BLUE BOOK

Magazine of Adventure in Fact and Fiction ★ September ★ 25c

Men of America . . . **Mathew B. Brady**
Painted by John Fulton

PLANETS IN COMBAT—A novel of the Future
by Robert A. Heinlein

TO THE WORLD'S END ***by David Cheney***

Ten short stories and many features

WHO'S WHO IN THIS ISSUE

—Drawn by William Oberhardt

Carl Burger

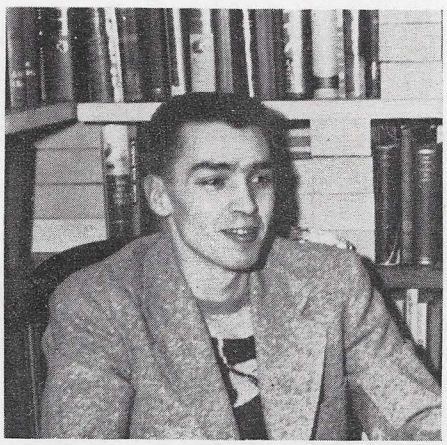
EVEN as a small boy, Carl Burger's passion for the outdoors was in evidence. Down in Maryville, Tennessee, where he was born in 1888, he spent his childhood roaming the Great Smokies in quest of trout, turkeys, quail and other prizes of Nature.

The call "Go West, young man," hit Carl at seventeen—and he spent a summer working at the Lewis and Clark Exposition in Portland, Oregon. Thence to Stanford University for a year—the year the earthquake rocked the San Francisco Peninsula. The following year, Carl helped build railroads in Tennessee, Georgia and Cuba, acquiring a lifelong love for the flora and fauna (spelled *f-i-s-h*) of the Southland.

After four years at Cornell, Carl graduated with a B.A. in Architecture in 1912, and spent two years teaching architecture at the University of Illinois. Then followed two and one-half years overseas in World War I, ending as Captain of Infantry. Since then (except for three years he spent with the Red Cross in Washington, D. C., during World War II), Carl has been a free-lance artist in New York City.

It is a legend in the Catskills that shy trout battle one another for the privilege of being netted by Carl Burger. For here is a painter-fisherman who all but loves his prey to death—as testified by the tender care that makes his latest work a masterpiece: the just-completed murals for the proposed New York Aquarium. Artist above all, Carl blends many other attributes into a personal distillation that is habit-forming to his neighbors up in Pleasantville, N. Y.

For Carl's exuberance for life has been expanding as his hair recedes. On him, some sixty years rest with smiling ease; and he can still charm wives, yet retain the friendship of their husbands and his own wife—which is something! One son—Knox—is fiction editor of *Collier's Magazine,* and married—which adds another to the list of Burger's talents: baby-sitter for his grandchild. But in last analysis, Carl's personal family crest should be a fly-rod and paintbrush rampant over field and stream. And it is said that less skilled artists who essay to match his coveted dexterity with rod and reel can often fill their creels with trout by calling softly to the pools below: *Carl Burger sent me!*



Gene Caesar

I WAS born in December of 1927 in Saginaw, Michigan, and I went through public schools there. My main interest in high school was music, and I earned spending-money those years by playing violin with various Western and Hillbilly groups. I took a slight interest in journalism at the beginning of my high-school years, but a dispute with an instructor killed it early.

When I finished high school, I enlisted at the Office of Naval Officer Procurement, Detroit, and I was placed in the Aviation Preparatory Program, V-5. Under this program, I attended Michigan Central College of Education at Mount Pleasant, Case Institute of Technology at Cleveland and Illinois Institute of Technology at Chicago. The first of these three was very good—a small school and a lovely campus. I did not enjoy the other two particularly—everybody else was wearing slide-rules at their belts. But at the last I had the good fortune to study under Dr. S. I. Hayakawa *(Language in Action).* He was perhaps the first teacher I had ever had. Both his course and his personality were unforgettable.

I was discharged from the Navy in mid-1946, and I spent a year in New York, working, among many places, as a sales clerk at Macy's. Returning home, I worked a summer as a machinist in a General Motors plant, then moved to Miami, where I worked as a mechanic for National Airlines. After living in Miami for but a short time, I enrolled at the University of Miami, Coral Gables.

That time I stuck to the books for over a full year, but that campus and that city both are too beautiful for prolonged studying. I left the University, worked for some time in the supply service, Pan American Airlines, then came back to Michigan.

I determined to write, and settled down to it; outdoor life and conservation are the only other interests I have allowed myself.

Edward T. Higgins

THE author of "Underwater Demolition Team" was born in Chicago in 1916 and received his formal education in that city. He spent thirty-seven months in the Navy as a member of Team No. Eleven, Underwater Demolition Unit, and participated in five major engagements with the team. He received two Bronze Stars and shared in two Presidential citations. At present he is working as an industrial safety engineer in an aircraft manufacturing plant, and is living in Los Angeles. His articles in BLUE BOOK are his first professional writing job.

EDWARD T. HIGGINS

Readers' Comment

An International Edition?

WHY not an international edition of BLUE BOOK, that would be on sale monthly in Britain? Copies are hard to get in this country, and those that do come across are eagerly sought after.

In fact, I have several times seen readers advertising in our *Exchange & Mart* (a weekly "swap" magazine) for copies of BLUE BOOK, so I think it is something of an honour to be in such demand!

I am lucky in that a good friend in the States sends me BLUE BOOK regularly, and I can't express in words how much your magazine means to myself and those who read it after me. My whole family reads it, then several friends, and eventually it reaches a sanatorium, and is greatly enjoyed by patients and nurses alike. It is impossible to say just how many people actually read this one copy, but it is well into three figures! Each copy goes the rounds until it is practically falling apart.

With your magazine so popular over here, I feel sure it would be a big success if printed and distributed throughout Britain.

I've no criticism of BLUE BOOK to offer—it is perfect the way it is, so just keep it that way!

Thanking you for so many hours of wonderful reading,

John Watt

Recommended to Congressmen

JUST read my first copy of BLUE BOOK and enjoyed it thoroughly, especially the article by Colonel Charles Wellington Furlong entitled "Where Do We Go From Korea?" (May, 1951, issue of BLUE BOOK.)

The plea from a military man familiar with Russia's aims is for a return to the *spiritual values* of life above all other ways of being victorious in this struggle. It is significant that this advice comes not from the clergy but from a soldier.

I believe the article is so valuable that it would be worth the necessary effort to put a copy of it in the hands of each one of our Congressmen as well as our diplomats. If they are really sincere in their desire for peace, they ought to take heed to the simple, yet so far ignored, solution to the world's problems. Why do we put so much emphasis on everything else when we have it straight from the shoulder of this well-qualified man—a statement as to what America needs most?

More power to BLUE BOOK for such excellent material!

Mrs. Geo. Buitendyk

BLUE BOOK

September, 1951 MAGAZINE Vol. 93, No. 5

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When the space-raid warning sounded, he knew the conflict had begun.

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Painted by John Fulton.

The short stories and novels herein are fiction and intended as such. They do not refer to real characters or actual events. If the name of any living person is used, it is a coincidence.

PHILLIPS WYMAN, *Publisher* DONALD KENNICOTT, *Editor*

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RIVER PIRATES, TWO MAROONED GAMBLERS AND A SHOW-BOAT CIRCUS FIGHT OUT THEIR CONFLICTING IDEAS.

The Judge

THE men in the stern had rifles. "Get out," they said when the prow of the boat, having slished through rushes, bumped the shore with a low sad sigh. "And don't come back." The boat unsucked itself from the mud and soon was out of sight: and a few minutes after that they heard the whistle of the steamer, in the channel the other side of the island—a sound eerie and derisive in this dismal place.

Chad turned, tears of rage in his eyes.

"So here we are!"

"Yes," said the Judge, "here we are."

He now made himself comfortable, his back against a tree, and was turning over cards on the crown of a pearl-gray beaver. It was said of Judge Bennison that when he went to hell—a trip there were those unkind enough to assert was overdue—he would start by quoting odds to the minor fiends, and no doubt end by having on his side of the table the Prince of Darkness' own watch, chain, stud, rings, and wallet, plus perhaps his shirt, if the Devil wears a shirt.

"It's disgusting," Chad cried. "I'm sick of the river. I wish I'd never seen it."

by DONALD BARR CHIDSEY

Just Laughed

Illustrated by JOHN FULTON

He almost added that he wished he had never seen Judge Bennison either. The Judge, twice Chad's age, sensed what was left unsaid; but he continued to turn cards. He knew Chad was sore. And why not? Being tossed ashore as a common cheat didn't help a man's pride.

"If only you wouldn't palm cards! You don't *need* to!"

"Just assisting fortune," the Judge said, shuffling. "The outcome would have been the same, in any event. Not really cheating—just hurrying the game along a little. I was getting bored, lad."

"Well, we're likely to be more bored here!"

They were. It was the bleakest conceivable prospect. They had been playing poker all night in the barroom of the steamboat and did not even know where they were, except that it was bayou country, and the river was splattered with islands, behind one of which, and presumably on the mainland, they now crouched. Before them all was palmetto and pickerel weeds and muddy water. Behind them was swamp. Technically they stood on a river bank; but so sedgy was the stream and so low and soggy the shore that it was difficult to tell where one left off and the other began.

"It's a great life," the Judge said.

"Yes, a wonderful life," bitterly.

"Looks bad right now, I'll admit. But something will happen."

"Will you tell me, please, what could come out of *that?*" and Chad motioned toward the swamp, a wall behind them.

It was sufficiently gloomy, dank and dark. A pallid mist writhed over the ground. All the trees were crippled by creepers and weighted low by great gray hanks of Spanish moss. You couldn't see ten feet; and no sound carried in that lugubrious place, which might have been Earth before the emergence of Man, the Earth of the great lizards.

"Oh, something'll come out of it," the Judge said.

At that moment something did—a glass ball the size of a tennis ball, bright red. This flashed out between two streamers of moss and fell to the ground, disturbing the mist.

The Judge and Chadwyck Chase looked at it.

Then they looked at one another.

Another glass ball came hurtling out of the jungle. This one was bright blue.

"Well, I'll be scobberlotched," muttered the Judge; and instinctively his hands moved to the "V" of his velveteen waistcoat.

Next there burst out of the swamp a tiny hunchback, a dwarf, dressed in purple pajamas with large white pompoms fastened to them, who rode a wooden giraffe, a sort of hobbyhorse.

Behind this apparition came bounding a bearded giant, all rags and tatters, his eyes bloodshot, and in his upraised fist, a bowie knife.

These two stopped short at the sight of Chad and the Judge, and the dwarf emitted a small mouse-like squeak. The dwarf obviously was terrified His eyes were popping half out of his head.

"Ho," said the giant. "Who the hell are *you?*"

The Judge rose with dignity. He flicked a speck of dust off a sleeve. He raised a quizzing glass.

"You see before you, my good fellow, two victims of malevolent chance."

"Huh?"

"Major Chase and myself"—the Judge often bestowed titles on Chad, who was no more a major than the Judge was a judge—"found ourselves in discord with certain other tempters of fortune."

The giant began to grin. He wore linsey-woolsey. The hair on his head like that on his chin was clotted with dirt. In his right hand—the bowie knife was in his left—he held four bright glass balls, green, pink, yellow, orange: the hand was that big.

"Got caught cheating, eh?"

Clearly he had heard of the newest trick the steamboat skippers were trying in their war against gambling. Gambling, even crooked gambling, was not a federal offense, yet the steamboats were on federal territory, engaged in interstate commerce. If a gambler had fleeced passengers—and their very presence hurt a line's name—he could be arrested only after a great deal of delay and disruption of schedule. A boat's officer, too, would have to stay behind to testify against him. Nine times out of ten anyway the gamblers, who had influential friends in most of the large river towns, would get off with no more than a fine. So the skippers of late had taken matters into their own hands. Let a known professional be caught in a game—if there was any allegation of cheating, however flimsy—and he was simply put ashore; it didn't make any difference where it was.

This was a popular process, though of course illegal. It gave the passengers, lining the rail, the comforting conviction that the steamboat people were striving to protect them. It also gave them a good look at the professionals.

"It strikes me you might be better off if you minded your own business," Chad said.

The giant looked at him with side-rolled eyes, but said nothing.

Chad's hands moved up toward the "V" of his waistcoat. Like Judge Bennison he carried two loaded derringers there, where they made almost no bulge. Each would throw a massy slug—though not far. They were unexcelled for, say, smashing a man's breastbone across a card table, or threatening to; but they were not much good out here.

"We'll go back to the camp, all of us."

The giant spoke mildly enough but with the manner of a man who takes obedience for granted.

Chad Chase glowered. Chad had a grudge against the world just now anyway, and he couldn't very well take it out on the Judge, who was fond of him and whose feelings were easily hurt.

"All of us? Is there some way you can be sure of that?"

The giant looked at him, blinking. He moved an uncertain step toward Chad. There wasn't a touch of nervousness in the man, who was simply puzzled.

Chad felt the blood mount to his temples. He felt the palms of his hands go dry and itchy, as they always did when he was in a tight place. He felt a blob of sweat roll down his nose.

"Why, certainly, sir. Major Chase and I would be charmed to visit your camp. Come, Chad."

The Judge spoke firmly, quickly. He took Chad's arm. And Chad, after a moment, nodded, lowered his hands.

The giant tossed the glass balls to the dwarf, who caught them expertly

"Those drums could be cleaned out," the Judge commented.

Chad turned, rage in his eyes. "So here we are!" "Yes," said the Judge, "here we are."

and also scooped up the two from the ground.

"Here, Hugo. You go first." Then he roared with laughter, perceiving that he had made a pun. "Hugo first, Hugo!"

The dwarf started to juggle the balls, trying to keep all six going.

Thus the party went through the swamp—a grotesque juggling hunchback on a hobbyhorse; then Judge Bennison, smooth, smart and imperturbable, regarding the performance through his quizzing glass; Chadwyck Chase, who scowled; and the bewhiskered alligator man, bellowing with delight at his joke.

Soon they came upon a scene so strange that it was a whole minute before they could believe their eyes.

Here was a large clearing on the bank of a bayou or inlet from the main river. It couldn't have been more than a quarter of a mile from where they were put ashore, perhaps the other side of a small cape or peninsula; the same island, in any event, blocked them off from the river itself.

In this clearing were a dozen or so alligator men, uncouth fellows with bushy filthy hair. All were armed. A few were asleep.

In the middle was a crate with gilded bars, a cage. There was a red and blue sign on it, ZAZU, though whether this referred to the catamount inside or the enormously fat woman who sat on top, weeping, was not clear.

The fat woman's face was red, and she howled as she wept, swaying back and forth, while tears as big as tadpoles coursed down her face. She was dressed like a gypsy, more or less; she wore a great deal of dirty, scrappy, bright silk, and there were brass rings in her ears. A natural blonde, she had once dyed her hair in keeping with her costume, and it was growing back in. The way she had it wopsed up, slam-bang fashion, it was all but checkered yellow and black, where it wasn't striped.

The catamount growled and lashed its tail. It looked to be having a fit. This might have been caused by the howls of the woman; in part it might have been pure cussedness; but chiefly it must have been brought about by one of the alligator men, a giggling gangling youth who was throwing knives into the side of the cage. Every time a knife would hit it would "*thunk!*" loudly, and then the catamount would spit and hiss, arching its back, while the woman above redoubled her wails.

There were also in this clearing two small men, dressed like the hunchback in purple pajamas, and a very tall, extraordinarily solemn man in pink stockinet breeches, Congress gaiters, a canary-yellow tailcoat, a red and white striped silk waistcoat—the stripes were horizontal—and a breathlessly tall black silk hat, a stovepipe, around which had been draped a wreath of poison ivy. The pajamaed ones were doing cartwheels. The tall man sat on a wooden zebra and pauselessly twanged a banjo, while he sang, over and over, in a very bad voice:

Buffalo Gals, won't you come out tonight,
Come out tonight, come out tonight—

The Judge removed his favorite blue coat and folded it, and rolled up his sleeves, and put his beaver aside, before he undertook to examine the engine of the steamboat. For there was also a steamboat at this clearing, a fact not at first noticed by either of them, which was odd, for while it was a very small steamboat, the smallest they had ever seen, it was painted blue, green, yellow, pink, and hung with Chinese lanterns, and surmounted by a sign which proclaimed this to be SANDERSON'S MAMMOTH CIRCUS. Sanderson was the fellow under the stovepipe; and the fat woman was Mrs. Sanderson. The engineer of this shaky craft was the hunchback, Hugo. And there was something the matter with the engine.

Judge Bennison had once been an engineer's cub.

"And Major Chase here, in case you didn't know it, gentlemen, used to be one of the best lightning pilots on the river."

This was news not only to the alligator men but to Chad himself. However, Chad said nothing. When the Judge seemed lightest and least responsible, Chad knew, he was likeliest to have some serious motive. He was

that way at the gaming table. He would chat with charm, witty, even flippant—and win. For the Judge watched everything, remembered everything, and would always win, given any kind of cards. Cheating was not a necessity for him, but rather a passion, something he turned to unreasonably, with trembling eagerness, as a drunkard turns to a bottle of whisky.

It would do no harm, Chad saw, to have a reputation as something useful. Men like these, men perfectly at home in this God-forsaken country, would think nothing of murdering strangers for their clothes—unless they thought they could first use their services.

Hugo, still white with fear, accompanied them to the boiler deck, as did also the man who a little earlier had been pursuing Hugo, forcing him to ride one of the animals from the portable carrousel and pelting him with his own glass balls. This man, Sachs by name, was no fool. He was ignorant, and assuredly vicious; but he was not without a certain calculating shrewdness. Nor was he sleepy! He had eyes everywhere. Obviously he led this gang.

They had him spread-eagled against the end of the catamount's cage. Jimson raised another knife.

THE Teakettle, as Chad and the Judge promptly named her, was almost round, a sort of wooden turret mounted on a flatboat. A stern-wheeler, she did not boast several tiers of decks, like her more elegant sisters. Besides the boiler deck itself, the essential boat, the hull, she had only a rickety raised hurricane deck. This latter extended forward almost to a point over the bows, while aft it was bifurcated, making a circle around the boiler deck. On this boiler deck, in addition to the fuel-room and the boiler—a horizontal affair probably salvaged from an old sawmill by a landlubber blacksmith—there was mounted a calliope, an old sagging instrument with twelve pipes sadly aslant. This was worked, of course, by the same steam that moved the paddles, which steam too turned the carrousel. Chad gathered from Hugo that when SANDERSON'S MAMMOTH CIRCUS arrived at a town it did so with the calliope going full-blast, fat Mrs. Sanderson at the controls, while in the bow stood Mr. Sanderson, who thundered of the glories of the show, and the three clowns, waving and whistling, went 'round and 'round on the carrousel. If it was dark they'd light the Chinese lanterns; but the Teakettle seldom stayed out after sundown, partly because night was the best time to make money, partly because none of them knew a thing about navigation.

"Those drums could be cleaned out," the Judge commented.

The Teakettle of course used river water, and the amount of slush and sediment in the mud drums under the boiler was tremendous. It was not coagulating, stiffish mud, but sloppy, watery.

Chad asked: "Would that cause a breakdown?"

"No."

The Judge was on hands and knees, examining a cam shaft.

"Reckon you'll get her started by tonight?" Sachs asked.

"Why? Got something you plan to do with her tonight?"

"Maybe."

Hugo said in haste: "Mr. Sanderson wouldn't hold the wheel at night. He'd be afraid."

"We got Major Chase here now," Sachs said.

"Well, I'll see what I can do," said Judge Bennison.

Chad went ashore. He wanted to look around. But he must be casual about it! They were all watching him. He yawned, stretched. He started to saunter off in the direction of the river, thinking that if he got to the banks of the Mississippi proper he might be able to signal a keelboat. Nobody stirred as he drifted to the edge of the jungle, but when he was there a voice, sharp but low, called: *"Don't keep going!"* Chad shrugged, examined his cuffs, straightened his cravat, and strolled back to the center of the clearing.

He surveyed the catamount, which spat at him. He turned away. He seated himself on the ground, his back against one end of the cage. The clearing was ominously quiet. It was not by chance that these men had gathered in this remote place. Chad Chase knew little about the bayou country, but he was sure at least that there was no road: no travelers would go by land when they were so near the river. In consequence there could be no field for the kind of cutthroats who infested the Natchez Trace, for instance, further north. So far as

Chad knew there were no plantations hereabouts to be raided. There wouldn't be enough 'gators to justify any such gang as this. And they weren't fishermen because they didn't smell like them.

Were they river pirates? That seemed likely. Pirates had been busy in these parts of late. They would steal up to a steamboat at night, from both sides, in rowboats. They'd swarm aboard, yelling, shooting; take the safe and anything else they could lay hands on; start a fire; and escape before most of the passengers were fully awake. Because of these tactics, skippers had begun to station armed lookouts. On the reaches, it was assumed, nobody would venture close to a speeding steamboat; but the lookouts were told to be especially alert in the cut-offs and in places where the channel was narrow between islands.

Was Sachs one jump ahead of this precaution? Did he have a plan to offset it?

Chad Chase glanced at the Teakettle; and suddenly the whole business was clear. Of course! The chance arrival of this band of players, in a boat of their own, had seemed providential to Sachs. In the commandeered craft he could board a steamboat on an open reach. Not that the Teakettle was likely to prove fast; but with lanterns lighted, calliope tooting, carrousel going round, surely she would be permitted to approach a big boat, especially early in the evening when the passengers were seeking entertainment. There was a heap of competition for first-class passengers these days. The line would go out of its way to see that they had a good time.

Afterward? Well, it was obvious now why the alligator men were maintaining these prisoners intact. It was equally obvious what would be done when the raid was finished. Sachs and his men would wear masks; but Chad and the Judge and each member of the troupe had seen their faces. No more than their deep-sea predecessors did the river pirates fail to remind themselves of the taciturnity of the dead.

Chad shivered. He looked around. On three sides the swamp lowered. On the fourth was the Teakettle, down on the boiler deck of which Judge Bennison toiled: Chad could see the calliope pipes, wobbly things at best, sway back and forth as the Judge puttered with something.

He waxed a mite misty-eyed at the thought of Judge Bennison. There were times when the Judge's propensity to "assist fortune" and the humiliating scenes this led to, made Chad want to wring the old boy's neck. But in the long run the Judge was a delight. He had his faults—he was inordinately vain, for one thing, and fancied that all women were fascinated by him—but in a tight spot he was a treasure.

Yes, the Judge would think of a way out. Chad would tell him—now. The sooner the better.

He started to rise, and something struck the end of the cage near his left arm. He looked down. A knife quivered there. The blade actually had passed through the loose of Chad's sleeve.

Inside the cage the catamount hissed and spat.

Chad looked up—and his face went cold, his heart contracted.

Not more than fifteen feet away stood Jimson, the youngest of the alligator men. He was giggling. He held three other knives.

Chad started to rise; but he was seized right and left by men who nipped around the sides of the cage. Working fast—they'd clearly planned this—they had him spread-eagled against the end of the cage, his wrists tied to staples, before he could start to struggle. Then they stepped back. Jimson raised another knife.

Chad screamed once, and then was still. He felt sweat stand out all over his head and body, chilly sweat. He felt a tingling in the back of his neck. Still seated, he raised his knees, bringing his heels up close to his buttocks. That protected his body, to some extent; but his head was still exposed.

He wished that he could scream again. He wished he could close his eyes, but he couldn't: he stared straight at Jimson.

Jimson did not have much of a beard, though certainly he had never shaved. His mouth was slack and wet. His eyes were hollows of mad-

ness, glittering with joy. He never ceased to giggle.

He seemed to take an unconscionably long time sighting with the knife, and raising it, and throwing it.

It struck the cage a couple of inches from Chad's left cheek. He could see the haft, shuddering there.

Jimson raised another knife.

"All right! That'll do!"

Judge Bennison, his graying hair shining in the sun, came up from the shore. He was imperious.

"Damn it, Sachs," he snapped to the leader who this time followed, "don't you see you're letting that numskull jeopardize the life of one of the best pilots on the river?"

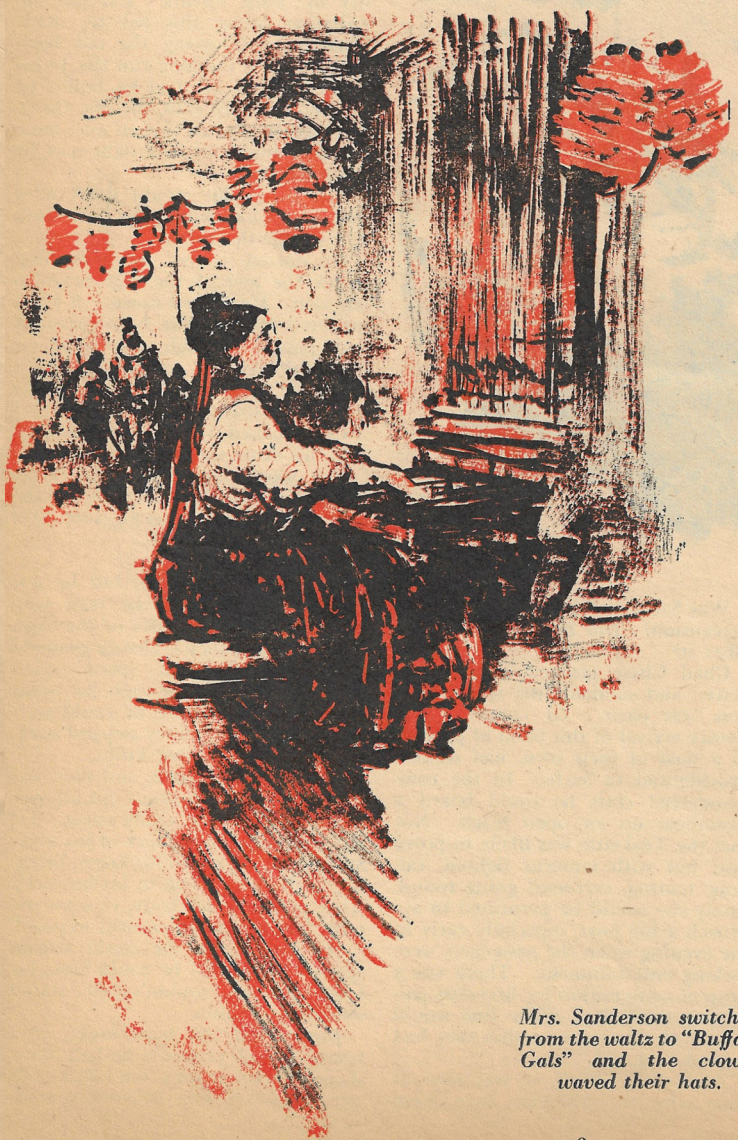
"Jimson's very accurate."

"He'd only need to miss once. Now if you expect to have any more work done on that engine, you cut this man loose."

Chad had not been tied long, and wasn't stiff. He went right to Jimson. He forgot about the derringers. He punched Jimson's jaw, first right, then left, and the youth went down, no longer giggling.

The Judge himself grabbed Chad from behind and pulled him away from the fracas.

"Are you all right? He didn't hurt you?"

"I'm all right. Only I wish you'd let me hit him again."

Mrs. Sanderson switched from the waltz to "Buffalo Gals" and the clowns waved their hats.

"You forget that he still had a couple of knives."

"Say, that's right. I guess I did forget that."

The Judge mopped his face, and his hand trembled.

"By God! I sure could use a glass of brandy! When you get to be my age, lad, shocks like that can hit you hard."

THE moon rose early that night, rose fat and full, almost as soon as the sun was down; and when that happened they moved out into the main river. They had previously tested everything, engine, paddles, calliope, carrousel, and these worked all right. As a matter of fact, the Judge confided to Chad, there never had been anything wrong. He had seen that at a glance, but he had pretended to find trouble: he wished to enhance his own value in the eyes of the pirates, to cover up Hugo, who when he found himself prisoner had hastily concocted the story about engine trouble, and also to give himself time to think. He'd had that time. Now he had a plan.

"Sounds crazy to me," Chad said. "Can you think of anything better?"

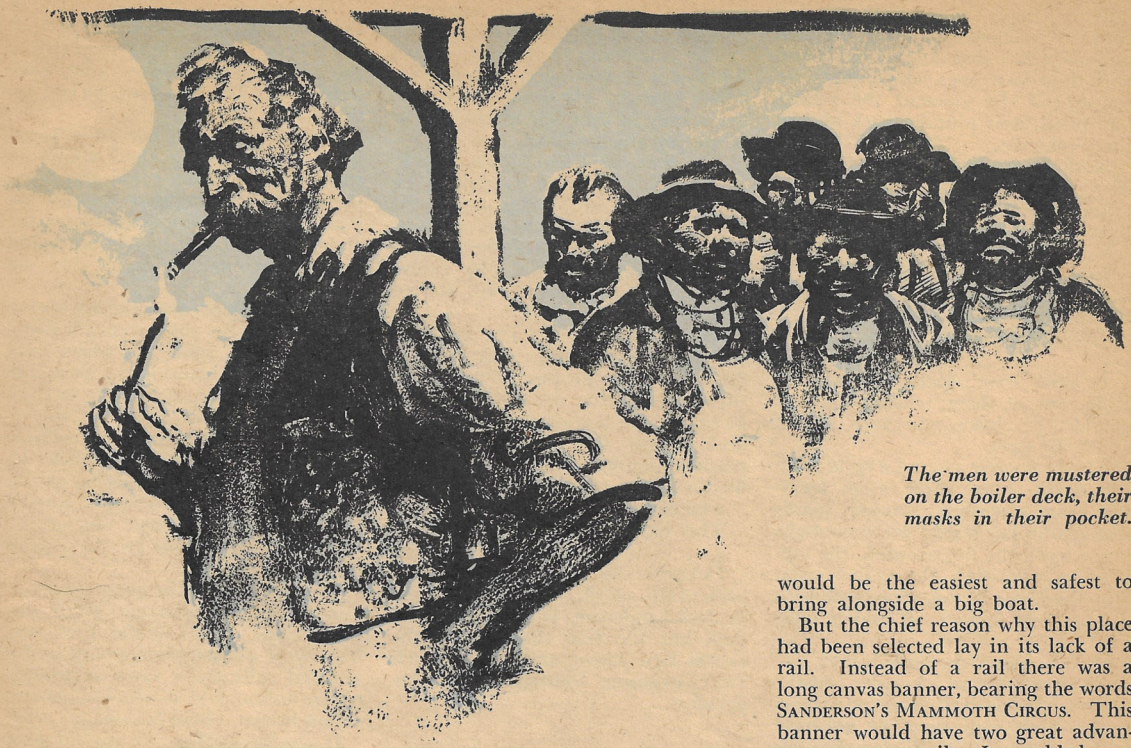
Chad couldn't.

Resistance, any attempt at interference, would have been quashed promptly, bloodily too. There were fourteen pirates, seven of the others. The players had no weapons. Chad Chase and the Judge, between them, had four tiny derringers; but these, meant to be used chiefly as threats, were undependable: you could never be sure that one wouldn't miss fire, they wouldn't carry any distance, and there was nothing with which to reload them.

Chad's position as pilot unexpectedly proved easy. It was a ticklish business getting the boat out of the bayou, but once they were on the open river there was no trouble at all. They did not need to hug a shore. He simply steered any place he happened to feel like steering. Of course the moonlight helped. So did the season. The spring rise, when the river would be chockful of planters and sawyers, hidden or half-hidden snags, was some months past. The surface was clear. Much of the time Chad didn't even watch it but instead strained his eyes in search of a steamboat.

No such boat appeared.

The Texas house was on the hurricane deck forward, forward even of the carrousel, whereas Judge Bennison was obliged to be aft on the boiler deck; but they had the customary speaking tube. Near the "lightning pilot" ordinarily were only clowns to hear. Near the lower end, the more important one, there were likely to be alligator men, for Sachs had ordered



The men were mustered on the boiler deck, their masks in their pocket.

them not to hang around the hurricane deck, exposing themselves, and they naturally gravitated to the boiler deck—indeed, there wasn't much of anywhere else to go. But the Judge had a way of offsetting that. When the Judge wanted to talk to Chad, and didn't want to be overheard, he gave a signal to Mrs. Sanderson, who thereupon whammed out a few chords on the calliope, making a noise that could have been heard for miles. Or the Judge would "accidentally" trip the safety valve, letting off excess steam which shrieked through the 'scape pipes. At his own end, too, Chad could always blow the whistle, just to make sure it was working.

The safety valve blew off of its own accord many times anyway, for the Judge, no piker, was keeping up a terrific head of steam. "She wasn't built for it," wailed the tiny Hugo. "You'll blow us all to Kingdom Come!" But the Judge only laughed.

In this way, then, the Judge and Chad settled the details of their plan. This was deemed wiser than to do so by courier. The scheme was so fantastic, and so daring, that knowledge of it might well drive the players into panic. It was sensed by them that something was going to happen; but they weren't told what it was, and likely enough they did not want to know, being scared.

So they cruised—the only thing to move in all that desolate scene, except the water. No light showed. The shore on either side was packed with shadows. The sky was bland.

And still no boat came.

Sachs thought of many things; but he could not have known when a steamboat would come, and whether, when it came, it would be alone.

They might conceivably have to wait all night. This might even go on for several nights.

Chad hoped not. The strain was getting on everyone's nerves. Only the Judge seemed unruffled. For all the work he was doing, the risk he was running, he still found time to get out his cards and take a few bets. When the alligator men lost, as invariably they did, they cursed him, refusing to pay up; but the Judge just laughed.

Though not a jurist, Judge Bennison *was* an excellent judge of character. He had sized up Sachs exactly. It moved even Chad to admiration, well as he knew the Judge, to see the inevitability with which Sachs laid his plans as Judge Bennison had anticipated.

The attack was to be launched from the hurricane deck aft on the starboard side. Sachs wanted it concentrated, not scattered. The hurricane deck at that point was narrow, forming a sort of raised platform along one side of the boiler deck. Chad, consulted as a pilot, had gravely agreed that the starboard side aft would be the easiest and safest to bring alongside a big boat.

But the chief reason why this place had been selected lay in its lack of a rail. Instead of a rail there was a long canvas banner, bearing the words SANDERSON'S MAMMOTH CIRCUS. This banner would have two great advantages over a rail. It could be so rigged that by simply pulling a cord it could be dropped, thereby giving the pirates direct access to a boat alongside: they'd have had to vault a rail. Then too, the canvas sign would conceal them. Flat on that part of the hurricane deck, they would not be visible from a larger, higher boat.

Since the success of the raid depended upon surprise, clearly this was the best place from which to launch it. So Sachs had reasoned. And so Judge Bennison had reasoned that Sachs would reason.

Sachs was a detail man. He fussed. He wanted everything ready and in place. There should be no last-minute confusion to give them away. The Chinese lanterns were kept lighted, and when the candles guttered low they were replaced. The men were mustered on the boiler deck, their masks in their pockets, their rifles loaded. Chad was curtly told not to leave the Texas house, the Judge not to quit the engine-room. Mrs. Sanderson must remain at the calliope, ready at a moment's notice to burst into noise; the clowns were to stick to the carrousel.

Nor had Sachs failed to consider the possibility that the original proprietors of the Teakettle might take off on their own while he and his men were pillaging a bigger vessel. Two of the men were equipped with hawsers, to each end of which a hook had been fastened. It was their job not

only to grapple the two craft together but also to stand by during the raid and make sure that nobody monkeyed with those fastenings, which they were to cast off the moment the pirates had piled their plunder back aboard the Teakettle.

Nothing, it would seem, could possibly go wrong.

Judge Bennison lighted a long pale panatela and winked at Mrs. Sanderson, who simpered.

And it was at this instant, the very instant when Judge Bennison winked, that the cry rose:

"Here she comes!"

It had been worth waiting for. Every one of them, whether outlaw, gambler or clown, rose with a glad cry at the sight.

The boat came around a bend from the north, some three miles away. She came gloriously, shining, sparks flying from her stacks, the moonlight brave upon the filigree-work, the flip-flapping mail flag, the gilded finial atop the Texas house. She came with all windows lighted, all fiddles playing.

She was alone, the perfect prey.

Chadwyck Chase blew the whistle. Mrs. Sanderson started to play something which might or might not have been a waltz. The pirates put on their masks and started to climb to that strip of the hurricane deck protected by the canvas sign.

The big boat slackened speed, the fiddles ceased to scrape, and passengers appeared at the rails.

Mrs. Sanderson switched from the waltz, if that's what it had been, to "Buffalo Gals, won't you come out tonight," a favorite in that family.

After a preliminary wheeze, the carrousel got going. The clowns, clinging to wooden animals, waved their hats.

Chad had turned the Teakettle, and they were now moving downriver, permitting the big boat to overtake them on the starboard side, so that the boarding-party would not be seen. Sachs watched these preparations carefully. As the big boat got nearer, however, Sachs, satisfied, lay down among his men.

It was then that Chad Chase got out the axe.

This was a fire axe the Judge had seen early and had hidden. With the aid of the clowns, frightened but willing, Chad hauled the catamount cage to a point amidships and near the entrance of the strip the flattened pirates occupied. There he went to work on it with the axe. Of course he wasn't heard. You couldn't hear anything but "Buffalo Gals."

It took no more than a minute to hack one end into strips. It was the same end he had been tied to, that morning; and it had been weakened and splintered by Jimson's knives.

The catamount went mad. Chad fished out a derringer, but the cat didn't emerge. He couldn't see it in there, only its eyes, but he could hear it spitting and snarling.

The moment Chad stopped hacking at the cage, and as though by signal—though in fact this part of the timing was sheer luck—the calliope ceased. There must have been something wrong with it. The twelve pipes, in a row fore-and-aft, started to sway.

Chad looked back. The big boat was breathlessly close. He drew a deep breath, and pushed the cage, turning it so that the splintered end faced aft, blocking off that strip of the deck where the pirates lay. He reached around between the bars and fired a derringer blindly.

The catamount sprang out.

This happened very fast.

Keeping his head low, Chad ran back to the wheel. Below on the boiler deck Sanderson, at the Judge's orders, cut the line that upheld the canvas sign above, and this sign fell away, exposing fourteen prone desperadoes.

MAINLY MASCULINE

THE HUCKSTERS. Jersey Joe Walcott was held in such low regard before his first fight with Louis that a Buffalo, N. Y., firm actually tried to rent the soles of the challenger's shoes for the moment when the champ would stiffen him and leave him with his toes turned up.

* * *

LITTLE TROUBLES. Napier, New Zealand, church authorities have forbidden the reading of risqué telegrams at wedding breakfasts. They said the messages were going much further than the usual "May all your troubles be little ones"—and they have asked telegraph-company officials to impose censorship.

* * *

INCIDENTAL INFORMATION. Tabby, a word for "cat," comes from Attaby, a section of Bagdad where striped silks are sold which resemble the color of rank-and-file felines.

* * *

LIFE CAN BE BEAUTIFUL. Lee Moore, of Council Bluffs, Ia., celebrated his 108th birthday by sitting down to fried chicken and two bottles of beer.

—by Bruce Hancock

They sprang to their feet. One of them saw the catamount and fired at it. There were warning shouts from the big steamboat, where rifles were produced. The big boat picked up speed.

The men on the narrow strip of hurricane deck had their choice of three moves. They could stay right there and risk being shot from the big boat. They could jump into the river, on one side. Or they could jump down onto the boiler deck, on the other.

Understandably they elected for the boiler deck. But they never got there.

Chad Chase spun the wheel with all his strength, causing the Teakettle to spin hard aport. And at that same instant—and *this* bit of timing was *not* just luck!—the twelve calliope pipes, manipulated from below by that unrecognized engineering genius Judge Bennison, were tipped toward the teetering men, and out of the mouths of them came twelve streams of mud.

The mud came in great gouts; it gushed forth, spluttering. Right out of the mud drums of the Teakettle, by way of a misapplied pump and a violated calliope, it came streaming, twelve columns of it—thick, slobbery, yellow-brown, viscid Mississippi mud.

It was irresistible. In the blink of an eye the deck was swept clear of pirates. There was nothing there at all—except mud.

The Judge smiled, and lighted a fresh panatela.

"I'm sorry," he said to Mrs. Sanderson. "I'm afraid it's going to be quite a job to clean up."

Chadwyck Chase looked back at fourteen heads in the mighty moonlit Mississippi. He grinned. He tooted the whistle—and kept right on going, full speed ahead.

"That's what I like about the river," said Judge Bennison next morning when they were having breakfast on deck. It was a beautiful sunny day. "You never know what's going to happen next."

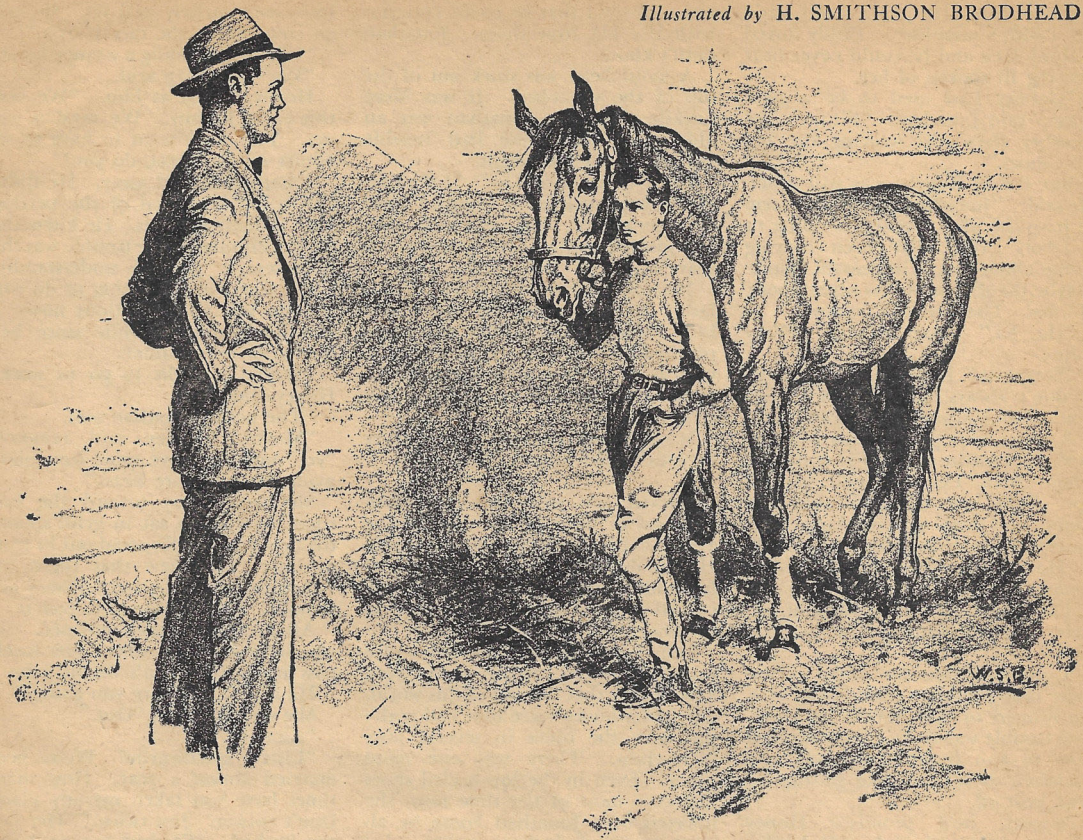
"It's certainly all peace and quiet right now," Chad admitted.

There was a scream, and Mr. Sanderson came running forward, the catamount at his heels. They had all forgotten about the catamount, which now Mr. Sanderson had accidentally flushed.

Chad drew his remaining loaded derringer and shot the beast. Mr. Sanderson stood there trembling. Judge Bennison lowered his coffee cup, absent-mindedly fished a deck out of his waistcoat pocket, and began to shuffle. As though suddenly thinking of something, he looked up.

"I wonder if I could interest you gentlemen in a little game of cards?"

Illustrated by H. SMITHSON BRODHEAD



The Big Shoes

SHE WENT LAME BUT KEPT ON FIGHTING—AND JONATHAN LEARNED THAT A MAN IS AS BIG AS HE WANTS TO BE.

by WALLACE UMPHREY

THE track had been dry and fast. Jonathan Foote dismounted, and a swipe began walking Galway Lass to cool her off. Jonathan regarded the mare with brooding distaste: she had practically lumbered around the track.

Early morning dew was still on the grass. Looking around, Jonathan saw Paddy Rourke waddling toward him. The spectacle afforded Jonathan only slight amusement. He leaned on the rail and watched Menominee working out, waiting for Paddy to come up to him with the bad news. Paddy Rourke was the owner-trainer of Galway Lass and Jonathan Foote was going to ride her in the Handicap.

Jonathan was small and dark, with a face more pleasant than handsome. Faint shadows of bitterness were in his gray eyes. He was thirty-two years old.

"Two-fifteen," Paddy said, breathing noisily. "A trifle slow but—" He broke off. "How did she feel?"

"Great," Jonathan answered dryly. "Galway Lass could pull a fish wagon at a neat clip."

"Jonathan, m'boy," said Paddy. "Leave us not jest. What is your honest opinion?"

"All right." Jonathan spoke confidentially. "Why not enter the Handicap yourself? You've got the weight. I could throw a saddle on you and—"

Paddy Rourke looked deeply pained. Being sensitive about his girth, he wore a fantastic girdle to hold in his paunch, and a complicated brace to pull back his shoulders and give him the rumor of a chest. He was fat and white-haired and sometimes quite childlike. And he was the shrewdest trainer in the business.

Jonathan felt suddenly friendly. Paddy Rourke at least still had some

faith in him. He put a small hand on Paddy's shoulder. Paddy loved Galway Lass and he could never bear hearing ill spoken of her.

"Galway Lass used to be a good horse," said Jonathan. "I'll try to remember she's still wearing the big iron shoes."

But Paddy Rourke was still upset. He said: "Jonathan, m'boy, you seem to have the idea that you're doing us a favor. Well, I've been hearing things about you. Unpleasant things. Maybe the shoe is on the other Foote. Ha, ha! That's a joke, m'boy."

"Ha, ha," Jonathan said. "Very funny.

"Forget it," Paddy said contritely. "I don't always believe what I hear. You'll give Galway Lass a good ride."

A swipe went past leading Menominee, the favorite of the Tyson stables. Then Duke Tyson himself strolled up. Duke was big and wide and young and very good-looking. He smiled at Jonathan with white teeth.

"How's Honey these days?" he asked Jonathan.

The needle, Jonathan thought bitterly. He was getting it a lot these days.

A great dislike for Duke Tyson came into Jonathan's mild blue eyes. He wanted to take a poke at Duke. The trouble was Duke Tyson weighed close to two hundred pounds, and Jonathan didn't feel like getting his head beat off.

Anyway, he'd promised Honey never to fight with Duke. Duke Tyson—millionaire sportsman and millionaire heel.

Honey had once been Duke Tyson's girl. Now she was Jonathan Foote's wife.

JONATHAN wandered toward the jockeys' room to change his clothes. A large amount of good-natured bantering was in progress, and Jonathan no longer felt a part of it. Most of the jocks were mere youngsters and they had no respect for the aged.

Somebody called out: "Hey, Johnny! How was Old Sore-Foot today?"

With great dignity Jonathan said: "Galway Lass? She's really got it. They might as well hand over the purse right now."

There was a round of laughter. Jonathan looked for something mean and nasty in it, but he finally had to admit it wasn't there. The trouble was that he was getting too sensitive for his own good. He wanted to join in the laughter, yet it wasn't in him.

Once Galway Lass had been a great horse, but two years ago she had turned up with sore feet. Nothing seemed to do her any good. Paddy Rourke had finally bought her in a claiming race for five thousand dollars. He said that he could cure her with the big iron shoes. Jonathan didn't know.

A moist head was stuck out of the top of the sweat-box. It was Mose Larkin, who like Jonathan was an old-timer. But Mose had trouble keeping down his weight.

"You lucky so-and-so," Mose Larkin said to Jonathan. "I got to sweat off every pound. You, you lucky stiff, you just get smaller and lighter as the years go by!"

Jonathan felt a smile freeze on his face. A sense of shame swept over him. Smaller and lighter and more pinched-up and wizened as the years went past! He was ashamed of it. In appearance, he was more like a boy than a man.

It was funny, but his size had never used to bother him.

SHAME was still with him when he stood in front of the door of the apartment where he and Honey lived. He bit down hard on the corner of his mouth, but it did no good. Honey rushed to greet him when he opened the door.

Honey had hair like the inside of a beehive, and red lips and merry eyes, and a figure that was out of this world. She had a husky voice that had really put over the blues in several tony night-clubs. There was one more thing: Even in the low-heeled shoes she wore most of the time now, she towered over Jonathan Foote by almost two whole inches.

She kissed Jonathan warmly. For a brief moment his worry and sense of shame was pushed away. But when she stepped back, the shame returned again worse than ever. She'd had to slouch a little to meet his lips.

Later Jonathan sat and smoked and read the paper. It was spread out before him, anyway. Honey sat down at his side.

She asked: "What chance has Galway Lass got?"

"I don't know," said Jonathan truthfully. "Not much, from where I sit. But Paddy feels sure and I respect his judgment."

"Still the big shoes?"

"Still the big shoes." Jonathan shook his head. "Paddy tried seawater runs, everything. Galway Lass didn't get any better. She could've been turned out to pasture till her feet healed—but a horse has got to run. Then Paddy got the idea of having a blacksmith shoe her with heavy iron plates to protect her feet. That way she could at least work out and be ready for the grind of a race. The idea is to replace the iron plates with some lightweight shoes at race time."

"Is it going to work?"

"Maybe. We won't know what the Lass can really do until the race. Her feet aren't entirely well yet. She may go lame before the race is over."

"It'll be like riding a strange horse."

"Yes," Jonathan said.

Honey looked at him. "We need this race, Johnny. We need a winner. You don't want to have to sell apples on the street, do you?"

Jonathan looked away. He didn't like being reminded of the perilous state of their finances. He knew that he was slipping. The trouble was that he knew it without understanding why. Age had something to do with it. He was more cautious now. It had been quite a while since he'd booted home a winner.

"Maybe I ought to go to work," Honey said.

"The hell!" Jonathan said.

"Maybe," Honey said remotely, "you ought to have some iron plates made for your sore head."

She went away toward the bedroom. Jonathan sat in grim silence, the newspaper still spread out in front of him. He knew that there was something wrong between Honey and himself. But he refused to face it.

After a while Honey returned. She was dressed for the street. Her loveliness made Jonathan's throat ache.

He asked: "Where you going?"

She said angrily: "Out."

"Alone?"

"Listen, grizzle-grim! We've been married almost a year. How many times have you taken me any place? Don't answer. Just twice!" Her face was flushed. "I'm just a normal red-blooded American girl. Once in a while I like to go out and have a hell of a fling. It's no use asking you to take me."

For a long time Jonathan could hear the echo of her footsteps. It was his fault, but there was nothing he could do. You started getting old, and then you started losing all around. He'd lose the Handicap, and he might easily lose Honey too.

A WEEK went past and Galway Lass failed to improve. Everybody was calling her Old Sore-Foot now. The future books acted as if she wasn't even entered in the Handicap.

"She'll be all right," Paddy Rourke said. "Just wait till she gets rid of the big shoes. She'll take off like a glider."

"Yes," Jonathan said, unconvinced. "Take another look in that crystal ball, will you? See what it shows as to her going lame in the middle of the race."

"Jonathan, m'boy," said Paddy, "have you no faith?"

"I'll trade the butcher some for a thick steak."

Paddy Rourke smiled. "Galway Lass," he said quietly, "is a thoroughbred."

Jonathan walked toward the stable. Galway Lass was in her stall, rubbed down after her morning ride. She looked sleek and fit. Jonathan touched the arched neck. The mare nuzzled him.

Well, hell, Jonathan thought suddenly. She was old too. Her best days were behind her. They were a pair.

Just then Duke Tyson strolled up. Jonathan didn't bother trying to hide his irritation.

Duke grinned and said: "How does she look?"

Jonathan said: "You've watched her."

"With the big shoes," Duke said idly. "The question is, how will she run without 'em?"

"She'll have wings," Jonathan lied.

Duke Tyson didn't smile. He examined Galway Lass with a critical eye. Then he shook his head and said: "You could be right. The future books have been wrong before."

Jonathan said: "That's your worry."

Duke said casually: "I wouldn't be so worried—if Honey didn't seem so sure."

"Honey," Jonathan said, a chill touching him. "When did you talk to her?"

Duke Tyson spoke off-hand. "Oh, we've had lunch together a couple of times lately."

Jonathan began to shake a little. He wanted to stick his fist into Duke Tyson's smiling face. Instead, he rammed his small hands into his pockets. There was no sense in being a sucker about the whole thing.

As he turned away, he heard Duke Tyson's laughter behind him. The laughter was different from that of the young jocks. It was mean and edged.

Mose Larkin was leaning disconsolately against the fence when Jonathan strode past. Mose Larkin was riding a horse named Celestra in the Handicap: He said: "This is my last race, Johnny. I can't make the weight any more."

"Broke?" Jonathan asked.

"Who isn't?"

"Has Celestra a chance?"

"As much chance as a snowball in hell," Mose Larkin said. "Hey, what's the matter? You're shaking."

Jonathan was still shaking a little when he got home. He said to Honey: "Why didn't you tell me you were seeing Duke?"

"You didn't ask."

"I won't have it," Jonathan said.

Honey said seriously: "It's time we had a talk. I'll try to stay calm."

Jonathan said: "No."

"We've got to face it," Honey went on bravely. "We're not happy. I know I'm not—and I don't think you are, either. What's happened to us?

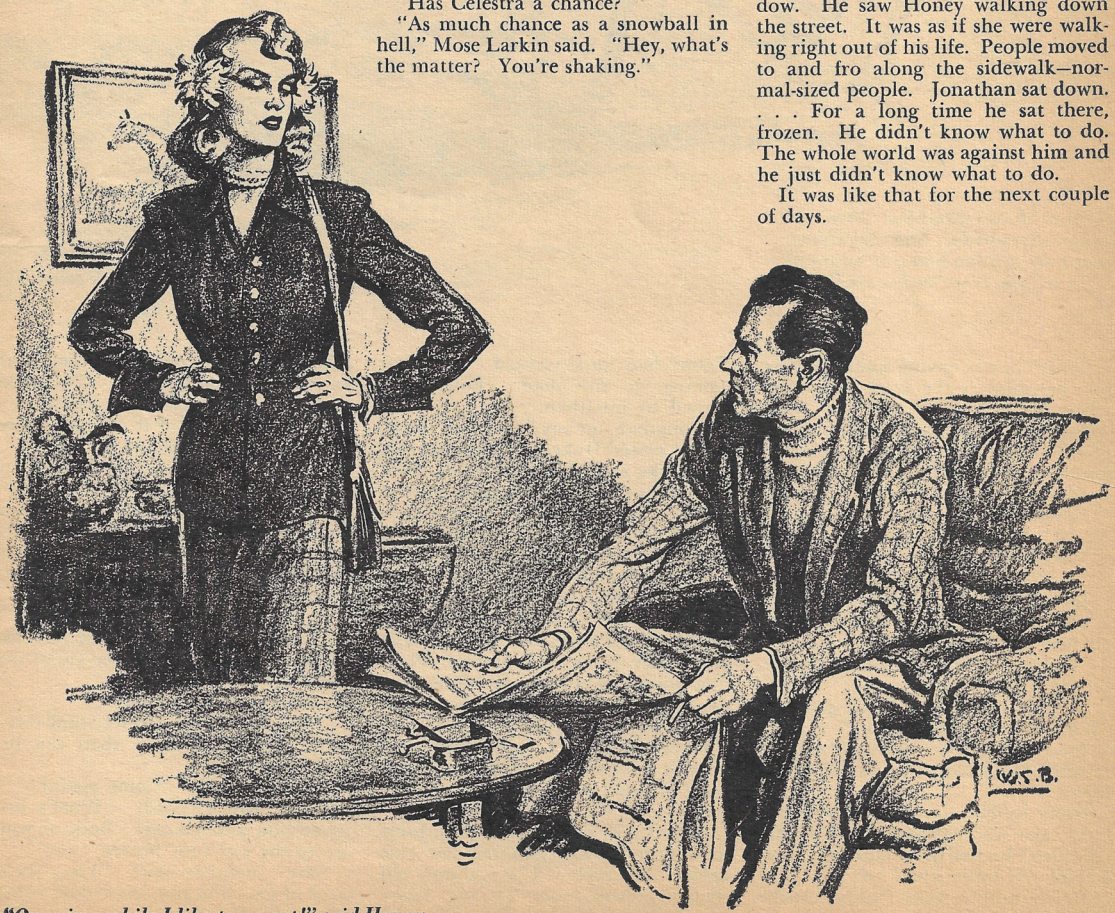
"Wait a minute," she said before Jonathan could interrupt. "I married you for one reason only—because I loved you. I loved you for what you were. But you've changed. You aren't any fun now. You've crawled into a shell and locked me out, and you just don't seem to give a d-darn any more!"

Jonathan said: "Do you want to leave me?"

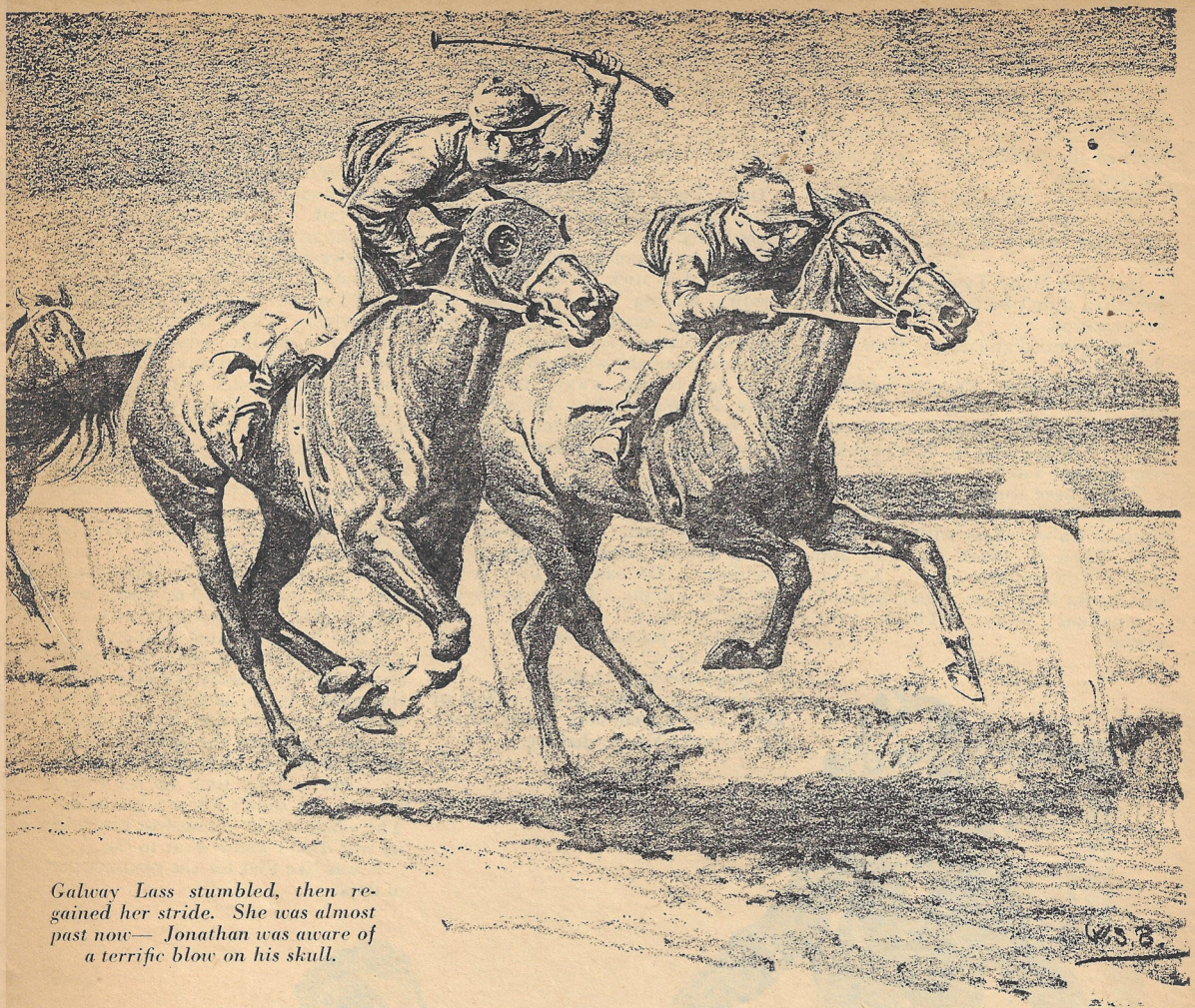
Honey turned away. "Darn you!" she cried fiercely. "I'm going out. With Duke! It's up to you now."

Time stopped and then started again, and Jonathan went to the window. He saw Honey walking down the street. It was as if she were walking right out of his life. People moved to and fro along the sidewalk—normal-sized people. Jonathan sat down. . . . For a long time he sat there, frozen. He didn't know what to do. The whole world was against him and he just didn't know what to do.

It was like that for the next couple of days.



"Once in a while I like to go out!" said Honey.



Galway Lass stumbled, then regained her stride. She was almost past now— Jonathan was aware of a terrific blow on his skull.

Jonathan was having a cup of coffee one morning at the track restaurant when he looked up and saw Duke Tyson and Mose Larkin coming out of the back room. Mose Larkin left immediately, but Duke came over and sat down.

"Menominee equaled the track record," Duke Tyson said.

"You've got the favorite."

"How's Galway Lass?"

Jonathan said: "Ask Honey."

Duke Tyson said: "I did. She's got me worried."

"I think," Jonathan said carefully, "that I'll take a poke at you."

"Sure." And Duke Tyson grinned. "What are you waiting for?"

Jonathan sat there without moving. He didn't want to get his ears knocked down.

Duke swung down off the stool. "I'll take the Handicap with Menominee," he said quite clearly. "And I think I'll take Honey too."

Half a minute later Paddy Rourke waddled in. He took the stool Duke Tyson had just vacated. He kept looking at the door. Finally he turned to Jonathan:

"Jonathan, m'boy," he said softly, "I just passed Duke. I've been hearing that Duke and Mose Larkin are thick as thieves. Celestra doesn't have a chance, and Mose is washed up. Maybe he's out to make himself a stake. Better watch him."

Jonathan didn't see much of Honey any more. She was always out some place. It was as if she was making up for all the times she had stayed at home after marrying Jonathan. Next time Jonathan saw her, he asked what she had told Duke Tyson about Galway Lass.

Honey said: "I told Duke that Galway Lass was by all odds the best horse on the track."

The day before the Handicap Jonathan gave Galway Lass her last ride before the race. The gallant old champion still wore the big shoes. Jonathan could feel the great muscles lifting and swelling under him, and he gave the horse her head. The mare romped around the ten furlongs.

The excitement of it chipped away a little of the ice around his heart.

"She's fit," he said afterward to Paddy Rourke.

Paddy examined the stop-watch in his hand. He seemed pleased with what it told him. He said: "We'll get the lightweight shoes on now. Tomorrow she'll fly."

"I don't know."

"Jonathan, m'boy, pray for rain tonight. A soft track will be easier on her feet."

"What if she goes lame?"

"She's fit," Paddy Rourke said carefully. "Which is more than can be said of you."

Jonathan said: "Come again?"

Paddy Rourke said: "What's between you and Honey? Both of you are eating out your hearts."

"No," Jonathan said. "Yes. She's tired of me. I'm just a sawed-off runt. She wants a man."

"Did she ever tell you that?"

"No."

"Before you were married," Paddy Rourke said, "did she ever say you weren't big enough for her?"

"Love is blind."

"That may well be. But if so, it's permanent blindness." Paddy Rourke patted his stomach. "I wear a girdle. I wouldn't lose any respect if I never wore it again. But I'm sensitive about my girth."

It was cloudy the night before the Handicap. Jonathan felt rain in the air, but the weatherman said it would clear tomorrow. Jonathan was restless, the way he always was before a race.

Honey seemed restless too.

Some of the things Paddy Rourke had said bothered Jonathan. He couldn't get them out of his head. He wanted to talk to Honey about them, but the shell was all around him, and the ice was cold against his heart.

Jonathan said: "I'm going to bed."

Honey said coolly: "I'll be along sometime."

Handicap day dawned clear and bright. So the weathermen had been right. It was going to be tough on Galway Lass. Jonathan reached the track early.

Paddy Rourke said: "Just once, you'd think my prayers would be answered."

"The big shoes are gone?"

"They're gone. Her feet look a little tender, but they ought to stand up." Paddy Rourke shook his head. "You'll have a horse under you that you don't know."

Jonathan said: "I've been a jock a long time."

"There's that," Paddy agreed sadly. "But both the horse and rider have to be thoroughbreds. Galway Lass will fight to win. But there's no fight left in you, Jonathan, m'boy. You won't give her a fair race."

"I ought to slug you," Jonathan said through his teeth. "I don't know why I don't. It must be your age."

"I know why, and that isn't the reason," Paddy Rourke said.

Jonathan hung around, waiting. There was an early crowd, and he saw faces he knew, but he felt all alone. Honey came with Duke Tyson. She was going to sit in his box.

From time to time Jonathan took a look at the tote-board. A surprising thing was happening. The odds on Galway Lass were dropping rapidly. It was like the stock quotations in twenty-nine, which Jonathan could remember, although he'd been too young at the time to be hurt.

Money was being put on Galway Lass—a lot of money. It could only mean that a great many bettors had faith in the old records and in Paddy Rourke as a trainer—and faith in Jonathan himself.

At the end of the fifth race Jonathan walked toward the jockeys' room to change into his silks. He felt beat out. He was always on edge before a big race, but this time it was different. He had too much besides the race on his mind.

There was no idle banter today. All the young jocks looked pretty grim. Mose Larkin avoided Jonathan like the plague.

Galway Lass was quiet when Jonathan rode her into the starting gate. She stood calmly, a gallant old champion with a great deal of experience in such matters. She had never been a temperamental mount. But Jonathan could feel the hard muscles quivering, and he knew that she was fit.

Jonathan grimaced. Paddy Rourke had been right. It was more than could be said of Jonathan himself.

Some of the jocks were having trouble with their mounts. The assistant starters were having a bad time, jerking and yanking at the plunging horses. The sun was warm overhead, and the track was dry. A horse named Killaloe kept backing out of his stall. Downpatrick unseated his rider. Both Galway Lass and Menominee were quiet. Celestra, with Mose Larkin up, almost went to sleep.

The head starter yelled a warning. Then the off bell clanged sharply.

Celestra took an early lead, Mose Larkin using the bat right away. Killaloe took out after him. Next was Menominee. Galway Lass was in the middle of the field bunched out behind.

Jonathan felt the difference immediately. The big shoes had held the horse down even more than he had supposed. Galway Lass was fighting for her head. After the big steel plates, the lightweight shoes must feel wonderful.

It came to Jonathan that he could easily have been running third in place of Menominee if he'd got off to a better start. His mind had been on other things. He was giving Galway Lass a lousy ride.

Galway Lass was running easily, still fighting for her head. She was still lost in the ruck, but she wasn't going to be satisfied to stay there. Jonathan felt her great muscles stretching out and something that might have been the beginning of pride started nibbling at his conscience.

"Honey," Jonathan's head said to him. "She's sitting in Duke Tyson's box. She's finished with me. She wants a man she has to tilt up her head to kiss."

And then his heart told him: "She never put this thing into words. How do I know she even thinks it?"

Jonathan's mind came back to the race. Galway Lass was still in the ruck. A big chestnut bore out, and Jonathan saw an opening. He gave the gallant old champion her head, and drove for it. She burst out into the clear.

She was running fourth now, behind Menominee. Celestra and Killaloe were fighting for the lead. All the horses except Galway Lass and Menominee were getting the whip now.

Menominee began to move up fast. Celestra was fading badly. Galway Lass moved up after Menominee. Celestra kept on fading. Celestra was third now, with Galway Lass challenging.

And then Jonathan was aware that Celestra was boring over. Celestra was a big horse and Galway Lass was being crowded toward the rail. The opening was getting smaller. And in that moment Jonathan remembered that he was to watch Mose Larkin.

Mose Larkin's face was white and twisted. He was using the bat in his hand. The opening was smaller now, and then Jonathan gave Galway Lass her head.

The gallant horse went through. She scraped the rail. She stumbled, then regained her stride. She was almost past now—

Jonathan was aware of a terrific blow on his skull. Blood flowed into his eyes. He knew that Mose Larkin had hit him, probably with the handle of the bat. Jonathan got some of the blood cleared out of his eyes so that he could see. Celestra was behind him now.

"To hell with it," Jonathan's head told him. "I'll quit right now. Nobody would expect me to finish the race."

Suddenly he was aware of a difference in Galway Lass' thundering stride. It was a subtle difference. And he knew that her sore feet had not been completely healed and that they had gone bad again. And then he knew she was still game.

Jonathan's heart said: "She's a thoroughbred. She'll fight till she drops. Why should I quit just because I got my skull cracked open? Maybe I haven't forgotten how to fight, either."

He leaned down and said: "Now! *Now*, old gal!"

Galway Lass responded. Menominee was leading now, Killaloe a close second. Killaloe was tiring, and Galway Lass moved up. And Jonathan knew he'd been a fool. His sensitivity about his stature was all in his mind. That's why he'd never taken Honey out after they were married—he'd been so afraid she would be ashamed to be seen with him. But

she'd never given him any indication. It had all been in his mind.

It was like Paddy Rourke and his girdle.

They were in the stretch now. An announcer began to shout: "It's Menominee by a length, Killaloe by a neck, Galway Lass moving up. . . . Now Menominee by a length, Galway Lass second and still coming. . . . And now Menominee by half a length—"

There was a clamor from the stands. Jonathan used the bat and Galway Lass responded gallantly. Galway Lass and Menominee were neck and neck. Jonathan felt Galway Lass shudder, but she was still game. She was a thoroughbred.

The big shoes! He could wear the shoes of any man. Jonathan felt himself as tall as a mountain. As tall as the world. You were as big as you wanted to be.

Less than half a furlong to go now. Galway Lass and Menominee were still neck and neck. Then the wire loomed ahead, and then they were under it, and Jonathan knew that Galway Lass had won. . . .

The ceremonies were hazy. They asked about the cut over Jonathan's eye, and what had happened out there, anyway. Jonathan looked over at Mose Larkin, who looked both grim and scared. It was Mose Larkin's last race. It made no difference now if he were ruled off the track forever. But Jonathan told them that nothing had happened. Nothing at all.

"She went lame out there," Jonathan said to Paddy Rourke. "She went lame, but she kept right on fighting."

Paddy patted his girdled stomach. "She's a thoroughbred."

Jonathan weighed in, and then began looking for Honey. She was coming toward him, running a little, Duke Tyson hurrying along a little behind. Jonathan waited until Duke was close—and then poked him in the eye. Duke Tyson jarred Jonathan, and it felt good, and Jonathan tapped Duke on the jaw. All two hundred pounds of Duke Tyson sat down hard.

"You in love with this guy?" Jonathan asked Honey.

Honey's eyes were shining. "Darn you!" she cried. "Oh, Johnny!"

Jonathan held her close. He didn't care about his stature. A man was as big as he wanted to be. Any man could wear the big shoes. Jonathan liked it just the way he was.

"I had to do something," Honey whispered. "A woman doesn't have much to fight with except jealousy. But I was willing to do anything for the guy I love—even if he is a jerk sometimes."

Jonathan said: "Let's go out tonight and paint the town a great big red."

Military

Charlemagne's Elephant

An ivory hunting horn, called an oliphant because it was fashioned from the tusk of an elephant, was slung over the shoulder of Roland when, returning from a war with the Saracens of Spain, he commanded Charlemagne's rearguard. Attacked in a pass of the Pyrenées by an overwhelming horde of Basques, Roland tardily realized that all was lost unless succor came. Thrice he sounded his horn with all the strength of his lungs. Charlemagne heard and hastened back, but arrived too late. Roland and all his knights and men-at-arms lay slain on the stricken field of Roncesvalles; and beside the paladin was his oliphant, burst in twain by the third mighty blast.

Twenty-four years later, in 802, tusks of living ivory gleamed, as a huge Indian elephant lumbered into Charlemagne's capital at Aachen past

Illustrated by

JOHN COSTIGAN, N.A.

Mascots-I

by FAIRFAX DOWNEY

gaping and cheering crowds. The great beast was the first of his kind seen in Europe since Hannibal invaded Italy with his war elephants a millennium before. A marvel to all who beheld or heard of him, the animal's advent was recorded in stately Latin by scribes and monks throughout the continent, and even in remote Ireland.

"This year for the first time," they inscribed on their scrolls, "an elephant, brought from distant parts, vouchsafed the Kingdom of the Franks a wondrous spectacle. He was the gift of Harun, monarch of the Persians and ruler over all the Orient save India, who sent besides his friendship, and made a firm alliance."

Charlemagne had asked especially for an elephant when he sent an embassy with presents of his own to Harun al-Rashid, Caliph of Bagdad, whose adventures are related in the Arabian Nights. The Caliph, granting the boon, chose from his royal herd a splendid specimen named Abul-Abbas in honor of the reigning dynasty, the Abbasides.

It had taken Abul-Abbas two years to make the long journey from Persia to his new home. Under conduct of Isaac the Jew, resourceful and trusted emissary of Charlemagne, he plodded across North Africa to Carthage, his progress through every stage of the journey reported by swift couriers to the anxious King of the Franks. Embarked on a stout ship capable of carrying his weight and bulk, Abul-Abbas landed at Pisa in the fall of 801. But Isaac did not venture over the Alps with his precious charge till spring, when Abul-Abbas made the crossing, chroniclers declare, more easily than had Hannibal's elephants.

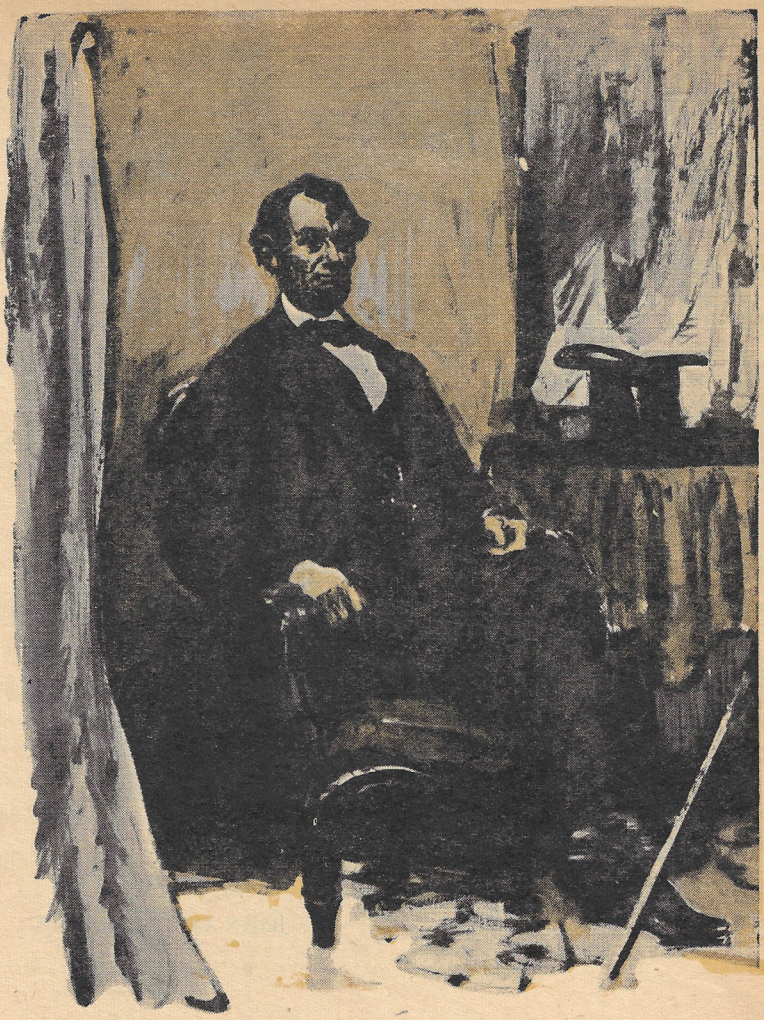
With Abul-Abbas came other gifts, costly and curious. Priceless to the devout of Christendom were the keys to the Holy Sepulcher, with a guarantee of safe passage to pilgrims. There was also a waterclock which chimed the hours while a procession of figures marched around a tower. But eyes were all for the elephant, installed in the King's menagerie, where he far outrivaled its former attractions—lions, bears and rare birds. Scholars gathered to solve a knotty problem in natural history which had been agitating them: do elephants lie down? Abul-Abbas, growing sleepy, lowered his ponderous body to the ground and settled the question.

Charlemagne on his campaigns took Abul-Abbas along, decked perhaps in trappings of black, the royal color of the Abbasides, but did not use him in battle. The prestige of owning the only elephant in Europe was too great to be risked, and the animal was immensely valuable as a symbol of the league between his master and Harun against the Byzantine Empire and the Saracens of Spain. It was Abul-Abbas' unique rôle to serve simultaneously as a Carolingian circus, a mascot, and the evidence of a masterpiece of statecraft.

Elephants are long-lived, but the cold climate told on Abul-Abbas, and he was still young when he died in the year 810, his passing lamented as universally as his arrival had been celebrated.

One of his tusks was made into a hunting horn, preserved to this day in the basilica at Aachen—just such an oliphant as Roland had carried. Thanks to the alliance of which it was a token, Charlemagne, King of the Franks and Emperor of the Romans, held his Spanish marches, and the oliphant from the tusk of Abul-Abbas was not sounded at a second Roncesvalles.

Far more important than Mathew Brady's studio on Broadway, was the splendid job he did at Bull Run, Antietam and Fredericksburg in photographing the men and the battles of the War Between the States.



Brady of

AT the creek called Bull Run, battle raged through the heat-drowsed woodlands, the thickets and smiling fields. The deep-rolling *whoom—whoom* of cannon fire drove massive iron balls crashing and splintering through green tree branches and briar-tangled thickets.

Shells burst and spewed jagged metal, and the stench of burnt black powder and death. . . . And while war tore lividly at the peaceful Virginia countryside, a civilian with a pointed chin beard, an old straw hat and a long white linen duster coolly made photographs of the battlefield.

When the blue-clad Union troops had marched south from the Potomac toward Lee's new army at Manassas, bands had played jaunty music. There had been gayety and confidence. Now Johnny Reb would learn not to start a war. Downy-cheeked recruits could shout merrily at the civilian's two dusty wagons: "Got the picnic baskets?"

"Cameras, boys, to take your pictures."

"*Wa-hooo!* The girls are waitin' for *my* picture!"

He could laugh at them then from the hard-jolting wagon seat and think of the sweethearts, mothers and anxious families who would want his pictures. Then, sobering, he would think of history, which awaited these photographs.

Brady of Broadway, he was called. His fashionable New York and Washington galleries had photographed renowned faces, including Lincoln, the new President. Permission to advance with the army had been grudgingly granted.

Now his greatest subject—War—had coiled into pose before his cameras and exploded. Minié balls whined like angry wasps and struck flesh with a sodden sound. Crouching figures shoved through the thickets, fired muskets, frantically wielded ramrods, reloading.

Head often under the black camera cloth, followed by quick steps to a wagon to develop plates, Brady coolly disregarded danger. . . . Whipped horses hauled gun batteries forward at the gallop. Shell and canister burst with deafening reports. Men staggered and sprawled on the earth and lay inert. . . . The bands were silent now. The merriment had vanished.

Shenandoah Valley troops unexpectedly reinforced Lee. Busy with his cameras, Brady watched with dismay the Union disaster spreading.

A pallid officer, sword forgotten in hand, spurred a lathered horse toward the rear. A 'teen-aged private, hatless, his musket, haversack and knapsack abandoned, came running back in fright and despair. . . . "Rebs are comin'! We're shot to pieces!"

The full torrent of panic and retreat began to swirl by. Brady's wagons were badly damaged in the rout. But with stubborn coolness he finally made his way back to Washington, the dead, the dying, the wreckage and débris of the battlefield forever fixed on his negatives.

BARELY sixteen in New York, twenty years earlier, he had dreamed of something like this while clerking in A. T. Stewart's large store, and paying wide-eyed visits to the studio of his new friend Samuel Morse.

Broadway

by
T. T. FLYNN

"A bright boy like you, Brady, should study the new process my friend Daguerre showed me in Paris," was Morse's opinion one day. "On the ship coming home, I invented the new code I need for this telegraph I'm trying to perfect. I can't give much time now to Daguerre's idea. . . . But it has possibilities."

Sam Morse paced his small studio, thinking. "You know, Brady, Daguerre thinks his process is good for scenic pictures. But it could be a perfect medium for preserving likenesses of people. Absolutely lifelike."

"Mr. Morse—"

"Yes, Brady?"

"Couldn't I use it to—to preserve likenesses of the fathers and mothers of our country for history?"

"Certainly, Brady. Make the plates more sensitive, and you'll have people fixed forever, exactly as they are in the living flesh now. And like the messages I mean to send over my wire, it's never been done before."

"I—I want to try it, Mr. Morse."

"Good, Brady—I'll teach you."

Three years of pinching pennies, learning with Morse. . . . And young Brady, barely nineteen, opened his first Daguerreotype Gallery at Fulton and Broadway.

EXCITING years followed. Men and women, destined for history as sculptured marble or stylized paintings, became living flesh with young Brady's skillful technique. . . . John C. Calhoun, Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, John Tyler, Edgar Allan Poe, the young Prince of Wales. . . .

Often young Brady thought of history. His folio, "A Gallery of Illustrious Americans," was widely acclaimed. His daguerreotypes won first prize at the great London Exhibition. Called Brady of Broadway now, successful, prosperous, he opened a second gallery in Washington.

The new wet-plate process allowed endless reproductions from a negative. He had the urgent feeling that he was equipped for destiny.

In the White House after Bull Run, President Lincoln listened patiently while his visitor earnestly argued.

"Mr. President, this war should be preserved on negatives. Think if it were possible now to see photographs of Alexander, conquering the world—or Genghis Khan's Mongol hordes at the Danube!"

We must guess their exact conversation. Lincoln, harried, burdened beyond endurance by a country torn apart, by problems of state and endless visitors with improbable pleas and schemes, said heavily: "Perhaps, Brady; but if we preserve the Union, history will take care of us. I suggest you speak with Secretary Stanton."

It was a tremendous, wrenching period in Washington. When the irascible, even more harried Secretary of War finally granted an interview, his remarks were blunt and final.

"The Government, Mr. Brady, cannot help you financially in this scheme. I'll grant you permission to try it at your own expense and risk. Mr. Allan Pinkerton, who has organized our new Secret Service, will keep an eye on you."

Somewhat downcast—he had expected help from the Government—Brady returned to the Washington gallery and undoubtedly discussed the problems with Alexander Gardner, his assistant.

"One man, Gardner, can't photograph a war. I'll have to train camera crews and give them special equipment."

"And stand all the cost yourself?" Gardner must have dubiously reminded. "The expense will be enormous. Is it worth it?"

"Beyond value, Gardner; eventually the Government will believe so, and help. . . . Gardner, this is our living history; it must not be lost. The eyes that saw the Revolution are about gone; we'll never know exactly what they saw. The generations after us, Gardner, must see this as we see it. It must be preserved."

ALL that cold, gloomy winter Brady of Broadway carefully trained his assistants, and had special camera wagons built.

"The wagons," he decided, "must go everywhere—in the fields, woods, mountains and swamps, anywhere the armies and the cameras go. You know we have only ten minutes in hot weather to coat, expose, and develop a plate. Each wagon must have a small developing booth on the back, with racks and shelves. We'll use four-by-four stereoscopic cameras for home views, and up to sixteen-by-twenty-inch Anthony cameras for the panoramas."

Spring—and General McClellan opened his great Peninsula Campaign. Astonished troops stared at the queer-looking wagon a civilian drove among them.

"What is it?" they shouted. . . . Before long Brady heard them calling: "Here comes Brady's *Whatzit Wagon!*"

Photographing the Peninsula battles that spring was arduous, dangerous. Sun glints on Brady's polished camera lenses were often sighted by Confederate sharpshooters. The keen-eyed youths in gray, tempered by the mountains and hunting fields of the South, too often were dangerously accurate. Standing coolly by his camera, Brady could hear the Minié balls whine close. Often he had to seek cover. . . . Or Confederate cannon would range on the telltale lense glints. Shells would come arching from the enemy lines, exploding close, shocking a man's liver and heart and courage as great fountains of dirt showered out.

On sweltering days the developing cabinet was an evil-smelling oven, reeking of chemicals and heat. Brady had to wedge himself inside, with tiny yellow-glass panes letting in the faintest illumination. Working in feverish, sweating haste, he would listen to the torn and flaming day outside, and wonder wryly what instant a vicious-buzzing Minié ball, the coughing death-sleet of canister balls or tearing smash of shell fragments would rip through the dim little booth—and through the man inside.

The war had to be preserved this way—dangerously, minutely, exhaustively. . . . The dead, the wounded, the brassy, filthy devastation that tore men's souls into heroism and cowardice and sacrifice must be transferred—awesome, vivid—to thousands of quiet parlors where intent and anxious eyes peered into stereoscope holders.

In crystal-clear, three-dimension stereoscopic depth, must live again—forever—the thunder and agony Brady saw when he stepped from the cramped and stifling little developing cabinet, mopped his streaming face, and stepped back to his camera.

