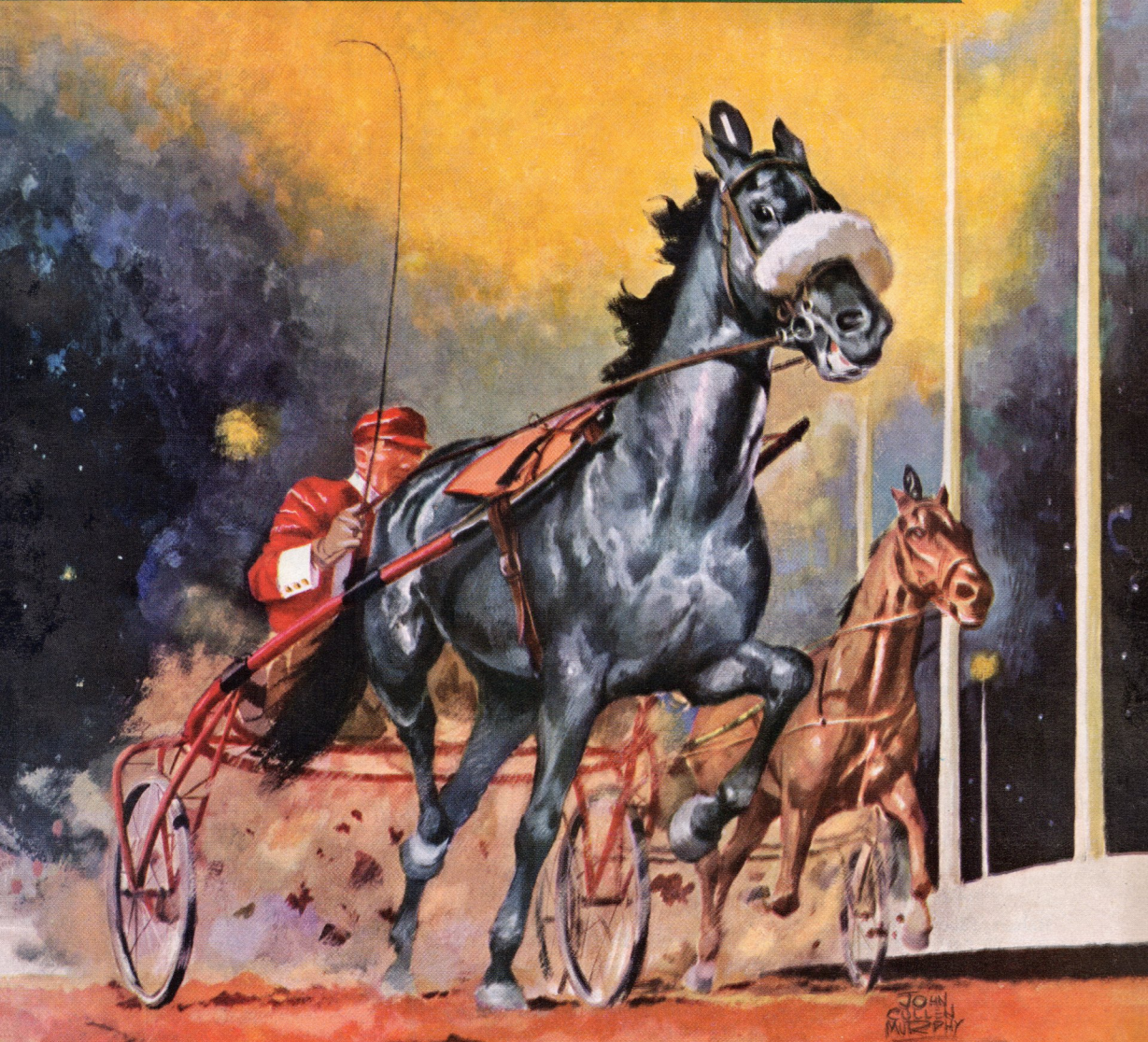
EXCLUSIVE!

NEW FACTS ON LINDBERGH KIDNAPPING!

Bluebook

ADVENTURE IN FACT AND FICTION

25c
AUGUST



The Revolution Comes to Trotting!

see page 5

Who wrote what in this month's Bluebook

Purely Personal

The man who wrote "Here We Go Again!" (pages 40-44), a brave lad named **Al Stump**, tells us he likes to check his stories personally before sending them to an editor. For example, when he did a piece on the American League's top pitcher, Mr. Stump took a bat and attempted to hit the pitcher's

best offerings (he missed). When he did a yarn on Sam Snead, he played a round with Slamming Sam and got himself beautifully trounced. For our piece on the resurgence of water polo, however, Mr. Stump took a firm stand; after all, he said, "I have a wife and four little Stumps, and at water polo I draw the line. Ice hockey? Football? Boxing? I'll try them all; they're a cinch compared to water polo. But these latter guys are likely to deep-six you in a scrimmage and forget to retrieve the body."

Read Mr. Stump's story and you'll see why we forgave him.

* * *

Robert Bloch ("Once a Sucker," starting on page 96) reports that this *Bluebook* novel is "an effort on my part to comment on the cult rackets which have flourished in the past on the West Coast—with particular emphasis on the three 'D's: Devil-worship, Dogma-worship and Dollar-worship." Mr. Bloch states that his desire in his novel is to offend no one; at the same time he sounds a warning against the charlatans who will take your $$$ with the promise of curing your ills. We think he's more than hit the bull's-eye.

Mr. Bloch further reports that he has several new novels up his sleeve (which we hope to see), and has written countless short stories, novels, novelettes, radio shows, and anything else editors seemed to want and for which they would pay him money. You can't find a better objective than that.

* * *

John T. Dunlavy ("It Isn't True . . . ," page 45) has been in *Bluebook* so often we felt it was time you knew something about him. Accordingly, here's something about him:

"Notre Dame grad, Marine flyer in W.W. II, former magazine editor, now advertising manager, I've been writing in my spare moments for the past six years. I wrote soap opera for radio and adventure yarns for magazines before a natural bent for research and a yen for curious information blossomed into the 'fascinating facts' articles for *Bluebook*. My particular slant stems from the fact that most people remember longest those facts that strike them as unusual, new, curious, startling or surprising. Therefore my aim is to use facts that fascinate as many people as possible and to leave the long-winded essays to others."

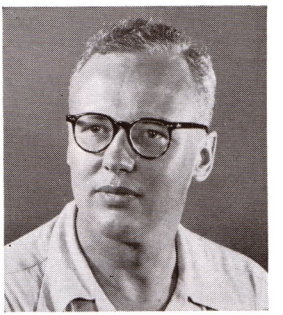
* * *

Speaking of people who've been around a long time, you may be interested to know that "A Rosy Future for Roderick" (pages 46-52) is **Nelson Bond's** *59th* appearance in *Bluebook* since his first sale back in May, 1940. Of this he writes:

"Publication of a story in *Bluebook* is but a preliminary to that story's greater success. My records show that of my first fifty in your magazine, more than half subsequently have been reprinted in anthologies, aired on radio or telecast on video. It is clear that a story making its original appearance in *Bluebook* is not quickly forgotten. *Bluebook* stories, like *Bluebook*, go on and on."

* * *

Here is **John D. MacDonald's** ("Delivery-Boy War," pages 59-61) version of what he feels is his biography:



"Tall, bi-focaled, slothful MacDonald began the tin-cup life of a free-lancer in 1946 under the mistaken assumption that it would be easier than working. Now, 300 stories and seven novels later, he has been tricked into a conditioned reflex that keeps him working, despite an endemic case of lethargy. Some obscure masochistic tendency has forced him to provide himself with two workshop windows, one looking out over Piseco Lake, full of Adirondack bass, the other looking out over Siesta Bay, full of Florida trout, snook, redfish, snapper, etc. Celebrated this *Bluebook* sale by going fishing. Caught a grouper. Ate same. Next morning found him (MacDonald) back, lashed to his posture chair, waiting for the mail to give him another excuse to go fishing."

COMING UP

About the last place you'd expect to find cloak-and-dagger derring-do of the traditional spy story is in the jungles of Malaya. But, in September, *Bluebook* will bring you the true and fabulously exciting account of the adventures of Col. and Mrs. L. A. Weston, who penetrated the savage jungles of Eastern Borneo to rescue two Dutch flyers who were held captive by head-hunters. How this American couple disguised themselves as natives and, in the dead of night, literally snatched the two airmen from a horrible death, makes for one of the most amazing true adventures of modern times. If you like your thrillers to be *real* and to keep you in suspense up to the final word, don't miss this one in the big September *Bluebook*.

* * *

Even more incredible than the adventures of the Westons are those of General Victor Gordon, who has spent his adult life as a soldier of fortune, and who tells about it in "Revolutions Are My Business," also in the September *Bluebook*. As a participant in most of the revolutions which have shaken Central America in the past fifty years, General Gordon knows his subject as no fiction writer ever could, and when you read his dramatic story you'll actually feel and sense the taste of gunpowder, of heat, of blood, of death. Even more important, you'll understand our neighbors to the south a great deal more after reading the General's yarn; and it could be, as he points out, that such understanding *could be* the most vital thing in your life today.

* * *

If you were an ordinary dogface or swabbie in the last war, if you're one now, or ever expect to be one, you also won't want to miss "The Pentagon's War on Pistols," another September item on your must list. An argument for issuing pistols to every fighting man regardless of rank, this is a story which should be read by everyone who ever has served in the Armed Forces—or, for that matter, by everyone with a close friend or relative who is a fighting man.

* * *

Naturally, there'll also be *Bluebook's* regular book-length novel, a novelette, a flock of swell short stories, short articles, cartoons, fillers, and who knows what all else, in the biggest quarter's worth of real male reading matter ever packed into one magazine.

Bluebook

ADVENTURE IN FACT AND FICTION

August, 1952 MAGAZINE Vol. 95, No. 4

PHILLIPS WYMAN, *Publisher*

• MAXWELL HAMILTON •
Editor

LEN ROMAGNA
Art Editor

SUMNER PLUNKETT
Assistant Editor

SHORT STORIES

NOVELETTE

ARTICLES

BLUEBOOK'S COMPLETE BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL

SPECIAL FEATURES

The short stories and novel 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.

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Thinking out Loud

Just as sure as we're sitting here wishing we were out at the ball game, some reader's going to scan through this issue of *Bluebook,* grab a pencil from a passing schoolboy, and write us a nasty letter demanding to know who gives a hoot about trotters, and why do we feature same on our cover and run a story on these hobble horses in our valuable pages? Accordingly we shall publish the answer to this query before it's even made.

Answer: Millions of people give a hoot about trotters.

According to the men who know statistics best, something like 27,000,000 hopeful citizens spent a tidy fortune last year paying admission to horse parks featuring flat races (the kind everyone talks about when he mentions playing the ponies). At the same time, better than 15,000,000—or *more than half* the other figure—bought admissions to trotting races.

Now, frankly, this astonished us. We knew a lot of people went to trotting meets, but we had no idea they were so numerous. Mainly, we guess, because you hear so much about horse racing on the flat, and who won the fourth at Saratoga, and isn't Louisville crowded on Derby weekend. With the trotters, however, it always seemed to be something rather quaint, an annual event at the County Fair, an adventure one experienced just because it was the thing to do.

But now we learn that this last typified the situation as it existed some ten or fifteen years ago. That's when trotting was for David Harum types mostly, and ladies who felt dressed up when they put on a clean apron. There have been some changes made, changes that probably will leave you with your mouth hanging open. If this latter situation appeals to you, by all means turn to page 5.

* * *

While on the subject of complaints, we'd like to report a letter to writer Joseph Lawrence from a Mr. Doug Clothier, of Boonville, Mo.

Mr. Clothier takes Mr. Lawrence to task for the latter's article on pigeons ("Down with Pigeons") which appeared in the April issue, chiding Mr. Lawrence for taking a swipe at a bird which, says Mr. Clothier, "has saved countless lives in time of war." And, opines Mr. Clothier, we all might not be here today if certain heroic pigeons—many of them with large clusters of service ribbons—had not done their job so well. Certainly, says Mr. Clothier, Mr. Lawrence might not be here, and wouldn't *that* be a good thing.

To which Mr. Lawrence—never one to give up—answers: "Look, I *still* don't like pigeons! Sure, some of them were heroes, and they got medals for their heroism. But I have a cousin who was a hero in the last war, and he's got a couple of medals for it, too. But that doesn't give him the privilege of squatting on the cornice over City Hall and defecating on the good citizens below. Now, does it?"

Seems like a hard question to answer.

* * *

A Mr. Charlie Splaine, of Los Angeles, also writes to say that the colleges will be opening in another month, and he's wondering if we're going to have a repeat this fall of that silly underwear stealing that sprang up on all the campuses last spring. "I sure hope not," says Mr. Splaine, "because, if we do, I'm going to find me a rocket ship leaving for Mars."

Mr. Splaine says it isn't that he's against stealing panties and bras from coeds; far from it. "It's just that, in my day," he continues, "when you wanted a girl's unmentionables, you went around getting them in a much more forthright and more interesting way than the lads seem to be showing nowadays."

* * *

Red Smith, sports columnist, writing in the New York *Herald Tribune,* states it as his belief that someone "must have slipped across a Federal law barring from the mails any magazine that does not include an essay entitled, 'Kid Matthews—Uncrowned Champion of the World.' "

Well, we don't know if such a law exists or not, but if it does exist we have broken it. We have had no such article in *Bluebook* and do not contemplate one at the moment. Not, understand, that we didn't consider such a piece not too long ago; we did, and we watched Mr. Matthews' rise to fistic eminence with a probing eye. Our reason for abandoning the idea of an article on the subject is simple—we just didn't want to be responsible for getting Mr. Matthews, who seems like a nice chap, knocked kicking the minute we set his name in type.

We figured this was bound to happen, based purely on our record.

Take Mr. Ralph Kiner, for example: Ecstatically, we accepted Mr. Kiner's monograph on how he could break Babe Ruth's home-run record—bought it—in fact, before the baseball season even had worked its way north. And what happened? Nothing, except that, as of Thursday, May 22nd, six days before our Kiner story was due to go on sale at your newsstand, Ralphie had hit exactly one (1) homer and had less than four months to go to hit the other sixty needed to break the Babe's mark this year. It all seemed pretty hopeless, and we are wondering if Brother Kiner personally put a whammy on himself by invading the literary field.

Then there's Bob Mathias, our candidate to win the one "Olympic title we can't lose," which appeared last month. As that one began to roll off the presses, young Mr. Mathias was limping around with what was reported as a variety of aches and pains, and there was doubt in some minds that he even would make the Olympic team, much less cop a title.

So if you have any predictions to make about yourself concerning things you'd just as soon have happen, or not happen, just shoot them in to us. Want to be happy? Just write a piece for us entitled "I'm the Unhappiest Man in the World." Like to get rich? Tell us about it in a story called "Why I'll Never Make a Thin Dime."

There is no end to the services we provide around here.

* * *

Pursuing the subject of *Bluebook's* invaluable aid to clear thinking a touch further, consider the story on page 59 ("Delivery-Boy War," by John D. MacDonald). We bought this story many months ago because we felt, and still do, that it was a beautifully written and interesting sidelight on the personal lives of men who risk their necks in the pursuit of adventure as part of their chosen occupation, that of flying for Uncle Sam.

Then, while we were shooting the yarn off to the printer, the papers became full of stories about Air Force pilots who refused to fly any more and who wanted out. There was much speculation as to what brought these men—heroes all—to the point of publicly confessing their fear, and we never did read any cogent explanation of the phenomenon—never read it, that is, until we went back and re-read this story of Mr. MacDonald's.

In the latter, we feel, will be found perhaps an inkling of what goes on in the home of a man who leaves for work in the morning on some job where there's a fifty-fifty chance of his not coming home alive that night. And while Mr. MacDonald's fiction happens to be about the fly-boys, it doesn't take much imagination to see that it also could apply to deep-sea

divers, lumberjacks, high-tension-wire men, automobile racers or sandhogs.

In short, Mr. MacDonald wrote his story before the Air Force business even became known. But the publicity given the latter proves that Mr. MacDonald wasn't just making up words in his head.

* * *

Which brings us, however circuitously, to the meeting we had on the sidewalk last week with a gentleman who happens to be the executive editor of one of those slick-paper magazines which are always taking ads in the papers to tell an astonished public that another million readers have been added to their swelling circulation.

"Tell me," he said, with an air that made me wonder why he didn't add "old boy" to his salutation, "how do you chaps get such wonderful writers on *Bluebook?* Here we are with almost two million circulation, I know we're offering more money for stories than you are, and it's quite obvious that we're a better market all around. Yet you get the stories we'd give a year's rent to obtain. I don't get it." He's got it now. Struggling to refrain from picking lint from our lapel, we told him a little about *Bluebook* and the people who'd seemingly sooner write for us—for *you*—than for any other magazine on the market.

When you've been publishing a magazine of adventure for men for a few months shy of fifty years, when—without having to shout it from the housetops—you've made it apparent that your readers are the *class* of the male reading public, it follows that writers are going to prefer your pages to the flossy offers they may get from across the street.

As one writer once told us, "What good does it do me to spend weeks putting a fine polish on a story if that story's going to appear in some magazine with a couple of million readers who get bug-eyed if they see a word of more than two syllables?" It was this fellow's contention that he got more satisfaction out of seeing his story in *Bluebook*, and knowing that the mail he received on it from readers was going to be intelligently written and with all the words spelled right, than he ever got out of receiving a bigger check from another publication where the readers all sat around with their suspenders down.

And, by this same token, we've more or less taken the stand here on *Bluebook* that it isn't a writer's name that makes us buy his stuff, or how much he commands from other magazines, or how many stories he's sold to Hollywood. The question we ask ourselves is, as we bloodshoot our eyes reading a hundred manuscripts to find the one we want: is it right for our *readers?*

You, in other words, are what makes *Bluebook* a writer's goal.

MAXWELL HAMILTON

WRONG STREET . . . In Knoxville, Tenn., W. K. Schooler, a resident of Temperance Street, was bound over to a Federal grand jury on a charge of transporting moonshine whisky.

COFFIN-KILLED . . . In Ponte Buggianese, Italy, a coffin killed a cemetery worker as he was helping to insert it into a crypt during interment services.

FIDO . . . In Newark, after his service station was robbed three times, Louis Lehrhoff bought a 120-pound watchdog; next time lost a radio, an acetylene torch, some tools and the watchdog.

NO BLARNEY . . . In London, the late Sir George Oliver Colthurst, seventh Baronet of Ardum, Cork, willed the Blarney Stone to his niece with instructions that it never be sold or removed from Blarney Castle.

HEAVENLY FOOD . . . In Spokane, Milton M. Tuck, down to his last $10 bill and hungry, bought a huge steak dinner for himself and a friend, choked to death on the sumptuous meal.

INNOCENT BYSTANDER . . . In Dallas, Horace Coleman, refereeing a pistol duel, wound up in the middle with a slug in each leg.

TRUE LOVE . . . In Fairfield, Calif., Ralph Fong had this explanation for his attempt to hire two men to kill his wife so he could collect her $10,000 life insurance: "I loved her so much I couldn't kill her myself."

RESOURCEFUL . . . Outside Webster, S. Dak., truck-driver Henry Becht, after his radiator hose broke and let out all the water, repaired the coupling, poured in 21 bottles of his load of beer, rolled on, foaming merrily.

SAFER THAN HOME . . . In Chilliwack, B. C., Mrs. Edna Fenton asked how to get herself jailed to escape her angry husband, was advised to hit a cop, did, was.

EAGER BEAVER . . . After being fired from his civil-service job for "circulating slanderous and defamatory statements against his superiors," Orton T. Campbell carried his dismissal to the courts, won the first round, lost the second, still has the opportunity to appeal to the Supreme Court and add substantially to the $500,000 that the Government has already spent trying to separate him from his $4,000 job.

CASUAL . . . In Pittsburgh, the marriage-license bureau got a request from Harry P. Doyle to send him the name of the woman he married in 1922.

FOR BETTER OR . . . In Chicago, a woman charged her husband with habitual drunkenness, won her divorce, dropped her married name—Rum, regained her maiden name—Cork.

CONSCIENCE . . . In Los Angeles, an anonymous letter to the city treasury from a civil servant contained $50 and read, "This is money that I feel I have stolen by loafing."

THOROUGHNESS . . . In Asheville, N. C., a police car hurried to investigate a report of a hole in the street, shamefacedly telephoned in their report: the car was in the hole.

PRO and CON

Address all letters to: THE EDITOR, Bluebook Magazine, 230 Park Avenue, New York 17, N. Y. All letters must be signed. None can be acknowledged or returned.

Editing is Fun

To the Editor:

Who okayed that miserable conglomeration of drivel called "West of Quarantine" (March BLUEBOOK)? I read it through to the bitter end to see if it could continue to be so foul from one page to the next. It did.

Paul J. Lagus.

Naval Air Station,
Memphis, Tenn.

To the Editor:

I liked "West of Quarantine," a very good example of the really Old Western tale. Give us more book-length Westerns of this type.

Bernal R. Camp.

Lincoln, Neb.

From the Wild Blue Yonder

To the Editor:

I live in a room with eight other men (we call them "boys" in the Air Force), and not one of us lets your stories go unread. BLUEBOOK . . . is a good magazine for a guy who likes adventure, as you say in your pages.

Keep it as it is now. You have a swell magazine.

Sgt. Deloss Erdman.

Eglin Air Force Base, Fla.

New Arrival

To the Editor:

I've just finished my first copy of BLUEBOOK. In my estimation, it is one of the top magazines on the market, a real *man's* magazine full of action and adventure.

Robert H. Frederick.

Marion, Md.

Another Precinct

To the Editor:

It has been with the deepest of disappointment that I have noted the change in BLUEBOOK in the past four months. I honestly think every change was a definite step downward. . . .

I hope I wake up some morning and find it's all just a dream.

Gerald E. Smalley.

Maquoketa, Iowa.

Hughes Guys

To the Editor:

Your readers can be glad they have a magazine which always is on the lookout for the good things. I refer, of course, to "The Davidian Report" (April), by Dorothy B. Hughes. As an avid mystery reader, I'd place this story even above those of another lady who is rated tops in the business of chills and thrills, Miss Agatha Christie.

Leon Hutchinson.

Peoria, Ill.

To the Editor:

The Dorothy Hughes story was wonderful!

Evelyn Gardner.

Albany, N. Y.

To the Editor:

. . . The best you've ever had!

Bill Tatum.

Oklahoma City, Okla.

Emm Gee

To the Editor:

I've enjoyed BLUEBOOK since way back when, but I'm wondering if future issues are to be cluttered with such tripe as "Are You Getting the Most from Your M.G.?" (April). . . . It's unfair to the 99 percent who neither own nor plan ever to buy an M.G.

Frank L. Walburn.

Clay Center, Kans.

To the Editor:

Interesting . . . but how about one now on the Nash Rambler? It makes the M.G. look sick—and I've owned both.

S. G. Naparstek.

Detroit, Mich.

To the Editor:

Lessner says that if you underestimate the sharpness of a turn, the power of your (M.G.) engine can pull you through. But I drive a Plymouth over heavily-traveled roads, where you have to stay in your own lane, and it's been my experience that when the car heads for the outside lane on a turn, you have to reduce speed slightly to get it back. Would Mr. Lessner suggest increasing the cut of the wheels and increasing the speed?

D. W. Meyer.

Chicago, Ill.

Mr. Meyer is right on all counts. For ordinary driving (not racing), reduce your speed; it saves your tires. Also, thanks for applying the M.G. story to your own driving; that's why we ran it in the first place. ED.

Indignant Author

To the Editor:

Judging from H. J. Crubaugh's letter (April BLUEBOOK), in which he implies that I'm stupid for writing "The Beast That Fights Back" (Feb.) and that you are for buying it, I suspect Mr. Crubaugh knows from nothing about firearms.

He asks how one gets a license to "use high-powered ammunition on a city dump." Why, friend, you just mosey down to City Hall and buy one. Second, he frets about the danger of using .22's on a city dump; these are lethal up to a mile, he admonishes, and he's right. But a hunter who's a hunter and not an idiot, does not shoot unless he knows (1) what he's shooting at and (2) where he's shooting. The only danger is from ricochet, and this danger is not great if hollow-point ammo is used, as I mentioned in my story.

True, there is danger—as there is, no matter how you pass your time (lady up the street split her skull while knitting; ceiling collapsed). But if Reader Crubaugh wants to escape even this margin of danger, he'll just have to wait till he's dead.

Al Capen.

New York, N. Y.

Blasphemy

To the Editor:

Re Walter F. Stevens' condemnation of the so-called blasphemous use of God's name in your stories:

Is it blasphemous to say "God bless you" when a person sneezes? If not, why can't one say "God damn it!"—since the expression is not damning *God*—which would be blasphemous—but is asking God *to damn something else.*

Again, another viewpoint, could it not be reasoned that the one using such an expression is not taking God's name *in vain,* that God actually may be giving the request prompt and considered attention, the request having been made to God? Again, there are different gods according to one's convictions; is it not possible the request is not made to the Almighty?

Robert E. Harrison.

Philadelphia, Pa.

the REVOLUTION comes to TROTTING!

Horse sense? If you don't think there is such a thing, take a look at the trotters, who are big business today only because of a horse's belief in himself.

• By JOHNNY BLUE

Illustration by JOHN CULLEN MURPHY

NOTHING IN THE SPORTS FIELD has been as astounding as the revolution that has come to the trotting races. In the space of a single decade a sport dying under the load of its own crooks has so cleaned itself up that it practically shines with the inner glow of its own purity. It was no easy house-cleaning. Dirty work in harness racing has flourished since the first Roman driver loosened the wheels of his rival's chariot and hitched his own wagon to a couple of ringers.

But how it has paid off! Now that the public is assured that it will get a heart-stopping run for its money, it is pouring out the cash in terms only dreamed of a few years ago. Last year the national handle was 304 million dollars, up a hundred million over 1949. Optimists are looking for this year to break the half-billion mark. Where in 1943 the national total in purses was $1,313,028, a single track—Roosevelt Raceway in Westbury, N. Y.—is estimating its purses for 1952 to pass the two-million mark, with the national total soaring over fifteen million.

If money talks, that kind of cash says loud and clear that the sport is clean. But there is more than honest racing behind the tremendous popularity surge of harness racing. That something lies in the wonderful horses themselves. There's never been anything like them before. Talk about improving the breed—what you'll see today has gone beyond improvement; it's revolution!

The other morning I was out at the half-mile practice track at Roosevelt Raceway, watching some fifty beauties going through their paces. A few trainers were at the rail with me, clocking their young hopefuls, and I was checking the times they were giving me against a record book. Back in the days of great horses, I read, a mare named Flora Temple had set six world records for the mile, her last one in 1859 finally cracking the dream mile of 2:20 by a quarter of a second. She was then seventeen years old, and full of track wisdom.

On this morning I watched a black three-year-old mare come whirling through her final mile workout of the day. Already she had jogged three miles. In track parlance, "jogging" means to run around the track the wrong way at an easy gait. When I asked, "Why the wrong way?" I was told with some surprise, "Man, these are race horses! Turn 'em loose in the right direction and they take off after anything in sight. The only way you can keep 'em slowed down is to turn around so they'll have nothing to race."

AFTER three miles of jogging the mare had been permitted to stretch her legs with a 2:30 mile. This was followed by a "blow-out" lasting about twenty-five minutes, during which she could puff and blow while cooling off and getting her wind back. Then back to the track for a 2:20 mile, and another blow-out period. Since she had warmed up nicely, she was let out a little more, and this mile she clicked off in 2:10.

Now she was back for her final mile. Already she had burned up enough energy to last a plowhorse all day in tough sod. She came flashing past us, stepping high, eyes proud. Her trainer clicked his watch, and gave his driver the nod; and that mare *left*.

Just two minutes and three seconds later her "warm-up" was over, and she trotted contentedly off the track, blowing with satisfaction. What had been world-record-shattering time as late as 1900 is, for this 1952 breed of wonder horses, just a little something to be knocked off at the end of a seven-mile warm-up session.

Yet the standard-bred horse, an all-American development, is only a hundred years old. Almost all of the 4,879 horses registered with the United States Trotting Association in 1951 are descended from a horse that made his last public appearance in 1854, attached to a fish-peddler's wagon. The horse's name was Abdullah, and he didn't like fish.

Now Abdullah was no ordinary horse. His grandsire had been the fabulous Messenger, imported as a thoroughbred from England in 1788. His sire bore the distinguished name of Mambrino, but his dam was, in the face of such aristocratic horseflesh, a tramp. Her name was Amazonia, so called because she was an enormous brute who had done right well as a drayhorse on the cobblestones of Philadelphia. Abdullah took on the lines of his sire and the strength of his dam, and for some 35 years did right well for himself and his assorted owners.

It must be pointed out here that in 1840, when Abdullah was in his prime, a horse was something. Men of ingenuity, intelligence, and sporting blood were permitted to concentrate all their talents on horses. Where today their descendants are dissipating their powers on such things as automobiles, speedboats, jet aircraft, guided missiles, hydro-electric plants, television and pinball machines, they could spend hours at the local barbershop poring over the bloodlines of the various nags that would be racing, come Sunday, out in Hy Smith's back pasture. A horse was not a form of diversion; he was *the* diversion.

So Abdullah, with Messenger bloodlines in him, was a horse stamped by destiny. In his time he covered a lot of mares, and among them was a small, gentle cripple named Kent Mare. She was supposed to be a Norfolk Trotter, and it was the hope of her owner that if she could produce a handsome colt, maybe he could get back her purchase price of $135. The owner, Jonas Seely of Orange County, N. Y., didn't quite make it. He sold mare and colt to Bill Rysdyk, his hired man, for $125.

Abdullah moved on, hitting the skids at the age of thirty. For a few years he stood up under the shame of pulling a cart for a Long Island butcher. But when the butcher sold him to a fish-peddler at the age of 35, and for only $35, Abdullah's proud soul revolted. On his first trip he kicked the slats out of the wagon, scattered fish along the south shore of Long Island, and kept on going. Twenty years beyond the age at which most horses are comfortably dead, Abdullah answered the call of the wild, and started a new life on his own. In November, 1854, he moved into a deserted shack and there died of pneumonia, still the captain of his great soul.

IF he needs a monument, it stands only a few miles away in the form of Roosevelt Raceway, where some 30,000 people will gather every night for 108 nights this summer to watch his descendants run.

Actually Abdullah has not been given the credit he deserves. That went to his son out of the little cripple, Kent Mare. Bill Rysdyk looked over his $125 bargain and decided to give the bay colt the name of Hamletonian. However, when he went to write it down, the spelling came out Hambletonian, and Hambletonian, the most famous name in harness racing, it has been ever since.

As a three-year-old, on his first warm-up, Hambletonian ran the mile in 2:48½, a speed phenomenal enough to make his name famous in every barbershop and saloon in the country. But phenomenal though he was as a speedster, he was even more so at stud. In 24 years he sired 1,331 foals, and it is from his get that most of the great racers of today spring.

HARNESS racing was a pretty furious thing for the next fifty years. A man could get himself killed with no effort by merely stating that the pacer didn't live that could beat a trotter. Or another man with no more sense could exit from this world by claiming that the trotter didn't live that could beat a pacer. Racing wasn't limited to tracks, by any means. There wasn't a boy in America who didn't dream of the day he would blow the fringe off his buggy racing down the main drag against all the other hot-rods in town. And for a while there was hardly a magazine story or novel in which the hero didn't meet the heroine by dragging her out of the way of a couple of amateur charioteers.

Yet even then, with everybody an expert on horses, there was some confusion over what made trotters out of some horses, and pacers out of others. It might be well to explain here to the uninitiated of this motor age that neither trotting nor pacing is a natural gait for a horse. The natural gait is best demonstrated by the thoroughbreds in saddle or "flat" racing. In trotting, the horse steps out high with its front feet, its right front foot moving forward in time with its left hind foot, and vice versa. In pacing, the horse does not lift its front feet as high as in trotting, and it moves both right front foot and right hind foot forward at the same time. This alternate movement of right side and left side is often called side-wheeling, and pacers are frequently called side-wheelers.

One reason for the public confusion over what produces trotters and pacers was that the horse-trainers themselves did not know. (There is some reason to believe that probably the horses don't know either.) Anyway, when promising trotters showed signs of switching over to pacing, their trainers would keep them in stride by weighting down their front feet with heavy shoes. This made them step high in order to clear their own feet, but it raised Cain with their speed.

Then it was found that hobbles fastened to the front legs, from the harness, would keep a horse at a trot no matter how much it might desire to pace. For years it was the fashion for all trotters to wear hobbles.

Then, just to disconcert everybody, some trainer discovered that by rigging his hobbles fore-and-aft, almost like a leather-webbed skirt around all four legs, he could not only keep pacers in their stride, but in some cases actually increase their speed. So the hobbles were taken off all the trotters, and placed on the pacers. To confuse matters still further, the pacers' hobbles came out spelled "hopples."

Then the automobile came along, and the whole problem of hopples became largely academic. Harness racing, even with the light, bicycle-wheeled sulky replacing the old high-wheeler, fell upon evil days.

There came a day at last when even the horse-breeders themselves wondered whether to breed their horses for racing or for dog-food.

The horses themselves settled the problem. "They became such beautiful and intelligent people," one breeder explained to me ambiguously, "that they restored your faith in humanity."

The faith needed a lot of restoring. By 1938 there were a lot—and by that we mean too many—of drivers and trainers who would resort to every trick in the book and then invent new ones to obtain a few bucks to get ahead of the feed bill. At county-fair meets drivers would agree on the winners in advance so that everybody would get enough money to pull on to the next meet. Desperate drivers would register a slow horse for a slow race, and then ring in a speedster under a false name to be sure of winning. Dirty driving crippled a lot of honest drivers. The public lost all confidence in the rigged races, and the purses dropped. The harder the crooked ones schemed, the less there was to scheme for. Harness racing was doomed.

EXCEPT for those beautiful horses! The honest breeders, owners, trainers and drivers looked them over and couldn't let them down. They organized the United States Trotting Association and started cleaning their own Augean stables. Rules were standardized for all tracks. Horses had to be registered; drivers had to be licensed. Judges and officials had to pass rigid tests to qualify for their jobs. Betting was placed under legal scrutiny.

And the rules were enforced.

A driver was caught spitting birdshot at the feet of an overtaking horse, causing it to break. (To break means that a pacer or trotter breaks into a gallop, thereby disqualifying itself.) The driver was ruled off the track. He went to California, but with the rules enforced all over the country and in Canada, he found himself as unwelcome there as at the track he had just left. He was out, for good, and the word was not slow in getting around.

A trainer registered a three-year-old for a race in which the average speed of the competition was around 2:10. Then under the three-year-old's name he brought in a five-year-old that could do the mile in 2:05. The judges let him sink himself, and then tossed in the harpoon. The ringer racket died then and there.

IN four years the clean-up job was pretty well completed, but by that time the war was on. It put a frightful crimp in racing, but there was no holding back the age-old natural process of breeding. In 1946, when once more the lights could go on at the night tracks, the horses were better and faster than ever.

Some idea of what the big clean-up in harness racing has meant is reflected in the prices being paid for good horses. Back around the turn of the century, when competition between breeders was at its height, bidding at auctions would run the price of a horse up to $40,000 and $50,000 regularly. The highest price paid was for Arion in 1891. He went for $125,000, exceeding by $20,000 the price paid for Axtel in 1889. But the $60,000 paid for the fabulous Dan Patch in 1903 was the last of the big money. Some excitement was created in 1924 when Belwin sold for $50,000, but with that exception no high-priced horse appears on the scene until 1946. Breeders stayed in business mainly for the love of it.

Then came the clean-up. A horse named Chestertown started the prices soaring again when he went for $40,000 in 1946. By 1949 the $100,000 mark was reached by Nibble Hanover, and last year Tar Heel boosted the record up to the $125,000 mark set by Arion sixty years ago. All through the auctions of recent months have been running such healthy bids as $40,000 and $50,000. The good old days are back.

Along with the improvement of the breed has come a tremendous improvement in tracks and equipment. Modern engineering has provided the roadbed and the dirt surface best suited for horses, and tracks all over the country have benefited from the experiments conducted by such big raceways as Roosevelt and Yonkers. Another big improvement has been in the development of an automobile-powered starting gate. This consists of two gates, one on each side of the car, that extend clear across the track. The horses are brought into position behind the gates, the car moves forward until, just at the starting pole, it reaches a speed best suited to get the horses off to a flying start. Then the gates fold out of the way, the car shoots ahead, and the race is on.

Through the use of these mobile gates, false starts, once the bane of harness racing, are largely eliminated. What is more, the horses seem to like it. With a little training they soon learn to nose right up to the gate, and take off like deer when it is whipped out of the way.

This has led one veteran racing driver, Nat Ray, who has been riding a sulky for more than sixty years, to look at today's high speeds with something like suspicion. "The horses aren't any faster today than when I started in racing," he insists. "What with these newfangled starting gates, improved tracks, rubber-tired sulkies, and everything else, they can just get more speed out of what they've got."

PLENTY of old-timers agree with Ray's theory, but the new school of drivers points out firmly that it won't hold water. "Look," exclaimed one impatiently, "take this mare here." He pointed to a black beauty who was being walked in a circle by her groom as she cooled off. "She is a long way from being my best horse. Last winter I had her down in Florida, and just for the fun of it I hooked her up to an old high-wheeled sulky I found in the paddock. The track down there was an unimproved one, just like the old tracks. Well, I warmed her up good, and then put the clock on her for the last mile. She went through it in 2:10. Why, if any of the old-timers had had a horse as fast as that back in 1900, she'd have made him rich for life."

And a breeder who has been in the business fifty years—one thing about harness racing is that it seems to be the only major sport in the world in which no one grows old—failed to take Ray's side. "When we say we are improving the breed, we don't mean just in terms of speed. These horses today are better all the way around. Better looking, better mannered, more intelligent, and, with what we have learned about feeding them, healthier. A lot of those horses of fifty years ago were mean, and some were downright vicious. I've known more than one who was so mean it was more than your life was worth to go into his stable. Now that I think of it, I can remember when you could look around a paddock anywhere and see some groom or trainer limping around from his latest kicking, and you could always hear horses squealing or trying to kick their stalls apart.

There's nothing like that around any more."

I looked around the quiet, sunlit scene, and there wasn't.

Along with all the rest of the improvements is a new spirit around the paddocks. During harness racing's dark days, there was little to attract young men into the game. As one driver put it, "If any kid of mine said he wanted to follow in my footsteps, I'd have broken his neck. Thank God, it's different today. I've got a youngster down on the farm who looks like he's got a way with horses. If he has, he's got my blessing."

The touch with horses seems to be the important thing shared by all the men who work with them. No one can define it exactly. It seems to be some mystic bond between men and horses. If you've got it, you devote your life to them. It's the thing that kept owners breeding horses through all the years when there was no future in it. It kept the drivers racing even when they knew a race was being framed against them. And it kept the trainers working like devoted slaves over horses who, because of small purses, wouldn't win enough money to pay for their hay.

It is also something of a handicap in getting young blood into the business. Up until the tractor came along, the farm was a great source of young horsemen. After sitting on a two-row sulky cultivator for a couple of years, the young farmer would begin to dream of greater glory, and the trotting business would have a new hand. Now, with the tractor on the scene, there are fewer ways to discover whether you've got the touch or not.

Still, it manages to manifest itself. Among the drivers listed by the U. S. Trotting Association are bankers, lawyers, accountants and doctors who have felt the call of the horses, and left their businesses to respond to it. And the young men, now that the tracks are respectable and there is a bright future for the business, are coming in.

As an example of what a young man can do if he sets his mind to it is John F. Simpson whose driving last year brought in $333,136 to make him the leading money driver of the year. John, who is 32, married and with three children, felt the touch early in life, and began working around the paddocks down in his native Virginia as part of his high-school education. But as he was told, and could plainly see, there was no future in horses from the driving point of view. Still, he could not get horses out of his blood, so when he went to college he concentrated on animal husbandry. He figured there was still a good living to be made as a technical man trained in care and breeding of horses.

But in 1940 the stable for which he worked as part of his summer training was short a driver for a meet. John sat in as a replacement, and suddenly the horses he drove, who had been only fair to middling before, began to get up and take off. And he discovered he liked the feel of that wind in his face.

The clean-up was in progress, but the public was still suspicious and stayed away in droves. As a result the purses, though upped considerably, were still small. Then came other troubles. Just when it looked as if night racing might prove to be the trick to lure the public to the tracks, the war came along, and with it the dim-out. The lights had to be turned out, and out went the public, too.

To John the troubles of wartime racing were of only academic interest. He was in the Army. During his three years of service he all but gave up any idea of returning to driving, deciding instead to resume his plan for a technical career.

His winning touch with horses was not to be denied, however. By 1949

> Every man who takes office in Washington either grows or swells.
>
> —WOODROW WILSON

he was fourth among the leading money winners of the country. In 1950 he was second with winnings of $234,519, and last year he came in first.

This year he may not place so high. He has taken over the management of the Hanover Shoe Farm, the largest breeders of standard-bred horses in the world. Among his charges are such expensive creatures as the $125,000 Tar Heel, the $100,000 Solicitor, the $100,000 Nibble Hanover, and others whose combined prices get astronomic. Thus his plans for a career in animal husbandry have paid off beautifully, while the chances are that they won't put too much of a crimp in his driving purses.

But let's take a look at a typical night at Roosevelt Raceway. While some 30,000 people make their way to the track by car, special trains, and chartered buses, the horses for the night's racing are brought over from the stables to the track paddock. There an identification man checks each one through a unique identification system devised to make the substitution of horses impossible. For this purpose the chestnuts of the horse are used, the chestnuts being those little knobs of hoof-like material found on the inside of each knee and hock. Actually they are the remains of an extra toe once possessed by the prehistoric horse, and, as is the case with fingerprints in man, no two horses possess identical chestnuts. Photographs of the chestnuts of all the horses registered at the track are on file, and these photographs are checked against the horses as they are brought into the paddock.

Then they trot out onto the track to warm up for one or two miles, and thirty thousand pairs of eyes begin looking them over for favorites. That is one great difference between harness and flat races. Whereas the saddle horses appear before the public for only a few minutes before they are off, the trotters are on constant parade. As soon as the first race is over, the horses for the next are brought out to warm up, and everyone has ample opportunity to look them over.

A devoted horse-follower explains it this way: "I could never get acquainted with the ponies at the flat races. When I put down my two bucks, it was like betting on a stranger, no matter what my scratch sheet said. Now the trotters, I know. Before the night is over, each one is an old friend, and when I back one up with my two bucks, it's because I like him. If I lose, I feel as sorry for my horse as I do for me."

But you don't have to rely on your own eyes to pick your horses. Printed right on your program is its performance record, and if you bet on a 2:12 horse that is racing in 2:10 company, you're either playing for long-shot money, or it's your fault. This detail, too, is part of the clean-up policy giving the public a fair shake.

When the horses line up for the race, they take their places according to the numbers drawn before officials three days previously. The drawing by lot for position is necessary because the pole position (against the inside rail) has got a decided advantage over the horses farther out on the track. At Roosevelt Raceway, for instance, which is a half-mile track, the horse running in the second lane must travel 17 feet farther than the horse against the rail on each turn. If he remains "parked out" for all four turns of the mile race, he loses 68 feet, and that can cost him the race.

This has led some of the followers of the flat races to scoff at placing bets on the trotters. They claim the pole horse has too big an advantage over the others to make for a fair bet. The drivers, while not discounting the pole position's advantage, deny that it lasts much farther than the first turn. They claim that by

"tucking in" behind the pole horse, they can let it break the wind for them, giving their horses enough reserve strength to "go overland" when they really want to start to travel.

And as my trotting addict friend has explained to me: "At the flat races, it's all hell-for-leather from start to finish. The horse gives everything it's got, and keeps right on giving to the end. No brain-work necessary at all. Now with my trotters, they've got sense. They run for miles every day, and they know exactly what they are doing. In addition to that, they've got men driving them who also know what they're doing. A race is more than a matter of speed. It's a matter of good judgment and strategy. That I like."

To which the drivers themselves add, "Let's look at it this way. Say we're in a race with a $50,000 purse, with $22,500 going to the winner. When we line up, don't think every single one of us has got anything else in mind but winning that race. We don't care what position we're in. We drive to win. And we have that same idea whether the purse is a big one or a little one."

The public, confidence restored, feels that way, too. Already the indications are that it will bet well over the $304,010,301 handle of last year, and that is the kind of money that talks.

But it is not only at the big tracks that you get to see championship horses in action. Thanks to modern transportation methods, the horses get all over the country, by horse van, railroad and airplane. And thanks to the supervision of the U. S. Trotting Association, the races are just as exciting at the smallest county fair track as they are at the big one. Gone are the days when a few superior horses would be matched against hopelessly out-classed rivals.

Today, through careful planning, the small tracks are assured of getting the best horses available, and more than that, they are assured that they will be getting horses evenly matched in speed. Maybe they won't get horses that will run the mile in 1:55 but they will get horses so fast that the few seconds of difference between their time and the world's record will never be noticed.

So there is the new picture. We have the breeders every year coming out with even greater champions. We have trained officials ruthlessly clamping down upon any infringement in the rules. We have honest drivers inspired by large purses worth driving for.

And, out under the stars, with a brightly-lighted track before them, we have the public watching one of the most exciting sports on earth. •

WORDLY WISE

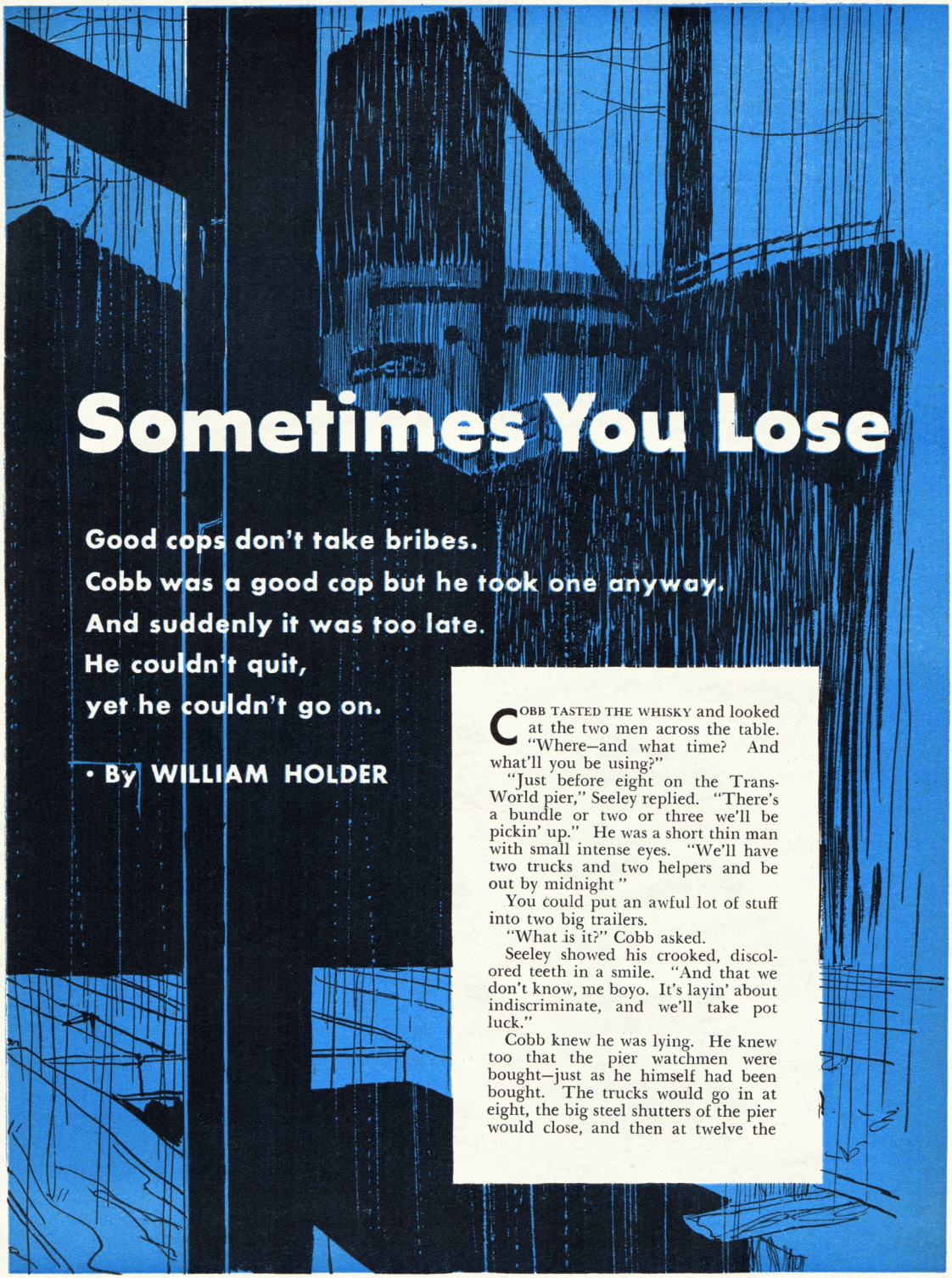
IDIOT

No civilization, ancient or modern, has had a more exalted idea of civic responsibility than did early Greece. There, the highest honor that could come to a citizen was a place of public trust—even though no pay might be involved.

A man who held no office was called *idios* (private). Eventually the word came to be applied to persons mentally incapable of taking part in community affairs. Then, slightly modified in spelling, its meaning was again broadened—to stand for any individual with less than normal intelligence.

This serves as a vivid reminder that, even yet, only an *idiot* will ignore the opportunities and responsibilities of citizenship.

—Webb B. Garrison



Sometimes You Lose

**Good cops don't take bribes.
Cobb was a good cop but he took one anyway.
And suddenly it was too late.
He couldn't quit,
yet he couldn't go on.**

• By WILLIAM HOLDER

COBB TASTED THE WHISKY and looked at the two men across the table. "Where—and what time? And what'll you be using?"

"Just before eight on the Trans-World pier," Seeley replied. "There's a bundle or two or three we'll be pickin' up." He was a short thin man with small intense eyes. "We'll have two trucks and two helpers and be out by midnight"

You could put an awful lot of stuff into two big trailers.

"What is it?" Cobb asked.

Seeley showed his crooked, discolored teeth in a smile. "And that we don't know, me boyo. It's layin' about indiscriminate, and we'll take pot luck."

Cobb knew he was lying. He knew too that the pier watchmen were bought—just as he himself had been bought. The trucks would go in at eight, the big steel shutters of the pier would close, and then at twelve the

trucks would leave, loaded. He said, "You'll have to take care of the foot cop on the beat. I can't do anything about him."

"As soon as he turns a corner he's no trouble to us. It's you we always like to talk to. You and the other cop who rides with you."

"Don't worry about him."

"We won't," the third man at the table put in. "*You* worry about him."

Cobb looked at Rudkin, the expressionless giant with the sandy hair and the white, even teeth. He'd often thought that he would not care to go up against this man—although they were almost of a size.

He said now, "All right. You go on the pier tomorrow night about eight and you're off a little before twelve. And I get the usual."

Seeley grinned and held up one finger. "All fifties, and in the mail in the morning, me bucko."

Cobb stood up, said, "So long," and walked out of the shabby bar. He was careful about these meetings, as he was careful about everything. He was far uptown, now, in a neighborhood where he was sure he'd meet no one he knew. He looked at his watch and then walked to the subway. He'd be just about in time for the kid to pick him up in the car.

He wondered why he felt a little jumpy about this deal. He didn't like Seeley or Rudkin, but he'd worked with them before and they operated smoothly enough. It was probably just that Gammo, the kid he worked with, was asking too many questions. This job itself was nothing. You just kept away from the Trans-World when they'd be coming in and going out, and if there were lights on the pier when you passed, why, you knew about that and had a story ready.

He got out at his station, went to the small apartment and made himself a couple of sandwiches and poured a glass of milk. The three rooms were nicely furnished but without ostentation, because you had to be careful here, too. Caution was part of the price you paid and the interest in fear was heavy.

He listened to a race result on the radio and grunted in approval, then went down to the street again and smoked a cigarette in front of the apartment. He wondered if he'd have any trouble with the kid tomorrow night. Gammo was anxious, suspicious, impatient—all cop; he was likely to get you jammed up if you didn't keep your eyes open

The dark sedan pulled up at the curb, then, and he went over to it and got in. Joe Gammo said, "I'm sorry I'm late, Mel. I had to stop and check on a few things." He was a big dark kid with a handsome, eager face. His smile was as much a part of him as his nose. "It's a nice day."

Cobb said, "Yeah." It would be a nice day until tomorrow night. You kept thinking about it, trying to figure just what would happen.

Gammo talked. He was a smart kid, a couple of years out of law school, and quick to learn. He wasn't under the impression that he knew it all; when you told him something he listened, and he soaked it up like a blotter. They'd been riding together for five months and Cobb had a real affection for him. This kid was one hell of a cop. He'd be in plain clothes soon, the way Cobb already was.

Gammo said, grinning, "What's the big bet today, Mel?"

"Dixie Kid in the third." That was another way in which he'd exercised care. As soon as he'd started to take, Cobb had deliberately developed an intense interest in the horses, and he hadn't kept it any secret. He went out to the track every chance he got, and in this way he could account for practically every dollar he had in the bank. He paid taxes on everything. They'd never catch him that way.

"A nice price?" the kid asked.

"He won a couple of minutes ago and paid $18.20," Cobb said "I had him for a hundred." It was partly the truth. He'd had twenty on the horse, but you could always use that extra room in the bank.

They made their routine tour, down the West Side docks, through the warehouse-lined side streets. Gammo talked and Cobb listened, wondering what it would be like to be this kid, twenty-six years old, a good education, honest as a silver dollar, in love with his job. Gammo said, "Mulry was telling me about the time you shot the two guys on Thirty-eighth."

Cobb said, "A long time ago." Six years. A jewelry-store stick-up and he'd walked right into it. They'd shot him down before he'd known what was going on, but he'd managed to get the gun out, and sitting there on the sidewalk he'd killed them both.

"Mulry said you were hurt badly."

Cobb said, "Yeah." Two months in the hospital, and now he lacked a lump of lung, a piece of kidney. But it seldom bothered him. . . .

They got the routine calls. They engineered a truce in a fight between a husband and wife; Gammo spotted a stolen car in a side street; they got to a bar on Thirteenth two minutes after it had been stuck up, but they could do no good there.

At half-past eleven, on their last trip along the docks, Gammo asked, "You know how much stuff is stolen off these piers, Mel?"

Illustration by STAN DRAKE

"Plenty," Cobb said. The kid had been hipped on this subject for weeks now.

"Fifty, sixty million dollars a year."

Cobb said, "Yeah. I read the figures somewhere"—and a little bell rang in the back of his head.

"I was talking to a guy from one of the big insurance companies. They take an awful beating."

Cobb said nothing, but he knew he wouldn't be able to give Seeley and Rudkin the Go sign much longer. He'd either have to try to get the kid transferred or—

"Tomorrow," Gammo was saying, "we might get a break. I have to see a guy in the afternoon. It might mean something."

"Who?" Cobb said evenly. "Who you going to see?" What the hell was going on here?

The kid shook his head. "It could mean nothing and I'd just be shooting off my mouth. I'll wait until I know what I'm talking about."

And Cobb knew he couldn't press him. He knew too that whatever Gammo was talking about couldn't possibly have any connection with Seeley and Rudkin.

They turned the car over to Hayes and Brown and went into the precinct-house to check with Mulry the lieutenant, and then they were through for the night. Cobb knew he needed a drink. The kid had shaken him up. He said good-night and grabbed a cab up to Charlie's.

He found himself thinking of the first time he'd gone on the take. Mom had been sick for a long while, and he was into every finance company that would handle him. Then he'd hit the Shylocks, the six-for-five guys, and that was a fast way to bleed to death. When the first proposition had come along it had been a nice size, three hundred bucks, and he'd grabbed it and refused to think.

From there it was a nonstop trip, except you were cagey and passed up the peanuts. You examined every angle to make sure you'd be able to slide out if anything happened, and you always worked alone. You put your conscience to sleep with the rustle of bills, and you forgot every yesterday with the promise of each tomorrow. . . .

At Charlie's, Rose was waiting for him at the usual table. He felt the same warm pleasure he always experienced at the sight of that lovely face, the dark hair, the fine body. Her smile made him forget a lot of things.

"You have a nice day, Mel?"

"It was all right." He caught a waiter's eye, ordered a drink for her, a double for himself. He lit a cigarette and tried to get that fool kid Gammo out of his mind.

Rose said, "What's the matter, Mel?"

He said, "Nothing's the matter. Why?" He must be slipping.

She smiled and made a little gesture with her hands. "You think I don't know when something's bothering you? You came in here as if you didn't know where you were. And then ordering the double."

He grinned at her. "Just thinking of a horse for tomorrow." Tomorrow was getting to be a very big day. This was a smart woman, and she knew him as well as anyone had ever known him. He said, "Let's get something to eat. I'm starving to death."

The steaks were fine but the trouble stayed with him, and he'd never had the willies like this since the first time he'd held his hand out. If he was getting this jumpy, it was almost time to quit.

"I saw an ad in the paper today," Rose said. "A place out on the Island near a beach, and only fifty minutes from the city."

She didn't bring it up very often, only once in a while. After three years, those ads would begin to look pretty attractive, he guessed. He'd always figured that a cop's wife had enough to worry about ordinarily, and if the guy was a thief he'd be letting her play with dice that were loaded against her.

He didn't reply and she reached across the table and touched his hand. Her voice was very soft. "Mel, why don't you give it up?"

He looked at her. "The job? You crazy?"

"Not the job. Whatever else you're doing."

He rested his forearms on the table lightly. "What are you talking about?"

Her eyes were full of distress. "I don't know. But it's—it's something. I've felt it for a long time. I—I don't—"

"You're talking through your pretty hat." But it got him; he'd never told her a thing.

They ate in a vaguely troubled silence, and suddenly it came to him that he was through, that any more of what he'd been doing would be stupid and meaningless. What he needed he had in the bank, and it was not too much, not an awkward bundle he couldn't handle. It was enough so that they wouldn't have to squeeze or cut too many corners, but it wouldn't get them into any trouble.

He looked at the woman across the table and he was filled with a greater tenderness than he'd ever known. She'd put up with makeshift for a long while, and now it would be okay about that ad in the paper. A reasonable down-payment on some place they liked, a nice quiet wedding with maybe the kid Gammo as best man, and all the trouble gone from her eyes. What the hell more was he looking for? He'd take this one tomorrow because it would be easier to take than to call off, and that would be the end.

He said, "Let's get out of here. I've got some etchings I want to show you."

She looked at him and smiled. "New ones, Mel?"

He grinned. "Well, I guess you might have seen some of them."

He paid the check, and when they were out on the street he asked, "Where was that place you were talking about? That ad you saw?"

She looked at him for a long moment, and he saw something very nice happen to her.

"Well, it was a town called—"

THE tour started just like any other It was raining lightly and there was a low overcast of scudding cloud that Cobb liked. It would be a dark, miserable night. Gammo seemed nervous and strained, and Cobb was very careful. He knew the kid had nothing, nothing at all, and he wondered at his own impatience. All he had to do was wait out the hours until midnight and it would be all over—for good.

It was almost six when the kid said, "Mel, I've got something hot for tonight."

Cobb looked at him. "A broad?"

"A job," Gammo said. Cobb kept all expression out of his face. "A big fat job on the docks. There's a bunch figuring on knocking over the Trans-World pier."

Cobb almost fell out of the car, but his voice sounded good to him as he said, "Where did you get this?"

The kid had his pet pigeon, like everyone else—a weed-boy in the neighborhood on whom he had a stolen car rap for pressure. Gammo had been on him tough, lately, and today the guy had put out; he had heard this and that—the pier, the night. "Somebody named Seeley has it rigged," said Gammo. "You ever hear of him?"

Cobb shook his head, then he said what he knew he was expected to say: "I hope you told Mulry about this. He'll have a couple of cars down, and—"

The kid said, "No. This is the first chatter this slob has given me in a month. He might be talking just to keep me off his tail. I've been riding him hard."

"Even so," Cobb said. He had to play it out. "If—"

Gammo said, "No, Mel. I don't want to pull a rock." It was his one weakness, Cobb thought. The kid figured it was a crime to make a mistake. "We can watch the place," said Gammo. "If we see anything we can put in the call. It'll be better than having Mulry eat me out."

Cobb let it sink; then he said, "All right. It's your party."

The kid acted as if he'd just found a hundred-dollar bill in the gutter. "You'll go along with me?"

Cobb said, "Sure."

It was half an hour before he thought it safe to get to a phone. He went into a place for a sandwich and a cup of coffee while the kid stayed with the car and the radio. Seeley answered right away.

"It's no good," Cobb said. "Either you or that big slob has been shooting his mouth off. My partner has the whole deal cold, from a pigeon."

There was a moment's silence.

"Buy him," Seeley said then. "Another grand."

"No dice. He doesn't buy. Call it off. It's dead."

Seeley cursed coldly. "So the word is out—there'll be a spread."

"No. Only the kid and I know. But—" And he could have cut his tongue out.

"Only you and the lad," Seeley said swiftly, and his voice was soft but somehow as sharp as a knife. "Well, we'll delay nothing. The things we want will be moved in the morning, and I've spent more than five minutes or five days thinkin' how to do this. You'll take care of your friend as best you can, and if anything goes wrong, God help you." And he hung up.

Cobb stared at the phone, knowing it would be useless to call back. He wasn't stupid often, but he sure was the champ when he fluffed one. He went out of the booth and killed a cup of coffee, trying to figure it. But he came up with nothing and knew he'd have to play it as he went along. It was no way to work.

He got some breaks. There was a big accident on the slippery highway just before seven, and when they got through messing around there they got a call to a flat on Fifteenth where two big drunks were carving at each other with broken bottles over a girl who was crouched screaming in a corner. It was good for a long stall, and Cobb milked it. Gammo was getting as nervous as a cat in a kennel.

WHEN they got into the car again it was almost nine o'clock and Cobb knew the trucks would be on the pier. One more decent break and there was a chance he'd get away with it, because Seeley would be in one hell of a hurry after that phone call.

Gammo said, "Mel, let's hit that pier. If that was straight dope they could walk off with the pilings by now."

Cobb had taken the wheel. He said, "Sure, kid. We'll take a quick look."

By now he knew pretty well what he'd have to do. He didn't like it at all, but he could find no other answer. He drove over to West, and as they approached Trans-World there were no lights visible. The kid was looking intently through the windshield and Cobb said, "It seems to me you got a bum steer. That place is dead."

They were within a block of Trans-World when they got a call—a fire over on Tenth Avenue—and Cobb wheeled the car and gave it the gun. The kid turned a strained face to him. "Christ, Mel! This is no fire-engine! What are you—"

"It's ours," Cobb said. "There's nothing but rats on that lousy pier. It can wait." And he hoped bitterly that it was a hell of a fire—a warehouse, from the address—and that they'd be stuck there good for a couple of hours.

They were there for only ten minutes. A stray bum had wormed his way in out of the rain and had dropped a cigarette on a pile of old paper. A hook-and-ladder company had the thing licked before it really started.

Gammo hadn't even got out of the car, and when Cobb came back he was at the wheel. He said, "Come on," and Cobb got in. They went over toward Trans-World in a hurry. The rain had cooled the air, but he could feel the sweat sliding down his sides.

He had always suspected that the day would come along, but he'd never thought it would be like this. He'd been afraid of the wrong thing. He'd held in his mind vague pictures of a Departmental inquiry but he'd never guessed that his trial would be held at night in the rain.

They stopped at the pier next to Trans-World and got out of the car and walked over. Cobb thought it would be one hell of a time for the big shutters to go up and the trucks roll out. He said, "This joint is as dead as Kelcey, kid."

Gammo paid no attention to him. He went up to the steel shutter and put his ear against it. In a moment he jerked his head and Cobb walked over and put his head against the metal.

They weren't even being quiet. He could hear men's voices and the movement of heavy objects. Haste was destroying their caution. He turned to the kid and Gammo's face was one big grin as he said, "You get busy on the radio. I'll go in by the small door and see that they don't get out. Let's move."

He had his gun out already and Cobb slipped his own from the holster. He was aware of no regret. This was the sum of the years—a total you could not ignore but might erase. Gammo was a step ahead of him, headed for the door at the side of the pier. Cobb said, "Look out!" then lifted his gun and brought it down, giving it a lot of authority, knowing that the kid's cap would break the impact. The kid dropped, his gun clattering on the cobbles.

COBB dragged him out of the way to the side of the pier and retrieved the gun. He went back to the door; it was locked, as he had known it would be. He didn't stop to think about it but smashed two panes of glass in the upper half with the barrel of his gun and it was the loudest sound he'd ever heard—the announcement of his betrayal. He reached in and turned the key, then pushed the door open, and in the split second of crossing the threshold he was in the two worlds he had fashioned for himself. The two watchmen were there, tied and gagged, and that was their out. He had none.

He walked into the pier proper and yelled, "What the hell is going on here?"—because you really didn't know what team was yours and you gave them all an even break. But he needn't have bothered, because big Rudkin was only fifteen feet away, a gun going, and Cobb felt the smashing blow in his right side. He fired twice and Rudkin's face dissolved redly, turning.

The pier floor did not feel hard as Cobb hit it. He tried to draw a breath but it came only a quarter of the way. He saw Seeley edge around the corner of a truck, and he fired—and missed—as the man shot at him. He felt the terrific blow in his neck and fired again. . . . Somewhere in the back of his mind he wondered what that house in the ad was like. . . . He stared at the gun as it fell from his hand. •

WANNA BET?

That the odds against getting your name listed in "Who's Who in America" are 10,000 to 3?

* * *

That you have only 1 chance in about 2000 of hitting the "jackpot" in a slot machine?

* * *

That (on the average) only 1 out of every 50 Americans have perfect eyesight?

* * *

That driving at night is more than 3 times as dangerous as driving in the daytime?

* * *

That for every 4 high-school students who go to college, 7 of their classmates will end up as patients in mental institutions?

That the odds are 10 to 1 you will *not* end up in a hospital during the next twelve months?

* * *

That 9 out of every 10 bathtubs (in the world) can be found right here in the United States?

* * *

That the odds are 20 to 1 you are *not* left-handed?

* * *

That the chance a newly-noted celestial object will collide, and destroy, the earth at some future time (in case you're sitting at home and worrying about it) are 1 in about 10,000,000,000? So relax.

—*Joseph C. Stacey*

Rather apprehensively, Pete walked toward her. She grabbed his beard and yanked, "I'll make you miserable, brute man! You will be most glad to give me up!"

Squaw for sale

PETE BROWN LOOKED AHEAD with excitement as he rode between the Comanche tepees. The Indian hunting party passing his cabin yesterday had told him of the Comanche fair. Fine stolen Pawnee horses for sale. Soft antelope skins and buffalo robes. Maybe a sturdy young squaw prisoner to cook for you.

For a moment Pete grimaced above his young beard as though he'd bitten a green persimmon. Good horses and buffalo robes were fine. But a woman again, in his bachelor cabin?

Leading his two pack-horses loaded with beaver fur, he threaded between the lodges emblazoned with the design of the many-rayed sun. He came out into a plaza-like opening ringed with copper-colored squaws and the hawk-nosed, haughty, short-statured fighters who were already a terror to the Southwest. He grunted contemptuously as he saw poncho-draped white men: *Comancheros* from Taos, cunning traders in everything Indian—in slave captives and stolen goods.

Pete halted beside one, an obese, swarthy man whose helpers carried trade goods. Simultaneously he felt excitement ripple around him. A brave was stalking toward a blanket on the grass.

When a mountain man

buys a wife he's got the right

to take what he wants.

Pete had the right,

but did he have the courage?

• *By CHARLES A. ROBERTS*

Behind him came two squaws leading a girl. And what a girl! She was white—dirty, ragged and haggard, but beautiful, and white!

"The French squaw," a buck grunted. "From the French village on the waters called the Red." Already the fat trader was stumping toward her, followed by his porters.

French! But with English blood? Pete wondered. Her dark red hair hung down like a falling flame. Her blue eyes were flames, too, in spite of their weariness and fear.

A strange tightness, almost of pity, came into his chest. Impulsively he followed the trader, though he cursed himself. Did he want to dicker over a squaw?

THE brave was speaking in deep chesty tones. His name was Black Star, he said—and a black-hued star of leather hung on his chest, the Comanche symbol of uncommon bravery. He had captured the young squaw himself in a raid near the Louisiana border. She'd bring much profit to his white brothers from Taos.

The fat *Comanchero* dropped beads on the blanket as an opening present. "My name is Cordero," he said in broken Comanche.

Pete's ears pricked up. He could talk the language easily, as he could a dozen Indian tongues.

Cordero's little eyes were suddenly sharp. "Are the people of the white squaw alive? Can they pay the ransom?"

"They can pay a rich ransom," Black Star declared loudly.

A lie, Pete Brown thought promptly. No doubt all her kinfolk and the whole village had been massacred. It showed in his manner. Besides, if the family were alive he wouldn't offer the girl for sale. He'd ask the *Comanchero* to dicker with her folks for the ransom money, as a go-between.

The fat man shrugged. Plainly, he didn't believe Black Star either. He dropped a couple of bolts of gaudy calico on the blanket. "They will pay a small ransom—maybe."

A tall, bony *Comanchero* pushed up and threw down three bolts. "Flaco's heart is good toward Black Star," he asserted. "But he cannot believe that the white squaw is worth much. He will buy her and sell her to a wealthy *ranchero* in New Mexico —as a kitchen slave."

The girl wrenched herself from the squaw's grip and ran toward Cordero. "*Señor* Cordero," she implored in broken Comanche, "I do not want to be a slave. Buy me—send me back to my people! They will pay a big reward!"

Pete saw the shine of greed in Cordero's eyes, and he felt suddenly nauseated. "These men, they fool you, ma'mselle," he burst out in the French he'd learned on the Missouri. "Sell you to the wild son of some landowner, that is what they would do. He would pay high for a white mistress."

The girl's eyes rounded in terror and she fell back. Cordero's tone grew snappish.

"The American hunter lies. The royal governor will purchase all captives destined for concubinage, and free them. It is a royal decree."

"Maybe it is," Pete retorted. "But it's not enforced, and you know it." Likely Cordero was trying to keep the girl quiet so he could handle her easier.

With an angry impulse Pete slipped a pack knot on his horses and flung down four pelts. "The white hunter will buy the girl himself!"

Black Star laughed raucously. "The cold winter nights come soon, eh? The young hunter thinks the white squaw can warm his blankets better than an Indian girl?"

The ma'mselle's face crimsoned with anger. "Claire Lefave will not be any man's mistress!" she stormed. She faced Pete and spoke in broken English. "And certainly not of the snake like you! I have heard of you outlaws on the Arkansas and Red Rivers—robbers, murderers!"

"Sure," Pete said quietly in English, "there's a passel of outlaws who trap on the Arkansas and the Red. But Pete Brown ain't one. I'm not buying you to be my squaw, either—"

He stopped, confused. What in tarnation *was* he buying the girl for? She had no kin he could take her to. And if, come spring, he spent time to take her to Louisiana, or even just to the Arkansas settlements, he'd lose the spring lift of beaver. And he wasn't going to do that!

"Then maybe you think to collect a reward," she said hotly. "But I will not go to your wretched skin shanty. I don't want to live with a filthy beast like you—even for the short time."

His face burned with mortification as she pointed. Sure enough, his buckskin suit was old and slimy with grease, his yellow hair and beard long, ragged and unwashed.

"I want Cordero to take me to Taos," she went on, pointing. "I believe he *will* sell me for ransom. And in Taos I would have good food, clothes and rest."

He looked at the strained whiteness of her face, and his exasperation cooled. It was a wonder she wasn't dead already, what with days of hard riding and hard treatment.

Cordero smiled with mock gallantry. "The lady prefers a Spanish gentleman—with good taste." He set more trade goods on the blanket. "Can anything be too costly to spend for the purchase of such a one?"

Pete hesitated. The girl hated him; if he bought her, he'd have only an ungrateful she-cat. Then he looked at her worn, lovely face, and turned to strip the plews from his packs.

"Here are a hundred pelts, Black Star. Six hundred dollars' worth. Let the Taos traders match that."

The *Comancheros* shrugged sullenly. Black Star grinned. "The she-whelp belongs to you, pale brother. Enjoy her for many moons."

Claire stamped her foot. Tears of vexation glittered in her eyes, making them bluer. "*Non, non!* I do not go with him!"

Rather apprehensively Pete walked toward her. She grabbed his beard and yanked weakly, pounding his face. "I make you miserable, brute man! You will be most glad to give me up!"

Sick at heart, he forced her hands down. Suddenly her face crinkled with mute grief. He patted her shoulder awkwardly.

"Hush, hush, Ma'mselle Claire. I won't treat you bad."

Then he busied himself, buying two handsome dresses of doeskin trimmed in porcupine quills from a Comanche, and from the traders flour, coffee and a heavy .40-caliber Hawken rifle. It was like Old Peg, the one he already had.

HE sought out Black Star. "Will the Comanche tell the truth? Were not all the French squaw's people killed?"

The brave grunted. "Gone under —all of them." His face cracked in a grin. "Black Star spoke to the traders with a crooked tongue, so they would not fear to buy her."

The girl's face was stony when Pete returned and lifted her onto one of the pack-horses. But he was alarmed to note the chill of her skin and her waxy pallor.

His trail the next day led into a timbered region, where already the yellow leaves were whirling down. Several times he stopped to let her rest. At night he reached his cabin.

It was a sturdy, medium-sized log hut of one room, built by some settler who'd had to abandon it. Now there were no other white men for a hundred miles.

He lifted the girl from the horse—and stiffened, as she fell against him in a dead faint. Her body, no longer chill, was hot with fever.

Hurriedly he carried her into the cabin. He made a thick bed of blankets and robes in a bunk and laid her on it. He heated water in an iron pot and undressed the girl, preparing to bathe her.

Illustration by HOWARD WILLIAMSON

Then he stopped, staring at the lovely curves of her legs and body. God, she was beautiful—like the breathless lines of a spirited young mare or a swift birch canoe! Something a man could feast his eyes on forever and ever, even if he never used it. Something like a mountain peak a far piece away, both white and rosy in the dawn, where the foot of even the mountain man had never trod. . . .

Now he knew what he would do with her. She'd have to be his squaw. He'd have to coax her to come to him, willingly. He had to have that loveliness to lay his hungry eyes on every day. That would be more joy, almost, than having her as a man had a woman.

CAREFULLY, respectfully, he bathed her, then clad her in one of the fine, bright dresses of doeskin. From buffalo marrow he made a delicate soup and fed it to her spoonful by spoonful. Unconscious though she was, she swallowed it.

Then, rather embarrassedly, Pete bathed himself, washed and trimmed his hair and beard, and washed the buckskin suit.

The girl lay unconscious for four days. On the fifth she opened her eyes and surveyed the cabin, visibly recoiling.

"So this is where you brought me?" she whispered intensely. "But I will not stay, *comprenez vous?* Take me to my family at once!"

Rising, she tried to slide out of the bunk. But her strength failed her, and she fell back. Her glance was burning.

"I'll take you to your kinfolks," Pete said at last, painfully. He had to tell her something. "But only when you're fit to ride a far piece. I sure do wish you'd come to like me. I wouldn't force you no ways to be my squaw, but I hope that after a spell you'll want to be, willing-like."

"*Moi?* Live in the *wild?*"

"The wives of the Hudson Bay trappers go with them on their trapping journeys. Young 'uns, too."

"Pah! Half-breed women!"

He gave her his slow, gentle smile. "You called me 'dirty.' Can you call me that now?"

She sized him up, and for a moment her lips curved in an acrid smile. And even that lighted her face. "*Oui,* you clean yourself up. But you are still the wild man. You know nothing of the white woman, of course?"

He sighed. "You're right. My ma died when I was ten, and Pap took to the mountain-man's life. Took me with him. I ain't knowed anything else. I bought me an Injun squaw when I was twenty. Paid two fine horses for her. After that she was mine to do with like I wanted."

"That is not for Claire Lefave," the girl said flatly. "Now please to hang a curtain across my corner, and leave me."

Patiently he strung up a curtain of buffalo robes, and from then on she attended to her wants herself. He handed what she needed through the hangings.

