged to quote you."

"Quote and be damned," retorted the Princess.

"Look here," Rod interposed, coming to a sudden decision, "I didn't get any note from you. I came up here on orders to bring this message to the Professor. Here, take it."

Schweinitz stared at him, then took the message. He laughed unpleasantly. "So you were coming anyway? I'll never get used to the quirks and tricks of fate. Why can't I learn to keep hands off." He glanced at the message. "Code! More code, always more and more." He gave them a quick nod, and hurried with the message to his room.

The Princess Anna sat looking at Rod, thoughtfully, then beckoned to him, and he came over and stood beside her. She whispered: "Lean down closer, Rurik."

The castle which had stood for six hundred years, was no longer there.

He gave an uncontrollable start when she so unexpectedly spoke his name. Was this a trap? He did not answer, just leaned closer.

She whispered: "You were so very small, Rurik, when you saw me, you would not remember. And you have not been told of the family skeletons—the quarrels, the bitternesses. I am your Aunt Anna."

Memories deep in his subconscious began to stir—memories fragile as dreams. He said slowly: "There was a coach, all blue and silver; and white horses; and a lovely princess—"

She smiled at him. "I took you and Kurt, both so small, into that coach."

"But you know I am Rurik!"

Her face hardened. "I have seen Kurt grow up. I despise all Essens. You play Kurt well, with all but your eyes. You cannot hide the cleanness and honesty in your eyes." She spoke faster: "It is not your fault, Rurik, that you were brought up American, and so do what you believe right—playing the spy. But because of our blood, I sent Waldecker to warn you not to come here. Kurt has broken out of prison. He is in the laboratory, waiting to kill you. Now go quickly, before Schweinitz comes to take you there. Leave Germany. You are all through being the spy."

He said earnestly: "There must be an end, Aunt Anna, an end to what will be endless killing, unless we stop what is being perfected in that laboratory. I came here to find the way into it. Tell me."

"Can you believe that I would?" she asked scornfully. "I am German still. Go, and go quickly, before I repent of giving you your life. Schweinitz will come back any minute. Now go."

"You are right! I've tried. I've done all I can." He looked apprehensively at the door. He caught her hand and kissed it. "I'll never forget you, Aunt Anna." He hurried out, as if afraid. On the balcony, he slipped his shoes off and carried them, and went like a shadow past Schweinitz's door, and down the stone staircase. At its foot, off a little to one side, he waited. Schweinitz would have to come down those stairs. When he had followed Schweinitz and learned the entrance, he would open the big doors and let in Harkliss and the men.

Up in the Princess' sitting-room, Professor Schweinitz, his face alight with excitement, came hurrying in. "I have news, Princess, to make you glad—"

She interrupted furiously: "I called and I called and you did not come. The spy is gone. You had no right to leave him alone with me. Did you expect me to hold him with these old hands!"

He snarled at her. "I should have known better. How long? Well, settle it among yourselves. I'll not be here. My new orders are to get away. Tonight! Kurt Essen will have to kill his brother in his own bed after all. Good-by, Princess. But thanks. Your hospitality is unforgettable. I'm as tired of you as you are of me." Before she could answer, he went out, grinning.

Rod was waiting in the dark. He had heard the opening and closing of doors—the Professor's, then the sitting-room's, then the Professor's again. He crouched tensely. It would not be long now. . . . That had been forty minutes ago. There had not been a sound since.

He was caught by the throat from behind and choked so fiercely that he almost lost consciousness. Then, the hands still gripping his throat, he was dragged into a small stone room under the stairs. The hands let go. In the shaded beams of a flashlight he saw Harkliss and Jason staring at him. Rod managed to make his throat work enough to say: "The fool! Someone—to the—stair-foot. Schweinitz—coming down." Jason went to the stairs. In a few words each cleared the situation. Rod heard that Marr and Jason, unable to reach the tunnel mouth from above, had had to go down the road and come up the slope to it. That took time. The "bucket" had given no trouble. From inside, they reached the big doors, and let Harkliss and the men in. Harkliss said to Rod, "Forty minutes, and he hasn't come down? He's gone—some other way." They went out and, without hope, held the stairs while Jason rounded up some of the hidden men. Then they went upstairs, fast.

The Professor's door was bolted. "Smash it down," Harkliss ordered. "Noise won't matter now." At the sound of the splintering wood, the Princess came storming out onto the balcony. "Once and for all, Princess, where's that laboratory entrance?" he demanded.

"Once and for all, try—again—to find it!" she jeered.

"Take her into her room for warm wraps," he ordered two of his men; "then take her to Lieutenant Frazier. Radio for transportation. This time she's going to HQ."

The Princess turned on Rod and glared at him. "I don't often make so bad a mistake, Rurik!"