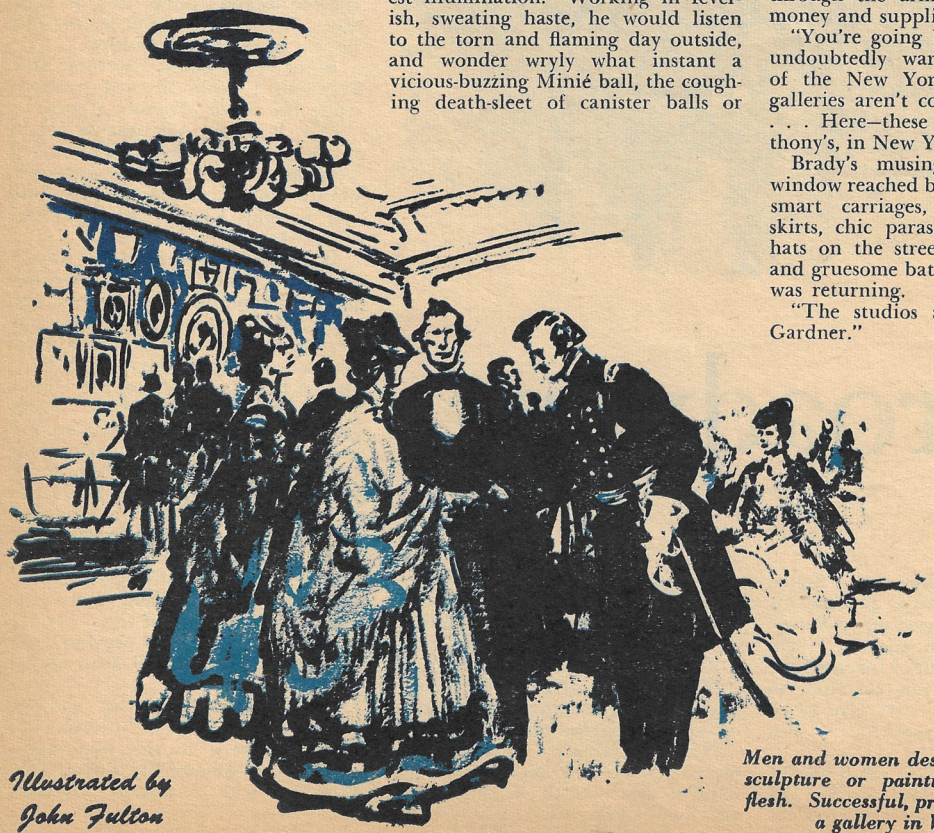
Everything must be on the negatives, fixed for history—the swollen dead, the green blowflies, the blood-smeared wounded and dejected prisoners, the bivouacs, the generals and the weary troops.

THE other camera crews were doing the same; and on each hurried trip back to Washington, Alexander Gardner, managing the studio, would present the unending packets of bills. Twenty camera crews scattered through the armies were devouring money and supplies.

"You're going bankrupt," Gardner undoubtedly warned. "The profits of the New York and Washington galleries aren't covering the expense. . . . Here—these bills are from Anthony's, in New York, for supplies."

Brady's musing gaze through a window reached beyond the hacks and smart carriages, the stylish hoop-skirts, chic parasols and tall beaver hats on the street—beyond the grim and gruesome battlefields to which he was returning.

"The studios are making money, Gardner."



Illustrated by John Fulton

Men and women destined for history as sculpture or paintings became living flesh. Successful, prosperous, he opened a gallery in Washington.

"Not enough, Mr. Brady."

"A man can't be bankrupt with all the negatives we're accumulating. They'll be invaluable to the Government; we'll be reimbursed."

Who could doubt it? All history had never possessed these thousands of plates, increasing daily, which immortalized a great war, a nation's agony. The Government, the country, would be grateful, appreciative, when the gory struggle ended. Meanwhile, the conflict must be put on negatives for history.

"We'll pay what we can, Gardner, and continue."

McClellan's Peninsula battles flamed and lashed at the Confederate lines. Immense casualties were inflicted on Lee's fiery troops. But the Union armies were battered and decimated; when McClellan drew back after four months, the weary, mauled Confederates were conceded victory.

Brady's assistants also were risking lives. O'Sullivan's camera was upset twice by bursting shells. At Dutch Gap Canal, a shell exploded beside Roche's camera. Roche shook the gray flying dust off his black camera cloth and moved the tripod directly over the shell-hole, deciding wryly: "Won't hit again right here."

Lee marched into Maryland unaware that his General Order 191 had been found wrapped around several cigars, revealing to McClellan that Confederate troops were marching in separated columns.

Brady raced to Sharpsburg as McClellan tried to close a trap. The fighting was bloody. Shaken by carnage which seemed unending, Brady focused his camera on the piled bodies of D. H. Hill's men in the sunken road, and carried the heavy tripod to the hillside where the dead sprawled among abandoned jackets, shoes, broken fence rails, abandoned muskets and cartridge boxes.

Then—once again Lee crossed the Potomac and risked massive, decisive battle at Gettysburg.

The beautiful countryside was warm, serene in the sunlight. Lt. Haskell, aide-de-camp to General Gibbon, wrote of it later. Brady saw it too, and moved through the holocaust, calmly, carefully photographing his history.

Haskell wrote of it; Brady photographed it.

"They were beautiful this morning—desolate now. . . . Grain, corn, orchards ruined. . . . Knapsacks cast aside, haversacks full of rations dead men will never eat. . . . Cedar canteens of Rebels, cloth-covered tin of Union canteens—blankets, trousers, coats, caps blue and gray, muskets, ramrods, bayonets, swords, scabbards, belts, broken wheels, exploded cais-

Brady had the urgent feeling that he was equipped for destiny.

sons, and limber boxes and dismounted guns, blood-smeared. . . . Horses dead, dying, torn, legs shot off. . . .

"There was no rebellion now, no war, no strife. The dead lay together, the wounded. . . ."

Tired, sickened, Brady moved on the battlefield, exposing his plates and hurrying to the reeking developing cabinet. At sundown the wounded moaned and cried out. Now and then an injured horse screamed in uncomprehending helplessness while Brady wearily washed, dried and varnished the day's plates.

And there was more—the new morning brought 250 Confederate cannon shredding the day with awesome fire. The Union cannon replied. . . . Acrid clouds of black-powder smoke swirled over the quaking fields and hung like death-fog in trembling woodland. The earth shook, churned. Above Brady's camera the sky was a vast sounding board of rolling thunder. . . .

Then suddenly fell awful quiet. . . . Pickett and Pettigrew's eighteen thousand men rolled a gigantic tide of destruction and bravery across the open fields—up the slope, on toward the waiting Union guns.

The moving tide rolled into the sheeting blast of Union fire, beat against it—and, torn, ripped and shattered, ebbed reluctantly back. . . .

Always back the tide now ebbed, slowly across the Potomac for the last time, ebbing south, ever south into deep Virginia.

Grant, the new commander, drove at the gallant, desperate ebb with the Wilderness battles and at Cold Harbor, and finally at terrible cost pushed the ebb-tide back into Richmond.

The end found Brady exposing plates at Petersburg, unaware of the surrender at Appomattox.

Downcast, he hurried to Richmond, where the heavy-hearted Lee had gone. Two days after the surrender, Lee generously posed on the back porch of his Richmond home. . . . "Marse Robert" now was history too on Brady's plates.

THE tragedy of Lincoln came swiftly. . . . The four convicted conspirators were ordered hanged in the yard of Washington Penitentiary.

This day when Brady set up his cameras on a platform facing the gallows, he was oppressed by crushing debts. Battlefield hardships had afflicted him with rheumatism. He must have had the thought: "This hanging, too, is part of it. . . . The last four to die."

Under the camera cloth he focused on the gallows platform, where an umbrella was held over Mrs. Mary Suratt, who had owned the boarding-house where the conspirators had met.

The dim-witted clerk David Herold was there, and George Atzerodt, the Confederate spy, who had lost his nerve and failed to kill Vice-President Johnson.

The fourth black hood was pulled over the head of Lewis Powell, who had rushed into Secretary Seward's room and slashed Seward's throat.

Once more Brady removed the velvet-lined lense-cap. . . . The trap dropped with a hollow crash. . . . The bodies dangled limply. . . . The last four. . . .

Now a nation had its great war forever preserved, two negatives made of each subject, whenever possible. And Brady had his debts, pressing, insistent. A country binding wounds, struggling with reconstruction, was indifferent. Sadly Brady added the account.

A hundred thousand dollars spent. His property sold in New York met only a small part of the debt. . . . Congress was not interested; no one cared to see war now, or think of war.

A man's heart can break slowly. Like wasting disease, a bankrupt man can fail slowly, submerged by degrees under the crush of debt.

Anthony and Co., the New York suppliers, took one set of the plates for accounts due. Unable to pay a two-thousand-dollar storage bill, Brady broken-heartedly watched his final set of negatives bought up by the War Department for the storage charges.

Four years of labor, health and pre-eminence in his profession, a hundred thousand dollars spent—all now gone beyond recovery.

That far and distant youthful vision of dedication to his country's history faded now in growing poverty and bitterness. All of it had been futile. All of it had been neglected, ignored, discarded by Congress and country.

Drink brought little solace as health failed and the bitterness persisted. . . . The end was charity, and a rented room in New York, not far from the spot where an eager youth had said: "I want to preserve our fathers and mothers for history, Mr. Morse."

Brady of Broadway died owning only the clothes he wore, bitter, neglected, unaware of history's timeless quality.

A nation did have memory and gratitude and pride in its past. Too late for Brady of Broadway—but in the National Archives, the Library of Congress, the guarded pride of careful collectors, Brady of Broadway's great war and his illustrious Americans hold now for the ages the vivid, living past.

Illustrated by Lea R. Gustavson

Sheba Murder

PERHAPS, MOREOVER, THE CLIMATE OF THAT TROPIC ISLAND HAD ALREADY KILLED HIM.

As told to BEATRICE GRIMSHAW

THE cook went shambling round the table, handing the dishes she had prepared. It was a strange thing to see her there, in this island world, a white woman waiting on other whites. Nobody noticed her or spoke to her, as she limped slowly, noiselessly, from green shadow to green shadow, in that veranda dining-room, where the leaves of the rubber trees, planted jealously close, almost impinged on the table. It was like being at the bottom of the sea, I thought. And here, in the person of old Annelie, cook and general help of the plantation house, was one of the dead and drowned secrets of the sea of life, rising again.

I had not always been patrol officer in the Shebas, those burning emeralds strung like jewels along the Line. I had seen other islands, lighter and pleasanter; yet some of them cursed and blighted by the cruelty of man. One in especial, whose mark, once made, was stamped upon its victims for life. I knew too much about that island to let one of its murderous brood into my own bachelor home down at the port. though comfort and fine food such as the plantation people enjoyed were holiday dreams to me. But here I found Annelie, sole survivor of a recent wreck on the Sheba reefs, cooking marvelous French meals for Braddon, owner of the estate, and his household. And Annelie was, to my experienced eye, assuredly one of them.

Braddon was seated at the top of the table, swelling himself out with food—he who was already more like a white worm than a man. At his right hand sat an extremely pretty girl, Shirley, whom he was to marry in two days' time. Farther away sat Shirley's adopted mother, Braddon's elderly aunt. I didn't know where the old lady had picked her up in infancy, but she had done a good job on this slim creature with the black eyes and the Titian red hair, educated her, taught her her prayers, and finally brought her up to the Shebas "for a change"—meaning a chance to become mistress of the Braddon plantation.

Yes, look, I thought; I'm twenty-seven, tough, slim; a change from the brute you're going to marry.

What she thought about one or two good-looking young half-caste girls who were quite obviously favored by the master, or why the plantation seemed to be in trouble every now and then over the wives of the black laborers, nobody knew. I supposed, looking at her and her Early-Victorian smile of complete abstraction from all disagreeable subjects, that she simply declined to see.

As for Shirley, she kept her eyes on her plate, and only raised them once or twice to throw a glance in my direction. *Yes, look,* I thought; *I'm twenty-seven, tough, slim, and not ugly; a change from the brute you're going to marry. You'll be like others*—get away to Sydney as soon as you can, and spend his money there. The old aunt and the girl were poor; luxuries, delights unknown to them, would flow from the white milk of the Hævia trees. Would they pay for marriage with the greatest brute in the Shebas?

THE answer to that came sooner than I had expected. Shirley, rising from her seat at the end of the meal, looked back at Braddon.

Well, I thought, *if ever I marry, I'd cut my throat if my bride looked at me like that.*

I had a duty of inspection to do; Braddon and I, after lunch, tramped out into the deep-sea greenness of the shaded plantation roads. Immediately every thread of our clothing was dripping perspiration: our boots and puttees were plated over with glutinous red mud. It was usually like that here, except when the skies above the rubber canopy burst into roaring, drowning rains—and that was often. The rubber trees loved it; always, in their star-shaped avenues, they grew closer and closer, spread out more richly their sapid, trembling leaves.

"Where rubber flourishes"—what was the Brazilian proverb? Oh—I remembered. *"Where rubber flourishes, man decays."* Here the Sheba native workers stood climate and surroundings well but half-caste overseers were sickly; Braddon himself, whom I had not met before, was like something you stamp on when it runs out from under a stone. *Maybe I'm a bit prejudiced there,* I thought: *maybe that girl with the black eyes and red hair has hit me where I live. Something curiously piquant, unusual about her. Foreign, nearly, though her English is all right.... Attractive is the word; but who, for the love of Mike, does she remind me of?*

"This is the coagulating house," Braddon boomed in my ear. "That's latex, that milky stuff in the pans. We coagulate it with coconut water; you'll have seen the palms on the way up. Those sheets of rubber have been through the press. The smokehouse—

"Hey, Annelie, what are you doing here? It's not time to milk the cows yet. That's the dairy there; those are the cow-stalls. Real Jersey, grand cream," he added to me.

"I washing the glasses for Master," the little cook replied. She had a tray of them in her hands, and was carrying it to the dairy, from the kitchen.

"That's a marvelous worker," Braddon told me. "Cooks, cleans, milks, sweeps out the rubber houses, fetches the coconuts, digs the vegetable garden, looks after my old aunt and Shirley—I wish they were all like her."

I said, coolly: "She would be a worker. She's been worked for fifty years as no man with sense or decency would work bullocks. She's lived when hundreds died. She's seen and probably shared in every variety of crime outside of hell. Why, man, she's a *libérée.*"

"What's a liberry?" he asked, stopping short, with a crablike stare.

"Means, and doesn't mean, a freedwoman. New Caledonian convict escapee; that's what you've got for a cook. They stopped importing convicts forty-eight years ago, but life's life there; the old survivors are still prisoners, outside actual prison. Your Annelie must have got away with a party of fugitives, and survived them in that wreck. A good many used to escape to the Shebas and Fiji, but the French got wise to the trick, and set special guards. And you keep a woman like that in your house, along with the girl you're going to marry! Where did you find her?"

"She found me," Braddon said; "she walked all the way up from the port, to see a rubber plantation—she said. Asked me to keep her to cook, and attend on my aunt and Shirley. She'd give her eyes for Shirley; fair worships the girl. The idea of her harming Shirley!"

"Touch pitch—" I quoted. "She

must have been sent to New Caledonia when she was a girl herself, and almost certainly for murder."

Braddon laughed, the fat man's giggling laugh. "Well, if she has, she's paid for it. And there's nobody to murder here. It's going to rain like hell in another minute."

I could see that he did not wish to pursue the argument. A French cook was a gift from heaven, and as such, to be cherished. We ran for shelter to the nearest cover, which happened to be the dairy, and Braddon stood inside the door, dipping his fingers into a pan of setting cream, and licking them, pinching off bits of butter from the newly shaped pats, prodding the hung-up ripening cream cheeses. *If you're one of those continual eaters, you'll not see forty, in this climate,* I thought, looking down with some satisfaction at my own flat stomach. To dig your grave with your teeth was not my idea of enjoyment.

Outside, the rubber trees were rejoicing in the furious downpour. Annelie went past again in the rain, her clothes clinging, her hair like a coil of wet rope.

"She doesn't care about anything," Braddon said, with a certain pride. "Wet or sick, or hungry, she just goes on. You couldn't kill her with an axe, I verily believe."

The rain had ceased like a tap turned off. Through the lush canopy of leafage, here and there a dart of sun shot through. Braddon said—"Let's go back while we can," once more trailed his dirty fingers in the cream, and licked them, and turned to the house.

I was spending the night at the plantation. Late, when the flying foxes had tired of screaming among the palm trees, and gone to roost; when the sound of the river, swelled by rains, alone cut a swath through the tingling silence of the night, I heard from the site where Shirley slept, a faint half-stifled sobbing. And with it presently, a low, caressing voice. Whose? Not the aunt's, and certainly not Braddon's. I found myself wishing foolishly that it had been mine. I could fancy Shirley there in the moonlight, her red-gold hair outspread in an aureole about the little, too-white face, those strange black eyes of hers staring, dismayed, into the future that threatens penniless, pretty girls. I could fancy myself consoling her, telling her about a coral-stone cottage down in the port, and a young patrol officer who lived there between his journeyings. And about the air of the sea, warm, heavy sometimes with storms, but clean compared with the stifling, sapid heat of the plantation, where the rubber trees—the Hævias that drank men's lives as they drank rains—flourished, but where man decayed.

But was it the old cook who was murmuring to Shirley? And what comfort could she give, with the wedding fixed for two days hence, the wedding cake baked and iced, and the old lady who had adopted, and practically owned the girl, ready to take her share in the profits of this slave sale?

Annelie "would give her eyes for Shirley." But Shirley didn't want Annelie's eyes: she wanted escape, which, with everyone against her, she did not seem likely to get.

Next day the full heat of the nor'-west season fell upon Braddon's plantation, and left me, experienced traveler that I was, fairly gasping for breath. Glimpses of sky above the rubber trees were black with threatening thunder; not a leaf moved; the hot dampness of the air seemed to melt into the hot dampness of perspiring face and arms. Thirst had hold of me; before I went out to finish my inspection, I took one drink, one only, from the red clay watermonkey. Once you start drinking, on days like this, you cannot stop; you must go on until your throat becomes a mere waterpipe, useless for the quenching of the drought that afflicts you.

A trifle, this? Yes, but life and death, that day, were to hang upon the fact that the Braddon plantation lacked as yet, any equipment for refrigeration.

I passed through the coagulating house, noticing as I went the cool shining of the big troughs of latex, so exactly like milk that your eye could hardly tell the difference. The rubber trees on a day like this, shed their white blood so freely that the tappers had hard work to get through. They were coming in now with their big stable buckets full of latex. Among them I saw the little crooked figure of Annelie, carrying in one hand an empty cut-glass pint tumbler, of the ostentatious kind favored by the Braddon ménage.

Braddon had gone a good way downhill to look at his rubber nursery; I could see his gross figure laboring slowly up the winding hill path. I didn't want to talk to him; I was liking him less and less every minute. *It's not my business,* I kept thinking, *it's not my business, but—*

Young and active, I took the next hill quickly, and in a few minutes was out of sight and sound of all but the brooding trees and the faint *chip-chip* of tappers. The lines of the labor were my next objective; I had walked through them, questioned the head boy, and was setting down results in my notebook, when—

I have heard a wounded horse scream, back broken in a race; I have heard, what is worse, a giant crocodile belling its rage in the Sheba swamps; but I have never heard a cry like that which I heard, some half-hour after I had left the coagulating house. It tore through the rubber canopy, up the side of the hill. It was the voice of a man—Braddon. I turned and ran as hard as I could down the slippery path, toward the place where I had last seen him, toiling up the hill below the dairy. He was not there. He had apparently started to reach the plantation house, when, seized by the strange illness that had made him cry out, he had fallen by the way. When I found him, he was lying on his back with his legs drawn up, thrashing about in agony. He could not speak intelligibly; in the midst of his outcries, I could distinguish only the one word *"milk."*

"Do you want milk?" I asked, remembering that milk was the antidote for many poisons. An oath, cut short by sudden choking, was his only reply.

Plantation boys had come up to my hail; we carried him into the house, laid him, still struggling, on a couch, and sent a messenger on horseback down to the port—although I knew that the port doctor was likely to be away, and that even if he was there, he could do nothing. Braddon was dying—dying quickly. His face was the color of lead; he was breathing stertorously. Five minutes, and it was over.

I left him with the women, and went to the dairy. After all, I was the law, in a way; it behooved me to find the reason for this sudden death, if I could.

It was cool and dusk in the dairy; the morning's milk had been set out in china pans—they didn't use separators here. In the wide window opening, where glasses stood, there was an empty tumbler, stained with milk; it seemed to have been upset, for there were streaks and pools of milk on the slated table. Cautiously, I tasted the spillings. Milk, nothing else. A laborer, passing by with his tapping tools, paused and eagerly offered information. The Master had come up, very thirsty, and had seen the big glass of milk in the dairy window, and he had come in and taken it, and drunk it all off very quick. And then he went away along the path to the house, and by and by he was sick, and lay down. The Master was foolish not to know that it is dangerous to drink very quick a lot of cold milk, when you are very, very hot.

Thus the tapper, in broken English, excitedly. I could guess that the whole plantation was buzzing with

"You washed the glass, and put milk in it. You killed him!"

the news of Braddon's death, but that no one would dare to mention it.

I told the man to go back to his work. I scooped the remainder of the spilled milk into an empty aspirin flask that I had in my pocket, went down to the back of the house, and called the kitchen cat. She licked up the milk readily when I put it in a saucer, and seemed none the worse.

ANNELIE had come in, silently, as was her way. She stood by the doorway, watching. Her bright black eyes were as inexpressive as beads, but I thought the folds of linen she wore across her breast rose and fell more rapidly than usual.

"Annelie," I said, "what were you doing with that pint tumbler?"

"Tumbler?" she repeated.

"You know what I mean. An hour ago. You were passing the coagulating house with it in your hand."

"I took it out to wash," she replied unemotionally.

"You did not," I said. "You had a sink and a tap in the dairy. Just why did you take it to the coagulating house?"

She shook her head. "I don't understand."

At a guess, I said: "You filled it with latex. You put it where your master would find it. He drank it, and tried to reach the house, and fell down. You washed the glass, and put some milk in it afterward. You killed him!"

Still she said: "I don't understand." Her face was as innocent as that of a child. *Long practice,* I thought.

"You'll understand this," I told her, bending down to the tiled floor of the dairy, and touching a little pool of spilled white liquid. "Put that on your tongue."

She stayed still as an image. I put my smeared finger to my mouth. I had already noted that the liquid was beginning to set. "Latex," I said. "What is it doing here?"

"I do not know," was her answer.

There was silence for a moment. Outside, the sound of tappers at work had ceased; the low insistent talking of the river grew loud. The strange green frog that croaks out *"Murder, murder,"* was calling from the river bank below.

I turned and left her there. I knew that I would never be able to prove the truth—the clever trick that had induced Braddon to toss off the tumbler of latex, instead of milk. I had heard of such accidents among the native labor; I knew that the digestive juices of the stomach coagulated the latex immediately, turning it into a solid mass of rubber, and condemning the victim to a quick and agonizing death. But short of a post-mortem, impossible under the circumstances, who was to say that Braddon had not killed himself as many have done, by drinking a long cold drink when overheated? Weak heart, no doubt; high blood-pressure. It fitted.

ANNELIE did not wait for further questioning. Like a shadow, she slipped away among the trees, wrapping her little shoulder-shawl about her head for all protection against the rain. A corner of it dropped aside, heavy with water, and showed the convict brand *"T.F."* usually well hidden upon her shoulder. There was a mole there too—useful, I thought, for identification, if the authorities ever tried to recapture her. It was unusually shaped, rather like a dark butterfly. *Murder or no murder, you're for it, my lady,* I thought, *now that the French have made that agreement with the Governor of the Shebas, to relieve us of our* libéré" *immigrants. Like Guatemala and the Devil's Island. . . .*

I went back to the house, and tried to quiet down the women. I did not think Shirley was really distressed—shocked merely; but the old lady was weeping. She saw, in her narrow future, no easy life on the plantation, no rich adopted daughter to keep her in comfort, wherever she might be. I could not find it in my heart to be sorry for her, nevertheless, remembering with what sacrifice—not hers—she had intended to secure these advantages.

I said the usual things to both, and went away to fetch the native women, who would attend to the dead. In my mind, over and over again, one question asked itself: "Why, why? What grudge against Braddon, a man she hardly knew, could Annelie have cherished? Why destroy her

own position? A strong motive she must have had, strong as death, to bring death to this remote place, unhealthy and corrupting, but so far unstained by violence. And of whom, uncertainly, vexatiously almost, did she remind me?

She appeared from among the rubber trees, as I was passing, and seeming to know my errand, as she knew everything (that was like the convict tribe; nothing they did not know or guess, in New Caledonia or elsewhere). She halted me for a moment to tell me where I could find the women I wanted. She had tidied herself—drawn the shoulder handkerchief into its place, re-coiled her hair, which, still damp, showed now faint traces of its former red. Her black sparkling eyes, by far the youngest part of her, scanned me as if they would have read my soul. What question they were asking of me, I could not guess—then.

Suddenly she burst out laughing, a queer cackling laugh. "Go cut the wedding cake!" she said. I did not answer; I thought her remark in bad taste. I went on, and left her there, standing in the wet red pathway, still laughing.

Things galloped, after that. Braddon was buried. The port doctor arrived, and asked a few questions, and went away. I asked Shirley to marry me. And she consented.

Annelie, the all-knowing, knew about that as soon as it happened. And that night she disappeared. Not till next day did we find her, in the deepest pool of the river. She had not waited for the emissaries of New Caledonia. She had done what she chose to do, and gone.

It was a few days later, when the women were packing up their goods to go down to my coral-stone cottage by the sea, that the secret which had been hovering about my mind like a bat in a cave, suddenly came out into daylight. We had gone down to a gravelly pool in the river to bathe; the old aunt playing propriety on the bank, and I swimming leisurely about, waiting for Shirley to appear from the surrounding bushes. She did appear, in pale green shorts and brassière that set off to a marvel her white skin and red-gold hair. I looked at her, struck dumb. I could not have said a word. I did not even take notice of her slender beauty, thus becomingly displayed; I saw only one thing, a butterfly, a tiny black butterfly, low down on one shoulder.

Red hair, black eyes, the butterfly mole. . . . It was as if a house of thoughts had crashed about my head. Annelie's escape to the Shebas; the elderly aunt's adoption of the baby twenty years before; the fierce heart of the convict woman burning against the marriage of her child to a corrupt and cruel man; her ingenious and determined murder of Braddon. . . .

She was buried, and her secret with her, the secret she had so effectively kept. And I knew that I must keep it too. The sins of the mother should not be visited upon my Shirley.

We were married down in the port, and the old aunt came with us to the coral-stone cottage. There's a white sand beach there, and the blue of salt water, and the warm healing breath of the sea. And the coconuts ruffle gayly in the long tradewinds; and you could not grow a rubber tree, even if you tried.

The Man Who Saved Washington

It was an unhappy group that met at Philadelphia in 1792. The planning commission for the proposed city of Washington watched uneasily as Thomas Jefferson, head of the commission, prepared to call the meeting to order. The previous session had resulted in a serious quarrel between commissioners and hot-blooded Major Pierre Charles L'Enfant, the Revolutionary War veteran and French engineer who had drawn up an impressive set of plans for the future capital. Since then, the angered L'Enfant had returned to France.

"Let us take a cheerier view of the matter," someone suggested to Jefferson. "We had relied on L'Enfant to direct the building of the city, true—but consider, Mr. Jefferson, that these have been described as the most complete as well as the most artistic plans ever made for a city system. Surely we have engineers who can carry out these plans."

"Yes, we have," admitted the thoughtful Jefferson, "but I'm afraid, gentlemen, that you do not yet know the worst. When Major L'Enfant returned to France, he took every drawing with him. As you know, no one worked with him. Except for the few meetings when he permitted us a glimpse of his sketches, he was the only one to see them. Therefore, we must begin over again."

"But we have no funds for that!" protested a commissioner. "And when Congress learns of the lost plans, they may refuse to appropriate more money to men who have nothing to show for the first grant." Others around the table nodded solemnly, and Jefferson turned to Benjamin Banneker, one of the first men he had appointed to the group.

"Mr. Banneker," he said, "if any of us has a solution for this problem, I know it is you. In your Almanac, each year, you enlighten not only the nation, but the world. Can you tell us what to do?"

"I think I can, Mr. Jefferson," Banneker answered softly. "You see, there is no problem. I have studied the drawings whenever Major L'Enfant brought them here, and now I carry them in my head. Give me an evening in my room, and I shall give you the plans for our new national capital."

The Marylander was as good as his promise. Entirely from memory, he reproduced the L'Enfant sketches and presented them to the astounded commissioners. Work began at once, and today's Washington is still in the pattern revised by Pierre L'Enfant and recalled in perfect detail by Benjamin Banneker.

Incredible as the feat seems, it was not an unusual accomplishment for the gifted Banneker. Though self-taught, he had an enormous fund of knowledge in almost every profession and skill of that day. As a boy, he developed himself into one of the best surveyors in Maryland, and at twenty-two made a clock that not only kept time but also struck the hours—one of the first clocks to be made in the new world!

A friend loaned him the finest available books on astronomy, and within a few weeks Banneker mastered the subject so thoroughly that he discovered dozens of errors in the books. Eventually, he turned to publishing an annual Almanac, one of the earliest but best ever issued in the United States. Thomas Jefferson looked forward to each edition, and sent many copies to the leading citizens of European countries.

When Jefferson was charged with the creation of the nation's new capital, he was quick to ask Banneker to serve on the planning commission. After salvaging L'Enfant's plans with his amazing memory, the versatile genius became recognized as the key member of the group, making many valuable contributions to the building of Washington.

By 1806, when he died at the age of 75, the city he had made possible was the talk of the world's diplomats. President Thomas Jefferson paused in the duties of his office to pay homage to his friend, Benjamin Banneker—surveyor, astronomer, mathematician, inventor, author—and the first Negro to take a leading rôle in the development of the United States.

—by Kenneth Leland Burks

No Guard at All

WILLY SHANE walked beneath the ancient trees, sniffing the November air. The old buildings filled his eyes and soul as they had from the beginning, when he had first seen Kings College. He cut across the brown grass toward the Library because he was no longer a freshman and was allowed this privilege to so distinguish him. He had an English theme to make up before Saturday, and the Coach had cautioned him about grades. The Coach had actually gone out of his way to speak seriously with Willy Shane.

He was five feet seven, and he weighed one hundred and fifty-five pounds; and the Coach, whose name was Hank Grady, had not always been kind to Willy Shane. In fact, Grady had tried unsuccessfully to chase him clear off the practice field in spite of his big year as a frosh football player. The Coach, of course, could not believe in a linesman Willy's size.

A voice boomed, "Hey, Willy!" and he turned, grinning. Georgie Respelli was lumbering toward him. Only, Georgie merely appeared to lumber because of his size. He was six-four, and tipped them at two-forty, but actually he was graceful as a cat.

Willy said: "What's the word, Georgie?"

The big man had a face like a pie, round and solemn. He said: "Coach wants me to talk to you. About that Bob Harrigan."

Willy tried to match strides with the big line-backer. "Harrigan I know. Don't let anyone fool you; he is terrific. I played four years against Harrigan."

"Yeah, yeah," said Georgie patiently. "I know. But what's to do about him? A little guy—I'll squish him to pulp."

Willy grinned up at his friend. "You sure, Georgie?"

They paused on the steps to the Library. Georgie scratched his cropped head. "I would have been sure. Only now I ain't."

"Bob Harrigan: One fifty-five, same as me. Runs the hundred in nine-seven. Cuts on a dime, give you five cents change in pennies. Sees out of the back of his head. Tough as a boarding-house steak. Midstate's greatest ground-gainer on the ground-est-gainin' team in the country. You're going to squish him?"

"How do we stop him? Coach says this, he says that. Then he says to see you."

Willy said proudly: "Every defensive player on the squad has seen me about Harrigan."

"So what?"

Not so proudly, Willy said: "You got to get close to him before he starts. And you got to hit him, and let him know it."

"What happened in prep school with you two?"

Willy coughed. "Uh—they always beat us."

"But you stopped Harrigan?"

"No," said Willy sadly. "I never stopped him."

Georgie said bewilderedly: "Then the Coach is nuts!"

There was a small silence. Then Willy said: "You think so?"

"We-ell. Maybe not. But you can't *tell* us anything?"

"Only that Harrigan is murder. And when you watch him, that full-back Firestone, he takes over. You saw the Midstate movies. You saw them."

"Is that all you got to say?"

Willy nodded. "Except that I'm going to play left guard."

GEORGIE put a hand on Willy's shoulder. "Look, you are my friend. I like you, Willy. And I admit you showed us plenty in scrimmage. Everyone admits it. And when Coach used you in a game, you fooled them good. And you hit as hard as some big men. But Willy, you have played maybe an hour of football in games, and you are a very small guy. Are you *sure* the Coach isn't over the hill mentally?"

"You back up the line. I'll play in it," said Willy. "I've been a guard all my life. Leave it to me."

"In prep school it is different—" Georgie began. Then he stopped. It was familiar ground. Everyone connected with Kings football had been over it again and again. Hank Grady still entertained some screwy idea about Willy Shane playing in the middle of the line. Georgie said: "All right. I will look again at the movies of Harrigan running wild against Ohio State, Illinois, Notre Dame, Northwestern and U.S.C.; then I will try to think how are we going to stop him, especially you."

"That's right," nodded Willy. He went into the library and delved into a heavy tome.

WHEN Willy returned to his room on the edge of the campus, he found Head Coach Hank Grady awaiting him. The lean man was sitting in Willy's best chair, smoking a cigar and staring at the ceiling. He was a baldish man with tanned, seamy features and clever, alert brown eyes. He said: "Willy, maybe I'm as crazy as everyone thinks. I only wish you were faster."

"I never was a fast runner," Willy admitted, dropping his books onto a table and sitting on a straight chair. "I can get off fast, but I haven't got speed."

"You're a half-pint; you're a slow runner, you lack experience." Grady shook his head. "You're practically no guard at all. Muldoon weighs two hundred, and is swift and experienced. The only thing is—I *know* Muldoon can't trap Harrigan on those cut-backs and reverses."

Willy said humbly: "Coach, maybe we're both crazy."

"You are, or you wouldn't be out for guard. As for me, I'm beginning to wonder. Would you mind going over this Harrigan problem with me again?"

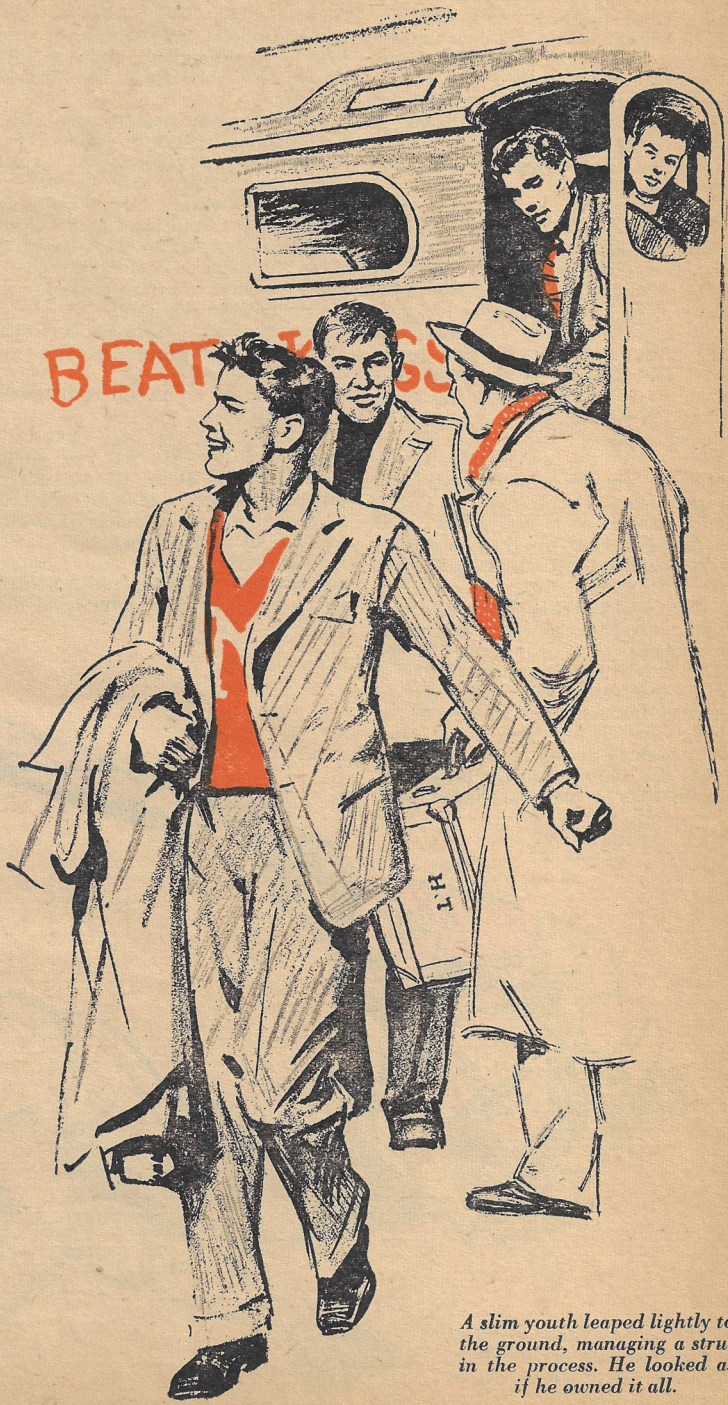
Willy closed his eyes: "He's tricky. He uses his elbows in close like a prize-fighter. He'll belt out your biggest man if he gets a clean shot at him. He talks all the time. He's all ego—and backs up everything he says. He's the real brains of the team, though Oberman calls most signals. Seidler and Oberman and Firestone are perfect blockers for him. Once away, nobody on our squad can catch him. In a broken field he is Grange all over again, maybe better, surely faster."

After a half-hour of this, Grady sighed. "You make me feel a little

Lots of people thought the Coach was crazy to play such a small man at guard. But the little guy had something special.

by
WILLIAM COX

Illustrated by O. F. SCHMIDT



A slim youth leaped lightly to the ground, managing a strut in the process. He looked as if he owned it all.

better. You make me feel like we are going to be beaten by Superman, Hoppy, and Kukla, Fran and Ollie rolled into one. If I hadn't seen pictures of this Harrigan, I wouldn't believe a word you are saying."

"Four years," said Willy. "Four years he beat out our brains. We had a better team—he beat us single-handed. Because he is not much bigger than me, nobody thought of him as college material. The last time I saw him he said: 'So-long, Willy, you won't be playing in my league ever again.' That's the way he is."

Grady allowed his eyelids to droop. He said softly: "You'll be playing in his league Saturday, Willy. They may send us to the booby hatch on Sunday. But Saturday afternoon is ours."

He was a nice guy, the Coach, thought Willy. He was a smart one, an old Kings man, a former All America here at one of America's oldest institutions. He was part and parcel of the Kings tradition.

Football was a big thing at Kings, but it was not everything. Footballers had to make grades. They got aid in scholarship but no convertible autos, no cash sums under the table. They lived a Spartan life; they got the finest education. They played the game because they loved it, and even the hardest-boiled played it because he loved Kings.

HANK GRADY was part of this. He was no martinet, no big name for newspaper headlines, but he knew football and the boys who indulged in the pastime. He was a schemer and a thinker, and when the schedule-makers handed him a tough intersectional game like this one with Mid-state, he figured to come close to winning. To be routed would always kill him—it had happened in his time; to lose honorably, merely hurt. He wanted to win, and in a quiet way all the Kings men wanted always to win. It was not a hooraw tradition, and they often lost. But they never liked it, and winning seemed natural and right when they wore the Gold and Black.

Willy loved it all. He was not on scholarship. He had earned the mon-

ey to enter, and was helped by his parents and had a little newspaper correspondence deal with a few papers in his home State. He did very well. And every day he fell deeper in love with Kings and the things it stood for in his mind. Grady had once said he was the last of the romanticists and Willy had been abashed, but Grady hadn't meant it that way, and he proved it by trying Willy at the guard position on defense.

So everyone thought both were crazy.

It was a great day for it, Willy Shane thought. The sun shone, a pale November sun, its rays cooled by brisk, bracing air. There was little wind, but people brought blankets and crowded cheerfully together in the old Kings Stadium. They could have sold this out in any huge field the country afforded, but it was to be played before thirty-five thousand in the rural Kings setting.

Kings was this season undefeated; Midstate was all-conquering since the beginning of the year past. Coach Ollie Carson of Midstate was a national hero, Harrigan the new meteor which slashed across the collegiate sky. Kings was—Kings.

That's what Willy Shane kept saying to himself as he went through the memorable day. Kings was Kings. The stalwarts who would play that day were calm men, not given to heroics; but they were steeped in the belief that all men were equal, once they donned pads and cleated shoes.

At the light luncheon he sat between Georgie and Dan Strout, who would play tackle alongside him this afternoon. Georgie would be behind him. Al Kline played the other guard. Owny Dargin was the line-backer who paired with Georgie on defense. Across the table, Kline talked privately to Muldoon, a bewildered young man who subscribed fully to the theory that the Coach had flipped his wig.

Muldoon kept looking at Willy, not in animosity, but in wonderment. Mechanically, Muldoon was a good player, Willy knew. He was strong, durable and willing. He lacked only imagination. Willy had long known what Harrigan and his blockers would do to Muldoon. Coach Grady knew, also. But how could Muldoon know, Willy thought charitably.

Georgie said: "You got a better appetite than anybody. How do you do it?"

Strout said: "This kid is all gone. Away and gone."

"Who wants to live forever?" laughed Willy. He felt real good. He had looked at the pictures again just before lunch. He hadn't learned a thing new, but it had been worth while to sit through them and watch Harrigan run. Keeler and Terance and Maskow, the wings and defensive safety, had been there, wincing at the thought of trying to catch Harrigan in a broken field. Willy knew their discomfort and sympathized with them.

Georgie said: "Willy, if I did not know you, I would say you thought we were going to have a field day."

"That's up to the runners and passers," said Willy.

"Gone!" marveled Strout. "Real gone."

They went over to the clubhouse, which was covered with ivy and roosted opposite the entrance to the Stadium. This was an ancient building, and the visitors dressed in its other section. Willy waited on the steps.

The bus pulled up, stopped. The Midwest players began piling out. Willy just stood on the steps under the ivy and watched. A slim, slope-shouldered youth leaped lightly to the ground, managing a strut in the process. He had red hair and freckles and a turned-up nose and a jaw like granite. He stared about. He looked as if he owned it all.

Willy said: "Hey, Harrigan."

Willy struck the redhead amidships with his shoulder. Harrigan went piling out of bounds.

The redhead peered, scowled, then grinned broadly. "Hey, Willy! I made a mistake about you. I see you're in the league, even if you didn't improve your standing."

"I like what I'm doing," said Willy.

"Well, fine," shrugged Harrigan. "See you, boy. Got to get ready to lace your buddies right now." He swaggered into the dressing-room.

Willy watched while the great Midstate back went out of view. Then he nodded to himself and joined his mates in the Kings side of the building.

He dressed with great care. A trainer named Obie Hill saw to bandages around his ankle, to slight but important extra padding. He stretched out on a bench apart from the others, and listened to Hank Grady's pre-game instructions. The even, cool voice of the Coach was soothing.

But he kept thinking about the arrogance of Bob Harrigan; he kept thinking back over the years. He kept thinking of his own preference for playing close up in the line on defense. It was all very clear and simple in his mind.

He trotted out with the rest. The old park was really jammed. They were standing up around the rim, with the old trees towering above them, and everyone was yelling, mostly for Kings, for the Midstate team was far from home. The people looked like blackberries in a yellow bowl from where Willy stared; and then they did not look like anything, for he had forgotten all but the ball-game.

He did not start the game. Kings won the toss, and Muldoon was elected to play the guard spot. That was smart of Grady, Willy thought, making it up to Muldoon by allowing him to start the game.

Midstate's tackle, Anker, booted the ball from the tee. All the Kings men stood along the sideline and howled. The ball came down to Al Dale, and he started up the funnel, but the Midstates were valiant, and he was downed on the twenty-five.

HANK GRADY had things up his sleeve. Manning called Kings into the single wing and sent Wreck Hogarth powering at the tackle. Wreck gained four yards. Manning set it again, with all the brawn of fresh, eager blockers ahead of the runner. Wreck hammered for five yards, making it third and one to go.

Once more they went into the single wing, and Midstate dug in, frantic, outraged, disbelieving. Wreck lowered his head and roared at them.

But Manning had stepped back. He had bootlegged the ball. Now he leaped like a salmon in a sunlit stream, and cocked his arm and let go of the ball. Gallagher had buttonhooked into a spot in the flat already occupied by Strout and Fred Ganzler. He began running. Willy admired the way Gallagher ran, using his blockers, then cutting away and chasing for the corner. Siebert of Midstate caught him there. Gallagher fought like a Celtic king of yore. They fell over the goal together.

Everyone but Willy danced with glee. Manning was setting up the conversion. He stood beside Hank Grady and listened while the Coach said: "Now they will really come. Hold out a few plays, Willy. I want to see something."

THE Midstate line, huge and boiling with rage, rose up and smeared Manning's try, and it was only six for Kings.

Willy said: "That's as good as no touchdown at all. Harrigan *never* gets one blocked. Better let me go in, Coach."

Grady muttered: "It doesn't make sense." But he nodded.

Willy put on his headguard. He saw Harrigan and the others of the Midstate ground-gaining backfield come on. He trotted out and posed a moment, hands on hips, looking at Harrigan.

Harrigan saw him, all right. The redhead stopped in his tracks. He stared hard and long. Then he went to Oberman, the quarterback and spoke quickly and earnestly.

Then Willy was lining up, and Strout was kicking off. There was a nice, tight feeling in Willy's middle; his nerves tingled pleasantly and he was slightly frightened, which was proper and fitting to keep a man from being too confident. Toe hit ball, and Willy began to run.

He got away quicker than anyone, but soon fell behind. He was in the second wave. White jerseys came hurtling down to block against black jerseys with gold stripes. There was grunting and crunching of bodies.

Harrigan had the ball. He was streaming for the sideline, blockers ahead. Willy shifted over. Big men hurtled at him, but he was a difficult target, and he had peripheral vision and an instinct for avoiding contact inaugurated by others.

Harrigan was over the thirty, running like a wild mare. Willy figured the angle defended by Seidler, the big blocking back of Midstate. He eased in.

Suddenly he made that fast start, ducked under Seidler's lunging attack. He came up alongside Harrigan, struck the redhead amidships with his shoulder. Harrigan went piling out of bounds. He rolled over and over, and wound up at the feet of Ollie Carson, the Midstate Coach.

Willy scowled. Harrigan had come to the thirty-five. There was nothing in knocking him out there on the kick-off return. The referee brought the ball in. Willy moved into the groove at left guard, and stood rolling up his sleeves, eying the Midstate giants.

They stared back in puzzled disbelief. Coach Carson stared in perplexed doubt, called out a man, sent in a rangy fellow wearing Number 19 —Yarnow was his name. Yarnow lined up opposite Willy.

Harrigan's voice came to him: "It's some wise-guy fake by Grady. Hit him! Come on, Obie."

Harrigan talked too much. Willy spat on his hands. Midstate got the signal, formed the T. Yarnow crouched like a bobcat, his eyes slanting at Willy from under his helmet. The ball snapped back.

It was a quick-opening, right at Willy, with Firestone carrying. This Firestone had legs of steel and a bowed back like a wrestler. He hit like a ton of pig iron.

Willy shifted. Yarnow, coming up and under, went flat on his face. Firestone came into the hole.

Willy filled it, using that quick start. His small frame seemed to wrap itself into a package no bigger than a Christmas parcel-post present from Aunt Mathilda. Then it uncoiled slightly. Then it hit against the huge Firestone.

Georgie was right there behind him. It seemed as if Georgie slew the dragon on the line of scrimmage. But as they unpiled, it was Willy up close, and Firestone looking as if this could not happen in a reasonable world.

Georgie reached out and with one hand plucked Willy from earth and stood him erect. He said mildly: "Nice goin', little friend. I reckon that Firestone's not so hot, after all."

FIRESTONE glared, walking to the huddle, chin on shoulder, eying Willy. Harrigan was chattering at the quarterback. Midstate made its plan. Willy stood straight, arms bared, gravely watching, his trained football mind working over the possibilities.

To his mind it was obvious when Seidler went out as flanker that Oberman was listening to Harrigan. Firestone chuffed and huffed. Oberman faked. Then Harrigan came slicing in where Yarnow cleared the way.

It was clear, because Willy never could afford to let them use their beef against him. He allowed it to be cleared. Then he went to work.

Harrigan had the speed and the toughness of a cayuse. He whirled into the hole. There was a blur of action, of flying arms and legs.

The referee unpiled them. Beneath the heap lay Harrigan. He had

gained a measly two yards. Latched fast to him in a death-grip was Willy.

Harrigan got up and screeched: "Where is that blockin'?"

Willy said: "Didn't get a square shot at you, Red. Next time I'll really hit you."

His jaw hurt where Harrigan's elbow had struck, but he did not think much of that, knowing the redhead. Harrigan, he figured, was a fighter from his toes. A real good one, a champion. Nothing was foul if it gained ground. Willy had expected the elbow from Harrigan.

It was now third down and seven and a half yards to go for Midstate. Willy squinted at Oberman, saw the quarterback make up his mind, still Harrigan with a word. Midstate came, and the ball went into play.

Yarnow allowed Willy to sidestep and maneuver. Firestone allowed himself to be battered down into the hole. Willy yipped, "Pass play!" as he tried to get through to harass Oberman. The quarterback flipped out to Harrigan, who drew back his arm and pitched one.

Foley took it over his shoulder. Keeler hit him, but it was first down for Midstate on the midfield marker.

Harrigan shrilled: "That's the way to go in there! Here we go, all the way!"

A real pepper-upper, thought Willy, *that's Harrigan. Now he will run. Not inside, but off the tackle. Now he will show his stuff and we've got to stop him, or he will be all over us and they will kill us. They will run us off the field if he gets that tail up and begins to believe he can wreck us.*

He waited long enough, moving his wiry body out of Yarnow's path. Then he dug through, cut and launched his big jump. Harrigan, true enough, was slanting off the tackle.

Willy hit him from the blind side. He measured it, and when he hit it was with everything he had. The collision came at the scrimmage line.

Harrigan's headguard flew off. Harrigan's mouth opened in a gasp. He loosed his grip on the ball. Willy reached slyly and punched. The ball rolled around, and Willy did another of his quick leaps. He fell on the ball. Several big men fell on Willy.

It was pretty black down there for a moment, but he came up, head cleared, in time to hear Harrigan wail: "The little son stole the ball!"

Georgie had Willy by the elbow, steadying him. He said mildly: "You got a bloody nose, Willy. That boy is loose with his elbows, huh? I'll remember it."

Willy said: "Oh, Red's all right. He means well."

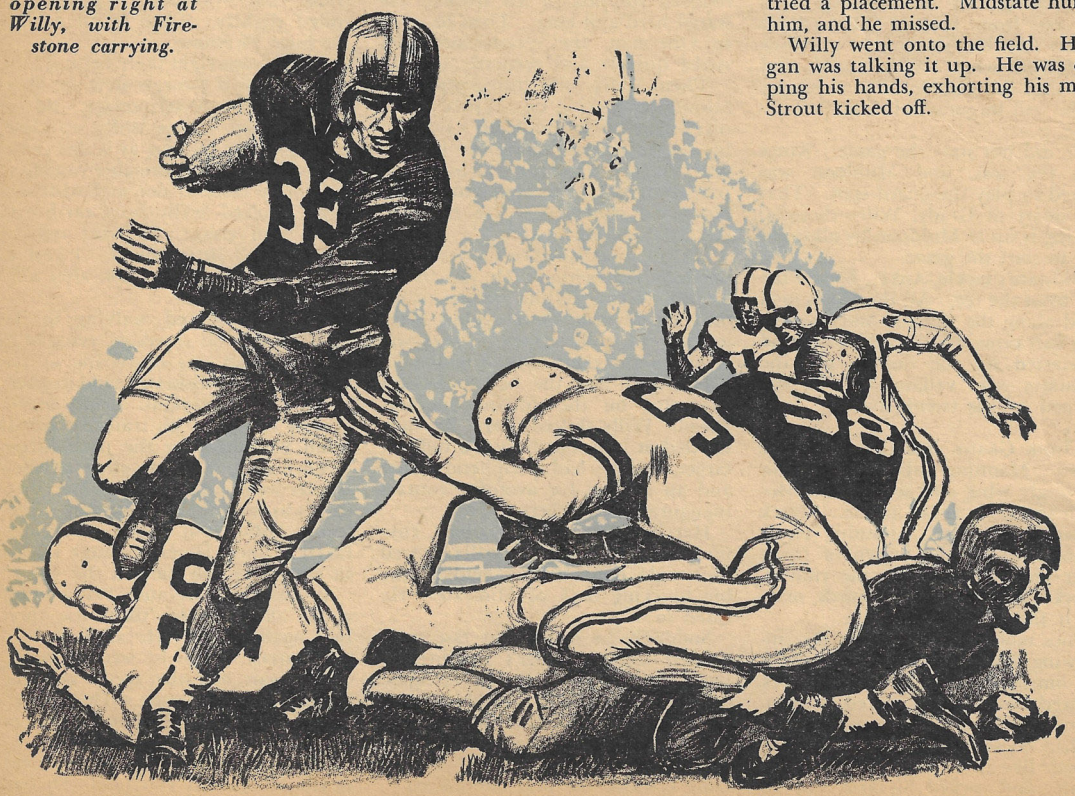
They walked off without even looking at Harrigan. They walked into a blast of organized cheering that nearly swept Willy from his feet. He heard his name, and blinked. He could not refrain from pausing there a moment, staring up into the stands, seeing the crowd now as individuals waving their arms, red-faced with yelling, praising his name.

Grady was smiling gently. He put his arm around Willy and said: "Not yet, they haven't proved us crazy."

"It's early," said Willy. He could not feel triumphant after that brief moment of happiness, because he knew about Harrigan, he knew about the Midstate team. He sat on the bench and watched.

Bud Manning knew his business. It was necessary to score again to cement that measly six-point lead. He opened up with everything Grady had given them. He emptied the bag. He led Kings down to the fifteen-yard line—and there Midstate rose and denied farther advance. On fourth down Manning went back and tried a placement. Midstate hurried him, and he missed.

Willy went onto the field. Harrigan was talking it up. He was clapping his hands, exhorting his mates. Strout kicked off.



It was a quick-opening right at Willy, with Firestone carrying.

Grady was smiling gently. "Not yet, they haven't proved us crazy."

Again Willy drifted in the second wave. Two men tried to pinch him, which was a great honor indeed. He let them whack against each other. He saw Harrigan attempting to get into a broken field with a crisscross, and remembered Red's old trick and waylaid him on the thirty-two.

Red tried to give him the hip, then the stiff-arm to the throat, coming up with it. Willy tucked in his chin. He took off. He made no attempt to wrap arms about the elusive, wriggling running back. He was satisfied with hitting him.

It was a sharp, crackling, electric collision. Harrigan went one way. Willy went the other. Willy bounced like a rubber ball, coming to his feet.

Harrigan arose more slowly. He shook his head. His blue eyes found Willy. He started to say something, stopped. He merged into the Midstate huddle.

They came very hard and brave, with a lot of good deception and fine running. And they met a Kings line and Kings backers-up, who fought them with skill, with coolness, with sure knowledge. The game became a dog-fight up front. Midstate had the brilliant backs. Kings had the Kings spirit and know-how, gleaned from usage and Hank Grady.

WILLY took his lumps. They knocked him about on a play now and then. It hurt, just as it hurt anyone, big or little, but it did not hurt any more because it was Willy. He was leather-tough, he was loving it.

On the sideline he rested, always under Grady's wing, listening to the canny Coach. The half ended.

In the dressing-room Georgie said: "They are very good. But we are doing it to them." He would not go away from Willy. They all sort of crowded around Willy, not saying much, because at Kings it is not proper to single out one man for praise during a ball game. He could feel them around him, and it was the most wonderful thing that could ever happen to him in the world.

Grady cautioned them, smiled at them, sent them out.

Midstate, receiving, came like a refreshed giant. Willy hit Firestone, and Firestone snarled and came again. Harrigan ran. . . .

It was strange, but Harrigan was not flashing today. He was always a threat, a dangerous man. Loose, he would score; but even around the ends, Harrigan never quite turned the corner.

Willy could not possibly reach him on every play. Often it was Georgie or Al Kline or one of the ends. Seldom was it necessary for the wingbacks to dump Harrigan. He seldom got that far.

And to the amazement and edification of all, Midstate could not score. The six points against Kings on the scoreboard, the 0 against Midstate began to look as though the numerals had grown there.

There was an exchange of kicks, and Midstate had the ball at midfield and the two-minute signal went in. Grady said:

"This will be about it, Willy. If they score, they will win."

Willy nodded. He did not waste energy on speech. He donned his sweaty headgear and trotted out to meet the enemy.

Harrigan, he saw at once, was bursting with it. He jawed at Oberman, a weary, baffled Oberman. The Midstates huddled.

Willy looked at Strout, at Masotsky and the others. They looked back at Willy. Georgie said: "Easy does it." They all had their heads up.

Oberman tried a pass. It fell incomplete. The Midstate line seemed to loosen. They had been trying to mousetrap Willy all afternoon, but had failed. He hesitated now.

Then Oberman was handling the ball, and Midstate backs were running in all directions, and there was a space through which Willy could go. He started in.

Yarnow came hurtling at him. He had committed himself now. Willy stopped, dropped to his knees. Yarnow flew over him.

Kneeling there, he saw Harrigan almost atop him. On the slickest of reverses, Harrigan came, knees high. He could take two steps and accidentally kick Willy's teeth down his throat. He could ride with those knees and smash Willy and there was a chance he would get clean away, because in that position, off balance, Willy could not get any power into play. Whatever happened, Willy knew in an instant's flash, there would be rue and arnica at its completion.

Harrigan's blue eyes flashed. He came swirling and driving, close to the ground, seeking only to get through and into the nest of blockers forming for this play which would end the game in glory for Midstate.

At the last possible moment he swerved. He cross-stepped, shifting the ball, doubling away from Willy.

Willy reached out one hand. He struck it against Harrigan's shoe.

Georgie threw off two blockers. He gave another the hip. As Harrigan faltered for one-tenth of an instant, Georgie came like a felled tree atop him.

Harrigan went flat as a pancake.

Georgie got up. Willy got up. Harrigan lay still. They had to come and get the redhead. Nothing was broken, Willy thought, but Red was plain used up, and his breath was knocked out of him. He scarcely groaned when they carried him away. Willy walked a few steps after the stretcher. He was aware that he hated to see Harrigan go off like that.

Then he went back and finished up the remaining moments, clobbering Harrigan's sub for a loss, forcing Midstate to punt, so that Manning might freeze the ball and let the clock run out.

Manning did this with great skill. The scoreboard seemed to glitter and glisten—*Kings 6, Midstate 0.* . . .

Willy came out of the Kings half of the clubhouse. The bus was waiting. Some of the Midstate players already were in it, heads down, wondering no doubt what had happened to them.

A door opened. Red Harrigan came limping out. He looked quickly, saw Willy.

"Thought you'd be here," he said.

Neither made the first move. They drifted toward each other by mutual consent. Willy said: "Took me a long time, figuring you out, remembering things."

Red said: "Yeah. I had four years of it, foolin' you."

Willy said: "I got to thank you. Know what I mean?"

"Sure." Red's cockiness asserted itself. "I made you. Wasn't for me, you wouldn't be great."

"Well—thanks," said Willy.

"Uh—your eye." Harrigan's assurance departed. "Guess I gave you the elbow."

"Why not?" asked Willy reasonably. "You got a right."

They were silent a moment, not looking at each other. Then Red said: "Well—congratulations. You guys deserved to win. 'Specially you."

"Well—thanks," said. Willy. "See you next year?"

Harrigan drew himself up to his full, inconsiderable height. "We'll beat out your brains next year!"

"You'll try," mocked Willy. "Just like today!"

Harrigan got into the bus. Willy stood and watched it fill, watched it pull out. Georgie Respelli came from the clubhouse and stood beside him.

"Some game!" said Georgie. "Some Harrigan!"

"We weren't crazy," sighed Willy. "I was really scared we were." Then he said: "I wonder why Red didn't run me down on that last play of his? He could have ruined me."

Georgie said: "Because he's a real football player. He knew he could hurt you—but he knew you'd nail him. He couldn't see me comin'."

"Yeah," said Willy. "Guess that's it."

He would always wonder about it, he knew. He felt a great warm thing about Red Harrigan. Better that he should wonder. If he got to thinking Red had chosen not to hurt him so late in the game, it would not be so good next year. Better to wonder—and prepare for the worst.

He walked beside Georgie beneath the great trees of Kings. Nothing could ever be greater than this, nothing ever in his life, he knew as surely as anyone can ever be allowed to have knowledge about himself. —The End

Revolt

THE WORM—OR RATHER, THE RACCOONS—TURN AGAINST THEIR TORMENTORS IN THIS FANTASY—

by BASIL DICKEY

Illustrated by Charles Chickering

BILL CURTIS and Sam Ormsby shared a cabin on Bush Creek, where they ran their trap lines. During the summer they both got themselves jobs on some of the farms in the neighborhood and turned in a good day's work for a pair of old duffers crowding fifty. They didn't make friends, both of them being silent men, not to say surly. Folks used to wonder how either of them could get along with the other one, cooped up as they were in that one-room cabin on Bush Creek. Maybe the answer to that was the applejack. No matter how skimpy the trapping got nor how low other supplies got, there were always two five-gallon demijohns of applejack in the cabin, one in Bill's bunk and one in Sam's.

Anyhow, come fall and the first nip of frost in the air, they'd give up whatever farm jobs they might be doing at the time and start oiling up their gear for the trapping season. By the time the first snow came, which was usually early in September, they'd have their lines run out and ready for business. They worked the traps separately, one going upstream and the other down, but they pooled their take so there was never any argument about who owned what. They never talked to each other long enough to start an argument, except when they'd each had a couple of mugs of applejack and then they were almost cheerful. They'd never had any real trouble until the day Bill came in and announced that he'd seen the track of a coon. Sam, who was about to pour himself a drink, set the mug back on the table and looked scornfully at his partner.

"Ain't been a coon in these parts in nigh onto ten years," he said, "unless you're referrin' to the colored gent

of the Wild Folk

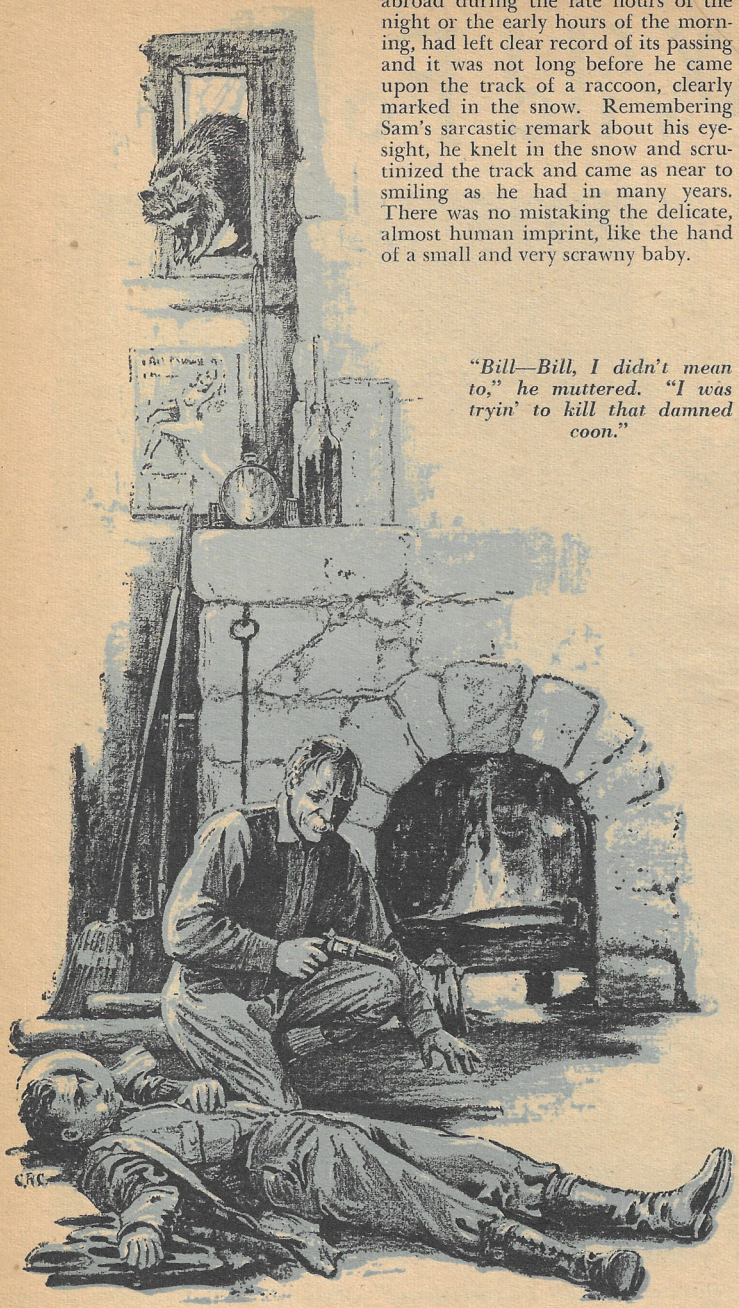
that helped Amos Kirk with the harvest, last fall."

"I ain't referring to no gent, colored or white. I'm speakin' about a raccoon, one o' them ring-tailed critters. You insinuatin' I wouldn't know a coon track when I see it?"

"You'd know it, if you seen it," Sam answered, "an' by the way, that spectacle-peddler was in the neighborhood last week. Might be a good idea if you hunted him up and got yourself a pair." He filled his mug, took a long drink and sat down at the table.

"Don't shoot, Bill! I'll come down."

Bill glared at him, while he tried to think of a good answer, and couldn't. He was sure he'd seen a coon track and he'd like to have taken Sam out to the place and prove it, but it was nearly a three-mile tramp and it would be dark, long before they could get there. Also, it had begun to snow again and whatever he had seen would have disappeared by now. Making no reply to Sam's insult, he went to his bunk, pulled out his demijohn and had a drink. Then they got supper together, jerked venison, sourdough bread, a can of greengages and boiled coffee. They ate in silence, washed up the dishes and went to bed, still without speaking. However, this was not unusual. Except for occasionally dis-



"Bill—Bill, I didn't mean to," he muttered. "I was tryin' to kill that damned coon."

cussing the take of the day, or the prospects for tomorrow, they seldom talked to each other.

Before sunup next morning, Bill was afoot and trudging northward. A clean white blanket of snow lay over the land and over the ice on Bush Creek. Every creature that had been abroad during the late hours of the night or the early hours of the morning, had left clear record of its passing and it was not long before he came upon the track of a raccoon, clearly marked in the snow. Remembering Sam's sarcastic remark about his eyesight, he knelt in the snow and scrutinized the track and came as near to smiling as he had in many years. There was no mistaking the delicate, almost human imprint, like the hand of a small and very scrawny baby.

The trail came from underneath a growth of scrub cedars and he had followed it less than fifty yards when it ended at the base of a big oak tree. Claw marks on the tree trunk and a few mottled gray hairs, caught in the bark, showed the course the creature had taken and he looked up quickly, searching for a hole in the tree. Instead he saw the animal itself, crouched upon a branch, no more than thirty feet above his head, an aged raccoon, almost entirely gray, except for the black marking of the face and the rings about the tail.

Bill's hand tightened on the small-bore rifle he held. This was far better than he had hoped. At sight of the track he had instantly decided to drag Sam to the spot and force him to take back the slur on his eyesight. Now he could take the carcass of the coon back to the cabin and shove it, all wet and bleeding, into Sam's face. Very slowly he raised the rifle, pressing the stalk gently against his shoulder; but as he caught the head of the raccoon in his sights, it opened its mouth and spoke.

"Don't shoot, Bill! I'll come down."

ACCORDING to legend, this was the remark a raccoon was supposed to have made to Davy Crockett, or one of the other pioneers, but Bill Curtis wasn't much of a reader and probably wasn't aware that the gag had been lifted from American history and it is quite likely that the raccoon was entirely innocent of plagiarism. At any rate, it began climbing down the trunk of the tree, coming down tail first, instead of head first, as a squirrel would have done. Meanwhile, Bill stood frozen in his tracks, his mouth wide open, watching the descent. He took a hurried step backward as the coon dropped lightly into the snow at his feet. His knees felt weak and he sat down on a nearby stump. For a long minute they looked at each other. Then Bill spoke, having some difficulty with his tongue.

"Di-di-did you say something?"

"Of course I said something," the raccoon answered. "I said: 'Don't shoot!' Think I was going to sit up there and let you fill me full of lead?"

Bill was almost as much startled by the second speech as the first. He was far from a talkative man among his own kind and carrying on a casual conversation with a wild creature of the woods was difficult, to put it mildly. With an effort, he managed:

"H-how come you can talk?"

"We've understood human conversation for several generations, but only a few of us have managed to master your rather silly method of articulation. I hope I'm not using words that are out of your range."

"I know what you're talking about, if that's what you mean," Bill answered. The coon didn't reply and after a short silence Bill said, "I wish Sam could see you."

"That's your partner, isn't it?"

Bill nodded. "We had a argument last night, as to whether I'd seen a coon—excuse me—a raccoon track in the snow. Sam's a thick-headed cuss.

Don't believe nothin' he ain't seen with his own eyes. I'd certainly like for him to see you."

"I'd like to see him. In fact, that's the reason I came here."

Bill's eyes widened. "You mean you come here all the way from—from wherever you come from, jest to see Sam Ormsby? Heck! Sam ain't nothin' to look at."

"No more are you," the coon answered, "but I didn't come just to see you and Sam Ormsby. I want to look over all the trappers along Bush Creek and the ones that work over in the Goose River country. This is the territory that's been allotted to me."

"Hold on," Bill said; "you're goin' too fast fer me. An animal can't own no land."

"We owned all of it at one time. Then you humans came along and drove us out of the best places and into the deep woods and the barren spots and even pursued us there and killed us, so that you could eat our bodies and decorate your females with our furs." The beady, black eyes of the animal were fastened upon Bill so menacingly that he got hastily to his feet, gripping his rifle.

"Gosh!" he said. "I ain't never thought about it, like that."

"Of course you haven't. And you trappers are the worst of the lot. The hunters are bad enough but they mostly kill their victims outright. You fellows hide your cunning devices along the trails we make and the animals that are caught in the cruel jaws of the traps suffer agony for hours and even days, until the murderer comes along to finish his work."

Bill Curtis was bewildered. It was the longest speech he'd listened to since the spring elections, over at the county seat and none of the orators there had spoken so convincingly. The raccoon had been pacing back and forth as it talked. Now, as it paused for breath—or perhaps it expected a burst of applause—Bill cut in.

"Don't say no more. You got me sold and delivered. You fellas sure get a dirty deal—but I still don't see that there's nothing you kin do about it."

The raccoon had stopped pacing and seemed to have cooled down a little as it answered: "We have a plan which we hope will work. That's why my forefathers decided we must learn to speak human languages."

Bill had a vision of a raccoon standing on the courthouse steps and addressing a crowd that filled the square. Silly idea, he thought, but maybe no more improbable than what was going on right here in the woods. And then the thought of the listening multitude gave him a really brilliant idea. What if all those people were listening at a dollar a head, with kids at fifty cents. And it wouldn't be just the square at Northfield but Minneapolis, Soldiers Field in Chicago, the Yankee Stadium—he tried to make a mental estimate of his anticipated wealth and was nearly smothered by the cloud of money rolling toward him. It was a cold morning but big beads of perspiration were beginning to stand out on his forehead. If he could just get the little beast safely inside the cabin, he'd make the Rockefeller family look like a bunch of pikers. He spoke gently, persuasively.

"Mebbe you an' me better go and see Sam."

The raccoon was watching him intently and Bill had an uncomfortable feeling that an animal that talked English might very well be a mind-reader and might object to being the main attraction of the Greatest Show on Earth. He was relieved when the raccoon answered:

"That's what I'm waiting for. Will he be at the cabin now?"

Bill thought it more than likely that Sam would be downstream with his traplines, but the main idea was to get the coon behind a locked door; then Sam's presence or absence wouldn't matter. He said that Sam was a slipshod duffer of a trapper and was probably loafing about the cabin, instead of tending to his business. He'd have liked to get a cord about the coon's neck but decided that might be dangerous to his plans, not to mention the danger of losing a couple of fingers in making the capture, so he started for the cabin with the raccoon trotting daintily at his side.

Sam Ormsby was at home, mending a couple of damaged traps. Having finished this job, he decided to clean and oil a .32-caliber Colt revolver which he used to dispatch a trapped animal, when there was danger of damaging the pelt if he used a club. He was surprised at Bill's early return and was about to make some unpleasant remark, when he saw the little beast that had followed Bill in. Neither Sam or Bill ever admitted being surprised over anything, so for a moment he remained silent and continued to shove cartridges into the chambers of the revolver. Then he said casually:

"What's that you drug in?"

Bill turned from closing the door and said:

"Happens to be a coon, what you told me I hadn't seen the track of."

Sam watched the raccoon which was stepping softly about the room, sniffing at the corners and paying no attention to either of the men. Sam looked at Bill and answered with a sneer:

"I see. But not no native of these parts. Somebody's pet coon that got himself loose and took to roamin' the woods."

"No such thing! Ain't nobody ever had that fella in a cage." Bill had had some idea of cutting Sam out of the big money but now his dreams of Empire suddenly swept over him again and he could no longer conceal his mighty secret. "That there coon is the greatest coon that ever lived! The critter kin talk!"

He had hoped to startle Sam into an expression of surprise or wonder, but he was disappointed. Sam turned from watching the raccoon and scrutinized Bill's face.

"You musta taken a couple of extra slugs o' applejack afore you went out," he said. "Better turn in an' sleep it off—but first open the door an' shoo the critter out. Like as not the owner'll be along lookin' for that coon and mebbe have the law on us."

Bill restrained his indignation. After all, he could hardly expect Sam to believe him. Certainly he wouldn't accept such an improbable statement from Sam. He spoke as coolly as his excitement and his cantankerousness would permit.

"Don't shoot off your trap, till ya know what yer talkin' about. That there coon can talk jest like you do, only a durn sight better. He knows words you ain't ever even heard of." Before Sam could reply, he turned toward the coon, which had started to climb the logs on the west wall of the cabin. "Tell him I'm right—er—Mr. Raccoon. Tell him what you told me."

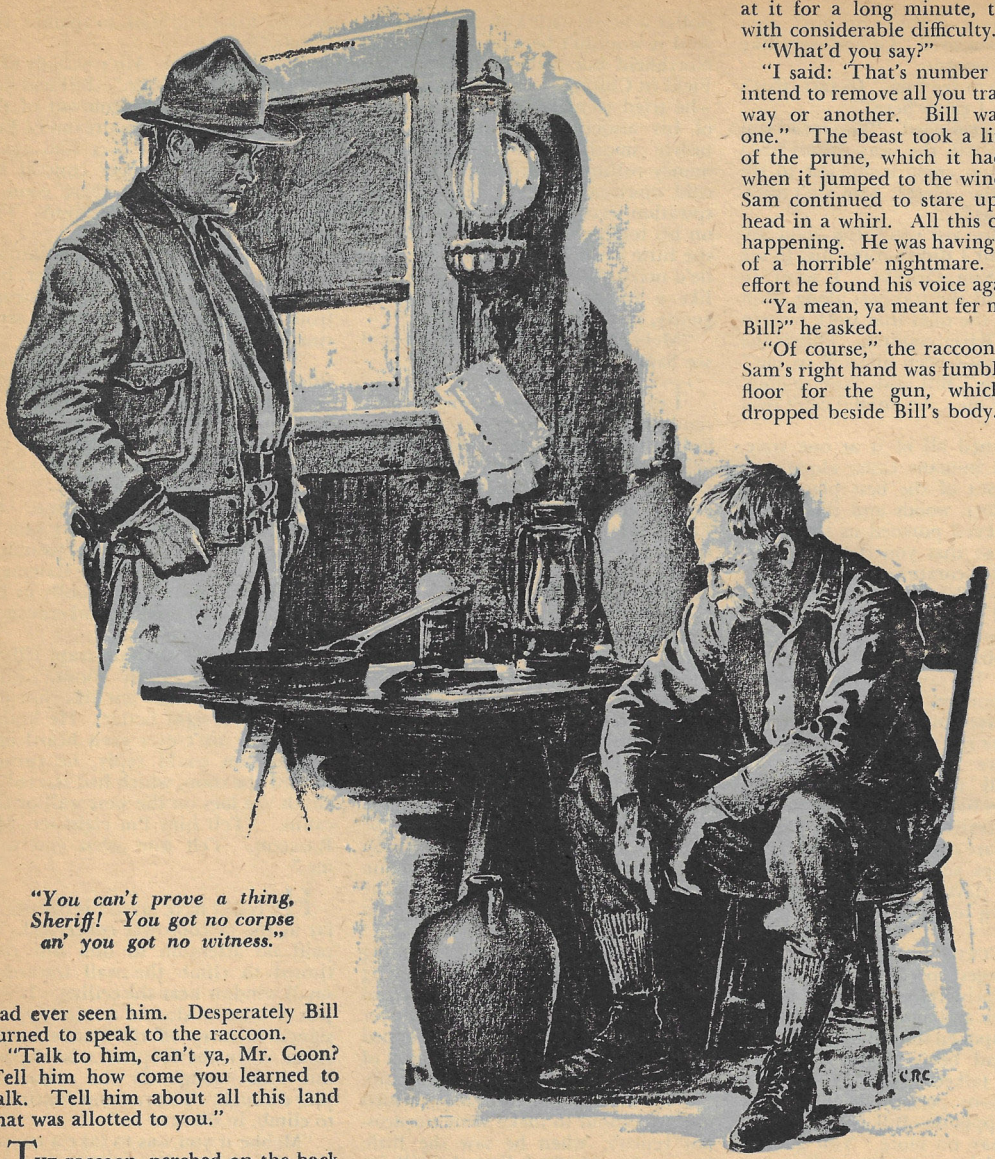
He could have saved his breath, as far as the raccoon was concerned. It paid no attention to him but continued to climb the wall toward a small window near the ceiling. It was just a narrow slot of a window, designed to carry off the smoke in the room, when the fireplace misbehaved, but wide enough for the animal to pass through. The raccoon continued to climb, in silence.

"Mebbe if you was to take a couple o' pulls at yer applejack jug, you could hear what he's sayin'," Sam remarked, sarcastically.

Bill ignored this. He was in momentary agony, lest his million-dollar pet should slip through the aperture and disappear. However the coon merely looked from the window, then climbed down again and dropped onto a chair, from the back of which it proceeded to inspect the stores of grub, piled on a hanging shelf. Bill drew a long breath of relief.

"Don't crowd him," he said, "mebbe he don't want to talk right now. Mebbe he's hungry."

"If he's hungry, he kin rustle his own grub! He ain't goin' to eat mine!" Sam was madder than Bill



"You can't prove a thing, Sheriff! You got no corpse an' you got no witness."

had ever seen him. Desperately Bill turned to speak to the raccoon.

"Talk to him, can't ya, Mr. Coon? Tell him how come you learned to talk. Tell him about all this land that was allotted to you."

THE raccoon, perched on the back of the chair, didn't even turn its head. It reached up and tore a hole in a sack of prunes, spilling part of the contents on the floor but retaining a fat prune in one of its slender paws and starting to gnaw at it. Sam came to his feet, his eyes blazing, the loaded gun still in his hand.

"Damned thief!" he snarled, swinging up the gun for a shot. Bill let out a yell of dismay and sprung in front of Sam.

"Don't shoot! That coon's worth a million dollars! He *can* talk, I tell ya!"

"An' I tell *you*, you're a liar and a drunken sot! Get out of my way!" Sam sidestepped and took aim again. Bill reached out quickly and struck up Sam's hand as he pulled the trigger.

The bullet took Bill through the throat and he was dead when he hit the floor. The raccoon made a surprising leap to the sill of the smoke-vent and crouched there, looking down into the room with its little black eyes snapping.

Sam had dropped to his knees beside the dead man.

"Bill—Bill, I didn't mean to," he muttered. "I was tryin' to kill that damned coon. Speak to me, Bill—"

"That's number one," the raccoon said, from its perch on the ledge. Sam raised his eyes slowly and looked up at it for a long minute, then spoke with considerable difficulty.

"What'd you say?"

"I said: 'That's number one.' We intend to remove all you trappers, one way or another. Bill was number one." The beast took a little nibble of the prune, which it had retained when it jumped to the window ledge. Sam continued to stare up at it, his head in a whirl. All this couldn't be happening. He was having some kind of a horrible nightmare. With an effort he found his voice again.

"Ya mean, ya meant fer me to shoot Bill?" he asked.

"Of course," the raccoon answered. Sam's right hand was fumbling on the floor for the gun, which he had dropped beside Bill's body. The animal on the ledge continued speaking while it munched the prune: "You'd better notify the sheriff what happened here. Don't lie to him. Explain things just as they happened. Tell him a talking coon came in and nagged at you until you tried to kill it—and shot Bill. That's a likely story. He'll believe you—or won't he?"

"You dirty, double-crossin' varmint from hell!" Sam snarled and fired from his hip. The bullet tore a six-inch splinter from the side of the window-frame. The raccoon slipped through the opening, making a funny little sound, somewhere between a squeak and a purr. Maybe that's the

way a raccoon laughs. Sam was through the door in two jumps, gun in hand, but the animal had disappeared and there were no tracks in the snow. Sam realized that it could easily have escaped into any of several trees that overhung the roof of the cabin. He went inside and taking care not to look at Bill's body, got the demijohn from his bunk and poured a mug of applejack. Without looking toward the body, he spoke to Bill in a low voice.

"I wished I'd believed you, Bill—but I couldn't." He waited a little and then went on, "An' there ain't nobody goin' to believe me, either. I'm goin' to have to hide you, Bill. If I don't they're goin' to hang me."

He got a pick and shovel from a corner and, after a second mug of applejack, went out to dig the grave. It was a long, hard job in the frozen ground but he finally got Bill covered up and the heavily falling snow soon removed all traces of his work. Returning to the cabin, he washed up the blood and picked up the spilled prunes. He had emptied his demijohn and begun on Bill's, when he finally went to sleep at the table with his head resting on his arms.

He woke with a bad headache and again tried to convince himself that he had dreamed the whole terrible episode—but Bill's bunk was empty and there was a conspicuously clean place on the otherwise grimy floor, where he had scrubbed up Bill's blood. He threw a folded blanket over the spot and went outdoors to assure himself that he had left no traces of the gruesome job he had done the previous day. The sun was well up and the storm was over but a six-inch fall of snow lay white and clean, as far as he could see, in every direction. He had buried Bill in a little valley, half a mile from the cabin and he trudged through the snow to the crest of a hill overlooking the place. Snow covered the valley, unbroken by the track of man or beast. The snow would pile up deeper and deeper through the long winter months. By the time spring came, there wasn't a chance in a million that Bill's body would ever be found.

He turned back to the road and walked to the farm of Amos Kirk, where there was a party-line telephone. He reported Bill's disappearance to the farm folks and phoned the sheriff. He said he was afraid Bill might have broken a leg and be lying out somewhere in the snow, freezing to death. Or maybe he'd broken through the ice on Bush Creek and got drowned. The sheriff said he'd send out some search parties. Sam returned to the cabin and on the chance that he'd have visitors, cleaned and recharged the revolver, leaving it conspicuously on the table. Then he took Bill's rifle and went out to do some searching himself—not for Bill, but for a gray raccoon that talked.

He covered a good deal of ground, in the next few hours but he didn't see any coons nor any coon tracks. Back at the cabin he opened Bill's applejack jug and took a long drink from it, not bothering to fill a mug. As he was setting the jug back on the table, Sheriff Matt Gordon came in, a tall, gray man, who had the reputation of being a good officer and very handy with a gun.

"Hello, Matt; find any trace o' Bill?" Sam wiped his mouth on his sleeve and tried to look hopeful. Gordon shook his head and looked about the room as though he thought Bill Curtis might be hiding there.

"Not yet," he said, "but we will, unless he's skipped out. Ain't been enough snow to bury a man good and there ain't nobody busted through the ice on the creek. You fellows didn't break up your partnership, did you?" He pulled up a chair and sat down.

Sam was sorry that he couldn't say "yes" to that. It was a better story than the one he had concocted and there'd have been no occasion for a search. It was too late to change the story now and anyway they wouldn't ever find Bill's body.

"Nope. Bill an' me got along pretty good for the most part. Had some squabbles, like anybody does that's got to live together, but nothin' to bust up a friendship."

As he finished speaking he saw a shadow pass swiftly across the table and he cast a startled glance toward the high window, then looked quickly away.

"What's wrong?" the sheriff asked.

"Nothin' wrong," Sam answered, "How about a drink?"