But her recovery was slow; and elatedly he saw that the bitter cold of early winter was nearing. If she wasn't up before winter struck, he wouldn't have to tell her why he couldn't take her to her kin until spring. And maybe during the winter he could still win her. . . .

One day in the late fall Pete was scraping the flesh from some pelts on the graining-block outside his door, with Old Peg standing close by. Suddenly three Comanches rode out of the woods and down to the river to water their horses. Pete watched them intently, and moved closer to Old Peg.

Turning, the Indians saw him; they talked among themselves, then rode up in front of the cabin. They showed no war paint or war shields, but his vigilance did not relax.

"Hough!" grunted the lead Indian. "The Comanche comes in peace. He asks only that the white brother give him and his other brothers ten beaverskins for presents."

"Why?" Pete demanded.

"The Long Knife is trapping on the land of the Comanches. Is that not enough?"

Pete Brown didn't betray any expression. He fished in his pocket, found three twists of tobacco and handed them to the Indian. "These are the only presents which the white brother will give," he said flatly.

The Comanches frowned, palavered among themselves again and sullenly rode away. When Pete entered the cabin, Claire was on her feet, trying to walk to the door. She was visibly alarmed.

"Do they threaten us, wild man?" she asked anxiously.

He shrugged. "Only blustering for presents. They've gone away. Nothing to worry about from them."

But in his heart he wasn't sure.

Her face relaxed. Suddenly she emitted a cry of delight. "See, I can walk, wild man. Walk! In a week I will be fit for the travel. I can make the start for home then, *n'est-ce pas?*"

"Sure you can," he said heartily. But his heart sank.

The week passed. He kept a sharp eye out for Indians. Finally one morning Claire got out of her bunk briskly. "Ah, today I feel of the best. Today we start for home."

"Good. I'll bring the horses in." But as he started toward the picketed beasts, his feet seemed to have weights tied to them. Suddenly his pulse speeded up: Sooty clouds were darkening the northern rim of the sky, and he literally ran back into the cabin.

"Claire—Claire! A blizzard's blowing up."

The girl looked at the sky and stamped her foot furiously. "Now we cannot travel. I must delay seeing my family till spring." She looked at Pete. "And you—you think if I stay I will come to be your squaw. You are crazy!"

Quietly he began moving the pelts inside.

"Get busy at some work. Then you won't mind the winter," he said.

Claire frowned moodily, but at last commenced helping. In a couple of hours the storm was howling. From then on, grudgingly, day by day she took over many of the household tasks. Soon she was caroling gayly as her natural vivacity asserted itself. She put blemished but thick robes and furs on the hard earthen floor. With a hide scraped thin and oiled, she made a windowpane.

One bright, white winter's day Pete brought out the spare rifle he'd bought. "You ought to know how to shoot this, Claire. I been fixin' to learn you. If mean Injuns come again, maybe the rifle'd come in mighty handy to you. Want it?"

"*Oui, oui!*" She clutched at the gun eagerly, then looked at Pete with mockery. "I will call her Spitfire. You are not the bad man—sometimes."

OFTEN thereafter they hunted together, seeking the deer, antelope and buffalo that took shelter in the nearby woods, and always they brought home fresh, choice parts of the meat.

Pete also taught her card games, and the last of the girl's reserve melted. She laughed—a gay delighted laugh that was like the chiming of hawk bells. Her eyes sparkled like the high blue mountain lakes. And his arms ached more and more hungrily to encircle her.

One night she played a queen she should have held back. "Don't play that yet," Pete said. He put a hand on her shapely arm.

She pulled away. "Do not touch me. Don't I told you?"

He began to boil. After all, hadn't he saved her from a heap of sorrow? He looked at her lovely face and figure and his hunger would not be denied.

"You're mine," he burst out. "I bought and paid for you. When a mountain man buys an Injun wife, he's got the right to take what he wants."

Her eyes rounded and seemed to emit blue sparks. "You won't take me," she defied him. "I'll kill you if you try it!"

Suddenly he plunged around the table and pinned her arms to her sides. He started to scoop her up and carry her to the bunk. In his veins was hot pounding madness.

Then it was as if he had an armful of thunderbolts. Claire drove her moccasins back against the floor and catapulted forward, wrenching from his grip. She whirled to grab for a flesh-knife, and he stumbled backward even as she lunged at him. But she followed, stabbing at him repeatedly, and he had to jerk to get away from each jab.

Then quickly he reached over and slashed his fist at her hand. With a cry she dropped the knife. Swiftly he hurdled the table and grabbed her arms. She kicked and bit savagely, but he forced her hands down. Then, lifting her struggling legs, he carried her to the bunk. She was still kicking when he pinned her to the robes.

"I'll never forgive you," she warned, her eyes burning. "I will make you the dead man the first time you are off-guard—"

"You won't. The squaw came to like me. So will you."

"I tell you I am not the squaw. I warn you!"

His patience snapped like a worn chain. "Why're you so tarnal stubborn? You got no other place to go—even when spring comes. You'll have to stay with me."

She grew very still. Her eyes were enormous as she stared at him.

"What—what do you mean?" she whispered.

He felt like a varmint. But he went on recklessly: "You've got no Red River town to go back to. Your family's plumb wiped out. So was the whole village."

"But the Indian!" she cried frantically. "He—he said—"

"That your folks was alive to ransom you. That was just to lead the traders on. He told me the truth afterward."

She was as white as a desert bed of salt. She turned slowly away from him, and her shoulders shook rackingly. It tortured Pete. The crazy delight was gone from him. He walked to the center of the room.

"I'm sorry," he burst out. "I'd figured never to tell you. Listen, Claire! I'll take you to New Orleans when spring comes, next month. Hear me, Claire? That's a promise."

But it was a long time before her sobs stilled. And for the rest of the winter she went about her tasks with less life than a clock. Once he drew her to him again, but as she yielded dully, like a dead body, he let her go hastily.

At last the warm sun came, the snows melting and green buds breaking out. He packed his furs. "In a couple of days we'll leave," he told her. "I'll sell my plews in New Orleans."

That afternoon, though, he saw a shadowy movement in the woods, and he took his rifle and went toward it warily. His manner was cool and decisive when he returned.

"Claire, we're not waiting; we're leaving tonight." He looked at her squarely. "The Injuns are watching us. I found fresh tracks in the woods."

Fire slowly brightened her eyes. She smiled wryly. "And the French girl, they think to take her—as well as your furs?" She reached out and patted her rifle. *"Bien,* we will give them the fight for their money—we and the good Spitfire, *hein?"*

"That's the ticket, Claire!" he said, relieved to see her spirit rise. "Now we've got to finish gettin' ready."

The prayer that was appointed to be read in churches throughout England during Britain's most grim moments in 1941 was one that Sir Francis Drake composed on the day that he made his dash into Cadiz harbor in 1587. It went: "O Lord God, when Thou givest to Thy servants to endeavor any great matter, grant us also to know that it is not the beginning, but the continuing of the same until it be thoroughly finished, which yieldeth the true glory; through Him that for the finishing of Thy work laid down His life. Amen."

Night was thick about the cabin when they came out. Hurriedly they tied the packs on the horses, then mounted their own beasts and set out, leading the pack-animals. They made a cold camp in a brushy hollow in the morning, rested during the day, and traveled at night again.

On the third morning they came to a prairie and they rode across it most of the day. Still no Indians appeared. In the late afternoon Claire flashed Pete a gay smile. *"Bien,* wild man, I think we outsmart them, *hein?* We are safe?"

He grinned at her. It was good to see her full of life again. He rose in his stirrups to scan the horizon—and sobered. "Reckon we laughed too soon, ma'mselle. Look yonder."

Claire gasped. Four Indians were riding down from the north, wearing war paint and shields. Pete sized up the near-by terrain quickly: Some two miles away an outcropping of boulders reared like buildings.

"Hump for them rocks!"

They spurred their horses, forcing the pack-animals into a lumbering run. But as they neared the boulders, so did the Comanches. And far in the lead was a brave with a star on his chest—the chief, Black Star! Suddenly Claire broke into a cry of joy.

"Voila, wild man! Look, the Taos traders—the *Comancheros!* They will help us. It is the good luck that they come just now."

From a clump of oaks to the south rode an Indian and two white men. Flat hats and ponchos identified them as Cordero and Flaco. Claire swung and galloped toward them.

"Hold on!" Pete shouted in alarm. "They ain't friends! They sicked the Injuns onto us—"

Cordero lifted a rifle and fired, and the bullet whistled past them. The girl reined in abruptly, and veered toward the boulders. "You—you renegades!" She shook her fist at the traders furiously.

The trapper and the girl raced toward the boulders again, toward a V-shaped cleft that showed between two of the rocks. "Head into that opening, Claire!" They had barely reached it before guns cracked again, and, with a scream, one of the packhorses pitched to its knees; then the other fell.

Pete ignored them. His horse and Claire's shot through the cleft, followed it around a great rock and came to a small grassy spot. It was like a deep pit, entirely surrounded and protected by boulders save for the entrance cleft.

Even as they slipped from their horses, hoofbeats echoed in the cleft. Pete whipped out his rifle. Black Star came charging toward them, his bow stretched to its fullest.

Claire's gun exploded, and a hole ripped through Black Star's shield. As it did, an arrow sliced like a white-hot knife across Pete's shoulder muscle, and it took all his strength to keep from falling. He literally forced his rifle up, as a scream shrilled from Claire's horse and it sank with a long feathered shaft in its side.

Pete fired. Black Star stiffened convulsively and toppled from the saddle.

"One down!" Pete shouted with bitter satisfaction. "Climb the rocks, Claire. Maybe we can hold 'em off from the top."

Already he was scrambling up a boulder, grasping at narrow holds and gritting his teeth against pain and weakness. Claire started climbing the other side of the pit. Pete reached the top just as the rest of the Comanches and the traders neared. Together he and the girl poured a heavy fire into them.

He saw Cordero grab at a crimson rip on his thigh. An Indian fell forward on his horse's mane. Then the riders swerved and raced away beyond sure gunshot. There they spun out

into a circle, trotting around and around the pile of rocks, emitting savage war-whoops.

Slowly the sun set, and its red glow thickened into dusk. A trader's long-chance shot killed Pete's horse, the last remaining, and the trapper's anxiety sharpened. When darkness lay on the boulders the attackers could scale them unseen, and that would be the end. Pete scanned the slabs for an idea. Suddenly he stared.

Across the pit the slope was almost sheer, but with narrow holds, set at intervals. Some distance from the top was a horizontal crevice, wide and high enough to hold two people lying flat. A shot could enter only from the boulder top where Pete was kneeling now—and from no other place.

As quickly as he could, he climbed across the slabs to Claire. Blood was trickling down his side and he felt strangely weak. Her eyes widened as she saw him.

"Pete! You have the wound!"

"Only a nick. Listen—they can grab us easy in the dark. You got to slip away, when it gets dark enough."

"Travel on foot? *Non.* It is the hundred mile to the Arkansas settlement. Too far for the stroll."

"You've got to. You can make it."

"I do not leave you," she declared. "Not to fight alone. Maybe I have hate you in the fall, but I am not this bad."

He laughed lightly. "Don't worry. After you leave, this child'll crawl along behind bushes and get away too. I'm one of them past-masters at that."

She shrugged doubtfully. He went on: "I'm going down now. When I draw their attention you slip away."

He slid down to the entrance, and started firing at moving shadows. Crimson explosions stabbed the night in return, and lead and arrows smashed against the stones. He kept on shooting.

In a lull an owl hooted some distance away. Good! The girl had got away! He stumbled back to the pit, and with the bridle rein cut from his dead horse, tied the rifle to him, then began feeling his way up the steep slope toward the crevice. His shoulder was throbbing and aching like a dozen sore teeth. His arm would hardly move. Yet he worked his way up inch by inch.

Thank God, he'd reached the crevice! He wriggled his legs and then his body into it until his head was just inside the opening. By now the attackers were swarming over the rocks, yelling. Pete's weakness made him torturingly sleepy.

But he kept himself awake. He could see only the top of the boulders opposite, but from time to time he yelled out insults at the attackers. If he kept them busy they wouldn't find out till morning that the girl had escaped. When they did, it wouldn't matter what they did to him.

The attackers yelled back in rage, plainly unable to find him. The night dragged by, and the hot morning came. Suddenly voices jabbered and without warning Cordero's face showed above the boulder opposite and a gun covered Pete. His own rifle seemed to drag with a ton's weight. But he fired.

Simultaneously the trader's gun flamed, and a mule seemed to kick Pete's temple. His rifle slipped into the pit, and he sank toward blackness. But even as he did, he saw Cordero topple backward, screaming.

A din of guns and yells brought him to. Men in coonskin caps were battling Flaco and the Comanches. Shortly it was over. The Indians and the trader were dead.

A rope, dropped from the boulder top above the crevice, lowered Pete to the ground, where a girl knelt beside him. His eyes widened incredulously.

"Claire!"

"Pete!" Claire gasped. "You are alive? Oh, thank *le bon Dieu!*"

"But I—I don't savvy," Pete said weakly. "How did you get to a settlement and back so quick?"

"The settlement? It was the surprise! A new post for the trading on the Red River—closer than we think." She looked at his bloody head and shirt with visible shock. "But your wounds—" From a bag she drew soft cloth and salve. *"Voila,* I come prepared. Now I bandage that gouge in the scalp."

Sudden hope thrilled him. But he bit down on it sternly. "You shouldn't've come back—taking that risk—"

The girl glanced at him reprovingly. "When you stay behind to help me get away—though you know you will be killed?" She flushed rosily. "M'sieu' Pete, I make the confession," she stammered, almost painfully. "You save me from much misery when you buy me. When Cordero attacks, I see at last how bad he is—

"I am sorry I act so hateful," she went on haltingly. She paused, then more slowly: "Pete, the—post needs the Indian interpreter. It is a good job, for a man who would settle down."

His jaw dropped. "You don't mean —you'd be my squaw after all?"

She bent and put her arms around his shoulders, paying the coonskin fighters no heed. "I do not think I can find a better man. And Pete, a preacher is at the post."

Suddenly a lark was singing in his breast. *"Cherie,"* he grinned, "the white brother's ways ain't bad after all. How soon could a body get to that preacher's hitching-post?" •

Balcony Fall Sequel

JIMMY DOOLITTLE probably will go down in history books as a peerless leader who led the first air raid on Japan, and inspired our aviation forces to victory in World War II.

But the old-timers in aviation probably will go on remembering Jimmy as an intrepid daredevil free-lance flyer of the early days of aëronautics.

Perhaps as typical a Jimmy Doolittle escapade as any was the time he went to South America to convince a country down there that they ought to buy the planes of a U. S. firm he was representing. It was rather an important mission, since the South American government was going to decide between Doolittle's firm and a European-make plane. Europe had been crowing about the superiority of its own aviation manufacturing know-how, and belittling ours.

So, what happens? Well, a few days before our Jimmy Doolittle is scheduled to exhibit his plane in the air for the South American government, what does he do but fall out of a balcony.

So when the day for Jimmy's exhibition dawns, he is in a hospital bed, both broken feet encased in plaster casts. And his European competitor is flying his own plane at exactly the time that young Doolittle was supposed to have shown off his.

So what does the American flyer do? With the assistance of a few conspirators, he sneaks out of the hospital, gets to the field where his plane is. Then he is placed in the cockpit and his encased feet are strapped to the controls.

And what happens next? Well, next, he's up in the air with his plane. And is he content to just stay up there and fly serenely around? No—not quite. He takes out after the "intruder" who "tried to usurp" his place in the sky. Rolling, zooming, sideslipping, Jimmy Doolittle keeps after the other plane in the sky until the European aviator finally takes the hint and gets himself down, and in a hurry. Even after the European competitor steps out of his plane, Jimmy keeps buzzing him, and the poor fellow runs for the security of the hangar.

Jimmy confessed later that it hurt like the dickens to keep moving his busted feet in the manner required for the plane's intricate maneuvers—but he won the contract for his firm.

Later his European rival bitterly complained that Jimmy's plane had brushed against his in the sky and had damaged his craft's tail.

From his hospital bed, where he was promptly taken after coming down on the field again, Jimmy Doolittle staunchly denied this. "Why, I never came within less than three or four inches of him!" he declared. •

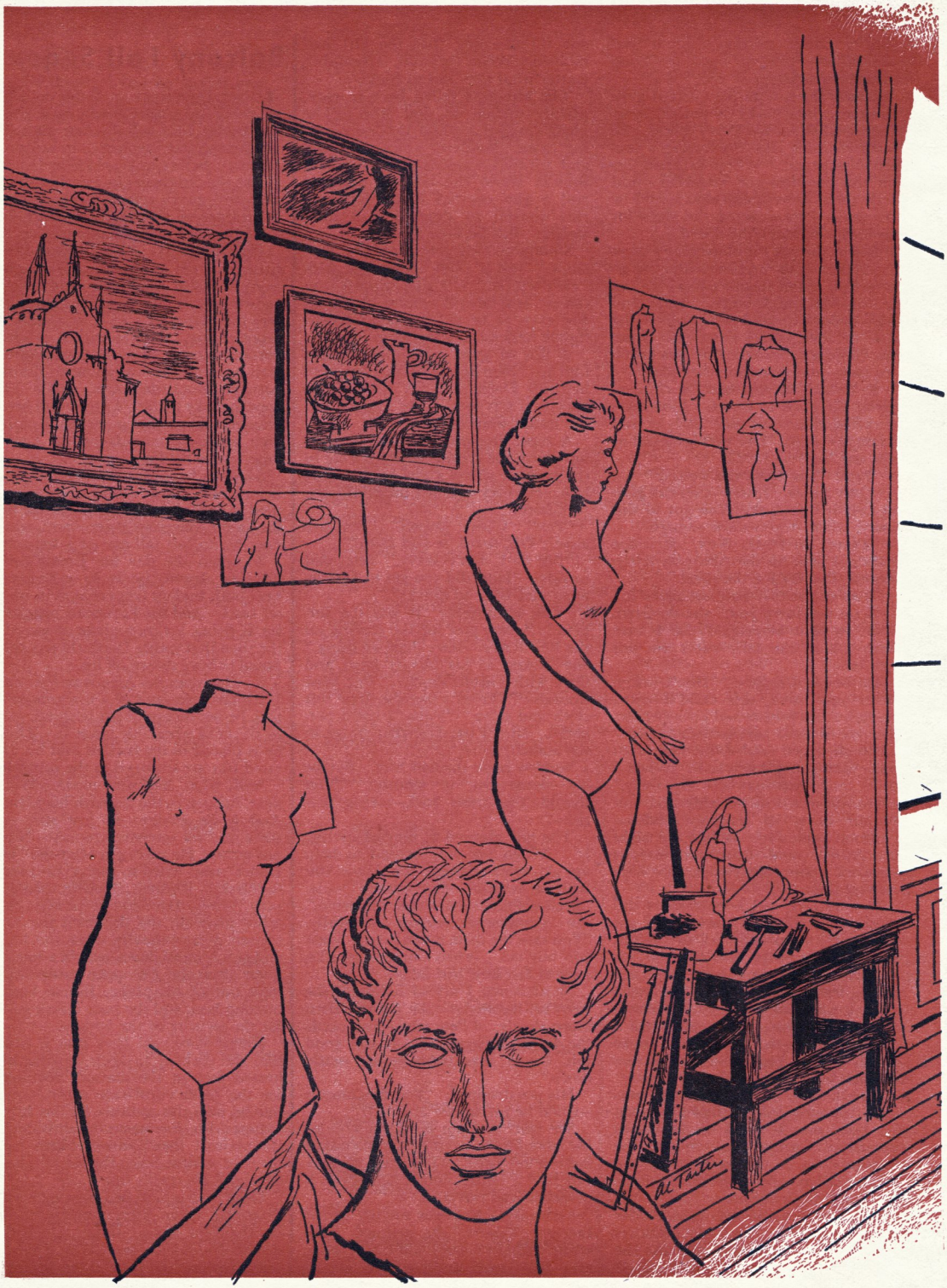


Illustration by AL TARTER

the case of the ARTIST'S WIFE

• By HORACE BAILEY BROWN

For Scotland Yard, it was a baffling mystery. She was rich, beautiful and famous, and lived with her husband in one of the most fashionable sections of London. Yet, when she disappeared, she wore not a stitch of clothing, and carried no money or luggage. Why? How?

INSPECTOR HENRY SMALL, of Scotland Yard, listened attentively but with unmistakable skepticism to the strange story being unfolded by André Collins-Malloy, artist and rich social lion in the Bohemian section of Kensington, London.

"I tell you she disappeared from the house completely nude and without money, clothing or luggage, sometime between 9:30 last evening and early this morning," the artist repeated, impatiently pacing the floor. "Why don't you do something about it besides sitting there and asking me stupid questions?"

Restraining a sharp retort in reply to the man's arrogance, the inspector nodded. "Quite so, sir, but first things come first. We must know what preceded this—er—unusual occurrence, before ordering a full investigation. Now, you say your wife disappeared between 9:30 last night and early today. Just what were the circumstances, Mr. Malloy—that is, as far as you know them?"

The artist seated himself at a table, tapping nervously with his fingers. Presently he explained that the evening before he had dressed and left the house at about seven o'clock to attend a stag dinner. Mrs.

Malloy remained at home, canceling an engagement because she was indisposed. At eight she summoned the butler, John Briggs, requesting a light supper be served in her room. An hour and a half later her maid, Marie, opened the bed and after putting out pajamas, slippers and robe, inquired if there was anything more her mistress wished. Mrs. Malloy dismissed the girl for the night, saying she would read for a time before retiring.

Returning home shortly before three A.M., Collins-Malloy said he decided not to disturb his wife, and retired on a couch in his studio—where he was awakened at ten by Briggs.

"WHEN was Mrs. Malloy first missed?" the inspector inquired.

"When Briggs came in with breakfast. I noticed there was service for two on the tray and asked him why. He told me the maid had gone to her mistress' room earlier with fruit juice and coffee and had seen that she was not there and that the bed had not been slept in. He thought Gerda—my wife—had read until I came in, then had come to the studio to spend the night with me."

"You have searched the house and grounds?"

"Every foot of both," the artist replied. "We also have determined she took no clothing or luggage with her. Why, even the lounging-robe and undergarments she was wearing when Marie went to her room last evening still are over the back of a chair. Her night-robes were not used; none of her clothing is missing. Even ten pounds she had in her purse is still there."

He arose, spreading his hands in a gesture of dismay. "Where has she gone, Inspector? You must find her before something terrible happens."

Inspector Small was not one who thought every report of a missing person was for the homicide department, particularly when it concerned men and women of the arty crowd where life was loose and lived at high velocity in the private studios and cafés of London. He knew that such persons usually returned home after a trip to the Continent or the Riviera, explaining their unannounced absence as merely the need for a rest.

André Collins-Malloy and his beautiful wife Gerda fitted into this category perfectly. The artist, who had inherited a fortune, was successful in his profession, darkly handsome and exceedingly popular in his circle of friends, particularly with the women.

Gerda Collins-Malloy, several years his junior, was one of England's fairest and most brilliant stage celebrities when she met André and following a whirlwind courtship, wed him.

They went to live at Collins-Malloy's ancestral estate in the outskirts of Kensington. For two years all went well. They entertained lavishly and were entertained by others of the ritzy, upper-crust circles in which they moved. There never had been a breath of scandal connected with them. With money, social position and a staff of loyal family retainers, there seemed little else to desire.

This, then, was the situation with which Inspector Small was confronted when he called at the Collins-Malloy mansion the morning of October 30, 1930, in response to an urgent telephone message from André.

"Perhaps," Small ventured in an effort to alleviate the husband's fears, "she became tired of waiting for you, and, unknown to the servants, went to stay with friends. Have you inquired among your associates?"

Collins-Malloy shook his head. "Of course not. Can you imagine any reason, Inspector, that would prompt her to leave this house nude?"

Small couldn't, particularly as he recalled the chill of the night before.

"I think it would be wise for you to wait twenty-four hours and see if she returns," he said in parting. "Meantime, I will examine the reports of injured persons and contact the hospitals." He bowed stiffly. "Good day, sir. If you fail to hear from her by tomorrow at this time, let me know."

The next morning, when Scotland Yard was informed Gerda had not reappeared, Inspector Small assigned three of his best investigators to visit the Collins-Malloy mansion and report back to him later in the day.

Flanked by the now thoroughly alarmed husband and Briggs, they examined the missing woman's apartment with great care. A fingerprint expert dusted furniture, doors and windows, searching for impressions that could be compared with those of the family and servants. Another checked clothing with Marie, the maid. Nothing was missing: Expensive furs hung in their accustomed places; no luggage was gone, and several thousand dollars' worth of jewelry lay atop the dresser and in a drawer.

UPON questioning the servants, Briggs and Marie repeated the same stories they had told their master the previous day. Both had been employed in the family for years and there was no reason to question their honesty or loyalty.

The gardener said he had made the rounds of the premises about 10:30 the night Gerda disappeared, as was his custom, and had unchained two watch-dogs that roamed the gardens during darkness. He insisted he had neither seen nor heard anything to make him suspicious and the dogs had not barked, acting as usual when chained up in the morning.

Collins-Malloy's account of having attended the stag dinner was easily verified, friends saying he had not departed for home until after two o'clock. He said he had let himself in with a passkey rather than disturb Briggs at such a late hour and had gone directly to his studio on the first floor, where there was a couch on which he sometimes slept.

"My apartment connects with that of my wife," he explained, "but Gerda is a light sleeper and many times when I have worked late or been out, I retire in the studio rather than arouse her."

A SEARCH of the grounds revealed nothing suspicious. The old estate embraced several acres of land, fully landscaped in gardens and paths, the whole being surrounded by a high stone wall built many years previously. At the rear this wall had crumbled in two or three places sufficiently for a person to have climbed over it, but there was no evidence the detectives could see of any path on either side or of broken or torn vines among the abundant growth.

Upon hearing the reports of his men late in the day, Inspector Small immediately set in motion the facilities of Scotland Yard to check every avenue by which the missing woman might have disappeared from her home. Gerda Collins-Malloy was too striking a beauty and too well known to have dropped out of sight without someone in London seeing her, he thought. But ticket clerks at railroad and bus stations, and scores of taxicab drivers questioned, could supply no clue to her mysterious disappearance. Many of these public servants knew her, but none had seen her on the night of her disappearance, nor since.

Likewise close questioning of her friends and social acquaintances failed to reveal the slightest intimation that there ever had been trouble between Gerda and her husband or that either had a romantic interest in anyone else. They were known everywhere as an unusually happily married couple.

Frankly puzzled, Inspector Small decided to make a personal inspection of the Collins-Malloy estate, and especially of Gerda's apartment.

In the two rooms everything was exactly as it had been the night Gerda disappeared. Going over the rooms with painstaking care, the inspector examined numerous articles, inquired about the usual position of the luxurious furniture, noted the bed had been opened but not slept in, as the maid had said, and that unwrinkled lingerie lay neatly folded over the back of a chair. In a hamper in the

bathroom there were several articles of intimate underwear.

"Was she wearing these the last time you saw her?" he asked Marie.

The maid nodded. "Yes, sir, she was. I remember, because she showed me an ink spot on this slip and told me I could have it."

After examining the flimsy article of clothing, Small was about to drop it back in the hamper; then he raised it to his nostrils and sniffed.

Turning to Collins-Malloy, he asked: "What kind of perfume did your wife use?"

The artist picked up a vial of rare, expensive perfume from the dressing-table. "This is it," he said. "I purchased it in Paris, on our last trip."

Small passed the uncorked bottle under his nose once or twice and handed it back. Scowling, he said, as though to himself, "That's not it."

There were three large windows in the apartment and the inspector now turned his attention to these. None were screened, and all were unlocked. Raising the center one, he looked out, first to the north, then to the south. The direct view was toward the west and the rear of the building overlooking the gardens of adjoining estates.

About to close the window, he noticed what appeared to be a small spot of white dust on the sill. With a magnifying glass he examined it closely, then taking a tiny brush from his pocket, brushed up what he could and placed it in an envelope.

COLLINS-MALLOY watched silently. Finally he asked: "Have you found a clue, Inspector?"

Small smiled wryly. "It is hard to say," he replied, rubbing together the tips of his fingers with which he had picked up the dust on the window sill, as though testing the smoothness of some very fine substance. "By the way, do you use any white powder in your work as an artist? An abrasive, for instance?"

André shook his head emphatically. "No. Nothing of the sort."

"Did your wife ever go in for painting or sculpturing?"

"Music was her only hobby," Collins-Malloy replied. "She knew nothing of either of the arts you mention."

Apparently satisfied with his inspection of the missing woman's boudoir, Small asked to be shown around the grounds. When under the window, he smoothed back the closely cropped grass with his hands, peering intently at the roots. At last he straightened and turned to James, the outside man.

"Would the dogs permit a stranger to come in the yard at night without making a commotion?"

The gardener shook his head. "No, sir, they would not. Even the other servants are afraid of them. Only the master, mistress and myself can handle them."

The inspector seemed to consider his next question thoughtfully. "If the lady had gone into the garden alone, or with someone known or unknown to the dogs, would they have barked?"

James replied: "At Mr. Malloy or his wife, possibly not. At anyone else, most certainly yes."

Returning to his office, the inspector summoned several assistants. To one he handed the envelope containing the white powder he had found on the window sill, ordering that it be analyzed by a chemist. Then selecting three of his investigators, he instructed them to call on and question closely neighbors living on estates adjoining that of Collins-Malloy and to examine every foot of ground in the garden and lawns, probing in freshly turned earth or new sod that might conceal a grave.

Finally alone, he remembered the strange odor on Gerda's slip. It was a fragrant, yet sickeningly sweet smell that he thought might be some rare, exotic perfume or perhaps an extremely pungent drug that would remain for many hours. With this still on his mind, he went home to rest.

The following morning, Inspector Small received a number of reports for which he had been waiting. Fingerprints in the room from which Mrs. Collins-Malloy had disappeared proved to be only those of the family and servants. The white dust he had found on the window sill had been analyzed as Carrara marble.

Detectives learned that neighbors of the artist knew very little about him or his wife. On an adjoining estate Lord Appleby, who had lived there for many years with his family, knew the Collins-Malloys only casually; the estate on the south had been unoccupied for more than a year except by a caretaker and his wife. At the rear, an Edward Hardingstone had leased the place about a year previously, but was not acquainted with any of his neighbors nor did he mingle in the same social set. However, because Hardingstone was a sculptor, Inspector Small—remembering the Carrara marble dust—ordered that he be questioned more closely.

Hardingstone led the investigators through his establishment, telling them he was thinking of buying it, but had held off until he learned more about his neighbors. He admitted he had seen both André and Gerda in their gardens on several occasions, but only at a distance and knew nothing personal about either. A check of his banking and professional connections indicated he apparently was a man of good standing and character, having lived in another section of London before moving to Kensington.

Meantime ten days passed and the mystery over the disappearance of Gerda Collins-Malloy deepened. London newspapers got wind of the case and made a front-page story of it.

One morning Inspector Small was studying reports of the baffling case when he answered his telephone and heard a familiar voice say: "I say, sir, this is Briggs."

"Well, what is it?" the Scotland Yard man asked curtly.

"The master went out yesterday evening and has not returned. I thought you might want to know."

"Quite right—and thanks for phoning. I'll be out immediately."

BRIGGS, obviously nervous when Inspector Small reached the mansion, explained that he was badly worried over the strange action of his master.

"'E 'ad an engagement lawst evenin', an exceedingly himportant one too, if I may say so. 'E went for a walk about dusk—in the garden, I thought—and when 'e failed to return, I looked around but could find nothing of 'im on the place. 'Twas not like 'im to miss a date. Well, sir, I watched for 'im until pawst midnight; then I retired, thinkin' 'e would ring when 'e returned if 'e wanted me. This morning when I went to 'is apartment it was empty and no one had slept in 'is bed. Nor was 'e 'ere in the studio."

All the time Small had been listening to the butler, he had been conscious of something faintly familiar in the studio. Suddenly he knew what it was: that faint, strange odor he had smelled on Gerda's slip when he visited her apartment.

"Has anyone been in this studio besides you and me since your master last was here?" he demanded.

"No, sir," Briggs said. "No one. I asked all the servants."

"Are you sure he didn't come in after you retired last night?"

"That I am not, sir, although no one in the house saw or heard 'im, if 'e did."

At the inspector's orders, André's quarters were searched to determine what clothing he had worn. Soon Briggs exclaimed that his master had not worn the same clothing in which he had seen him dressed the previous afternoon when he went for the walk. Further search disclosed that Collins-Malloy's lounging trousers and jacket were missing from the wardrobe.

"Then he did return without being seen, and went out again," Small declared. "Or perhaps he *didn't* go out again," he added significantly.

After telephoning his headquarters for assistants and obtaining uniformed bobbies to be stationed around

the estate as guards, Inspector Small, while awaiting their arrival, considered the problem confronting him.

Had André Collins-Malloy been spirited away in the same manner as his wife, perhaps murdered and his body disposed of? Or had the man had something to do with the disappearance of his wife a fortnight earlier and decided to join her, if he knew her whereabouts, or make his own getaway if he had a guilty conscience?

Now an even more thorough search of the old house was made, detectives testing walls for secret doors to hidden rooms or passages, and crews of men digging up the cellar in search of a possible shallow grave. The inspector fervently wished that the creaky timbers—mortised together more than a century and a half earlier and perhaps hiding some ancient death-vault or torture-chamber—could talk.

Banks where the artist and his wife had transacted business were visited and under court order required to open the missing couple's accounts for inspection. Nothing bearing on the baffling case was discovered. No sums of cash had been withdrawn for more than a month and only a few comparatively small checks in payment of current bills had been cleared since before Gerda's disappearance.

After two more weeks of fruitless work, during which every angle of the strange case was deeply probed, Inspector Small was forced to admit that this might be the first mystery in many years the Yard had failed to solve; yet he determined not to give up even temporarily until every means at his disposal had been brought to bear in the ever-widening search for the missing couple.

One day near the end of October, Small decided to have another look around the Collins-Malloy house. He had personally been over the ground many times, as well as the shrewdest investigators in the Yard, without uncovering any new evidence; yet he knew from long experience that frequently some small thing escapes attention in the early stages of an investigation, and small clues often break the most stubborn cases.

As he walked through the stately gardens, now barren of flowers but still green and well kept, it seemed to him he knew every foot of them as intimately as the masters of the place had for so many generations. Nothing appeared to be different from the last time he had been there, the week before. At the back of the sunken gardens where the estate joined that of the one occupied by Hardingstone, the inspector stopped in front of the old stone wall at a place where it was crumbling. For the hundredth time, he thought: "The answer must be here." He examined the hanging vines, but had no more success than before in discovering broken stems or crushed leaves. In one spot he saw what might be a stone moved out of place recently; the place from which it had come seemed to be freshly exposed to the air. Yet there was no evidence of a path on either side of the ancient barrier.

Suddenly a strange voice, coming from the opposite side of the wall, drawled in a friendly tone: "Strange thing about the owners of this place, isn't it? I heard the property is for sale. Are you thinking of buying?"

Inspector Small looked up quickly into the smiling face of a tall man who had spread the ivy leaves apart and was studying him carefully.

"Well, not exactly," Small replied pleasantly, deciding to play the rôle in which he had been mistakenly cast. "But I did hear it would be disposed of if the owners were not found, so as I was driving past I decided to look around in the gardens."

As he talked he too studied his companion closely, noting the powerful frame, strong, well-kept hands,

She's going to make some man a good wife some day, provided he comes down off the movie screen and asks her.

—THORNTON WILDER

closely cropped mustache and deep-set, flashing eyes.

"Did you know the—er—the people who lived here? The name slips my mind for the moment."

"Not intimately, of course," the man replied. "I saw them a few times and once I chatted a moment with the woman across the wall, but she seemed aloof, rather detached from the world—a strange person who gave the impression of desiring to be let alone. I made no further attempt to be friendly."

Recognizing the man as Edward Hardingstone, about whom he had a report from a Yard operative, Small decided to play out his unsolicited part as a prospective buyer of the estate and see what happened.

He said: "Have you lived here long?"

"Less than a year," Hardingstone replied. "I originally intended to buy the place, but my neighbors seemed so snobbish and unfriendly I abandoned the idea two months ago and decided to move as soon as my lease expires. But if someone like you were to be a neighbor, well, it would make a difference."

The inspector bowed, smiling at the obvious flattery. "A nice compliment, sir, and may I return it by saying a gentleman such as you for my next-door neighbor might influence my decision to purchase—that is, if my family likes it."

"You have a family, then?" Hardingstone said. "Children? Boys or girls, by chance?"

"One of each," Small replied, "but hardly by chance."

They laughed at the quip as Hardingstone extended his hand. "I am Edward Hardingstone, artist and sculptor. And you?"

The inspector was prepared for the question. "Alexander Hubbell. In the investment business these many years."

A moment later Hardingstone had invited his new friend to view the grounds and stop in for a spot of tea. Through the break in the wall, Small stepped through into a faded sunken garden and looked across a wide expanse of lawn at the rambling building he figured must be as old as that of the Collins-Malloys'. Hardingstone led him around, pointing out improvements he intended making if he eventually decided to buy. Finally they arrived at a rear door in one of the wings.

"This is my studio," he said.

Small found himself in a spacious room the walls of which were hung with paintings, some priceless, he thought. Around on the floor stood statues—some completed, others only partially chiseled out of stone. On a huge mantel in a locked, glass-enclosed case there were trophies that appeared to have been collected in many parts of the world.

"Your work?" Inspector Small waved his hand toward the paintings on the walls.

"Not all of them," Hardingstone replied. "I only dabble in oils. My first and only love is marble. Some of these are finished and waiting for their purchasers to call for them. Others are not ready, as you see."

The inspector thought he did. In fact, he stepped casually to the side of a partly completed bust of a woman, being done in Carrara marble. Stroking it gently with a hand down the smooth arm and across a spot where the sculptor recently had been working with hammer and chisel, he uttered a word of praise, then closed his fist and thrust it into his coat pocket.

After a quick Scotch-and-soda, Small said he must be going but promised to return for a longer and more friendly chat at some later time. Returning to his car the inspector directed that he be driven to his office with all possible haste.

Back at headquarters, he hastened to the laboratory. At last opening his

hand, he told the chemist there would be dust on the palm which he wanted analyzed.

"It should be Carrara marble particles," he said. "Compare it with the powder you analyzed that was taken from the window sill in Mrs. Malloy's bedchamber."

Two hours later Small received a report that the white dust taken from his palm was of the same character and texture as that previously analyzed.

It was only a slender thread of circumstance, insufficient evidence on which to build up even a good case of suspicion, yet it was a lead and Small determined to follow it through to a conclusion.

For the next twenty-four hours operatives checked on the background and character of Hardingstone. It was not difficult to catalogue him. He was well known in the London artist colony, and he had traveled extensively, spending much of his time for the past ten years on the Continent and in the Americas. Nowhere in his record could anything be found against him. In fact, the Scotland Yard men turned up exactly nothing that would point to his implication in any manner in the disappearance of the Collins-Malloys.

Yet Inspector Small's suspicion of the man grew as the hours passed. Why, he could not say with certainty. He decided to make a return visit to the fellow's place.

THE sculptor met him at the door with a smile and led the way to his studio. Motioning toward a chair, he said: "How nice to have you call again. Have you decided to purchase the place next door?"

Feeling that the time had come to identify himself, Small extended his identification card to Hardingstone. "My interest, sir, in the property of which you speak extends only to finding the present owners, as you now will understand."

The man scowled as he handed back the card. "And what, Inspector, do you think I would know about where they have gone?"

In that moment Small had to admit to himself that the man had something there to which he could not immediately supply the answer. Then more as a means of breaking the embarrassing silence, he mentioned the Carrara marble dust.

Hardingstone tilted back his head and laughed, more insolently than with mirth, the inspector thought. "Are you insinuating I am the only sculptor who uses Carrara marble? Have you not heard it is an exceedingly common commodity in my profession and London is full of those who work with it?"

Even as Hardingstone was finishing his brief speech, Inspector Small became aware of something vaguely familiar in the studio. For an instant he could not say what it was; then he remembered: Once more he smelled that faint, exotic odor he had detected in the bedchamber of Gerda and the studio of André Collins-Malloy shortly after they had disappeared. He now was certain this was the key to the solution of the mystery.

As suddenly as the detective had noticed the strange odor, Hardingstone had observed him sniffing—and the expression on the artist's face changed to a sneer.

"I might have known you were a sneaking sleuth," he said coldly, "and I must now ask you to leave my house."

"Not yet," the Scotland Yard man snapped tersely. "You have some questions to answer—here or at headquarters. Where do you prefer to do it?"

The sculptor moved swiftly—but Small was faster, covering him with a service pistol withdrawn from a shoulder holster. Hardingstone's half-drawn gun clattered to the floor and his hands were slowly raised above his head at the lawman's order.

Inspector Small said: "Sit down."

Still menacing the man with his weapon, Small backed to the studio door and blew a whistle. Immediately three operatives, who had been waiting in a car a short distance away, came in.

"Handcuff him, then search him," Small ordered.

As the detectives stepped forward one inadvertently moved between the inspector and the prisoner. Hardingstone was quick to seize the opportunity to make a break. He didn't get far. A heavy fist felled him almost before he started. As he dropped to the floor, his head struck the partly extended arm of the statue of a nude woman, chipping off a thick layer of plaster.

It seemed a small thing, at the moment, yet when the inspector moved close to assist in lifting the unconscious Hardingstone to a chair, he stopped short and looked around. From somewhere close had come that sickening sweet fragrance which he had smelled twice before.

An instant later Small was examining the nude statue, breaking off several additional pieces of plaster from the arm. Then he recoiled in horror and amazement. Beneath the layer of sculptor's clay he saw the dead flesh of a human arm.

Swiftly the detectives began breaking away more and more of the brittle covering, until at last the embalmed body of Gerda Collins-Malloy was exposed in full.

Meantime, Hardingstone had recovered his senses and sat glaring at his captors.

"So you did murder her?" Inspector Small said. "And the man, also? What have you done with his body?"

A FEW hours later Edward Hardingstone made a full confession. He led the Scotland Yard men to a secret chamber in the basement of the old mansion; here they found the body of Collins-Malloy in the process of being embalmed for the same macabre treatment as had been given his wife. There also were numerous plaster-covered statues of small animals, with which the mad sculptor had experimented before trying his strange art on human beings.

Hardingstone said he had watched for an opportunity to murder Gerda Collins-Malloy and carry her body to his studio. He had gained entrance to her apartment with a short ladder to the window. Using a rare poison which caused instant death when injected into the body, he had stabbed the woman with a hypodermic needle as she slept in her chair; he had stripped off the flimsy garments she wore, dropped the body out of the window, then carried it across the gardens to his studio. He said he had no trouble with the watch-dogs because he had fed them every night for a month. In this way he had become friendly with them, and they raised no outcry, permitting him to chain them to a tree in a distant corner of the estate while he carried out his grisly work. Afterward he had unleashed them.

It was in much the same manner that he had murdered Collins-Malloy, although he had not intended to do so in the beginning. But it dawned on him eventually that if the husband disappeared also, the police would be likely to think he either had slain his wife and run away or, in the absence of bodies, that for some reason they had decided to disappear together.

Upon searching Hardingstone's secret chamber of horrors, a supply of the poison drug was found. Its odor was so pungent that even a drop would leave a trace in the air for many hours. The investigators also found complete embalming equipment, together with dissecting instruments.

It seemed certain Edward Hardingstone was insane, and he was ordered to be examined by alienists. Then one morning when his guards went to his cell, they found him dead, a tiny hypodermic springe with a few drops of the deadly poison still in its barrel. Where the man had concealed it on his person never was learned, but he had gone out by his own hand and by the same means as his victims. •

A Bluebook NOVELETTE

Episode in Haiti

It was a vacation for Hunter, on a tropic island steeped in a history of violence and hate. He was unprepared to find that history still was being made.

By RICHARD STERN

IT WAS A FEW MINUTES after seven o'clock, but the afternoon clerk was still on duty when I came downstairs from my room. "Monsieur Parks has not arrived?" I said.

"Non, monsieur."

"He has not telephoned?"

"Non, monsieur."

In the tropics, I told myself, you should make allowances for tardiness. Parks was already an hour late. It was true that he had been punctual enough before dawn that morning when he had picked me up and the two of us had gone flying in the small chartered plane; but that, I was convinced, had been for him more than a social engagement, more than the mere sight-seeing jaunt he had represented it. "I shall wait in the bar," I told the clerk. "When Monsieur Parks arrives—"

"Oui, monsieur." His manner said plainly that all things happened in their own time, that impatience accomplished nothing. A sound philosophy. I smiled at him as I turned away.

I have often speculated on the course events might have taken had I decided to wait in the lobby—or, for that matter, if I had stayed upstairs in my room. I would not then, of course, have met the old man, Jonas Peters, nor seen the other one, the big one with the yellow hair, Bruno Dodge. But in the end, I think, everything would have been the same. I was already involved, although at that time I had no way of knowing, and no reason to suspect.

The old man came first. He had been waiting for me, I know that now. Then, however, it seemed merely the sort of thing that happens in foreign countries.

"Mr. Hunter," he said, as he approached the table I had taken. "You will forgive me, I am sure. At this time of year visiting Americans are not common in this ancient republic."

"I suppose not," I said. He was a tall, erect old man, with wide shoulders, white hair and a large nose. He was smiling, and his eyes, vividly blue in a smooth tanned face, seemed amused. He sat down.

"The hurricane season, you know, Mr. Hunter, and the heat—there is really little to attract visitors." He nodded to the bartender who stood by. "If I may presume to suggest," he said, "Haitian rum is excellent. I fancy myself as a connoisseur and I consider it beyond compare." Then he spoke to the bartender in rapid French, ordering two rum punches—not too sweet. He turned to me again. "My name is Peters, Mr. Hunter, Jonas Peters. I obtained your name from the guest register. You are, I believe, a lawyer—and on vacation?"

"Yes." I wondered into what niche he fitted. I am still wondering.

"And a flyer, Mr. Hunter. With wartime experience, perhaps?" He paused there, watching my frown, and the amusement in his eyes seemed to deepen. "There is nothing mysterious in my knowing, I assure you, Mr. Hunter. Haiti is, has always been, a gigantic sounding board, an echoing room. There are no secrets in Haiti. Napoleon's generals found that to be true when they attempted to conquer this island."

I smiled at him. "You mean drums?"

"I am not being facetious, Mr. Hunter. Drums, yes, but also what in Creole they call 'talk-a-mouth'." He shrugged. "You were flying, early this morning, in a chartered aircraft, Mr. Hunter, and since young Mr. Parks from the embassy who accompanied you is not a flyer, the inference is obvious." He watched the bartender put down our drinks, then took the chit, signed it swiftly, and leaned back in his chair. "Your health, Mr. Hunter!"

At the end of the bar a man finished his drink and set down the glass.

I noticed this man only because of his size; he was, I think, as big a man as I have ever seen—tall, immensely broad without fat, with brilliant yellow hair. He tossed a coin on the bar and walked out in the direction of the lobby, setting his feet down soundlessly, moving without haste, yet quickly, like a bear in the woods.

Peters said, "As well as I know this country, Mr. Hunter, I have never really seen it from the air. The Bay of Port-au-Prince must be a stirring sight at dawn."

"It is."

"And out along the coast—" He paused, smiling. "It must have been interesting."

"The grapevine is efficient," I said.

"It is, Mr. Hunter." There was a subtle change in his eyes. The amusement was gone, abruptly replaced by something else—speculation, perhaps. "It is, indeed. The grapevine, as you call it—" He looked up then. The clerk from the lobby was coming toward us.

"Telephone, monsieur," the clerk said. There was satisfaction in his voice. One had merely to wait and all things happened; here, in the telephone call, was proof of this.

"Excuse me," I said to Peters.

The voice on the telephone took me off-balance. It was not Parks; it was a woman's voice. "Mr. Hunter? This is Louise Parks, Howard's sister."

"Yes?"

"Have you seen Howard? Or have you heard from him?"

"No, I haven't." I looked at my watch. It was twenty-five minutes to eight. "I've been expecting him."

"So have I." The words came out too fast; they almost ran together. "That is, I've been expecting both of you. Howard told me 'six o'clock' and it's 'way past that now, and—" Her voice trailed off.

"I'm sorry," I said. "I thought it best to wait here."

There was a little silence. "Would you mind very much taking a taxi, Mr. Hunter? Any driver will know where we live. It's in Petionville, you know."

"Yes," I said. "Howard showed me this morning. But wouldn't it perhaps be better, Miss Parks, if we made it another time? Howard seems to have been delayed, and—"

"No! Please!" It was not mere politeness. It was more than that, a great deal more. "Please, Mr. Hunter, take a taxi and come up, and—"

"Of course," I said.

"We'll have a Martini. Do you like Martinis, Mr. Hunter?" It was fright in her voice, that much was plain. The words tumbled over one another.

"Why, yes," I said. "I do."

"You'll—you'll hurry?"

"Right away, Miss Parks?"

I went back into the bar. Peters was still at our table.

"I'm sorry," I said. "An engagement." I smiled. "I've been summoned."

"Indeed, Mr. Hunter?" There was no mistaking the change in his eyes now. They had turned cold and hard, as cold and as hard as blue ice. Then, abruptly, they were amused again. "Another time, Mr. Hunter."

"Yes," I said, "of course. Thank you for the drink. Good-by, Mr. Peters."

"*Au revoir.*"

At the doorway I paused and turned; I cannot explain why. He was watching me in a speculative sort of way. There were small crinkles of thought in the corners of his eyes. He raised his glass and made a small bow and I turned away and went out to the taxis.

Petionville is a suburb above Port-au-Prince, a twenty-minute drive. My driver made it in fifteen. Louise Parks was already on the front steps when we came up the driveway. She was young—younger than Howard, younger, even, than I had thought from her voice. She wore black velvet trousers and ballet slippers and a loose white silk shirt. Her hair was light, but not as light as that of the big man in the bar—and I wondered that I should remember him, that I should think of him at that moment. She took my hand. "Thank you, Mr. Hunter. It was sweet of you to come." Her voice was under control now; the words no longer ran together.

"Not at all," I said.

"My cook has been having a fit."

"Cooks do." I followed her into the house and out onto a broad screened gallery, cool and restful. A cocktail stand was set against the wall. "She'll get over it," I said.

I don't believe she heard me. She stood there, her hands clasped, looking at my face. It was beginning again, the nervousness that had been in her voice on the telephone. "I can't imagine where he is, or what he's doing. He told me this morning that he'd pick you up about six and bring you straight here. I haven't heard a word since. I've phoned the embassy. I've even phoned the ambassador as the Residency. I've tried the Club. It's—it's silly, because there just aren't places here where he could have stopped the way a man stops off after work in New York or in—" She was silent, looking at my face.

"Now, Miss Parks," I said. "He'll be along."

She nodded slowly. "Of course."

"I left word at the hotel."

"Yes," she said. She was silent for a moment, getting herself under control. "I promised you a Martini, didn't I? Will you mix them, please?" She nodded toward the cocktail stand. And then somewhere back in the house a telephone range, and her head came up. "Excuse me," she said, and almost ran across the room and into the hallway. I heard a door close.

Illustrated by HERB SASLOW

While I mixed the drinks I tried to understand it, and failed. I felt uncomfortable, awkward, an outsider. I found myself listening, waiting for her to come back, to say that Howard was on his way, that he had been delayed by some perfectly simple and innocuous occurrence.

She came back into the room walking slowly, her hands clasped together in front of her. She was smiling. "I'm sorry," she said. She sat down on the chaise facing the low coffee-table. She looked at her drink and then at me. "*Santé,* Mr. Hunter."

"Your health," I said, and I watched her unclasp her hands and reach for her glass. It was not too full, but some of the liquor slopped over the edge and onto the table and she withdrew her hand slowly and sat there staring at the little puddle without movement, without sound. I put my own glass down untouched. "It wasn't Howard who phoned," I said.

"No." She looked up then. "It was the ambassador. He—he has called the Foreign Office and the police." Her voice was toneless, and her smile was gone.

"But that's absurd," I said. "Howard—" I didn't know how to finish.

"People don't just disappear in this country." She kept her hands tightly together in her lap. She seemed to be talking to herself, trying to be logical, dispassionate. "Not—not foreigners. It's like a small town. There are no secrets."

The old man Jonas Peters had said the same. "But still," I said, "good heavens, Howard's an American; he's in the embassy."

"The ambassador told me to stay here." She paused. "He told me to tell you to stay, too. He wants to talk to both of us."

"But—" I began, and there I stopped. "Of course."

"I don't understand it, either, Mr. Hunter. I'm—I'm just afraid."

I looked down at the small puddle her shaking fingers had spilled around her drink. I looked at her. She was staring straight ahead, without expression. It was a time for reassurances, but, somehow, I couldn't quite bring myself to make them, to tell her that Howard would come walking in any moment, because I didn't think that he would—then, or ever. It had got to me, too, and I could not have said how or why. "Drink your drink," I said. "Use both hands if you have to. It doesn't matter if a little spills." And then I looked away.

THE ambassador was short and round, almost bald, with a permanent smile that seemed never to touch his eyes. The minister of police, who came with him, was more the traditional picture of a diplomat. We sat, the four of us, there on the gallery. The ambassador said, "We have no word yet, Miss Parks. I am sorry." And then he looked at me. "How long have you known Howard Parks, Mr. Hunter?"

"He was at college when I was there—a year ahead of me, I think."

"You didn't know him well?"

"Only by sight, then, but later, during the war, in Italy, I knew him better. He was attached to the embassy in Rome; I was with the Air Force and we had quite a few dealings."

HE was like a good lawyer directing his examination of a witness. "Were you intimate friends, would you say, Mr. Hunter?"

"No. Acquaintances, rather."

He nodded. The minister said, "The airplane, monsieur the ambassador."

The ambassador nodded again. He had been heading for that all the time. I knew what was coming. I had followed the same reasoning myself. "You were not close friends," the ambassador said. "You had not seen one another since the war. You met by chance at the airport yesterday when you landed here from Cuba. Yet Howard went to the length of chartering a plane, getting up before dawn this morning—going, actually, to quite a bit of trouble and some expense to go flying with you. Can you explain that, Mr. Hunter?"

"No," I said, "I can't. He put it on a sight-seeing basis. The best way for me to see the country, he said, was from the air because road travel was difficult and limited. It seems far-fetched, unless he wanted to fly himself and knew that I was a flyer."

"We have flyers, too, Mr. Hunter," the minister said. "Their rates are reasonable."

"Where did you go, Mr. Hunter?" the ambassador said.

I had been over that in my mind too. "Over the city, out along the coast, up here to Petionville; Howard wanted to see his house from the air."

"And what did you see, besides the house?"

I spread my hands. "What *would* you see? The city, the buildings, the pattern of streets, the mountains, the bay, the island of Gonave, a few fishing boats, a schooner, an inbound freighter, the small huts among the trees, the houses up here—"

"Nothing that stands out in your mind?"

"No, nothing." Louise's eyes had never left my face; I was conscious of them. Vaguely, I said, "I'm sorry. I'd like to help, but—"

A white-coated servant had appeared in the doorway. We all looked at him. To the minister of police he said, "The telephone, monsieur."

Louise drew her breath in sharply. It was a small, frightened sound.

The ambassador said, "I am sorry, my dear. We are doing all that—"

"I don't understand," I said. "It's none of my business, I know, but just because a man is missing for an hour or two—"

"Let me put it this way," the ambassador said. "If a man of yours during the war was missing for two hours between two known points—"

"That was wartime."

"Precisely, Mr. Hunter." His eyes, on my face, were cool and sharp. His voice was almost angry. "This is not Korea; nor is it Germany, where tensions have been publicized. But—" He stopped there.

"Oh," I said, and I looked at Louise. This, of course, was the explanation of her behavior. "I see." She said nothing, only gazed at her hands. "I'm sorry," I said.

From the doorway the minister of police said, "Monsieur the ambassador, if I may speak to you?"

The ambassador got up abruptly. The two of them stood together, talking in low voices. I watched them, and Louise, I knew, was watching them too. When the ambassador turned back to us and came slowly across the gallery, unsmiling now, I think we both knew what he was going to say.

He stopped before Louise, stood looking down at her. "The police have found Howard." He paused. "In the garden, behind the hotel."

LOUISE said nothing for a time, just sitting there, looking at her hands. She raised her head slowly. "He's—he's dead?"

"Yes, my dear," the ambassador said. His voice was gentle, but his eyes were no longer cool and sharp, and his face was beginning to color with anger. "He is dead."

The ambassador drove me to the hotel on his way to the embassy offices. The driver jumped out to hold the door open. "One moment, Mr. Hunter," the ambassador said. I could see him dimly, sitting back in his corner, his face thoughtful. "I am cabling Washington tonight."

"Of course," I said.

He looked at me then. "Among other things, I shall ask for whatever information Washington can provide concerning you."

"I don't blame you. There is too much coincidence—"

"Precisely." He was silent for a few moments. "Until I hear from the department, which should be tomorrow, you will, of course, remain available."

"Yes."

"And if the department turns up nothing—" He paused. "In that event, Mr. Hunter, I think it would

be well if you left the country immediately." He paused again. "Your continued presence here could prove embarrassing."

"I'm afraid I don't understand that. To whom?"

"To the United States, Mr. Hunter. You are an American. I don't want to give anyone the opportunity of making of you a *cause célèbre*, a focal point for suspicion in this matter."

"Oh," I said. I turned it over in my mind. "I wouldn't like that either. I'm a lawyer—and a scandal, even down here this far away from home, wouldn't do me any good."

He nodded. "Then we understand one another. Good-night, sir."

THE same clerk was on duty. He paid me no more attention than before. He handed me my key, and a folded note from my box. The note was from Jonas Peters:

I shall be in the bar it read. *I should like to talk to you when you return.*

I crumpled the note and threw it in the wastebasket. I thought of what the ambassador had said and of what I, myself, had been thinking. I stood there indecisively. "I have had no dinner," I told the clerk. "The dining-room is closed?"

"*Oui, monsieur.*"

"Can I get a sandwich?"

"*Oui, monsieur.* In the bar."

By such narrow margins are things decided.

Peters was at the same table. He had a game of solitaire laid out. I went over and sat down, and he smiled at me and gathered the cards.

"You arrive fortuitously, Mr. Hunter," he said. "I was on the verge of cheating." His eyes showed nothing. It was as if he had drawn a curtain behind them. He raised his finger and the bartender appeared immediately. He watched me while I ordered, and when the bartender had gone, he leaned back in his chair and took out a gold cigarette case and lighter. He lighted the cigarette carefully. "This is a distressing business, Mr. Hunter."

"It is." I hesitated. Despite the ambassador, and despite my own inclinations, I had to know. "And you—"

He raised his hand. "All in good time, Mr. Hunter. Let me ask my questions first."

I shook my head. "Why should I tell you anything?"

He was silent for a little time, studying me. "I think you will, Mr. Hunter. I was careless in something I said. I underestimated your shrewdness, a thing I do not often allow myself to do. You have questions you want to ask me because of that small bit of carelessness. I shall answer them. After you have answered mine."

"The ambassador—" I began.

"George and I are friends of long standing. I see no need to trouble him with what can, after all, be settled between you and me." He paused. "I can put your conscience at rest, Mr. Hunter, and that should be worth a good deal to you."

He saw too deeply; he had sized me up too well. I had tried to ignore it, but it had been there all the time, nagging at me.

"You are on the horns of a dilemma, Mr. Hunter. You are afraid that you may know, or have guessed something that is concerned with the death of young Mr. Parks. If it is pertinent, you should tell it to the ambassador, or to the police. But at the same time, and prudently, I might add, you have no desire to become involved in something which concerns neither you nor the late Mr. Parks. I admire prudence."

"What are your questions?" I said.

"I should like to know all about your flight this morning."

"Why?"

"For my own reasons, Mr. Hunter."

I hesitated. He watched me, smiling, and the smile told me nothing. "All right," I said. "It was Parks' idea. It was a sight-seeing tour, he said. . . ." I went through it all, precisely as I had gone through it with the ambassador and the minister of police. Peters watched me and listened, and when I was done he was silent for a little time studying the ash of his cigarette.

"But you know that it was *not* a sight-seeing tour, Mr. Hunter. You know that—" He stopped there while the bartender brought my sandwich and small salad and coffee and then left us again.

"I think," I said, "that my questions come now."

"Fair enough, Mr. Hunter."

I WANTED a moment or two to organize it in my mind. I took a bite of the sandwich and a sip of the coffee. "The ambassador knew I had been flying. The minister of police knew. Just as you did. Apparently it is common knowledge. But neither of them knew *where* I had flown, while you did."

"I am annoyed with myself for that bit of carelessness, Mr. Hunter. There was no need for me to mention your flying out along the coast. It was clever of you to pick it up."

"You saw the plane this morning," I said. "That is how you knew."

"Correct, Mr. Hunter." His smile widened. "Shrewdness *and* imagination."

"All right," I said. "Tell me—"

"No; that is the wrong approach. I promised to answer questions."

"That's quibbling."

He said nothing.

"All right," I said again. "You want to know how much I know, or how much I've guessed. I'll tell you. I have guessed that you were the reason that Parks wanted to go flying, that he knew you were up to something and wanted to see it for himself. That's why he didn't want to take a professional pilot, because he didn't want to run the risk of having the man talk. I turned up unexpectedly and he jumped at the chance."

"You reason well, Mr. Hunter."

"I'll go on," I said. I wanted to watch some of the complacency disappear from that face. "You were out along the coast when you saw us. There is nothing out there. But there was a schooner not far off-shore, headed out to sea. It could have landed during the night, in some small cove, put a cargo ashore, put out again just before dawn."

"My admiration for you continues to increase, Mr. Hunter."

"Smuggling—" I began, and there I stopped, for I thought I saw a flicker of something in his eyes. It was quickly gone. "Well," I said. "Does it add up?"

HE got a fresh cigarette, lighted it carefully. "Let us say, Mr. Hunter, that it is an intelligent hypothesis. Let us, for the moment, assume that it is true."

"Purely hypothetical, of course," I said.

The blue eyes were amused. "You also indulge in sarcasm, Mr. Hunter. You have many facets."

He was imperturbable. He was also, I was beginning to believe, more than a little dangerous.

"Extending your hypothesis," Peters said, "you arrive, of course, at the conclusion that I killed Mr. Parks to prevent him from telling what he saw, or from using what he saw." He shook his head. "You err there, Mr. Hunter. You should be able to see the flaws in that conclusion. There are at least two. First, assuming that Mr. Parks had some damaging information concerning me, why did he not use it? He had the entire day to do whatever he wished to do, to tell whatever he wished to tell. I could have silenced him, if that had been my purpose, only by killing him this morning, not this evening."

"There are several possible answers to that," I said. "Opportunity, or lack of sure knowledge that it was Parks in the plane."

"Granted," Peters said. "But my point nevertheless carries weight. The second point, I think, is conclusive. Mr. Parks did not leave the embassy until six o'clock. At that time, I was here in the bar. I left the bar shortly after you did, and went into the din-

Peters was silent a moment, studying me. "I think you will tell me, Mr. Hunter," he said. "I was careless in something I said. I underestimated your shrewdness, a thing I do not often allow myself to do. And yet you are on the horns of a dilemma." I sat forward in my chair.

ing-room for dinner. After dinner I came back here. I was here when Mr. Parks' body was found. During the critical hours, from six until approximately eight-thirty, I was here in the hotel in plain sight of a dozen persons. Is your conscience settled now, Mr. Hunter?"

"You could have had someone—"

"Mr. Hunter—I have, in my time, found it necessary to dispense with one or two persons. I make no secret of it. I have never found it necessary to have someone else do the chore for me." The curtain had lifted at last. His eyes were cold now, glittering, and his entire face had taken on an expression of predatoriness that was startling to see. I could believe what he was saying. I could also believe what he was implying.

"That's a back-handed threat, of course?"

His face softened slowly. He put down his cigarette, picked up the cards and straightened them in his long fingers. "I contracted to set your conscience at rest, Mr. Hunter. I have done that, I believe. I shall rely on your prudence to cause you to forget the entire matter." He pushed back his chair and stood up. "Allow me, please, to pay for your meal. Goodnight, Mr. Hunter."

Sleep took time in coming that night. I lay in the darkness beneath the mosquito bar, hearing the sounds outside—the rustle of wind in the palms, somewhere the faint throbbing of drums, a voice speaking Creole in the courtyard below, a brief burst of laughter. There were footsteps in the hall, the rattle of a key. . . . I thought of the girl Louise. She was alone now, all alone. I thought of her brother, whom I had never known well, whose life had touched mine only casually and only three times: at college, during the war, here in Haiti. Did acquaintance impose obligation on me? In the morning, I thought—and the rest of the thought eluded me. I sank into sleep.

At breakfast the next morning I saw the big man again. This time he came directly to my table, walking soundlessly, setting his feet down a little in from straight; watching him, I thought again of a bear. "Mr. Hunter," he said. "I am Bruno Dodge. I want to talk to you. May I sit down?" It was a deep voice, a pleasant voice; it rumbled with good nature. His English was almost accentless. "A matter of business."

"I'm just a tourist," I began.

His laughter was as deep as his voice. It rumbled across the dining-gallery. "I am not selling anything." He pulled back a chair and sat down. His laughter subsided. "I am an importer here in Port-au-Prince, Mr. Hunter. I am also an exporter—sisal goods, mahogany ware, woven cotton materials, other things."

"Oh?" I said politely.

"I export chiefly to New York, to a firm called Brown & Company. Do you know them, Mr. Hunter?"

"I shook my head. "I don't understand—"

He laughed again and the whole table shook. "But it is simple. You are a lawyer. You practice in New York." He pulled a folded newspaper from his pocket. "This season of the year, visitors are listed." He pointed to a small box labeled *Arrivals*. "I need a lawyer to represent me in New York, perhaps to bring suit. Brown & Company have been, shall we say, delinquent in their payment to me." He shook his head. "No, that is the wrong word. They haven't paid me at all."

I braced myself for the laughter this time. My coffee-cup rattled in its saucer. "Is it a large sum?" I said.

He shrugged. "To you maybe, no. To me, yes. Twenty-three thousand dollars is a large sum in this country, Mr. Hunter."

"It's an appreciable sum anywhere." I sipped my coffee. It was wrong, I thought; people didn't do business that way. He knew nothing about me beyond my listing in the newspaper. I said, "Wouldn't it be better, perhaps, if you went up to New York yourself, talked to these people, and then, if you need legal help—"

"I have found, Mr. Hunter, that I can be in only one place at a time."

His chuckle was startling, but it lacked the shock effect of the full laugh. "My business here requires me, and my business there requires me." He spread his hands.

"Well—" I said.

"I have receipts of delivery, Mr. Hunter. Custom receipts, bills of lading, all papers in order—"

"Well," I said again, "I'll look them over if you want."

"Splendid." He paused. "You are returning to New York?"

I thought of the ambassador, of what the ambassador said. "Yes."

"Then it arranges itself. Ordinarily—" He paused there and smiled. "It is embarrassing, but between lawyer and client there should be no secrets. I need that money as quickly as possible." He spread his hands again. "You can understand. A sum of that magnitude—"

"I think I understand," I said.

He pushed back the chair and stood up. "I will have the papers sent up immediately."

"Do that. I'll be interested in seeing them." I watched him walk off across the dining-gallery. A curious person, Mr. Dodge; a curious country, Haiti!

I had one more caller that morning. I was in my room looking over Dodge's papers which were, as he had said, all there and all in order. They had been delivered promptly by a boy who had obviously been instructed to put them directly in my hands. I was studying them, wondering about them, when a knock came at the door. I said, "Come in." Then I pushed back my chair and stood up. "Miss Parks!" She was the last person I had expected to see.

She closed the door behind her. "I—I wanted to talk to you."

"Of course." I hesitated, watching her. There were no signs of tears, but her face was tight, drawn, and her eyes seemed unnaturally bright. "Yesterday," I said, "last night, I didn't offer my condolences. It didn't seem to be quite the time, or—"

"Thank you." She took the chair at the writing-desk. I perched on the bed. "I want you to do me a favor, Mr. Hunter."

"I'll be glad to, if I can."

"You can." Her eyes were steady on my face. "I want you to take me flying." There was a directness in her voice, in her manner, a decisiveness that had not been there last night. It was plain that her mind was made up. In that moment, watching me, waiting for my reply, she bore a strong resemblance to Howard. There was the same determination, the same strength.

"I don't understand," I said. "Where do you want to fly? When? Why—" I stopped there. "Oh—I think I see."

"Yes," she said. "Tomorrow morning, just before dawn."

"Now, Miss Parks," I said. "Isn't that, perhaps—"

"It's not a sentimental gesture, if that's what you're thinking."

That made it even worse.

"I want to fly exactly where you and Howard flew. I want to see what you saw, or what Howard saw, because—" She stopped there, and took a deep breath and blinked rapidly three or four times, but her eyes didn't leave my face.

"You think that something he saw yesterday morning was responsible—"

"Yes." She was silent for a moment or two. "I believe you think so too."

"I—" I was thinking, of course, of the old man, Peters, and of our talk in the bar last night. I was thinking, too, of the ambassador, and of myself. "I don't know what to say, Miss Parks."

She said nothing. She watched me.

"If you have an idea," I said, "wouldn't it be better to take it to the embassy, or to the police?"

"I have taken it to the ambassador. He—he isn't interested. He thinks I'm being hysterical."

"And the police?"

"The police"—she said it quite calmly—"think that Howard killed himself. There was a gun beside him."

I stared at her. "But that's absurd." Or was it? Because it was a new, strange theory? The doubt must have showed in my face.

She said, "It *is* absurd. You too know it's absurd. Howard—"

"I didn't know him very well, Miss Parks. I hadn't seen him in some years until I happened to run into him when I got off the plane." I left the rest of it unsaid.

For as long as it might take a man to count to ten, she said nothing. I watched the change come into her face; it showed first in the set of her chin and then in her mouth and then, at last, it reached her eyes. It was not pleasant to see. "And you don't care to be involved, do you? Isn't that what you're saying?"

I wished that she had not chosen that word. "Miss Parks, I came down here on a vacation. I wanted to see this country that people are talking about so much. I met Howard entirely by accident. I seem to be mixed up in something I don't understand. I'm not sure I want to understand it. I am very sorry about your brother, but—"

"Thank you." She looked away then. Her eyes caught the papers on the desk. She picked one of them up and then put it down again and looked back at me. She said nothing.

"Those are business papers, Miss Parks," I said.

"So I see. Bruno Dodge." And her tone gave the name a special significance. She stood up. "Howard used to talk about you, Mr. Hunter. Or should I say, Major Hunter? When he came back from Italy he was full of you." She paused. "He said that the luckiest thing that ever happened to him was his running into you at the airport day before yesterday."

"Miss Parks—"

"You—" She stopped there for only a moment, and drew a breath that seemed to shake her entire body. "You don't even mix a good Martini, Mr. Hunter. Good-by." She closed the door quietly.

I sat where I was.

It was a little past noon when a messenger came from the embassy. The ambassador would like to see me, if it was convenient. The messenger was a bright-faced, solemn young man. "I have a car waiting, sir."

"Of course." I gathered the papers on the desk, folded them, replaced them in their envelopes and put on my coat. The young man held the door for me.

We walked together through the lobby. I put my key on the desk. Behind me, Jonas Peters said, "Good morning, Mr. Hunter. This bright day finds you well, I trust?" He was smiling.

"Thank you," I said.

He glanced at the young man, then looked at me again. "You must give my regards to my good friend the ambassador."

"I'll do that."

Something flickered deep behind his eyes, a small warning flash, no more. "Splendid! A drink, perhaps, Mr. Hunter, when you return?"

"Perhaps," I said.

He nodded. "*Au revoir.*" He turned away and walked off across the lobby, his wide shoulders swinging easily. To a martial beat, I thought; there was that about him; almost I could hear the trumpets and the drums. . . .

The ambassador was not alone. There was a small man with him, a small calm serious man, perhaps forty-five years of age. "This is Mr. Potter," the ambassador introduced him. "Mr. Potter flew down from Washington early this morning."

I sat down and waited.

The ambassador said, "As far as the department can determine, Mr. Hunter, you have a clean bill of health." His manner was more friendly today.

"I'm glad to hear it," I said.

Potter stirred a little in his chair. "Do you have any ideas about this, Major?"

I thought of the girl standing in my room looking at me. "I understand that the police think it was suicide."

The ambassador said nothing. Potter said, "It's simpler for them that way, Major. Do *you* think it was suicide?"

"I don't know. I didn't know him very well." I hesitated. "But I doubt it."

Potter nodded. "So do we."

I still don't know at what point my mind had been made up. It may have been the theory of suicide that did it; it may have been the girl; it may have been lots of things.

"There is a man named Peters," I said, "Jonas Peters—" I stopped there, watching Potter's face. "You know him?"

"I do, indeed," said Potter. He looked at the ambassador. "I didn't know—"

"Jonas," the ambassador said, "has a way of turning up almost any place. He is in business here, he claims, with a man named Dodge, Bruno Dodge, who does importing and exporting, and other things. What their business together really is—" He shrugged. "That is a matter for the local authorities; and Mr. Dodge and the local authorities—" He stopped there and his mouth closed angrily.

"Peters," Potter repeated. He was looking at me again. "What about him, Major?"

What the ambassador had said put it in a different light. I said, "I met him at the hotel. He seemed curious about where Howard and I had been flying."

Potter waited. "That all, Major?"

I nodded. "It isn't very much, but I thought you'd like to know."

His face was blank. He watched me for a time. "Thank you, Major. I'll have a talk with him."

THE ambassador looked at his watch. "Apropos of our little conversation last night, Mr. Hunter, it's too late, I'm afraid, for today's plane, but tomorrow I'll see that space is held for you." The implication was plain; he expected me to be aboard when tomorrow's plane took off.

"Thank you," I said. I stood up, hesitated. "I wonder if you would do me a favor. I was approached this morning with a piece of legal business . . ." I told them about Bruno Dodge, about his papers, about his New York problem.

The ambassador said, "Mr. Dodge cannot go to the United States himself, Mr. Hunter. That is not widely known. I tell you for a purpose."

"Oh?"

"There are at least two charges of passport-fraud standing against him in Washington. We have tried to have him extradited, without success."

"I see," I said. "Thank you."

Much of the friendliness had disappeared. "If you care to do business with a man like that, Mr. Hunter, there is unfortunately nothing I can do about it."

"I understand."

"I wonder if you do," the ambassador observed. "The United States is not the only country where Mr. Dodge does not dare to go. The Dominican Republic, next door, for example—" He paused. "I'm not sure there would even be a trial for him in the Dominican Republic. Mr. Dodge is that sort of man."

"Thank you," I said. I nodded to both of them. "Good-by."

There was no answer.

Outside, in the bright sun, I stood for a little time on the steps of the embassy, trying to get it all straight in my mind. There was too much, entirely too much. I nodded to a taxi-driver who had come out from the shade of a tree and opened his taxi door hopefully. "Take me to a restaurant," I said. I didn't want to go back to the hotel. Not yet. I didn't want to see Peters again until I had had time to think.

The restaurant—Kalmar's—was on the edge of the Champ de Mars. I sat on the cool gallery, looking out across the green of the lawns to the Presidential palace and the palace of ministers. Two statues were in the foreground: One was of Dessalines, one of Toussaint L'Ouverture. Taken together, they were symbolic of the violence and intrigue that had plagued the entire island for a hundred and fifty years. And the violence and intrigue were not over yet, that much was sure. On the other half of the island, the Dominican Republic. . . . I was back to Bruno Dodge again, and what the ambassador had said about Dodge's not daring to set foot across the border. I wondered if Peters was wanted there, too; it seemed logical that he was. The whole affair, I thought, was beginning to take shape. There were still holes, to be sure, but the broad outlines were there. . . .

I went through it slowly, step by step. First, the flight with Howard Parks. I thought I knew the explanation for that; I was fairly sure I had been right in my guesses to Peters. He had assured me that there was nothing to it, but I was beginning to believe otherwise. He and Dodge were in business together, the ambassador had said, and yet at my first meeting with Peters, Dodge had been sitting across the bar and the two had not even bothered to recognize one another. And after Howard's death had been established, Peters had gone to some length to persuade me of his innocence. Why? He wanted to set my mind at rest, he said, and he had implied more, that he wanted me to forget the whole affair and go back to the States. And then the offer of legal work from Dodge, urgent legal work which could not wait. It could be legitimate; the fact that Dodge dared not go to the States himself lent the idea credibility.