The tough old door went down with a crash, and they poured into the Professor's room. On this cold windy night the window onto the stone terrace was wide open. "That does it!" Harkliss cried, triumphantly. "He went out there. The lab entrance will be from one of the towers at the ends of the terrace. Come on!" They divided into two squads, Sergeant Carty in command of the other. Harkliss ordered: "Whoever finds anything, send back for the other squad." And to Carty: "Count the stair-steps. Send a runner to tell me how many."

AROUND THE TOWER'S INNER WALL was a spiral stone stairway. Harkliss, Rod, Juggy Marr, Jason and two GIs, single file, hurried down and down the south tower, the one nearest the lake. They grew dizzy—round and round! The tower seemed to have no bottom. The bobbing flashlights made what they were doing seem fantastically unreal. They reached the base of the tower. All except Harkliss stared dubiously at the solid stone floor and the curved, blank stone walls. Rod said: "It's from the other tower."

Rather scornfully, Harkliss answered: "Did you expect to find a door labeled, 'This way to the lab'?"

With their flashlights they began examining the masonry joints, and thumping with their gun-butts. Floor and walls everywhere sounded solid as the pyramids, and the blocks of masonry everywhere were solidly joined. A runner from the other squad arrived, saluted, and reported: "Sir, Sergeant Carty says we've found no opening bigger'n loopholes. Two hundred twenty-eight steps was in the stairs."

"Two-ninety-two in ours," Harkliss said. "Tell Sergeant Carty to bring his squad down here, fast. It's this tower."

When the runner left, Rod said: "I don't get it."

"The stair-steps tell the story. The other tower evidently goes only to the base of the walls. This one goes sixty-odd steps below. Why? Because there's a low, narrow ridge which ties this castle hill to the next hill west. Remember? So, the bottom of this tower, it figures, must be below the top of that ridge. There must be some sort of trick opening into some sort of tunnel in that ridge. We've always looked for the lab in or under the castle—and never found it. Now we'll look outside."

STILL THEY FOUND NO SIGN of a "trick opening." Harkliss was again getting in a rage. "Damnation," he cried. "It's got to be here. We've got to find it."

"How can you be so sure, Len?" Rod asked in a low voice. "The whole idea sounds—well, screwy. Did you ever hear of such a thing, really?"

"Hear of it?" Harkliss answered furiously. "Read medieval history, read Viollet-le-Duc, read— Don't bother me now with silly, ignorant questions. —Jason! What the devil you doing up there? Come down!"

Jason was six or eight steps up the stairway. He answered, "I was lookin' where it wouldn't be expected to be, sir, an' here it is, maybe. Have a look, sir."

Harkliss raced up the steps. Jason traced with his finger an irregular pattern of stone blocks, close fitted, yet where no mortar was visible. Harkliss fairly yelled: "Push it, man! Push!" Together they threw themselves against the section. There was a faint sound of iron wheels in iron grooves, and the small irregular section rolled outward from the tower wall. Harkliss and Jason nearly pitched off the outer side of the stairs into the sudden opening. The men down on the tower floor stared up at it incredulously. A draft of dank mine-air blew into their faces. On the front of this movable wall-section was an iron torch-holder similar to others on the stairway; this one, however, made a perfect handle for pulling the wall-section back into place again.

Harkliss looked down into the upturned faces of his men. "I won't order any man to follow me into such a place. I want volunteers."

Juggy Marr spoke before anyone else could. He said: "You mean, sir, we don't have to follow you unless we volunteer?"

"That's right," Harkliss said, trying to keep the surprise and disappointment out of his voice.

"I won't volunteer, sir," Juggy Marr said, "unless I and maybe one more can go in like skirmishers ahead of you. I'd like for you to allow me to say I think our officer hasn't got the right to be out in front of us in a rathole that goes to Christ knows where, and probably get himself knocked off the first one. What would we do then, sir?"

Rod said: "We'll all go in, of course, if you'll follow."

"All right!" Harkliss said, "But I'll be on your heels." He ordered one of the GIs: "Go tell Sergeant Carty his squad's to follow us into this tunnel. Then you take it on the run to Lieutenant Frazier. He's to message the boats and order them to patrol close, along the hill west of the castle. Try to find an entrance at water-line into the cliff there. Watch for a boat making a get-away. That's all."

Harkliss, taking Juggy Marr, went around the wall-section and a little way into the tunnel to get the lay of the land. They came back, and Harkliss briefed them. The tunnel was wide enough for two abreast, a scant six feet high, and seemed to be quite sharply down-grade. He thought it would lead into a cave, or perhaps some sort of abandoned mine. He was sure Schweinitz's laboratory was in it somewhere, and of course would be lighted, but might be bratticed to hide the light.