The sheriff ignored the invitation and turned to look up at the small window, then got out of his chair and carrying it with him, set it beneath the window and stepped up on it. He examined the break in the frame for a moment and stepped down.

"Bullet, wasn't it?"

"Yeah," Sam said, "I was cleaning a gun an' I accident'ly let it fall on the floor. It lit on the hammer and fired."

"Could happen," the sheriff nodded. "You're a pretty old hand to have a gun go off unexpected, though. This the gun?" He took up the revolver from the table.

"Only firearm we got around here, 'ceptin' that little rifle o' Bill's."

The sheriff broke the gun, examined the charge and sighted toward the light of the window, through the freshly cleaned barrel. Finally he inspected the firing pin. "I've a notion

it would take a mighty hard bump to make that thing shoot without pullin' the trigger," he said dryly, and started walking about the room, looking at things in general.

"I told you what happened, Matt," Sam said, nervously. "I can't do no more than that, can I?"

"Nope—that's all I want to know, Sam, just what happened." The sheriff came around the end of the table, stooped and picked up the folded blanket and looked down at the clean spot on the floor. "Not a very extensive job of scrubbing, Sam."

"Dropped a mess of eggs," Sam said. "Had to clean it up."

Gorden knelt, struck a match and examined the scrubbed spot carefully. Then he straightened up, brushing off the knees of his trousers. "Sam," he said slowly, "a really good liar would have said it was a mess of beets. There's several red spots down there that you missed. Guess I'll have to take you along."

Sam became suddenly defiant. "You can't prove a thing, Sheriff! You got no corpse an' you got no witness." As he spoke he again caught the flicker of a shadow across the table and glancing up, saw the raccoon looking in at the high window. With a swift lunge he reached out and caught up the revolver from the table. Matt Gordon took no chances with an armed murderer. He drew and fired, almost in the same motion. Sam crumpled to the floor with a bullet through his heart.

"That's two," said the raccoon.

"Who's there?" the sheriff said, turning to look at the high window and then stared, with his mouth wide open.

"You wouldn't know me," the raccoon said. "I was counting. Bill Curtis was number one and Sam Ormsby is number two."

Sheriff Matt Gordon found his voice and spoke, just above a whisper.

"Well, I'll be eternally damned!"

"That is quite likely," the raccoon said, and disappeared from the window, again making the weird little sound, that might have been a laugh.

Action on Hill

April 23rd, 1951: THIS battalion of the 1st Marines was in regimental reserve, and the regiment was in divisional reserve—about as far back as an infantry unit could get on the Central Korean front. Since February we had been pushing northward from Wonju, cautiously probing a skillfully withdrawing enemy. Now, while the 5th and 7th Marine regiments shouldered forward across the 38th Parallel, the 1st Marines rested just outside of battered Chunchon.

Our battalion was following a training schedule, which sounds odd; but it is a paradox of the military profession that peacetime is all training and no experience, and war is all experience and no training. And we had replacements who had to be integrated into the battalion. Our battalion had fought the North Koreans from Inchon to Seoul, the guerrillas in the hills outside Wonsan, the Chinese Reds from frozen Hagaru-ri back to Hungnam and the sea, and now again against the Chinese in the current drive up the spiny ridge of central Korea.

Something was in the wind. Intelligence told us of the Chinese and

It is history now—this bitter battle fought by the First Marines in April. The author has since been wounded, but returned to duty.

by MAJOR EDWIN SIMMONS, USMC

Illustrated by Brendan Lynch

902

North Korean corps massing for the spring counter-offensive. Three Chinese corps had been detailed to destroy the 1st Marine Division, the rumor went—a compliment to our prowess, we felt. Besides, there was an electric tension in the air; the front-line soldier's barometer of danger. . . .

On the morning of 23 April we had barely begun our training when we were told the battalion was to be ready to move on thirty minutes' notice. Training stopped. We waited. We learned that the Republic of Korea division to the west of us was withdrawing. The 1st Marine Division's left flank was wide open and dangerously exposed. At 10:35 we were aboard trucks moving north. An hour later our battalion was crossing the concrete Mojin bridge which spans the Pukhan River almost exactly at the 38th Parallel. Moving toward us on the MSR (Main Supply Route) came the retreating ROKs. Their trucks, loaded helter-skelter, rattled rearward. Their foot troops, in small groups, were heading for the rear, intermingled with women and children. Groups gathered at stream crossings to drink, or to bathe their feet and faces. They seemed completely listless, apathetic and bovine. There was no panic; neither was there any apparent leadership; and the troops rested at will under the trees.

We disembarked from our trucks, went into an assembly area, made a hasty reconnaissance of the ground, and put out our security.

Our battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Virgil W. Banning, and Major Joseph D. Trompeter, were called to Regiment to receive our orders.

About 1:45 they radioed me to have the battalion ready to move, immediately on their return.

In less than an hour the battalion was hiking for its objective: Hill 902. "Hill" was purely a military euphemism. According to the map, our objective was 902.4 meters high. Translated into feet, that is an elevation of three thousand feet, which certainly qualifies it as a Korean *san,* a Japanese *yama,* or in the Eastern United States, a full-fledged mountain.

The military significance was this: whoever possessed it dominated the Mojin bridge approaches, and the Mojin bridge was the funnel through which the entire 1st Marine Division must withdraw. And our latest aërial intelligence indicated that the Chinese were closer to 902 than we were!

The straight-line distance to 902 was only five kilometers, which on a good road or trail is only a little more than an hour's walk for seasoned troops. But there was no straight-line route to the top of 902, and the difference in elevation from our starting point to the crest was nearly twenty-five hundred feet.

The afternoon was warm. The men were carrying their rations, sleeping bags, perhaps a poncho or shelter half, and their weapons. Our arms included not only the individual's rifle, carbine or pistol, but also our crew-served mortars, machine guns, and rocket launchers, with their accompanying ammunition loads. Put every man's load at from forty-five to ninety pounds.

At first the trail wasn't bad. The battalion moved easily over a pass and down into a valley, a finger of which pointed toward 902. The trail continued good as far as a worked-out gold mine. From here it dwindled to a trace. The valley was bright with the fresh green of spring. There were patches of purple on the hillsides from some spring flower. Ahead loomed 902, sullen and foreboding, dark green with stunted pine trees, and gray with bare rock.

We've climbed many hills in Korea, and some perhaps were worse than 902, but the pressure was never quite so great, the pace so insistent.

We were moving up a razor-edged nose now toward a ridge running northeast from 902. The exertion set hearts to pounding, lungs to gasping for breath. Sweat stung our eyes; our calves ached, our pack-straps cut into our shoulders like burning knives; our knees felt like painful hinges.

"Sure, it's rough," prodded First Sergeant Fred L. Turner of George Company, a rugged forty-four-year-old. "It'll be rougher if the Chinamen get on top of the hill first. Now move out."

Our men pushed on. But there are limits to human endurance, and the fibers of some were tougher than others. Every man gave his best, but some had more to give. Some must move ever slower. Some must stop. The main ridge was reached. Not so many days before, it was outposted by other Marines. There was the usual litter of ration cans and a few shallow foxholes.

Hill 902 was a natural fort, a bare pinnacle of rock jutting into the sky. From it ran three ridges: the ridge we were on, a second dropping to the southeast toward the Mojin bridge, and a third climbing west to an even higher elevation: Hill 1010. The ridge line to Hill 1010 would be a devil's raceway before the night was out.

It was almost dark when our first company reached the crest, literally clawing for handhold and foothold. By this time there had been a certain intermingling of personnel—the stronger forged ahead and the weaker lagged behind.

Our hastily organized defense was wishbone-shaped. George Company straddled the rocky peak of 902 and sent a short spur out in the direction of 1010. How Company tied in on George's left, extending down the southeast ridge toward the Wojin bridge. Item Company was on the right flank, essentially along the nose we had just climbed. We had heavy machine guns with George and Item. There was no battery position available for our 81-mm. mortars, so we put mortars behind each rifle company. "Behind," in this case, meant ten or twenty yards down from the ridge line itself. Beyond that—in the fast-gathering darkness, at least—the slope dropped precipitously into an apparently bottomless cañon.

Our people dug in the best they could. The ridge was solid rock covered thinly with soil. In some places a man could wedge himself under an outcropping or into a crevice. Given time and explosives, we could have blasted out near-impregnable positions, but there was little that near-exhausted men could do with entrenching tools.

Our battalion command post was on the reverse slope just behind the juncture of George and How companies. Slightly below us was the battalion aid station. Even as we moved into position, the Chinese began nibbling at us with long-range rifle and machine-gun fire. The night grew blacker and colder. Our sweat-soaked uniforms chilled us to the bone. Here and there men picked away at their unheated "C" rations, but there was little enthusiasm for food.

We were in a ticklish position, and every man in the battalion knew it. We are proud—justly, I think—of the way we integrate our artillery, mortars, air and naval gunfire.

But we had been in reserve, and our artillery forward observer teams had been pulled away on other missions. Close air support was out of the question. As for naval gunfire—the closest salt water was a hundred miles away. We were only a little better off in regard to mortars. Some were out of range. The 81-mms. were in position—although mighty poor positions and with mighty little ammunition—just what the men had packed in on their backs. The little 60-mms. were in comparatively good shape. So when the fight came, it looked as if it would be primarily machine guns, rifles and grenades against whatever the Chinese had.

We could get jeeps as far as the gold mine, and there the battalion rear set up an ammunition-supply point. We had carriers—and they began the back-breaking haul of mortar- and machine-gun ammunition from the gold mine up to our position.

And then sometime around ten o'clock we had a piece of good luck. An artillery liaison team and three forward observer parties arrived. They were strictly jury-rigged for the occasion, made up of casuals and spare parts, but they did have radios, and they would be able to shoot for us.

It wasn't until the next morning that I learned the liaison officer, Captain Raymond G. Eibel, wasn't a Marine at all, but Army. He was from a field-artillery battalion, a National Guard outfit. So were two of his forward observers. The third was a Marine lieutenant.

The services were unified, but quick. In spite of certain slight technical differences in fire-adjustment procedures, and the fact that only one radio would work, our artillery eyes were soon shooting in our defensive fires.

And just in time.

Shortly before midnight a rain of small-arms fire came crackling in on George Company, the point of our "wishbone."

We were unmistakably in for it.

Our lines were battered by the heaviest mortar fire we had received in one concentrated dose since arriving in Korea; and by midnight the Chinese, slipping down from Hill 1010, were within hand-grenade range, having overrun our outpost.

Technical Sergeant Harold E. Wilson, second in command of George Company's center platoon, was at the apex of the attack. Crawling from foxhole to foxhole, he was hit almost immediately in the right arm. His arm useless, a second bullet caught him in the leg. With his line being chopped to bits in the meat-grinding attack he fed in his support squad, getting hit again in the left shoulder and forehead. A platoon from How Company was hurriedly shifted to bolster his position. While guiding them into his lines, a mortar blast knocked him down, and a fragment cut his cheek.

Elsewhere, men were fighting as bravely, if not as spectacularly, as Sergeant Wilson. George Company, straddling the rock pinnacle of 902, felt the worst of the attack with the enemy waves breaking and curling off to the left and right against Item and How companies' positions. We could only guess at the enemy's strength. Conservatively, it was a regiment, and later identification of the dead indicated it was the 360th Regiment, 120th Division, 40th CCF Army Corps.

But no night can last forever, and by dawn the enemy had had enough and began breaking off, retreating to his covered positions, from which his snipers continued to make it hot for any Marine so foolish as to show himself on the skyline.

Doughty Sergeant Wilson was not through yet. Wounded in five places, he went forward at first light with his platoon leader to drag back bodies of the four Marines who had been killed in the outpost. Then, and only after he had helped reorganize his shot-up platoon, he allowed himself to be taken to the rear.

For daylight had brought with it the terrible chore of evacuating our dead and wounded. The walking wounded could stumble back the southeast ridge toward Mojin bridge, taking care to stay on the reverse slope and off the crest. But there were nearly a hundred dead and seriously wounded who would have to be carried out.

Our carriers—almost pathetic in their loyal anxiety to help—did their best. But there were nowhere near enough stretchers to handle our casualties. Extra stretchers were started up from the rear, an exhausting three-hour trip. We improvised litters from blankets and poles, ponchos and rifles. The inert forms of the dead, shrouded in sleeping bags or shelter halves, were tied to the litters with communication wire. I remembered a boy saying gently: "Don't let his head hit the ground."

At 8:30, our mission of holding Hill 902 through the night accomplished, we were ordered to fall back on another battalion which now had good positions above the Mojin bridge. Disengaging from the enemy is a difficult maneuver, perhaps the most difficult. Our artillery drummed the menacing ridges with covering fire. Our mortars coughed out the ammunition so painfully provided.

We started back.

If the ridge from 1010 to 902 had been the Devil's Raceway, then the ridge southeast of 902 was Hell's Roller Coaster. For in the four or five

Our heavy machine guns carried the load of furnishing our immediate protection.

kilometers we must travel, it swooped down and then up, every several hundred meters, to intermediate crests. Our goal was just east of Hill 439, where sat our sister battalion.

Every rifleman and every B.A.R. man had a hand to a stretcher on the way out. The Chinamen knew what we were up to, and started down the ridge-line after us. Our artillery attempted to keep a screen of fire between us and them, but the Chinese accepted their losses and continued to come.

Our heavy machine guns carried the load of furnishing our immediate protection, falling back from position to position, the sturdy old Browning water-cooleds clattering out their warning to the Chinamen not to come too close.

THE trip back was three times more terrible than the trip up.

It was a beautiful bright sunny day. But the sun meant heat, and the heat meant thirst—lip-cracking thirst. Our men had climbed 902 the day before with filled canteens. Now, except for the most careful, the canteens were empty. In the distance glinted the Pukhan River, a tantalizing goal. The promise of water became more of a spur than the Chinese bullets which continued to kick dust from the ridge-tops.

We carried out everything we could: our dead, our wounded, our guns, our ammunition. There was a little mortar ammunition which had to be left behind—we tucked a few blocks of TNT under it, and cut our fuse just long enough, we hoped, to catch the Chinese vanguard.

I saw First Sergeant Edgar H. Lee of Item Company with six rifles on his back. "As far as I know," he said, "they aren't expendable yet."

In one fashion or another we made it down the ridge, although it was

slipping, sliding, clawing business. At times the stretchers had to be literally dragged by men crawling on their hands and knees. As we neared the other battalion's position, they sent out carrying parties to help us with our dead and wounded—and a good thing, too, because our people were about spent.

But as we closed into the battalion lines, there was scant rest for the weary, for that battalion had their orders to shift to their positions as soon as we had tumbled into their holes.

Luckily, we had fallen heir to a well-integrated trench system dug by the Chinese and improved by the battalion.

There was a knob a thousand meters east of Hill 439. There would be the left flank of our new position. We left heavy machine guns there on which to build our new line. Major Trompeter located one platoon, How Company's 1st, still fairly intact. It had been on the left flank of 902 and pretty much out of the fight. The platoon command was 1st Lieutenant George S. Sulliman, a recent replacement without too much combat behind him. He was sent with his platoon to organize the knob.

He arrived at almost the instant a company of Chinese closed hand-to-hand with heavy machine guns. He ordered "Fix bayonets!" and waded into a hail of mortar shells, machine-gun bullets, rifle fire, and hand grenades. One heavy machine gun was knocked out. A second went silent when its gunner and assistant gunner were hit. Lieutenant Sulliman leaped behind the gun and fell dead with a Chinese bullet through his head.

But the hill was saved and our left flank was secured. The Chinese tried again and again to breach our position, but each effort grew more and more feeble.

A little rest, a little water, and the sight of our wounded moving to the rear in ambulances and trucks, and our battalion was ready to fight again.

The remainder of the story is simple enough. We held on to our new position until the Marine Division had consolidated itself and our lines to the west once again stood firm.

In a period of less than forty-eight hours, we had taken extremely heavy casualties, but we had beaten the Chinese and sent him sulking back into the mountains. And if, by any chance, he might have had the misconception that he had won a temporary advantage, we set him straight by posting our withdrawal route with cardboard signs which read in English, Korean and Chinese:

"We, the U. S. Marines, will be back."

—The End

Last Laughs

by WEBB GARRISON

Dr. Robert Wilde, a Presbyterian minister of St. Ives, England, left a considerable sum when he died in 1678. The principal was not to be touched. He directed that the interest be used to purchase Bibles, for which the boys and girls of St. Ives should throw dice, on the communion-table in the church, on the last Thursday of each May.

* * *

A certain Sydney Dickenson provided handsomely for his widow. His $300,000 estate was willed to her—on condition that "for the first ten years following my demise, she spend two hours a day at my graveside, in company with her sister, whom I have reason to know she loathes worse than she does me."

* * *

Francis Reginald Lord, of Australia, left his widow one shilling, "for tramfare to some place to drown herself." And Andrew Kozak, of Worcester, Mass., willed his wife "a dollar to buy poison." But a Boston bachelor was much more gallant. He bequeathed his fortune to the three girls who had rejected his proposal of marriage, "because I owe them what peace and happiness I have enjoyed."

* * *

Not all off-trail legacies have been motivated by a desire to chuckle at the expense of disappointed relatives. A few pranksters have drafted zany wills for no other purpose than a dig at human dignity.

A Mr. Sanborn, who died in Medway, Mass., in 1871, willed his body to Harvard, "especially to the manipulation of Oliver Wendell Holmes and Louis Agassiz." He stipulated that his skin be used to cover a drum, which should be given to the leader of the Cohasset drum corps. That worthy, in turn, was expected to "proceed to Bunker Hill at sunrise on each June 17, and there beat 'Yankee Doodle' upon the drum."

BACK

THE Gloucesters have done it again.

This famous British regiment, the only one in the service authorized to wear two cap badges at the same time, has added more glory to its battle banner, with an epic stand in the grim foothills of Korea. Their outstanding effort in the present campaign has won for them the U. S. Presidential citation, and the Gloucesters are the only British military organization entitled to this distinction.

Unfortunately only six men of the honored battalion of more than six hundred were left to accept the famed blue ribbon.

But it has always been so with the fighting Gloucesters.

For three days and nights the Gloucesters, part of the British Twenty-ninth Brigade commanded by Brigadier-General Thomas Brody, held off the savage attacks that marked the Chinese offensive which began on April 22nd. At that time the British Brigade was dug in between the South Korean First and the United States Third Divisions spread across the deadly Uijongbu-Seoul axis, and the Gloucesters took the full thrust of the enemy's frontal attack.

Lieut. General James A. Van Fleet, United Nations ground commander who made the presentation to the Gloucester survivors, said before other units of the Twenty-ninth Brigade standing at attention in a hollow square somewhere in Korea: "The Gloucesters held their position against extremely heavy odds for three consecutive days, giving no ground and inflicting a heavy toll of enemy casualties. Their firm stand upset the Chinese timetable of advance, and by holding their position, fighting fiercely above and beyond the call of duty, this magnificent battalion was surrounded and cut off by overwhelming enemy forces. They fought back-to-back, according to their great tradition, and while rescue by friendly elements was attempted several times, no aid could be effected.

"Their epic stand will go down as one of the most valiant of modern times. This famous Gloucestershire battalion will long be remembered as an outstanding example of courage

to BACK

The heroic British regiment which received our Presidential Unit Citation for its last-ditch stand in Korea has a long record of gallant battles against great odds.

by ARCH WHITEHOUSE

Drawn by Frederick Chapman

and determination by all freedom-loving peoples."

It's an old story with the Gloucesters. Back in 1801, the old First Battalion staged another epic stand at Alexandria when they were attacked by a French cavalry squadron then known as the "Invincible Legion." There was no time to form the honored British square, so the Gloucesters stood back-to-back and remained steady until they had cut the French lancers to ribbons.

For that, the First Battalion received a most unusual honor, especially when one recalls the stiff straight-laced and regimental rules of the British service; and to commemorate this gallant victory and to remind the rest of the world of their back-to-back stand, it was decreed that all First Battalion men of the Gloucesters should from that day on wear a smaller version of their regimental cap badge at the backs of their forage caps. The Gloucesters are the only regiment in the British Army ever awarded this signal honor, and now to this has been added the gold-framed blue of the American Presidential citation.

Yes, the is truly an honored regiment.

The Gloucesters' back-to-back method of fighting was repeated in World War I at Festubert in 1915, when the First Battalion of that day was surrounded by four German regiments. For their stand in this battle the Gloucesters had the small back-of-the-cap badge increased in size.

Then again, back in 1849 during the Punjab campaign of the Sikh Wars, the Second Battalion of the Gloucesters was attacked by overwhelming forces of Sikh horsemen at the battle of Chillinwallah, and once more had to resort to a back-to-back defense. They held out in this manner for more than twenty hours, until at last the Sikhs were forced to withdraw and leave much of their equipment behind. For this action the Second Battalion was also awarded the right to wear a miniature badge at the back of their caps.

It was while leading the First Battalion at the Siege of Quebec that General Wolfe fell, but won undying glory.

The Gloucesters are a very old regiment, the First Battalion being formed in Gloucestershire as far back as 1694. A second battalion was raised in 1758, and for a time the First was known as the 28th Foot and the Second listed as the 61st Foot, but they were eventually merged into the Gloucestershire Regiment in 1881.

Twenty-four battalions were raised and fought in World War I and saw action in France, Belgium, Italy, Bagdad and the Dardanelles.

In World War II many battalions of the Gloucesters were blooded in France, Belgium, North Africa and Germany.

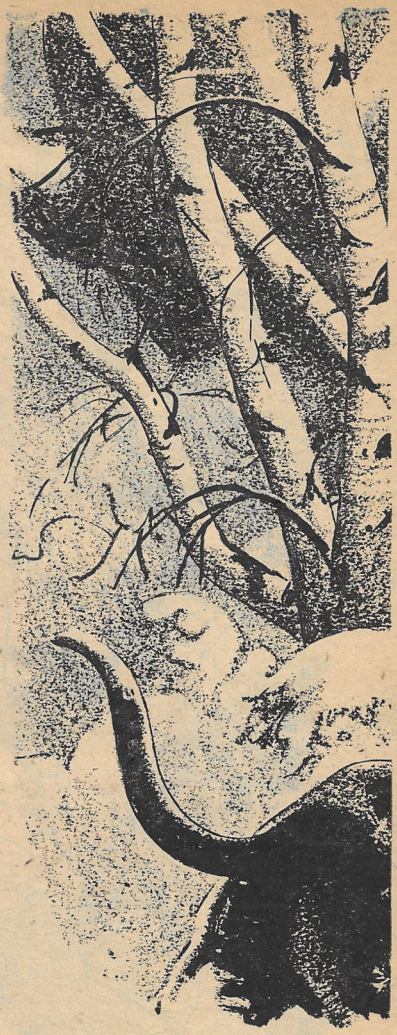
Along with many other fine traditions, the Gloucesters picked up several colorful nicknames. They were once known as "The Old Braggs," a nickname based on Colonel Phillip Bragg, who commanded the regiment in 1743.

Then later, because of their two cap badges, they were also known as "The Fore and Afts." Less respectful regiments once referred to them as "The Back Numbers," but as long as glorious military history is recalled, they will be remembered as the men who so valiantly upheld the prestige of the United Nations in the bitter campaign of Korea.

The primeval passion of the hunter was hot in his blood—and she was not the right girl to conquer the call of the wild in every young man's heart.

Home

by GENE CAESAR



TWO wolves came out of the swamp, gray shadows at the edge of the thickness. The iced river lay blank and bare in the blue moonlight. Across the river the scrub oak ridged to the forest. The wolves pawed the snow at the river's edge.

The wolves knew the swamp was safety, but there were deer in the forest. The swamp meant home and life . . . the forest, danger and death, the crack of a rifle, the bawl and chop of a stubborn hound. Between, beneath the ice, the river flowed. There were deer to hunt in the forest.

Suddenly, without reason, one of the wolves threw back its head and howled. . . .

At a small cabin miles down the river a giant red wolfhound leaped from his kennel and bugled an answer and a challenge, then ran the circuit of his taut chain. Kennel peace, kennel dreams became unbearable to him, sickening to him. Every nerve of his body wanted the hunt.

Other hounds joined in the clamor, snarling because there was no one to hear and understand. Then there was silence and no further sound from the forest north.

THE young man, missed by his hounds, sat with his elbows siding a cup of coffee. The town was fifteen miles down the river from his cabin. In the grill it was clean, warm and light.

"No one's asking you to give up hunting, Russ." Mary Ellen, behind the counter of her father's grill, was sweet, a little plump, full-breasted—the pick of this little north woods town. "You don't have to do everything at once. But we ain't gonna keep up the way we been going. There ain't no sense in it."

Russ Devlin sat back and looked at her. His mind had been wandering. He hadn't been listening. Since the time, nearly a year ago, when he'd found this river with its towns in this forest, and believed that his senseless drifting had come to an end, this girl had been his girl and very nearly his only life outside of the wild. She was such wonderful company too, he thought, when she didn't talk.

"There ain't no sense in a man spending *all* his time in the woods." She wouldn't let it go. "I never ask ya for much. I never ask ya for *nothing*, and the once that I—"

"Hon, I *don't* want to go to Marquette tomorrow."

"You think I *gotta* put up with ya? You think I ain't got chances, just 'cause I'm stuck in a place like this? Jimmy Bender'll take me, tomorrow, if I want; he's always asking, and he goes every week-end. 'Gotta get outa the sticks and make sure I'm still alive,' he says. Well, that's the way I feel."

Russ looked at her, shrugged, and looked at his coffee.

"You don't wanna go to Marquette. You didn't even wanna take me to the dance in Jordantown last week. What *do* ya want to do, stay here at the Landing all the time?"

"Hon, I've *been* places, lots of places; and when I came here—" He shook his head. You wanted a girl, he thought; you needed a girl. But there was always the talk with this girl, the bickering and the explaining. You found a town in a great northern forest. You wanted to stay there, and you found yourself a girl, and then you found that the girl didn't want to stay there. So there was always the explaining and the feeling of guilt at merely being yourself. Were there girls who took you for what you were and let it go at that? He didn't know. Until now, he'd never stopped moving long enough to find out things like that.

"Oh, I know," Mary Ellen said, "it's me, it's always me. If ya wanna make a mossback out of yourself, I'm supposed to let ya. I ain't supposed to say nothing. Well, if ya wanna turn Indian, you find yourself a different girl." That strange look on her face, and her hands on her hips again. . . . He winced. "Why'n't you get yourself one o' these *farm* girls? One o' them'd put up with ya. One o' them'd stay in the sticks for ya. They'd think Jordantown was the Big City. Why'n't you stand me up next Saturday night and go stag to the dance at Spikehorn? Why'n't you get yourself a girl in Spikehorn? They still—"

"Oh, hon—shut up," he told her.

"I'm telling ya for *your* sake, more'n for me. You gotta snap out of it. You could do anything you wanted to if you'd just get started at something. Why ya gotta go on like a madman?"

He said nothing to this.

"No one's against hunting and fishing; this is a hunting and fishing town, a tourist town, but other people don't do it the way you do. None o' the fellows here'll go fishing with you no more, not like last fall, getting out on the pond before it's light, casting like a fiend till after dark. They like to hunt, but not the way you hunt. And them dogs you bought—them devils are gonna kill somebody sometime."

He was absorbed in his coffee. She changed her tone a little.

Illustrated by CARL BURGER

Is the Hunter

"What's about wolf-hunting that's so important, honey? I wanna know. I wanna understand. What's with this special grudge ya got against wolves? No one else hunts them. It's too dangerous, they say, going out at night in the winter. It's too much work. The bounty ain't worth it. There ain't enough to bother with. Why do *you* have to do it, Russ, and do it all the time?"

When there was no answer, she faltered: "There ain't no sense in it."

"I can't blame you for feeling the way you do," he said finally.

She jumped at the chance. "Russ, honey, I'd like to get outa this town. You know that. I'm sick of it. I'm sick of standing here and watching the cars go by on the highway. I'd like to live farther south where there's something to do. I'd like us to be married and have a house in a city—and—maybe a TV set. Do ya think I like this place, and having to be nice to the tourists—and—"

She stopped, then caught herself. "But I ain't askin' all that. I ain't askin' ya to do everything at once. But I *am* askin' ya to get some sleep tonight so ya can drive me to Marquette tomorrow. You don't need to hunt *all* the time."

He finished his coffee and stood up. "Would you mind if I didn't wait and see you home tonight, hon? I have some things—"

"I don't mind if ya'll get some sleep so we can start early. Are ya gonna come after me now?"

He looked at her and then smiled. *"All* right. *All* right. We'll go to Marquette tomorrow."

She pulled his shoulders across the counter and kissed him good night. "Now—you promised me, and you better be here. Seven. At seven. Now—now you be here, honey."

He slipped his parka on, drew the waist-strings tight, but let the fur hang at his neck. *"All* right." He opened the door and walked into the cold.

It was not snowing now. The snow of the day and the night before lay moon-bright and rough—ahead of him and on under the trees. The road was two hollows in the forest snow. Russ left the little coupé in the leanto at the side of the cabin. His hounds were frantic.

"All right," he told them, *"all* right."

In the cabin he tossed his parka on a chair and started a fire. He walked through to the shed, chopped venison from a hanging carcass and threw it to the dogs. Picking up the two pails, he walked to the river and chopped the day's ice from the water-hole. It was a still night, and very cold. He gave water to the dogs, then filled the kettle on the grate above the fire. The alarm clock was stopped. He wound it for the morning, and set it from his watch.

It was not until he had washed and was lying on his bed, reading by the kerosene lamp, that he became aware of the whining of the dogs. He went out to them.

"Pilot!" The giant red hound was his favorite. "What's up, fellow?" Sport and Shadd, the two overgrown foxhounds, strained toward him on their chains. "What's out there? What's out there, boy?"

He looked down the river, clear as day in the moonlight.

Something was moving on the land at night. You could feel it and know it. There were things that lived in darkness while men slept, and knew a secret and a triumph in their wild lives. And the restlessness of their prowlings came as wind from the wintry thickness and found its mate in the hearts of men who love the forest and the night. Miles deep in the swamp, a bobcat screamed. Pilot barked, quickly and tightly.

"Are they up and moving, Pilot? Are they out there tonight? Well, that's tough, fellow. That's tough. Not tonight, boy."

He lit a cigarette and walked to the river to smoke it. All the dogs were barking behind him now. He went back to them, laughing.

"Now don't give me a hard time, you damned mutts. I've got to get up in the morning. And don't give me that look. It isn't funny."

He slapped Pilot's shoulder. "You are all set, aren't you, boy? You've got everything you need to have. You know everything you need to know. You go after wolves and that's all there is to it. And you don't have to worry about your woman, because she goes after wolves too."

He went inside, laughing. He lay in bed for perhaps ten minutes, wide awake, the clock ticking close to him, the dogs whining in the yard. Then he lit the lamp again and began to dress. It was eleven-thirty.

"What the hell!" he said aloud. "It isn't going to hurt to go out for an hour or so, just to have a look." He took his rifle from the wall. . . .

It was snowing a little now, snowing lightly in aimless flecks moving before the car lights. The dogs ran beside the car on the river side, casting and working the brush. Russ slowed the car and babied the springs where an abandoned railway crossed the river road. . . . It was warm and pleasant in the car. This forest, Russ knew, was crisscrossed with abandoned railways, dotted with abandoned mines and lumber camps. It pleased him to think this part of Michigan grew a little wilder every year. Ten years before, the old-timers said, there had been no wolves here. He made it very simple in his mind, and enjoyed thinking about it. Year by year civilization had been thrust more and more to the south, and now the wolves had come back.

Russ ran from the car. The tracks were there, larger than a fox's, longer than a dog's. They were about three miles from the cabin. Pilot shoved his nose deep into the printed snow, snorted and sounded off. The tracks were there! Russ knelt over them. A passion more basic than excitement burned in him, tingled clear to his finger tips. Wolves had crossed the river. Wolves were hunting through the forest in the night. Wolves were hunting, and they had to be hunted. He did not reason this. He felt it, like a hound, with his whole body.

"Go get them, boy! Hunt them up!"

The three dogs bounded into the brush, barking for a second, then cold-trailing in silence.

Sport and Shadd already behind him, Pilot crossed the last oak ridge and loped into the forest. Life—living now! Living was the snow of a wolf-track on his muzzle, the strong scent of wolf solid in the sharp air. Living was the whipping of muscles under his hide, his legs driving beneath him, stilling the game in the thickets. Living was the certainty, as he ran, of the successful crack of the rifle—of his own teeth tearing the strong mat of a wolf hide. Beyond that there was nothing.

The hounds had quartered north. Russ drove another half-mile along the river, then cut the engine. It was very warm in the car now. He loosened his parka.

"In town at seven tomorrow," he thought. "I'd better try to sleep while I can. Looks like we might be out a little longer than I figured. I only hope that they find those gray devils before the real snow comes and ruins the shooting."

He closed his eyes, and the car was a world in itself. It was snowing more steadily, and a little wind was beginning to move in the tops of the trees.

The wolves lay like suckling puppies, tearing and gulping the warm meat of the young doe they'd pulled down. Blood spangled the snow like the moon-shadow of a tree, but the moon was dim now. Snow was falling in the forest.

Far-off — something — nothing — intangible, hushed and murmurous in the air. Something wrong in the air. The stiffening wind was the wrong way. There was no certainty of danger, only the threat, only frostlike silence and the falling snow.

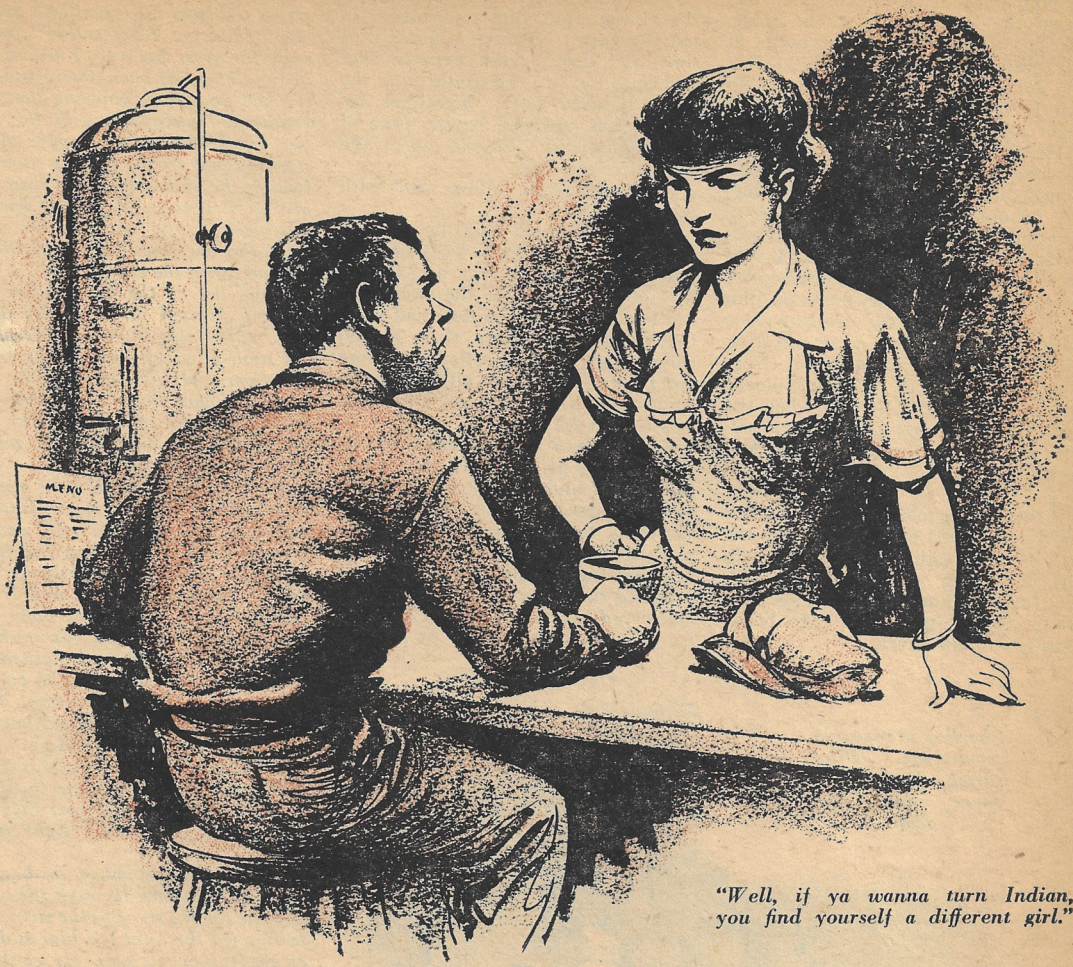
Then it was there, clear in distance, sharp for the instant, but untraceable —the bark of a hound.

The wolves trotted north among the trees, quartering toward the river, the swamp and safety—two small movements in falling snow.

Russ sat up as though he'd been slapped. There it was again! The wolves had been flushed.

He tightened his parka as he stepped from the car to listen. They were very far away, but Pilot's bugling rang clear. . . . *Jumped them—jumped them!* Beneath, the bawl and chop of another hound could be made out, he wasn't sure which. He tried to figure it—east of the next north-south section road at least, probably out on the north branch of Nine Mile Creek. He looked at his watch, and it was two-thirty. He waited a few minutes. He couldn't be sure they were driving toward him, and he had to be in on it—he just had to be. He hated to wait at the river, with the snow falling harder and harder.

He decided to follow the hunt in the car. He might get a good road shot and be able to take up his dogs that much sooner. When the dash for the river started, he should be



"Well, if ya wanna turn Indian, you find yourself a different girl."

able to get back first in the car. He started the engine and drove very fast along the river road. There was a good wind now, and the snow shot out of the northeast against his windshield.

At the corner of the first east-west section road he cut the engine and listened through the open window. He'd been wrong! Pilot's voice came from the east but yet north, far from Nine Mile Creek. He drove a mile east on the section road and listened again. The hunt was directly north, and he waited.

If they ran too far to the north, he knew, he'd have to chase them and call off the dogs. If they got through to the rock piles, they were gone. He waited, and it seemed forever.

No—they were cutting east. The first passion for the hunt came back as he started the car and followed. There was a north-south section road ahead. He might make it. He raced dangerously on the snow-covered tracks, skidding as he turned left, and racing again.

Too late! About two hundred yards ahead of his lights two dim forms shot across—then another—and another. And he was still at the wheel. Where in the hell was the other dog?

Backing out to the corner, he listened again. There was Pilot's bugling—and the other voice was Shadd's. Good girl, he thought. But Sport—where in the hell was that mutt?

The hunt was close, and moving west and south. They were going to cross the other road. He drove a few hundred yards west, snapped the safety on his rifle, and knelt in the snow beside the car's headlight.

Once more they crossed far out of range.

But he had it figured. They were driving straight south, and he had it figured. They'd cross both branches of Nine Mile Creek, cross the Old Mine Road, then drive west on the ridge south of the road. They'd run almost to the edge of Russ' land, then north a little to cross the river. That was it!

He raced for the Old Mine Road. This was the long way back, but he wanted to stay with the hunt until he was sure. . . . Over the first bridge—over the crest of the center forest ridge—the second bridge. At the Old Mine Road he listened again. For a second he was puzzled and couldn't figure direction. Then he realized the wolves were not trying for the ridge, were not going to cross the road. They were driving directly for their crossing-place, straight down the frozen bed of Nine Mile Creek!

Russ was almost frantic. What a mistake to make! He should have gone back the way he'd come. But who could ever know wolves would brave the Old Mine clearing by running the creek to the river? You could never figure those gray devils.

He still had a chance—if he could hold the car on the frozen road. Skidding and sliding, he bored into the

driving snow at an insane rate. He raced the long stretch at the ridge. He got through the worse twists at the gully. He made the hill, then the turn before the Old Mine. He felt better. He would make it all right now.

He clutched, cut the engine and listened as he coasted past the abandoned mine, and the dogs were singing strong—"*We're coming, we're coming*"—driving down the creekbed.

He switched the engine back and raced for the river. The hounds were doing their part. They expected him to be waiting at the crossing-place with the rifle. They were counting on him. He had to be in on it—he just had to be! At the one moment for his shot, at that second when the wolves slowed and dug their claws into the ice for the crossing, he had to be there!

It was going to be close. He braked hard and leaped out, crashed into the brush and fought his way through, the deepening snow pulling at his feet, driving him insane. The hunt was sweeping past him. He broke through to the river.

The wolves were disappearing in the swamp side, dim movements in moving snow. He threw a quick wild shot after them. Pilot went by him and onto the ice. He could hear the giant hound's heavy breathing between each powerful baying note of his driving voice. He ran out on the river after the dog.

"Stay with them, fellow! Stay with them!"

Why he shouted that, he did not know. It was all lost. Why he himself was crossing the river and following into the cedars of the swamp he did not know. The wolves had won: they'd made the swamp; there was no chance now. He'd called it wrong and blown it all; it was all lost, but he couldn't let it go. He only knew that he couldn't let it go.

He dug into the west bank of the river, forced his way into the cedars. He twisted and dodged in the thickness. Suddenly his foot went down in the roots, his ankle wrenched and he pitched into the trunk of a tree, his head jarring and flashing.

Shadd turned at the river, whined, and paced back and forth. There was no one to encourage her or tell her what to do. The wolf line lay plain across the river into the black swamp. She had never been called upon to cross the river before. The last part of the drive had been downwind, and she had no way of knowing that Russ Devlin lay unconscious in the snow two hundred yards away. Shadd started south in the driving snow, following the river home, trotting without spirit because there had been no kill, feeling the frost in her lungs after the hard drive through the forest and down the creek.

Sport lay as the wolves had lain, gorging himself on the belly of the doe. The false dawn was already in the snow-filled sky when he started for the river and then home. He knew that he had done something very wrong, and he crawled on the trail. He wanted to hide himself, and he thought only of his kennel.

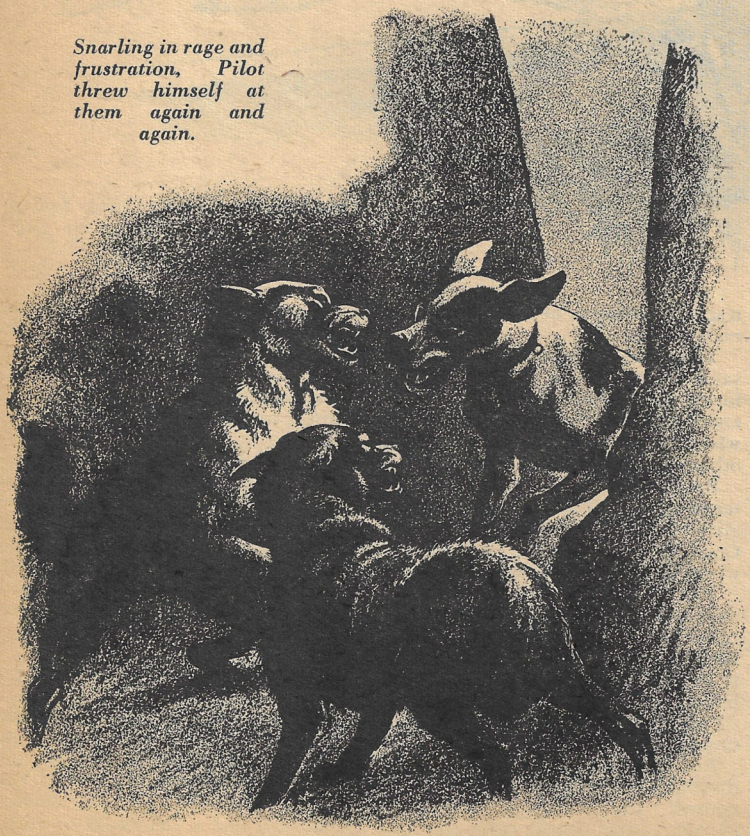
Without a thought that he was now alone, Pilot drove miles into the swamp. The wolves finally came to ground in the rock ledges and fought him, side by side in the narrow opening. Snarling with rage and frustration, he threw himself at them again and again. His jaws, his neck and chest were slashed and slashed, but he couldn't get at them, he couldn't get in to get his teeth on one. When he was exhausted, he stepped back and started barking—Here! Here! Here! *—sharp and insistent, but his hunter did not come. From time to time he attacked the wolves again; they were deadly and unmoving, tight in the rocks.*

It was daylight when he began to work his way back through the swamp and the foglike snow to the river. The feeling for the hunt left him as drunken gayety leaves a man. He wanted his kennel and rest. He moved heavily, slipping and sliding, his bones jarring and grating. For the first time he felt the cold, and it stabbed him where the wolves' teeth had stabbed. As he stumbled, he flecked blood in the snow.

Long after the hound had gone, the gray wolves stood at the opening into the rocks. Slowly their lips relaxed and settled back down over their curved yellow teeth. Then they settled on the cold rock and sniffed each other, whining. White daylight came into the rocks.

Once more the forest had betrayed them; once more the river became in their minds a line never to be crossed. There were snowshoe hares to hunt in the swamp. The swamp meant home. The swamp meant safety.

Russ Devlin woke with the bitter ache of the cold in every part of his body. The snow had become a blizzard, whirling and slashing, and through it the false dawn already seeped.



Snarling in rage and frustration, Pilot threw himself at them again and again.

He slapped Pilot's shoulder. "You don't have to worry about your woman, because she goes after wolves too."

The cold numbed his mind as well as his body. Where was this? What part of the forest? No, not the forest, the swamp. The river, the wrong side of the river. Wolves, the hunt, he'd blown the hunt. The wrong side of the river.

The iced wind scraped at his face. He forced himself up on his elbows, the muscles of his arms and shoulders tight and cold. His body was a pile of snow. His arm moving slowly and painfully, he slapped the fur of his hood clean and pulled it up. A little better. He tried to see around him—nothing but the vague form of brush through the blizzard. He pushed up on his knees, then tried to stand. A pain worse than the cold stabbed in his left ankle, and he went down again. The second time he tried it, his face went into the snow. He sat there, his back to the wind, and tried to think.

Of all the spots to be in! Of all the fool stunts, running into the swamp that way! When you've lost them, you've lost them. The car—just to get to the car, start that gasoline heater going, just lie there on the seat for a while.

He started crawling through the deepening snow, crawling into the wind, pulling at bushes and roots, pulling at the snow itself, sliding and floundering. He gave it up, tried to walk, and immediately fell again.

Be frozen before I get to the river that way, he thought. *What the hell have I done to my ankle? Warm. . . . I've got to get warm!*

The wind had stopped stinging his face. He looked up. He had crawled to the edge of a cedar thicket. Furiously he fought off the desire to double up and stay where he was. He pulled his way into the brush of the thicket—a clearing there, a tiny clearing and no wind. Dawn showed the thick tops of trees above him.

Warm—he had to be warm. He huddled in the snow, feeling warm for a while in the thicket's lack of wind, but the cold came through, and he felt it again, stabbing and maddening. He looked around in the dimness. A dead tree lay off to his right. Crawling to it, he broke the branches desperately, throwing them into a pile on the snow. The making of a fire seemed an impossible task; the actuality of a fire, a far-off thing.

But the fire caught, hissing on the snow, sputtering for a long time, finally blazing up. The trunk of the dead tree lay beneath the snow. Russ broke the branches he could get from the tree, all of them, piled all of them on the fire. He had no thought to save them. He had no thought beyond getting completely warm immediately.

Crawling as close to the fire as he dared, he soaked in the heat. He felt the bruise on his forehead. Numbed by the cold, it had not bothered him but it began throbbing now. He turned his head sidewise in the fur of his hood and relaxed completely. Doubled up before the fire, he drifted down and down in the wonderful luscious warmth.

At the cabin the alarm clock went off. Shadd woke, thrust her head from the kennel into the driving storm and then drew back. She was a tired, very winded hound, and when nothing happened, she went back to sleep. Gluttoned on the wolves' kill, Sport remained asleep. The alarm rang itself out, and there was nothing but the wail of the blizzard.

The second time Russ Devlin woke, the cold was stabbing clear through him, grating on every bone in his body. The fire was long-gone, the dead embers now covered with snow. He was very weak and very tired. He knew he had to try to start another fire, had to move, had to do something; but he could not force himself. He passed off every idea of action with the first excuse to come to his mind. Fire—no more wood. Move—tried it before. Maybe the cold would go away if he lay there long enough. Cold. Cold. All down the river, far through the forest, deep in the swamp. Cold.

Why was he here? How had he come to this? Letting his feeling get the better of him and running into the cedars, into the wolves' side of the river. No, not that, not just that.

Hunting on a night when he should have been getting some sleep, the way other human beings did. No, not that, either. Then hunting itself—hunting as though he were another savage animal, hunting without reason or end, hunting as though, like a wolf, his life depended on it. That was it. And why? As Mary Ellen said, no sense in it.

Mary Ellen. He'd failed her again. Maybe he'd lose her this time. No, it was wrong, wrong that he should disappoint her again and again, wrong that he should ever lose her, wrong that his feeling for the hunt should blot out everything else, wrong that he should now be lying out in a blizzard, with a twisted ankle. He belonged with Mary Ellen—sweet, soft, full-breasted, pouting-lipped Mary Ellen. He belonged with her right now. He smiled, thinking about it.

They should be lying together right now in their own bed in their own neat little house—with the TV set that she wanted so much. They should be lying tightly together, soft, warm, her breasts tight and aching against him, her lips brushing his shoulder or the cords of his neck. And if they woke, sweet and tender in the night, the storm and the snow would be in another world. That was the way things should be. That was where he should be, not here lying in the snow.

If I get out of this, he thought, *if I get out of this, honey, things are going to be different, things are going to be very different.*

He was getting warmer now. *I really am,* he thought. *I'm getting warmer now. Thinking of my girl? No. I'm actually getting warmer now.*

But there was no fire—no let-up in the storm. He shouldn't be getting warmer.

And suddenly he realized that he was freezing to death.

He tried to fight against it, but he couldn't move. His arms, his legs, even his fingers—nothing would move. He couldn't fight it if nothing would move. Why had he let himself lie there? Was his mind gone?

And then it came to him that he was going to die.

It came all at once; it was just suddenly there, and was a very simple thing. There was life, and then there was death. You had to stay on your own side of the river. For the river flowed beneath the ice; between, the river flowed. Because death was the place wolves came from, the place they ran back to.

Something on the edge of the thicket? . . . No, just the storm. No, something there. Something really there. Something on the edge of this thicket on the wrong side of the river. And death was the place wolves came from!

Something was coming into the brush through the snow-fog!

Wolf! He pushed up on his hands. He'd done it. He'd moved. But his rifle. Where was his rifle? He was suddenly on one knee, one arm in front of his throat, his gloved hand fumbling for his knife. And then he felt ready to cry like a baby.

"Pilot! Pilot, boy. *Pilot!*"

He threw his arm over the hound's neck and clung to him. The cold was no longer a lonely cold; Pilot was back with him now. And he'd moved. He let go of the dog and beat his arms against his knees. He wouldn't lie down again, not now. He wouldn't let himself lie down again.

Something chillier than the blizzard had come over his freezing body when he'd seen that unknown form move into the thicket; and now, for the first time since the frenzy of the chase down Nine Mile Creek, his mind was clear. He could beat this. He could do it. He'd have to crawl back and find his rifle where he'd first fallen. It shouldn't be too hard to dig out of the snow. There'd be a mark where he'd lain. He could use the rifle as a crutch for his bad ankle. The car was there, just across the river. And Pilot was with him, Pilot was here.

Russ Devlin started pulling his way back through the thicket. There was absolutely no doubt in his mind that he was going to make it. . . .

Pilot stood in the beating snow for a few minutes after his hunter had staggered from the car to the cabin. The feeling that something was wrong cut him more deeply than the iced wind. He had driven the wolves miles through the forest, pressed them sharply on the creekbed, forced them onto the open river, and his hunter had not been there with the rifle. He had driven them miles through the swamp and brought them to ground in the rock ledges, but his hunter had not come. And he had found his hunter helpless as a fawn in the drifting snow. Something was very wrong.

Whining with disappointment and doubt, he walked to the big kennel and lay down beside Shadd in the cedar shavings. He had probably run fifty miles in the night's hunt. Shadd woke and they sniffed noses. She whined and began licking the slashes in his roan hide.

"This did it, hon. I'm cured now."

It was late evening, and the storm was dying in darkness outside. In the cabin the fireplace roared, alive and moving, and the kerosene lamp was bright. Russ lay on his bed. Mary Ellen had screeched the brakes of her father's car in the clearing, stormed into the cabin, and been furious and then crying by turns. Now she sat quietly by the bed, her hand in his hair.

"You mighta been killed out there."

"Oh, I know that. I know that much better than you. But I'm through with it now."

"You said that before."

He laughed. "I know—but I mean it now. Everything's going to be *all* right from here on. You'll see. You know something, hon, a man isn't very much by himself—a man isn't very much."

She bent over and kissed his forehead. "Neither's a girl."

He lay back. "And you know something else? I'm just a little bit crazy about you."

"Are you, Russ? Are you really, now? I never know."

"You'll see. You'll see, now. As soon as I'm on my feet, I'm going to get out of here. I'll go to Marquette—oh, the hell with Marquette, I'll go down across the Straits to Saginaw or Flint. I'll get a job in a plant; I've done it before. I'll get us an apartment—then I'll write you to come. It won't take over two weeks. You'll see." He laughed. "And the only hunting I'll be doing from now on'll be shooting pheasants out of some cornfield."

"What's Flint like, Russ? What's to do there?"

"Oh—lots of things. Big dances at the I.M.A. every Saturday night."

"With name bands?"

"With name bands."

"Russ—one thing I never got: how could you live in places like Flint and Chicago, and then come up to a place like this—and stand it?"

"I don't know. Right now I don't know. Maybe it was just to find you."

He held her face for a while and looked at her.

"Russ—I better go. I didn't say nothing when I left work Dad'd raise hell if he found out I came out here."

Russ could limp painfully to the river for water the next day. He fed the dogs. In the late morning he began cleaning his rifle—the habit after a hunt. He stopped himself and laughed. "Just what the hell am I doing this for?" But he finished the job.

The following morning Russ Devlin slept very late, and was then very restless. *I'm getting fed up with this place,* he thought. *If I'm going to leave, I should do it right now.* His limp was almost gone as he cut through the forest to the lake to take up his traps. He'd taken one decent mink that could be sold in town on the carcass. The stacks of muskrat hides could be sold too. And the dogs? He shook his head. There was no making city-yard dogs out of animals like those. He'd give them to Claude

Wolves knew the meaning of the swamp and the forest—but there were deer to hunt in the forest.

Bender. Bender hadn't the guts for wolf hunting, but he liked dogs, and he went after bobcat once in a while. And Bender had always liked him—in spite of everything. Russ knew that. He spent the afternoon deciding what to take from the cabin and packing it. There was really very little. He would leave in the morning—that was certain now. He could take the dogs to Bender on the way through the town to the highway.

The morning for leaving—snow was falling in the forest, falling very hard, a white fog in cold daylight. Russ sat and watched it. Fast-falling snow was the forest's hour of timelessness—no tracks, no movement, no record.

He put off leaving. He could make no time in weather like this. He fed the dogs, then lay and read through the morning. At noon there was no let-up in the heavy snow. He could start out now, he reasoned, but he'd never make the ferry at the Straits, even if the ice-breaker held it up. There'd be no gain in time over waiting until the next morning.

The snow cut out in the late afternoon. When darkness came, it was very clear and very cold. Russ lay on his bed, a book closed beside him, thinking about the fallen snow. The story written upon it in tracks would be a fresh story, a new story. Time had started again in the forest. The past was no longer there; its tracks were covered; the old stories were chalked over.

WONDERING whether or not he was really going to leave in the morning, Russ suddenly realized that more than anything in the world he wanted to hunt tonight.

Two wolves came up from the swamp, gray shadows moving to the edge of the bluff. Below, the river lay blank and bare in the blue moonlight. On the other side the scrub oak ridged to the forest, and there were deer to hunt in the forest. The wolves knew the meaning of the swamp, the river, the forest—but there were deer to hunt in the forest.

One of the wolves threw back its head and howled.

Pilot lay in his kennel, tensing with the noises of the night. Cold and exhaustion were lightly remembered things now; one hunt's disappointment was a thing before—and apart. On some hill of the night a wolf howled. Pilot barked, quickly and tightly.

Russ Devlin jerked to his feet and walked to the door. It had suddenly become very close in the room. The night air hit him, but it was a familiar cold, nothing like the cold he had known in the blizzard, the cold he hardly remembered.

Yes—something was moving on the land at night, living in darkness, knowing its secret triumph while men slept. Russ felt it and knew it—the restlessness of wild lives. Miles up the river the wolf call came again. All the dogs were barking now.

Russ looked north where the frozen river twisted, gimleted and narrow, beneath the cold blue moon. He stood there for a long time and wondered if he had ever honestly intended to leave—to go south.

A fresh snow—and the wolves were up and moving, running with cold and silence and loneliness, hunting with hunger. He shivered with cold excitement. He knew the rules. He was part of it now; he had to be in on it. Through the black top of the forest, something moved, called to him to throw off ten thousand years of civilization and come back—come back.

"The hell with her!" he said aloud. "The complete positive hell with her!"

Yes. . . . The swamp was death, and the river was the line. Stay out of the swamp, he thought, but live on the bank of the river and know the edge, the extreme of life. He walked over and slapped Pilot's shoulder.

"Shall we go get them, fellow? Shall we go get them?"

Spies in the

DURING the Second World War photography was as important, in its way, as radar. Air photographs of cities, pictures of railroads and ports that showed where every power plant and airfield were situated, were vitally important and much wanted. The need for these photographs was appreciated long before the outbreak of the war; and in 1935 a foreign power tried to photograph the most important German cities—and succeeded.

In telling the story, the names must be concealed. But except for changes in names, the story is told exactly as it happened.

In 1935, in a western suburb of Berlin, there lived a writer who was quite content with his life. A former Prussian intelligence officer, he had left the service and started writing. His books were very successful. We shall call him von Felseck. Von Felseck had one peculiar hobby: whenever an important crime took place in Berlin, the homicide squad would be sure that Herr von Felseck would turn up at the inquest, armed with a couple of bottles of brandy. He was cordially received, since he had the gift that won him the respect of experienced detectives: he was clairvoyant.

This hobby of following crimes was his one great pleasure. The bane of his life was due to an unfortunate circumstance. He had very sensitive nerves and needed his rest. He would be lying down or sitting at his desk, and suddenly he would be disturbed by the noise of planes from a nearby airfield. Each time it happened, he nearly jumped out of his skin. He was beside himself when he discovered one day that certain companies were advertising their products by having a plane circle over a part of Berlin every day. Now and then the plane dropped small gift novelties or wrote a message in smoke. At least twice a week it disturbed Felseck in the midst of his work.

One morning Herr von Felseck was sitting and reading with wax in his ears, because the plane was at it again. His maid came in and signed to him to take the wax out of his ears—she had something to tell him.

Marie seemed dreadfully excited. She was a young Alsatian, extraordinarily beautiful. Herr von Felseck often watched her as she walked about the apartment, her hips swaying slightly in unconscious provocation, her lips parted in a faint smile. A year before, she had become his mistress.

But at the moment Marie was not his mistress; she was his servant, and a frightened, trembling one. Her eyes were filled with panic. She was a foreigner, and danger was at hand.

When Marie finally calmed down enough to speak, Herr von Felseck became distinctly uncomfortable. He was clairvoyant, remember, and Marie said that two strangers were outside, asking to see him.

The two men showed their credentials; they were agents of the Gestapo. On the surface von Felseck was perfectly composed as he invited them to sit down.

One of the two men opened a bright yellow briefcase and took out a sheaf of papers. Herr von Felseck, he began, leafing through his notes, was the

THESE SKY-WRITERS IN PRE-WAR GERMANY HAD A SPECIAL AND SECRET OBJECTIVE.

Sky

by KURT SINGER

son of a Prussian officer who had served his country well. His grandfather had fought in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-1871 and had won military fame as the commander of a cavalry corps. After the First World War, von Felseck himself made an adventurous escape from a Russian prisoner-of-war camp; and under the Weimar Republic, according to his papers, he had been a successful *Abwehr* (counter-espionage) agent.

"This is it," Felseck thought.

The Gestapo went on: What he was going to say now was strictly confidential, of course. The Gestapo had organized its own counter-espionage service, in addition to the existing military intelligence service. They wished Herr von Felseck to place his unusual talents at their disposal.

At first Herr von Felseck could not think clearly, for that advertising plane had decided to circle exactly three hundred yards above his house. Nevertheless he got out of it pretty well.

He would have to consider such an important offer, he said, and it would be necessary to see whether he really had the proper talent for such work. There was also the question of whether he was young enough for that kind of work. The Gestapo men agreed that he would have to think it over. They "promised" to call again. "Heil Hitler!"—and they were gone.

Herr von Felseck left his home immediately after them. Outside in the street, he shook his fist at the advertising plane. He sat down in a quiet café to think, and realized that he was in a tough spot.

He hated the current state of affairs in Germany. He was a gentleman of good family, and the last thing he wanted was to join forces with the Gestapo. Yet he saw no way out of it.

For weeks Herr von Felseck succeeded in putting the matter off. But the diabolic force that was the Gestapo ultimately put the choice so bluntly that he had to move into a building on Prinz Albrecht Strasse. At any rate, he had a more or less honorable position; he was in the department that busied itself with counter-espionage, for ferreting out foreign spies.

Still, he disliked his employers so thoroughly that he was an utter failure at his work. He had no inspiration, and even in matters of daily routine he forgot everything he had to do. His accomplishments as a counter-spy were nil; and to add to his chagrin, the advertising plane took to flying overhead. Day after day, the monster flew over the center of the city, wearing his nerves to a frazzle.

The inevitable happened: One day his department chief sent for him. "Von Felseck," the chief said with dangerous iciness, "your work is not satisfactory. In fact, it's abominable. There's been talk around here that you're an Oppositionist, and I am almost beginning to think so myself. Pull yourself together, my man."

BACK in his room, von Felseck flew into a rage. The advertising plane was swooping in narrow circles over government quarters. Von Felseck sat down and drafted a memorandum to his department head. "It is a matter for concern," he wrote, "that a private plane is permitted to circle around a capital at will every day for hours at a time. Scheduled flights are forbidden to fly over certain areas —the sport planes, as well. It seems to me that there ought to be a careful investigation of the occupants of the plane that has been circling the government quarters for several days. In general, private advertising planes ought to be prohibited, for reasons of military security."

Half an hour later Herr von Felseck turned green. Three infuriated officers of the Air Corps entered his office. The head of the Air Ministry was in a rage, they told him. The pilot of the advertising plane was a famous officer of the First World War, one who had received the highest decorations from his Fatherland, and a man who was absolutely reliable, a perfect security risk. Outraged, and determined to prove that the Gestapo's suspicions were all wrong, the Air Ministry head had ordered that the plane be forced down at Staaken air-field.

"Come along."

"Where to?" von Felseck gasped.

"To Staaken. Marshal Göring has asked your office to invite you to the great unmasking—since you are the accuser."

Von Felseck got into the car with the officers, and they drove him out to Staaken. They stood waiting at the field, the officers keeping their distance from Herr von Felseck.

Suddenly the advertising plane appeared in the sky. Then three speedy fighter planes shot out of a cloud, escorting the advertising plane. It was clear that they were forcing him down. At the airfield a company of the General Göring Regiment was drawn up, carbines held at ready. Police emergency trucks stood by.

THE advertising plane rolled to a landing. The three fighters dipped lower and circled around it, their guns trained on it. "All right, come along," the Air Force officers said to Herr von Felseck. "We want you to be right there watching when the plane is searched." They ran up to the plane and formed a loose circle around it. As soon as they reached it, a man in a natty coverall climbed out. He stood for a moment and looked around at the scene. Then he took out a gold cigarette case, put a cigarette in his mouth and deliberately lit it.

Herr von Felseck's heart stood still. A Major shouted at him: "You see? Now we can tell you. The pilot is our famous flyer Rheinfeld." Then he called out: "All right, Rheinfeld, come over here. What a mess! You're going to get the surprise of your life."

The Major's voice echoed across the field. Herr Rheinfeld approached. All he said was: "I was misled." For a moment everyone stood aghast; then a tremendous uproar broke out.

Built into the plane they found a concealed camera for taking aërial photographs. The other man in the plane was by no means a German mechanic. He was a Frenchman. He made matters easy for the authorities by remarking now, in fairly good German, that there was no sense in denying what he had been doing.

Rheinfeld was a broken man; he could scarcely move, and his arms had to be placed behind his back so that the handcuffs could be put on. The foreign agent surrendered his wrists to the cuffs with a friendly smile.

Herr von Felseck was standing forgotten in the midst of the turmoil. But the Air Force officers remembered him. Saluting, they stepped up to him, clicked their heels and apologized. They expressed their admiration for the Gestapo's efficiency and declared that Herr von Felseck would always enjoy their greatest respect.

Von Felseck threw a last glance at the smiling spy and unhappy Rheinfeld. Then he hurried to the nearest telephone and reported the whole affair to his chief. The chief roared with joy over the telephone and embraced Herr von Felseck when the successful agent returned to the Prinz Albrecht Strasse. The Gestapo had dramatically proved to the highest authorities that it alone was any good; the military counter-intelligence service had been shown up as useless.

Rheinfeld would not answer his interrogators; he only wept and groaned. But the foreign spy was willing to talk. He had been going about his business all over Germany for months, and the photographs had reached his superiors long ago, he said cheerfully. Nothing could be done about it now. He expected to be put to death soon.

Prinz Albrecht Strasse was overjoyed. What a piece of luck this was! The first really important spy to be captured in the Third Reich had fallen into the hands of the young Gestapo organization and not that of the military counter-espionage service.

That evening Herr von Felseck sat at home and had a few drinks. The quiet of the night was undisturbed by any circling planes. Around midnight he went to bed.

At five after one the doorbell rang wildly.

Waking, von Felseck thought that the visitors must be his fellow-agents from the Gestapo who had had a few drinks too many and wanted him to join in their celebration. But when he unlatched the door, it was pushed violently open. An officer and two soldiers stepped in.

"Herr von Felseck?"

"*Jawohl!*"

"You're under arrest."

"Why?"

"My orders do not permit me to talk. I am ordered to arrest you."

"Here we go again," Herr von Felseck thought. He was permitted to dress under military guard; then he was taken down to a car and driven to the military prison. He spent a worried night. Next morning officers of the military counter-intelligence service interviewed him. Von Felseck put on a good show of indignation and demanded to know why he had been arrested.

"Suspicion of espionage," he was told. Through his intervention a foreign spy had been captured. "How did you know there was a spy in that advertising plane, Herr von Felseck?"

"I didn't know," Herr von Felseck answered sharply. The officers shook their heads. They pointed out that circumstances were suspicious. Maybe he had regretted his association with

"My orders do not permit me to talk. I am ordered to arrest you."

the spies and had decided to give away the whole business.

They refused to trust him. What about Marie, the French maid in his household?

But the Gestapo had its liaison men in the military intelligence service, of course, and learned within a few hours that Herr von Felseck was in a military prison. Why? Was it departmental jealousy? Von Felseck's chief saw to it that he was released immediately.

THREE days after his release, von Felseck sat with this author in a restaurant in Sweden. Marie, the alleged maid, was with him, grandly dressed in silver lamé. The two had just been married. They wanted me to help them.

"The Nazis forced me to become a spy," Felseck said.

I still did not know whether to believe him. Ought I to denounce him, betray him to the police? It is hard to face the necessity of someone who asks you for help.

"But how, how, how," I asked again and again, "how did you know these flyers were photographing Berlin?"

Marie's lovely dark-brown eyes flashed, and instead of German, she suddenly addressed me in perfectly modulated French.

"Chéri," she said; "Chéri was working with me. He was working for both sides. It was the only way to escape being caught. I was sent to Berlin as an agent of the Deuxième Bureau. One of my assignments was to watch von Felseck; but then we fell in love, Chéri and I. We had to give the Germans something so that we wouldn't be suspected."

They were an odd pair, and their story sounded strange and incredible. *Why aren't they going to France? They're lying about this,* I thought.

"And what happened to the arrested flyers?" I asked. "They paid with their lives for your escape, didn't they?"

"You tell him," von Felseck said to Marie.

With an irresistible smile, she explained to me, the teller of spy stories, that this chapter too had a happy ending.

"Oh," she said, "it was easy. I knew we had two German spies who'd run into the same kind of bad luck. We'd put them on ice, and they were exchanged, so no one was executed. In peacetime such deals happen." . . .

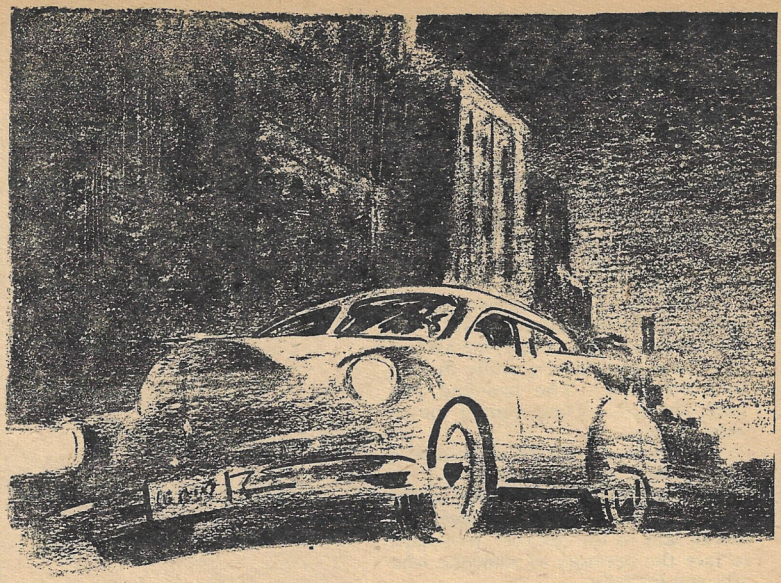
I helped the newlyweds to get out of Sweden. They went to France. I heard from them from Germany in 1948—a Christmas card, saying they were on their way to China. They are still in Shanghai—Red Shanghai.

As far as everybody but myself and a few men in Washington is concerned, the pair are leading Communists.

Illustrated by
RAY HOULIHAN

When Marie calmed down enough to speak, von Felseck became distinctly uncomfortable. Marie had said two strangers were outside asking to see him.

OFFICER MURPHY DEVOTES—AND RISKS—HIS LIFE TO FIGHT CRIME IN HIS BELOVED OLD NEIGHBORHOOD.



The Cramped

OFFICER MURPHY always brooded over war and the things war did to young men; and one of the reasons for his concern was Jim Deland, who had lost his left arm in the South Pacific. Other boys had returned to the Old Neighborhood with maimed bodies and minds, but Murphy had known Jim Deland's father, and he knew Deland's girl, Mary Stewart; and he worried about the romance and wondered if the two would ever get married.

Walking his self-appointed beat while Jingle, his sour partner, drove the squad car, Murphy often passed the small smoke-shop which Deland owned and operated, and he often stopped to make a small purchase, carefully not noticing the artificial arm with its brown gloved hand which could not, despite its cleverness, ever seem the same as a human limb. The shop did not provide enough income for marriage, he knew. Deland was not a shopkeeper—he had been preparing for an engineering degree in college when the Army got him in 1942.

Jim Deland was a tall, lean young man. His face was thin and withdrawn, his hair close-cropped, Army style, his eyes set in deep caverns beside a chiseled, long nose. His father had been a warehouse superintendent down on Rome Street, a happy, hard-drinking, lusty man, improvident and popular. Jim was quieter and never drank in Harry Hoople's saloon with his neighbors. He dressed soberly and spent his few spare hours—the shop stayed open late to take in every dime possible—with Mary Stewart.

WHEN Murphy paused at nine o'clock on a Saturday night, Mary was in the shop, arranging the stock. She was a small girl with pretty legs and a snub nose and a pert manner, and it was never apparent that for eight years she had been eating out her heart because Jim Deland was too proud to marry her and let her keep her job as cashier of the Bijou Theater down the street. Mary was a light-hearted girl; nothing could daunt her spirit for long.

She said to Murphy, "Don't you ever sleep? Are you on duty twenty-four hours?"

"We're on tonight, off tomorrow," said Murphy. "Gimme a pack of cigarettes, Jim, huh?"

Deland put Murphy's favorite brand on the glass-topped counter. The shop was narrow and shallow and cramped. Deland said, "You ought to buy them by the carton, Murphy. Cheaper."

"And less profit to you," Murphy reminded him.

Deland shrugged. His artificial arm hung by his side, the hand turned in a slightly unnatural position. "Profits are so small it wouldn't matter much."

Murphy said: "You got a big back room there. Why don't you enlarge the place, put in some more stock?"

"It takes capital to expand," said Deland indifferently. He was staring moodily at Mary's legs as she stood upon a short ladder and lifted her graceful arms to pile cigar boxes on a shelf. Murphy saw the hopeless bitterness in Deland's eyes and inside Murphy there was sadness.

Murphy said: "Well—watch out for those stick-up artists. We got a problem with them. Funny, we seldom get armed robbery in the Neighborhood. The boys know that's a bad rap. Breakin' and enterin', sure—we always had that. But guns—"

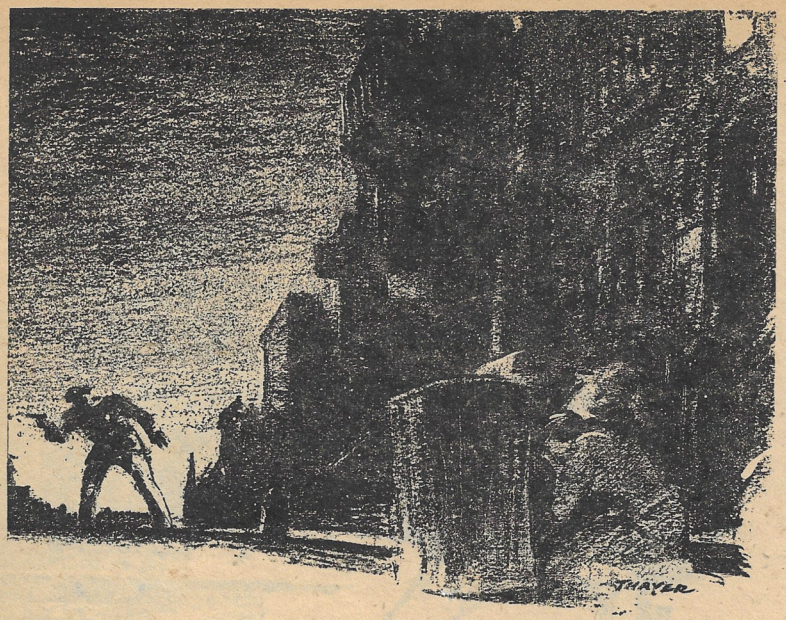
The door of the shop opened, and a cheery voice said: "Hey! How you kids? Murphy—howdy!"

It was Harry Torrence, a cousin of Jim Deland. He was a man of more than average height, slim and elegant. He wore sports clothing, a checkered jacket, slacks, moccasin-type shoes. He had pink cheeks and long eyelashes and a small mouth with incongruous thick, red lips. His teeth were very white and even—and women were fond of Harry Torrence. He had a clerking job on the other side of town and was seen in the Old Neighborhood only on week-ends, when he returned to the bosom of an adoring family. He went at once to a position near Mary, looking up at her, and she promptly hiked down her skirts and descended the ladder, her face slightly flushed.

Deland said dryly: "Hello, cousin. That's some coat."

Harry Torrence glanced down proudly at his jacket and said, "Imported goods. Sixty-five bucks. Thirty for the slacks. Nothing like good goods. Pays to get the best."

"You must've got a raise," said Murphy.



Left Hand

by JOEL REEVE

"You're not just a-birdin'," laughed Torrence. "I'm in those big chips, Murphy—I'm buyin' a new car next week."

Deland's face was tight. His mouth worked a moment, as though he were restraining himself from too-abrupt speech.

Murphy felt puzzled. Jim Deland should not be jealous of his cousin. He should know Mary Stewart had eyes and heart for nobody except Jim. Torrence had made his bid for Mary while Jim was overseas and if he hadn't succeeded then, his chances were forever nil. Murphy knew these things, as he knew almost everything about everybody in the Old Neighborhood.

He lingered a moment, listening to Harry's bragging, and then went out to make a last round before picking up Jingle for a quick ride through the warehouse district. He tried a few doors, stopped to talk to Arthur "Little Gooney" Traudt about the latest stick-up of a smoke-shop on the edge of the Neighborhood. The little reporter for the *Clarion* did not have anything new, but said he had been assigned to find out why so many cigar stores were being heisted. He said he had an idea—that it was well known that bookie rooms were secretly operated from such stores and that perhaps the robbers were knocking them off.

Murphy said thoughtfully: "And they couldn't squawk to the authorities. You know, Gooney, sometimes you come up with very smart ideas. Lemme know what you find out."

As Traudt dashed off, Murphy was thinking hard about bookie joints. They were none of his business. Someone above him in the Department was collecting for protection, a common enough thing. He had always known of such venality in the Department; it was as natural as paint. There were always some cops on the take. No city was without them. So long as Murphy did not figure in it, he stayed clear and minded his own business, which was keeping the Old Neighborhood in order. If the higher-ups winked at bookmaking, it was none of Murphy's business.

Unless bookie joints led to armed robbery. Then it would be different. Murphy was never one to hold still for a situation which might lead to injury to his neighbors. Gun-toting young thugs would never stop at bookie joints. Once successful, they'd extend their activities to gas stations, even banks. Someone was bound to be hurt.

Murphy went off to meet Jingle, turning over these matters in his policeman's mind. . . .

A month later Jingle, squinting in his habitual manner, said to Murphy: "Now it's a one-man job. Three stick-ups. A gas station, two cigar stores. Guy in a long cape, like in a movie. He ain't hit the Neighborhood yet. But he will."

Murphy said: "Yeah."

Jingle whined: "You ain't knockin' off Geoghan's Saloon often enough. Y' know it's one of them Neighborhood punks. Yer always favorin' these bums in the Neighborhood."

"Drive your heap around and keep your nose clean," Murphy told him. "You'll never be a real cop."

"I'll be a cop when *you* are fired for insub—insubor'nation," snapped Jingle. "Then I'll handle these punks right. A trip uptown to Coney Island, a few hours with the rubber-hose detail. That'd take care of 'em."

Murphy said: "Get goin'. I'll meet you on Rome at nine."

Sometimes Jingle disgusted him so that he almost couldn't stand it. Jingle's uncle was a political ward-heeler in another part of town and Jingle's job was safe. But the stupid cop would never understand the Old Neighborhood nor the people in it, not if he were assigned there for a hundred years. You had to be born in the tough, proud old section to know it as Murphy knew and loved it.

Of course the Old Neighborhood was neither prosperous in the manner of uptown, nor beautiful like the suburbs. But it was, to Murphy, the heart of the city with its own arteries of business and traffic, its people stubbornly clinging to the life they knew and managed to enjoy to the hilt. There was strong, pulsating life in the dirty streets and a strong neighborly feeling best exemplified by Murphy himself, if he only knew it.

He watched Jingle drive away and walked down to Jim Deland's shop to buy some smokes. Mary Stewart was alone, tending store.

Murphy said: "You don't mean Jim took an hour off?"

"First time I ever knew him to do it," said Mary. She was not smiling. She looked drawn and worried.

Murphy said: "Hey—that's a new door cut through." He was staring at the rear of the store.

"Jim decided to expand. He's trying to do the work himself," said Mary in a low tone.

MURPHY stared at her. She was lying. He had known her for many years, since she was a child and he could tell she was lying. The truth was immediately apparent to him. Jim Deland was letting the bookies in.

Murphy said carefully: "It's none of my business, Mary. I got no orders to knock off any bookmakers. But I'm sorry to see Jim into it."

Mary stepped around from behind the counter. She almost whispered. "It means the Association. Oh, they're powerful and they are supposed to protect their own and all that. With guns!"

Murphy said, "I know." He knew all about the Association. It was the big mob. It had never permeated the Old Neighborhood, because uptown and cross-town were more profitable. There was no loose gambling money of any amount among the hard-working folk of the Neighborhood.

Of course there would be some who gambled. The choice of Jim Deland as their operator was shrewd. People would figure that if Jim, a war hero, was in on it, the business could not be so bad.

Mary said: "I'm scared, Murphy."

"Yeah. I don't like it myself," muttered Murphy. "Don't let on to Jim that I'm wise, you hear?"

The door opened and now Murphy was aware of a buzzer connected with its opening as Mary stepped quickly away from him. Harry Torrence said: "Caught you, huh? Spoonin' behind old Jim's back. Where is Jim, anyway? He's been out of the shop a lot lately."

Mary said: "Why—he has not!"

Harry laughed. "I came home during the week twice and he was gone. Had a light in here but the joint was closed. Maybe Jim don't have to work nights now." His glance went shrewdly to the door newly cut in the back wall.

So Torrence knew already. Murphy sighed. Everyone in the Neighborhood had probably known before Murphy.

"I'll be a cop when you are fired," snapped Jingle. "Then I'll handle these punks right."

Mary said: "Jim's all right. He knows what he is doing."

There was no spirit in her voice. A light had dimmed inside Mary Stewart. As Murphy sadly left the shop, Harry Torrence had bought an expensive cigar and was leaning one elbow on the glass case, smiling his fat little smile at the girl.

AT nine o'clock Jingle raced the car up Rome Street just as Murphy turned the corner. He slowed down, shouting, and Murphy made a flying leap into the sedan. The radio was sputtering the riot call, and Jingle yelled: "Gas station at Lance and Main. Tucker was snoopin' on the trail of the bandit. *He got Tucker.*"

Murphy grunted as though hit in the belly. It had happened. Tucker was a Headquarters detective. The armed robbers had finally been forced to shoot.

The squad car squealed to a stop. There was a small crowd near the pumps. Murphy heard the siren of the Homicide crowd and began moving people back. Jingle took over that job and Murphy ran to where a man lay on some blankets. The gas-station attendant, nursing a bleeding arm, was babbling to anyone who would listen.

"I'm in those big chips, Murphy—buyin' a new car next week."

Murphy paused a moment to catch the bare facts: The lone bandit had come in behind the attendant and slugged him. The man never saw his assailant—he was a company man and not from the Neighborhood and Murphy did not question him, but went on to where Tucker lay. The Homicide sirens came closer. The lights of the gas station fell across Tucker's face, which was very pale and sunken, his eyes shadowy and dull.

Tucker whispered: "Hullo, Murph. . . . I walked in on him. . . . He's a fast shot, Murphy. He's six feet, maybe better, one-seventy, thin guy under cape. . . . Murphy, I saw his left hand."

Murphy bent his ear almost to touch Tucker's lips. The voice was nearly inaudible. "His left flipper, Murph—it's deformed. Turns out. . . . Looks twisted. . . . Somethin'—I just don't know—somethin' funny. . . ." Tucker's voice trailed off.

Murphy stood up. There was another sound on the night, a higher note than the siren of the Homicide squad, a keening sound, and this was the ambulance. They would not need it now. Murphy knew, and his stomach was empty now except for a small hunk of heaviness in its middle. They would need the morgue wagon for Tucker now, and the hold-up man was doomed.

For the entire Police Department and all its stool pigeons and the Fire Department—even the street cleaners would be looking for the killer of a cop. The citizens of the Neighborhood would quietly and surreptitiously bring revolvers from hidden places and oil them and load them, for they were not people meekly to brook depredations, and they would all be searching for the armed robber, the man with the cramped left hand.

Murphy shook his head. Sorrow was deep within him. He saw Homicide coming up, made his report to the Commissioner as he passed his chief's limousine, and continued walking away from the scene of the crime.

An automobile turned the corner, slowed and paused and a voice called: "Murphy!" Harry Torrence got out of the car and ran toward the sidewalk and the car went on. Torrence said, "We just got it on the police wave—I was riding with some pals."

Murphy said: "Yeah, it's bad. Did Jim get back to the store before you left, Torrence?"

"No. What do you want of Jim? Looks like you'd be after the killer. Every cop in town will be after him," said Torrence. "I'm going home to get my gun. I'd like to get sight of him."

Murphy said: "Nemmine your gun. That'll get you nothin' but trouble." He walked along toward the cigar store. "That your new car just drove away?"

"Yeah. Loaned it to a friend of mine," said Torrence. "You think a citizen shouldn't carry a gun for protection in a time like this?"

"That's what I think, and if you haven't got a permit you better think that way too."

He turned off Kay Street, bidding Torrence a curt good-by, anxious to get away from everyone, to think about Tucker's dying words. He should have reported them to the Commissioner. Soon he would have to report them, as coming from a different source, or he would lose his rating. He might even be transferred from the Neighborhood, which was the threat they hurled regularly at him when he insisted on going his unorthodox way.

A man with a cramped left hand! Jim Deland had been out of the shop when the crime was committed. Jim Deland had been out of his shop often during the week, when the other hold-ups had been perpetrated. Jim Deland had an Association bookie room in back of his store. . . .

Murphy paused, rapping one hand against the other. He crossed Kay Street, doubling in his tracks, and returned to Main Avenue. The sirens were retreating uptown. Main Avenue was dotted with people in tight groups who discussed the crime in low voices. Harry Hoople's Saloon blazed with lights as the regulars gathered to hash it all over. Murphy went on, to Deland's store.

Jim Deland was there alone. Murphy shut off the buzzer by closing the door. He stood a moment, looking at the owner. Then he said: "You don't look right healthy, Jim."

"I'm all right." Deland stood with his artificial arm dangling, the hand turned out, twisted, one might say. His face was gaunt, the cheeks sunken.