FOR a long time I sat turning it over in my mind; and at last I was satisfied. I finished my lunch and walked down toward the center of town. I had several things to do.

I found a public telephone and a listing for Bruno Dodge. I called him. "I've looked over the papers," I said. "They seem to be in order. I don't believe there should be any difficulty in forcing a collection."

"You will do it, then?"

"I don't see any reason why not; I think I can handle it quite easily."

"It's worth a great deal to me, Mr. Hunter, to have it taken care of. And, as I told you this morning, as quickly as possible."

"I understand. I plan to leave on tomorrow's plane for Miami and then New York."

"Splendid. I knew I could count on you."

"Yes," I said. "I think you can."

I consulted the directory again. There were two listings under Parks—one for Howard, one for Louise, the same number for each. I looked at Howard's name for a long time. I still didn't know the answer to the question I had asked myself: Does acquaintance impose obligation? There was more to it than that. I disliked being duped; I rebelled at being thought a simpleton. I was angry now. I called the number and Louise answered the phone herself. "This is Marvin Hunter, Miss Parks. I have changed my mind; I'll take you flying."

There was a little silence. "I suppose I shouldn't look a gift horse in the mouth, but—"

I didn't try to explain. "I'm going this afternoon, right now, and I'll take you if you want to come."

"Not tomorrow morning?"

"There isn't time," I said. "And I think this afternoon will do just as well."

There was only the smallest hesitation. "I'll meet you at the airport."

I had the plane rolled out and warmed up by the time she arrived. It was the same plane Howard and I had used, a small, high-wing cabin job which handled like a toy. She got in beside me; I fastened her door securely, released the brakes and taxied up to the head of the strip. We turned and headed into the wind, waiting for clearance from the tower.

"You said that you were going by yourself whether I came or not." She

was watching me. "Do you know what you're looking for?"

"No." This was no more than the truth. I didn't want to tell her that I was not really looking for anything; that I doubted if there was anything to be seen. "We'll fly the same course," I said, "and maybe we'll be lucky."

It satisfied her. "What changed your mind?"

"I don't know. Just everything, I guess. People—"

She was smiling at me. It was the first time I had really seen her smile; it lighted her face and her eyes. "You found that you couldn't isolate yourself, is that it? People wouldn't let you alone?"

I thought of Peters, of Dodge. "Something like that."

"They wouldn't let you alone, because you're a part of it."

"I don't follow you."

"When something like—like this happens, it concerns everybody, don't you see that? It's everybody's business. Didn't you learn that during the war?"

"Let it go," I said. The tower gave me the light and I pushed the throttle forward and released the brakes. We began to roll down the runway. "It doesn't matter." Out of the corner of my eye I could see that she was still watching me, still smiling.

We dropped the airport behind us and made a slow climbing turn out over the bay. The sun was brilliant on the water, bringing out fantastic colors, pale blue, turquoise, deep green, here and there the vivid white of sand bottom or the vicious, dirty brown of a coral reef. I altered course and picked up the shore, started out along it. There is always a pleasure for me in flying, a feeling of headiness, of freedom, a lift in my mind. I felt it now. Louise said unexpectedly, "I feel better."

"Do you?"

"It's as if I just came out of the darkness into the sunlight."

"Flying does that for you."

"Not flying. It isn't that. It's—it's doing something."

I turned to look at her.

"It may not help at all," she said. "It—it won't bring Howard back. But at least we're trying. Don't you feel that too?"

"Maybe that's it," I said. I dropped down a little closer to the trees. "We'd better start looking. Maybe you'll see something I don't."

We flew for about twenty minutes in silence, she watching out of her window, I making a pretense of watching out of mine. We saw nothing that mattered—the shoreline, the trees, the road that wavered as it followed the contours, now close along the water, now a half-mile inland. Here and there we saw a small clearing and a tiny white hut with perhaps a donkey tethered or a goat and a bony dog who slunk into the brush and small children who rushed out into the open to look up at us.

We reached the cove I had fixed in my mind, and I dropped and circled it, remembering how close the schooner had been, trying to remember if there had been tracks on the sand, if there had been anything at all. There had not, of that I was sure. But that was what Peters wouldn't know, couldn't know, and so he would assume—

"Why are we circling here?" Louise said. "Do you see something?"

I shook my head. "This is the end of the line. This is where we turn around."

"Oh." Her voice was small, disappointed.

I pulled up, well over the trees, and steadied on a return course. "I'm sorry."

"It isn't your fault."

I hadn't realized how high I had raised her hopes.

"We tried," she said. "That's the important thing."

"You're too young to know that."

She just looked at me.

We swung in a wide circle to make our approach to the field, and started down. She said, "Not yet. We aren't going down now?"

We flew for about twenty minutes in silence while Louise looked eagerly and I pretended. The colors were fantastic but we saw nothing that mattered. Then I spotted the house by itself.

"Why not?"

"You said—you told the ambassador that you and Howard flew up to Petionville."

"So we did. I'd forgotten." I was anxious to be on the ground now, to give Peters as much time as I could—

"Then aren't we going up there now?"

"We flew to Petionville only because Howard wanted to see your house from the air."

She said nothing and I turned to look at her. She was staring straight ahead, and the line of her chin was firm, set.

"All right," I said. "We'll go up there, if you want to."

"Don't you?"

SHE was like a small terrier; she had her teeth into something and she wasn't going to let it go. In a way it was comical, in another way it was something to be admired. "Sure. We started it. We'll finish it."

"Maybe something he saw up there—"

"Sure," I said again. "It's a good idea." But there was nothing in Petionville, and I knew it. We had already seen all there was to see. The schooner out along the coast just after dawn the day before had been the clue to the whole affair. Peters had told me that he relied on my prudence to make me forget that I had seen the schooner. And I had been prepared to forget it and go on my way and leave the matter to the ambassador and to the police, if it had not been for threats and then bait, for what I had learned from the ambassador, things that added up too plainly.

Suddenly Louise said:

"Look, there: That white house, with the big trees, and the sun on it."

My gaze followed her pointing finger.

It was another house, perhaps a half mile from hers. It also sat on a promontory, with an unobstructed view of the bay and the island of Gonave and the broad water beyond. Not so broad at that, I thought. Cuba lay a little to the north, and between Cuba and the island mass of Haiti and the Dominican Republic was the Windward Passage, and the water beyond the stretch of the bay was the wide part of the funnel leading into the straits. This all passed through my mind like a geography lesson, and then was gone because it was not pertinent. What lay below was, or maybe it was not, I didn't know. But it was curious, anyway. I banked to have a closer look.

"It's—it's a sort of aerial," Louise said. "It looks like the ones they have on police cars. Do you see it, in the top part of the tree? There! The sun catches it now."

"I see it," I said.

"What does it mean?"

"I don't know," I said. "Probably nothing." I was beginning to guess what it meant; and I wished she had not seen it. "Whoever it is likes to listen to the radio. That's all."

"But that doesn't make sense." She said it slowly. "There's only one station here in Haiti, and you don't need an aerial to get it. And you don't need that sort of thing for short-wave, either. If the reception's good, you get it easily, and if it isn't, you don't listen."

"Maybe he does. Maybe he likes to, no matter what the reception is."

"He?" She was looking at me now. "Do you know whose house that is?"

I could have guessed, but I was afraid to. "It doesn't make any difference."

"It's Bruno Dodge's house."

"And there's yours. That's what we came to see, isn't it?"

She looked at me and then looked away again. She said nothing. . . .

We landed at the airport and taxied to the hangar. I cut the switch and just sat there for a moment in the sudden silence. "I thought I was reasonably smart," I said. "It's beginning to look now as if maybe I wasn't."

"I'm not sure I understand you." Her voice was a little friendlier now.

"I'm not sure I understand myself." I reached across her and opened her door. "Let's go to—"

"My car's here. We can drive into town."

"There's a bar just across the road," I said. "Let's go there. Maybe you'd like a drink. I know I would."

"All right," she said.

IT was there, in the Aero Bar, that Peters found us. I had asked for it, of course; this had been my reason for the flight, to force his hand, to try to bring him out into the open. But it was all changed now.

He came in slowly, almost strolling. He walked directly to our table, and he took off his hat, a fine-grained panama of price, and he made a little bow. "Miss Parks," he said. "Mr. Hunter." He pulled back a chair and sat down. "You will forgive the intrusion, I am sure." The ice in his eyes was plain, and his nose, no longer merely large, reminded me of the beak of some great predatory bird, a horned owl, perhaps, or an eagle. "In the event that you are wondering, Mr. Hunter, I am armed."

From him it did not sound melodramatic, merely serious. "That makes it nice," I said. "But here, in broad daylight—"

He ignored it. "I was under the impression, Mr. Hunter, that I had made it clear I wanted you to stay out of my business."

"Too clear," I said.

He nodded, but his face lost none of its threat. "That may have been a mistake on my part. No matter. Your prudence—"

"You've talked to Potter?" I said.

"I have. And now I find that you have been flying, presumably retracing your route of yesterday morning." He looked at Louise for a moment. He looked back to me. "It was not wise of you, Mr. Hunter."

The whole script was changed now. I had to improvise. "There was nothing to see," I said. "Your guns weren't there."

HIS eyes widened a little, but that was the only change. "Guns, Mr. Hunter?"

"It pretty nearly has to be guns," I said. "Smuggling anything else into this country wouldn't be worth your while. This isn't the States—where there's a lot of money, and maybe a big profit for evading duty. It had to be something contraband, and when you add to it that you are mixed up with Dodge—"

Louise made a little sound. I put my hand out and touched hers. "This time," I said, "I think I'm right." I looked at Peters again. "You and Dodge, plus the fact that Dodge is wanted next door in the Dominican Republic where a lot of people have tried a lot of times to whip up a revolution since Trujillo came into power. . . . Guns seem the logical answer. Land them from a schooner here, and smuggle them across the border a few at a time—"

"Those are rather dangerous assumptions, Mr. Hunter."

"Maybe." I had to know, and I thought that this way I could tell. When you want an admission from a witness, you can get it sometimes by crowding him on one subject, focusing his concentration on that, and then springing your real question on him without warning. "But is the radio part of it?"

He was too good, he had been at this sort of thing too long, to allow much to show. But I was watching him carefully, and I was sure his astonishment was real.

"Radio, Mr. Hunter? What radio?"

I shook my head. There was one more question, and this was the time for it. "Did you know that there are at least two standing charges against your friend Dodge in Washington?" I paused there, and watched him digest it. "They are for passport fraud, Mr. Peters. The ambassador told me, so I imagine that the information is correct. What does passport fraud connote to you? Or don't you care?"

I didn't think I was taking too long a chance. The ambassador had spoken of Peters by his first name, and

he had gone out of his way to warn me about Dodge, but both he and Potter had somehow given me the impression that Peters was a different matter entirely. And then there was the man himself, and I was counting on my own estimate of him. Guns, yes, that I could believe. But the other, no. Still—

"Passport fraud, Mr. Hunter? It does indeed have an unpleasant connotation these days. Persons who connive in order to enter the United States—"

"It's your country, too, isn't it, Mr. Peters? Don't you carry an American passport?"

His face softened a trifle. There was a hint of amusement in his eyes. "Are you waving the flag at me, Mr. Hunter?"

I said nothing.

His face changed again. The amusement disappeared, and the ice was back in his eyes. "I should like to hear more about our friend Mr. Dodge." He paused. "You mentioned a radio?"

I told him what we had seen. I added just one thing. "An aerial could be for reception. It could also be for transmission."

He listened carefully. When I had finished, he took out the gold cigarette case and lighter, offered them, lighted his cigarette with great deliberation. "You did not see this aerial yesterday morning."

"No, but Parks did."

"That is mere conjecture, Mr. Hunter."

"I don't think so." I looked at Louise Parks. "Tell him what you told me."

She nodded. "After breakfast yesterday morning," she said, "Howard left for the embassy, I thought. I drove down the hill fifteen or twenty minutes later to do some errands. When I got back, I found that he had come back too, and had changed his clothes and gone out again. It—it didn't seem important then."

Peters said, "What was wrong with the clothes he had been wearing, Miss Parks?"

"He had sweated through them. It didn't occur to me at the time, but he must have been walking, don't you see—and he had his car, so why would he walk, unless—"

"Unless he had gone to see from the ground what he had seen from the air, is that what you think, Mr. Hunter?"

"It adds up."

"Possibly," Peters said. He watched me for a little time. "Your reasoning, as I see it, goes like this. Mr. Parks, by some means which do not appear, was aware that a certain event was going to take place out along the coast early yesterday morning. He wanted to see it for himself, and so he had you fly him there. He saw the schooner and realized its implication. On the return to Port-au-Prince, and probably on a whim, he suggested that you fly up to Petionville so that he might see his house from the air. He saw, as you and Miss Parks saw this afternoon, an aerial in the tree in front of Mr. Dodge's house, an aerial that would be concealed from the ground, an aerial that required explanation because of Mr. Dodge's known character and past indulgences in passport fraud. The Caribbean is, has always been, a powder keg, similar in its way to the Balkans prior to their recent envelopment by the Soviet Union. Perhaps the Balkans are still a powder keg. We hope so, but we can't really know. No matter." He paused, and put out his cigarette.

"You're doing fine," I said.

"Thank you, Mr. Hunter. I am usually able to follow a plain trail. Let me resume. . . . The Caribbean is a danger-spot, as I have said. To Mr. Parks, the possibility of a radio transmitter, an unknown radio transmitter, in the hands of a person of Mr. Dodge's background, might very well have been of greater importance than a piece of suspected smuggling. Mr. Parks, then, pursued the investigation of the radio, perhaps was imprudent enough to confront Mr. Dodge with his findings, and was, as a result—I am sorry, Miss Parks—silenced by Mr. Dodge." He paused there and looked at me. "An ingenious theory, Mr. Hunter, but it will require substantiation."

"Three main points," I said. "First, Dodge was nowhere near the cove where the schooner had landed. You can substantiate that. Therefore, Dodge had nothing to fear from Parks' knowledge of that part of it. My guess is that Dodge can't even be connected with the guns."

"You are right there, Mr. Hunter; he cannot."

"And yet he wants me out of the country, and he tried to bribe me to go." I saw the little signs of astonishment again in Peters' face. I told him about the papers and Dodge's request that I attend to them. "That was a bribe, pure and simple. Dodge knows no more of me than my name and the fact that I am a lawyer. There are legal firms in New York, reputable firms, who specialize in that sort of thing. I do not. And there are local lawyers, here in Haiti and, I'm sure, known to Dodge, who could have put him in contact with such a New York firm."

Peters watched me steadily.

"The third point is means and opportunity. Dodge was in the hotel last night; Howard's body was found in the garden of the hotel. I doubt if Dodge can account for his whereabouts, as you can, during the critical hours."

Peters was silent for a little time. "You make a convincing case, Mr. Hunter. There is, however, one point which requires explanation." His eyes seemed to be looking right into my mind. "Why do you tell *me*, why risk the possibility that I too am involved, rather than go directly to the embassy or to the police?"

"We would have," I said, "if you hadn't come in, armed, as you said. We would have anyway, I think, if I weren't afraid that it would be futile. The ambassador made it plain that Dodge has some highly placed local friends. The police have already decided that Howard committed suicide, and that seems to bear the ambassador out."

He shook his head. He was smiling, a tight little smile that held in it no amusement. "That may be true, Mr. Hunter, and I think it is. Your attempt would be futile. But, I repeat, why do you think I am interested?"

Here it was, the last link. "Because Dodge was trying to double-cross you. And I don't think you're the kind of person to take that lying down."

It was a moment or two before he said anything. Then, "I am listening, Mr. Hunter."

I was glad it was Dodge I was talking about in that moment, and not myself. The old man's face was frightening to see. "It was Dodge who told Parks where and when the guns were to be landed. Who else in Haiti knew? And he did it because for his purpose, which is probably to cause as much unrest in this area as he can, the implication of you, an American, in a gun-running project would be even better than an actual revolution next door. The ambassador wants me out of the country because I am an American and it's known that I went flying with Howard; and the ambassador, who doesn't appear to be a man to jump at shadows, is afraid that if I stay here gossip will begin to link me with Howard's death, and, by implication, the word will go around that the embassy is using its local influence to protect one of its citizens even though he may be guilty. If I leave, the story loses its point, because I'll be out of sight, out of mind." I paused there. Peters was watching me closely. "If the reputation of the United States has to be guarded that closely, think what damage could be done to it if you were actually caught running guns. There would be rejoicing in the Kremlin."

He nodded slowly. "There would, indeed. All the old charges of Yankee

imperialism would be dredged up and repeated. You are right, Mr. Hunter. You, if I may say so, have been admirably right on all points. I have been too concerned with my own interests—"

"You didn't see the radio," I said, "and you didn't know about the passport fraud. Without those, nothing adds up."

"But it does now, Mr. Hunter." He leaned forward and crushed out his cigarette. He picked up his hat. He was smiling, but his eyes were still like ice and the predatoriness of his face was plain to see. "You were quite right in your assumption that I do not think lightly of treason—or treachery."

I said, "I won't presume to try to tell you how to handle your own affairs, Mr. Peters, but—" I stopped there.

He was watching me. I sat looking down at the table. This was the decision that had to be made: On the one side there was the policy of noninvolvement for me, the airplane tomorrow back to the States, the turning of my back on the whole matter. I could leave it in Peters' hands, that was clear. Bruno Dodge would meet with a fatal accident, and Howard's death would be evened up. I looked at the girl. She was watching me, too. A thing like this was everybody's business, she had told me, and so it was, and there was the core of the matter. I couldn't leave it, not at this point. I was in too far and my own self-respect wouldn't let me pull out. "I'm a lawyer, Mr. Peters," I said. "I approve of law and order."

"Bravo, Mr. Hunter."

"And I don't approve of gun-running." This, I knew, was mere balm for my conscience. Peters, I think, understood that, too. He said nothing. "On the other hand," I said, "I don't think I'd like to see *you* run the risk of landing in trouble for performing a public service."

PETERS' smile spread. "Removing a cancerous growth named Dodge from the body politic, you mean, Mr. Hunter?"

"Yes. There is another way." I hesitated. "Do you know a local public official, highly placed, who would accept your word, and whose advice Bruno Dodge would heed?"

His eyes lost their cold fury. They began to sparkle. If I had not felt drawn to him before, I would still, in that moment, have found him almost irresistible. It was easy to understand the attitude of tolerant disapproval which the ambassador and Potter had showed when I had mentioned Peters' name.

"I think I do, Mr. Hunter." He leaned toward me. "I am listening."

Later I sat in the hotel bar, alone this time. It was early night, dark, hot and still, strangely oppressive, the evening breeze not yet risen. I waited. If I was right—but I had to be right; he would have to react the way we had anticipated, because he would have no choice. I told myself this, sitting there, sipping at my punch, making it last as long as I could. That the reaction had already set in, I'll not deny, and I was beginning to regret that I hadn't made the other decision, left the whole thing in Peters' hands, let him take whatever steps he chose to take in dealing with Dodge's alleged treachery. *Alleged,* there was the hitch? I had convinced Peters that my reasoning was correct, but suppose it were not?

"Good evening, Mr. Hunter."

I looked up. Dodge was towering over me, looking as if his chuckle would rumble up out of his big chest at any moment. "You seem pensive," he said.

"I—I guess I was."

"Thinking of our problem, no doubt?"

There was no way of knowing what he meant by that. "As a matter of fact, yes." The answer suited either problem.

"I tried to reach you earlier today, Mr. Hunter. I have received a letter from Brown & Company. Their figures are somewhat at variance with mine, and I thought that it would be well if we compared—"

"The papers you gave me are upstairs in my room. If you want to come up, we can look at them there."

"Splendid, Mr. Hunter." He watched me rise. "After you."

Going up the stairs, hearing the big man's soft, light step behind me, I was not happy. The skin between my shoulderblades seemed overly tight, and there was a tingle at the base of my skull. I was being foolish and imaginative, I told myself; nothing would happen here, not now, not when the bartender had seen us together. But my mind insisted on returning to Howard—who only last night, here on the hotel grounds— My hand shook a little when I put the key in the lock. It wouldn't turn to the left. I tried the knob; the door was already unlocked. Behind me, Dodge's voice said softly, "Go right in, Mr. Hunter." And something hard nudged me in the small of my back. There was no longer any doubt.

The room was dark. Dodge closed the door and switched on the light. I heard the lock turn, but my attention was not on that, nor on the gun that still pressed against me. Louise lay on the bed, her hands and ankles tied behind her. There was a pillow covering her face, secured there with a piece of cord. Dodge said, "You may untie her now, Mr. Hunter. I don't think that she will have suffocated yet." His chuckle was there, underlying the words.

I think that it took me only one jump to cross the room. I know that my fingers broke the cord as if it were thread. I held her up in a sitting position, my arm around her shoulders, while she drew in great shuddering gasps of breath, and the red, almost blue of her face began to fade, and the tiny inarticulate sounds died away. Dodge said, "It seemed a reasonable precaution, Mr. Hunter, to bring the young lady, too."

I should have seen it, but I hadn't. I had been too wrapped up in the cleverness of my reasoning. I should have sent her away before I talked to Peters, because now she knew too much, and so of course she was in as deeply as I was, and that meant—

She stirred a little. I looked down at her face; she was smiling. "Hot, isn't it?" she said.

THE wonder, the admiration in my mind must have showed in my face because her smile spread. "Yes," I said. "I'm afraid it's turning hotter."

Dodge said, "We will go now."

"Where?" I said. "Why?"

"Down the fire-escape, Mr. Hunter, to my automobile." He was no longer smiling; there was menace now in his face, in his eyes. "Bear in mind that I will shoot if I have to. You will go first, then Miss Parks, then I."

"You can't get away with it," I said. "If we meet somebody—"

"Hope that we won't, Mr. Hunter."

We did not. The rear of the hotel was dark, deserted. We walked through the garden into an alley. A car was there.

"You drive, Mr. Hunter. Miss Parks will sit in front with you. I shall be in the rear."

"Now, look—"

"Suit yourself, Mr. Hunter. The gun will not make enough noise to attract attention, and I shall leave it here with the two of you and return to your room and go back down to the bar. Another suicide, a double suicide this time."

"You and the local police—" I began.

"My contacts in this country are excellent, Mr. Hunter."

We got into the car.

I drove slowly, following his directions, skirting the main part of town, picking up the main road to the north, toward the airport. Louise sat beside me, in silence for the most part. Once she said, "The sea breeze is up now. It'll be cooler before long." And her hand touched my knee, gently, firmly. There were

Dodge held the gun steady. "It seemed a reasonable precaution, Mr. Hunter, to bring the young lady, too," he said. Louise stirred and smiled. I looked down at her. "Hot, isn't it?"

many things I wanted to say, but the words eluded me. I could see her face only dimly. "You do mix a good Martini," she said. "I was angry when I said you didn't."

"That was a long time ago."

"In a way. A lot of things have happened."

"Yes," I said. "I'm afraid that—"

"You have only yourself to blame, Mr. Hunter," Dodge said. "You should have remained a tourist, an innocent bystander. Your curiosity—"

"Potter knows," I said. "The State Department man who flew down from Washington. I told him the whole thing, chapter and verse, about your radio and about the guns—"

That was a mistake. I had gone too far. I heard him chuckle in the darkness.

"No, Mr. Hunter, you have not told Mr. Potter about the guns. Jonas Peters was very much at liberty when he came to see me this afternoon; and were the matter of the guns known—"

"Peters came to see *you?*" It popped out before I could stop it.

This time the laughter came, rumbling through the car, almost shaking us with its force. "But of course! You should have expected that, Mr. Hunter. Jonas and I have known one another for some little time. We have our mutual interests. He told me the story of your afternoon conference—all of it."

"Oh!" I said.

"Your reasoning powers are considerable, Mr. Hunter, that I will grant. Your judgment is poor."

"Oh," I said again. I looked at Louise. "I got you into this—"

"No." She was still smiling, but the quality of the smile had changed. "I did the pushing—"

"Pull in here, Mr. Hunter, and park. Beside this hangar. So! Now get out."

The main airport buildings were dark. Only the limit-lights of the runway showed. Outside of the hangar, the same small cabin plane was warming up, and as we walked toward it, a man appeared out of the darkness and said something to Dodge in a language I did not understand. Dodge answered in what was apparently the same tongue. Then in English:

"The plane is quite ready, Mr. Hunter. I have explained to my friend that it will be left, in good condition, at the airport at Cap-Haitien. A short flight, Mr. Hunter, and you are a good pilot. There is a chart in the plane."

Louise sat beside me, as before. Dodge sat in the rear seat. I spread the chart beneath the small map-light, although it was not at all necessary. I had already memorized the geography. I was thinking of Peters, of his visit to Dodge after our talk. I tried to reconcile that visit with what I knew of the facts. I could not. There was only the one explanation, and that was the one which Dodge had provided in the car. I had walked into the trap with my eyes wide open, and I had dragged Louise in with me. Sitting there, pretending to study the chart, my mind began to make wild rushes in this direction and in that—I thought of refusing to take off, of ground-looping the plane, of jumping out and running off into the darkness—all of them foolish, ridiculous thoughts.

"You should be ready by now, Mr. Hunter."

I refolded the chart. "Yes," I said. There was no other way. If Peters had crossed us— I didn't dare to finish it, even in my own mind. I shut off the map-light and watched the glow of the instrument panel. I hoped that the compass was right. We taxied to the head of the runway, paused there for a moment, and then took off. This was the only chance. I circled the airport, gaining altitude, and when we had enough, I settled on our course, east of north. The mountains were black shapes beneath us.

Dodge said, "There is a ship in the harbor at the Cap, Mr. Hunter. It is a friendly ship; it will carry us to Cuba. No, it will carry *me* to Cuba. You and Miss Parks will disembark before we reach Cuba."

LOUISE said, "There's no place to disembark between the Cap and Cuba. There's only water."

"Yes," Dodge said, "that is correct, Miss Parks." He paused. "I shall remain in Cuba for a little time, until any furor that may be raised by your disappearance will have died down, until certain friends of mine have seen to it that the death of your brother has been officially called suicide. Then I shall return."

"The embassy—" began.

"Your embassy is impotent, Mr. Hunter. It has tried several times to have me extradited and has not even been able to accomplish that."

"For passport fraud," I said.

"Yes. I have been in your country many times, under many names. If it suits me, I shall go again. There are ways."

"No doubt," I said. "We don't have a police state."

"That, Mr. Hunter, is a stupid phrase. A country must be governed. The concept of self-government by the masses is ridiculous. They must be led. Sometimes they must be driven."

"Must be pleasant," Louise said, if you happen to be driving."

I watched the compass carefully. I watched our airspeed and the flight

clock. Finally I saw lights ahead and I began to drop down toward them.

"There is the Cap," Dodge said. "You are a good pilot, Mr. Hunter." His voice almost purred with satisfaction. "If you had been taught to plan carefully, and to judge carefully, as I have, the ending might have been a little different. But that, of course, is the difference between our two civilizations."

"Did you invent civilization too?" Louise said. "Along with everything else you claim?"

It got to him. "You are jealous, that is all," he said, and the satisfaction was gone from his voice, leaving it raw and bare. "You are blind, you Americans, you British, you so-called Western democracies. You wallow in your own self-satisfaction. You—"

There was much more of it, but I wasn't listening. I was concentrating on the lights, trying desperately to pick out the airfield, almost holding my breath. The palms of my hands were wet. I saw the field and headed toward it, but there was no indication, none at all, that—

Dodge said, "Mr. Hunter, I see no ship in the harbor."

I tried to think of something to say. It was Louise who saved it. "I imagine that he's busy now, superman. A night landing on a strange field—" That was too close, and she switched it smoothly. "Maybe your precious ship hasn't arrived here yet."

"It should have," Dodge said. I was in radio contact with it yesterday, and—"

"Maybe sometimes even your kind of people make mistakes, had you thought of that?"

AND that started him off again, thank God! I came in fast, fishtailing to kill our speed. I saw a dark shape toward the end of the runway and headed for it. I think I was muttering a little prayer beneath my breath. I slammed on the brakes as hard as they would go and kicked the rudder over. One wingtip almost caught the ground. And then we were stopped and the dark shape erupted men moving quickly toward us. I threw open my door and Louise did the same and the night was filled with brilliant light, all of it concentrated on us. I sat there limp, watching the guns covering the three of us.

Dodge said, "What is this?"

It was Louise who answered him. I don't believe I could have. "Your destination, superman."

Then an accented voice, speaking the loveliest words I had ever heard, said: "This is Monte Cristi, Señor Dodge. This is the Dominican Republic. You will raise your hands and come out slowly." The voice paused, and I could almost see the shrug. "Or you will not. It is all one. We can shoot you as easily where you sit."

IT was two days later. The four of us—Louise, the ambassador, Potter and I—sat in the ambassador's cool office. "For the record," the ambassador said, "your landing in the Dominican Republic instead of Cap-Haitien was a mistake?"

"For the record, yes," I said.

Potter's face produced a tight little smile which was, I think, as much as he could manage. "An understandable mistake, Major. Monte Cristi is just across the border, not many miles from Cap-Haitien, and at night, flying over unfamiliar territory—"

"Quite so," said the ambassador. He was wearing his perpetual smile, and his eyes, watching me, were not unfriendly. "From Mr. Dodge's point of view, it was an unfortunate mistake." He paused. "As soon as we heard he was there, we requested, through our embassy in Ciudad Trujillo, that he be extradited to the United States." He paused again. "Unfortunately, Mr. Dodge had already been shot while trying to escape."

Louise said, "Escape where?"

Potter coughed.

"Oh," Louise said.

"The radio, in case you have been wondering, Mr. Hunter," the ambassador said, "was of the type known as FM, and since there are no FM stations in this area, and hence no FM receiving-sets, its presence was never suspected. FM, I am told, operates only on line of sight. This one was amply powerful to reach out into the waters beyond the Island of Gonave, to ships heading for, or coming from the Windward Passage." He stopped there and some of the friendliness went out of his eyes. "Had this been wartime, the radio could, would of course, have been used to supply information to enemy submarines. The Windward Passage, as you know, is a particularly vulnerable spot, almost as vulnerable as the Panama Canal itself."

"Howard was the one who found the radio," I said.

The ambassador nodded. "We are all in Howard's debt."

Potter stirred in his chair. He watched me. "In two days here, you managed to get around quite a bit, Major. You wouldn't have heard anything about guns, would you?"

"Guns?" We owed Peters our silence, I thought. The guns were a matter between him and the authorities. "I don't think I understand."

"I didn't think you would," Potter said. "A cache of them has turned up near the Dominican border, but that doesn't interest you."

"I'm afraid not."

A few minutes later Louise and I walked down the hallway. She said, "You're going back to the States?"

"Why," I said, "that—" I stopped there. Jonas Peters was coming up the stairs, walking slowly, carrying his hat in his hand. He made a little bow. He was smiling.

"An unexpected pleasure, Miss Parks, Mr. Hunter. Everything went well, I trust?"

I nodded. "Your contact in the Dominican Republic, whoever he was, provided a nice turn-out of soldiers to meet us."

"Splendid."

"But when Dodge told us that you had been to see him that afternoon—"

His face was suddenly harsh. And then he was smiling again. "That, Mr. Hunter, was a temptation which I was unable to resist. You can understand, of course?"

"Yes," I said. "You wanted him to think back to it and know, at the last, that you had a hand in trapping him."

"Precisely, Mr. Hunter. As I believe I told you, I do not view treachery lightly. I am sorry if it caused you anguish."

"It's done now," Louise said. "All of it."

I shook my head. "Not quite all. For your information, Mr. Peters, a cache of guns has turned up near the Dominican border. It appears that somebody has been indulging in a bit of gun-running."

"No!" In the one word he managed to express shock, incredulity and sorrow. He shook his head. "I find it hard to believe, Mr. Hunter, that anyone would—" He paused "Ah, well, there are all types of people in this world, are there not, Mr. Hunter?"

We stood there and watched him walk down the hall, tall, erect, his wide shoulders swinging easily. He turned into the ambassador's office. We heard his voice clearly; I think that he intended that we should: "Good morning, George. I trust that I find you well, on this beautiful day?" The door closed quietly.

WE turned away and started down the stairs. I said, "About my going back to the States right away—"

"Yes?" Louise said.

"I thought that maybe we could talk about it."

She nodded. Her face was grave, but her eyes were dancing. "I am listening, Mr. Hunter."

We walked together out into the bright sun. •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HERE WE GO AGAIN!

Most civilized communities banned water polo as being nothing short of moist murder. Now staging a comeback, with a new set of rules, it's still not for sissies.

• By AL STUMP

Illustration by

AT SANTA MONICA'S NORTH BEACH, youthful Pete Stange, captain and center-back of the El Segundo (California) Swimming Club's water-polo team, was lolling one warm morning in a lifeguard tower. A scream of terror snapped him to attention. As the only guard on duty, Stange's first action was automatic—to knock the telephone from his desk with a sweep of his hand. That opened the circuit to the lifesaving GHQ up the beach, flashing a signal for reinforcements.

Within seconds, Stange was breasting the surf with a rubber "tube"—a body-belt buoyant enough to support a 300-pound man—in tow.

A father and his 9-year-old son floundered in the riptide two hundred yards out. Drifting away was their overturned boat. The boy couldn't swim and the father, in his panic, was almost as helpless. Arriving on the scene at a fast crawl, Stange was swarmed over by the bleating youngster. The man, with the maniacal strength of the drowning, plastered himself to Stange from behind with a neck stranglehold and a leg-clamp. There have been professional lifesavers who haven't returned from such a contretemps.

The 145-pound guard coolly kicked the boy away with rapid foot-thrusts, moved in and fastened the belt around him. So much for Rescue Number One. Subduing husky Papa was something else.

"I could have broken his hold in several ways, of course, but any of them might have seriously hurt him," Stange later reflected. "The easy way out was the water-polo way. People who go crazy on you are no trouble when you've played that game. I just took in air, submerged with this big fellow, stayed under a while—and he let loose faster'n if I'd jabbed him with a knife."

Limp enough to be handled, Father co-operatively clung to the tube while Stange convoyed the pair back through the breakers. Pete Stange, 17 years old at the time, was grinning and still breathing easily when he met his reinforcements in shallow water.

It isn't coincidence that about 60 percent of the beach guards patrolling the two-hundred-mile Southern California coastline are drafted from water-polo's ranks. The game has been condemned by swimming coaches on technical grounds, banned in some sections as too rough. Yet water polo insists that it develops the world's greatest all-around aquatic performers.

"A lot of physical educators don't like us. We've taken more bad raps for thirty years than any other sport," says Carl Swendsen, who coached the United States water-polo squad in the 1936 Olympic Games. "The oldest line is that water polo is 'moist mayhem,' a man-killer. Another is that it ruins a competitive swimmer's stroke. But, practically speaking, what about George Frieth?"

OFF Venice Pier, a fishing smack filled with fifteen Japanese and Russians capsized a half-mile out. Frieth, an ace middle-distance swimmer and all-time great of Western water polo, dived in, pulling a string of lifebelts. He got them clamped on and was herding the fishermen to safety when huge combers scattered the group in all directions. Frieth labored in the water for almost an hour. He recollected the fifteen, towed them in and lost not a man. He was awarded the Carnegie Medal, and the fishermen named their near-by settlement "Village Frieth" in his honor. "Show me the champion swimmer, any event, who could do that," challenges Swendsen. "If he hasn't been around water polo, he doesn't exist."

The game of combat in the water, which originated in London's Crystal Palace in 1874, has been a hungry outcast of sport for some years. But recently it has staged a notable comeback on the West Coast. In the Los Angeles area alone, more than 5000 university, junior college and prep-school youths are whipping pools to a froth. Whole communities have become excited, and dig into civic funds to support the best club teams in the country. The crowds of 1500 to 2000 —or full capacity—astonish Eastern and Midwestern adherents. At least two dozen California pools now being built will welcome water-polo's newfound drawing power. Nationally, the game also shows signs of perking up, but still has drawn meagerly since 1940—around 300,000 paid admissions.

Nobody is quite sure why. Water polo is far from a wet-behind-the-ears kid. This year marks its sixty-third birthday in the United States, which makes it three years older than basketball and the senior aquatic event carrying a national championship. It holds Olympic Games membership dating to 1904, has retained small but wild-eyed followings in Detroit, St. Louis, Chicago and New York, and boasts at least one immortal—an unsinkable oldtimer named Joe Ruddy —who is ranked greater in his field than Babe Ruth, Bobby Jones or Bill Tilden. Water poloists only wish that the American public would awaken to them as it has abroad. Teams in thirteen European nations, India, Japan, Australia, Canada, Cuba, Iceland, and from Central America to the Argentine, do better than well at the gate. In Hungary, Italy and Germany, outdoor tourneys have played to 20,000 fans and literally had them hanging from trees.

The name, itself a misnomer, hasn't helped. Water polo actually is a blend of submarine wrestling, football, marathon swimming and basketball. "And," assert its critics, "a gang fight." Another disadvantage has been the confusion of the modern, scientific, high-speed, tricky-passing game with "American" or "softball" water polo, which flourished in spots before and after World War I. This was marine near-murder. Swimming was at a minimum in favor of gouging, slugging, biting and strangling. Some of the underwater demolition work bordered on the sadistic. A popular device was for two burly guards to collar the ball-holder, take him below and pin him on the pool bottom until he collapsed. Goalies suddenly would disappear—to come up minutes later, unconscious and bleeding from both ears. After an epidemic of broken bones, shattered eardrums, infected sinuses and numerous calls for the police, the colleges and the Amateur Athletic Union kicked softball out. . . .

Today's "Olympic" version takes far more than a strong-arm squad which can stay afloat interminably. New rules adopted in 1948 make water polo about three parts skill and two parts roughhouse. It is played, outdoors, in pools 60 by 90 feet and, indoors, 35 by 60, in 8 to 10 feet of water. Seven men stripped to trunks and numbered caps comprise a team —two forwards, a center (or sprint) forward, a center-back who is the key playmaker but not necessarily the key scorer, two guards and a goalie. The play is split into four seven-minute periods (collegiate) or two ten-minute sessions (A.A.U.). No touching of the bottom or using the pool sides for support is permitted and only a five-minute half-time rest is provided. The object is to get the ball past huskily-built goalies stationed before 10-foot-by-3-foot cages at either end—amazing fellows whose peculiar frog-kick enables them to rear hip-high out of water for up to ten seconds. Shots at the goal may be taken from any place outside a four-meter zone, with all hands collaborating. Inside the zone, only one man may handle the ball, although such heroics aren't advised.

The uproar starts when the referee tosses a soccer-size, brightly-hued inflated rubber ball into mid-pool. Two sprint men, picked for their speed, go for it. After that, water polo is best likened to what happens when a berserk hunting-dog plunges in after a raccoon. The ball-carrier is always fair game. He advances the ball by dribbling, or shoving it along with the forehead and upper arms while swimming, and by one-handed passing. He can be stopped by "tackling," which is a euphemism for body-slamming or otherwise dunking him beneath the waves in a wild struggle for the ball. Modern rules aim to prohibit undue abuse of the offensive player, but as water poloists say, "You can't take the malice out of the boy when the referee often can't see what he's doing." Elbows fly, knees grind into bellies, bodies dissolve in a sheet of spray and the official only hopes to call a foul on the right miscreant.

Aside from the fact that man isn't a gill-breathing creature, the game is for a select few because of the ball-handling requirements. Only the goalie may lay *both* hands on the slick ball. Single-handed passing is a trick beyond many of the most expert swimmers. And it gives water polo perhaps a greater variety of goal shots —hooks, tips, bat-shots, scoops, side-arms, blind flips, back-hands and sizzling overhand fastballs that can stun a struck goalie—than any sport. So lusty is the brawling around the goal, in fact, that few guardians retain all their teeth after a year of stopping forty to sixty shots per game.

PUNCHFESTS are more frequent than in hockey and often send two and three players at a time to the sidelines on major fouls. In the 1948 Olympics at London, 215-pound Bob Bray of the American team tackled an equally husky Belgian so ruggedly that the Belgian threw a right cross to Bray's nose. By profession, Bray is a Los Angeles police department sergeant. "Naturally," joshes Austin Clapp, coach of the '48 squad, "Bray wouldn't do anything in front of witnesses. He waited until the ref's back was turned, then walloped the Belgian's nose."

For the next ten minutes, the pair forgot about the game and staged a private pummeling party. Eight thousand Wembley Stadium fans shouted for the officials to stop it, but they had twelve other water dervishes to watch. The game ended in a 6-6 tie, but Bray was credited with victory. "When the two of them staggered out," says Clapp, "the Belgian was the bloodiest."

The dunking sessions remain as red-blooded in national meets, despite a U. S. clamp-down on fouling. During the A.A.U. championships at St. Louis last year, three Portage Park (Chicago) players and one from the Whittier Swim Club were ejected for fighting. Amateur overseers urged the teams not to make this a second Battle of Scapa Flow. The players agreed. The Missouri Athletic Club and New York A.C. teams then entered the pool and soon had six men sidelined for unseemly conduct. Fans, too, frequently lose their heads. At one Midwestern game, a spectator jabbed a lighted cigar into an official's back and was bodily thrown out.

THE rowdy aspect doesn't mean that water polo cannot please the discriminating fan. Coupled with the bruising contact are fast breaks, snappy passes and intricate screen and pivot plays. That, plus the fact that games are staged in compact arenas at cheap prices, seemingly should give water polo a widespread audience. Undeniably, its talent includes some of the world's finest physical specimens. James R. (Jimmy) Smith, a wartime water-survival expert for the Navy and author of the game's leading text, says, "In almost any gathering of athletic experts, it is conceded that here is the most punishing test ever invented." Smith's point is that trained athletes of other sports, who also are expert swimmers, rarely last long in tank skirmishes. Usually they crawl out, exhausted, in a matter of minutes. Even the human fish Johnny Weissmuller was reportedly only mediocre in big-time water polo. One leading coach estimates that in a city of 1,000,000 population perhaps ten first-class performers can be found.

Yet until the recent boom time, even California's teams had trouble making ends meet. In 1947, the Los Angeles Athletic Players team came up broke before the Olympic trials in Detroit. Players chipped in two dollars apiece to buy a $25 radio. This was raffled off for a net profit of $100, which bought two cases of whisky, and after another raffle, $500 clear. A policy meeting was held at which members voted to "shoot the bankroll"—gamble the whole sum on a big Hawaiian *luau,* or feast, with tickets priced at $10 each. To their surprise, they finished with $1700 and enough left-over meat to carry them to Detroit, where they won the right to represent America abroad.

"Another time, we were stranded for four days in Chicago without money," L.A.A.C. mermen recall. "Nobody was very worried. In water polo, you get used to a hamburger diet."

In St. Louis, bald, vigorous Carl O. Bauer, former national A.A.U. water-polo chairman, has built the famed life-saving Meramec River Patrol around star poloists. Bauer goes after every publicity crumb the game can get. When Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt casually mentioned in print that her late husband was an ardent water poloist in his youth, she immediately received a letter barrage from Bauer. He urged her to waste no time in working in more syndicated plugs. Bauer could have told Mrs. Roosevelt the game's saddest tale, about the lady who bustled up to a prominent coach and said, "I've never seen it played, but it sounds so exciting that I've bought tickets for the whole family."

The coach said he was delighted.

"Just so I'll know *something* about it," she went on, "tell me—in water polo, is it very difficult to train the horses to swim?"

The town where this couldn't happen—and the pastime's hottest spot—is El Segundo, California. This is an industrial hamlet of just 8,500 population, sixteen miles southwest of Los Angeles. By pulling together, little El Segundo in February, 1951, landed the Pan-American Games national water-polo trials over the bids of major cities. By pulling harder, it raised what seemed an impossible amount of money to send its winning team to Buenos Aires.

One competing team, Portage Park, Chicago, wasn't sure it was seeing right at El Segundo. The young Portagers raised funds for transportation west by renting a lot and selling hundreds of Christmas trees, collecting and selling 10,000 wire coat-hangers and several tons of scrap paper. "Back home, a crowd is a few dozen relatives standing around," remarked a Portage player. "I never thought I'd play before two thousand raving maniacs."

El Segundo Swim Club's 1951 team averaged under 19 years of age, but it sliced through the trials like a school of sharks. After the final game, overjoyed townspeople flocked to the home of Coach Urho (Whitey) Saari for an ice-cream social. Saari is a chunky, 36-year-old towhead of Finnish descent, whose community standing rivals that of popular Mayor William R. Selby. A good breast-stroker and poloist at Buffalo, N. Y., State Teachers College, Saari came to El Segundo as city schools swim instructor in 1941. Under his coaching, El Segundo High School has won four straight California Interscholastic Federation water-polo titles. The feat is doubly appreciated, because the school has never cut a swath in football or basketball.

Saari says that his guests plowed through five gallons of ice cream. "Then word got around that there was only $400 in the national water-polo treasury. It meant that we might not go to South America. We needed $1000 per man for seven El Segundo players, with nothing said about substitutes. And we had to have it in fifteen days."

Citizens took over. A committee headed by J. R. (Jack) Hapke, a lanky Standard Oil executive, hit every business office in town. El Segundo had just concluded its annual Red Cross and Community Chest drives, but merchants dug deeply. One auto dealer gave $25; when the fund lagged, he added another $75. The high-school girls' Teen-Age Club rang doorbells in residential sections and raised $467 in one night. At the pool, the town's prettiest girls dived in to retrieve coins tossed by fans—$138 worth. A rally with "Life in South America" as the theme brought in another $80. The Kiwanis Club gave $150, and a baseball autographed by the Brooklyn Dodgers was good for $100 from the near-by Redondo Beach Elks Club. A 12-year-old came into campaign headquarters with a piggy-bank full of pennies. Meanwhile, Saari wrote pleas for help—and papered the area with 2,500 mimeographed copies of them. Los Angeles horseplayers were startled to have their daily Santa Anita television results interrupted by a show advertising the El Segundo squad.

The City Council pried loose $1,000. Spirits rose further when comedian Andy Devine, whose son is a promising water poloist, joined the act. So did Janet Mahla, a fetching local miss who posed for so many publicity photos that she was given an RKO screen test.

YOUTHS like those who could arouse support for an obscure sport are typical of the new-type player developed in California. Water polo long was considered fit only for toughened, mature men. The Western (Big Ten) Conference and Eastern Intercollegiate Conference, which once played polo, no longer permit it. Saari and other Western tutors take the stand that it is the most beneficial of schoolboy games. They point out that the Pan-American lineup was the youngest ever to represent the United States in any international competition. El Segundo's junior members were Bill Zerkie and Bill Dornblaser, both 17 and the oldest were Jim Norris, a UCLA zoology major, and Bob Hughes, ex-national junior college 100-yard champion, both 20. Another regular was 18 and two others were 19. Bruce O'Brien, a spare from Portage Park, was 16 when he went to Buenos Aires. The boys spotted Chile twenty pounds per man in their opening game and won when Hughes batted in three crucial goals, 6-2.

Next they faced the Mexican national champs; the Mexicans were the biggest, roughest team at the Games.

"We were just well started when a 200-pound guard lost his head and grabbed 145-pound Jack Spargo around the neck with both hands. He was slowly choking him under water, where the referee couldn't see it," relates Saari. "I was yelling murder, while up on a diving platform, big Jim Fuchs, the Yale shot-putter, was peeling off his coat. They had to hold back Fuchs from jumping in on top of the Mexican."

Spargo, however, needed no help. The 19-year-old last year won every major rough-water Pacific Ocean marathon swim held in Southern California. Water boiled, the guard loosed a yell and fell back in pain, and Spargo shot down the tank to take a pass. "You use a little judo in this game, too," he has since explained.

INSTEAD of seeking revenge in the old water-polo manner, the Americans merely turned on speed. Pete Stange, the hero of the Santa Monica rescue described earlier, sprinted along the pool side, dribbling the ball. He passed to what looked like open water, but a submerged Bill Dornblaser popped up to grab it. Dornblaser can swim faster on his back than most crawl-strokers, and he ran his guard in circles until forward Bill Zerkie broke clear for a lob pass. Zerkie leaped out of the water to his thighs; faked the goalie wide and slammed the ball into the nets. Six more goals followed for a 7-0 shutout of Mexico.

The Argentine entry, which is subsidized by the Peron government, finally eliminated El Segundo, 9-2. But the youngsters placed third behind Argentina and Brazil. It was the best foreign showing by a U.S. team in many years. Not since 1904 has this country won an Olympic water-polo title.

Since returning, Urho Saari has made a study of the physical condition of his charges. "One boy had to drop out after two shoulder separations. Well, that could happen in football. We've had one broken finger and a few dozen welts, scratches and skin cuts in five years. There has been no sinus or eardrum trouble. Every player we've had has added ten to twenty pounds in weight and two to three inches to his chest, biceps and thighs. Pete Stange is typical. Four years ago, he weighed 100 pounds. By California school age-weight-height exponent, he was rated Class D—too puny for other sports. Pete hasn't grown upward much, but he now weighs 165. Water polo has given him a 43-inch chest, 31-inch waist, and arms and legs like you see in the muscle ads."

El Segundo educators heartily agree. Water polo carries a regular varsity-letter award at the high school. Not one, but three, teams hit the tank for each scholastic match. Where grid and hoop teams give only a fraction of the student body a playing chance, up to ninety El Segundo boys perform on B, C and varsity water-polo squads. "It's too bad that so few schools in the country allow water polo," says the Recreation Commission's R. R. Tillotson. "Properly run, it's the best of health-builders—and also the cheapest of sports to operate. Better yet, it makes such watermen of kids that we never expect to hear of one of them drowning. Fact is, they'll save dozens of lives before they're through."

The CIF league, which includes Whittier, Compton, Inglewood, Fullerton, Leuzinger, Anaheim, Huntington Beach and Long Beach, in Southern California, has sent ripples throughout the State. About forty prep-school teams and 3,500 juniors are churning and firing away at nets. A fourteen-team junior-college league, embracing such schools as Loyola, California Tech and Occidental, and a crowded Los Angeles lifeguard league, will be in full swing this fall. Water-polo's season on the West Coast follows football's, with championship playoffs coming in December.

Whittier, with 27,000 population, is another hot-bed. Under Coach Heber Holloway, a swim club was modestly started in 1930. At first the polo-ists thrashed around in lonesome privacy and passed the hat or staged water pageants to raise travel funds. Now full turnouts of 1,200 fans are not uncommon. In 1950, to reach the national A.A.U. indoor meet, Whittier needed several thousand dollars. The money quickly was forthcoming from gate receipts—also friends and parents and such diverse business interests as a dairy and a real-estate agency. The Whits run slightly older than the El Segundos—six players are at Stanford, USC and College of the Pacific—yet they faced far more seasoned septets at St. Louis. It was another triumph of the California "teach-'em-young" system. In the finals, Whittier outpaddled the burly Missouri Athletic Club, 8-4.

Though many colleges have expressed new interest in adopting water polo, the Pacific Coast Conference Southern Division remains the sole collegiate stronghold. Division coaches scoff at the theory heard in the Big Ten that water polo's twists, turns and varied arm action are fatal to a sprint-swimmer's stroke. Whittier's Marvin Burns is a two-time All-American center-forward, 6 feet, 4 inches and 210 pounds of bone and sinew. He also holds the Coast Conference fifty-yard free-style record of 23.3 for Stanford University. Recently, Urho Saari blasted the theory by timing his first seven men at 440 yards. Five were clocked in less than 5.18, good average time for college competition, and one in 4:48, fast enough to win many championships. For that matter, Duke Kahanamoku was a stellar polo-ist, and few greater meet swimmers ever lived.

Yet water polo on the Atlantic seaboard, by comparison, remains largely a tolerated sport. West Point and Annapolis are exceptions. Both service schools have strong teams, but the opposition from Fordham, Columbia, Manhattan and St. Peter's College is thin.

"The trouble is, they remember the old American game, which was never more than a bastard deviate," says Austin Clapp, Los Angeles attorney and Olympic coach. Clapp had one taste of the expunged game in 1929 on a visit to the New York Athletic Club. Then a ranking hardball performer, Clapp didn't know what had hit him. "The first five minutes, I was seldom above water. I was slugged, dragged under and held there by a guard, who sat on my head. Now and then I saw the ball—just glimpses before being bashed."

THE game's serious thinkers believe that the de-brutalizing influence of California water polo will spread the game elsewhere into school programs and eventually make it a strong favorite with teen-agers. In Calcutta during the war, Urho Saari saw evidence of even greater possibilities. He was strolling along when he came upon several dozen naked Indian urchins of eight to ten, furiously churning about in a stagnant, algae-covered city reservoir in which were stored the monsoon-rains. A yellow ball flew through the air and Saari realized that some noble water-polo pioneer had passed here before. The incident gave him an idea. As swimming coach for the Army's Special Services, he had been hoping to open the Calcutta Swimming Club's fine pool to GIs. Why not crack this swank British social establishment by introducing water polo?

When he arrived, a British officers' team was busily fighting off a goal-cage rush by a native water-polo team. Saari happily hurried out and organized a pickup team of soldiers who'd played a bit at home.

"We were raw at first, but in a few weeks we could have spotted points to seven seals," says Saari. "We waded through the club tournament and won the Calcutta Club Cup in the finals. The British seemed surprised. They didn't know that Americans are pretty good aquatic animals, too." •

. . . that your facts are always straight. For example, it isn't true . .

By JOHN T DUNLAVY

. . . that Phineas Taylor Barnum made the observation "There is a sucker born every minute." No evidence has ever been brought forward that the famous showman actually made this statement, though it quite accurately reflects his views on public gullibility.

. . . that George Washington, as a boy, cut down a cherry tree with his hatchet and refused to lie to his father. No accurate records of Washington's childhood have ever come to light. The tale has been attributed to the enthusiasm of Weems, one of his biographers.

. . . that June 21 is always the longest day in the year. In each year preceding a leap year the longest day is June 22, while in all other years it is June 21. Similarly, the shortest day in the year may be either December 21 or December 22.

. . . that a "Frankenstein" is a monster. In reality, a "Frankenstein" is a person who is destroyed by his own creation. In the original story, Victor Frankenstein was a student who constructed the monster. The monster, however, had no name at all.

. . . that you are not permitted to wash a United States flag. Neither law nor etiquette prohibits the washing or dry cleaning of the United States flag. As a matter of fact, the preferred treatment suggests frequent cleaning and repairing.

. . . that a silver spoon will keep hot water from breaking a glass. According to the commonly accepted belief, the spoon absorbs enough heat to prevent sudden expansion of the glass which results in a crack. Laboratory experiments have shown the amount absorbed is negligible and ineffective when compared with the overall quantity of heat in the glass of water.

. . . that it is colder in winter because the earth is farther from the sun. Actually the earth is three million miles closer in January than in July. Winter is caused by angle at which the sun's rays strike—the greater the angle, the less warmth penetrates the atmosphere.

. . . that there are double-jointed people. What are popularly referred to as "double-joints" are merely conditions of loose ligaments surrounding joints.

. . . that we only have five senses. The five senses are supposedly sight, hearing, taste, touch and smell. There are, however, countless other avenues of information which are in reality "senses." One authority claims we have five thousand. To name but a few: memory, temperature, time, proportion, pain, equilibrium, quantity, color, resistance, etc.

. . . that there is any such thing as an air pocket that contains no air. This term came into popular use because early flyers didn't understand the operation of air currents. When a plane enters a body of air which is descending, the plane will suddenly lose altitude. This is an "air pocket." Similarly, when it enters a body of air which is ascending rapidly, the plane will gain altitude sharply. This is called a "bump."

. . . that Mrs. O'Leary's cow started the Chicago Fire. Members of the O'Leary family denied this story for years—but not until a newspaper reporter named Michael Ahern confessed, shortly before his death in 1927, that he had invented the story to make his account of the fire more interesting, did the origin of the tale come to light.

. . . that a low forehead is indicative of criminal tendencies. Careful studies reveal no pattern of behavior is predictable from any physical type. Thus high foreheads do not mean intelligence, nor long fingers artistic ability, nor a square chin stubbornness.

. . . that William Tell shot an apple off his son's head with a bow and arrow. The legend is common to several cultures, and the Historical Society of Switzerland has proved that no such person ever existed.

. . . that monkeys search through their hair for fleas. Most monkeys are completely free from body parasites of any kind. They are continually in search of salt which exudes from the skin and dries in the hair.

. . . that toads cause warts. The superstition arises from the warty-appearing skin of toads but has no basis in fact. Goats do not eat tin cans; they lick the salt off labels. Houseflies do not bite; their jaw construction makes it impossible. Ireland is not the only place where there are no native snakes; this is true of many islands including Hawaii. Neither bats nor moles are blind.

. . . that crocodiles cry—therefore there are no such things as crocodile tears. Snakes cannot be charmed by music; they are completely unmoved one way or another by it. All whales do not have small throats; sperm whales can easily swallow large fish and could have swallowed a Jonah.

. . . that catgut is from cats; it is made from the intestines of sheep. India ink doesn't come from India; most of it comes from China. Camel's-hair brushes do not come from the hair of camels; they are made from the tails of Siberian squirrels. Whalebone is not really bone; it is properly baleen, which is more closely allied to the structure of teeth. German silver is not silver at all; it is an alloy of copper, nickel and zinc.

. . . that the Fourth of July is really a legal holiday. Although it is celebrated in all forty-eight States as a legal holiday, no law was ever passed establishing the date. As a matter of fact, Thanksgiving is the only real national holiday established by law.

A Rosy Future For Roderick

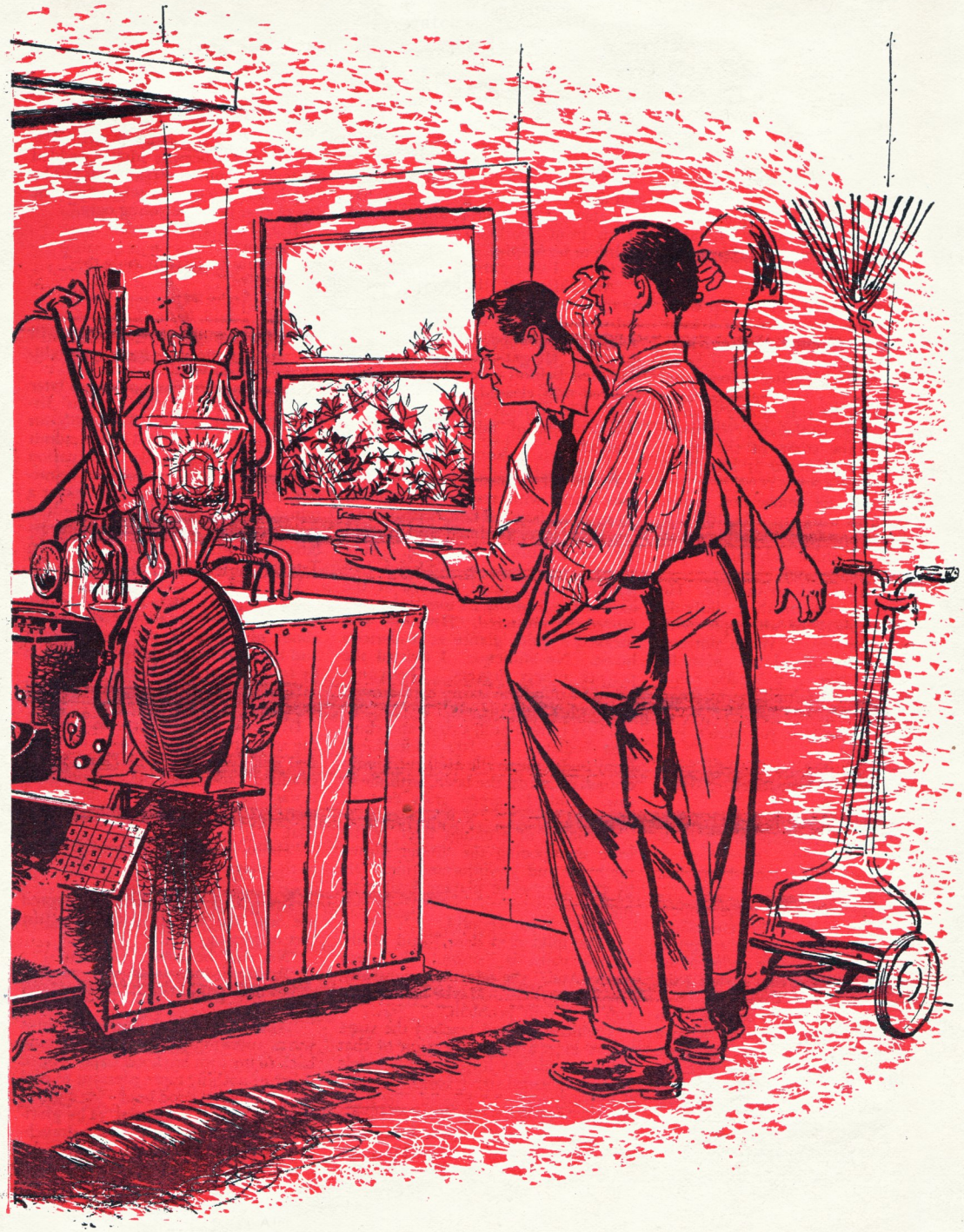
With a brain like his, Roddy was destined to rule the world. And maybe he will... some day.

• By NELSON BOND

THE FIRST TIME I met the kid I didn't recognize the golden glitter of genius. In fact, my initial impression was that he was just plain brassy. Of course, the circumstances of our meeting were not exactly conducive to my forming what you might call a cool and unbiased opinion of Roderick. . . .

You see, we had just moved into the suburbs—Molly and I—and after having tidied up most of the odd jobs around the inside of our new house, I went outdoors to make my initial attack on a patch of lawn that had been permitted to mass summer reserves of crabgrass behind sturdy spring shock-troops of weeds.

Since I had just invested in a glamorous new power mower, the prospect



of playing lawn-barber didn't appall me. Until I actually tackled it, that is. Then I discovered to my chagrin that not even a gasoline-gulping grass-grazer can trim old Mother Nature's tresses unless you can get it going. And I couldn't get the darned thing going.

The starter mechanism was what had me stymied. The instruction book claimed that when I wrapped "cord A" about "flywheel B" and tugged, my efforts would be rewarded with a heart-warming, resonant roar. But I wound and yanked until I was blue in the face, spirits, and vocabulary, and all I could coax from my reluctant tool was a thin, asthmatic wheeze.

CONSEQUENTLY, I was in a far from friendly frame of mind when a calm young voice addressed me from near by.

"Hello, mister. Trying to start your mower?"

The author of this idiotic inquiry was a chunky, towheaded youngster perched on the stoop of the house next door. I glowered at him balefully.

"Who, me? Of course not, sonny. Just trying to work up a healthy appetite. A problem," I commented caustically, "which obviously you would not understand."

Irony was wasted on the kid. He continued to gnaw on the rapidly diminishing sphere of an apple with blissful insouciance. When nothing remained but a thread-thin spine, he chucked the core at a hapless robin jaywalking our mutual lawns, then spoke again.

" 'Cause if you are, you aren't, you know," he said.

I pondered that one briefly. . . .

"Come again?" I suggested.

"Beg pardon?"

"That last remark of yours. What do I need to unscramble it? A code-book?"

For a moment *he* looked puzzled. Then he grinned.

"Oh, I see. It *was* a trifle cloudy, wasn't it? I mean," he elucidated carefully, "if you're trying to get it started, you aren't going about it the right way. At least, that's what *I* figure."

It's bad enough not to be able to do a thing right. It's worse to have a youngster one-fourth your age poke your incompetence with a tormenting finger. I bared my fangs at the brat in a winsome smile. I said, "See here, Buster—"

"Roderick," he supplied. "Roderick Fenton."

"Tell me, Roderick—how old are you?"

"Eight," he said, "going on nine."

"Eight," I corrected him, "going on borrowed time. Listen, kid. There are laws against adults mangling minors out of season. But I know of nothing in the criminal code that prohibits a man hurling a heavy object into the air and letting the law of gravitation take its course.

"I may not be able to operate this thing, but with a determined effort, I think I can *lift* it. So will you shut your obstreperous little trap, or must I bounce an otherwise useless hunk of machinery off your noggin?"

"Well, good gosh!" complained the youngster. "If you're going to be that way about it—" He rose and fumbled at his front doorknob. "I was only trying to be helpful."

"Grrr!" I murmured politely.

"And, after all, that *is* a gasoline motor. If you don't turn that little red petcock on the feedline—"

"Git!" I squalled, stung beyond endurance. He got—hastily. The door slammed behind him. I waited till the red mist cleared from before my eyes, then turned again to ponder the problem of my hundred-dollar headache.

AGAIN I wasted energy on the rope trick, with results as futile as those preceding. Then, with grudging reluctance, I paused and studied the mechanism before me. Sure enough, there was—as Roderick had pointed out—a small petcock at the base of the feedline. I touched it. It moved. I muttered, "Hmmm!" and sneaked a quick glance at Roderick's house. No audience. I twisted the petcock ninety degrees. Then once again I wound the starter cord around the flywheel and tugged.

There came a puff, a roar, and chugging bedlam. My feet skidded out from under me as the awakened mower took off across the lawn, with me in tow. And the green grass flew all around. . . .

A couple of evenings later, as we were shampooing the dinner dishes, my bride and joy informed me, "Oh, by the way, we're playing bridge tonight."

"Fine. With whom?"

"The folks next door," said Molly. "Their name is Fenton. She's very nice. And," she added thoughtfully, "*he* is a physicist. Maybe he can help you with your problem."

I winced. I had reached the stage where even a casual mention of that subject made my frayed nerves jangle like an Oriental string band.

"Please, sugar," I begged, "let's not discuss that now. Evenings are for rest and relaxation. That is"—a sudden dark suspicion shuddered through me—"theoretically. Where are we playing? Here?"

"No. At their house."

Illustration by GEORGE WITHERS

"That's what I was afraid of. Before or after?"

"Tom, what *are* you talking about? Before or after what?"

"Before or after that loathsome little monster of theirs has been chained to his bedpost for the night?"

"Are you talking about Roddy? Why, I think he's a *sweet* little boy!"

"So, no doubt," I growled, "was Jack the Ripper. No, my pet. For once in our otherwise idyllic wedded existence, I must overrule you. The date is off; I refuse to set foot in the den of that horrible young ogre."

"But, Tom, I promised—"

"I'm sorry."

"It would be terribly rude to—"

"Too bad."

"And they're expecting—"

"No!" I said flatly, firmly, finally. "Absolutely and positively no! I will not stir from this house tonight. That's my last word!"

Thus it was that an hour or so later we were seated in the Fentons' living-room, getting acquainted with our new neighbors. And I must admit that in spite of my sulky anticipation they *were* a pleasant couple: attractive, friendly, and intelligent. Over a round of bourbon highballs—Fenton even served my favorite brand—our relationship quickly reached the Molly-Tom-Sarah-Walter stage.

Very cozy. . . . Very impermanent.

For all good things—to corn a phrase—must finally come to an end. Along about nine o'clock the door opened and into our happy parlor walked the fly in the ointment: Roderick.

"Oh!" he said. "Company? Good evening."

Give me A for Effort—warmed by the spirit of good fellowship and several stiff ounces of Old Hangover, I subdued my natural repugnance toward the onerous little brat and made with the light neighborly chit-chat.

"Hello, Roddy," I greeted. "Been to the movies?"

THE glance with which he favored me was not exactly scornful. Just sort of pitying.

"No, sir," he said. "Library."

"Roddy," interposed his mother somewhat apologetically, "is *very* fond of reading."

"And why not?" I declaimed, in a warm suffusion of nostalgia harking back to my own boyhood days. "I can think of nothing more pleasant to curl up with than a good book—for a growing boy, that is. Ah, yes! The glorious literature of youth! Been drenching the dome with deeds of derring-do, Roddy?"

"Beg pardon, sir?" said Roderick blankly.

"Glutting the gray cells with gore? Reading stories of high adventure in

far places? Knights of the Round Table, pirates on the Spanish Main, Indians on the warpath?"

"No, sir," said Roderick. "Lobachevsky on tractrix mechanics."

"Huh?"

"And Riemann—and Bolyai. The non-Euclidean geometers." He wriggled uncomfortably, perhaps in apprehension of the way my jaw had dropped agape. "I—I'm quite interested in mathematics," he said. "Aren't you?"

I took a firm grip on my glass, and on my shattered self-control, and managed to force a chuckle that did not *quite* strangle me.

"Sure thing! I always say," I said, "that the best way to get ahead in this world is keep your feet on the ground and remember that two and two makes four."

"Or," murmured Roderick, "sometimes a hundred."

"Eh?"

"Dyadic notation, that is. Well, I'd better be off to bed. Good-night, all."

He kissed his parents, and they him, just as if he were human. Then he disappeared upstairs. His father gazed after him fondly.

"Kid's really something, eh, Tom?" he said.

"He's *something,* all right," I admitted cautiously. "But just *what*—"

"Yes, sir! I'm mighty proud of that young fellow. He's quite a little thinker. Am I right?"

"You thaid it!" I agreed.

My lab chief is a brain-truster with more degrees than a clinical thermometer. The next day I asked him, "Doc, what is dyadic notation?"

"Dyadic— Oh, you mean binary notation? Why, it's an arithmetical system requiring the use of only two symbols—1 and 0—as opposed to the ten used in the decimal system. Very simple; very efficient. 1 remains 1, but 2 becomes 10, 3 is 11—"

"And two plus two? It's not four?"

"No. It's one hundred. Why? When did *you* become interested in unusual math systems?"

"I'm not. I just happened to hear it mentioned."

The chief grinned. "Better not let the Government boys hear you say that. The only place on earth I know of where dyadic notation is commonly used is the rural areas of Russia. And this military project we're working on—well, you know how touchy the Feds are."

"Yeah, I know. I've even stopped using the Petroff Defense when I play chess."

"By no means incidentally," continued Doc, "how are you coming on with that research job?"

"You want the truth," I asked him, "or ulcers?"

"As bad as that?"

"Worse. I'm getting nowhere, fast. As a matter of fact, I'm farther from a solution now than I was when I began, because I've eliminated about umpteen billion possibilities."

Doc shook his head sadly.

"It's a tough one, I know. But there must be *some* answer. You call yourself a chemist—"

"I've called myself everything *but* that during the past few months."

"Well, stick with it. And let me know if you need anything."

"Fine!" I grunted moodily. "How are we fixed for aspirin, paper dolls, and straitjackets?"

You think I wasn't worried about that problem, maybe? Guess again. I can *prove* I was up to my eyebrows in despair. I even took my work home with me weekends. Because I was up a tree, and so was the chief, and so was the company that employs us both. Not to mention Uncle Sam, who was depending on our efforts to discover an answer to his problem.

So one Saturday afternoon I was seated in my study, fretfully plowing

Habit gets a fellow. Many a father who worked his way through college is now working his boy's way through.

—MUTUAL MOMENTS

through some research tomes, when eighty-odd pounds of nuisance loomed beside my elbow! Yes, it was friend Roderick.

"Hello, Mr. Evans," he said.

I shut my eyes, hoping that when I opened them again he'd be gone. But he was still standing there, calm and disgustingly congenial.

"Hello," I sighed. "Did you want something?"

"Nothing special. Just came to visit you. You're reading, huh?"

I raised astonished eyebrows at the volume in my hands. "Well, damned if I'm not!" I breathed.

"*I* like to read," said Roderick.

"You do? Remind me to hang a *Do Not Disturb* sign on my door for your future entertainment."

"Mostly science books," continued Roderick blandly, "or geology, or psychology, or history. Who's your favorite character in history?"

"King Herod," I told him. "Look, Roddy, I'm a very busy man. If you don't mind—"

"Am I annoying you?"

"No more than a combination of migraine, hay-fever, and the seven-year itch. I've got a job to do—"

"Pop told me you're a chemist," said the brat. "Is that right?"

"Statistically, yes. Ethically—"

"There used to be a lot of chemists at Oak Ridge," said Roderick. "That's where I was born, you know."

"You were *born*? You mean they didn't find you under a rock?"

Roderick either didn't get it or chose to overlook it. He continued, "I've got a chemistry set, myself. The big one. A hundred different chemicals and a book that tells how to make all sorts of things."

"Including," I asked hopefully, "trinitrotoluene?"

"Aw, you're kidding. TNT's dangerous. But you'd be surprised at some of the things I've mixed with my set. Some that aren't even in the book. I invented one that's real peculiar. I call it my magic cobweb. It—"

"Roddy," I said wearily, "I'm delighted to know you get such enjoyment from your toys, but I don't have time to talk about it now. As I said before, I've got a job to do—"

"What kind of job?" asked Roderick.

I sighed and chose the path of least resistance.

"If I tell you, will you go home?"

"Why, sure. If you want me to."

"Very well, then. Here's the problem. You know that our country is faced with the possibility of another war?"

"Of course. I guess that everybody knows that."

"And that part of our preparedness campaign is the arming of our allies overseas?"

Roderick nodded. "Sure. We send them planes and tanks and guns—"

"That's right. And you know *how* we send them?"

"By ship, mostly, I suppose."

"Exactly. And that's where the trouble begins. We load thousands of tons of valuable equipment on cargo vessels and send it on a long sea voyage. Because of its shape and size, much of this material has to make the trip on deck, exposed to sun, rain, ice, and an incessant fine salt spray. Now do you know what salt water does to metal?"

"Uh-huh. Corrodes it."

"Right. So to protect our equipment we must coat it with some substance that will withstand the elements. And that's my job—to find a suitable substance."

Roderick said, "But they've already *got* such things. I've seen pictures where—"

"True. But none of the present protective coatings is satisfactory. Either they are thick and gooey, or they form a hard, rubbery crust that takes forever to remove. We spend days apply-

ing them and weeks getting them off. Soldiers who *should* be practicing military maneuvers have to waste endless man-hours on the dirty job of cleaning the gunked-up equipment when it reaches its destination. And if you don't think that job is tough, ask any G.I. who has ever uncrated and cleaned a box of rifles."

"Then what you're trying to find is—"

"A simple, inexpensive compound that can be swiftly applied, will safeguard the material in transport, then can be quickly and easily removed at the other end of the line. An elusive substance," I sighed. "Perhaps a nonexistent one. And now, sonny, I've kept *my* part of the bargain. It's your move."

"Eh?" said Roderick vacantly.

"Outward," I designated, while gently propelling him toward the door. "Don't think it hasn't been nice seeing you, because it hasn't. Come back again, but not too soon."

Roderick asked plaintively, "Well, gosh, you don't have to *push*, do you? Mr. Evans—"

"What now, little man?"

"Do you mind if I use your lawnmower?"

"I guess not. But take good care of it, huh? That thing cost plenty."

"Sure," he promised. "I'll be careful. Thanks."

He left, and I dived back into the sterile sanctuary of my books.

THAT was at two o'clock. About four, I wearied of bashing my brains against a stone wall and decided to wander outside for a breath of fresh air.

It was a bright clear cloudless day. Therefore what happened came as a complete surprise. I had taken only a dozen steps into the front yard when there came a sudden hissing splash, and I found myself spluttering in the middle of a torrential summer shower.

Or that's what I thought it was, at first. Then it dawned on me that from the faucet around the corner of the house, my pal Roderick had just turned on the water, and that I was standing squarely over the sprinkler's gushing nozzle!

With an outraged howl I leaped out of range, slapping angrily at my soaked clothing. Roderick returned to the scene of the crime and stared at me in astonishment.

"Gee, Mr. Evans! You got wet!"

"You're telling *me?* You little nitwit, why didn't you warn me you were getting ready to turn on the hose! Look at me! Soaked to the skin! For two cents I'd—"

Then my fury doubled, trebled, increased a hundredfold. For my roving eyes detected something they had not noticed before. Smack-dab in the center of the lawn, devastatingly exposed to the sprinkler's drenching deluge, stood—

"My mower!" I wailed. "Confound you, Roderick! I *told* you to be careful of that thing!"

I made a dash for the outlet that fed the hose, but Roderick beat me to it by three strides. As our hands met at the faucet he said reassuringly, "It's all right, Mr. Evans. There's nothing to get excited about. I'm just testing it, that's all."

"Testing what? My patience?"

"My magic cobweb," said Roderick. "The stuff I was telling you about. And it works. Come and see!"