"Our worry," Harkliss said, "is not the men in there. Our worry is locating the lab. This whole job is just taking a chance, as nasty a chance as any of us will probably ever have to take. We're going in there," he said grimly, "without showing any sort of light. We'll guide by dragging the fingers of one hand along the tunnel side. Marr, you and the other skirmisher—"

Jason said: "I want to be the other, sir."

"Very good, Jason. Well, Marr and Jason, you count your paces—count fifty, then stop, and listen while you count ten more. Every fifty you stop and listen. The rest of us, waiting, we'll begin to count, too, when you start. When the second fifty begins, after the listening, then we'll take off. That means we will all be moving and all listening at the same times, and the skirmishers will be always fifty paces ahead. Is that clear?" He ordered the remaining GI to wait at the tunnel entrance and repeat these same orders to Carty and his squad. "Wait! We might need a password, an identification. The word will be *'Buckley.'* All right. Let's go."

Harkliss and Rod waited, shoulder to shoulder, in the tunnel, in pitch blackness, counting slowly, silently. Before they reached fifty, the cautious footsteps of the two skirmishers had become inaudible. At the count of fifty, they counted ten more, then they themselves started, counting each pace. Fingertips of one hand dragged along the cold damp walls; fingers of the other hand touched the fingers of the completely invisible man at his side, and they were as cold and as damp with nervous sweat as were the cold, damp walls. Even before they had gone the first fifty paces, it had become a nightmare.

The blackness in this tunnel was as though something solid crowded and pressed upon them and made it difficult to breathe. It seemed to have blacked out not only their eyes but their minds as well. And the tunnel now and then made sharp, inexplicable turns, so that they lost all sense of direction as well as distance.

FROM UP AHEAD IN THE DARK came the sound of a heavy fall, and a guttural ejaculation and sounds of violent scuffling. Then silence again. Harkliss and Rod had stopped instinctively. You can't mess in where you can't tell who's who. The craving for light was almost irresistible. Then approaching footsteps, and a whispered, *"Buckley—Buckley—Buckley,"* which they gladly answered in the same way. They held out their arms, full reach, to keep from being bumped into. When the groping hand of the man in front collided with their hands he stopped, invisible, an arm's-length away, and whispered: "Jason, sir."

"Let's have it."

"I fell flat, sir, over a Kraut sitting with his back to the wall and his feet out in front. Juggy, he cut the guy's throat. 'By luck,' he says. We don't think he was a sentry. No rifle that we can find—just a knife and a Luger. Drunk and asleep, we think, sir. He smelled plenty—of cognac." Then Jason explained that they had stretched the Jerry out and stacked him tight against the right-hand wall, but Juggy was standing by to keep them from tripping over the stiff.

They were stopped by Juggy Marr's whisper of the password. "Good work, Marr," Harkliss said, warmly. Then: "Stand here, Rod, and keep Carty and his men from piling up on—on this dead man, and getting all in a lather. We'll go ahead. No time to lose." There was a tensing feeling that the show-down was now not far off. The skirmishers started on again.

Rod said, while Harkliss waited, as promised, for the skirmishers to make their distance: "I'd like light, too. To make sure. It might be—"

"It's good you don't have it," Harkliss answered. "It does seem as though he had been on his way home, through the castle. With a knife and a Luger! But he didn't make it! Do you mind staying here, Rod?"

"I'd rather. In this hellish dark, I'd hate to think of him being trampled on."

Harkliss found Rod's hand and gave it a quick, hard grip. "Carty'll be along soon," he said, and left the twin brothers alone together.

The tunnel presently made an almost right angle, and Harkliss had gone only a little beyond when he heard the skirmishers returning. "Go back, sir," Juggy Marr whispered. "We're stymied." They went back around the turn. The tunnel's end was only a little way beyond, Juggy explained. "Nothing to hold onto, sir, or guide by, and if we got out there just a couple of yards in this dark, we'd be lost. I threw a rock a long ways, and it hit nothing until it dropped, and made echoes like in a big cave, maybe."

They sat down on the floor to wait. "When Carty and the others get here," Harkliss whispered, "there seems nothing else except to take a big chance and make light enough to see where the hell to go and what to do."

The reunited squads totaled eleven. They left six men in reserve behind the tunnel's turn; and Harkliss, Rod, Juggy Marr, Carty and Jason went forward to the tunnel mouth. "Hug the walls," Harkliss cautioned. He pointed a Very pistol out at a 60° angle, and fired. The magnesium flare struck a rocky, dome-like roof perhaps a hundred feet high; the magnesium burst into its intense, blue-white, blinding flame, and still burning, dropped to the ground. Eyes which had only blackness for so long were stabbed by the pain of this fierce, sudden light, and involuntarily screwed themselves tight shut. Yet they had received a confused impression of a great cave with walls which glowed with uncanny phosphorescence, and the ground was heaped in all directions with mounds of broken rock on which gleamed the salt veins.