Murphy said: "Now don't talk back for a moment. . . . You got a book runnin' in the back. The Association moved in. And you're thinkin' that somebody's crossin' the Association by robbin' cigar stores and that you might be next. . . . Didja know the lone bandit knocked off

Tucker just now, in the Peerless Gas Station?"

Jim said: "No, I didn't know." His voice was dead. His eyes did not meet Murphy's.

"When the Association moves in, you got little to say if you want to stay in business," Murphy said gently. "Only you might've come to me with it. I was your father's friend."

Deland muttered: "You have no right messing with the Association. You're a square cop."

"They wouldn't mess with me," Murphy corrected him. "I know them boys. Some day maybe I will be allowed to tangle with 'em. Not that one cop could do anything against a national setup, but I'd like right well to have a whack at our local representatives of that organization."

Deland said: "It's no use fighting City Hall."

"So you've quit?"

The dull eyes sparked a bit. "You might call it that. Maybe I have quit—in a way. Mary thinks so."

"And she went home mad," Murphy guessed. "And possibly Harry Torrence took her home—your own cousin with the big job and the new car. So you're jealous—and sore."

Deland said harshly: "I'll handle my own affairs, Murphy, thank you just the same."

Illustrated by

RAYMOND THAYER

The citizens would quietly bring revolvers from hidden places and oil and load them.

"Okay," nodded Murphy, knowing now that his guess was correct. He walked out, leaving Deland looking after him with haunted eyes.

He walked around on back streets for a while, knowing Jingle would be looking for him in anger, but evading that grumpy individual as long as possible. Finally Jingle blew the siren very loud and Murphy slipped back onto Main Avenue. There was commotion in front of Zack's Drug Store. It was midnight.

Jingle said angrily: "Breakin' and enterin'. I tell you we got to go to Geoghan's and clean out the joint. This Neighborhood's gone berserk. They stole Zack blind."

The little druggist, in pajamas and bathrobe, said: "They didn't get any money, Murph. Just some drugs and rubber stock and perfumes and things. Looks like a kid job."

Murphy nodded. The rear door had been forced rather expertly. There was little disorder inside the store, as though the thieves had known exactly what they wanted. Murphy took notes and made a report.

Harry Torrence was one of the small crowd on the sidewalk. He said to Murphy, "Things are gettin' too hot in the Old Neighborhood. I think I'll go back uptown to my room."

"Maybe it's a good idea," said Murphy grimly. "I don't like this business. I don't like this guy in a cape with a twisted hand—" He broke off.

Harry Torrence said: "Twisted hand? Oh. . . . Yeah. . . . I see."

Murphy said nervously: "Just keep that to yourself. It might put them on the wrong man."

"The Force will be rough on a cop-killer!"

"I was thinkin' of the Association," said Murphy. "This man has more to fear from Association gunsels than from cops right now."

"On account of knocking off all those bookie joints," nodded Torrence shrewdly. "This guy is in the middle, but good."

"He ain't got a chance in hell," said Murphy solemnly. "If we don't nail him the Association will some night stick his feet in concrete and drop him in the river."

"Hell of a thing. Well—guess I'll blow." Torrence moved toward the new, shiny sedan at the curb.

Murphy called, "Hope you forgot about totin' that gun."

"Won't need it, uptown," smiled Torrence. He waved as he got into the car and drove away.

JINGLE came by, squawking as usual. Their tour of duty was over and Jackson and Levy drove off in the squad car as relief, but Jingle scolded: "You'll be traipsin' around playin' Hawkshaw when all you gotta do is knock over Geoghan's and round up them Neighborhood bums. You're gonna get in trouble yet, protectin' them characters!"

"Could be," said Murphy. "Now get out o' here and lemme alone."

Jingle went away. It was a relief sometimes to get rid of the restric-

tions of being on duty, Murphy thought wonderingly. Shedding Jingle and the necessity of routine reports was like taking off a heavy overcoat on a warm day.

He walked over to where Jim Deland had a room in Mrs. Fultz's boarding house, but Jim was not in. He went past Mary Stewart's apartment but no light burned there, either. He drifted over to a spot across the street from Jim Deland's smoke-shop and lingered there, in a shadow.

Jingle had been right: Murphy was playing detective. Once long ago he had planned on being the greatest detective on the Force, maybe Chief of the Division. That was before he realized that his destiny lay in keeping peace in his Old Neighborhood—but the knowledge and instinct remained in him.

He saw Mary and Jim come from the shop. They were arguing, but it was apparent that Jim was losing. The stubborn hunch of his shoulders was fading as they walked down the street. Mary held onto his good arm with two hands, looking up at him, talking to him. Murphy followed. They did not notice him.

When they made the turn toward Mary's apartment, Murphy speeded up. He reached the corner only a step behind them. He saw a large car coming toward them and shouted, running into the street.

The car swerved. There was a menacing gun-barrel—twin gun-barrels. Murphy had his service gun in his hand. He fired twice before the weapon of the underworld, the automatic shotgun, could go off. When it did explode there was shot all over the neighborhood, but Jim Deland, veteran of a greater war, had dragged Mary to safety behind a trash can.

Then the car was wheeling away. Murphy knelt, aimed at a tire. He held the pose for a moment, then shook his head, straightening, as the sedan squealed precariously into Kay Street and was gone.

Jim Deland stammered: "But how could they get here so quick? I only phoned them ten, fifteen minutes ago."

Mary was trying to adjust her clothing. "They—they would have killed us both."

Murphy shook his head. "No. They could've got you both, but they bungled it this time. They didn't wait for Jim to take you home and then go for him. I thought they would, but they didn't. It shows they ain't so awful smart."

The door opened and Geoghan was holding a gun. "Stick me up, will you, Jim Deland? I'll blow yuh full of holes!"

Jim said, "How did you know—"

"That you'd throw out the bookie room?" Murphy grinned. "I didn't know. But it's pretty safe to figure people will run true to form. You ain't always right, but it's a good bet."

Mary said, "But he only told them—just now. Murphy, they must be terribly dangerous. I'm scared—I talked Jim into getting out and now—"

"Now you go home," said Murphy. "You lock your doors and don't let anybody in but Jim or me."

Deland said: "What do I do?" He looked grim and helpless, his face gaunt with worry, standing there, the artificial arm turned in that manner, slightly cramped.

Murphy said: "People are likely to keep on actin' the way I figure they'll act. So you come with me. I might need help."

Deland said bitterly: "A lot of help *I* am!"

"That's for me to decide. Come!"

THEY took Mary home and locked her in. Then they went down and walked the streets for a short time. Murphy said suddenly, "Where's the other new bookie joint in the neighborhood?"

"I can't tell you that," said Deland miserably. "That wouldn't be right."

"You got to tell me," said Murphy. "It's so new I ain't found it yet. I don't reckon that car with the gunmen made its regular pick-up of cash. Not with me shootin' at 'em, and them knowin' it and knowin' me."

"Why do you want to know about the other place, then?"

"It makes sense," said Murphy. "It's a cop way of thinkin'. Where is it?"

Deland's shoulders drooped even farther. "If it wasn't for Mary. . . . I gave it up because she asked me to. I can't marry her ever, on what the store takes in, but I 'couldn't stand her hating what I was doing." He straightened a little. "So what does it matter? The new place is behind Geoghan's Saloon."

Murphy slapped one hand against the other. "Geoghan! Damn it, that Jingle was near bein' right. I won't have it, I tell you!"

He was almost running. Deland strode beside him, head down. They passed a parked car and turned a corner and there was Geoghan's, open after hours as usual, with the back entrance locked to all but those known to tough Patsy himself.

Murphy did not attempt to enter. He shoved Deland behind him.

He said: "Livin' in the Neighborhood so long, a cop gets to know things. Now we will just ease along, see? You go around the back. Here—take my blackjack. You won't need a gun. I'll cover the front. You'll know what to do."

He watched Jim lurch around the back of Humperknickel's Delicatessen and gave him time to make the back of Geoghan's. Then Murphy slid into the mouth of the alley, his gun drawn for the second time that night.

There was a sound of cursing. Then a door slammed. Then a figure loomed in the darkness of the alley.

It was a tall man in a trench coat. He was moving quickly and shoving something into his pocket. He saw Murphy and stopped dead, wheeled and ran back into the alley.

Murphy sprinted. He was almost up to the fleeing figure when there was the sound of bodies coming together. He saw an arm go up, come down. He hurtled into the fray, aiming the muzzle of his gun. He felt it clunk against a skull.

The door to Geoghan's opened and there was light in the alley. Jim Deland stood staring down at the prone figure. Geoghan was holding a gun, trying to get past Murphy.

"Stick me up, will you, Jim Deland? I'll blow yuh full of holes, you thievin' hypocrite!"

Murphy shoved Patsy against the wall, relieving him of his weapon, taking satisfaction in handling tough Patsy without kid gloves. "Shuddup, or I'll let you have one. Take another look, ye dumb bog-trotter!"

Geoghan saw the fallen man then. He bent, staring.

"But the mitt—the cramped hand!" he muttered.

Murphy ripped back the hat of the man on the ground. He kicked the left arm. It fell wide into a pool of light. There was a red rubber glove on the hand.

Jim Deland said: "Harry! Harry Torrence!"

"Your cousin," nodded Murphy. "Who but he knew that I had information against a man with a twisted left hand? I didn't tell nobody else, heaven help me!"

"I—I don't understand!"

"He wanted Mary. He wanted you out of the way, so he could have a free try at her again. He's a vain one. He thinks no woman can resist him forever," said Murphy. "He tipped off the Association that you were the hold-up man. They didn't get over here so quick because you wanted to quit. They came because he tipped them off."

"Harry—did that?"

"Well, there was profit in it, too," said Murphy judiciously. "His fine new car, his new job. With the Association, of course. He knew where every drop was. But he was new at it and he didn't rate everything he bought. I suspected this a long time now, knowin' Harry Torrence."

The man on the ground stirred and groaned.

"He'll live for trial," said Murphy happily. "This won't do nothin' but blow the lid off the Association around here." He wheeled on Geoghan. He roared: "And you! Makin' book! Makin' Jingle look good! You, Patsy Geoghan, that I've allowed to run when I could've closed you down!"

Tough Patsy looked meek. "They come in and acted bad. They had a lot of stuff on me. . . . All right, Murphy. I'll t'row 'em out. I guess you fixed it."

Murphy said: *"You'll* throw them out! You'll be lucky I don't get you sent up!"

Geoghan, who unafraid whipped a dozen toughs per week, said in a small voice: "I've always been square with you, Murph."

But Murphy was handcuffing Torrence, dragging him to his feet. He said conversationally to Jim Deland, "When he took the rubber gloves from the drug store it tied in, see? You got to have a sort of imagination about these things. I knew you didn't gun Tucker. You ain't that kind. You didn't have an alibi, either. I always suspect guys with alibis."

He moved the still incoherent Torrence to the sidewalk. "You better run over and tell Mary about it. And Jim—"

The tall man said: "Yes, Murphy?"

"Note that you handled him all alone, with the mace I give you. Note that you're still a good man. And try to remember Mary's just as good and proud. So she works—it would be better for her she should have a man at home when she gets through work."

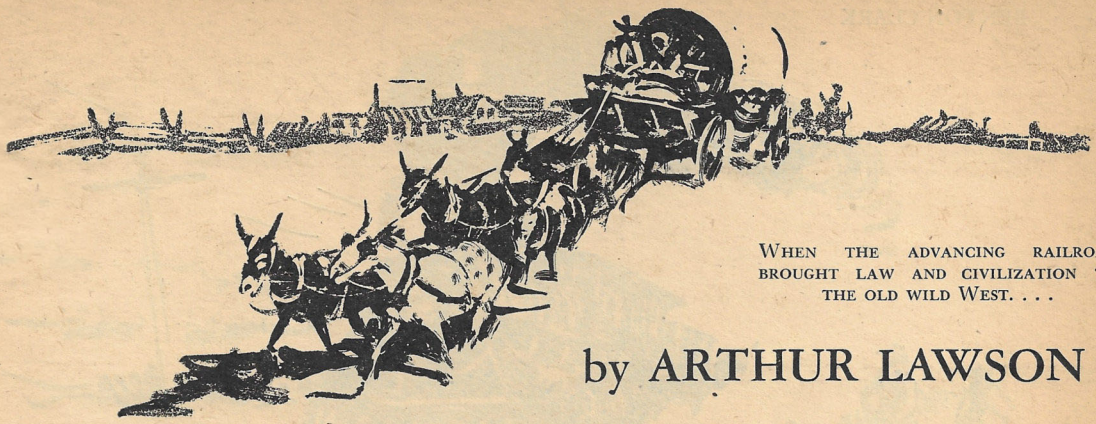
He watched Jim Deland pull his shoulders straight and stalk down the street. He went to the corner, shagging Torrence along, and pulled the box. Geoghan was standing by.

Patsy said timidly: "Could I have the dough he stole from me? It's quite a heap o' tin."

"You'll identify it. Evidence," grinned Murphy. "You can go into court and make the complaint and then you'll have to give it over to the Association. A bad bargain you made, and serves you right. Makin' Jingle look good!"

HE was pretty proud of himself. He had paid off with his detective work. It wasn't so bad being a cop in the Old Neighborhood when it paid off like this.

He wondered if the Association would fight back. He hoped so. It would make a fine battle in the Old Neighborhood. He thought about Mary and Jim and then he was completely happy. . . . Not every cop found a chance to play detective and Cupid on the same night.



WHEN THE ADVANCING RAILROAD BROUGHT LAW AND CIVILIZATION TO THE OLD WILD WEST. . . .

by ARTHUR LAWSON

God *and the* Law

THE special train from Omaha creaked to a stop in the middle of nowhere, and John Castine got up to stand by one of the plate-glass windows of the ornate car. As far as he could see, the hot prairie unrolled in brown grass, raw and ugly, flat and dull.

"Blast it, Bull," he said without turning, "why don't you give up? I'm a lawyer, not a builder. I would not swap an office in Boston for all the ground I can see from here."

Buel Bennett, burly and gray and better known as the Bull, pounded on the arm of his chair while his whisky glass hopped about precariously. He swore with a voice of thunder.

"God and the Law!" he shouted. "That's what makes civilization. Why the devil do you think I brought you two lily-livered ninnyhammers out here? God and the Law!"

The second young man, lean and tall like John Castine, grimaced as he sipped his lemonade. He would rather have had whisky as in the old days, John suspected; but he was now the Reverend Harry Russell, and he did not take his new profession lightly.

"Brigadier-General Buel Bennett," the parson said with a wry smile, "still pulling his rank. But John's right and you know it. These folks out here don't want God. They'd rather have sin. And I'm not the one to ram the church down a man's throat."

"I tell you, we're making a new country here!" Bull Bennett shouted. "Nothing's been done like it before. I'm building the railroad. We need men like you to build the towns."

The argument was right back where it had started two days ago in Omaha. Bull Bennett let go his breath with a long wheeze, drained his glass and bellowed for a refill. John Castine, who had already had more than he wanted, gulped his drink and went along.

He found himself wishing that he had not come on this trip at all. Already he was homesick for the ordered ways and quiet streets of Boston. Fools they were; sentimental fools striving to keep alive a dying friendship. It had sounded fine in the days of the war, how his two closest comrades would see the Wild West from Bull Bennett's own railroad that he was going to build as soon as peace came. But a lot of things were fine to talk about when you were fighting your miserable way through the mud of the Chickahominy. Now it was different. Now John wondered a little how even war could have made them friends. The slender, sensitive Harry Russell, so sickened by war that he had become a parson; roaring Bull Bennett, with his juvenile enthusiasms; and himself, John Castine, a civilized man, who had fought in a war only because the Union had to be preserved, and had longed when it was over only to be allowed to return to an orderly life. There was an oddly assorted trio for you.

The general's boy, whom Bull had sent up to the engineer a few moments before to find out why the train had stopped, was standing nervously in the doorway to the front platform.

"Well?" the Bull asked.

"Hell-on-Wheels up ahead, Boss," the boy said.

The preacher smiled. "It looks as if I'm too late, Bull, with Hell already leading the race to your town."

"Just a figure of speech," the Bull answered hastily, as if the parson were making an unjust accusation. "It's the train that's carrying the end-of-the-road town." He turned to the boy. "You see a boxcar painted blue, with a white sign—*Railroad Café?*"

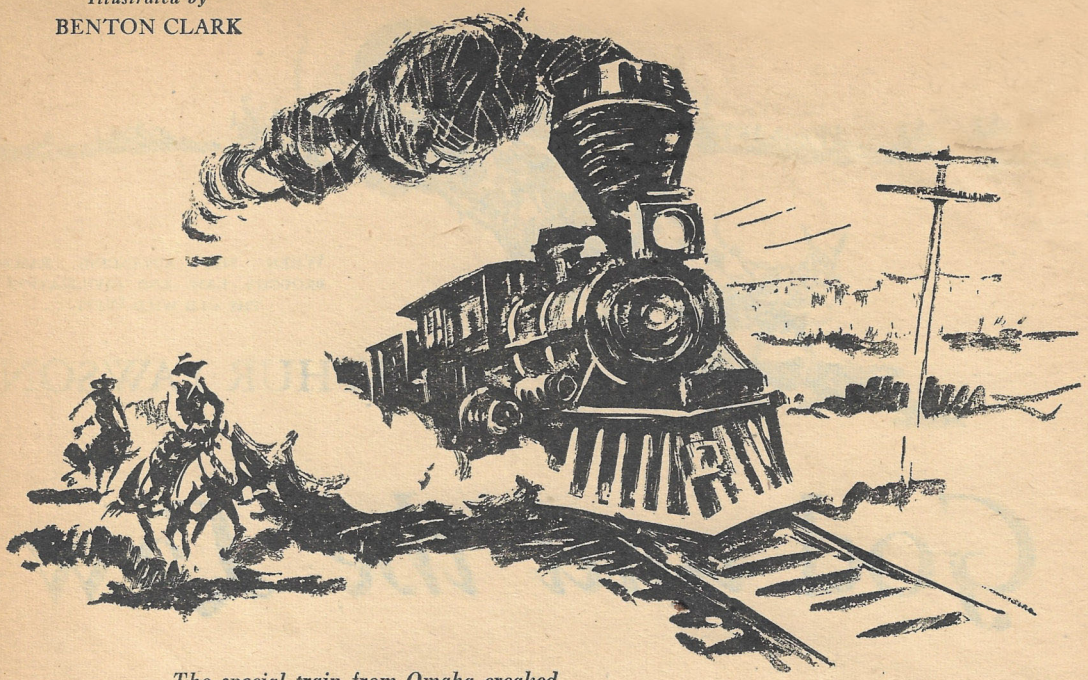
"Yes sir, Boss, I sure did. Baby blue with white printing."

The waiter had brought the round of drinks. Bull Bennett took his and stood up. "Come along, boys. I'll show you something. And you're going to have a wedge of the best damn pie you ever ate, bar none."

ON the platform of the ornate car a faint breeze stirred, and a strange roaring sound drifted down from ahead. It reminded John Castine of the troop trains he had known too well during the recent War Between the States. Bennett led the way, ponderous, massive, carrying his drink in a huge and steady hand; the lawyer and the parson followed, each toting his own glass.

John Castine's feet had hardly touched the buffalo grass when an angry buzzing swept by him, and the tumbler disintegrated in his hand. The next thing he knew he was under

Illustrated by
BENTON CLARK



The special train from Omaha creaked to a stop in the middle of nowhere.

the car, between the rails. Dodging bullets during the war had become so much a part of his life that he had not even stopped to think. On the prairie, the preacher and the Bull were bending over to see what had become of him.

"Get down, you fools," he shouted to them. "It's a raid."

The general laughed, roaring like the animal he was named after. A brief flurry of gunfire sounded up ahead, then the rising crescendo of voices. No more bullets came his way, so John climbed out from the roadbed to dust himself off.

"Just a couple of the boys having a little fun," Bull Bennett said.

THEY walked past the special train, past the locomotive with its great stack, and saw stretched out ahead the most curious conglomeration ever to be seen on rails. This was "Hell-on-Wheels," a town of saloons, honky-tonks and boarding-houses, which had mushroomed at the end of the railroad. Now the rails had been pushed ahead, and the town was moving to the new terminus. Whole buildings had been loaded on flatcars, others torn down and their lumber put aboard. One car, looking like a float ready for a Fourth of July parade, carried a bevy of fancily dressed but very dusty girls clustered at one end of the car, staring down at something on the prairie.

A traveling photographer had set up his camera. His shrill-voiced assistant was gathering business. A crowd had collected. Men who recognized the general opened a path; followed by his two friends, he filed through.

A dead man lay in the grass. A gun rested in his right hand; and his face, covered with blood, looked to John curiously unhuman. Another man, short and dark, stood between the body and the girls on the car; he had lighted a fresh cigar and was smoking it jauntily.

"Afternoon, General," he said.

"One dollar," the photographer's assistant kept shouting. "Who wants a genuine photograph of himself standin' over the notorious Spike McCoy? Only one dollar!"

"We was just having a little friendly discussion, General," said the man with the cigar. "Spike got het up. It was self-defense, General."

To John's surprise, Bull Bennett merely shrugged, jerked at his long-handled mustache. What had happened to all his fine talk of "God and the Law?" Evidently the death of Spike McCoy was no loss to the West of which the general had planned and dreamed. Then, at Bull's next words, a vague suspicion entered his mind.

"We have a preacher with us, boys," he said. "Stand back. I don't expect we can keep McCoy from sizzling down below, but we can try."

The man with the cigar seemed relieved, John thought. Shovels and picks made their appearance. Plenty of men stood willing to dig the grave; it was all more cold and impersonal than if you had come upon a group of enemy dead at the end of a bitter battle. John, marveling at this display of callousness, heard Bull Bennett asking him to take the legal step of looking through the dead man's effects, and found himself complying willingly, glad at least to be able to take some action.

Spike McCoy's belongings included some hard money, a tintype of a girl, some extra cartridges, and a tremendous roll of greenbacks. John, finding no indication that the man had any relatives, told the general: "We'll have to impound this, and advertise for heirs."

Bull Bennett nodded, smiling faintly and the grave was dug. Looking pained but determined, Reverend Harry Russell stepped forward, held a brief but stirring service. At the conclusion, the locomotives blew shrill whistles to help McCoy on to eternity. The shovelers pitched earth into the hole.

With Bull Bennett and the parson, John moved away from the crowd toward a blue-painted boxcar. The general was talking deep in his throat. "Civilization on the prairie—it's coming, and you're the men to bring it here."

He cleared his throat as if suddenly embarrassed. In the wide doorway of the blue car stood a very pretty girl. John Castine, startled, gaped at the golden hair and print apron. Bull Bennett bowed stiffly.

"Charity," he said, "I want you to meet my friends, John Castine and the Reverend Russell. Miss Charity Lee, my—niece."

They vaulted into the car. John saw that windows had been cut into the walls and curtains hung; narrow tables were bolted to the floor. At one end of the car stretched a counter with stools also bolted down, and beyond that was the kitchen. Except for the girl and the three men, the car was empty. Sandwiches and beer had been deserted while customers ran out to the funeral.

CHARITY LEE had retreated behind the counter, but John Castine could see that her figure was lithe and slim, her mouth full and generous, and her eyes unusually dark for so blonde a girl.

Bull Bennett leaned toward him. "Finest little girl in the world," he said in as near a whisper as he could manage. "My sister's only child. Orphaned. Promised to take care of her. She could be living in comfort back East, but she won't have it. Insists on earning her own way. Says she wants to grow up with the real West."

John Castine smiled. So that was it! Here was one person Bull Bennett had not been able to fit into the groove he had made for her. So he was proud of her, and embarrassed about her, at the same time.

He looked at Charity more intently, saw that she was half smiling at him, and flushed. The general called for pie and beer, and Charity Lee disappeared behind the partition that cut off the rear quarter of the car. Immediately Bull Bennett launched into his favorite subject.

"It's men like Lew Kopak you've got to fight, John. Got to kick them out if they ever get in. And you, Harry—you've got to make your city so God-fearing that people like Lew will stay away."

Lew Kopak, John surmised, was the man with the cigar, the man who had killed McCoy. John was annoyed, for he no longer wondered what Bull Bennett saw in his two strangely assorted friends that had made him hang onto them. It had nothing to do with friendship, except as the Bull sentimentalized it. John and Harry had been the Bull's best lieutenants during the war: he wanted them now to do his dirty work for him during the peace. The McCoy incident had offered him a wonderful opportunity to break them in.

Old Bull Bennett had asked them on this junket in the name of old times—come along on the first through train to the new capital of the West. At the moment John had just finished his law studies and was ready to set up his own office, while Harry Russell had done with his theological studies and was waiting for a church. It would be their last chance for a long time to see this raw and brawling West which excited Bull Bennett so much. So they had come—and it had been a neatly-laid trap.

John said: "What you need is a gunman, Bull. You have to fight Kopak with another Kopak. I've put up my guns. I'm not taking them down again."

The general hunched his broad shoulders. Charity Lee was setting down the generous wedges of pie and the foaming mugs of beer. The long train carrying Hell-on-Wheels had begun to rumble again. More men had jumped aboard the rolling café. Charity looked closely at John.

"Aren't you *the* John Castine?" she asked. "I heard—"

Everybody had heard it by now, he supposed. John Castine the hero. Just because he had happened to be on hand when the chance to be a hero came along. At Pine Run, with a dozen men, he had held back several hundred Confederates long enough for reinforcements to come up and win a great victory. After that, no matter what he did, his name was featured in the papers. If you had to boost enlistments, you told a story about John Castine. Lieutenant Castine—Captain Castine—Brevet Major Castine. Yes, everybody knew about John Castine.

A GREAT anger swept over him. "I heard—" the girl had said. The others were waiting for his answer. It seemed to him that they were all allied with Bull Bennett to trap him, even Charity Lee, who "wanted to grow up with the real West."

A thin, whining voice behind him said: "I heard he lost his nerve." It was Lew Kopak, his cigar smoked down to a stub. "If you're looking for somebody to clean up your town, General, get a man. Or get a scrub-lady."

He stood back, grinning faintly, appreciating the fact that everybody in the car had heard him.

When he was a small boy, John Castine had been very good with his fists. It had seemed necessary, and sometimes it was fun to fight. In the war, sabers and guns were the thing, because a job had to be done. But that was over, and he wanted no more killing. He had seen enough dead men. A civilized man fought with his brains. If he accepted this challenge, he would be going just the way Bull Bennett wanted him to go.

He took another fork of pie, then swiveled around on his stool; the train was swaying on its unsettled roadbed, not moving very fast. The passengers adjusted themselves to this rocking motion like sailors aboard ship, or braced themselves against the bolted-down tables. Only Lew Kopak stood without conscious balance, all his muscles tuned, ready. In an oiled spring holster, he carried the six-shooter with which he had killed McCoy.

"You heard Castine," the general said. "He's fed up on fighting. Don't pick on the boy."

Charity Lee came close to John, spoke to him in a low voice. "Don't let him goad you into a fight. He's not worth your little finger. The Kopaks and the McCoys, they'll kill each other off in time."

JOHN might have withstood Bull Bennett's not-so-subtle needling, but Charity Lee's advice on top of it was too much. He lashed out at Kopak with the beer mug in his hand, not throwing it, but using it as he might have brass knuckles. Still sure of himself, Lew Kopak smoothly slipped his revolver from its holster and squeezed the trigger. John's beer mug crashed into Kopak's jaw and knocked him off balance. The first bullet sang over John Castine's head.

Kopak got no chance to fire a second. John Castine's long arms encircled his legs and lifted him clear of the floor. In the same motion he tossed Kopak through the door of the car.

Vaguely he saw that a second man was dragging a pistol from its holster. He whirled, but he did not need to, for the Reverend Harry Russell had gone into action. The pie-plate in his hand smashed down over the gunman's head. Then the parson grabbed him and threw him out after Kopak.

"Thanks, Harry," John Castine said.

Harry Russell shuddered, straightened his coat and tie. Then—John could have sworn—a very faint smile flickered across his lips.

"It was a pleasure," he said. "Comrades in peace and war, you know."

The two tall young men stood side by side, their backs to the counter. No one else in the car moved. Those who were armed quite ostentatiously kept their hands far from their guns.

John Castine addressed Charity Lee without looking at her. "Thanks for the advice. But I'll play this my own way."

Charity Lee flushed.

The train slowed down again and stopped. It had reached a siding, and because it was too long to pull off the main line, it had halted with the

rearmost car just ahead of the switch. When the special train from Omaha had pulled onto the siding, the Hell-on-Wheels outfit would back up and let the faster train by.

Charity Lee leaned across the counter. "I'm sorry," she murmured.

"Forget it," John answered curtly.

"The special's pulling out, boys," Bull Bennett was bellowing. "We've got to roll."

The Reverend Harry Russell swung down first from the baby-blue boxcar. All up and down the line of cars, cheers burst forth at his appearance. When John Castine followed immediately after, the cheers swelled to an uproar.

"You know," said the parson as they walked together toward the general's train, "I do believe that even among this backwash there are a few souls on the side of the right."

"I'm afraid," John answered, "that it's just a few souls that like to see a good fight."

The general's boy held wide the doors of the ornate parlor car. Whistles shrilled, and the cars moved nervously over the new-laid tracks. These rails were of good wrought iron, but it would take a while for them to settle. Looking out through the rear door, over the fancily gilded rail, John Castine could see two men running toward Hell-on-Wheels. They were stumbling in the buffalo grass as they ran, but they finally made the train.

"Lew Kopak," he announced, "has caught up with his crowd."

"Benny Barka with him?" the general asked. He did not seem troubled at the news.

John nodded. Benny Barka, he assumed, was the man the preacher had thrown out of the café car. He thought that Bull Bennett was having trouble keeping back a smile: he was actually glad that the pair had caught the train. It fitted right into his plans to goad John Castine into a fight—and to compromise him into staying on.

The general roared to the waiter: "One round of the usual!"

The Reverend Harry Russell winced. As the special train rocketed onto the main line, the waiter brought the drinks.

"To God and the Law!" the general toasted.

Mountain City was a half-built roundhouse, some switches, a station platform, and a row of shacks along the single street that ran parallel to the tracks. Mountain City was also a mob of men, speculators who were ready to sell you any plot of land in the city regardless of who owned it. Mountain City was a dream of General Buel Bennett's. It might be mud and shanties now, but in his mind some day it would be the capital of the territory—and some day it would be the capital of the greatest State in the Rocky Mountains.

John Castine began to understand something of Bull Bennett's dream, as the three one-time comrades prowled around the little town. Mountains circled them, shining against the horizon, and the water of Raven Creek was clear and cool. A man with Bull Bennett's boyish enthusiasm could really see civilization here, see the city rising before his eyes, not thinking of the dreary time that must precede. John could not forget the latter, and he knew it was not for him.

"Right up here on this rise," the general said, "we'll build your church, Harry. The town's business district will always be near the railroad, but out here people will build their homes. A church should be close enough so people can walk to it."

"Not *my* church, General," the preacher assured him.

But that did not stop Bull Bennett. "This is the spot, all right. Give you a chance to keep an eye on all the wickedness down below. And on John, too. He'll want his office on the main street."

John checked the sharp retort that came to his lips, aware of its futility. To the eastward smoke puffed into the sky.

The general pointed. "There she comes," he cried excitedly. "Hell-on-Wheels."

The train, under its strange burden, rocked like a ship in a storm. In the town below, the speculators all began to run down the track. Bull Bennett started running too, and John, caught in the mood of the moment, could not help but hurry after him. Whistles were blowing so loudly and long that the train had hardly enough steam to keep headway. Gamblers, girls and honkytonk keepers had poured from the train to run along the rails. Just below town they collided with the speculators, and a great cheer mingled with the moan of the engines.

The train creaked to a stop near the platform, without brakes being set and without enough steam left in the boilers even to keep the whistles going. Guns were popping everywhere and where the station was yet to be built, one of the railroaders had set up an old brass cannon and was firing salutes into the white-flecked blue sky. One of the dance-hall girls threw an arm around his neck and kissed him. The man touched off the cannon again, and the girl screamed, while the man whooped like a Sioux.

A city had died a hundred miles to the east; a city—this time perhaps a permanent one—was being born right here.

The city grew. John could see it growing like some sort of magic plant. The lone street of that morning had become "Main Street." Others now branched off from it, and others still were surveyed parallel to it: Bennett Boulevard, Mountain Avenue, Railroad Street. Tents were pitched. Shanties had been unloaded from the long train of flatcars, and the Railroad Café was shunted over to a convenient spot near the station platform. A truly elegant honkytonk known as the Lighthouse seemed to have popped from the muddy ground. Complete with folding boardwalks which had been brought along each time Hell-on-Wheels moved from one site to another, it had wooden walls and a canvas roof and colored Oriental lanterns. Flanking the slatted, swinging doors were painted robust, naked ladies, each with a finger crooked to entice the passerby.

Spike McCoy had once been entrepreneur of the Lighthouse but he was dead and buried and forgotten, and a small, freshly-painted sign proclaimed: LEW KOPAK, PROP.

True to the sign, Lew Kopak himself was propped squarely beneath it. Benny Barka flanked him on the other side of the door, below the second fat lady, when John Castine and the Reverend Harry Russell stamped on the boardwalk to shake mud from their boots. Lew was smoking a cigar and smiling genially.

"Afternoon, boys," he greeted them. "Come on in. Anything you want is on the house, Parson. You too, Shyster."

"Thanks," John Castine said, not pausing.

"If you never seen any real, genuine sin, Parson, here's your chance," Lew taunted.

"Precisely what I need," the preacher said, "to spice up a dull Sunday sermon."

The two men walked on by, looking straight ahead, their backs uncompromising. As they stepped off the folding boardwalk fronting the Lighthouse, Lew Kopak called after them:

"We're holding a meeting tonight —eight o'clock. To set up a town government."

For the briefest instant, John Castine halted in the mud; then he went on. Evidently the original citizens of Mountain City had not yet troubled to organize a formal government. The usual method, he knew, was to call a mass meeting of everyone in town, and there elect a temporary mayor and council, who would draw up a constitution and petition the territorial government for a charter. Finally a formal election would be held. It was a pity that this had been delayed until Lew Kopak's arrival, but that was none of John's affair. He had let himself get involved in one

At Pine Run, with a dozen men, he had held back several hundred Confederates.

brawl with Kopak, and that was enough. Lew Kopak was a symbol of all he did not like about the raw West; Kopak had also become, although he himself certainly did not know it, a tool that Bull Bennett hoped to use to work his will upon John Castine. He was certain that the general figured that, if he could once get him involved with Kopak, John would be swept into the current of this mountain torrent and would stay here.

"You know," said the parson suddenly, "there is a pile of sin to be fought around Mountain City."

"I expect," John agreed.

He looked at his old friend sharply. Harry Russell had spoken in a half-jesting tone, but his face was very serious. The baiting of Lew Kopak, Bull Bennett's constant nudging, must have had their effect upon the preacher. *He can't make up his mind,* John thought; *he's not so sure of what he wants as I am.*

Perhaps the wrinkled bit of wrapping paper that crinkled right now in John Castine's pocket could give his friend the answer. He did not know himself how it had got there, but he did know who had scrawled upon it these words:

You and the skypilot both better start totin shouten irons.
We meen it.

John did not intend to tell Harry Russell about that note.

There was a gay and carefree dinner party that night in Bull Bennett's ornate parlor car. The general was mellow, the champagne ice cold; and Charity Lee was very beautiful in pale green, a square-throated gown that put a strange light into her amethyst eyes and praised the gentle curves of her lovely figure. John Castine, aware that she would be present, had promised himself to forget his annoyance with her. Having seen enough and had enough of the general's plots and plans, he had decided to leave Mountain City tomorrow; but for the sake of old friendship, he would do nothing tonight to mar the occasion for Bull Bennett.

After his first sight of Charity, he judged that his self-imposed task would be easy. He even got to thinking, as the champagne mellowed him, of a certain fine brick house in Boston, and how a girl like Charity Lee would grace its drawing-room. They could have fine parties there, not this poor farce of a one that barely shut out the brawling, dirty town outside. The rising young attorney and his beautiful wife. . . .

John had figured out, too, what it was he disliked about the West: it was too much like the war. Glamorous from a distance, those mountains and streams, but up close it was all mud and blood, barrenness and raucous noise.

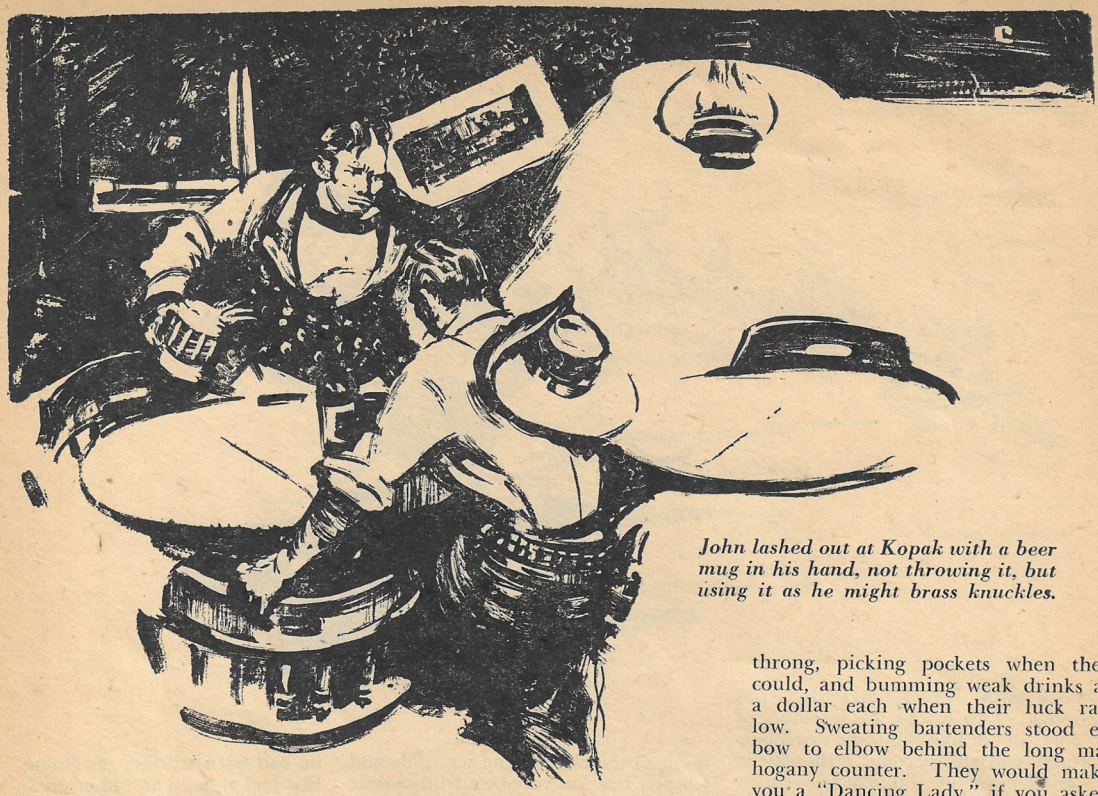
The general bellowed for more champagne. The glasses bubbled, and he called for his boy. All evening he had been sending telegrams. The first had gone to an old crony in Wall Street, who had sworn that the general's railroad would go bankrupt before it ever reached the mountains:

TRAINS RUNNING TO MOUNTAIN CITY TODAY BIGGEST AND BEST LITTLE CITY IN THE WORLD

That had got him going. He had sent another to the mayor of New York City, inviting him to come as a personal guest of the railroad to see what a real city looked like; then he went farther afield. He telegraphed President Johnson the suggestion that the capital be moved to Mountain City, where the clear mountain air would straighten out the thinking of Congress. He had next invited the Prince of Wales to come over and hunt prairie chicken.

John Castine, watching Buel Bennett's exhibitionist antics, began even to feel some of the warmth toward him stealing back, such as he had felt during the war. The old boy meant well, and in a way he was lucky. He had hopped right from the war into something like it. He was doing things, in the only way he knew, and that was how you could be happy. Maybe it was the same sort of conviction that made Harry Russell stick to lemonade.

Now the general demanded fresh paper. "God and the Law! Gives me an idea." He talked as he wrote.



John lashed out at Kopak with a beer mug in his hand, not throwing it, but using it as he might brass knuckles.

"To His Holiness, the Pope, Rome, Italy."

The gay party gasped, but the general continued: *"The biggest little city sends you greetings.. Five thousand feet closer to heaven than is Rome, we ask your blessing."* He invited the Pope to come in person and offered him the use of his private car. Then, augustly, he folded the paper and handed it to the boy.

"Uncle Buel," Charity Lee said, "you can't send that."

Oddly enough, the preacher said nothing. Harry Russell had moved away from the table when the general was writing, and now he was standing on the car's platform. John Castine reached for the paper, but the boy backed away.

"Better leave that one till morning, General," he said mildly.

Bull Bennett glowered at him. He did not like to be crossed. He bellowed at the boy: "If you don't want your hide tanned—"

The boy ran. Briefly, while the door was open, sounds of the town drifted in. Men were shouting in the streets: "Town meeting! Lighthouse —town meeting—"

John wondered if he should go around to the telegraph shack and tell the operator to hold up the general's message, but he shrugged it off. If the general insisted on making a fool of himself, let him.

The preacher called from the door: "If we're going to that meeting, John, we'd better be on our way."

John was startled. "Why do you want to go? It will be a farce. A meeting in a honkytonk—dominated by Kopak and his crowd."

Charity Lee was suddenly beside him. "John's right," she told the preacher. "I've seen it before. Men like Kopak—the only way they can fight is with guns. So they try to make you fight their way. He's trying it now—I heard about the note. Don't go—either of you."

They were all after him, one way or another, John thought—pulling him their way. Now Bull Bennett stood uncertainly. It was obvious that he had consumed too much champagne.

"I'm going," he muttered.

But the Bull could not make it. He slumped back into his chair; his eyes looked accusingly at John.

"It's an act," Charity whispered. "He's trying to goad you again."

John turned on his heel, walked out and joined the preacher.

The Lighthouse was as brilliant as sin and as crowded as Hades. Short-skirted girls moved through the throng, picking pockets when they could, and bumming weak drinks at a dollar each when their luck ran low. Sweating bartenders stood elbow to elbow behind the long mahogany counter. They would make you a "Dancing Lady," if you asked for it, or a "Kansas City Tornado;" but a "slug" was by far the favorite drink of the evening. The men here were intent on consuming as much red-eye as possible in the briefest time, and Lew Kopak's boys were prepared to oblige.

Lew himself leaned against the battered old piano, smoking a fresh cigar. Benny Barka stood by the swinging doors, greeting each new arrival. He bowed sardonically at these latest two.

"It's a great honor, Parson, a really great honor, Castine," he smirked. "Where's the general?"

John Castine felt Benny Barka's eyes moving over him, searching for bulges that would indicate hidden weapons. He noticed how their arrival had caused a hush to sweep the honkytonk, then a quick murmur of talk. Lew Kopak was waving his cigar. John Castine thought of the two pistols still in his carpet bag, of his college days and Harvard Yard, and of reading law at Beechum and Beauchamps on State Street. One of the girls was chattering at him and rubbing her hands over him; he pushed her aside and moved across the room to the piano, which stood on a portable dais. Lew Kopak beat on the bass keys. His shrill voice cut through the smoke and racket of the canvas-covered saloon.

"We got a real lawyer here," he shouted, "and a real live parson. If you ask me, we're damn lucky."

The crowd cheered, as if this had been rehearsed. The whole of Hell-on-Wheels was here, John judged, Kopak's rivals as well as his friends. The speculators from the original settlement would side with the Kopak crowd, and anything done at this meeting would be a farce; but the bitter thing was that any provisional government set up tonight would be binding at least until it reached the legislature or the Governor.

Kopak was beating the piano again. "This here lawyer knows everything, including the long words," he told his admiring audience. "He'll keep us legal. And this preacher, he'll keep us on the side of the Lord. I'd like to suggest we make John Castine moderator."

This surprise came so suddenly to John that he could not guess what was back of it. The crowd shouted, "Yay—yay!" and the lawyer was elected. John Castine's face was hot as he stood before the gathering. He had been angled into a position he did not want, nor could he think of a way of getting out of it. He cleared his throat.

"Tonight," he shouted, "we're going to elect a provisional government—a mayor and council to act until we can form a legally constituted government. We'll need temporary police and fire departments—some sort of court—"

Somebody yelled: "Hear—hear!"

The canvas roof shook with the cheers. They would cheer him now, but unless he could think of a miracle to turn them, when it came to voting they would vote Lew Kopak's way. Kopak drummed the bass keys again.

"It is customary," John Castine said, "to open meetings such as this with prayer—a plea that we may be successful."

Taking the cue, the Reverend Harry Russell stepped up onto the dais. His face, as he raised his hand, was a mask. The crowd fell silent, but for a long moment the preacher stood there saying nothing. A girl giggled. John Castine's ribs began to ache, and he realized he had been holding his breath.

"I'm not sure that a prayer would be exactly fitting." The preacher spoke quietly, yet his voice seemed to carry like a bombshell through the room. "A prayer must be backed by faith. I do not see any faith here."

The girl giggled again. Lew Kopak beat furiously on the keys.

"Shut up," he shouted at the girl. "And you, skypilot: You got up here to pray. Now get going."

"Maybe he ain't a real preacher after all," Benny Barka said from the doorway. "He's the gent pushed me out of the boxcar. A real preacher wouldn't do that."

Kopak slid a pistol out from under his coat. "You'll pray, damn it, and you'll pray right."

The preacher began to talk, straight to Lew Kopak, his sonorous voice ringing through the honkytonk. As he talked, John Castine marveled at his friend. This was no longer the retiring, sensitive Harry Russell who had gone into the church because of the shock of war: this was a new man, a man with a cause he believed in.

"You're a sinner and a hypocrite, Lew Kopak," he said. "You're a murderer and a thief. Yet you have the incredible gall to set yourself up as a representative of the people—"

"Pray," Kopak's voice rasped.

"—of this town, and to call a meeting in this unholy spot," surrounded by your henchmen—"

John Castine knew that Kopak was going to shoot even before his finger whitened on the trigger.

"You'll pray," Kopak shouted, "or dance!"

The gun blazed, and the bullet shattered the wooden floor of the dais between the preacher's feet. The Reverend Harry Russell never moved; his voice rolled on through the dance hall. Kopak's gun boomed again, and splinters flew about the boots of the preacher. The acrid bit of black-powder smoke made John Castine cough. He could not reach Lew Kopak, because both the preacher and the piano were in the way.

The pistol barked for a third time. This time the lead bit into leather—yet only the slightest whistle of breath showed that the preacher had been wounded.

Plainly, John thought, Lew Kopak had never been faced with anything like this before. He had lost his cigar and his cockiness. His mouth was screwed up strangely, and his nerves were wearing away like a sandy bank of a stream in flood. In a moment he would kill; he would have to kill because he was that sort of a man, and nothing could stop him, neither the law nor his own twisted will.

Harry Russell was walking toward Kopak now, castigating him, talking steadily. John Castine vaulted over the piano like a boy playing leapfrog. One of the short-skirted girls clutched at him, delaying him just enough so that Lew Kopak got off the inevitable shot. He could not even hear the sound of it in that pandemonium, but he could see the burst of smoke and the jerk of the black pistol in Kopak's hand.

Benny Barka also was firing, apparently, from the doorway, because John Castine felt a plucking at the back of his coat and knew that the girl who had grabbed for him could not have reached him there. Then both John's heels crashed down, full into Lew Kopak's face, and the gunman crumpled up on the dais. The lawyer fell heavily upon him.

The Reverend Harry Russell had gone to his knees, his big hands clutching his chest. His voice was muted, like the muttering of wind in the cottonwood leaves: "*. . . for they know not what they do.*"

His eyelids flickered. He was staying to the last. He was really praying now, not for himself, but for these people here, and he wanted to make it good. He wanted to make it strong enough to stick.

John Castine had recovered his balance. Lew Kopak had lost his pistol, and John had found it. He could be sure of only one cartridge in the weapon, though there might be two if Kopak was not in the habit of carrying his hammer over an empty. John Castine's sharp heels had cut open Kopak's forehead, and blood spurted into the eyes of the honkytonk owner, blinding him. Benny Barka was angling through the crowd for a shot.

John took a long chance; he fired point-blank at Barka, and Barka hit the floor. John had missed, but his shot stampeded the crowd. Men and girls rushed for the door and for the flimsy walls, and canvas fluttered as people piled up against guy ropes. Whimpering like a beaten dog, Lew Kopak knuckled blood from his eyes and groped over the dais for his gun.

John Castine pistol-whipped him, knocking him flat on his face.

Then he lifted the preacher in his arms. The canvas eddied above and collapsed; there was a crash of tin and glass, the risk of burning cloth and spilled coal-oil. Girls screamed endlessly and men cursed; some, more brash than the others, took a chance on raiding the bar.

And John Castine, with his head hunched down over the limp body of his friend, butted his way out of the blazing Lighthouse. When he reached fresh air, he gulped deeply, dizzily of it. Behind him the great canvas roof bellied up, like a balloon filling with gas; flame ate through it and shot into the air as if forced by a bellows.

The preacher was as big as John, solid and heavy. But he seemed light as a boy as his friend trotted down the gleaming rails toward Bull Bennett's elegant parlor car.

Fire stained the clouds above Mountain City. There was no longer any night. All about the one-time Lighthouse, men fought frantically, tearing down the flimsy structures they had spent the day erecting, or pushing the smaller buildings into the street to

"Don't go out there, John. They're waiting for you."

be hauled away. A massed ring of tinhorns and girls, construction workers and plain people gathered around to stare at the terrible sight. They stood with mouths open, eyes reflecting the blaze.

In General Buel Bennett's private car, the preacher lay unconscious on his bed. John Castine stood by, while Charity Lee washed her hands. Bull Bennett was lifting a stiff drink and looking troubled and indignant, as if to say that this kind of thing could not happen to a friend of his.

The man who had brought the information stood on the back platform, his heavy body silhouetted against the bright sky. Nobody answered him. Nobody looked at him.

"Lew Kopak got out, I'm telling you," he said a second time. "He crawled out. He's out. We all thought he was done for—but he got out."

"How bad is Harry, really?" John Castine asked Charity Lee.

"I don't know," she answered. "That bullet broke a rib." Her hands were poised above the wash basin. "I don't think it hit his lungs—or heart."

John Castine got his carpet bag and took from it a package wrapped in oiled cloth. Carefully he unwrapped his pistols. He had brought them along with the thought of hunting buffalo in the old Army manner. Oil lay heavy on the metal and he found the barrels clear of rust. The lawyer wiped off his guns and tested the mechanism. When he had put the Colts away after the war, he had never expected to fire them again at a human being.

"Thought they'd look good on my office wall alongside my diploma," he said to no one in particular. "Two kinds of law: the law of might, and the law that's written by men democratically assembled to determine what's best for all. Two kinds."

The girl had dried her hands and was listening to the preacher's breathing. John spun the cylinders of his six-shooters. "There's a third kind of law, I expect. I don't even know what to call it—but I'm going to give it a try first tonight. Do you have some cartridges, General?"

"Plenty." Bull Bennett finished his whisky and water. "I'll go with you."

"No. You stick to your railroading, Bull. I've taken over the law job." And he spoke so firmly that for once Bull did not try to argue.

"You going to kill him?" the man in the doorway asked.

"If you're carrying messages," John answered, "just tell him that law has come to Mountain City. His time is up. That ought to be enough. But tell him, if he wants it that way, I'll be carrying my guns."

THE man jumped from the platform and scurried along the right of way. John walked over to the table, took the largest piece of paper he could find, and wrote on it in ink in broad, clear strokes. He stood up, buckling on his guns; then, with the paper in his hand, he started toward the door. But at the doorway he stopped, for Charity Lee stood there, blocking the way.

"John Castine," she said, "I've something to say to you, and this time you're going to listen. Maybe you thought I was egging you on before, like Uncle Buel—but I wasn't. I meant it."

She looked up at him, a light he had not seen before in her purple eyes. "Don't go out there, John. They're waiting for you, hiding out to get you from the dark. What have you got to gain? You've licked them once today; by tomorrow they're going to know they're licked, and they'll get out of town. I know their kind."

John shook his head, held up the notice he had written for her to see. "Tomorrow they'll know it—but not until I've walked out there tonight and put up this sign where they can see it. I've got to do that." He could not resist adding, though he smiled as he spoke: "I thought you liked this kind of thing, Charity. Growing up with the West—gunfights, badmen."

Her eyes flashed fire. "Growing up with the West, yes. Because it's a fine thing to see and a fine time to be living in. To see men like Kopak

pushed aside and the good men coming in to build. But not the killings, John. You know what I mean. I heard you say you'd put up your guns for good."

He shook his head, but his heart was suddenly singing. "I thought I had. But I learned a thing when I saw Harry down there, and heard him. Boston is no longer for folks like us. We've got to have a thing to fight for, and maybe a new land to build. We've got it here. If I have to, I'll use my guns for it."

Then, before he stepped out of the car, and quite as if it were the natural thing to do, he put his arms around Charity Lee and kissed her.

The rails looked red-hot under the fire glow, and the heat of the blaze was heavy in the night. The Lighthouse was a total loss; its sidewalk crackled merrily, and the bursting piano strings added their macabre music. A whisky barrel blew up, sending its geyser of blue flame into the sky. It was better than the Fourth of July; it was much better because two men waited with drawn pistols behind the fire, while a third slowly walked down the main street of Mountain City.

Mountain City—mud and filth—a town that could be loaded onto flatcars and moved a hundred miles tomorrow and set up again without losing its identity. Mountain City—a telegram to the Pope. Well, this was something here, this walk of death—this was something that the general would not care to relay to Rome. Something that big grizzled Bull would not cable to the Prince of Wales. Come hunt rats with me, better than grouse in Olde Scotland, rats like Kopak and Benny Barka. Bring the Princess. Bring good old Victoria.

It was odd what you thought about when walking alone down a street lined with pink-tinged faces. You thought crazy thoughts, and you thought of a girl whose lips had been warm against yours a moment before. You wondered if you would ever look into her eyes again. Crazy thoughts, and a curious color; but still there was a high fine feeling about it all, and none of the emptiness there had been sometimes since the war.

The blazing boardwalk to his right not only dazzled John's eyes but its heat caused sweat to blind him. Still he kept on going. He thought of Harry Russell who kept on talking, and he kept walking down the street. He had an objective. Sometime during the afternoon, a few enthusiasts had trimmed a pine tree and hoisted it for a flagpole, down the street a hundred yards. A hundred yards was a long way tonight, but that was where he had to go.

Near the end of the boardwalk, the wall of faces collapsed as men and women ran to escape from the line of gunfire. That must mean that Kopak and Barka were somewhere just ahead. His instinct, sharpened by the years of war, all but drove him to one side; but he fought to keep himself in the street, and he kept on walking.

The flagpole was less than fifty yards away. It would have to happen soon, if it was going to happen. He saw movement ahead, and now he was certain. Kopak and Barka were up there, but they kept shifting position, as if nervously seeking the perfect spot from which to fire.

John reached the flagpole. He put the notice against it. Deliberately turning his back upon Kopak and Barka, he pounded a nail into the green wood with the butt of one of his Colts. Then, still deliberately, he holstered the gun and stood back, so that the sign was there for all to read:

TOWN MEETING—AT NOON TODAY
UNDER THIS FLAG
THIS WILL BE LEGAL. ANYONE LOOKING FOR TROUBLE I WILL THROW OUT.
JOHN CASTINE

Why didn't they start shooting? Curiosity might have stayed their hands while he was putting up the sign, but that could no longer be the answer. He was a perfect target, with the firelight behind him. They would never find a better.

"All right, Kopak," he called. "If you want a fight, start shooting."

He heard an odd whimpering sound, which could only have come from Lew Kopak. Benny Barka cursed, trying to work up courage. Then, suddenly, he could see both of them again, running. They were not running toward him, but away from him, into the darkness and toward the railroad tracks that stretched eastward. For their kind, there were easier ways than this to make a living.

Someone behind him yelled. John waited a moment, then turned back down the street. As he walked toward the General's parlor car, the pink-tinged faces seemed to open into one vast cheering throat.

Charity Lee was waiting for John as he came up the steps of the car. She rushed into his arms, and he held her close. He felt he had traveled a long road since Appomattox, searching. This was to be his home, and he knew it now.

After a while he said, with a touch of Boston still in his voice: "That Railroad Café, Charity. You'll have to give it up."

Her eyes twinkled merrily through tears "Yes sir," she said.

Harry Russell was breathing evenly now. But they found General Buel Bennett sitting with his head in his hands, groaning. A telegram lay on the arm of his chair, and in his right hand he held a glass; the glass was empty but he drank of it just the same. He tapped the telegram.

"John," he said, "I don't dare look at it. From the—the Pope. Too much champagne, John! You should never have let me send it. You should have pulled down the wires."

Wearily, John picked up the paper, feeling it would burn him. He broke the seal and read aloud, slowly.

"General Buel Bennett." (Bennett winced.) "Deeply impressed by your glorious achievement. I would be honored to visit your great little city that is closer to Heaven than is Rome. But just where the hell is it?"

The General gulped again from his empty glass.

"It's signed, 'Pope,'" John added.

Then he recognized the poorly disguised writing, and it was not that of the telegraph operator. He glanced over at the bed; the Reverend Harry Russell's eyes were closed, but his lips smiled. John Castine remembered that he had not been in the car when the boy left to send the Bull's last telegram.

John grinned. You couldn't kill a man like that. And he was going to be a good man to have beside you in the big days to come.

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PICTURE FLIGHT

A press photographer gets some dangerous assignments—this time a crashed plane followed a railroad wreck.

by ARCH WHITEHOUSE

"GET this one, Chuck," Hap Grady ordered. "Get this one right, if you have to fly through one of those Pennsylvania tunnels to make it!"

The New York *Mercury-Blade* had not had a worth-while local story to get its ink-stained teeth into for weeks. They'd tried all summer, but they couldn't blame the weather on anyone. And a paper needs something besides disturbing foreign news.

"I sometimes wonder," Chuck Meredith said with a sudden surge of unexpected reflection. Augie Sprain, his camera-man, allowed his cigarette butt to droop in puzzlement.

"You wonder?"

"I mean—I wonder if all this is important."

"We gotter have pitchers!" Hap grunted, and glared.

"We always have 'pitchers.' We get them whenever some society heiress gets lost in the Adirondacks. We get 'pitchers' of every new luxury liner coming up the bay. We get pitchers of hotel fires, Florida hurricanes and shipwrecks. We always get pitchers, but we never justify the effort of getting one of them."

Grady wheezed, swung the stogie over to the port side of his mug. It was all part of the *Mercury-Blade* setup. There was the same old whiff of stale tobacco, printer's ink, damp paper and the metallic clatter of teletypes and typewriters, the same scattering of tense and tired faces. The same disorder of desks, waste-paper baskets, sodden paper cups and scummy pop bottles. The same frantic movement of men and women preparing a newspaper that would be dead three hours after it whirled off the press.

"What's eatin' him, Augie?" Hap demanded.

Augie Sprain was a small wiry man with a sharp-featured pan, who had seen and photographed almost everything both in peace and war.

"To Chuck—it ain't important," Augie said, and snapped the catches on his equipment case. "Let's go!"

"A Keystone Flyer wreck ain't important?" gasped Grady. "A crack super-job goes off a trestle with about nine hundred important guys aboard —and it ain't important?" Hap wheezed again, and eased his paunch from the greasy rampart of his desk.

"But you'll never find out what happened," Meredith grumbled.

"They'll grill the engineer," Augie said morosely.

"Yeh, they'll grill the engineer," Meredith muttered. "There's nothing like a well-grilled engineer—with parsley."

"He's maybe dead," the fat city editor said and looked worried again. "The one guy who could tell us what happened."

"Could be the fireman's still breathing. You could have him grilled," Chuch tossed into the discussion.

Hap peered at Chuck again. His fat face looked ashen and lifeless. "I don't git what you're driving at, Chuck."

"I'm ready to quit this lousy racket," the photo-plane pilot said, and got to his feet. "A guy learns to fly, and they ease him into a war to drop bombs on women and kids . . . the way Hitler did on London. Me, I squirm out of a job like that, and I hook up with Augie, and we take pitchers, and maybe we make it a lot easier for the doughs who have to go in with a bayonet and hand grenade. Who knows? So we come home, and what happens?"

"You hook up with the *Mercury-Blade,* the two of you, and you draw down two-fifty a week, just gettin' pitchers . . . like you was doin' before. That ain't a bad deal in my book."

"That's what it says in your book. To me it whiffs. We take a perfectly good airplane, and we turn it into a tabloid Graflex ghoul. We flutter over disasters and mass murders like a buzzard—to get pictures. You put them on the front page, and the public eats it up. That's your idea of public service. There's a hundred important guys trying to do something about cancer and polio and heart disease—"

"The public doesn't want to read about that. Scares hell out of 'em! They don't want to know what they can die of. They want to know what they missed by not being aboard the Keystone Flyer. We're in business, Chuck. We got a lot of stockholders who have dough in this outfit. You draw down two-fifty a week to get pictures that pull circulation. That's all you got to do, bub. Now git!"

"What's chances of gettin' a regular street beat?" Augie whined and shouldered his camera case. "I got a hunch I'm gonner be grounded any day."

THE *Mercury-Blade* had a smart Beechcraft G17S fitted for news photography work, and while they'd put a lot of lettuce into it, fitting up a darkroom in the cabin, mounts to take all sorts of cameras and multi-length radio sets, the kite was paying off. With Chuck Meredith at the stick and Augie Sprain on the shutters, the New York tabloid consistently beat its competitors every time a situation arose where time, speed and distance played any part.

"Nice!" Meredith said after studying the Met report at the airport.

The section of right-of-way providing the disaster snaked through a tortuous gorge barricaded with wind-swept Appalachian peaks that looked good in the scenic railroad folders, but for flying are as deadly as a proximity fuse. There were sections of approach gaps that were hardly wide enough to take a Beechcraft, and Chuck realized Grady had handed them a job. He knew what the winds through those gorges would be like, and what his chances were of coming into the clear on the other end, and since the law of gravity hadn't been repealed, anything could happen.

He tried to explain all this to Augie, but the little camera-man was too intent on packing his gear. Just so long as Chuck was flying it, Augie would go out for pictures squatting on a billboard skimming through a hurricane.

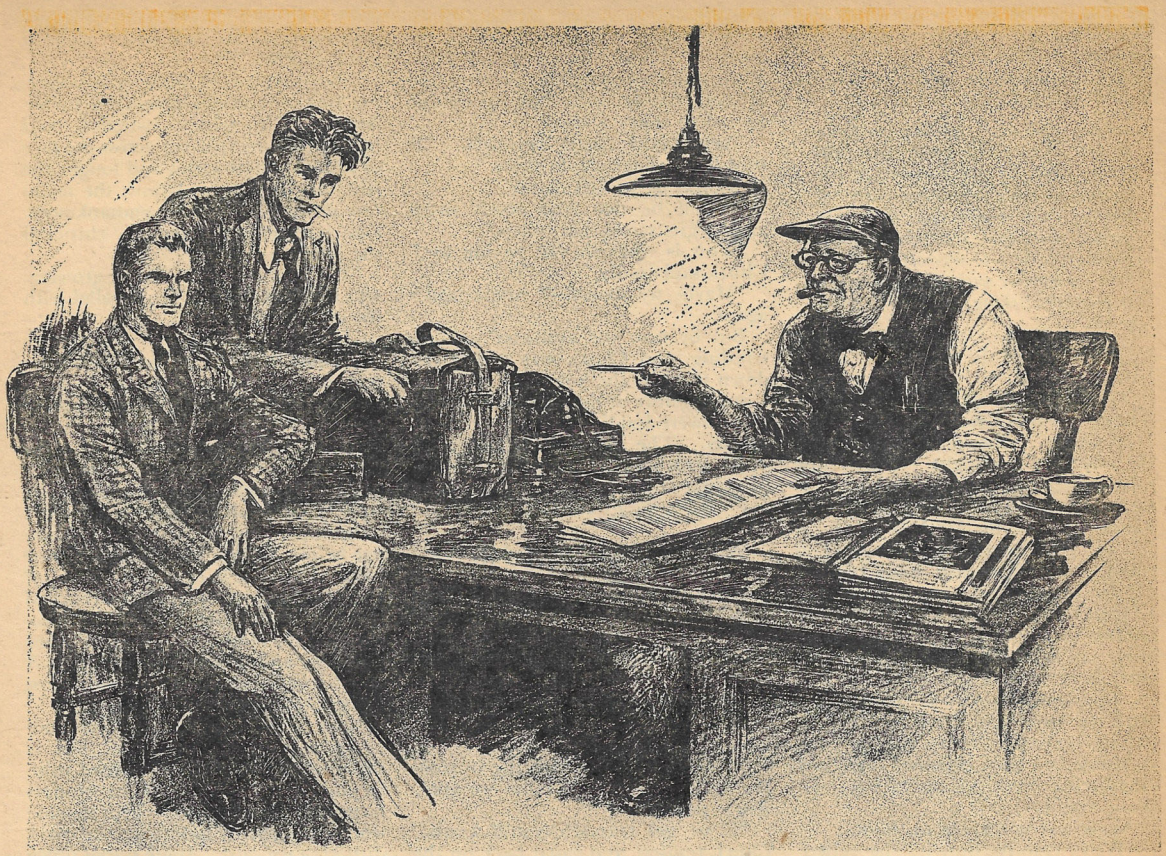
"What you mutterin' about?" Augie inquired as he climbed up on the wing. "Let's git goin'!"

Chuck looked up at Augie and marveled at his unconcern. To Augie, a front-page picture was an accomplishment that rang a strident gong. It was all he knew—it was his life.

"I was just thinking—" Chuck said.

"You can git a headache that way."

"Nothing heavy, like that."



"Get this one, Chuck," Grady ordered, "if you have to fly through one of those Pennsylvania tunnels to do it."

"Oh, the weather? Ah-h-h-h, you'll git through. You ain't goin' milky, are you?"

Meredith sniffed and smiled again. Fear had nothing to do with all this. The pilot knew how good he was, and how far his skill would take him. He knew when to say: "We turn back here." That was the brand of courage few read about in the Carnegie Foundation list, but they paid some men fifty thousand dollars a year and made them heads of great corporations for the same quality. For flying a news-camera ship and getting stark pictures of great disasters, a pilot can get two-fifty a week. It stuck in Chuck's crop that they'd pay so much for a man to use a plane for such a degrading venture.

"Let's go," he said, because up to now he had no idea what he could do about it. He could only hope that some day, while winging through that long delirious burning blue, the Voice would come through with an answer.

Chuck opened the 450 Wasp-Junior, saw all the needles on the green, and then got a clearance from the tower. He'd filed a flight plan, and had considerable grief trying to get the CAA inspector to clear it.

"You got plenty weather out there, Chuck," the inspector argued. "Be lucky if you even find that gorge in this. However, you know what to do if it gets bad. I can't make all your decisions for you, pal."

"You know me," Chuck grinned, and rolled up the chart. "I don't want my picture in the paper."

"Good luck, Chuck."

The course took them across Jersey and swept through two-tenths visibility all the way to Hazleton. From there Chuck selected a route that led to Williamsport and then he began checking for ground conditions. Augie, serene in his confidence that Chuck would put them spot-on over the wreck with no particular grief, whiled away the time listening in on a commercial wave-length set, in hopes they'd pick up another juicy disaster. It was all grist to Augie's mill.

"We're just poking a hole in the air," Chuck grumbled. "You'll never see enough of this splather to get a telephoto shot."

"I know you," Augie replied. "Twenty-five minutes from now, you'll be scraping her belly along the tops of what coaches are left on the tracks."

Chuck grinned, and held his course for the area between Williamsport and a set of Appalachian peaks that were marked "2,593" on his chart.

Figures near the Allegheny route dropped down 1,500 feet less than that, and Time had filed in a set of wicked sawtooth ridges to make it tougher. He could picture it all already. There'd be a long bewildering scarf of vapor drifting through the gorge, and savage rain-swept gusts would wrap that scarf in and out of the peaks; and until you smacked one, you'd never know what was in there. There'd be turbulent winds howling their chorus through the deep gashes, and the uneven sides of the chute would divert the rampaging tempest and set up dozens of up-drafts that would curl and corkscrew aloft to clutch at anything braving their fury. All that would be in there, as well as a wrecked luxury express. Chuck knew what could happen to him. He realized there could be a broken and fire-ravaged Beechcraft camera ship

as well as a Keystone Flyer cracked up in there, and he knew what an Accident Investigation Division board would decide.

"We find after lengthy examination of all available parts and equipment; after full consideration of prevailing weather conditions and the terrain over which this flight was carried out, that full responsibility for the accident to aircraft NC-29134 rests exclusively with the pilot. This is another striking example of pilot-error. . . .

"They'll grill the engineer," Augie had predicted.

They'd grill Chuck too, if he lived. They'd never question the motives of Hap Grady. They'd never condemn the object of the flight. They'd just miss seeing the pictures of the Keystone Flyer wreck and turn to the Korea news—or the football scores.

That set Chuck to thinking. Too many dead pilots had been blamed for crashes that were in no way their responsibility. Who knows why an airliner hits a peak miles off its course? Who can say why a transatlantic aircraft goes down a few miles short of its destination? Who is there to defend the man who can't be there to defend himself? There was no time to ponder on that, because Augie was clambering back to ready his telephoto outfit.

Augie was preparing to shoot.

"We're coming into it," he yelled. "There's the eastern stretch snaking out of the gorge. She should be down there, somewhere."

BELOW was a muddled pattern of glowering rain-swept peaks. Ahead, a dirty-white layer of cottony vapor that swirled and dragged vague designs through the pine-flecked depressions. There were shapeless breaks in the vapor that framed the sodden details of a valley farm. A dirt road crept through the marshland shouldering into a turgid stream. Beyond that—there was no knowing. There could be a large gory chunk of pilot-error, however.

"I'll make one pass through there," Chuck said, and gulped a wad of concern. "You'd better get her first clip, because I'm not going back. We got a fifty-fifty chance of coming out clear at the other end. I'm just going on the idea a two-track cut might be wide enough for us to sneak through—and I'm nuts!"

Augie gave him a look he'd never produced before. For the first time Augie sensed Chuck was concerned, and suddenly all his serenity dissolved, and he seemed to age in the passing seconds.

"Maybe we should—" he started to say.

"We'll give it a whirl," Chuck decided. "They want a wreck shot. We'll give them one if we get through. If not, Grady will have a double spread to worry about."

"Yeh," said Augie hollowly. "It sure looks rough down there."

"Could be stuffed clouds."

"Could be that line bends sharp after it gits across that trestle."

"This is what they're paying for," Chuck said coldly.

"Maybe we should—" Augie began again.

But by now the altimeter was unwinding, and Chuck was taking her down through the hole. He snatched a quick glance at the dial and saw the clouds were holding at 1,300 or thereabouts. The peaks were listed at 1,800, which meant he had a five-hundred-foot leeway to pile it up. Nothing like giving yourself plenty of room.

With trembling paws Augie was cocking his long-range camera. He palmed the lens to keep the vapor off. He checked his shutter speed and lens opening, and made sure everything was set. He slipped out the pack slide and muttered a few words of the photog's prayer.

"There's the approach to the trestle," Chuck said.

"A wrecker-job is chugging in from the west. How much room we got?" Augie yelled.

"If we get through—you'll know," Chuck replied, and eased back on the throttle but kept enough to assure a fast pick-up.

Below they could see a highway, and gradually the parked cars along the road packed in tighter and tighter. Two ambulances with their red crosses gleaming sped back toward Lock Haven. There were antlike figures hurrying across some fields—creatures of morbid curiosity scurrying to gaze on a long broken chain of carnage and buckled horror.

"If we ever git through this—" Augie was beefing.

The Beechcraft, whimpering and bleating her dread, tossed and chivvied by the vacillating winds, swayed and swung uncertainly through the open funnel of the gorge. The tracks below gleamed dully with the wash of the storm. Ahead, as far as Chuck could see, was nothing but a blank green-brown backdrop of cañon wall. He took another look and decided there was no choice now, no turning back. There wasn't room to kite a Cub around. They had to go on now.

"You get one shot, Augie!" he yelled. "Once you get it, hit the floor and hang on."

"Remember me askin' Hap about a street-beat?" Augie said.

"Here she is. I'll let you have her on the port side. You got some contrast against that rock wall. Make it good, brother!"

They were racing along now, bouncing and stumbling through the turbulence. The winds switched and halted, and the rain cut across the face of Chuck's wind-screen and fought the swirl of the wiper. Below, the metal ran along an elevated embankment, and emergency equipment cluttered the rails.

"We must be nuts!" Chuck growled, and treadled to keep her parallel with the embankment.

AUGIE cranked his window down and braced the camera on a metal arm. He squinted along his peep-sight and waited until the wreck began to shudder into the finder. He snapped once, and retched at what he saw. Three cars were hung up on what was left of the trestle. Another stood on its end in the stew of wreckage below. Three more were on their backs, water well over the ledges of the windows, their trucks wrenched into fantastic angles. Ahead, the locomotive and tender lay on their sides, battered and brutally distorted. A vari-colored patch of oil seeped across the gray-green water.

Augie tried to switch the film-holder for a possible second shot, but at that instant the Beechcraft tilted wildly, and he had to clutch at the window frame to stay aboard. The outside world shipped its moorings and went slithering upward. Augie stared down into the quivering tops of several pine trees, and the ship gave another lurch that hurled him across the cabin. His long-range job went buckerty-buckerty down the catwalk. The Beechcraft was banking sharply the other way now—and Augie knew. . . .

The cabin structure creaked with the outrage of strain. The engine roared and wound the prop to a lashing fury. She tilted again and the little camera-man clung to the catwalk, awaiting the final crash that meant oblivion.

A street-beat job would pay only seventy-five a week, but Augie already had his finances budgeted.

A new light oozed in through the window as the camera ship leveled off, and Augie sensed they'd augered through. He crawled up to the front office seats. Chuck sat tense, staring ahead at the narrow gash allowed him. He turned as Augie grabbed at the seat-back.

"You okay?" he yelled.

"Whew!"

"We'll make it," Chuck said, and drilled her straight into the gorge ahead. "Just this one stretch, and we should be out."

"Wonder what a sandhog racks up a week," Augie muttered and watched the V of the gorge race at them.

Augie snapped once—and retched at what he saw.

"Just suck in your belly, Buster," Chuck said, and sat figuring whether the thirty-two-foot wing-span would sneak through a peep-sight V of rock ledge and scrag pine.

The aircraft whipped and cavorted through the fiendishly capricious vortices that swirled and thumped at her wing-tips.

There was a long, anxious minute while Chuck diced the width of his wings against the unknown measurements of the gorge, but gradually the space broadened, and a wider angle of light seeped through. The Beechcraft escaped with a final frantic zoom of throttled power, and they were beating their way into the gray mottled carpet of cloud resting on the shoulders of the nearby peaks.

"No two guys are entitled to that much luck," Augie complained, and went back to his job.

Chuck sat it out, pondering whether it was luck or good flying. He realized that had one flight instrument been off—his altimeter, artificial horizon, sonic altimeter—anything could have happened. He wondered whether it was luck or his persistent confidence in what he had on the panel. Whatever it was, he concluded, it was a waste of pilot skill and mechanical efficiency when devoted to a lurid tabloid's screech-sheet requirements.

"If it only meant something!" he continued to complain in silence. "If what Augie just shot would prevent a thing like that ever happening again—I'd do it all over. If there was anything in that film he's developing that would give one clue to what actually happened, or disclose the cause, I'd say: 'Okay, now we're earning our dough.' But all we get is a telephoto shot of a train wreck for the morons to stare at. If that's journalism, I'm William Beebe two miles down in a bathysphere."

By the time they were skimming across New Jersey again, Augie came up front with his negative.

"How was it?"

"Good! Them stainless steel cars were lucky for me. They stand out swell against that muddy water. We really got a shot, Chuck."

"Here we go again," Meredith grumbled. "The railroad puts on stainless steel cars for safety, but if they go off

a trestle and flop into a river they stand out swell for the news pictures."

"Ain't it the truth?" Augie grinned for the first time since they took off.

He went back to put the negative in the dryer so he could make a couple of prints before they landed. While he waited, he went back to his personal radio and tuned in on a commercial station. He was just in time to catch the first sentence of a news-flash. He stood tense and undecided, but finally jotted down a few notes and went back to the pilot.

"You know what?" he began. "We'll no sooner get in than Grady will be shootin' us out again."

"What now, my cheerful little earful?" Chuck scowled.

"They's a Trans-Oceanic airliner down, chum."

"Where? . . . Who?"

"Ollie Jackson. I just picked up the flash on my set. A Connie out of Gander this morning. Should have been in two hours ago."

"Ollie Jackson?" gasped Chuck. "Not *our* Jackson?"

"They left Gander and cleared through Moncton in New Brunswick. His course went over Presque Isle to skip a storm moving in from the Bay of Fundy. Presque Isle got a routine report, and that's all anyone's heard from them, but there's reports of something exploding in the Katahdin area."

"Ollie Jackson's down?" wheezed Chuck Meredith in utter disbelief. "The guy only just made captain! What a lousy break!"

CHUCK had known Jackson ever since they'd started flying together in 1940. Ollie had put up a good effort on heavy bombers. He'd done the Ploesti and both Schweinfurt raids, and had completed two full tours of duty. After that he'd tried the commercial lines and went all through the headaches and wearying trials of the co-pilot. But Jackson had stuck, boned up and refused to accept lay-offs, ill fortune, and bad-weather furloughs. In the last few weeks he'd stitched four stripes on his sleeves. Jackson was Chuck's idea of heaven's gift to commercial aviation.

Now Jackson was down. A Trans-Oceanic Constellation was missing, and there were reports of an explosion near Mount Katahdin in Maine.

We find after lengthy examination of all available parts and equipment. . . .

"You know what?" Chuck began and his deep brown eyes reflected his decision.

"Now wait a minute!" Augie began when he caught the pilot's expression. "We got to git a print into La Guardia first."

"We must be nuts!" Chuck growled.

"We can save an hour or more by heading straight to Worcester to refuel. We got to give Ollie a break."

"If he's down the way they say, there ain't any break that we kin give him," Augie argued.

"Jackson didn't crack that ship up!" Chuck raged. "I know Jackson."

"But Gees, I'm pooped, Chuck."

"When a guy like Jackson goes down like that, something happened —something Jackson had nothing to do with."

"Okay, but first we hit La Guardia and dump these prints for the pick-up," pleaded Augie. "No use wasting what we got."

"Nuts to Grady! We've got to get to that crash—but fast! We've got to get in there first, Augie. There'll be nothing to work on if the mob gets in there first."

"Look! Let's start from the beginning," Augie cried. "First you figger we're buzzards circling over railroad wrecks. You give Grady a spiel about the unimportance of it all. Next you risk your neck and your ticket getting a swell shot of a trestle pile-up. None of it you want, but now suddenly you forgit all your wonderful resolutions and decide to get a scoop on an airline crash. Deal me in on an explanation for that, will you?"

"We've got to give Ollie a break!"

BY now Chuck had swung the Beechcraft over on her port tip and was racing north.

"Grady will be holding everything for that Keystone Flyer shot," wailed Augie. "Let's git one print in first."

"No railroad wreck is that important. Ollie Jackson's down with a Connie. There's not only a picture in this, Augie, there can be one heck of a story."

"I just take pictures," the lensman peeped. "It'll take you four hours or more to git up there."

"We can still be the first ones at the crash."

Augie said: "I don't get this *'at* the crash.'"

"We can find the crack-up, sit down somewhere close and go in on foot. We can still be in there first, if I know the Katahdin area."

"Jackson piles up tryin' to fly through that stuff," Augie continued dolefully. "Now you get a cockeyed notion to sit down alongside his wrap-up and do a firsthand investigation. Not with me, you won't—I just had a forkful gettin' that trestle shot."

"Jackson must have flown this stretch on instruments a hundred times. He must know the area like he knows the initials on his tie clip. They're not going to slap a package of pilot-error on that guy if I know it."

"Little Rollo among the wreckage!" Augie Sprain mooned. "He could'a' been off course. He could have had engine trouble. Maybe a downdraft sucked him in. Anything can happen in weather like this."

"You make as much sense as a news commentator," Chuck grumbled. "Remember, we're talking about a guy named Jackson."

"You're really stickin' your chin out this time, Chuck."

"Look! I'm landing at Worcester to fill up. You can hop off if you like. I'm going up north and find out what happened to Jackson. Take it or leave it!"

Augie wavered and did fluttery things with his hands. "Maybe I can put a print aboard a Northeast Airlines job going into New York. It'd make the second edition," he said thoughtfully. "Maybe Grady'd like the idea of us going up there."

"Thanks, pal," Chuck grinned and turned back to his job.

They went into Worcester slithering through weather no man would send a dog into. They checked with the Met office, and it was much the same all the way up beyond Bangor. On the chart, their little escapade over the Keystone Flyer appeared as simple as a school lazy-eight, compared to what they'd tackle if they hoped to find that Trans-Oceanic Connie.

The Worcester office had nothing on Jackson's crack-up. There was still no report on it anywhere. Search planes had gone out of Presque Isle and Moosehead Lake, but had returned unrewarded. There was talk of getting a couple of crop-dusting helicopters out of Houlton to comb the area, but so far nothing had come of it. Those egg-beater boys knew that country and if an airliner was down it would be in there a long time, and there was no particular hurry.

"You'd better try to get as far as Augusta and sit it out," the Worcester chief advised. "If that Connie's down in Maine, someone will find her between now and when next spring's fishing season opens. They always do."

"Thanks," said Chuck, sensing the logic of the reasoning. "Guess we'll just buzz up that way and see what happens."

"A pilot has just so much longevity," the Worcester man said and answered a phone.

Chuck studied the large wall chart. His eye drew an imaginary line between Gander in Newfoundland and New York City. From the take-off strip all the way to Presque Isle in northern Maine he followed the course known to have been flown by Jackson. The rest of the course was indefinite, but Chuck continued with his mental dotted line. It swung out of Presque Isle on a normal flight curve to New York and hacked smack through the top of Mount Katahdin which was 5,267 feet high, according to the chart.

WHEN the weather man wasn't looking Chuck took a course figure from Worcester to Katahdin and slipped the notation in his pocket. After that he drew up a normal flight plan for Augusta and filed it in the regulation manner.

"Take it easy," the Worcester official warned. "They got one wreck to look for already."

"Sure! We'll play it safe, pal,"—and he greeted Augie who came in from a telephone booth.

"Grady says it's okay," he began and then caught Chuck's pursed-lip signal. "Whatever you say, he says. There was nobody important on that Keystone wreck, anyway."

"Too bad," Chuck snarled quietly. "Let's go!"

Once they'd cleared the Worcester field again the weather began to ease as far as the rain was concerned, but the ceiling was no better. Chuck went on instruments and picked up the tower at Manchester and checked for barometric pressure again. He was taking no chances on anything until he found that Constellation. With the easing off of the rain, the winds became blustery in their boisterous effort to houseclean the sky and bundle the gray clouds away. The Beechcraft was buffeted and tossed relentlessly, and it was a continual fight with stick and rudder to keep her on course.

Visual conditions were improving, and by the time they reached Moosehead Lake, the terrain began to peep through ragged holes in the cloud blanket. They found themselves skimming a chain of notched peaks, with none too much room to spare, and Chuck decided they were in the Katahdin area.

"You're not going down through this, are you?" Augie inquired after the first look.

"You didn't mind me going down on that trestle. This is no worse."

"It looks worse to me."

"This is where that Connie can be. If we're going to find her, here's where to look," Meredith responded and let the Beechcraft drop through an open patch that brought out a bare strip of timberline.

"Brother!" breathed the cameraman.

Chuck said nothing but he realized he'd taken a wicked chance going through like that. So far, they were in luck, but if the cloud ceiling dropped they could be trapped. This was a swell way to use up the longevity.

"Fifty bucks for one good parachute," Augie said, and pressed his hands to his temples.

The winds were treacherous again, and Chuck was more than occupied staying right side up. She swung from side to side, switch-backed and plunged on with erratic surges of power. Her wild gyrations gave little opportunity for close study of the spruce-spiked area below. Chuck was getting tired, too. The long strain and effort were beginning to tell and he wondered how he was reacting. If there was much of a lag in his reflexes it might mean all the difference between clipping a crag and slipping past it in safety.

"What would a guy like Jackson be doing down in an area like this?" Augie moaned. "I ask you!"

"If he hadn't been somewhere like this, he'd have landed at La Guardia long ago."

"So he didn't land at La Guardia, but does that put him in here?"

"Could be," Chuck replied. "He cleared Presque Isle. If he had cleared this area, he would have reported in at any of the fields south of here. He didn't, and he hasn't been found anywhere south of here. Try that on for logic."

AUGIE'S tone was skeptical.

"So, you figure he hit in here—but what was he doing down low here where he could hit in?"

"If we find him, we'll know and Grady will have a story worth blasting."

"I wish I knew what you were gettin' at," Augie moaned and wagged his head negatively again.

"Jackson would have been on course," Chuck persisted. "He was that sort of guy."

"He could have been sleeping. He has to sleep sometime."

"Not on a leg like this, he wouldn't."

"So he comes down low over a wicked area with a mountain in it and gets bopped off. That just don't make sense, Chuck."

"It don't make sense that Jackson didn't get through to La Guardia, either."