He grabbed my hand and tugged. I allowed myself to be pulled across the sodden lawn to my maltreated mower. Water stood on its erstwhile pristine surface in pearls . . . in pools . . . in bright and glistening puddles. I groaned, envisioning each droplet as a future blob of rust. But Roderick calmly drew a handkerchief from his pocket, and—

"See, Mr. Evans?" he said. "It wipes right off."

He swept the linen square across the water-dappled surface of the mower. And believe it or not, the water *did* wipe off! As smoothly, as easily, as ever *aqua pura* slid from the dorsal of the proverbial duck!

I stared at this inexplicable phenomenon, then at its ditto parent, in stunned amazement.

"How did you do that?" I croaked.

"With my handkerchief," asserted Roderick.

"I know. But I mean, how come the water wiped off like that?"

"Oh, it wasn't ever *on*. It's a matter of molecular cohesion. You see, a few minutes ago I sprayed the mower with my magic cobweb,"

"You did *what?*" All of a sudden the danger of rust seemed relatively unimportant. The thought of the youngster coating my cherished mower with some compound of ingredients from his chemical set was terrifying. "You did *what?*" I cried in agony.

"It's all *right*, Mr. Evans," Roderick insisted. "My spray protected it from the water. And I can remove the spray in a matter of seconds. Here, I'll show you."

He galloped to his house, returned immediately with a squirt-gun. He leveled this at the mower, then paused.

"Oh, by the way," he suggested, "maybe you'd like to feel the mower? Just to make sure it *is* coated?"

AS one moving in a nightmare I touched the metallic surface. It was as slippery-smooth as a layer of fine silk. The kid's term for the mixture was not bad. It *did* feel sort of like an oiled cobweb—if you can imagine such a thing.

"That's the protective spray," said Roderick. "It took me about ten seconds to apply it. Now, here's how fast it comes off."

He went *swoosh-swoosh-swoosh* with the squirt-gun. I stifled an impulse to yell—for before my startled eyes the oily coating on the metal clouded, turned to a fine mist, and evaporated in the warm rays of the sun. Seconds later, when I touched the surface of the mower, the metal was bone dry!

And that's when I became Charter Member Number One of the Roderick Fenton Fan Club of America.

WELL, I don't have to blueprint the rest, do I? To make a long story short, I watched Roderick mix a fresh batch of his magic-cobweb spray. It was everything I had been seeking for long, heartbreaking months: a simple compound made of common, inexpensive ingredients.

I took the boy with me to the plant. He came home with a big grin and a royalty contract calculated to keep him in lollipops for the rest of his natural days. In return, my company got exclusive rights to his discovery, and with those rights assurance of almost enough Government money to pay its excess profits tax.

But there was one thing more. And for an answer to it I went to Roderick's father. He is a scientist, and so am I. So I wasted no words, but came abruptly to the point.

"I think I know," I said bluntly, "but tell me, anyhow. About the kid, I mean. *Is* he?"

"Grateful to you?" parried Walter Fenton. "Why, of course, Tom. And so am I. It was mighty nice of you to—"

"Pish!" I interrupted. "Also tush! I'm knee-deep in debt to *him*, and you know it. Now, stop stalling. I know when he was born, and where. And I know what was going on there at that time: atomic experimentation. That's two plus two. How about adding it up for me?"

Fenton sighed.

"I see you're close to the answer already, Tom. I guess I'll have to tell you the rest." He shook his head slowly, soberly. "You see, Roderick isn't actually our son. Sarah and I adopted him. His real father was one of our top physicists. His mother died in childbirth; his dad went a year later—radiation got him."

I nodded. "That's about what I figured. He was working on the Manhattan Project, I take it. Quite close to the pile?"

"Too close. Our shields weren't very effective in those early days. It cooked some of the boys for keeps. Others, like Roddy's father—well, we simply don't know. But something must have happened: Hard gamma

rays . . . mutation of the genes. Roddy—"

"I know. At eight he reads Lobachevsky and Bolyai for amusement. When did he *start* reading?"

"At two," acknowledged Fenton. "English, that is. He has picked up French and German since, and a smattering of Greek and Latin. He latched onto physics and math at four. Now he's so far beyond me that I can't even read his notes any longer. He uses symbols I don't understand—and I have an I.Q. of 140."

"His intelligence quotient? You've measured it?"

"Yes. But you wouldn't believe me."

"I think I might. Try me."

"Over 400," said Fenton. "There's no way of gauging it accurately. The tests just aren't devised for minds like his."

He went on: "You're the first person I've ever discussed this with—except Roddy, of course. He and I had a long, man-to-man talk about it on his sixth birthday. He knows he's different—and why. But I've advised him to conceal it from the world as much as possible. Some people might not like it. They might be resentful. You know what I mean?"

I NODDED. "Yes. Or even fearful. Though there's no patricular reason why they should be. It was inevitable. Ever since Darwin, we've known that one day man would take the next step upward in his eternal striving toward perfection of the species. A sudden mutation, alteration of the genes—that's the way it happens. Mueller's experiments with gamma rays on fruit-flies proved that. And the radiations of an atomic pile, like the one Roddy's dad worked on at Oak Ridge nine years ago, are hard rays. Gamma rays."

"Then you believe, as I do, that Roderick is—"

"Yes," I told him. "Mentally. But in all other respects perfectly normal, thank God! Roddy is the sign of things to come. But not in blue tights, wearing a crimson cloak and hurtling through the air. A true *man*—but a finer, wiser type of man."

With deliberate delicacy neither of us ever used the other word—the popular expression for the type of which Walt Fenton's adopted son was the forerunner:

Superman. . . .

It's strange, perhaps—but at the time of my conversation with Walt Fenton I wasn't the least bit concerned about Roddy's *homo superior* status. As a matter of fact, I was rather pleased that I had been smart enough to figure it out on the basis of the observed facts. It was not until a few days had passed that the *other* aspect struck me, and I began fretting myself with a growing, gnawing doubt.

A nine-year-old child of a race of superhumans is one thing. But how about a grown man of that race? What might we expect of Roderick Fenton ten or twenty years from now? What rôle in life might conceivably be played by a creature with an intelligence quotient three times greater than that of mankind's most learned savants?

Several weeks slipped by before I unloaded this gathering uncertainty on the shoulders of Walt Fenton. He frowned and tugged his lower lip as he answered:

"Your guess is as good as mine, Tom. I've lain awake nights worrying about that very thing. On the basis of what we see now, he may turn out to be mankind's greatest benefactor: infinitely gentle, friendly, and kind, with the intelligence to improve our creaking civilization in a thousand ways.

"Or," he conceded, "the converse could be true. Ambition might seize him: a personal lust for money, power, control. Were he ever to use his tremendous intellect for evil purposes, men could not withstand him. If he desired, he could rule the earth."

"There's a third possibility," I added. "Superman need be neither benevolent nor malevolent to be harmful. Nietzsche showed us that. The future human might be so coldly logical in his reasoning as to be wholly, utterly ruthless, without intent to be so."

"Beyond good and evil," nodded Fenton. "Yes. I suppose that, too, is a possibility. Confound it, Tom, if there were only some answer to this problem. Some certain, swift, and gentle solution—"

HE did not designate what thought he had in mind that might be considered an "ungentle" solution. His meaning was all too clear.

It was as we were sitting there, staring at each other moodily, that Roddy made one of his boisterous, enthusiastic entrances. He grabbed one of his

"See what practice does? You aren't half as lousy as you were last week."

foster-father's hands and tugged; he motioned excitedly to me.

"Come on!" he cried. "Come see it! It's almost finished."

We followed him to the Fenton garage, there to pause and stare at the wackiest contraption my middle-aged optics have ever beheld. It looked something like a box, and something like a bird-cage, and altogether like one of Rube Goldberg's worst nightmares. It was composed of all sorts of odds and ends; a zany conglomeration of salvaged pipes, bolts, wheels and timbers from the neighborhood's collective scrap-piles. Centrally located in the maze was a bucket-shaped seat upholstered with a discarded cushion from an old porch glider. Mounted on a dashboard panel were a number of dials and gadgets, the nature of which was utterly obscure. I looked at it, then at Fenton. Fenton shrugged. We both looked at Roddy. Roddy beamed.

"What do you think of it?" he asked.

"It's fine, son," conceded Fenton cautiously. "Only—"

"Only what?"

"Precisely," I chimed in. "Only what? Or to be more specific, what the hell?"

"Oh, golly!" gulped Roddy. "Didn't I tell you? Maybe not. Well, you see, it's a time-machine!"

Fenton smiled at me a trifle feebly. He said, "Imaginative kid, eh, Tom? Well, I suppose that's natural. He's been reading a lot of H. G. Wells lately."

I thought to myself that there was still a *fourth* possibility Walt and I had never considered. Roderick's super-cranium could over-extend itself. In fact, it seemed a reasonable assumption that it already had. And surely no great harm could be expected of a superhuman moron. . . .

"Look," chortled Roddy happily. "I'll show you!"

He reached inside the instrument, turned one of the dashboard dials fractionally, then smiled at us.

"Two minutes," he proclaimed. "I'm going to send it two minutes into the future. Watch!"

He yanked a gearshift-like lever, and swiftly withdrew his arm. There was a sudden chuffing sound, between a puff and a snort and a grunt; for an instant my ears rang with a shrill supersonic whine. And then—

"Good Lord!" gasped Walter Fenton. "It's gone!"

It was. The space before us was as empty as a taxpayer's pockets on March 16th!

Even as Fenton gawked at me, and I returned with interest his imbecilic glance, there came another sound. As before, my ears rang briefly. Then I heard a dull clumping thud—and Roddy's fantastic go-cart appeared abruptly out of nothingness to settle on the floor before us. Roderick looked up from his wrist-watch.

"One minute, fifty-six seconds," he announced. "Almost perfect. Just a little adjusting and it will be ready to—"

"Son," choked Walter Fenton, "you —you *mean* it? This isn't just a—a joke? It really *works?*"

"Well, gosh! Of course it works. You saw it, didn't you?"

I said dazedly, "How?"

Roderick bit his lip. "Well, I'm not sure I can explain it to you, Mr. Evans. I mean—excuse me—if you don't understand time-warp and continuum mechanics—"

"I don't," I told him flatly.

"Then I'm not sure I could make you understand." He wriggled apologetically. "But that doesn't matter. Even if most humans—" He caught his foster-father's eye, and corrected himself swiftly: "Even if most *people* don't know how it works, we can use it. We can go to the future and study their civilization—bring back the inventions needed to improve *our* civilization and make it better—speed the progress of mankind on to a higher culture."

Fenton said slowly, carefully, "Is that *good*, son?"

"Good? Of course it's good."

"I wonder. Perhaps it would be better for man to progress more slowly—to earn advancements by discovering them for himself. I mean, it is a form of slavery to make oneself dependent on the wisdom of others—"

A mild frown touched Roderick's brows. He spoke, I thought, a shade impatiently.

"Don't be ridiculous, Dad! Mankind *needs* guidance and instruction. Inferior brains *must* depend on those who can lead and direct them. Even you can see—"

He stopped abruptly, chagrined at having been betrayed into so frank an expression of his own convictions. Again, swiftly, he was the child Roddy Fenton, grinning and companionable, eager to please.

"What I mean is, we can learn so much from this—"

"Perhaps," I offered, "it would be safer to use it only to travel into the *past*. There, too, we can find much that will benefit mankind. We can learn the secrets lost through the ages, rewrite our history-books, find the answers to a thousand puzzling mysteries."

"That *would* be fun," admitted Roderick. "But it's impossible just now. *This* machine"—he pointed—"won't travel backward in time, only forward. As a matter of fact, I'm not sure a machine can be built that will go backward. It involves too many awkward paradoxes—like people being where they never were, you know."

"I see," said Walter Fenton. He had been brooding quietly ever since Roddy's brief, impetuous expression of disdain for humankind. Now his face was thoughtful, grave, determined. "This machine, then, goes only one way?"

"That's right, Dad. Forward."

"And how far forward, son?"

"Oh, a *long* way. Naturally, I haven't tested it. But this dial here—"

Roddy clambered into the machine, the better to exhibit its mechanism. Fenton and I leaned over its side.

"This dial here," continued Roderick, "designates the era to which it is to travel. You simply set the dial to the proper number of years, or days, or minutes."

"This figure, then," asked Fenton, "would direct it to a time two hundred years from now?" He flicked the proper needle to position. Roderick nodded.

"That's right. Careful, Dad! If this lever were to be pressed while I'm in here, we'd never see each other again."

"You mean you'd be killed?" I asked him.

"Oh, shucks, no! I'd be perfectly safe. But I would vanish from here and suddenly appear in the world of two hundred years from now. A world, perhaps,"—he smiled shyly at his foster-parent—"where people are more like myself. Who knows? At any rate, I'd be safe; it's just that I could never return again."

"Yes," said Fenton slowly. "That's what I thought. Well, then—good luck, son!"

Roddy stared at him. "Huh? Good luck? Oh, you mean with selling this invention? Sure thing, Dad. We'll make a pot of money, all of us."

"No, Roddy," said Fenton. "That's not precisely what I mean. I mean *that* world is ready for you; this is not. We all love you dearly. We recognize your brilliance and applaud it. But frankly, Roddy, we're afraid of you. Of what your well-intentioned ruthlessness may bring to us and others of our time. So, good luck, Roddy—and —good-by!"

Roddy's eyes widened; his jaw dropped agape. He cried, "But, Dad! You can't mean to—"

But Fenton could; with calm deliberation, he reached forward and plunged the starting lever.

So, if you have no silly scruples against betting on a sure thing, here's one on which you can lay your bottom buck: there's a rosy future for Roderick.

A couple of hundred years from now, that is. •

Buck Henderson swung around and stared at Scot. It was the first time in their sixteen years' association that Scot had ever talked back.

Third Base Coach

What was it to him? He could say "Okay" and play dumb, and have the job for life. Except, of course, for losing his self-respect.

· By William Heuman

FOR TWENTY-THREE YEARS, as player, coach, manager, and again coach of the Bruins, Scotty MacNeil had put on his baseball cap before he put on his pants. As a player, squatting behind the plate for the Bruins for seventeen long summers, it had brought him good luck, and he'd hit .308 as a lifetime average, which was better than good for a man who worked all afternoon with his knees bent double, and the speed gone out of his legs after the fourth year of it.

As a manager, the act had brought him bad luck. He'd ended up sixth his first year and eighth his second. The Bruin president and owner, big Buck Henderson, had seen to it that there was no third, and Scotty MacNeil had made no strenuous objections to his demotion. Playing big-league baseball was a pleasure; coaching big-league baseball was also a pleasure. Managing a big-league club was headaches and ulcers and sleepless nights, and booing from fans who'd given you nothing but cheers and good will for the seventeen years you were a player.

This afternoon Scotty MacNeil still put on his cap before he put on his pants, even though he didn't particularly need luck, good or bad. A coach's lot was like that; it was anonymity with a capital *A*, and after those two hectic, inglorious years as head man on the club,

Scotty welcomed anonymity the way a marooned man welcomes a sail on the horizon.

The dressing-room was empty as yet, save for the two eager-beaver kids at the far end, chatting excitedly. It was their first year in the big time, and as yet neither one of them had broken into the line-up. Their eagerness brought them down a half hour before the players were due in the dressing-room; Scotty came in a half hour early because Tommy Sanders, the new Bruin manager, liked to have a meeting of his coaches before each game, and before the team took the field.

Scotty put on his spikes and tightened the laces automatically. When he bent down he could feel the creak in his back, and his legs were stiff when he stood up. He was thankful he wouldn't have to squat for nine innings this afternoon. Standing in the third-base coaching box, waving runners on or holding them up, was enough for a man 49 years old.

Tommy Sanders was sitting at a battered oak desk in the office when Scotty came in, his spikes scraping a little on the wood floor. Young Sanders was in uniform—dark-haired, brown-eyed, 26, and the youngest manager in the circuit. He also was the finest second-sacker.

Paul Bedford, Tommy's other assistant, a placid, gray-faced man who'd once played the outfield for the Bruins, sat on the other side of the room, smoking a cigarette. He was ten years Scotty's senior and the Bruins' first-base coach. Paul was the typical coach; he could stand at first base and wave a thousand guys down to second on prospective doubles, and nobody noticed him. When one of the thousand was thrown out, everybody wanted to know who that goon was in the first-base coaching box, and why in hell had he let a flat-footed runner try to stretch a cheap single into a double?

Tommy Sanders greeted Scotty with a question. A pencil poised in his hand as he made up the starting line-up, Tommy asked:

"What do you think about Lefty this afternoon, Scott?"

Scotty MacNeil took off his cap and ran a hand through his graying hair before answering. Tommy Sanders wanted an opinion on Lefty Malone as a starting hurler this afternoon against the Trojans. With all the right-handed sluggers in the Trojan line-up, Scotty would have preferred Matt Wyckoff, a big right-hander, in this opener against the first-place club.

"—and if you find my wife, then you'll need one of me."

He didn't say this, though; he hesitated, glanced over at Paul Bedford, and then nodded slightly. "Lefty should have it today," he murmured. He sat down then, and reached for the box of cigars the Bruin manager pushed toward him. He said, "Thanks."

He sat there, holding the cigar in the palm of his hand a moment before putting it into his mouth. He watched Tommy Sanders turn his head and say to Paul Bedford, "Paul?"

"Okay with me," Paul nodded.

From the expression upon the coach's face, Scotty MacNeil knew the man hadn't even thought about it. Everything was okay with Paul Bedford; he'd stopped thinking for himself.

Looking at him, Scot MacNeil saw himself in ten years. At least *he* had an occasional thought in his head which was contrary to that of his superiors. Paul Bedford no longer did. Paul accepted things, following the course of least resistance—always agreeable, always amicable, padding himself with that irrefutable "Okay." Paul Bedford had a job, a fairly easy job without responsibilities, a job which paid him well for very light work, and which gave him the winters off. He wanted to keep that job, and if keeping it meant that he had to stop thinking, he would stop thinking. It was better to stop thinking than to stop eating, or stop the monthly installments on that little bungalow he'd bought in central Florida two years ago.

Hunched in the chair, the unlighted cigar in his mouth, Scot wished he'd mentioned Matt Wyckoff, at least to put himself on record that he had a mind of his own. With a shock he realized that for many weeks now he had accepted Tommy Sanders' line-ups without question, which meant that he, like Paul Bedford, was building a protective wall about himself, a wall of affirmatives. He felt the shame of it. As an active player he'd never been a man to stretch doubles into triples, or to attempt picking off runners with two down; he'd been a cautious player as opposed to those who threw caution to the wind; but he hadn't been afraid.

Tommy Sanders had his head bent over the slip of paper as he wrote out the rest of the line-up. His pencil scratching on the paper was the only sound in the little room. Outside, Scot could hear the players coming in, the low hum of their talk, the occasional bang of a locker door.

Sanders looked up, pushed the sheet of paper away, and asserted: "We have to start this series off with a bang."

Scot MacNeil took the cigar out of his mouth before he realized that he

was about to say "Okay." He didn't say it. Paul Bedford said it from the other side of the room. Scot sat eyeing the youthful manager thoughtfully. He was not envious of Tommy Sanders, even though four years before he'd been the Bruin manager, and young Tommy his rookie second-sacker. He didn't envy any manager; nor did Paul Bedford, who'd seen Buck Henderson fire four managers during the dozen years he'd been serving as Bruin coach.

"We have a good chance to get into the first division," Sanders was saying, "if we can knock over the Trojans three out of four."

"We'll get 'em," Paul Bedford said.

Scot didn't say anything. He found he was beginning to hate the word "Okay."

Sanders told them the signals which would be in use for this afternoon's game; then the brief meeting was over. As they were going out through the door, Scot MacNeil put a hand on Tommy Sanders' shoulder, detaining him while Paul Bedford went on.

Smiling, Sanders asked, "What's up, Scot?"

They stood just outside the door to the dressing-room, and Scot said quietly, "If Henderson tears in here today, kid, let him rave. You know how he is."

Tommy Sanders didn't say anything for a moment; then he nodded. "Thanks, Scot," he murmured. "I know what you mean."

"He's a big mouth," Scot went on. "Everybody knows that. He blows off and then he forgets about it. Let him talk; words don't hurt anybody."

"I know." Sanders nodded again.

"He'll fire a guy today," Scot said, "and then tomorrow wish he hadn't. You know what I mean?"

He was telling Sanders to be careful. There had already been a few brief spats between the Bruin owner and the Bruin manager. Every once in a while Buck Henderson felt that he had to run the Bruin ball club personally, and not from the head office.

TIME and again, when Scot had been manager, Buck Henderson had stormed into the dressing-room after a game, berating every one in sight. He was not an astute student of the game, and he was not close enough to the players to know whether they were giving their best or not, but that had never prevented him from exploding verbally whenever he thought the Bruins dropped a game they should have won.

Privately, Scot always had been of the opinion that if Buck Henderson had kept out of the Bruin dressing-room, his teams would have made a much better showing. It was not good for the morale of a ball club to have the president publicly castigate a player for an error or failure to come through at a critical time.

Tommy Sanders said, "I wish he'd keep out of here, Scot. He has never helped things."

"You can't rule the president of a club out," Scot told him, "if—" He meant to finish it with the statement, *If you wish to keep your job.* Instead, he said, "If you want to keep peace with the front office."

"If keeping peace with the front office," Sanders growled, "means I've got to bow and scrape every time that bullhead comes in, then I'll welcome a little war."

SCOT MACNEIL didn't say anything to that. He could have said that you didn't have very much of a war with Buck Henderson. When you blew up, you were through; you were out, and your fat pay-check stopped after your contract ran out. You were nobody, casting hopeful eyes about for another job in a profession where there were always two dozen men around to fill one position.

The dressing-room was filled when they finally came out, and Scot paused, looking around as Tommy Sanders went over to talk to Lefty Malone. For twenty-three years he'd spent his summer afternoons in this place, and it had paid him off. He had his house in the suburbs. Like Paul Bedford, he and Martha had planned to pick up a little bungalow in Florida for the winter months before spring training began.

He wasn't in the clear, though, not by a long shot. Putting two boys through college had taken a lot of it, and the cost of living, and the terrific taxes had taken the rest. Being in the clear meant working for Buck Henderson, holding down his job the way Paul Bedford did, "okaying" everybody in sight, so that when an explosion came they remembered that you were a nice guy and that you were easy to get along with.

Scot was heading toward his locker when he saw the bulk of big Buck Henderson filling the doorway. The Bruin owner had football shoulders and the beginnings of a paunch; he was a red-faced, flat-nosed, bulldog of a man with thin brown hair and tough, pale blue eyes.

"Scotty!" Buck Henderson bawled.

Scot pulled up and waited. He felt suddenly small when Buck Henderson bore down on him. He hadn't been small and timid as a backstopper for the Bruins, as many a runner had discovered when they tried to bounce him while he was guarding the rubber; but this big, paunchy man always made him feel that small. Physically, he wasn't afraid of Buck Henderson. It was something else about the big man—maybe the fact that he controlled the pursestrings, that he decided whether they had that Florida bungalow, or the kind of clothes Martha MacNeil wore, or if Scot MacNeil had to start looking for a new profession at an age when a man was considered over the hill.

Buck Henderson growled, "Who starts today, Scotty?"

"Lefty Malone," Scott said.

Buck Henderson glared at him. He always asked questions as if the man who was to answer them was trying to evade the issue.

"Malone?" Henderson sniffed, and Scot could see that he didn't particularly care for the choice. He didn't care too much for the choice, himself, but he was baseball man enough to know that in major-league baseball selecting your starting hurlers was like shuffling a deck of cards. You took a chance after considering all the angles; the guy's effectiveness against the club previously, his mental attitude when facing that particular club, his present physical condition. You put them all together, and then you made your decision, and as often as not you were wrong. Any major-league hurler was liable to go good against any major-league club at any given time, and *vice versa.*

Scot said slowly, "Lefty's won his last two, Mr. Henderson."

HE wasn't trying to refute Buck Henderson. He was a subordinate giving the facts and figures to his superior.

"Trojans batted him out the last time they were here, didn't they?" Henderson demanded.

"That's right," Scot nodded.

He was ashamed of himself for agreeing so hastily with Henderson when only a few minutes before he'd agreed with Tommy Sanders that Malone would be a good choice for the opener.

"We want to take this first one," Henderson growled, as if Scot were maintaining that it wasn't particularly necessary.

"That's right," Scot said. He stood there, rubbing his hands on the sides of his pants—that small-boy feeling coming over him again, and hating himself for it.

Henderson mumbled something and went past him to speak to Tommy Sanders. Scot went on to his locker, lips tight. Paul Bedford paused by the locker before going out on the field. The gray-faced man said softly:

"Boss sounding off again, Scot?"

"You know him," Scot growled.

"I know him," Bedford nodded.

Scotty MacNeil looked at the man closely to see if there was any shame

Illustration by RAY QUIGLEY

in his eyes. There was none, and he knew, then, that some day he too would be like this. He would have no conscience in the matter, no feeling about it at all.

He wondered how Bedford had so insulated himself. Maybe he also had kept thinking about his wife and his children. He had a couple of girls, Scot remembered, both married now, and he was a grandfather. Maybe he'd kept thinking about them as he "okayed" Buck Henderson and everybody else in authority.

Scot said suddenly, "What do you think about Lefty Malone today, Paul?"

The senior coach looked at him. "Okay," he said.

Scot closed the door of his locker. "Not to me," he said softly; "you don't have to do it to me, Paul."

He went out on the field and for a while stood in the pitcher's box, retrieving batting-practice balls thrown in from the field, tossing them to the batting-practice pitcher. From the field he saw Tommy Sanders and Buck Henderson in the dugout. Henderson was waving his arms as he spoke. Tommy Sanders' face was white, but he was apparently giving as much as he was taking.

Hardened baseball writers up in the press cage were grinning down at them because this was not an unusual sight. Buck Henderson fought tooth and nail with all his managers; that is, of course, with those who fought back.

Watching them, Scot had the feeling that it was the beginning of the end for young Tommy Sanders. Tommy had a one-year contract to handle the Bruins.

WHEN Henderson finally left the dugout and went to his private box, Scot went in for a drink at the water-cooler. Tommy Sanders was sitting on the edge of the bench, leaning forward, hands clasped, his brown eyes still emitting sparks.

Scot said, "He crabbing about Malone starting this game?"

The manager nodded. "I told him *he* should get a glove and go out there."

Scot's eyes widened a little. He was remembering that Tommy Sanders was a married man now with twins, and that a job meant a lot to him, too.

"He'll send you to Siberia," Scot muttered. "The last-place Buffalos."

"Let him!" Tommy scowled. "But that big fourflusher will never make me back down!"

"You might never get another chance to run a big-league club," Scot told him, "if Henderson fires you. You won't get the money with the Buffalos that you get here."

"Okay," Tommy Sanders said grimly, "but at least I'll be able to sleep nights."

Scot stepped over to the water-cooler and took a drink; then he watched Paul Bedford warming up a young pitcher on the sidelines. He wondered if Paul slept nights. He didn't sleep too well, himself.

He watched Tommy Sanders go out to the batter's cage, stand there a few moments, and then take his hits, slashing several balls savagely to the outfield.

He's young, Scot thought. *They can't kick him out of baseball. Henderson can trade him, but he'll still make a good living. He's young. He can do it.*

It went deeper than that, though, Scot MacNeil knew. It wasn't youth or old age. Paul Bedford had probably been the same kind of a guy when he was 10 that he was now, but Tommy Sanders wouldn't crawl if he was 80 and Buck Henderson was the only man who could provide him with his daily bread. It went deeper than youth; it went right down to the inner man.

SCOT MACNEIL sat on the bench when the Bruins took the field with Lefty Malone on the mound. He plodded out to the third-base coaching box when the Bruins came in, and he stood there, hands on hips, facing down toward home plate.

Buck Henderson sat in the box behind him, a cigar in his mouth, a grim smile on his wide face. Lefty Malone had gotten by the first inning, which could or could not mean anything. Lefty was a guy who had trouble with his control. When he had it he was very, very good; when he didn't he was very, very bad. You couldn't tell yet. Little things upset Lefty. Scot had seen him pitching shut-out ball, and then blow sky-high because an infielder had made an error on him with the bases empty and two away. Left-handers were sometimes like that.

The Bruins picked up a run in the first inning, and another in the second, giving them a 2 to 0 lead. Tommy Sanders himself accounted for the second run with a hard two-bagger to the left-field wall.

Malone moved along easily, and Scot started to relax at third base. If Lefty came through with a nice win today against the league leaders it would put Buck Henderson in a good mood. He would come into the dressing-room grinning, slapping everyone on the back, and the altercation with Tommy Sanders would be forgotten —until another time.

Paul Bedford sat down next to Scot when the Bruins took the field for the start of the fifth.

"Everything very nice," Paul murmured. "Everything peaceful."

"That the way you like it?" Scot asked him.

"You said it!" Paul grinned.

They picked up another run in the fifth, and up until that time Lefty Malone had allowed two hits and passed one man.

"He's got it," Scot said to Tommy Sanders. "You picked it right today, kid."

"Game's not over," Tommy murmured.

THE Trojans put two men on in the sixth, but Lefty Malone got out of it with a neat double-play which Tommy Sanders started. Lefty's control was still good.

The trouble started in the eighth, with one away, and it was a bad call by Umpire Johnny O'Dowd which did it. Malone was facing the little Trojan outfielder, Sam Winston. Sam was a waiter; he had a habit of fouling off pitches he didn't like and eventually drawing a pass.

He fouled off four in a row on Malone with the count three and two, but Lefty stuck with him, putting a nice curve ball on the inside corner. O'Dowd called it another ball, and Lefty stormed in, pounding his glove.

"He put it in there," Paul Bedford said worriedly. "Johnny missed that one, Scot."

Tommy Sanders had raced in after Malone to bring him back to the mound, but the damage had been done. Lefty grooved the first pitch for the next Trojan batter, and there was a single to center. He walked the following man on four straight pitches, and it was not an intentional pass.

"This is it," Bedford muttered.

Time was called and Tommy Sanders and the Bruin infield gathered in the box. Scot got up and stood on the top step of the dugout watching. The bases were loaded with one away and the score 3 to 0 for the Bruins. Ordinarily, there would have been no question about the pitcher's staying in after the kind of ball Lefty had been hurling all the way, but Malone was not an ordinary pitcher. When he cracked, he cracked wide open.

Paul Bedford said at Scot's elbow, "Boss wants Lefty out of there."

Scot glanced toward the president's box. Buck Henderson was standing up, pointing with his finger toward the bull pen. The right-hander, Mike Sorrel, was warming up in the pen. Mike was a fair relief man; not a great one, but fair.

Scot noticed that Sanders was half-facing Henderson's box, and there was little doubt in his mind that Tommy saw the president's gesture, but he paid no attention to it.

"Stringing along with Lefty," Paul Bedford murmured; "and he'd better come through for Tommy's sake."

Tommy Sanders patted Lefty Malone's back, then turned and trotted to his position. The other infielders returned to their position, and Lefty kicked up the dirt around the pitcher's mound.

Scot MacNeil saw Henderson sitting down slowly, glaring at Tommy Sanders, his face red, jaw thrust out. Then Scot went down the steps to his seat. He sat there, looking across the field at Tommy Sanders. The boy manager was patting his glove, kicking an imaginary pebble out of the way.

"I'll say this much," Paul Bedford observed. "He has nerve."

"It's more than that," Scot growled. "I have nerve, too. This is different."

Lefty Malone prepared to pitch with the right-handed batsman, Walt Carrigan, at the plate. Lefty's hook didn't break, and Carrigan caught it squarely on the nose, the ball bouncing off the left-centerfield wall. Three runners came in to tie the score and Carrigan reached second.

Tommy Sanders held up his hands and walked to the pitcher's box. Scot sat there, watching him.

"Hate to be in his shoes," Paul Bedford said, "when Buck Henderson comes into the dressing-room after *this* game!"

Scot stared out across the field, and he was thinking, *This kid would hate to be in your shoes, too, Mister.*

Mike Sorrel came into the game and put out the fire. In the ninth inning the Trojans pushed over another run on Mike and walked off with the ball game by a 4 to 3 score.

Scot MacNeil got up and ducked through the dugout door. He walked slowly back to the dressing-room, his spikes scraping on the concrete walk underneath the grandstand. Above him he could hear the noise as the crowd moved out.

He was the first one into the dressing-room, but the club trainer, Doc Morrison, was in his little massage-room. The Doc poked his head out.

"A tough one to lose, Scot."

He'd heard it on the radio in the room. Scot nodded. "They're all tough when you lose them," he agreed.

He sat in front of his locker, holding his cap in his hand, and he was still sitting there when the players came in, with not much talk this afternoon.

Lefty Malone stood in front of his locker, cursing Johnny O'Dowd, but no one paid any particular attention to him. Tommy Sanders came in, slapping his glove into the palm of his hand. He went straight to the office, pushed open the door and closed it behind him.

SIX FINGER VILLAGE

By IB MELCHIOR

IN THE LITTLE SPANISH VILLAGE of Cervera de Buitrago, hidden away in the mountains five hundred miles from Madrid, a man who possesses only five fingers on each hand is considered a freak!

Almost every one of the over three hundred inhabitants of the village has at least six fingers on one or both hands, and often seven or even nine. One married couple has twenty-eight fingers between them. Doctors from the world over who have studied the strange phenomenon discovered that centuries ago this settlement in the mountains was begun by a couple with six fingers each, and since then nobody with less than this number was allowed to settle in the village. Intermarriage has made the many-fingered strain permanent.

Cervera de Buitrago is proud of its unique claim to fame, and today one official prerequisite for any man running for mayor, judge, or other public office in the town is to possess at least six fingers on each hand.

Scot had been watching the dressing-room door. He saw Buck Henderson charge in, tie askew, face redder than usual. The players watched him barge past the lockers and push in through the office doorway. Across the aisle from Scot, Paul Bedford shook his head sadly.

Scot could hear Henderson's heavy rasping voice, and then Tommy Sanders' higher-pitched one, tense with anger. He sat there for a few moments; then he tossed the cap into the locker and got up. He walked over to the office door, Paul Bedford watching him, pop-eyed. He went in.

Both men were standing—Tommy Sanders was still in uniform, his face sweaty and flushed with anger. Buck Henderson had his back to the door and had not seen Scot come in. He was saying bitterly:

"What the hell kind of baseball is that?"

Scot MacNeil said behind him, "If Lefty had gotten past that guy, what would you have said?"

Buck Henderson spun around. He stared at Scot uncomprehendingly. It was the first time in their sixteen years' association that Scot had ever questioned him, and the shock of it made Henderson speechless for a moment. Then the big jaw came out; he took a step forward, shaking a finger at Scot.

"You keep out of this, MacNeil!" he roared.

Scot looked at him contemptuously.

He saw the Florida bungalow vanishing; he saw his steady income lopped off and suddenly; all the comforts of middle and old age disappeared. But he said quietly, steadily:

"I'm already in this, you big windbag! That boy is your manager; *you* picked him. Why don't you stand behind his decisions?"

Tommy Sanders was staring at Scot, his mouth open too. Scot took a step forward himself now, and pointed a finger at Henderson's face.

"If you'd kept out of my office when I was manager, you bullhead," he snapped, "I'd have done better, too. Now you're trying to ruin this boy."

Buck Henderson opened his mouth, closed it, and mumbled, "You're crazy, MacNeil!" It was the best retort he could think of, at the moment.

"I've *been* crazy all these years," Scot snarled, "working for a windbag like you. Now you can get yourself another doormat."

He walked out of the room then, feeling like a million dollars. Even when he'd been made manager of the Bruins he hadn't felt like this. He was a man again, his own man.

He went back to his locker and sat down. He didn't hear any talking in the office. He was humming a tune when Paul Bedford came over hesitantly. Bedford said slowly, "Sounded as if you had a run-in with the boss, Scot."

"I told him off," Scot said, "and then I quit."

"You *quit?*" Bedford asked weakly.

"You should know how it feels, Paul," Scot grinned. "You ever quit anything of your own accord?"

"You're crazy, Scot," the first-base coach muttered. "A good job like this!" He went over to his locker and sat down; then he picked up his cap and started to turn it around and around in his hands.

SCOT was putting on his shoes when he heard Tommy Sanders' office door open and close. He thought Henderson was going out, but didn't turn around to look. Then he heard Buck Henderson speaking—but this didn't sound like Buck's voice; the Bruin owner was saying querulously:

"What do you have to get so sore about, Scot? Everybody blows off!"

He looked up at Henderson then, trying to keep the surprise out of his eyes. Henderson was frowning, a puzzled expression on his face as if he did not quite understand what had happened. He'd been told off by a man who had always agreed with him, before this, and the shock of it was still in his eyes. Other men had opposed Buck Henderson; but this was different—this opposition had come from a source where opposition was not supposed to be. It was like a lion out after bolder prey being suddenly set upon by a jackal. The jackal couldn't do him any harm, but it made him think.

Scot MacNeil could read this in the Bruin owner's face. Henderson had been bearded in his den, and he now had a new respect, not only for Scot MacNeil, but for *all* lesser men because one had defied him.

"Let's forget the whole damned business," Henderson growled.

Scot looked at him, and for one moment the temptation was strong to smile and apologize and okay the big man to death. Instead, he said, "We'll all get along a lot better, Mr. Henderson, if we keep out of each other's hair."

"What I was telling Sanders," Henderson grinned. "We made a deal in there: I keep out of his dressing-room if he keeps out of the front office."

Scot nodded. He managed to hide the smile in his eyes. It made Buck Henderson feel good to be able to say that. It was a compromise and not a defeat for him. Scot almost felt a little sorry for Henderson, understanding the man better now—for Tommy Sanders rarely went near the front office.

"Just didn't want you to feel sore about things," Henderson finished. "You know how it is, Scot."

"Sure," Scot MacNeil murmured. He didn't say "Okay." He didn't think he'd ever say "Okay" again. •

SPORT TIME

When Joe Kuhel, the Washington Senators' manager, once took a punch at a baseball writer and was fined $100 he received $50 from a fan the next day with a note saying, "I'd have sent along the other $50 if you hadn't missed."

* * *

The "eyes" had it one day last season on the turf. On the same day "On the Eye" won at Keeneland, "Eye for Eye" won at Tropical, "Eagle Eye" finished first at Jamaica and "Cateyes" was barely nosed out at Havre de Grace.

* * *

Bullfights are now being televised in Spain.

* * *

In 1896 Bernie Wefers was clocked in 9 2/5 seconds for the 100-yard dash, but A.A.U. officials wouldn't let the record stand because they just couldn't believe it was possible.

Ray Chapman, Cleveland infield star of 1920, once refused to bat against the fast ball of Walter Johnson, Washington pitcher, on a dark day, fearing a beaning. A few days later, facing a Yankee pitcher, Carl Mays, on a bright sunny day, he was struck by a ball and killed.

* * *

James L. Bottomley, former St. Louis Cards first baseman, holds the record for runs batted in in a single game—12.

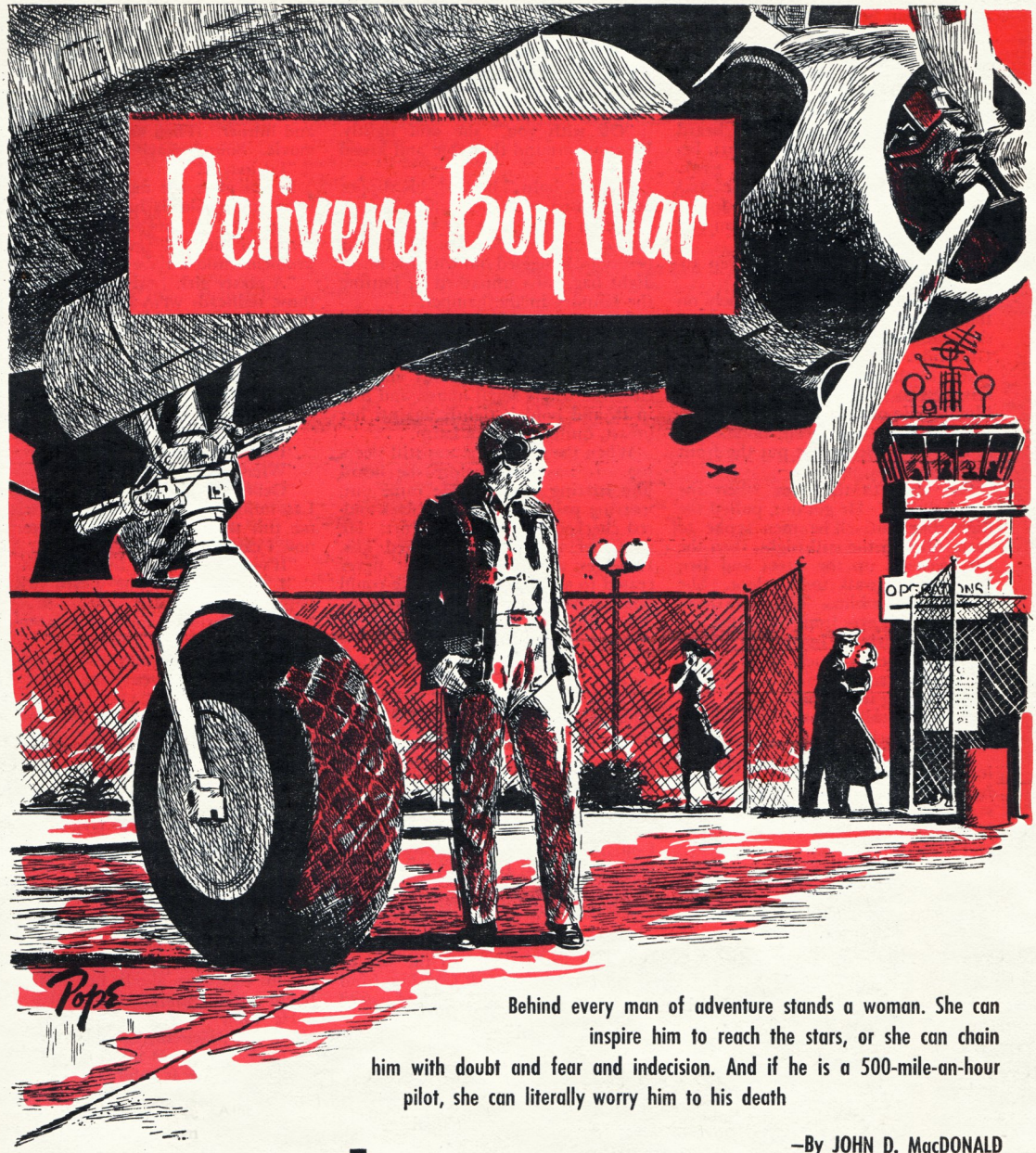
* * *

Walter Johnson, Washington's "Big Train," once shut the Yankees out three times within four days and his record of pitching fifty-six scoreless innings in a row is unequaled.

* * *

The highest batting average of all time was achieved in the era of the dead ball, by Hugh Duffy, of the Boston Nationals, in 1894. He wound up with a fabulous .438.

Delivery Boy War



Behind every man of adventure stands a woman. She can inspire him to reach the stars, or she can chain him with doubt and fear and indecision. And if he is a 500-mile-an-hour pilot, she can literally worry him to his death

—By JOHN D. MacDONALD

FOR A WEEK, THIS TIME, she was alone in a burned world. The landscape was as unreal as this life she was leading. "Home" meant the sane green hills of central New York State. Here, on the California desert, there was a harshness alien to her.

The little house assigned to them was on the station street known as Brass Row: for majors through full colonels. The whistling roar of the jets was merged in her mind with the arid wind that scoured baked rocks. There was no getting away from the sound. Though the PX stocked everything she needed, she would drive into San Berdoo, telling herself that the long trip was necessary for some special item which she never seemed quite able to find. And, even there, she would hear that jet-sound. It was a sound you didn't hear with the ears alone. . . .

A full week, this time. . . . At dusk she went out behind the house. This was the part of the day she liked. The air was spiced at dusk, not smelling of hot stones. It cooled off quickly, and she put on the yellow cashmere sweater she had taken out with her. Just as she lit a cigarette, she heard the phone. It stopped her heart, because this time it was a full week. She threw the cigarette aside and walked in, trying not to run, for to run was the sort of confession you had to avoid making.

"Mrs. Helfer? ETA is eleven tonight. Full roster."

Her fingers curled more loosely on the phone. "Thanks a lot, Timmy," she said, making her tone just right: Grateful, but not too grateful; relaxed, with just that faint edge of crispness to be expected from the tall blonde wife of Colonel Helfer. . . .

Everything had been done, and at quarter of eleven she put the front lights on.

She went to the door when she heard the car. He got out, pulled the flight bag out. The men spoke to each other in the still night, then the car went on up the street and Ben came up the walk to the door. She opened it for him. The cap's peak shadowed his eyes from the lights, yet she saw weariness in the set of his shoulders, the gauntness of his cheeks.

"Get the word?" he said, dropping the flight bag in the hall.

"Timmy called me about seven, darling."

He kissed her—then, folding her in long arms, stood quite still, holding her for long seconds. "*Mmm*," he said. Stubble scratched her cheek. He smelled of leather and engine oil and high cold places.

"Good trip, darling?"

"Standard issue. Nothing to report, sir."

"Hungry?"

"I think so, if I can stay awake long enough."

"Go take your shower."

As she worked in the kitchen she heard the muted roar of the shower.

You have been married to this man for sixteen years. You know him. You know where he is flawed, the tongue that can be too sharp, the fits of moodiness, that streak of jealousy that annoys even as it flatters. Yet he is good, and decent, and incredibly precious to you. He knows you the same way, knows of your occasional bullheadedness, knows you can't save money to save your soul, knows that in spite of your perfect faithfulness to him, you are, withal, a bit of a flirt. Together you are marriage, and good marriage. After sixteen years, physical love between you can still be a craziness. Benjy, now fifteen, is like him, with those very level gray eyes, and that look of measuring.

When he had finished all but the coffee, his head sagged, and he gave a start as he lifted it. He gave her a rueful grin.

"Off with you," she said lightly. He came around the table and kissed her.

"'Night, baby," he said; his slipper heels scuffed as he went off to bed.

She sat at the table for a long time, then cleaned up. She tiptoed into the bedroom, struggled out with the heavy flight bag. She unpacked it, putting the laundry in the hamper.

After she got into bed, she lay and listened to his deep slow breathing beside her. She felt as though she could stretch out her arms and enclose the whole small house, and him in it, and hold it tightly against her breast, quite safe from harm. . . .

When she got up, he was still sleeping. It was noon before she heard him stirring around. He came out, wearing pale-gray slacks, a black-and-red checked cotton flannel shirt. He gave her a toothpaste-flavored kiss. His eyes were bright and it never ceased to amaze her the way he could bounce back from utter exhaustion. That lean tall body had incredible reserves of strength.

"Liz, I guess I was a zombie last night."

"No, dear. You scintillated. You said *'ugh'* and *'huh'* and *'umm'*—and then you collapsed."

She served the brunch. He drank the tall glass of juice. "I guess I told you it was a standard trip. The MIG's had a fat happy week, so they needed the merchandise. Remember Conlahan? Little round-headed guy—we knew him at Drew."

"I think so."

"Damn fool was flying combat at his age. Don't know how he worked it. Came back last week with a piece of rocket in his leg, half the size of a teacup. Pressure suit kept him from bleeding to death. Landed and passed out."

"Ben, is there going to be any change?"

He gave her a quick, wary look. "Not that I know of. This jumping-bean ferry arrangement is still the quickest way of getting them where they're needed. But it's going to get easier, Liz. The next ones through will have the bigger auxiliary tanks."

"So that they can make longer jumps," she said bitterly.

"Easy, gal. I'm just a commissioned delivery boy. I just take the lieutenants across like a flock of chickens, and bring them back in a transport. I'm no Conlahan."

Illustration by MILLER POPE

"You better not be."

"What'll we do today, honey?"

"What do you feel like doing, Ben?"

"No party—just us. And if we stay here, you know what will happen: I'd like to drive around some, end up at the Mission Inn, maybe, for drinks and dinner. Then catch an outdoor movie. Sound okay?"

"I'd love it!"

It was after the movie, when they were driving slowly back to the small house, that she ran out of other conversation and told him about the new problem child on the station.

"A pretty girl, really, Ben. One of those redheads who doesn't have the usual redhead's complexion. She's turning into a bottle baby, but fast. Moira took her home from the club again yesterday and now she says it's somebody else's turn."

"What's her name?"

"Jackie Genelli."

"I see," he said.

"What do you see, dear?"

"Genelli is Rogan's replacement. Last-minute change. He came with me this trip. Nice kid, but jittery; now I can see why."

"It's—too bad."

"I guess maybe she heard what happened to Rogan."

"And Carlson and Kowalt and Shimm," Liz said in a low tone.

"Just married, maybe. I don't think Genelli's twenty-one yet. It makes it tough."

"Because you happen to be newlyweds? It that supposed to make it tougher?"

He slowed the car. "Hey!" he said softly. "That doesn't sound like you."

"Oh, doesn't it? Sorry, I guess I forgot that I'm Lady Icewater. I meet everything with a careful little smile, and I spent all week long doing my nails."

Ben pulled over onto the shoulder, turned off the lights and motor, shoved the dash-lighter in and took out his cigarettes. She lit her own and handed him the lighter.

He said, "See what you can do about Mrs. Genelli, Liz."

"Ben! I can't set myself up as a—"

"You've done it before, Liz."

"Darling, listen to me. I'm all right. I'm not going to start fraying at the edges. But my missionary work is over. I just haven't got any—any strength to spare. I need it all for myself, every bit of it. We pretend it isn't so, but both of us know that ferry casualties are running higher than combat. Jackie Genelli knows that too. She's going to have to find her own resources. She can't borrow mine; because if she does—I might not get them back."

"You won't try?"

"No, darling," she said firmly.

After a little while, without another word, he started the car up again. She told herself it didn't make any difference. She told herself that the faint restraint in his manner was all imagination.

THREE days later the next batch of merchandise was ready. They lighted up and slammed off into a sky of incredible blue.

The first day was never as bad as the ones that followed, somehow. There was no sense to it, actually. It just never seemed as bad. Liz spent an aimless day, and part of another, and then she did as she had known in her heart that she was going to have to do: she called on Jackie Genelli.

It was mid-afternoon. Jackie took so long coming to the door of her small house that Liz had begun to hope that she wasn't in. Then Jackie opened the door and stood there, very young, very pretty. She wore no makeup, her red hair was tangled, her denim playsuit spotted across the halter.

"I'm Mrs. Helfer. Liz Helfer."

"I know," the girl said. She stood, unmoving, in the doorway.

"Could I come in, Jackie?"

"If you want." The tone of voice gave no quarter.

Liz followed her into the small cluttered living-room. Jackie pushed magazines off a chair. "You can sit there." She crossed the room and sat on the couch, legs pulled up under her, her eyes watchful.

"I understand you're from New Orleans, Jackie."

"Don't start so far away. It will take longer to get to the point."

"Why are you being rude?"

"I'm not—I'm just being surly. I'm a surly type. Now just give me a delicate little hint about the proprieties, Mrs. Colonel Helfer, and I'll promise to be a good girl."

Liz made up her mind in a fractional part of a second, then tipped her head back and laughed, hoping she was doing a good job of it.

Jackie watched her, unsmiling, sullen. "What's funny?"

"I'm a committee of one, Jackie. You guessed that right. But I don't care what you do. I really don't."

"And, Mrs. Colonel Helfer, I don't think I care what you say. I hate it here; I hate the whole bloody awful business. They're making Gidge fly too much and too often. Oh, it's all right for you and the rest of the biddies around here. You're used to it; you don't turn a hair. You're not human. I don't think you've got any imagination left." Jackie slipped off the couch, went to the window and stood with her back to Liz, breathing hard. She had a very nice figure, Liz decided.

"Did you have a nice three days with Gidge?" she asked.

"Oh, just dandy! . . . I can't take it. I told him I can't."

"Was he a flyer when you met him?"

"Yes, but I didn't know it would be this way. God, to think of the picture I had of myself! Waving him off with a tear in my eye! I never got any further than waving him off. I didn't think of day after day and night after night when you don't hear a thing except the sirens on those crash wagons. I—I just haven't got the guts for it."

"Is Gidge going to ask to be grounded?"

JACKIE'S response was a derisive snort. "Him?"

"Turn around, dear. I want to talk to you."

"Tell me to keep a stiff upper lip? Tell me to be brave? Pat me on the head a little?"

"No."

"I love the guy. Maybe you've forgotten what that's like."

"I hardly think so. But Lieutenant Gidge Genelli is going to keep on flying in my husband's group. That's where I come in. That's what is important to me, Jackie. Ben and I, we're a pair of antiques; I sweated out the last war while Ben did over a hundred missions out of England."

"And so this is nothing compared to that?"

"This is quite a thing, Jackie. Quite dangerous. Very unpleasant. But at least Ben is with me."

"That's worse. Every time Gidge comes back I can't be right with him because of thinking of the next time."

"Never mind that for a moment, Jackie. In 1943 Ben was a captain, flying a fighter plane. His wing man was Whitey Jensen. Whitey started getting the wrong sort of letters from his wife: whining letters—letters saying she couldn't take it. Even one that said she might kill herself—that is, if he didn't get out of the air. It may have seemed odd to Whitey that Laura couldn't take it, while he was forcing himself to button up his ship for every mission. Whitey got very jittery. He lost the edge of his flying. And one morning, taking off, Whitey wallowed over and jabbed his wingtip into Ben's tail-section. Ben kept his head and managed to get altitude. He had no rudder, but with the ailerons, tabs and elevators he could make a very gradual turn. By the time he brought his ship in, they had what was left of Whitey and his ship off the runway."

"Why are you telling me a ghastly thing like that? Do you think that just because I—"

"I'm telling you, Jackie, because your husband flies with my husband. If Gidge worries so much about you that he uses bad judgment in the air, it may affect, to some slight degree, Ben's safety. And I want Ben to have every possible margin of safety. I want so badly for him to have it, that when he comes home, I try to make it just as though he'd come home from an office. I didn't do so well this last time. So I have to do better next time. He has too much on his mind to spare any room for my—my petulance."

Jackie looked down at her linked fingers, white-knotted. "I wouldn't want to make Gidge . . . fly badly."

"Did he leave here at peace with himself and with you?"

"No, but I want him to stop."

"And if he shouldn't come back, Jackie? If he makes one of those five-hundred-mile-an-hour errors of judgment?"

"Don't say a thing like that!"

"You don't have to shout at me, Jackie. I don't care if you spend all your time while Gidge is gone rolling up and down the street, or getting your stomach pumped. But I don't want you putting a man in the air who could endanger Ben. Just as I won't send Ben away in a frame of mind that might endanger your husband."

Liz walked out unhurriedly. She shut the front door quietly behind her and walked down the station street by the neat small houses. It was as though she had visited her own past, had visited the Liz of 1942. She felt incurably tired, as though emotional exhaustion were a disease she could never escape.

ON the fifth day, at ten in the morning, the black phone said, "Mrs. Helfer? ETA is thirteen-thirty hours. Full roster."

"Thanks a lot, Timmy," she said.

She stood by the phone a moment, then looked in the mimeographed station book and found Jackie Genelli's number.

"Jackie? Liz Helfer. Just got the word: They're all back at one-thirty this afternoon."

There was a little time of silence on the line; then Jackie said, her voice light, quick, controlled, "Thanks a lot, Liz."

There was no need to hear any more. Liz hung up, stood with her eyes shut, her fingertips on the edge of the phone table for long moments. Jackie would make it. Most of them could. A pathetic few couldn't.

Suddenly there seemed to be a million last-minute things to do. She whistled, out of key, as she worked. For her man there would be a little time of ease, of rest, of love. It was all she could do—a small thing, but desperately difficult. •

Illustrated by HANK BERGER

The bootleggers are back in greater numbers than ever, and once more "the revenooers" are smoking out illicit stills. But none can top Izzy & Moe, the boys who pinched a joint with those doleful words:

• By GEORGE SCULLIN

"Dere's Sad News Here."

SOMETHING STRONGER THAN BRANCH water is trickling out of the hills these days. Bottled lightning in carload lots is rolling down the backwoods trails, and the old feud between moonshiner and "revenooer" is booming as it hasn't done since the repeal of the Liquor Prohibition Amendment in 1933. It's no small-time feud, and no joke either, these days. The stills are bigger, the 'shiners are tougher, the stakes are higher, and the revenooers are young, scientifically-trained men who don't kid around.

The reason for it all is the liquor tax, recently boosted to a new high. The moonshiners and their bootlegger agents figure they can put out their own brand of bottled goods, complete with fusel oil, take out a fat profit, and still undersell the Federally-taxed product of the legal distilleries. In four months last year, the young men of the Alcohol Tax Unit made 3,245 raids, all ending in seizures, which will give you some idea of the how the business has grown. What increases the seriousness of the

situation is that the average capacity of the stills seized was *more than 10 percent greater than in the good old days.*

Now that the tax has gone even higher than in 1951, there are bound to be a lot more stills in the hills. More stills means more unskilled operators, more unclean equipment, unscientific methods, rotten mash, and poison in the panther juice. It will mean more jake-leg, blindness, alcoholic poisoning and the other pleasantries of the Prohibition days. And where it hits us legal drinkers is that there will be less taxes in the treasury, which means we will have to pay more to make up for the chiselers.

That we don't like, so we are wishing more power to the young, scientifically-trained men of the Alcohol Tax Unit. We are going to do better than that; we are going to give them a tip. We are going to tell them about a couple of guys named Izzy and Moe.

Now Izzy and Moe weren't long on modern criminal investigation, and what they knew of science you could put in a speak-easy's false-bottomed shot-glass. Just the same, they were, by their own modest admission, the world's greatest Prohibition agents. Izzy Einstein didn't admit that about Moe, and certainly Moe Smith didn't admit it about Izzy, but since they were partners, the truth must lie somewhere in between.

The young agents of today who have taken the trouble to read up on Izzy and Moe have come away from their findings slightly staggered. Izzy, on a fine morning, used to make as many as thirty raids before breakfast, just to work up an appetite. Not many agents of today can believe that, but disbelief was one of the handicaps that always confronted Izzy and Moe. In their hands the simple truth became preposterous.

For instance, we were reading the other day about some young Alcohol Tax Unit men who busted open a million-dollar-a-year still in Monmouth County, New Jersey. One man worked inside the mob for months, patching roofs, repairing fences, and plugging leaks in the mash barrels. When the arm finally was put on the mob, it was the culmination of a year's work for a half-dozen good men.

It reminded us forcibly of the time Izzy got almost the same assignment back in the early Twenties. There was one great big leak in the Prohibition defenses around New York, and the stuff was really pouring into town in carload lots. Dozens of agents went to work on the case, using every scientific weapon at their command. By a process of elimination, over a period of months, they finally narrowed their search down to the Catskill Mountains of New York, and there they were stumped.

About this time big, fat, amiable Izzy Einstein was riding high in New York City, knocking off blind pigs at a rate that was putting his fellow agents to shame. One morning on his way to work he completed thirty raids before checking in at 9 o'clock, just as a sort of warm-up for the day's work. Other agents felt good if they completed seven raids in a week. They decided it was about time he got his come-uppance: They gave him the Catskill case.

Now Izzy was but strictly a product of Ridge Street, down on the Lower East Side. Before the inspiration hit him that he was a natural-born genius in the sleuthing business, his only experience had been as a dry-goods salesman and as a U. S. postoffice clerk. Such contact as he had had with the hills and meadows and the burbling brooks had come to him of a Sunday afternoon in Bronx Park.

Izzy took a train to Roscoe, New York, where the last lukewarm lead had vanished. It was a sleepy town of less than 500 people, and Izzy knew he would be spotted as a city slicker the minute he arrived.

So he didn't bother to arrive; he just got off the train, went into the depot and got a ticket on the next train back to New York. Puckering up his fat face ruefully, he admitted to the stationmaster that he was the dumbest man in the world: "So dumb yet I come all a way up here to sell cigars—and forget my sample case!"

"That kills your day, then," said the stationmaster. "The next train doesn't come through for five hours."

Izzy went outside to sit on a sunny bench. A few loungers drifted around but he didn't open his eyes. After a bit, the stationmaster came out and sat with him. After another bit they began talking about dumb stunts pulled by other people. Izzy contended philosophically that city people were dumber than country people, and the stationmaster contended that as far as he could see, one was about as bad as t'other. It went on like that for a couple of more hours, neither getting very excited about the subject; but then, it was a nice quiet day, so there really wasn't anything to get excited about.

They talked about the East Side, and Broadway, the price of rot-gut, the high cost of living, and whether hens were more profitable than cows. "Depends on the feed," allowed the stationmaster. "We got one dairyman here, he uses scientific feed he orders special. Got the recipe from the university, he says. Gets a carload a week, and if I do say so, it smells good enough to eat. Like prunes, almost. But it sure must do the business. I see him going into town two, three times a week with a truckload of cream, and he ain't got more than ten cows."

Izzy patted his paunch and agreed that there was a lot to be said for good feed. He was almost half asleep, but he was polite enough to ask the dairyman's name, and otherwise show an interest in his companion's conversation. By the time his train came in, he had all the information he needed.

He was back the next day, this time with his sample case, and was greeted by the stationmaster as an old friend. A couple of hard-eyed men transferring cases from a box-car to a Model-T truck witnessed the greeting and relaxed. They didn't even notice Izzy as he sniffed appreciatively at the cases of dried prunes and raisins in the truck, their original labels concealed beneath cow-feed labels.

It didn't take Izzy long to complete his business calls on the stores of Roscoe—he actually got orders for a couple dozen boxes of cigars which the storekeepers are still waiting for—and then he was off for a walk in the country to kill time. Even to his New York-trained eye, the ten raisin-fed cows he encountered at the farm of his suspect didn't look very productive. He moved downwind from the dairy barn and sniffed delicately. His nostrils were temporarily stunned by the overpowering aroma of sun-ripened cow manure and rancid silage, but he waited patiently. A lift of the breeze, and there it was, a 100-proof sniff of the real stuff.

Less than 48 hours after he was put on the case the leak was plugged, 100 cases of evidence were in a Government warehouse, and ten moonshiners and booze-runners were temporarily out of circulation. . . .

But it was in his beloved New York that Izzy really shone. He looked so obviously the fat, happy, dumb family-man that no one, not even his own boss, Chief Agent James Shevlin of the Southern New York Division of the Federal Prohibition Bureau, could believe that beneath his soup-stained vest beat the daring heart of a *Sherlock Holmes.* What made it even more confusing was that in real life he was exactly what he looked like, an amiable family-man in love with his wife and four children, and as proud of his flat on Ridge Street as any millionaire was proud of his Park Avenue mansion.

What did *not* show on the surface was Izzy's uncanny knowledge of applied psychology and his broad understanding of people no matter where encountered. He liked people so

much that, just to get along with his polyglot neighbors, he mastered Polish, German, Hungarian, Yiddish, Bohemian and Italian without benefit of any serious attempts at formal education.

During his first year as an agent Izzy worked alone and liked it. In fact, he almost didn't work at all. His superiors down at the Customshouse had hired him with reluctance, and only when they were short-handed, because it was the only way to get him out of their hair. He was so insistent that he was a daring sleuth, and they were so convinced that he wasn't, that the only way to settle the stalemate was to turn him loose on a few cases. They firmly hoped that a couple of raids would convince him that such work was best left to professionally-trained men, and just as firmly they hoped he wouldn't get hurt before he learned his lesson.

Izzy started out by teaching *them* lessons. One of the rules of the game was that a joint couldn't be pinched until alcohol had been purchased there, and the alcohol preserved as evidence. It wasn't enough that you had bought a slug there, and came in with the evidence reeking on your breath. It had to be in a bottle.

So Izzy invented a vest-pocket funnel connected by a long rubber tube to a flask on his hip. Then he practised tossing off slugs of booze, the gesture carrying the glass to his mouth while actually flipping the contents into his vest pocket. In this he had the co-operation of the corn juice itself. One jolt of that stuff tossed off free-handed was like batting yourself in the stomach with a mallet. Automatically you doubled up, your arms twisted as though in *rigor mortis*, and it was drinker's choice whether you leaped over the bar or fell on the floor. With this choice of convulsions at his disposal, Izzy quickly found the movements best suited to vest-pocketing his drink, and set out to do business.

He was phenomenal. He hit the 24-hour-a-day joints first. Along about 5 A.M., a miserable creature would be seen crawling out of a doorway after sleeping off a desperately bad night. It would stagger off forlornly, so obviously in need of a bracer that no one could refuse it—if it had money, that is. It *had* money, if it hadn't been rolled. It would search its pockets desperately, then remember the wallet stashed away inside its underwear. Out would come the wallet, tied shut with string. Painfully the string would be unwound, the wallet opened, and a few coins—enough for one jolt—would be reluctantly produced. "Paying with a pang," Izzy called it; and it worked every time: The jolt would be produced; *flip* into the vest pocket. The figure would straighten up as though by magic, and the firm voice of Izzy Einstein would announce, "Dere's sad news here. The joint is pinched."

Then, on to the next joint; a dozen raids in a morning were nothing, with thirty raids being his all-time record.

Then one morning Izzy reported for work and discovered he was to have a partner. He was introduced to Moe Smith, and they were so much alike that, as one newspaperman observed, they were less partners than counterpartners.

Moe was if anything bigger than Izzy, and just as outwardly dumb and happy. Even their backgrounds were identical, with one peculiar exception. At one point in his career Moe had had some success as a featherweight pug.

Then began one of the most fantastic partnerships in the history of crime detection.

They started out with a Ford-car act that was something out of a circus. As their first case they took a joint over in Brooklyn that was known to be a speak' but in which every agent who had tried it had been tossed out bodily. Izzy drove up in the old Model T and all but blew it apart in front of the joint. For an hour he tinkered with it, and then, grease-stained, harassed, and all but in tears, went in to use the phone. A pleading talk on the phone ensued, to no avail. Looking more despairing than ever, Izzy went out and sat on the curb beside his wreck.

Up walked Moe. A lot of talk, a lot of thumping on the car and much looking under the hood. A pulling out of a checkbook and a search for a pen. Then into the joint to borrow

Even though he was strictly a city feller, Izzy took just 48 hours to nab a still in New York's Catskill Mountains that a flock of agents couldn't find after months of sleuthing. He just went downwind from a herd of too-contented cows, and there was sad news for the farmer.

Raiding an exclusive country club was a cinch for Izzy and Moe. You just went in looking terribly rich and eccentric—which last was no trouble for them—and the joint was pinched.

pen and ink. A sale on the spot, and what could be more natural than a drink to celebrate the sale?

After that production, it would have been a heartless bartender who could have refused them, even though they were strangers. Having participated in Izzy's troubles, he felt he knew Izzy well, and the drinks were forthcoming.

Said Izzy, in what was to become a slogan heard thousands of times, "Dere's sad news here." Total time for the pinch on which a dozen other agents had failed: 45 minutes.

They used the Ford-car trick until the mere sight of a Model T pulling up in front of an oasis was enough to panic it into closing for a week.

Next they tackled a rough one up in the Bronx, "tackle" being the exact word in this case. Van Cortlandt Park was a large recreation spot much given over to baseball teams in the summer and football teams in the fall. A goodly sporting crowd followed the various fates of the neighborhood teams, and didn't seem to mind too much if sometimes the athletes were more inspired by inward fires than neighborhood loyalties. The firewater was being locally supplied, but, for some reason, the Federal agents just couldn't seem to pass themselves off as local Bronx sports. Could Izzy and Moe?

They could. One hot October afternoon the two ponderous agents squeezed themselves into football uniforms, and then, like two pachyderms, rolled and bellowed on the green. They didn't fake; by the time Moe had heaved his 250 pounds into Izzy's bulk a few times, and vice versa, both were sufficiently bloody and grass-stained to look as though they had emerged from the wars. At that point a near-by game ended, and the exhausted teams trotted off for a spot of much-needed refreshment. Izzy and Moe trotted right along. There was saw news there, too, by the time the agents departed.

For a change of pace, Izzy and Moe moved in on the ultra-rich, high society of exclusive Westchester County, north of New York City. By this time other agents were managing to pass themselves off for other than what they were, but this was a job requiring more than the normal flair for histrionics. To penetrate the sacred portals of an exclusive golf club, a man not only had to look as if he had a million dollars, but he had to look as though he had had it kicking around for so long he had all but forgotten about it.

Izzy and Moe, clad in outrageous golf knickers and socks, and each carrying one club (they didn't want to run up the expense account by buying a whole set of clubs) moved in like a pair of maharajahs. They looked so ridiculous and acted so pompous that it was quite clear to even the most conservative members that they were the genuine article. Only millionaires of long standing would ever dare behave so eccentrically. As for their accents, still bearing traces of the Lower East Side, weren't they from a long line of furriers, in minks and sables yet?

The membership committee members looked them over. Maybe they would take them in; maybe they wouldn't. In the meantime, as long as they had all that money, they might as well use some guest privileges at the bar. That was no surprise to Izzy and Moe. They figured that even the richest club is not above picking up some of the long green when the occasion warrants, and they were just panting to warrant some occasions. They played the club's avarice for all it was worth.

All the club *was* worth, too, as it turned out. After a couple of hundred thousand dollars' worth of prewar stock had been removed, the mahogany bar destroyed, and the clubhouse closed for a year, the members had little left to live for.

Yet there was never anything vindictive about the way Izzy and Moe operated. To their way of thinking, every moonshiner, bootlegger, and speak-easy operator was smart enough to know he was breaking the law. He was smart enough also to take precautions about getting caught at it. If his precautions weren't smart enough to foil the efforts of Izzy and Moe, then tag, he was "It." If he didn't like being "It," Izzy and Moe just figured he plain didn't belong in the game in the first place.

They worked hard at playing their end of the game fairly. No one worked harder. When the speak-easy customers began to get fussy and demand ice in their drinks, Izzy and Moe obliged the bartenders by starting an ice route. For weeks they peddled ice from a horse-drawn wagon, sometimes carrying a fifty-pound cake up four flights of stairs to oblige a legitimate customer whose strident hail they couldn't escape. By the time they were through they had around forty speak-easies as paying customers, all of whom promptly vanished from the trade the day Izzy and Moe turned in their ice tongs and their horse.

To catch a notorious bootlegger in the Bronx, who was operating out of an apartment opposite Woodlawn Cemetery, they got jobs as grave-diggers. They dug graves all day, and, when no suspicious trucks showed up, they got lanterns and dug graves all night. All told, they dug so many graves that old-timers around there must have suspected the Bronx of having been hit by a plague. But finally they got their evidence. Their victim was actually relieved when he got to the Federal Building and found

the pinch was genuine. He thought he was being body-snatched by a couple of ghouls too impatient to wait until he was dead.

Their tricks were endless, but few were careless. When they became street-car conductors, to bust up a little social club near the car barns, they learned all the jargon of the trade and most of the car stops and transfer points in Greater New York. When a railroad complained that its roundhouse crews were coming on the job so looped they kept falling into the grease-pits, Izzy and Moe learned all about oiling up a locomotive before moving in for the kill.

Some of their arts were routine, such as becoming sewing-machine repairmen to knock off booze peddlers in the garment industry; coal-carriers to catch the small (and consequently dangerous, because their hooch was almost always poisonous) operators in cold-water flats; blackface street peddlers to catch the smoke salesmen in Harlem; and Bowery bums to nail the blockfall pushers on the East Side. Blockfall was Izzy's pet name for the various varieties of wood alcohol called gin. "Take a drink," he would explain, "walk a block, and fall down."

But for every routine piece of art work they exhibited, they had another that was sheer genius. Up near Columbus Circle, for instance, was a fabulous establishment (Reisenweber's) featuring big-name entertainment; here the smallest nip began at four bucks and went up swiftly from there. Its boast was that no agent in the world could get past its battery of lynx-eyed men who guarded the doors.

Izzy and Moe did. They started out on the make one night, working their way through the buxom but slightly faded dolls who liked to frequent the burlesque houses in those days. Finally they discovered a couple of doxies made to order for their purpose: Huge gals, broad of beam and flashy of dress, and loud of laugh. Being no Beau Brummels themselves, they made up for it with loud promises to "blow the lid off"—and the pick-up was made.

Behind this blatantly hard-drinking screen, they plowed right into the lavish joint, and soon were the most boisterous foursome among all the thousand or more customers. When the bill reached twenty-four dollars, Izzy and Moe decided it was time to blow the lid off as promised.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said Izzy, climbing up on his chair, "I'm Izzy Einstein, and this is my partner, Moe Smith. Dere's sad news here. Kindly finish your drinks—at these prices you should—then leave quietly. The joint is pinched."

It was, too.

Another favorite joint was Jack's, down on Sixth Avenue, across the street from the Hippodrome. It was a favorite haunt of actors, musicians and newspapermen, some of the latter of whom were great publicists of Izzy and Moe. Still, duty was duty. For this raid, they decided to go in as musicians. There would be dozens of people there who would recognize them on sight, but by this time they had become aware of a strange fact. Even your friends are inclined to accept you for what you are rather than what you look like. If you have always looked like an ordinary guy, and suddenly appear in a tuxedo and carrying a huge bull fiddle, about the only recognition you'll get is a remark like, "See that musician over there? If I didn't know better, I'd swear it was Joe Doakes."

So Izzy got a big bull-fiddle case and Moe got a trombone case, and after the Hippodrome show they barged in with the rest of the musicians from the pit. That was an easy raid.

Too easy. The jury listening to the case decided it couldn't be done that easily, and tossed out the evidence. Back they went again, this time as themselves. "You remember us," said Izzy. "We've been here before."

"Yeah, sure, come in," said the doorman. "I'd remember your faces anywhere." And in they went.

That time they knocked off more than $100,000 in good liquor, and the wails of such newspapermen as Stanley Walker, Edwin C. Hill and Alva Johnston would have been much louder if the story hadn't been so rewarding. "Izzy Is Bizzy," read one headline, and that set the tone of the others.

There was a strange aftermath to their second raid. A few weeks later Jack's was busier than ever, trying to make up for past losses and get set for the inevitable fine. A fire broke out in the kitchen, and up rolled the firemen. "Don't let 'em in!" screamed a doorman. "It's another trick of Izzy and Moe!"

Not all their stunts were successful, but even when they failed it was in typical Izzy-and-Moe style. Most dramatic of these failures was a well-planned raid on a fourth-floor gentlemen's club in a well-equipped apartment house. (A joint run by a guy named Louis Stusits.) Reports had it that the entrance hallway was well decorated with newspaper pictures of Izzy and Moe in a dozen different disguises. That could be entirely possible because neither was averse to publicity, and more than one high politician was known to have complained bitterly that they were grabbing off more newspaper space than he was.

Since entrance by the front door looked difficult, they decided to go in by the dumbwaiter, arming themselves with a search warrant in advance to keep within the law. They drew lots, and it fell to Izzy to ride the dumbwaiter, with Moe heaving on the rope from the basement.

One of the few failures Izzy and Moe ever experienced in their raids on speak-easies came as the result of their sudden fame—and a dog who resented their entrance via dumbwaiter.

All went well until Izzy was up around the second floor. By this time Moe had his feet braced under the dumbwaiter door, putting all his weight and the strength of his legs into heaving the ponderous Izzy to his destination. That was when the watch-dog got him—and at his most exposed point. With a loud cry, Moe dropped the rope.

His cry was nothing to the scream Izzy sent echoing up the dumbwaiter shaft; it was enough to curdle every drink in the place. Then he hit bottom and wedged there. His exposed part was too tempting for any dog to resist. It immediately left Moe and turned its full attention to Izzy.

By the time the pair escaped, minus most of their pants and a few morsels of cushioning, their nervous quarry had already polluted the sewers with all the evidence in stock, and as far as is known, never did open again.

Another raid cost a lot of dignity when they jumped a Polish establishment in Brooklyn. Two brothers were running a home-brew bottling works in the basement of their flat, and their wives were selling the stuff in the front parlor. The brothers, caught with their bottles down, were willing to admit it. Not so with their wives. As Izzy and Moe led out their captives, the wives came at them with brooms and mops: *Wham, wham,* out into the hall. *Wham* on the front stoop. *Wham* on the sidewalk. By this time a goodly crowd had collected, as it can in Brooklyn, and still the punishment went on. A final *wham* nearly took off the top of the car as they drove away.

To some 4000 victims of their previous raids, that story made the best reading of the year.

In all their thousands of raids only once was a shot fired, though one nervous bartender tried earnestly to plug them with a gun he didn't know was empty. Moe, with the same skill he had shown as a featherweight, but with three times the bulk, put him away with an eight-ton wallop.