Not only American eyes, but German eyes as well, suffered this momentary blindness; and this, along with the shock of the surprise of the light, was all that saved the Americans. From ambush behind twenty or more of the rock piles came ill-aimed streams of bullets intended to pour into the tunnel mouth and cut down all who might be there. Multiplied and reëchoed by the rocky walls, the rifle- and machine-gun fire shockingly sounded like the beginnings of a battle between armies. All five of the Americans flung themselves face down, and hugging the walls, they crept desperately for the shelter of the tunnel-turn. The flare still burned in the cave; and the short, straight stretch of tunnel was like a tube of light. Bullets in increasing numbers were coming in. Juggy Marr and Carty were the last to reach safety. Carty had had his thigh raked by a bullet, and Juggy had gone back for him.

And this was just in time, for a grenade was thrown from out in the cave. It was intended to strike just in front of the turn, but struck a side wall first and so fell far short. Its blast was swallowed by a far deeper roar as tons of the roof came down and sealed the tunnel solidly from the cave almost as far back as the turn.

Chapter Twenty-two

THE MEN WHO WERE TO HAVE TAKEN WERNER Schweinitz and his laboratory tramped back up the tunnel toward the tower, but they were not in darkness now. Darkness would have been unendurable. Each had his flashlight on, and some threw their light on the ground, some on the tunnel walls, and some even on its low roof. None wanted ever to see darkness again.

There was no danger now of stepping on the body stretched close against the base of the tunnel wall. "Do you want us to bring him out now, Rod?" Harkliss asked.

"Let him lie."

Jason moved to Rod's side and said, with mingled admiration and respect: "I wish I'd known, sir, who you really were, before I thought the things about you that I thought." Harkliss had broken the news of the Essen-Braun brothers, just before they entered the tunnel.

They kept their flashlights on, nervously, even after they first came out through the castle's big doors, and stood there on the road, again out in the blessed open, high in a world of vast spaces and clean cold air which boisterously dashed itself against their faces and brought color back to them. And the wind had blown big patches of clouds out of the sky so that stars were again to be seen, and there was a feeling that somewhere up above the moon must be shining. One by one, they snapped their flashlights off.

The runner who had been sent to Lieutenant Frazier with the order regarding the boats had been sent back into the castle to round up and bring out those men of the detail who had not been taken along by Harkliss and Carty. These men were now in front of the castle; and the five old servants, still under guard, had been brought out long ago. All in all, quite a fair-sized crowd.

Major North had come up in a jeep and was talking to Mike Frazier, and both shouted in relieved tones, at sight of Harkliss and Rod: "Any luck?"

"None," Harkliss said, shortly. "Bring in all your men, Mike. Order 'Recall' sounded. —Beg pardon, Major. Good evening."

"Schweinitz got away, I suppose?"

"I don't know whether he did or not, sir."

The bugler began sounding the Recall. And then, with a roar too great even to be consciously heard or comprehended, it seemed as though the surface of the entire earth were trying to tear itself loose so as to fly off into space. Men were thrown this way and that, and—flat on their faces—were tossed as though on a storm-swept ocean. And in the same moment the hill west of the castle—Werner Schweinitz's laboratory hill—split open in many fissures filled with white-hot flame and incredible smoke. Men on their faces tried to press their faces into the earth, and they beat furiously upon it with their fists.

Then the stricken, honeycombed laboratory hill began to collapse into itself. And as the vast masses of upper earth crushed down into the natural caves and the labyrinth of galleries of the old mine, and as the waters of the Grafensee rushed into subterranean fissures and turned to steam, which exploded too, there were set up tremors as in a natural earthquake, and these continued vibrations and earth-waves began to snap off the Schloss Grafenberg's stout towers and to split its tall walls, until the proud old castle gave up utterly and came down from its pointed hilltop in thundering Niagaras of stone. The walls and towers which faced Schweinitz's hill, and those on the edge of the precipitous cliff above the Grafensee, fell outward. Those on the east side and the front, because of the direction of the earth-waves, crumpled and fell inward. The castle, which had withstood man and nature for more than six hundred years, was no longer there.

From the split and riven mound which had once been a high hill there now was rising a prodigious whirling pillar of dust and steam and smoke from which came sudden bursts of crackling and snapping fire—thousands of feet in the air, the whirling pillar rose, as though it meant to reach even to the amazed moon.

To the little handful of men of C Company on the fragment of road left in front of where the castle had been, all this was as though they had front seats at the end of the world. If doomsday—the real one—should come soon enough, while some of these men are still alive, the real thing will seem to them a mere repetition, or by comparison, even tame. . . .