Augie puzzled over that and took another look down into the spiked green racing below.

Illustrated by
CLAYTON KNIGHT

"You know—this can be a very important job," said Augie.

He slapped automatically at Chuck's shoulder.

"Hey!" he yelled. "You sure played a hunch, Chuck. Turn left and look down there."

A great dread responded to Augie's signal. Chuck banked over sharply, peered down and caught the shattered pattern of disaster. It was marked by great slabs of wing panel; evidently engines that had plunged from their mounts. In the path lay the hacked foliage offering its white wounds and dreary fronds of funereal foliage. The Constellation was scattered along a metal-hacked path that culminated in a blackened patch where what was left in the ruptured tanks had flamed after being ignited by a quick-match of friction.

The main cabin was now a distorted tube that had rifled through a small stand of fire-charred timber and ended up on its side to display the ghastly wounds it had suffered.

BEYOND the pathetic flutter of splintered limbs caught by the swirling winds, nothing moved. From the air it bore the appearance of a gutted shark that had been hacked to pieces and carelessly tossed away.

"That's a Connie," Chuck said while Augie went back for his long-range camera again.

He encircled the confined area again and searched for the impact point. While Augie loaded and set his shutter, Chuck flew back over what he believed to have been Jackson's course. Mount Katahdin glowered at them through the stringy murk, and Chuck eased in closer and closer until he found what he hated to admit:

Augie saw it too—a long telltale gash scraped across the upper face of the peak. It was as clear as if drawn by black crayon on a light gray surface.

The Connie had clipped Katahdin a few spare feet below the gaunt tip of the peak. The contact, light as it might have been, was enough to send the great airliner hurtling into the timber-stacked depression that lay below.

"There's your answer," Augie muttered and tried for a shot of the slash across the peak.

"He was dead on course," Chuck muttered, "but his altitude was off—and that's not like Jackson."

"All he had to do was look at the dial," the little camera-man argued.

"Sure! But it all depends what he sees there," the pilot said and circled away. "Guess we'd better contact Presque Isle and let them know."

"You do that while I get a couple of shots of what's left."

"All he needed was six or eight feet," Chuck Meredith grumbled, and headed back for the wreck.

The weather cleared more while Augie put the details of the disaster on film and Chuck called the airfield at Presque Isle. In those few minutes Meredith knew he'd never know a minute's peace unless he got down there and satisfied himself about one item that might clear Ollie Jackson. That gash across the peak of Mount Katahdin would be a wound across his soul for the rest of his days unless he made one effort to find out why it was there. There'd be voices and phantom dials in his every dream. His whole life would be a wreck-strewn path meandering through a doubt-draped world unless he got to that wreck before anyone else, and satisfied himself on one point.

He turned and called to Augie: "Get up here and put your straps on!"

"Now what?"

"We're going down there and find out why—"

"Down where? Are you off your rocker?"

"Grady ordered us to get pictures of that Keystone wreck if we had to fly through a tunnel. He meant that too. Now we got a chance to get the greatest scoop in history—as far as Jackson is concerned. It'll be a tunnel of sorts, but we're finding out why Jackson hit that peak. Buckle up, brother!"

"You're putting her down—where?"

"I saw an old logging road about two miles from where that Connie wound up. It may be less than two miles. We can do a wheels-down job in there and be at the wreck in less than an hour."

"Not with Augie, you won't."

"You'll want your name on the picture, won't you?"

"There won't be any picture. We'll both be wrapped up in what's left of this."

"Leave it to me," Chuck said with cold confidence.

"Listen, Chuck. I'm buying out. Get me where I can step off and you can have it all to yourself."

"Jackson's altimeter was off, Augie. That, I'm certain. We go down and prove it and they'll never be able to crucify Ollie. It's worth that, isn't it?"

"Just because a guy misses gettin' past a mountain by a few feet don't mean his sky clock was off," Augie protested.

"Anybody but Jackson, and I'd say okay. But I know Ollie Jackson."

"So you can look at what's left of an altimeter and tell whether it was off?" demanded Augie as they continued to circle.

"Give me one look at the back of it, and I'll know. If I'm right, you get a picture that will maybe save a million lives. Your name would be on that picture, Augie. It would be in every hangar in the country. It would be on the wall in every maintenance school. It would be in every instruction book printed anywhere in the world. *'Photo by Augie Sprain,'* it would say underneath."

"I got a feelin' I'm fallin'," Augie beamed, and added: "That would be something!" He began buckling the safety belt and additional shoulder straps.

"They'll just take one look at your picture, and it'll all be there—just as if it was lettered to show what was wrong, Augie."

"Ollie could'a' got a deal like that?" the camera-man asked in amazement.

"Wait until you see what I think we'll see."

"We can maybe get close-ups too," Augie crowed, and watched Chuck let down for the long narrow gash through the woods below. He was still a tabloid cameraman at heart.

"Maybe we'll be lucky," Chuck said as he sideslipped the Beechcraft to kill her forward speed. "Maybe that logging road will be just narrow enough for us to kill the pile-up some, by nipping the wing-tips."

"We'll be workin' ninety years to pay for the damage," Augie groaned.

Chuck ignored the complaint and risked everything he had. They could pick up his ticket if he fluffed this one.

The Beechcraft flobbered out of the sideslip and nosed around sluggishly a few feet above the trees. The road came in straight and clear; the old wheel tracks almost obliterated by low scrub and weeds. Chuck sat strangely calm as he headed the camera-ship into the narrow pine passage. Augie was tense and braced his hands against the instrument panel. He took one look at the air-speed indicator—and gasped.

A HUNDRED whips lashed at the Beechcraft's wing-tips and she recoiled at the flailing. She plunged on stubbornly and Chuck held her off, dragging her tail until her forward speed began to slip away and the old helpless stall-dread clutched at his belly. She hit once and porpoised off the center crown of the road. Metal put up a high-pitched squeal as low stumps tore out her cross-members and wrenched at the rear spar of the lower wing. A prop blade sheared off and flew skyward. There was another frantic bounce and slabs of sky, branches and the spume of earth mixed a wild phantasy of pictorial discord in the frame of the windscreen.

After that she subsided and with a last snarling swerve plunged into some second-growth timber bordering the road and bashed to a halt.

"You've made worse landings on a clear runway," Augie approved, and unfastened his belt. "Can you walk?"

"You've made worse landings on a clear runway," Augie approved.

"Watch me!" Chuck said and began to clamber out of his seat.

Augie grabbed his press Graflex on the way out, and together they took a bead on Katahdin and plunged into the timber. They were more than an hour reaching the first spread of battered dural and broken engines. They spent a few harrowing minutes checking through the buckled cabin but what faint hopes they might have nurtured were instantly dispelled by what they saw. Nothing could have lived through that unearthly crash, but the carnage only strengthened Chuck's determination to discover the cause.

"I'm glad we got here before any rescue party," he half-whispered to Augie. "It's bad enough but they'd have hacked this mess to shreds getting those poor devils out. Now we can look it over, just as it hit."

They went back to the bundled wreckage of what had been the flight bridge. Jackson was in there, somewhere—or what was left of him. Together, they cleared the control pit of the pilot and co-pilot and then Chuck went to work with a section of broken prop blade.

With one wrench he eased the instrument panel away and studied the instruments after Augie had photographed the full panel showing the details of the dials as they stood. Then he crawled under and peered up into the maze of connections behind.

"Just as I feared," he groaned when he came out. "Let's get this panel in the clear where you can get a full shot of it."

"Don't tell me you figured it out already?"

Chuck wiped his forehead. "Take a look at those two pressure tubes leading into the back of the altimeter."

Augie looked, poked with his fingers and came up puzzled. "So what? They're hooked in tight and secure!"

"Right! Only they happen to be hooked in—*in reverse.* I'll bet the log will show that a repair or replacement was made at Gander. Those pressure lines—the green one—the static tube—is connected to the red vent."

"That could be bad?"

"It means the mean pressure by which the altimeter diaphragm works, isn't getting to the right section of the instrument. In that case the needle will show a difference in altitude of anything from six hundred to one thousand feet."

"Cripes! If Ollie only had six hundred feet more he'd have skipped that peak by plenty!"

"I'm telling you. Jackson was that sort of guy. He'd never make a mistake like that or take any such chance in this area. He thought he was flying at about 6,500 feet—maybe more. Katahdin is about 5,267 feet high. He had plenty room on the clock, only the clock was hooked up wrong, and he piled up!"

"It's all there—on the back of that can?" Augie wheezed.

"You get a picture showing the position of those two tubes, and you'll clear Ollie Jackson."

Augie looked up soberly. "You know," he said, "this can be a very important job—like you say, Chuck."

"We can be important to guys like Ollie Jackson," Chuck said.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: An air accident which occurred on December 28, 1946, near Shannon, Ireland, was caused by a faulty altimeter, and on inspection it was discovered that the two pressure tubes at the back of the instrument were hooked in in reverse. Since then, the size of the fittings have been changed so that this mistake can never happen again.

WANTED

"YOU'D BETTER GET YOURSELF ANOTHER GIRL," SHE TOLD HIM, "A NICE ONE WITHOUT SCANDALS IN HER FAMILY."

by RICHARD HOWELLS WATKINS

DIRK LANE lifted his foot from the accelerator. His overheated car lost way rapidly.

Just ahead the white concrete of the overseas highway, leaping on from key to key amid unending light-green shallows, crossed the southern tip of yet another bit of land. This must be Ponce Key, this islet hidden by a palisade of mangrove trees standing on exposed roots above the water.

A horn blasted behind Dirk and a convertible swept past toward the low red sun and Key West, somewhere under it.

Dirk was almost sure he had reached the end of a long quest.

"A fat feller, half bald and half grizzled, and a girl—his daughter, most likely," the man at the gas dock had said and his faded blue eyes had turned up slyly at Dirk.

"She is," Dirk had replied curtly. "Thanks."

He ran his car off onto the shoulder and looked with sober suspicion at the narrow, muddy track that sloped down from the road and hid itself in the mangrove swamp. It looked like treacherous going. He was no great hand at driving; he had been gripping a ship's wheel at a time when most youngsters were tooling jalopies around town.

He switched off the ignition. Out of the car, he looked again at the track and then seaward, where a tanker, riding high, seemed by the deepening blue of the water to be hugging the twenty-fathom curve. His eyes turned back along the highway to the last bridge he had crossed. A solitary fisherman, a swarthy young man in a pink gabardine sports shirt, hung over the parapet with his rod in both his hands. His eyes were turned toward Dirk. No parked car accounted for his presence, though Dirk had passed no inhabited keys for a good few miles to the eastward. Perhaps Pink Shirt liked walking on hot concrete. Dirk pulled out the ignition key and put it in his pocket. Odd, to distrust a fisherman, but his faith in people had taken a jolt recently and he didn't like that fellow's look, anyhow.

He walked down the track. He need not have balked at driving it; there was solid stone under that dubious surface. He felt little emotion now; the anger that had sustained him had dulled. He was tired of badgering people with questions along these hundred and thirty miles of coral and limestone keys. And there was nothing ahead but unpleasant duty; nothing to stir up a man's feelings.

The shallows drew in on either side of the trail. The mangroves, standing high on those fantastic roots, bunched thicker. Then the ground lifted and the key widened ahead of him. He went walking in among old lime trees, planted haphazardly. In with them a few coco palms slanted skyward. Their shadowing fronds made it seem the sun had already set. Grayish stones outcropped here and there; the limes had twisted their roots in it to hold themselves against the pressure of sea winds.

Dirk saw a car ahead, a gleaming coupé of the same make as his own car. It was blocking the track. Next moment he caught sight of the peeling siding and screened porch of a ratty little fishing camp. His eyes were drawn from it instantly by a glimpse of June Fielding. He took two steps more and stopped.

THE girl sat in a heavy rowboat alongside a rickety pier, bent over to scoop water from the bottom with a partly flattened tin can. Her bare brown arm moved rhythmically but her attention was all on the shack-like camp. There was a certain tension about the set of her slim shoulders.

Suddenly she ceased bailing, set down the can and slowly turned toward Dirk. There was no surprise on her face, no surprise and no greeting. She stood up, put a knee on the edge of the pier, and climbed up. For an instant she looked again at the low building. Then she came along the uneven planking to meet him.

The muscles of Dirk's face tautened.

"Your father in there?" he asked curtly, with a glance toward the camp.

June nodded. He started walking again so that she had to turn to walk with him.

"Wait," she said.

HE stopped at once. She looked into his face. His eyes met hers with hard directness.

"Never mind," she said and took a step toward the camp.

Dirk frowned. Already she had him on the defensive, she who was so deeply in the wrong. Well, it was a trick she had been able to do when she was eight, but it was only a trick. This time it would do her no good.

"At least I should be more welcome than a deputy sheriff," he said.

Her head tilted. "Your mission is the same. I see that."

True enough, that was. June stood still, waiting, showing not the slightest curiosity about how he had gathered together the facts that pointed to the keys as the hiding-place of Amos Fielding. They were little things, like the old man's dislike of the Caribbean and South American peoples with which his ships traded, his almost childish enthusiasm for fishing, his outspoken pity for himself, condemned to life in a hot Southern city, and that chart of the keys he had tucked back in the wrong drawer of Dirk's chart table on the *Annette Fielding*.

"Without even leaving a note for me!" he said. "Didn't you think I'd be interested?"

"It was our affair, not yours."

"Our affair!" he repeated. "You may be sappy enough to let your father ruin your life. But I'm stopping it!"

June raised her head in the curious way that made her seem for the moment quite as tall as he. "As if you could!" she said.

"I can. He's going back now—with me, if he's smart, with a deputy sheriff if he isn't. There's a warrant out for his arrest."

June nodded. "I know that," she said calmly. And then her hand touched his arm impulsively. "Dirk! Please go away!"

"Embezzling, they call it," Dirk said. "If he'd only faced his directors and told them what a muddle he's made trying to be smart! They may be tough old shellbacks but they knew he'd had a jolt when your mother died and for a while was hardly responsi-

ble. But no! He had to run—and you ran with him!"

His eyes bore on her savagely. "I can understand his running—but you going with him! That's something I'll never understand." He started again toward the shack.

"I'm sure there are a great many things you'll never understand!" June flared. "There's a man in with him now who—"

"We'll throw the man out on his nose," Dirk said, without slackening his stride. He looked around and his voice was harsh: "I'm not going to risk his taking it on the lam again."

Her brown eyes closed an instant; perhaps the crook's phrase had hurt her. Well, she had it coming.

She followed behind him, without another word.

Through the corner of the porch, where it jutted beyond the shack, Dirk caught a glimpse of the hood of another car, drawn up in the back. Two cars? He remembered the visitor. He glanced into the nearer car as he passed. The keys were in it.

AMOS FIELDING came suddenly out onto the porch, across it and to the doorstep. The screen door slapped behind him. His round face had fallen in perceptibly since Dirk had last seen him. He looked shrunken. Strangely his lips seemed to be framing soundless words and cautions. If he had been startled by the sight of Dirk some other emotion had swiftly superseded it. Or was he feigning insanity?

"Pack your gear, Mr. Fielding," Dirk said brusquely. "We're starting back to Jacksonville tonight."

Fielding scowled, hesitated, then made up his mind.

"All right, Sheriff, just as you say," he said with overdone humility.

"Same type of humor as your daughter," Dirk said. "I don't like it in this—"

He cut off his words as a small, alert man in a white linen suit stepped out of the house onto the porch and peered intently through the screening at him. The eyes were black, intelligent, full of life.

"Not a police officer, then?" the little man said swiftly. "Just a friend—a friend of Mr. Fielding of Jacksonville?" The shrewd eyes darted from Dirk to June and back to Dirk.

"Who's this?" Dirk asked.

June, still behind him, was silent.

Amos Fielding's animation had left him; he glowered at Dirk; then, with an effort, roused himself.

"He says his name's Kennard, and he's got some crazy notion I'm a fugitive from justice," Fielding said. His laugh was a failure.

"Now happily confirmed, that crazy notion," Kennard asserted. He flung open the screen door and joined them on the grass outside, eager, strenuously unselfconscious and unafraid. He kept studying Dirk. "I have a talent. I can spot a fugitive at first glance."

He pointed southward. "At Havana I have had some small successes, and also at Caracas."

Dirk glanced around at June; she was facing Kennard with wide-eyed apprehension. Dirk sized up the animated little man. For all his exaggerated confidence he was nervous; the rapidity of his speech, his gestures and facial expression betrayed him. A little squirt trying to be important, to dominate the situation.

"The difficulty is always to trace the man back, to learn where he comes from and his name," Kennard said most cheerfully. "Once those details are in my hands—as has happened so opportunely in this case—" He gestured toward Dirk with his hand; then dropped it to his side with ominous finality.

Dirk looked sideways at June, feeling himself a wide-mouthed swab.

"Blackmail?" he asked Fielding.

"Now that he knows my name and where I come from—yes," said Amos Fielding sullenly. "Before you got here he was just fishing around, for days, pretending to be friendly, asking us questions."

Dirk met June's eyes. "It doesn't matter," he said. "Your father's going back tonight."

"Ah, but perhaps it does matter!" Kennard cried. He pivoted, keen eyes watching them all. The little man's mental agility seemed to shake his timorous body, like an over-large engine in a rust-thinned hull.

"Let me see if I understand this situation," he said. "Mr. Fielding, here, absconds with some money, accompanied by his devoted daughter. Then he is hunted down by this bright young fellow"—his shrewd eyes raked Dirk—"a seagoing young man, by the color of his skin and the wrinkles around his eyes. A shipmaster, perhaps? He has a commanding eye. Well, for business or—ah—let us say sentimental reasons—he de-

Dirk's long arms whipped out. One hand swept the wadded handkerchief against Kennard's face. The other clamped back of his head.

sires Mr. Fielding to return. Arrest is far from his thoughts. Whereas a quiet voluntary return might redeem the delicate situation, an arrest, a dragging back in handcuffs, would be catastrophic."

He tapped his meager chest and deepened his voice. "Well, gentlemen, I represent arrest. A telephone call to Key West, perhaps another to Miami, and the sheriffs' offices of two counties would be vying for the distinction of apprehending Mr. Fielding. Am I right? Please don't bother to lie."

Dirk reached a decision. "Let's talk this over," he said. He flung open the screen door and stepped onto the porch. Without turning his head to see if he were followed, he continued on into a room sketchily furnished with odd bits of wicker furniture.

KENNARD was prompt, almost too prompt, in following. June and Fielding came in after him. Dirk maneuvered Kennard toward a corner containing no doors or windows.

"A moment, Captain, before you lay hands on me," Kennard said. His voice was shaky. He pointed toward the track through the lime grove.

In the dusk the bridge fisherman of the pink gabardine sports shirt was visible, leaning against the trunk of a coco palm.

"It would save time if you concede me elementary intelligence," Kennard said and his voice held feeble exasperation. "Miguel, over there, is a man of violence, passionately addicted to pistol fire and not too bright."

He cleared his throat nervously. "I know my limitations, my lack of forcefulness, my insignificant person and I reinforce these failings with Miguel. But I tell you in all sincerity it would be better for all of us not to rouse that young man. I am sure none of you are armed. Miguel has a pistol and he will use it willingly, quite heedless of future consequences."

You have taken over here, Dirk. He could feel June thinking that as plainly as if she had spoken the words. *What's the next move?*

An armchair creaked resentfully as Dirk planted his arms on the back of it and let his eyes rove out the window.

"You ask me why I make use of such a creature," Kennard said. "Let me tell you it is not easy to lay hands on the precise instrument—"

"Why don't you shut up!" Dirk growled. A comic character, this Kennard, but he packed a menace nevertheless. He could make a phone call. There was no doubt Kennard was worried about unleashing Miguel. But in spite of his fears, vanity in the little man would lead him to call his thug into action. Then, too, he might not dare to emerge empty-handed from this adventure—with Miguel impatiently expecting money.

Dirk glanced again at June, standing there beside her frightened father. Her brown arms rested at her sides; her animation was gone. Her stillness, her passivity was not natural. But he understood it. Well, she was wrong again if she thought he couldn't handle the crisis he had precipitated.

Old Amos Fielding was trying to light a match for his cigar; he was making heavy weather of it.

Dirk pushed him into the corner. "Would you go back voluntarily now, if you could?" he asked softly.

"Yes, yes!" said Fielding in a hoarse whisper. His effort to be convincing gave him the shakes. "Of course! You know I lost money; I didn't abscond with it. I can't buy off this little crook with—"

"Damn' right you can't," Dirk said. The thing to do was to keep his mind off June except as she fitted into this problem. Fielding wanted to scuttle back now. Dirk looked at June. She sensed his question and nodded gravely. Yes; she would go back with her father now, if they could return voluntarily.

"I'm not greedy," Kennard said defensively. "In return for a small share of the—of Mr. Fielding's takings, I will give him some invaluable advice on how to maintain seclusion successfully, without arousing suspicion. Otherwise, arrest!"

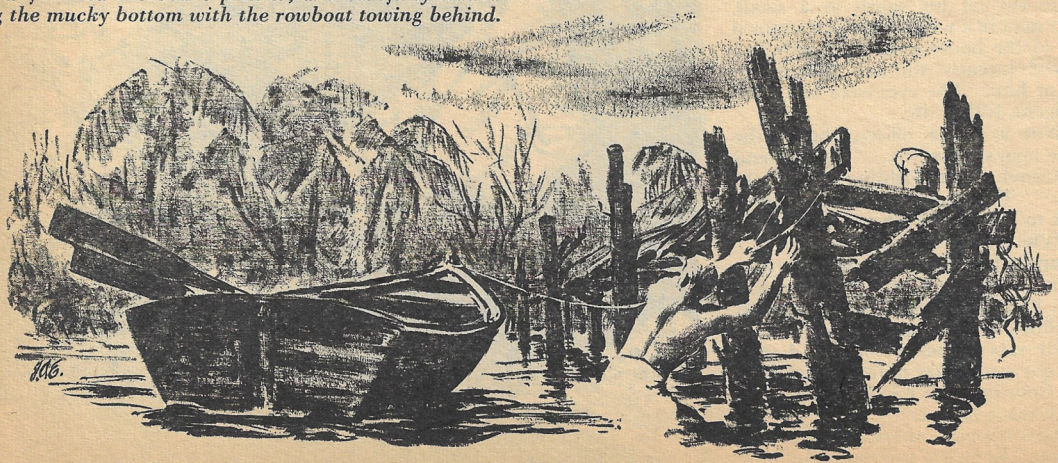
HE glanced around the darkening room, analyzing their attitudes and their silence. His words pattered on with no more effect than raindrops but outside in the twilight, blocking the trail, Miguel waited.

"It is to my interest, once our agreement is concluded, to see that Mr. Fielding escapes and remains well hidden. The moment he is found the question of what became of his resources arises. Then I, too, become hunted. Surely you see I would avoid that."

Kennard stopped talking and his eyes anxiously asked a reply.

Dirk stepped to the door onto the porch to appraise the dusk outside. He had often noticed when pacing the bridge this near the equator how rapidly darkness took over from daylight once the sun was under. This evening, however, the light seemed to linger unconscionably. He could still make out the figure of Miguel, now squatting on the track beyond the lime trees. His pink shirt was going dark, one indication, at least, that day

Dirk unfastened the boat's painter, and carefully waded along the mucky bottom with the rowboat towing behind.



Illustrated by James Ernst

Suddenly she ceased bailing. For an instant she looked again at the building.

was departing. And in the room here, with screens filtering the light, figures were becoming shadows and expressions could no longer be read. It still suited June's purpose to remain utterly quiescent and Dirk pointedly ignored her. He must stall a while longer.

"What makes you think it would hurt me to see Fielding under arrest?" Dirk asked.

"Again I must ask you to credit me with some slight vestige of common sense," Kennard said, aggrieved. The question gave his voice new life, turned him on like a faucet. "Miss Fielding would not approve of your attitude."

DIRK jerked his head around; his eyes were savage.

"So what?" he said.

Kennard ignored him. His short legs took him over to Fielding's side; he laid a friendly hand on Fielding's arm and was not too disturbed when Fielding fretfully shook it off.

"Leave Mr. Fielding to me," he said over his shoulder. "I'll take care of him. You two go along. There is no proof, I take it, that his daughter had any guilty knowledge he was fleeing. True, she might undergo some rigorous questioning in Jacksonville but you will have plenty of time to devise a story that will withstand the best attack."

He waved a hand toward the highway. "Go, you two! Go back! Live your lives! Fielding and I will be all right. Our interests are identical, I tell you. Miguel will behave if he knows it is profitable to do so."

The assumption of this ineffectual little leech annoyed Dirk. He was not so poor-spirited as to want this girl who had left without a word to play nursemaid to her defaulting father. His mission here was to bring Fielding back and thus assure, for old friendship's sake, that June did not wholly mess up her life. It was an impersonal gesture. He and June were through. She had made a choice and the mere making of it was enough to free him from his illusions about her. He would make his disinterested motive very plain to her; then he would return to the sea.

He lifted his head. He swung around on Fielding and his violence held Kennard's attention.

"Well?" he asked harshly. "Do you want to run farther with your new buddies or do you want to go back with me?"

Fielding reacted automatically to his play of feeling.

"I want to go back, but not like—a felon," he cried. His voice was thin and high. "June, you were right! This is impossible. It's a nightmare! I want to go back."

Dirk's glance swept through the window. Miguel was a mere blur. Dirk pulled out his handkerchief and lifted it toward his forehead.

"It's a problem," Dirk said. "With Mr. Kennard—" His long arms whipped out. One hand swept the wadded handkerchief against Kennard's face; the other clamped on the back of his head. He had him in a muffling vise.

HE slid a foot behind Kennard's legs as the little man clawed at him and Kennard went down. Dirk's double grip on Kennard's head eased his fall. A moment later, with the handkerchief still plugging Kennard's mouth, he had a knee on the smaller man's chest and a hand free to control Kennard's feeble resistance. Over his shoulder he said:

"Keep on talking. Let's hope Miguel is far enough away not to notice his boss has dried up."

"What good will this do us?" June asked suddenly.

"Kennard hasn't plugged all the exits from this rathole," Dirk said. "Put that rug alongside Kennard. I want to roll him in it. And please say something."

Kennard had not lied about that; Miguel was trigger-happy!

"Yes!" said Fielding jerkily. "This is unbearable, this hiding, this fear of arrest or blackmail. If I can I'll go back voluntarily, Dirk. It—it was a mistake. I have suffered here."

June bent to help Dirk wrap his gagged victim securely in the moth-eaten rug. Then she switched on a portable radio, found a discussion on one station and increased the volume slightly. Dirk stowed Kennard away in a corner of the room, blending his voice with the radio, dragging nervous words from Fielding and from June, words quite at random. Curious how June, usually so animated, had withdrawn into herself.

A cigarette tip, glowing faintly in the darkness over where the track came in from the highway, told him Miguel was still unalarmed.

Dick turned from the window. "I'm going to sneak your boat away from the pier and around behind this shack, June," he said. "You and your father can pole it around the mangroves and out to the highway. My car is parked there. Here are the keys."

"Yes!" Fielding whispered. He was pacing the room as if he felt himself caged here now. "We can get away like that, Dirk."

June faced Dirk. "What will you do?"

"You can count on it that Kennard won't be getting to a telephone until after you reach Miami," Dirk said. He looked at Fielding. "There you'd better call Sheriff Scott long distance and tell him you understand you're wanted and are coming back."

"When Miguel hears us start your car—" June began.

"You handle your end and I'll handle mine," Dirk said curtly. He looked again at the glowing spot in the darkness, cast a glance at Kennard, struggling fruitlessly against the tight folds of the rug and opened the door leading from the kitchen end of the camp.

June followed him out into the darkness. He stopped. "I don't need any help—except a little conversation to tone in with that radio chatter," he said.

"I want to know what—"

"I'm not going to get shot, anyhow," he said. "Please go in and start talking."

He moved away from her abruptly, slipping toward the mangroves edging the shallows. There was room enough among them to land the boat. He stripped to his shorts and pushed off softly into the warm water. Spidery roots clutched at his arms and legs. Mosquitoes whined around him. Submerging, he clawed along close to the shore. At the base of the pier he worked out along the rickety piling to the boat.

He paused to search the shadows of the trees beyond. He could make out neither Miguel nor his cigarette. Frowning, he listened acutely but only a murmur of voices from the house and the small sound of the breeze in the mangrove and lime tops reached his ears. He pivoted slowly, searching the dark key. A match flared suddenly. Miguel was maintaining his watch on the trail through the mangroves. Night had settled blackly on this islet.

Dirk unfastened the boat's painter. The water here was waist-deep; he bent and flipped the line over his shoulders. Carefully advancing each foot he waded along the mucky bottom with the rowboat towing behind. His progress was snail-like; he could not risk waves chuckling against the bow of the boat—but the distance was short. He moved quickly once the bulk of the camp cut off sight and sound of the boat.

The sandflies and mosquitoes that swarmed at this time of day made darkness in the house somewhat reasonable. But Miguel must soon become uneasy about it. Dirk landed the boat, fumbled for his clothes and carried them up to the camp.

June and Fielding were waiting for him inside the back door.

"Your car's the one behind here?" Dirk asked. "Are the keys in it?"

"Yes," said June. She stopped obstinately. "I want to know what you intend to do?"

"Depends on circumstances," he said rapidly. "Miguel will probably head for the highway as soon as he hears you start my car. I'll hide Kennard out among the trees somewhere to scramble up and delay Miguel and go on from there. I'll guarantee your getaway."

He paused. "Head for Miami, not down the keys." His voice was curt. "O.K. The boat's right in front of you."

"Thanks," muttered Fielding. "I know—"

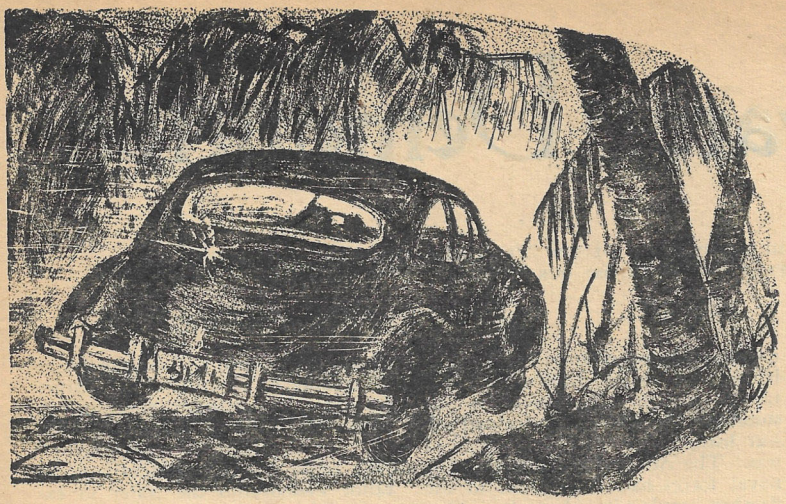
"Get under way," Dirk interrupted. Without a glance at the girl he stepped into the shack and closed the door. He stood there, listening. By small sounds he heard them start toward the shore. His face was grim. He opened the door a crack and waited until the boat had pushed off into the shallows. Then he pulled the door shut.

"Are you struggling or only jittering?" he asked Kennard, in his rug. He lifted his voice higher than the radio to give Miguel a little variety. "You might as well quit wriggling; you're only running off a test for me on how securely that rug's got you."

As he scrambled back into his clothes he continued to talk to Kennard, pointing out how ridiculous it was for an intelligent man of unforceful personality and dubious nerves to take to crime. He kept his voice ranging from gruff remonstrance to brisk controversy. Kennard modified his writhings to listen. So voluble a speaker must be suffering intensely from that gag.

It should have been amusing. It wasn't.

Dressed, Dirk pulled a piece of mosquito netting from above a bed in the next room, tore it in half and slung Kennard in his rug over his shoulder. He carried the prisoner out into the lime grove. He heard no sound in the



night save the distant scurry of a fast car on the highway.

Well back of the house, he set Kennard on the ground at the bottom of a tree. He tucked one piece of mosquito netting loosely over Kennard's head and the other around his feet.

"The idea is to make sure you don't do any meddling by telephone before Fielding checks in with the sheriff," he said softly. He waved an arm around his head at whining hosts rising from the grass. "Struggle and you'll probably knock that netting loose an hour or two before you can get free enough to slap. That could be very hard on you out here tonight. Hear 'em hum? Doze till dawn, Kennard. I'll send somebody along about nine A.M. just in case you are still bound."

He turned and started back toward the house, head raised to listen. He frowned uneasily at the unbroken stillness and brushed away mosquitoes automatically. He paused at the car behind the house—Fielding's car.

Maybe Miguel had served an apprenticeship as a car thief and could detour an ignition lock. He eased up the hood, groped endlessly, found the distributor, groped again and finally managed to lift the cap. He was pocketing the rotor when, from the house, the radio suddenly launched into brassy music.

Dirk moved fast. There was barely enough light from the stars to dodge trees as he put a little distance between him and the house. He heard the swish of Miguel's shoes coming to investigate before he made out the blur of his moving figure.

While Miguel prowled around the house Dirk drifted up to Kennard's car and eased open the door.

Miguel hailed the house.

Dirk slipped in behind the wheel, fumbled for the keys he had seen left in the ignition lock and found them. He groped feverishly to make sure light switch, gear lever, brake and gadgets were the same as his own. They were. He thrust his head far out the side window and listened tensely.

Miguel's voice was impatient and suspicious. He was speaking Spanish. He voiced a threat, loudly. Another sound came to Dirk's ears: the grind of a starter out on the highway. June and her father had reached his car. He listened breathlessly. The motor caught. The car growled in low gear, then hummed. They were away, leaping into speed.

The thud of Miguel's feet sounded close at hand.

Dirk snapped on the switch and tramped on the starter. He bent low behind the wheel, jamming the motor into gear. It started, bucked and surged ahead. He snapped on the headlights and swung in a wide curve out into the grove. Dodging trees, bumping over limestone outcroppings, he kept it turning, eyes alert for the trail.

Miguel shouted. As Dirk sighted the track Miguel's gun cracked thunderously.

Kennard had not lied about that; Miguel was trigger-happy; he pumped bullets and Dirk hunched his shoulders, crouched as low as he could while still peering ahead.

A nearer sound told Dirk lead had torn through the thin steel of the car body.

The mangroves closed in on either side. With trees and distance behind, Dirk straightened up, steering along the winding narrow fairway.

The job was done. As when he had walked down that trail, he felt little emotion. More than a job was over. So what?

His swerving lights bore suddenly on a girl leaping aside. June! He skidded to a stop and stared at her.

She ran toward the car. He grabbed at the door latch.

Another bullet screamed through the mangroves. June scrambled into the car.

Dirk sent the car lunging on. "Keep your head down," he said. "Miguel's about to finish that clip."

The raised surface of the highway showed in the lights. The tires bumped across the low spot. They rolled onto smooth concrete.

Dirk swung the wheel. Kennard's coupé turned its radiator toward Key West. He glanced at June. She uttered no protest.

"Well, I'm glad your father can drive a car, anyhow," he said.

"Dad's just a nuisance to you," June said. She was staring down the path of light ahead. "He isn't to me. I can remember back—"

She stopped to make a fresh start: "He needed help. He was sick and panicky and bent on running away. I couldn't stop him. Do you think I would let him run alone? To be all alone somewhere when he realized what the rest of his life was going to be like? I knew he'd go back if I just stood by. I did. I waited. I knew he'd go back. We didn't need you in this, and Kennard couldn't have stopped us."

She turned to look at him. "What is it? A father-fixation or just old-fashioned family decency? I don't know. I don't care. I had to see him headed back. And now I'm not disowning him, whatever happens. You should have stayed on your ship."

"Don't try to talk yourself out of it," he said. "You came back."

"You'd better get yourself another girl, a nice one without scandals in her family."

"You must have been listening while you poled that boat," he said. "You knew Miguel wasn't shooting holes in me. But you didn't go. And you didn't come back just to rescue me."

"I don't know why I came back."

He laughed softly. "You're stuck with me, June, just as I'm stuck with you. We belong."

He lifted his foot from the accelerator and she was in under his encircling arm.

It would be handy, he told himself, if he should lose his ship and drown forty men some day, to know that someone was standing by against the world. But not even that was why he had to have June.

Underwater Demolition

NOW IT CAN BE TOLD—THE HEROIC WORK OF THE "FROG MEN" WHO CLEARED OUT THE UNDERWATER OBSTACLES BEFORE OUR AMPHIBIOUS LANDINGS.

ON June 13 the U.S.S. *Kline* arrived again at Morotai, slipping into the harbor at dusk to mingle with the great armada of ships preparing for the invasion of Balikpapan on the northeast coast of Borneo.

For once we knew the location and schedule of our next operation. Twelve days remained for rehearsal before the first reconnaissance at Manggar, one of the two beaches off Balikpapan selected for the first troop landings. We started training immediately, using the maps and reports furnished by Intelligence concerning the prospective invasion sites. As usual we went through the routine of long-distance swimming, map-reading and the working out of staged problems approximating the actual combat conditions we would face on the Manggar and Klandassan beaches. During liberty hours ashore we made friends and visited with the Australian troops staging at Morotai for the invasion. We liked them instinctively, and they in turn made us welcome in their company. Beer was in fairly good supply at the moment, providing a common medium of exchange as well as a basis for cementing new friendships. Cans of American Pabst, Budweiser and Ruppert beer proved acceptable in exchange for quart bottles of the heavier, stronger Australian beer, an exchange that proved to our advantage if the alcohol content of the beverages could be counted as a factor. Several of the soldiers had exquisite bracelets, made during long hours of waiting, of silver coins gathered from many countries. We had only to admire or offer to buy one of the bracelets and it was freely given, the owner unwilling to accept any payment except thanks. It seemed a sorry state of affairs to have to fight a global war in order to meet and exchange compliments with such wonderful people.

Returning to our ship late one evening, Elliot and I found a message to report to Ensign Joe Miller, Mine Disposal Officer of UDT 11. He was on board, still awake and dressed. Since other officers sharing his quarters had turned in for the night, he led us on deck and back on the fantail to explain the reason for his summons. It was a mine-disposal job —at least, that's what he thought it was. The Admiral commanding the naval forces had called him to the flagship, explaining that the picket boats guarding the perimeter of the harbor had discovered a large mine or buoy of unknown origin floating into the harbor with the current. The picket boats were still following the mine or whatever it was, warning ships out of its erratic path, but afraid to explode it by gunfire because of possible danger to adjacent ships and harbor installations. All the Admiral wanted Joe to do was to take the damn thing out of the danger area and dispose of it. All Joe wanted us to do was to help him. We readily agreed, glad to have something to break the monotony of briefings and rehearsals.

Early the next morning we nailed a crewman from one of our LCP (R) s and blackjacked him into going along to man the boat for us. Throwing aboard a rubber boat, some powder packs, and some fuse cord, we swung the boat over the side and departed to locate our errant target and its picket-boat escort. After a lengthy search we located the object lying peacefully on its side on the beach of the small island we used for demolition practice. The escort was still in attendance, standing a respectful distance offshore. As soon as we entered the area and made our purpose known, we were immediately left in complete charge and alone, the picket-boat crew apparently preferring their monotonous cruising to playing nursemaid to a floating question mark.

WE left the LCP (R) standing offshore and took to the rubber boat for the run to the beach. Once there, the riddle became more complex than ever. Our mine or buoy was quite large, shaped like a carrot or a child's top, measuring about seven feet in length and about three feet maximum diameter. Except for barnacles and marine encrustations, it was perfectly smooth metal with no knobs or horns protruding to identify it as a mine; nor did it have attached rings such as buoys usually have. While Joe Miller and I squatted on the sand puzzling over some means of identification, Elliot waded into the water to examine the top end. Suddenly he jumped backward in the water and let out a startled yell: "Gosh, it's a mine." We joined him in the water, and he pointed to his discovery; a half-inch electrical cable trailing from the tip a distance of two yards. Dangling from the shredded end of the cable were six smaller wires wrapped with colored insulation. Beyond a doubt the thing was a strange unfamiliar type of Japanese mine. The only problem now was to dispose of it. To explode it on the beach would blow our picture postcard island into the drink; yet there was no safe way of moving the damn thing out to sea. Finally in desperation we sent our landing craft back to the *Kline* for a line. When it returned, we gently and gingerly looped the line around the upper end of the mine, reeled out about a hundred yards, and tied the free end to the boat. Slowly and carefully we jockeyed the boat ahead, pulled the mine free of its resting place in the sand and towed it out into the harbor, stopping about midway between Morotai and the island in an area clear of ships. There we instructed the boat crewman to hold the line tight against the current. We then loaded powder and fuse over the side into the rubber boat. It was the work of only a few minutes to tie the charges to the side of the mine, set a ten-minute fuse, and cast off the holding line.

As we started to paddle back to our boat, we made a horrible discovery. The swift current was carrying us along with the mine, now floating free and ready to explode. We paddled like maniacs, but our best efforts failed to open more than a small gap of water between us and our explosive playmate. After five minutes had gone by, we signaled frantically for the landing craft to come in after us. The crewman was

Team... Balikpapan

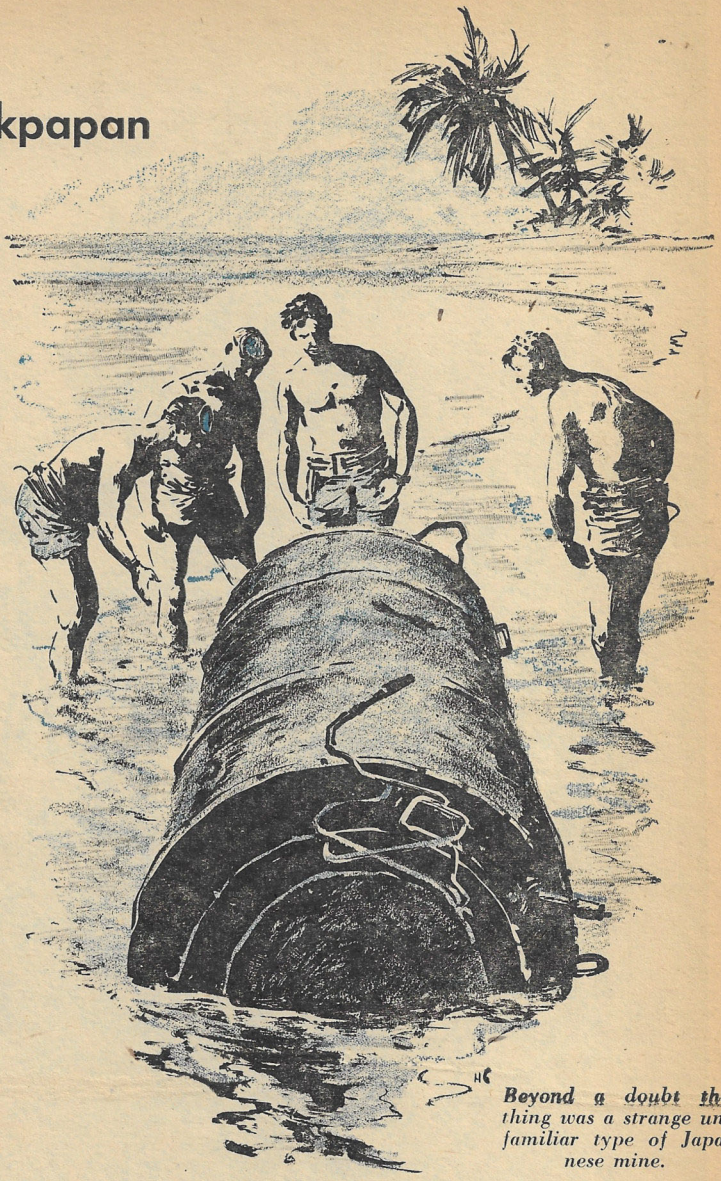
by EDWARD HIGGINS *with* DEAN PHILLIPS

not exactly eager, but he came back, wheeling alongside, scarcely slowing as he took us aboard and headed for open sea. A safe distance away, we hove to and waited—and waited and waited. We waited a full half-hour and nothing happened. The mine just drifted quietly back to the island and resumed its interrupted rest on the sand of the beach.

THERE was nothing to do but repeat our performance. The sharp barnacles had cut the powder train before the fire reached the charges. The second time we made the boat stand in close while we reset the fuse and take us aboard as soon as we finished. As we drew away to a safe position, we noticed the natives from the island launching their outrigger canoes and heading in the direction of the mine.

The powder detonated this time, and so did the mine, exploding with a resounding roar that brought up the bottom of the harbor and sent all the ships for five miles to General Quarters. That mine must have been packed with half the high explosive powder in Japan. It threw a geyser of water, mud and fish a hundred feet into the air, drenching us and nearly capsizing our little boat. As the spray and shock waves subsided, we saw what the natives in the canoes had in mind. Water explosions must have been an old story to them, for they were paddling around in the blast area, happily scooping tons of shell-shocked fish into their canoes. . . .

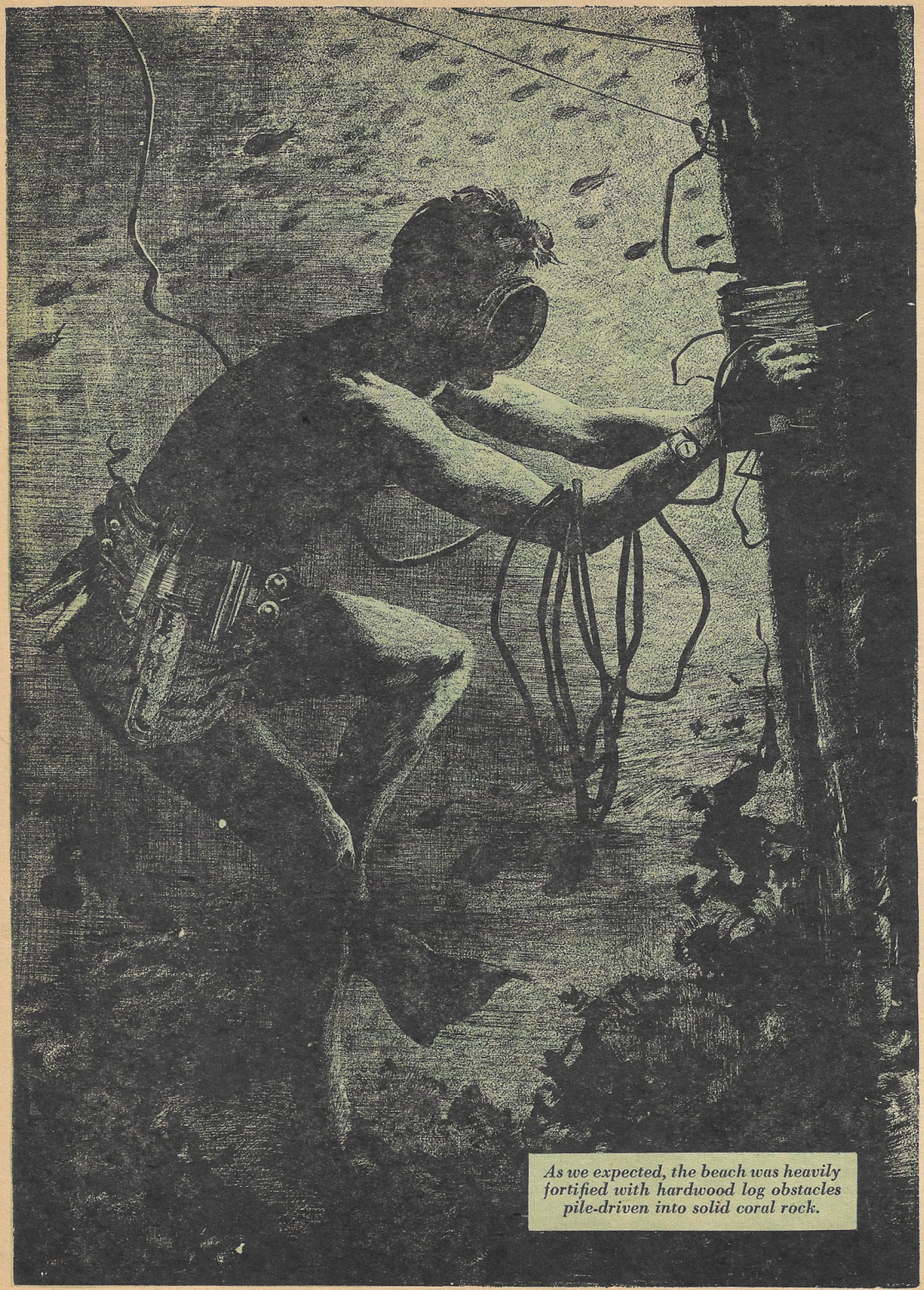
On June 20 we left Morotai, heading again for Borneo. The invasion was scheduled for Manggar and Klandassan beaches in the Balikpapan area, and was to be carried out by Australian troops supported by ships of the United States Fleet. We were assigned our usual job of hydrographic survey of the landing strips and the removal of any obstacles in the path. And this time there were obstacles, plenty of them, on both strips. The Intelligence reports and aërial photographs destroyed any doubt in our minds on that score. Again they scared hell out of us with the story about oil and gas being piped into the water to boil invading forces. Sometimes our Intelligence officers were more of a hazard to our morale than the Nip gunners.



Beyond a doubt the thing was a strange unfamiliar type of Japanese mine.

Our convoy approached Balikpapan directly from the sea. From far out, even before land was in sight, we could see a huge column of black smoke rising into the sky. The column grew in size and intensity as we came closer, rolling in wide billows from the Balikpapan oil-storage tanks and refineries. This was the center of the Jap-held oil reserves in the area, and one of the largest installations on oil-rich Borneo. An air strike had started the fire. Now it raged, apparently uncontrolled, while the Japs prepared to fight the invaders. From that time until we left Borneo in July, the fire burned, sending great rolling clouds of thick black smoke into the air by day and lighting the night sky with a flaring red and orange flame that was visible for miles at sea.

ON the morning of Fox Day (Invasion Day) minus six, we went in to make a reconnaissance of Green Baker Beach at Manggar. The beach was divided between Platoon 1 on the left flank and Platoon 2 on the



As we expected, the beach was heavily fortified with hardwood log obstacles pile-driven into solid coral rock.

right flank, with each team employing twelve swimmers, including one officer. The operational plan called for swimmers to swim on the beach in pairs, with each pair one hundred yards apart and the men within the pairs approximately thirty yards apart. Upon reaching the high-water mark, the men in each pair were to turn right and swim parallel to the beach, one along the inner row of obstacles, estimated to be five to ten yards from the high-water mark, and the other along the outer row of obstacles, estimated to be about fifteen yards seaward of the inner row. After completing the required survey, each swimmer was to swim seaward. In addition to these assignments, one pair of swimmers, consisting of one officer and one enlisted man, swam with each platoon for the purpose of estimating the best method of setting up a trunk line for demolition operations.

Finally, the mine-disposal officer swam with Platoon 2 with orders to search for mines, particularly among the obstacles. In addition to the lead lines, Plexiglas plates, pencils, knives and other usual gear for hydrographic work, all swimmers carried mine detonators for the first time. These detonators were small pencil-like gadgets containing vials of acid and time-setting mechanisms. Since mines were usually sighted on the way in to the beach, the detonators were not employed until the swimmers were finished with their work and leaving the area. Then the detonator was clipped to the horn of the mine, the timing mechanism set, and the acid vial crushed to start the chain reaction. After the men were safely out of the area the detonator would explode the mine harmlessly in the water.

Two boats were to be used, No. 1 carrying Platoon 1, a boat officer and a crew of six, consisting of a coxswain, two gunners, two radiomen and a bow hook. Boat No. 2 carried Platoon 2, a boat officer and a crew of seven, consisting of a coxswain, two gunners, two radiomen, a bow hook and the team pharmacist's mate. The bow hook's primary function was to pull the swimmers out of the water at the conclusion of the reconnaissance. Boat No. 3 carried reserve swimmers of Platoon 3 under the command of one officer. This officer had the additional duty of boarding one of the LCS (L) gunboats to act as fire spotter if Boats 1 and 2 dropped their swimmers without needing reinforcements, leaving the boat in command of a Chief Petty Officer.

Boat No. 4, acting as control boat, was in charge of Lieutenant Commander L. H. States. Also aboard was an officer to be placed aboard another of the LCS (L) gunboats to act as fire spotter. Five men were left aboard the *Kline* to stand by on the fantail to handle lines and assist in bringing wounded aboard.

Air support for the reconnaissance was provided by the 13th American Air Force and the Royal Australian Air Force. From 07:30 until 08:00, Roger Hour for the swimmers, there was high-level bombing by B-24 Liberators all along the beach from the high-water mark to one hundred and fifty yards inland. From 08:00 until 08:10 there was low-level bombing and strafing by Beaufighters and B-25 Mitchells covering the same general area. From 08:10 until 09:15 the high-level bombing resumed, covering an area beginning two hundred and fifty yards inland from the high-water mark to six hundred yards inland.

Fire support by surface ships was supplied by five LCS (L) gunboats on a line one thousand yards off the beach, by two destroyers three thousand yards out, and by two light cruisers six thousand yards out. All the support ships reached their assigned stations at 07:30 and commenced firing immediately. Fire was intensified from Roger Hour, 08:00, until 08:10 while the swimmers were going in to the beach, and again from 09:15 until the final withdrawal of all LCP (R) boats with swimmers aboard, and all LSC (L) gunboats. Fire from all guns was directed into an area extending from the high-water mark to one hundred and fifty yards inland until 08:10. During the rest of the operation this area was restricted to .40-mm. and three-inch fire from the gunboats. From 08:10 until the finish of the operation five- and six-inch fire from the destroyers and cruisers was confined to the area beginning two hundred and fifty yards inland to six hundred yards inland, except when specifically called otherwise by the commanding officer of UDT 11 from the control boat.

At Roger Hour minus forty-five minutes, the *Kline* took her station five thousand yards off the center of the beach, and began to lower our boats. At Roger Hour minus thirty minutes the boats were in position one thousand yards seaward of the gunboat line, and we were circling, waiting for the word to go in, and watching the tremendous barrage from the ships and planes begin to pulverize the beach. The destroyers and cruisers wheeled back and forth, their big guns throwing salvo after salvo of shells screaming and thundering over our heads, drowning out the smaller sound of the gunboats' lighter fire forward of our position. Overhead the giant Liberator bombers made run after run the length of the target area, dropping showers of high explosive and fragmentation bombs, on the shore positions.

At Roger Hour on schedule, Boats 1 and 2 proceeded through the gunboat line to a point five hundred yards off the right flanks of their respective beaches and turned left, dropping off pairs of swimmers one hundred yards apart on a line parallel to the beach. The control boat advanced to the thousand-yard line and patrolled the length of the beach throughout the entire operation.

We met little opposition going in. The Australian Beaufighters and American Mitchells circled and dived on the beach, bombing and strafing, keeping the Nips under cover. Some sniper and light machine-gun and mortar fire hit the water around us, but it was inaccurate and sporadic, the shore gunners apparently preferring to stay under cover from the fire pouring into their midst. It was extremely fortunate that the defending guns were reticent, for our gunboats, upon which we depended for close fire support on troublesome positions, were positioned too far to the right. This error in position forced them to fire from a difficult angle, and materially reduced their effectiveness in covering our operations on the beach. We could actually hear birds singing in the trees on the shore as we neared the obstacles. With all due respect to the beauties of nature and to the heroic efforts of our feathered friends to serenade us in the midst of a rain of fire, we much preferred the singing of .40-mm. shells over our heads to the lyrical songs of the birds. In our loutish unrefined way we considered the "larks still bravely singing" just a little stupid, and fit companions for the Nips cowering in their warrens under the trees.

As we expected, the beach was heavily fortified with hardwood log obstacles pile-driven into solid coral rock. There were three rows of ten-inch posts six feet apart in each row, with four feet separating the rows. The posts were staggered to form groups of domino fives, solidly cross-braced at the top with boards, bamboo poles and barbed wire. These barriers extended over eight hundred yards of beach, comprising a total of about twelve hundred posts. We found no mines or underwater oil-pipes, although we searched the bottom with the same tense anxiety we had felt at Brunei Bay. The sniper fire seeking us out from the shore was a minor evil compared to the thought of swimming in burning oil. We mentally catalogued our Intelligence officers as a bunch of irresponsible kindergarten spies every time we thought of those damned pipes.

Generally the approaches to the beach were good, eminently suitable for troops and amphibious-craft landings. All swimmers completed their missions without difficulty or incident —all except Ensign F. G. Deiner and G. J. Bender, who were swimming the parallel course observing for the demolition trunk line. They had picked out a tree stump as a landmark going in. Reaching the required point, they had turned along the beach and started swimming along the outer row of obstacles. After proceeding a short distance they glanced at the beach to check their progress. They were still abreast of the stump. They swam a little farther. The stump was still there. Swimming faster now, they swam a longer distance, then turned suddenly toward the shore. The stump was still alongside—only now it had legs. Two short, stocky legs were hurrying the stump along as fast as they could run. Realizing now that they were apparently being stalked into a trap by a Nip sniper, Deiner and Bender altered course, and throwing caution to the winds, headed for the open sea. At the same time the stump took to its heels and fled for the shore, showing great emotional stress and chagrin at being discovered in motion. The swimmers returned and completed their job, but the stump remained in hiding until we left, sulking in disappointment.

At 09:15 our LCP (R) s closed the beach again to pick us up. By 10:00 we were back aboard the *Kline* with the Manggar Beach reconnaissance satisfactorily completed.

Intelligence took our reports and beach information and started making up the charts and maps for the next day's demolition operation and for the anticipated troop landings. The team went to work preparing the powder charges, fuses, detonators and trunk lines. We were still at it late at night, taking turns in the powder magazine and in the briefing room. No alerts or General Quarters bells had disturbed us in this area, and none were expected. We had been told that there were no enemy aircraft in the vicinity except a few old decrepit seaplanes down the coast. This information was comforting. The ships lying at anchor in the water offshore were perfect targets silhouetted between the full moon in the background and the blazing oil fires raging on shore.

Several times the quiet of the tropic night was broken by the racket of Australian P.T. boats roaring wide open through the anchorage toward the Nip positions down the coast. Sporadic firing could be heard in the distance as the P.T.'s made contact with Jap boats and shore defenses.

Long after midnight we finished preparing our demolition charges and our briefing and hit the sack for a couple of hours' rest. Roger Hour was 08:00 again, allowing for little time before we would be in the water again, blasting the eight hundred yards of obstacles loose from Manggar Beach.

We were up shortly after dawn in time to see the P.T. boats returning from their night-long harassment of the Jap water traffic. One of their boats pulled alongside us and stopped to ask for some fresh water and some flour. Our own water supplies were low, but the needs of the P.T. boat crew were so small that the skipper of the *Kline* readily gave them all they could carry. He was a little puzzled, though, by the request for flour for such a small craft. Upon explanation that it was needed for baking bread, he sent the flour back to the galley and gave them enough fresh bread to last for a week.

While this was going on, we questioned the crew about their night missions. They told us the Japs down the line were attempting to evacuate to stronger positions beyond Balikpapan. Since they had no naval ships to accomplish the move, they were using sampans, junks and anything else that would float. The P.T. boats were taking a terrific toll. The flimsy slow-moving craft could offer little defense against the swift powerful P.T.'s. Each dawn found the water covered with wreckage and dotted with survivors clinging to floating boxes and planks. Truly the sons of the Emperor were finding their plan of world conquest a bit out of focus. They had no air defense, no sea defense; and now even supplies and reinforcements were completely cut off.

After the Australians shoved off we had a light breakfast and began loading our charges and swimming gear aboard our boats. Each swimmer was allotted eighty to one hundred pounds of powder, divided into five packs, each floating on an inflated Marine jungle bladder. In order to avoid any confusion or duplication of effort, the rows of posts were divided into sections; a small crew of four men with an officer or petty officer in charge would work in each section. The left half of the beach was assigned to the 1st and 3rd Platoons while the right half was assigned to the 2nd and 4th Platoons. Each half of the beach was to be divided into sections by tying colored rags on the posts at regular intervals. The men on each flank were divided into five groups of five men each.

The stump was still alongside—only now it had legs.

To each part of the beach a trunk-line crew was assigned; it consisted of one officer and three men plus an extra man to place the cloth markers designating the section division lines. Standard boat crews were assigned with the addition of photographers to Boats 2 and 4. Boat No. 2 carried the pharmacist's mate and Boat No. 4, the ship's medical officer and an extra team officer. The latter two were transferred to LCS (L) gunboats, the team officer to act as a spotter for gun-fire support. Fire support was the same as for the reconnaissance of the previous day, two light cruisers at six thousand yards, two destroyers at three thousand yards, and the five LCS (L) gunboats at one thousand yards off the beach.

At Roger Hour, Boat No. 3 went through the gunboat line to a point five hundred yards offshore and discharged the trunk-line crew and section markers. This was a lesson we had learned at Okinawa, the necessity of giving the trunk-line men at least five minutes' head start to enable them to string the prima-cord detonating line across the tops of the posts ahead of the men placing powder charges. Otherwise the charge placers were delayed in tying in the individual fuse lines from charges at the bottoms of the obstacles.

After Boat No. 3 had cleared the beach at Roger plus five minutes, Boat No. 1 went into the five-hundred-yard point off the center of the beach and turned left, dropping men and explosives for the left flank of the beach. The men went over the seaward side of the LCP (R), and the explosives, individually primed blocks of tetrytol, over the landward side. At a sufficient interval to prevent the two boats becoming simultaneous targets, Boat No. 2 followed Boat No. 1 to the center of the beach and turned to the right, dropping swimmers and powder in the same manner. Boat No. 4, the control boat, remained, circling at the gunboat line. Boats 1 and 2 patrolled at seven hundred and fifty

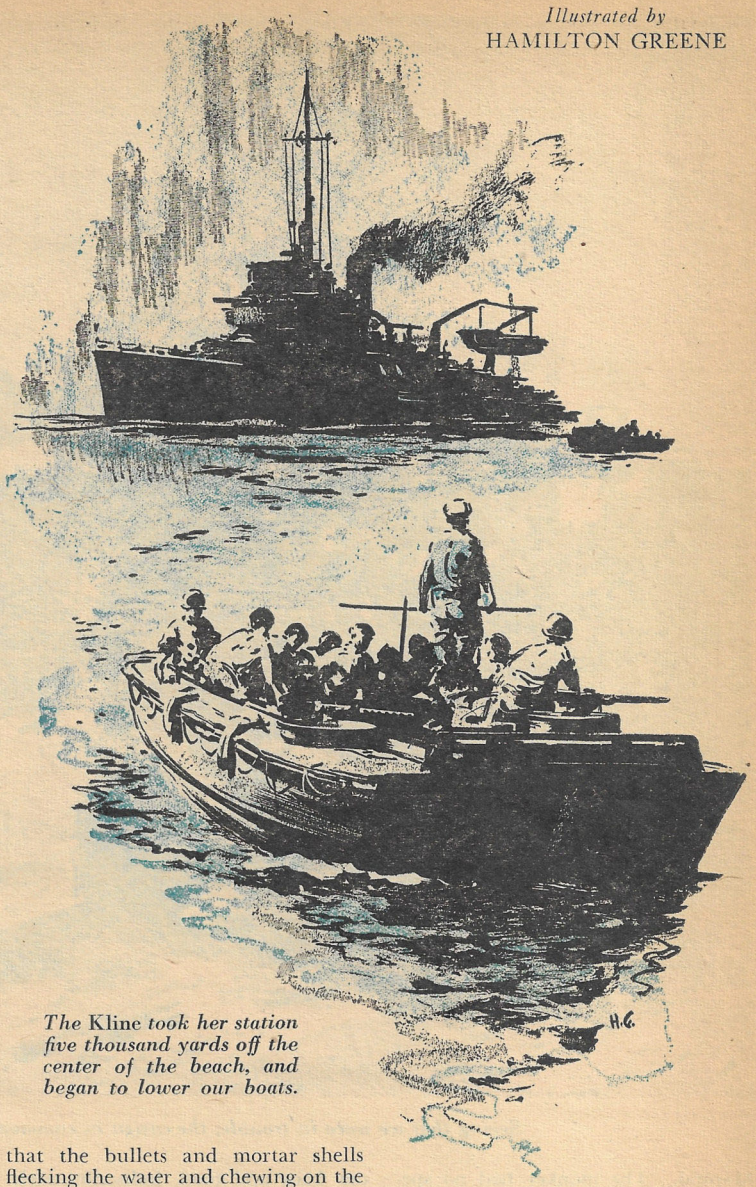
yards, while Boat No. 3, carrying a reserve supply of powder and caps, retired behind the gunboats.

Our first concern after going overboard was to collect our powder packs as rapidly as possible. They were bobbing around in the wake of the boat, trailing web-straps and tow-lines. Each man was responsible for taking five packs into the obstacles, and we were anxious to get in where we could disperse the packs along behind the posts away from the enemy fire reaching out from the beach. In spite of the heavy fire from our ships and planes, the Nips were doing a lot of shooting in our direction. One hit on a floating charge pack was all it would take to punch a one-way ticket for the swimmers in the immediate area, a possibility which caused us much more concern than the chance of stopping a bullet or shell. The machine-gun and mortar fire came out in waves, now heavy, now light, but never still. Snipers were a hazard throughout the entire operation, their bullets kicking up small splashes in the water around the swimmers and around the obstacle posts from the time that we hit the water until we climbed back aboard our boats.

I MISSED my landmark going in and had to turn and swim parallel to the outer row of posts for some distance to reach my assigned section. As I plowed along, towing my packs on their air bladders, I could see someone swimming toward me in great breast-stroke lunges, splashing mightily and blowing like a whale. It was Ensign Williams, trying to reach his sector. Two of his air bladders, carrying demolition charges, had snagged on the barbed wire and deflated, lowering the packs to the ends of their tow lines, where they dragged like sea anchors against his forward progress. To have cut them loose might have meant returning to the boat for replacements and he was determined to avoid that consequence at all costs. So he chugged along more underwater than out, half drowned but making slow headway. As we came abreast, he came up for air and seeing me watching him, gave me a big grin as he went under for another heave. I had to laugh, it was that funny. But I couldn't help admiring a guy with guts like that who could still grin while he was fighting his heart out.

I felt better after seeing Williams, and I watched him porpoising through the water until I was sure he had made his position, then entered my own area and went to work. It was the same story, dive under water, fix the charge, run the prima-cord lead up to the trunk-line, tie it in, pick up another charge, take a deep breath, dive under to the next post, pray that the bullets and mortar shells flecking the water and chewing on the posts weren't carrying your serial number.

Illustrated by
HAMILTON GREENE



The Kline *took her station five thousand yards off the center of the beach, and began to lower our boats.*

By 10:00 our work was finished and we were back in the boats, all except the trigger men, who were still in the water waiting for the signal to fire. At 10:20 the shot was fired, and we watched with deep satisfaction as the complete course of obstacles blew clear of the water and up on the beach into the laps of the Japs. That was one nice thing about the way those charges worked. If they were set right and fired properly, they blew backward out of their set position, clearing the water completely except for a few splinters sticking in the coral on the bottom.

There would be no clean-up necessary on this beach. Manggar was ready for the Aussie troops.

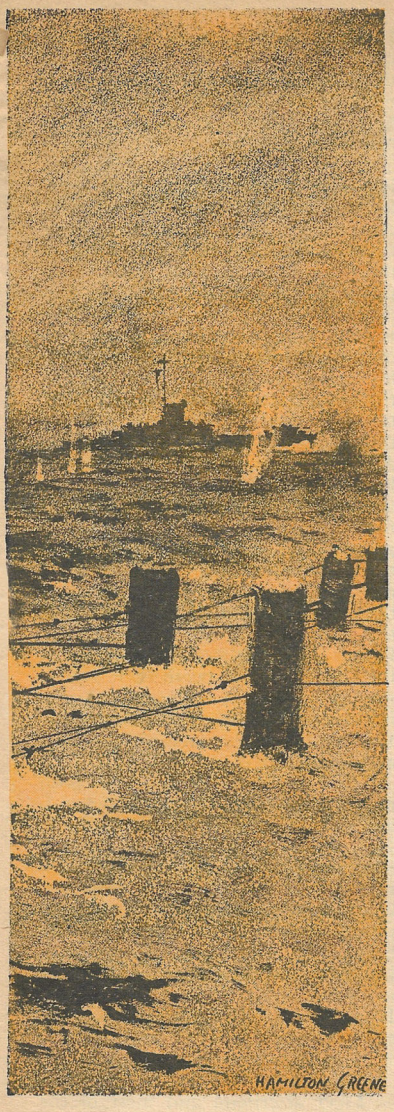
We were up late again that night, briefing for a reconnaissance of the Klandassan beaches scheduled for the following morning. All of us were plenty tired from the activities of the past two days, but the morrow would be Fox Day (D-Day) minus four. Much remained to be done before the Australian troops could move in over the invasion beaches.

Between briefing sessions we amused ourselves and relaxed by playing with a pet monkey one of the team members had picked up on our last stop at

Seeing that we were in trouble, the ensign in command ordered our gunboats forward, right

Morotai. The monkey had no special name. We called him everything we could think of, and he always answered, climbing over the shoulders and head of whoever was handy, chattering forty miles an hour, mooching food and candy. In some strange animal way he seemed to sense the distinction between the men of UDT 11 and the men belonging to the ship's crew. He also seemed to sense the unspoken feeling of antagonism between the two groups, groups fated to endless days and nights together, contained like cell-mates in the steel cage of the hull of the *Kline*, APD 120. Early in his indoctrination to shipboard life the monkey cast his lot with the demolition men. He shared our beds and food, indiscriminately stealing chow from our plates and sneaking under warm blankets beside sleeping men with childish cunning. By the same token and with equal enthusiasm he carried on a running feud with the ship's crew. Many of them liked him and tolerated his tricks good-humoredly, but some disliked him intensely and lost no opportunity to direct a swift kick at his small evasive rear end. He responded by stealing their blankets, hiding their clothes and dropping on them from rigging as they slept on the upper deck on warm nights. During the day he played on the rigging for hours on end, substituting the lines and braces for the trees of his native Borneo. One of his favorite stunts gave us heart failure every time we saw him perform it. He would stand on the deck on the fantail while the ship was underway, balancing himself delicately against the roll and pitch of the ship. When everything was just right, he would race toward the stern and catapult between the safety lines out over the foaming water. At the last minute his long prehensile tail would flick up and catch the top line, swing him up and over, and he would land grinning on his feet back on deck. All in all he was a most amusing and diverting mascot. . . .

On the morning of June 27 Fox minus four days we made the reconnaissance of the Klandassan Beaches.



into the teeth of the Nip guns.

The organization and method were the same as those used at Manggar two days before. The beach was divided between the 3rd Platoon on the left half of the beach and the 4th Platoon on the right half. Each team used swimmers in pairs, going in one hundred yards apart with the men within the pairs thirty yards apart. Equipment again included the new mine detonators. The mine disposal officer swam along specifically to search for mines along the beach and among the obstacles.

All four boats were in operation, Boat No. 1 carrying the reserve swimmers from Platoon No. 1, Boat No. 2 the swimmers of Platoon No. 4, Boat No. 3 the swimmers of Platoon 3 and Boat No. 4 the commanding officer, **Boat No. 4 again carried the ship's medical officer,** who was placed aboard an LCS (L) as fire-support spotter. Fire- and air-support were furnished by the two cruisers, two destroyers, five LSC (L) gunboats, Air Force B-24 Liberators and B-25 Mitchells together with the R.A.A.F. Beaufighters. All worked at the same distances and on the same time schedule as on the two preceding days.

We were still in the Balikpapan area, but the work on the Manggar and Klandassan beaches was considered separate operations, as the troop landings were regarded as separate invasions. Klandassan was more isolated than Manggar although Intelligence reports indicated that the strong points of the Jap garrison were in the Klandassan area right off the town of Balikpapan proper. We expected heavy fire from the shore as a result of this concentration of defense. We were not disappointed.

As at Brunei Bay, lack of progress by the mine-sweepers complicated our progress into the reconnaissance area. Due to the heavily mined approaches neither direct nor close approach to the beach by the boats was possible. The route finally chosen offered the least danger, if such could be said of any route through the carefully guarded harbor.

At 05:30 the *Kline* made a rendezvous with the gunboats at a point on the edge of the unswept mine field. As the gunboats passed in column our boats were lowered and team personnel taken aboard. The LCP (R)s then joined the gunboats and proceeded through the minefields, being tracked by radar from a destroyer which supplied radar navigation for the column. Wind and seas were high and smoke from the oil fires on shore combined with a heavy driving rain to reduce visibility to zero. The gunboats were navigated to a point approximately three thousand yards from shore off the center of the beach as close as they could safely approach.

At Roger Hour the landing craft started for the beach. At a point five hundred yards off the left flank of the beach, Boats 2 and 3 turned left and began dropping swimmers in pairs at the planned hundred-yard intervals. At the same time the Nips opened fire with three-inch and .37-mm. guns. Visibility began to improve, but the origin of the enemy fire inland still could not be determined through the rain and smoke. We consoled ourselves with the observation that fire accuracy was just as difficult for the Japs as it was for our gunners.

Fire was particularly heavy as we neared the beach. A small river parted the dense jungle near the center of the beach, its steep banks sheltering the gunners pouring fire at us as we came within their range of vision. For the first time in our experience the Japs seemed to know what we were doing. We had a theory that the commanding officers of previously invaded islands, fearing loss of face, had refused to admit that their laboriously constructed beach defenses had been breached by a handful of swimmers with no stronger combat weapons than the knives they wore at their belts. Consequently little or no information on our methods of operation had filtered through to the high command, and no subsequently besieged commanders had been forewarned or prepared to take direct offensive action against us. We dreaded the possible future day when some Jap officer with a spark of imagination would send armed swimmers out to cope with our activities.

We faced no swimmers now, but the most murderous fire we had ever endured. These Japs knew what we were up to, from the past two days. Our support fire was still handicapped by the poor visibility, but the Nips could see us paddling along in the water. Their guns were zeroed in along the rows of posts. They gave us the full treatment, ranging from sniper fire through mortars, machine guns and three-inch artillery. All we could do was to swim, and swim fast, taking measurements and soundings as we went. As before there were no oil-pipes or mines among the obstacles, but the gunfire beating around our ears gave us enough to think about and still keep our minds on our work. As we were swimming in, Frank Jameson took a mortar shell too close, being severely wounded by the concussion. He continued in, however, and accomplished his mission, a feat of heroism which earned him the Silver Star Medal. No decoration was ever more deserved.

By 09:30 all swimmers were back in the boats. The same column formation with the gunboats was accomplished and we were tracked without mishap back through the minefield by the destroyer radar. Once our information was reported to Intelligence, we showered and turned again to briefing and preparing powder charges for the demolition scheduled for the next day. Ways and means for spending idle time presented hardly any problem at all.

Fox Day minus 3 found us in our boats at 05:00 and away from the *Kline* heading into Klandassan beach. Since the obstacles were exactly the same as those on Manggar and placed in the same domino-five formations, our plan of operation was also the same as we had previously used. The

only difference was the substitution of Hagenson packs, vests fitted with pockets to carry the primed blocks of tetrytol, for the old-type flotation bladders. Fire- and air-support were identical to that received on the preceding days, although the progress of the mine-sweepers during the night enabled the gunboats to move their position forward to the fifteen-hundred-yard line.

UDT 18 was on hand to help us in the main demolition work on the beach. Our hydrographic survey reports from the previous day's reconnaissance together with the beach maps and aërial photographs had been sent to their ship early the day before for their briefing sessions. Our own briefing and powder preparation work had lasted far into the night. Tired and morose as we were, the assignment of Team 18 to take half the sixteen-hundred-yard obstacle demolition run was more than welcome.

We approached the beach behind the gunboats, the destroyer tracking us through the minefields by radar as before. At 06:00 the enemy shore batteries opened fire on our column with three-inch guns and long-range mortars. At 07:30 the gunboats were on position at the fifteen-hundred-yard line taking the shore line under intense fire. Behind us the destroyers and cruisers poured five- and six-inch shells into the narrow beach and into the jungle behind, while overhead the B-24 Liberators shuttled back and forth blasting the Nips with string after string of high-explosive and fragmentation bombs. All this fire seemingly had little effect. The Japs knew from bitter experience what was coming. They had apparently used the night hours to secure their gun positions with better protection and in more commanding positions. Their fire, particularly from the area around the small river inlet, was intense as the LCP(R)s left the gunboat line and started to the beach at 08:15. Three-inch shells were raining into the water around us, scoring near misses that drenched everyone in the boats and kept the small craft pitching and rolling to a near-capsizing point.

Team 18 boats went into their section of beach on our left flank. Their course required them to cross the mouth of the river at a point approximately six hundred yards off the beach. As they crossed this point, the Jap guns hidden in the caves along the banks caught them in direct fire. We could only watch with sick dismay as the three-inch shells caught one of their boats and chewed it to pieces. Men spilled and tumbled into the water as the boat disintegrated under direct hits. The rest of their craft managed to go on across, out of the limited range of the riverbank guns, although not without damage. We had to leave the casualties to other boats. There were still two eight-hundred-yard strips of beach waiting for the teams to clear, casualties or no.

We hit the water five hundred yards offshore, picked up our floating demolition packs and started swimming toward the beach. The posts were hardwood, pile-driven into the coral bottom at distances ranging from ten to twenty yards off the narrow strip of coral sand marking the beach. Beyond was dense jungle rising to sloping hills in the immediate background. The thick foliage hid scores of mortar crews, their fire trajectory ranged into the obstacle patterns. As we approached, their fire became increasingly and painfully accurate, especially the fire from their small powerful knee mortars. We were in trouble, and we knew it. Working on those obstacles under such a hail of shells was impossible, even if we could get in behind them. The posts offered little protection against the explosive mortar fire. Concussion could take a swimmer out of action just as effectively as a bullet, and had a much larger area of coverage. All we could do was to stay outside the obstacle area, swim in what we hoped were evasive patterns, and wait for a break in the torrent of fire pouring from the jungle.

Our gunboats provided the break we were waiting for. Seeing that we were in trouble, the ensign in command ordered the boats forward, right into the teeth of the Nip guns. Forward they came, their three-inch, .40-mm. guns and .50-caliber machine guns firing white-hot at the shore line. They turned just off the obstacles, scant yards from destruction in the shallow water and cruised there, pouring a solid sheet of fire over our heads into the gun positions in the jungle. We loved those gunboat crews for that, and the ensign in command.

The Jap fire faltered a little as the gunboats moved in and we went on in to mine the posts. Now we could work rapidly, for the larger targets presented by the boats caught the Nip gunners' fancy and they diverted at least ninety per cent of their shots from us to try for bigger game.

Our charges were placed and tied into the trunk lines by 10:18, and we headed back for our LCP(R)s, the gunboats covering our exit. The fuse was set for ten minutes, and the trigger men received the fire signal at 10:25. At 10:27 the beach went up, eight minutes ahead of schedule. Apparently enemy fire had hit one of the charges placed near the top of one of the posts to break the cross-bracing. Had the shot hit ten minutes sooner, every man would have been among the obstacles, and UDT 11 would have received the largest number of posthumous Purple Heart awards in Naval history.

As we left the beach, enemy fire increased tremendously. Our gunboats were throwing shells back with everything they had, battling for time to allow us to get clear, when one of those incongruous little things happened as they do sometimes in war. A little dog, hobbling on three legs, trotted out on the open beach, shying disdainfully at the .40-mm. shells hitting all around him. The men in the boats started to whistle like mad, trying to attract his attention above the shattering noise of the gunfire. All their efforts were useless. The dog hopped around for a few minutes, seemingly confused by the sound and the fury going on around his small person, then obviously seeing no future in pursuing such a course, ducked out of sight into the jungle. At about the same time a shell fragment whistled through the air, struck Ensign Lanier on the helmet and dropped to the bare leg of Coxswain H. P. Smith, scaring hell out of both of them, and inflicting a bad burn on Smith's leg. We suddenly remembered the war, and forgot the dog.

The demolition was successful both on our eight hundred yards of beach and on the section allotted to Team 18. We just had time to see the final result when the gunboats, failing to hold down the Jap guns sufficiently to get clear, began flipping phosphorous smoke bombs onto the beach. The white smoke-screen pouring along the shore finally enabled us to leave and return to our ship. Home sweet home never looked so good as that battered old APD at 11:30 on Fox Day minus three.

That afternoon and most of the following day we rested, glad we were finished at Klandassan. It had been by far the toughest beach yet, and we wanted no more of it. The invasion fleet was on its way from Morotai. We would guide the first waves in under cover of heavy fire from the big ships of the fleet as well as increased air support. But that was play compared to obstacle demolition. We relaxed as the word was radioed to the Australian commander that the beaches were clear—except for three hundred yards across the mouth of the inlet splitting the beach. These obstacles had been left because the murderous fire of the guns dug in along the banks made the operation seem too hazardous even to attempt. Back came word that the commander wanted those obstacles removed. He wanted more room to maneuver his

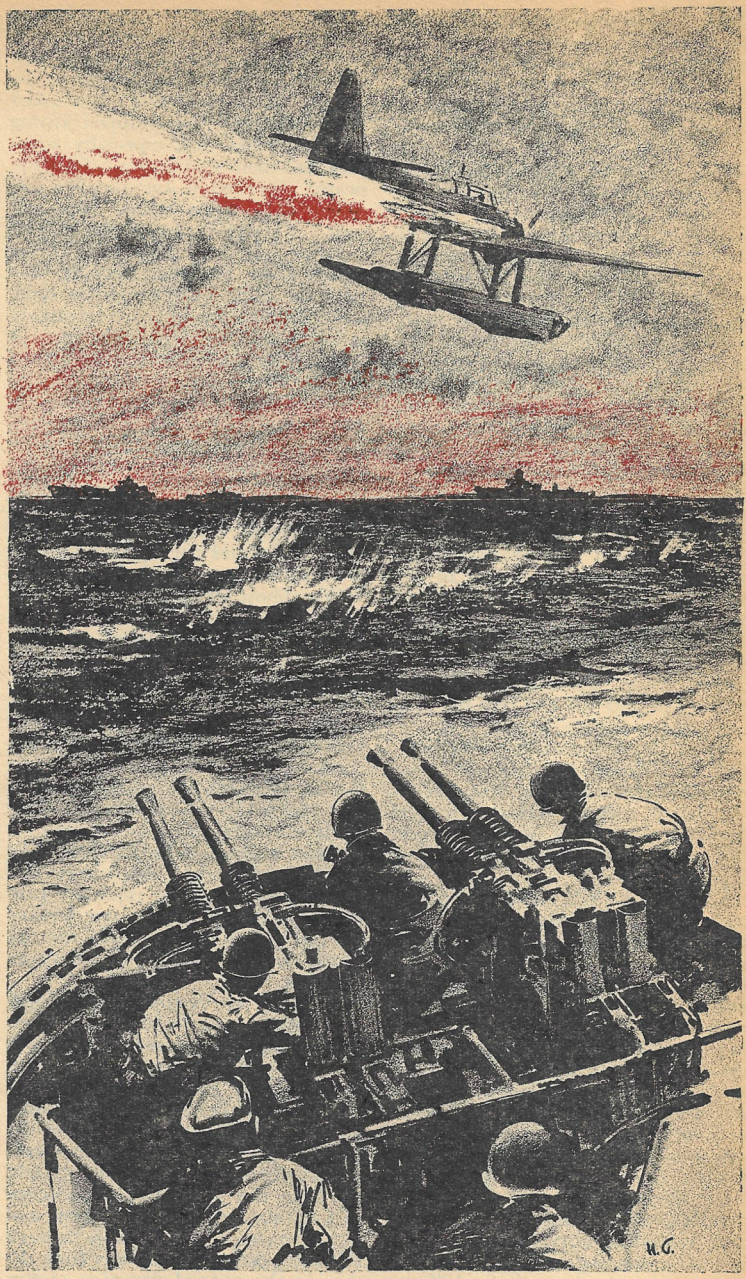
invasion troops, and three hundred yards of beach might make a great difference in the success of the landings.

We went back to work, reviewing the information on the little row of obstacles, briefing on operational plans and preparing demolition charges, trunk lines and fuses. We hadn't expected this. No one was in a very good humor as thoughts of the heavy fire from the river mouth occupied our minds. This was strictly a suicide mission. We all had the feeling that we were living on borrowed time at it was.

ABOUT 21:00 we came up to our quarters for some coffee and a breather after a session in the powder magazine working on the powder charges. We pored over our maps as we chewed on the strong black coffee taking advantage of all the time we had left to memorize tomorrow's assignments. We were completely unprepared for the General Quarters alarm that rang without warning through the ship. Our battle station was in our troop quarters. We stayed where we were, frozen into silence. This was our first General Quarters in the Borneo area. Since we had been told that no Japanese naval or aircraft forces were within striking distance, we couldn't imagine what was going on nor could we leave our battle station to go on deck to find out. For ten minutes nothing happened; then the all-clear signal rang and we returned to our coffee and maps. The General Quarters had been a false alarm caused by an American plane appearing over the anchorage without previous identification.

Within a matter of seconds after the all-clear the .40-mm. guns opened up on deck directly over our heads. Since the .40's were seldom fired, we knew that something must be coming in on the starboard side, our side, at deck level. We froze again, looking uncertainly at the thin steel bulkhead that offered our only protection. Then the .20-mm. guns just forward opened up, firing with the .40's at something approaching on the starboard side.