The serious shot was fired during a raid on a garage-warehouse in the Bronx, just a block or so from the Polo Grounds. It was more of a fort than a garage, a fact which made it an object of suspicion in the first place. Izzy and Moe studied it for several days, noting the trucks that came and went, and finally deciding the traffic pattern of the trucks bore no resemblance to honest industry. Since it was plainly a liquor drop and not a place in which to make a purchase, they decided to walk in. They were like that. However, in this case there was something sinister about the joint—so for one of the few times in their lives, they carried pistols.

Izzy knocked on the garage door. It was so solid it nearly broke his knuckles. It opened a few inches, and Izzy jammed in his knee. Instantly an electric button was pressed, a motor whirred, and the door clamped on his leg like a vise. Nor did the pressure let up.

This time it wasn't funny. Izzy thought for sure his leg was going to be crushed. Moe was just as frantic. He was tugging away at the door with his bare hands when suddenly he remembered his pistol. He yanked it out and let fly toward the ceiling through the crack in the door.

There was a loud clatter inside and then the door wheezed open. In the doorway stood a badly-shaken guard. At his feet were a high-powered rifle and a pistol, both dropped in fright at the blast from Moe's gun.

The raid proved to be one of their richest. The garage held nearly $500,000 in imported hooch.

By this time they had just about worn out their welcome in New York. They had arrested some 4,750 persons, and the amount of booze they had confiscated ran into the millions of dollars. As a matter of record, they had participated in twenty percent of the arrests made in the entire Lower New York State District, which included all of New York City.

If you want to be thought a liar always tell the truth.

—LOGAN PEARSALL SMITH

Their salaries at this point stood at $3,600 a year. They had dozens of offers of better-paying jobs, not a few of the offers coming from well-meaning bootleggers who would have paid off on the button just to get them out of the way. Moe succumbed in 1925 to an offer to become an insurance agent, a job he held most successfully until his death last year. Izzy would have succumbed, but, because of his knowledge of so many languages, the service was as reluctant to let him go as they had been to hire him in the first place. In the end, Izzy agreed to remain if he could be transferred to other districts well outside of New York.

As a lone wolf Izzy set some more records. In Detroit he became an unemployed mechanic, seeking the source of the poisonous fusel oil and wood alcohol that was killing dozens of derelicts, and making wrecks out of scores of other good men. Though it was a bitter winter, he wore no more than the thinnest of second-hand workclothes, figuring that the misery of cold was something that couldn't be faked. He stood in breadlines with bums, slept in doorways with bums, and moved into hovels with bums. Whenever he could make a purchase he did, pulling a few last coins from his pockets and "paying with a pang."

Forty arrests later, and with the "smoke" ring smashed, he moved on to Mobile, Alabama.

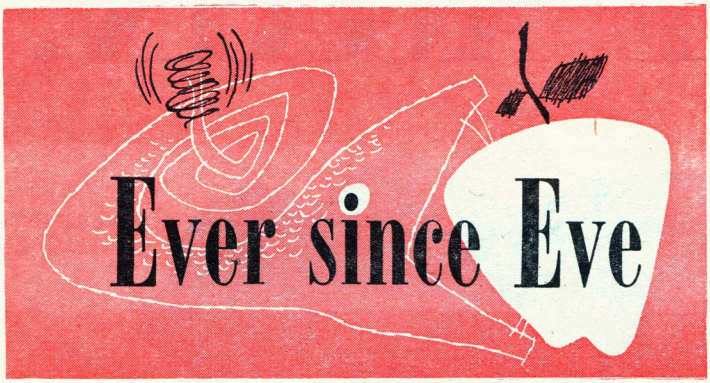
There he became a worker on the docks, unloading banana boats. In the evenings he became popular in the bars as a player of Mobile jazz on a mouth organ. Some eighty-five arrests later, and after the confiscation of $100,000 in rot-gut, he was not so popular, and he moved on to Los Angeles.

Los Angeles mobsters knew how to handle him, and being a stranger in town, he let them do it in their own way. He was elevated to the position of technical adviser on saloon settings for one of the studios, and had no hesitation in letting it be known that he was satisfied with his movie career. As a Hollywood character, he was of course welcome in the better bistros, and his little funnel-to-tube-to-flask was seldom dry. It was a great shock to the Hollywood mob when their dumb little sucker from the East closed all their joints.

But neither Hollywood, nor St. Louis nor Chicago offered the same thrills any more. Maybe he missed Moe, though he'd never admit it. Besides, the financial pressure of his family was exceeding the ability of his salary to relieve it. Late in 1926 he turned in his badge, and he too became a successful insurance agent. A fantastic period in crime detection, but a truly great one just the same, had come to an end.

So what can our modern Alcohol Tax Unit Agents learn from all this? Well, one time Izzy raided an up-to-date, ultra-modern, scientific speakeasy. It had electrically locked doors, sliding panels to conceal liquor cabinets, a big sink in which to destroy evidence, and a framed picture of Izzy Einstein over the bar. The doorman, the bartender and the proprietor held weekly drills on what to do in case of a raid, revising their drills to keep up to date on the changes of personnel down at the Prohibition office.

Izzy listened to the bartender's explanation of all this in admiring silence, in the meantime saving a little of his admiration for his own picture above the bar. Then at last he observed: "That's a real scientific system, and I'll bet you could clean up with it at the track. But it's for horses, not people. In the meantime"—and he fumbled for his badge—"dere's sad news here—" •



Women have been the root of all evil. . By ELSIE LEE

Even in Arabia where women are not highly thought of, a woman can be the root of all evil.

Take, for example, the case of the tailor of Bir Es Hasra.

There was a certain Arab who made his living by thievery, and as thieves go, he was high in his profession and had a certain standing. But even the mighty fall, and this thief—Ali, by name—fell quite literally into the hands of the law when the rung of the ladder on which he was resting, preparatory to burgling the upper story of the banker's house, suddenly gave way.

Ali fell onto the garden plot, such as it was, beneath the banker's bedroom window—causing a commotion that could not be overlooked. The banker's wife peeped from the window, and seeing Ali sitting cursing on the ground, her screams led to his instant apprehension by the caliph's guard.

Now even in Arabia, a man has his day in court. Ali was duly brought before the judge; there was a recital of his misdeeds and at last the judge nodded his head wisely and said, "Have you anything to say before I pronounce you guilty?"

"Yes, your honor," said Ali, bowing ingratiatingly. "Your pardon, but I am not guilty."

"Not guilty?" The judge roared with laughter. "Why, you were caught red-handed trying to enter banker Sulieman's bedchamber. How can you say you're not guilty?"

"It is simple," Ali shrugged. "Is it my fault I was caught? Oh, no. If the rung of the ladder on which I stood had not given way, I should not have been caught. So I am not guilty, your honor. The man you want is the carpenter who sold me the faulty ladder."

The judge looked at the advocates, and the advocates looked at the caliph's men, and they all looked at Ali, who merely bowed again, politely.

"Well," said the judge, "there is much in what you say. Perhaps we should see this carpenter. Let him be brought."

So the caliph's men went out to the street of lumber merchants and shortly thereafter they dragged in the carpenter, named Vasti.

"It is charged that you were responsible for the faulty ladder, whereby Ali the thief fell to the ground and was captured by the caliph's men," said the judge sternly. "The blame for his crime thus rests on you. Have you anything to say before I pronounce you guilty?"

"N-n-no, your honor, except if it please your worshipfulness, I am not guilty," Vasti stuttered. "For five years I have worked with wood and always given satisfaction, your honor, but this was extraordinary. On the day that I visited the bazaar to purchase my last lot of wood, I was walking through the street of the Five Lotus Blossoms—you know it, perhaps?—when I saw coming toward me a most beautiful girl."

He sighed reminiscently, and continued: "She wore a most delicious green robe, your honor. It moved about her little feet like the south wind playing with two little kittens. Her hair had the sheen of black marble and her eyes were as lustrous as the gown which undulated with the grace of her movement. She was veiled, but I thought—that is, it seemed that her eye rested on me with interest, all unworthy as I am."

"And what has this girl in a green gown to do with the matter?" demanded the judge irritably.

"Everything, your honor," Vasti said hastily. "I am young, and the girl was beautiful. I could not get her out of my head, and because I thought so much of her grace and loveliness, my judgment in wood was impaired. I bought less wisely than usual. But it is not my fault, as you see, but that of the girl in the green gown who lured me with her beauty."

The judge nodded his head thoughtfully and looked at the advocates, who looked at the caliph's men. And the caliph's men went out and got the girl in the green gown.

"It is charged that with your beauty you seduced a young carpenter and caused him to buy poor lumber," barked the judge. "Whereby the faulty ladder he constructed caused Ali the thief to fall into banker Sulieman's garden and be apprehended. This is all your fault. Have you anything to say before I pronounce you guilty?"

The girl Sephira sighed gently behind her veil and cast down her eyes modestly. "My crime is grave, your honor," she admitted, and her voice was like the ringing of bells, "but truly I do not think I am guilty. For it was not I who seduced the carpenter, but my green gown, and I should never have bought it except that Jonas the tailor persuaded me it was the right color. He had only enough material for this one robe, but I would not have bought it if he had not persuaded me. So it is not my fault, as you see, but that of the tailor who made the gown to sway with my passing."

The judge cleared his throat sharply and glanced at the advocates, and the caliph's men merely sighed and went out and got the tailor, named Jonas.

When the matter had been explained to Jonas, he wrung his hands together sadly and said, "There is nothing I can say. It is true that I made the gown for Sephira which caused the carpenter to lose his judgment and make a faulty ladder which caused Ali to fall and be taken by the caliph's men. I admit the whole. Do with me as you will."

So the judge squared his shoulders and said, "For that you are solely responsible for the attempted burglary of banker Sulieman's house, I hereby condemn you to be hanged by the neck until you are dead. Take him out to the East Gate of the city and dispatch him at sunrise."

Jonas wrung his hands together once more, but the caliph's men took charge of him, while the judge leaned over to inquire whether Sephira would permit him to escort her home.

It was nearly noon the following day when the judge thought of Jonas. "I suppose you hanged that tailor this morning?" he said casually to his aide.

"Well, as a matter of fact, your honor, we had a small difficulty. A minute matter, with which we would not trouble you."

"Eh?" said the judge. "What happened?"

"Why, your honor, the East Gate is a very low gate," said the aide, "and as it happened, Jonas was a very tall tailor. We tried and tried, but we couldn't fix the hook and the rope in such a way that his legs would clear the ground."

"Well?"

"So we finally let him go; and we went out and found a shorter tailor and hanged *him*." •

COME AGAIN,

Illustration by BOB FINK

McKECHNIE

He was old and alone, and that's the way he wanted it. He didn't like women, but he almost killed himself for one he'd never met————By JON CLEARY

WELL, THIS LOOKED like the beginning of the end. Time had slowed the hand and stiffened the back, and a man grew old early in the shearing game. Fifty-five now, and he'd lasted ten years longer than most of them. But it was still pretty hard to realize he was finished.

Wirramunna sheep station was always first to begin the West Australian shearing season, and McKechnie had been coming here for as long as he could remember. Every year he had looked forward to it after the four months' layoff: the boat trip from Perth in the south to Derby on the northwest coast, the 150-mile truck ride to Wirramunna, the familiar smell of the wool grease and the noise in the shed, the clatter of the first shorn sheep going down the chute, the whole environment where for years he had been a "gun" shearer, a champion.

"There they come," Alec Patterson said. "How do you feel about it, Bluey?"

McKechnie stared down at the red cloud of dust moving across the plain. Even at this distance he could hear the shouts of the aborigine stockmen and the light nagging barks of the dogs, and this was something else he'd always looked forward to: the arrival of the first mob of sheep for tomorrow's shearing.

"Glad to be done with it," he said, and lifted his gear from the back of the truck. "I know when I've had enough."

He turned and walked away as Jock Shaw, the shearing contractor, came out of the main house with Laurie, the station-owner, and yelled that he had some mail. McKechnie knew there would be none for him and he kept on across the yard toward the sleeping huts.

Judson, the new man with the team, was lying on his bunk when McKechnie walked into the hut. Judson was a big man, too big really for a shearer, with a big voice and a big opinion of himself. All during the boat trip from Perth he'd been talking about how good shearers were in Victoria where he came from, and McKechnie, a quiet man, had grown tired of the sound of that voice. He had avoided Judson on the boat and hadn't spoken to him during the truck ride out from Derby.

"They tell me you used to be a pretty good shearer." Judson lit a cigarette and flicked the match past McKechnie's nose and out the door. "Bit of a come-down, ain't it, to finish up as a cook?"

"I'm training to be a chef." None knew better than he what a come-down it was, but when you'd known only one life you couldn't just walk out of it and make a new start. "You gotta start somewhere."

"Pretty quick with the tongue, ain't he?" Judson looked at Simmons and Lucas, the other two men in the hut. "How quick were you with the clippers? What was your best for a day?"

"Three hundred and ten in eight hours." The lean spade of a chin came up and the sunbleached eyes were suddenly young; that was something of the years he would have with him forever. "What's yours?"

ALEC PATTERSON entered the hut, thus saving Judson's face. He dropped his gear on the floor and lay down on his bunk, stiffly and quietly, staring up at the ceiling, one hand clutching a letter.

"You get any mail, Alec?" Lucas said.

"Yeah," Patterson said, without turning his head.

That would be one from his new missus, McKechnie thought. He hadn't been able to believe it at first when Alec had come to him on the beach at Carnarvon that morning four months ago. Later there had been a feeling of emptiness and finally just plain anger.

"This is going to rock you," Alec had said. "I'm getting married Saturday. I met her a week ago in Perth and we hit it off right away. I want you to be best man at the wedding. That means you'll have to shave and put on a tie; but you'll do it for a cobber, won't you?"

But in Bluey McKechnie's book you did nothing at all for a cobber who walked out on you like that. He'd mumbled something to Alec, then gone out and got drunk. He'd stayed drunk for a week, been drunkest of all on the Saturday of the wedding, and he hadn't seen or heard from Alec till yesterday. Alec had flown up from Perth to Derby, missing the nine-day boat trip, and in the truck coming out to Wirramunna, he'd kept his distance from Alec. He should have asked Jock Shaw to see that they were billeted in different huts.

THE evening meal and next morning's breakfast were not a gourmet's delight, but they were adequate. McKechnie had spent most of his life abusing shearers' cooks, and he knew what to expect from the shearers and what they wanted.

Alec Patterson didn't come to the evening meal, and at breakfast he hardly touched the food before him.

"What's the matter?" McKechnie asked. "Ain't it as good as your missus makes?"

Patterson looked up at him, then abruptly rose from his seat and walked out of the cookhouse. McKechnie stared after him, anger staining his face. Well, that was just the way he wanted it! Alec had his missus, to write him letters and spend his money and take up his time so he couldn't even talk to old cobbers. Bluey McKechnie had himself, and that was all anyone needed.

After breakfast McKechnie strolled across to the shearing shed. He'd wanted to stay away in the cookhouse, away from the memories, but he might just as well have tried to walk out on Judgment Day. He leaned against the wall and looked down the long shed. He felt the itch in his hands, the weight of the sheep against his knee, the smell of the wool thick in his nose, and when he lit his cigarette it wasn't only the smoke that dimmed his view.

"Wish you were in there, Bluey?" Jock Shaw was standing beside him; he had worked for Jock for fifteen

years and Jock could remember him *when*. "It won't be so bad next year."

"I'm doing all right," McKechnie said. "I'm gunna take it easy now."

Shaw looked at him and grinned. "You bleeding old liar!"

THE twelve shearers were standing on the board waiting for the starting bell. Contract men, they were, paid at the rate of so much a hundred sheep, so there was money as well as glory in being the fastest shearer in the shed. The first sheep was the important one; a good start was needed if a man was to top the tally for the day.

McKechnie looked down the shed at the shearers, seeing the slight dark figure of Alec Patterson and the big blondness of Judson side by side; then the sound of the bell hit him as a sudden shock. He saw the men dart into the pens for their sheep, heard the handpieces begin to buzz, saw Alec Patterson get a slight lead on the others. Then he turned and walked quickly across to the cookhouse. A new season had begun, but the starting bell had sounded for him for the last time.

That night the other men were already in bed by the time he got across to the hut. The first day's shearing was always the toughest, and the men usually went to bed early. Alec Patterson was just sealing up a letter as McKechnie walked in.

McKechnie had brought a billy of tea across with him. He set it down on the small table in the center of the hut. "You blokes want a cup?"

Judson raised himself in his bunk and held out a mug. McKechnie glared at him. "What's the matter? I seen you done only two hundred and thirty today. Did that break your back or something?"

"A bloke oughta break *your* neck!" Judson got out of his bunk and poured himself a mug of tea. "It beats me how you've lived as long as you have, you old goat."

"Lay off!" Alec Patterson took the billy from Judson. "We're all too tired to listen to an argument."

He sat on his bunk and began to sip his tea. His blunt dark face was wan and tired, and McKechnie could guess at the reason. He was finished with Alec as a cobber, but he'd been a shearer too long not to admire another man's skill.

"You were going some today." There was grudging approval in his voice. "Two hundred and forty-four; you never done as good as that before on the first day."

"I once done two fifty," Judson said. "He just got the jump on us today, that was all."

McKechnie ignored him, and spoke again to Patterson. "The missus'll be proud of you, eh?" The sarcasm in his voice was as subtle as a blunt axe.

"Yeah." Patterson put his mug on the table and climbed back into his bunk. He looked at the letter he still held in his hand, then rolled over to face the wall. "I just been telling her about it."

McKechnie felt the rebuff like a slap in the face. Anger boiled up within him. Then Judson spoke.

"You afraid one of us young blokes might some day break your record?"

McKechnie's anger switched direction. "You'll never beat anyone's record! You use your wind too much for talking!"

Judson was out of bed in a moment. He towered over McKechnie, his arm raised like a club.

But Patterson and the other two men moved quickly. "Break it up," Patterson said, standing between them. "He's twice your age and half as big."

"Tell him to keep his trap shut, then," Judson said. "The little red-headed runt—"

"Get outa me way!" McKechnie tried to push past Patterson. "I'll show him who's a runt!"

Patterson pushed down McKechnie's fists. "Get into bed, will you? Dave and Harry and I want to get some sleep. For Pete's sake, cool down! That damned temper of yours—"

"Would you like to step outside for a moment?" He would take on the whole world tonight! A sudden, unfamiliar spasm of loneliness had hit him, and he threw up his only defences. "I'll take on any—"

"What'd be the point in knocking you cold, Bluey?" Simmons asked. "Who'd get breakfast in the morning?"

Lucas laughed, and the tension was broken. Judson got back into his bunk and picked up the magazine he'd been reading. Patterson looked at McKechnie and grinned. "One of these days you're going to buy into a fight with Joe Louis."

"He'll get his money's worth." McKechnie drained his mug of tea. Then his lean freckled face crumpled into a grin that had never grown old. "All I ask is that he'll be sitting down."

When the hut was dark McKechnie lay in his bunk looking out at the bright starlit sky. He could hear Patterson moving restlessly in the bunk next to his. Last season they would still have been yarning, talking about the day and what might happen the rest of the season; but tonight Alec was keeping to himself. McKechnie felt the loneliness come down on him again and now in the quiet dark there were no defences. He stared at the stars, feeling suddenly bleak and old. . . .

At lunchtime the next day he heard the men talking about Patterson. At the evening meal they were still talking about him. He had tallied two hundred and ninety-four sheep for the day, the highest at Wirramunna since before the war. McKechnie ladled the food onto Patterson's plate and nodded appreciatively at him.

"Nice going, mate," he said. "Seems I'm a good teacher."

"I haven't forgotten it," Patterson said. "I've always told Marge how much I owe you."

"Yeah," McKechnie said, and froze up. "Righto—move on and let the next bloke in."

The next bloke was Judson. "Make it a big helping."

"Trying to build up your strength, eh?" McKechnie heaped food on the plate. "You blokes from the East can't stand up to the competition around here."

"We'll see," Judson said. "We got a long way to go before the mob is through."

The next day the race started. McKechnie heard about it at lunchtime and in the afternoon went across to the shed. Patterson was working with a sort of quiet frenzy, seemingly oblivious of the other men in the shed. Beside him Judson was matching him for speed, but there was no grace or smoothness about his movements and it wasn't a speed that would last. He was throwing the sheep around with a roughness that made McKechnie wince. Jock Shaw and Laurie were out with the stockmen, bringing in tomorrow's mob; otherwise Judson would have been told to slow down and take more care.

AT the end of the day the tallies showed Patterson: 288; Judson: 285. Patterson seemed unaware that there had been a race; he ate his meal in silence and immediately afterward went across to the hut. The men broke up into groups, some to play cards, others to have a sing-song to the accompaniment of an old concertina. McKechnie finished baking tomorrow's bread, washed down and went across to the hut.

Patterson was just finishing another letter. There was a snapshot on the table in front of him, but McKechnie deliberately kept his gaze away from it. He'd never seen Alec's missus—Marge, or whatever her name was—and he didn't want to. He disliked her enough without looking at her.

Patterson signed the letter, put it in an envelope and sealed it. The mail went out of Wirramunna only once every two weeks and most of the men sent only one letter with it. But it looked as if Alec was going to write one every night and send out a batch. If that was what marriage did to you, got you moody and writing letters all the time, McKechnie was glad no woman had caught him.

Judson came into the hut, followed by a half-dozen of the men. He looked flushed and excited.

"How'd you like to make a bet, Patto?"

Patterson looked up at Judson, then at the men crowding in the doorway, then back at Judson. "What sort of bet? What's on?"

One of the men spoke. "He's been telling us what he used to do in the sheds over East. We're calling him. We reckon you can lick the pants off him, any day he wants to name."

"I'm saying you can't." Judson's voice was hoarse. "I got a hundred quid that says I can beat you!"

"We'll cover that," Simmons said. "I'll cover it myself if nobody else wants it."

A hundred pounds was a lot of money, almost three weeks' wages. In a cooler moment the shearers might have hesitated to chance so much, but the argument had evidently been strong and forceful, and cool thinking had vanished before hot words.

"No." Patterson put the letter in his pocket and picked up the snapshot. "No, I'm not interested. Try someone else."

"What's the matter?" Judson jeered. "You scared?"

"Come on, Alec," Simmons urged. "Don't let him get away with *that.*"

"No," Patterson repeated. "I'm not scared. But I'm not going to have you blokes risking that much money on me."

McKechnie had been sitting silently on his bunk. He'd seen all this happen before, but then the men had been betting on *him,* and he knew how Alec felt. Still, he wished that Alec *would* take on Judson, just to shut him up. They would have Judson with them for eight months, and he needed to have the wind taken out of him early in the piece.

"Come on, Alec," he said now. "Give it a go. We'll split the bet up amongst us—that way we won't feel it so much. Put the big wind in his place."

Judson turned quickly, but Patterson interrupted him. "All right," he agreed quietly. He looked at the snapshot in his hand, then put it away with the letter in his pocket. "I'll take you on, Judson. But I'll put up my own money."

There were murmurs of dissent from the men, but Patterson shook his head. "It's either my money or no bet."

"That'll do me." Judson was livid with anger; he had suddenly realized he had talked too much, turned the whole team against him, and he had to show them what he was worth. "I don't care who puts up the cash! I got a hundred quid says I'm the best shearer in this shed—"

"Only in this shed?" McKechnie was tired of Judson's talk. "I thought you was the best in Australia."

It was over so quickly that no one was quite sure what happened: Judson lunged across the hut, grabbed McKechnie by the shirt, raised his fist and brought it down just as Patterson stepped in front of him. The swinging fist caught Patterson on the side of the head; he stumbled back, twisted and fell to the floor with one arm underneath him. He lay for a moment while the whole hut seemed paralyzed; then he sat up groggily, clutching his right wrist.

McKechnie wrestled free of Judson's grip and dropped on one knee beside Patterson. "What's the matter, mate? What you done?"

"My wrist," Patterson said dully. "I've cracked it or sprained it."

McKechnie felt the wrist. "The bone's all right; you must've sprained it. I'll get some packs for it." He stood up and looked at Judson. "Why don't you come over to the cookhouse while I get me meat-cleaver?"

Judson looked down at Patterson. "I'm sorry, Patto. I didn't mean to hit *you.* But this little runt—"

"It's all right." Patterson got slowly to his feet. "I'll come with you, Bluey."

In the cookhouse Patterson sat quietly as McKechnie lightly packed the swollen wrist. Muscles moved in Patterson's dark face and his black eyes held a look of some deep inner pain far greater than that of the swollen wrist.

"I won't be able to handle a sheep." He was talking as if to himself, hopelessly. "I might as well go home."

"The bet's off," McKechnie said. "Don't worry about it."

Patterson looked at him. "I'd forgotten the bet; I'm thinking about the job. I'll be out for at least three weeks with this." He held up his wrist and looked at it bitterly. "I need the money."

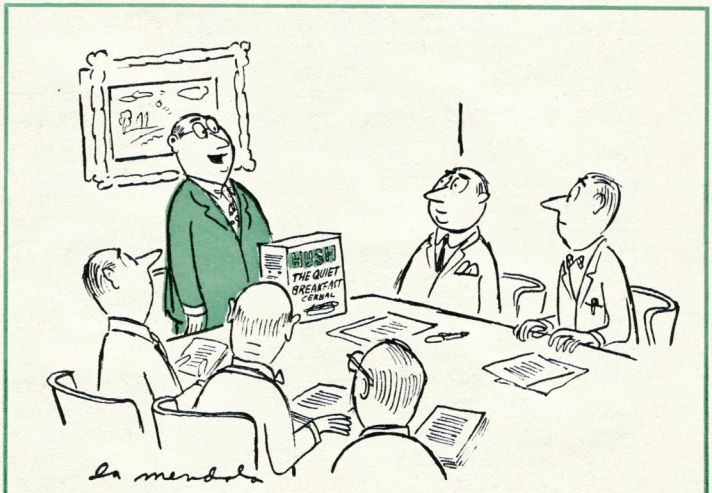
"What's three weeks?" McKechnie said. "You'll make it up before the end of the season, if you keep up the rate you been going these last two days."

"I want the money before the end of the season. I want it as soon as I can get it." He looked down again at the wrist. "Marge is sick. She's going to have a baby, and the doctor says she'll need a lot of treatment before it turns up."

McKechnie turned away to pour the water slowly out of the bowl. Without looking at Patterson he said, "You oughta stayed out of that fight tonight. Then this wouldn't've happened."

"He'd have murdered you," Patterson said. "You don't seem to be able to get it into your head that you aren't young any more."

McKechnie said nothing, still standing with his back turned, and Patterson went on: "I know you haven't much time for me any more, Bluey. I guess it's because of Marge. Well, I'm not apologizing. I was pretty soured on you too, for not turning up at my wedding. If it was to happen all over again, I'd still get married. I've seen what this life can do to a cove; I've seen what it's done to you, but you seem blind to it: Working your guts out in lonely places, always



"Gentlemen, I think we have here something that will revolutionize the industry!"

away from home and in the end forgetting you ever had one—working like blazes and spending like blazes, never saving a cracker because there's no one to save it for. Then suddenly you're an old man before your time—an old man with no money and nowhere to go."

"It ain't always like that." McKechnie was staring down at the empty bowl, his back turned to Patterson. "I know some blokes—"

"Yeah. Ones like me—the married ones—the ones who saved their money and got out early, bought a farm or business, and stayed home to enjoy life with their missus and kids. That's what I want, Bluey, and I thought you, of all people, would have understood." He took the swollen wrist in his other hand and squeezed till tears glistened in the black eyes. "That's what I want, if my missus lives."

McKechnie dropped the bowl with a clatter and turned round. "I'll shear for you until your wrist's better. I'll see Jock about it. You can be the cook—we'll get one of the shed boys to give you a hand." He paused, then asked, "Is that all right with you, mate?"

Patterson looked at McKechnie for a long moment; then he put out his left hand. "Thanks, mate."

McKechnie shook the hand warmly. "Righto, I'll fix it up with Jock." He walked to the door, then halted. "Why'd you take on that bet with Judson? You couldn't've afforded to lose that much dough, not if you need it for your missus."

"I'd have just had to win, that's all," Patterson said simply. "If I'd won I could have sent the money out in Saturday's mail. She's worrying about the expense, and she's too sick to have any worries at all."

JOCK SHAW had no objection to the substitution. His only reason for not taking on McKechnie as a shearer this year had been the almost certain knowledge, based on his observations last year, that McKechnie wouldn't last a full season. And good replacements were hard to find in midseason. He wanted to keep Patterson in the team if possible, and the substitution of McKechnie till the sprained wrist healed seemed the best solution.

The men welcomed McKechnie back. There is something about the return of a champion—and he had been a champion known in sheds from Northern Queensland right around the continent to the Kimberleys in West Australia. The men patted him on the back and wished him luck. They shook hands with their own future, because all knew they couldn't avoid the day when they too would be too old.

Judson stood on the board beside him. "Luck, old-timer."

McKechnie was getting the feel of the handpiece again. "How'd you like to put your hundred quid up against me?"

Judson looked at him sharply, then laughed. "Don't make jokes about money, Bluey. You need it for your old age."

"I ain't joking," McKechnie said. "You got a hundred quid to pay up tonight if I beat you?"

Judson stood looking at him for a time; then he said: "Yeah, I got it. I won it at a two-up game in Derby while we was waiting for the truck."

"If I lose, I can't pay you tonight. But I'll give you an IOU on me wages. Will that do you?"

"Why're you so keen to bet?" Judson asked. "Why d'you wanna throw away so much money?"

"I got me reasons." McKechnie shrugged. "A hundred quid to whoever turns in the highest tally today."

Judson picked up his handpiece and tested it. Then he said, "It's a bet, you bleeding old goat!"

McKechnie looked over into the pen where the sheep were herded. He graded them, picking out the easy ones, wanting to get a good start and his hand working expertly again before he got on to the cobblers, the sheep with wrinkled skin and hard wool. Then he straightened up, waiting for the starting bell to go, and tried to make his mind a blank. It wouldn't do to remember the stiffness and exhaustion he'd felt at the end of each day all through last season.

At the bell, he dived into the pen. He grabbed a sheep under the forelegs, sat it up and dragged it out onto the board. With the sheep's forefeet tucked under his left armpit, his left hand pulled his machine into gear as his right hand whipped up the handpiece. He worked with the automatic smoothness of long practice, thirty-seven years of skill in the stabbing right hand. The belly wool was thrown clear, then the wool on the left flank, then the neck. From the neck to the left forearm; then the sheep was on its side and he was beginning the long sweep from flank

"LEFTIES" or "RIGHTIES"?

Listed below are 15 of the top hurlers in baseball today (10 are right-handers; 5 are left-handers). Do you know the "lefties" from the "righties?" Can you identify at least 10 correctly for a passing score? 11 to 13 is good; 14 to 15 excellent. (Check one)

	L	R		L	R
VIC RASCHI	☐	☐	LARRY JANSEN	☐	☐
BOBBY FELLER	☐	☐	SAL MAGLIE	☐	☐
ALLIE REYNOLDS . . .	☐	☐	BOBBY SHANTZ. . . .	☐	☐
EDDIE LOPAT	☐	☐	MEL PARNELL	☐	☐
VERN BICKFORD . . .	☐	☐	BOB LEMON	☐	☐
WARREN SPAHN . . .	☐	☐	ROBIN ROBERTS . . .	☐	☐
EWELL BLACKWELL . .	☐	☐	NED GARVER	☐	☐
			PREACHER ROE	☐	☐

ANSWERS:

Vic Raschi (R), Bobby Feller (R), Allie Reynolds (R), Eddie Lopat (L), Vern Bickford (R), Warren Spahn (L), Ewell Blackwell (R), Larry Jansen (R), Sal Maglie (R), Bobby Shantz (L), Mel Parnell (L), Bob Lemon (R), Robin Roberts (R), Ned Garver (R), Preacher Roe (L).

to the top of the head. Then he propped the sheep against his leg and attacked the other side. Stab, punch, a long sweep, every movement part of a beautifully co-ordinated whole; then the sheep was finished and stumbling down the chute into the counting pen. He had gained almost five seconds on Judson.

McKechnie counted the first twelve sheep, listening for the clatter of hoofs going down Judson's chute, knowing he had gained almost half a sheep, in the first twelve. Then time and the sheep began to merge into a fog in his mind and he worked like an automaton. Sweat sprang out on him; and it soaked and blinded him. His ears were full of the buzzing of the machine and his lungs seemed full of wool. At the end of the first half hour he was no longer straightening up when he dived into the pen for a sheep. He was just a stooped hunchbacked caricature of a man, bent halfway to the floor, a simian-like creature that had been trained to do only one job and that with all the speed it could muster. He heard his wool picker-up yell, "Slow down, Bluey! You'll kill y'self!" but the words didn't register and he kept on at the same mad rate of speed.

WHEN the bell rang at the end of two hours for the rest period, he leaned against the fence of the pen. He reached up and grasped the rail and slowly, agony stretching his thin face even thinner, pulled himself upright. Pain sliced across the middle of his back and he bit savagely on his sweat-rag to shut the cry in his mouth.

Judson was leaning against the fence, his face shining under its thick film of sweat. "You had enough? You wanna call it off?"

"I'm in front, ain't I?" It hurt him even to talk. "We got the rest of the day to finish yet."

At lunchtime he was six sheep ahead of Judson and everyone in the shed knew about the bet. He went straight from the shed across to the hut and lay down on his bunk. There was no part of his body that wasn't paining him, and his stomach kept fluttering as if he were about to vomit. Patterson brought him some food.

"Get this inside you," Patterson said. "And then slow down this afternoon. I wouldn't have let you stand in for me, if I'd known you were going to take up that bet against Judson."

He was forcing himself to eat some of the food. "You want that hundred quid, don't you?"

"You're doing it for *me?*" Patterson stared at him, then banged his good hand hard on the table. "Stone the crows, Bluey, I don't want you to kill yourself! That's what you'll finish up doing. You could have beaten him ten years ago—but this isn't ten years ago. All you'll beat now is yourself!"

McKechnie heard the bell go for the men to go back to work. He climbed off his bunk like a man getting off the rack. He swallowed the last of his mug of tea and wiped his mouth on his sweat-rag.

"It ain't only the money I'm after," he said. "There's something for meself I want out of it."

The afternoon was the longest time he had ever lived. The hours stretched out into years, and each second was a stab of pain in his punished body. He worked in a red mist, doing the right thing only by instinct. His mind had ceased to function altogether. When the rest period arrived he staggered to the fence and slumped against it, not even attempting to pull himself upright. His picker-up rolled him a smoke.

"Whyn't you give it up, Bluey? There ain't any sense in this—"

"How's the score?" His voice was a croak.

"You're still leading him by three. But he's nowhere near as done in as you are. He'll catch you in the next two hours."

All he could lift was his chin. "I'll hold him. I'll show him who's a burned-out old goat!"

The bell went and he spun away even as he was talking. He dived into the pen, grabbed a sheep and was back on the board just that much quicker than Judson. Stab, punch, out and away, stab, punch, out and away; the rhythm went on and on until it seemed that all his life he had been crouched here on this board, doing nothing else but shearing this sheep he couldn't see, feeling nothing else but this one great pain that was himself. . . .

Then the final bell went. His picker-up took the sheep and the handpiece from him, and he fell back against the fence. He lay huddled there, a tight ball of a man that looked as if it could never unroll itself again. Beside him Judson was hanging over the rail—almost as far gone, but with the knowledge that he had his youth to help him recuperate.

PATTERSON and Simmons picked up McKechnie as if he were a child and carried him toward the hut. Halfway across the yard Jock Shaw stopped them.

"How is he?" he asked.

"I don't know," Patterson said. "The only thing he has left is his heart—and I don't know how strong that is."

"How'd he go?" Shaw said.

"Two hundred and ninety-eight to two ninety-six," Patterson said. "Can you beat it? Two ninety-eight—at his age!"

Jock Shaw looked down at the almost unconscious McKechnie. "His heart's all right. But tell him to take it easy from now on or I'll send him back to Perth. Someone's got to protect him from himself."

ALEC PATTERSON took the letter and snapshot out of his pocket and put them on the table in front of him beside the small pile of pound notes. He looked across at McKechnie, propped up in his bunk.

"The money will be there Monday morning," he said. "That'll take a load off Marge's mind!"

"And off yours too, I'll bet." Fatigue was still etched deeply into the lean face, but the eyes were bright. "You gunna put in a P.S. telling her how you got it?"

"No, I'm saving that until the season's over and we go home. I couldn't tell it well enough in a letter." Patterson grinned across at him. "You can tell her yourself; you're coming home with me. We'll need a godfather for the baby."

McKechnie gestured in embarrassment. "Dunno nothing about kids—except sheep's ones." Then he held out a hand. "Let's have a look at your missus."

Patterson passed him the snapshot. McKechnie saw a small fair-haired girl who seemed to have nothing but a friendly smile, and he was a little disappointed that Alec hadn't done better. Then he looked up and saw the expression on Alec's face—and suddenly McKechnie knew he had been looking at the most beautiful girl in the world.

"How d'you reckon she'll go?" he said. "She's a tiny thing."

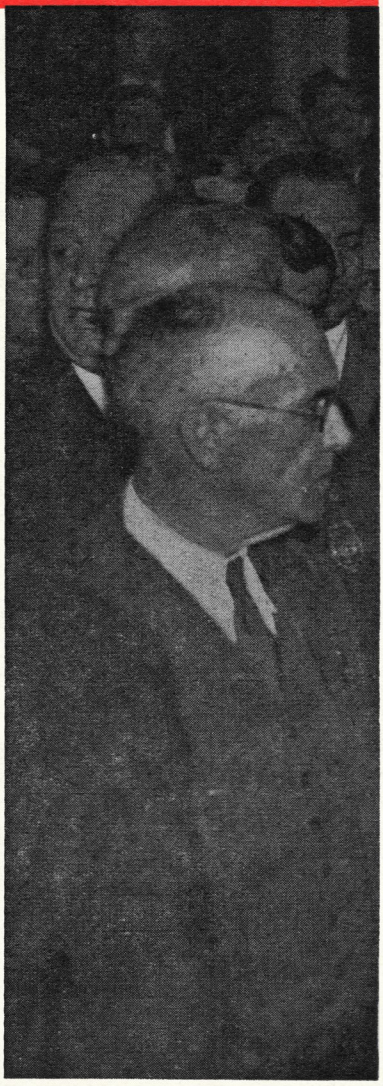
"All I can do is hope," Patterson said. "But we've got each other to live for, and that has pulled a lot of people through." He picked up the letter. "I can't hold a pen. Would you address this for me?"

McKechnie hadn't held a pen in years, other than to sign for his wages at the end of each season. With his tongue poking out from between his teeth, his forehead furrowed, his eyes squinting and his fingers wrapped round the pen like the claws of a crab, he laboriously scrawled the address. With a sigh of relief he handed back the pen and the letter.

"And memorize that address," Patterson said. "Because that's your home from now on, you old goat."

McKechnie lay back on his bunk and winked at Alec. He was old, all right, but today he'd reached back through the years for some of the glory of the past. He was old and finished, but it didn't matter any more. He had somewhere to go. •

Let's Finish the



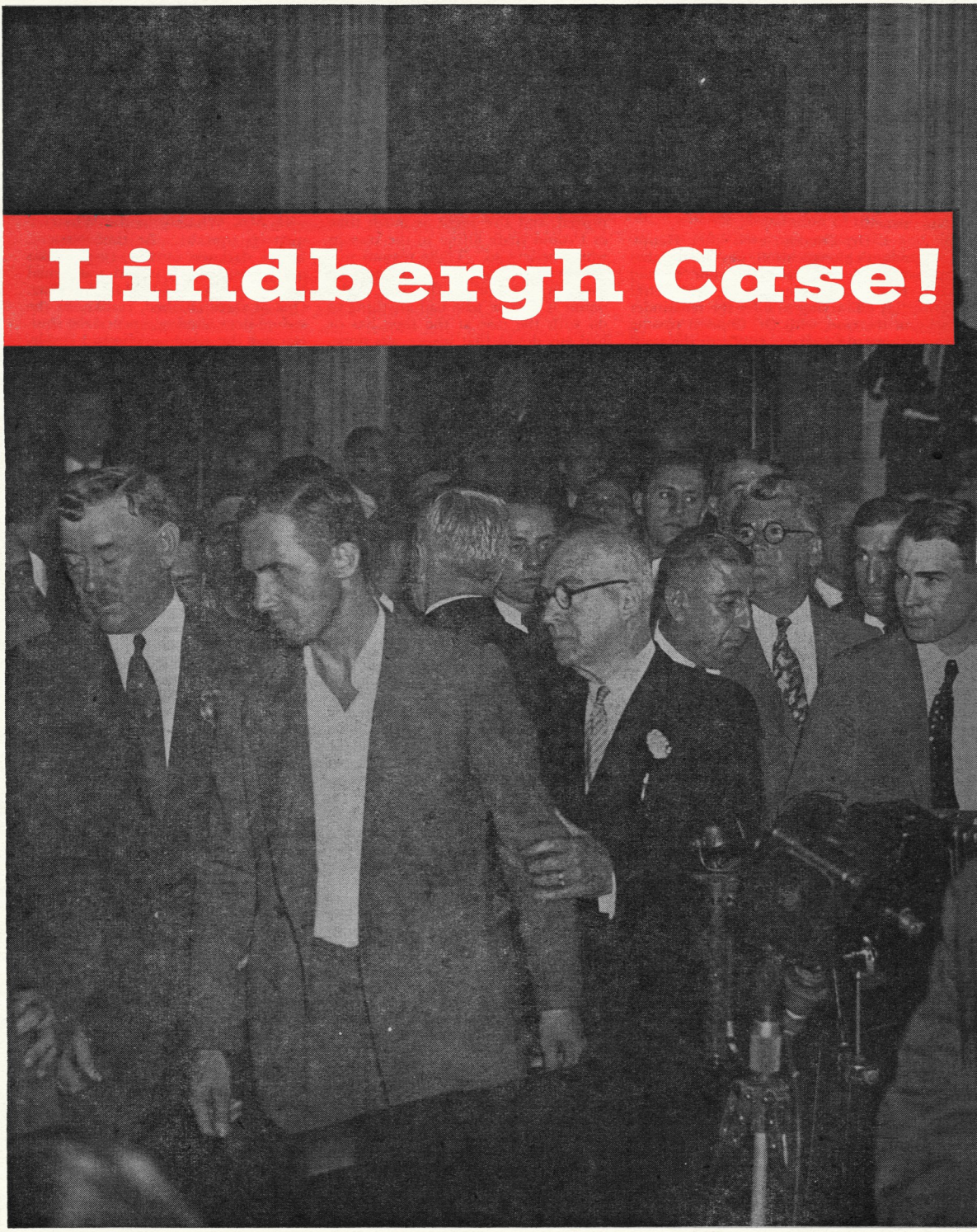
Did the execution of Bruno Hauptmann close the Lindbergh case? A reporter who covered it from the beginning says it did not. There were two others involved *who still have not been caught*, and the author backs up his charge with some startling evidence, much of it suppressed and withheld from the public at the time.

By CECIL CARNES

TWO INDIVIDUALS—A MAN AND A WOMAN—are free to come and go as they please today, even though they are guilty accomplices in one of the most vicious, sordid crimes the world has ever known, the kidnap-slaying of Charles Augustus Lindbergh, Jr. One of these individuals—their precise identities as yet unknown—may actually have been the killer whose hand snuffed out the life of the Lindberghs' first-born just twenty years ago, the crime for which Bruno Richard Hauptmann died in the electric chair without revealing his accomplices' names.

While it seems almost inevitable that Hauptmann's co-criminals, if they're still alive, will be discovered in time, it is the feeling of *Bluebook's* editors that the case should be solved *now,* and that the true facts behind this notorious kidnap-murder should be revealed to the public, which has been allowed to forget the horror of the event in the belief that the execution of Hauptmann brought the case to a close. It didn't, as these facts will show:

Lindbergh Case!



1. From the very beginning, investigators have known Hauptmann had accomplices. They even found more than one set of footprints at the kidnap scene!

2. Dr. John F. Condon, the scholarly intermediary in the case, *actually talked* to both of the accomplices on several occasions, once when the conversation also included Hauptmann.

3. A description of the Lindbergh baby's death never has been given to the public in precisely the way it happened.

4. Dr. Condon, even after Hauptmann's electrocution, was warned that he and the then Governor Harold Hoffman, of New Jersey, had better "lay off" trying to solve the remainder of the case, with Dr. Condon passing along to Governor Hoffman the word that "They say they'll get you if you keep on trying to solve the case."

5. Dr. Condon always believed that, had he been given sufficient time with Hauptmann in the latter's cell, he could have obtained the whole story. For Dr. Condon knew that Hauptmann was well aware of the fact that one of their telephone conversations *had been interrupted by two other voices,* those of a man and a woman.

6. Even after twenty years, more than three-fifths of the $50,000 ransom money paid by Colonel Lindbergh still has not been found.

7. Following Hauptmann's trial and sentence, even the condemned man's own attorney admitted he didn't believe all of Hauptmann's story, and actually tried to get Mrs. Hauptmann to convince her husband he should tell the truth and "reveal who else was in on" the crime.

8. A man dressed as a New York taxi-driver came to Dr. Condon's home and delivered last-minute instructions for the ransom payment, and this man —who might have been one of the accomplices—never has been seen or has come forward (if he was an innocent participant) since.

9. Hauptmann himself used the word "we," or similar ones to indicate that he was not alone in the plot, on *54 occasions,* and was able to answer quickly Dr. Condon's questions aimed at exposing him as a lone kidnaper. Until the day he died, Dr. Condon believed that Hauptmann could not have failed to slip up, could not have given subconsciously the responses Hauptmann did on the several occasions they talked, had the man not been a member of a gang.

Of the foregoing, any one would seem enough in itself to keep the Lindbergh case wide open, and possibly the doubt in the minds of many people that the crime actually had been solved with the execution of Hauptmann stems from the natural questions that come to the fore whenever and wherever the case is discussed. For, as a reporter who covered both the kidnaping and the trial of Bruno Hauptmann, I still am asked, wherever I travel throughout the world, these same questions:

1. Was Hauptmann really guilty?
2. Did he have accomplices?
3. If so, who were they?

Up till now, I have answered that Hauptmann *was* guilty, as legally proved, and I've spent as much time as I could spare filling in the reasons why I believe so. Those reasons will be obvious to anyone who has read the complete story of the trial, and I doubt if anyone who had anything to do with the case at the time has or had any doubt that justice was done. Just this spring, Arthur Koehler, the wood expert who testified at the trial and who now is on the faculty of Yale University, was quoted in the *Yale Alumni Weekly* as saying that "If he (Hauptmann) had been more skillful in his woodworking, he might have been acquitted." But "the wood from Hauptmann's attic used to make the kidnap ladder, and the telltale marks on the wood from his own plane could not be mere coincidence."

Indeed Hauptmann was guilty; of that I have no doubt. Of the fact that he had accomplices, who never were caught, who possibly are secure in their freedom today, and who may be alive to commit even more atrocious crimes, I also have no doubt. And a re-examination of the entire case, from the hour of its very beginnings, should be enough to convince even the most skeptical of this same fact.

At 9 P.M., March 1st, 1932, Colonel Charles A. Lindbergh, who had captured the imagination of the world with his solo flight from New York to Paris, five years earlier, was sitting before a cheery, blazing fire in the living-room of his huge, double-winged, stone and stucco mansion on the south slope of Sourland Mountain, near Hopewell, New Jersey. His wife, Anne Lindbergh, daughter of the former Ambassador to Mexico, Dwight W. Morrow, was seated on the sofa beside him. She was knitting, in expectation of the arrival of their second child. Upstairs in the nursery, which was the southeast corner room, was their first-born, twenty-months-old Charles Augustus, Jr. Charles, a bright and handsome child of normal size and weight for his age, was suffering from a slight cold. The nursemaid, a Scots lass named Betty Gow, had rubbed the baby's chest with an unguent, then dressed him in a special little home-made flannel petticoat and a sleeping-suit, finally making certain that his blanket was pinned into position, for the night was cold. She and Mrs. Lindbergh had made the rounds of the windows after tucking young Charles in, fastening the outside shutters except for one which had warped so that the hook would not reach the metal eye on the sill.

Charles had been asleep since about 8 P.M., and the Whatelys, the English couple who served the Lindberghs, having disposed of their duties in the kitchen, had settled down to an evening's leisure. Betty Gow was chatting with Mrs. Whately in the Whatelys' quarters upstairs. At this moment, in the darkness outside, two persons quietly but boldly placed a sectional ladder against the side of the building. One of them climbed, catlike, to the second-story window, opened the shutter and the window, climbed inside, took little Charles from his crib and left a ransom note there. Then, leaving a plain trail of muddy shoe outlines across the floor and onto the radiator grille, he left, closing the window but leaving the shutters open. As he got to the middle of the descent, it is probable that the ladder broke, throwing the man against the side of the building, waking and presumably wounding the child. While one of the conspirators hastily gathered up the sections of the ladder and dumped them into a clump of bushes about 70 feet from the house, the other carried the baby, who almost certainly was bleeding from the fall. Inside the house, Colonel Lindbergh had heard a noise, something like the crushing of a lightweight wooden box. He had asked his wife, "What's that?" She failed to answer and apparently both felt it was an ordinary kitchen noise like the closing of a pantry bin or a utensil-lined door.

As troopers reconstructed the scene later, the baby's death came, in horrible fashion, a few seconds later. He was held by the heels and his head swung against a rock. The first officials to arrive discovered two sets of footprints, and later, in the daylight hours, blood and gray mucus on an outcropping in the area. But, long before this, the culprits had driven their car out of lonely Lindbergh Lane and to a spot in a copse a few miles away, where they buried the "most famous baby in the world."

Police and press descended on the Lindbergh home in droves. And the greatest manhunt in the history of the world was on—with thousands of police alerted and hundreds of thousands of amateurs joining in. It is safe to hazard that far more persons looked for the man who turned out to be Hauptmann than ever searched for his compatriot, Hitler. Valuable clues were handled by New Jersey State Police, country constables, Hopewell

cops, and, eventually, by the FBI, Treasury men, detectives from cities in New Jersey and New York, and even wood experts from the United States Forest Products Laboratory.

The ransom note, left on the radiator grille, demanded $50,000 ransom for the baby, specified the denominations of the bills, warned against interference in the case, and carried a unique, distinguishing mark: the Italo-Germanic trigamba, or three-legged insignia. This was stamped in the middle by the stopper from a bottle of red ink. It was also pierced as if it had been jammed onto a multi-pronged paper spike of the kind used in offices for temporarily filing bills or receipts. This unique signature was to carry through on all the negotiations thereafter.

Naturally, Colonel and Mrs. Lindbergh had the sympathy of the entire world with them in their agony, and public indignation mounted as the search for the baby and his abductors spread; and the false leads and the phony sensation-seekers who purported to have information on the kidnaping were carefully sifted. Then, on March 4th, Colonel and Mrs. Lindbergh issued a dramatic statement urging the kidnapers to "select any representative that they desire to meet a representative of ours who will be suitable to them at any time and at any place they may designate."

It was at that moment that Dr. John F. Condon, an elderly Bronx schoolteacher—who embodied all the qualities of a Richard Harding Davis character, mixed with the intellectual processes of a local Winston Churchill—entered the picture. Dr. Condon frequently was called upon, because of his having become established as the sage of New York's Bronx neighborhood, to quote at length for the readers of the area's neighborhood newspaper, *The Bronx Home News,* on any and all subjects which the editor felt demanded a local opinion. Having read every scrap of news on the Lindbergh case, Dr. Condon was touched by the public appeal issued by Colonel and Mrs. Lindbergh, and he promptly wrote a letter, which the *Home News* published, offering to serve as intermediary in the case and to put up $1,000 of his own hard-earned savings as a gesture of faith.

But, at that point, there arose an important factor in the case which generally has been overlooked: Bruno Richard Hauptmann, who never read *The Bronx Home News,* answered Dr. Condon's letter! And this was the first indication, although not apparent at the time, that Hauptmann indeed had an accomplice or accomplices.

The clear evidence that Hauptmann didn't read *The Bronx Home News* came out when, on the occasions he was trying to contact Hauptmann again, Dr. Condon again used this same Bronx newspaper, feeling naturally that, since he'd "reached" Hauptmann through the *Home News* in the first place, any ads Condon placed in that paper would be seen by Hauptmann. *But none of them ever was!*

The only time Dr. Condon was able to reach Hauptmann through the newspapers, after that first success with the *Home News,* came when Condon used *The New York American* and *The New York Evening Journal,* the two papers Hauptmann *did* read, as he told Dr. Condon later.

At another time later on—and this is an important connection as regards the proof that there were accomplices—when Hauptmann was talking to Dr. Condon on the telephone, *another voice broke in and told Hauptmann to inquire if Dr. Condon was the man who wrote "sometimes pieces for the papers."* But the only "pieces" the doctor ever had written for newspapers had been done for *The Bronx Home News,* the newspaper Hauptmann admitted he didn't read! So it

Experience is simply the name we give to our mistakes.

—OSCAR WILDE

was *not* Hauptmann but one of his accomplices who had seen Dr. Condon's original letter offering to serve as an intermediary!

At any rate, Dr. Condon wrote his original offer to help, the letter was published, and the result was the first real contact with the kidnapers. Returning from a lecture on the night of March 9th, 1932, Dr. Condon found a letter in his mailbox, addressed to him in crude printing, and his heart leaped. Tearing open the envelope, he discovered inside a crude note and a second sealed envelope. The printed note read:

Dear Sir: If you are willing to act as go between in Lindbergh cace follow strictly instructions. Handel incloced letter personally to Mr. Lindbergh. . . Affter you gets the money from Mr. Lindbergh put them words in New York American. Money is ready. After notise well (we'll) *give you further instructions don't be affrait we are not out for your 1,000$ Keep it only act stricly. Be at haus every night between 6-12 by this time you will hear from us.*

Dr. Condon was bewildered. He probably expected no such signal success from his published letter, and now that it had been achieved, he didn't know which way to turn. Accordingly, he urged his huge frame down to Rosenhaim's, a restaurant which was the favorite nocturnal gathering-place for the Bronx set and at which the doctor hoped to find his old friend, Al Reich, a former prize-fighter and loyal crony of Dr. Condon's. But Reich wasn't at Rosenhaim's, and, in desperation, Condon showed the letter to Rosenhaim, asking the proprietor's advice. The latter suggested the simple expedient of telephoning Colonel Lindbergh.

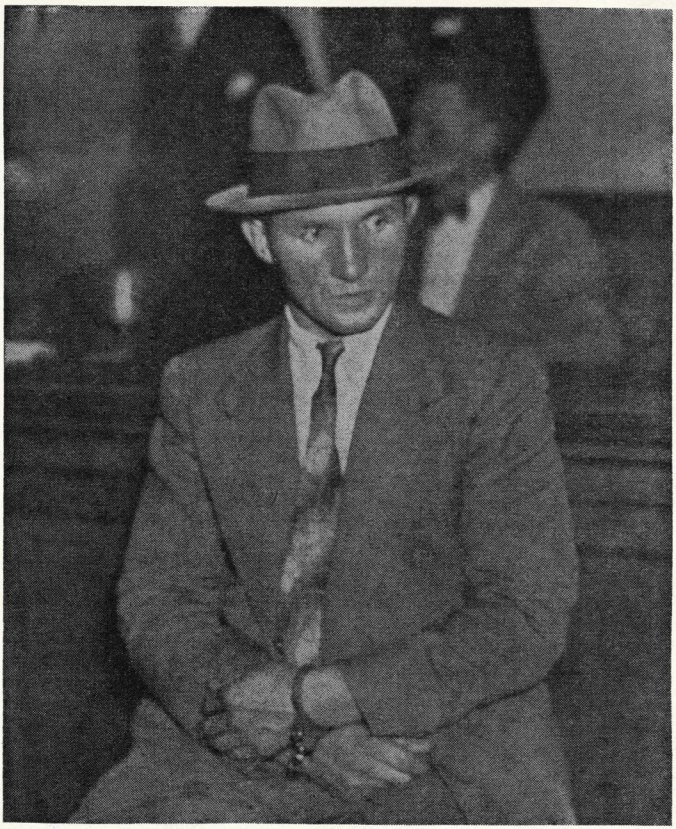
The upshot of that was that he got Lindbergh on the phone, read him the first note, explained that there was a second addressed to Lindbergh, and described the "signature" of the first note: the trigamba with the red-blotted stamp and the holes spiked through the paper. At that, Colonel Lindbergh immediately became interested, and asked to see Condon at once, and the doctor was driven to the Colonel's home and spent the night there. The note he delivered to Colonel Lindbergh read:

Dear Sir: Mr. Condon may act as go-between you may give him the 70,-000$ make one packet the size will be about (and a drawing showed him the money would form a stack about 6 by 7 by 14 inches, and it looked like the drawing of a mechanic or a carpenter used to making rough illustrations in connection with his work). *We have notifiet you already in what kinds of bills We warn you not to set a trapp in many way If you or someone els will notify the Police there will be a further delay. after we have the mony in hand we will tell you where to find your boy.*

You may have areplane redy it is about 150 mil. awy. But before tell you the add. a delay of 8 houers will be between.

Condon slept in the nursery that night, on a cot. In the morning he examined the room for clues. Many months later he told me that since the child had been extricated without unpinning the blanket, he might then have deduced, but didn't, that the famous baby had been strangled right in his crib. Of course at that time he did not know what the officers had found outside on a rock outcropping, and neither, I'm sure, did Lindbergh himself. I remember discounting what Condon said because it would have been so easy simply to unpin the blanket, lift the baby out, then pin the blanket again.

But now began the most interesting—and significant—phases of the case. In addition to the original ransom note left at the scene of the kidnaping, there had been several additional notes which had been mailed to the New York offices of Colonel Henry C.



Bruno Richard Hauptmann, who was executed for the Lindbergh kidnaping. But the evidence indicates that it literally was impossible for him to have committed such a crime without help.

Breckinridge, Lindbergh's friend and lawyer. While the original note had demanded a ransom of $50,000, the ones to Breckinridge had stepped up the figure to $70,000. So the figure mentioned in the note Condon delivered to Lindbergh tallied with that in the notes to Breckinridge, and was an indication of the authenticity of the Condon letter. Even more completely convincing to both Lindbergh and Breckinridge, however, was the fact that the Condon letter bore the same handwriting as the others and had the identical signature, the Italo-Germanic trigamba. Col. Lindbergh agreed that Dr. Condon now was in contact with and accepted as the negotiator for the true kidnapers of his child. (It should be mentioned that, for a time at least, both Lindbergh and Breckinridge suspected that Dr. Condon himself might be a member of the kidnap gang, although they later agreed that this suggestion was "inconceivable"!)

It was decided that Breckinridge was to return to the Bronx with Dr. Condon; this he did, and he remained in Dr. Condon's home throughout the following 22 days, representing Colonel Lindbergh throughout a series of bizarre events. These began almost at once with a telephone call. (When Hauptmann was arrested later, Dr. Condon's telephone number was discovered written on the wall near Hauptmann's phone, and it is known that Hauptmann did call Dr. Condon on several occasions. On one or two of these occasions, Hauptmann reached Mrs. Condon when the doctor was out. Yet Mrs. Hauptmann said later that she could not recall overhearing any calls to Condon from the Hauptmann home.)

This first telephone call, taken by Dr. Condon while Al Reich stood near by, consisted of the opening question, "Did you get *our* note?" Dr. Condon, who had adopted the identifying name of "Jafsie" (from his initials, J.F.C., at the suggestion of Colonel Breckinridge) answered that he had. The caller then identified himself as "John," and asked if the money was ready. Dr. Condon answered that such things took time, but that it soon would be ready. Then the man said "We will contack you," and seemed about to hang up. But, in the background, Dr. Condon could hear the hum of a busy restaurant or similar business, and he could distinctly hear a woman conferring with a man. Then he heard the man identified as "John" talking to another man, while he, Condon, waited. Condon recalled all this for me many months later in the Hotel Hildebrecht, in Trenton, in this fashion:

"Then I heard John say, 'Dok-tor Condon?' and I answered 'Yes.' Then he conferred again with someone else, and afterward said the thing that was on his mind: 'Do you write sometimes pieces for the papers?' I answered that I did. The man on the other end used the word 'us,' and then a man's voice broke in with *'statti citto,'* which in Italian idiom means, roughly, 'Shut up.' It came from the other man, 'Shut up. You've talked too much already.' This obviously referred to the fact that the parties on the other end of the line knew full well that a call could be traced in a certain limited number of minutes. Then a woman chimed in, 'Let him finish.' And we closed the conversation with his assurance that I would soon hear from 'them.' From that moment on I resolved to use all my mental powers, when I saw 'John' face to face, to make his subconscious speak on that matter of what I shall call multiple knowledge. And I did. But remember, now, my first duty was to get the child back as quickly as humanly possible."

FROM the latter, would you conclude the kidnaping had been a one-man job? If Dr. Condon was an accredited witness—and he never was discredited, his testimony, in fact, playing a key rôle in Hauptmann's prosecution—was the report of this first conversation to be brushed aside merely as the ramblings of an old man who thirsted after publicity? Certainly not! It is one more concrete bit of evidence that Hauptmann was not in the case alone, had not been from the beginning. Yet, to date, Hauptmann is the only one to pay the penalty, with the others perhaps at this very moment secure in the firm conviction that they played a rôle in one of the most sensational crimes in history—and got away with it.

The next evening, a taxicab driver, who properly identified himself and later testified at Hauptmann's trial, delivered a note to Dr. Condon. It

contained a demand that Dr. Condon go to a certain spot in the Bronx and there find the instructions which eventually led him to a rendezvous with the mysterious "John" in Woodlawn Cemetery, late at night several days later.

It was an eerie setting as Jafsie—as he was to be called almost exclusively from then on—left Al Reich seated in the car outside Woodlawn on the appointed night and walked toward the cemetery gate. And it was there he met a man of but slightly over medium build, weighing perhaps 160 pounds, wearing a soft, snap-brim hat well down over his eyes, and a coat, the collar of which he kept up around his face. Jafsie soon got him to sit down in a spot where a near-by street light gave the doctor a pretty good view, and he proceeded so to involve the fellow that he kept him there for an hour and fifteen minutes. He got the fellow to lower his coat collar, and he saw the Germanic face, the fishlike eyes, the heavy brow, the point to the chin that went on up to "the broad part of the triangle,"—the face of a lean, hungry, shifty man. Nothing there of culture; it was the face of a laboring-man, a man who was from his speech plainly a German, and at a guess, a former German soldier. Dr. Condon made him shake hands and felt the well-developed muscle below the right thumb, which could have come from pushing carpenter's tools.

"John" spoke assuringly, saying: "The baby izs alricht. We give more for him to eat as we heard in the paper from Mrs. Lindbergh." (He referred to the baby's diet, which had been extensively publicized).

He used "soud" for south, "greenhaus," for greenhouse, "boad" for boat, "grib" for crib, "maddress" for mattress, "rizk" for risk, "vould" for would, "farder" for further, "simble" for simple. He sounded, at times, like a grown-up Katzenjammer Kid. He spoke of some members of his *gang* as being "innozent." The gang, as he explained it, consisted of "Number One," who, he said, was a "highup in the Government." And of "Number Two," who he said was the one who knew Dr. Condon, knew of his unique position in the Bronx and knowing he was reliable, recommended acceptance of his offer to be intermediary. Then there was himself, "John," who was only "go-between, too," like Dr. Condon for the parents. And there were "two vomans," who were "innozent."

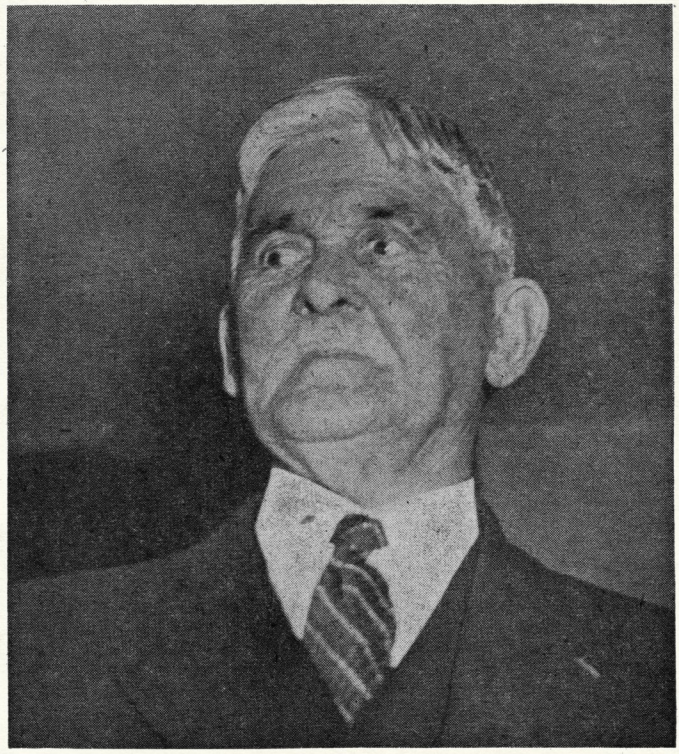
Dr. Condon got the distinct impression then, in lengthy questioning, that "John" was lying and improvising about all the members of the gang except perhaps the man who knew him, "Number Two," and a woman, or women. He was later, in their next meeting, to have startling verification that "John" himself was indeed "Number One," no matter how many others were involved.

But now "John" said he couldn't commit the gang because "Number One vould schmack me oudt." But he agreed as to the necessity of bringing things to a hasty conclusion and restoring Charles Lindbergh, Jr. to his "mudder's arms." He ended with "Ve drust you," and promised soon to send Dr. Condon the "slipping-suit" as proof that Condon was dealing with the right persons. Once he threw a scare into Dr. Condon by inquiring whether, if the baby died, "I vould burn?" But then he assured the "Dok-tor" that the baby was "better as it vas," which meant it had recovered from its cold.

For an earnest on his part, Dr. Condon showed "John" two large safety pins and the man unhesitatingly identified them as the ones on the blanket in the nursery. At the approach of a cemetery guard they split up, "John" showing great agility in scaling the high fence. Jafsie explained to the guard that he and a friend thought nothing of getting together almost anywhere, and the fellow apparently was satisfied. Dr. Condon returned to Al Reich and they drove home, and eventually the doctor reported all this in detail to Colonel Breckenridge and the proper authorities.

BUT several days passed before the sleeping-suit finally was mailed. (Later, when all the gruesome details became known, the official guess was that Hauptmann or one of his accomplices returned to the shallow grave of the baby, took off the sleeping-suit, washed it fairly clean, and then had it dry-cleaned, all of which took a bit of time.) On March 16th, four days after the talk in Woodlawn Cemetery, the tiny slumber suit arrived, and Colonel Lindbergh himself identified it, and he determined to get the ransom money ready quickly. With the tiny piece of clothing, mailed in a piece of brown wrapping-

Dr. John F. ("Jafsie") Condon, the retired Bronx schoolteacher whose testimony helped convict Hauptmann. He was convinced till he died that Hauptmann couldn't have played a lone hand.



paper, came another note laying down an ultimatum: There would be no further dangerous conferences, and the money must be paid before the baby could be seen—and as a matter of fact there would be an eight-hour delay between the two. If these terms were not acceded to, the ransom demand would increase, and there would be nothing in it for Colonel Lindbergh except further anxiety. It was at this point that Jafsie, who sensed something amiss, insisted that someone, *anyone,* first must see the child alive and well before the money was paid. But there, in Condon's Bronx living-room, with its comfortable chairs and its turn-of-the-century bric-a-brac, Colonel Lindbergh said, "No. We will pay the money. Mrs. Lindbergh wants us to pay the money and I do too."

There followed a further exchange of notes, and another telephone call, and then came the incident of the strange-acting woman. Dr. Condon had agreed, some time previously, to run a bazaar for charity, at a vacant store at 194 East 200th Street. He went to this store on Saturday, March 19th, and waited upon the customers himself.

Now, at this time, the public was reading about the greatest manhunt on earth, the search for the kidnapers; the newspapers were full of it, almost to the exclusion of other items. But there had been only a passing, almost kidding reference to the fact that a Bronx character, a kindly old eccentric former schoolteacher, who was a faddist on health and physical culture, and who used to sleep out of doors even in the winter, that this fellow "in his anecdotage," had offered his services as intermediary. But newsmen hadn't even come around to ask the "Doc" whether he had heard from the kidnapers. Why should they? This story had no place for humorous pieces, printed on the side. This was a great and tragic story.

So the public had no inkling whatsoever, at this time, that Dr. Condon was involved in the case!

Yet, on this Saturday, a rather nondescript woman approached Dr. Condon, asked him desultory questions concerning some violins which were on sale and only when the other customers had left the premises did she startle Dr. Condon with these vibrant, whispered words:

"Nothing can be done until the excitement is over. There is too much publicity. Meet me at the depot at Tuckahoe, Wednesday, at five in the afternoon. I will have a message for you!" And she left, walking quickly across the street and up the steps to the Third Avenue elevated train, which would have taken her to the Williamsbridge section of the Bronx. Dr. Condon, who had been pledged to secrecy regarding any contacts with the kidnapers, did not attempt to follow.

But he told Al Reich about the incident, as well as Colonel Breckinridge. He also told his wife, his daughter, Myra, and the late Elmer F. Irey, then chief of the U. S. Treasury Department's Intelligence Unit, which had entered the case. And, later, he also told me.

"Of course, the woman could have been a crackpot," Jafsie said. "But I don't believe that because I wasn't 'in' the case so far as anyone outside knew. And no one having any inside information on the case knew that I was going to be at that particular place at that particular time.

"Oh, I know—it could possibly have been a woman reporter, sent out by an enterprising editor to learn by indirection whether I was really working on the case. But, if this was true, why was there never any story to that effect in any of the papers? The story breaking the news that I actually was working on the case—when it finally did come—made big news in all the papers; and, in fact, the man who broke it got his first job in the newspaper business because the paper to which he took the story, the very conservative *New York Times,* deemed it so important as to warrant the hiring of a complete novice on the strength of it."

It was one more indication to Jafsie, in short, that the kidnaper was not a lone wolf and was, in fact, a member of a gang. The fact that the Tuckahoe lead came to naught was explained by the increasing anxiety on the part of the kidnapers as to the danger of further "conferences" and that they were even then making concrete plans for a final meeting at which the ransom would be paid. The truth of this supposition was borne out in the second visit from a taxi-driver.

As Jafsie told the story to me, it was his feeling that, having once successfully sent a cabdriver with a note (after paying the man a dollar for his trouble), the gang may have determined "to have a look inside my house," to see if Condon might have contacted the police. The first cabdriver having delivered his note without incident could have prompted the gang to use this method again to serve their purposes.

At any rate, on the evening of April 2nd, with Colonel Lindbergh present and the ransom money ready (all but $15,000 of it being in gold notes, as supplied to Lindbergh by the Morgan bank), a furtive-looking individual claiming to be a taxi-driver, and wearing a cabdriver's cap, arrived at the Condon home and delivered a note, in an envelope, to Jafsie. The cabbie took a look around and departed quickly.

Now, obviously, everyone was on edge for further word from the kidnapers, and, at the moment, the note was far more important than the cabdriver who had delivered it. (There had been no trouble tracing the previous one; all assumed there'd be no difficulty finding this one.) In any case, Dr. Condon, absorbed in reading the note, left to the others present the obvious task of getting the driver's name and number, which could have been false but which would have proved beyond a doubt that the kidnapers indeed were a gang. That there certainly was at least one more individual involved in the crime than Hauptmann, however, seems obvious. Despite urgent appeals later—when the case against Hauptmann was being prepared—for this mysterious cabbie to come forth, he never did; and to this day he remains as much a mystery as he did that night twenty years ago.

Was he, in truth, a cabdriver who never identified himself because he feared the consequences such a revelation might have involved? That seems hardly plausible, since there had been no consequences of note for the previous driver; and such a revelation could, in fact, be a moment of fame for a man who thus made his identity known. The only other supposition has to be that this cabbie was, in truth, *an accomplice in the crime,* and that when he is seen again it will be when he, like Hauptmann, faces a charge of murder.

The note which was left by this mysterious caller did, however, have the final instructions for the paying of the ransom, and they were followed by Jafsie and Colonel Lindbergh to the letter. With the ransom money —$70,000 of it—on the seat between them, they drove first to an intermediate point, where they received further instructions—taking them this time to St. Raymond's Cemetery, also in the Bronx. En route, Jafsie noticed that Colonel Lindbergh was armed with a loaded revolver, and he immediately determined that he would not risk having the flyer meet the kidnapers' emissary. When they arrived in the darkness at the rendezvous near the cemetery, Jafsie got out of the car, leaving Lindbergh still sitting in the front seat.

Colonel Lindbergh testified later that he plainly heard "John" call out, "Dok-tor! Over here!" And Jafsie went forward to meet again the man to whom he had first talked 21 days before, in Woodlawn. This time there was no light to aid Condon, but

he said afterward that it plainly was the same man he'd met before.

"Have you got it, the money?" Jafsie was asked. Condon said he could get it, that it was in the car with Colonel Lindbergh and that the latter was unarmed.

JOHN, according to Jafsie, gave a definite start at this news. Condon then said that Colonel Lindbergh couldn't afford to pay more than $50,000, and that he was prepared to pay it; but he must have an immediate description of the place where the baby could be found. This time there was no protestation that "John" would get "schmacked out" by "Number One." Instead, he agreed. And Jafsie Condon realized that here was Number One, himself. But he never gave up trying to put his questions so as to elicit hurried responses that would reveal, if it were true, that "Number One" was also "One and Only" in the case. And Hauptmann never faltered, never gave a response which would betray that his talk of a gang was false. They split up. Dr. Condon went after the money; "John" went out to prepare a note concerning the return of the child.

Thirteen minutes later they met again at the same spot, and each handed the other his part of the bargain. "John" stepped back a few paces—and inadvertently, stepped on a fresh grave in doing so—pulled out a flashlight, took a quick look to verify that what he had was money, then said: "Everybody says your work has been perfect." And so they parted, to meet again in September, 1934, in Manhattan's dour old Greenwich Street police station.

The note which Jafsie carried back to Colonel Lindbergh told him his boy was "on the boad Nelly," in Buzzards Bay, between the Massachusetts south coast and Martha's Vineyard. Jafsie flew there with Colonel Lindbergh, but of course they found nothing. Instead, on May 12th, the baby's body was found accidentally in a shallow grave on the Princeton-to-Hopewell road, somewhat over four miles from the Lindbergh estate.

Condon, who in the meantime had run a series of advertisements in *The Bronx Home News* which were signed "Jafsie" and which asked repeatedly, "Have you crossed me?" ceased this activity—Hauptmann hadn't read them anyhow—and turned his full strength to helping the police and Federal investigators launch their all-out drive to capture the criminals, now that secrecy and worry over the baby's safety unhappily no longer were factors. First they were able, from Jafsie's description, to construct a remarkably faithful drawing of the man called "John," a likeness which, it developed later, was remarkably close to that of Bruno Richard Hauptmann.

As the months passed the pressure on the investigating officers from an angry and inquisitive public became almost a thing of weight and substance. Yet they were almost literally wearing stones down to pebbles, they turned them so often. The bills turned over to "John" had all been listed, and, the majority of them, being gold notes, which were called out of circulation as of May 1st, 1933, were relatively easy to trace.

Hauptmann, who was certainly in command of the situation so that he could handle all the money, or at least control the conversion of it to regular bills, was, contrary to popular conception, noted several times as he passed bills later identified as ransom money. This happened, as my incomplete notes made seventeen years ago reveal, at two banks on the upper West Side of Manhattan. A teller then recalled a hazy description of Hauptmann, and the sharp chin and triangular face were mentioned. Meanwhile the kidnap ladder had been traced to a mill in the South and back to a lumberyard in the Bronx.

PSYCHIATRISTS were called in and shown the handwriting and the symbols on the ransom notes, and were told about this Germanic carpenter. To their credit they wrote some very skillful interpretations about this man they'd never seen. From all that had happened, it was almost inevitable that Hauptmann at least, some day would be caught. Jafsie even saw him again one day while on a bus ride on the Grand Concourse, in the Bronx, but, by the time he could have the bus stopped and pursue him, "John" had vanished.