It was not until long after dawn that the men from the castle hill were able to work their way down to level ground. Sections of the road had been piled high with fallen stone from the castle; other sections had been carried away. Loss of life in C Company had been bad,

but not as bad as if men had been in the castle. No trace of the two boatloads was ever found. Men on post along the road where the walls had fallen outward were buried under tons of toppled stone. But where the walls had fallen inward, there had been only a few injuries from stray stones which had bounded from the falling mass.

Harkliss, a little past noon, was at his desk in his office. Not much plaster was left on the walls, and none on the ceiling; but except for fallen plaster, and its chimneys—which had toppled outward, the sturdy old Rathaus had stood up well. . . . It was hard to concentrate. Harkliss pushed aside the pile of reports, and restlessly went to the window for a "breather." Across the way, two of the housefronts had fallen into the marketplace, another house was fire-gutted, and everywhere the once-tall chimneys were down. But the shock of the artificial earthquake had been purely local.

MAYOR DIEDRICH EICHHORN was shown in. He had aged twenty years. "Everything has been very terrible," he said tremulously. He looked to make sure they were alone. "You have not yet seen our home—no? Both chimneys came down into it. But I am a fortunate father. My Thea is dead." He laid the list of names on the desk and tapped it with his finger. "I do not understand how I could have been so blind. I believed in her. I never even suspected she had persuaded these people to give up the things sent them by their sons from the conquered countries, so that, she said, they might be restored to their owners. Instead, it was a test—to find who were Germans trying to do right. Then she made 'examples' of them, for warnings. You understand? I shall not have to denounce her now—by God's mercy!" He looked at Harkliss pathetically. "Must it be made public—that it is I who gave you this truth about my own daughter?"

"Maybe I shouldn't," Harkliss said, "but I can promise this—I'll tell the truth: that you never knew what she had been up to."

Old Diedrich Eichhorn did not try to speak. He wiped the tears with the backs of his hands, and just nodded and went out the door. He passed Major North coming in, but gave no sign that he even saw him.

Major North sat down at Harkliss' desk and interlaced his fingers on the desk in front of him. Harkliss told him of the solving of the identity of "12" and "Dortheim," and of what Diedrich Eichhorn had just now said. He added: "I'm putting the house under guard until we can search for her papers."

The Major said he was glad the old father didn't have to be involved. "And we called the other one the 'Queen of Poison!' "

"Thea Eichhorn never really fooled Ames Cairns. He never trusted her," Harkliss said, proud of his friend. "But how he got those names, and why he started that cockeyed scroll, I suppose I'll not know until I see him in the States."

"Maybe Cairns' doctors will let Rod Braun ask him. Then Rod can write you," Major North suggested. "Rod is going home. The Princess knows who he is; Sepp Kerling knows. So, he's through. I'm getting him out of the service, and out of here, fast. Been working on it—starting the wheels. Where is he now?"

"Down in the cells, talking to his Aunt Anna again. We have no charges against her. We'll have to let her go."

North commented: "Certainly did her best to save Rod from his brother. That's more than G-2 at GHQ did. Someone slipped. They'll have a lot of explaining to do. Three days to tell me Kurt Essen had broken out! Message was waiting, along with a memo of your phone-call that you were going after Schweinitz. I called your HQ, too late, to lock up our 'Kurt Essen,' and I came over by plane. Just in time to meet up with my first atom bomb. Harkliss, have you any ideas about it? Accident? Mass suicide? Or touched off by his 'remote control'?"

"Chances are, sir, we'll never know.

"We know one thing," the Major said. "No one will ever get the news out of his laboratory. In any case, Harkliss, your sector is world-famous. Word comes that scientists from all creation are heading hot for here to study the effects. First atom bomb ever to be exploded deep underground. And to study us, who were nearly on top of it. Theory is, so far, we weren't burned to a crisp only because so much earth was impregnated before the released gamma rays got out into the open."

An orderly came hurrying in and reported: "Sir, the Captain of K Company to speak to Captain Harkliss. He says, 'emergency,' sir."

K's captain, commanding the sector on the other side of the Grafensee, really had something. He said: "With all your wires down and the radio still crazy with static, I had to drive over. Here's why: My men happened to find a Jerry in the brush about four miles in from our side of the lake. He had a knife in his back and ought've been dead, but was still alive when I left. He identifies as the Number One priority fugitive you've been wanting—Colonel Reinhart Erzburg, alias Ludovic Mauer. Our medic says he'd been lying there for about eighteen hours. That figures to be just about the time your atom bomb went off. Myself, I can't see any possible connection, but thought you ought to be told, quick. And I wanted a look from this side at what went on—went off, rather." He was a replacement captain, young and voluble.

They took Rod Braun along, and with K's captain's car leading the way, they drove very fast. Life and events had suddenly grown grim again.

When they all tiptoed to the side of the cot, everything surgical that could be done for Reinhart Erzburg already had been done. The Medical Corps captain gave his patient a keen look and said to Major North: "You'd better make it snappy, sir."