I gripped the rails of the bunk on which I sat, fighting to keep from bolting for the port side of the ship. Panic surged against my temples, twitched my feet and loosened my fingers from their grip on the bunk rail. I had to run. I had to see what was coming. I had to get away from the side of that ship. But I knew I couldn't move. The men with me were in my charge. I had to stay there at my station. If I ran they would too, so I stayed, how I don't know, but I did, fighting myself second by second, minute by minute, until a



One of the seaplanes, caught by fire from the ships, exploded.

tremendous explosion astern of the ship broke the tension and the guns stopped pumping.

We got the story after the all-clear sounded. The old Jap seaplanes down the coast, four of them, had been rigged with torpedoes and sent out in a sneak attack. Their approach behind the hills along the beach had not registered on the radar. They had skimmed over the tops of the hills and dropped in our midst without warning. Only the false General Quarters caused by our own plane had readied us at battle stations. Two of the seaplanes had converged on the *Kline,* one on the bow and one on the stern, catching us motionless in the water silhouetted between the full moon and the oil fires burning on

shore. . . . The explosion we heard had been one of the seaplanes caught and exploded by fire from the ships.

There was little sleep that night. I got a blanket and bedded down on the fantail. The fear we had known at Okinawa was back. The next planes might be playing for keeps.

In the morning we went back in to complete the demolition of the obstacles on Klandassan. The entire pattern of approach and demolition was identical with that of the day before. The fire from the guns along the river mouth was heavy but fixed, the range and trajectory of the fire being limited by the tracks running into the caves in which the guns were mounted. Sniper fire was heavy too, coming from the underbrush along the beach and along the sides of the river bank. Our gunboats ran nearly into the mouth of the river. Their heavy fire kept the Japs under cover enough to allow us to place our charges and get back to our boats without incident. We were in the water among the obstacles for about an hour, the gunboats hammering away overhead in addition to fire support from the destroyers, cruisers and planes whose efforts cannot be discounted despite the fact that the gunboats ran much the heavier risk.

At 11:15 the operation was secured. The final demolition shot had taken out all of the remaining obstacles on the beach. Both Klandassan and Manggar were ready for the invasion so far as our part was concerned.

On July 1, 1945, Fox Day, the Australian troops moved in from the sea to invade Balikpapan. Team personnel took positions in LCP (R)s two hundred yards in advance of the first assault wave and guided the landing craft through the demolished barriers to the assigned beaches. Jap fire from the shoreline and from the hills above the beaches was heavy, but their weapons were light and lacked the force necessary to halt or slow down the waves of landing craft and soldiers hitting the beaches. Support fire from the fleet units off shore and bombing and strafing by American and Australian aircraft was extremely heavy, starting at the water line and moving back into the hills as beachheads were secured.

Once ashore, the troops moved briskly inland, leaving the secured strip of coral sand along the water's edge to the supply ships and tank and vehicle carriers. At 16:00 war and work ceased abruptly along the shoreline. We could see small fires popping up all along the beach surrounded by small groups of soldiers and crew-men from the shuttling amphibious craft. The fires puzzled us for a while until we realized that it was tea time. No war, especially against the contemptible Nips, was important enough to interfere with four-o'clock tea, at least as far as the Aussies were concerned. We asked them later why they stopped killing Nips to make tea, especially when they had them on the run. They appeared surprised at our question and said simply: "The bloody Nips will wait. They've no place else to go."

From July 2 to July 7 the *Kline* moved down the coast, keeping pace with the rampaging troops on land. Every day saw a new beach reconnaissance or another demolition run, or both. The Japs had been on Borneo so long that every accessible strip of shore was planted with anti-vehicle and anti-personnel obstacles. Sometimes we were ahead of the troops, going in under fire from the Nip garrisons still holding fast on shore. Our fire support depended on the opposition we met. Usually we had gunboats along and perhaps a destroyer; often we were on our own.

We almost lost our simian mascot during one of our frequent runs down the coast. We were under way in a three-ship convoy with Jocko as usual indulging in his favorite sport of diving between the safety lines on the fantail. He had been our sole diversion during the long hours off Balikpapan and had become one of the family, although his constant trickery and natural mischievousness had made him even less popular with his enemies among the ship's crew. We watched him with amusement and concern as he made repeated runs through the ropes, each time flicking his tail up in time to catch the top strand and swing back to safety on the deck.

Suddenly he disappeared. A sudden movement of the ship had thrown him off balance, causing his tail to slip from the safety line as he plunged out over the churning water. We rushed to the fantail and peered anxiously into the churning wake of the ship. Finally he appeared far astern, his treacherous tail sticking straight up from the water like a periscope of a submarine. His small arms and legs were churning frantically through the water carrying him away from the ship in the general direction of San Francisco. Our yells of alarm brought Lieutenant Commander States to our assistance. He immediately requested the commanding officer of the ship to change course to attempt the rescue. The commanding officer, knowing of our affection for the monkey, and being a very decent officer, agreed. He obtained permission to leave the convoy and put the ship about to a point near enough for the Team to launch a rubber boat. It took a little paddling to reach Jocko, for he was determined to sight the Golden Gate before sunset, but he seemed only grateful for the interruption when he was hauled aboard, frightened, wet and shivering. Back aboard the ship he was given full and complete first aid, including a shot of spirits, and was put to bed in warm blankets to ward off pneumonia. An hour later he was up and about chattering gayly as he played in the rigging. It was apparent, however, that the fascination of the safety lines on the fantail was gone. He ignored them now!

Several days later we found him one morning lying under depth charges on the deck, dead of a broken neck. Suspicion naturally pointed to someone in the ship's crew, and we set out to hang the culprit to a yardarm. The deep antagonism between the team and the crew, started at Maui and rising since the rest-camp sojourn on Guam, flared into open violence over the incident. Only the strictest discipline imposed by both commanding officers prevented open civil war. Naturally the identity of the guilty man was never discovered.

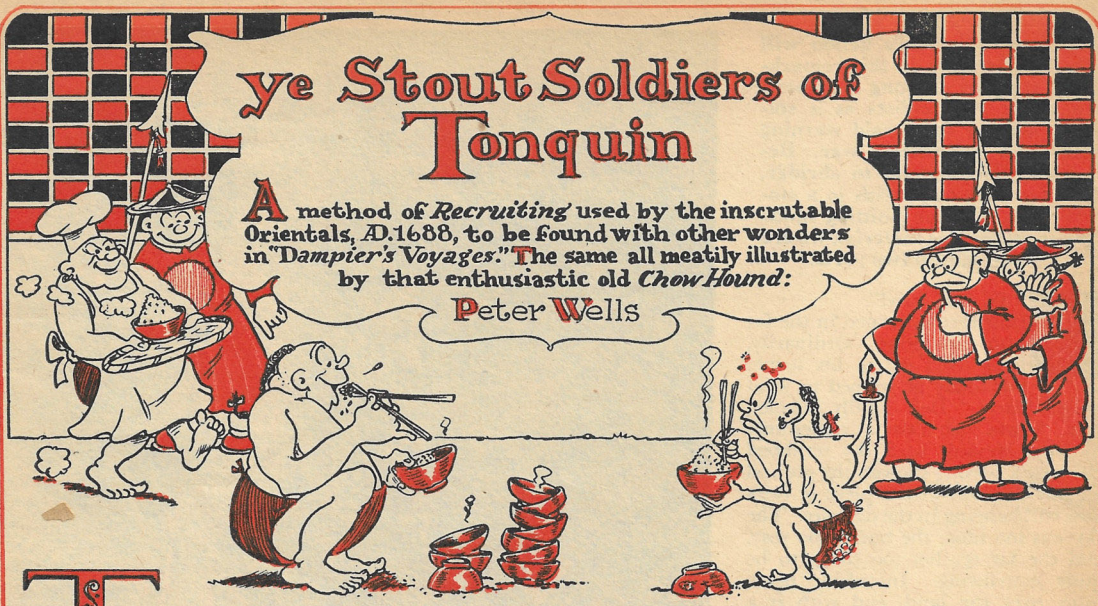
Altogether in days up to July 7 we completed twelve to fifteen reconnaissance missions and demolition operations. The majority were required to open up beaches for new troop landings or to discover and blast channels for the heavier supply ships and landing craft. The air strip at Seppinggan was secured on July 3, requiring a landing place for LCT's. When our hydrographic survey reports disclosed no suitable natural channel, we were ordered to blast one. This was done by swimmers carrying in powder charges in the usual way, fixing them to the obstacles and the coral shelf obstructing the ship entry and blowing the channel clear. It was a strange and somehow nerve-racking experience working in the absence of heavy gunfire and bomb explosions. We just kept expecting hell to break loose around our ears. It didn't seem right to be doing what we were doing without ducking behind the posts for protection from the enemy gunfire that usually played a concerto to accompany our water ballet.

On July 7 we left Borneo and headed for Manila in the Philippine Islands. Manila was already safe in the hands of American troops, eliminating the need of our services in that theater. As before we expected to go on to the inevitable invasion of the Japanese home islands. Our only hope was for a rest-camp stopover before the next action on the schedule. In any event we were glad to leave Borneo in the capable hands of the Australians. A few days' liberty in Manila would be welcome.

ye Stout Soldiers of Tonquin

A method of *Recruiting* used by the inscrutable Orientals, A.D.1688, to be found with other wonders in "*Dampier's Voyages*." The same all meatily illustrated by that enthusiastic old *Chow Hound*:

Peter Wells



The Soldiers are most of them lusty strong well-made Men: for 'tis that chiefly recommends them to the King's service. They must also have good Stomachs, for that is a greater recommendation than the former; neither can any Man be entertained as a Soldier that hath not greater stroke than ordinary at eating: for by this they judge of his Strength and Constitution. For which Reason, when a Soldier comes to be listed, his Stomach is first proved with Rice, the common Subsistence of the ordinary People in this Kingdome: and according as he aquits himselfe in this first Tryall of his Manhood, so is he either discharged or entertained in the Service. 'Tis reported, that at these Tryals they commonly eat 8 or 9 Cups of Rice, each containing a pint, and they are ever afterwards esteemed and advanced, according to the first Day's Service: and the greatest eaters are chiefly employed as Guards to the King, and commonly attend on his Person. The Province of Ngean breeds the lustiest Men, and the best eaters: for that reason those of that Province are generally imployed as Soldiers. After 30 years Service a Soldier may petition to be disbanded; and then the Village where he was born must send another Man to serve in his room...

Devotees of science fiction will find a rare treat in this remarkable story of a young man born in space, who enlists as a soldier when a space-raid warning threatens interstellar war. Because it is too good to abridge, and too long to publish in a single issue without omitting much other interesting material, we are printing it in two parts.

PLANETS *in*

EASY, boy, easy!"

Don Harvey reined in the fat little cow pony. Ordinarily, Lazy lived up to his name; but today he seemed to want to go places. Don hardly blamed him. It was such a day as comes only to New Mexico, with sky scrubbed clean by a passing shower, the ground already dry, but with a piece of rainbow still hanging in the distance. The sky was too blue, the buttes too rosy, and the far reaches too sharp to be quite convincing. Incredible peace hung over the land, and with it a breathless expectancy of something wonderful about to happen.

"We've got all day," he cautioned Lazy, "so don't get yourself in a lather. That's a stiff climb ahead." Don was riding alone, because he had decked out Lazy in a magnificent Mexican saddle his parents had ordered sent to him for his birthday. It was a beautiful thing, as gaudy with silver as an Indian buck, but it was as out of place at the ranch school he attended as formal clothes at a branding—a point which his parents had not realized. Don was proud of it, but the other boys rode plain stock saddles; they kidded him unmercifully, and had turned "Donald James Harvey" into "Don Jaime" when he first appeared with it.

Lazy suddenly shied. Don glanced around, spotted the cause, whipped out his gun and fired. He then dismounted, throwing the reins forward so that Lazy would stand, and examined his work. In the shadow of a rock a fair-sized snake, seven rattles on its tail, was still twitching. Its head lay by it, burned off. Don decided not to save the rattles; had he pinpointed the head, he would have taken it in to show his marksmanship. As it was, he had been forced to slice sidewise with the beam before he got it. If he brought in a snake killed in such a clumsy fashion, someone would be sure to ask him why he hadn't used a garden hose.

He let it lie and remounted while talking to Lazy. "Just a no-good old sidewinder," he said reassuringly.

He clucked, and they started off. A few hundred yards farther on Lazy shied again, not from a snake this time but from an unexpected noise. Don pulled him in and spoke severely. "You bird-brained butterball! When are you going to learn not to jump when the telephone rings?"

Lazy twitched his shoulder muscles and snorted. Don reached for the pommel, removed the phone, and answered: *"Mobile 6-J-233309, Don Harvey speaking."*

"Mr. Reeves, Don," came back the voice of the headmaster of Ranchito Alegre. *"Where are you?"*

"Headed up Peddler's Grave Mesa, sir."

"Get home as quickly as you can."

"What's up, sir?"

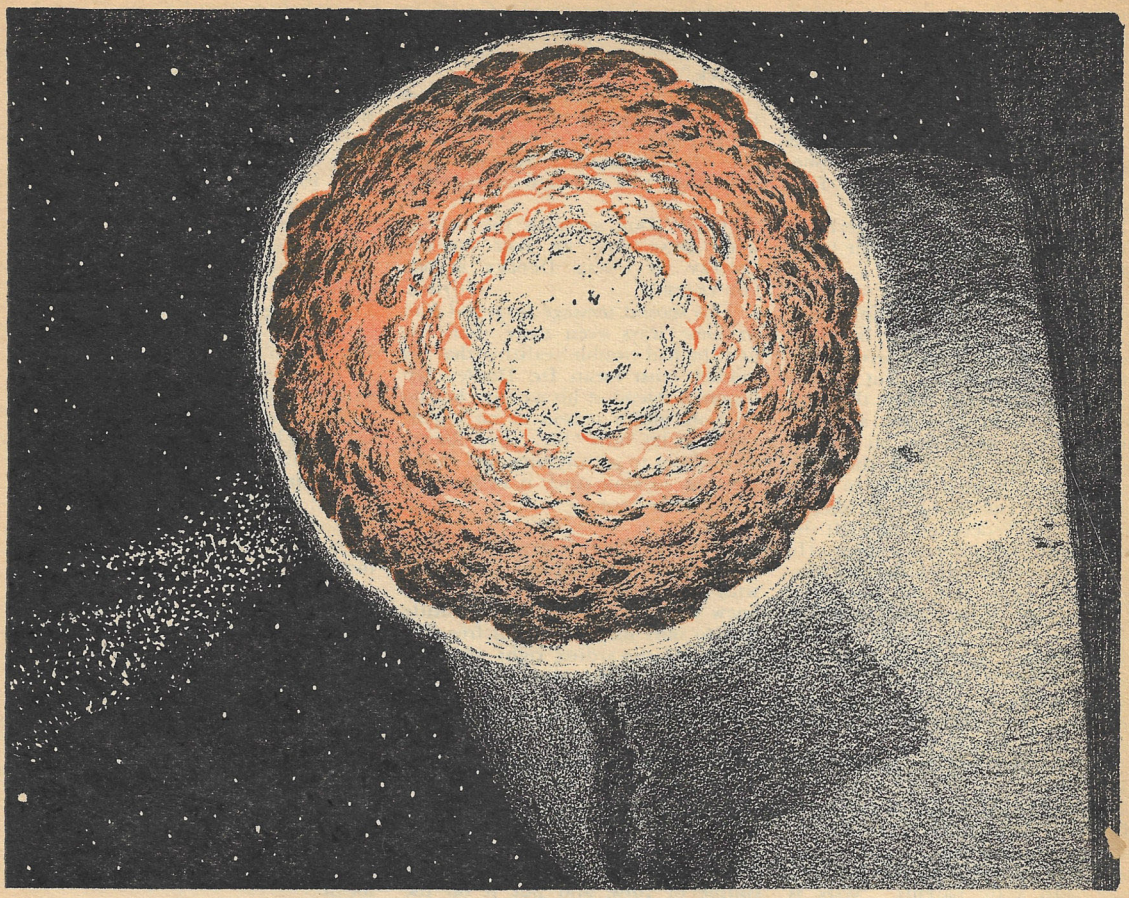
"Radiogram from your parents. I'll send the 'copter out for you if the cook is back—with someone to bring your horse in."

Don hesitated. He didn't want just anybody to ride Lazy, like as not getting him overheated and failing to cool him off. On the other hand, a radio from his folks could not help but be important. His parents were on Mars, and his mother wrote regularly, every ship—but radiograms, other than Christmas and birthday greetings, were almost unheard of.

"I'll hurry, sir."

"Right!" Mr. Reeves switched off. Don turned Lazy and headed back down the trail. Lazy seemed disappointed and looked back accusingly.

As it turned out, they were only a half-mile from the school when the



A second sun blazed white and swelled visibly as Don watched, until it blanked out the Earth floating beyond it.

COMBAT

by ROBERT A. HEINLEIN

ranch 'copter spotted them. Don waved it off and took Lazy on in himself. Despite his curiosity, he delayed to wipe down the pony and water it before he went in. Mr. Reeves was waiting in his office and motioned for him to come in. He handed Don the message.

It read: DEAR SON, PASSAGE RESERVED FOR YOU VALKYRIE CIRCUMTERRA TWELVE APRIL LOVE

MOTHER AND DAD.

Don blinked at it, having trouble taking in the simple facts. "But that's right away!"

"Yes. You weren't expecting it, then?"

Don thought it over. He had halfway expected to go home—if one could call it going home when he had never set foot on Mars—at the end of the school year. If they had arranged his passage for the *Vanderdecken* three months from now. . . . "Uh, not exactly. I can't figure out why they would send for me before the end of the term."

MR. REEVES fitted his fingertips carefully together. "I'd say that it was obvious."

Don looked startled. "You mean—Mr. Reeves, you don't really think there is going to be trouble, do you?"

The headmaster answered gravely: "Don, I'm not a prophet. But it is my guess that your parents are sufficiently worried that they want you out of a potential war zone as quickly as possible."

He was still having trouble readjusting. Wars were something you studied, not something that actually happened. Of course, his class in contemporary history had kept track of the current crisis in colonial affairs; but it had seemed something very far away, even for one as widely traveled as himself—a matter for diplomats, not something real.

"Look, Mr. Reeves, they may be jumpy, but I'm not. I'd like to send a radio telling them that I'll be along on the next ship, as soon as school is out."

Mr. Reeves shook his head. "No. I can't let you go against your parents'

explicit instructions. In the second place, ah—" The headmaster seemed to have difficulty in choosing his words. "That is to say, Donald, in the event of war, you might find your position here, shall we call it—uncomfortable?"

A bleak wind seemed to have found its way into the office. Don felt lonely and older than he should feel. "Why?" he asked gruffly.

Mr. Reeves studied his fingernails. "Are you quite sure where your loyalties lie?" he said slowly.

Don forced himself to think about it. His father had been born on Earth; his mother was a second-generation Venus colonial. But neither planet was truly their home; they had met and married on Luna, and had pursued their researches in planetology in many sectors of the solar system. Don himself had been born out in space; and his birth certificate, issued by the Federation, had left the question of his nationality open. He could claim dual citizenship by parental derivation. He did not think of himself as a Venus colonial; it had been so long since his family had last visited Venus that the place had grown unreal in his mind. On the other hand, he had been eleven years old before he had ever rested his eyes on the lovely hills of Earth.

"I'm a citizen of the System," he said harshly.

"Mmmm—" said the headmaster. "That's a fine phrase and perhaps some day it will mean something. In the meantime, speaking as a friend, I agree with your parents. Mars is likely to be neutral territory; you'll be safe there. Again, speaking as your friend—things may get a little rough here for anyone whose loyalty is not perfectly clear."

"Nobody has any business questioning my loyalty! Under the law, I count as native-born!"

The man did not answer. Don burst out: "The whole thing is silly! If the Federation wasn't trying to bleed Venus white, there wouldn't be any war talk."

Reeves stood up. "That will be all, Don. I'm not going to argue politics with you."

"It's true! Read Chamberlin's 'Theory of Colonial Expansion!' "

Reeves seemed startled. "Where did you lay hands on *that* book? Not in the school library."

Don did not answer. His father had sent it to him, but had cautioned him not to let it be seen; it was one of the suppressed books—on Earth, at least. Reeves went on: "Don, have you been dealing with a *bootlegger?*"

Don remained silent.

"Answer me!"

Presently Reeves took a deep breath and said: "Never mind. Go up to your room and pack. The 'copter will take you to Albuquerque at one o'clock."

"Yes sir." He had started to leave when the headmaster called him back.

"Just a moment. In the heat of our—uh—discussion, I almost forgot that there was a second message for you."

"Oh?" Don accepted the slip; it said: DEAR SON, BE SURE TO SAY GOOD-BY TO UNCLE DUDLEY BEFORE YOU LEAVE. MOTHER.

This second message surprised him in some ways even more than the first; he had trouble realizing that his mother must mean Dr. Dudley Jefferson—a friend of his parents, but no relation, and a person of no importance in his own life. But Reeves seemed not to see anything odd in the message, so Don stuck it in his levis and left the room.

Long as Don Harvey had been earthbound, he approached packing with a true spaceman's spirit. He knew that his passage would entitle him to only fifty pounds of free lift; he started discarding right and left. shortly he had two piles, a very small one on his own bed—indispensable clothing, a few capsules of microfilm, his slide-rule, a stylus, and a *vreetha,* a flutelike Martian instrument which he had not played in a long time, as his schoolmates had objected. On his roommate's bed was a much larger pile of discards.

He picked up the *vreetha,* tried a couple of runs, and put it on the larger pile. Taking a Martian product to Mars was coals to Newcastle. His roommate, Jack Moreau, came in as he did so.

"What in time goes on?"

"Leaving."

Jack dug a finger into his ear. "I must be getting deaf. I could have sworn you said you were leaving."

"I am." Don stopped and explained, showing Jack the message from his parents.

Jack looked distressed. "I don't like this. Of course I knew this was our last year, but I didn't figure on you jumping the gun. I probably won't sleep without your snores to soothe me. What's the rush?"

"I don't know. I really don't. The Head says that my folks have war jitters and want to drag their little darling to safety. But that's silly, don't you think? I mean, people are too civilized to go to war today."

Jack did not answer. Don waited, then said sharply: "You agree, don't you? There won't be any war."

Jack answered slowly: "Could be. Or maybe not."

"Oh, come off it!"

His roommate answered: "Want me to help you pack?"

"There isn't anything to pack."

"How about all that stuff?"

"That's yours, if you want it. Pick it over, then call in the others and let them take what they like."

"Huh? Gee, Don, I don't want your stuff. I'll pack it and ship it after you."

"Ever ship anything 'tween planets? It's not worth it."

"Then sell it. Tell you what, we'll hold an auction right after supper."

Don shook his head. "No time. I'm leaving at one o'clock."

"What? You're really blitzing me, kid. I don't like this."

"Can't be helped." He turned back to his sorting.

Several of his friends drifted in to say good-by. Don himself had not spread the news, and he did not suppose that the headmaster would have talked; yet somehow the grapevine had spread the word. He invited them to help themselves to the plunder, subject to Jack's prior claim.

Presently he noticed that none of them asked why he was leaving. It bothered him more than if they had talked about it. He wanted to tell someone, anyone, that it was ridiculous to doubt his loyalty—and anyhow, there wasn't going to be a war!

Rupe Salter, a boy from another wing, stuck his head in, looked over the preparations. "Running out, eh? I heard you were, and thought I'd check up."

"I'm leaving, if that's what you mean."

"That's what I said. See here, Don Jaime, how about that circus saddle of yours? I'll take it off your hands if the price is right."

"It's not for sale."

"Huh? No horses where you're going. Make me a price."

"It belongs to Jack, here."

"And it's still not for sale," Moreau answered promptly.

"Like that, eh? Suit yourself." Salter went on blandly, "Another thing—you willed that nag of yours yet?"

The boys' mounts, with few exceptions, were owned by the school, but it was a cherished and long-standing privilege of a boy graduating to "will" his temporary ownership to a boy of his choice. Don looked up sharply; until that moment he had not thought about Lazy. He realized with sudden grief that he could not take the little fat clown with him—nor had he made arrangements for the horse's welfare. "The matter is settled," he answered, adding to himself: *as far as you are concerned.*

"Who gets him? I could make it worth your while. He's not much of

a horse, but I want to get rid of the goat I've had to put up with."

"It's settled."

"Be sensible. I can see the Head and get him, anyhow. Willing a horse is a graduating privilege, and you're ducking out ahead of time."

"Get out!"

Salter grinned. "Touchy, aren't you? Just like all fog-eaters, too touchy to know what's good for you. Well, you're going to be taught a lesson some day soon."

Don, already on edge, was too angry to trust himself to speak. "Fog-eater," used to describe a man from cloud-wrapped Venus, was merely ragging, no worse than "Limey" or "Yank"—unless the tone of voice and context made it, as now, a deliberate insult. The others looked at him, half expecting action.

Jack got up hastily from the bed and went toward Salter. "Get going, Salty. We're too busy to monkey around with you." Salter looked at Don, then back at Jack, shrugged and said: "I'm too busy to hang around here—but not *too* busy, if you have anything in mind."

THE noon bell pealed from the mess hall and broke the tension. Several boys started for the door; Salter moved out with them. Don hung back. Jack said: "Come on—beans!"

"Jack?"

"Yeah?"

"How about you taking over Lazy?"

"Gee, Don! I'd like to accommodate you—but what would I do with Lady Maude?"

"Uh, I guess so. What'll I do?"

"Let me see—" Jack's face brightened. "You know that kid Squinty Morris? The new kid from Manitoba? He hasn't got a permanent yet; he's been taking his rotation with the goats. He'd treat Lazy right; I know, I let him try Maudie once. He's got gentle hands."

Don looked relieved. "Will you fix it for me? And see Mr. Reeves?"

"Huh? You can see him at lunch; come on."

"I'm not going to lunch. I'm not hungry. And I don't much want to talk to the Head about it."

"Why not?"

"Well, I don't know. When he called me in this morning, he didn't seem exactly—friendly."

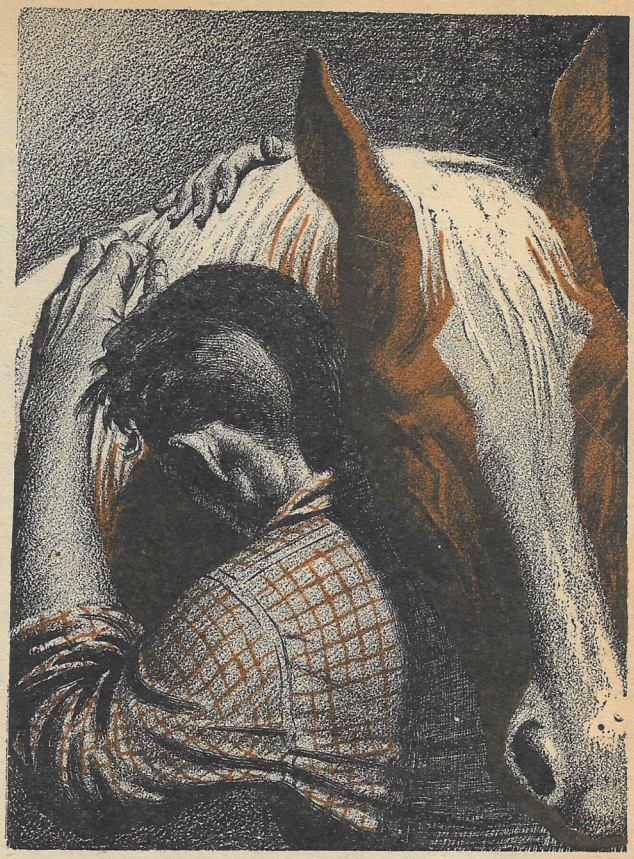
"What did he say?"

"It wasn't his words; it was his manner. Maybe I *am* touchy—but I sort of thought he was glad to see me go."

Don expected Jack to object, convince him that he was wrong. Instead he was silent for a moment, then said quietly: "Don't take it too hard, Don. The Head is probably edgy too. You know he's got his orders?"

"Huh? What orders?"

Illustrated by Brendan Lynch



"Good-by, boy. Take care of yourself." Lazy nickered softly.

"You knew he was a reserve officer, didn't you? He put in for orders and got 'em, effective at end of term. Mrs. Reeves is taking over the school—for the duration."

Don, already overstrained, felt his head whirling. For the duration? How could anyone say that, when there wasn't any such thing? "'Sfact," Jack went on. "I got it straight from cookie." He paused, then he asked: "See here, old son—we're pals, aren't we?"

"Huh? Sure, sure!"

"Then give it to me straight: are you actually going to Mars? Or are you heading for Venus to sign up?"

"Whatever gave you that notion?"

"Skip it, then. Believe me, it wouldn't make any difference between us. My old man says that when it's time to be counted, the important thing is to be man enough to stand up." He looked at Don's face, then went on: "What you do about it is up to you. You know I've got a birthday coming up next month?"

"Huh? Yes, so you have."

"Come then, I'm going to sign up for pilot training. That's why I wanted to know what you planned to do."

"Oh—"

"But it doesn't make any difference—not between us. Anyhow, you're going to Mars."

"Yes. Yes, that's right."

"Good!" Jack glanced at his watch. "I've got to run—or they'll throw my chow to the pigs. Sure you're not coming?"

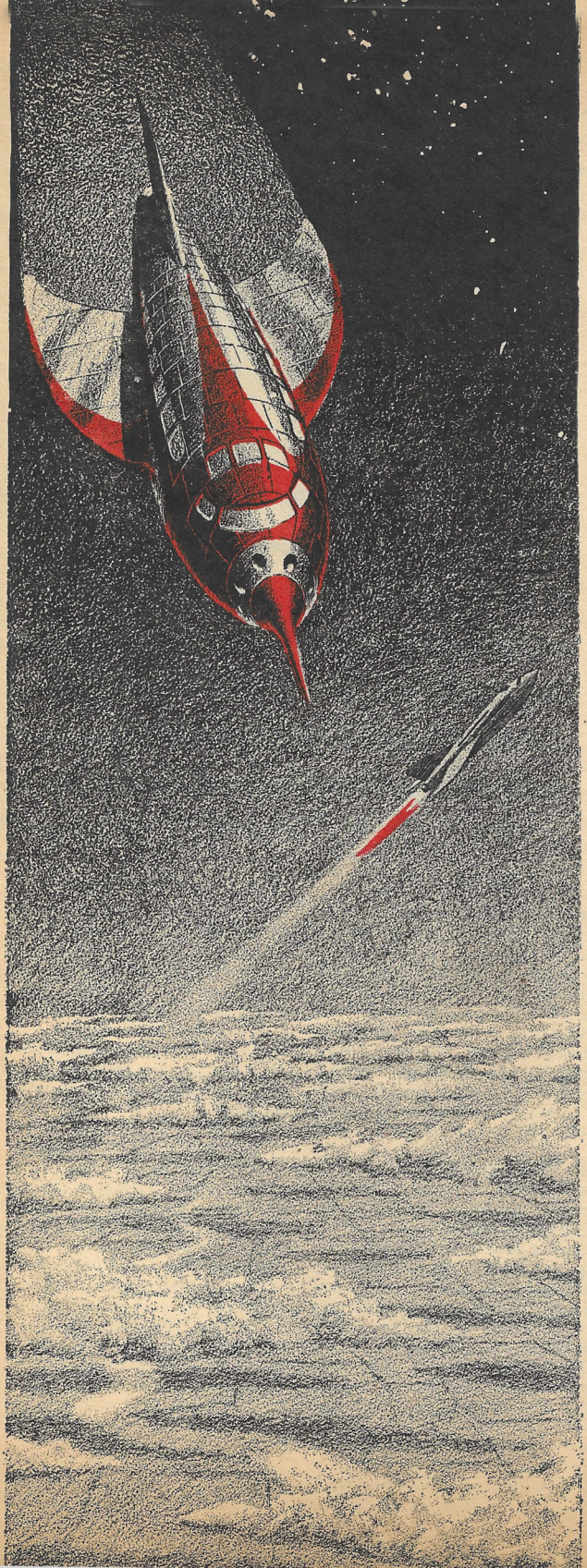
"Sure."

"See you." He dashed out.

Don stood for a moment, rearranging his ideas. Old Jack must be taking this seriously—giving up Yale for pilot training! But he was wrong—he *had* to be wrong.

Presently he went out to the corral. Lazy answered his call, then started searching his pockets for sugar. "Sorry, old fellow," he said sadly, "not even a carrot. I forgot." He stood with his face to the horse's cheek and scratched the beast's ears. He talked to it in low tones, explaining as carefully as if Lazy could understand all the difficult words.

"So that's how it is," he concluded. "I've got to go away, and they won't



let me take you with me." He thought back to the day their association had begun. Lazy had been hardly more than a colt, but Don had been afraid of him—he seemed huge, dangerous, probably carnivorous; Don had never seen a horse before coming to Earth, and Lazy was the first he had ever seen close up.

Suddenly he choked, could talk no further. He flung his arms around the horse's neck and leaked tears.

Lazy nickered softly, knowing that something was wrong, and tried to nuzzle him. Don raised his head. "Good-by, boy. Take care of yourself." He turned abruptly and ran toward the dormitories.

Chapter Two

"MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN"
Daniel V, 25

THE school's 'copter dumped him down at the Albuquerque field. He had to hurry to catch his rocket, for traffic control had required them to swing wide around Sandia Weapons Center. When he weighed in, he ran into another new security wrinkle. "Got a camera in that stuff, son?" the weighmaster had inquired as he passed over his bags.

"No. Why?"

"Because we'll fog your film when we fluoroscope, that's why." Apparently X-ray failed to show any bombs hidden in his underwear; his bags were handed back, and he went aboard the winged-rocket *Santa Fé Trail*, shuttling between the Southwest and New Chicago. Inside, he fastened his safety belts, snuggled down into the cushions, and waited.

At first the noise of the blast-off bothered him more than the pressure. But the noise dopplered away as they passed the speed of sound, while the acceleration grew greater—and he blacked out.

He came to as the ship went into free flight, arching in a high parabola over the plains. At once he felt great relief no longer to have unbearable weight racking his rib-cage, straining his heart, turning his muscles to water—but before he could enjoy the blessed relief, he was aware of a new sensation; his stomach was trying to crawl up his gullet.

At first he was alarmed, being unable to account for the unexpected and unbearably unpleasant sensation. Then he had a sudden wild suspicion—could it? Oh, no, it *couldn't* be—not space sickness, not to *him!* Why he had been born in free fall; space

The rocket continued glider fashion on a long screaming approach to New Chicago

nausea was for Earth-crawlers, groundhogs!

But the suspicion grew to certainty; years of easy living on a planet had worn out his immunity. With secret embarrassment he conceded that he certainly was acting like a groundhog. It had not occurred to him to ask for an anti-nausea shot before blast-off, though he had walked past the counter plainly marked with a red cross.

Shortly his secret embarrassment became public; he had barely time to get at the plastic container provided for that purpose. Thereafter he felt better, although weak, and listened half-heartedly to the canned description coming out of the loud-speaker of the country over which they were falling. Presently, near Kansas City, the sky turned from black back to purple again, the air foils took hold, and the passengers again felt weight as the rocket continued glider fashion on a long, screaming approach to New Chicago. Don folded his couch into a chair and sat up.

Twenty minutes later, as the field came up to meet them, rocket units in the nose were triggered by radar, and the *Santa Fé Trail* braked to a landing. The entire trip had taken less time than the 'copter jaunt from the school to Albuquerque—something less than an hour for the same route eastward that the covered wagons had made westward in eighty days, with luck. The local rocket landed on a field just outside the city, next door to the enormous field, still slightly radioactive, which was both the main spaceport of the planet and the former site of old Chicago.

Don hung back and let a Navajo family disembark ahead of him, then followed the squaw out. A movable slideway had crawled out to the ship; he stepped on it and let it carry him into the station. Once inside, he was confused by the bustling size of the place, level after level, above and below ground. Gary Station served not merely the *Santa Fé Trail*, the *Route 66*, and other local rockets shuttling to the Southwest; it served a dozen other local lines, as well as ocean hoppers, freight tubes, and space ships operating between Earth and Circum-Terra Station—and thence to Luna, Venus, Mars and the Jovian moons; it was the spinal cord of a more-than-world-wide empire.

Tuned as he was to the wide and empty New Mexico desert, and before that, to the wider wastes of space, Don felt oppressed and irritated by the noisy swarming mass. He felt the loss of dignity that comes from men behaving like ants, even though his feeling was not thought out in words. Still, it had to be faced—he spotted the triple globes of Interplanet Lines, and followed glowing arrows to its reservation office.

An uninterested clerk assured him that the office had no record of his reservation in the *Valkyrie*. Patiently Don explained that the reservation had been made from Mars, and displayed the radiogram from his parents. Annoyed into activity, the clerk finally consented to phone Circum-Terra; the satellite station confirmed the reservation. The clerk signed off and turned back to Don. "Okay, you can pay for it here."

Don had a sinking feeling. "I thought it was already paid for?" He had on him his father's letter-of-credit, but it was not enough to cover passage to Mars.

"Huh? They didn't say anything about it being prepaid."

At Don's insistence, the clerk again phoned the space station. Yes, the passage was prepaid, since it had been placed from the other end; didn't the clerk know his tariff book? Thwarted on all sides, the clerk grudgingly issued Don a ticket to couch 64, Rocket Ship *Glory Road*, lifting from Earth for Circum-Terra at 9:03:57 the following morning. "Got your security clearance?"

"Huh? What's that?"

The clerk appeared to gloat at what was a legitimate opportunity to decline to do business after all. He withdrew the ticket. "Don't you bother to follow the news? Give me your ID."

Reluctantly Don passed over his identity card; the clerk stuck it in a stat machine and handed it back. "Now your thumbprints."

Don impressed them and said: "Is that all? Can I have my ticket?"

"'Is that all?' he says! Be here about an hour early tomorrow morning. You can pick up your ticket then—provided the I.B.I. says you can."

The clerk turned away. Don feeling forlorn, did likewise. He did not know quite what to do next. He had told Headmaster Reeves that he would stay overnight at the "Hexton Caravansary," that being the hotel his family had stopped at years earlier, and the only one he knew by name. On the other hand he had to attempt to locate Dr. Jefferson—"Uncle Dudley"—since his mother had made such a point of it. It was still early afternoon; he decided to check his bags and start looking.

Bags disposed of, he found an empty communication booth, looked up the Doctor's code, and punched it into the machine. The Doctor's phone regretted politely that Dr. Jefferson was not at home and requested him to leave a message. He was dictating it when a warm voice interrupted: "I'm at home to you, Donald. Where are you, lad?" The view screen cut in, and he found himself looking at the somewhat familiar features of Dr. Dudley Jefferson.

"Oh! I'm at the station, Doctor—Gary Station. I just got in."

"Then grab a cab and come here at once."

"Uh, I don't want to put you to any trouble, Doctor. I called because Mother said to say good-by to you." Privately he had hoped that Dr. Jefferson would be too busy to waste time on him. Much as he disapproved of cities, he did not want to spend his last night on Earth exchanging politenesses with a family friend; he wanted to stir around and find out just what the modern Babylon did have to offer in the way of diversion. His letter-of-credit was burning a hole in his pocket; he wanted to bleed it a bit.

"No trouble! See you in a few minutes. Meanwhile I'll pick out a fatted calf and butcher it. By the way, did you receive a package from me?" The Doctor looked suddenly intent.

"A package? No."

Dr. Jefferson muttered something about the mail service. Don said: "Maybe it will catch up with me. Was it important?"

"Uh, never mind; we'll speak of it later. You left a forwarding address?"

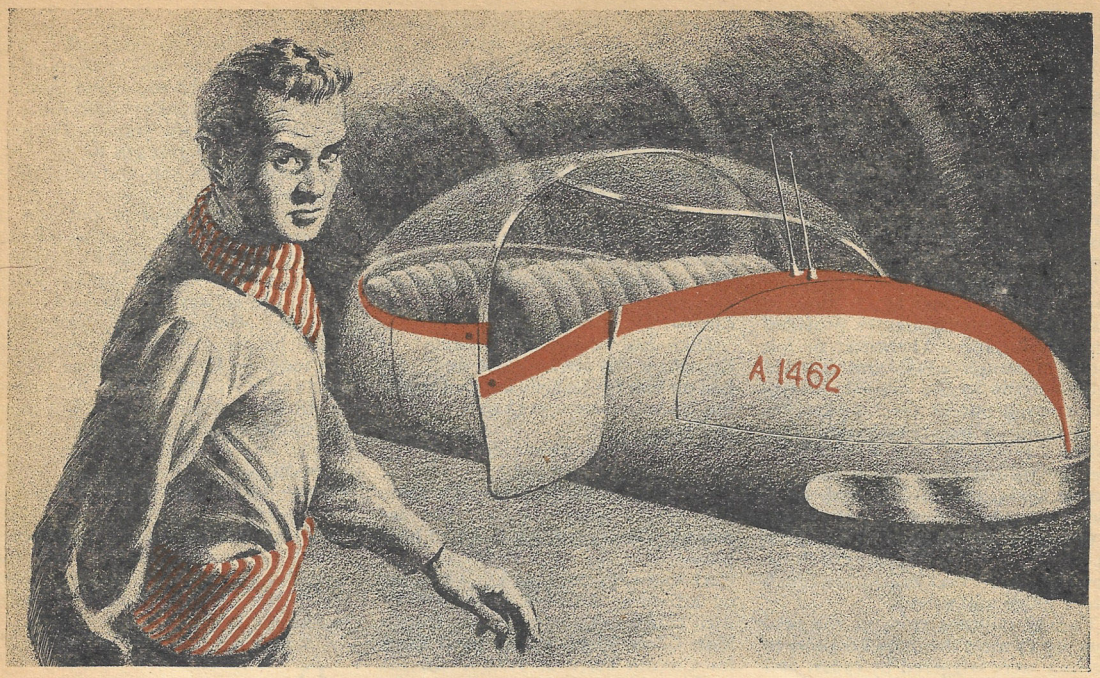
"Yes, sir—the Caravansary."

"Well—whip up the horses and see how quickly you can get here. Open sky!"

"And safe grounding, sir." They both switched off. Don left the booth and looked around for a cab-stand. The station seemed more jammed than ever, with uniforms much in evidence, not only those of pilots and other ship personnel, but military uniforms of many corps—and always the ubiquitous security police. Don fought his way through the crowd, down a ramp, along a slidewalk tunnel, and finally found what he wanted. There was a queue waiting for cabs; he joined it.

Beside the queue was sprawled the big, ungainly saurian form of a Venerian "dragon." When Don progressed in line until he was beside it, he politely whistled a greeting.

The dragon swiveled one fluttering eyestalk in his direction. Strapped to the "chest" of the creature, between its forelegs and immediately below and in reach of its handling tendrils, was a small box, a voder. The tendrils writhed over the keys, and the Venerian answered him, via mechanical voder speech, rather than by whistling in his own language. "Greetings to you also, young sir. It is pleasant indeed, among strangers, to hear the sounds one heard in the egg." Don



Don became suddenly and unpleasantly aware that a security policeman was giving him undivided attention.

noted with delight that the outlander had a distinctly Cockney accent in the use of his machine.

He whistled his thanks and a hope that the dragon might die pleasantly.

The Venerian thanked him, again with the voder, and added: "Charming as is your accent, will you do me the favor of using your own speech, that I may practice it?"

Don suspected that his modulation was so atrocious that the Venerian could hardly understand it; he lapsed at once into human words. "My name is Don Harvey," he replied, and whistled once more—but just to give his own Venerian name, "Mist on the Waters"; it had been selected by his mother, and he saw nothing funny about it.

Nor did the dragon. He whistled for the first time, naming himself, and added via voder: "I am called 'Sir Isaac Newton.'" Don understood that the Venerian, in so tagging himself, was following the common dragon custom of borrowing as a name of convenience that of some Earth-human admired by the borrower.

Don wanted to ask "Sir Isaac Newton" if by chance he knew Don's mother's family, but the queue was moving up, and the dragon was lying still; Don was forced to move along to keep from losing his place in line. The Venerian followed him with one oscillating eye and whistled that he hoped that Don too might die pleasantly.

There was an interruption in the flow of autocabs to the stand; a man-operated flatbed truck drew up and let down a ramp. The dragon reared up on six sturdy legs and climbed aboard. Don whistled a farewell—and became suddenly and unpleasantly aware that a security policeman was giving him undivided attention. He was glad to crawl into his autocab and close the cover.

He dialed the address and settled back. The little car lurched forward, climbed a ramp, threaded through a freight tunnel, and mounted an elevator. At first Don tried to keep track of where it was taking him, but the tortured convolutions of the ant-hill called New Chicago would have made a topologist dyspeptic; he gave up. The robot cab seemed to know where it was going, and no doubt the master machine from which it received its signals knew. Don spent the rest of the trip fretting over the fact that his ticket had not yet been turned over to him, over the unwelcome attention of the security policeman, and finally, about the package from Dr. Jefferson. The last did not worry him; it simply annoyed him to have mail go astray. He hoped that Mr. Reeves would realize that any mail not forwarded by this afternoon would have to follow him all the way to Mars.

Then he thought about Sir Isaac. It was nice to run across somebody from home.

Dr. Jefferson's apartment turned out to be far underground in an expensive quarter of the city. Don almost failed to arrive; the cab had paused at the apartment door, but when he tried to get out, the door would not open. This reminded him that he must first pay the fare shown in the meter—only to discover that he had pulled the bumpkin trick of engaging a robot vehicle without having coins on him to feed the meter. He was sure that the little car, clever as it was, would not even deign to sniff at his letter-of-credit. He was expecting disconsolately to be carted by the machine off to the nearest police station when he was rescued by the appearance of Dr. Jefferson.

The Doctor gave him coins to pay the shot and ushered him in. "Think nothing of it, my boy; it happens to me about once a week. The local desk sergeant keeps a drawer full of hard money just to buy me out of hock from our mechanical masters. I pay him off once a quarter, cumshaw additional. Sit down. Sherry?"

"Er—no, thank you, sir."

"Coffee, then. Cream and sugar at your elbow. What do you hear from your parents?"

"Why, the usual things. Both well and working hard, and all that." Don

looked around him as he spoke. The room was large, comfortable, even luxurious, although books spilling lavishly and untidily over shelves and tables and even chairs masked its true richness. What appeared to be a real fire burned in one corner. Through an open door he could see several more rooms. He made a high, but grossly inadequate, mental estimate of the cost of such an establishment in New Chicago.

FACING them was a view window which should have looked into the bowels of the city; instead it reflected a mountain stream and fir trees. A trout broke water as he watched.

"I'm sure they are working hard," his host answered. "They always do. Your father is attempting to seek out, in one short lifetime, secrets that have been piling up for millions of years. Impossible—but he makes a good stab at it. Son, do you realize that when your father started his career, we hadn't even dreamed that the First System Empire ever existed?" He added thoughtfully: "If it *was* the first!" He went on: "Now we have felt out the ruins on the floors of two oceans—and tied them in with records from four other planets. Of course your father didn't do it all, or even most of it—but his work has been indispensable. Your father is a great person, Donald—and so is your mother. When I speak of either one, I really mean the team. Help yourself to sandwiches."

Don said, "Thank you," and did so, thereby avoiding a direct answer. He was warmly pleased to hear his parents praised, but it did not seem to be quite the thing to agree heartily.

But the Doctor was capable of carrying on the conversation unassisted. "Of course we may never know all the answers. How was the noblest planet of them all, the home of empire, broken and dispersed into space junk? Your father spent four years in the Asteroid Belt—you were along, weren't you?—and never found a firm answer to that. Was it a paired planet, like Earth-Luna, and broken up by tidal strains? Or was it blown up?"

"Blown up?" Don protested. "But that is theoretically impossible, isn't it?"

Dr. Jefferson brushed it aside. "Everything is theoretically impossible, until it's done. One could write a history of science in reverse by assembling the solemn pronouncements of highest authority about what could not be done and could never happen. Studied any mathematical philosophy, Don? Familiar with infinite universe sheaves and open-ended postulate systems?"

"Uh—I'm afraid not, sir."

"Simple idea, and very tempting. The notion that everything is possible—and I mean everything—and everything has happened. *Everything.* One universe in which you accepted that wine and got drunk as a skunk. Another in which the fifth planet never broke up. Another in which atomic power and nuclear weapons are as impossible as our ancestors thought they were. That last one might have its points, for sissies, at least. Like me!"

He stood up. "Don't eat too many sandwiches. I'm going to take you out to a restaurant where there will be food, among other things—and such food as Zeus promised the gods—and failed to deliver."

"I don't want to take up too much of your time, sir." Don was still hoping to get out on the town by himself. He had a dismaying vision of dinner in some stuffy rich men's club, followed by an evening of high-falutin talk. And it *was* his last night on Earth.

"Time? What is time? Each hour ahead is as fresh as was the one we just used. You registered at the Caravansary?"

"No sir, I just checked my bags at the station."

"Good. You'll stay here tonight; we'll send for your luggage later." Dr. Jefferson's manner changed slightly. "But your mail was to be sent to the hotel?"

"That's right."

Don was surprised to see that Dr. Jefferson looked distinctly worried. "Well, we'll check into that later. That package I sent to you—would it be forwarded promptly?"

"I really don't know, sir. Ordinarily the mail comes in twice a day. If it came in after I left, it would ordinarily wait over until morning. But if the headmaster thought about it, he might have it sent into town special, so that I would get it before up-ship tomorrow morning."

"Mean to say there isn't a tube into the school?"

"No sir—the cook brings in the morning mail when he shops, and the afternoon mail is 'chuted in by the Roswell 'copter bus."

"A desert island! Well—we'll check around midnight. If it hasn't arrived then— Never mind." Nevertheless he seemed perturbed and hardly spoke during their ride to dinner.

The restaurant was misnamed the Back Room, and there was no sign out to indicate its location; it was simply one of many doors in a side tunnel. Nevertheless many people seemed to know where it was and to be anxious to get in, only to be thwarted by a stern-faced dignitary guarding a velvet rope. This ambassador recognized Dr. Jefferson and sent for the *maître d'hôtel.* The Doctor made a gesture understood by headwaiters throughout history, the rope was dropped, and they were conducted in royal progress to a ringside table. Don was bug-eyed at the size of the bribe. Thus he was ready with the proper facial expression when he caught sight of their waitress.

His reaction to her was simple; she was, it seemed to him, the most beautiful sight he had ever seen, both in person and in costume. Dr. Jefferson caught his expression and chuckled. "Don't use up your enthusiasm, son. The ones we have paid to see will be out there." He waved at the floor. "Cocktail first?"

Don said that he didn't believe so.

"Suit yourself. You are man-high, and a single taste of the fleshpots wouldn't do you any permanent harm. But suppose you let me order dinner for us?" Don agreed. While Dr. Jefferson was consulting with the captive princess over the menu, Don looked around. The room simulated outdoors in the late evening; stars were just appearing overhead. A high brick wall ran around the room, hiding the non-existent middle distance and patching in the floor to the false sky. Apple trees hung over the wall and stirred in the breeze. An old-fashioned well with a well-sweep stood beyond the tables on the far side of the room; Don saw another captive princess go to it, operate the sweep, and remove a silver pail containing a wrapped bottle.

AT the ringside opposite them a table had been removed to make room for a large transparent plastic capsule on wheels. Don had never seen one, but he recognized its function; it was a Martian's "perambulator," a portable air-conditioning unit to provide the rare, cold air necessary to a Martian aborigine. The occupant could be seen dimly, his frail body supported by a metal articulated servo framework to assist him in coping with the robust gravity of the third planet. His pseudo-wings drooped sadly; he did not move. Don felt sorry for him.

As a youngster he had met Martians on Luna, but Luna's feeble field was less than that of Mars; it did not turn them into cripples, paralyzed by a gravity field too painful for their evolutionary pattern. It was both difficult and dangerous for a Martian to risk coming to Earth; Don wondered what had induced this one. A diplomatic mission, perhaps?

Dr. Jefferson dismissed the waitress, looked up and noticed him staring at the Martian. Don said: "I was just wondering why he would come here. Not to eat, surely."

"Probably wants to watch the animals feeding. That's part of my

own reason, Don. Take a good look around you; you'll never see the like again."

"No, I guess not—not on Mars."

"That's not what I mean. Sodom and Gomorrah, lad—rotten at the core and skidding toward the pit. '—These our actors, as I foretold you —are melted into air—' and so forth. Perhaps even 'the great globe itself.' I talk too much. Enjoy it; it won't last long."

Don looked puzzled. "Dr. Jefferson, do you *like* living here?"

"Me? I'm as decadent as the city I infest; it's my natural element. But that doesn't keep me from telling a hawk from a handsaw."

The orchestra, which had been playing softly from nowhere in particular, stopped suddenly, and the sound system announced *"News flash!"* At the same time the darkening sky overhead turned black, and lighted letters started marching across it. The voice over the sound system read aloud the words streaming across the ceiling: BERMUDA: OFFICIAL: THE DEPARTMENT OF COLONIAL AFFAIRS HAS JUST ANNOUNCED THAT THE PROVISIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE VENUS COLONIES HAS REJECTED OUR NOTE. A SOURCE CLOSE TO THE FEDERATION CHAIRMAN SAYS THAT THIS IS AN EXPECTED DEVELOPMENT AND NO CAUSE FOR ALARM.

The lights went up and the music resumed. Dr. Jefferson's lips were stretched back in a mirthless grin. "How appropriate!" he commented. "How timely! The handwriting on the wall."

Don started to blurt out a comment, but was distracted by the start of the show. The stage floor by then had sunk out of sight, unnoticed, during the news flash. Now from the pit thus created came a drifting, floating cloud lighted from within with purple and flame and rose. The cloud melted away, and Don could see that the stage was back in place and peopled with dancers. There was a mountain in the stage background.

Dr. Jefferson had been right; the ones worth staring at were on the stage, not serving the tables. Don's attention was so taken that he did not notice that food had been placed in front of him. His host suggested: "Eat something, before you faint."

"Huh? Oh, yes sir!" He did so, busily and with good appetite, but with his eyes on the entertainers. There was one man in the cast, portraying *Tannhäuser,* but Don did not know and did not care whom he represented; he noticed him only when he got in the way. Similarly, he had finished two thirds of what was placed before him without noticing what he was eating.

Dr. Jefferson said: "Like it?"

Don did a double-take and realized that the Doctor was speaking of food, not of the dancers. "Oh, yes! It's awfully good." He examined his plate. "But what is it?"

"Don't you recognize it? Baked baby gregarian."

It took a couple of seconds for Don to place in his mind just what a gregarian was. As a small child he had seen hundreds of the little satyr-like bipeds—*faunus gregarius veneris Smythii*—but he did not at first associate the common commercial name with the friendly, silly creatures he and his playmates, along with all other Venus colonials, had always called "move-overs," because of their chronic habit of crowding up against one, shouldering, nuzzling, sitting on one's feet, and in other ways displaying their insatiable appetite for physical affection.

Eat a baby move-over? He felt like a cannibal, and for the second time in one day started to behave like a groundhog in space. He gulped and controlled himself—but he could not touch another bite.

He looked back at the stage. Venusberg disappeared, giving way to a tired-eyed man who kept up a rapid fire of jokes while juggling flaming torches. Don was not amused; he let his gaze wander around the room. Three tables away a man met his eyes, then looked casually away. Don thought about it, then looked the man over carefully and decided that he recognized him. "Dr. Jefferson?"

"Yes, Don?"

"Do you happen to know a Venus dragon who calls himself 'Sir Isaac Newton'?" Don added the whistled version of the Venerian's true name.

"Don't!" the older man said sharply.

"Don't what?"

"Don't advertise your background unnecessarily, not at this time. Why do you ask about this—uh—Sir Isaac Newton?" He kept his voice low with his lips barely moving.

Donald told him about the casual meeting at Gary Station. "When I got through, I was dead sure that a security cop was watching me. And now that same man is sitting over there, only now he's not in uniform."

"Are you sure?"

"I think I'm sure."

"Mmm—you might be mistaken. Or he might simply be here in his off hours—though a security policeman should not be, not on his pay. See here—pay no further attention to him, and don't speak of him again. And don't speak of that dragon, nor of anything else Venerian. Just appear to be having a good time. But pay careful attention to anything I say."

Don tried to carry out the instructions, but it was hard to keep his mind on gayety. Even when the dancers reappeared, he felt himself wanting to turn and stare at the man who had dampened the party. The plate of baked gregarian was removed, and Dr. Jefferson ordered something for him called a "Mount Etna." It was actually shaped like that volcano, and a plume of steam came out of the tip. He dipped a spoon into it, found that it was fire and ice, assaulting his palate with conflicting sensations. He wondered how anyone could eat it. Out of politeness he cautiously tried another bite. Presently he found that he had eaten all of it, and was sorry there was not more.

At the break in the stage acts Don tried to ask Dr. Jefferson what he really thought about the war scare. The Doctor firmly turned the talk around to his parents' work and branched out to the past and future of the System. "Don't fret yourself about the present, son. Troubles, merely troubles—necessary preliminaries to the consolidation of the System. In five hundred years the historians will hardly notice it. There will be the Second Empire—six planets by then."

"Six? You don't honestly think we'll ever be able to do anything with Jupiter and Saturn? Oh—you mean the Jovian moons."

"No, I mean six primary planets. We'll move Pluto and Neptune in close by the fire and we'll drag Mercury back and let it cool off."

The idea of moving planets startled Don. It sounded wildly impossible, but he let it rest, since his host was a man who maintained that everything and anything was possible. "The race needs a lot of room," Dr. Jefferson went on. "After all, Mars and Venus have their own intelligent races; we can't crowd them much more without genocide—and it's not dead certain which way the genocide would work, even with the Martians. But the reconstruction of this system is just engineering—nothing to what else we'll do. Half a millennium from now there will be more Earth-humans outside this system than in it; we'll be swarming around every G-type star in this neighborhood. Do you know what I would do, if I were your age? I'd get me a berth in the *Pathfinder.*"

Don nodded. "I'd like that." The *Pathfinder,* star ship intended for a one-way trip, had been building on, and near, Luna since before he was born. Soon she would go. All or nearly all of Don's generation had at least dreamed about leaving with her.

"Of course," added his host, "you would have to have a bride." He pointed to the stage which was again filling. "Take that blonde down there. She's a likely-looking lassie—healthy, at least."

Don smiled and felt worldly. "She might not hanker after pioneering. She looks happy as she is."

"Can't tell till you ask her. Here." Dr. Jefferson summoned the *maître d'hôtel;* money changed hands. Presently the blonde came to their table but did not sit down. She was a tom-tom singer and she proceeded to boom into Don's ears, with the help of the orchestra, sentiments that would have embarrassed him even if expressed privately. He ceased to feel worldly, felt quite warm in the face instead and confirmed his resolution not to take this female to the stars. Nevertheless he enjoyed it.

The stage was just clearing when the lights blinked once and the sound system again brayed forth: *"Space raid warning! Space raid warning!"* All the lights went out.

Chapter Three

Hunted

FOR an infinitely long moment there was utter blackness and silence, without even the muted whir of the blowers. Then a tiny light appeared in the middle of the stage, illuminating the features of the starring comic. He drawled in an intentionally ridiculous nasal voice, "The next sound you hear will be—the Trump of Doom!" He giggled and went on briskly: "Just sit quiet, folks, and hang on to your money—some of the help are relatives of the management. This is just a drill. Anyhow, we have a hundred feet of concrete overhead—and a durn sight thicker mortgage. Now, to get you into the mood for the next act—which is mine—the next round of drinks is on the house." He leaned forward and called out: "Gertie! Drag up that stuff we couldn't unload New Year's Eve."

Don felt the tension ease around the room, and he himself relaxed. He was doubly startled when a hand closed around his wrist. *"Quiet!"* whispered Dr. Jefferson into his ear.

Don let himself be led away in the darkness. The Doctor apparently knew, or remembered, the layout; they got out of the room without bumping into tables, and with only one unimportant brush with someone in the dark. They seemed to be going down a long hall, black as the inside of coal, then turned a corner and stopped.

"But you can't go out, sir," Don heard a voice say. Dr. Jefferson spoke quietly, his words too low to catch. Something rustled; they moved forward again, through a doorway, and turned left.

They proceeded along this tunnel—Don felt sure that it was the public tunnel just outside the restaurant, though it seemed to have turned ninety degrees in the dark. Dr. Jefferson still dragged him along by the wrist without speaking. They turned again and went down steps.

There were other people about, though not many. Once someone grabbed Don in the dark; he struck out wildly, smashed his fist into something flabby and heard a muffled grunt. The Doctor merely pulled him along the faster.

The Doctor stopped at last, seemed to be feeling around in the dark. There came a feminine squeal out of the blackness. The Doctor drew back hastily and moved on a few feet, stopped again. "Here," he said at last. "Climb in." He pulled Don forward and placed his hand on something; Don felt around and decided that it was a parked autocab, its top open. He climbed in, and Dr. Jefferson got in behind, closing the top after him. "Now we can talk," he said calmly. "Someone beat us to that first one. But we can't go anywhere until the power comes on again."

Don was suddenly aware that he was shaking with excitement. When he could trust himself to speak, he said: "Doctor—is this actually an attack?"

"I doubt it mightily," the man answered. "It's almost certainly a drill—I hope. But it gave us just the opportunity that I had been looking for to get away quietly."

Don chewed this over. Jefferson went on: "What are you fretting about? The check? I have an account there."

It had not occurred to Don that they were walking out on the check. He said so and added: "You mean that security policeman?"

"Unfortunately."

"But—I think I must have made a mistake. Oh, it looked like the same man, all right, but I don't see how it would have been humanly possible for him to have followed me even if he popped into the next cab. I distinctly remember that at least once my cab was the only cab on an elevator. That tears it. If it was the same cop, it was an accident; he wasn't looking for me."

"Perhaps he was looking for me."

"Huh?"

"Never mind. As to following you—Don, do you know how these autocabs work?"

"Well—in general."

"If that security cop wanted to tail you, he would not get into the next cab. He would call in and report the number of your cab. That number would be monitored in the control-net board at once. Unless you reached your destination before the monitoring started, they would read the code of your destination right out of the machine. Whereupon another security officer would be watching for your arrival. It carries on from there. When I rang for an autocab my circuit would already be monitored, and the cab that answered the ring likewise. Consequently the first cop is already seated at a table in the Back Room before we arrive. That was their one slip, using a man you had seen—but we can forgive that, as they are overworked at present!"

"But why would they want *me?* Even if they think I'm—uh—disloyal, I'm not that important."

Dr. Jefferson hesitated, then said: "Don, I don't know how long we will be able to talk. We can talk freely for the moment, because they are just as limited by the power shut-down as we are. But once the power comes on, we can no longer talk and I have a good deal to say. We can't talk, even here, after the power comes on.

"The public isn't supposed to know, but each of these cabs has a microphone in it. The control frequency for the cab itself can carry speech modulation without interfering with the operation of the vehicle. So we are not safe, once power is restored. . . . Yes, I know; it's a shameful set-up. I didn't dare talk in the restaurant, even with the orchestra playing. They could have had a shotgun mike trained on us.

"Now, listen carefully. We must locate that package I mailed to you—we *must.* I want you to deliver it to your father—or rather, what's in it. Point number two: you *must* catch that shuttle rocket tomorrow morning, even if the heavens fall. Point number three: you won't stay with me tonight, after all. I'm sorry, but I think it is best so. Number four: when the power comes on, we will ride around for a while, talking of nothing in particular and never mentioning names. Presently I will see to it that we end up near a public comm booth, and you will call the Caravansary. If the package is there, you will leave me, go back to the Station, get your bags, then go to the hotel, register and pick up your mail. Tomorrow morning you will get your ship and leave. Don't call me. Do you understand all that?"

"Uh—I think so, sir." Don waited, then blurted out: "But why? Maybe I'm talking out of turn, but it seems to me I ought to know why we are doing this."

"What do you want to know?"

"Well—what's in the package?"

"You will see. You can open it, examine it, and decide for yourself. If you decide not to deliver it, that's your privilege. As for the rest—what are your political convictions, Don?"

"Why—that's rather hard to say, sir."

"Mmmm—mine weren't too clear at your age, either. Let's put it this way: would you be willing to string along with your parents for the time being? Until you form your own?"

"Why, of course!"

"Did it seem a bit odd to you that your mother insisted that you look me up? Don't be shy—I know that a young fellow arriving in the big town doesn't look up semi-strangers through choice. Now—she must have considered it important for you to see me."

"I guess she must have."

"Will you let it stand at that? What you don't know, you can't tell—and can't get you into trouble."

Don thought it over. The Doctor's words seemed to make sense; yet it went mightily against the grain to be asked to do something mysterious without knowing all the why's and wherefore's. On the other hand, had he simply received the package, he undoubtedly would have delivered it to his father without thinking much about it.

He was about to ask further questions when the lights came on and the little car started to purr. Dr. Jefferson said, "Here we go!" leaned over the board and quickly dialed a destination. The autocab moved forward. Don started to speak, but the Doctor shook his head.

The car threaded its way through several tunnels, down a ramp and stopped in a large underground square. Dr. Jefferson paid it off and led Don through the square and to a passenger elevator. The square was jammed, and one could sense the crowd's frenetic mood consequent upon the space-raid alarm. They had to shove their way through a mass of people gathered around a public telescreen in the center of the square. Don was glad to get on the elevator, even though it too was packed.

Dr. Jefferson's immediate destination was another cabstand in a square several levels higher. They got into a cab and moved away; this one they rode for several minutes, then changed cabs again. Don was completely confused, and could not have told whether they were north, south, high, low, east, or west. The Doctor glanced at his watch as they left the last autocab and said: "We've killed enough time. Here." He indicated a communication booth.

Don went in and phoned the Caravansary. Was there any mail being held for him? No, there was not. He explained that he was not registered at the hotel; the clerk looked again. No—sorry, sir.

Don came out and told Dr. Jefferson. The Doctor chewed his lip. "Son, I've made a bad error in judgment." He glanced around; there was no one near them. "And I've wasted time."

"Can I help, sir?"

"Eh? Yes, I think you can—I'm sure you can." He paused to think. "We'll go back to my apartment. We must. But we won't stay there. We'll find some other hotel—not the Caravansary—and I'm afraid we must work all night. Are you up to it?"

"Oh, certainly!"

"I've some 'borrowed-time' pills; they'll help. See here, Don, whatever happens, you are to catch that ship tomorrow. Understand?"

Don agreed. He intended to catch the ship in any case, and could conceive of no reason for missing it. Privately he was beginning to wonder if Dr. Jefferson was quite right in his head.

"Good. We'll walk; it's not far."

A half-mile of tunnels and a descent by elevator got them there. As they turned into the tunnel in which the Doctor's apartment was located, he glanced up and down; it was empty. They crossed rapidly, and the Doctor let them in. Two strange men were seated in the living-room.

Dr. Jefferson glanced at them, said, "Good evening, gentlemen," and turned back to his guest. "Good night, Don. It's been very pleasant seeing you, and be sure to remember me to your parents." He grasped Don's hand and firmly urged him out the door.

The two men stood up. One of them said: "It took you a long time to get home, Doctor."

"I'd forgotten the appointment, gentlemen. —Now, good-by, Don—*I don't want you to be late.*"

The last remark was accompanied by increased pressure on Don's hand. He answered: "Uh—good night, Doctor. And thanks."

He turned to leave, but the man who had spoken moved quickly between him and the door. "Just a moment, please."

Dr. Jefferson answered: "Really, gentlemen, there is no reason to delay this boy. Let him go along, so that we may get down to our business."

The man did not answer directly but called out: "Elkins! King!" Two more men appeared from a back room of the apartment. The man who seemed to be in charge said to them: "Take the youngster back to the bedroom. Close the door."

"Come along, buddy."

Don, who had been keeping his mouth shut and trying to sort out the confusing new developments, got angry. He had more than a suspicion that these men were security police, even though they were not in uniform —but he had been brought up to believe that honest citizens had nothing to fear. "Wait a minute!" he protested. "I'm not going any place. What's the idea?"

The man who had told him to come along moved closer and took his arm. Don shook it off. The leader stopped any further action by his men with a very slight gesture. "Don Harvey—"

"Huh? Yes?"

"I could give you a number of answers to that. One of them is this"—he displayed a badge in the palm of his hand—"but that might be faked. Or, if I cared to take time, I could satisfy you with stamped pieces of paper, all proper and legalistic and signed with important names." Don noticed that his voice was gentle and cultured.

"But it happens that I am tired and in a hurry and don't want to be bothered playing word games with young punks. So let it stand that there are four of us, all armed. So—will you go quietly, or would you rather be slapped around a bit and dragged?"

Don was about to answer with youthful bravado; Dr. Jefferson cut in: "Do as they ask you, Donald!"

He closed his mouth and followed the subordinate on back. The man led him into the bedroom and closed the door. "Sit down," he said pleasantly. Don did not move. His guard came up, placed a palm against his chest and pushed. Don sat down.

The man touched a button at the bed's control panel, causing it to lift to the reading position, then lay down. He appeared to go to sleep, but every time Don looked at him, the man's eyes met his. Don strained his ears, trying to hear what was going on in the front room, but he need not have bothered; the room, being a sleeping-room, was fully soundproof.

So he sat there and fidgeted, trying to make sense out of preposterous things that had happened to him. He recalled almost with unbelief that it had been only this morning that Lazy and he had started out to climb Peddler's Grave. He wondered what Lazy was doing now, and whether the greedy little rascal missed him.

Probably not, he admitted mournfully.

He slid a glance at the guard, while wondering whether or not, if he gathered himself together, drawing his feet as far under him as he could—

The guard shook his head. "Don't do it," he advised.

"Don't do what?"

"Don't try to jump me. You might hurry me, and then you might get hurt—bad." The man appeared to go back to sleep.

Don slumped into apathy. Even if he did manage to jump this one, slug

him maybe, there were three more out front. And suppose he got away from them? A strange city, where *they* had everything organized, everything under control—where would he run *to*?

Once he had come across a stable cat playing with a mouse. He had watched for a moment, fascinated even though his sympathies were with the mouse, before he had stepped forward and put the poor beastie out of its misery. The cat had never once let the mouse scamper farther than pouncing range. Now he was the mouse—

"Up you come!"

Don jumped to his feet, startled and having trouble placing himself. "I wish I had your easy conscience," the guard said admiringly. "It's a real gift to be able to catch forty winks any time. Come on; the boss wants you."

Don preceded him back into the living-room; there was no one there but the mate of the man who had guarded him. Don turned and said: "Where is Dr. Jefferson?"

"Never mind," his guard replied. "The lieutenant hates to be kept waiting." He started on out the door.

Don hung back. The second guard casually took him by the arm; he felt a stabbing pain clear to his shoulder —and he promptly went along.

Outside they had a manually-operated car larger than the robot cabs. The second guard slipped into the driver's seat; the other urged Don into the passenger compartment. There he sat down and started to turn—and found that he could not. He was unable even to raise his hands. Any attempt to move, to do anything other than merely sit and breathe, felt like struggling against the weight of too many blankets. "Take it easy," the guard advised. "You can pull a ligament fighting that field. And it does not do any good."

Don had to prove to himself that the man was right. Whatever the invisible bonds were, the harder he strained against them, the tighter they bound him. On the other hand, when he relaxed and rested, he could not even feel them.

"Where are you taking me?" he demanded.

"Don't you know? The city I.B.I. office, of course."

"What for? I haven't done anything!"

"In that case, you won't have to stay long."

The car pulled up inside a large garaging-room; the three got out and waited in front of a door; Don had a feeling that they were being looked over. Shortly the door opened, and they went inside.

The place had the odor of bureaucracy. They went down a long corridor past endless offices filled with clerks, desks, transtypers, filing machines, whirring card-sorters. A lift bounced them to another level; they went on through more corridors and stopped at an office door. "Inside," said the first guard. Don went in; the door slid shut behind him, with the guards outside.

"Sit down, Don." It was the leader of the group of four, now in the uniform of a security officer, and seated at a horseshoe desk.

Don said: "Where is Dr. Jefferson? What did you do with him?"

"Sit down, I said." Don did not move; the lieutenant went on: "Why make it hard for yourself? You know where you are; you know that I could have you restrained in any way that suited me—some of them quite unpleasant. Will you sit down, please, and save us both trouble?"

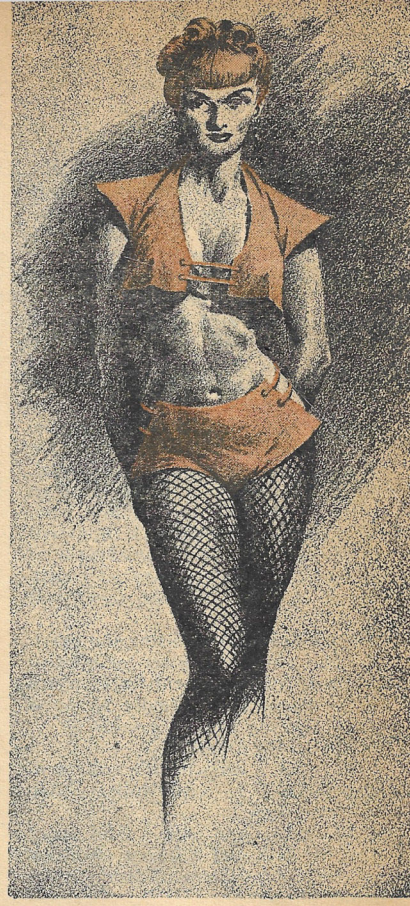
Don sat down and immediately said: "I want to see a lawyer."

The lieutenant shook his head slowly, looking like a tired and gentle schoolteacher. "Young fellow, you've been reading too many romantic novels. Now, if you had studied the dynamics of history instead, you would realize that the logic of legalism alternates with the logic of force in a pattern dependent on the characteristics of the culture. Each culture evokes its own basic logic. You follow me?"

Don hesitated; the other went on: "No matter. The point is, your request for a lawyer comes about two hundred years too late to be meaningful. The verbalisms lag behind the facts. Nevertheless, you shall have a lawyer—or a lollipop, whichever you prefer, after I am through questioning you. If I were you, I'd take the lollipop. More nourishing."

"I won't talk without a lawyer," Don answered firmly.

"No? I'm sorry. Don, in setting up your interview, I budgeted eleven minutes for nonsense. You have used up four already—no, five. When the eleven minutes are gone and you find yourself spitting out teeth, remember that I bore you no malice. Now about this matter of whether or not you will talk; there are several ways of making a man talk, and each method has its fans who swear by it. Drugs, for example—nitrous oxide, scopolamine, sodium pentothal, not to mention some of the new, more subtle and relatively non-toxic developments. Even alcohols have been used with great success by intelligence operatives. I don't like drugs; they affect the intellect and clutter up an interview with data of no use to me. You'd be amazed at the amount of rubbish that can collect in the human



Presently the tom-tom singer came to their table

brain, Don, if you had had to listen to it—as I have.

"And there is hypnosis and its many variations. There is also the artificial simulation of an unbearable need, as with morphine addiction. Finally there is old-fashioned force—pain. Why, I know an artist—I believe he is in the building now—who can successfully question the most recalcitrant case, in minimum time and using only his bare hands. Then, of course, under that category, is the extremely ancient switch in which the force, or pain, is not applied to the person being examined, but to a second person whom he cannot bear to see hurt, such as a wife, or son, or daughter. Offhand, that method would seem difficult to use on you, as your only close relatives are not on this planet." The security officer glanced at his watch and added: "Only thirty seconds of nonsense still available, Don. Shall we start?"

"Huh? Wait a minute! You used up the time; I've hardly said a word."

"I haven't time to be fair. Sorry. However," he went on, "the apparent

objection to the last method does not apply in your case. During the short time you were unconscious at Dr. Jefferson's apartment, we were able to determine that there actually was available a—person who meets the requirements. You will talk freely rather than let this person be hurt."

"Huh?"

"A stock pony named Lazy."

The suggestion caught him completely off guard; he was stunned by it. The man went quickly on: "If you insist, we will adjourn for three hours or so, and I will have your horse shipped here. It might be interesting, as I don't believe the method has ever been used with a horse before. I understand that their ears are rather sensitive. On the other hand, I feel bound to tell you that if we go to the trouble of bringing him here, we won't send him back but will simply send him to the stockyards to be butchered. Horses are an anachronism in New Chicago, don't you think?"

Don's head was whirling too much to make a proper answer, or even to follow all of the horrid implications of the comments. Finally he burst out: "You can't! You wouldn't!"

"Time's up, Don."

Don took a deep breath, collapsed. "Go ahead," he said dully. "Ask your questions."

The lieutenant took a film spool from his desk, fed it into a projector which faced back toward him. "Your name, please."

"Donald James Harvey."

"And your Venerian name?"

Don whistled "*Mist on the Waters.*"

"Where were you born?"

"In the *Outward Bound,* in trajectory between Luna and Ganymede."

The questions went on and on. Don's inquisitor appeared to have all the answers already displayed in front of him; once or twice he had Don elaborate, or corrected him on some minor point. After reviewing his entire past life, he required Don to give a detailed account of the events starting with his receiving the message from his parents to join them on Mars.

The only thing Don left out was Dr. Jefferson's remarks about the package. He waited nervously, expecting to be hauled up short about it. But if the security policeman knew of the package, he gave no sign of it. "Dr. Jefferson seemed to think that this so-called security operative was following you? Or him?"

"I don't know. I don't think he knew."

"'The wicked flee when no man pursueth,'" the lieutenant quoted. "Tell me exactly what you did after you left the Back Room."

"Was that man following me?" Don asked. "So help me, I had never laid eyes on that dragon before; I was just passing the time of day, being polite."

"I'm sure you were. But I'll ask the questions. Go ahead."

"Well, we changed cabs twice—or maybe three times. I don't know just where we went; I don't know the city and was all turned around. But eventually we came back to Dr. Jefferson's apartment." He omitted mention of the call to the Caravansary; again, if his questioner was aware of the omission, he gave no sign of it.

The lieutenant said: "Well, that seems to bring us up to date." He switched off the projector and sat staring at nothing for some minutes. "Son, there is no doubt in my mind but that you are potentially disloyal."

"Why do you say that?"

"Never mind the guff. There's nothing in your background to make you loyal. But that is nothing to get excited about; a person in my position has to be practical. You are planning to leave for Mars tomorrow morning?"

"I sure am!"

"Good. I don't see how you could have been up to much mischief at your age, isolated as you were on that ranch. But you fell into bad company. Don't miss that ship; if you are still here tomorrow, I might have to revise my opinion."

The lieutenant stood up, and so did Don. "I'll certainly catch it!" Don agreed, then stopped. "Unless—"

"Unless what?" the lieutenant said sharply.

"Well, they held up my ticket for security clearance," Don blurted out.

"They did, eh? A routine matter; I'll take care of it. You can leave now. Open sky!"

Don did not make the conventional answer. The man said: "Don't be sulky. It would have been simpler to have beaten the living daylights out of you, then questioned you. But I didn't; I have a son about your age myself. And I never intended to hurt your horse—it happens I like horses; I'm a country boy originally. No hard feelings?"

"Uh, I guess not."

The lieutenant put out his hand; Don found himself accepting it—he even found himself liking the man. He decided to chance one more question. "Could I say good-by to Dr. Jefferson?"

The man's expression changed. "I'm afraid not."

"Why not? You'd be watching me, wouldn't you?"

The officer hesitated. "There's no reason why you shouldn't know. Dr. Jefferson was a man in very poor health. He got excited, suffered an attack and died of heart failure, earlier tonight."

Don simply stared. "Brace up!" the man said sharply. "It happens to all of us." He pressed a button on his desk; a guard came in and was told to take Don out. He was led by another route, but he was too bemused to notice it. Dr. Jefferson dead? It did not seem possible. A man so alive, so obviously in love with life— He was dumped out into a major public tunnel while still thinking about it.

Suddenly he recalled a phrase he had heard in class from his biology teacher: "'In the end, all forms of death can be classed as heart failure.'" Don held up his right hand, stared at it. He would wash it as quickly as he could.

Chapter Four

The Glory Road

He still had things to do; he could not stand there all night. First, he supposed he had better go back to the station and pick up his bags. He fumbled in his pouch for his claim-check while he worried about just how he would get there; he still did not have hard money with which to pay off an autocab.

He failed to find the claim-check. Presently he removed everything from the pouch. Everything else was there; his letter of credit, his identification card, the messages from his parents, a flat photo of Lazy, his birth certificate, odds and ends—but no claim-check. He remembered putting it there.

He thought of going back into the I.B.I. warren; he was quite sure now that it must have been taken from him while he slept. Darn funny, his falling asleep like that, at such a time! Had they drugged him? He decided against going back. Not only did he not know the name of the officer who had questioned him, nor any other way of identifying him, but more important, he would not have gone back into that place for all of the baggage in Gary Station. Let it go, let it go—he'd pick up more socks and shorts before blast-off!

He decided instead to go to the Caravansary. First he had to find out where it was; he walked slowly along, looking for someone who did not seem too busy nor too important to ask. He found him in the person of a lottery-ticket vendor at the next intersection.

The vendor looked him over. "You don't want to go to that place, Mac. I can fix you up with something really good." He winked.

Don insisted that he knew what he wanted. The man shrugged. "Okay, chump. Straight ahead until you come to a square with an electric

fountain in it, then take the slidewalk south. Ask anybody where to get off. What month were you born?"

"July."

"July! Boy, are you lucky—I've just got one ticket left with your horoscope combination. Here." Don had no intention at all of buying it, and he thought of telling the grifter that he considered horoscopes as silly as spectacles on a cow—but he found that he had purchased it with his last coin. He pocketed the ticket, feeling foolish. The vendor said: "About half a mile on the slidewalk. Brush the hay out of your hair first."

Don found the slidewalk without difficulty and discovered that it was a pay-as-you-enter express. The machine not being interested in lottery tickets, he walked the catwalk alongside it to the hotel. He had no trouble finding it; its brilliantly lighted entrance spread for a hundred yards along the tunnel.

No one scurried to help him as he came in. He went to the reservation desk and asked for a room. The clerk looked him over doubtfully. "Did someone take care of your baggage, sir?"

Don explained that he had none. "Well—that will be twenty-two fifty, in advance. Sign here, please."

Don signed and stamped his thumbprint, then got out his father's letter of credit. "Can I get this cashed?"

"How much is it?" The clerk took it, then said: "Certainly, sir. Let me have your ID, please." Don passed it over. The clerk took it and the fresh thumbprint, placed both in a comparison machine. The machine beeped agreement; the clerk handed back the card. "You are you, all right." He counted out the money, deducting the room charge. "Will your baggage be along, sir?" His manner indicated that Don's social status had jumped.

"Uh, no, but there might be some mail for me." Don explained that he was going out on the *Glory Road* in the morning.

"I'll query the mail-room."

The answer was no; Don looked disappointed. The clerk said; "I'll have the mail-room flag your name. If anything arrives before up-ship, you'll be sure to get it—even if we have to send a messenger to the field."

"Thanks a lot."

"Not at all. —Front!" As Don let himself be led away he suddenly realized that he was groggy. The big foyer clock told him that it was already tomorrow, had been for hours—in fact, he was paying seven-fifty an hour, about, for the privilege of a bed; but the way he felt, he would have paid more than that simply to crawl into a hole.

He did not go immediately to bed. The Caravansary was a luxury hotel; even its "cheap" rooms had the minimums of civilized living. He adjusted the bath for a cycling hot sitz, threw off his clothes, and let the foaming water soothe him. After a bit he changed the pattern and floated in tepid stillness.

He came to with a start and got out. Ten minutes later, dried, powdered and tingling with massage, he stepped back into the bedroom feeling almost restored. The ranch school had been intentionally monastic, with oldstyle beds and mere showers; that bath was worth the price of the room.

The delivery chute's annunciator shone green; he opened it and found three items. The first was a largish package sealed in plastic and marked "Caravansary Courtesy Kit"; it contained a comb and toothbrush, a sleeping pill, a headache powder, a story film for the bed's ceiling projector, a New Chicago *News,* and a breakfast menu. The second item was a card from his roommate; the third item was a small package, a common mailing tube. The card read:

Dear Don: A package came for you on the P.M.*—I got the Head to let me run it into Alb-Q-Q. Squinty is taking over Lazy. Must sign off; I've got to land this heap. All the best—Jack.*

Good old Jack, he said to himself, and picked up the mailing tube. He looked at the return address and realized with something of a shock that this must be the package over which Dr. Jefferson had been so much concerned, the package which apparently had led to his death. He stared at it and wondered if it could be true that a citizen could be dragged out of his own home, then so maltreated that he died.

Was the man he had had dinner with only hours ago really dead? Or had the security cop lied to him for some reason of his own?

Part of it was certainly true; he had seen them waiting to arrest the Doctor—why, he himself had been arrested and threatened and questioned, and had had his baggage virtually stolen from him, for nothing! He hadn't been doing a thing, not a confounded thing, just going about his lawful business.

Suddenly he was shaking with anger. He had let himself be pushed around; he made a solemn vow never to let it happen again. He could see now that there were half a dozen places where he should have been stubborn. If he had fought right at the outset, Dr. Jefferson might be alive—if he actually were dead, Don amended.

But he had let himself be bulldozed by the odds against him. He promised himself never again to pay any attention to the odds, but only to the issues. . . . He controlled his trembling and opened the package.

A moment later he was looking baffled. The tube contained nothing but a man's ring, a cheap plastic affair such as one might find on any souvenir counter. An Old English capital "H" framed with a circle had been pressed into the face of it, and the grooves filled with white enamel. It was flashy but commonplace, and of no value at all to any but the childish and vulgar in taste.