But he turned up again at a filling station on September 15th, 1934, driving his old Dodge car up to the pumps located at Lexington Avenue and 127th Street. He wanted "fife," and he paid with a $10 gold note. Walt Lyle, the station manager, took the bill, noted its type and said, "Don't see many of these any more." Hauptmann said no, and added cheerfully that he himself only had about a hundred of them left. Since this was more than 16 months after passing such bills had become illegal, Lyle told Johnnie Lyons, his assistant, about it, and Johnnie wrote the license number of the car down hurriedly, just before the car wheeled out of sight. It was 4 U 13 41, and it soon was traced to Bruno Richard Hauptmann. Hauptmann was arrested, and on his person was another of the ransom bills. A short time later Tom Sisk, an FBI man who was a friend of mine, kept noticing that Hauptmann while answering questions, would respond to a subconscious urge to peek at the Hauptmann garage. Exhaustive search there turned up 966 of the ransom-payment bills, a total of $14,580.

Only $5,085 more of the $50,000 payment ever turned up, which means that $30,315 had been converted by Hauptmann without being detected, and how much of this he spent himself or paid to others can not, of course, be determined.

In the preparation of the case, and in its trial, every newspaper and, it seemed, everyone having anything remotely to do with the matter, had an "angle." The prosecutor—the brilliant David Wilentz, then Attorney General of New Jersey—took the quite justified position that his task was to prove Hauptmann innocent or guilty, and that he was therefore not concerned with others not under apprehension, but must, in the interests of greatly-desired clarity in a very confusing case, beware of collateral issues and collateral facts, however interesting they might be. He developed his presentation along the "lone wolf" conception and made it sound plausible that Hauptmann was one of the very few individuals in the world who could have conceived and carried out this great crime alone. He did not allow the intrusion of such questions as to how Hauptmann knew unerringly the location of the nursery. Some of his investigators, who couldn't speak for Mr. Wilentz, told reporters "off the record" that someone of the servants "probably" had boasted in beer halls of her familiarity with the Lindberghs, and may have been "drawn out" by pretended skepticism to prove she knew all about the famous couple, and as well the layout of the Sourland Mountain home, which had never been publicly described; it was actually a "hideaway." The implication, of course, was that this may have been done, perfectly innocently, by the Morrow waitress, Violet Sharpe, who committed suicide following repeated questioning, after her story didn't hold up. However the official attitude was then, and so far as is known, still is, that Violet, who had an "understanding" with the Morrow butler, a conservative English type, didn't want to give a truthful answer as to where she was on the night of the kidnaping because she had spent the evening with a man whom she had met rather easily and without premeditation.

THE *New York Journal* and its mate, *The New York American,* paid Mrs. Hauptmann's expenses at the trial. Eventually this led some of the reporters from these newspapers to believe the case against Hauptmann was not conclusive. *The New York Post*

was busy exhibiting cynicism as to the credibility of witnesses, in general, and that the word "human" connoted weaknesses which would not permit of testimony in such an important case. Governor Hoffman, about to be inaugurated, was prepared to insist upon an open mind and that Hauptmann, if found guilty, not be hastily executed. He wanted to "clear up all angles of the case," and he still does.

The ladder, the ransom money, the writing of all the ransom notes, the appearances at both rendezvous with Jafsie, the footprint on the cemetery grave, all were traced to Hauptmann. He relied on the story that a tubercular German friend named Isidor Fisch had left the money package with him when Fisch sailed home to die in his native land. That, upon being notified of Fisch's death, he, Hauptmann, had opened the package to find a windfall. Rounding out the story with a remarkable series of experts in woodlore, currency and handwriting, and tossing in some persons who were ready to testify that they had seen Hauptmann in the vicinity of the Lindbergh estate "on or about" the date of the kidnaping, and relying upon the identification of Hauptmann as "John" by Jafsie and Colonel Lindbergh, the prosecution won a verdict of *"Guilty: death."*

AFTER the verdict, I took the same train back to New York that carried Anna Hauptmann, the guilty man's mousy wife, and her attorney, the flashy Ed Reilly. Now that the case was over, Reilly was berating Mrs. Hauptmann. "That phony Fisch story!" he growled. "Didn't you suspect your husband when he was able to buy you a $400 radio right after the Lindbergh ransom money had been paid over—even though he hadn't worked in months and when he did he made only enough to barely live on?"

She had not suspected.

"Come clean," Reilly suggested. "We can get $50,000 for the real story of what happened. Then we can really fight the appeal. You don't believe that silly story you told—now, do you? You knew all along all of the true facts, didn't you? Knew everybody in the whole affair, didn't you?"

Piteously Mrs. Hauptmann said her husband wasn't guilty; that he was a kind man. She recalled how when the neighbors had sick children they brought their troubles to him; and how one time, driving through the park, he found a squirrel that had been run over, and he nursed it back to health and then released it again. "Why he's a kind man who wouldn't hurt any living thing," she fought back. "Look how he loves his own little son!"

"Yes," said Reilly. "And he only 'started' that son after he got the Lindbergh ransom money and could then afford it!" Mrs. Hauptmann dissolved in tears. I took her home, later, in a taxi from the station.

I felt sorry for her then, and I still do. She was, in my opinion, guilty of being nothing more than a typical German "Hausfrau," who wasn't, or even expected to be, hep to what was going on in the family. She was kept strictly in her place: bed, kitchen, and nowhere else without a broom or a mop in her hand. After Hauptmann's death, she married again, and now once more is a widow and living quietly with her son, Manfred, in another city far from the scenes of her personal tragedy.

Today, Dr. Condon is dead, and Elmer F. Irey is dead. And presumably Colonels Lindbergh and Breckinridge would just as soon forget the whole grim subject of the kidnaping and murder. But, under American concepts of justice, a case is not considered wrapped up until all those involved in a crime have paid a penalty for their misdeeds. From the foregoing, it would seem obvious that this has not been the case in the Lindbergh kidnaping.

For, in view of the facts of the situation as I know them, consider what the public was asked to believe in the lone-wolf theory of the kidnaping, in the turn of events which sent Hauptmann to the chair. To believe that his death closed the books forever on the crime, you must believe:

1. That Hauptmann built a sectional ladder which included parts of his own attic, and that he then drove this ladder in his own car from the Bronx to the Lindbergh home, brazenly ignoring the stares of several persons who saw him en route.

2. That he then calmly parked his car down the road from Lindbergh's home, and, ignoring the possibilities of watchdogs, armed guards, and automatic alarm systems (for, remember, Lindbergh had built this house as a retreat from public adulation), unerringly carried the ladder to the precise spot where he could climb to the only unfastened shutter on the house, the one outside the nursery.

3. That he then crawled in through that window, abducted the baby, left a ransom note, climbed back out on the ladder, and, while trying to descend, fell when the ladder broke and crushed the child against the side of the house.

4. That, even in the face of this obvious disturbance, he took time to abandon the ladder in some near-by bushes and calmly carry the child's body to his car still parked near by.

5. That he then drove to a spot on the Princeton-Hopewell road, stripped off the baby's sleeping-suit, and buried the body in a shallo . grave.

6. That he then drove back home and, single-handed, successfully carried on the ransom negotiations with Dr. Condon, eventually collecting $50,000 for himself.

7. That he used the undiscovered portion of this money to play the stock market and to live a quiet, toil-free life.

8. That again, his electrocution on the night of April 3, 1936, completely closed the case.

It is obvious, even from these basic seeds of doubt, that Hauptmann *could not* have committed this crime, of all crimes, alone. As some of the newspapers said, in their twentieth-anniversary stories of the crime this spring, the case just *wasn't*, and still isn't, complete, and the very cloudiness of the picture has been the factor which has made millions of level-headed Americans even reach the conclusion that Hauptmann was convicted *unjustly* and that an innocent man was sent to the chair.

The furtherance of this last assumption is not encouraged here, as shown earlier. What *is* encouraged is the absolute honesty and conviction of Dr. Condon, who, in the trial, never was presented in his true light to the public. To the press, he was "superannuated" and "eccentric," and certainly his actions at times were unorthodox. The press, of course, could afford to be cavalier in its attitude toward Jafsie; the prosecution, however, had to make up its mind in a much more serious manner.

WAS Jafsie, first, "in the clear?" This latter wasn't resolved until after the New Jersey police had put him through some sharp questioning, a second-class "third-degree." Then, was he really firm in his identification of Hauptmann as "John"? And, finally, would he prove too talkative as a witness? The prosecution felt—for valid reasons—that no intimation must be given at the trial that others besides Hauptmann were involved. (After all, only Hauptmann was before the bar of justice, and the others involved shouldn't even be tipped off that their existence was known.) The prosecution also could not risk handing the defense the opportunity to hammer away at the question: "Where are the others?"

For, what sometimes is forgotten is that the job of the court was limited to one thing—proving the guilt or innocence of Bruno Hauptmann. Finding the accomplices involved with Hauptmann was, and still is, a matter for the investigative forces of the government, not of the prosecutor.

That Dr. Condon came close to discovering who these accomplices were

is shown in the exclusive story he gave me concerning his visit to Hauptmann while the latter was in the Flemington, N. J., jail. Trying to win Hauptmann's confidence, Jafsie talked to the man about his mother and about what Hauptmann's comrades who had fought alongside him in the German army, in World War I, must be thinking regarding their fellow-veteran having been charged with so heinous a crime. Jafsie told me that his efforts had reduced Hauptmann to tears, and that he was convinced the man was on the verge of talking. But the jailer abruptly announced that Jafsie's time was up—and the opportunity was gone forever.

"HAD that interruption not occurred," Condon told me later, "I could have had the whole story and every name in it, and there wouldn't be half a trial or a piece of a trial here today."

That the other "half a trial" may some day be staged, and that a man and a woman—who lived in the Bronx in the early 1930's who read *The Bronx Home News,* and who lived close enough to St. Raymond's Cemetery to permit Hauptmann to walk to them, borrow writing-materials, sit down and write the instructions for finding the baby, and be back at the rendezvous with Jafsie in thirteen minutes—will eventually be found, seems inevitable.

The great bulk of the ransom bills never have been found, and it seems inconceivable that all the gold notes returned to the U. S. Treasury under the order of May 1st, 1933, were not checked before they were destroyed. When the final break comes in the case, we may learn that these gold notes were kept for years in a safe-deposit box, or had served in some obscure section of the globe in the way gold itself often does—as security in escrow. Is it not likely that persons clever enough to have done all the rest might also be clever enough to exchange this money with a hoarder or someone else who, for reasons of his own, wouldn't spend it immediately?

There are parts of Mexico, and certainly of many other countries among our southern neighbors (to say nothing of other parts of the world), where people never even have heard of the Lindbergh kidnaping. Certainly such persons would not be on the lookout for ransom bills. That missing $30,315 of the ransom payment may yet be the clue which eventually will be traced back to the missing accomplices, just as the smaller portion of it led unerringly to Bruno Richard Hauptmann.

It is my belief that the tracing should be done *now.* •

"THE RIVET'S STILL THERE"

By M. R. KRYTHE

Whenever you buy a pair of genuine Levis—those indigo-blue jeans made for more than a century by the Levi Strauss Company of San Francisco—you'll notice their distinctive copper rivets. These sturdy fasteners are "still there," as the firm proudly boasts; and members of the company chuckle as they tell the story of *how* they got there.

During the Gold Rush days, young Levi Strauss, in 1850, stepped ashore in the City by the Golden Gate, carrying a bundle of canvas and other heavy materials. He'd brought these from New York, hoping to sell the goods to get a grubstake before setting off for the mines.

But Fate apparently had other plans for him. Immediately a miner stepped up to Levi and asked, "Did you bring any pants along? Can't get any here that will stand the hard wear in the diggin's."

"No, I—I didn't," said the surprised young man; "just didn't think of doing that."

Suddenly an idea hit him. He grabbed his new acquaintance by the arm, and they hurried along the narrow dusty street until they came to a small tailor-shop. There Levi showed the owner his goods, and asked him to make two pairs of pants at once, one for himself and the other for the miner.

They proved so satisfactory that the news soon spread that Levi's pants actually held up, and he was besieged with more orders than he could fill. He had his brothers in New York send out more materials. Young Strauss became so involved in the pants business that he never did get to the diggings as a miner. Since his product was so popular, he started a small factory where the "Levis"—as everyone called them—were turned out as fast as possible.

Meantime, something happened over in Virginia City, Nevada, that had an important bearing on the Strauss Levis. Whenever a miner named Alkali Ike came to town, he'd go to the tailor, Jacob W. Davis. With a stream of profanity, Ike cursed his "doggoned pants pockets" because they were always tearing out. This wasn't strange, since Alkali Ike used to load them with rock specimens when on his prospecting trips.

Davis mended the pants as well as he could, but in spite of his efforts, the pockets kept tearing out. One day when Ike had made a round of several saloons, and was especially abusive, the tailor said:

"You lay down in the shop, Ike, and get some sleep; I'll try to fix the pockets this time so that they will really stay on."

Alkali Ike was soon snoring peacefully; Davis slipped over to a harness-shop, and pounded in some iron rivets to hold the pocket-corners in place. The tailor did it as a joke; but Ike didn't get angry, as Davis had expected. He was delighted with his new indestructible pockets, told others about them, and Davis was kept busy riveting pants pockets.

On his annual trip to San Francisco to buy materials, the tailor told Strauss about his new idea. At once there was a conference with a lawyer; Strauss got a patent on the rivets; and Davis stayed on to take charge of his overall factory. However, in order to prevent rusting, Levi used copper rivets instead of iron ones.

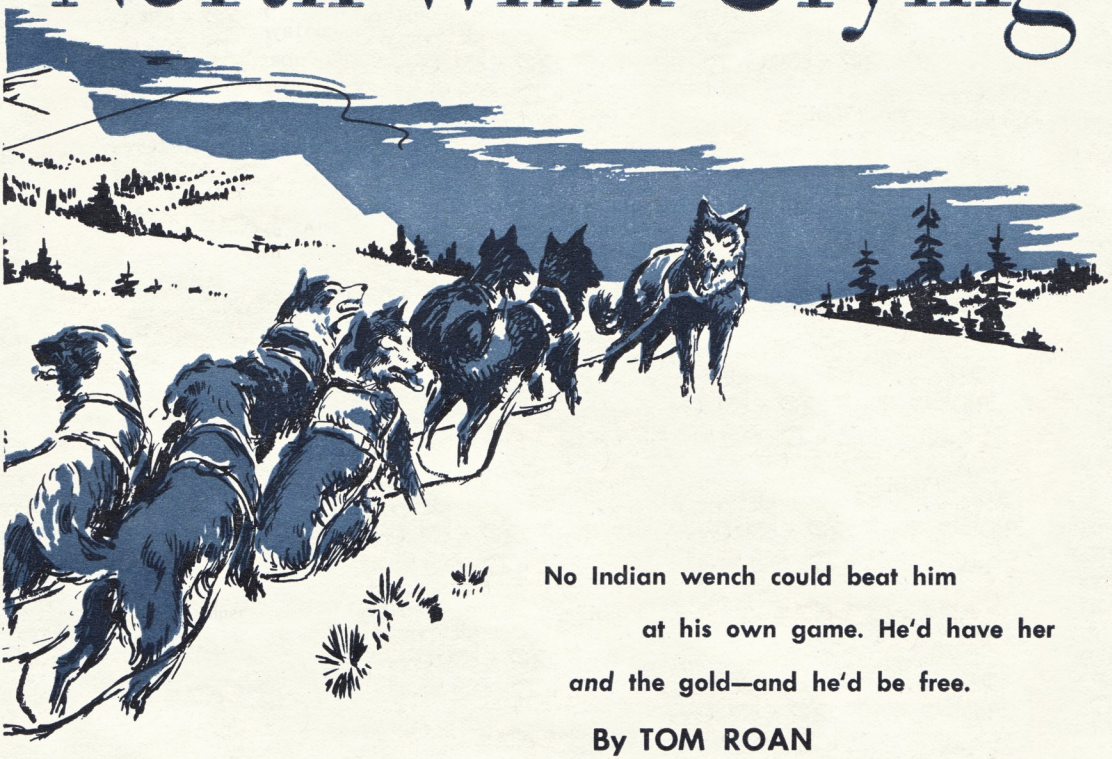
Since 1850 the firm (now made up of descendants of Strauss) has made more than 95,000,000 pairs of Levis in their eight factories. At their Centennial celebration in 1950 they gave Governor Earl Warren an especially tailored pair of Levis.

Levis have changed very little during all these decades; they still are stitched with strong orange-colored thread; they carry the same oilcloth patch with the firm's guarantee, and their characteristic trademark—two horses, each trying to go in a different direction and tear a pair of Levis apart—is still used.

The company hasn't been able to improve on one of the most important and durable Levi features: the copper fasteners that strengthen these sturdy pants. Take a look at your Levis; "The Rivet's Still There."

Illustrated by CHARLES GEER

North Wind Crying



No Indian wench could beat him at his own game. He'd have her *and* the gold—and he'd be free.

By TOM ROAN

CURSING THROUGH HIS BEARD and keeping his distance as he trudged through the snow, Archie Buckner sent the long whip flying again. The lash cracked into a noise that was louder and sharper than a pistol-shot in the frosty air—a sound that was like suddenly shattering glass.

Pain showed for just an instant in the fur-rimmed face of the tall Indian girl pushing and twisting at the gee-pole of the sled. Ahead, the lead-dog whipped her head around and snarled back at the string of seven malemutes behind her, the brutes straining and sawing in their harness to take the long sled up and over the stiff pull. When the last surge took the sled to the top the girl spoke one sharp word:

"Ee-yak!"

"Now what the hell?" Archie Buckner stared at her. His eyes raked the halted dogs in a swift glance. "You know damned well I said we'd make time—fast time!"

"Of course." The girl nodded, her voice gentle. "The fear drives you on and on. Now I am your prisoner, but I do not intend to kill my husband's dogs."

"Damn your husband!"

"So you say so often."

"You damned Indian, you!"

"Oh, yes," she nodded, smiling faintly, "an Indian, but I fear no man. Until now no man has been afraid of me."

Archie laughed contemptuously. "Who is afraid of you now!"

"You." She lifted her left hand. From under the cuff of her mitten hung a small steel chain made fast to the end of the sled. "Is there further proof,"—she shook her wrist and rattled the chain—"than this?"

"Shut up!" He lifted the whip, towering above her with a rifle strapped to his back and six-shooters in his waistband under the heavy furs. Twice before, today, he had lifted that whip with the quick notion of knocking her down. As many times he had heard a low growl from the dogs and saw that they were watching him with lifted lips and a dangerous glimmer in their eyes. Now again he stepped back, and the hand holding the whip dropped at his side.

JUDGED strictly by his own conclusions, the North had been cruel to Archie Buckner. Months ago in Forty Mile he had shot a man down in the Music Box—a saloon, gambling-house and honky-tonk. Moments later he had killed a screaming woman who had thrown herself forward and across the dying man's chest.

All the North hunted him now. The man who had died mattered little. He was only a crimp and a tinhorn gambler who nightly tinkled the music-box and was not above rolling a drunken miner for his poke. But in Alaska only a woman might kill a woman and get away with it—sometimes. There was too great a shortage of them up here, and rare were the men who would dare to contribute to the shortage by sending one away. They were mostly toys, of course, but men now and then needed toys in this great and sprawling country where the cold white silence reigned for months on end when the sun swung south.

Too many men, perhaps, remembered Lille Balleau. They remembered her golden hair and her golden voice. Ten-score and more had known her arms were soft and warm. If her eyes too often brimmed with tears and love and her lips were only lies for fat pokes, well, hell, what mattered that to a man in this far land—a miner in from the creeks, rich and drunk and roaring wild, in town for a few days and nights to paint it red, to see and thrill, to taste and feel the sights?

Up here a man found his gold or left his carcass in the wilds for the wolves and prowling things, living today and apt to die tomorrow, gulping life in the raw and rowdy where he could find it. Alaska had all kinds of men, the strong-gutted and brawny with hair on their chests and whiskers to their belly-buttons, and others weak as jelly, too soft to fight and die, then get up to fight and die again—men who had no earthly business in the North!

Archie Buckner was one of the latter. Born in Bartlett Alley, one of the toughest rat- and human-runways in all of old San Francisco's howling Barbary Coast, he had started life the soft way. As soon as he could toddle he was Mamma's little darling of the parlor. Maudlin women and sentimental drunks had poured tears and dollars on him, his mother dressing him as a doll, one day a girl, the next a boy, a bunny rabbit or a toddling teddy bear.

At thirty, the darling of the parlor had outgrown some of it, though he still wanted what he wanted, and hang or damn who the devil had to pay for it. He was short on several of the wonderful things his mother had promised and sworn he was going to be.

But Archie Buckner had not been short at other things. In the Midnight Sun he could sit and sway like a wizard on the piano stool, long hands fluttering up and down the keys, his particular brand of music reeling and rocking the split-log walls and rafters. Given a fiddle, he could saw the toughest and most miserly drunken miner to great tears falling in his beard and the spending notion to fling his poke on the bar and bawl:

"Bartender, God damn you, set 'em up on me to the whole house!"

Bank Sweet from the Music Box had let his big brown eyes roll on deadly territory when he lamped them in Lille Balleau's direction. Lille Balleau belonged to Archie Buckner—from Archie Buckner's first week in the North there had been no question about that. They knew it from barroom rakes to miners, all the rest of the town to keepers of the dives and joints. As one of his kind sometimes would, Archie Buckner had been true to Lille Balleau. True, until she packed trunk and bag and slid out when his back was turned, making a quick change of both heart and address to the Music Box.

Everybody knew what followed. He had never intended to shoot beautiful Lille. He had never intended to mar nor scar an inch of her sleek and glossy white skin; he had never once thought of a pistol-ball bursting her pretty Irish jaw. It just so happened that she had made a fool of herself at the wrong moment, mauling his heavy heart with a twist of her dramatics when the lightning was letting loose, the noise crashing all around and nobody able to think.

He had walked to the center of the room, eyes on the couple at the piano beyond the hardwood strip of dance floor, a long black .44 in his waistband. A handsome rake had been Bank Sweet, a lowbrow from the moonshine-whisky hills of Arkansas, who still ate beans off his knife. With everybody looking on, Bank's courage had gone to thin soup. Without anybody telling him what was coming, he had leaped from the stool with a yell—the sudden roar of the .44 flapping him down to one knee on the floor and his left elbow rippling a crash of noise from the keys. A gush of red had come from his mouth as he hung there for a second like a reeling drunk sick at the belly.

And there was Lille, dropping to her knees, screaming and crying over that thing dying on the floor.

The big black .44 had bucked again—just bucked, jumped, whirling rings of smoke coming out of the muzzle, streaks of flame roaring the lead to Lille.

ARCHIE BUCKNER might have stood trial and come clear of it in spite of everything. A dozen women in Forty Mile would have sworn away their lives and all hopes of the hereafter for him. Some of them would have hidden him until the excitement had its chance to die. Instead, he had wheeled and fled. After that, one mistake after another had trailed him, driving him on and on until all the North seemed to be after him. Everywhere he turned men wanted to capture him, to take him back and see him hanged. When the North swung down its glittering eye a man was doomed—little hope, little chance left for him beyond the unspeakable business of dying.

And Archie Buckner did not want to die. Thinking that he was keeping himself from it, he had killed two men in the long and bitter months since leaving Forty Mile. On the Peel he had killed one Charley McCoy, burying him under the floor of his cabin. On the Great Bear he had killed Rodney Knight, hiding this second body under the hearth of the rough-rock fireplace. He had taken gold from both places, and from several more besides, making up eighty pounds of the hard pack he carried.

Now this—the sled, the wolfish dogs, and the pretty half-Indian wife of Dawson Queen, the man who rode the mails through thousands of square miles of this cold and lonely wilderness of the Far North.

Odd now, but each time he looked at this girl he thought of Lille Balleau—so sweet, so smooth and beautiful, Lille Balleau! Lille was now only a figure of the imagination, a golden shadow to haunt his dreams each time he laid his weary body down and tried to sleep.

Everything, indeed, was a dream until he came to Dawson Queen's one-room cabin, cold and hungry, shoulders and back rubbed raw from the pack he was carrying. Kloshe Queen had taken him in, never troubling herself to ask who he was or from where he had come.

Other men on the trail had stopped at the cabin while Dawson Queen was away on his mail run. Nothing had ever happened to Kloshe Queen. Her faith was so simple it was childish. Not once did she suspect that she had under her roof a far-wanted killer who was eating his guts out for the sight of a good-looking woman.

Damn it, it was her own fault, letting a man pile into a moosehide bunk against the wall just across the room from hers. Dog-tired, stomach filled with good warm food, he had slept for hours. Something had stirred, rousing him at dawn, the long-hunted animal lying on his side, cracking open one eye, ears cocked. Across from him two long shining legs were noiselessly sliding from under their covering and off the side of the bed. The torso of a woman had come up, bare from throat to waist for just a moment as arms lifted a mannish shirt to cover it.

Well, hell, and so what! A good-looking woman, a smooth warm-skinned beauty—a lonely cabin locked in by the cold in the heart of a still and far wilderness. . . . A man . . . a woman . . . a leap, a grab, a scream, a clip to the jaw, and the six wolfish dogs outside growling and scratching at the front door, whining like crying children to get in and take a short and bloody part in the battle being fought inside. . . .

After that a man could hang and die only once. That was why he had taken Dawson Queen's extra sled and dogs. In the end, with the sled loaded with food and all the things needed on the trail, what fool would have left the pretty half-breed behind? With eighty pounds of stolen gold now on the sled, he would be a different man when he made his way to the outside world.

"WELL?" He looked down at her. The dogs dropped to their bellies as they rested on the snow, every tongue still panting. "How much longer are we stalling?"

"I am listening."

"Listening?" He cocked his head to one side.

"It is the north wind." She lifted her free hand, the other resting on the gee-pole. "For some it blows evil. For others it is a good voice. Listen to it now."

He stepped back, glowering. Until now he had scarcely noticed that the wind was blowing, but it was there, a soft sobbing coming down the valley, a low whispering that seemed to grow stronger as he listened. It was like cold needles stabbing him when he faced it, coming from off the far Arctic wastelands of ice and snow. For a few seconds it was like a low voice singing over the rise, reminding him of a woman whimpering.

"All right," he said then. "Mush on!"

"Then you hear it?"

She was grinning at him now, a kissable wench standing there leaning against the gee-pole, a strange sparkle in her dark eyes. For just a little more he would bang her on the jaw and put her down right here on the snow. A glance at the dogs changed his mind. Those brutes would be up and at his throat. The only thing holding them now was

Men tire themselves in pursuit of rest.

—LAURENCE STERNE

Kloshe, and she was holding them to save their lives, knowing he would shoot them down one after the other if they started to charge him.

"You do hear it now," she nodded. "It is the north wind crying. It is bad when it cries like that, so soft and sad—"

"Mush on!" he snarled. "I'll have you working none of your damned Indian mumbo-jumbo on me!"

"But it is crying." She lifted her hands, a queer look of fear now in her eyes. "I hear it like—like an Indian death-song, a song old men sing when they know the time of dying is close at hand. They—"

"Mush on, damn you!" He lifted the whip, conscious of the dogs leaping to their feet in their harness, their fangs baring. *"Mush!"*

"Mush! *Tenas mahsh!"* She turned lifting her free hand, giving her order to the dogs in English and Chinook. *"Konaway, mamook!"*

The dogs turned, tails lifting and wagging in the air. The lead-bitch swung back to position like a pendulum, setting her feet in the snow and straining forward in a weave to set the other dogs in line. Bucking right and left at the gee-pole, Kloshe rocked the sled, all the dogs now tightening the traces, stretching themselves forward—the sled beginning to move again. Now it was pitching down the south slope of the rise, the runners starting a low and slithering song of their own on the snow.

South, always south, keeping off the trails, as far away as possible from all forms of civilization. That was the way to get out of the North, the way other wanted men had done it. Behind him let the North boil and rage, let the Northwest Mounted Police watch the trails. By dodging every cabin, by avoiding every meeting with mankind, he would make it, if nothing better than the Gulf of Alaska and the upper rim of the North Pacific Ocean, then down through the limitless inland waterways in some small stolen boat, and on into the Puget Sound—the final gateway to freedom.

IT was all carefully and hopefully plotted in his mind. This girl, the sled and dogs, would have to go long before he was even within hundreds of miles of safety. Where, when and how that parting would take place was still in the future. Right now the sled and the dogs were indispensable, and without the girl to drive and manage the dogs he would be lost.

Rounding a bend an hour later the sled-runners were singing merry tunes as they glided over an unbroken sheet of ice filling a narrow waterway that had come twisting in from the east. Down a steady but imperceptible slope high walls of rock and ice were closing in on them. A widening that in warm weather would be a mile-wide lake was showing ahead. Yelling his command to the girl, he had her curve to the right and around an abrupt shoulder, the gray Arctic nightfall rapidly closing around them.

The gods could not have picked a better spot for the night. Just around the shoulder was an ice-rimmed hole six feet high and half as wide in the rocks. Rifle down, cocked and ready, he made a quick inspection, and turned back with a grin in his matted beard as he spoke, a warm and quivering anticipation already possessing him.

"Thirty feet deep and twenty wide inside. We'll leave the sled drawn up close, right outside. A handful of fire and it'll be a warm nest. Others have camped here before us; there's quite a pile of dry wood inside. The dogs will stay with the sled."

"Yes." She looked at him with hard defiance in her big eyes. "And the dogs will rob the sled of all the food we have, before morning! You're a fool as well as a coward."

"Damn it," he snarled, his fist tightening on the rifle's barrel, "we'll take the grub inside!"

"And"—she nodded—"spend half of tomorrow repacking the sled. The better way is to take the dogs inside."

"Don't toy with me, Kloshe!"

"Don't rouse the dogs." She waved her free hand toward them. "They hate you, as it is."

"What in hell could they know?"

"Look at their eyes and curled lips." She was beginning to jeer at him. "They know I am in trouble. One word from me—"

"And I'd shoot you down!" he rasped. "Damn you, Kloshe, you're dancing like a fool on a lighted powder-keg, when you mock me!"

"That I know." She smiled wearily. "Listen!" She lifted her hand, a strange light again filling her eyes. "The wind is stronger!"

"Damn the wind!"

An hour later, he was cursing and arguing with her, but he was keeping his hand close to the butt of a six-shooter and his voice low. She held the other side of the fire, the dogs forming a waiting and watching half-ring behind her. Each time his voice had lifted, their bristles lifted with it. Several times, a low whimper had come from the lead-dog, that magnificently brawny bitch in her coat of dusty white and liver-brown. Each time she had whined it had been like a deep crying hard-held in her throat, her half-bared fangs yellow as gold in the firelight.

"If you keep this up, Kloshe," he ground out the words, trying to keep his voice down, "you're going to make me kill you."

"Yes, I know." She was smiling again as she nodded, so damnably sweet about it, and so maddeningly beautiful now in the warmth and firelight with her head bared and her heavy furs laid aside. "It will be simple: A bullet through the heart or the head, a quick stab of pain, and Kloshe will be dead here on the rocks. She will be robbed of only one thing more." Her eyes sparkled. "And that will be the sound of fury from the dogs, dying to avenge the wrongs to me! I will miss the snapping of the fangs, the ripping of a coward's flesh, the great hunks of meat tearing out of him, his blood spilling on the ground."

"I'll kill the damned dogs, I tell you!"

This time her smile bared perfectly-set white teeth. "Not before some of them get through to you!"

Arguing, pleading, promising her many things, was getting him nowhere.

Finally he cursed himself and piled down in the opening, sleeping with one eye cracked and his ears cocked.

Though still dead-tired at the first hint of dawn, he got up and moved quietly outside, rifle hugged against him. When he came to the great shoulder of rocks, the wind struck him, and it seemed to be coming now from the east. In it he heard a sharp crying that staggered him back, making him afraid.

All right, today it would be something else: the damned dogs strung to the sled, hung on a rise or a hard turn where both he and Kloshe would have to put their shoulders to the sled. Today there and then, another swift belt to the jaw, and—and—

His thoughts stopped, as if jarred to a quick halt. Again the crying was coming back to him through the thick haze of grayness filling the outside world. It was sharper now. In a moment's dying of the wind it seemed to be rising, growing even sharper. As the wind came back it was still there, muffled now to a low crying and whining—something coming down the frozen waterway, running through the grayness, making time—fast time—on the ice!

"Damn!"

It seemed to be the only word he could say. He fell back against the rocks, rifle up and ready, eyes popping in his face. Then, out of the grayness, he saw it, as one object, an apparition composed of eight running dogs, a long sled and a tall man.

He was going on; in another minute he would be lost in the pre-dawn gloom. Then hell itself was suddenly loosed, in scream on scream, sharper than a bugle's shrill calling, reaching far out on the ice.

"Dawson!" It was one word, over and over, each punctuated by a slight pause as if to give them room to go flying away in the dawn grayness, all the desperation and anguish behind the calling: *"Dawson! Dawson! Dawson!"*

"You—wench!" Buckner wheeled, his own voice a yell of sudden terror letting loose.

"Dawson! Dawson! Dawson!"

She was holding the dogs, in her panic thinking she was doing the right thing by keeping them behind her instead of letting them rush out to die.

"Dawson! Daw—"

He cut her short with a shot. The yard-long blade of fire and crash of the rifle was like a sudden rocking of the earth to his panic-stricken ears. He had not intended it; the cold finger

"You—wench!" Buckner shouted, his voice a scream of terror. "Dawson! Dawson!" she yelled, holding the dogs instead of sacrificing them. "Daw—" He cut her short with a shot.

on the trigger had fumbled, trembling hands the cause of it, the bullet smacking a shower of ice and bits of rock down at least two yards from the girl.

Wheeling, rocking back, he was like a man gone mad against the high shoulder of rocks, hands pawing and raking again, trying to work the rifle's bolt and get another cartridge in the firing chamber. With an oath and a quick stiffening of every muscle in his body, he stood straight, only his head craned forward on its long neck, ears straining.

Down there on the ice in the gloom, sled-runners were screaming, coming around in a swift turn. As the sled turned Kloshe's far-reaching voice came again like the final and hopeless shriek of some wild thing dying: *"Dawson!"*

"Kloshe!" The voice boomed out of the gloom, appearing to rock the resound on the slopes like the harsh echoing of a drum. "Kloshe! *Nika chako!*" it cried again.

QUEEN, it was! Dawson Queen! Buckner turned suddenly, in his terror not knowing where he was going nor what he was trying to do. He had to do something, quick! The right thing was to get back and get in position to start shooting before big Dawson Queen spotted him.

A sloping break in the rocks seemed put there for him. He slung the rifle to his shoulder and fell into the break, a scrambling thing pawing and clawing his way upward, getting to the first six-foot rise. On it he fell flat, the cocked rifle going off with another hellish noise, its bullet glancing and crying away on the icy rocks above him. Screaming like a woman, he wiggled himself up, pawing for the next rise.

Hell, nothing was clear now! Terror possessed him body and soul, robbing him of the last smattering of his senses. He heard snarling dogs below, and realized that Kloshe had let them loose. Given their chance at last, they were trying to follow him. Maddened and cursing, he climbed higher and higher, to fall flat on his face on top of the shoulder, another sound coming now to freeze him with terror from a second source.

It was another sled—eight dogs and two more men who seemed to have burst out of the gray nowhere. Down there they were in brighter light where a stronger wind was clearing the gloom. Two wide-brimmed white hats fastened on top of the sled's load told Archie Buckner that here were the men he dreaded more than all other men on earth.

"Mounties!" he gasped, bucking himself up on hands and knees. "Mounties with Dawson Queen!"

Of course they were Mounties, and why hadn't he remembered that one usually found them not far from the mail runs? There they were, and maybe they had been at the cabin when Queen returned. Together they had picked up the trail, reading the meaning of the stolen food, the missing wife, the dogs and the sled.

Jerking back as if hit in the face, Archie Buckner started clambering madly up running, the timbered ridge.

Anywhere, anywhere now! The eighty pounds of stolen gold and the woman no longer were of interest; only life mattered now. Into the frozen walls of gloom ahead, over the high places and down the other side, and he might make it, might yet beat them out. There would be other lonely cabins in these far and still wilds, and maybe he would kill again —and again—anything to keep going!

Four hours later it looked as if he might make it. He had put everything behind. Crossing the ridges, he was still going up. Ahead of him, still, white and cold, loomed a towering pass sheeted with ice and snow. Here he was slowed to a creep, winding his way up, pausing to rest for a few moments here and there.

He had lost all track of time. Time was no longer important. Now he was possessed only with the feeling that he had once more put danger behind him, escaping the smart ones, by his own superior smartness.

A sound brought the old fear back. It was the wind, a low sobbing and crying on the slopes. He thought of what Kloshe had said of the north wind, of old Indians singing their death-songs when the end was at hand.

Damn Kloshe! She was gone, back to her man—and to hell with her! He was cursing her as he neared the top of the long drag. The wind was still crying. Then out of it there suddenly came a sharper, longer-lasting cry—a wail, a whistle lifting a spray of ice and snow ahead of him.

A bullet, that! He turned and looked back. Yes, a man was back there, a weaving shape against the wall of green below the timberline. One of the Mounties, damn him! One of those men who never gave up.

At the top he turned and fired three careful shots. The fourth was about to be released when abruptly he changed his mind. Wheeling, no heavy pack to load him down now, he hurried on, getting the crest of the top behind him. There he stopped, eyes widening as he stared below, around, then back at the rim of the crest behind him.

God, no! That damned Indian wench—what had she done to him? How had she fooled him like this? Had he walked along behind her and the sled like a fool, letting her pick the way, slow-circling him back to the starting-place?

And she had! It was down there, down a long white slope shaped like a great trough and covered with snow. Beyond a sudden drop-off sprinkled with scrub-timber was the Dawson cabin, squat and made of the usual heavy logs, but no friendly smoke from its rough chimney bannering in the wind now. He took a few uncertain steps forward—and then he halted again.

Only a few miles away, down-country to his right, three creeping shapes were showing. In a moment he knew them as sleds. Dawson, Kloshe, and the second of the infernal pair of Mounties!

Well, hell, he still had time to play a trump card: By being careful he could get to the cabin ahead of them, and from inside its thick walls he could down them as they came up. Yes, of course—down Dawson, the two Mounties; and again—yes again!—have Kloshe, the gold and the sled.

He started on, then stopped again, cringing from a sharp cry. It was the infernal wind, the crying north wind! He laughed wildly, took another step, and halted with the snarl and gasp of a startled tiger. Looking up, he stood fascinated, unable to believe his eyes. Never had he heard of sled-dogs trailing a man; yet up there was big Tahmahnawis, the lead-dog of Kloshe's string. She was on a rise above the pass itself, trying to help the Mountie hidden somewhere below.

Archie Buckner wheeled up the rifle. The dog saw him, and dropped back behind an icy spur. Buckner shifted. For a second he forgot to watch his feet. In that second his right foot slipped. He spun half around with a yell, the rifle blazing away at the lifeless sky. All at once he was falling, bouncing, turning like a log.

It was the beginning of a snowball: Rolling faster and faster, it was growing larger and larger until it was like a white house coming down the slope; and he was a prisoner soon unconscious inside a great ball racing faster and faster as it struck the deeper snow.

THAT was the end of Archie Buckner. An hour later Tahmahnawis and the trailing Mountie found the remains. Coming over the drop-off and falling on ice and rocks two hundred feet below, the great snowball was broken, split apart in the middle, the two halves lying forty yards from each other in the low timber.

Northwest Mounties are patient men. They dug the upper half of Archie out of one great mass of hard-packed snow, the lower half out of the other. •

HENRY,

Illustration by DAVE STONE

the GEEPEY and the GOONEY

A portrait of a weird and wonderful citizen who whistled instead of talking, and who thought you could play a guitar while riding a motorcycle.

• By JOSEPH LAWRENCE

A MAN WHO WRITES PIECES for the papers gets calls from some mighty strange people, and I can't say I ever am too surprised at some of the characters who are at the other end of the line when I pick up my telephone. When it rang the other afternoon, however, and I discovered the caller was Henry Farrell, I must admit I drew back in some astonishment; I had neither seen nor heard from Henry in more than ten years—not since 1941, to be exact, when he was my assistant on the staff of the *Home Mechanics* magazine and thus succeeded in providing me with one of the weirdest, wackiest years of my entire life.

"Joe?" he said. "What are you doing?"

That's all. No questions about how had I been in the more than ten years since we'd last seen each other; no preamble such as "Hello," or "Is this Mr. Lawrence?" or even a clue to his identity. Just "Joe? What are you doing?"

"Who," I said crisply, "is this?"

"Oh, this is Henry, Joe. I just called to say, if you aren't busy, a bunch of us are riding out to New Jersey to visit with Carlo Bergstrom, and I thought you might like to come along. There are fifty of us going, and we're all riding white motorcycles. We'll be leaving in twenty minutes and we have a motorcycle for you and anyone else you think would like to come along. Think you can make it?"

That did it. The only man I've ever met—or ever hope to meet—who could telephone someone he hadn't seen in ten years and, without bothering to identify himself, begin a meaningless conversation about riding white motorcycles, to the home of a character whose name meant—and still means—nothing to me, is Henry Farrell. Henry did things like that as a matter of course.

"We're all meeting at the Holland Tunnel," Henry was saying, "and we ought to be at Carlo's house in time for dinner. And bring your guitar."

"On a motorcycle?" I yelled. The fact that I had no guitar and never had had one occurred to me later.

"Oh, sure," Henry said blithely. "Gus is coming, and his wife, too, and they're bringing their saxophone. We'll have a fine time."

Sadly I told Henry that I was up to my ears in work and didn't think I could make it, but that I appreciated his calling me and would he please give my best to Carlo and Gus and Gus's wife. I was tempted to add "whoever they are," but I didn't, and after a minute Henry hung up joyously, and I sat back to reconsider the picture I've always kept in my mind of Henry Farrell—a picture, I might add, which I doubt if I'll ever forget.

He was brought into my office one morning early in 1941 by my boss, who introduced him to me, saying

that Henry ought to be just the man to fill that spot we had on the news desk. I doubt if I said anything in reply for at least ten seconds because, frankly, I was staring in some slight surprise at Henry Farrell.

He was a long, thin, scrawny guy, with yellow hair that looked as if it had been combed with a rake (if anything); he wore a baggy tweed suit, a string tie and rubbers—although it was a beautiful, cloudless morning—and, in his hand, he carried a rolled-up umbrella. In the year I knew him, and saw him almost daily, I never saw him venture outdoors without either the rubbers or the umbrella. He also wore thick-lensed, horn-rim glasses.

I FINALLY recovered enough to rise and mutter that I was pleased to meet him, and that's when I got the first of the many shocks I was to receive from my association with Henry—he didn't talk. Instead—and everyone who recognizes Henry in this description will bear me out in this—he wiggled his fingers at me like a small child waving from a window, and made a whistling sound through his teeth that sounded like the noise a trained bird is taught to make when its owner brags that it can talk.

It was all I could do to keep from wiggling *my* fingers in reply and returning his greeting whistle for whistle. . . .

Any doubts I might have had about Henry's ability, as judged by this first impression, soon were dissipated, however. In no time he'd plunged into the job, taken hold as only a man who knew his stuff would do, and soon was a well-liked and respected member of our staff. He still whistled whenever such commonplaces as "Hello," "Thanks," "How are you?", "Good-by," or "Let's have lunch," were called for, but he talked at other times, and his conversation always was stimulating if for no other reason than that it was different.

The further fact that we rarely saw Henry without a broad smile helped to endear him to everyone in the office; but that the smile was not just something put on for effect soon became apparent. Henry had a delightful sense of humor, a fact which was brought out all too clearly in his drawings. Henry whistled rather than indulge in conversational clichés; he drew fantastic impressions in pencil rather than waste time trying to describe a person or thing verbally.

For example, most of us had photographs on our desks of our wives and children. Henry didn't; instead, the glass top of his working space rested on drawings of some of the strangest figures ever seen outside the mind of a mental patient. There was a round ball, with an egg-shaped head from which emerged wires and electrodes and similar gadgets. This figure had three eyes arranged in the general pattern of a triangle; there were four sets of teeth, and the neck was a long, thin string attached to the round ball of the torso. The figure was labeled "The Gooney."

"What's a gooney?" someone asked Henry one day.

"Oh," he giggled, "that's my mother. Good likeness, don't you think?"

He went on to explain that the three eyes enabled his parent to observe things ordinary people might miss, and the four sets of teeth made it possible for Mama to eat like a stevedore. (The boss, who met Henry's mother one day, reported that she actually was a handsome woman of evident culture and refinement.)

There were similar pictures of "The Geepey" (Henry's wife), "The Booley" (his father) and "The Zookey" (his mother-in-law). The one of the Geepey had four sets of eyes—front and rear and on both sides of the head. . . .

There finally came a day when Henry came whistling and grinning over to my desk and suggested he would like to have us all bring our wives and come out to his place on Sunday for a day on "the Wewlie." I told him I thought that would be fine, and just what was the Wewlie?

"That's my boat!" Henry squealed. "We ought to have a fine day, if the weather's nice."

The following Sunday, eight of us met at a pier along the Sound, up in Westchester, and arranged with a man to row us out to the *Wewlie*. He looked at us strangely when we told him where we wanted to go, but grunted an agreement to ferry us out, four at a time. I was among the first four, with my wife and another staff member and his wife.

We skirted a variety of luxurious yachts as we tooled across the harbor, and I recall we wondered what kind of boat Henry owned and how it would compare with the others in the harbor. I also found myself questioning Henry's ability to own a craft in these waters, knowing as I did his $65-a-week salary.

I got the answer speedily.

The *Wewlie* turned out to be no less grotesque than the reproductions of the Gooney, the Geepey, the Booley or the Zookey. In the first place, it was easily the most top-heavy vessel I've ever seen, being surely as high out of the water as it was long. The bow seemed to curl up in front of the wheelhouse like the toe of an East Indian slipper; there were approximately four decks above the waterline; the stern looked as if it had been backed abruptly into a cliff and squeezed into the midships section, and the topside was a maze of aerials, cables, pseudo-radar screens and fishnets. There was not a sign of life aboard.

"Do you suppose we've come on the wrong day?" my wife asked dubiously.

It was at that moment that the other girl in our boat let out a shriek and pointed at the *Wewlie*. I saw what she meant; from the topmost part of the top deck unfolded the completely naked figure of Henry Farrell. He was followed almost immediately by another nude figure, that of a very pretty, dark-eyed girl. The latter, when the excitement died down, turned out to be the Geepey.

Now, ordinarily, if a man or woman were discovered and come upon suddenly while sunbathing, there would be squeals and a rush for covering of some sort. With Henry and the Geepey there was no such nonsense. They merely hailed us casually, told us to come around to the other side of the *Wewlie,* and they'd meet us with a length of line. They did, too, in the meanwhile having pulled on sport shirts and slacks.

We had a fine day, swimming, eating and quaffing cold beer. Not a word ever was said about the deshabille of our host and hostess at the time of our arrival. . . .

I remember later on talking with Henry about the *Wewlie* and wondering how the other yachtsmen in the area felt about this weird craft anchored so close to their obviously sleek possessions. My question was so phrased as to suggest that the appearence of the *Wewlie* might not be the only fault the locals might find with the Farrells as neighbors. Henry whistled and giggled.

"Yeah," he smirked, "they've been trying to run us out for a long time. But it's a free country; they haven't got us yet."

THAT Henry wasn't all screwball, however, was proved by the nature of his work for *Home Mechanics*. He consistently turned in the best copy of any editor on the staff; he literally deluged us with story suggestions (every one accompanied by a diagram and a wacky drawing, which in themselves were enough to make his ideas worth studying), and there was at least one occasion when we were trying to get the plans for a fabulous new plane that was being built for the Army, and when everyone else including the president of our company failed miserably to get anywhere on the idea, Henry whistled at me, waved his fingers and asked if he might try. He went off, spent the day with the inventor, and came back with a story that turned out to be one of the sensations of the magazine-publishing year.

It was toward the latter part of the spring, however, that Henry took

sick. His wife telephoned me one morning, about a week after Henry had failed to show up at the office, and reported that Henry was in the hospital. I asked what the trouble was, and the Geepey said they weren't quite sure (giggle) but that they were making tests and she would let me know.

Three weeks passed without another call from the Geepey, and finally one morning I telephoned her. How, I asked, was Henry?

"Henry?" Mrs. Farrell repeated. "Oh! Yes! Why, he's fine."

That was nice, I told her. Was he thinking about returning to the office soon? Mrs. Farrell told me to wait a moment, mumbled to someone out of earshot of the telephone, and eventually said that, yes, Henry ought to be back real soon now.

It was two and a half months later that the boss came into my office one afternoon to ask the latest on Henry, and I told him all I knew. He said he didn't live too far from the Farrells' and would drive over that night and see how Henry was coming along.

Next morning, the boss came into my office, sat down next to my desk, and shook his head in puzzlement. He had called at Henry's house the night before, and after a prolonged ringing of the doorbell, Henry's mother had come to the door. Why, she had said, no, Henry wasn't here; he was down working on his boat; the boss certainly would find him somewhere in the harbor.

The boss drove to the harbor, poked around among the boats until he found one that gave him a momentary start, decided it was the *Wewlie*, and climbed aboard. Sure enough, there was Henry, bronzed and healthy, and sitting pulling contentedly on a bottle of beer. "Welcome aboard," he whistled, "and how about a stein of the brew?"

Henry returned to work the following Monday. He came in just as if he'd been no farther away than the men's room, whistled slyly at all of us, wiggled his fingers, and propped his umbrella against the side of his desk. In three minutes he was on the phone and conducting his affairs much as if he'd never been away.

It may sound incredible that we let Henry get away with such conduct; but actually we didn't. When it could be pried out of Henry by the boss, it developed he'd actually been a pretty sick boy during his absence, had had most of his stomach removed, and it had been touch and go for awhile there as to whether they were going to have to send for "the Boombie" (the undertaker).

One of the members of the staff of *Home Mechanics* was the late Bill Williams, later adjudged one of the truly great editors of modern times. It was Bill's constant claim that Henry was nothing short of a genius, and he kept insisting that Henry get together a collection of his drawings for publication in a book. When Henry just giggled and whistled at this suggestion, Williams decided to take matters in his own hands and collect the sketches himself. Whether he ever acquired sufficient of these to warrant publication, or whether he finally decided it was impossible to present Henry's wonderful personality any other way except in the flesh, I never found out; and Bill died suddenly a few years later, leaving no traces of an uncompleted manuscript on the Geepey, the *Wewlie* and the Booley.

It was Bill Williams, I know, who reported himself as being the only man ever to see Henry actually flustered and at a loss for a word, a whistle or a finger-wave. This occurred after I'd left *Home Mechanics* at the request of Uncle Sam, late in 1941.

It seems there was one of those office parties, given after hours for someone who also was about to don khaki. The party was held in the art department, and much good cheer spread quickly through one and all. Along about nine o'clock, the cheer had mounted to what might best be termed a frenzy, and one celebrant—an artist, naturally—conceived the idea that he could fly, and was attempting to demonstrate same by going through a 28th-floor window. Probably nothing would have been done to dissuade him had he not insisted on taking a little blonde secretary with him. That was when strong measures were taken; girls were scarce at those parties.

I've a grand memory for forgetting. —ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Williams, Henry Farrell and two others embraced the artist, led him to the elevator, and whisked him to the street. On the street level, the artist realized he was being ejected from the party, and staunchly refused to leave the elevator. A discussion ensued, and the elevator operator telephoned the police.

By the time half a dozen of New York's Finest arrived on the scene, our artist friend was, according to Williams, extremely violent, and it took many smart raps with nightsticks even to reduce the budding Rembrandt to a prone position on the lobby floor. That's when Henry decided the police needed his help.

Grabbing the artist by his right foot, Henry began to tug and pull, as the cops essayed to get the man through the revolving door and into the paddy-wagon. The artist, however, objected; he kicked and screamed, while Henry continued to pull joyfully on the man's leg. Then it happened: As Henry gave a particularly violent yank on the limb, the latter suddenly seemed to separate from the rest of the body at a point midway between the ankle and the knee, and Henry as suddenly was left standing there, gaping, wide-eyed, and without a whistle to his name—a complete foot, ankle and shin-bone in his hands.

As Williams wrote the story to me, the explanation was simple enough. But no one in the office had known anything about the artist's having an artificial leg, least of all Henry, and the momentary shock was enough to startle even as calm a character as Henry. According to Williams, it was a month before Henry's smile returned, and two months before his whistle was anything more than a dry wheeze.

That was the last I heard about Henry until the other day when he called about the white-motorcycle trip to Carlo's place—except for another letter from Williams which reached me on a slab of rock out in the Pacific late in 1943.

"What are you guys *doing* out there?" Bill wrote. "Here I sit quietly content in the belief you are out there fighting to save me from being attacked by the Japs; I read newspapers that tell me we are winning every battle we enter; I assure myself the war will be over suddenly—and now comes the blow that tells me we *aren't* winning, and are in fact on the verge of complete collapse:

"They have drafted Henry Farrell!

"Here is a guy with no stomach. He can't see three feet in front of him even with those plate-glass cheaters he wears. He would die of pneumonia if he took off his rubbers anywhere except while in bed. His feet are flatter than an elephant's. He has no ear-drums. But he's in the Army.

"I tell you right now, I'm taking it on the lam. Starting tonight, I am fleeing for the hills, and if things are as bad as this, I'm never coming back. Good-by. It was nice having met you. (Signed) Bill."

I was certain Bill was kidding, or that his facts were wrong about Henry. But I learned several years later, on my return to New York, that, sure enough, Henry *had* been drafted, had served with distinction in some branch of psychological warfare—had even won a medal or two, although I can't imagine for what. Probably for taking off his rubbers on a cloudy day. •

BLUEBOOK'S COMPLETE BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL

ONCE A SUCKER

There's one born every minute, and that's what I was—in a business where I thought that title belonged to everyone else

· By Robert Bloch

Illustrated by STAN DRAKE

I WAS FINISHED. I had never actually begun, but that didn't matter. I was finished. In Hollywood I was a failure, and it hurt.

I walked into my agent's office and sat down to wait for the privilege of telling the great man to go to hell. That wouldn't get me anywhere, but at least I'd have the satisfaction of doing something constructive: Tell Larry Rickert to go to hell; then get drunk.

I was still waiting outside Rickert's office when Peter Lorre walked in. It wasn't Lorre, of course—Rickert didn't have any top names—but the resemblance was there, and strong. He walked deliberately over to the reception window. He wasn't much: Black suit, unusual for out here, but nothing special. White shirt, quiet foulard tie. Flashy ring on little finger of left hand—probably a fake stone. And a monocle. That's right—a monocle. I ignored him until Larry Rickert condescended to see me.

I walked down the hall to the big layout in the back and Larry smiled at me across the desk and waved me to a chair.

"What can I do for you?" he asked.

"That's exactly what I want to know," I told him.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean I came in here two months ago because your ads say you're a good agent, and that's what I needed. You didn't sign me up or anything like that, but you did manage to get over three hundred bucks out of me for a retainer fee and for photographs and the transcriptions I did for audition disks. What I want to know is, when do I see a little action?"

HE gave me the same grin he used for his advertising photos.

"Take it easy, Eddie. Relax."

"I've *been* taking it easy—for ten weeks now. I want to know why you haven't sold me, or my show."

Rickert stopped smiling. He leaned forward and waved the chewed end of his cigar at me.

"Listen, son," he said, "this isn't Iowa. That package idea of yours—the Radio Psychologist—may have sounded pretty good when you dreamed it up back there. And I was willing to give it a whirl. I sent audition disks out for you to all the network reps. I've been in there pitching. But it's just no dice."

"So I stink, eh?" I stood up. "All right, Mr. Rickert. But it's a pity you didn't tell me so before I spent three hundred bucks with you."

"Hold on, now—"

I was holding on, hard. I knew there was no use getting mad. He'd given me the answer: I was washed up but good. Now I didn't even feel like telling him to go to hell.

"No hard feelings, Eddie," said Rickert. "Go on home and think it over. Maybe something will still break. I'll let you know."

I went out and through the hall, back to the outer office. The little man with the monocle was still sitting there. He looked up and started to open his mouth.

"Pardon me," he said.

I didn't stop; I opened the door and emerged on the sunlit street.

He padded after me. "Please—" he murmured.

"Go away." I shook him off. "Go away. Can't you see I'm busy? I have to kill somebody."

Hurrying around the corner, into the crowd, I wondered who it was I meant to kill.

The sunshine swept around me, and so did the people, hurrying along. But I had nowhere to go. I searched my pockets: crumpled bills and some change—four dollars and thirty-five cents.

Why had I ever come out here, anyway? I was just a hick, like all the other Iowa farmers who dream of it for years, save up for years, finally travel two thousand miles to get here, and then have nothing but a souvenir to send the folks back home—a miniature wooden outhouse with the name of the city stamped on it.

I was a fool. But I couldn't go back; they'd laugh at me. My brother would laugh at me. I was laughing at myself.

EDDIE HAINES, the Boy Wonder—the star of the senior play. Just a high-school kid who never grew up. I used to think I was pretty good. They all thought so, then: "You ought to be in the movies. Or on the radio."

Why not? It sounded great—in high school. Then I wasn't in high school any more, and after a while they all got jobs and I was still bumming around, waiting for my big chance.

Then I got the idea for this Radio Psychologist program, and I thought I was all set. I read and studied and worked out a format for presentation and it was in the bag. Yeah, sure it was!

Now all I had left was four dollars and thirty-five cents. Not enough to get drunk on, but I tried. When that didn't work, I went home.

Then I remembered Charlie—my big brother, Charlie. Always ready to hand out advice. But one thing he had told me I'd never forgotten:

"There's two things a man should always take straight—his whisky and his razor."

Well, I'd taken the whisky. And I had my razor. It was time to cut the comedy; time for the unkindest cut of all . . . Shakespeare . . . High-school plays . . . To hell with that. To hell with everything—

A headache began to blind me, sending sharp pains against my eyes. But it wasn't sharp enough—not nearly as sharp as the straight edge of my razor, pressing against my throat. As I moved my hand I was thinking that the edge of a razor is the sharpest thing in the world.

It was the only thing in the world.

Chapter Two

THERE WAS SOMETHING ELSE in the world, after all: Noise. Knocking. Persistent knocking. Rattling. Knocking on my door, rattling the knob.

"Go away!" I yelled.

The doorknob rattled again. The voice was plainly audible as I moved into the living-room.

"Open up, please. I want to see you."

"Go away!"

Silence.

I stood there, waiting for the sound of receding footsteps. Another moment now, and I'd be alone again. Another moment and I could go back into the bathroom and—

Rustling. . . . Something was sliding under the door; something green slithered into view.

It was a hundred-dollar bill.

I bent down and picked it up in my left hand. Then I turned the bolt, opened the door.

He came in—the little Peter Lorre guy again. Only this guy was bald. He took his hat off and the light from the bathroom shone on an absolutely hairless skull.

All I could do was stand there and look at him, stand there and try to slip the straight razor into my pocket without his noticing, or without cutting off my leg.

He turned on the living-room light, walked over to the sofa, sat down, and pulled out the monocle. Then he looked up at me and smiled.

"You're Eddie Haines," he said. "Pleased to meet you. I am Professor Hermann."

My left hand held the money, and my right hand stayed in my pocket with the razor. So I only nodded at him. All at once I felt I had to sit down. He watched me, still smiling.

"You will pardon my intrusion. I tried to call, but it seems your telephone has been disconnected. And it was important that I see you at once."

"How did you—"

He waved his hand, the one with the diamond ring on the little finger. I wasn't so sure any more that it was a fake diamond.

"Mr. Rickert gave me your name and address. You recall, I think, that I was in his office this afternoon?"

"But—"

Again the wave. "I happen to have heard your voice, on a record."

"Are you in radio, Mr.—uh—Professor Hermann?"

"No. But I am greatly interested in voices. And I have something in mind which may interest you."

I was sobering up, fast. I needed a cigarette. I moved my hand in my pocket.

"Ouch!" I'd cut my finger on the straight edge of the razor. I pulled the hand out of the pocket without thinking. He was looking at me, and I forced a grin as I swabbed at the blood with my handkerchief.

"Afraid I must apologize to you," I said. "You see, I happened to be shaving when you rang, and I got a little confused. I carried my razor out with me and forgot I'd stuck it into my pocket."

The Professor nodded gravely. "I see there are a few things I must teach you. For example, you haven't yet learned how to tell a lie."

"What do you mean by that crack?"

His gravity disappeared with a chuckle.

"My dear young man! You'll find it's no use trying to deceive me. I happen to know you weren't shaving; you were getting ready to cut your throat."

I gaped at him, and again he chuckled.

"That would have been very silly of you, my friend. Very, very silly. Because you and I are going to make a million dollars—together."

IT was hard for me to realize that so much had happened in so short a time. But the clock in the little restaurant told me that it was only nine. We'd been sitting here a good hour already, eating and talking.

That is, I'd been doing the talking. The Professor didn't say much. He nodded, smiled, shook his head—all on cue. It wasn't until I had several jolts of coffee inside of me that I came out of my talking jag long enough to realize that I was a fool to let him pump me without knowing what he wanted.

I lit a cigarette and pushed my cup away.

"Seems to me I'm doing the talking."

His bald head bobbed. "Go ahead. I like to listen to you. You have a wonderful voice."

"Tell that to the radio executives. They won't listen to me."

"Radio executives!" I caught the familiar wave of the hand, the glittering arc of the diamond swirling through space. "Your voice is too fine an instrument for radio. It must not be wasted in an effort to sell laxatives and gasoline. That would be sheer prostitution."

I took the bull by the horns. "Speaking of prostitution," I said, "you haven't yet told me what you're interested in. Why did you get hold of me in such a hurry?"

"But I did tell you! Because of your voice. I've spent several weeks now, listening to voices. Auditioning, I believe they call it. I have heard recitations in the offices of agents, recordings and transcriptions of available talent. I heard your voice quite by accident, just the other day, in an advertising agency. Apparently Mr. Rickert had sent them the record.

"Right then and there I was almost certain I had found my man. Because you do have a very fine voice, Mr. Haines. I'm not speaking of diction or phrasing; I'm speaking of pitch and timbre. You have a persuasive voice; you sound sincere, convincing. Women like your voice, don't they, Mr. Haines?"

What was the matter with this guy? I stared at him—a fat, ugly, baldheaded little stranger who tossed around hundred-dollar bills and talked about voices. Was he looking for another "Continental"?

He smiled. "You don't understand, of course. But you will—I'm sure of that. I think that with proper training, you will go far. You have the voice, the personal attributes, and the youth. It was no accident that brought us together; it was Destiny."

HE wasn't smiling now. He hunched forward over the table and his eyes were glittering to match that diamond.

"Cut out the violin music," I said. "What's your proposition?"

He glanced at the restaurant clock and rose quickly. "We haven't time to discuss that now," he said. "It's getting late. We're due at the meeting."

"What meeting?"

"Come and see. It's important that you arrive before the testimony starts."

The Professor led me down the street for about half a block and halted before my idea of a beautiful animal—a handsome new black Jaguar convertible.

"Climb in," he said.

We pulled away, headed down the boulevard, then northwest toward Beverly Hills. Neither of us said anything for a while, and the Jaguar just purred.

The Professor glanced at the dashboard clock. "Right on time," he said. "We'll pick her up and then go to the meeting."

"Her?"

"Oh, I forgot to mention that we're bringing a guest. You will probably like her—I don't imagine you've ever met a movie star before."

"Movie star?"

"Well, featured player. Seven hundred and fifty a week. Lorna Lewis—you know of her?"

Lorna Lewis—of the glamorous gams. The censor's delight. I'd heard of her, all right. This was going to be interesting after all.

"The movie colony is particularly impressionable," remarked Professor Hermann. "I expect great results from them in our future work. For example, consider their interest in astrology. I can name you dozens of actors, actresses, producers, executives, who won't make a move unless the stars are right.

"I always think of one top name out here—she's been in pictures since the original Lassie was a pup—who lives according to a carefully plotted horoscope based on her date of birth. Ridiculous, of course. As she gets older she keeps moving her birth-date forward. She's changed her age four times now, and each time she gets a new astrologer and a new horoscope. Yet she won't as much as sleep with an assistant producer without consulting the stars."

"This Lorna Lewis," I said. "Is she gone on astrology too?"

Professor Hermann shook his head. "No. Spiritualism."

I blinked and sat up. "Mean to tell me that's what you have in mind for us—some kind of spook racket?"

"Far from it. My dear boy, don't underestimate me. You and I will not be engaged in any such vulgar fakery. Our paths lead to a higher destiny. But we'll speak of all that at another time. Right now your cue is to observe—and be silent."

We entered the driveway on a hillside. Beyond the palm-bordered path rose a rambling California-Spanish hacienda. I caught a glimpse of a side terrace and a swimming-pool in the back. Then we drew up before broad stone steps.

Professor Hermann led me to the door. The usual buzzer produced the usual chimes, and we waited.

"Come in," said a voice. I recognized it immediately. I recognized the black curls, the full thick lips, the slim sweep of perfectly modeled legs. It was Lorna Lewis.

"Come in. Be with you in a minute." She waved us to a love-seat in the hall alcove and then dashed up the stairs, treating us to a rear view of the finest pair of peach-colored slacks I'd ever seen.

"Don't stare!" hissed the Professor. "And from now on, take your cues from me." He produced his monocle and bent forward to polish it with a handkerchief, as though it were a rare scientific lens.

"Remember, now, not a word. Let me do the talking."

"But—"

She was running down the stairs again, still wearing the peach-colored slacks and a green blouse. I hadn't fully appreciated the blouse before, but it was even better than the slacks.

"Ready? Let's go, then—our appointment's for eight and we mustn't be late." Suddenly she seemed to notice me. "Who's he?" she asked.

"Miss Lewis—Judson Roberts."

That was me, apparently. I rose and started to open my mouth, but the Professor coughed.

"Mr. Roberts cannot answer you. He is committed to silence until midnight."

This time her blink was genuine. "Oh—a vow, or something?"

PROFESSOR HERMANN smiled. "Certainly not, my dear child! Mr. Roberts is no fake mystic. He's a scientist. As such he is engaged in an experiment of psychological conditioning. He has just arrived from the University of Lima and plans to collaborate with me in my work. I'd like to have him tell you about it sometime—I'm sure you would be interested."

"I know I will." She gave me a long look and seemed to mean it.

"I've invited Mr. Roberts to accompany us as an observer this evening, if you don't mind."

"That's fine with me. But I don't know if Mrs. Hubbard will approve. I hear she's very particular about who she admits."

"More than likely." The Professor led us outside and slid behind the wheel of the car. Lorna Lewis followed and I edged into the front seat beside her. The peach-colored slacks pressed against my thigh. I pressed back.

The Professor was doing most of the talking as he nosed the Jaguar south, then east. "Your Mrs. Hubbard probably doesn't care for strangers at all. I wouldn't, either, if I were working a nice, soft racket—preying on motion-picture people with phony spiritualism."

Lorna Lewis tossed her head.

"You'll see! Mrs. Hubbard is different; she doesn't try to fool anyone with tricks or hocus-pocus."

"No ectoplasm or apparitions? What about rope escapes and raps? Does she produce apports?"

"You're making fun of me." Her slim hands caressed a silver cigarette-case. "Mr. Roberts?"

"Mr. Roberts does not smoke," snapped the Professor. That was news to me. I wondered if I also did not drink. Probably I fasted a lot, too. Certainly I had nothing to do with women.

Eyeing Lorna Lewis, I decided that was one rule to be changed in a hurry.

"My dear Miss Lewis," purred the Professor, "I am by nature a skeptic

and by profession a psychologist. As such I have devoted much time to the investigation of so-called psychic phenomena. I am sorry to report that I've never seen a genuine medium."

"But Mrs. Hubbard doesn't put on a show," the girl protested. "Why, I've only been there once before and it was just like sitting down for a visit. The lights were on and everything. But the things she told me, the things she knew about me—it was simply uncanny!

"She knew my name—my real name, that is—and my age, and where I lived, and who my folks were, and what my next picture would be and who would direct. She even told me I'd get Lester Vance opposite me and I didn't hear about it from the studio until three days later!"

The Professor chuckled. "You're in pictures, my child. Such information is virtually public property."

"But my real name, and my real age—"

"It's all listed somewhere. Your birth certificate is available by mail. And certainly an unscrupulous woman would be willing to spend a few dollars on investigation. She probably has a line into the studio, paying someone to feed her advance tips on activities. She hopes to make you a regular client and attract others. Didn't you say your hairdresser told you to go there in the first place? It's very obvious."

I SUDDENLY realized he was talking to me more than he was to her, trying to tell me the angles. I listened carefully.

"If you are gullible enough, I predict that sooner or later your little five-dollar readings won't satisfy Mrs. Hubbard. She'll give you some good advice about the future and some even more intimate information about yourself, feed it to you bit by bit just to keep you coming back for more. She'll enmesh you more and more. Sooner or later she'll find out that you too have mystic powers, that you're clairvoyant, clairaudient, a natural medium. She'll give you slate-writing and then the old psychic-force routine."

"Psychic force?"

"Moving inanimate objects without touching them. Waving her hand over fruit, walnuts, coins. They'll obey her, move and follow her hand. Psychic force. I'll show you sometime how it's done."

"Tell me."

"Simple. She wears a magnetized ring. There's another magnet inside the walnut or fruit or fake coin. Naturally, it moves. By varying the weight of the object she can produce just a stir or a pronounced movement. It sounds stupid and simple, but wait until she gives you the buildup—in a dim, quiet room with her voice pitched low, and the spirits abroad."

Lorna Lewis shook her head. "No, Mrs. Hubbard isn't like that at all. You'll see."

"Very well. But remember, I'm here to protect you. Just introduce us as friends; I promise not to interfere in any way, but I want to observe what happens."

"That's right, Professor," said Lorna Lewis, with the roguish smile that endeared her to millions. "Just keep your eyes open."

Chapter Three

WE TURNED INTO A STREET that looked like the butt-end of Tobacco Road. Lawns of brown weeds and sand, withered palmettos decorated by dogs, houses sagging behind rusted iron fences. We parked and then walked across the sidewalk in single file. I fancied I saw the shades move slightly in a window to the left of the porch, but I was more interested in the movement of Lorna's peach-colored slacks. We followed the slacks up the porch steps.

She pressed the buzzer and a sour whine echoed from within the house.

A sallow-faced Mexican girl opened the door. She brushed the perspiration from her mustache, wiped her hand on her stringy hair and said, "Yes, please?"

"We've come to see Mrs. Hubbard. We have an appointment."

"I tell her. Wait here."

She ushered us into the hallway and left us.

We settled down in wicker chairs and waited. Lorna Lewis found a cigarette. The Professor polished his monocle. I sat and read a copy of an ancient fan magazine.

The silence was emphatic. It grew hotter, mustier. The hall became an oversized coffin. Lorna Lewis stepped on her cigarette. The Professor put his monocle into the left orbit. I put down the fan magazine and sat there listening to the worms bore through the woodwork.

Then the door opened, we jumped, and the Mexican girl said, "In here, now."

The center of the room was occupied by a "dining-room suite"—six chairs and a round table. Mrs. Hubbard sat in one of the chairs, her elbows on the table top.

She wasn't exactly *Mrs.* Hubbard—"Mother Hubbard" would have been more accurate. A fat, blowsy, red-faced woman in mid-menopause, with pork-bristles on her arms and chin. Coarse brown hair nestled in a bun against the back of her high-necked black dress. There was something tragic about her deep-set eyes. Here, if I ever saw one, was a woman who had been suffering. From a hangover.

"Greetings."

Her voice was as big as her body. It bounced off the walls and exploded against our ears.

"You are prompt, Miss Lewis. And I see you have brought guests."

"I thought you wouldn't mind. This is—"

"I know." Mrs. Hubbard smiled slightly. "Please be seated, and I will endeavor to convince the skeptical Professor Otto Hermann, Ph.D., that I am indeed a psychic sensitive."

We selected chairs and sat around the table. The Mexican girl opened the door again and ushered four more people into the room. We turned and stared at a fat little red-faced man with a mustache, a portly matron in a flowered print dress, a pale, bespectacled blonde girl, and a gaunt, gray-haired woman who constantly fiddled with her coral beads.

Mrs. Hubbard, unsmiling, waved them to places at the table. The Mexican girl brought in some extra chairs, and then produced a card-table which she set up in the corner of the room. Mrs. Hubbard retreated to a seat behind the card-table and we sat around the larger one, facing her in a semicircle.

Nobody said a word. Lorna Lewis watched Mrs. Hubbard. I watched Lorna Lewis. The Professor was watching me. Mrs. Hubbard didn't appear to be watching anybody. The whole affair began to take on the charm of an inquest.

I was waiting for something to happen. I was waiting for the closing of the blinds, the whisperings in the darkened room, the rappings and the wailings, the screech of chalk moving across a slate, the phosphorescent phantom issuing from the mouth of the moaning woman.

THE Mexican girl appeared again. She carried a tablet of cheap blue-ruled paper, a package of envelopes, and a handful of yellow pencils. This assortment made a nice little mess on Mrs. Hubbard's card-table.

We watched and waited as the Mexican girl rotated chunky thighs toward the door. The red-faced man fingered his mustache, the matron played with her purse, the girl with the glasses coughed, the gray-haired woman used her coral beads for a rosary. The Professor had his monocle to divert him, and I had Lorna Lewis. That black hair had a living luster; I wondered how it would feel to dig my hands into those curls, press that head back, and—

"Will everybody please take a pencil, a sheet of paper and an envelope?"

Mrs. Hubbard was ready to go into her routine. We filed past the bare

card-table, took up pencils and paper, and returned to our places.

"Because our group today is a little larger than usual, and because there is a natural reticence in the presence of strangers, I feel it best to have you put your problems in writing." Mrs. Hubbard patted her brown pug and smiled.

"I suggest that each of you write down one question, to begin with. If we have time, I shall be glad to work with your further inquiries personally—and privately, if you wish.

"At the moment, the important thing, frankly, is to gain your complete confidence. Without it, you will have no faith in my power, nor in my ability to help you. Since some of you are visiting me for the first time today, I'm going to make use of a rather spectacular device to convince you of my extra-sensory perception."

The deep voice rolled smoothly, easily, persuasively.

"I'm not very much of a showman—I cannot offer you a dark room, table-tipping, ghostly presences. But if each one of you will write on a piece of paper a question you'd like answered, fold the paper up as much as you like, and personally seal it in an envelope, perhaps I can demonstrate an interesting psychic phenomenon."

There was a pause, a shared feeling of hesitation. Mrs. Hubbard didn't have to be a mystic to sense the indecision.

"Please! It's very simple. I am going to read your questions back to you as you have written them, without opening the envelopes. There's no trickery. You can examine the paper, the pencils, the envelopes. You won't find any carbon, or wax or acid-treatments. There will be no waiting and no switches. I'll read your questions back to you immediately, right here at this table. Then I will give you your answers. So if you'll write whatever is closest to your mind and heart—"

The red-faced man scrawled something on his ruled sheet and folded it carefully four times. The matron licked the tip of her pencil and frowned. Lorna Lewis pouted. I watched her lips pucker as if seeking kisses—or bites. The spectacle suggested several questions to my mind; but not the kind I cared to have read back to me in public.

I shielded my paper and wrote, "Will my new venture be successful?" It sounded corny, but I wanted to know.

There was much business of folding and sealing. Lorna Lewis ran her tongue across the flap, drawing it in and out like a kitten lapping cream.

Mrs. Hubbard lumbered around the table and took up the sealed envelopes. I watched her, for obvious reasons; we all did. But I could detect no sleight-of-hand. She collected seven envelopes, shuffled them carefully, and placed them on the table, in the corner. She spread them out fanwise before her and frowned. Our chairs scraped back as we faced her. She switched on a lamp behind her and produced a wire filing basket.

"I'll read your questions and answer them one at a time," she told us. "In order that the answers be confirmed, I shall ask the writer of each question to raise his or her hand and let me know if my reading is correct. Then I'll open the envelope. Is that agreeable?"

We nodded. I looked at Professor Hermann. His face was utterly immobile. I wondered what he was making out of this—what he would do if Lorna Lewis seemed sold on Mrs. Hubbard. So far he hadn't opened his mouth.

Mrs. Hubbard stared down at the envelopes. Her forehead corrugated. A fat hand reached out at random and lifted an envelope from the center of the fan. She placed it against the

I sometimes give myself admirable advice, but I am incapable of taking it. —MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU

corrugations above her eyes. Her eyes closed.