Erzburg opened his eyes, very bright with fever, and saw them—all but Rod, who kept out of sight. North said: "I'll make a deal with you, Erzburg. I'm Major North, Military Intelligence. The British sent us your record. They want you. You know what that means—the rope. If you'll answer some questions, with the truth, I'll try to keep you in the American zone."

Erzburg gave him a contemptuous look. Anger made his voice quite strong. "Silly talk," he said, with much of his old arrogance. "You can't turn me over to the British. Or anyone. Or keep me. I know."

"Go clean, then. Just a few answers."

"Certainly, Major. Anything you want to know—when I meet you in hell."

HARKLISS TRIED, AND GOT NOTHING but sullen silence. It looked hopeless. Rod Braun came pushing close and leaned down and laughed tauntingly. "Now I can forget those slaps in the face, Erzburg! So! I got my knife into you after all!"

Erzburg's eyes snapped open in sudden fury. "You liar! You sneaking American spy. You renegade. *Your* knife!" And to the others; "He lies! He lies!"

Major North said, coolly: "You couldn't see. It was from behind. We'll believe him. Unless you—"

Rod had been doing some deep guessing. Now he tried it out. "Erzburg won't talk," he jeered. He's ashamed. First I take Erika away from him. Then he can't stop even old Schweinitz from taking her. Schweinitz has her now!"

Erzburg stared at him suspiciously. "You still weren't there," he said. His expression slowly changed. "Liar!" he said again. "But you make good guesses. If I can't have her, no one shall. Old Schweinitz! And it was a dirty trick, Erika. In my back! But always, Erika, you played dirty. With everyone."

Were they too late after all? Was he going delirious on them? Erzburg seemed to make some sort of special

effort, and steadied his mind. "I'll talk. Why not—after what they've done to me! Cognac! Give me cognac. I'll talk. I'll talk."

The doctor shrugged, but brought a glassful, and helped Erzburg take a deep drink. And Erzburg, when he had coughed and coughed, and had writhed with the pain of it, began in an unnatural voice: "My Erika and Thea Eichhorn in the Eichhorn house, quarreled. All unexpectedly, Thea tried to shoot Erika, and Erika had to throw her knife. It killed Thea Eichhorn. Served her right. Erika was always good with a knife; I taught her good tricks, too." He grinned feebly at the irony of that, and motioned for more cognac. When he had taken it and had finished coughing, he went on, speaking faster. His mind seemed extraordinarily clear, which is sometimes one of the forerunners of death.

"Because she'd killed Thea Eichhorn—but couldn't prove self-defense—my Erika had to get out quick. Out of Dortheim—out of Germany! Thea's father, the mayor, would be after her. You Americans, too. Worst of all, our Underground—for killing Thea Eichhorn, so high in the command, so valuable. One chance my Erika had. Old Schweinitz. She knew his new orders. She knew our chain stood ready to pass him to safety out of Germany. Always the old lecher had wanted her. Always she'd laughed at him. Now he could have her until she was through with him. That was her way with all of us."

ERZBURG'S EYES WERE SHUT. His memories made him beat with his fist in feeble wrath on the bed covers. His voice was weaker when he spoke again. He knew it was weaker, and he frowned. He really wanted to finish. Those at the side of the cot bent closer.

"I did not know all this then when she came to Schweinitz's laboratory. I did not bring her. My canoe was full before I knew she was there in the dark in the crowd on the shore." He could tell that his mind had skipped ahead in the story and he impatiently went back to make it clear. "My Erika too smart to show her true purpose. Not Erika! She came, she said, to warn him. . . . Love-sick Thea might have told this spy—told of the entrances. So she had brought men to fight off the Americans, in case. . . . So that dear Werner could get away. She and her runner, Runkle—of the Gestapo once—had made a fast round-up. More than twenty men waited with her while Runkle—swam to the entrance. In the canoes—we brought them in. Armed them. Put them in ambush. My Erika—working on old Schweinitz. He jumped for her promises—like a dog for a piece of meat—so long, he'd sat up and begged! Then, time to go. But Schweinitz's burned hand—he couldn't paddle—Erika never'd learned. They took me. Took me in. My Erika kissed me—her last—a Judas kiss—whispered, 'When through with him, you and I, Reinhart, will go on—together.' So easy to believe—what we want to believe. I paddled the canoe—across. Guides, with dogs, waiting. They argued, 'One only!' 'New orders,' my Erika said to them, and gave her code number, '22.' They had to obey. We went on—such dark!—dark now—so very far—so dark—far, far, then up a long, high hill. Erika—'Must rest, must rest—'"

He himself rested for so long that they looked at each other, hopelessly. The doctor leaned across the three on their knees and felt the pulse, frowned in an astonished way. "Stronger!"