Don turned it over and over, then put it aside and sorted through its wrappings. There was nothing else, not even a message, just plain white paper used to pack the ring. Don thought it over.

The ring obviously was not the cause of the excitement; it seemed to him that there were just two possibilities; first, that the security police had switched packages—if they had, there was probably nothing he could do about it—and second, if the ring were unimportant but it was the right package, then the rest of the contents of the package must be important *even though it looked like nothing but blank paper.*

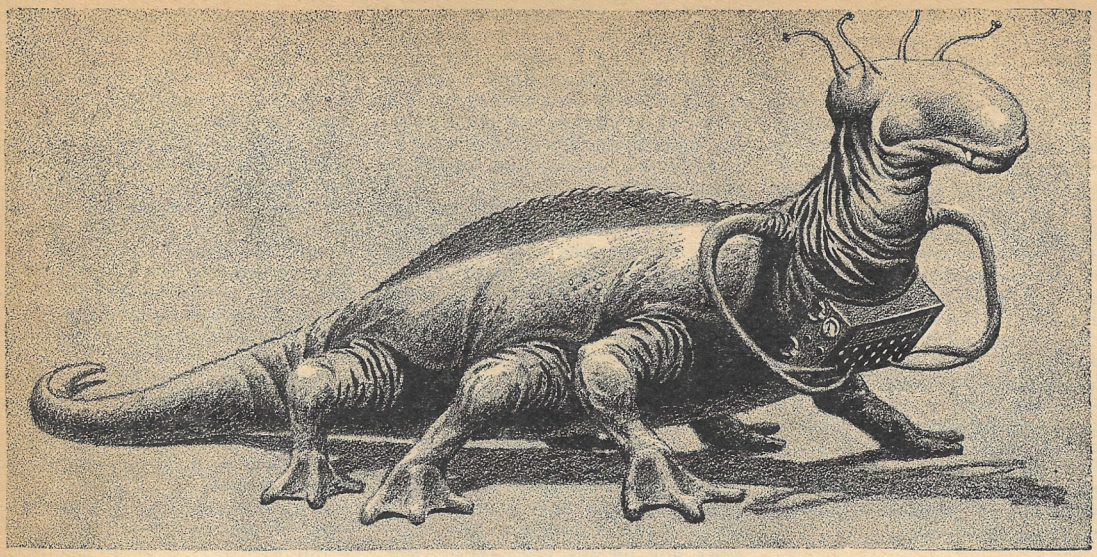
The idea that he might be carrying a message in invisible ink excited him and he started thinking of ways to bring out the message. Heat? Chemical reagents? Radiation? Even as he considered it, he regretfully realized that, supposing there were such a message, it was not his place to try to make it legible; he was simply to deliver it to his father.

He decided, too, that it was more likely that this was a dummy package sent along by the police. He had no way of telling what they might have forced out of Dr. Jefferson. Which reminded him that there was still one thing he could do to check up, futile as it probably would be; he stepped to the phone and asked for Dr. Jefferson's residence. True, the Doctor had told him not to phone—but the circumstances had changed.

He had to wait a bit; then the screen lighted up—and he found himself staring into the face of the security police lieutenant who had grilled him. The police officer stared back. "Oh, me!" he said in a tired voice. "So you didn't believe me? Go back to bed; you have to be up in an hour or so."

Don switched off without saying anything.

So Dr. Jefferson was either dead or still in the hands of the police. Very well; he would assume that the paper came from the Doctor—and he would



A familiar figure lumbered onto the cargo lift nearby—Sir Isaac Newton, his dragon acquaintance.

deliver that paper in spite of all the slimily polite stormtroopers New Chicago could muster! The dodge the Doctor had apparently used to fake the purpose of the paper caused him to wonder what he could do to cover up its importance. Presently he got his stylus from his pouch, smoothed out the paper, and started a letter. The paper looked enough like writing paper to make a letter on it seem reasonable—it might be writing paper in truth. He started: *"Dear Mother and Dad, I got your radiogram this morning, and was I excited!"* He continued, simply covering space in a sprawling hand and finishing, when he was about to run out of paper, by mentioning an intention to add to the letter and have the whole thing sent off as soon as his ship was in radio range of Mars. He then folded it, tucked it into his wallet, and put the whole into his pouch.

He looked at the clock as he finished. Good heavens! He should be up in an hour; it was hardly worth while going to bed. But his eyes were trying to close even as he thought it; he saw that the alarm dial of the bed was graduated from *"Gentle Reminder"* to *"Earthquake"*—so he picked the extreme setting and crawled in.

He was being bounced around; a blinding light was flashing in his eyes, and a siren was running up and down the scale. Don gradually became aware of himself, scrambled out of bed. Mollified, the bed ceased its uproar.

He decided against breakfast in his room for fear that he might go back to sleep, choosing instead to stumble into his clothes and seek out the hotel's coffee shop. Four cups of coffee and a solid meal later, checked out and armed with hard money for an autocab, he headed for Gary Station. At the reservation office of Interplanet Lines he asked for his ticket. A strange clerk hunted around, then said: "I don't see it. It's not with the security clearances."

This, Don thought, is the last straw. "Look around. It's bound to be there!"

"But it's— Wait a moment!" The clerk picked up a slip. "Donald James Harvey? You're to pick up your ticket in room 4012 on the mezzanine."

"Why?"

"Search me; I just work here. That's what it says."

Mystified and annoyed, Don sought out the room named. The door was plain except for a notice *"Walk In;"* he did—and found himself again facing the security lieutenant of the night before.

The officer looked up from a desk. "Get that sour look off your puss, Don," he snapped. "I haven't had much sleep either."

"What do you want of me?"

"Take off your clothes."

"Why?"

"Because we are going to search you. You didn't really think I'd let you take off without it, did you?"

Don planted his feet. "I've had just about enough pushing around," he said slowly. "If you want my clothes off, you'll have to do it."

The police officer scowled. "I could give you a couple of convincing answers to that, but I am fresh out of patience. Kelly! Arteem! Strip him."

Three minutes later Dan had an incipient black eye and was nursing a damaged arm. He decided that it was not broken, after all. The lieutenants and his assistants had disappeared into a rear room with his clothing and pouch. It occurred to him that the door behind him did not seemed to be locked, but he dropped the idea; making a dash for it through Gary Station in his skin did not appear to make sense.

Despite the inevitable defeat his morale was better than it had been in hours.

The lieutenant returned presently and shoved his clothes at him. "Here you are. And here's your ticket. You may want to put on clean clothes; your bags are back of the desk.

Don accepted them silently, ignored the suggestion about a change in order to save time. While he was dressing, the lieutenant said suddenly, "When did you pick up that ring?"

"Forwarded to me from school."

"Let me see it."

Don took it off and flung it at him. "Keep it, you bloody thief!"

The lieutenant caught it and said mildly: "Now, Don, it's nothing personal." He looked the ring over carefully, then said, "Catch!" Don caught it and put it back on, picked up his bags and started to leave. "Open sky," said the lieutenant.

Don ignored him.

" 'Open sky,' I said!"

Don turned again, looked him in the eye and said: "Some day I hope

to meet you socially." He went on out. They had spotted the paper, after all; he had noticed that it was missing when he got back his clothes and pouch.

This time he took the precaution of getting an anti-nausea shot before up-ship. After he had stood in line for that, he had barely time to be weighed in before the warning signal. As he was about to get into the elevator, he saw what he believed to be a familiar figure lumbering onto the cargo lift nearby—Sir Isaac Newton. At least it looked like Don's passing acquaintance of the day before, though he had to admit that the difference in appearance between one dragon and another was sometimes a bit subtle for the human eye.

He refrained from whistling a greeting; the events of the past few hours had rendered him less naïve and more cautious. He thought about those events as the elevator mounted up the ship's side. It was unbelievably only twenty-four hours—less, in fact—since he had got that radio message. It seemed like a month, and he himself felt aged ten years.

BITTERLY he reflected that they had outwitted him, after all. Whatever message lay concealed in that wrapping paper was now gone for good. Or bad.

Couch 64 in the *Glory Road* was one of a scant half-dozen on the third deck; the compartment was almost empty, and there were marks on the deck where other couches had been unbolted. Don found his place and strapped his bags to the rack at its foot. While he was doing so, he heard a rich Cockney voice behind him; he turned and whistled a greeting.

Sir Isaac Newton was being cautiously introduced into the compartment from the cargo hold below, with the help of about six spaceport hands. He whistled back a courteous answer while continuing to supervise the engineering feat *via* voder. "Easy, friends, easy does it! Now if two of you will be so kind as to place my left midships foot on the ladder, bearing in mind that I cannot see it—Wups! Mind your fingers! There, I think I can make it now. Is there anything breakable in the way of my tail?"

The boss stevedore answered: "All clear, chief. Upsy-daisy!"

"If you mean what I think you mean," answered the Venerian, "then, 'On your mark; get set—*go!*'" There was a crunching metallic sound, a tinkle of breaking glass, and the huge saurian scrambled up out of the hatch. Once there, he turned cautiously around and settled himself in the space left vacant for him. The spaceport hands followed him and secured him to the deck with steel straps. He waggled an eye at the straw boss. "You, I take it, are the chieftain of this band?"

"I'm in charge."

The Venerian's tendrils quitted the keys of the voder, sought out a pouch by it, and removed a sheaf of paper money. He laid it on the deck and returned to the keys. "Then, sir, will you favor me by accepting this evidence of my gratitude for a difficult service well performed, and distribute it among your assistants equitably and according to your customs, whatever they may be?"

The human scooped it up and shoved it into his pouch. "Sure thing, chief. Thanks."

"The honor is mine." The laborers left, and the dragon turned his attention to Don, but before they could exchange any words, the last of the compartment's human freight came down from the deck above. It was a family party; the female head thereof took one look inside and screamed.

She swarmed back up the ladder, causing a traffic jam with her descendants and spouse as she did so. The dragon swiveled two eyes in her direction while waving the others at Don. "Dear me!" he keyed. "Do you think it would help if I were to assure the lady that I have no anthropophagic tendencies?"

Don felt acutely embarrassed; he wished for some way to disown the woman as a blood sister and member of his race. "She's just a stupid fool," he answered. "Please don't pay any attention to her."

"I fear me that a merely negative approach will not suffice."

Don whistled an untranslatable dragon sound of contempt and continued with: *"May her life be long and tedious."*

"Tut-tut," the dragon tapped back. "Unreasoned anguish is none the less real. 'To understand all, is to forgive all'—one of your philosophers."

Don did not recognize the quotation, and it seemed pretty extreme to him, in any case. He was sure that there were things he would never forgive, no matter how well he understood them—some recent events, in fact. He was about to say so when both their attentions were arrested by sounds pouring down the open hatchway. Two and perhaps more male voices were engaged in an argument with a shrill female voice rising over them and sometimes drowning them out. It appeared (a) that she wanted to speak to the captain, (b) that she had been carefully brought up and had never had to put up with such things, (c) that those hideous monsters should never be allowed to come to Earth; they should be exterminated, (d) that if Adolf were half a man, he wouldn't just stand there and let his own wife be treated so, (e) she intended to write to the company and that her family was not without influence and, (f) that she *demanded* to speak to the captain.

Don wanted to say something to cover it up, but he was fascinated by it. Presently the sounds moved away and died out; a ship's officer came down the hatch and looked around. "Are you comfortable?" he said to Sir Isaac Newton.

"Quite, thank you."

He turned to Don. "Get your bags, young man, and come with me. The captain has decided to give his nibs here a compartment to himself."

"Why?" asked Don. "My ticket says Couch Sixty-four, and I like it here."

The ship's officer scratched his chin and looked at him, then turned to the Venerian. "It it all right with you?"

"Most certainly. I shall be honored by the young gentleman's company."

He turned back to Don. "Well—all right. I'd probably have to hang you on a hook if I moved you, anyway." He glanced at his watch and swore. "If I don't get a move on, we'll miss take-off and have to lay over a day." He was up and out of the compartment as he spoke.

The final warning sounded over the announcing system; a hoarse voice followed it with: *"All hands! Strap down! Stand by for lift—"* The order was followed by a transcription of the brassy strains of Le Compte's *"Raise Ship!"* Don's pulse quickened: excitement mounted in him. He felt ecstatically happy, eager to be back in space again, back where he belonged. The bad, confusing things of the past day washed out of his mind; even the ranch and Lazy grew dim.

So timed was the transcribed music that the rocket-blast effect of the final chorus merged into the real blast of the ship's tubes; the *Glory Road* stirred and lifted—then threw herself away into the open sky.

Chapter Five

CIRCUM-TERRA

THE weight of acceleration was no worse than it had been the day before in the *Santa Fé Trail*, but the drive persisted for more than five minutes—minutes that seemed like an endless hour. After they passed the speed of sound, the compartment was relatively quiet. Don made a great effort and managed to turn his head a little. Sir Isaac Newton's great bulk was flattened to the deck, making Don

think unpleasantly of a lizard crushed into a road. His eyestalks drooped like limp asparagus. He looked dead.

Don strained for breath and called out: "Are you all right?"

The Venerian did not stir. His voder instrument was covered by the sagging folds of his neck; it seemed unlikely that his tendrils could have managed the delicate touch required for its keys, even had it been free. Nor did he reply in his own whistling speech.

Don wanted to go to him, but he was as immobilized by the blast weight as is the bottommost player in a football pile-up. He forced his head back where it belonged so that he might breathe less painfully, and waited.

When the blast died away, his stomach gave one protesting flipflop, then quieted down; either the anti-nausea shot had worked, or he had his space balance again—or both. Without waiting for permission from the control room, he quickly unstrapped and hurried to the Venerian. He steadied himself in the air, holding with one hand to the steel bands restraining his companion.

The dragon was no longer crushed to the deckplates; only the steel hoops kept him from floating around the compartment. Behind him his giant tail waved loosely, brushing the ship's plates and knocking off paint chips.

The eyestalks were still limp, and each eye filmed over. The dragon stirred only in the meaningless motion of string in water; there was nothing to show that he was alive. Don clenched a fist and pounded on the creature's flat skull. "Can you hear me? Are you all right?"

All he got out of it was a bruised hand; Sir Isaac made no response. Don hung for a moment, wondering what to do. That his acquaintance was in a bad way, he felt sure, but his training in first aid did not extend to Venerian pseudo-saurians. He dug back into his childhood memories, trying to think of something.

The same ship's officer who had rearranged the berthing appeared at the forward or "upper" hatch, floating head "down." "All okay this deck?" he inquired perfunctorily, and started to back out.

"No!" Don shouted. "Case of blast shock."

"Huh?" The officer swam on into the compartment and looked at the other passenger. He swore unimaginatively and looked worried. "This is beyond me; I never carried one before. How the deuce do you give artificial respiration to a thing as big as that?"

"You don't," Don told him. "His lungs are completely enclosed in his armor box."

"He looks dead. I thinks he's stopped breathing."

A memory floated to the top in Don's mind; he snatched it. "Got a cigarette?"

"Huh? Don't bother me! Anyhow, the smoking lamp is out."

"You don't understand," Don persisted. "If you've got one, light it. You can blow smoke at his nostril plate, and see whether or not he's breathing."

"Oh. Well, maybe it's a good idea." The spaceman got out a cigarette and struck it.

"But be careful," Don went on. "They can't stand nicotine. One big puff, then put it out."

"Maybe it's not such a good idea," the ship's officer objected. "Say, you sound like a Venus colonial!"

Don hesitated, then answered: "I'm a Federation citizen." It seemed like a poor time to discuss politics. He moved over to the dragon's chin, braced his feet against the deckplates and shoved, thus exposing the Venerian's nostril plate which was located under the creature's head in the folds of his neck. Don could not have managed it, save that they were in free fall, making the bulky mass weightless.

The man blew smoke at the exposed opening. It eddied forward, then some of it curled inside; the dragon was still alive.

Still very much alive. Every eyestalk sprang to rigid attention; he lifted his chin, carrying Don with it; then he sneezed. The blast struck Don as he floated loosely, and it turned him over and over. He threshed in the air for a moment before catching a handhold on the hatch ladder.

The ship's officer was rubbing one wrist. "The beggar clipped me," he complained. "I won't try that again soon. Well, I guess he'll be all right."

Sir Isaac whistled mournfully; Don answered him. The spaceman looked at him. "You savvy that stuff?"

"Some."

"Well, tell him to use his squawk box. I don't!"

Don said: "Sir Isaac—use your voder."

The Venerian tried to comply. His tentacles hunted around, found the keys of the artificial voice box, and touched them. No sounds came out. The dragon turned an eye at Don and whistled again.

"He regrets to say that its spirit has departed," Don interpreted.

The ship's officer sighed. "I wonder why I ever left the grocery business? Well, if we can get it unlatched from him, I'll see if Sparks can fix it."

"Let me," said Don, and squirmed into the space between the dragon's head and the deckplates. The voder case, he found, was secured to four rings riveted to the Venerian's skin plates. He could not seem to find the combination; the dragon's tendrils fluttered over his hands, moved them gently out of the way, unfastened the box, and handed it to him. He wiggled out and gave it to the man. "Looks as if he kind of slept on it," he commented.

"A mess," the other agreed. "Well, tell him I'll have them fix it if possible, and that I'm glad he wasn't hurt."

"Tell him yourself; he understands English."

"Eh? Oh, of course, of course." He faced the Venerian, who immediately set up a long shrilling. "What's he say?"

Don listened. "He says he appreciates your good wishes, but that he is sorry to have to disagree; he is unwell. He says that he urgently requires—" Don stopped and looked puzzled, then whistled the Venerian equivalent of: "Say that again, please?"

Sir Isaac answered him; Don went on: "He says he's just got to have some sugar syrup."

"*Huh?*"

"That's what he says."

"I'll be— How much?"

There was another exchange of whistles; Don answered: "Uh, he says he needs at least a quarter of a—there isn't any word for it; it's an amount about equal to half a barrel, I'd say."

"You mean he wants *half a barrel* of waffle juice?"

"No, no, a quarter of that—an eighth of a barrel. What would that come to in gallons?"

"I wouldn't attempt it without a slipstick: I'm confused. I don't even know that we have any on board." Sir Isaac set up more frantic whistling. "But if we don't, I'll have the cook whop up some. Tell him to hold everything and take it easy." He scowled at the dragon, then left quite suddenly.

Don attached himself to one of the steel straps and asked, "How are you feeling now?"

The dragon replied apologetically to the effect that he needed to return to the egg for the moment. Don shut up and waited.

The captain himself showed up to attend the sick passenger. The ship, being in free trajectory for the satellite space station, would not require his presence in the control room until well past noon, New Chicago time; he was free to move around the ship. He arrived in company with the ship's doctor, and followed by a man herding a metal tank.

The two conferred over the dragon, at first ignoring Don's presence. However neither of them knew the piping

speech of the dragon tribe; they were forced to turn to Don. Through him Sir Isaac again insisted that he required sugar solution as a stimulant. The captain looked worried. "I've read somewhere that sugar gets them drunk the same as alcohol does us."

Don again translated for the Venerian; what he had asked for was simply a medicinal dose.

The captain turned to the medical officer. "How about it, surgeon?"

The doctor stared at the bulkhead. "Captain, this is as far outside my duties as tap dancing."

"Confound it, man, I asked for your official opinion!"

The medical officer faced him. "Very well, sir—I would say that if this passenger should die, you having refused him something he had asked for, it would look very, very bad indeed."

The captain bit his lip. "As you say, sir. But I'll be switched if I want several tons of intoxicated dragon banging around in my ship. Administer the dose."

"Me, sir?"

"*You*, sir."

The ship being in free fall, it was quite impossible to pour out the syrup and let the Venerian lick it up; nor was he physically equipped to use the "baby bottle" drinking bladders used by humans when weightless. But that had been anticipated; the tank containing the syrup was a type used in the galley to handle soup or coffee in free fall. It had a hand pump and an attachable hose.

It was decided, Sir Isaac concurring, to place the end of the hose well down the dragon's throat. But nobody seemed to want the job. Granted that *Draco Veneris Wilsonii* is a civilized race, to stick one's head and shoulders between those rows of teeth seemed to be inviting a breach in foreign relations.

Don volunteered for the job and was sorry when they took him up on it. He trusted Sir Isaac, but recalled times when Lazy had stepped on his foot quite unintentionally. He hoped that the dragon had no unfortunate involuntary reflexes; apologies are no use to a corpse.

While he kept the end of the hose firmly in place, he held his breath and was glad he had taken that anti-nausea injection. Sir Isaac did not have halitosis, as dragons go, but dragons go rather far in that direction. The job done, Don was happy to back out.

Sir Isaac thanked them all, *via* Don, and assured them that he would now recover rapidly. He seemed to fall asleep in the midst of whistling. The ship's doctor peeled one eye stalk and shined a hand torch at it. "The stuff has hit him, I think. We'll let him be and hope for the best."

They all left. Don looked his friend over, decided that there was no point in sitting up with him, and followed them. The compartment had no view port; he wanted at least one good look at Earth while they were still close by. He found what he sought three decks forward.

They were still only fifteen thousand miles out; Don had to crowd in close to the view port to see all of Earth at one time. It was, he had to admit, a mighty pretty planet; he was a little bit sorry to be leaving it. Hanging there against velvet black and pinpoint stars, drenched in sunlight so bright it hurt your eyes, it almost took your breath away.

The sunrise line had swung far into the Pacific past Hawaii, and North America was spread out to his gaze. Storm blanketed the Pacific Northwest, but the Midwest was fairly clear, and the Southwest was sharp. He could make out where New Chicago was with ease; he could see the Grand Cañon, and from it he could almost figure out where the ranch had to be. He was sure that with a small telescope he could have spotted it.

He gave up his place at last. He was soaking in the pleasant melancholy of mild homesickness, and the comments of some of the other passengers were beginning to annoy him —not the cheerful inanities of tourists, but the know-it-all remarks of self-appointed old-timers, making their second trip out. He headed back to his own compartment.

He was startled to hear his name called. He turned, and the ship's officer he had met before floated up to him. He had with him Sir Isaac's voder. "You seem to be chummy with that over-educated crocodile you're bunking with; how about taking this to him?"

"Why, certainly."

"The radio officer says it needs an overhaul, but at least it's working again." Don accepted it and went aft. The dragon seemed to be sleeping; then one eye waved at him and Sir Isaac whistled a salutation.

"I've got your voice box," Don told him. "Want me to fasten it on for you?"

Sir Isaac politely refused. Don handed the instrument to the fidgeting tendrils, and the dragon arranged it to suit him. He then ran over the keys as a check, producing sounds like frightened ducks. Satisfied, he began to speak in English: "I am enriched by the debt you have placed upon me."

"It was nothing," Don answered. "I ran into the mate a couple of decks forward and he asked me to fetch it along."

"I do not refer to this artificial voice, but to your ready help when I was in distress and peril. Without your quick wit, your willingness to share mud with an untested stranger, and—in passing—your knowledge of the true speech, I might have lost my chance to attain the happy death."

"Shucks," Don answered, feeling somewhat pink, "it was a pleasure." He noticed that the dragon's speech was slow and somewhat slurred, as if his tentacles lacked their customary dexterity. Besides that, Sir Isaac's talk was more pedantic than ever and much more Cockney-flavored – the voder was mixing aspirates with abandon and turning the *theta* sound into "*f*"; Don felt sure that the Earthman who had taught him to speak must have been born in earshot of Bow Bells.

He noticed as well that his friend could not seem to make up his mind which eye he wanted to use on him. He kept waggling one after another at Don, as if seeking one which would let him focus better. Don wondered if Sir Isaac had overestimated the proper size of a medicinal dose.

"Permit me," the Venerian went on, still with ponderous dignity, "to judge the worth of the service you have done me." He changed the subject. "This word 'shucks'—I do not recognize the use you made of it. Husks of plants?"

Don struggled to explain how little and how much "shucks" could mean. The dragon thought it over and tapped out an answer. "I believe that I gain a portion of understanding. The semantic content of this word is emotional and variable, rather than orderly and descriptive. Its referent is the state of one's spirits?"

"That's it," Don said happily. "It means just what you want it to mean. It's the way you say it."

"Shucks," the dragon said experimentally. "Shucks. I seem to be getting the feel of it. A delightful word. Shucks." He went on: "The delicate nuances of speech must be learned from the living users thereof. Perhaps I may return the favor by helping you in some small way with your already great mastery of the speech of my people? Shucks."

This confirmed Don's suspicion that his own whistling had become so villainous that it might do for popcorn vending but not for regular communication. "I certainly would appreciate a chance to brush up," he answered. "I haven't had a chance to speak 'true speech' for years—not since I was a kid. I was taught by a historian who was working with my father on the (whistled) ruins. Perhaps you know him? His name was Professor Charles Darwin." Don added the

whistled or true version of the Venerian scholar's name.

"You ask me if I know (whistled)? He is my brother; his grandmother, nine times removed, and my grandmother, seven times removed, were the same egg. Shucks!" He added. "A learned person, for one so very young."

Don was a bit taken aback to hear "Professor Darwin" described as "young"; as a child Don had classed him and the ruins as being about the same age. He now had to remind himself that Sir Isaac might see it differently. "Say, that's nice!" he answered. "I wonder if you knew my parents—Dr. Jonas Harvey and Dr. Cynthia Harvey?"

The dragon turned all eyes on him. "You are their egg? I have not had the honor of meeting them, but all civilized persons know of them and their work. I am no longer surprised at your own excellence. Shucks!"

Don felt both embarrassment and pleasure. Not knowing what to say, he suggested that Sir Isaac coach him for a while in "true speech," a suggestion to which the dragon readily assented. They were still so engaged when the warning signal sounded, and a voice from the control room sang out: "Strap down for acceleration! Prepare to match trajectories!"

Don placed his hands against his friend's armored sides and shoved himself back to his couch. He paused there and said, "Are you going to be all right?"

The dragon made a sound which Don construed as a hiccup, and tapped out: "I feel sure of it. This time I am fortified."

"I hope so. Say—you don't want to bung up your voder again. Want me to take care of it?"

"If you will, please."

Don went back and got it, then fastened it to his bags. He had barely time to fasten his safety belts when the first surge of acceleration hit them. It was not so bad, this time, neither as many gravities as the blast-off from Earth nor of as long duration, for they were not breaking free of Earth's crushing grip but merely adjusting trajectories—modifying the outer end of the *Glory Road's* elliptical path to make it agree perfectly with the circular orbit of Circum-Terra, the crossroads station in space which was their destination.

The captain gave them one long powerful shove, waited, then blasted twice more for short intervals—without, Don noted, finding it necessary to invert and blast back. He nodded approval. Good piloting—the captain knew his vectors. The bull-horn sang out, "Contact! Unstrap at will. Prepare to disembark."

Don returned the voder to Sir Isaac, then lost track of him, for the dragon again had to be taken aft to be transferred through the cargo hatch. Don whistled good-by and went forward, towing his bags behind him, to go out through the passenger tube.

Circum-Terra was a great confused mass in the sky. It had been built, rebuilt, added to, and modified over the course of years for a dozen different purposes—weather observation station, astronomical observatory, meteor count station, television relay, guided missile control station, high-vacuum strain-free physics laboratory, strain-free germ-free biological experiment station, and many other uses.

But most importantly it was a freight and passenger transfer station in space, the place where short-range winged rockets from Earth met the space liners that plied between the planets. For this purpose it had fueling tanks, machine shops, repair cages that could receive the largest liners and the smallest rockets, and a spinning, pressurized drum — "Goddard Hotel" — which provided artificial gravity and Earth atmosphere for passengers and for the permanent staff of Circum-Terra.

Goddard Hotel stuck out from the side of Circum-Terra like a cartwheel from a pile of junk. The hub on which it turned ran through its center and protruded out into space. It was to this hub that a ship would couple its passenger tube when discharging or loading humans. That done, the ship would then be warped over to a cargo port in the non-spinning major body of the station. When the *Glory Road* made contact, there were three other ships in at Circum-Terra; the *Valkyrie* in which Don Harvey had passage for Mars, the *Nautilus,* just in from Venus, and in which Sir Isaac expected to return home; and the *Spring Tide,* the Luna shuttle which alternated with its sister the *Neap Tide.*

The two liners and the moon ship were already tied up to the main body of the station; the *Glory Road* warped in at the hub of the hotel and immediately began to discharge passengers. Don waited his turn, then pulled himself along by handholds, dragging his bags behind him, and soon found himself inside the hotel, but still in weightless free fall in the cylindrical hub of the Goddard.

A man in coveralls directed Don and the dozen passengers he was with to a point halfway along the hub where a large lift blocked further progress. Its circular door stood open and turned very slowly around, moving with the spinning hotel proper. "Get in," he ordered. "Mind you get your feet pointed toward the floor."

Don got in with the others, and found that the inside of the car was cubical. One wall was marked in big letters: FLOOR. Don found a handhold and steadied himself so that his feet would be on the floor when weight was applied. The man got in and started the car out toward the rim.

There was no feeling of weight at first, at least not toward the "floor." Don experienced a dizzy sensation as increasing spin sloshed the liquid about in his inner ear. He knew that he had ridden this elevator before, when he was eleven and heading for Earth and school, but he had forgotten its unpleasant aspects.

Soon the elevator stopped; the floor became the floor in earnest, though with considerably less than one gravity, and the upsetting sensation ceased. The operator opened the door and shouted: "Everybody out!"

Don walked into a large inner compartment, carrying his bags. It was already crowded with more than half of the ship's passengers. Don looked around for his dragon friend, then remembered that the ship would have to be moved around to a cargo port before the Venerian could disembark. He put his bags on the floor and sat down on them.

The crowd, for some reason, seemed unquiet. Don heard one woman say: "This is preposterous! We've been here at least half an hour and no one appears to know that we're here."

A man answered: "Be patient, Martha."

" 'Patient,' he says! Only one door out of the place, and it locked—suppose there were a fire?"

"Well, where would you run to, dear? Nothing outside but some mighty thin vacuum."

She squealed. "Oh! We should have gone to Bermuda as I wanted to."

"As *you* wanted to?"

"Don't be petty!"

Another elevator load discharged and then another; the ship was empty. After many minutes more of grumbling, during which even Don began to wonder at the service, the only door other than the elevator door opened. Instead of a hotelman anxious to please his guests, in came three men in uniform. The two flank men were carrying mob guns cradled at their hips; the third man had only a hand pistol, still holstered. He stepped forward, planted his feet and set his fists on his hips. "Attention! Quiet, everybody."

He got it; his voice had the ring of command which is obeyed without thinking. He went on: "I am Assault Sergeant McMasters of the High Guard, Venus Republic. My com-

"Attention! Quiet! Take it easy. Nobody's going to get hurt—if you behave."

manding officer has directed me to advise you of the present situation."

There was an additional short moment of silence, then a rising mutter of surprise, alarm, disbelief and indignation. "Pipe down!" the Sergeant shouted. "Take it easy. Nobody's going to get hurt—if you behave." He went on: "The Republic has taken over this station, and everybody is being cleared out. You groundhogs will be shipped back to Earth at once. Those of you who are headed home to Venus will go home—provided you pass our loyalty check. Now, let's get sorted out."

A fussy, plump man pushed his way forward. "Do you realize, sir, what you are saying? 'Venus Republic,' indeed. This is piracy!"

"Get back in line, fatty."

"You can't do this. I wish to speak to your commanding officer."

"Fatty," the Sergeant said slowly, "back up before you get a boot in your belly." The man looked dumfounded, then scuttled back into the crowd. The Sergeant continued: "Those of you going to Venus form a queue here at the door. Have your ID's and birth certificates ready."

The passengers, up to that time a friendly group of fellow-travelers, split into hostile camps. Someone shouted, "Long live the Republic!" which was followed by the beefy sound of a fist striking flesh. One of the guards hurried into the crowd and stopped the impending riot. The Sergeant drew his sidearm and said in a bored voice: "No politics, please. Let's get on with the job."

Somehow a line was formed. The second in line was the man who had cheered the new nation. His nose was dripping blood, but his eyes were shining. As he offered his papers to the Sergeant, he said: "This is a great day! I've waited all my life for it."

"Who hasn't?" the Sergeant answered. "Okay—on through the door for processing. Next!"

Don was busy trying to quiet down and arrange his whirling thoughts. He was forced at last to admit that this was it, this was war, the war that he had told himself was impossible. No cities had been bombed, not yet—but this was the Fort Sumter of a new war; he was smart enough to see that. He did not have to be threatened with a boot in the belly to see what was in front of his face.

He realized with nervous shock that he had just barely got away in time. The *Valkyrie* might be the last ship to Mars in a long, long time. With the transfer station in the hands of the rebels, it might be the last one for years.

The Sergeant had not said anything about passengers for Mars as yet; Don told himself that the Sergeant's first effort must naturally be to sort out the citizens of the two belligerents. He decided that the thing to do was to keep his mouth shut and wait.

There was an interruption in the queue. Don heard the Sergeant say: "You're in the wrong pew, bud. You go back to Earth."

The man he was speaking to answered: "No, no! Take a look at my papers; I'm emigrating to Venus."

"You're a little bit late to be emigrating. The situation has changed."

"Why? Sure, I know it has changed. I declare for Venus."

The Sergeant scratched his head. "This one isn't in the book. Atkinson! Pass this man on through; we'll let the lieutenant figure it out."

When he had completed the group that wanted to go to Venus, the Sergeant went to a speech-only wall phone. "Jim? Mac speaking, from the nursery. They got that dragon out yet? No? Well, let me know when the *Road* is back at the chute; I want to load." He turned back to the crowd. "All right, you groundhogs—there'll be a delay, so I'm going to move you into another room until we're ready to send you back to Earth."

"Just a moment, Sergeant!" called out a male passenger.

"Yeah? What do you want?"

"Where do passengers for Luna wait?"

"Huh? Service discontinued. You're going back to Earth."

"Now, Sergeant, let's be reasonable. I haven't the slightest interest in politics; it does not matter to me who administers this station. But I have business on the Moon. It is *essential* that I get to the Moon. A delay would cost millions!"

The Sergeant stared at him. "Now isn't that just too bad! You know, brother, I've never had as much as a thousand at one time in my life; the thought of losing millions scares me." His manner suddenly changed. "You stupid jerk, have you ever thought what a bomb would do to the roof of Tycho City? Now line up, all of you, double file."

Don listened to this with disquiet. Still, the Sergeant had not said anything about Mars. He got into line, but at the very end. When the tail of the line reached the door, he stopped. "Get a move on, kid," said the Sergeant.

"I'm not going back to Earth," Don told him.

"Huh?"

"I'm headed for Mars in the *Valkyrie*."

"Oh, I see. You mean you were—now you're headed back to Earth in the *Glory Road*."

Don said stubbornly: "Look, Mister, I've *got* to get to Mars. My parents are there; they are expecting me."

The Sergeant shook his head. "Kid, I feel sorry for you. I really do. The *Valkyrie* isn't going to Mars."

"What?"

"She's being recommissioned as a cruiser of the High Guard. She's going to Venus. So I guess you had better go back to Earth. I'm sorry you won't be able to join your folks, but war is like that."

Don breathed slowly and forced himself to count up to ten. "I'm not going back to Earth. I'll wait right here until a ship does go to Mars."

The Sergeant sighed. "If you do, you'll have to chin yourself on a star while you wait."

"Huh? What do you mean?"

"Because," he said slowly, "a few minutes after we blast off, there will be nothing in this neighborhood but a nice, pretty radioactive cloud. Want to play a leading rôle in a Geiger counter?"

Chapter Six

The Sign in the Sky

DON could not answer. His simian ancestors, beset with perils every moment of life, might have taken it calmly; Don's soft life had not prepared him for such repeated blows. The Sergeant went on: "So it had better be the *Glory Road* for you, kid. That's what your parents would want. Go back and find yourself a nice spot in the country; the cities are likely to be unhealthy for a while."

Don snapped out of it. "I'm not going back to Earth! I don't belong there; I'm not a native of Earth."

"Eh? What is your citizenship? Not that it matters; anybody who isn't a citizen of Venus goes back in the *Glory Road*."

"I'm a Federation citizen," Don answered, "but I can claim Venus citizenship."

"The Federation," the Sergeant answered, "has had a slump in its stock lately. But what's this about Venus citizenship? Stow the double-talk and let's see your papers."

Don passed them over. Sergeant McMasters looked first at his birth certificate, then stared at it. "Born in free fall! I'll be a cross-eyed pilot! Say, there aren't many like you, are there?"

"I guess not."

"But just what does that make you?"

"Read on down. My mother was born on Venus. I'm Venus native-born, by derivation."

"But your pop was born on Earth."

"I'm native-born there too."

"Huh? That's silly."

"That's the law."

"There are going to be some new laws. I don't know just where you fit. See here—where do you want to go? Venus or Earth?"

"I'm going to Mars," Don answered simply.

The Sergeant looked at him and handed back the papers. "It beats me. And I can't get any sense out of you. I'm going to refer it on up. Come along."

He led Don down a passageway and into a small compartment which had been set up as an orderly-room. Two other soldiers were there; one was using a typer; the other was just sitting. The Sergeant stuck his head in and spoke to the one who was loafing. "Hey, Mike—keep an eye on this character. See that he doesn't steal the station." He turned back to Don. "Give me those papers again, kid." He took them and went away.

The soldier addressed as Mike stared at Don, then paid no further attention to him. Don put his bags down and sat on them.

After several minutes Sergeant McMasters returned, but ignored Don. "Who's got the cards?" he inquired.

"I have."

"Not your readers, Mike. Where are the honest cards?"

The third soldier closed the typer, reached in a drawer and pulled out a deck of cards. The three sat down at the desk and McMasters started to shuffle. He turned to Don. Care for a friendly game, kid?"

"Oh, I guess not."

"You'll never learn any cheaper." The soldiers played for half an hour or so while Don kept quiet and thought. He forced himself to believe that the Sergeant knew what he was talking about; he could not go to Mars in the *Valkyrie*, because the *Valkyrie* was not going to Mars. He could not wait for a later ship, because the station—this very room he was sitting in—was about to be blown up.

What did that leave? Earth? No! He had no relatives on Earth, none close enough to turn to. With Dr. Jefferson dead or missing, he had no older friends. Perhaps he could crawl back to the ranch, tail between his legs—

No! He had outgrown that skin and shed it. The ranch school was no longer for him.

DOWN inside was another and stronger reason: the security police in New Chicago had made of him an alien; he would not go back, because Earth was no longer his.

Hobson's choice, he told himself; *it's got to be Venus. I can find people there I used to know—or who know Dad and Mother. I'll scrounge around and find some way to get from there to Mars; that's best.* His mind made up, he was almost content.

The office phone called out: "Sergeant McMasters!" The Sergeant laid down his hand and went to it, pulling the privacy shield into place. Presently he switched off and turned to Don. "Well, kid, the Old Man has settled your status; you're a 'displaced person.'"

"Huh?"

"The bottom fell out for you when Venus became an independent republic. You have no citizenship anywhere. So the Old Man says to ship you back where you come from—back to Earth."

Don stood up and squared his shoulders. "I won't go."

"You won't, eh?" McMasters said mildly. "Well, just sit back down and be comfortable. When the time comes, we'll drag you." He started to deal the cards again.

Don did not sit down. "See here, I've changed my mind. If I can't get to Mars right away, then I'll go to Venus."

McMasters stopped dealing the cards and turned. "When Commodore Higgins settles a point, it's settled. Mike, take this prima donna across and shove him in with the other ground-hogs."

"But—"

Mike stood up. "Come on, you."

Don found himself shoved into a room packed with injured feelings. The Earthlings had no guards and no colonials in with them; they were giving vent freely to their opinions about events. "—outrage! We should blast every one of their settlements, level them to the ground!" "—I think we should send a committee to this commanding officer of theirs and say to him firmly—" "I *told* you we shouldn't have come!" "—Negotiate! That's a sign of weakness." "—Don't you realize that the war is already over? Men, this place isn't just a traffic depot; it's the main guided-missile control station. They can bomb every last city on Earth from here, like ducks on a pond!"

Don noticed the last remark, played it over in his mind, let it sink in. He was not used to thinking in terms of military tactics; up to this moment the significance of a raid on Circum-Terra had been lost on him. He had thought of it in purely personal terms, his own convenience.

Would they actually go that far? Bomb the Federation cities right off the map? Sure, the colonials had plenty to be sore about, but— Of course, it had happened like that, once in the past, but that was history; people were more civilized now. Weren't they?

"HARVEY! Donald Harvey!"

Everyone turned at the call. A Venus guardsman was standing in the compartment door, shouting his name. Don answered: "Here!"

"Come along."

Don picked up his bags and followed him out into the passageway, waited while the soldier relocked the door. "Where are you taking me?"

"The C. O. wants to see you." He glanced at Don's baggage. "No need to drag that stuff."

"Uh, I guess I'd better keep it with me."

"Suit yourself. But don't take it into the C. O.'s office." He took Don down two decks where the "gravity" was appreciably greater, and stopped at a door guarded by a sentry. "Here's the guy the Old Man sent for," he announced, "—Harvey."

"Go right on in."

Don did so. The room was large and ornate; it had been the office of the hotel manager. Now it was occupied by a man in uniform, a man still young, though his hair was shot with gray. He looked up as Don came in; Don thought he looked alert but tired. "Donald Harvey?"

"Yes sir." Don got out his papers.

The commanding officer brushed them aside. "I've seen them. Harvey, you are a headache to me. I disposed of your case once."

Don did not answer; the other went on: "Now it appears that I must reopen it. Do you know a Venerian named—" He whistled it.

"Slightly," Don answered. "We shared a compartment in the *Glory Road*."

"Hmm. . . . I wonder if you planned it that way?"

"What? How could I?"

"It could have been arranged—and it would not be the first time that a young person has been used as a spy."

Don turned red. "You think I am a spy, sir?"

"No, it is just one of the possibilities I must consider. No military commander enjoys political pressure being used on him, Harvey, but they all have to yield to it. I've yielded. You aren't going back to Earth; you are going to Venus." He stood up. "But let me warn you; if you are a ringer who has been planted on me, all the dragons on Venus won't save your skin." He turned to a ship's phone, punched its keys, and waited; presently he said: "Tell him his friend is here and that I've taken care of the matter." He turned back to Don. "Take it."

Shortly Don heard a warm Cockney voice: "Don, my dear boy, are you there?"

"Yes, Sir Isaac."

The dragon shrilled relief. "When I inquired about you, I found some preposterous intention of shipping you back to that dreadful place we just quitted. I told them that a mistake had been made. I'm afraid I had to be quite firm about it. Shucks!"

"It's all fixed up now, Sir Isaac. Thanks."

"Not at all; I am still in your debt. Come to visit me when it is possible. You will, won't you?"

"Oh, sure!"

"Thank you and cheerio! Shucks."

Don turned away from the phone, to find the task-force commander studying him quizzically. "Do you know who your friend is?"

"Who he is?" Don whistled the Venerian name, then added: "He calls himself Sir Isaac Newton."

"That's all you know?"

"I guess so."

"Mmm—" He paused, then went on: "You might as well know what influenced me. 'Sir Isaac,' as you call him, traces his ancestry directly back to the Original Egg, placed in the mud of Venus on the day of Creation. So that's why I'm stuck with you. —Orderly!"

Don let himself be led away without saying a word. Few if any Earthlings have been converted to the dominant religion of Venus; it is not a proselyting faith. But none laugh at it; all take it seriously. A terrestrial on Venus may not believe in the Divine Egg and all that that implies; but he finds it more profitable—and *much* safer—to speak respectfully of it.

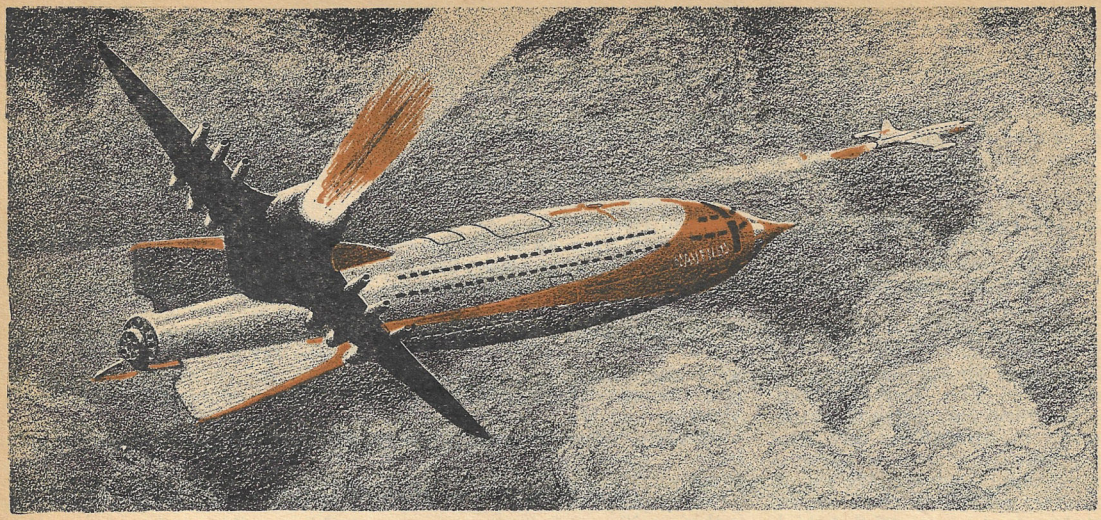
Sir Isaac a Child of the Egg! Don felt the sheepish awe that is likely to strike even the most hard-boiled democrat when he first comes in contact with established royalty. Why, he had been talking to him, just as if he were any old dragon—say, one that sold vegetables in the city market.

Shortly he began to think of it in more practical ways. If anyone could wangle a way for him to get to Mars, Sir Isaac was probably just the bird who could do it. He turned it over in his mind—he'd get home yet!

BUT Don did not get to see his Venerian friend at once. He was herded into the *Nautilus* along with Venus-bound passengers from the *Glory Road* and a handful of technicians from Circum-Terra whose loyalties lay with Venus rather than with Earth. By the time he discovered that Sir Isaac had been transshipped to the *Valkyrie,* it was too late to do anything about it.

The flag of the task-force commander, High Commodore Higgins, was shifted from Circum-Terra back to the *Nautilus,* and Higgins moved at once to carry out the rest of the *coup.* The storming of Circum-Terra had been managed almost without bloodshed; it had depended on timing and surprise. Now the rest of the operation must be completed before any dislocation in ship schedules would be noticed on Earth.

The *Nautilus* and the *Valkyrie* had already been prepared for their long jumps; the *Spring Tide's* crew was removed, to be sent to Earth and a crew supplied from the task force; she herself was fueled and provisioned for deep space. Although designed for the short jump to Luna, she was quite capable of making the trip to Venus. Space travel is not a matter of distance but of gravity-potential levels; the jump from Circum-Terra to Venus required less expenditure of energy than did the terrible business of fighting up through Earth's field from New Chicago to Circum-Terra.



As soon as the Nautilus *had parked, the shuttles began to swarm up to her.*

The *Spring Tide* shoved off in a leisurely, economical parabola; she would make the trip to Venus in free fall all the way. The *Valkyrie* blasted away to shape a fast, almost flat, hyperboloid orbit; she would arrive as soon or sooner than the *Nautilus*. The *Nautilus* was last to leave, for High Commodore Higgins had one more thing to do before destroying the station—a television broadcast on a globe-wide network.

All global broadcasts originated in, or were relayed through, the communications center of Circum-Terra. Since the *Nautilus* had touched in at Circum-Terra, a cosmic Trojan horse, the regular broadcasts had been allowed to continue uninterrupted. The Commodore's G-6 staff officer (propaganda and nerve warfare) picked as the time for the Commodore's announcement to Earth of the *coup* the time ordinarily given over to "Steve Brodie Says": the most widely heard global news commentator. Mr. Brodie immediately followed the immensely popular "Kallikak Family" serial drama, an added advantage audience-wise.

The *Glory Road* had been allowed at last to blast off for Earth with her load of refugees, but with her radios wrecked. The *Nautilus* lay off in space, a hundred miles outside, hanging in a parking orbit, waiting. Inside the space station, now utterly devoid of life, the television center continued its functions unattended. The Commodore's speech had already been canned; its tape was threaded into the programmer, and it would start as soon as the throb show was over.

Don watched it from a recreation lounge on the liner along with a hundred-odd other civilians. All eyes were on a big television tank set in the end of the compartment. A monitoring beam, jury-rigged for the purpose, brought the cast from Circum-Terra to the *Nautilus,* and the radio watch in the ship was passing it on throughout the ship so that the passengers and crew might see and hear it.

As the day's serial episode closed, *Celeste Kallikak* had been arrested for suspected husband murder, *Buddy Kallikak* was still in the hospital and not expected to live, *Father Kallikak* was still missing, and *Maw Kallikak* was herself suspected of cheating on ration stamps—but she was facing it all bravely, serene in her knowledge that only the good die young. After the usual commercial plug ("The Only Soap with Guaranteed Vitamin Content for greater Vitacity!") the tank faded into Steve Brodie's trademark, a rocket trail condensing into his features while a voice boomed, "Steve Brodie, with tomorrow's news *today!*"

It cut suddenly; the tank went empty and a voice said: "We interrupt this broadcast to bring you a special news flash." The tank filled again, this time with the features of Commodore Higgins.

His face lacked the synthetic smile obligatory for all who speak in public telecast; his manner and voice were grim. "I am High Commodore Higgins, commanding Task Force Emancipation of the High Guard, Venus Republic. The High Guard has seized Earth's satellite station Circum-Terra. We now have all of Earth's cities utterly at our mercy."

He paused to let it sink in. Don thought it over and did not like the thought. Everybody knew that Circum-Terra carried enough A-bomb rockets to smear any force or combination of forces that could be raised to oppose the Federation. The exact number of rocket bombs carried was a military secret, variously estimated between two hundred and a thousand. A rumor had spread through the civilians in the *Nautilus* that the High Guard had found seven hundred and thirty-two bombs ready to go, with component parts for many more, plus enough deuterium and tritium to make up about a dozen hell bombs.

Whether the rumor was true or not, Circum-Terra certainly held enough bombs to turn the Terran Federation into a radioactive abattoir. No doubt with so much underground, many inhabitants of cities would survive; but any city, once bombed, would have to be abandoned; the military effect would be the same. And many would die. How many? Forty millions? Fifty millions? Don did not know.

The Commodore went on: "Mercifully, we stay our hand. Earth's cities will not be bombed. The free citizens of Venus Republic have no wish to slaughter their cousins still on Terra. Our only purpose is to establish our own independence, to manage our own affairs, to throw off the crushing yoke of absentee ownership and of taxation without representation which has bled us poor.

"In so doing, in so taking our stand as free men, we call on all oppressed and impoverished nations everywhere to follow our lead, accept our help. Look up into the sky! Swimming there above you is the very station

from which I now address you. The fat and stupid rulers of the Federation have made of Circum-Terra an overseer's whip. The threat of this military base in the sky has protected their empire from the just wrath of their victims for more than five score years.

"We now crush it.

"In a matter of minutes this scandal in the clean skies, this pistol pointed at the heads of men everywhere on your planet, will cease to exist. Step out of doors, watch the sky. Watch a new sun blaze briefly, and know that its light is the light of Liberty inviting all Earth to free itself.

"Subject peoples of Earth, we free men of the free Republic of Venus salute you with that sign!"

The Commodore continued to sit and gaze steadily into the eyes of each of his colossal audience while the heart-lifting beat of *Morning Star of Hope* followed his words. Don did not recognize the anthem of the new nation, but he could not help but feel its surging promise.

Suddenly the tank went dead, and at the same instant there was a flash of light so intense that it leaked through the shuttered ports and tormented the optic nerve. Don was still shaking his head from it when over the ship's announcing system came the call: "Safe to unshutter!"

A petty officer stationed at the compartment's view port was already cranking the metal shield out of the way; Don crowded in and looked.

A second sun blazed white and swelled visibly as he watched. What on Earth would have been—so many terrible times *had been*—a climbing mushroom cloud was here in open space a perfect geometrical sphere, growing unbelievably. It swelled still larger, dropping from limelight white to silvery violet and became blotched with purple, red and flame. And still it grew, until it blanked out Earth floating beyond it.

At the time it was transformed into a radioactive cosmic cloud Circum-Terra had been passing over, or opposite, the North Atlantic; the swollen incandescent cloud was visible to most of the habitable portions of the globe, a burning symbol in the sky.

Chapter Seven

Detour

IMMEDIATELY after the destruction of Circum-Terra, the ship's warning signal howled and loud-speakers bellowed, ordering all hands to acceleration stations. The *Nautilus* blasted away, shaping her orbit for the weary trip to Venus. When she was up to speed, and spin had been placed on her to permit sure footing, the control room secured from blast stations. Don unstrapped and hurried to the radio room. Twice he had to argue to get past sentries.

He found the door open; everyone inside seemed busy and paid him no attention. He hesitated, then stepped inside. A long hand reached out and grabbed him by the scruff. "Hey! Where the deuce do you think you're going?"

Don answered humbly, "I just want to send a message."

"You do, eh? What do you think of that, Charley?" His captor appealed to a soldier who was bending over a rig.

The second soldier pushed one earphone up. "Looks like a saba-*toor*. Probably an A-bomb in each pocket."

An officer wandered out of an inner room. "What goes on here?"

"Sneaked in, sir. Says he wants to send a message."

The officer looked Don up and down. "Sorry, No can do. Radio silence."

"But," Don answered desperately, "I've just *got* to." Quickly he explained his predicament. "I've got to let them know where I am, sir."

The officer shook his head. "We couldn't raise Mars even if we were not in radio silence."

"No sir, but you could beam Luna, for relay to Mars."

"Yes, I suppose we could—but we won't. See here, young fellow; I'm sorry about your troubles, but there is no possibility, simply none at all, that the commanding officer will permit silence to be broken for any reason, even one much more important than yours. The safety of the ship comes first."

Don thought about it. "I suppose so," he agreed forlornly.

"However, I wouldn't worry too much. Your parents will find out where you are."

"Huh? I don't see how. They think I'm headed for Mars."

"No, they don't—or won't shortly. There is no secret now about what has happened; the whole system knows it. They can find out that you got as far as Circum-Terra; they can find out that the *Glory Road* did not fetch you back. By elimination, you must be on your way to Venus. I imagine that they are querying Interplanet about you right now."

The officer turned away and said: "Wilkins, paint a sign for the door saying, '*Radio Silence—No Messages Accepted.*' We don't want every civilian in the ship barging in here trying to send greetings to Aunt Hattie."

Don bunked in a third-class compartment with three dozen men and a few boys. Some passengers who had paid for better accommodations complained. Don himself had had first-class passage booked—for the *Valkyrie* and Mars—but he was glad that he had not been silly enough to object when he saw the disgruntled returning with their tails between their legs. First-class accommodations, up forward, were occupied by the High Guard.

His couch was comfortable enough; and a space voyage, dull under any circumstances, is less dull in the noise and gossip of a bunkroom than it is in the quiet of a first-class stateroom. During the first week out, the senior surgeon announced that any who wished could avail themselves of cold-sleep. Within a day or two the bunkroom was half deserted, the missing passengers having been drugged and chilled and stowed in sleep tanks aft, there to dream away the weeks ahead.

DON did not take cold-sleep. He listened to a bunkroom discussion, full of half facts, as to whether or not cold-sleep counted against a man's lifetime. "Look at it this way," one passenger pontificated: "You've got so long to live—right? It's built into your genes; barring accidents, you live just that long. But when they put you in the freezer, your body slows down. Your clock stops, so to speak. That time doesn't count against you. If you had eighty years coming to you, now you've got eighty years plus three months, or whatever. So I'm taking it."

"You couldn't be wronger," he was answered. "More wrong, I mean. What you've done is chop three months right out of your life. Not for me!"

"You're crazy. I'm taking it."

"Suit yourself. And another thing—" The passenger who opposed it leaned forward and spoke confidentially, so that only the entire bunkroom could hear. "They say that the boys with the bars up front question you why while you are going under. You know why? Because the Commodore thinks that *spies* slipped aboard at Circum-Terra."

Don did not care which one was right. He was too much alive to relish deliberately "dying" for a time simply to save the boredom of a long trip. But the last comment startled him. Spies? Was it possible that the I.B.I. had agents right under the noses of the High Guard? Yet the I.B.I. was supposed to be able to slip in anywhere. He looked around at his fellow passengers, wondering which one might be traveling under a false identity.

He put it out of his mind—at least the I.B.I. was no longer interested in *him*.

Had Don not known that he was in the *Nautilus* headed for Venus, he

might well have imagined himself in the *Valkyrie* headed for Mars. The ships were of the same class, and one piece of empty space looks like another. The Sun grew daily a little larger rather than smaller—but one does not look directly at the Sun, not even from Mars. The ship's routine followed the same Greenwich day kept by any liner in space; breakfast came sharp on the bell; the ship's position was announced each "noon;" the lights were dimmed at "night."

Even the presence of soldiers in the ship was not conspicuous. They kept to their own quarters forward, and civilians were not allowed there except on business. The ship was forty-two days out before Don again had any reason to go forward—to get a cut finger dressed in sick bay. On his way aft, he felt a hand on his shoulder and turned.

He recognized Sergeant McMasters. The Sergeant was wearing the star of a master-at-arms, a ship's policeman. "What are you doing," he demanded, "skulking around here?"

Don held up his damaged digit. "I wasn't skulking; I was getting this attended to."

McMasters looked at it. "Mashed your finger, eh? Well, you're in the wrong passageway. This leads to the bomb room, not to passengers' quarters. Say, I've seen you before, haven't I?"

"Sure."

"I remember. You're the lad who thought he was going to Mars."

"I'm still going to Mars."

"So? You seem to favor the long way around—by about a hundred million miles. Speaking of the long way around, you haven't explained why I find you headed toward the bomb room."

Don felt himself getting red. "I don't know where the bomb room is. If I'm in the wrong passage, show me the right one."

"Come with me." The Sergeant led him down two decks where the spin of the ship made them slightly heavier and conducted Don into an office. "Sit down. The duty officer will be along."

Don remained standing. "I don't want to see the duty officer. I want to go back to my bunkroom."

"Sit down, I said. I remember your case. Maybe you were just turned around, but could be you took the wrong turn on purpose."

Don swallowed his annoyance and sat. "No offense," said McMasters. "How about a slug of solvent?" He went to a coffee warmer and poured two cups.

Don hesitated, then accepted one. It was the Venerian bean, black and bitter and very strong. Don found himself beginning to like McMasters. The Sergeant sipped his, grimaced, then said: "You must be born lucky. You ought to be a corpse by now."

"Huh?"

"You were scheduled to go back in the *Glory Road,* weren't you? Well?"

"I don't track you."

"Didn't the news filter aft? The *Glory* didn't make it."

"Huh? Crashed?"

"Hardly! The Federation groundhogs got jumpy and blasted her out of the sky. Couldn't raise her, and figured she was booby-trapped, I guess. Anyhow they blasted her."

"Oh—"

"Which is why I say you were born lucky, seeing as how you were supposed to go back in her."

"But I wasn't. I'm headed for Mars."

McMasters stared at him, then laughed. "Boy, have you got a one-track mind! You're as bad as a 'move-over.'"

"Maybe so, but I'm still going to Mars."

The Sergeant put down his cup. "Why don't you wise up? This war is going to last maybe ten or fifteen years. Chances are there won't be a scheduled ship to Mars in that time."

"Well—I'll make it, somehow. But why do you figure it will last so long?"

McMasters stopped to light up. "Studied any history?"

"Some."

"Remember how the American colonies got loose from England? They fooled along for eight years, fighting just now and then—yet England was so strong that she should have been able to lick the colonies any week-end. Why didn't she?"

Don did not know. "Well," McMasters answered, "you may not be a student of history, but Commodore Higgins is. He planned this strike. Ask him about any rebellion that ever happened; he'll tell you why it succeeded, or why it failed. England didn't lick the colonies because she was up to her ears in bigger wars elsewhere. The American rebellion was just a 'police action'—not important. But she couldn't give proper attention to it; after a while it got to be just too expensive and too much trouble, so England gave up and recognized their independence."

"You figure this the same way?"

"Yes—because Commodore Higgins gave it a shove in the right direction. Figured on form, the Venus Republic can't win against the Federation. Mind you, I'm just as patriotic as the next—but I can face facts. Venus hasn't a fraction of the population of the Federation, nor one per cent of its wealth. Venus *can't* win—unless the Federation is too busy to fight. Which it is, or will be soon."

Don thought about it. "I guess I'm stupid."

"Didn't you grasp the significance of blowing up Circum-Terra? In one raid the Commodore had Earth absolutely helpless. He could have bombed any or all of Terra's cities. But what good would that have done? It would simply have got the whole globe sore at us. As it is, we've got two-thirds of the peoples of Earth cheering for us. Not only cheering, but feeling frisky and ready to rebel themselves, now that Circum-Terra isn't sitting up there in the sky, ready to launch bombs at the first sign of unrest. It will take the Federation years to pacify the associate nations—if ever. Oh, the Commodore is a sly one!" McMasters glanced up. "'Ten-shun!" he called out, and got to his feet.

A lieutenant of the High Guard was in the doorway. He said: "That was a very interesting lecture, Professor, but you should save it for the classroom."

"Not 'professor,' Lieutenant," McMasters said earnestly. "'Sergeant,' if you please."

"Very well, Sergeant—but don't revert to type." He turned to Don. "Who is this, and why is he loafing here?"

"Waiting for you, sir." McMasters explained the circumstances.

"I see," answered the duty officer. He said to Don: "Do you waive your right not to testify against yourself?"

Don looked puzzled. "He means," explained McMasters, "do we try the gimmick on you, or would you rather finish the trip in the brig?"

"The gimmick?"

"Lie-detector."

"Oh. Go ahead. I've got nothing to hide."

"Wish I could say as much. Sit down over here." McMasters opened a cupboard, fitted electrodes to Don's head and a bladder gauge to his forearm. "Now," he said, "tell me the real reason why you were skulking around the bomb room!"

Don stuck to his story. McMasters asked more questions while the lieutenant watched a "wiggle" scope back of Don's head. Presently he said: "That's all, Sergeant. Chase him back where he belongs."

"Right, sir. Come along." They left the room together. Once out of earshot, McMasters continued: "As I was saying when we were so crudely interrupted, that is why you can expect a long war. The 'status' will stay 'quo' while the Federation is busy at home with insurrections and civil disorder. From time to time they'll send a boy to do a man's job; we'll give the boy lumps and send him home. After a few years of that,

the Federation will decide that we are costing more than we are worth and will recognize us as a free nation. In the meantime there will be no ships running to Mars. Too bad!"

"I'll get there," Don insisted.

"You'll have to walk."

They reached G deck. Don looked around and said: "I know my way from here. I must have gone down a deck too many."

"Two decks," McMasters corrected, "but I'll go with you until you are back where you belong. There is one way you might get to Mars—probably the only way."

"Huh? How? Tell me how?"

"Figure it out. There won't be any passenger runs, not till the war is over, but it is a dead cinch that both the Federation and the Republic will send task forces to Mars eventually, each trying to preëmpt the facilities there for the home team. If I were you, I'd enlist in the High Guard. Not the Middle Guard, not the Ground Forces—but the High Guard."

Don thought about it. "But I wouldn't stand much chance of getting to go along—would I?"

"Know anything about barracks politics? Get yourself a job as a clerk. If you've any skill at kissing the proper foot, a clerk's job will keep you around Main Base. You'll be close to the rumor factory, and you'll know when they finally get around to sending a ship to Mars. Kiss the proper foot again and put yourself on the roster. That's the only way you are likely to get to Mars. . . . Here's your door. Mind you don't get lost up forward again."

Don turned McMasters' words over in his mind for the next several days. He had clung stubbornly to the idea that, when he got to Venus, he would find some way to wangle passage to Mars. McMasters forced him to regroup his thoughts. It was all very well to talk about getting in some ship headed for Mars—somehow, legally or illegally, paid passenger, crew member, or stowaway. But suppose there were no ships heading for Mars? A lost dog might beat his way back to his master—but a man could not travel a single mile in empty space without a ship. A total impossibility—

But that notion of joining the High Guard? It seemed a drastic solution even if it would work, and—little as Don knew about the workings of military organization—he held a dark suspicion that the Sergeant had oversimplified things. Using the High Guard to get to Mars might prove as unsatisfactory as trying to hitch-hike on a Kansas twister.

On the other hand, he was at the age at which the idea of military service was glamorous in itself. Had his feelings about Venus been just a touch stronger, he could easily have persuaded himself that it was his duty to throw in with the colonists and sign up, whether it got him to Mars or not.

Enlisting held another attraction: it would give pattern to his life. He was beginning to feel the basic, gnawing tragedy of the wartime displaced person—the loss of roots. Man needs freedom, but few men are so strong as to be happy with complete freedom. A man needs to be part of a group, with accepted and respected relationships. Some men join foreign legions for adventure; still more swear on a bit of paper in order to acquire a framework of duties and obligations, customs and taboos, a time to work and a time to loaf, a comrade to dispute with and a sergeant to hate—in short, to *belong*.

Don was as "displaced" as any wanderer in history; he had not even a planet of his own. He was not conscious of his spiritual need—but he took to staring at the soldiers of the High Guard when he ran across them, imagining what it would be like to wear that uniform.

The *Nautilus* did not land; nor did she tie up to a space station. Instead her speed was reduced as she approached the planet, so that she fell into a two-hour, pole-to-pole parking orbit only a few hundred miles outside the silvery cloud blanket. The Venus colonies were too young, too poor, to afford the luxury of a great orbiting station in space, but a fast pole-to-pole parking orbit caused a ship to pass over every part of the spinning globe, an "orange slice" at each pass—like winding string on a ball.

A shuttle ship up from the surface could leave any spot on Venus, rendezvous with the ship in orbit, then land on its port of departure or on any other point, having expended a theoretical minimum of fuel. As soon as the *Nautilus* had parked, such shuttles began to swarm up to her. They were more airplane than spaceship, for although each was sealed and pressurized to operate outside the atmosphere while making contact with orbiting spaceships, each was winged and was powered with ramjet atmosphere engines as well as with rocket jets. Like frogs, they were adapted to two media.

A shuttle would be launched to catapult from the surface; her ramjets would take hold; and she would climb on her wings, reaching in the thin, cold heights of the upper stratosphere speeds in excess of three thousand miles an hour. There, as her ramjets failed for want of air, her rocket jets would take over and kick her forward to orbiting speed of around twelve thousand miles an hour and permit her to match in with a spaceship.

A nice maneuver! It required both precise mathematical calculation of times, orbits, fuel expenditure, and upper air weather, and piloting virtuosity beyond mathematical calculation—but it saved pennies. Once the shuttle was loaded at the spaceship, it was necessary only to nudge it with its rockets against the orbital direction, whereupon the shuttle would drop into a lower orbit which would eventually intersect the atmosphere and let the pilot take a free ride back to the surface, glider-fashion, killing his terrible speed by dipping ever lower into the thickening air. Here again the pilot must be an artist, for he must both kill his momentum and conserve it so that it would take him where he wanted to go. A shuttle which landed out in the bush, a thousand miles from a port, would never make another trip, even if pilot and passengers walked away from the landing.

Don went down in the *Cyrus Buchanan*, a trim little craft of hardly three hundred feet wingspread. From a port Don watched her being warped in to match airlocks, and noticed that the triple globes of Interplanet Lines had been hastily and inadequately painted out on her nose and over had been stenciled: Middle Guard—Venus Republic. This defaced insignia brought the rebellion home to him almost more than had the bombing of Circum-Terra. Interplanet was strong as government—some said it *was* the government. Now hardy rebels had dared to expropriate ships of the great transport trust, to paint out the proud triple globe.

Don felt the winds of history blowing coldly around his ears. McMasters was right; he now believed that no ship would run from here to Mars.

When his turn came, he pulled himself along through the air locks and into the *Cyrus Buchanan*. The craft's steward was still in the uniform of Interplanet, but the company's insignia had been removed and chevrons had been sewed to his sleeves. With this change had come a change in manner; he handled the passengers efficiently, but without the paid deference of the semi-servant.

The trip down was long, tedious and hot, as an atmosphere-braking series always is. More than an hour after touch-off the airfoils first took hold; shortly Don and the other passengers felt almost full weight pressing them into the cushions; then the pilot lifted her as he decided his ship was growing too hot, let her ride out and upward in free fall. Over and over again this happened, like a stone

skipping on water, a nauseating cosmic roller-coaster.

Don did not mind. He was a spaceman again; his stomach was indifferent to surges of acceleration or even the absence thereof. At first he was excited at being back in the clouds of Venus; presently he was bored. At long, long last he was awakened by a change in motion; the craft was whistling down in its final glide, the pilot stabbing ahead with radar for his landing. Then the *Cyrus Buchanan* touched, bounced, and quivered to the rushing water under her hull. She slowed and stopped. After a considerable wait she was towed to her berth. The stewart stood up and shouted: "New London! Republic of Venus! Have your papers ready."

Chapter Eight

"FOXES HAVE HOLES AND BIRDS OF THE AIR HAVE NESTS—"

Matthew VIII:20

DON'S immediate purpose was to ask his way to the I.T.&T. office, there to file a radiogram to his parents, but he was unable to leave at once; the passengers had to have their papers inspected, and they themselves were subjected to physical examinations and questioning. Don found himself, hours later, still sitting outside the security office, waiting to be questioned. His irregular status had sent him to the end of the line.

In addition to being hungry, tired and bored, his arms itched—they were covered from shoulders to wrists with needle pricks caused by extensive testing for immunities to the many weird diseases and funguslike infections of the second planet. Having once lived there, he retained immunity to the peculiar perils of Venus—a good thing, he mused, else he would have had to waste weeks in quarantine while being inoculated He was rubbing his arms and wondering whether or not he should kick up a fuss when the door opened and his name was called.

He went inside. An officer of the Middle Guard sat at a desk, looking at Don's papers. "Donald Harvey?"

"Yes sir."

"Frankly, your case puzzles me. We've had no trouble identifying you; your prints check with those recorded when you were here before. But you aren't a citizen."

"Sure I am! My mother was born here."

"Mmmm—" The official drummed on his desk-top. "I'm not a lawyer. I get your point, but after all, when your mother was born, there wasn't any such nation as Venus Republic. Looks to me as if you were a test case, with precedent still to be established."

"Then where does that leave me?" Don said slowly.

"I don't know. I'm not sure you have any legal right to stay here."

"But I don't want to stay here! I'm just passing through."

"Eh?"

"I'm on my way to Mars."

"Oh, that! I've seen your papers—too bad. Now let's talk sense, shall we?"

"I'm going to Mars," Don repeated stubbornly.

"Sure, sure! And I'm going to heaven when I die. In the meantime, you are a resident of Venus whether we like it or not. No doubt the courts will decide, eventually, whether you are a citizen as well. Mr. Harvey, I've decided to turn you loose."

"Huh?" Don was startled; it had not occurred to him that his liberty could be in question.

"Yes. You don't seem like a threat to the safety of Venus Republic and I don't fancy holding you in quarantine indefinitely. Just keep your nose clean and phone in your address after you find a place to stay. Here are your papers."

Don thanked him, picked up his bags and left quickly. Once outside, he stopped to give his arms a good scratching.

At the dock in front of the building an amphibious launch was tied up; its coxswain was lounging at the helm. Don said: "Excuse me, but I want to send a radio. Could you tell me where to go?"

"Sure. I. T. & T. Building, Buchanan Street, Main Island. Just down in the *Nautilus?*"

"That's right. How do I get there?"

"Jump in. I'll be making another trip in about five minutes. Any more passengers to come?"

"I don't think so."

"You don't sound like a fog-eater." The coxswain looked him over.

"Raised on the stuff," Don assured him, "but I've been away at school for several years."

"Just slid in under the wire, didn't you?"

"Yeah, I guess so."

"Lucky for you. No place like home, I guess." The coxswain looked happily around at the murky sky and the dark waters.

Shortly he started his engine and cast off lines. The little vessel slopped its way through narrow channels, around islands and bars barely above water. A few minutes later Don disembarked at the foot of Buchanan Street, main thoroughfare of New London, capital of the planet.

There were several people loafing around the landing dock; they looked him over. Two of them were runners for rooming houses; he shook them off and started up Buchanan Street. The street was crowded with people but was narrow, meandering, and very muddy. Two lighted signs, one on each side of the street, shone through the permanent fog. One read: ENLIST NOW!!! YOUR NATION NEEDS YOU; the other exhorted: *Drink* COCA-COLA—*New London Bottling Works.*

The I. T. & T. Building turned out to be several hundred yards down the street, almost at the far side of Main Island, but it was easy to find, for it was the largest building on the island. Don climbed over the coaming at the entrance and found himself in the local office of Interplanetary Telephone and Televideo Corporation. A young lady was seated behind a counter desk. "I'd like to send a radiogram," he said to her.

"That's what we're here for." She handed him a pad and stylus.

"Thanks." Don composed a message with much wrinkling of forehead, trying to make it both reassuring and informative in the fewest words. Presently he handed it in.

THE girl raised her brows when she saw the address but made no comment. She counted the words, consulted a book, and said, "That'll be a hundred and eighty-seven fifty." Don counted it out, noting anxiously what a hole that made in his assets.

She glanced at the notes and pushed them back. "Are you kidding?"

"What's the matter?"

"Offering me Federation money. Trying to get me into trouble?"

"Oh." Don felt again a sick feeling at the pit of his stomach that was getting to be almost a habit. "Look—I'm just down in the *Nautilus.* I haven't had time to exchange this. Can I send the message collect?"

"To *Mars?*"

"What should I do?"

"Well, there's the bank just down the street. If I were you, I'd try there."

"Thanks." He started to pick up his message; she stopped him.

"I was about to say that you can file your message if you like. You've got two weeks in which to pay for it."

"Huh? Why, thanks!"

"Don't thank me. It can't go out for a couple of weeks, and you don't have to pay until we are ready to send it."

"Two weeks? Why?"

"Because Mars is right smacko back of the Sun now; it wouldn't punch through. We'll have to wait on the swing."

"What's the matter with relay?"

"There's a war on—or hadn't you noticed?"

"Oh—" Don felt foolish.

"We're still accepting private messages both ways on the Terra-Venus channel—subject to paraphrase and censoring—but we couldn't guarantee that your message would be relayed from Terra to Mars. Or could you instruct someone on Earth to pay for the second transmission?"

"Uh—I'm afraid not."

"Maybe it's just as well. They might not relay it for you even if you could get someone to foot the bill. The Federation censors might kill it. So give me that traffic, and I'll file it. You can pay for it later." She glanced at the message. "Looks like you sort of ran into hard luck. How old are you, Don Harvey?"

Don told her.

"Hmmm. . . . You look older. I'm older than you are; I guess that makes me your grandmother. If you need any more advice, stop in and ask Grandmother Isobel Costello."

"Uh, thanks, Isobel."

"Not at all. Usual I. T. & T. service." She gave him a warm smile. Don left, feeling somewhat confused.

The bank was near the center of the island; Don remembered having passed it. The sign on the glass read: BANK OF AMERICA & HONG KONG. Over this had been stuck strips of masking tape and under it was another sign handwritten in whitewash: *New London Trust & Investment Company*. Don went in, picked the shortest queue, and presently explained his wants. The teller hooked a thumb toward a desk back of a rail. "See him."

Moving very fast, Charlie headed him off, taking him by the ear.

AT the desk was seated an elderly Chinese dressed in a long black gown. As Don approached he rose, bowed, and said: "May I help you, sir?"

Don again explained and laid his wad of bills on the banker's desk. The man looked at it without touching it. "I am so sorry—"

"What's the matter?"

"You are past the date when one may legally exchange Federation currency for money of the Republic."

"But I haven't had a chance to before! I just got in."

"I am very sorry. I do not make the regulations."

"But what am I to do?"

The banker closed his eyes, then opened them. "In this imperfect world one must have money. Have you something to offer as security?"

"Uh, I guess not. Just my clothes and these bags."

"No jewelry?"

"Well, I've got a ring but I don't suppose it's worth much."

"Let me see it."

Don took off the ring Dr. Jefferson had mailed to him and handed it over. The Chinese stuck a watchmaker's loop in his eye and examined it. "I'm afraid you are right. Not even true amber—merely plastic. Still—a symbol of security will bind the honest man quite as much as chains. I'll advance fifty credits on it."

Don took the ring back and hesitated. The ring could not possibly be worth a tenth of that sum—and his stomach was reminding him that flesh has its insistent demands. Still—his mother had spent at least twice that amount to make sure that this ring reached him (or the paper it had been wrapped in, he corrected himself), and Dr. Jefferson had died in a fashion somehow connected with this same bauble.

He put it back on his finger. "That wouldn't be fair. I guess I had better find a job."

"A man of pride. There is always work to be found in a new and growing city; good luck! When you have found employment, come back and we can arrange an advance against your wages." The banker reached into the folds of his gown, pulled out a single credit note. "But eat first—a full belly steadies the judgment. Do me the honor of accepting this as our welcome to the newcomer."

His pride said no; his stomach said *Yes!* Don took it and said: "Uh, thanks! That's awfully kind of you. I'll pay it back, first chance."

"Instead, pay it forward to some other brother who needs it."

Don said good-by and left.

There was a man loitering at the door of the bank. He let Don get a step or two ahead, then followed him, but Don paid him no attention, being very busy with his own worries. It was slowly beginning to grow on him that the bottom had dropped out of his world, and that there might be no way to put it back together. He had lived in security all his life; he had never experienced emotionally, in his own person, the basic historical fact that mankind lives always by the skin of its teeth, sometimes winning but more often losing—and dying.

But never quitting. In a hundred yards of muddy street he began to grow up, take stock of his situation. He was more than a hundred million miles from where he meant to be. He had no way at once to let his parents know where he was; nor was it a simple matter of waiting two weeks—he was flat broke.

Broke, hungry, and no place to sleep—no friends, not even an acquaintance—unless, he recalled, one counted Sir Isaac, but, for all he knew,

his dragon friend might be on the other side of the planet.

He decided to settle that problem at once by spending the note the banker had given him. He recalled a restaurant a short distance back and stopped suddenly; whereupon a man jostled him.

Don said, "Excuse me," and noted that the man was another Chinese—noted it without surprise, as nearly half of the contract labor shipped in during the early days of the Venerian colonies had been Orientals. It did seem to him that the man's face was familiar—a fellow passenger in the *Nautilus*? Then he recalled that he had seen him at the dock at the foot of the street.

"My fault," the man answered. "I should look where I'm going. Sorry I bumped you." He smiled.

"No harm done," Don replied, "but it was my fault. I suddenly decided to turn around and go back."

"Back to the bank?"

"Huh?"

"None of my business, but I saw you coming out of the bank."

"As a matter of fact," Don answered, "I wasn't going back to the bank. I'm looking for a restaurant, and I remembered seeing one back there."

The man glanced at his bags. "Just get in?"

"Just down in the *Nautilus*."

"You don't want *that* restaurant—not unless you have money to throw away. It's strictly a tourist trap."

Don thought about the single credit note in his pocket and worried. "Uh, where can a chap get a bite to eat? A good, cheap restaurant?"

The man took his arm. "I'll show you. A place down by the water, run by a cousin of mine."

"Oh, I wouldn't want to put you to any trouble."

"Not at all. I was about to refresh the inner man myself. By the way, my name is Johnny Ling."

"Glad to know you, Mr. Ling. I'm Don Harvey."

The restaurant was in a blind alley off the foot of Buchanan Street. Its sign advertised Two Worlds Dining-room—*Tables for Ladies*—Welcome Spacemen. Three move-overs were hanging around the entrance, sniffing the odors and pressing their twitching noses against the screen door. Johnny Ling pushed them aside and ushered Don in.

A fat Cantonese stood behind the counter, presiding over both range and cash register. Ling called out, "Hi, Charley!"

The fat man answered, "Hello, Johnny," then broke into fluent cursing, mixing Cantonese, English, Portuguese, and whistle speech impartially. One of the move-overs had managed to slip in when the door was opened and was making a bee-line for the pie rack, his little hoofs clicking on the floor. Moving very fast despite his size, the man called Charley headed the faun off, took him by the ear and marched him out. Still cursing, Charley returned to the pie rack, picked out half a pie that had seen better times and returned to the door. He tossed the pie to the fauns, who scrambled for it, bleating and whimpering.

"If you didn't feed them, Charley," commented Ling, "they wouldn't hang around."

"You mind your own business!"

Several customers were eating at the counter; they paid no attention to the incident. Ling moved closer to the cook and said: "Back room empty?"

Charley nodded and turned his back. Ling led Don through a swinging door; they ended up in a booth in the back of the building. Don sat down and picked up a menu, wondering what he could get that would stretch his one credit as far as possible. Ling took it from him. "Let me order for you. Charley really is a number-one cook."

"But—"

"You are my guest. No, don't argue. I insist." Charley showed up at that point, stepping silently through the booth's curtain. He and Ling exchanged remarks in a rapid singsong; he went away, returning shortly with crisp hot egg rolls. The aroma was wonderful, and Don's stomach put a stop to his protests.

The egg rolls were followed by a main dish which Don could not place. It was Chinese cooking, but it certainly was not the chop suey of the trade. Don thought that he could identify Venerian vegetables out of his childhood in it, but he could not be sure. Whatever it was, it was just what he needed; he began to feel a warm glow of content and ceased to be worried about anything.

While he ate, he found that he was telling Ling his life history with emphasis on recent events, that had landed him unexpectedly on Venus. The man was easy to talk to, and it did not seem polite to sit wolfing his host's food and saying nothing.

Ling sat back presently and wiped his mouth. "You've certainly had an odd time of it, Don. What are you going to do now?"

Don frowned. "I wish I knew. I've got to find a job of some sort, and a place to sleep. After that I've got to scrape up, or save up, or borrow, enough money to send word to my folks. They'll be worried."

"You brought some money with you?"

"Huh? Oh, sure, but it's Federation money. I can't spend it."

"And Uncle Tom wouldn't change it for you. He's a flinty-hearted old so-and-so in spite of his smiles. He's still a pawnbroker at bottom."

"'Uncle Tom'? The banker is your uncle?"

"Eh? Oh, no, no—just a manner of speaking. He set up a hock-shop here a long time ago. Prospectors would come in and pawn their Geiger counters. Next time out he'd grubstake 'em. Pretty soon he owned half the hot pits around here and was a banker. But we still call him Uncle Tom."

Don had a vague feeling that Ling was too anxious to deny the relationship, but he did not pursue the thought, as it did not matter to him. Ling continued: "You know, Don, the bank isn't the only place where you can change Federation money."

"What do you mean?"

Ling dipped his forefinger in a puddle of water on the table top and traced out the universal credit sign. "Of course, it's the only legal place. Would that worry you?"

"Well—"

"It isn't as if there were anything wrong about changing it. It's an arbitrary law, and they didn't ask you when they passed it. After all, it's your money. That's right, isn't it?"

"I suppose so."

"It's your money, and you can do what you please with it. But this talk is strictly on the quiet—you understand that?"

Don didn't say anything; Ling went on: "Now, just speaking hypothetically—how much Federation money do you have?"

"Uh, about five hundred credits."

"Let's see it."

Don hesitated. Ling said sharply: "Come on. Don't you trust me? After all, it's just so much waste paper."

Don got out his money. Ling looked at it and took out his wallet, started counting out bills. "Some of those big bills will be hard to move," he commented. "Suppose we say fifteen per cent." The money he laid down looked exactly like that Don had placed on the table except that each note had been overprinted with Venus Republic.

Don did a rapid calculation. Fifteen per cent of what he had came to seventy-five credits, more or less—not even half what he needed to pay for a radiogram to Mars. He picked up his money and started putting it back into his wallet.

"What's the matter?"

"It's no use to me. I told you I needed a hundred eighty-seven fifty to pay for my radiogram."

"Well—twenty per cent. And I'm doing you a favor because you're a youngster in trouble."

Twenty per cent was still only a hundred credits. "No."

"Be reasonable! I can't move it at more than a point or two over that; I might take a loss. Commercial money draws eight per cent now, the way things are booming. This stuff has to go into hiding, losing eight per cent every year. If the war goes on very long, it's a net loss. What do you expect?"

Fiscal theory was over Don's head; he simply knew that anything less than the price of a message to Mars did not interest him. He shook his head.

Ling shrugged and gathered up his money. "It's your loss. Say, that's a handsome ring you're wearing."

"Thanks."

"How much money do you say you needed?"

Don repeated it. "You see, I've just got to get word to my family. I don't really need money for anything else; I can work."

"Mind if I look at that ring?"

Don did not want to pass it over, but there seemed no way to avoid it without being rude. Ling slipped it on; it was quite loose on his bony finger. "Just my size. And it's got my initial, too."

"Huh?"

"My milk name, *Henry*. I'll tell you, Don, I'd really like to help you out. Suppose we say twenty per cent on your money and I'll take the ring for the balance of what you need to send your 'gram. Okay?"

Don could not have told why he refused. But he was beginning to dislike Ling, beginning to regret being obligated to him for a meal. The sudden switch aroused his stubborn streak. "It's a family keepsake," he answered. "Not for sale."

"Eh? You're in no position to be sentimental. The ring is worth more here than it is on Earth—but I'm still offering you much more than it's worth. Don't be a fool!"

"I know you are," Don answered, "and I don't understand why you are. In any case the ring is not for sale. Give it back to me."

"And suppose I don't?"

Don took a deep breath. "Why then," he said slowly, "I suppose I'll have to fight you for it."

Ling looked at him for a moment, then took off the ring, dropped it on the table and walked out of the booth without saying anything more.