Then she was speaking, and her voice came from far away—far away inside herself, far away inside the envelope.

"Should I sell my property to the syndicate or hold out for the original figure?" she whispered.

A red-faced Jack-in-the-box popped up. "That's it!" he shouted. "By golly, that's my question!"

Professor Hermann never blinked. Everyone else was leaning forward, tense with excitement.

Mrs. Hubbard smiled. "Please, control your enthusiasm. It makes it more difficult to concentrate." She opened the envelope, unfolded the sheet, glanced at it carelessly, and placed it in the wicker basket. And all the while she continued to talk.

"As it comes to me, Mr. Rogers, this property that you speak of consists of a block of eight lots situated just south of San Juan Capistrano, on 101-A, the coast drive. This syndicate of which you speak, the—"

Rogers opened his mouth and she paused. "Oh, of course, I will not mention their names, if you prefer. But it is true, isn't it, that they plan to build a hotel on this site? And that yesterday they offered you $18,000 cash for an outright sale, while you are holding out for $25,000? I thought so. It appears that if you refuse, they will offer you $20,000 on Thursday. If you still refuse, on Monday they will meet your price."

Without pausing, the plump hand sought another envelope, pressed it to the red forehead. Eyes closed and mouth opened.

"Will Mike leave me?"

Lorna Lewis leaned forward. "Yes," she murmured. "That's my question."

Mrs. Hubbard nodded, slitting the envelope. She tossed the unfolded paper into the basket, nodding again as she glanced at it.

"Mike will leave you soon—forever. He is preparing for a long journey right now. He hasn't told you yet, because he does not know about it himself. But I see him going away from you, far, far away—"

The girl's mouth opened. Mrs. Hubbard was apparently used to this reaction, for she hurried on. "I could tell you much more, but it would not be discreet. Alone, perhaps, and later, if you desire me to."

I tried again to pierce Professor Hubbard's bland stare. I tried to figure it out. There must be an angle, there was some kind of fakery somewhere, but—

"Will my new venture be successful?"

She was reading my question!

My own mouth opened now. I sucked in air as I watched Mrs. Hubbard carelessly unseal the envelope and withdraw the folded paper. She unfolded it—and then her mouth fell open.

Something red fluttered to the table: something bold and brazen, with a picture of a half-naked girl emblazoned on its crimson background.

It was the cover of the fan magazine I'd been reading in the hall!

Professor Hermann was on his feet. "My question, I believe," he said.

Mrs. Hubbard's open mouth gulped for words. When they came, they were short and sweet.

"You son of a bitch!" said Mrs. Hubbard.

SHE couldn't escape. We were crowded around the table and the Professor, inarticulate no longer, was holding forth.

"You see, it's very simple. The whole trick is old as the hills—while the audience is looking for mirrors, radio-eyes and all kinds of elaborate devices, the fake mystic is merely using the old 'one-ahead' system. All she needs for that is a stooge. In this case it was Rogers, here."

The red-faced, mustached man who had popped up like a Jack-in-the-box now looked as though he would col-

lapse like one. But the Professor held his arm firmly.

"Here's how it works. The stooge writes his question and seals it like all the others, but he marks his envelope—with his fingernail, here at the flap. Just a nick. The medium looks for it and can tell at a glance, naturally, which one belongs to her confederate. Here—"

He held up an envelope—unopened.

"This envelope she saves until the last. What she does is call out the stooge's question, which has been agreed upon in advance. Then he jumps up and makes a big show about hearing the correct question and she opens the envelope she's held to her forehead. Naturally, it's one of the other envelopes with a legitimate question, which she reads as she puts it in the basket. While answering the stooge's question, in convincing detail, she was actually reading Miss Lewis' question from the envelope she opened. Then, with the next envelope, she answered Miss Lewis; opened the flap and found Mr. Roberts' question.

"But when she called Mr. Roberts' question, she opened my envelope—and that was her mistake."

"You clever bastard," muttered Mrs. Hubbard. "What do you want?"

The Professor shrugged. "Nothing at all, really, from you—except your promise to quit working a racket on people who are in need of genuine assistance from reputable consultants. I don't think you'll be trying these tricks around here very much longer."

"Why, you goddam—"

"Careful, now! Watch your language. You aren't very ladylike, Mrs. Hubbard. Of course, appearances are deceptive; you ladies and gentlemen must always remember that. For example, Mrs. Hubbard here does not use ladylike language because she really isn't a lady. In fact—"

The Professor's hand descended to pat Mother Hubbard's head. It rose again, clutching a brown-bunned wig. We gaped down on a fat, baldheaded man who gripped the edge of the table with brawny knuckles and cursed.

Professor Hermann ignored his victim as he turned to us with a little bow.

"My friends," he said, "I think that our little session with the supernatural is over."

Chapter Four

We drove Lorna Lewis home. It was hard for me to remember that I was "Judson Roberts," and that I was under a vow of silence. But the Professor was in the driver's seat. He drove, I fidgeted, and Lorna Lewis babbled.

"You were so right," she kept repeating to him. "And I'm so grateful to you. If that racketeer had found out about me—I mean, if I'd trusted him and really told him a lot of things I need advice on—"

She shivered. It felt good against me.

Professor Hermann smiled. "Perhaps in the future you will be more discreet. Only a reputable consultant should be trusted with your intimate problems."

"That's what Mike tells me." She lit a cigarette, and it was agony for me to sit there and smell the smoke. "About Mike—there's something I must know."

"Bothering you, is he?"

"Yes. And I want you to help me; I can trust you, now. When could we talk about it?"

"Miss Bauer makes all my appointments. Call her at my office whenever you wish."

He left it at that, and we dropped Lorna at the house. She said good-by to me and hoped that we'd meet again. I nodded calmly. Then, as her peach-colored posterior wriggled its way up the walk, I was tearing open a package of cigarettes, fumbling at the matches. I got a light as we drove west.

"Can I talk now?" I asked.

The Professor nodded, grinning.

"I don't get the pitch yet, but I can see that you've sold her a bill of goods."

He nodded again, carelessly.

"That was a sweet idea, using the magazine cover. But what if it had been some other racket—were you sure of being able to expose it anyway?"

"Certainly. There is no possibility of failure, the way I work. You will learn that in due time."

"Where are we heading for now?"

"You shall see."

"When are you going to tell me about those plans of yours?"

"Soon."

I shut up and watched the lights of Santa Monica flash by. We kept going. A lemon moon was in the sky as we neared the flickering streetlights of Long Beach. The Professor parked on a side-street and led me down a ramp to the Boardwalk. We jostled through the late evening crowd and emerged on the midway.

"Come along," he said, and led the way to a stand near the entrance.

Sideshow banners proclaimed the presence of Seero the Mystic—Secrets of Past, Present and Future. Gaudy horoscopes decorated the sides of the ticket-booth. A horsefaced woman with yellow hair—and teeth to match—smiled at us from behind the glass.

"Is he here yet?" asked the Professor, returning the smile.

"Just came in. There's nobody with him yet."

We entered the pitch, going through a short passageway and emerging into a darkened, banner-draped room. A man sat behind a covered table, peering into a crystal ball. He wore a bathrobe and a turban. When he saw us he rose, went to the door, latched it, and returned to his seat at the table.

No one spoke for a moment. I stared at the mystic, wondering where I'd seen that fat face before. He must have caught my thought, because he took his turban off and laid it on the table. I saw the bald head, and then I knew. The man was "Mrs. Hubbard."

"You got here fast," he said.

"I always keep my promises." The Professor smiled. "Is everything all right, Jake?"

"Yeah, sure. All fixed but the payoff." Jake gave me the kind of stare that would have cracked his crystal ball. "Who's the savage?"

"This is Judson Roberts, my new associate. He'll be working with me from now on."

Jake favored me now with his normal smile. "Please to meet up with you. You a dummy?"

"I can talk," I said. "But I learn more just from listening."

"A wisey, huh?" Jake swung around to the Professor. "Rogers said for me to collect his split, too."

"Very well." Professor Hermann reached for his wallet and laid three portraits of Benjamin Franklin on the table. Jake covered them with a big fist.

"Thanks," he said.

We left. The Professor walked out to the beach and headed for the water's edge. He stood frowning off into the darkness.

"Now I understand," I said. "You rigged the whole thing up, didn't you? Planted a phony medium just to pull that stunt, so there really wasn't a chance of anything going wrong."

The wind tore the chuckle out of his mouth and carried it away across the water. "Of course. I never permit the possibility of an error. And this little affair tonight was more important than you know. Lorna Lewis had to be convinced. She is my opening wedge into the movie colony and the big money beyond that.

"You will find that I plan everything perfectly. Everything we do must be planned in detail, in advance. That way we cannot fail. I want your complete confidence and I am prepared to justify it—and pay for it. Not with hundred-dollar handouts; I'm talking about important money now—thousands, or perhaps millions. For me. For you."

His white face stared up at me. "We can take over this town, you and I. Not with a phony cult or a fly-by-night racket. We're going to go after the top, the cream. We'll get right next to them, get under their skin, get into their minds. We'll start out by advising and analyzing them—but we'll end up by actually running their lives. We'll own them, body and soul.

"Today you saw me arrange events so that Lorna Lewis would ask me for help. If my plans work out, six months from now I'll be able to tell her—and dozens of others—to do anything I wish. And they'll do it.

"That's why I need you. That's why I found you. Because this calls for a front man—young, good-looking, persuasive—to work with the women and with the men, too. Of course, you must be trained and it will take time, and it will not be easy. There is much that you must know: Metaphysics. Psychiatry. Theology. The arts of social presence. Your personality must be molded for aggression and command. I am the guiding hand—you will be the instrument, ground to perfection for our work.

"I shall demand strict obedience, strict adherence to the program of study I will lay down for you. But in return you shall receive everything you've always wanted: Fame, wealth, power.

"You'd like that, wouldn't you? I can sense it in you—the same drive, the same urge for power that I feel. Power over them all; the sleek, slim women you've never been able to have, the hard, smug, domineering men who've always ignored you. You can rule them if you wish; make them do anything you desire. There will be no laws you cannot break. Judges, doctors, politicians, financiers—the whole pack will come fawning at your heels, licking your fingers and whimpering for what you can give them."

I HAD to say something. "But look, you can't just do that to people. Maybe they'll fall for a line, but sooner or later they find out. I don't feel right, selling a bill of goods."

He laughed. "And yet you wanted to become a radio announcer."

"That's different."

"Is it? Is it any more honest to read off gaudy lies about the non-existent benefits of soap and toothpaste than it is to advocate self-help? You'd be perfectly willing to tell millions of pimply, bloated hags that they will become lovely and alluring if they buy a cake of perfumed fat to drop into their bathwater. Isn't that the same thing?"

"Well, not exactly. I mean—"

"Be honest with yourself, now. You'd have no scruples about trying to run people's lives as a radio announcer, would you? You'd sell anything, use any method. Fill little adolescent know-nothings with self-conscious fear, droning horrible warnings about acne and bad breath and perspiration odors. Frighten old folks with grave hints about the dreadful dangers of constipation and upset stomach. You'd promise wealth, success and happiness by implication to *anyone* who obeys your commands—who runs down to the corner druggist or the neighborhood grocer, who buys this, uses that, eats whatever it is you want to sell. Yes, and if your studio handed you the script, you'd use your best voice to proclaim the merits of a crooked politician, the virtues of a dishonest business policy. And yet you talk against running people's lives!"

It sounded good. I wasn't completely convinced, but I nodded. "Maybe you're right. But I still don't think you can get away with it. There may be a few screwballs who want to be fooled—who go for all the *isms* and *ologies* that come along. But most people are pretty sensible and normal. I don't see—"

"You will. Come along and I'll show you."

He led the way back across the beach. It came alive all around me: A cannibalistic circle huddled around a small fire, gorging on half-raw hot-dogs and dill pickles. Troglodyte faces gaped in the firelight—a wrinkled, wizened old man's head with white, bushy hair and beetling black brows that moved convulsively as he chewed with his whole face at a tongue sandwich. There was a fat, blobby woman with stringy hair and a red neck; the rest of her flesh hung in dead-white folds, broken here and there by bulging purplish veins that stood out like mountain ranges on a relief map. She slapped at a screaming brat with one beefy hand. A bullet-headed youth squatted next to a portable radio, fiddling with the volume control and scratching the hairy recesses of his armpits.

"Welcome to the world," chuckled the Professor.

There was sand in my shoes. I was hungry. I stepped through a tangle of crumpled paper, greasy paper plates and broken pop-bottles. A small dog rushed up and nipped at my ankles.

"You see?" murmured the Professor. "Here are your normal people."

"All right," I said. "They stink. I hate 'em. But that doesn't prove anything. It doesn't prove they'll fall for a line of hooey about their lives and futures."

The wind sent a dirty newspaper flying against my leg. I bent down and pushed it away, glimpsing the red letters of the headline: *Sex Maniac Sought in Hatchet Slaying.*

"Perhaps this will help," the Professor told me. We turned onto the midway.

Fluorescence and incandescence blinded me. My lungs gulped in popcorn oil, lard, the reek of frying meat, the stink of decayed fruit, and a rancid stench composed of tobacco, sweat and whisky.

"We're open till nine tonight, Mr. Burchester."

Banners swirled all around me—before me, behind me, on either side, overhead. CONGRESS OF FREAKS. FLEA CIRCUS. ARCADE. EATS. FUN HOUSE. LEARN YOUR FUTURE. THREE SHOTS FOR A DIME. PLAY THE WINNERS. MAN-EATERS. RED-HOTS. A dozen juke-boxes blared and boomed. A merry-go-round seethed. Against this background rose the whirling, rattling, clanking and grinding of the Whip, the Dodger, the plane-rides and the roller-coaster. The sharp crack of rifles echoed from the shooting gallery. Barkers shouted in command, and amplifying systems carried exhortations, roars, and raucous bawlings of invitation. From the rides overhead I heard screams, shrieks, wails, and high, hysterical laughter.

"Close your eyes," said the Professor. "Don't look at them. I won't even make you look at them. Just listen. What do you hear?"

I closed my eyes and stood there, jostled and pitched by the crowd.

The harsh music in the background suggested bands; the *boom-boom* beat was in marching tempo. War. Yes, war—with rifle-shots and shouted orders. Grinding of machinery; tanks and planes and armored cars, artillery going into action. And over that, the screams: the screams of the wounded, the dying; the screams of the killers, boring for blood with their bayonets.

I DON'T know whether the Professor was a "psychic sensitive" or not, but abruptly he said, "Dachau."

"Huh?"

"Dachau. The prison-camps in Germany, during the last war. The victims shrieked that way, I should imagine."

"Funny, I was thinking of war, myself."

"Not funny. Perfectly natural. Normal. As normal as these people and their actions. Look around you—see what they're doing. They're seeking entertainment — having fun, as they call it.

"This is an amusement park, my friend. People come here to find what they want out of life—entertainment. They put their pennies into the peep-show slots because they want to. They know they're being swindled — and they love it. They love the phoniness, the lies, the cheats. They know the freak shows are fakes, that the barkers lie. They know the spielers are conning them about stepping up and winning the electric clocks. They don't believe in our friend SEERO THE MYSTIC, but they pay their money and go inside because they want to be fooled.

"This is not a new concept. Your showman, Barnum, said it long ago—and it was known and spoken of in ancient Egypt. But it is a truth that survives, for the desire for self-delusion never dies.

"People long for escape. Some of them pay their pennies to find it here. Others are able and willing to pay fortunes for something a little more convincing—for the sort of escape we will give them. Those are the ones we shall rule: the seekers."

"Suckers," I said.

"The seeker is always a sucker," said Professor Hermann.

Chapter Five

THERE NEVER HAD BEEN any question about my going through with it. Why not? I had nothing to lose. If it got bad, or risky, I could always pull out.

That's the way I thought when I left the Professor. That's the way I thought when I went to his office the next morning.

Somehow I'd never pictured him in a downtown office. But there was the sign on the door, in neat, discreet lettering:

OTTO HERMANN PH.D. PS.D.
PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSULTANT

The waiting-room was cool and dark, well-furnished without the flash of Larry Rickert's fake modern layout. The receptionist's desk stood right out in the open. Behind it sat a plump, middle-aged brunette wearing a loose white smock and a tight red smile. She smiled up at me and her words filtered through a thick accent.

"You would be Mr. Haines?"

"I would."

"The Professor iss expecting you. Please to enter."

I pleased to enter the private office. The Professor sat in a chair at the side of his desk. He was wearing the same black suit, or a reasonable facsimile. He glanced at his watch.

"Good morning. You are late."

"Sorry. I overslept. Yesterday took a lot out of me, I guess."

"You are rested now?"

I nodded.

"Good. Then we can proceed to business." He opened a drawer of his desk and drew out a thick sheaf of legal-bond typing paper.

"What's that?" I asked.

"Your book. The one you wrote."

I stared at the title page and read.

Y-O-U
by
Judson Roberts

"Take it and read it," he said. "Memorize it. After all, you wrote it. Remember, you're Judson Roberts."

I riffled the pages and sat back. "What's it all about?"

"Did you ever read Dale Carnegie? Walter Pitkin? Stuart Chase? They're all in there. And Doctor Frank Crane and Elbert Hubbard. Also Madame Blavatsky, Mrs. Eddy, plus a touch of Thorstein Veblen. And of course, Herr Freud, and Jung, and Aldous Huxley and Ouspensky and Spengler—a bit of everyone."

"Did you actually write it?"

"No. Rogers wrote it—you remember, the little man with the mustache at the séance. He has talent, when controlled. I had him start it a year ago, when I began to plan all this."

"What's the point?"

"Perfectly obvious. Now that I've found my Judson Roberts, the book will be published. I can arrange for printing and for distribution — but there will be more profit in selling it ourselves. Rogers can set up a direct-mail campaign, and over a period of years the book will make money—a small, steady income, although that's not important at all. But a published book is needed to establish Judson Roberts as an authority. That is most desirable. By the way, I've already sent in your name for a course and a diploma."

"Diploma?"

"You're going to be a Doctor of Psychology, just as I am. There's a correspondence school in the East. Fifty dollars gets you a degree, and no questions asked. . . . What are you grinning about?"

"It just struck me funny. All of a sudden I'm a Doctor of Psychology and the author of a book."

"There's nothing funny about that. It's window-dressing. And speaking of window-dressing—" The Professor rose and surveyed me critically. "Watch your posture. You have a tendency to slouch, your shoulders aren't squared. And you slump when you sit in a chair. We'll correct that. You'll need a wardrobe, of course, but that will come later. Hold your head a trifle higher and emphasize your height. You gain a certain advantage when people have to look up to you during a conversation. You might experiment with a different hair style. Those sideburns are all right for a cheap salesman, but I want more dignity. Ah, well, we'll come to these matters in due time. But right now, you have work to do."

"Such as?"

"Reading your book."

I picked up the manuscript. "I'll run through it tonight," I promised.

THE PROFESSOR shook his head. "Only the beginning," he said. "You'll read it again—and again—and again. The content is the key to our whole system. It must be correlated with your other reading. For the next three months you're going to sit in that apartment of yours and read. I'll see that you eat, meanwhile."

"Sounds pretty soft."

"It won't be. You're going to study and sweat. I'll quiz you. You'll take tests. By the time I'm done, you'll be able to hold your own conversationally with any metaphysician, real or phony, and sound convincing."

"Okay. You're the Professor."

"And you're Judson Roberts."

That's how it started. I walked into the office as plain Eddie Haines, and I walked out as Judson Roberts, with my book under my arm.

JUDSON ROBERTS took his book home and studied it. Then he studied the basic, selected writings of Freud, Adler, Jung, Brill, Moll, Stekel. He subscribed to the *Journal of Psychiatry*. He read Swedenborg and *Isis Unveiled*. He read Frazer in bed, Charles Fort at the lunch-counter, Briffault in the bathroom. He waded through it all, the good and the bad alike—Lully, Flammarion, Toynbee, Nietzsche.

At first I couldn't make sense out of it all; nothing seemed related.

But gradually, Judson Roberts made sense of it. For as I read, Judson Roberts took shape. He was born out of the books, weaned on the Professor's nightly question-sessions.

Judson Roberts answered questions, written and oral. He learned to discourse on effects and autistic phenomena. He could give a Rorschach test. He could explain the symbolic derivatives of a matriarchic culture-pattern and analyze the inherent masochism of Kafka's works. Roberts could improvise a relationship between the Sung Dynasty, Apollonius of Tyana, and enuresis.

It takes a few minutes to read, but it took months to do. Eight hours of reading a day, seven days a week, plus two or three hours of talk, questions, answers. But wading through theories and ideas, I began to understand people a little better: Motivation and compulsion and compensation. Sublimation and projection. And not all of it came from college texts and reference works, either. I got some excellent insights from the *Seventh Book of Moses*. And even some from hex- and voodoo-supply catalogues.

The Professor kept taking me around to astrologers, palmists, phrenologists, spiritualists—men like Jake on the boardwalk and top operators working out of mansions in the hills north of Hollywood.

I learned that suckers are all alike, and the methods of handling them basically the same.

And through it all, he kept after me with questions. One afternoon toward the end of the third month, for example—

"What are the twelve divisions of normal interest?" droned Hermann.

"Time, personal magnetism, sex and marriage, investments, friends, obstacles, enemies, health, money trouble, changes and trips, surprises, and warnings."

"What is Yoga?"

"Yoga means unity, right action. Yogi is the practice of Yoga by a Guru, or teacher, and a Chela, or pupil. There are five divisions of Yoga:

"Raja-Yoga, the development of consciousness. Jnana-Yoga, or knowledge. Katma-Yoga, right action, and Bhakti-Yoga, right religious action. Then Hatha-Yoga, or power over the bodily functions. Govern your body and you govern the universe through Asana, the system of bodily posture, breath control, and control of the circulation and nervous system."

"Good enough. Now, define Turiya, Dharma, Kalpa, Manvantara. And recite the laws of Manu."

"Hey, take it easy! You've got me so full of that stuff it's coming out of my ears."

"I know. But there is so much to do, so little time. You must be ready soon."

"Yeah. Ready for Utter McKinley's embalming staff! Have a heart, Professor, I'm only human."

"You must be more than human for this job. You might apply some of the principles of Hatha-Yoga for exercise."

"I don't need exercise. I need a rest, a chance to get out of this damned hot apartment. I haven't had a drink for months, haven't seen anybody to talk to but you."

"That was our bargain."

"Our bargain was for me to make a million dollars, to have anything I wanted. And what do I get? A little cigarette-money and enough studying to kill Einstein! Look—I'm not Judson Roberts *all* the time, you know. I like a little fun once in a while."

"SO!" The Professor's fat fingers crawled over the nakedness of his skull. "How would you like to go to a party tonight?"

"What kind of a party – another séance in Pasadena?"

"No, I'm talking about the real thing. As a matter of fact, you're invited to attend. She's been inviting you for weeks, but I didn't tell you."

" 'She'?"

"Lorna Lewis. She has inquired about you frequently. Yes, maybe that would work out—if you're interested."

"Count me in. I'll be there with bells on."

"No bells. You'll be there in a nice, conservative gray Palm Beach suit. You'll behave yourself and do the job I've laid out for you."

"But—"

"You'll do one thing and one only: Be nice to Lorna Lewis."

"That," I said, "is just ginger-peachy. I might even teach her a few Yoga positions."

Chapter Six

AT THE PARTY the Professor planted me on the sofa; then he wandered away, after acknowledging a nod from our hostess. I was a little disappointed with the nod—I didn't expect Lorna Lewis to throw herself into my arms and nibble my ears, but even so, her cool reception didn't sit well with me after so much of a buildup. After the Professor vanished, I fidgeted. All I'd got from that greeting was a distinct letdown.

Plump little Miss Bauer from the Professor's office accompanied us, and it was she who identified the stocky, freckled, curly-haired man who dug his fingers possessively into Lorna Lewis' forearm.

"Mike Drayton. Iss her husband."

"Husband? Didn't know she was married."

"Yess. He iss a professional player."

"Playboy?"

"No, player. Of hockey."

"Oh, sure. I remember, now." I remembered Lorna Lewis' references to "Mike." Some problem of hers. Well, he looked like a problem to me; if we tangled, I'd be a dead duck.

But now it appeared that I'd never reach the tangling stage. Lorna was flitting around, greeting sports-jackets and evening wraps, offering glasses to Aloha shirts and gabardine slacks at the bar, being kittenish with a tall, red-haired man who was obviously a producer and obviously aware of it.

Mike Drayton, the husband, had disappeared. So had Miss Bauer and the Professor. I caught a glimpse of him as I went to refill my highball glass; he was stalking Lorna Lewis on the terrace. Maybe he'd steer her over to me.

The highballs were good, and after my long layoff, the second drink took hold. I had a third, but I was too nervous to enjoy it.

A trio of Filipinos wandered around making noises on mandolins and ukeleles—very corny. But most of the guests seemed to be far past the third drink, and they shouted requests. A small group gathered around a blonde who kicked off her shoes for a hula. Another, much smaller group, sat out on the stairs and talked shop. Through an archway I saw a fringe of bald, partially bald and gray heads huddled over a card-table.

It looked too damned typical, too pat and according-to-formula for me. Too much like the Hollywood party you read about. I don't know what

I'd been expecting—certainly anything but this. And on top of it, I was all alone, ignored, off in a corner with no Lorna Lewis to finger the lapels of my Palm Beach suit.

I thought I'd better get drunk in a hurry and forget it.

I thought I might as well get out of here.

I thought—

She had hair the color of ripe apricots. She even smelled like apricots—well, apricot brandy, then. Because she was carrying a load.

She sat down beside me, and smiled up with green eyes. They were nice eyes, but right now a bit on the glassy side.

"Hello."

"Hello, yourself."

"What's the angle?"

"Angle? There's no angle."

"Come, now—everybody's got an angle. Are you trying to get Himberg's eye?"

"Who's Himberg?"

"The redheaded personality—the producer. You're trying to break into pictures, aren't you?"

"Not me, sister."

"I could never feel like a sister toward you, pal. And you aren't exactly the brotherly type, yourself. So why the gloom act?"

"Sorry. I was just watching the show."

"Well, you might get me a drink. And seeing as how you're getting so intimate and making advances, my name is Ellen Post."

"No relation to Emily?"

"I'm going now; I can see I misjudged you. You didn't look like the type to pull *that* one."

"Sorry. No, please, sit down. I'll get you a drink. Bourbon, straight?"

"Extremely straight, if you please."

"I please."

"Quit your bragging and run along."

I went up to the bar and got a straight shot and another highball. Ellen Post watched me as I crossed the room toward her.

"So you're Judson Roberts."

"Who told you?"

"A little bird. A little baldheaded bird, with a monocle. A little sparrow, hopping after Lorna Lewis."

"I see you don't think much of psychological consultants."

"Not much." She gulped her shot.

"You in pictures?" I asked.

"No. This is my line." She tapped her glass. "Prescribe me another, Doc."

I finished my drink and made my way back to the bar. Professor Hermann was sitting on the terrace with Lorna Lewis. They glanced up as I passed and the Professor winked. I didn't know what that was supposed to mean, so I ignored it. I liked apricots better, anyway.

"Here we are." I gave Ellen Post a glass and clicked my highball tumbler against its rim. "Forbidden fruit."

"What kind of a toast is that?"

"You be the psychologist and figure it out. Anyway, I was thinking of apricots."

"Apricots?"

"Yes. You—your hair, your skin."

She chuckled. It was a husky sound, from deep within the throat, but it sounded surprisingly feminine.

"I've been called a lot of things in my time, but that's a new approach. I might add that I like it, Dr. Roberts. Or is it Judson? Or Judd?"

"Whichever you prefer."

She frowned and rose. "God damn it!"

"What's the matter?"

"I'm going."

"Have I said something wrong?"

She shook her head. A scent came from her hair; it was a pleasant scent, but it didn't match her mood. Her face was depressed and strained.

"No—you didn't say anything wrong. That's the trouble, they never do. It's always the right thing, and I have the right answer, and the drinks get good and the conversation gets better. It's no use. I'm going home."

Absinthe makes the heart grow fonder.

—ADDISON MIZNER

"Could I—"

"You could. But I won't let you." She walked swiftly, a little uncertainly, toward the terrace. "Good-by, Dr. Roberts. See you in Alcoholics Anonymous."

"But—"

"*There* you are!" Another scent, behind me. Not perfume, but something more vital than that—heavier. Tiger-lily. Not golden, but white. I didn't have to turn to know that Lorna Lewis was smiling up at me.

"I was coming to rescue you," she said.

"From what?"

"The Post. Miss Pillow-to-Post. Did she ask you to go to bed with her? She always does when she gets a few quick ones into her. Drinks, I mean."

"What kind of a person is she?"

"Can't you tell? A lush. One of those rich-bitch society types—she always crooks her little finger, even when she drinks out of the bottle. I can't stand her; but Mike likes her. He would—he's a rummy himself."

I looked around for the Professor, waiting for a cue, a signal. He'd tell me just how nice I was supposed to be. But the Professor had disappeared. That meant I was on my own.

Maybe I should have remembered that I now was Judson Roberts, Ps.D. Maybe I should have figured out how to play it carefully, watch my step. Instead I looked down at those white legs, looked up into the blue, blazing insolence of Lorna's eyes.

"It's hot in here," I said.

"It might be even hotter, outside."

"You mean, your husband?"

"Don't call him that. He hasn't been my husband since the Toronto game, when somebody hit him with a stick. All he wants now is his bottle—understand?" She leaned close.

I understood, all right. I understood that she was a cheap, two-timing little tramp. But she had those legs and she was a movie star, or almost a star. And I was Eddie Haines, a nobody from nowhere. I was Eddie Haines, trying like hell to hold my liquor, trying like hell to remember my name was Judson Roberts.

There was only one answer.

"Let's go outside," I said.

Dark curls tumbled from side to side. "No, not now. I'm the hostess, remember? Wait until later, when I get rid of this gang. I'll throw them out and check on Mike."

"When?"

"Tell you what: It's after eleven, so you come back about twelve-thirty. I'll be waiting for you down at the coach-house. You know where it is—on the side, behind the swimming-pool."

"Right."

"Clear out, now. I don't want us to be seen together—you understand."

I understood. She squeezed my arm and rose. I made one last attempt to find the Professor. He wasn't in the big room, and he wasn't on the terrace. The night air was cool. I breathed slowly, deeply, evenly—but inside my chest, my heart was going like a dynamo.

There was nothing to do for an hour and a half. Just nothing to do but wait—and drink.

I found a little place down the road and stopped in for a quick one. It had to be quick; the bars close at twelve. When I found that out, I had another, and another.

Then I staggered out into the night. It was a good night. Cool, but not too cool, and very clear. Stars. Millions of them.

The house was dark. Too damned much shrubbery on the lawn. And the swimming-pool—mustn't stumble and fall in the swimming-pool! Show up all wet. Stars in the swimming-pool, too. . . . Star light, star bright, first star I see tonight, wish I may, wish I might—

I found the door to the coach-house and it opened and somebody was wait-

ing for me. Sure enough, I could see her; she was waiting, and now she came forward and what was I waiting for?

"Everything all right?" I asked.

"Sure. Mike was upstairs. He's out cold."

"*You're* not cold."

"You're not sober."

"Do you mind?"

"What do you think?" She laughed. I wanted to stop that, so I did. My mouth closed down on hers, and through the doorway I could see the stars; and then a faint sliver of a pale moon that rose over the black outline of the terrace.

"Wait a minute. What's that?"

"Forget about it, honey."

"No. I hear something outside. Somebody's coming."

Now I heard it too, the crunch of gravel and then the fumbling, and the squeaking of the door.

"*Mike!*"

He stood there in the doorway. I tried to focus on him. He was a big man, and it was hard to see him clearly or separate his bulk from the monstrous, menacing black shadow.

He stood there and cursed us—cursed us in a low, steady, monotonous voice, ripping his words off back-alley fences, off privy walls. He said other things, too.

"I'm gonna kill ya. I'm gonna rip out ya guts an'—"

He was in the light, I was in the dark, and now was the time, if ever.

I WENT toward him; he reached out those hairy ape-arms of his, and I hit him, hard. But not hard enough. He backed away, and then he came up with one on the side of my head. I felt it, soft and far-away, and as I wobbled he hit me again.

Then we were outside and Lorna said, "No! Stop—please—" But it was phony, cheap-movie dialogue; it was a corny scene, a couple of drunks fighting over a tramp.

That made me mad, so I hit him again. He swung—not to hit, this time, but to gouge at my eye with his thumb. He was good at it. I pushed my knuckles against his mouth, hard. He grunted and tried to tackle me.

He was heavy, he was strong, and he pushed me back toward the edge of the pool. I could see him gritting his teeth in the moonlight, and the blood running out of the corners of his mouth looked bright and heavy as quicksilver.

Then everything went dim and I felt something tightening around me. He had my neck; he was choking me. Lorna yelled and he yelled; but I could only gasp from far away.

I kicked up and in. The tightness suddenly relaxed. I could get to my feet and watch him. He stood doubled-up at the edge of the pool, waiting for the pain to ease, waiting to come in again and kill me.

I couldn't wait. I moved toward him. He was ready, now. He spread his hands and poised. I closed my eyes and swung from the waist.

My hand hurt. I wobbled there, rubbing my fingers, watching him fall backward into the pool. It took a million years before the splash came when he hit the water.

Lorna stopped yelling. Everything got very quiet.

I walked over to the pool and looked down. There was nothing to see but bubbles—pretty little silvery bubbles, gleaming in the moonlight.

Chapter Seven

THE WATER STABBED ME with a million novocained needles. I gulped, paddled, then dived. Silver pressed my eyeballs, but I could see through silver. I could see something dark and huddled, bobbing down there at the bottom of the pool.

I reached it, tugged at it. Heavy . . . Heavy as the weight inside my lungs, my head. I went up for air, got it. Then I dived again, tugged again.

This time I could lift; we came to the surface together, live and dead weight. Dead weight! He couldn't be— I had to get him out.

"Help me lift him up!" I yelled.

Lorna stared over the edge of the pool. Her lips twitched, and then her mouth tried to run away from her face. But she reached down and held Mike's collar as I pulled myself over the side and then grabbed him under the arms.

I tugged and lifted. He was heavy as lead. Lead. . . . Dead. No—he was all right. He must be all right.

Then he was sprawled out on the grass, face down, and I was kneeling over him, pressing his back and lifting him, pressing and lifting—

"Iss wrong, perhaps?"

I jerked and Lorna jerked. Mike just lay there.

We stared up at the plumpness of Miss Bauer.

"What are you doing here?"

"She's with me."

Professor Hermann emerged from the shadows of the walk. "What goes on here? We've been looking all over for you. When the party broke up we left, and I called your apartment from a filling-station. No answer, so I came back. Apparently it was wise that I did."

"We were fighting," I said. "I hit him and he fell into the pool. I fished him out. But—"

The Professor pushed me aside. He knelt and took off his hat. The bald moon of his skull shone down over Mike's face as he turned Mike over on the grass. A fat hand fumbled beneath the soggy wet shirt.

It rested there; the wind stopped moving, the grass stopped rustling, the stars stopped twinkling. The trees bent forward, listening—listening for a heartbeat.

"He's dead," said Professor Hermann.

Then everything was moving again, fast—too fast.

"Steady up!" Miss Bauer was holding me.

"But he can't be! We've got to work on his lungs, get the water out! He couldn't have been under more than a minute or so—"

"He was unconscious," the Professor said. "It is too bad."

"Too bad?" We all looked at Lorna. "I'll say it's too bad! Wait until the papers get hold of this, wait until Lolly finds out! I'm through—Himberg will tie a can to me—and the cops—Christ—somebody do something—"

I shook her. It only jumbled the sounds together.

"Oh, Christ—Himberg—gotta—"

I slapped her mouth shut. "Cut that out!"

The Professor put on his hat, rose, and put his hand on Lorna's shoulder. "He's right. Hysteria will not help, now. We must be calm. We must think."

"Think? What good will thinking do? Mike's dead and they'll find out, they'll get us—"

"No; not if we're calm. Listen to me, Miss Lewis. I may have a solution, but you'll have to help me."

"How?"

"By answering questions. Here—"

HE gave her a cigarette, lit it for her. He watched it wobble between her lips, then steady as she inhaled.

"There! Now listen to me, and answer. Are there any servants in the house?"

"No. I told Frieda to clear out when the gang left. And George is on vacation this week."

"Good. Can you remember what Mike did at the party?"

"Mike? No—I don't want to talk about him—"

"You must. It's important. Your life, your career."

He knew how to get to her, all right—not with "life," but with "career." She sobered.

"What time did Mike go upstairs with his bottle?"

"How did you know about that?"

"I saw him. Miss Bauer saw him. Others must have seen him—that group on the stairway."

"That's right. Let me see; it was around eleven, I guess."

"Was he drunk?"

"No more than usual."

"He drank frequently?"

"You can say that again. The last six months he's always been lushed up."

"And people know that? Your friends?"

"He pulled that stunt at every party I've given, or every one we ever went to. Not that he'd come with me very often, the louse. And when he did, he generally sneaked off in the middle of the evening and took the car with him."

"You say he'd get drunk and then leave a party—drive off somewhere alone?"

"Sure. He wrecked the station-wagon about four months ago. Drove it into a piling near Santa Barbara. How the hell he ever got 'way up there, I don't know. *He* didn't know, he was that stiff. It was in the papers."

"That time he wrecked the car—how long was he gone?"

"Two days, nearly. The cops picked him up. He wasn't hurt, but I had a hard time helping him beat the rap. Himberg fixed it somehow."

"Your friends know his habits?"

"They should. Please, Professor, don't ask me anything more. I think I'm going to be sick."

She weaved away and was sick—very sick—over near the trees. I turned and watched Miss Bauer as she worked silently, furiously, over Mike.

"Please," said the Professor. "That is useless. Besides, I have a plan."

He turned to me. "Did anyone else know of your—your visit—here at the coach-house?"

I shook my head. "I stopped in a tavern below the hill here, but there was no one around except the bartender. I didn't spill anything to him, either."

"Good. Then will you please take my car and drive yourself home? I will get in touch with you tomorrow."

"But Mike—the police—"

"I am taking care of Mike. And there will be no police, if you do what I say. Go, now. I must talk to Miss Lewis alone."

Miss Bauer tugged at the Professor's sleeve.

"I do not like this," she said. "Let me continue; the water iss leaving the lungs. If we send for a rescue squad, he may yet be alive."

The Professor faced her. "That is for me to decide."

It was more than a statement; it was a command. Miss Bauer bowed her head. The Professor went over to Lorna and took her arm. She sobbed against him and he began whispering to her. His voice was soft, soothing, gentle. I couldn't hear anything he said.

I walked to the car, climbed in, drove away. I went home, walked up to the apartment, closed the door. I ripped off my damp clothes and fell down on the bed and slept. . . .

Then, coming up out of the darkness, into the sunlight, I felt like a new man. A man who needed a shower, a shave, breakfast, a cigarette.

I had them all. But when I lit the cigarette, my hand trembled. The old Yoga wasn't working for Judson Roberts today.

I wondered if Professor Hermann was working. I wondered whether he had dumped the body in the ocean, tried to make it look like suicide. I wondered if something had gone wrong, if they were looking for me. . . . Better pull down the blinds, quick, and—

No, that was wrong. I must trust him; I had to trust him. He had told me to wait, that he'd get in touch with me. So I'd wait.

I picked up Flugel's "Psychology of Clothes" to read about canes as symbols of personal extension, and wondered what Ellen Post was doing this fine day. Did she have a hangover? Did she remember me? I tried to

"He's dead," said Professor Hermann. That started everything moving again in my mind, fast—too fast. I was a murderer! "But he can't be!" I shouted. "He wasn't under water even a minute." Miss Bauer was holding me. Lorna Lewis just stood there, watching the Professor.

picture her, place her in a setting. A hall bedroom? Obviously not the place. An apartment like this one? Wrong, again. A big house? Room next to her parents? Did she have money, live alone?

Why hadn't I found out more about her, got her address, made a date?

This was no time to think about it. This was no time to read about canes as phallic symbols, either. I wanted to know what was going on. It was already past noon.

I dialed the Professor's office. He'd paid up my phone bill for that reason, last month.

"Yess?"

"Miss Bauer, this is Judson Roberts. Did he— Is the Professor back?"

"No."

"Have you heard—anything?"

"No."

"I see. If he should come in, you'll ask him to call me at once?"

"Certainly."

"Thanks."

I hung up. As I reached for a cigarette, the doorbell rang.

I started to get up, then sank back. Once before, the doorbell had rung and I'd been afraid to answer it. I'd waited, and a hundred-dollar bill had slid under the door for me.

What would happen if I waited now?

I decided to find out. I sat there, as the bell sounded again. Then came an eternity of silence. I stared at the door.

Something rustled, crept, slithered under the door. It wasn't green, like money. It was white, like paper.

A newspaper.

I rose and walked over to the door on tiptoe. I looked down. The newspaper had been reduced to a single sheet, and the top portion of a column was inserted under the door upside down. I cocked my head and read a headline:

HOCKEY STAR VICTIM IN TRAIN SMASHUP.

I opened the door and let Professor Hermann in.

Chapter Eight

"I DON'T SEE HOW you did it!" I shook my head and tried not to shake anything else.

"It was simple. The newspaper tells the story, does it not? Drunken driver, stalled on the tracks near the curve at La Placentia, just outside of town. The express hit the car, dragged it for a quarter of a mile. Michael Drayton, thirty-one, husband of Lorna Lewis, Imperial starlet. Wife hysterical at news of accidental death. End of story." The Professor put down the paper and shrugged.

"Didn't they find water in his lungs?"

"There was no water left, thanks to Miss Bauer's work. I checked on it. Lorna's story about smashing the station-wagon gave me the idea. I told her it would cost her a car. She gave it to me without question. I bundled the body into the back and drove over in time to catch the train that pulls through at 4:10 A.M. It was still dark and the side road was deserted. I got out, stalled the motor, and propped Mike up in the front seat. Then there was nothing to do but wait for the express to come, and watch it hit. The car was smashed to bits, and I suppose that Mike—"

He saw my face, and broke off without finishing the sentence. "I walked a few miles and caught a bus," he concluded. "Then I phoned Lorna and told her what to say when she was notified. After that I went home to sleep. I slept until I knew it was time to get up and look at the papers."

The Professor told it that way, without inflection, without emotion. I began to feel cold all over.

"You make it sound so simple," I told him. "But if you hadn't figured it out, I'd be finished. The whole thing is like a nightmare, from the beginning. It was all an accident, you know that. But I never could have proved it. Maybe he was no damned good, maybe he had it coming—but I'm still guilty of his death. And you saved me. I don't quite know how to say it—"

He sat there, smiling at me. "Never mind. I understand. You can forget last night. It was just lucky that I happened to be there."

The black hat came off. The bald head looked like a skull. I shuddered, and lit a cigarette. He was right, better drop it. I was lucky, lucky he happened to be there.

Luck . . . Happened. Something clicked.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"Nothing. I was just thinking—how come you didn't give me any instructions last night?"

"I don't understand."

"You remember, you were going to build me up with Lorna."

"I did. I spent much time talking of you."

"Yes. But you didn't tell me what to do with her. You left me alone, disappeared."

"I saw you were getting along all right. There was no need to stay."

"But you came back."

"I phoned you from the filling-station, after midnight. I got worried when there was no answer."

"Didn't you figure I might be keeping a date with the lady?"

"Yes, of course. But I wanted to check on you." He smiled. "You know, I am very careful about everything I plan."

"You must have been."

"What do you mean?"

I stood up. "I mean, the whole thing looks queer to me now. How did you know where to find us when you returned? How did you know we weren't in the house, upstairs? Yes, and Mike Drayton—he was supposed to have passed out, with a bottle. What made him come to the coach-house and surprise us?"

The top of his head had the dull luster of old ivory. I stared down at him, panting.

"You've told me yourself you never leave anything to luck. Things don't just happen when you have a hand in them. You went upstairs and woke Mike. You told him where we'd be. You sent him to us, knowing there'd be a quarrel, a fight. Perhaps you even planned on murder."

"Sit down. You sound like Lorna, now."

"Well, I'm not Lorna; I'm not a hysterical little tart. I know what I'm saying, and I know you. You did plan it this way, didn't you?"

HE looked up at me and smiled. His mouth smiled, but his eyes didn't change. They looked blank, empty; they seemed just holes in an old ivory skull.

"Yes. There is no reason why you shouldn't know. I planned it this way."

"But why—why would you do such a thing?"

"Sit down. Keep your voice low. I'll tell you. Better still, I'll show you—on the first of next month, when I get a check from Lorna Lewis for a thousand dollars. . . . Consultation fee. There will be such a check, every month, from now on."

"Blackmail!"

"I do not like that word."

"I don't like what you did. I don't like the way you messed me up in this deal."

"It just worked out that way. It seemed—"

"Never mind how it seemed! Nothing just works out around you. You had a reason. I want to know."

"Very well, my young friend. You will know. I'm sorry you forced me to say this, but perhaps it's for the best." The skull leaned forward. The eyes, dead no longer, bored through my scowl.

"I have plans for you, big plans. I have taught you many things, and you will learn more. When we start our project, you will be perfectly equipped to handle any problem that arises. And you will meet the public, not I. I'll stay in the background.

"If things had gone along without any trouble, you'd take your place as

Judson Roberts, gain a reputation, make contacts. In a little while you'd start getting delusions of grandeur. You'd begin to wonder why you couldn't run the show alone, why you must continue to play *Trilby* to my *Svengali*. And you'd try to dump me.

"Mind you, I don't say you'd succeed; but you'd try. I know you better than you know yourself.

"So I planned this, and it worked. Now you won't try to step out of line. You've killed a man. You know it, and Lorna Lewis knows it. But more important still, *I* know it—and I'm not afraid to talk, if I must."

I laughed harshly. "I can just hear you talking, Professor. You're an accessory—"

"Perhaps. It might cost me a year or two in prison. But *you* would burn for it! And, as you so aptly remarked, I leave nothing to chance. That's why I brought Miss Bauer along. She's a good witness; an innocent bystander who saw it happen.

"So now you know, my friend. And now you will never try to cross me, you will never attempt to take over. You will do just as I say, and not try anything rash, like running away."

I stood up again. "You think of everything," I whispered. "But did you ever think that I might try to—kill you?"

I was lightning; I struck from the side. My hand went down, aiming for the fat crease in his neck—

Something was wrong. I stumbled. His foot was out. I was going down. And then there was a pressure on the back of my own neck, an intolerable pressure, crushing the spine up into my brain—

His voice found me in the darkness. "You're a fool! Don't ever try that again. I warn you, I have powers you've never dreamed of! Now, get up—if you can."

I DRAGGED myself over to the chair. My head rested on a red-hot lance that bored through my backbone.

"I told you once before to forget everything that happened last night. That was good advice. You had better follow it. Forget today, too; because we're starting over again."

He was still sitting there, perfectly calm.

"Yes, we're starting," he repeated. "The time has come. I've got the office lined up, and the decorators hired. Next month we'll be on our way, both of us—on our way to the top.

"That's why you must forget all this. The past is dead, safely dead. Only the future is alive. I'm going to make those promises come true, for both of us.

"I am your friend, Eddie—believe that. I'm the only friend you ever had. You can trust me—you must trust me—you *will* trust me."

It was like something you hear in a dream, something you hear when you're under ether, something you hear when you're under hypnosis. Hypnosis! Those slitted eyes of his, staring and staring at me—

"You'll have everything," droned the voice. "I'll stay in the background and you'll get the glory, the fame, the money, the power. That's the way it's going to be. Never doubt it for an instant. You're Judson Roberts, remember? And I'm just—nobody."

I shook off the voice, shook off the stare, and looked at "nobody," sitting there in the chair. His head was like a skull. . . . And then it changed. Maybe it was the slitted eyes and the slitted mouth; maybe it was something else. But all of a sudden, it hit me.

For the first time I realized that Professor Hermann looked like the Devil.

He sat there, and his pudgy hands closed over a shadow. It was only a shadow, but he held it tightly and I knew he would never let it go.

It was my soul.

Chapter Nine

A TALL YOUNG MAN with wavy hair and a professionally precise mustache stared at a tall young man with wavy hair and a professionally precise mustache, who stared at a tall young man with wavy hair and a professionally precise mustache, who—

But you get the idea.

It went on that way, endlessly. The man wearing the soft, sand-colored suit, the white shirt and the solid black knit tie gazed at himself in each of the eight mirror surfaces covering the octagonal office walls.

This octagonal inner office was as big as a barn, with a high ceiling and recessed lighting. The degree of brightness was controlled by a knee-switch behind the desk. That desk and its chair, set in the center of the room, was the only visible furniture. The rest was all space, light and mirrors—mirrors multiplying the presence and personality of Judson Roberts. Mirrors that dazzled and confused the client.

The mirrors caused self-consciousness, and self-hypnosis, too. Of course, I wasn't susceptible any more. Three months here had made me acquainted with the layout, and with the man in the mirror that I had become—Judson Roberts.

It had cost Professor Hermann a lot to set up Y-O-U—"Your Opportunities Unlimited." There was a big nut in the overhead, too, but already it was starting to make ample return.

I sat behind the desk and studied myself in those mirrors. Mr. Judson Roberts smiled back at me from all over the room.

And why not? The book was selling through direct mail, there was a big play for the weekly lectures at the hotel, the appointments poured in regularly. Strangers kept calling, mail arrived. And Judson Roberts was taking the suckers over the jumps, just as the Professor had predicted.

I didn't resent the Professor any more, either. He was right, and our successful operation proved it. The Lorna Lewis mess was forgotten; I never saw her any more.

FOR that matter, I saw very little of the Professor. As he had promised, he got me started and then left me alone. He handled his own office and I handled mine.

Of course, he'd assigned little Sid Rogers to help steer me over the hard spots—and to keep an eye on me too, I suppose. Rogers even took an upstairs room in the new house I'd rented on New Hampshire near Wilshire. But he didn't intrude, and his assistance was welcome at the office.

He briefed May, our secretary. He ghosted my weekly lectures. He made the appointments, sized up clients, checked on the backgrounds of potential prospects. He offered sensible advice:

"Always dress conservatively; flash is out—this isn't the Boardwalk. Remember to keep your voice soft, low—make it just a little hard for them to hear you . . . then they'll have to concentrate, and that's half the battle. Never turn your back on a sucker, don't give him a second to think about anything else."

Tricks, gimmicks, angles. Always something to learn, something to remember, something to try out.

At first I had been afraid, wondering if the bluff would work. Now I wondered why I'd ever wondered. The Professor was right—the seeker was always a sucker. And I wasn't finding it difficult to keep up a front any more. The face smiling back at me from the mirrors was different now, somehow. Poised. It wasn't only that I wore a new mustache; I wore a new look of confidence. I looked like Judson Roberts now, I felt like Judson Roberts, I *was* Judson Roberts.

The phone rang. I lifted the receiver from the concealed alcove inside the round desk.

May's voice, crisply confident: That meant business was in the office.

"Mr. Roberts? A Mr. Caldwell to see you. He wishes to make an appointment."

"Wishes" was a code-word. It meant money. "Appointment" was another code-word. It meant a ten- or fifteen-minute stall, until Rogers could check on the client.

"O.K.," I said, softly. "Tell Mr. Rogers to give me what he can. I'll buzz you when I'm ready. Meanwhile, give Caldwell the consultation routine."

That meant that May would phone the Professor's office and ask for Doctor Altschuler. There would be a discussion of psychiatric treatment over the phone. "Mr. Roberts advises— Mr. Roberts recommends that the patient— Mr. Roberts finds indications of fixation." All for the benefit of the poor guy fidgeting in the handsome but contrivedly uncomfortable chair in the outer office.

I knew what Rogers was doing, too. He was working on Caldwell's name in the little office down the hall. He and the girl we hired to play "nurse" were tracing Caldwell's history with the aid of three telephones and an entire wall-cabinet full of city directories, phone books, detailed city and county street maps. They were looking for biographical sketches in "Who's Who," in business directories, fraternal publications, school annuals. They were phoning for credit-ratings, phoning newspaper morgues. They were checking cross-indexed files furnished by the Professor's friends in similar rackets. And they would get results fast—almost spectacular results.

GIVEN a little luck, Rogers could work even without a sucker's name. All he needed was a glimpse of the license plate of the car he drove. In fifteen minutes, working according to plan and system, he could come up with name, address, occupation, age, financial status—wife's name, names of children and ages, names of parents and close relatives—present residence and previous residences from date of birth on. In addition, there were the little convincing touches; hobbies and club memberships, school background and nickname, and a fairly detailed description of his home and its landmarks. From this it was often easy to guess the character and present problems of the sucker. Yes, Rogers was a good man.

He came in through the hidden entrance behind the rear-wall mirror and laid the typewritten cards on my desk.

"Got a live one, it looks like," he said. "Airlines corporation counsel; inherited money, too. But it's all down here."

"Thanks, Sid. You're a fast worker."

"Good luck."

He vanished. I read the dossier very carefully. Then I read it again. I looked at my watch. Fourteen minutes since May had called. Time enough.

I put the cards down next to the phone, picked up the receiver, and buzzed May.

"Send him in," I said. I leaned back and pressed the light-switch. The mirrors seemed to rise out of the walls, glaring and pressing forward.

The door opened and Edgar Clinton Caldwell stepped into the room.

THERE are three ways to use the information I'd just received from Sid Rogers. The first is to put on the old mystic act—telepathic impressions. It works well with women, and with swishes. The second method is the "arch, inscrutable" gag: "yes, we have our own sources of information, you know." That's for the wise guys, the blusterers.

Looking at Edgar Caldwell, I decided to use the third routine.

He stood there, fat and frightened under the blinding light, gazing at his rumpled reflection in the mirror. He had been sweating, and his coat hung soggily from broad, stooped shoulders. The lower button was open, revealing a wrinkled white triangle with a broad base over a protruding stomach. His gray hair was plastered back over a high, ruddy forehead. He was fat, and he was also big—all his features seemed a little larger than life-size.

I could tell he was frightened, but he didn't know I could tell. He thought he was looking fierce. His eyes glowered; his chin, and its accessory folds, thrust forward aggressively.

But I was watching his hands: large, red, knob-knuckled hands, the hands that clenched and unclenched in unconscious, uncontrolled apprehension. Those hands were looking for something to hang on to in a room of emptiness. Those hands wanted to smash out at the mirrors that multiplied and distorted their reflections. Those hands wanted to come up, cover the eyes and shut out the glare of light, shut out the spectacle of my complacency. The hands could not grasp, they could not destroy, they could not conceal.

I looked at Caldwell's hands and knew the third approach would work.

"You are Edgar Clinton Caldwell?" *Soft voice, but phrase the question as though the man is on trial.*

"Yes. Mr. Roberts?"

Good! His voice trembled a little on my name. Got him!

"I am Judson Roberts. Won't you come in?"

Get him to cross the room. Make him sweat and falter as he tries not to watch himself in all those mirrors. He'll notice everything he's tried to hide from others and himself—the way he looks from the side, the unflattering angles of his head, his poor posture, his ridiculous waddling butt sticking up behind. Get him to cross the room and he's licked before he starts.

"Trick layout you got here."

Start the third gambit. Frank, open smile. Look up. Let him feel superior, for just a moment.

"It's meant to impress the credulous. I must apologize to you, sir. There's obviously no need of stage-effects with *you*."

I dimmed the lights. He blinked his relief, standing there and waiting for me to confide in him.

Third gambit, now.

I reached into the desk-recess and drew out the typed notes. I held them out to him.

"Here, Mr. Caldwell—I'm going to ask you a small favor before we go any further. Will you please verify the accuracy of these statements?"

He took the cards and I watched them disappear in the red folds of his huge hands. I watched him read, watched his eyes dilate, watched the eyebrows as they tried to climb his forehead.

"What the— Where the devil did you get all this dope?"

Smile. Let it hit him, let it sink in. Wait until he's sold.

"I could make it sound mysterious, Mr. Caldwell, but the whole thing is really quite simple. I have a trained research staff, you know. The moment your name was announced, they went to work on the files. Naturally, a man in your position has left his mark in many places; newspapers, trade publications, directories. Our references yielded this preliminary data. Undoubtedly a more comprehensive checkup would afford us much more information on your background and position.

"Now the reason for all this is obvious to you, Mr. Caldwell. I am a professional psychologist and as such, a business man. I conduct my affairs on a business basis, just as you do. Naturally, it is helpful for me to know as much as possible about a client before I see him; just as you endeavor to find out what you can about a prospect. I'm sure that you, too, have your sources, Mr. Caldwell."

WATCH *him grin. He isn't frightened, now. He thinks you're taking him into your confidence. He's flattered. You wouldn't pull any tricks on him, he can see that; you've sized him up as an equal. In a word, the poor fish is hooked.*

"I might as well be perfectly frank with you, Mr. Caldwell. Our relationship to come will demand such frankness, mutual frankness. Don't you agree?"

He nodded. I wanted to keep him nodding, now.

Build up a dependency. The patient develops a fixation upon the analyst. Keep it in that stage. Flatter him with questions, inquire after every detail, endlessly. Everyone wants to talk about himself. That's Y-O-U, the whole secret of it. Complete catharsis.

"And now, Mr. Caldwell, let's talk about you and your problems. You have a problem, don't you, Mr. Caldwell?"

Problems. They all have problems. Every one is different, and they're all the same. Always a common denominator—the basic fear:

The rabbity little man, Mason, who came on Thursday afternoons. He was afraid of his own desires. Mrs. Finch, Mondays and Fridays by appointment in her home, feared what happened to her when she tried stopping or cutting down the dosage of her sleeping-powders. Maxwell Solomon, very confidential ("apt to call you any time I need you"), attempted to conceal in pyrophobia his dread of Divine retribution for saving himself rather than his wife and child in the crash of their private plane. Miss Eudalie Vinyer was afraid of me because I was all men and all men were her brothers and at thirteen she had been too young to derive any enjoyment from the opposite sex. Baker feared his boss; Klotscher feared God; Mrs. Annixter feared tuberculosis, which was a polite term for her more deep-seated neurosis, which was a polite term for the fact that her husband was steadily driving her to the brink of a genuine and frustrating nervous breakdown. By a strange coincidence, Mr. Annixter came too. He feared Mrs. Annixter.

It was all very simple, and all very complicated. Some of them knew, and some of them didn't know. Some of them had to be told, some of them couldn't be told. Some of them needed a doctor, some a psychiatrist, some a lawyer, some a priest, some an executioner. But all of them needed me. They needed an audience, a father-confessor, a child, a mother, a lover to listen and understand and flatter and cajole and condone.

They needed Y-O-U.

Detail—endless detail; they wanted to tell everything.

They wanted every test I could give them—co-ordination, color determination, mnemonics, word-association and free fantasy sessions, work with charts, slides, ink-blots and anything else I could think up.

I would send them to a pal of ours, Dr. Sylvestro, for a complete preliminary physical checkup, and they loved that too.

That was the answer. They feared, and they wanted love. Love in the form of attention, interest, an affirmation of their own self-importance.

Y-O-U gave it to them. For Y-O-U, with all the metaphysical and practical psychology hokum boiled away, was simply an extension of the old saws, "Know thyself" and "Be yourself." The whole routine was built up to flatter the individual, make him think about himself. There were touches of the "charm school" and the "expand your personality" routine here; we sent people to beauty parlors and plastic surgeons and dress designers and dancing schools. But in the end, we took them to the cleaners.

It was fascinating to watch the spectacle. There was only one difficulty—I kept wanting to go outside and vomit.

Now here was Mr. Caldwell and *his* problem. Edgar Clinton Caldwell, 57. Wealthy, father of three, a "successful business man," a typical example of middle-class respectability and sublimated eroticism.

Dr. Sylvestro had recommended me to him. "Nerves." Hemorrhoids and constipation. "But there are some things you can't tell even a doctor—you understand that, Roberts. Like

> I am most fond of talking and thinking; that is to say, talking first and thinking afterward.
>
> —OSBERT SITWELL

the string. Sounds silly; I wouldn't mention it even to Mrs. Caldwell. But I save twine and old string—every bit. I have boxes full of it down in the office, in the safe. It's just a habit; I know it's nothing serious—but why do I do such a thing?"

I knew why. But I didn't tell him. I let him do the talking, twice a week. First a routine probing. Then a gradual, almost imperceptible hypnotic technique. That's something I was picking up from Professor Hermann. I suspected he used it on Miss Bauer, and that he had been tempted to try it with me.

It worked with Caldwell. He grew to depend on the sittings. And I kept taking notes: notes about him—notes about his business dealings. I wasn't quite sure what the angle would be, yet. Those things I left to the Professor.

When I had enough, I asked Hermann.

He read, listened, and twirled his monocle. Then:

"Get him to retire. Liquidate his holdings. We'll need cash for this."

"Retire? But he loves his business—I can't take that away from him. Oh, I can probably force the issue, but the results will be bad. He'll just go to pieces. Inside of six months he'll be a wreck."

"I know that." The bald head bobbed, the monocle twirled. "Get him to retire."

"BUT I don't want to retire, man!" Caldwell expostulated. "It isn't that I don't place any faith in you, Roberts; you know better than that. But here I am, in the prime of life, with a fine position—why, I own better than fifteen per cent of the airline stock. I've worked years to get where I am; and now you advise me to chuck everything. Why?"

"Because you're not happy."

"Dammit, man, who says I'm not happy? I've got a net worth of upward of two hundred thousand, no debts; a house in town and one at the beach. Marge and I get along great—the sex part doesn't bother me, you know; I told you about Eve—and those boys of mine—"

"You're not happy."

"Don't keep saying that! Just because of those goddam piles, and a few dreams—"

"I'm sorry to keep interrupting you, Mr. Caldwell. I'm sorry to keep repeating myself. But you are not a happy man. And you know it. Your very defensive attitude reveals it. Happy men are under no compulsion to save string. Happy men do not wash their hands until the flesh is red and chafed, the knuckles constantly rubbed raw from frequent cleansing with strong abrasive soaps. Happy men do not require sexual stimulation from a mistress."

"Please, let's not mention that part again; I wish I'd not let *that* slip out."

"You will be thankful some day that you were utterly frank with me. And you will be thankful that I am utterly frank with you. I want you to retire. These sessions are stimulating, but they are not enough. In order to remake your life, you must devote your life to the task.

"Your present habit-patterns and associations keep you chained to the reflexes and conditioning which make you unhappy. You'll never be free, never emancipate your personality, until you are willing to start afresh.

"I don't want to be an alarmist, Mr. Caldwell, but unless you undertake the step now, it may be too late ever to escape. You aren't getting any younger, you know. What you can do today, voluntarily, you will be unable to do five years, three years, or even one year from now. This is your last chance."

"I don't see it, Roberts—don't see it at all. You talk as though I were a sick man. Just because I get down in the dumps once in a while, same as everybody—"

"*Are* you the same as everybody, Mr. Caldwell? Can you say that honestly to me, to yourself? After what we both know about those dreams, about your relations with Eve, about what happened at that fraternity initiation—"

"That was an accident!"

"But your impulses, your desires; those were not accidental. They were fundamental, implicit in your disorder."

"You can't frighten me, Roberts."

"Please—I'm not trying to frighten you. Have I ever resorted to any mumbo-jumbo or trickery, since the first time you came to me? Have I ever been anything but straightforward and sincere? I haven't preached or lectured or put on any of the cheap front you despise. I haven't attempted to delude you in any way. That's what makes it so hard for me to impress you now. But you must be impressed with the importance, the necessity, of taking this step. Or else—"

"Else what? What are you driving at?"

"There'll be a psychosomatic reaction, to begin with. The old-fashioned 'nervous breakdown.' You've seen it happen to others. In your case, with an sex fixation, it will be painful. And Eve will take over. She's almost done so now; from what you say, she's practically blackmailing you as it is. Suppose your wife finds out? Suppose something else happens? It could, easily enough. Remember the Arbuckle affair—"

WHEN a fat man trembles, his flesh quivers all over. Acres of gray jelly, quaking and oozing perspiration—

"But what do you want me to do? Suppose I retire, then what?"

"I'm going to take you back forty years. We'll start all over again. We'll go back to the time before the initiation and the scandal, before you had to leave school. You know what your ambitions were then. We'll recapture that personality, make it dominant once more, make a young man of you, a new man."

"How?"

"I'll work with you personally. Every day. Oh, nothing spectacular, and nothing drastic. You love Marge, and the boys; I won't take them away from you. But you must make a major alteration and adjustment. You need help.

"And you can afford it. Even if you weren't in need of treatment, I'd advise retirement on the general principle that any man who is financially independent should retire from business and begin living. You've tried to retreat from life into your work, and it isn't successful. So now you must retreat from work into life again."

"So that's it, eh? I can afford it, you say—meaning here is where you make a killing. Big fees, is that the angle, Roberts?"

"Please! You're antagonistic—not to me, but to the truth. You know my fees: twenty dollars a consultation. That is not exorbitant! I shall not be able to give you more than three days a week. Our program will take about a year. Say three thousand dollars, at the most. I assure you I do not need your money, nor would I particularly care to undertake this treatment if the prognosis were not favorable. Besides, frankly, I have a personal interest in your problem, Mr. Caldwell. And you know I can help you."

"Yes, I do. I'm going to think over what you said—think it over very seriously. It would be worth it, just to get rid of Eve. Do you think—"

"That you will be strong enough to give her up? Yes, I can definitely promise you that, Mr. Caldwell. Quite definitely."

Chapter Ten

THERE WERE EMPTY GLASSES and filled ashtrays all over the small apartment. I could smell Scotch and smoke and Tabu and stale food and Lysol—everything but fresh air. Fresh air wouldn't have suited Eve Ireland, anyway.

I didn't exactly suit her, either.

I sat facing her on the sofa, pretending to examine my drink while I sized up the tall blonde with the brunette's complexion. Her hair was dark at the roots, her eyes were red at the corners, her mouth was lined at the edges where the lipstick tapered off.

She gave me a look that would have made her a fortune as a glass-cutter and said, "Well, now that you're here, what's the big idea?"

"No big ideas. Just a little one."

"Cut the cute stuff. Speak your piece and get out."

"I'll bet you didn't handle your old customers this way."

"Say, what is this?" She stood up, bracelets jangling.

"Sit down. Don't be afraid."

"Afraid? Listen, you—"

That told me all I wanted to know. Not a clever woman—not subtle; just a pushover. And I knew how to handle her. I kept my voice loud, made it harsh.

"You've come up in the world, haven't you, kid? This guy Caldwell must treat you all right."

Her eyes narrowed as my mouth widened.

"Of course he goes for your little tricks," I went on. "Where'd you pick up those fancy ideas, anyway—when you worked Las Vegas?"

Her earrings quivered and danced. "So it's a shakedown, huh? Well, let me tell you—"

"No—I'll tell *you*, instead. This isn't a shakedown, Edith—"

"Eve."

"Edith Adamowski. I know your name; I know all about you. Don't get excited, this isn't a frame. If you want to know who told me, it was Caldwell himself."

"Caldwell? What kind of a gag is this, anyway?"

I told her what kind of a gag it was.

SHE sat down, after a while, and drank her drink. She nodded. I went right on talking.

"The important thing is, he doesn't know anything about it. He mustn't know. Like I told you, he's willing to pay five grand to get rid of you for good. He thinks he's a new man, that he can frighten you into it. All you have to do is let him. Take the five grand, and blow. Then stand by for orders and the big killing. That's five grand more for you."

"Well—I dunno. I got a good setup here."

I walked over to her and sat down. I smiled into her eyes. "Do you mean to tell me you like it?" I asked softly. "Do you like it when Caldwell—"

"Shut up! Goddam you, don't say it! I hate the filthy dog; why the hell you think I'm on the sauce all the time if it isn't because of him? He gives me the creeps, but—"

"Then do as I tell you. There's ten grand in it for you. Five now, and five in a little while."

"How can I make sure you don't double-cross me on the other five?"

"How can I be sure you don't double-cross me by taking his first five and then spilling your guts?"

She grinned. "Yeah! Yeah, I never thought of that."

I grinned right back at her. "Well, don't start thinking of it, either. Because, if you do sing to him, you're going to have an awfully sore throat."

"Huh?"

"Come here." I led her to the window, pushed aside the gray strand of a curtain that had once been white. "See that man down there? The big one, standing next to the car?"

She saw him. She saw Jake, waiting for me.

"I see him. What about him? Who is he?"

"I'm not going to introduce you. I hope I never have to. But he's the man who has orders to kill you if you don't play ball."

"So that's it, huh?"

"That's it. Are you in?"

Eve Ireland gulped the rest of her drink. She drank fast, man-fashion. She was furious, through and through. If Jake didn't kill her, some

cop or thug surely would. I watched her mouth dispose of the drink and waited for it to form the words I knew would come.

"All right. Count me in."

"My God, Roberts, you were right! I did it!" Caldwell's knobby knuckle slammed against the desk.

"I knew you would, Ed. Did you say what I told you?"

"Bet your life! And it was just the way you predicted it would be. She turned on the tears, and then she tried to get me hot again, and then she had hysterics, and then she threatened me. But I remembered what you said, and it worked out."

"Good for you."

"You know something? I almost couldn't go through with it. When she started loving me up, I—"

He went into details, and I tried to keep from shuddering. It wasn't easy, but I managed. I even kept the smile on my face and remembered to nod in the right places.

"But the important thing is, she's gone now, Roberts. Left town today. I paid her off in cash."

"That isn't the really important thing, Ed."

"No?"

"The important thing is what you've proved to yourself. That you have the courage to start over, start fresh. That you are already beginning to become the kind of man I want you to be—and that *you* want to be."

I stood up and looked down at him. "I'm anxious to get started. How soon will you be through winding up your affairs?"

"Be about three weeks more. They took it pretty hard down at the office, you know. And I don't know what I'd have done if you hadn't told me how to handle Marge. But I'll be a free man in three weeks."

"Except for the stock."

"You can't talk me out of that one, Roberts. That's one setup where I'm the expert. Dumping fifteen per cent of the company stock on the market right now would sink them. The Imperial outfit is just waiting to close in and reorganize. Besides, as it is, the stuff keeps bringing in dividends. It's a sound investment. And I won't have to watch it, just let it sit. I'm going to be a free man."

"That's right," I said. "In three weeks you'll be a free man."

We stood on the corner of Wilshire and Western, bucking the breeze.

"What's the big idea of the briefcase?" Caldwell asked. "I don't get it."

"You will, soon enough. Just follow me and obey orders."

"Right. Oh, damn it to hell—"

His hat blew off. I watched it swirl away over the car tops, then spiral into the street. It rolled. He started to rush after it.

I grabbed his arm. "Wait a minute, Ed. Let it go."

"Let it go? But that's a twenty-dollar panama! I'm not going to—"

"Hold it. Your first lesson in living begins right now. Look, Ed: Never chase your hat in the street. You might be killed by a car. Besides, who wants to get sweated up and out of breath chasing a hat?"

"But—"

"Let the other fellow do it for you, Ed. Don't you understand? There's always somebody else who's willing to chase your hat. Willing? He's crazy to death to do it for you. It makes him a hero. And if you thank him for it, he'll fall all over you."

I turned and gestured.

"You see? That man without a coat, between those two sedans. He's getting it for you. Wait here."

"This yours, mister?" said a voice.

"Yes, it is. Thank you very much. I appreciate your kindness."

"Oh, that's all right."

"Look at him blush," I murmured, as we turned away.

Caldwell held back. "I ought to give him something for—"

"Certainly not. As it is, he's happy. He's done his good deed for the day. He feels superior. If you offered him a dollar it would be like kicking him in the face. He's on top of the world now, and you have your hat back without exertion. Just remember that in the future."

He nodded. "Guess your theories aren't as impractical as they sound."

"Well, we'll test another one right now. Follow me down this block."

We walked quickly, without speaking. At the corner I halted and led him to my car.

"Get in."

"We going somewhere?"

"Not yet. First, you've got a job to do. Take this pencil and paper."

"Yes."

"Now, write down everything you can remember seeing during our walk down the block."

"How's that again?"

"It's very simple. Just write down everything you saw as we walked. People. Costumes. Faces. The names of stores. What was in the windows. Everything."

"Why?"

"Don't ask questions. I'm trying to find out something about your powers of observation, and association."

He grumbled, and he sweated, but he wrote. And he was flattered at the attention. *This* was something like it!

Here was somebody who really took an interest in what a man thought, what he could do, what made him tick. Nobody had ever cared about those things before—Marge didn't, that slut Eve didn't, the fellows at the office didn't, even his friends. In the old days his teachers, his father, his own mother hadn't cared.

I watched him, knowing what he was thinking, knowing what he was doing, knowing what I was doing.

In a way I almost felt sorry for the man. He looked so pathetic, so eager, as he sat there scribbling away like an anxious schoolboy. I was giving him something nobody else had ever bestowed upon him in his lifetime—something few men ever get or ever realize they want—personal interest. I suddenly realized that I *could* do what I had said I would; remake him, remold him into a better, more integrated, healthy personality.

But to hell with that! Suddenly it all came back to me: a picture of Caldwell, dozens of men like Caldwell, and what they had done to *me* in the past.

"Sorry, Mr. Caldwell is busy now and cannot be disturbed. . . . Afraid there's nothing doing right now—if you'd care to leave your name. . . . No, I have no time to discuss it with you—"

Yes, there were a lot of Caldwells, a lot of fat, well-fed brutes ready and waiting to push little guys around. Ready to play Boss—and play God, if you let them.

Well, I wasn't having any more. From now on, I was Boss, I was God, and the Caldwells would dance!

"All right, that's enough," I snapped.

"But I'm not finished yet."

"Sorry, another time." I looked at my watch. "I've got an assignment for you."

And so we started.

I gave him assignments galore—I went through the whole bag of tricks.

I supplied him with a card, an order-pad, and a briefcase full of sample neckties and sent him into a haberdashery, cold, to pose as a tie salesman and get an order.

Another day I got him lost in the canyons and made him drive us back.

I kept him awake for two days and two nights; denied him food or water for twenty-four hours; ordered him to grow a beard.

It was silly, it was pathetic, it was as simple as A-B-C, and he loved it—because I kept up a fast line of patter about personality development, exposing one's self to new experience variants, developing dormant skills and realizing and utilizing psychic potential.

The very simplicty of the methodology is what made it so effective. I was always at his side, always ready

with a new problem, always eager to discuss his reactions, listen to him talk about himself. He was completely sold.

As a matter of fact, it didn't hurt him a bit—as therapy. He dropped about ten pounds in three weeks, took on some color, stopped washing his hands. He was still a string-saver, but the change of pace and the absence of Eve combined to restore his sex-drive and focus it upon more normal goals.

It surprised me, at first, to see him benefit. But why shouldn't he benefit? The fake religions, the fake healers, the fake mystics, all have a history of success with sufferers and seekers. The fact that this success is often illusory or temporary, the fact that in the end most converts plunge still further into a morass of maladjustment, just doesn't seem to matter to anyone.

Certainly, the notion never occurred to Caldwell. He felt free, uninhibited, readjusted.

"I'm ready to get started now," he kept telling me. "And thanks to you, I know what I want to do. I was never happy in corporation law, anyway. Handling other people's affairs, other people's funds—that's living your life second-hand. You've shown me I know how to sell, how to analyze a situation. And I do have a background of business experience. Seems to me I ought to take advantage of it."

"What did you have in mind, Ed?"

"Real estate. There's a boom building up again in the south, you know. Beach development, housing. I've had my eye on some property for a long time now. But I was always too cautious, too afraid. I kept putting it off. Now I'd like to try my hand. Why don't you take a run down south with me one of these days? I'll show you what I have in mind.

"And here's something else, Roberts: You've done a lot for me. Don't think I'm not appreciating it. I'd like to cut you in on this little deal."

"But remember, your funds are tied up," I reminded him. "That stock you own—"

He laughed. It was a surprisingly energetic laugh, in which his chins and belly joined. "That was a lot of damfool nonsense. I was talking like an old woman in those days! Sure, if I sell the company will probably have to reorganize, and Imperial will take over. But what's that to me? It's my money; I can pull out whenever I please.

"Don't get me wrong, Roberts. I'm not going back into business—no more ten-hour days for me. You showed me the light. But this investment proposition is different: it calls for less time, and it's something I've always wanted to try my hand at. What do you say?"