Erzburg opened his eyes, intensely bright. "Cigarette, if you please." The doctor hurriedly lighted one, then took it from his own lips and put it between lips already fever-cracked. Still in that almost natural voice Erzburg said, but very fast: "Erika asked, 'Surely far enough now?' Schweinitz answered yes. 'Then do it,' she said, and, 'What will it do?' He answered: 'Release a cadmium sheath.' Very angry, she told him: 'Quiet! Not what I meant. Werner, you talk too much.' Then she ordered again: 'Do it! Now!'

"A small radio transmitter—he'd carried all the way—on the ground between us three. He opened its case. Then: 'No!' old Schweinitz said, 'I can't. No! All our own men in there!' 'You fool,' she said, 'Werner, you soft old fool. Show how, then, to me.'—'Like a telegraph key, dots, dashes. . . . I'll show you on your hand. . . .So! . . . . Repeat, on mine. . . . Right!' My Erika laughed. 'Here goes!'—tapped with the key. We waited—held our breath. Waited. Schweinitz said: 'Time. Time—time for it to work. . . . It must!' Then—but you saw, too. The gates of hell! The—gates—of hell."

His eyes stared. They waited for him to go on. The cigarette between his lips sent up smoke in a tiny unwavering thread. The doctor again quickly leaned across the three, again felt the pulse. He took the cigarette from the unresisting lips, and threw it away, and pulled the sheet up over Reinhart Erzburg's face. "I'll never know how he lasted this long," he said. "Hate, I guess."

"Well?" Major North asked bitterly, "what do we know—that we can understand?"

K Company's captain surprisingly came up good. Giving a jerk of his head toward the late Reinhart Erzburg, he said: "He gave us a couple of key words. Besides, it's been known, for quite a while, approximately how it could be done. Probably our own scientists have already worked out something even better."

All looked at him incredulously. He didn't seem the same man, the amateur officer they'd been rather ignoring. His juvenile bounciness was gone. He was in his own field now. In those few words there had been convincingness, authority. They listened respectfully.

"That radio transmitter emitted a signal closely controlled in frequency by a quartz crystal. The bomb mechanism had a radio receiver tuned to precisely the same frequency. The way Schweinitz used a series of signals avoids the dangerous possibility of a chance radio signal, originating somewhere else, unintentionally setting off the bomb. It's like the secret combination on a safe, only a completed series opens it. Only the final detonating contact of a series results in setting off the bomb. Then the radio receiver, in the bomb itself, picked up the signals from the transmitter, and the completion of the signal started some sort of mechanism—probably complicated and ingenious—which removed a cadmium envelope or sheath. Cadmium stops neutrons. Take away the protecting cadmium, and the neutrons instantly bombard the Uranium 235. Then, *wham!* If it's a big bomb, up goes half a city!"

Rod Braun said: "Remember what Erika told me that first day?—all the big cities, all at the same time!"

"And that isn't all," Harkliss said. "We still don't know what made that chair rock, do we? Schweinitz knows. And Schweinitz has control of ether waves. Remember the big 'windstorm'? and the 'sky-music'? They weren't just stepped-up sound-tracks, as I bluffed they were. They were heard for miles and miles, and everywhere with the same volume and intensity."

MAJOR NORTH LOOKED IMPATIENTLY at his watch. "They've had better than twenty hours' start. Could be in Switzerland by now. We've got to—"

"Do what, sir?" Len Harkliss asked bluntly. "Schweinitz isn't like a man working for himself. He's working for a cause. Other Germans, you can bet, sir, have been told, step by step, all he has discovered so far. We've got to get him, yes; and get him quickly, and put him where that brain of his can't invent something more, and worse. But our getting Schweinitz isn't the last answer."

Bryson North asked, harshly: "What is the answer?"

Harkliss shook his head. "Such things have gone beyond us. They're out of bounds, out of control." He gestured toward the man under the sheet. "He knows the answer. The answer to such things, now, doesn't come until 'after.'"

Who's Who *in this* Issue

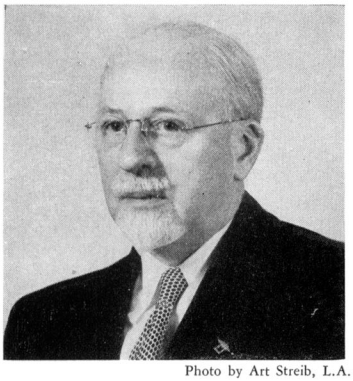


Photo by Art Streib, L.A.

William Gilmore Beymer

MIGHT as well begin at the beginning. Born, 1881, Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. Educated, public schools Allegheny and Parnassus (it's true—old maps prove there was such a town), and the Chambersburg Academy and Stanford University—two years. Resigned, voluntarily, to go to New York to become a rich and famous illustrator and marry the girl.