Don stared after him and tried to figure it out. He was still wondering when the curtain was pushed aside and the restaurant keeper came in. He dropped a chit on the table. "One and six," he said stolidly.

"Didn't Mr. Ling pay for it? He invited me to have dinner with him."

"One and six," Charley repeated. "You ate. You pay."

Don stood up. "Where do you wash dishes around here? I might as well get started."

Chapter Nine

Bone Money

BEFORE the evening was over the job of washing dishes for his dinner developed into a fixed arrangement. The salary was small—Don calculated that it would take him roughly forever to save enough money to send a radiogram to his parents—but it included three meals a day of Charley's superlative cooking. Charley himself seemed a very decent sort under his gruffness. He expressed a complicated and most disparaging opinion of Johnny Ling, using the same highly spiced lingua franca that he had used on the move-overs. He also denied any relationship to Ling while attributing to Ling other relationships which were on the face of them improbable.

After the last customer was gone and the last dish dried, Charley made up a pallet for Don on the floor of the back room in which Don had dined. As Don undressed and crawled into bed, he remembered that he should have phoned the spaceport security office and told them his address. Tomorrow would do, he thought sleepily; anyhow the restaurant had no phone.

He woke up in darkness with a feeling of oppression. For a terrified moment he thought someone was holding him down and trying to rob him. As he came wider awake he realized where he was and what was causing the oppressed feeling—move-overs. There were two of them in bed with him; one was snuggled up to his back and was holding onto his shoulders; the other was cradled in his lap, spoon-fashion. Both were snoring gently. Someone had undoubtedly left a door open for a moment and they had sneaked in.

Don chuckled to himself. It was impossible to be angry with the affectionate little creatures. He scratched the one in front of him between its horns and said, "Look, kids, this is *my* bed. Now get out of here before I get tough."

They both bleated and snuggled closer. Don got up, got each of them by an ear and evicted them through the curtain. "Now stay out!"

They were back in bed before he was.

Don thought about it and gave up. The back room had no door that could be closed. As for chucking them outside the building, the place was dark and still strange to him and he was not sure of the location of light switches. Nor did he want to wake Charley. After all there was no harm in bedding down with a move-over; they were cleanly little things, no worse than having a dog curl up against one—better, for dogs harbor fleas. "Move over," he ordered, unintentionally renaming them, "and give me some room."

He did not go at once to sleep; the dream that had awakened him still troubled him. He sat up, fumbled in the dark, and found his money, which he tucked under him. He then remembered the ring, and, feeling somewhat foolish, he pulled on a sock and stuffed the ring far down into the sock.

Presently all three were snoring.

He was awakened by a frightened bleating in his ear. The next few moments were quite confused. He sat up, whispered, "Pipe down!" and started to smack his bedmate, when he felt his wrist grasped by a hand—not the thumbless little paw of a move-over, but a human hand.

He kicked out and connected with something. There was a grunt, more anguished bleating, and the click-click-click of little hoofs on bare floor. He kicked again and almost broke his toe; the hand let go.

He backed away while getting to his feet. There were sounds of struggle near him and loud bleating. The sounds died down while he was still trying to peer through the darkness to find out what was happening. Then a light came on blindingly and he saw Charley standing in the door, dressed in a wrap-around and a big, shiny cleaver. "What's the matter with you?" Charley demanded.

Don did his best to explain but move-overs, dreams, and clutching hands in the dark were badly mixed together. "You eat too much late at night," Charley decided. Nevertheless he checked the place, with Don trailing after.

When he came to a window with a broken hasp, he did not say anything but went at once to the cash register and the lock box. Neither seemed to have been disturbed. Charley nailed up the broken catch, shoved the move-overs back into the night, and said, "Go to sleep," to Don. He returned to his own room.

Don tried to do so, but it was some time before he could quiet down. Both his money and the ring were still at hand. He put the ring back on his finger and went to sleep with his fist clenched.

(To be concluded in the forthcoming October issue of Blue Book.)

To the World's End

The ancients of the Mediterranean world made their weapons of bronze; for this tin was essential; and Britain was the best source of supply. Yet a voyage beyond the Pillars of Hercules (Gibraltar) was a faring desperate indeed.

by DAVID CHENEY

Graven by Palmos on the Sacred Disks of Crete for the Records of Cnossos

ON the twentieth year of the Fourth Minos, Lord of Labyrinth and Ruler of the Mid Sea, he the Giver of Laws sat on the shining sun-throne and held court.

Upon either side of the throne-seat stood a tall lamp of alabaster, in whose broad salver a wick floated on green oil and burned brightly, casting mellow light over the glowing mail of the lords of Crete, and the bright blue, scarlet and gold of the women. It was mid-morning, but the throne-room is ever shadowy and dim.

Through the clustering courtiers strode a tall young warrior, wearing a blue chlamys of fine Tyrian cloth. His quilted mail flashed with golden plates.

The greaves of his legs, his back-plates and breastplates, all were of bright gold. His slender waist was bound with a broad belt curiously wrought of golden wire and adorned with scarabs of Egypt enameled azure and scarlet. At his side swung a heavy sword with ivory hilt embellished with a small crimson dolphin: for the dolphin is symbol, not of Poseidon only, but of Crete also, ruler of the sea-ways.

This golden youth took from under his blue chlamys a long arrow with broken shaft and black obsidian point, and a strange-shaped ingot of white metal. He cast broken arrow and ingot ringingly upon the stone tiles before the lion skin that lay at the Minos' feet.

He made low obeisance to the Minos, to the Queen in her woman's seat beside him, and to the Minos-son near, and the court. He clapped right hand upon the ivory dolphin-hilt, and stared around with fearless but restless eyes.

The Minos raised to him his staff of ebony and ivory. A short and stocky lord of Phæstos, whose plates of mail were enameled green and yellow, and who stood near Myenides, King of the South Palace—he who is known to men as the Bronze Warrior—started and moved one step forward.

"O Voice of the Law!" cried the young warrior. "I come to warn Cnossos!"

"To warn!" repeated the Minos in his deep voice. He stared down at broken arrow and metal ingot. "An arrow with a broken shaft. An ingot of tin. What symbols are these? *Warn* is a perilous word. We think we have not seen your face before. Offer you counsel or threat?"

"I am Alces, Prince of Phæstos. I am too near akin to that traitor lord of Phæstos to have been seen in your court before this, or to be known to you: I mean that lord, Sire, who went down into Egypt against Myenides the Bronze Warrior, and was slain by him for his treachery near the royal palace at Thebes."

"But the arrow! The ingot!" cried the Minos impatiently.

Prince Alces threw back his chlamys. He thrust out his bared left arm. A wound lately healed showed deep and red in the flesh.

"The arrow is from this arm," he said. "The ingot is Cassiterides tin. I got the arrow when I got the tin."

THE stocky lord moved another step forward. He spoke hoarsely:

"The youth Alces is a breeder of trouble and a liar!" he said.

"Why so hot, friend?" asked the King of Kings. "Is not the scar evident? We know such wounds. An arrow has been drawn from his arm. Let the Lord Dentos be silent till I raise to him the ivory scepter. Myenides, know you this young prince?"

"He is of my following," said the Bronze Warrior. "It was he who brought home on his ship *Triton* the Lords Orestos and Thersites, and the Greek slaves after their flight to Athens. You will remember, Sire, that Arbyces, Archon of Athens, named him in his letter. I know nothing of this matter; but you may put faith in Prince Alces. He is son of that warrior Meriones who, with spear-famed Idomeneus, led eighty ships to the aid of the Greeks embattled upon the plains of Troia."

"Meriones," mused the Minos, stroking his black beard. "We knew Meriones well. Did not Homer sing, Meriones was equal to man-slaying Ares? Ah, ah! When my sire and I sought of Agamemnon and the Greeks the loan of ships for the sea-fight against mad Archites, this Meriones commanded the eighty galleys from hundred-towned Crete, given back in our need by Agamemnon—and died in bloody battle off Patmos. Think you, we could forget? Verily, we owe something to the son of Meriones! Say on, Prince Alces."

"Let the Bronze Warrior examine the arrow," said Prince Alces, "and say if he know it."

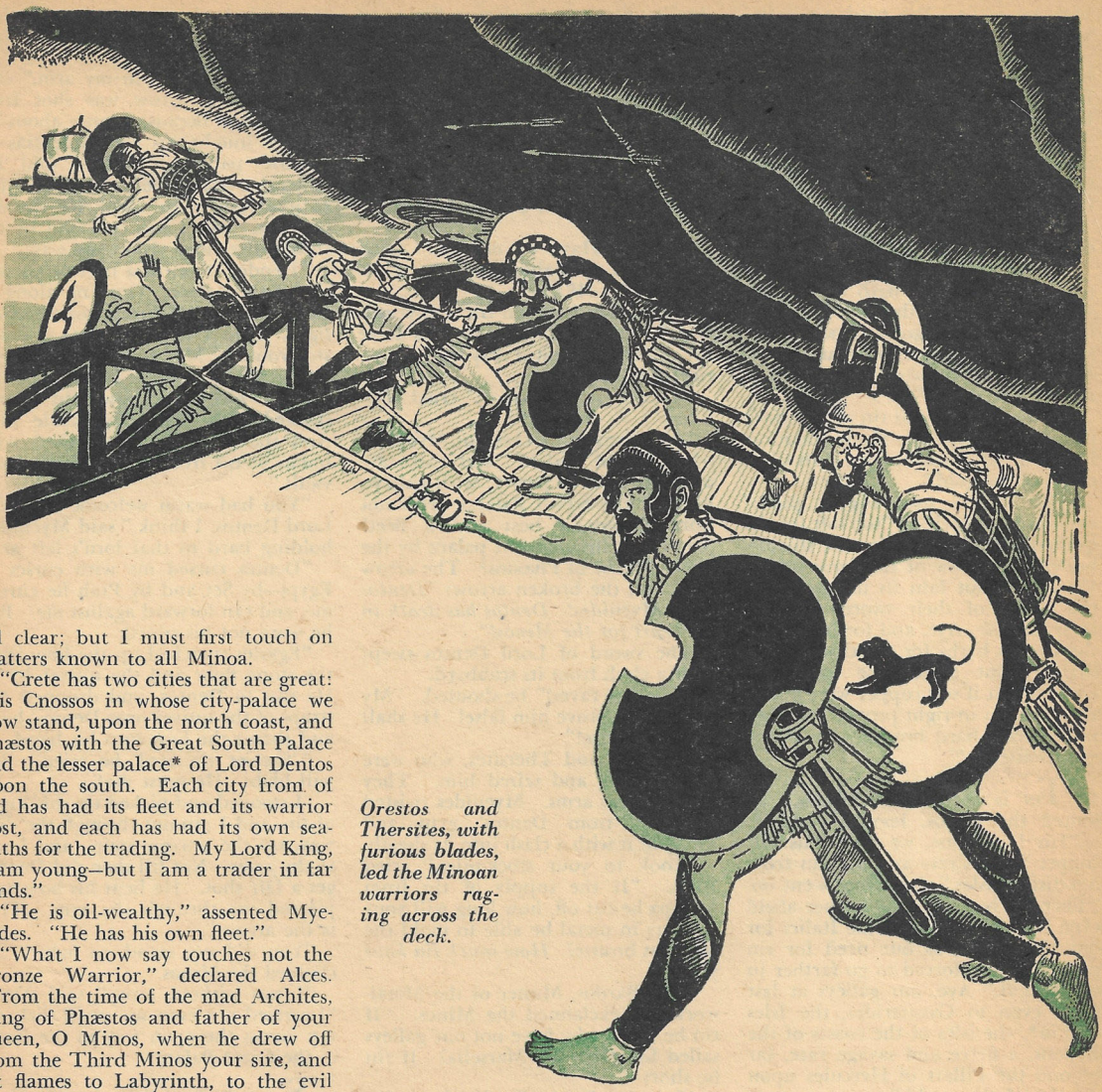
MYENIDES stepped forward. He picked up the broken shaft and the part with the head that lay by it. He looked upon the black-stone point and upon the shaft, and upon the feathered butt.

"The feathers green and yellow and these odd barbs upon the point I know," declared Myenides. "The Lord Dentos should know this arrow. It is from one of his own quivers."

"It is no shaft of mine," growled Lord Dentos. "Any man can dye feathers yellow and green. Give any shaper of heads a feather and hot water, and he can chip out Dentos barbs. This is a foul plot—"

"You speak too soon," said the Minos sternly. "Most points now are bronze. Yet you still use the black-glass stone. It is not your time, Dentos. Did we ask you to speak? When your turn comes, you shall answer the Prince. We listen now to him."

"I crave your patience, Sire," said Prince Alces calmly. "I would make



Orestos and Thersites, with furious blades, led the Minoan warriors raging across the deck.

all clear; but I must first touch on matters known to all Minoa.

"Crete has two cities that are great: this Cnossos in whose city-palace we now stand, upon the north coast, and Phæstos with the Great South Palace and the lesser palace* of Lord Dentos upon the south. Each city from of eld has had its fleet and its warrior host, and each has had its own sea-paths for the trading. My Lord King, I am young—but I am a trader in far lands."

"He is oil-wealthy," assented Myenides. "He has his own fleet."

"What I now say touches not the Bronze Warrior," declared Alces. "From the time of the mad Archites, King of Phæstos and father of your queen, O Minos, when he drew off from the Third Minos your sire, and set flames to Labyrinth, to the evil days of that Lord of Phæstos who plotted in Egypt to overthrow you and brought worship of animal gods into Crete, Phæstos was rival to Cnossos and ever plotted to make her kings overlords of Crete. When that traitor died in Thebes, and you crowned Myenides the Bronze Warrior our king, you made sure for that time the peace of Crete."

"I see not where all this leads—" began the Minos.

"My house has ever been loyal to Cnossos and to the Minos; I believe in one ruler and one power for Minoa. *I speak, O Minos, for the peace of Crete!*"

"Harken not to this babbler," growled Lord Dentos. "He seeks not peace, but to bare blades in war!"

"You'd best be silent," said Orestos, who stood near, in low voice: "Know you not the custom of the Royal Court? Is not the Minos just to all men? When your time comes, he will hear you. Speak not till he raise to you his scepter."

But the patience of the Minos was near an end.

"If the Lord Dentos speak again before his time and ere we raise to him the scepter," he cried, rising, "we will load him with chains and bid him think on the virtue of silence in the dungeons under Labyrinth!"

"I command a thousand Cretes—" began Dentos.

"And I, your overlord, command ten thousand," exclaimed Myenides hotly, "and am master of all the troops that guard the coasts. And the King of Kings can raise fifty thousand heroes!"

Alces turned toward the Lord Dentos. "The power is still with the King of Kings!" he cried, and turned back to face the throne. "Is not the peace of all Minoa made sure by the strength of our fleet and the might of our host? Mycenæ and Tiryns* have walls: for what city in the south of Greece has a navy strong enough for its defense? But Phæstos and Cnossos

*Modern archeologists, in excavating the royal palace at Phæstos, have uncovered the remains of this smaller palace. D. C.

*Minoan cities on the mainland of Greece. Mycenæ is famed for its lion-gate, still standing.

have no walls. We need no walls—we have ships that control the sea."

"If you and Dentos have had a brawl," said the Minos, "let Myenides hear you. Is this not his business? Let Myenides judge your wrongs."

"My own wrongs are of little moment," said Alces. "I speak for Cnossos, for the green isle of Crete, for all Minoa!"

"Say on," bade the Minos, sitting down again.

"Is not the might of the fleet dependent on the strength of our seawarriors? Is not the power of our host based on the good metal bronze? Here is an ingot of precious tin, O Minos: *Is not bronze compounded of copper and of tin?*"

"Truly, copper and tin are precious metals," assented the Minos, nodding his head, "and worth more than silver or glittering gold."

"Our fathers used copper pure," continued the prince, "too soft for the quilted mail, too soft for the shield—before they knew of *cassiteros* or tin. Were they not fain to use stone for the blades of their swords and for their knives? Aye, and for heads like the Dentos barbs for the tips of their shafts? But those wise in metals learned that if soft copper were mixed with soft tin in right proportion, they would have hard bronze. *So Minoa must have tin!*"

"Tin is the life of Minoa," assented the Minos, leaning forward.

"For long time, we mined us our copper upon Crete and our tin from not-distant isles," the prince went on. "Then we had to range farther afield even unto the Land of the Italici for our tin. Ever, as our need for tin grew, we were forced to go farther in quest of it. Aye, our galleys at last fared even to Cassiterides, the Isles of Tin*, the isles of the coasts of the Britons, a fierce and savage race, far beyond the Pillars of Hercules upon the rim of the world."

"Rarely, rarely," objected the Minos. "Through the interior of Europa, through the Lands of the Dolmen-makers**—"

"I was coming to that," said Alces. "We learned to barter with the inland peoples at the mouth of Eridanus on upper Adri, at the mouth of the Rhone at Marsella, and at the farther trading-posts of the Minos on the south coast of the Land of the Lion Rock.

"From Crete to the Cassiterides is a long and weary voyage, and a dangerous one. Swift is that galley which makes the Tin Isles in three moons. Are not four moons or even five often passed in that faring? So we began to barter for our tin with the inland tribes: for from tribe to tribe the tin passes, from Cassiterides and the Britons to the Gauls, till it reaches the coast at last and the traders of Crete.

"Our strength is in this metal tin. Consider, then, if tin fail, how shall we have bronze for our armor, bronze for our arms?"

"What! Have we not tin?" cried the Minos, springing up. "Runs the supply low? *Why—*"

"If Cnossos have no tin, Labyrinth falls," said Alces. "If Phæstos have tin, a lord of Phæstos may burn Labyrinth again!"

"You are mad to say it!" cried Myenides.

"This matter touches not Myenides—have I not said it? But there are other lords with power, with galleys, lords of the South Palace! Has not Lord Dentos a host and a fleet? Stands not his arrogant palace by the Royal House of Phæstos? The arrow cries out, the broken arrow: *Dentos hates Myenides! Dentos has death in his heart for the Minos!*"

The sword of Lord Dentos swept with a clash from its scabbard.

"The boy raves!" he shouted. "My blade shall prove him false! He shall eat my bronze!"

Myenides and Thersites, who were near, sprang and seized him. They pinioned his arms. Myenides twisted the hilt from Dentos' grip and dropped it with a clash into its sheath.

"Look to your stock-piles," cried Alces. "If the supply of tin from Europa be cut off, how long will your workers in metal be able to mold the puissant bronze? *How much tin have you?*"

"Call Bardos, Master of the Metalworkers!" exclaimed the Minos. "If tin be short, why have not our galleys sailed for Adri, for Marsella? If tin be short—"

"Question Bardos," said Alces. He stooped and picked up the broken arrow and the ingot. *"The Lord Dentos has tin."*

"The brazen-coated liar!" shouted Dentos, struggling with those who held him. "Free me! Let us to the arena! Let him prove it in the arena! My blade shall split his false throat! He lies!"

"The Lord Dentos has been amassing tin," declared Alces calmly. "He has been long importing the ingots from Europa; but instead of turning in all his metal to the royal stock-pile for his credit-disks, when his ships came in, as required by law, he turned in not one ingot in twenty."

"All lies! Lies! *Lies!*" shouted Dentos.

"How know you this, Prince Alces?" demanded the Minos sternly. "You bring black charge against a lord of Crete! If he be guilty, he will face the Minotaur!"

"The arrow was in my arm," said Alces. "The arrow was shot from Dentos' bow because I knew about his tin. I sought his son Amentias in Dentos' palace. A slave told me Amentias was in the baths. I thought to join him in the pool, for the day was hot. But I was confused by the slave's directions—I lost my way.

"I ended, Sire, in a narrow passage under the palace. Groping along in that dim place, I heard voices, saw a light. And I stumbled into a broad storeroom. My Lord Dentos was there, with Egastes, captain of his guard. His great bow and quiver stocked with shafts lay beside him. And the chamber was packed with ingots of tin from stone floor to lofty vault."

"You had warm welcome from the Lord Dentos, I think," said Myenides, holding hard to that lord's left arm.

"Dentos cursed me with curses of Egypt—by Set and by Ptah he cursed me, and ran forward against me. But he wore not his sword.

"Egastes snatched up the bow from the stone floor and the quiver by it. He ran to Dentos, and dropped the straps of the quiver over Dentos' head and thrust the bow into his hand.

" 'Skewer the spy!' he cried. 'He will blab! He must die!'

"I stooped and picked up this ingot of tin, and I ran out through the dim way, up the narrow stairs, and forth to the gates. Not till then did Dentos get a fair shot. He bent his bow and pierced me through the arm. This is the arrow."

"You did not stand, to fight?" exclaimed the Minos.

"I was without arms," said Alces. "I carried not even my small dirk. I ran across the open way to the stairs of the Great Palace.

"Sarmentes of Minopolis was descending, and Lyxergos and others with him. At sight of them, Dentos and those following turned about and went back into his palace. My Lord King, I silenced Sarmentes and those with him till I should ask them to speak."

"How silenced them?" asked the Minos.

"It was Minos-business, I said. I said that, when the hour was right, I would summon them to Labyrinth to speak. Sire, they are captains of my fleet. They are here."

"Is there more to the tale?" asked the Minos, staring at Dentos.

"No more, Sire. So it was I escaped from Dentos, and broke the shaft near the flesh and drew forth the bolt. I have asked, since, and find that little tin has come into Crete in the last six

*The Scilly Isles, off the coast of Cornwall, England.

**The dolmens of Europe mark the ancient trade routes.

"The arrow is from this arm," Alces said. "I got the arrow when I got the tin."

moons. Little tin, Sire; but this man has abundance!" . . .

A man in leathern apron entered the throne-room, from the farther door that leads to the section of the workshops and the storage-rooms. He made obeisance to the King and to the court.

"My Lord King," he said in harsh voice. "What is the pleasure of my Lord King?"

"Bardos, you are Master of the Metal-workers," said the Minos. "You have also charge of the stock-piles of Crete?"

"The brass and the bronze, the copper and the tin, the silver and the gold—aye, and elektron from the Baltic, and purple dye from shells of Taras Bay:* all these are in my charge." He rubbed sooty hands on his leathern apron.

"What weight of tin have you in the great bins?" demanded the Minos.

"Of tin, Sire? Why—why, I know not. I have not heeded—do not the galleys bring in the ingots of tin with almost every tide? *There is always tin.*"

"If the supply were cut off," the Minos insisted, "how long would the tin in the storerooms last?"

"Now, Hephæstos forbid!" cried the Master of the Metal-workers. "Why should the inflow of tin ever cease? *There is always tin—*"

"But if it were cut off? If we got no more?"

"I can only guess," stammered Bardos. "At rough estimate, six moons, eight moons—not more than eight moons. But surely, *there is always tin.*"

"How much tin have you in the bins of Phæstos?" asked the Minos of Myenides.

"If the supply cease this day," answered Myenides, "if, Sire, as I dread to hear, for any reason the supply has already ceased, I doubt our tin would last three moons."

"And how much tin have you hidden under your palace?" cried the Minos, turning abruptly and pointing at Dentos.

"The fellow lies! I have no tin!"

"All copper and tin brought into Crete is to be turned over to the royal stock," said the Minos sternly. "Did not the wise Rhadamanthos embody it in the *Law of Minos?* You know, you receive credit-disks for the metal —your *profit* is secure. You would not hold out tin for *profit,* then. But tin, as the wise young prince has said, is power; and the possession of tin, should our supply fail, would assure him who has it control of all Minoa! My Lord Dentos, *how much tin have you?*"

"Why should *I* hoard tin?" cried the man, his face aflame. And he struggled with his captors to free his arms.

"We shall see," said the Minos. "Myenides, take your guards and search the storerooms of Lord Dentos' palace. The Lord Dentos should consider that if we find he has heaped there ingots of tin, he goes to Minotaur—and his palace shall be razed to the Phæstian sod."

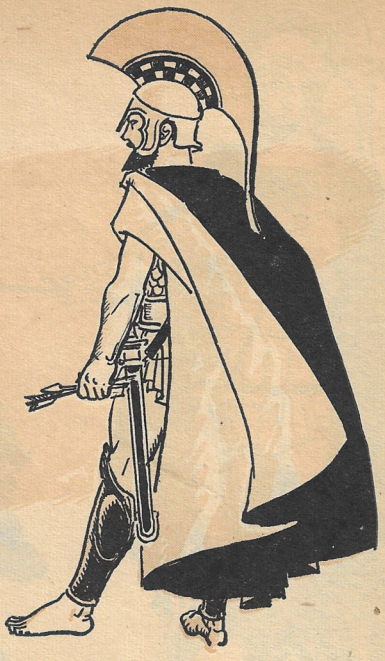
Lord Dentos roared like a bull of Labyrinthine stalls. He gave a heave forward. He broke loose from the hold of Myenides and of Thersites. And shouting:

"To me, Denti! *To me, Denti!*" he whipped out his bronze blade again and plunged toward the gates.

A turmoil broke out by the swinging gates. Slashing through, cutting right and left without heed where their great blows fell, the guards of Lord Dentos in flying wedge charged

*The purple dye from the Murex shells of the Tarentine Gulf rivaled the famed Tyrian purple.

Illustrated by FREDERICK CHAPMAN



"The boy raves!" Lord Dentos shouted. "He shall eat my bronze!"

shouting into the presence of the King of Kings. Bronze clashed with bronze, and the red blood flowed.

Before the royal guards could recover from their surprise, the warriors of Dentos had ringed him around, and that evil horde rushed from the City Palace, and down the broad stairs.

Their chariots awaited them below. With rumble of heavy wheels and sharp clatter of hoofs, they were off down the Way of the Axes toward the sea.

The Minos himself had snatched up his great sword, which he kept ever by him, and sprang down among his courtiers to take part in the fray. Now he shouted, "After them!"

But Alces touched his arm.

"Dentos has ships in the haven," he said. "They are in the Bay of Sea Gulls, waiting. He will put to sea."

Myenides came back, panting. "They are safe away," he said. "I wager I will find no tin under the palace of Dentos! He will see to it, the ingots are hidden away in the hills."

"Would he attack the South Palace?" demanded Orestos.

"We are too strong, and he too wily," said Myenides, and laughed. "I think he will try other tricks."

"Minoa must have tin," said the Minos. "You must find his hoard. Alces, Minoa must have tin or Labyrinth falls."

"My galleys are in the port, ready to sail," said Alces. "They are provisioned for sea-warriors and the long voyage. Let me have Thersites and Orestos and a bold following, and I will fetch you tin, Sire."

"Dentos will pursue, to destroy you," warned Myenides. "He holds that bolt in his Set-cursed quiver!"

ALCES looked at him with steady eyes: "Fear *I* any bolt of Dentos?" he said softly. "Have we not ships, and battle-famed heroes to man them? He can wound the arm of an unarmed man: but think you he could skewer the King's fleet? With Thersites and Orestos by me I would board *Ostreon* his great galley itself, and strike him down!"

"Thersites is but just wed," said the Minos, thinking always first of his warriors, as his manner was, and looking at that madcap lord soberly.

"My lord has only just snatched me from sea-ways and lifted me from slavery," said a soft voice beside him. "My lord has just wed me. Will he fare forth now for a year's time to risk his life in the unknown?"

Alcmena stood by him. Her cheeks were flushed.

"Would the Minos and the Princess of Greece try me?" cried Thersites. "Who doubts where my heart will stay, while I toss upon the sea-horses beyond Scylla and Charybdis? This tin sword you have forged, Alces, stands to the hilt in my heart! But I will go with you, young Prince, in Minoa's need—even to the world's end, for tin."

Alcmena clapped her hands. "You hear Thersites, my Lord King!" she cried in triumphant voice. "Would he sulk in terraced gardens of Labyrinth when Minoa calls?"

"You are glad that I go?" cried Thersites, astonished.

"I am half fish," said Alcmena, laughing, her face toward the Minos. "I am a dolphin! Think you Alcmena bides here?" And she turned her bright head and looked at Thersites. "Nay, my lord husband!" she said. "I fare with you to the world's end! Surely, Orestos will go with you: fare you twain ever two ways? I must be there, lest you and he cross blades in comedy again!"

"It was no comedy—" began Thersites, flushing.

"Good, then," approved the Minos. "Thersites and his bride shall ride on your galley, Prince Alces; and lo, I will lend you for this faring the royal ship *Minos-eye* and the *Dragon of Adri*. This *Dragon* is aged, but still tough of beam. Orestos!"

"I am ready, my Lord King."

"You have not been wed yourself so long as to lose the name bridegroom! Will your queen of Egypt fare with you to Cassiterides?"

"Ankhsen is not present, Sire," replied Orestos. "But I will speak for her. She will not bide home, with me a-voyaging. She will be company for Alcmena."

"I should be a bridegroom!" grumbled Alces. "This will be no pleasure-jaunt, with pipes and timbrels and

festoons of flowers. Do we not sail for tin? Are we not menaced with sea-battles on that faring? But here be a troop of lovers! Someone fetch me cushions of down for the cabins! I will bedeck the spars with ribbands. I will set up dovecotes on the decks."

"Dovecotes?" cried Alcmena. "Why dovecotes?"

"For the billing and cooing—" began Alces.

"You are a comely youth," retorted Alcmena, smiling. "Old sea-tales have it, the daughters of the Britons are fair, with eyes like sky and hair like gold. Would you trade with them for tin and give your heart in the barter? Methinks you may need your dovecotes for the home-faring!"

"It will take time to make ready for the long voyage," said the Minos, with something like a groan, "and we ill can spare one hour! There must be provisions for the warriors—arms and food—"

"How long will it take to have *Minos-eye* and *Dragon of Adri* ready?" demanded Alces. "All is aboard my galleys, for all my ships can carry—have I not told you so? Dentos, I think, has seven ships. I have five, but mine are swifter. With your sea-houses, Sire, we shall match him, ship for ship, man for man."

"Our galleys are always ready," said the Minos. "And what ships on the wide waters of the world can match *Minos-eye* or *Dragon of Adri?*"

"Good," said Thersites. "We can clear for sea in one hour."

"But the goods for trading?" cried Orestos. "Needs must we have palace jars and jewels of price, bronze swords of cunning workmanship, and—"

"It will take longer than an hour," said Alces. "My ships are well stored with all needful merchandise. But those of the Minos?"

"They will carry the heroes, arms, provisions for the fleet," said Myenides, "and all is aboard. Would I could go with you!"

"Think you the Minos is happy to tarry at home?" demanded the King of Labyrinth. "But our place is here, Myenides. This traitor is clear away. He has a strong following. He may follow Alces; or he may strike Phæstos or even Cnossos, while your fleet is out. Alces. you do a brave thing for Minoa. Minoa shall not forget."

Alces bowed.

"Fetch us wine," the Minos bade his cup-bearer, "that we may pour a libation and drink to the success of the expedition of Alces!"

Wine was brought in golden urns. They spilled wine to the gods and drank—all but Myenides. He poured no wine, but lifted his cup toward the sun.

"I drink to the One," said he, "to Jehovah of Moses. For long life to Prince Alces and success in the quest for tin! I drink for success to my Lord Orestos and his bride, to Thersites mighty in battle, and to Alcmena, peerless among the women of Greece!"

So they drank and parted, on the palace stairs. It was late on that day, however, before the goods for barter were checked, and the fleet of Alces spread painted wings and put forth to sea.

But hidden round the farthermost western point of Crete, under the land, would lie the sea-hawks of Dentos lurking to strike.

THE wind was fair for the westward faring, when the galleys of Cnossos went forth out of harbor and passed by the Isle of Dea. The sea was calm. The deep blue waters scintillated in the sun as if sprinkled with gems.

The ships of Dentos had fleetly swept beyond vision of the Minos-men. The only craft in sight was a slant-sailed Egyptian trader from Nile's mouth swiftly growing larger as she swept toward Crete.

Now, the golden-armored Alces led forth from the Bay of Sea Gulls seven ships in his expedition to Cassiterides in quest of tin for the puissant bronze; and every galley was both merchantman and warship. Alces commanded the fleet; and Thersites was lord of the sea-warriors—to his discontent, as I shall show.

The greatest of that fleet was the royal sea-house *Minos-eye*, whose name is mighty throughout the world. *Minos-eye* bore painted in red upon each leathern sail the head of a bull. She was three-masted, as our seals show, and bore banks of oars upon each side, great sweeps to push against the sea.

The prow of *Minos-eye*, lofty against heaven, lifted high in mighty forks. Her forks were shod with bronze where they bowed outward upon the bow and slanted backward to the keel: for when her rushing weight bore down in sea-battle upon the doomed galley, like a sword of the gods she would cleave it through and through. Aye, she would stave in the decks of that lost ship; their goodly beams would break, their timbers splinter under her forked prow, and strew the curdling seas with gleaming bodies of the crew. Zeus, what a ship! Her, Alces himself commanded, and second under him that Ascopas of Canæ who had been master of the *Sea-Dog* sunk by Corcyraean pirates when Orestos and Thersites battled them off the coast of Hellas and the mad warrior Thersites rescued the Greek maid Alcmena the Archon's daughter, whom later he wed.

Minos-eye had a house in the stern known as the Royal House: for oft in purple robes the King of Kings voyaged in her; and for him was set therein the high throne-seat of carved and gilded cedar. Amidships, she had a house for the lords and captains of warriors; and forward, steps led down into the quarters of her crew. She was decked all over with cypress wood.

The walls of the Royal House and of the Lords' House were painted like chambers of Labyrinth: with gardens and shining lakes, with butterflies and with birds; and golden and silver fish deceived the eye and came alive among tall reeds.

The *Dragon of Adri*, once false Archites' ship, whose captain was Oryx mighty in sea-fights, was as great. Her timbers were brought by the shipwright Chlios from the Land of the Siculi, from fuming shadows of the fire-mountain's reek, where hammer of Hephæstos upon anvil of the earth's heart in the insufferable heat beats soft the eternal rock, and Etna spews forth the molten mass to whelm the towns of man.

These twain were Minos-ships. With them rushed with rhythmic sweeps and straining of lofty sails *Leviathan*, a two-master, that Sarmentes of Minopolis commanded; *Trident*, a two-master, whose captain was that Aspartes of Gortyna wise in seaways, said once to have brought golden apples from Hesperides to soothe the fever of Dædalus when, old and sick, he lay upon his last bed; and three swift single-masters: *Amphitrite*, that Lycantos of Chyteum oft steered to Eridanus mouth for wax and honey and amber and tin; *Flower of the Sea*, Lyxergos of Phæstos' beautiful floater, whose oarsmen were champions in the sea-races; and *Purple Fish*—Asmadios of Phæstos steered her, he whom the priests of Geia crowned with laurel for his gifts of onyx-stones.

SOON, Dea's green mass was lost to sight, and westward along the Cretan coast fared the fleet. When Ida's white crown was past, then the Prince Alces summoned the captains to the Royal House, and he sat on the throne of golden cedar and of ivory to receive them, and a great table of ebony stood before him.

To Alces came Orestos, to stand upon his left hand, and Thersites, now Prince of Minopolis, upon his right. The dark-tressed Ankhsen, she who had been Tut-ankh-Ammon's queen, whom Orestos wed after the Pharaoh's death and his rescue of her in Nippur of Babylonia; and Alcmena, she who was princess of Athens and one of the Tribute Company, whom Thersites freed by grace of the Minos and made his bride, after she was crowned Princess of Labyrinth—she of the golden hair: these twain sat by.

Oryx came from *Dragon of Adri*, a proud sea-lord whose cup-bearer and

whose shield-bearer stood beside him as he were a king; and Sarmentes, from lofty *Leviathan;* aye, and Aspartes of the *Trident,* he of Hesperides fame; and Lycantos the far-trader from *Amphitrite,* and Lyxergos, winner of sea-races, from *Flower of the Sea;* and Asmadios of the *Purple-Fish,* gift-giver to the earth-mother Geia, to give wisdom to the council.

THEN the gold-armored Alces rose and spoke:

"We sail for tin, as all know," he said. "Perchance we may find tin at Taras; or we may get tin in Marsella or in the Land of the Lion Rock by the Pillars of Hercules. But there may be no tin for us at any trading-post. If so, we needs must fare forth out of the wide Mid Sea into the unknown, aye, even to Cassiterides."

"We will find no tin sufficient for our need on the mainland of Europa," asserted Orestos, shaking his head. "If there were tin there, we would have no shortage now."

"If the gods will, we fare even to the Tin Isles," said Alces again. "But the Lord Dentos of Phæstos has gone forth out of Labyrinth in wrath. His fleet has sailed. Somewhere, before we put the utmost cape of Crete at our backs, he will come forth. I call you to consult: if Dentos come forth, *shall we fight or shall we run?*"

Thersites strode forward till he stood in front of the table of ebony before the Prince Alces. The hot blood was in the warrior's face.

"By Hercules, why should we run?" he cried, his voice high.

"We have sailed to fetch home tin—" began Prince Alces.

"We fear no ships!" raged Thersites. "Why should we run? When in all time did any fleet of Cnossos avoid sea-battle with a rebel lord of Phæstos?"

Orestos spoke softly, a little smile on his lips.

"You rage before you think, Thersites," he said. "Tell me, comrade, is this a fleet of war? Or fare we forth far to fetch home tin for the makers of bronze?"

"Why—why, we fare to fetch tin," stammered Thersites.

"If we stop to fight, then, shall we not lose time? And perchance ships? And lives of men? And will we not thereby be delayed in the long venture, when present need of tin distresses Minoa? This is a small fleet, if strong. Has not the Minos other ships? Has he not his war fleets of Labyrinth and the Phæstian galleys of Myenides mighty in arms and men? Let them take on Dentos: we are for western seas."

"Would you let this traitor Dentos hold us back in our great purpose, Thersites?" cried Alces. "Is sea-battle more precious to Thersites than tin for his bronze blade?"

The flush paled from Thersites' cheeks. He stared at his long-time comrade. On a sudden, he unbuckled his great sword-belt.

And then he cast the bronze-bossed belt and the broad-bladed sword in its heavy sheath of ivory and of gold crashing upon the ebony table.

"When with the Thief of Thebes we stood on the height above the plain of Sumer in Babylonia," he cried, "and you sent men in gleaming mail to show themselves upon the hills and befool the host of Narbutali, I scoffed and played the fool. But your feint, O wise comrade, caused Narbutali to spread out his puissant host, and we carved the Babylonian ranks like butter and smashed through then to enter Nippur the Holy City. And now—I play the fool again."

"Pick up your belt and sword, Thersites," said Orestos. "Would the Minos name you Lord of Sea-warriors, if you were a fool?"

"Therefore I cast off my belt and sword," cried Thersites, raising a clenched fist and shaking it. "Set me to swabbing decks! Give me a pike to stand by the bulwarks, should hostile galley board us! Why should the Minos name *me,* Lord of Warriors? 'Tis an insult to Orestos! Comrade, I will not brook the slight! Will *I* be Lord of Warriors, and you, my liege-lord, submit to a fool's commands?"

"My dear lord!" cried Alcmena. "Play you again the comedy of the swords of the Athenian ship, when you strove with Orestos in brief mêlée that you might stay with me in Athens? Buckle on your belt, dear lord!"

Orestos laughed. He strode round the table, picked up Thersites' belt and sheath, and with a slap girded it upon him again.

"Comrade," he said, gravely and low, "you forget I am no longer overlord to Thersites! I know well you would spill the last drop of your hot veins into the rolling sea, for me. But you take your honors all awry, if you think Orestos slighted when Thersites was named Lord of Sea-warriors!"

"Why should *I* command—" began Thersites, but more calmly.

"You have proved your worth on field and sea," Orestos told him. "Think you the Minos has forgotten how you sent his ship a-rushing to shear off the starboard sweeps of the pirate galley, and boarded and took it with the fury of Ares? You have become great in Minoa. And the Minos said: 'Orestos, I have raised Thersites to be king of a city. And lo, has he not proved in the sea-fight and in Babylon with you his loyal heart and his cunning? With you by his sword-arm to counsel—'

"'Name him Lord of Sea-warriors!' I urged of the Minos. 'I would fare on that far way as counselor only: for will I then not lift the burden of command from my back to his? And have the more time to be with Ankhsen?' And the Minos answered, smiling: 'Good. Let Thersites be Lord of War for Alces' fleet.'"

"Is this truth?" demanded Thersites, clapping a hand upon his hilt.

"When did Orestos speak other than true words to Thersites?" demanded the conqueror of the army of Nippur. "Surely, if never before this hour, not now, with the scar fresh healed in your shoulder that you took for my sake!"

Thersites swung round and bowed to the Prince Alces and flashed a grim smile to Alcmena.

"Harken, Minoans," he said. "I will then command the sea-warriors. And let our host beware! I will be a grim leader! You are answered, Prince. We will run for it—toward Greece, toward Taras. But if Dentos broach this formation, we will stave his hulls; we will drown him fathoms deep in the salt waste!"

And he strode up the wide steps and out upon the windy deck.

Alces looked after him. "The Minos is wise," he said. "Yonder goes one quick and hot of temper—and the man to lead our host."

Alcmena rose, swept a low bow to Alces and to the lords of the fleet, and followed her own lord.

WHEN the captain-lords had returned to their own galleys, the fleet of Alces ran down the coast of Crete some twenty-five leagues till they raised the long cape that extends like a giant jaw on the farther side of the Gulf of Canea. Thence they came opposite the deep Gulf of Kisamos; and the other jaw of that gaping maw is Buso.

All this way, the great ships ran within sight of the land: for all sea-traders hug the shore. There lies haven in storm. The middle sea is peopled with monsters, and lashed with the wrath of sea-gods. Who knows, in Mid Sea what huge sea-beast will rise? Leviathan, that can stave a hull with his blunt skull? Ink-spitting octopus with arms reaching and long, that will entwine a ship and pull her down to coral caverns of Poseidon? Sirens, to bewitch? Furies, to destroy?

Aye, the fleet of Alces now stood off the Gulf of Kisamos. And straight there rushed from out that bay the flashing-oared ships of Dentos.

The trumpets sounded from ship to ship the warning blare. The bowmen and the pikemen took their places. The shining shields were raised beside the toiling oarsmen.

Alces flew his signals from the forked beak of *Minos-eye*. His ships stood off northeastward toward the Isle of Antikythera and the Strait of Kythera—toward Greece.

Dentos went after them. His bare-backed oarsmen sweated at the sweeps. The wind failed. You could hear the creak of the hundreds of tholes of oak. The sound of the sweeps roared across the quiet sea.

The many-oared galleys *Minos-eye* and *Dragon of Adri,* though their lofty sails of bull's-hide flapped and drew no more, fleetly outsped the surge of the Phæstian fleet. But the smaller ships, though with bare poles swifter than any of Dentos' craft, were slowed by those now useless bulls'-hides, flapping and empty of wind.

Flower of the Sea fast closed the gap between her forks and the *Dragon of Adri's* stern, but *Amphitrite* and *Purple Fish* lagged with the two-masted *Trident,* ever a sluggish craft.

Two great galleys of Dentos swept up, one on either side of the *Trident.* They came in upon her sweeps and shattered them.

They threw over brazen hooks and laid down boarding-bridges. And the men of Dentos poured shouting in upon the deck of the Lord Aspartes.

Now this same *Trident* was one of the eighty ships led by Meriones, father of Alces, and by spear-famed Idomeneus to the help of the Greeks at Troia; and by Meriones was it steered in the fleet at the sea-fight off Patmos. Her warriors were all of Gortyna, veterans of the Trojan war, men mighty of valor. So that the battle on the *Trident's* deck waxed furious and great, and the smooth deck was incarnadined.

Thersites, looking back across the quiet sea, whipped out his great sword with a clang. He shouted to Orestos, who stood in the high stern looking back:

"May Baal-zebub, God of Flies, feed on the flesh of my heart, if I run for it with Aspartes at the point of Dentos' blade! Ha! Swing round the great steering-oar! A rescue! A rescue!"

In the still night a light flared on and off, as if a torch were moved back and forth behind a shield.

Orestos looked to the north, toward the green isle rising nearer. He looked back, where Gortyna's heroes were fighting and dying.

Orestos sprang to the tiller that Ascopes of Canæ held, and seized it with him. The twain pushed hard upon that massy beam.

The port oarsmen rested upon their shafts. The starboard rowers dipped strong blades into the rippling sea. *Minos-eye* came about, and went zooming southward; and *Dragon of Adri* after her.

Then the *Amphitrite* wheeled about, and Sarmentes turned *Leviathan.* But the *Purple Fish,* as the fleet charged down, was rammed by the *Ostreon,* Dentos' huge galley, and broke up and sank in the wine-red sea.

The *Amphitrite* stood over against the sinking galley, and picked up Asmadios of Phæstos out of the wreckage, and forty-six of his crew. Her bowmen showered the *Ostreon* with their death-tipped bolts.

Minos-eye swept down upon the beleaguered *Trident* with the fury of Minotaur. The Dentos galleys were still fast to the *Trident's* sides, the battle still in doubt.

And *Minos-eye* jabbed her bronze-shod and lofty prow hard into the side of the nearer Phæstian galley, and smashed her. The force of that rush drove the broken hull against the side of the *Trident,* and the *Trident's* thick bulwarks crashed against the farther galley. The brazen grappling-hooks sprang free.

Orestos and Thersites, with furious blades, led the Minoan warriors raging across the *Trident's* deck and swept the foemen over the sides. And they broke the boarding-bridges and set torch to the hostile galley.

The *Trident* and *Minos-eye* stood off from the wrecks they had made. The one galley of Dentos settled and sank; the other burned furiously upon the open sea.

They broke the boarding bridges and set fire to the galley.

Thersites, upon his own deck again, turned to Orestos and to Alces by him.

"Look to the Phæstian dogs!" he cried. "Two other of his galleys flame, and *Amphitrite* has rammed a third!"

"Dentos has had enough, by Zeus!" cried Alces. "See! The *Ostreon* turns about! The shattered fleet run back for haven into Kisamos!"

"We have lost a ship, but we have the victory," said Orestos. "Shall we not make with all speed for the Grecian coast?"

"Dentos slinks into Kisamos," grumbled Thersites. "We could destroy him there—"

"In the cabin, at the counsel, you voted to run," began Orestos. *"Minoa must have tin!"*

"Aye, brother," said Thersites, sighing. "It tears my heart. Ho, helmsman! About ship! We are for the north!"

The fleet of Cnossos turned about. A strong breeze rose. The bulls'-hides filled. The tall ships ran with singing sheets toward the Strait of Kythera and the distant Cape of Matapan.

They passed northward to the coast of the Greeks. Thence Alces led the fleet northwestward toward islands off the wide mouth of the Sea of Adri. On a moonlight night, Alces, pacing the deck of *Minos-eye*, discovered treachery upon the *Flower of the Sea*.

All the long day before that moonlit night, there had been a flat calm. The great sails were furled, the poles bare. All that day and into the night, the sinewy oarsmen had toiled at the great sweeps. They now rested at the shafts. The galleys lay quiet and clustered together by a great island in the midst of the sea.

A light flared upon the stern of *Flower of the Sea*. . . . *Minos-eye* lay next to her. In the still night, the creaking of spars and rigging, the little lapping of waves against the hull, an occasional laugh or shriller voice from the men's quarters, were the only shatterers of that silence. The light flared on and off, as if a torch were moved back and forth behind a shield.

Alces looked fearfully southward. Far off, on the horizon's rim, a little star gleamed and was gone and gleamed again: an answering flash.

Alces ran to the cabin and called Orestos, for it was Thersites' hour for rest.

Orestos' head and shoulders were barely above deck, dimly seen in the light of the moon, when Alces spoke to him—softly, because of the quiet.

"Some traitor makes signals upon *Flower of the Sea*," he whispered. "There is an answering flash upon the rim of the waters southward. Someone has told Dentos of our position. Come and see!"

Orestos gave a smothered exclamation and ran with him forward. They stood in the bows, staring across from the port bow at the near galley deck. As they looked, the light flashed again.

"A torch!" whispered Orestos.

"Look to the south," Alces whispered back.

Orestos turned his head. Far in the night, a star winked—low it glowed out and was gone and glowed again.

"The galleys of Dentos!" exclaimed Orestos softly. "He renews the chase!"

"I will take the little boat," said Alces. "The ship is in your charge. I will see what traitor burns the pitch-pine yonder."

"Make haste," said Orestos. "If the fleet of Dentos pursue, we must be off apace. But who would do this thing?"

Alces fetched two seamen from forward. They lowered the little boat without sound, and paddled him to the high sides of the *Flower of the Sea*. Alces sought and found ropes hanging near the stern and drew himself aboard.

On the farther side, well aft, a dark figure stood. Even as Alces watched, the concealing shield moved; the light shone out an instant—brilliant and white, a flaring torch.

Alces sprang across the deck. He seized the man by the shoulders and roughly twisted around his face. The fellow wrenched away and tossed the torch over the side, hissing into the quiet water.

But Alces had seen his face.

"Amentias!" cried Alces. "What does the son of Dentos upon a galley of Cnossos?"

Amentias spoke smoothly. "Prince Alces!" he cried. "Whence came you? Would not a Minoan yearn to voyage to the world's rim? I came to Labyrinth in my father's train. When he fled seaward, I went down to the ships. I offered to sail as a seaman: for is not the Captain Lyxergos himself from Phæstos?"

"As am I," said Alces, "and as Myenides himself. But—Lyxergos accepted the son of a traitor?"

"Am I traitor because my father is?" demanded Amentias hotly. "Or is he traitor, who should be king of Phæstos? Did not the Minos crown Myenides in my father's stead? But that is not at issue, here. I have no desire to be in line for kingship. I am for Labyrinth, I stand for Myenides. And Lyxergos praised me for loyalty to the Minos and took me into his House of the Lords. What have I done?"

"What have you done!" cried Alces. "You have signaled your sire with torch and shield! You have given them our position, so they can come up and seek to end our quest for tin!"

"My sire?" Amentias laughed. "Did he not run into the Gulf of Kisamos with broken ships? Has he eyes keener than eagles', to see from Kisamos to Adri? Nay, friend, I had but come off duty at the helm, and reaching the cabin, found I had left my chlamys here. So I lighted torch and came thither seeking the cloak."

"If you looked for the cloak," demanded Alces, "why moved you the torch back and forth behind the shield?"

"The calm breaks," said Amentias. "Little puffs of breeze stir, and the torch smoked and threatened to go out. I but moved my shield between the torch and the stir of air."

ALCES let go of Amentias' shoulders. "It is true that there is movement of air across the stern," he acknowledged, with doubt in his heart. "But there was an answering light upon the horizon's rim."

"You saw a low star," said Amentias, laughing. "Grow you fidgety, after the battle? There is a sea running, southward: Now, the waves leap up on the world's rim and hide the star; now they hollow into troughs, and the star shines clear. The rolling sea makes the low star to wink."

"Did you find your chlamys?" asked Alces.

"It is not here," said Amentias. "I must have been mistaken—it is in my cabin after all!"

"For this time, I must needs take your word," said Alces. "But to me it still smells of stale fish. Step warily, son of Dentos! You shall be watched. If you are seen at night again with torch upon a deck, I will bind you, arms and legs, and fling you into the deep."

Alces turned on his heel and went to the side toward his waiting boat. There he turned, and called back:

"And if by ill adventure, the galleys of the Lord Dentos raise mastheads above our horizon, toward the Iapygian coast or the Gulf of Taras, I will bind you to a mast and make you a target for the bowmen! We bear on this fleet the fate of Labyrinth!"

Amentias only laughed.

Thereafter the trumpets blared, the oarsmen bent to the task, and the galleys shot swiftly over the moon-bright waves. The wind rose. With rattle and creak, the sails were raised and filled. The sea roughened, and the wind blew hard.

Now the fleet labored through frothing seas. Aye, the furies rode upon the blast and whipped that curdling tumult into rage of wind and water. The salt spray drove hissing across the roiling decks.

A galley could not carry sail in such a storm, and the leathern catchers of the wind were dropped and stored away. The heaving hulls, wallowing, rising, dropping away again, wrenched and beaten and tossed about, groaned like dying bulls.

When dawn broke, there was no glory in the east. They caught gray glimpse of the far Iapygian coast; and the fog pursued the fainting gale, and covered the still disquiet sea.

Through that impenetrable humor of the sea straight overhead the great ball of Apollo's chariot rolled as red as fire, as blood. The winged sons of Atræus and Aurora, Boreas and Auster, Argestes and Cacias, Sirocco and Afer, having met and fought all night upon the tormented ocean, roared off to the Cycladean Cave, and drew after them the fog.

Then shouted from the dripping deck of *Minos-eye* the stentorian cry of Ascopas of Canæ:

"To arms! To arms! The Dentos fleet!"

And Alces, raging, answered: "You shout the death of Amentias!" he cried. "By Zeus, he did signal from the *Flower of the Sea!* Thersites! *Thersites!*"

The shields again were stood by the toiling oarsmen. The great sails were unfurled. The sea-warriors stood to their arms.

Speeding up from the southward against them, with favoring gale at their backs, rushed the ships of Dentos. The Cnossian fleet made toward the Gulf of Taras, and the galleys of Dentos sped at an angle to cut them off.

Thersites stood forward, and held to a halyard, for the ship pitched in a still angry sea. "Now we must fight!" he shouted to Orestos. "It will be a great battle! The odds are against us, for the traitor has got him more ships. Now Ares be praised! We have no excuse! We fight or we sink!"

"We should still seek to make the port of Taras," asserted Orestos. "You mind the pact we made? We run for it! This is a trading fleet, comrade! *We sail for tin!*"

"There is no tin at bottom of the Mid Sea," said Thersites. "Have we turned aside from the long run to Iapygia? But you need no Dædalus to tell you what befalls off the heel of the Great Boot! The sides of an acute angle must perforce meet, comrade. Because we sailed the long way and they cut hypotenuse across this triangle, they will be waiting for us off the cape. But I have a plan."

"Zeus only can avert the meeting. Thersites, you know I fear not the Phæstians. But I beat my mind with the one word, *tin!* 'Tin! Tin! Tin!' I shout into my own ears that I may not think on sea-battle! Ha! Need I tell Thersites that Orestos loves a good fight?"

"Thersites is right: we cannot escape this battle," said Alces, who stood by, holding to a stay to keep his footing.

"There should be calm in close by yonder shore," said Thersites.

"The wind and the sea will drop there, certainly," agreed Alces, and Orestos nodded.

"And the Dentos ships outnumber us," said Thersites.

Orestos stared at him. "The mad warrior waxes sane!" he averred to Alces. "A calm, inshore; the enemy awaiting us; the Dentos ships outnumber us. *He has a plan!* Say on, Thersites. I am ahead of you."

"With sails and oars drawing, Dentos will outmaneuver us," said Thersites with a rush. "But when sails draw not, our sweeps will outspeed the traitor oars!"

"Good," said Alces.

"We will steer straight for the Iapygian shore. In the lee of the land, we will turn and run. Will not then the Phæstian galleys pursue, and being slower in the calm, string out along the coast?"

"And then?" cried Alces.

"This is what we shall do," said Thersites, and lay bare his plan.

WHEN they had come in under the coast of Iapygia, the sails flapped and the sea was flat. Alces commanded that the leather be furled. And they ran along the coast, well in, close to the rocks and yellow sands.

The ships of Dentos came up racing, and drove into the lee, and the wind failed them. Their great sails hung loose and useless upon the spars. Then they took in their leather, in their turn, and bent to the sweeps.

Thersites had the trumpets sound. The horns of Cnossos shouted in the still air. The Cnossian fleet, with roar of myriad blades flashing in the sun, rushed down that coast, and

Dentos after them. And his ships were strung out far along the wave-beaten strand; nor were any two of them near together.

Thersites then swung the fleet about: for as the battle neared, the command was his. And he deployed the fleet by twos: in two ranks, he set the great galleys.

Leviathan and *Trident* he sent forward first, tall two-masters, of oak and cypress their beams, swarming with heroes; and *Amphitrite* and *Flower of the Sea* followed them. But *Minos-eye* and *Dragon of Adri*, mightiest of the world's ships, moved swiftly outward, one inshore, one seaward, slanting away from the course taken by the others.

So maneuvering, the ships of Labyrinth bore down upon Dentos' own proud galley, the *Ostreon*. The *Leviathan* and the *Trident*, approaching one to her port and one to her starboard, darted in at her; and each Cnossian galley as she neared the *Ostreon* shipped her oars on the Phæstian side, and went surging and crashing through her sweeps. And the twain cleared away and drove toward the next enemy galley.

Minos-eye now went charging in from seaward and smote with bronze-shod prow the *Ostreon's* stern, staving the Lord Dentos' house high-mounted there, and backed from the wreckage. From the land-side, *Dragon of Adri* rushed crashing upon the doomed craft's bow. Her lofty forks shattered and fell. And the *Ostreon* spun, broken forward and aft, upon the quiet sea.

As the great galley lay helpless, being now without sweeps, with sails down, and with the sea pouring into her bow and her stern, as she whirled upon the calm water, the Labyrinth ships shot in showers of flame-bearing darts. The *Ostreon* burst into flame and burned fiercely and drifted landward till she struck upon a rock and split apart.

So did Thersites to the second, the third, and the fourth of the galleys of Phæstos. By then, two great ships came up to fight, and laid fast to the *Amphitrite;* but her heroes forced back the helmets of the South Coast. They pierced their bucklers; they slashed through their shining mail.

One Dentos ship the Cnossians took; but the Phæstians poured on to the *Amphitrite's* deck from the other side and caught them in the rear. Then surged the *Trident* into that furor on the one side and the *Leviathan* upon the other, but the *Amphitrite* began to burn. And the rest of Dentos' fleet fled northward into the Adri Sea.

The heroes from the Cnossian ships drove the foe over the bulwarks into the sea. They let down buckets into the waters and quenched the fires upon *Amphitrite.* So, with two prizes, the fleet moved about, and near the tip of the Iapygian land meeting a breeze, unfurled their painted wings and rounded the cape into the Gulf of Taras.

It was believed that Dentos died in that battle; but he escaped upon a floating mast to the beach, and thence was taken off by Agleon of the South Coast. Now, this Agleon had gone into that struggle because Dentos was his lord, but his heart clave to the Minos and to Labyrinth. And Agleon straight bound the traitor and bore him prisoner east and south to Cnossos. So Dentos lived to die under the golden hoofs of the Minotaur.

As for Amentias, the traitor's son, he was not seen after the battle. Whether he was swept overboard in the furor of the fighting, or leaped into the sea when the ship was near the beach and so escaped to the shore, no man knew.

The victorious fleet poured libations to the gods, and chanting, rode triumphantly into the beautiful gulf. The coast thence westward is a very garden of the gods. Aye, slanting down toward the Isle of the Siculi and the smoking fire-mountain Etna, and the narrow and dangerous way between the Great Boot and the vast island, even between Scylla that lures and kills, and Charybdis that draws and destroys, the coast is flower-grown and palm-bedight. The Greeks now begin to settle there. But the Minoan traders were first—and the Iapygians are of kindred blood.

On the way into the Gulf of Taras, the carpenters and the crews worked to heal the wounds of battle on the ships. When they came near the town, standing in with streamers of parti-colored fine linen flying from their forks, Amados King of Taras, he who was blood-brother to the Fourth Minos, put out to meet them in a long black galley bright with banners and shining shields.

King Amados' galley and numerous other Tarantine ships great and strong escorted the far-voyagers to the shore. And the smaller craft were beached upon the golden sands, and the greater rode at anchor in the fairway.

There abode the fleet for a full moon, the lords and men resting and feasting, the ships being furbished and made ready, and stocked with fresh water and provisions of all kinds.

They burned a hecatomb upon the beach of twenty young lambs and ten kine, and numberless doves, and poured libations to the immortals.

The lords gave gifts unto King Amados, and he brought them fruits and great tuns of wine, and sent to his royal brother a jeweled collar and an hundred talents of pure gold.

Leaving Taras, the Prince Alces led the fleet westward along the south coast of the Land of the Italici. Now, of that long voyage from Taras to the Lion Rock, is it not recorded for future men in *The Hundred Books of Crete?* But these the Minos had recorded upon parchment: against which I, Palmos, counseled him—for parchment hath affinity for damp and for fire, but the baked clay disks of Crete shall last to the end of time. I am minded on my own account, if I can find time, to copy the *Hundred Books* upon clay, that they may have this divinity: to become immortal.

However all this may be, the *Hundred Books* record: how day became night in the strait between Scylla and Charybdis, and great gales lashed mountainous seas and threatened to drive the fleet upon Scylla, where the sirens sang in the windy blasts to lure men deathward to ragged rocks; and now upon Charybdis, whose Nereids called from the cliffs in the gale with voices to draw the heart from the body and bring the stout hulls crashing like eggshells upon their steeps.

How there was lost the *Sea Serpent,* gift of Amados King of Taras, and the fleet was torn and raddled by wind and sea. How the ships put into the bay of the fire-mountain past the isle of cerulean caverns and found there dwelling on that fair bay Mycenaean folk, to welcome them with Minoan words.

How, reaching Marsella, they got them no tin—and here they were told there was war among the interior tribes. And they fared on along the seemingly endless coast, on the edge of the lost, drowned world: that Paradise of which ancient bards have sung, when a dam of rock shut off the Mid Sea from the unknown ocean beyond, rising between the Lion Rock and the Afric land—and all the basin of the Mid Sea was then dry land and a paradise indeed. But the angry gods, for that man had sinned, burst that great dam, and the flood that followed destroyed all that then-known world.

There was one man escaped with his family and his flocks and his herds upon a galley he had builded: the Hebrews tell of him—Noah his name. I know not the truth of that; —but along this coast of Europa from Marsella westward, round the great curve of the continent, you shall see, an you be valiant and voyage far, the rim of beauty to ravish the hearts of gods. The rest of the Paradise

that was before Noah, lies drowned under the deep Mid Sea.

And the *Hundred Books* tell that the expedition of Alces fared on and reached in long time, at last, the port that lies in the shadow of the Lion Rock.

They went into that port, singing hymns to Poseidon and to Athena. But when they neared the shore, the land spewed forth black boats that came up swarming with death-bolts and with shouting. And the fleet was sore beset.

Smashing through that demon navy, *Minos-eye* and *Dragon of Adri* leading, the noble ships of Labyrinth rammed and sank a black pirate galley. One of the slaves on that craft, bending over the sweep, was freed of his chains by the crash. He leaped into the sea, and swimming with great strokes, came up under the side of *Minos-eye*.

The Prince of Alces, seeing that the wretch was like to drown, leaped down to him with a rope, and helped him over the lofty bulwarks to the deck.

So it came presently that the Prince Alces, seated upon the gilded throne, had the galley-slave brought before him in the Royal House.

The galley-slave stood naked, save for a blue loin-cloth, with sinewy back scarred by the lash and long hair tangled and unkempt. He held himself proudly and made no obeisance, but was smitten suddenly with astonishment.

"You are the man who leaped into the sea to save me!" he cried.

"Am I crippled or age-broken that it should surprise you?" asked Alces, smiling.

"When before, since earth was shaped out of chaos, did a king risk his life for a galley-slave? Are not the Kings of Minoa proud?"

"I am not a king," answered Alces. "I am Prince Alces of Phæstos. And you are not a slave."

"Did you not see? I was chained to the bank of the pirate ship! When you rammed her, my fetters snapped, and I leaped free. I am a galley-slave."

"Nay, man, you err; I deal with no slave," said Alces. "From that moment I touched you in the cold sea, you were free."

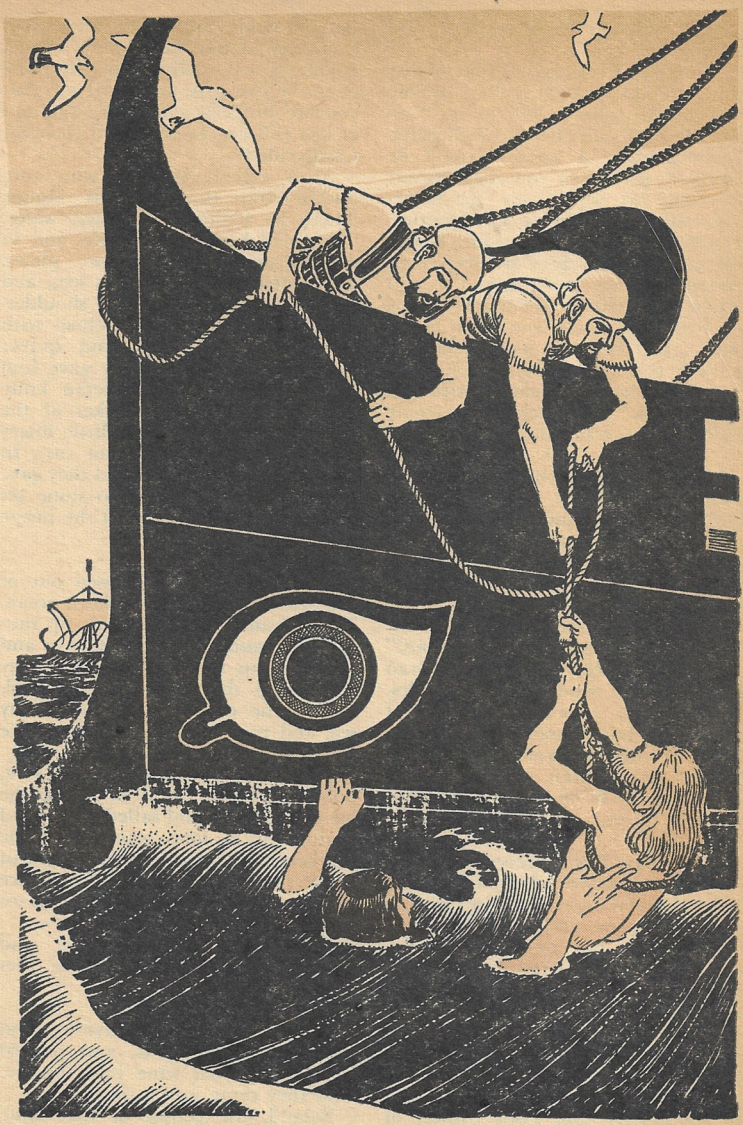
The man drew himself up proudly. "Good, then: you are a prince. But you carry yourself like a king," he said. "Only a great king could be of such humble mind."

"I humble?" And the young gold-armored Lord of the Fleet laughed aloud. "A man's life is a life, be he prince or slave. Is not your degree or mine an accident of birth, a chance of the gods? Did I choose to be noble, or was I heired into it by the gods? Behold, you shall be laved in scented water and clad in fine linen, and given a staff of ivory. Then should I be stripped of this pretty mail and dirtied and scarred and clad in blue loincloth, and stood before you here in the Royal House, who, looking upon us, should say, this one is the prince and that one the galley-slave? Were you born a slave?"

"Nay—the savage horde smote us in the night, and looted and slew; and they took me in my sleep, and they chained me to the oar-bank."

"Why, when you found your chains had snapped, did you dive overboard and swim to this ship?"

"You come from the isle of Crete," the man declared. "I know your ships. You have come a far way, to reach the Lion Rock and the Pillars of Hercules. Do I not know of Labyrinth and the makers of bronze? For what purpose would you be faring so far from home, save for tin? It is told by our old men that of eld, galleys of Crete came even to Cassiterides for tin. Therefore I swam hard for your ship."



Seeing the wretch was like to drown, Alces leaped down with a rope.

"We sail to Cassiterides," said Alces.

"So it was I told myself, the mighty ship, the tall-masted galley of the wealthy Minoans is bound for Cassiterides. I am from Cassiterides. I am British. I knew I could be useful to you when you come to our isles—and so would get me home. You will bear me home, Lord Prince? I will repay you there—for I will make an eternal pact between your people and my people, and I will repay you with a thousand talents of tin, with hides and with wool. And I will be your interpreter; for I think you know no British."

"Minoa has no quarrel with the British folk," said Alces. "We come to trade; we come for tin."

"My people will be hostile to strangers. But fear not—I will speak to them, and they will crown you with oak-leaves and we will make merry together in the mead-hall. You will be great in my country, because you restore me to my hearth. Are you wed?"

Alces stared and laughed. "Wed? Nay, by Hercules! I am a free man!"

"You will need the voice of Bran if you would trade in Cassiterides. But you are a prince, and big of body and fair to see. Aye, Prince Alces, I will show you a princess of beauty to dim your goddess Aphrodite's glow. If your heart and Bodercea's meet, she shall be your bride."

"Nay, nay, Bran!" protested Alces. "I seek no bride. I would rather have a silvern ingot of tin in my arms than the fairest maid in Briton!"

"You have not yet looked in Bodercea's eyes," declared Bran. "Her hair has sheen of the sun; her eyes are blue as flax, her form as shapely as that of the queen of the gods; her voice, like sound of sweet water running in fern-banked brook; her mood joyous, winsome; and the little bow of her scarlet lips, Lord Prince, of proper height to meet your own! Fleet as a fawn, cunning with bow and arrow as Diana—"

"Enough!" cried Alces. "Your Bodercea is a goddess, and I only mortal. Let her wed a prince of Briton. But you—how know you Palace Minoan, friend Bran?"

"In my youth," said Bran, "my father, who was a trader that loved adventure, took me with him even to Marsella. There the Minos had a trading-post. The son of the King of Taras came to study the trading. We became friends, and for six moons were we together. The Prince of Taras taught me your tongue."

"His name?" asked Alces.

"Amados," answered Bran.

"He is King of Taras now," said Alces. "Methinks Bran needs must be of noble birth, to have had a brother of the Minos for a friend. Good. I will deliver you into the hands of Ascopas, who will see that you are properly clad. We put out of this evil bay at once, and clear for Cassiterides!"

Alces called Ascopas, who conducted Bran to the Lords' House. There he bathed in scented water. They clad him in fine linen and in quilted armor with bronze plates, and fastened greaves to his legs, and strapped to him goodly shoulder-pieces. They gave him helmet with lofty plume, and bow and quiver stocked with darts. They gave him a double axe, and a Cretan knife with ivory hilt, with socket at the tip of the handle for the little finger —for such a knife will not turn in the hand at a stroke.* And they gave him a ring with a cameo stone set on it, on which was carved the image of the Minotaur.

The fleet of Alces passed out of the Mid Sea into the unknown ocean. Then Bran the Briton went up into the bow, and piloted *Minos-eye* and the fleet up the long way till they came to a sharp turn of the land. Thence he crossed boldly a stormy sea, and presently out of a fog there lifted white cliffs.

"The cliffs of Britain," Bran said, pointing. They went in under the lee of the land, and sailed southward again, and a long way round the southernmost tip till they came off of country at the end of Britain; thence looking southwestward they could see a fair archipelago of islands.

Bran called Orestos, Alces, and Thersites and pointed to the isles ahead.

"Cassiterides!" he cried.

Now the fleet sang hymns, and sacrificed to the gods, and poured libations of rich wine into the sea. And they came into a small bay.

Behold, the people of that land, the British folk, swarmed out from shore in their round boats of hide, which men call coracles or *cwrwgls* in their barbarous tongue. Now these little boats were light, with cross-seat in the midst. Verily a Briton could bear his coracle upon his back.

The bay was black with the little boats, and those who paddled them were stained with a mineral red and their faces were smeared blue with woad. They cast spears and shot darts, and raised a raucous din with furious voices.

Then Bran went up into the bow and showed his face to the nearest coracle, and cried out to the Britons. They suddenly changed their wrathful cries to shouts of joy. And forth from the shore came a long black and slender galley, bearing warriors in copper mail, and a woman rode in her bow.

Bran ran to Alces and plucked him by his quilted sleeve.

"Behold," he said, "the Princess Bodercea!"

Alces then for the first time saw the maid. She was standing, balancing herself featly to the rise and fall of the galley, and her hair hung in a golden cloud about her face: and her face was the face of Circe, of all loveliness praised of bards. And she, not waiting for the help of any man, seized the rope-ladder that hung over the side, and mounted to the deck of *Minos-eye*.

Bodercea ran straight toward Alces. He, looking into her blue eyes, saw that she wept. But she came up, not to him, but to the man who had been a galley-slave, and weeping, clasped him in her arms.

Bran turned to the two younger men and smiled.

"My daughter, the Princess Bodercea," he said.

Alces stared, speechless. Thersites cleared his throat. But it was Orestos who found voice:

"Your daughter is the Princess? Then you are—"

"Bran, King of the isles you call Cassiterides," said he proudly. "Said I not I would heap your ships with tin? Bodercea, this is Prince Alces, commander of the Fleet of Cnossos," and he took her by the hand and led her to the Prince, and placed her unwilling hand in that of Alces.

"This is the Prince whom it is my will that you wed," he said.

Bodercea turned angrily to her father, and the blood flamed in her cheeks. And she answered him in sweetly broken Minoan:

"You shall not spoil your homecoming!" she cried. "I wed him only to whom my heart is given. You come in barbarian ship, with outland folk, and stand me before an outland warrior and bid me him to wed. Do I know him or the life he leads? He may be evil; he may be cruel as the men of the north! He may be—"

"I may be all that," said the Prince Alces calmly. "What is it to the Princess what I am? I come to Cassiterides to trade; I come for tin. The King, your father, cannot speak for me. I have no desire to wed."

*Such a knife, made in the ancient fashion near the ruins of Labyrinth, has been given the author by Michael Biskaduros, of Clinton, Massachusetts, who is a Cretan from near the Palace, and who has read all this author's Cretan stories in BLUE BOOK. His father was a helper of Sir Arthur Evans, the archeologist who excavated the Labyrinth, and he himself is well-versed in Minoan story—and has made this author proud by asserting these Bronze Age tales ring true.

The Princess looked at him. The sun shone upon his golden mail. "You look," she then said wonderingly, "like a god."

She turned away and ran for the ship's side, and descended to her galley. But her father laughed.

WHEN they went ashore, Bran took the lords and the ladies to his own house: a vast stockade of wood with mound and with moat around it, and an inner palisade of sharpened stakes. And the central building had in it a great hall, with fireplace of rock and with a great stone hearth before it. The timbered ceiling of the hall was black with smoke. There was a fire flaming there, the log of an oak at the back as thick through as a temple pillar and as long as a great lance.

There they gave to the heroes of Labyrinth a splendid feast. The rich mead flowed like water, there was an ox roasted whole, and the lords were crowned with oak leaves. The British bards brought in silver-toned harps, and chanted in their strange tongue of glory in battle and valiant deeds.

The Minoan lords abode as guests in the House of Bran for three moons, while the ingots of tin were made ready and the holds of the fleet stowed with them. Alces bartered for wool, also, as well as for tin, and for hides. He traded with them the palace jars and the jewels of price, the cunningly hilted swords of bronze, bronze heads for bolts, and craftsmanship of the artisans of Labyrinth and of the South Palace.

And Bran sought ever to bring Alces and his daughter Bodercea together; but the maid was haughty to him and proud, and would have none of him.

As for Alces, though Bran saw him looking at the Princess now and again with dreaming eyes, he disclaimed all interest. So that the King's wiles and hopes seemed doomed to failure.

Then that wise king called into council Orestos and Thersites, and said to them:

"It is my desire that the Prince Alces take Bodercea my daughter to wife, for I love the boy as he were my own son. But they will have none, either, of the other. So as the time nears when you must clear away for Crete, I wish you, when you have pledged secrecy, to help me plan."

"How, plan?" asked Thersites. "The girl is lovely, and I too have great fondness for the Prince. But if he is not interested in your daughter, and she cares not for him—"

"I seek to find a way to bring them together," said Bran. "They are destined the one for the other. I would see my daughter happy, and this noble youth can make her so. There must be a way."

"The guards sleep," she said. "I gave them a potion so they would."

"I like the idea," said Thersites, "but when it comes to such matters, I am helpless. My head is as empty as yon drained mug!"

"The Princess could not do better than to wed Alces," said Orestos. "I have studied the youth from Crete to Cassiterides. He is a great man, and gentle. When he leaped overboard for you, he knew not that a king was in danger of drowning. He risked his life for a galley-slave. But when it comes to finding answer to your problem, like Thersites, I have none. Is not this women's business? Why not consult Ankhsen and Alcmena?"

"Good," said the King. "Will you call them?"

When the women were called, Orestos said to them:

"King Bran has it much to heart that our Alces wed his daughter Bodercea."

"An excellent outcome to this long voyage, if you can bring it about," said Ankhsen.

"They are well-matched," mused Alcmena. "But what can Ankhsen and I do about it?"

"There must be some way, in the little time remaining before you spread wings and fly home, to bring the twain together," said Bran. "Is it not the joy of women to match man and maid?"

The two women looked at each other and both laughed.

"Leave us here a little while, and we will put our wits together. Surely, some good thing should come out of Egypt and of Greece together," said Alcmena.

So the men went forth and left them to consult. And when they returned, Ankhsen said:

"We have mixed a brew that shall work your magic, King Bran! Listen now, all of you. This is what Bran must do!"

And when the three men had heard that plan, they declared it good.

AT the feasting that night King Bran drank overmuch of the mead. And he fixed his eyes upon Alces, and said: "Am I not king of this land?"

"Sire," answered Alces, "you are king."

"As king, I am the law of this land. Does any warrior gainsay me?"

"Verily, you are the law in Cassiterides," answered Alces, not seeing whither the talk would trend.

"Good—I, King Bran, am the law," said the King, and held forth his beaker for the cup-bearer to fill, and spilled the mead over himself with shaking hands. "And you are only a prince, young warrior, and in my domain."

"I am your guest—" began Alces.

"In these isles, you will do as I say. Yonder sits Bodercea my daughter. Is she not beautiful? But she will not

obey her father; she loves him not. There is a Druid priest in the outer court. Rise, Alces, and take my daughter, by force if you must—my guards will aid—take my disobedient daughter to the priest. Wed her!"

The Princess sprang to her feet.

Prince Alces also rose. "Nay, King Bran," he said, "you mistake me! I am your liegeman in all things, except in the heart. What king is so great that he rules the heart? I will not take your daughter, unwilling, to the priest."

Bodercea swirled round and stared at him. "What mean you, Prince Alces," she demanded hotly, "you will not take me, *unwilling*? You have told my father a hundred times, if once, you would not wed Artemis herself, though from Olympus she descended to woo you! You are wedded to a tin ingot, to golden armor, to the beauty of ships—the King of Babylon has not more wives; but never one of your wives of flesh and blood!"

Alces laughed. "The King your father is lord of this land," he said, "and I like him much, and am loyal to him. I will go forth from this hall gladly and submit to the priest, and wed the maid willing. But no unwilling maid shall be bride of Alces of Phæstos."

There was a stir about the table. King Bran hiccoughed and stared.

"There is more warmth in the golden plate upon your breast than in the heart under it," said Bodercea scornfully. "You do not love me. I wed only one whom I love—and who loves me more than earth or sky or home or immortal gods!"

"Knows fair Bodercea ought of the heart under my breastplate?" Alces was holding a tall golden beaker of mead. He opened his hand and let the beaker crash to the straw-strewn floor. "When I first saw you, running wet-eyed to greet your father, I loved you. But my heart is not upon my sleeve. Nor will I measure my love for Bodercea with words that other ears than hers shall hear. Bran, I will wed your daughter willing, any time she reveals her will. But by the Olympian gods, I wed no maid unwilling!"

"Here, you are in my father's power," said the maid, her cheeks aflame. "You fear my father. My father the King should know I will not wed this man."

"And you, Prince Alces? Did I put an *if* to my order? You are to wed my daughter forthwith, be she willing, or be she like one of the Furies raging and clawing! Will you take her forth to the priest?"

"The King knows what I feel toward him. The King has quaffed the mead deeply this night, and is not himself. Were the King himself—"

"You say I am drunk?" shouted Bran, springing up, and overturning his high seat.

"You are not yourself," said Alces coolly. "I will not wed the maid."

"I have a crypt of stone beneath this house," said Bran. "I could keep a man there till his days end, an I will it. There is a bronze ring in the wall, and strong chains. Choose, then, Alces: the maid or the chains!"

Alces laughed. "I will shed no blood in your great hall," he said. "I think the men of Crete will not long brook my imprisonment. But let there be no feud between Crete and Cassiterides, for your daughter's sake, King Bran! I must needs choose your dungeon."

"Away with him!" shouted the King. "The craven shall rot before *I* release him!"

And guards of Bran, who had moved softly behind the Prince Alces, swiftly seized him by the arms, and led him forth.

Bodercea stared after him. She looked at her father as if she did not know him, and turned and went forth to her own chamber.

Thersites stirred uneasily, and he whispered to Alcmena, who sat by him:

"Is this play-acting? Bran seems overserious, to me! I like not to let a brother warrior be haled forth—and my blade sleeping!"

"Hush!" warned Alcmena. "Be patient! You shall see."

Now, the Prince Alces found himself lying on dirty straw in a small, round room. His wrists were chained to his ankles, and the chains were fast to a bronze staple in the rock.

So he lay a great while. And he heard a creaking: the bar of bronze, that held the door fast shut, clashed. The heavy oaken door moved outward.

Dazedly, he beheld Bodercea standing in the door, a pitchpine torch in her left hand, his own scarab-studded sword belt with its sheath, and Pteras his sword with the dolphin hilt of ivory in her right.

"Oh, Alces!" she cried to him. "My father was not himself! My father would not do this thing, were he himself!" And she choked, and wept.

Alces blinked up at her, dazzled by the light.

"Think nothing of it," he said. "This all will pass! I blame not your father. But how come you here? The guards!"

"The guards sleep," she said. "I gave them a potion so they would sleep. See—I have brought your belt and sword!"

"For what purpose?" demanded Alces.

"Do you not know?" she cried. "The Cretan fleet will sail—at dawn!"

"And what is that—to you or me?" demanded Alces.

"To me, death," said the Princess. "To you—the homeward faring, the green isle of Crete, Labyrinth of the thousand chambers!"

"Surely Bodercea knows," said Alces gently. "I sail not homeward with the fleet."

"You—you sail not with the fleet?" She gave a little gasp, and thrust the torch into a socket on the wall. "Why do you not sail?"

"The gods give man one life," he said. "And to some men, the gods grant but one love. I will not put the world between me and the maid I love—nay, not for all Crete! I had told Thersites and Orestos I would never leave Cassiterides without you at my side. Go back to your chamber. I stay in the crypt."

She went down on her knees beside him and her tears fell upon his bound hands as she tugged at the clasps. "I have been cruel and foolish and overproud," she said, "and you make me prouder! Alces, do you not know, can't you see? I set you free, as you set my father free, and I fare with you—to the world's end, I care not whither—if only you do love me!"

The chains fell clanging from him. He lifted her as he rose and held her tight-clasped in his arms.

And beyond the light, in the dark corridor, the voice of King Bran sounded:

"If you two lovers hope to escape to *Minos-eye* ere she sail, you had better hurry! And mayhap on your long voyage hence, you will forgive the old King: for how else could I bring you two to your senses? I know this willful chit, Prince Alces! She will not accept orders; she will only share command!"

Then he led two speechless lovers forth to the great hall, where Thersites and Alcmena, Orestos and Ankhsen, awaited them with a sad-faced priest of the Druids.

And there Alces and Bodercea were wedded. . . .

So verily did the expedition of Alces sail to world's end, to Cassiterides, and fetch home the tin to keep Labyrinth strong. Of the voyage homeward, is not all written in the *Hundred Books*? Patmos waxes old: but the tale is ever young. Methinks it will still be fresh for the reading when Labyrinth is buried in dust, and the fleets of Crete have rotted to nothing in the last ports.

Warrior, is the sword immortal? The bronze blade will outlast the ivory hilt, but in long time all weapons fail: and only love and the Immortal Gods endure.

MEN OF AMERICA . . . MATHEW B. BRADY

First Photographer of War

IT has been said that republics are ungrateful. Conspicuous in our own history is the ingratitude shown one of our citizens who performed a great and gallant service for us—Mathew B. Brady, who devoted four years and all his resources to photographing the Civil War, and died in poverty.

The son of an Irish immigrant, young Mathew had little formal schooling, but he had the gift of picking up knowledge, and the greater gift of making friends. Two of these were of special help to him. The portrait painter William Page taught him something of drawing and composition, and introduced him to another artist, Samuel Morse. Now chiefly remembered for his invention of the telegraph and his work with Cyrus Field on the Atlantic cable, Morse was at that time much interested in the photographic process introduced in 1839 by Daguerre, and quickly communicated his enthusiasm to his young friend Brady.

At once Brady began experimenting with the new discovery; improvements soon made its practical value obvious; and in 1842 Brady opened a portrait studio at the corner of Broadway and Fulton Street in New York. The new venture caught on, and great numbers of prominent people patronized the studio.

Brady soon won a succession of medals for the excellence of his work at national exhibitions, and presently introduced a popular innovation—colored daguerreotypes on ivory. In 1850 he published his "Gallery of Illustrious Americans" and the following year took a collection of his portraits to exhibit at the London World's Fair.

It was shortly after this that the wet-plate process invented by Scott-Archer, which permitted the making of many prints from one negative, came to Brady's notice. He thereupon imported Alexander Gardner, an English artist skilled in the process, and discarded the daguerreotype. Business boomed, and in 1858 he opened a branch studio in Washington, and shortly afterward another uptown in New York.

NOW came the War Between the States, and the great work for which Destiny had been schooling Mathew Brady. The story of that work is told by T. T. Flynn, under the title "Brady of Broadway," beginning on page 18 of this issue.

BLUE BOOK

Magazine of Adventure in Fact and Fiction ★ September, 1951

THE JUDGE JUST LAUGHED *by Donald Barr Chidsey;* **PICTURE FLIGHT** *by Arch Whitehouse;* **THE CRAMPED LEFT HAND** *by Joel Reeve;* **HOME IS THE HUNTER** *by Gene Caesar;* **SPIES IN THE SKY** *by Kurt Singer*