"Well, I don't know if you're ready yet. Give me a little time to analyze the elements involved. I trust you won't do anything rash until we work things out."

"Naturally, I wouldn't make a move without your say-so. But I want action."

"All right." I nodded. "I think I can promise you some action very shortly." And he agreed to this.

My new place on New Hampshire was a white frame affair, seven rooms, fireplace—conventional enough, because I didn't operate from here. Rogers had a bedroom on the second floor and he kept out of my way. I wasn't home much, anyhow; ate out, and the night work didn't give me a chance to try out the fireplace-and-slippers act. Once in a while we used the front room for a little private conference.

This time the Professor, Rogers, and Doc Sylvestro joined me. I had all my stuff in writing, and they kept passing around the notes and making notes of their own.

I sat there and watched my companions: little Rogers, with his hyper-

When a girl marries she exchanges the attentions of many men for the inattention of one.

—HELEN ROWLAND

sensitive twitchings; the Professor, an ivory Buddha in a black suit; and Dr. Sylvestro, a gaunt gargoyle whose specialty was silence.

"Good." The Professor's soft voice addressed me. "You say he will sell the stock?"

"Tomorrow."

The Professor was speaking to Rogers, now.

"I'm depending on you to handle this deal. Buy Imperial, preferred, as soon as the sale is completed. Get all the cash you can lay your hands on. Buy Imperial."

"Check."

"That leaves our string-saving friend in possession of a cool hundred and fifty thousand in cash, does it not?"

Sylvestro's deep voice: "You have plans for that money too, haven't you, Hermann?"

The bald head inclined slowly. "Naturally. In fact, my plans are already in effect. When Jake arrives—"

"Wait a minute," I said. "I've got an idea for you, Professor. As I told you, Caldwell wants to go into real-estate speculation. You know I have his complete confidence. He'll follow my advice. Now suppose you were to arrange a tie-up with some promoters who own beach property, and we could split the profits—"

A fat hand rose and pushed the rest of the sentence back down my throat.

"That is too risky, too uncertain. I'd considered it, of course, but I have found a better way—with your friend, Eve Ireland."

"Eve? But I paid her off; she went away."

"Before Caldwell broke with her, before the payoff, there was a lapse of two weeks during which he continued to see her. You know that."

"Yes."

"But what you do not know is that Rogers also contacted Eve Ireland."

"Meaning you didn't trust me to pull off the agreement?"

"No. We checked on you, naturally. That is my policy. But we had something else in mind. We anticipated this situation. Has it ever occurred to you, my friend, that if a man is willing to pay five thousand dollars, he will also be willing to pay a great deal more?"

"I don't get it."

"Let Jake tell you. That sounds like his ring."

I got up and answered the bell. It was our Neanderthal friend, all right—the man whose forehead was voted most likely to recede.

"How's tricks?" he grunted.

"You're the mystic," I told him. "Come on in."

Our little family circle watched impatiently as he extracted an envelope from the pocket of his sports shirt.

"Here they are," he said.

The Professor opened the envelope. Five 3¼ x 4¼ negatives and an equal number of prints were shuffled fanwise through his fingers. His face bore the blankness of a professional poker-player. The others leaned forward.

"What'd he get?" Rogers asked.

"See for yourself."

Rogers grabbed at the photos. Doc Sylvestro got up and leaned over his shoulder.

"Jesus!" Rogers whispered. "How the hell did you manage this?"

"The babe co-operated."

"I'll say she did! But I mean, you must have been pretty close."

"Bathroom. I used that new-type flash the Professor got me. No light, see? When she heard how much the take would be, she fixed me up. Got 'em all the same night."

"Jesus!" Rogers repeated. "Hot stuff."

Sylvestro's gargoyle grimace deepened. "Care to look?" he asked.

I looked, then turned away. I hoped the Professor wouldn't see my face. I heard myself saying, "But what are you going to do with this?"

The Professor opened the envelope and took out some prints. The others leaned forward. "Lord!" whispered Rogers. "How did you manage these?" The Professor merely smiled.

"What are we going to do? We're going to shake down your pal Caldwell for about fifty Gs, to start with. I bet he'll think it's worth it not to have his wife see what he does in his spare time—why, they put guys away for less than this! Them ropes—"

"Never mind." The Professor silenced Jake and retrieved the photographs.

"I think you understand our plan now," he told me. "Here's what's going to happen—"

I listened and nodded. Then I shook my head. "No," I said. Heads jerked around in surprise. "You aren't going to pull a dirty trick like that. You don't expect me to take a hand in such a stinking, rotten setup!"

"Oh, yes, I do." The Professor smiled. "Remember Mike."

Everybody smiled. After a moment, I smiled, too. But all the while I kept saying to myself: *It's all right, this isn't real, it's just a nightmare, it's going to end, it's got to end. . . .*

"My God, Roberts, say something!" Caldwell shook my shoulder. Maybe he just put his hand on it, but he was trembling so that he shook anything he touched.

"Don't you understand?" he panted. "This woman, she came back; she wants fifty thousand, she says she'll go to Marge with those pictures—"

I shrugged his hand off. "I can't help you. If you'd only taken my advice and broken with her immediately after I suggested it, this wouldn't have happened."

"But it *has* happened! Something must be done." He gulped. "Couldn't you see her again, talk her out of it?"

"Please, Ed! Obviously she's determined. And I can't afford to get mixed up in anything like this. You understand."

"But can't we fix up a trap, or something, with the police?"

"Then they'd see the pictures, wouldn't they? And Marge would hear the whole story."

"God, what can I do? What *can* I do?"

"I'm afraid you'll have to pay her off."

Silence.

"Look, Roberts, you're sure there is no other way? I'd make it worth your while."

"It's too late now."

"Well, will you come with me tomorrow night when I meet her?"

I gave him a refrigerated smile. "That would be very unwise. And I'm afraid, until this matter clears up, that we had better not see one another."

"But who can I go to? Who is there to help me?"

He waited, but I didn't answer. I couldn't answer. There was no answer left for him.

I could only sit there and watch him cry, watch his jelly-flesh dissolve in his clothes, watch the red hands as they scrabbled and twisted across my desk, endlessly raveling and unraveling a piece of dirty string.

The buzzer sounded, by prearrangement, and I left the room. When I returned, ten minutes later, Edgar Caldwell was gone.

I never saw him again. . . .

Of course, I heard all about it, later. Imperial put through their consolidation act, and the Professor's newly acquired stock went up twelve points before he sold.

They took Caldwell for his fifty grand, and then after a while they put the bite on him for another fifty, using a set of duplicate negatives.

He phoned me and tried to see me at the office, but I was always out. This was several weeks after, and I was working on Orlando Lightwick, Mrs. Penworthy, and Benny Cole, the gambler. Even if I had wanted to, I couldn't have seen Caldwell right then.

Besides, the job was over. The Professor was satisfied, Jake and Rogers and Sylvestro were happy. I suppose

Eve Ireland was happy, too – even though she took all the risk and they finally chiseled her down on her percentage of the take. But that was no concern of mine. I didn't know and I didn't care.

It must have been about six weeks later that the Professor broke the news to me.

"Did you see the papers?" he asked. "Caldwell is dead."

"Dead?"

"He committed suicide – down at his beach-house, last night.

"How?"

"Can't you guess? The string fixation, the ropes in the photographs– remember? He hung himself."

"No!"

"Curious, isn't it, how we follow an unconscious pattern? But that's the way it goes. Once a string-saver, always a string-saver."

Chapter Eleven

IT WAS AFTER Caldwell's death that everything began to go wrong. Everything, and nothing. Perhaps it was only I who went wrong.

Strangely, Mike's death had upset me, but not like this. That had been an accident and somehow I couldn't accept the complete guilt or responsibility–even though the Professor held it over me as a threat.

With Caldwell, things were different. Oh, he was no great loss to the world – he'd lied and cheated and stolen, and his behavior with Eve Ireland was bestial enough to be punished.

But I hadn't the right to do the punishing–or to execute him. He saved the string, but I tied the hangman's knot, I placed the noose around his neck, I kicked the chair away and left him dangling there, gray jelly quivering on the end of a rope, gray jelly jerking and then the rope cutting into his chin, cutting into his neck and stretching it long and thin. They say, sometimes, when they cut down a corpse, the neck is no bigger around than a child's wrist–

Thoughts like that were what made me start to sit in the house and drink, just like Rogers, going upstairs to his room with a pint every night. Maybe *he* had something to drink about, too. Like Ellen Post, the apricot girl. I wondered about her, but there was no sense wondering. I couldn't think clearly. There was always the rope, dangling and twisting back and forth, to and fro. . . .

That's the way I was thinking, that's the way I was living after Caldwell died. I happened to be going through my *Hamlet* act one night when the doorbell rang. It was the Professor.

"Good evening."

"Hello. I didn't expect you."

"That is obvious."

"You mean the whisky? I was just having a nightcap."

He sat down at the table and crossed his arms. The sleeves made a black X on the tablecloth. X marks the spot. Black suit again–all that money coming in and he still dressed in the same clothing. Like a minister. Or an undertaker. . . .

"What's the matter with you?"

"Not a thing. Should there be?"

"Rogers tells me you do a lot of this."

Rogers was a little rat. I raised my glass and drank to holes in his cheese. "Not so much. Besides, what else is there for me to do?"

"You might keep up your studies. There is no end to learning, you know."

"I'm doing all right. The money's coming in, isn't it?"

"Yes. I really cannot complain on that score."

"Then I'm entitled to my own way of amusing myself."

"Amusing yourself!" The Professor ran a hand across his gleaming skull and stared at me across the table. "So you are still interested in amusement, eh? That's the end-all and be-all of everything you do; your sole purpose in living is to justify and pay for your amusement, as you call it. In other words, you have the psychology of a garage mechanic."

"That would pretty accurately describe my income and my status, too." The word-choice was that of Judson Roberts – but the bitter intonation was strictly Eddie Haines.

"You're dissatisfied?"

"A shrewd analysis," I said.

"But when you think of where you were just eight months ago–"

"I'd rather think about the big promises you made me. Fame, fortune, anything I wanted. You remember?"

"Yes. Those things will come, if you desire them. Although for a while, I had hoped they would not be necessary. That you would reach a stage where you'd no longer desire them."

"I don't know how you figure that angle."

"It was only a hope on my part. I thought perhaps, in your reading and study, you might develop a genuine interest in some phases of metaphysics. Then you and I might have gone on to the next phase together. But I misjudged you–you want, as you term it, amusement."

"Let's call it more money and be done with it. You'll never get to me with any nonsense about 'spiritual riches,' if that's what you thought."

He smiled. "I've trained you too well, I see. You're always sure of an ulterior motive, aren't you?"

I could smile, too. "Well, you certainly aren't going to try to sell me on the idea that you've gone overboard on theosophy yourself, are you?"

"No, Eddie. I'm not going to try to sell you anything. Some day, perhaps, you will learn, as I have, that there are certain truths behind ageless symbols, a reality beyond all allegory, an attainment–" He stopped. "But I bore you."

"Not at all." I reached for the bottle. "Nothing bores me, as long as I have this."

He took the bottle from my hand, set it down.

"That's out."

"Look, now–"

"Would a guarantee of five hundred a week help to keep you on the wagon?"

"Look. It's not just the money part that gets me down."

"I know. You didn't like what happened to Caldwell, did you?" He took out his monocle and began to polish it with the same careful attention they bestow on lenses at Mount Palomar. "Well, I think I can reassure you on that score. We won't be trying extortion again; it's far too risky. Besides there's no longer any need. From now on things will run smoothly, on the momentum we've gained.

"HERE is another thing. I shall be devoting less and less time to this operation in the future. If you keep away from liquor, I promise to give you a free hand. Run things as you choose. The clients are coming in and you know how to handle them. You see, you'll be earning your money."

I stood up. "That suits me. Just as long as I can run things my way. Without threats, without frame-ups."

"It's a bargain." The Professor didn't shake hands. He never shook hands. Somehow, that suited me. He had hands like fat blind spiders. . . .

"By the way, I've been thinking. It might not be a bad idea to put you on the air."

"Radio?"

"A fifteen-minute program, once a week. To sell the book, sell your name. I'm having Rogers check into the costs and possible time. Then you might work up an expansion program; train a few assistants for this personal-supervision stuff. We'll discuss it all some other time. Right now I have another appointment."

He left us alone then, and there we sat–the bottle and I. The bottle was half-empty; I was half-full.

I looked at it. "Did you hear what he said?" I asked. "Five hundred a week. And I'm going on the radio! That's a laugh. I came out here to get on the air, but Rickert said I wasn't good enough. And now–"

The bottle didn't answer me. . . .

There was another bottle sitting on another table, a couple of nights later. I was drinking club soda, straight, in a little bar off the Strip.

That was the Professor's idea—I'd meet him here and we'd go over our radio plans.

But he was late. He was always late, these days. I talked to him on the phone but I never saw him. Rogers reported that business was slack; Miss Bauer kept the office open as a matter of policy, although the Professor had cut his own practice down to a minimum.

Nobody seemed to know just what he did or where he went. Doc Sylvestro was with him a great deal of the time, but it was all very hush-hush.

Everything the Professor did was hush-hush stuff. I found myself doing a little objective thinking for the first time in months.

Professor Hermann was a type—a West Coast type; more specifically, a Southern California type. He would not be tolerated anywhere else; he wouldn't exist, let alone flourish, in another setting.

But this was a land of Messiahs and miracles; of Peter the Hermit and Isaiah the Evangelist; a land where red flowers and green skyscrapers sprang up overnight. A land of fabulous fertility, luxuriant lushness.

The rod smote the rock and gold gushed forth in 1849. The rod waved as a magic wand and lo, there was Hollywood. The rod smote the rock again, and oil spewed fortunes to the skies. The rod pointed and there was real estate, and aircraft factories, and an entire civilization that bought cars from Madman Muntz and cemetery lots at Forest Lawn. At night, the flying red horse heralded the Apocalypse in advertising from a dirigible. The searchlights stabbed at heaven to proclaim the presence of a new fruitstand.

But the sky was too blue, the sun too radiant, the exaggeration of all natural phenomena too pronounced. It led to extremes in individuality—eccentricism rampant. Its ultimate end was the Professor, and those who accepted and believed in him.

Sitting there, trying to figure it all out, I suddenly realized that I was as deluded as the rest of the seekers out here. The sun-worshipers, the gold-worshipers, the sudden success-worshipers. I had accepted the distortion of values and attitudes as normal. If the rod suddenly pointed at the rock and called forth the fury of an earthquake, I'd rush to the Professor for salvation.

He couldn't help me. He was just a faker in a black suit, a self-acknowledged charlatan. Yet I depended upon him for my way of living. He had made me, created Judson Roberts. My life was in his hands. Yes, quite literally—my life was in his hands.

Why had I never attempted to find out anything about him? It was important that I know who he was, what he wanted. I tried to utilize the Judson Roberts technique, but it was hard to do an analysis on club soda.

I looked around the quiet bar. Perhaps I could order just one drink before he— No. He had forbidden it. Yet who was he to forbid? Yes, who was he?

Otto Hermann, Ph.D. Not listed in "Who's Who" or any professional directory. The degree had never been granted by an American university.

German, perhaps Austrian. Age, forty-odd. When had he come to this country? And why?

Miss Bauer would know. But who was Miss Bauer? Why did he keep her around?

Every answer was a new question.

Professor Hermann, the man who wore black. Why black? What was the symbolism? Black, in a land of light. Deliberate exhibitionism might be the answer. That big diamond ring he wore—

No, that was out. Because he didn't wear the ring all the time; only when keeping an appointment with strangers, or at the office. And he never added to or augmented his jewelry, despite increased income. That diamond was merely for misdirection—he wanted you to watch its glitter as he did something else with his other hand, or with his voice. A focal point for hypnosis.

Hypnosis. Mastery. Superiority. He was always the leader, the director, the dominator. Why?

Why did he want wealth and power? Not for obvious display or to satisfy obvious compulsions. I wondered about his sex-life. Apparently it was nonexistent. That was the key: Sublimation, some physical defect?

The bald head—not shaven, but hairless. What disease-process might result in permanent depilation, absence of nictation? Encephalitis? But there were other stigmata of degeneration, and nictation usually increased.

Disease. Mania. Megalomania. I wasn't being objective. Because he reminded me of some movie villain. That didn't brand him as psychotic or even as a potential psychotic. Everything he did seemed actuated by a high degree of logic—*too* high a degree, perhaps. There was an abnormal degree of conscious and unconscious emotional inhibition.

There was an abnormal degree of half-baked phrase-making in my analysis too. Judson Roberts, the great psychiatrist! Nevertheless, if I could find the clue to the Professor—

I grinned at the bottle of club soda. The glass circle of its mouth remained motionless. "It's a hard job," I told the bottle. "A hard job, trying to psychoanalyze the Devil."

"What you need is a drink," the bottle said.

I blinked, then realized the words hadn't come from the bottle. They were spoken by Ellen Post.

Chapter Twelve

I studied her oval face. That exotic look was caused by a double-fold of the upper eyelids—a simple explanation, made by the practised observation of Judson Roberts, but it didn't keep Eddie Haines from admiring her features.

Right now I felt more like Eddie Haines than I had felt in a long time.

"Your order?"

I looked at the waiter. I looked at her. Then, "Two apricot brandies."

She smiled. Judson Roberts could have analyzed that smile before you could say "Mona Lisa"—but I wasn't Judson Roberts tonight. She smiled, and that was enough for me.

"So you remembered?"

"Like an elephant. A pink one." I took another look at her. She was sober, and that made a difference. She seemed taller than I'd remembered her as being, and her voice was softer.

"What brings you here?" I asked.

"A convertible."

"Nuts."

"Ooh, Doctor Roberts, what you said!"

"I mean it. Let's not be smart tonight. I want to know all about you. I've been wondering who you are, where you live, why I've never seen you since that party—"

The drinks arrived. She stared at her glass with the same concentrated awe usually bestowed on the Grand Canyon. When she spoke, her voice was almost a whisper.

"That party—when I heard about Mike, it did something to me. Not that I cared about him especially. It was just that—oh, to make a long story short, I quit drinking. For quite a while. I went down to the beach and took some more lessons."

"What kind of lessons?"

"Singing. But I didn't stick at it this time, either. I'm just not good enough. As with everything else, I'm a might-be. That's not even as good as a has-been. I just can't do anything well, except drink."

"So you're back here."

"Yes and no. I haven't gone out for months; this was just an impulse. I cut the crowd and the parties completely. You know poor Lorna has gone completely batty."

"I didn't know."

"She's mixed up in some cult or other; your friend the Professor is in on it too." Her gaze was candid. "You really don't know?"

"That's right. I haven't seen much of the Professor lately. I was supposed to meet him here tonight, but he hasn't showed. Now about this cult—"

"Oh, I really don't know anything but gossip. There is some kind of secret meetings going on. Lorna just hints things to her friends. But if I know her, there's an orgy in the background somewhere."

I watched her pick up the drink. Apricot brandy, apricot lips. . . . She swallowed, made a face.

"Brrrrr!"

"Then why do you do it?"

"What else is there?"

"You were going to tell me about yourself," I said patiently. "About the house you live in, the clothes you buy, the things you like to eat. How you wore your hair when you were a little girl. Do you like fireplaces—and sunsets? And does your nose get red when you have a cold?"

"Really, I'd like to, but I have to run along now." She rose.

"Sit down."

"Say—you really mean it, don't you?" She sat down again.

"Why do you always run away when somebody asks you about yourself?"

"That's my business."

"You told me once that drinking was your business. Is that part of the running away, too?"

"Good old Doctor Roberts! Do you think, in your benevolent, homespun way, that you're going to *help* me? I've heard that line before, too."

"All right, so it's a line," I said. "I can't help you. Nobody can help you; you help yourself. Either that, or you keep on drinking. And in two hours you'll be up at the bar, telling everything you wouldn't tell to me. Spilling drinks and intimacies in front of the bartender. He'll help you."

"You know something?" She wrinkled her nose. "I like you when you get mad. You drop that phony front, then. I made a mistake when I walked out on you. We could have had a lot of fun together."

"Sure," I nodded. "A lot of nice clean drunken fun. We're adults, aren't we? We know what we want—a great big bottle, and a chance to suck on it. A chance to drool our way back to infancy. Babies don't know what they're doing, they're not responsible if they go to bed with each other and make messes. Yes, we could have had a lot of fun. And I'm damned glad we didn't."

"So am I."

She leaned forward. I smelled apricots. The suntan had ripened her.

"Another drink?"

"No. Let's talk. If you've been trying to scare me off drinking, you're succeeding."

"Good. Try to pretend that I'm God for a change."

"I don't get it."

"Your god is the bartender. The bartender is always God, or haven't you noticed?"

"I hadn't, but go on. You will, anyway."

"Drinkers are all alike. They go to the bartender for peace, for release. They tell him their troubles in confessional. Like God, he dispenses wisdom, judgment, guidance. He rules supreme in his own world. He is quick to punish the transgressor. He can also reward with his favor—or with free drinks. He is omniscient and all-powerful. He knows everything about everybody within the microcosmic universe of the tavern. He is father-confessor, mediator, dispenser of solace and consolation. And he is worshiped in libations, with sacramental wine that produces divine intoxication. He is also, I might add, the father-image. Or more exactly, an idealization of the father. The infantile regressions of the dipsomaniac fit into this pattern of unconscious symbolism."

"Funny you should say that. I never drank until Dad was killed. He was one swell guy. Drank a lot himself, though. Geoffrey Post, industrial designer—you recall the name? He got into plane-building in the 'thirties. That's how he died; piloting one of his own planes. Cracked up."

"So you cracked up. No mother, and the father-image. He drank, so you drank. You couldn't have anything to do with men, sober, because of the part he played in your sexual imagery. You drank, and then the men you slept with became identified with him, and that made you feel guilty so you drank again. And—"

"Wait a minute. I'm not crazy."

"They call it 'dipsomania', you know, and rightly so. Most psychotic states have their inception in some sexual deviation. Unconscious homosexual urges, incestuous desires—"

"Why do *you* drink, then? Are you in love with your mother?"

"I'm an orphan." I grinned. "But seriously, doesn't it make some kind of sense to you?"

She nodded. The empty glass between her fingers nodded with her.

"I suppose it does. I was beginning to figure some of those things out for myself. We were always together, he and I; traveling around, never stopping long enough in one place to make friends. When I was eighteen he'd take me dancing; we went to parties together. Strangers took us for—" she bit her lip—"lovers."

"They were right, weren't they?"

"In a way, yes. Although neither of us knew, consciously, that we had those feelings. It wasn't until after Dad died that it hit me. Then I went to pieces, and now I'm trying to put those pieces back together."

"You can't do it alone very easily. You'll need help."

"Are you suggesting professional treatment?"

"Nonprofessional. Please, Ellen—I want to help you."

"But the Professor—he's your friend, and he's a—"

"I'm not like that. You can trust me. You must trust me."

"We'll see. I want to think things over, first." She rose, and this time there was no dissuading her.

"When will I see you again?"

"I'll call you. At your office."

"Good-night, Ellen."

"Good-night—Judd."

"That girl, who is she?" The Professor shot up out of a trapdoor, or appeared in a burst of flame—I didn't particularly notice his arrival, because I was thinking of apricots.

"Her name's Ellen Post. We met at the Lorna Lewis party."

"That's right. She was attracted to you, I remember. Have you seen much of her since?"

"This is the first time, and our meeting was accidental. But I hope I'll be seeing more of her."

"I do, too. She might be useful."

"Useful?"

The Professor slid into the booth, removed his hat, and gave me a glimpse of how his skull looked under dim blue neon lighting.

"I've checked on her. Something Lorna Lewis let drop one day aroused my interest. She's Geoffrey Post's daughter, isn't she?"

"Yes."

"Well fixed?"

"I don't know." I was weary. "She probably has a small income from the estate."

"That doesn't matter. But she's Leland Post's niece—his only niece. He takes an interest in her; put her on the cure last year."

"On the cure?"

The Professor grinned. "She's a rummy—you must have found that out. And it helps. Leland Post is a State Senator, with ambitions. He'd do a lot, out of love for her and self-interest, to keep her from getting mixed up in any scandal."

I scowled.

"Now, wait a minute!"

"Please. Restrain yourself and hear me out. Leland Post is owned by one of the oil syndicates from Long Beach. He's going to try for Congress next year. Right now he's very much in the public eye."

"Hold it, Professor. I've got a—a personal interest in this kid. No funny business."

Those eyes, those unblinking eyes, burned up at me. They burned a hole through the upholstery behind my head. But I met the gaze.

"Very well," he said softly. "It was only a tentative thought—nothing important. We'll abandon that gambit, as long as you have a personal interest."

We talked of other things: the radio program, which was to be temporarily shelved due to time-shortage: the current cases, and the problem of Rogers, who was getting out of line. There was much to discuss.

But it was Judson Roberts who talked with the Professor. Eddie Haines just sat there, wondering if Ellen Post would call, when she'd call, when he'd see her again.

There were definitely two of us to consider, now—Eddie Haines and Judson Roberts. Just a couple of the boys. Eddie Haines hadn't been around very much lately. He was stuck on Ellen Post, but he never came around any more.

Judson Roberts was always available, though. He was everywhere—seen in the best places these days. A fast, smart operator, Roberts. He knew how to handle himself—and everybody else too.

Telling the old ladies at the lectures, "Remember the first principles of Y-O-U: Your Opportunities, Unlimited. Cultivate yourself. Allow the seeds of your personality to flower. If your soul is thirsty, drink deeply." Straight out of the old seed-catalogue, that's the way Judson Roberts worked.

But why worry? Everything was sailing along smoothly now. Sailing along on the S.S. *Schizophrenia*—passengers Judson Roberts, First Class, and Eddie Haines, Steerage; sometimes known as Messrs. Jekyll and Hyde.

That's the way it was, and that's the way I thought about it, until Ellen Post finally did call me up.

She was at her beach-house, at Malibu, and would Mr. Judson Roberts care to run down for the afternoon?

"I'll be seeing you," said Eddie Haines.

Chapter Thirteen

THE SUN WAS WARM at Malibu, so Ellen and I sat in the shade of the little beach-house. Only three days had passed since our meeting in the tavern, but here we sat, and I had my arm around her waist.

Just a whirlwind romance. Only there was no whirlwind about it, no romance. We merely sat and talked. We had a lot to talk about, Ellen Post and Judson Roberts and—

She called me "Judd" because she thought I was Judson Roberts and if I were Judson Roberts I'd tell her something. It wouldn't be the truth but she'd believe it, and then she'd put her arms around me, those soft sun-ripened arms and I'd taste apricots and I'd have what I wanted. Only I wouldn't have it really because I wasn't Judson Roberts. Eddie Haines would rather tell her the truth and take his chances. Right now, I wanted to be Eddie Haines again.

I took a deep breath and exhaled. Then everything came out. . . .

Half an hour elapsed between the time I said, "My name is Eddie Haines," and my last sentence, "Here I am."

In between there were two cigarettes—the second left in the ashtray to burn unheeded—and a grateful deepening of dusk that hid my face in shadows.

I didn't want her to see my face. There was enough nakedness as it was, because I held nothing back: The suicide attempt, the meeting with the Professor, the Y-O-U setup, and what we did to people like Caldwell, everything.

Everything except the facts about the death of Mike Drayton, that is. I couldn't tell her that. I wanted to, but I knew what her reaction would be. What I did spill was bad enough, and I expected the awkward silence when I finished, the stiff, impersonal phrases, the cold "We'd better go" with which she'd conclude our relationship.

What I didn't expect was the scent of apricots, the slim arms around me, the leaping fire of her lips.

"You poor guy," she whispered. "And I thought I had troubles."

"Then you don't—"

Her lips answered me first, then her voice. "Of course not. Oh, I'm so glad you told me, Eddie! I knew I'd never get used to the idea of marrying a man named Judd."

It got dark fast, after that. . . .

It was midnight when I came home. There were no lights shining inside the house, not even from Rogers' upstairs room. I let myself in and clicked the living-room switch.

Immediately, the phone jingled. I answered.

The Professor's voice snapped across the wire: "Where have you been? I've called many times."

"Sorry. Just got in."

"He's gone, isn't he?"

"Who?"

"Rogers. Jake told me he'd walked out on us. He was to meet me this evening—very important matter—and he never showed up. I checked and found out that he hadn't been at the office in two days. Did you see him?"

"No. He comes and goes. He has his own key, uses the back entrance. But you know that. What's the matter—did you have an argument?"

"Certainly not. I can't understand it. Unless he got frightened. He's been drinking a lot more lately, hasn't he?"

"Hard to tell. You know how he can hold his liquor. But what's all this about being frightened? What's there to be afraid of?"

"Nothing. Nothing at all." The Professor spoke too quickly. Judson Roberts was alert; he caught things like that. But he made no comment as the Professor continued:

"You know what to expect from a chronic alcoholic. Delusions, sudden erratic deviations in conduct-pattern. Anyway, he's gone. I thought I'd check with you."

"I'll see what I can find out at the office tomorrow," I promised. "Call you then—unless you care to come over now."

"No. I'm busy. Good-night."

He hung up; I hung up.

The Professor was busy at midnight. And Rogers was running away because he had been frightened—

I went upstairs slowly, very slowly. I turned on the hall light and walked down to Rogers' bedroom.

IT WAS EMPTY; Rogers was gone. I felt no emotion except vague curiosity. He was a strange little man. I'd never really known him. He was furtive, a solitary drinker and uncommunicative with me, but he probably mumbled to himself. Sitting up in this room, night after night, cradling a pint bottle in his arms and whispering to it.

Yet he had talent. A curious genius, almost. He wrote for the Professor, he did my lectures, he wrote *Y-O-U*.

Why? Where did the ability spring from? And what did he want? He was well-paid, but he had no interests, no hobbies, and his only apparent vice was drinking. He liked to stay in the background; neither fame nor power seemed to matter. He had worked with Jake, I knew, but he had no friends.

It might have been interesting to cultivate him, find out about him. But there was no use in thinking about it now. Rogers had gone. And he was frightened.

What would frighten him, outside of the loss of his liquor supply?

I walked over to the typing-table, stooped, and pulled the wastebasket out from under it. The wastebasket was newspaper-lined, and there was a thin film of cigarette ash at the bottom, filling the newspaper creases with grit. I turned the basket upside down on the floor. The ashes powdered the rug. The newspaper dropped. A piece of paper wedged against it, fluttered loose.

I picked it up.

I read a few typewritten lines, just cryptic notes. But they told me what I wanted to know—why Rogers was frightened. I read:

Thirteen in Coven.

Sig. in blood.

Ointment or unguent for flying dreams—compound contains aconite, belladonna and—? Check.

The Black Man—

That was all. But Rogers was frightened. And now so was I.

Chapter Fourteen

THE USUAL EARTH TREMOR was felt the next morning around 10:30. It rattled the mirrors in my office, and my reflection shook momentarily. But it wasn't a temblor, and besides I had no time for earthquakes; Professor Hermann was shaking *my* firmament.

The mere fact of his unexpected presence was enough to upset me. I had to work hard keeping that Judson Roberts mask from slipping when I heard his pitch.

"About Rogers," he said: "I've located him, at last."

"Good."

"Not good. He's gone completely berserk. Jake found him holing up in a Skid-row joint down on Main. Sick drunk. He won't pull out of this for months. At least, Sylvestro doesn't think so."

"Where is he?"

"Sylvestro recommended a sanatorium, run by a friend of his. It's up near Santa Barbara. They're taking him there today. Naturally, I'll handle the expenses." He took off his hat. I saw eight skulls in the mirrors.

"He never said anything to you about what was troubling him?" the Professor asked.

"Not a word."

"Did he take his belongings with him when he left?"

"The room is empty."

"Mmmm. There was nothing with him when Jake picked him up. I wonder—well, no matter. Poor Rogers! He looked very bad. I hate to say this, but from what I saw and what Sylvestro said, he may never come out of the sanatorium."

The Professor sighed, and I held tight to the Judson Roberts mask. I could picture the kind of a rest-home run by Sylvestro's "friend." It was probably quite small—about six feet long, three feet wide and three feet deep. It would fit into a shallow hole quite easily, and its occupant would be assured of plenty of rest—eternal rest.

"And that reminds me," Hermann said. "What are you doing about Ellen Post?"

"Why, nothing. We talked it over, remember?"

"Oh, yes. But you see, there has been a change in plans. Due to this unfortunate business with Rogers, I find it necessary to go East for a while. Private affairs. In the meantime, I am in need of funds. I'm drawing what I can out of your Y-O-U setup here, but we could use more. And this Ellen Post connection with the Senator is too good to overlook. I am afraid I shall be forced to ask you to withdraw your objections and proceed during my absence."

"Just what does that mean?"

"It calls for no drastic action on your part. Just go along, cultivate her as you have been. But see to it that she drinks. When I return, I'll handle matters from that point on."

"What's the setup?"

"That's my affair. I've told you what you need to know. Take her out and get her drunk—regularly. And take her to the best places. I want her seen, identified. I understand she hasn't been around much, lately. It's your duty to remedy that situation."

"Suppose I don't want to play?"

Eight skulls grinned. Sixteen ivory hands crawled across my desk.

"You'll play. Because I'm playing with you. And I can play rough unless you let me set the rules."

I nodded. "All right. Anything else?"

"That's all."

"You say you're leaving. When will you be back?"

"I don't know. A week, ten days, perhaps. Don't worry—Miss Bauer will communicate with me, should the necessity arise. And I've told Jake to keep an eye on you."

"That was thoughtful."

"You ought to know by this time that I think of everything."

He rose and walked to the door. The man in black, who thought of everything. The *Black Man*—Roger's notes.

As soon as he was out of the office, I buzzed May.

"Yes, Mr. Roberts?"

"Anybody out there?"

"No. Oh, yes, Jake's here."

"What's he doing? Does he want to see me?"

"I'll ask."

There was a pause; the voice coming through to me deepened. Jake was talking. "I'm gonna stick around for a while, if you don't mind. The Professor's going away, and he sort of hinted you might need a little protection. If it's all right with you."

It wasn't all right with me. But the Professor made the rules—

"Sure, Jake. But you needn't bother. I can call you when I go anywhere."

"Oh, I'm okay here. I like it. That May, she's a dish all right."

"Suit yourself."

I switched off, picked up the phone, and dialed Ellen at the beach-house.

"Darling, when can I see you? About two be all right? No, I'll come on out. Something I'd like to discuss with you. No, I'm not upset. Everything's all right. Good-by."

No, I wasn't upset. Everything was all right. Everything was swell.

Judson Roberts wouldn't have minded. But I wasn't Judson Rob-

"Maybe it's your contour and not the chair's!"

erts any more. After yesterday, with Ellen, I knew I'd never be Judson Roberts again. I was Eddie Haines.

I looked at Eddie Haines in the mirrors. He was there, for the first time in months. Not a particularly fetching sight; his hair was in his eyes, and his mouth was drawn.

But I could recognize him, recognize myself. That was something. I waved to the mirrors as I went out. Eddie Haines waved back. Whatever happened now, I knew I could count on him.

JAKE had a time keeping up with me in his battered Ford, but he managed.

"Why you dragging me off to Malibu?" he grumbled.

"I'm going to see a woman. And you're going to sit out in the hot sun and sweat. Professor's idea, remember?"

He called me a name, and I gave him a sweet smile. Then we were off.

The same sun shone over the beach today, shimmering in Ellen's hair. Jake stayed up on the road, but even if he'd seen us, it wouldn't have stopped me from taking her in my arms.

"Whew! You *did* want to see me, didn't you?"

"Let's go inside."

"Good idea."

"No—I must talk to you."

"You disappoint me greatly, sir," she said.

"Listen, Ellen. This is serious."

"All right. What's the matter, Eddie?"

Funny how the little things count. Even then, I wasn't sure if I'd have the nerve to go through with it. But she called me "Eddie." That was enough. That did it.

I told her everything; what the Professor planned, what he said, what I suspected.

"But that's utterly insane! People don't go around doing such things—imagine him thinking that you would go for such a scheme."

"I did go for it, Ellen. I'm taking you out tonight and getting you drunk."

"You're *what?*"

"It's the only way. Trust me. I've figured an angle. If we go to some place like the Gin Mill—"

I explained my angle to her. She nodded.

"Jake's up on the road now in his car. He'll follow us. He'll be watching. That's why I had to choose the Gin Mill. From now on he'll watch me night and day, particularly when I'm with you. We must be careful, and clever. Are you game?"

"Of course. You know I'll help. Only, Eddie—"

"Yes."

"There's one thing I don't understand—one thing you haven't told me." She hesitated.

"Go on."

"Why do you have to obey the Professor? Why don't you just quit the racket and go away?"

I didn't answer. I couldn't.

"He has something on you, hasn't he? Something you didn't tell me."

It was my turn to hesitate. "Well—"

"Eddie, darling, you said you'd trust me. Don't you know that you can tell me anything and it won't matter? Please, dear. Maybe I can help."

"Maybe you can. But not now. I'll tell you later, I promise. Meanwhile, I'm going to think of a way out of all this, but fast." I kissed her. "All right, young lady, change your clothes. You've got an important date to go out and get stinking drunk."

The Gin Mill was one of those fake "atmosphere" joints—with singing waiters, complete with false mustaches; steins of beer, a "free lunch" which you paid for, and sawdust on the floors. There were also cuspidors in the booths.

That's what I needed—the cuspidors. Jake shambled over to the bar and roosted there for three hours, while Ellen and I kept the waiter rushing to our booth with refills on Scotch.

We drank a lot; at least Jake thought we did. He'd glance in the mirror out of the corner of one bloodshot eye and catch a glimpse of us raising glasses. But he never noticed us emptying the shots into the cuspidor.

As the evening progressed, our voices rose, and we began to muss each other up. That part was fun—and there was no need to fake.

Around ten I suggested a little singing. Ellen had a nice voice, but when she cut loose on some old favorites it was murder. Even I couldn't stand it.

"Can that, you're overdoing the act," I whispered. But she kept right on singing. She was singing as I dragged her out of there. We staggered over to the car. Jake sauntered behind at a discreet distance.

I drove Ellen up Wilshire to the apartment hotel where she stayed when she planned to be in town. I watched Jake's Ford in the rear-view mirror, but Ellen pulled my head around.

"Don't try anything foolish, darling. That big gorilla would tear you to pieces."

I shook my head. "I'm not going to bother Jake at all. He'll see me home, watch me stagger up the steps, and call it a day."

My prediction proved correct. I dropped Ellen, helped her lurch into the lobby, returned to my car and started toward home.

Jake pulled up behind me.

"How'm I'm doin', huh?" I yelled. "Some number, isn't she? Some number, isn't she? Some—"

"Not so loud!" Jake said. "Look, you better turn in. You're loaded to the eyeballs."

"Good idea. See you tomorrow, same time, same stashun. 'by now."

He watched me locate the keyhole. I stepped inside, switched on the light, then went upstairs and turned on the bedroom light.

Then I went into the darkness of the bathroom and peered out of the window. Jake's car was pulling away from the curb.

Good. So far, everything checked. I looked at my watch: 11:05. Late, but not too late.

It would be a long drive to Vista Canyon. But that's where the Professor lived. At least, he was supposed to live there. I'd never been invited out; how I would locate his place in the dark, I didn't know. But he was out of town, Jake was gone, and now was the time. . . .

Now was the time to park the car on the shoulder, out of sight; to crunch through gravel and inspect the crooked signboard at the roadway's fork.

Names, meaningless names; names of the wealthy, names of the reclusive. No Hermann.

Little beads of conversation began to string themselves on a single thread of recollection.

"It's on the very top of the hill. The windlass and cable is convenient. We lower a little car down for groceries. You can even ride in it yourself if you like. Built back in the Prohibition days. Porch on three sides, wonderful view, completely private. Fox-pen just below the house. Bootleggers had to have a place to cache the liquor, and so they set themselves up as running a fox-farm."

IT hadn't seemed important, when I heard it. But now sentences came back to me. Hillside. Look for a cable down the hill. Three-sided porch. A fox-pen in back, just below the level of the house.

I began to climb, to crawl. Crickets stopped their chirping and listened. I hit a winding path that ended up before the door of a three-car garage. An owl hooted—derisively, I thought.

I went back down to the road and started up another path. Look for the cable.

I found it and I followed it through a tangle of scrub. I clung to the heavy wire as the going got tough. Then the house looked down at me over the edge of the hillside, and I stared back.

There were no lights on the porches, or inside. I walked around to the front door, using the gravel path as

little as possible. The door was locked, of course. I contemplated the wire mesh of the screened-in porch. I felt for my pocket-knife. Once a Boy Scout, always a Boy Scout.

Supposing the Professor hadn't left? What if somebody else was here—Doc Sylvestro, for instance?

It takes about twelve seconds to break-and-enter a house, according to the movies. Working without director, lights, or camera, I managed it in a half hour, with the aid of scraped and bleeding fingers. My trouser legs ripped as I wriggled through and dropped to the porch floor with a dull thud.

I got up and waited for an echo, a response from within the darkened house. Silence, punctuated by crickets.

I opened the door and went inside, groping for a light-switch. I found it, hesitated. *A Scout is brave. . .*

The light went on.

I don't know what I expected to see. A bubbling cauldron, a heap of skulls, the heads of children floating in alcohol—

It was a perfectly conventional room in a perfectly conventional summer cottage.

I walked toward the hall; then abruptly altering my course, I went out to the rear porch. I switched the light off as I departed, and allowed the moon to guide me. I stared down at the leveled area in back of the hilltop house.

More wire netting, thin-meshed and held together by strutwork. A concrete flooring. This was the fox-pen, all right. I didn't see any foxes inside. I didn't see the Professor, either.

Going down the porch steps, I listened carefully to the frogs. Were they trying to tell me something? If they were, they gave it up. As I fumbled with a latch and entered the fox-pen, the croaking ceased.

Silence. Silver silence. I stood inside the pen, but I didn't feel very foxy. I didn't know anything—didn't even know what I was looking for.

"The bootleggers had to have a place to cache the liquor, so they set themselves up as running a fox-farm."

They stacked it right out here in the open, in the fox-pen. No, of course not. There'd be foxes in the pen, but—

I saw it over in the corner, shadowed by the house above. A black circle: the metal lid covering a cistern.

Of course! That's where they hid the liquor in the old days—down below, in the hollowed-out hillside! Lift the lid and climb down the stairs to the storage-rooms, the vaults.

That's where they hid the liquor, and that's where the Professor would hide whatever it was he wanted hidden.

The frogs croaked a triumphant chorus as I walked over to the iron cistern-cover, bent down, and reached for the ring in the center.

I tugged. It was heavy, and I had trouble. I couldn't seem to move my shoulder. I glanced around at my shoulder and saw a hand . . .

Chapter Fifteen

"MR. ROBERTS—what are you doing?" said a voice.

I looked up into the plump white face of Miss Bauer.

"Come away," she whispered. Her hand left my shoulder, traveled to her lips. "He will hear you."

"He?"

"Otto. He works down in the vaults tonight, making ready." She urged me to my feet. "Be not afraid. He will sleep below. Come to the house!"

I followed her out of the pen, up the porch steps. She kept whispering. She had been asleep in the bedroom, she said, and when she heard me prowling around it was natural to assume I was the Professor. Then she finally tiptoed out to investigate and found me.

All this I learned in the kitchen, over coffee. Gradually the story filtered through her thick accent, her idiom, her fear.

For Ottilie Bauer was afraid.

She did not know, at first, what crazy business Otto had in mind when he urged her to come and live with him here in the canyon. This Doctor Sylvestro, he was at the bottom of things, really. It was he who had planned, who got poor Mr. Rogers to work out the ceremony, who interested Otto in the idea.

"Black arts, isn't it?" I said.

"Worse. Much worse. It has to do with the Anti-Christ."

"Devil-worship?"

She nodded.

That was the new racket, then: Satanism. The Black Mass ritual. Gathering, orgy, sacrifice.

I listened to her story, filling in the gaps for myself.

At first it was just a new thrill to sell to "clients"—with emphasis on the

I tugged. The cistern cover was heavy and I had trouble. Then I glanced around and saw Miss Bauer. "Come away," she whispered. "He will hear you down in the vaults."

orgy. I could see Lorna Lewis and some of the others going for that. There had been rumors of such esoteric *erotica* in the past. Sylvestro and the Professor had Rogers cook up a ritual, a ceremony, and then spread the word.

Miss Bauer had warned. She had coaxed. She had pleaded. But the project was carried out. They had gone on from there.

"Now I do not know what will come. Because, you know, he believes in this thing."

The Man in Black. The man who was above ordinary vices, ordinary sins. Everyone is a seeker. And every seeker is a sucker. The Professor, a sucker for Satanism. He even had the Devil's appearance.

Her fear-filled voice was going on:

"I wanted so to see you, to warn you. This must be stopped."

He was down in the vault now, preparing for another meeting. He had "gone away," all right. Gone down to the Pit, down to Hell. . . .

"But you cannot stop him. Better to go away while you can. While he iss—"

We both heard a sound, both turned. But it was only the wind. I smiled at her, but my hands clenched. She smiled at me in return, but her lips quivered.

"I can't go away," I said softly. "You see, the Professor knows I killed Mike Drayton. You know it too."

Her lower lip quivered again.

"No. You did not kill him. That was a lie."

"But—"

"He made you go away. You saw nothing after that: How I worked on the lungs, how he revived."

"He—revived?"

"He sat in the car, and Otto, he drove him away. For air, he told me, and I must go home to bed. It would be all right. Then I did, the next day, in the papers—"

I stood up. "So the Professor murdered him, and pinned the rap on me! You're a witness, you can testify, you're sure that's what you saw?"

She nodded. "Yes. I can testify. I do not wish to tell this, but he must be stopped. You go away."

"You bet I'll go away! And fast!" I stepped around the table, then halted.

"But what about you—isn't it dangerous for you to stay? Something's happened to Rogers, and from what you tell me, the Professor is wacky enough to try anything. If he knew that you had tipped me off—"

"He will not harm me, Mr. Roberts." She smiled; it was an old smile, borrowed from the Sphinx. "You see, he iss my brother." . . .

I drove back at dawn, slept until noon, then called Ellen.

"Go home and start packing," I said. "We're getting out of here."

"When?"

"In a few days, soon as I can clear up a few odds and ends."

"You really mean it?"

"Cross my heart and hope not to die. Have you ever wanted to go to Niagara Falls for your honeymoon? Or do you prefer the Zambezi? That's in Africa, Southern Rhodesia, I think."

"You sound high."

"I'm right up there. And you'll be, too."

"Coming over?"

"Not now. Got to get started at the office. I'll call you and we'll get together—in every sense of the word."

"That's a promise."

"Scout's honor."

"Since when did you become a Boy Scout?"

"Since last night. Tell you all about it when I see you. Meanwhile, in case you happen to be interested, I love you."

"You say the nicest things."

It was one of those parties where you cough twice before you speak and then decide not to say it after all.

—P. G. WODEHOUSE

I hung up, still feeling high, still feeling clever. I got my hat, went out, locked the door, and met Jake sitting on the steps.

When you lose altitude in a plane, it does something to your ears. I didn't feel anything, but I wasn't high any more. I no longer felt clever, either.

"You sure must've hung on a beaut, the way you slept today," Jake greeted me.

I nodded. "Been here long?"

"About two hours."

"You needn't have bothered."

"Boss' orders—wants to see you."

"The Professor? I thought he was out of town."

"Me too. But he called this morning, big as life. He's going to be waiting for us at your office."

He was sitting at the desk when I opened the office door.

"Come in," he said.

Yes, come into my parlor, said the spider to the fly . . . the black spider with the white skull, the black spider who knew by the tiniest tremor just what had wandered into the web he spun.

Or did he know? The stolid face told me nothing.

"How does it happen that you're here?" I asked.

"I had to change my plans. I'll be leaving today, instead. Sit down."

I sat down on the edge of the desk and swung a leg. It felt good, even though it looked too much like a pendulum, ticking off the minutes, the seconds before he came out with it—

"Jake tells me you did a good job last night."

"If you had my hangover, you'd know what kind of a job I did."

"That's fine. I want you to keep it up: tonight, again, and tomorrow night. I shall be back sooner than I expected. On Friday I'll take over."

"Take over?"

"Yes. I know how you feel about this, and I want to spare your feelings as much as possible. Friday you will take Miss Post out for the last time."

"I will?"

"You will pass out. A friend of hers will be present to take her home. That's all."

"Only she isn't going home; I get it."

"There's no need for you to worry. She won't be harmed, I promise; nor will she blame you for—what happens. But her uncle will prove to be very helpful after that episode, I can assure you."

He stood up. "So, that is all I have to tell you. Take her out tonight, tomorrow night. Then, on Friday, I'll get in touch with you and give final orders." He smiled. "Jake will keep an eye on you meanwhile."

I smiled right back at him. "You certainly think of everything," I said.

"That's correct."

"Well, think of this for a minute. I'm not taking Ellen Post out—tonight, tomorrow, or Friday. And Jake isn't going to play Boy Detective with me any more, either. Because I am quitting this business, as of today."

"So?"

"Just so. And get this, while we're on the subject—if you try any funny stuff on Ellen Post I'll rip your head off and stuff it down your throat."

"Dear Doctor Roberts!" He grinned slowly. "Is this all you have learned of tact, the diplomatic approach, the psychology of personal relationships? You need a refresher course in Y-O-U."

"Never mind the funny stuff. I mean what I said."

"That is quite apparent. But may I remind you that you are acting under my orders? And for a very good reason?"

I watched him, now. I wanted to see his face.

"Mike Drayton's murder? But I didn't kill Mike Drayton. You did."

I wanted to see his face, and I did. But it wasn't worth it—there was no reaction at all.

Then, and only then, did I realize the value of his advice. I should have been tactful, diplomatic—but no, it was too good to miss, telling him off. And in telling him, I had told all.

He knew where I got my information. And now—

There was a paperweight on the desk. I slid off the edge slowly, meeting his blank stare. Then I grabbed, grasped, swung.

He toppled forward in the chair, very slowly, like a big, baldheaded doll. The doll was bleeding from a cut behind the ear.

I stepped over to the door and peeked out. May was behind the glass, and beyond it I could see Jake, lounging on a sofa and reading a magazine.

"Jake," I called, "come in here a minute. The Professor would like to see you."

He came over, waddled through the door, waddled right into the paperweight. He didn't fall like a doll—he fell like a ton of bricks.

I left them decorating the inner office and walked over to May. It was a big risk, hanging around here now, but I had to get my call through. I owed it to Miss Bauer.

"Get me the Professor's house," I said. "Hurry it up."

She dialed and handed the phone to me.

"Hello?"

It was Ottilie Bauer's voice.

"This is Doctor Roberts," I said. "Don't ask any questions. Just come down to Ellen Post's apartment at once. Yes, right away. Don't stop for anything." I gave her the address and hung up.

"What's the matter?" May asked. "Where are the others?"

I patted her shoulder. "In conference. I'm going out now, but you might call the sign-painter for me, the one who does the lettering on the office doors."

She looked puzzled.

"You have a job for him?"

"Right, sister. Tell him to scrape my name off. I'm quitting."

Chapter Sixteen

I DROVE UP WILSHIRE about twice as as fast as the law allows, parked in front of Ellen's apartment-hotel, buzzed her from the desk, and went up to the third floor.

There wasn't much time for planning, but I'd managed to work a few things out. First, I must get a written, witnessed statement about the Drayton murder from Miss Bauer. Second, I must warn her and help her decide what she could do. Third, I must grab Ellen and get the hell out of town with her.

Ellen was playing the phonograph when I arrived, singing arias in accompaniment to some operatic recordings. She opened the door on a high C, slightly flat.

"Hello," I said. "Where's Ottilie?"

"Who?"

"Miss Bauer. I told her to meet us here. She should have made it before I did."

"Well, she hasn't come."

"Damn!"

"What's the matter?"

I told her what the matter was, fast.

THERE was no reason to hold back anything. I gave the murder to her cold, then my interview with Ottilie Bauer, and my recent caper with the Professor and Jake. She heard me out, making appropriate sounds and gestures—not the least of which was her final comment, "All right, Eddie. I'm with you on this, whatever you want."

"I want Miss Bauer here to sign a statement, just in case. Then I want to figure things out with her to prevent—something—from happening. Then you and I are leaving. When the Professor and Jake wake up, they're going to want to see me."

I glanced at my watch. I'd been here twenty minutes. Ottilie Bauer should have been here long ago. Unless the Professor had come to in a hurry—

"Where's the phone?" I asked.

She indicated it, and I used it. I got through the switchboard and dialed the Professor's house. If there was no answer, I could assume Miss Bauer had left. If there was an answer—

"Hello."

A voice—not Miss Bauer's, but a man's. There was something familiar about it. I hesitated until I placed the speaker: Doctor Sylvestro!

"Hello," he repeated.

I hung up without answering. Sylvestro was out there. And if the Professor had revived, and called Sylvestro before Miss Bauer could leave, then everything was haywire.

"Did you get her?" Ellen asked.

"No, but I'm going to."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean I've got to get out to the Professor's house, right away. She may be coming, delayed en route. There are such things as flat tires, you know. But I can't take any chances. Sylvestro answered the phone just now. That can mean anything. So I'm on my way."

"I thought you weren't taking any chances. What do you call this? If they find you there, you'll never get away!"

"I've no choice. Miss Bauer is my alibi. Besides, I can't leave her in the soup."

Ellen put her arms around my neck. They seemed to belong there.

"All right, Eddie. But I'm coming with you."

"No, you're not. You can't. If I'm wrong, then Miss Bauer may still show up here. You'll have to be on hand when she arrives. Tell her what's happened, get a written statement, and wait for me to call. I'll call you, as soon as I can."

"*If* you can."

I kissed her. "Yes, darling—*if* I can."

It wasn't very heroic, and there was nothing heroic about the way I kissed her. I didn't want to go, didn't want to stick my neck out, or in.

But I had to, and I went.

I went, fast. The walls of Vista Canyon flashed by, the roadside signs blurred before me. "DRIVE SLOWLY" meant nothing to me. And "DANGER—FALLING ROCKS" was kid stuff.

I wasn't afraid of falling rocks. I was afraid of seeing the Professor's car, or Jake's, in the rear-view mirror. I was afraid of seeing Doc Sylvestro waiting for me in ambush with a sawed-off shotgun.

AS I approached the heart of the canyon I slowed down. Just before the turn which brought me to the crossroads beneath the hillside, I pulled over to the shoulder and stopped the motor. I climbed out and walked cautiously around the bend.

A car was parked up against the trees—a strange car. I inspected it, noted the familiar AMA seal. Doctor Sylvestro's heap, all right: That meant he was still up there.

I returned to my car and started the motor. A U-turn was dangerous here, but it was more dangerous to leave the car standing where it could be seen.

So I drove back slowly down the road until I hit another sidepath in the canyon. I drove the car up the dirt roadbed until I found a spot under some trees, out of sight. I parked here and walked back on foot. I kept looking back over my shoulder, in case somebody came along. And I kept looking ahead, anticipating Doc Sylvestro. I came abreast of the crossing again, glanced up at the hillside house far above me, and then found a clump of bushes to screen me.

Then I sat down, lit a cigarette, and let the sand-fleas have dinner. The cigarette-smoke didn't rise above the bushes, nor did I. I sprawled out and watched the sunset. I leaned back and closed my eyes. I began to doze—

Muffled sound from far away: Door-slam; crunching; footsteps. Doctor Sylvestro descended interminable stairs. I caught glimpses of him through the trees. He minced down,

carrying the inevitable black bag, stopped at the bottom, mopped his forehead, and pulled out a cigarette. He lit it, and a little red eye moved through the dusk toward his car.

I crossed over to the wooden stairway and climbed. There was no hand-rail, and the canyon depths loomed below. The sky darkened. I sweated.

Up, and up, and up. I looked down at the gray ribbon of road. No cars. I went on.

Then I stood on a small patio, below the porch. The house ahead of me was dark. This time I knew what to do. I went around to the porch and looked for the place where I'd slashed the screen. I entered and walked into the parlor.

The house was more than dark—it was empty. There were no signs of struggle, nothing to indicate what Doctor Sylvestro might have been doing.

Perhaps I'd been mistaken. Perhaps Miss Bauer had left; she might be at Ellen's place right now. Best thing to do was call and find out, right away.

What really flatters a man is that you think him worth flattering.

—GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

I looked around for the phone. There were two, standing on the table in the corner. I started over to the table.

No—wait a minute. Miss Bauer had said something about the bedroom. I could just peek in, first. I peeked.

Nothing there. The bed was made, no signs of packing or confusion. I was relieved rather than disappointed.

Of course, I might just as well try the kitchen too before calling. . . .

I walked into the kitchen.

Even before I entered, I could smell it; the strangely familiar odor, the instinctively recognized reek.

An attempt had been made to mop up. But there were stains on the table, on the floor all around it. I thought of a butcher-shop, an operating-room—

Operating-room. . . . Doctor Sylvestro and his black bag! But then, where—

A humming sound from the corner. Something huge and white and gleaming was there—something that hummed and purred next to the refrigerator. I walked over to the deep-freeze, tugged the handle, raised the lid.

I saw the packages wrapped in butcher's paper; six of them. I lifted out the top one, the round one.

I unwrapped Miss Bauer's head. . . .

There was nothing else for me to do, then. I closed the deep-freeze and left the kitchen, left the humming, the odor, the stains. I walked over to the table and picked up the nearest of the two phones. There was nothing else for me to do.

My finger, clicking the receiver. My voice, saying, "Give me the police department, please."

An answering voice, a hollow voice, *Jake's* voice: "What are you doing here?"

Here? I dropped the mouthpiece. Jake wasn't *here*. How did he get on the phone?

But I had dozed off for a little while when waiting out there in the bushes . . . he *could* have come . . . and the phone . . .

That phone was connected with the vaults under the fox-pen!

I knew it now, knew there wouldn't be time to take the other phone and call the cops for Jake was climbing out of the cistern. I heard a clang as I ran toward the porch door.

I stood on the patio, at the head of the stairs. I gazed down into darkness, and something moved—something blacker than darkness. A black suit? The Professor, coming up the stairs.

Jake's feet thudded through the house. Jake's voice bounced off the mountains.

"Hey, come back here!"

"What's the matter?" The Professor's voice, from below; not very far below, either.

Jake didn't reply. He made for the porch. "Stop!"

I hesitated.

Then I saw the flash, heard the sound of the shot. It went *spang!* And it was close, too close.

I ran forward in darkness. The windlass loomed. They were shouting now. Jake ran after me. I jumped into the cable-car, tripped the windlass.

There was another shot, another flash and a *spang!* But the car was grating down, I was crashing through a gantlet of branches that stabbed at my face. I crouched low, racing in darkness.

"Get him!" *Spang!* "The rope, you fool—cut that cable!"

Clattering, ripping, roaring . . . must be halfway down now . . . the flimsy wooden car like an orange-crate, swaying. . . .

It was black, no moon shone, and the trees clawed me. I fell into darkness. And then the car lurched; something snapped. For a moment I hung there, grabbing air. Behind me something rumbled and crashed. Somebody had started a boulder down. And somebody had cut the cable.

The rock came. The car tipped. And I hurtled down through the tree-tops. I could see them coming closer and closer, and I closed my eyes; then it didn't matter if I closed them or not, because the blackness was everywhere.

Chapter Seventeen

I OPENED MY EYES. My neck ached, my head ached. For a moment I lay still while I sorted and catalogued the varieties of pain.

Opening my eyes hadn't helped much. There was still darkness all around me, but gradually I could focus. I raised my head, bracing myself on my hands. I was on the ground, with needles lacerating my palms. Pine needles.

Yes, that would be right. I had crashed through the trees and now I was lying in the canyon. Above me—Muffled voices. Footsteps. Then a gleam, from far away, flashlight beam. Jake and the Professor were hunting for me, hunting in the night. And they'd find me here, in a matter of moments.

There seemed to be a tree-trunk, far away. I hunched forward. My fingers clawed bark, braced the broad surface. I got to my knees, embracing the tree-trunk. It must have looked silly, and it hurt like hell. The big pain centered in my head and neck. . . . Voices came closer. I could hear something snap.

Then I was walking away from the voices. Walking very slowly, walking very softly. I bumped into bushes, and it hurt. I bumped into trees, and it hurt. But I kept right on walking, through the underbrush.

They would be watching the road. I'd better not try to climb out of the canyon. I couldn't make it, anyway. The main job was to keep walking, keep from falling down and letting the pain smother me in sleep.

Deep darkness and crickets all about me. No voices, now. I was walking along the dry bed of a little gully. It was dusty. I smelled the dust when I stumbled and fell. I coughed, got up and walked again. I wiped dust from my face, and something sticky came away in my hand.

The ground sloped. I clung to branches and crawled upward. Then I could see the road. It might be safe to cross here, if there were no lights. I didn't see a flash. I felt gravel under my feet, felt it grind against my knees as I pitched forward again.

I sprawled there, waiting for them to come and get me, waiting for a car to run over me, waiting for the

next wave of pain. There was nothing else to do, so I tried to think. That hurt worse than anything else.

There was something I had to do, now. Something about a call, and a car. . . . Yes. My car. Up the side-road, if I could find it. If they hadn't found it.

I got up and walked. I found the side-road. I found the car. I even managed to open the door and climb inside. Then I blacked out again.

I opened my eyes and fumbled at the dashboard. Lights. There were keys in my pocket. The pain was mounting, but I could see. I had to see, in order to drive.

I drove. I drove very slowly, and then I drove fast. The road kept winding and winding and I wound with it.

The sky turned gray. Dawn. This was Saturday. . . . Saturday morning. Nobody would be at the office. I couldn't go to the house; they'd think of that. But the office—

Yes. That's where I was going. Because the files were there, the files and the records. I had to burn them before I called the police.

The police would know what to do about my head. First burn the records, let them burn in hell, and then sleep. They could all burn in hell, just as long as they let me sleep.

Driving burning hurting driving stopping burning walking falling lying sleeping sleeping sleeping. . . .

When I woke up I felt fine.

I was sitting in a chair behind a desk in a big room lined with mirrors, and I felt fine.

I looked at the mirrors, at the face in the mirrors, a face, covered with dirt and blood. At first I didn't recognize the face, and then I remembered.

Ottilie Bauer and the deep freeze. . . . Mike Drayton and the swimming-pool. . . . Edgar Clinton Caldwell and the rope. . . . Ellen Post and . . . what?

That was enough to make anyone blow his stack. I emptied the desks and file cabinets and set a match to the papers, using a chair as a poker to make sure that everything burned. I jabbed and heaved and ripped until I began to sweat and some of the anger drained out me, then I went outside.

Even then I kept seeing the round package in the freezer. By the time I got to the street I was blowing my stack again and the earthquake seemed entirely appropriate. The earth shook and trembled; fissures opened in the street, and buildings swayed and cracked hideously.

My car was half-smothered under a large sign that had fallen, and I was too impatient to be bothered, so I went to Ellen's apartment on foot. I had my finger on the bell when I hesitated. Then I searched my pockets and used the key she had given me.

I needn't have bothered being careful. The apartment was empty, just as it had been the last time I was there, except for a small table in the foyer that was overturned. I took off on a run back to the car and started tearing at the debris until I could get one door open. I squeezed in, started the motor, rocked the car back and forth until I was out from under the sign, then sped back to the Professor's fox-farm.

If he had done anything to Ellen—

I parked at the bottom of the stairs and started climbing. Jake would be on guard somewhere, and as soon as I could I left the steps and worked through the underbrush around to the fox-pen. I climbed down the iron steps into the cistern.

The Professor would be there, and Ellen—that much I knew, but nothing more. If Miss Bauer had been right, if the Professor actually had swallowed his own line and really did think that he was the Devil— I shuddered.

I moved along the passageway toward the sound of voices from beyond. Cadenced chanting rose at my approach.

I steeled myself for what I might see: Satan, with the silver bowl, the silver knife of sacrifice, crouching over the altar and the body of Ellen. Then a sound arrested me; a chink of light guided my footsteps to a side of the corridor. There was a small room beyond. I approached it, peered through the inch-open door.

Ellen!

She lay upon a couch and black velvet bore the naked jewel of her loveliness. Great lights blazed down upon her flesh, but her eyes were closed in sleep or in death.

And there was a hooded one who crouched behind a chromed tripod, making strange vague fumbling gestures—

I remembered. Once there had lived a man named Caldwell and he was photographed. The hood and tripod, the lights, the nakedness—

I opened the door, rushed into the room. The hood fell away from the gargoyle face of Sylvestro.

He turned, but I moved very quickly. I grabbed the tripod and struck him across the head, not once but many times. He fell as blood gushed forth from his twisted mouth.

I bent over Ellen, caressing her warm, living flesh. She didn't move. She slept as one drugged. I slapped her face. Finally eyelids fluttered, flickered, parted. She awoke.

"You're here," she whispered. "Eddie!"

"Your clothing—find it," I said.

She found the garments in a cubicle at the side of the room. She was dazed, submissive.

I stared at the interior of the cubicle; shelves lined the walls and upon them were jars and bottles and packets.

"It's their darkroom," she said. "Photographic supplies: chemicals, paper, film, old negatives. They have curtains in the other room, and they take pictures of the fools with dark light flashes. That's the racket. But how did you get here?"

I shook my head. This was not the time to explain. I was mad clean through.

"This other room," I said. "There is an altar?"

"Yes." She came close to me. "But let's get out of here. We can phone the police—"

"They are assembled now? And one can enter behind the curtains, with space to stand concealed?"

"What's that got to do with us? Eddie, I'm scared. That man Hermann—you were right about him, he really thinks he's the Devil. Come on, let's hurry."

I entered the cubicle. She followed me.

"What are you going to do?" she whispered.

I told her how to plant the negatives and film near the curtains and set them off when I gave the signal as I approached the altar.

"But you can't get away with it! It's so much easier to get out and let the police come."

"Trust me," I said.

"All right, Eddie, whatever you say."

Then I went back into the corridor, where the chanting rose, and into the room with the altar. The chamber was low and broad beneath a domed rock ceiling. Upon the red-draped walls the shadows danced by candlelight. Tapers blazed down upon the hordes of Hell.

I moved silently to the side, slipped behind the drapes and found a space between wall and hanging which was like a little corridor extending all around the room. I walked down and saw that Ellen followed at a distance, her arms laden. She deposited her burden and withdrew. She would

I hate careless flattery, the kind that exhausts you in your effort to believe it.

—WILSON MIZNER

return, I knew, to carry out my instructions. I hoped it would work. Even if it didn't, I would have the satisfaction of destroying the negatives he was using for blackmail.

There were slits at intervals in the drapery, and I peered through an opening and contemplated the scene.

All wore cloaks and some were cowled, but I knew many of them from the days of Judson Roberts. I saw Lorna Lewis. She faced the altar, swaying upon her haunches as she chanted and waved a goblet. All were chanting, all held goblets, all adored the altar and the Black Goat of the Sabbat.

The tethered kid bleated upon the dais, and goat-stench mingled with the reek of candle-wax and wine. The crucifix inverted—the bowl and the knife—these were symbols of the Devil's Mass. I had read of them and I recognized them, just as I now recognized the man in black who led the chanting from the altar-stone.

The Devil stood incarnate before me; the white skull bobbed and the white hands wove evil glamour over all. I got mad all over again.

Ellen came up behind me and nodded. I waved her back and moved along the wall, edging up to the hangings near the altar.

Walls vibrated with the litany, for the sacrifice was at hand. The Devil would slay the kid, they would partake of mingled blood and wine. Then came Saturnalia, the orgy of vice.

I stepped out from the hangings and stood before them. The chanting ceased.

The man who had been Professor Hermann gazed at me, and there was nothing of humanity in his eyes or face, for the mask had been stripped away. Now he was the Devil. I saw him come toward me, watched him raise the knife. Then I smiled. This was the moment.

Once this man had been Otto Hermann. Once he had been a man like anyone else. Now he was insane with delusions of Satan, with altars and sacrifices and silver knives. He blinked and came forward, still holding the knife. He must have seen it in my eyes.

"So that's it," he whispered. I signaled to Ellen with a gesture behind my back. "I'm Satan and you're the avenging angel. Strange that it should come to this! But what I have created I can destroy."

The knife swept up. I smiled and waited and hoped and waited. I watched the silver sweep of the blade as it started down—then saw it blotted out in a blanket of fire. The Devil jumped back, caught off-guard by the sudden burst of flame from the fast-burning negatives. I started to lunge at him, then saw a drapery catch fire and fall forward, burning furiously, cloaking his body in a solid sheet of flame. It wrapped around him and he screamed; then he fell back and smoke rose and swirled to blot out his writhing body. Satan was returned to Hell.

My eyes hurt and it was hard to breathe. I groped for the door amidst the dense smoke. I choked, gasped, stumbled through the corridor in darkness. I found the iron stairs, climbed frantically and gulped fresh air at the top.

Now it was ended, I couldn't think, couldn't remember. I began to stagger to the bottom of the hillside, clinging to the trees. Lights flashed past me in the night. The others—the would-be Satans—were fleeing below.

I came to the car, waiting on the side of the road. I got the door open, somehow, and there she was! Ellen, with her face and hands oddly blackened. She gasped when she saw me.

"It worked, then? And Hermann—"

"The Devil is dead," I told her. Then I collapsed.

She put her arms around me.

"Go to sleep, Eddie," she said. "It's all right now. Go to sleep."

Chapter Eighteen

SHE DROVE ME to the beach-house and put me to bed. I stayed in bed for the next three days. I don't remember much of that at all. Gradually I managed to pull out of it.

As it was, I had been up two days before she'd even let me talk about what had happened.

"When you got away in the cable car, they must have figured you were dead," Ellen decided. "Anyway, they had to take a chance on it. The earthquake kept them from coming into town and finding out whether you were alive and had returned to the office.

"I was so startled when the temblor came that I dropped a phonograph record," she told me. "It must have been Sylvestro who imitated your voice over the phone to me. He said I was to come right out to the canyon. They had all been killed in the quake, and you wanted me to help you because your car had been hit by falling rocks. I went right out there—"

"And they grabbed you," I finished. "You see, that Black Mass deal had to go through, earthquake or no earthquake. They were determined to frame you immediately. They wanted photographs of you to show to your uncle at once. Unless they could make a deal with him within the coming week he'd be named a candidate and they couldn't apply the necessary pressure to him personally. Even the Professor could work on your uncle only as an individual, beforehand.

"So they got you out there and doped you and set things up for their photos. The Professor was smart. He held the ceremony too, as planned—and was ready to work with black-light photography on the others during the ritual. It must have taken him a long time to sell Satanism to the chosen few. He had the whole scheme worked out, and what a sweet blackmail it would have been if he could have carried it off! He was a smart one—smart as the devil."

It wasn't until the next day that Ellen let me see the newspapers, and I read about what they found in the house out at Vista Canyon.

They didn't know very much, even after all this time. The quake had kept the authorities busy enough, and naturally nobody who had been mixed up in the ceremony did any talking to the police.

There was no mention of poor Miss Bauer, and I could only assume her remains had been disposed of right after I had found the deep-freeze.

Apparently nobody had tumbled to that cistern in the abandoned fox-pit behind the house. Everything that it contained—all the burned and charred remnants of the past—remained hidden and would probably never come to light. But "police were investigating rumors of a mysterious cult" and they were "seeking the missing owner, Otto Hermann, well-known psychological consultant, who disappeared during the time of the quake."

My name wasn't mentioned. Judson Roberts wasn't tied in to this deal, and Eddie Haines never had been.

He never need be.

Even if they do get down into the hillside and find Sylvestro and the Professor—even if they finally start a full-dress investigation—I'm still in the clear. I burned the Judson Roberts record file at the office, and there is no connection between him and Eddie Haines at all.

Ellen and I can go away, today. Or I can stay here and face the music, risk taking a rap if they want to pin one on me for what happened.

Writing it all down here, the way I have these past weeks, I can turn it over to the authorities tomorrow. Or I can burn it, the way the Professor was burned, the way the past was burned.

I think I'm going to leave it up to Ellen to decide. She'll know what's best. Yes, I'll ask her, and whatever she says, I'll do.

As long as she remembers to call me "Eddie." •

RELAX and ENJOY

MOVIES

Africa: ***Ivory Hunter*** (Universal) has a plot for those who require one, but most of all it has some of the most magnificent color sequences ever filmed of big game in their native haunts near Nairobi: elephants, giraffes, rhinos and all sorts of wild life that give the photographers and actors some mighty exciting experiences. The story, based on fact, concerns the efforts of one man to establish parks and prevent the appalling and needless destruction of wild life. The picture was considered so unusual that it was selected for the Royal Film Performance in England last year.

Adult Comedy: ***Pat and Mike*** (MGM) pairs Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn in a professional sports background, with Tracy a promoter and Hepburn a golfer trying to beat an inferiority complex that results from her association with a stuffy professor. There are excellent laugh sequences of training, exhibitions, and cross-country tours that gain tremendously from Tracy's delivery and from revelation of the usually concealed Hepburn legs. There are also tennis and golf stars playing themselves, including Babe Didrikson Zaharias, Gussie Moran, Alice Marble, Don Budge and Frank Parker.

Slapstick: ***Jumping Jacks*** (Paramount) with Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis back in uniform—as paratroopers, this time—in a hilarious comedy that is up to their usual standards. Martin, already in uniform, sends for his old vaudeville partner, Lewis, when a sourpuss general threatens to do away with the camp shows unless they are improved. Lewis is passed off as a GI, and the show is such a hit that the general demands continuation of the show, even to the extent of sending it on tour to other camps. The deception has to be concealed from the general, of course, and things are touch and go for a while until Lewis gets involved with maneuvers and winds up a hero by capturing the enemy general.

TELEVISION

Dramatic: Offering top-quality stories, fine acting and intelligent direction, ***The Web*** is one of the better dramatic shows presently available. Writers like Hugh Pentecost fashion the adult and compelling scripts for this series, and thereby hangs the secret of the success of The Web. Thanks to the caliber of the writing, The Web makes worth-while viewing for those who like stories of intrigue and adventure which don't depend solely upon gunfire and fisticuffs for their impact.

Mystery: ***Ellery Queen*** makes a better-than-average TV show by virtue of the slick performances of the cast. Led by Lee Bowman in the title rôle, the cast principals have been working together for a year and a half, with a resultant polish that makes the most out of generally mediocre scripts.

Science Fiction: ***Tales of Tomorrow*** brings science fiction to TV in a believable, exciting fashion. The producers of this show have resisted the temptation to obscure their stories in a cloud of special effects, with the result that the spine-tingling possibilities of interplanetary visitors, push-button civilization and travel by rocket ship almost seem as genuine and logical as a long-distance phone call.

BOOKS

Adventure: ***Harpoon Venture*** (Viking, $4.75) by Gavin Maxwell is the story of four years of a unique experience. Gavin Maxwell is probably the only man in the world to set up a modern business of hunting the basking shark, the second largest fish existing. Set in the spectacular scenery of the Hebrides, it is a tale of sea chase that has very few peers among books of maritime adventure. When Gavin Maxwell realized a childhood dream and acquired the island of Soay in the Hebrides after the war, he decided to hunt the basking shark for commercial purposes. Every step of the way presented dangers and difficulties, and only after months of trial and error was he able to design equipment that would assure a catch. The basking shark is a fearsome and almost unconquerable adversary—the ordinary whaling harpoon crumples against his horny hide like a corkscrew, and three hundred rounds from a Breda machine gun merely pepper his flanks like pebbles. In addition to the exciting text, there are 82 pictures which provide a good visualization of the locale and the business.

RECORDS

Classical: Vladimir Horowitz is represented in two fine albums, ***Chopin's Sonata in B-flat*** and a group of shorter pieces by Chopin and Liszt (Victor) . . . ***Il Trovatore*** as performed by LaScala Milan Company is a first-rate reading of Verdi's great opera (Columbia) . . . The Paganini Quartet offers an outstanding performance of ***Ravel's Quartet in F*** (Victor).

Musical Comedy: Risë Stevens and Robert Merrill team for ***A Cavalcade of Musical Comedy*** (Victor) . . . Kostelanetz leads the Philadelphia Orchestra in a contemporary American concert featuring the scores of ***Showboat, South Pacific*** and ***Slaughter on Tenth Avenue*** (Columbia) . . . ***Lovely to Look At*** has Jerome Kern's great Roberta score right off the soundtrack of the movie with Kathryn Grayson and Howard Keel (MGM).

NOTE: All records reviewed are available on both LP and 78 speeds.

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