Studied at the Chase Art School under the late Robert Henri, a great painter. So, instead of an illustrator I became a painter. Exhibited "on the line" in the National Academy and in London. No eats in Art, and the girl was still waiting.

So, a trifle desperately, wrote a short story, "The Left-Handed House." Bought by Ridgway of *Everybody's Magazine,* but published in the opening number of Ridgway's Weekly—its only short story. Got in on all the national advertising which launched the new venture, and "arrived" in one jump.

Married the girl. (Still married to her, and still glad of it.) The bride and groom got to New York from California just in time for the opening of the 1907 panic. Come spring, and we ate rice one whole week. Then *Harper's* and the *Century* each bought stories of mine on the same day. Haven't been able to eat rice since.

Invited by Harper's to join the staff and write a series of factual stories of spies of the Civil War, so that Howard Pyle would at last have some Civil War stories to illustrate. (After appearing in the magazine, the stories were published in book form: "On Hazardous Service.") Thus I became an involuntary historian.

Many stories and articles in various magazines until World War I put the Civil War and its specialists up in the attic.

Back to California so that young daughters could grow up in Chamber of Commerce sunshine. Clubs, cars, California—wrote little, sold little, but one swell time. And then the Depression . . . .

Lecturer, University of California, Extension Division, scenario and short-story writing, five seasons, averaged two hundred students a week. City Editor, Associated Press. Technical Adviser in motion pictures, all major studios, American period and historical pictures—preferably Civil War, but "anything since Columbus" (sales talk). Such pictures as "Operator 13," "So Red the Rose," "Spawn of the North," "Allegheny Uprising," "The Remarkable Andrew"—many more.

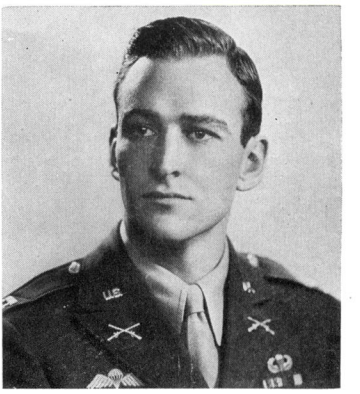
Then World War II, and back to the attic, because American historical pictures were out for the duration.

Taught in Army Air Force School until the Government abruptly closed all such civilian-army schools. Then to Lockheed—and all over and under the P38s on the Second Assembly Line—an amazing experience of which I am no end proud.

William Torode

BORN in Guernsey, Channel Islands, forty-three years ago, I had traveled over most of the globe and held down a variety of jobs before settling down to a writing career.

After three years in the Navy (World War I) and a few more years in the merchant marine as 2nd and 3rd mate of everything from tankers to ocean greyhounds, I wound up in North China as an irrigation engineer. Didn't get much fun, but saved a little money and moved on to Calcutta, with stop-overs at Singapore and Rangoon. Tried Mombasa, East Africa, then Lorenzo Marques, where I joined an expedition into Central Madagascar. Five out of twelve white men came out of that mess.



Captain George Thomson
(See "Guarding Patton's Flank," p. 62)

Moved on to South America, and made every dump from Buenos Aires to Rosario on the River Plate, from Valparaiso to Lima on the west coast, as well as a few places up the Amazon. Returned to China, and suddenly discovered I'd passed up the U.S.A. Came in by way of Frisco and hit New York during the noble experiment. Liked the town and decided to hang my hat up. I had learned to play Hawaiian guitar, for my own amusement, and found everyone cr-r-azy about the music. W. G. T. became a musician—of sorts—until the fad wore off.

Met a little girl who decided I should become a writer. Did a little newspaper work, ghost-writing, and hit a big magazine in '42. Played around with radio scripts, did a novel (unpublished), and decided to stay with writing. Couldn't get into the service, so compromised by writing technical instruction books.

Incidentally, I married the girl who wished this writing business on me, and we settled down in Astoria, Long Island. We now have three swell kids, Valerie 9, Barbara 8, Billy 3.

The voyage of the *Marvale* is the result of a trip I made from Calcutta, India, to Dundee, Scotland. I had signed on as quartermaster. My opposite number was a little off the beam. He owned two parrots and would sit for hours conversing with them as if they were people. Used to drive me nuts. I couldn't get the guy out of my system until I'd changed his name to Bowers and bumped him off.

BLUE BOOK

MAGAZINE

JANUARY, 1947

GUARDING PATTON'S FLANK
by RICHARD M. KELLY

SIGNS IN THE SKY
by ANDREW G. CAFFREY

THE JUSTICE OF AMRU
by H. BEDFORD-JONES

Joel Reeve, Fairfax Downey, William Byron Mowery, Georges Surdez and many others